

**Built to Outlast:  
Operational Approaches to Hybrid Warfare**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

**BUILT TO OUTLAST: OPERATIONAL APPROACHES TO HYBRID WARFARE** by MAJ Richard B. Johnson, United States Army, 100 pages.

There is a healthy debate about hybrid warfare in American military journals and publications. Much of this discussion describes hybrid threats as a nascent phenomenon, citing the Israeli Defense Force's 2006 struggle against Hezbollah militants in southern Lebanon as a bellwether for future conflict. Significantly, much of this debate also focuses on an adversary's means and capabilities in hybrid war, rather than the cognitive fusing of mixed forms of warfare that hybrid threats employ. Consequently, there is a lack of discourse on operational approaches to hybrid warfare.

This monograph utilizes oral history interviews and discussions with theorists and practitioners from the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict in southern Lebanon, the American experience in Vietnam, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The author was able to develop these case studies by taking advantage of research opportunities in the United States, United Kingdom and Israel financed by the Command and General Staff College and the Joint Special Operations University. The resulting historical qualitative analysis provides a fresh inquiry of hybrid warfare through the lens of operational art.

To gauge suitable operational approaches to hybrid warfare, this study develops explanatory fundamentals to counter future hybrid threats by evaluating the aforementioned conflicts. These fundamentals of an operational approach include disrupting the hybrid threat's logic in the forms of warfare it employs, rather than focusing on physical methods to counter the hybrid threat's means and capabilities. Additionally, it includes pursuing a strategic aim by arranging tactical actions within the context that led to a hybridized threat. Finally, it avoids uniform and prescriptive approaches across time and space.

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## Introduction

The danger is that this kind of style, developed out of a single case, can easily outlive the situation that gave rise to it; for conditions change imperceptibly.

- Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*<sup>1</sup>

The Hezbollah fighters struck quickly, overwhelming the small truck-mounted border patrol with antitank rounds and small arms fire. But significantly, they only sought to kill the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) reservists in the second truck. Their objective that morning went far deeper than a simple guerrilla ambush; they sought captives. The four organized sections swept through the carnage and pulled Sergeant Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev back through the hole in the border fence, under the cover of coordinated mortar fire. It took 45 minutes for an IDF relief force to reach the site to find them long gone, giving the fighters ample time to abscond with their prisoners through the Lebanese village of Ita a-Sha'ab. Barely another hour had passed when Hezbollah's Al Manar satellite television network lauded the successful kidnapping of two IDF soldiers, an effort to restore faith in their wider struggle to repatriate their own captured fighters.<sup>2</sup>

As the Israeli Air Force (IAF) prepared to destroy bridges radiating out from the area in an effort to contain the captives, the IDF organized a combined arms force with a Merkava tank to secure a vantage point on Giv'at Hadejel, a hill overlooking the village. The detachment never made it to Giv'at Hadejel, as a huge improvised explosive device (IED) rocked the Merkava,

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<sup>1</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 154.

<sup>2</sup>Amos Harel and Avi Issacharof, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 2-5, 11-12, 14; Matt M. Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 34-35. This account of the events on 12 July 2006 is drawn primarily from *34 Days*, due to Harel and Issacharoff's access to interviews with the IDF soldiers in the morning ambush at Report Point 105. Brigadier General Gal Hirsh, the division commander in the northern border area, had already identified this scenario as a major risk and previously requested that the reservists along the border be replaced; they were not.

killing the crew of four. When the dismounted troops dispersed to secure the site, they came under heavy indirect fire which killed yet another soldier.<sup>3</sup> 12 July 2006 came to a close with eight IDF soldiers killed, Goldwasser and Regev still missing. Reports circulated to the highest levels of the defense staff and government, providing a context for “belligerent declarations and hasty decisions that ultimately led to a war.”<sup>4</sup>

The next morning, the IAF struck Hezbollah’s Zelzal-1 and Fajr-3 missile positions across Lebanon, successfully destroying over half of their arsenal in 34 minutes. But therein lay the issue; the IAF could only destroy half of this arsenal of medium-range missiles, and very little could be done about the thousands of light, mobile Katyusha rockets distributed across southern Lebanon. The Hezbollah response was an unprecedented barrage of Katyushas into northern Israel that surprised the IDF in terms of both volume and penetration.<sup>5</sup> Without a major land offensive, there was no practical way to disrupt the rocket attacks on Israeli population centers.

Over the next two weeks, Hezbollah simultaneously fired rockets to weaken Israeli political resolve, while defending against the IDF’s continued incursions from well-prepared positions in southern Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> The IDF began to fixate on the town of Bint J’beil for its

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<sup>3</sup>Harel and Issacharof, 12-13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>5</sup>Harel and Issacharof, 91-93; Uri Bar-Joseph, “The Hubris of Initial Victory: The IDF and the Second Lebanon War,” in *Israel and Hizbollah*, ed. Clive Jones and Sergio Catignani (London: Routledge, 2010), 156, 158-159. Although accurate in locating Hezbollah’s Iranian medium-range rockets, Israeli intelligence failed to recognize that their light rocket arsenal was significantly upgraded with Syrian assistance prior to the conflict. Hezbollah’s improved 122mm Katyusha rockets had an effective range of 42km instead of 20km, and they also had received new 220mm rockets with an effective range of 50km to 70km.

<sup>6</sup>Author’s discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Member of the Winograd Commission, 8 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel. Penny L. Mellies, “ Hamas and Hezbollah: A Comparison of Tactics,” in *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD*, ed. Scott C Farquhar (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 61; Cathy Sultan, *Tragedy in South Lebanon* (Minneapolis, MN: Scarletta Press, 2008), 40. As a result of this pattern of conflict which the IDF seemed powerless to stop, there were 43 civilians killed in Israel with 300,000 people displaced. In Lebanon, estimates are that 600,000 people fled as the IDF continued air strikes throughout the campaign. As for the military forces, the IDF suffered 119 killed in action while Hezbollah lost an estimated 184

symbolic resonance within both societies. After the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah secretary general Hasan Nasrallah held a victory speech there. The IDF Chief of Staff, General Dan Halutz, sought to create a “spectacle of victory” through a raid in Bint J’beil rather than focus on a holistic disruption of the rocket threat to northern Israel’s population.<sup>7</sup> At Bint J’Beil, the IDF encountered stiff Hezbollah resistance, as both sides clashed in what was more of a meeting engagement than an IDF raid or a Hezbollah ambush. IDF veterans of the battle at Bint J’Beil hold a lasting impression of Hezbollah’s capability, one that is far different from what they had trained and prepared. One paratroop officer remarked that “[t]hese were not the small sections we were familiar with...these didn't retreat from the field.”<sup>8</sup> Another recalled later that Hezbollah “had eyes everywhere,”<sup>9</sup> and a third veteran of the conflict recollected “we were under constant fire, they never stopped hitting us...[y]ou can tell Hezbollah has been trained in guerrilla fighting by a real army.”<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the short war, Hezbollah displayed the nature of a complex adaptive threat in which their combination of regular and irregular aspects created a synergistic effect, one greater than the sum of those component parts.<sup>11</sup> They mixed regular forces with a hierarchical, military-

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based on the number of funeral processions recorded. Other sources estimate between 300 to 500 dead Hezbollah fighters.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph, 154, 156; Sultan, 54, 56; Harel and Issacharof, 119-120, 126-128, 136-139; Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 45.

<sup>8</sup>Amos and Harel, 135.

<sup>9</sup>Sultan, 56. Sultan’s work includes accounts from both a Hezbollah fighter and an IDF soldier who fought at Bint J’Beil. Her collection appears slightly biased against the IDF in its presentation, focusing on a magnitude of collateral damage in southern Lebanon which is disputed in other sources listed herein.

<sup>10</sup>Greg Myre, “Israel’s Wounded Describe Surprisingly Fierce, Well-Organized and Elusive Enemy,” *New York Times* (10 August 2006). Accessed at [www.nytimes.com/2006/08/12/world/middleeast/12soldiers.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/12/world/middleeast/12soldiers.html) on 10 September 2011.

<sup>11</sup>Ralph Peters, “Lessons From Lebanon: The New Model Terrorist Army,” *Armed Forces Journal* 114, no. 3 (October 2006): 39; Mellies, 52; Sultan, 53. To enable this adaptive nature, Hezbollah teams had much more autonomy than their IDF counterparts. This is a reflection of both the Iranian doctrinal influence and the entrepreneurial nature of Lebanese society. The Hezbollah fighter interviewed in *Tragedy*



style command structure with the distributed nodes of an irregular force; a great majority of their fighters wore uniforms.<sup>12</sup> Most visibly, they employed a lethal combination of regular and irregular means, melding conventional weaponry such as anti-ship missiles, Kornet anti-tank missiles, and Katyusha rockets with improvised weaponry suited for irregular warfare such as IEDs and ambush sites.<sup>13</sup> But most importantly, Hezbollah combined regular and irregular behaviors in their form of warfare. They fought in many sustained battles, but also maintained an ability to disengage when it was advantageous. Furthermore, they displayed the ability to counterattack given the tactical opportunity.<sup>14</sup> Nasrallah's exhortation at the outset of the conflict provides a unique summarization of this change in modalities: "[y]ou wanted an open war. Let it be an open war. Your government wanted to change the rules of the game. Let the rules of the game change....[w]e are not a regular army, we will not fight like a regular army."<sup>15</sup>

Hezbollah engaged Israel in multiple domains, far beyond the jagged valleys of southern Lebanon. By using a combination of regular and irregular aspects to counter Israeli power on land, sea, air, and in the battle of international narratives, Hezbollah achieved a synergistic effect to exhaust Israel. This effort to indirectly exhaust Israel is illustrated in Hezbollah's central theme

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*in South Lebanon* explained "I have specific tasks, as do others in my small unit, but we work independently of others. I think this is our strength."

<sup>12</sup>Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 45, 59; Hybrid Warfare Panel Discussion, 9 February 2012, Fort McNair, DC. The IDF was also captivated by the fact that Hezbollah established a regular system for administration, to include pay stubs.

<sup>13</sup>Peters, 38; Anthony Cordesman, "The Lessons of the Israeli-Lebanon War." Center for Strategic & International Studies, 43. Accessed at [www.csis.org](http://www.csis.org) on 2 September 2011.

<sup>14</sup>Biddle and Friedman, 36, 39.

<sup>15</sup>Cordesman, 8; Robin Wright, *Dreams and Shadows* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 198-199.

of *muqawama*, a notion of resistance which exploits Israel's sensitivities to casualties in attritional warfare.<sup>16</sup>

The IDF fundamentally did not disrupt Hezbollah's logic for violence in the conflict. Although the IAF was precise, air strikes failed to disrupt Hezbollah's balance in Lebanon and push it into an operational collapse.<sup>17</sup> The IDF found its historic advantages in tanks, aircraft, reconnaissance, and night raiding actions nearly irrelevant in 2006.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Israeli politicians and strategists held a myopic view of their desired endstate and could not provide an articulated framework for operations. Consequently, IDF commanders were left with an inherent tension in their operational plans. They were pulled between an endstate which was not achievable without sustained land warfare, and a strategic context which would not allow sustained land warfare. Although the IDF was able to raid several Hezbollah strongpoints and destroy most of their medium-range missiles, they failed to arrange these successes towards a strategic aim.<sup>19</sup> The IDF lacked both the theory and practice to prevail in the 2006 conflict; operationally and strategically, Hezbollah outlasted Israel.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Mellies, 53; Peters, 40, 42; Biddle and Friedman, 77. Biddle and Friedman illustrate the power of this synergistic effect; even though Hezbollah could not match the conventional capacity of other Arab militaries, they were more successful in holding terrain than the French in 1940 or the Italians in 1941.

<sup>17</sup>Gal Hirsch, "On Dinosaurs and Hornets - A Critical View on Moulds in Asymmetric Conflict," *The Royal United Services Institute Journal* 148, no. 4 (August 2003): 4; Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 61. Ironically, Hirsch illustrates a conceptual understanding of this very requirement in his 2003 article: "I recommend creating the strike through the operational logic described here: a simultaneous operational employment of forces, like a swarm of hornets." Accounts like *34 Days* imply that Hirsch was significantly constrained by higher headquarters' guidance during his command of the tactical and operational land maneuver in southern Lebanon.

<sup>18</sup>Shimon Naveh, "The Cult of Offensive Preemption," in *Between War and Peace: Dilemmas of Israeli Security*, ed. Efraim Karsh (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 172. Naveh illustrates the historical context of the IDF's presumed superiority over Arab forces in night raiding actions and complex mobile maneuvers.

<sup>19</sup>Author's discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Land Warfare Analyst, 8 March 2012, Latrun, Israel; Author's discussion with Israeli Military Analyst, 8 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel; Author's discussion with Israeli Military Analyst, 9 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel; Matt M. Matthews, *Interview With BG (Ret.) Shimon Naveh* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press), 4; Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 62-64. Discussions with IDF theorists and practitioners reveal a disjointed relationship between theory, doctrine, and practice with respect to operational art in 2006. The IDF's new

## Significance

Israel's operational approach to the hybrid threat in Lebanon sparks an interesting discourse, an introspective dialogue about the applicability of the US Army's doctrine and organization to defeat similar threats. To understand this, it is instructive to examine how the US military applied operational art to defeat hybrid threats in previous conflicts. That historical inquiry guides the following research, lest we fall into the trap Clausewitz alludes to in this introduction's epigraph.

This is a potentially rewarding endeavor, because an adequate analysis of operational art can provide insight for future approaches to hybrid threats. There is a healthy debate about hybrid threats and the nature of hybrid warfare in American military journals and publications. Much of

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operational doctrine artificially conflated the theories of Effects-Based Operations (EBO) and Systemic Operational Design (SOD), resulting in what one officer deemed "a maze of words." Halutz's headquarters adopted this doctrine less than one month prior to the conflict, before it was studied and embraced by tactical echelons and the reserve forces. Shimon Naveh's interview corroborates this, contending that the IDF's operational doctrine was neither fully synthesized nor embraced as an adaptive organizational process. American assessments of the IDF generally combine the two issues; Matthews' own critique in *We Were Caught Unprepared* reflects this conflation, at one point referring to it as "the new EBO/SOD doctrine" and "this effects-based, SOD-inspired doctrine." Therefore, it is fundamentally incorrect to use the 2006 war as a sole basis for debating the utility of design methodology in conceptual planning.

<sup>20</sup>Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In The Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse, NY: The Syracuse University Press, 2004), 44, 46; Daniel Isaac Helmer, *Flipside of the COIN: Israel's Lebanese Incursion Between 1982 - 2000* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007), 70-72; Sergio Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army* (London: Routledge, 2008) 190; Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: The Princeton University Press, 2007), 136-137; Michael D. Snyder, "Information Strategies Against a Hybrid Threat" in *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD*, ed. Scott C Farquhar (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 114-115; Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 11, 19, 29, 34. As context for the preceding vignette, it is important to note several circumstances surrounding the July 2006 war. Fundamentally, Hezbollah is a jihadist organization which increasingly engages in Lebanese politics, not a political party with an armed wing for jihad. Israel used a combination of armed incursions, limited operations, and overt occupation in the same areas in southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000, in an effort to create an operational security buffer. Hezbollah used the intervening six years to establish an extensive, modern bunker system; with security protocols in place, no fighter had knowledge of the entire structure. The IDF's focus during this time was chiefly on the Gaza Strip and West Bank, where they became proficient in short counter-terror operations at the expense of combined arms maneuver coordination, mobility, and logistics. Nasrallah did not expect the kidnappings to result in an open war against Hezbollah, so neither side was adequately prepared for the conflict when it began. Upon examining the bodies of Goldwasser and Regev once they were returned to Israel after the war, the IDF determined that they most likely died from wounds sustained in the initial ambush on 12 July.

this discussion describes hybrid threats as nascent phenomena, citing the IDF's struggle against Hezbollah as a bellwether for future US military operations. Significantly, much of this debate also focuses on an adversary's means and capabilities in hybrid war, rather than the cognitive fusion of mixed forms of warfare which hybrid threats employ. A symptom of this focus on physical aspects is the projection for US military equipment and capabilities, instead of a contemporary debate in terms of the doctrine and organization to counter hybrid threats in complimentary abstract domains. The US Army genuinely needs advanced capabilities in the confusing environment of land warfare against a hybrid threat. However, these investments will not bear fruit if there is not a thorough range of operational approaches, broad methods that arrange these tactical gains in pursuit of strategic objectives. Technology and information dominance alone will not fuse tactics and strategy, but logical constructs that provide clarity and direction to an adaptive organization may provide this capability.

When operational art pursues strategic aims through the arrangement of tactical actions within the context of the adversary, it enables a force to defeat that adversary via positions of relative advantage. Translating these positions of military advantage into positions of political advantage enables successful conflict termination from a position of strength, rather than seeking a strategic break-even point. Theories of hybrid warfare, operational art, and historical analysis of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq illustrate several key concepts regarding sound operational approaches: they cognitively disrupt the hybrid threat's logic governing the forms of warfare it employs, they fuse tactical successes to the strategic aims within the context that led to the hybridized threat, and they avoid uniform approaches across time, space, and purpose. Future operational approaches to counter hybrid threats must adapt elements of these explanatory concepts.

## Methodology

This monograph utilizes qualitative historical analysis to build understanding of American operational approaches to hybrid threats. To develop broad, explanatory fundamentals, this research and analysis does not attempt to quantify or otherwise model hybrid warfare in a predictive fashion. Sound historical analysis develops the widest possible consensus of significant experiences by collating direct observations and previous treatments on the event, so this may incorporate contradictions.<sup>21</sup> This is a reflection of the relative nature of historical analysis, and the lack of an objective, singular *truth* inherent to a specific event or campaign. Even the most rote, ‘hard’ sciences have limitations in the reproducibility of results for the same reason. In the complex and amorphous environment of historical hybrid warfare, this reproduction is achieved only through the virtual replicability of a narrative.<sup>22</sup> This monograph utilizes case studies to reproduce a narrative through the dual lenses of operational art and hybrid warfare.

The study of operational art and hybrid warfare through a historical lens has a set of inherent limitations, some of which are imposed by the nature of the research and some of which are deliberately placed upon the analysis to bound the subject matter. The chief limitation on research is the specter of presentism, since accounts from Vietnam and Iraq do not share the same logical constructs with contemporary expressions of hybrid warfare and operational art. To bring reasonable limits on the scope of research, several constraints narrow the field of what is considered for analysis. The research focuses on the Army’s historical experiences with hybrid warfare, since warfare is an activity among the population; the population lives on land and the

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<sup>21</sup>To aid in the development of this wide consensus, the case study analyses rely heavily on the direct observations of primary sources, and incorporate foreign sources to minimize American military bias.

<sup>22</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 9-10, 39-40, 42-43.

Army is the eminent land force for sustained military operations.<sup>23</sup> American experiences with hybrid warfare form the subject matter for two reasons. First, there are many macro- and micro-cultural peculiarities of American institutions and military operations. Using case studies from American experiences isolates that variable to improve the application of resulting fundamentals for an American Army. Additionally, foreign campaigns such as the IDF in Lebanon or the Russians in Chechnya receive a majority of the treatments through a lens of hybrid warfare, creating a misconception that this may be a form of warfare which is unfamiliar to the US Army's institutional lineage.<sup>24</sup> The application of operational art is analyzed rather than tactical methods or strategic considerations, since operational art is the closest expression of warfare to the underlying reason for hybrid threats: a technique of considering and arranging means to achieve a higher purpose. Finally, hybrid warfare is the subject rather than a wider survey of irregular warfare or unconventional warfare, owing to the relative vagueness and breadth of those concepts. Hybrid warfare is also broad concept, but it retains enough specificity and unique characteristics as to avail itself to discrete analysis. These deliberate constraints on the scope of the analysis provide clarity for the resulting fundamentals, but may limit their applicability in future conflicts.

In order to gain understanding and context for these fundamentals, this monograph continues with an investigation into the competing models that describe the elements of hybrid warfare. This discussion focuses on the form, function, and logic of unrestricted warfare,

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<sup>23</sup>Owing to the limited resources of this study, there are only two case studies presented. A full treatment on the subject would apply the same analytical logic to the American Revolution, the Mexican War, the Civil War, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

<sup>24</sup>Brian P. Fleming, *The Hybrid Threat Concept: Contemporary War, Military Planning and the Advent of Unrestricted Operational Art* (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2011), 7, 61; Daniel T. Lasica, *Strategic Implications of Hybrid War: A Theory of Victory* (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), iii; Sean J. McWilliams, *Hybrid War Beyond Lebanon: Lessons From the South African Campaign 1976-1989* (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 3; Steven C. Williamson, *From Fourth Generation Warfare to Hybrid War* (master's thesis, US Army War College, 2009), 29.

compound warfare, fourth generation warfare, hybrid warfare, and current US Army doctrine. To develop a working model for hybrid warfare which frames the subsequent case study analyses, this inquiry evaluates the physical and cognitive traits of hybrid warfare, historical trends, and the external stimuli that drive a threat to hybridize. Likewise, the following chapter examines the theory, application, and elements of operational art. This context creates an appreciation for the application of operational art in a specific campaign or war, an operational approach. This discussion of operational art includes the underlying nature of modern warfare, and the inherent insufficiency of methods that linearize a complex process.<sup>25</sup>

The case studies of the American experiences in Vietnam and Iraq illustrate the concepts of operational approaches to defeat hybrid threats with varying levels of success and adaptation. Each case study describes the threat, the nature of tactical actions and strategic objectives in the environment of hybrid warfare, and the operational approach which sought to broadly arrange them. The consequent analysis focuses on the effectiveness of the operational approach, with consideration of the cultural context, historical background, and grievances that led to the conflict and its termination. The monograph's conclusion presents explanatory fundamentals to counter future hybrid threats based on the analysis of hybrid warfare and operational art theory, and the two case studies. Finally, it culminates with a brief assessment of the Unified Land Operations doctrine's ability to address hybrid threats with these fundamentals in mind.

## **The Nature of Hybrid Warfare: Built to Last**

The Western discussion of hybrid threats and hybrid warfare spiked dramatically as the first analyses of Hezbollah emerged from Lebanon in 2006. The first widely publicized use of the term *hybrid warfare* for a military audience pre-dates that campaign in Lebanon; a speech by

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<sup>25</sup>This monograph does not incorporate a stand-alone Literature Review on the subjects of hybrid warfare or operational art; the respective discussions topically convey this context throughout.

Lieutenant General James Mattis on 8 September 2005, which he quickly followed with an article in *Proceedings*.<sup>26</sup> There is an inherent tension between developing clean-cut distinctions among complex forms of warfare while retaining an appreciation of the whole phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> However, if the US Army seeks operational approaches to counter a hybrid threat, then it requires a rich understanding of hybrid warfare's nuances as a point of departure for each incident. The following discussion deconstructs the ongoing scholarly debate in order to build context and examine hybrid warfare's physical and cognitive elements, its historical trends, and the reasons that an adversary develops a hybrid nature.

### **The Insufficiency of Symmetry and Statehood**

The genesis of the current debate in hybrid warfare stems from an insufficient military vocabulary to describe these observed phenomena. After an intense focus on large-scale conventional conflicts during the Cold War, with episodic foci on irregular conflicts, the insufficiency of describing warfare in terms of symmetric and asymmetric enterprises surfaced. There are inherent limitations in characterizing any form of warfare as symmetric since a perceptive enemy will choose to strike at vulnerabilities instead of at strengths.<sup>28</sup> Although this is a key concept in most traditional Eastern theories of warfare, the Western military discussion of

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<sup>26</sup>Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 14; Frank Hoffman and James N. Mattis, "Future Wars: The Rise of Hybrid Wars." *Proceedings* 132 (November 2005); William J. Nemeth, *Future War and Chechnya: A Case for Hybrid Warfare* (master's thesis, US Naval Postgraduate School, 2002); Erin M. Simpson, *Thinking About Modern Conflict: Hybrid Wars, Strategy, and War Aims* (paper presented to the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, 2005). Unpublished papers pre-dating Hoffman's effort include a 2002 Master's thesis by William J. Nemeth which represents the earliest scholarly work on the subject, in which the emergence of devolved hybrid societies gives rise to hybrid warfare as observed in Chechnya. Simpson's early work in the subject explores hybridity in forms of conflict, in the context of groups' strategic aims.

<sup>27</sup>Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 248.

<sup>28</sup>Hew Strachan, "Making Strategy: Civil-Military Relations After Iraq." *Survival* 48 (Autumn, 2006): 71; Biddle and Friedman, 22.



asymmetry advanced significantly with works such as Robert Leonhard's *The Art of Maneuver*.<sup>29</sup> Leonhard illustrates that even conventional attacks are inherently asymmetric when they seek to defeat an enemy system by attacking them in advantageous mediums with dissimilar means.<sup>30</sup> Presenting the evolving appreciation for hybrid threats through the lens of symmetry can create awkward connotations, such as the current term "High-End Asymmetric Threat."<sup>31</sup>

Concurrently, the ongoing contraction of many domains is exposing the insufficient method of categorizing hybrid threats as state and non-state actors.<sup>32</sup> This simplistic categorization may lead to a superficial appreciation for their organizations, relationships, and social contexts. This is also a problematic binary choice when a hybrid threat develops in an area with no Westphalian notion of effective central governance.<sup>33</sup> In some instances, it may provide most of the security and social services that Western analysts normally associate with a state actor.<sup>34</sup> The lack of statehood or even state-sponsorship does not equate to a lack of effective

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<sup>29</sup>Robert T. Ames, *Sun Tzu: The Art of War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 78-80; Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 25, 42. The works of Sun Tzu and Mao Tse-Tung both illustrate aspects of this concept. In a work attributed to Sun Tzu, the theorist contends that "[b]attle is one disposition trying to prevail over another" and all positions of advantage leading to this are relative in both time and space. Mao contends that within weakness there is inherent strength, and within strength there is inherent weakness; he seeks to "turn these advantages to the purpose of resisting and defeating the enemy."

<sup>30</sup>Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver-Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1991), 108-111; Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 34.

<sup>31</sup>Nathan Frier, "Hybrid Threats: Describe...Don't Define." *Small Wars Journal* (2009): 5. The term "High-End Asymmetric Threat" reflects an attempt to describe particularly well-equipped hybrid threats that spring from "functioning but unfavorable order" as opposed to discrete models of insurgency and terrorism that spring from the "absence or failure of order altogether."

<sup>32</sup>Fathali Moghaddam, *The New Global Insecurity* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 19-20; Author's discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Land Warfare Analyst, 8 March 2012, Latrun, Israel. Psychologist Fathali Moghaddam asserts that this increased interconnectedness and interdependence is a result of fragmented globalization, which blurs the lines of a state / non-state dynamic and results in both collective and personal insecurity. Discussions with IDF officers regarding the 2006 war illuminate the risk in this compression of domains, in that media spreads information rapidly with minimal context.

<sup>33</sup>Huba Wass de Czege, "Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer," *Small Wars Journal* (2011): 4; Simpson, 3, 12.

<sup>34</sup>Erik A. Claessen, "S.W.E.T. and Blood: Essential Services in the Battle Between Insurgents and Counterinsurgents." *Military Review* (November-December 2007): 92-93.

organization and preparation for warfare. State sponsorship is simply a fact of life, another aspect of the strategic context rather than a requisite for a hybrid threat. The hybrid threat will seek to optimize their efficacy with or without it.<sup>35</sup> Alternatively, characterizing hybrid threats as categorically non-state actors in a global insurgency without an organizing function has two fundamental shortcomings. With respect to the model itself, an *insurgency* assumes that the threat is acting to overthrow, replace, or obviate the established government in a given region or society. It is a tenuous claim to argue that the social and economic reach of Western states constitutes an effective central government beyond their shores or direct military control, whether it is real or virtual.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, there is ample evidence that adversaries *can* organize across the traditional state boundaries in multiple domains, with coordinated planning, recruiting, funding, and arming that can result in an “undeniable strategic coherence” instead of simply a mutually beneficial convergence of aims.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, symmetry and statehood are only descriptive in nature, and an effective operational approach requires the explanatory foundation of a threat’s unifying logic. With the conceptual limits of a definition rooted in symmetry and statehood in mind, hybrid warfare is then *violent conflict utilizing a complex and adaptive organization of regular and irregular forces, means, and behavior across multiple domains to achieve a synergistic effect which seeks to exhaust a superior military force indirectly.*<sup>38</sup> This avoids characterizing hybrid warfare as

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<sup>35</sup> Author’s discussion with Israeli Military Analyst, 8 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel.

<sup>36</sup> Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 11-14, 66-67, 271-273. Although the *perception* of this central power certainly leads to conflict within that given region or society. The body of Al Qaeda literature cited here is but one example, especially the opening “well-established facts” in their 1998 declaration of war against the United States.

<sup>37</sup> David Kilcullen, “Countering Global Insurgency.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28 (2005): 605.

<sup>38</sup> Hybrid Warfare Panel Discussion, 9 February 2012, Fort McNair, DC; Author’s discussion with Retired IDF Military Intelligence Officer and Terrorism Analyst, 6 March 2012, Herzeliyah, Israel. This monograph’s description of hybrid warfare deliberately avoids the aspect of criminality for two reasons. Primarily, criminality depends on a corresponding characterization of legitimacy, and a hybrid threat may be engaging in what some consider criminal activity only as a means to de-legitimize governance efforts of a rival. Furthermore, it may simply be a nonstandard means of financing operations, which is entirely

asymmetric since that is not a distinguishing characteristic from other forms of warfare, and it does not typify a hybrid threat within a particular level of recognized governance since that does not inherently alter the form of warfare it can employ. Hybrid warfare is a mix of cognitive and physical elements, which adversaries employ to assert relative advantages in spite of their comparatively limited means. These dimensions differentiate hybrid warfare from strictly conventional or unconventional endeavors.

## **Competing Models of Mixed Forms of Warfare**

Theorists describe these functional aspects of hybrid warfare with a variety of models and metaphors. As with any attempt to describe a varied and amorphous spectacle, each attempt to codify hybrid warfare takes on a focus and implication of its own. Several nuanced themes emerge that go much deeper than a simplified view which casts hybrid warfare as an anomaly where we see “militaries playing down” and “guerrillas and terrorists playing up.”<sup>39</sup> These models in the current debate include unrestricted warfare, compound warfare, fourth generation warfare, and hybrid warfare. To understand hybrid warfare and develop a context for operational approaches to defeat them, it is instructive to examine each model on its own merits and applicability.

## **Unrestricted Warfare: Combinations in Multiple Domains**

Chinese Colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui authored the essay *Unrestricted Warfare* in 1999 which presents their concept of war without limits.<sup>40</sup> In response to an unbalanced strategic climate with fungible international rules, they describe a mode of warfare

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absent in other hybrid threat organizations. For example, Hezbollah finances a significant portion of its security operations and construction through indirectly aligned charities.

<sup>39</sup>Frier, 1, 8.

<sup>40</sup>See Liang Qiao and Xiangsui Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing, 1999).

“which transcends all boundaries and limits, in short: unrestricted warfare.”<sup>41</sup> Instead of solely seeking large-scale conventional war, which suits a powerful state’s core competencies and means, they contend that the approach of the future will be an active decision to build the weapons or capabilities to fit the war.<sup>42</sup>

The essence of unrestricted warfare is that it is not limited to the physical, detached battlefield so the actions of war normally associated with military efforts will expand across other domains such as economics and material resources, religion, culture, the environment, and information networks.<sup>43</sup> To break through these conventional limits of war, and the conception of multiple domains as detached and distinct entities, the authors suggest several methods: supra-national combinations of state and non-state actors, supra-domain combinations using platforms to attack across the spectrum of conflict, and supra-tier combinations to allow tactical units and small-scale means to achieve direct strategic effects.<sup>44</sup> Their principles to guide these methods include omni-directionality, synchrony, limited objectives, unlimited measures, asymmetry, minimal consumption, multidimensional coordination, adjustment, and control.<sup>45</sup>

Significantly, the authors did not assert that unrestricted warfare implies a chaotic implementation or an uncoupling from national strategic aims. Since *Unrestricted Warfare* examines strategic concepts, the authors do not examine the implementation of their theorized form of warfare on a practical level. The concepts of supra-domain methods and principle of omni-directionality are useful to understand hybrid threat behavior, but the model of unrestricted warfare does not specifically address the synergistic effect of hybrid warfare. While these

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 12. Liang and Xiangsui are not the only ones to explore unrestricted warfare throughout history, but their creative and explanatory paper influences many contemporary strategic analysts, particularly hybrid warfare theorists.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 181-199.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 206-216.

methods may create simultaneous effects across multiple dimensions, they do not describe a function to link single successes to the broader strategic aims.

## Compound Warfare: Unifying Distinct Forms

The simultaneous use of a regular or main force and an irregular guerrilla force against an enemy is described in the model of compound warfare.<sup>46</sup> The benefit of this combination is that it presumably pressures an enemy to both mass and disperse simultaneously, using both forces in a complimentary fashion in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.<sup>47</sup> The main forces in compound war will often seek to fortify themselves from definitive destruction with a safe haven or a major power ally.<sup>48</sup> The strength of the compound warfare model is that it accurately explains several familiar conflicts such as the American Revolution and the Peninsular War.<sup>49</sup>

Compound warfare's contribution to the evolution of hybrid warfare theory is that it describes a unified command of distinct forms of warfare, and the benefit of employing those forces. However, the compound warfare model describes two distinct forces on separate battlefields, only unified physically by support to one another and the scope of the conflict. Additionally, these subcomponents are either regular conventional or irregular guerrilla forces, without an inherent ability to adapt into different forms of warfare.<sup>50</sup> Compound warfare has great utility in describing most conflicts, with hybrid warfare theory describing a subset of compound

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<sup>46</sup>Thomas Huber, "Compound Warfare: A Conceptual Framework," in *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*, ed. Thomas M. Huber (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002).

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>49</sup>For an illustrative case study, compare Huber's chapter "Compound Warfare in Spain and Naples" in *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot* and Phillippe Gennequin, *The Centurions versus The Hydra: French Counterinsurgency in The Peninsular War (1808-1812)* (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011).

<sup>50</sup>Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 21.

warfare in which the regular and irregular forces achieve a synergistic effect.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, there is a limited ability to analyze some conflicts through the lens of compound warfare. One example is Vietnam, where the hybrid threat could promote subversive agrarian reforms one day and then mass for a conventional attack the next.

#### Fourth Generation Warfare: Protracting the Conflict for Benefit

The notion of hybrid warfare illustrating a fourth generation of warfare is deceptive. This model does not directly describe a combination of multiple forms of warfare, rather the emergence of a wholly new style of warfare.<sup>52</sup> Thomas X. Hammes' *The Sling and the Stone* provides the deepest analysis of this model, in which he asserts that this new generation of warfare uses all available networks to convince an enemy's strategic and political decision-makers that protracting a conflict is too costly.<sup>53</sup> In this model, tectonic shifts in the landscape of society resound in the ways in which states fundamentally conduct war. However, by describing these shifts as distinct changes instead of a continuum, it does not address this fourth generation of warfare in earlier eras, such as insurgency in French and British colonies or T.E. Lawrence's campaigns. As such, some analysts take issue with this concept.<sup>54</sup> In his conclusion, Hammes allows that fourth generation warfare represents an evolved form of insurgent tactics writ large.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the critical insight from Fourth Generation Warfare is that deliberately protracting a

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<sup>51</sup>Hybrid Warfare Panel Discussion, 9 February 2012, Fort McNair, DC.

<sup>52</sup>William S. Lind, Keith Nightengale, Johns F. Schmitt, Joseph W. Sutton, and Gary I. Wilson, "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation," *Marine Corps Gazette* 73, no. 10 (October 1989): 23; Clayton L. Niles, *Al Qaeda and Fourth Generation Warfare as its Strategy* (master's thesis, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2008), 3-4. Within this concept, the first three generations are: Napoleonic warfare, a second evolutionary generation of warfare incorporating political, economic, social, and technical changes, and maneuver warfare. Much of this concept is attributed to the works of Thomas X. Hammes and William S. Lind.

<sup>53</sup>Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: MBI Publishing, 2004).

<sup>54</sup>Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 19.

<sup>55</sup>Hammes, 2, 208.

conflict can aid a politically and militarily weaker opponent. This is important to the overall appreciation for irregular warfare, as is the opportunity for hybrid threats to exploit this opportunity.

### Existing Hybrid Warfare Theory: The Deliberate Synergistic Effect

After the 2006 conflict in Lebanon, a cavalcade of literature on hybrid warfare and threats emerged. Some of these offered definitions of hybrid warfare that now seem almost singularly custom-fit to Hezbollah's operations in Lebanon: "[h]ighly disciplined, well trained, distributed cells can contest modern conventional forces with an admixture of guerrilla tactics and technology in densely packed urban centers."<sup>56</sup> The most complete treatments on the subject include *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* by concept developer Frank Hoffman in 2007, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* by Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey Freidman in 2008, and the compendium *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats: Perspectives for an Era of Persistent Conflict* published by the Council for Emerging National Security Affairs (CENSA) in 2011. While these studies focus much of their analysis on the implications for defense apportionment and possible adaptations for the military, they provide a firm foundation for understanding hybrid warfare.

A critical insight from Biddle and Freidman is that there are several elements common to both conventional and guerrilla warfare. These include the use of delaying actions, harassing fires, concealment, dispersion, and strategic intents pursued via armed coercion.<sup>57</sup> Within this strategic intent lies a common underlying theme:

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<sup>56</sup>Frank Hoffman, "Lessons From Lebanon: Hezbollah and Hybrid Wars." *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 1. Accessed at [www.fpri.org](http://www.fpri.org) on 2 September, 2011.

<sup>57</sup>Biddle and Friedman, 11-17.

...the actors' strategic logic does not cleanly distinguish "guerrilla" from "conventional," and "asymmetry" is properly regarded as a feature of almost all strategy rather than as a meaningful distinction between irregular and "regular" warfare.<sup>58</sup>

In this sense, conventional warfare and guerrilla warfare combine their inherently asymmetric approaches along a continuum, instead of in discrete alternatives for action.<sup>59</sup> Hoffman's succinct contention is similar; that hybrid warfare represents a deliberate synergy of approaches to target a conventionally capable force's vulnerabilities.<sup>60</sup>

Writings on hybrid warfare tend to describe the phenomenon in both physical and cognitive terms. In general, analysts describe both the threat itself and its means in physical terms immediately following the conflict in Lebanon, with descriptions of the cognitive qualities of hybrid warfare emerging later. Owing to the spectacular and unforeseen success of Hezbollah against the IDF, there was a natural tendency to focus on the effectiveness of high-tech equipment in the hands of an irregular force such as man-portable surface-to-air missiles, encrypted communications sets, purpose-built explosive devices, and anti-ship weapons.<sup>61</sup> Further analysis broadened the scope of hybrid warfare methods, and with it came the qualitative cognitive characteristics of organizational adaptation, command and control methods, and the synergistic effect of variation.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>60</sup>Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 14.

<sup>61</sup>Frank Hoffman, "Preparing for Hybrid Wars." *Marine Corps Gazette* 91 (March 2007): 58; David E. Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid Warfare* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010), 3; Peters, 38; Cordesman, 18, 36, 43-48; Hoffman, "Lessons From Lebanon: Hezbollah and Hybrid Wars."

<sup>62</sup>Frank Hoffman, "Complex Irregular Warfare: The Next Revolution in Military Affairs." *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (Summer 2006), 398; Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 14; John J. McCuen, "Hybrid Wars." *Military Review* (March-April 2008): 108; Biddle and Friedman, 59.



Hoffman's earlier pieces on hybrid threats claimed that today's threats are more lethal so historical case studies may not be applicable.<sup>63</sup> However, his later published works such as *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* delve heavily into historical precedents as both a critique of other models and as evidence for his conclusions. Although the ever-evolving nature of warfare in general means that historical precedents will not fit neatly into our conceptions of present observations, it may be most accurate to describe hybrid warfare as simply part of the broader emerging trend of converging forms of warfare and behaviors.<sup>64</sup>

Hybrid warfare theory also sheds light on the reasons for which an adversary employs this form and behavior. Mattis' 2005 article asserts that the conventional overmatch of a superior military force creates a compelling logic for adversaries "to move out of the traditional mode of war and seek some niche capability or some unexpected combination of technology and tactics to gain an advantage."<sup>65</sup> Overwhelming military might dissuades them from fighting with strictly conventional means, and this relative advantage which Mattis highlights is critical since large militaries generally take longer to adapt and innovate due to their hierarchical organization.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, adversaries may choose to wage hybrid warfare since it lends itself to conduct amongst the population. This aids them in protracting conflict, which favors them in the absence of the overwhelming military end strength and capital that an opposing state may not be able to leverage in the conflict.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>"There is much to learn about history but it rarely repeats itself." Frank Hoffman, "Lessons From Lebanon: Hezbollah and Hybrid Wars."

<sup>64</sup>Biddle and Friedman, 77; Frank Hoffman, "The Hybrid Character of Modern Conflict" in *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats: Perspectives for an Era of Persistent Conflict* (Washington, DC: CENSA, 2011), 42-45.

<sup>65</sup>Hoffman and Mattis, 1.

<sup>66</sup>Frank Hoffman, "Small Wars Revisited: The United States and Nontraditional Wars." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28 (2005): 914; Robert M. Cassidy, "Why Great Powers Fight Small Wars Badly." *Military Review* (September-October 2002): 41.

<sup>67</sup>McCuen, 109.

## US Army Doctrine: A Threat-based Focus

With an institutional lack of joint force doctrine regarding hybrid warfare, the Army's current and emerging doctrinal publications illustrate a developing appreciation for the nature of hybrid warfare.<sup>68</sup> The army's logical construct for operations, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, characterizes a hybrid threat as the most likely opponent. It defines it as "the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects." It further describes the hybrid threat as incorporating high-end capabilities traditionally associated with nation-states to exploit vulnerabilities and erode political commitment. In an acknowledgement of the ability to protract war in these circumstances, the threat will seek to wage war in more battlespace and population than US forces can directly control.<sup>69</sup>

*Training Circular 7-100: Hybrid Threat* provides the baseline model of enemy forces for combat training within the army. It defines and describes hybrid warfare in much the same manner as *Unified Land Operations*, with a deeper description of the force structure and behavior of hybrid threats. This manual describes an enemy's ability to achieve simultaneous effects instead of synergistic effects, which is more than an insignificant choice of terms.<sup>70</sup> In the discussion of hybrid threat concepts, it astutely states that opponents have difficulty isolating specific challenges within the environment, that protracted conflict favors the hybrid threat, and

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<sup>68</sup>Department of Defense Joint Staff, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept 2.0* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2010) 9, 16. The Joint Operating Concept for Irregular Warfare only refers to hybrid warfare in a footnote, which may account for the five ways it professes to counter irregular warfare: counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, and stability operations.

<sup>69</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2011), 4.

<sup>70</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Training Circular 7-100: Hybrid Threat* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2010), p. 1-2.

that the most challenging aspect may be the threat's ability to rapidly adapt and transition.<sup>71</sup> The discussion of hybrid threat components focuses on the nature of groups that combine, associate, or affiliate in an attempt to degrade and exhaust US forces rather than cause a direct military defeat.<sup>72</sup> However, with much of the army currently training or conducting security force assistance and counterinsurgency operations, it remains to be seen how much of this model will take root in the force beyond the Army's combined training centers.

### **Summary: Understanding the Large Gray Spaces**

This study's definition of hybrid warfare as *violent conflict utilizing a complex and adaptive organization of regular and irregular forces, means, and behavior across multiple domains to achieve a synergistic effect which seeks to exhaust a superior military force indirectly* grows from an assemblage of several different conceptualizations of hybrid warfare. First, from unrestricted warfare's tenets it incorporates omnidirectional attacks across domains and the combination of means. Unrestricted warfare also describes the ability to develop capabilities to suit the environment and balance of power, which is a key component of a hybrid threat's adaptive nature and organization. From compound wars, it includes the cognitive tension created in simultaneously dispersing and massing forces to counter a hybrid threat, and the notion of nonlinear effects in combining different components. From fourth generation warfare, it integrates the evolving loss of states' monopolies on violence and the effects of protracted conflict. This is particularly useful in understanding a hybrid threat's aim of cognitively exhausting an enemy's political will to continue the conflict while physically exhausting an enemy's military combat capability.<sup>73</sup> Finally, from the existing concepts of hybrid warfare, it

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 1-2.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 2-1.

<sup>73</sup>Author's discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Member of the Winograd Commission, 8 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel. In this aspect, hybrid threats reveal their generic strategic

retains the central themes of a deliberate synergistic effect, the concept of forms of warfare in a continuum, and the rapid organizational adaptation of hybrid threats.

Without a strict set of classifications or bounds, this study's definition of hybrid warfare deliberately lends itself to a continuum rather than categorizations. If theory is to be useful, it must be abstract enough to account for a variety of situations yet specific enough to describe a definitive phenomenon with accuracy.<sup>74</sup> There are many different competing theories and models which explain hybrid warfare, but as Hoffman states:

[i]f at the end of the day we drop the 'hybrid' term and simply gain a better understanding of the large gray space between our idealized bins and pristine Western categorizations, we will have made progress. If we educate ourselves about how to better prepare for that messy gray phenomenon and avoid the Groznys, Mogadishus and Bint Jbeils of our future, we will have taken great strides forward.<sup>75</sup>

This contention drives the following analysis of operational art. Existing hybrid warfare theory aptly demonstrates both the nascent nature of this form of conflict, as well as its utility against militarily superior forces. Specifically, this is done with the synergistic combination of irregular and regular qualities in protracted warfare to exhaust the superior force. Hybrid threats will emerge, and will be conceptually *built to last*. It may be impossible to completely avoid the Groznys, Mogadishus, and Bint J'beils of the future via preparation or strategic adroitness, so there must be an adequate model to guide unified action against a hybrid threat.

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disposition. The 2006 war illustrated that in the most simplistic terms, a large expeditionary force considers a stalemate a strategic loss while a hybrid threat considers a stalemate a strategic victory.

<sup>74</sup>Author's discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Land Warfare Analyst, 8 March 2012, Latrun, Israel. The danger in labeling any form of warfare is that it can over-simplify the problem for the commander; there are an abundance of prescriptive theories for counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, etc. For this reason, explanatory conclusions must accompany a theory describing a certain phenomenon in warfare.

<sup>75</sup>Frank Hoffman, "Hybrid vs. Compound War." *Armed Forces Journal Online* (2009), accessed at [www.armedforcesjournal.com](http://www.armedforcesjournal.com) on 2 September 2011.

## The Nature of Operational Art: Built to Outlast

Operational art is “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”<sup>76</sup> It creates a pathway to conflict termination in the absence of a singular decisive battle; this pathway is commonly known as a campaign.<sup>77</sup> Since operational art is a *pursuit* of strategic objectives instead of the *fulfillment* of strategic objectives, it implies that campaigns continue via positions of relative advantage instead of culminating and re-starting in an iterative process.

Operational art exhibits the inherent cognitive tension between tactics and strategy since the mechanical context of tactical activity blends with the abstract context of strategic thinking. Therefore, it requires a new mode of discourse beyond tactical and strategic thinking.<sup>78</sup> Challenges with the implementation of operational art illustrate this tension. When operations quickly arrange tactical actions in terms of purpose but are slow to implement them in terms of temporal and spatial arrangements, they may gain no relative advantage.<sup>79</sup> In terms of cognitive and physical aspects, the challenges and apparent differences in the strategic, operational, and tactical activities in war may lead to their stratification in many doctrinal models for warfare.

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<sup>76</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 9. Michael J. Brennan and Justin Kelly, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009). This monograph focuses on operational art instead of the amorphous ‘operational level of war’ which has a potential to subsume strategic concerns in military operations. All of the ‘levels of war’ (tactical, operational, and strategic) are logical constructs which aid in organizing military actions and concepts, but this monograph will analyze the more specific sets of tactical actions, strategic aims, and the operational art which links them. For a deeper discussion on this subject and the viability of an ‘operational level of war,’ refer to Brennan and Kelly.

<sup>77</sup>Michael J. Brennan and Justin Kelly, “The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art.” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 56 (1st Quarter 2010): 112.

<sup>78</sup>Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence* (London: Frank Cass Publishing, 1997), 6-7; Huba Wass de Czege, “Operational Art: Continually Making Two Kinds of Choice in Harmony While Learning and Adapting.” *Army* 61 (September 2011): 54-55. Although, the strategic aims of war should include an *appreciation* for the limits of mechanical tactical means in war, as the tactical actions in war should include an *understanding* of the abstract strategic environment.

<sup>79</sup>Frans P.B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy, and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (London: Routledge, 2007), 236. Osinga’s commentary on John Boyd’s theories describes this in terms of “tempo.”

Proper doctrine should link all three through the conduit of operational art.<sup>80</sup> The hierarchical separation of a continuum of three levels of war is a helpful but artificial system, which doctrinaires construct to nest concepts in war.<sup>81</sup> While arranging tactical actions, operational art must provide a conduit to incorporate the impact on strategic context, lest decision-makers become disconnected sponsors of war.<sup>82</sup>

## The Characteristics of Operational Art: Blending Grammars

Operational art must consider the conflict's environmental context in order to provide this conduit between tactical actions and strategic aims. In this, several elements of Western and Eastern thought manifest themselves. A Western approach sets up an ideal form (an *eidōs*) which translates directly to a goal (a *telos*), and then seeks action to make this a reality. This goal constitutes a theory for action, which is put into practice. As such, theory and practice are for all intents coupled into theory-practice. However, this theory-practice by itself is insufficient since warfare is an activity that lives and reacts.<sup>83</sup> An Eastern approach relies on the inherent potential of a situation, instead of projecting a plan borne strictly of theory-practice. It is an attempt to use the situational context to gain a relative advantage through its inherent propensity.<sup>84</sup> Operational

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<sup>80</sup>Brennan and Kelly, "The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art," 114. Major Leighton Anglin suggested the metaphor of a "conduit" in a discussion with the author, 22 July 2011. This is a further reflection of the fusing of tactical actions, operational art, and strategic aims rather than separate, stratified levels of warfare.

<sup>81</sup>Brennan and Kelly, "The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art," 114; Wass de Czege, "Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer," 1-2, 4.

<sup>82</sup>Alan Beyerchen, "Clausewitz, Nonlinearity, and the Unpredictability of War." *International Security* 17 (1992): 89; Brennan and Kelly, "The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art," 115.

<sup>83</sup>Francois Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 1, 3, 14. Jullien traces the Western lineage of thought to Greek philosophers, hence the usage of *eidōs* and *telos* to illustrate the concepts of Western thought.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 16, 21. Jullien states that "[p]otential consists of determining the circumstances with a view to profiting from them."

art illustrates this notion in its elements of “setting conditions” and “shaping operations.”<sup>85</sup> This has particular importance concerning hybrid threats, since these threats tend to destabilize familiar forms and contexts for a military force.<sup>86</sup>

An operational approach is the cognitive *method* of arranging tactical actions in time, space, and purpose in pursuit of strategic aims; it is the application of the elements of operational art within a specific context. Culture exerts a great influence on the cognitive methods initially available to fuse tactics and strategy. A military’s organizational doctrine, shared experiences, capabilities, and constraints combine to provide a starting point for operational art. Efforts to understand the environment and provide a rich frame for problem solving can assist operational planners in developing approaches that are refined for a specific context. Antulio J. Echevarria describes this with the metaphor of grammar when he examines the US Army’s struggle to adapt familiar conventional operational approaches to counterinsurgency efforts after decades of a focus on conventional warfare. He describes the two forms of warfare as having the same logic but distinct grammars, with the contemporary nature of warfare requiring the mastery of both grammars.<sup>87</sup> It follows that hybrid warfare requires the *blending* of both grammars.

## The Theoretical Lineage of Operational Art

To understand when operational art began as a method to fuse tactical action and strategic aims, it requires an examination of when operational maneuver began. The Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century showed the first hints of operational maneuver, and the art and science requisite to employ it, but movement was still the means to arrive on a set battlefield in a position

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<sup>85</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 12-13. Unified Land Operations doctrine describes Decisive, Shaping, and Sustaining operations as part of the operational framework.

<sup>86</sup>Hirsch, 2.

<sup>87</sup>Antulio J. Echevarria II, “American Operational Art, 1917-2008,” in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, eds. Martin Van Creveld and John Andreas Olsen (Oxford, UK: The Oxford University Press, 2011), 137, 161.

of advantage.<sup>88</sup> This was a result of the dominant theories of warfare at a time, which focused on the concept of a concentrated force defeating a larger dispersed force to achieve a decisive victory. However, these wars showed the utility of commanding distributed forces and arranging the continuous actions of a campaign in space and time.<sup>89</sup> The increased accuracy and lethality of direct fire weapons during the 19th century atomized the battlefield, and the expansion of railroads and telegraph links enabled both large-scale transport and communication over long distances. The effects of these technological advances were evident in the American Civil War, which was arguably the first comprehensive use of operational art. Dispersed elements could now fight in synchrony over great distances, requiring commanders to arrange their actions in time, space, and purpose.<sup>90</sup>

On the heels of the Napoleonic era, Prussian officer and educator Carl von Clausewitz labored to complete a comprehensive theory of war in relation to policy, and its resulting implementation in warfare.<sup>91</sup> In a departure from the Enlightenment era military theories of the time that contained fixed values and prescriptive principles for winning wars, he focuses on the inherent uncertainty in war. Because he sees decisive victory as a function of strategy, tactical battles alone could not achieve victory for an army in the field.<sup>92</sup> Within *On War*, Clausewitz's

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<sup>88</sup>Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 4-9.

<sup>89</sup>James J. Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2004), 2, 26, 30.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 17, 33-35.

<sup>91</sup>Clausewitz, 24-25, 65-67; Matheny, 9. Significantly, Clausewitz died in 1832 before *On War* was complete to his satisfaction and must be studied with this fact in mind. As a result, some of the grander concepts that lead his work were not completely reconciled with discussions on operations and tactics later in *On War*. An additional hindrance for modern readers is Clausewitz's use of the term *strategy* to describe grand strategy, theater-level military strategic, and operational art; his use of the term must be considered in the context for each usage in *On War*.

<sup>92</sup>Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 141-142, 145; Clausewitz, 227-229, 236-237, 263-270.



description of the nonlinear aspect of warfare and his Center of Gravity construct shape much of the modern conceptions of operational art.

Although *On War* predates most of the mathematical concepts of nonlinearity by more than a century, Clausewitz's description of the *friction* of war shows an intuitive sense of this phenomenon. The friction of war illustrates the small details in warfare that have macroscopic effects, leading to a cumulative unpredictability due to their interconnected relationships.<sup>93</sup> Clausewitz rejects the clockwork nature of his contemporary military doctrines because they failed to address the cumulative effects of the dynamic processes, feedbacks, and friction that the Enlightenment's linear systems professed. Therefore, distributed command models such as *Aufstragtaktik* and Mission Command are logical responses, since they distribute uncertainty and allow smaller forces to make adjustments within their local context.<sup>94</sup> Clausewitz's other chief contribution to operational art is the Center of Gravity construct. He describes the Center of Gravity as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends," and striking it theoretically leads to decisive victory.<sup>95</sup> Clausewitz's Center of Gravity refers less to the physical concentration of strength, and more to the forces that concentrate it. Furthermore, his Center of Gravity model is a complex phenomenon that relies on the relationship between both belligerents. Much like the spatial movement of the center of gravity of two grapplers as they struggle for a dominant position, a Clausewitzian Center of Gravity displays cognitive movement as both sides maneuver in battle. As a result, it is paramount to identify the unifying force in an adversary's system within the context that leads to its construction, and understand one's own impact on this system and the environment.<sup>96</sup> These aspects of the Center of Gravity are critical in operational

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<sup>93</sup>Clausewitz, 119-121, 139-140; Beyerchen, 73, 77.

<sup>94</sup>Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of War: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 87, 89-90.

<sup>95</sup>Clausewitz, 595-596; Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 179.

<sup>96</sup>Clausewitz, 485-487, 597; Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 180.

approaches to defeat hybrid threats since they avail the possibility to define and strike ideological, political, and economic sources.<sup>97</sup>

Another intellectual ancestor of current operational art is the theory of Deep Battle, developed through the works of Soviet theorists such as A.A. Svechin, M.N. Tukhachevsky, and G.S. Isserson after World War I.<sup>98</sup> In an effort to restore mobility and operational maneuver to the battlefield, Deep Battle sought to break the physically linear aspect of an enemy front with simultaneity and depth in a focused area.<sup>99</sup> Isserson's theories also build on Clausewitz's concept of culmination, and the attempt to attain objectives before exhausting combat power.<sup>100</sup> This takes advantage of the continued spatial growth of the physical battlefield, as well as the increased mobility for motorized and mechanized forces. Deep Battle and the experience of World War II illustrates the need to integrate operational art in separate domains.<sup>101</sup> As a result, mass and maneuver became unifying concepts to arrange tactical actions in operational art. The US Army's

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<sup>97</sup> Werner Hahlweg, "Clausewitz and Guerrilla Warfare" in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, ed. Michael Handel (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 128-131; Peter Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War* (Princeton, NJ: The Princeton University Press, 2009), 97-99; Christopher Daase, "Clausewitz and Small Wars" in *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe (Oxford, UK: The Oxford University Press, 2007), 183; Clausewitz, 479-483. Although *On War* has little focus on irregular warfare as we would recognize it today, his earlier lectures on small wars (*Kleinkrieg*) and guerilla warfare (*Volkskrieg*) are integrated into his short passage "The People in Arms."

<sup>98</sup> Jacob W. Kipp, "The Tsarist and Soviet Operational Art" in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, eds. Martin Van Creveld and John Andreas Olsen (Oxford, UK: The Oxford University Press, 2011); G.S. Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, trans. Bruce W. Menning (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army School of Advances Military Studies, 2005); Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy*, ed. Kent D. Lee (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 1992), 217-256.

<sup>99</sup> Richard W. Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory: The Life and Theories of G.S. Isserson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2010), 76-78. USSR Commissariat of Defense, *Field Service Regulations Soviet Army 1936*, trans. Charles Borman (Washington, DC: The Army War College, 1937), 1-2, 59-61; Isserson, 49.

<sup>100</sup> USSR Commissariat of Defense, 1-2, 7; Harrison, 69, 149.

<sup>101</sup> Isserson, 150; Harrison, 98.

AirLand Battle doctrine furthered this trend of abstraction and integration, describing a unifying concept of securing or retaining the initiative in order to apply combat power.<sup>102</sup>

Maintaining the initiative through relative advantages provides the central theme for current US Army doctrine, organized in the model of Unified Land Operations. This model organizes the enduring concepts that describe a land force which seizes, retains, and exploits the initiative in order to set the conditions favorable for conflict resolution and termination.<sup>103</sup> These efforts are executed through Full Spectrum Operations (FSO), by the means of Combined Arms Maneuver (CAM) and Wide Area Security (WAS), and guided by Mission Command. FSO illustrates that forces employ simultaneous combinations of offensive, defensive, and support operations. CAM and WAS provide the twin means to apply combat power to these combinations. The two are complementary; CAM provides the means to seize and exploit the initiative whereas WAS provides the means to retain the initiative. Both are cognitive approaches that are not meant to be employed in isolation.<sup>104</sup> To adapt Echevarria's metaphor of logic and grammar, maneuver is the logic that connects the distinct but complimentary grammars of CAM and WAS. In Unified Land Operations, operational art provides the cognitive links in this structure, serving as the conduit between tactical actions and strategic aims. It stresses the importance of context for operational art, stating that it requires commanders who "continually seek to expand and refine their understanding and are not bound by preconceived notions of solutions."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Richard M. Swain, "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army." in *Operational Art: Developments in the Theory of War*, eds. B.J.C. McKercher and Michael Hennessy (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 159; Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-5: Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1986), 14-16.

<sup>103</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 1.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

## Operational Art and the Nature of Warfare

The evolution of operational art highlights the development of the battlefield from one with linear arrangements of time, space, and purpose, to a more fluid and dynamic environment. Although an observer would have little difficulty noting the different environments of a Napoleonic battlefield and southern Lebanon in 2006, practitioners of operational art must take special care with the subtle difference between complicated warfare and complex warfare. Complicated systems may have a dizzying multitude of one-to-one relationships but they display linear phenomena such as additivity, which allows modeling and prediction. Complex systems with interconnected relationships do not obey the principle of additivity, so two nearly identical initial conditions can result in vastly different outcomes.<sup>106</sup> Several aspects of operational art must be examined through the lens of complexity due to the friction of war and its inherent instability.<sup>107</sup>

First, technical superiority is not a substitute for a sound operational approach. A metaphoric silver bullet may lend a measurable and absolute advantage in a linear system, such as the use of the longbow at Crecy. However, this only lends a relative advantage in a complex system, which may be negligible.<sup>108</sup> The complexity of modern warfare also tends to marginalize the capabilities of over-centralized command and control networks. Too many interconnections may be a hindrance if units lose their ability to act independently.<sup>109</sup> By providing focus through a clear and common aim, operational art can arrange the purpose of tactical actions without this tether to a central node. Secondly, the approach of attrition warfare has its limitations in a

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<sup>106</sup>Linda P. Beckerman, *The Non-Linear Dynamics of War* (Science Applications International Corporation), section 6.2. Author's discussion with Israeli Military Analyst, 9 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel. One example of this concept for interconnected warfare is revealed in the off-handed Israeli description of the 2006 war as "our northern system."

<sup>107</sup>Beyerchen, 62, 80.

<sup>108</sup>Beckerman, section 1.5.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, section 5.6.

complex environment. Much like the effect of technical superiority, the assumption that a specific amount of additional combat power will result in a commensurate amount of enemy casualties assumes a constant, linear ratio.<sup>110</sup> An operational approach cannot simply increase friendly combat power or protect against an enemy's capability, nor can it solely fixate on linear measures of effectiveness such as body counts or the spatial range of essential services.

### **Summary: The Operational Approach**

The characteristics and history of operational art illustrate that stability and adaptability are not antithetical in doctrine. In order to ensure a shared orientation of forces, the doctrine of operational art provides a stable framework and a common lexicon. An operational approach is the adapted implementation of this doctrine, when it is set contextually to fuse tactical actions and strategic aims. Due to the complex nature of warfare, an operational approach must evolve with the uncertain and changing nature of warfare.<sup>111</sup> Unless an army fights the same war in succession or the nature of warfare is unchanging, linear prescriptive theories generally do not win wars on their own merits. Conversely, the pragmatic application of broad fundamentals may enable success.

However, this application of broad fundamentals must pursue a continual strategic advantage instead of collection of sporadic victories.<sup>112</sup> Hybrid threats will undoubtedly form with the intent of being *built to last*, as described in the preceding chapter. As the following case studies illustrate, an operational approach with a myopic view of the endstate may not adequately defeat or obviate a hybrid threat. This aspect of operational planning, providing for continuation

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., section 6.2.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., Conclusions.

<sup>112</sup>Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 3-4. Dolman highlights this inherent tension in operational art, that strategy requires continual positions of relative advantage while tactics that use decisive efforts require a culmination and reconsolidation.

rather than culmination, should engender an operational approach to hybrid warfare which is *built to outlast*.

The operational approach describes “the gap” between the observed state and the desired endstate in a conflict of hybrid warfare.<sup>113</sup> In its barest theoretical form, applying operational art should be the same *action* every time: the pursuit of an objective through the arrangement of tactical actions. But historical analyses of Vietnam and OIF shed light on the peculiarities of this action, since the form and function of the strategic objective, tactical actions, the opposing forces, and the environment all change dramatically with each application. That is why this study focuses on an operational approach; the broad and episodic adaptation of operational art doctrine in a specific context. On the path to explanatory fundamentals, these case studies provide context to the preceding abstractions on hybrid warfare and operational art.

## **The American Experience in Vietnam: The Bull and the Toreador**

The U.S. fought the war as a bull fights the toreador's cape, not the toreador himself.

- Norman B. Hannah, *The Key to Failure: Laos and the Vietnam War*<sup>114</sup>

Against the backdrop of the Cold War, some regional conflicts gave rise to hybrid threats as subversions turned into increasingly violent propositions. In Indochina, Communist forces protracted the conflict and enticed the combined American and Vietnamese effort to adopt a security-oriented approach. Much like the bull in a bullfight, the American effort did not fall prey

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<sup>113</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 5-0: The Operations Process (Incl. Change 1)* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2011), p. 3-1. Army doctrine further describes the operational approach as “a broad conceptualization of the general actions that will produce the conditions that define the desired end state...[it] provides the logic that underpins the unique combinations of tasks required to achieve the desired end state.”

<sup>114</sup>Norman B. Hannah, *The Key to Failure: Laos and the Vietnam War* (Lanham, MD: Madison books, 1987), 306.

to the object of its focus. It fell to the unknown force behind the cape after succumbing to exhaustion.

## **The Context of Conflict in Vietnam**

The Vietnam War is difficult to place in a historical context owing to the nature of the conflict itself.<sup>115</sup> American leaders, and to some extent the government of South Vietnam itself, fundamentally misread the conflict in terms of military security while the Communist forces cast it as a complete social revolution.<sup>116</sup> Beyond a competition in governments, the conflict displayed several schisms which led to grievances along urban-agrarian social fault lines, colonial and nationalist tensions, and even traces of religious conflict as the French-empowered Catholic minority gravitated toward the regime in Saigon.

Terrain and demographics also conspired to make this a demanding environment for conflict. Roughly the size of Florida with 1,500 miles of coastline, South Vietnam (SVN) rapidly transitions from an open coast to a rugged central highlands with peaks up to 8,000 feet.<sup>117</sup> The distances between the coast and borders with Laos and Cambodia are only 30 to 100 miles, providing effective and varied infiltration routes towards the prized coastal cities. While these central highlands are sparsely populated, Saigon dominates the fertile Mekong Delta region to the south.<sup>118</sup> 1960 census data reveals the ethnic and religious divisions in the country. Of an estimated population of 15 million, tribal minorities in the central highlands such as the Montagnards accounted for roughly 1 million citizens, with a remaining 15 percent minority of

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<sup>115</sup>Richard B. Johnson, *The Biggest Stick: The Employment of Artillery Units in Counterinsurgency* (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011), 88-163. This section on *Context* draws heavily on the author's original work while researching the employment of artillery units in counterinsurgency operations. It is intended as a brief overview of the cultural, historical and strategic context, not an exhaustive treatment on the roots of conflict in Vietnam.

<sup>116</sup>Jeffery Race, *War Comes to Long An* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972), 151.

<sup>117</sup>Ngo Quang Truong, *Indochina Monographs: Territorial Forces* (Washington, DC: US Army Center for Military History, 1981), 9.

<sup>118</sup>Ngo, 10-11.

Khmer (Cambodian) and Chinese.<sup>119</sup> Religiously, 12 million self-identified as Buddhists compared to 2 million Catholics and small minority communities of Cao Dai and Hoa Hao adherents from the remote regions of the Mekong Delta.<sup>120</sup>

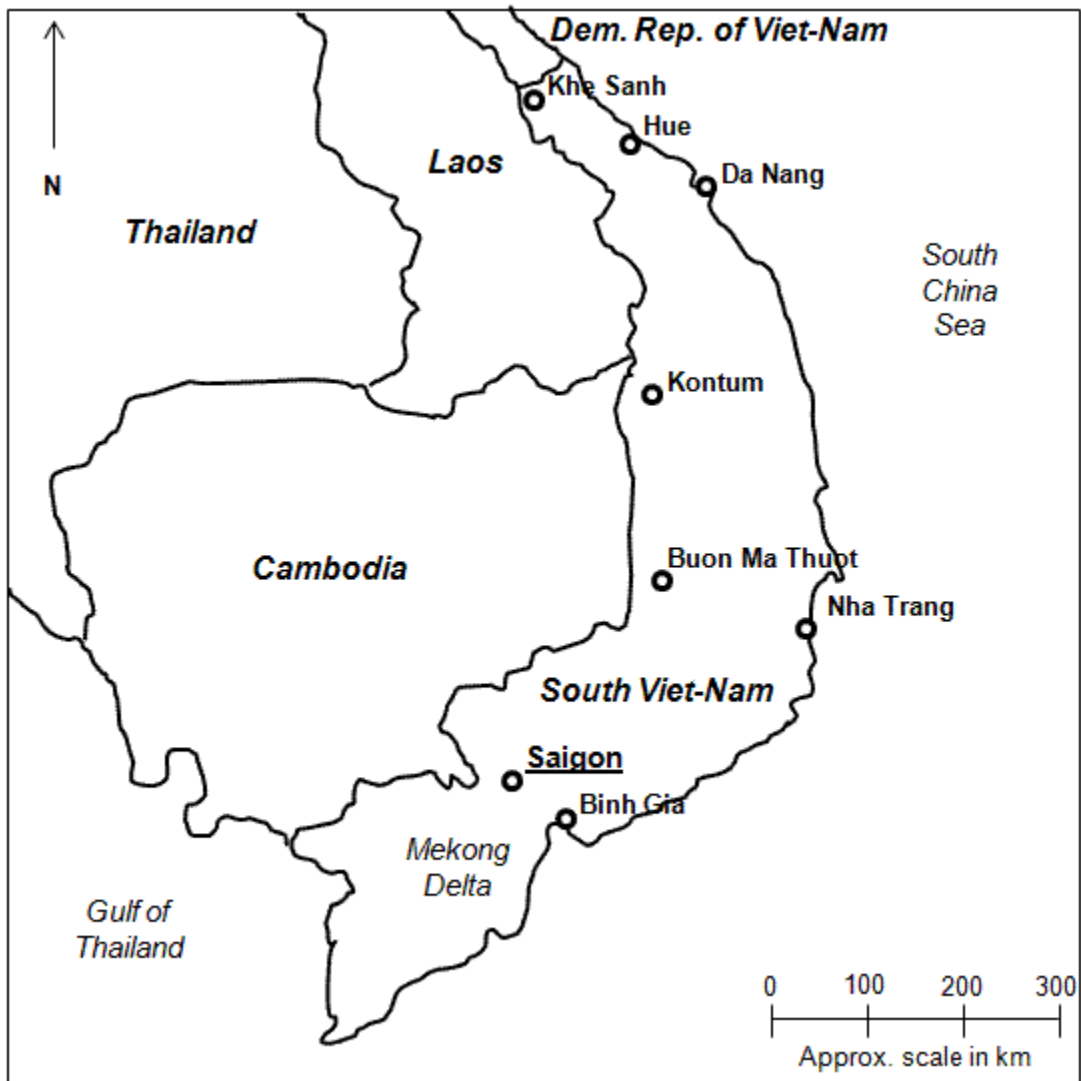


Figure 1: South Viet-Nam, 1965

Historically, Vietnam had French colonial administration and nominal rule from the 19th century until the Japanese swiftly destroyed French presence in 1944.<sup>121</sup> The *Viet Minh* began as a

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<sup>119</sup>Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 6.

<sup>120</sup>William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), 52.



resistance force to Japanese occupation, supported by both Chinese nationalist advisors and American OSS teams.<sup>122</sup> This endowed them with considerable experience and organizational structure, which prepared them for the political chaos ensuing Japan's surrender in 1945. Chinese, British and American advisors, liberated French prisoners of war, and the *Viet Minh* all struggled to establish effective governance in Vietnam.<sup>123</sup> The Vietnamese held an ingrained distinction between northern and southern societies, but the emerging paradigm in the re-established French colonial administration resembled an urban-rural division for the first time.<sup>124</sup> After nearly a decade of counterinsurgency, French airborne units established a lodgment in order to extend their operational reach into Laos and interdict key *Viet Minh* routes. In what would come to be known as the siege of Dien Bien Phu, *Viet Minh* forces defeated the French garrison and prompted the eventual transition to Vietnamese rule.<sup>125</sup>

By 1954, the United States had already begun to send military assistance directly to the provisional governments in Indochina rather than the remaining French apparatus. This support was formalized in the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), which utilized a Korean War model to equip and train conventional units in an assembly-line fashion.<sup>126</sup> And by 1960, it was apparent that this model was insufficient to meet the threat of hyper-organized communist

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<sup>121</sup>Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, 54. During the early years of World War II, the Japanese allowed the sustained administration of French Indochina by an overseas government loyal to the Vichy French, and this uneasy setup lasted until the liberation of metropolitan France by Allied forces.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>123</sup>Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, 68-71; Bernard Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Press, 1966), 23.

<sup>124</sup>Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, 13, 78. This is partially a reflection of the Vietnamese expansion from their ethnic northern base in a southward colonial fashion, concurrent with the start of European competition in Asia.

<sup>125</sup>Vo Nguyen Giap, *Inside the Vietminh: Vo Nguyen Giap on Guerrilla War* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 1962), chapter 4; Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, 482. Giap's account of Dien Bien Phu is an excellent self-examination of the strengths and liabilities inherent to his style of guerrilla warfare. Although it has some tones of Marxist exhortation, it maintains a seemingly objective view towards the military aspects of the campaign. French officers and historians rightly view this as a defeat, not a surrender.

<sup>126</sup>Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, 318-320.

subversion and terrorism. Assassinations and targeted killings rose to over 4,000, and massed troops infiltrated to Kontum and other ill-equipped army garrisons.<sup>127</sup> In 1962 the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) superseded MAAG with an expanded mission to coordinate all American security activities within SVN, the Military Assistance Command - Vietnam (MACV).

Early American efforts to address security and pacification include the failed Strategic Hamlet program,<sup>128</sup> expanded advisory efforts,<sup>129</sup> and prompting the Diem regime in Saigon to invest in paramilitary Territorial Forces.<sup>130</sup> Intelligence estimates and local leaders' intuition in 1964 indicated that some areas were transitioning to a phase of mobile warfare, prompting a presidential decision to enlarge MACV's force by 44 battalions in 1965.<sup>131</sup> It was in this new

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<sup>127</sup>Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy* (New York: Shocken Books, 1961), 345.

<sup>128</sup>Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 121-140; Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*. (New York: Davis McKay Company, 1969), 169-170; Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 156-159; Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 138; Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 363. The Strategic Hamlet program was an effort to extend governance to the countryside and provide a local counter-organization to the VC, with theoretical roots in the Malayan Emergency. The execution and scope of the Strategic Hamlet program was uneven; it did not enjoy initial support from MACV, did not incorporate enough local security, and it began hastily in regions with nepotistic connections to the Diem regime. The VC viewed this as an opportunity to insert an intelligence network into the villages themselves. In any case, the sudden collapse of the Diem regime effectively terminated the program. The Strategic Hamlet program failed to achieve any cohesive effect, and at its conclusion in 1963 there were an estimated 23 VC battalions operating in the Mekong Delta, the very region where the program was initiated.

<sup>129</sup>Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 56, 67-68. The effort in SVN counted 16,000 advisors by January 1964. Through prior command relationships and mentorship between Westmoreland and Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, Westmoreland effectively served as a deputy ambassador for military affairs.

<sup>130</sup>Ngo, 26, 96. Formalized in 1961, the GVN eventually organized these territorial forces into Regional Forces (RFs) and Popular Forces (PFs) in 1964. This gave the GVN a force to fight an insurgency that had grown from a "brush fire subversion," since they had to focus the conventional forces of ARVN along the border. RFs constituted a military force at the disposal of a district-level or provincial-level leader, while the PFs served a military function for local security in individual villages.

<sup>131</sup>Edward Lansdale, "Contradictions in Military Culture" in *The Lessons of Vietnam*, ed. W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson Frizzell (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, 1977), 45; Moyar, 412-416. As 1965 approached, General William C. Westmoreland (Commander, MACV) and his staff realized that the disjointed strategy of defending large bases to bomb military targets in North Vietnam was having minimal effect within SVN itself. The initial plan for 68 battalions was intended to "halt the losing trend," with pacification remaining the responsibility of ARVN forces.

phase of operations that MACV would need to arrange tactical actions and unifying themes in SVN to pursue the strategic aim of creating a secure, western-aligned state.

### **The Hybrid Threat in Vietnam: *Dau Tranh***

The hybrid threat in SVN was an admixture of regular and irregular modes. Although certain facets of the threat appeared uniform in nature, the overall organization was both complex and adaptive. Furthermore, it displayed an amalgam of regular and irregular forces, means, and behaviors.<sup>132</sup>

Communist forces were a complex organization, since the sum of their component elements achieved far greater effects than a simple linear aggregate of combat power. This is a reflection of their concept of victory: a decisive superiority in the balance of forces for a given area. This balance of forces referred to a ratio of resultant political power, not military capability.<sup>133</sup> In one sense, this purposeful organization mattered as much as tactics and ideology, since the aim was neither the defeat of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) nor the occupation of territory. The aim was an organization in depth of the population, a victory by both organizational method and means.<sup>134</sup> The National Liberation Front (NLF) had southern Communist forces of the *Viet Cong* (VC) that functioned as self-sufficient elements for subversion and limited security actions, whereas North Vietnamese Army (NVA) elements in

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<sup>132</sup>Truong Nhu Tang, *A Viet Cong Memoir* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 130-140, 169. A note on terminology: different scholarly works assign different labels to elements of the hybrid threat in Vietnam. The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) of the DRV appears as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) in most texts referred to in this monograph. As such, this is the label assigned to the conventional forces operating under guidance from the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN). Similarly, for southern or regrouped Communist forces under the guidance of the National Liberation Front (NLF), the label Vietcong (VC) appears more frequently than the official People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF). Although the term VC was a pejorative for any Vietnamese Communist (*viet nam cong san*), it is the most recognizable in applicable literature.

<sup>133</sup>Race, 142-149.

<sup>134</sup>Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* (Novato, CA: Da Capo Press, 1986), 220; Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1966), 111.

SVN exhibited a more traditional hierarchical structure and method.<sup>135</sup> Originally, the NLF incorporated many nationalist non-Communist groups, but these groups' influence waned as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) gained influence and overt guidance. The Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) embodied this degree of control linked to Hanoi.<sup>136</sup>

The threat organization was also adaptive, illustrated in Giap's application of the *dau tranh* theory of warfare. This theory, based on the three stages in a Maoist model of warfare, allowed forces to gradually develop and adapt in a protracted struggle based on local conditions.<sup>137</sup> Communist forces were inherently local and decentralized, whereas the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) forces were district-minded and rigidly centralized. This allowed Communist forces to raise recruits and money through both attractive and coercive policies at the local level, since they viewed the village leaders as the critical link between the people and the party.<sup>138</sup> Although there was always a degree of political and social tension between COSVN and the NLF, Vietnamese military history now confirms that many times VC

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<sup>135</sup>Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1966), 236-237. Of note, many of these VC soldiers and supporters regrouped to the north in the aftermath of the 1954 partition, which meant they had to be re-introduced to SVN.

<sup>136</sup>Truong Nhu Tang, *A Viet Cong Memoir* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 130-133.

<sup>137</sup>Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1961) translated by William B. Griffith, 54-55; Mao Tse-Tung, *The Selected Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 210-214; Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* (Novato, CA: Da Capo Press, 1986), 223. Mao's model of protracted warfare describes three phases of warfare. The first phase is the development of political movement and limited guerilla operations controlled by the party. The second phase is a transition to full-scale guerilla warfare, and is viewed as a strategic stalemate which can last the longest time. In this phase, the force establishes base areas and uses dispersion to entice the enemy force into fruitless search-and-destroy operations. In the third phase, guerrillas supplement conventional units in open warfare (both mobile and positional battles), although Mao does not intend for a huge leap between the approaches in the second and third phases.

<sup>138</sup>Race, 159-161.

forces came under direct COSVN operational control and leadership when it was prudent, allowing these forces to adapt during transitions between the phases of warfare.<sup>139</sup>

This ability to mix regular and irregular forces was in line with our description of a hybrid threat, instead of a model of compound warfare with spatially distinct forces. COSVN had a specific charter to act as a holistic command for the effort in SVN, even if the NLF forces deliberately did not place themselves under a strict command-supported relationship. One useful way to view the operational relationship of the DRV's influence and regular forces to the NLF's influence and irregular forces is through metaphor: a father and son relationship where the father seeks long-term growth for his son, but maintains an ability to intervene with an assumed authority.<sup>140</sup> This was not a simple proposition of the VC's guerrilla forces supporting the NVA's main forces, as one would expect in a strictly compound warfare model. In some cases these roles reversed, with the NVA devolving into local forces.<sup>141</sup> Meanwhile, the VC could combine main force units, guerrillas, or local scouts as required, simultaneously acting as a reserve and support function for main force actions.<sup>142</sup> The effect of this mix was that Communist forces could support both forces simultaneously.<sup>143</sup> For example, captured enemy documents describe the

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<sup>139</sup>The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002) trans Merle K. Pribbenow, 66-70; Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* (Novato, CA: Da Capo Press, 1986), 45; Richard K. Dembrowski, *Eating Dinner with a Fork, Spoon, and Knife: How a corps executed MACV's One War Strategy* (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 10.

<sup>140</sup>Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002) trans Merle K. Pribbenow, 76; Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, 325-327.

<sup>141</sup>Military History Institute of Vietnam, 192, 248.

<sup>142</sup>Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988), 206-211; Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, 235.

<sup>143</sup>Dale Andrade, "Westmoreland was Right: Learning the Wrong Lessons From the Vietnam War," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 19, no. 2 (June 2008): 146.

melding of these forces in “three-front” attacks that closely coordinated local and main force units for the 1969 counter-offensive to reverse the losses of the previous year.<sup>144</sup>

Communist forces also employed a mixture of regular and irregular means in the fight, illustrated by Giap’s claim that “[s]ophisticated SAM missiles were used alongside primitive weapons.”<sup>145</sup> This was especially prevalent in their adaptation of indirect firepower. In a period of six months, the NVA refined techniques to attack air bases and other fixed sites with improvised rocket attacks.<sup>146</sup> Even early in the American involvement, ARVN advisors noted the VC’s judicious and accurate use of mortar systems designed to support infantry advances.<sup>147</sup> To manage the incorporation of modern weaponry in irregular units, COSVN integrated key technical experts into the NLF and VC, most of them returning back south after regroupment in 1954.<sup>148</sup> The mixing of regular and irregular means was not limited to offensive weaponry; it also pervaded service and support. COSVN’s integration of training and sustainment operations enabled larger conventional operations from safe havens in Cambodia and base areas within SVN itself. For the upcoming Binh Gia campaign in 1964, COSVN designated a specific headquarters section to develop a campaign plan. This plan utilized the irregular forces to prepare logistics and medical nodes for a massing regular force, and supported it with two regiments and an artillery group of main forces.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>Standing Committee of A26, “Matters to be Grasped when Performing the Ideological Task in the Party Body” in *Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, ‘Decisive Victory: Step by Step, Bit by Bit’* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive, 1969), 11.

<sup>145</sup>Vo Nguyen Giap, *How We Won the War* (Philadelphia, PA: RECON Publications, 1976), 13.

<sup>146</sup>Headquarters, United States Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, *PAVN Artillery (Rocket Units)-1967* (Saigon: United States Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, 1967), 1, 34.

<sup>147</sup>James B. Lincoln, “Letter to Clark Lincoln dated 14 August 1965 Comparing NLF and Saigon Forces.” in *A Vietnam War Reader*, ed. Michael H. Hunt (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 66. Most veterans of America’s contemporary counterinsurgencies also recognize the value of light, mobile indirect fires systems to an insurgent.

<sup>148</sup>Randall N. Briggs, “Compound Warfare in Vietnam” in *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*, ed. Thomas M. Huber (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Press, 2002), 230.

<sup>149</sup>Military History Institute of Vietnam, 138-139.

Far beyond a mix of forces and means, the Communist forces active in SVN exhibited a mix of regular and irregular behavior. *Dau Tranh* theory provided the basis for this mixture. Giap described this effort to reach a decisive position through political and mobile warfare as “a form of fighting in which principles of regular warfare gradually appear and increasingly develop but still bear a guerrilla character.”<sup>150</sup>

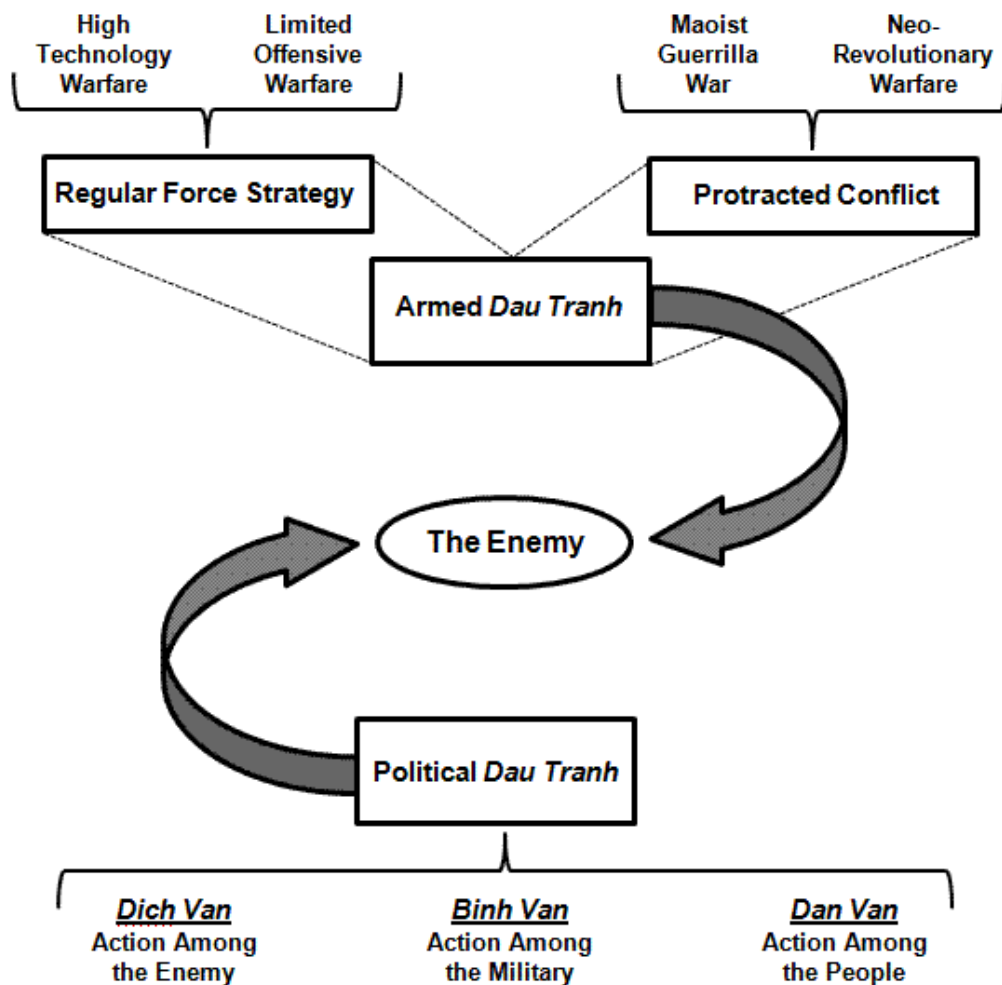


Figure 2: *Dau Tranh* Model<sup>151</sup>

<sup>150</sup>Vo Nguyen Giap, “The Resistance War Against French Imperialism” in *Guerrilla Warfare and Marxism*, ed. William J. Pomeroy (New York: International Publishers Company, 1968), 219.

<sup>151</sup>Pike, *PAVN: People’s Army of Vietnam*, 212. This graphic is adapted from Pike’s original work, to apply his graphical representation with the terminology and context herein.

*Dau Tranh* connotes an intense emotional struggle instead of a physical struggle, and consists of *dau tranh vu trang* (armed struggle) and *dau tranh chinh tri* (political struggle). This means that all actions taken in war are within the scope and framework of *dau tranh*; it is the complete blending of forms of warfare.<sup>152</sup> This achieved a requisite balance between civic action and military security. In practice, there was not an inherent distinction between the two struggles. Because the NLF formed to address 2,561 targeted villages instead of striving for a conventional capability like the *Viet Minh*, the VC village-level forces served as much of a psychological effect as they did a direct military value.<sup>153</sup>

## Hybrid Warfare in Vietnam

Communist forces translated this dual effectiveness into positions of relative advantage across multiple domains. Although Leninist theory contended that armed propaganda and military strength should be inseparable and equal, information and influence activities took primacy in SVN.<sup>154</sup> Tellingly, even the regular forces of the NVA traced their military lineage to Giap's first *Viet Minh* armed propaganda team, which Ho Chi Minh saw as the "embryo of the National Liberation Army" in the struggle against the French.<sup>155</sup> The VC envisaged this communication of ideas and narratives as a seamless web, with dedicated cadres enabled by local security. In turn, these narratives symbiotically supported local security.<sup>156</sup> On a larger scale, Hanoi's narrative of

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 215-217.

<sup>153</sup>Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, 109-111, 234-235.

<sup>154</sup>Hoang Ngoc Lung, *Indochina Monographs: Strategy and Tactics* (Washington, DC: US Army Center for Military History, 1978), 122, 124.

<sup>155</sup>Ho Chi Minh, "Instruction to Establish the Vietnam Propaganda Unit for National Liberation" in *Guerrilla Warfare and Marxism*, ed. William J. Pomeroy (New York: International Publishers Company, 1968), 204; Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, 28-29.

<sup>156</sup>Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, 124-132, 233, 237. For an illustration of this theory in practice, refer to: Propaganda and Training Section X69, *Study on the 1969 Spring - Summer Campaign SR6 COSVN* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive, 1969).



an independent NLF helped to contest the war in the diplomatic domain, with the seemingly independent nature of the NLF proving to be “an enduring thorn in the side of Western anti-Communists.”<sup>157</sup> Concurrently, the *Dich Van* program specifically targeted an American audience to convince them that victory was impossible, in order to constrain the use of American military capabilities such as air power.<sup>158</sup>

Communist forces melded these efforts in the military, political, and diplomatic domains in search of a synergistic effect.<sup>159</sup> But the synergistic effect of a hybrid threat was more evident in the employment of regular and irregular forces, means, and behaviors. Insurgents avoided large battles, and therefore took American units further away from the population in an attempt to locate them. Exploited documents proved that both VC and NVA forces were trying to keep Army units fixated on non-decisive search-and-destroy operations away from the prized population centers on the coastal plains.<sup>160</sup> Meanwhile, Communist-liberated areas controlled by the NLF’s People’s Revolutionary Government acted as a base area for both regular and irregular forces. This *dan van* program of the larger *dau tranh* model added a noncontiguous base area for recruitment, sustainment, and protection, which was only nominally detectable by military means. GVN leaders attributed the most successful pacification efforts as 1969-1971, after the VC’s failed Tet Offensive erased these base areas and decreased the resulting threat from Communist main force units.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>Van Canh Nguyen, *Vietnam Under Communism, 1975-1982* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1983), 9; Briggs, 226 (quotation).

<sup>158</sup>Political Department, People’s Liberation Army, *Outline of the Reorientation of Forthcoming Missions in 1970 For Elementary and Intermediate Cadre* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive, 1970), 4, 10-11; Pike, *PAVN: People’s Army of Vietnam*, 239-241.

<sup>159</sup>Standing Committee of A26, 5-6; Hoang, 125. General Hoang adds the economic, social, and cultural domains to his analysis of the threat.

<sup>160</sup>Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 167, 192.

<sup>161</sup>Pike, *PAVN: People’s Army of Vietnam*, 245; Tran Dinh Tho, *Indochina Monographs: Pacification* (Washington, DC: US Army Center for Military History, 1978), 184.

This synergistic effect supported the Communists' overall approach in SVN, that of exhausting the American and ARVN forces. Based on prior struggles against the Japanese and French, Giap viewed war as a long-term endeavor which sought to exhaust the enemy's manpower at its concentrated points while preserving the limited Communist manpower in SVN.<sup>162</sup> Even within the Maoist model of a three-phased war, localized conditions and enemy disposition meant that certain regions could be in different phases simultaneously to defeat the enemy where it was weakest.<sup>163</sup> The *dau tranh* model is deliberately protracted, with the assumption that eventually the incumbent force (in this case, both the GVN and its American support) is seen as accountable for contributing to this protraction.<sup>164</sup> This is evident in the VC slogan to promote ambush tactics, "fight a small action to achieve a great victory."<sup>165</sup> The effect of exhausting a larger force indirectly gained great traction, and by 1970 COSVN used the strain on American soldier morale as one of their three campaign objectives.<sup>166</sup>

## The Operational Approach in Vietnam: A Strategy of Tactics

MACV's pursuit of a strategic aim in Indochina reflects the restrictive effect that social and political constraints manifest on an operational environment. America's grand policy tradition of containment easily translated into the narrower containment of Communist expansion in the contested areas of the Cold War.<sup>167</sup> As it appeared that communism was the next great

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<sup>162</sup>Giap, *Inside the Vietminh: Vo Nguyen Giap on Guerilla War*, I-3 to I-5, I-9 to I-10.

<sup>163</sup>Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War* (New York Monthly Review Press, 1970) ed Russell Stetler, 179 - 181; Giap, *Inside the Vietminh: Vo Nguyen Giap on Guerilla War*, II-4, I-12. Although this localized focus may lead to some areas tending towards regular warfare before others, Giap still visualized an overall gradual buildup to mobile warfare with guerrilla characteristics.

<sup>164</sup>Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, 219.

<sup>165</sup>Hoang, 126.

<sup>166</sup>Political Department, *People's Liberation Army*, 2.

<sup>167</sup>Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 167, 190-193. McDougall's model of continuous policy traditions in American foreign relations does not cast "containment" as a radical departure from other traditions of orderly liberty, unilateralism, progressive

expansionist threat after fascism, it naturally appealed to check its advance rather than seek its appeasement. This policy approach also had very pragmatic tones, since Truman contended that containment would cost roughly \$400 million compared to the estimated \$341 billion price tag for World War II.<sup>168</sup>

Containment of Communist expansion translated into the *Domino Theory* strategy of halting this expansion in Vietnam. This was not a stretch, since the Japanese expansion of World War II followed roughly the same axis of advance through China, Indochina, then to southeast Asia and beyond into the Pacific. As a theater strategy in Indochina, the basic objective remained the same through all presidential administrations: preventing a Communist takeover of SVN. Although the commitment of forces continued to increase in the 1960's, it remained a limited war. Since the bombing of military targets in the DRV itself was not a MACV activity, they considered efforts to destabilize and disrupt this strategic base area and infiltration route as a fundamentally separate action from attrition and pacification efforts within SVN.<sup>169</sup> Exacerbating this difficult strategic context was the unstable GVN, which impelled the political leadership to cultivate personal loyalties in ARVN, and thus an unstable military.<sup>170</sup>

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imperialism, and expansionism. McDougall tenuously links another tradition of “global meliorism” to the strategic context of Vietnam, contending that the attempt to establish democracy in SVN took on the character of America’s own domestic agenda. However, this monograph omits McDougall’s global meliorism as a policy motivation, owing to the factual inaccuracies regarding the Strategic Hamlet program and a disjointed treatment of CORDS in *Promised Land, Crusader State*.

<sup>168</sup>McDougall, 163.

<sup>169</sup>Graham A. Cosmas, *U.S. Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation 1962 to 1967* (Washington, DC: US Army Center for Military History, 2006), 483.

<sup>170</sup>Hoang, 134; Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), 87-89. In *On Strategy*, Harry Summers makes a compelling argument that the strategy itself was wrong, and that instead of countering insurgent forces in SVN the US should have primarily oriented on military action against the DRV. However, this is a thin view of the historical strategic context at the outset of American commitment in 1954, since the recent experience in Korea created an overriding avoidance of Chinese or Soviet introduction to the conflict. It also discounts the fact that the NLF did not see itself as beholden to Hanoi, nor did it rely on the DRV for most of its resources.

The tactical actions in Vietnam took on a similarly disjointed characteristic, although it would be incorrect to assert that military security actions were completely divorced from the realities of pacification efforts. Unlike the *dau tranh* model though, they remained separate actions without a unifying logic. This reflected the Army's operational art doctrine at the time MACV was established:

[t]he nature of the political situation at any time may require employment of armed forces in wars of limited objective. In such cases, the objective ordinarily will be the destruction of the aggressor forces and the restoration of the political territorial integrity of the friendly nation.<sup>171</sup>

The dissonance in this approach lies between the nature of "aggressor forces" since MACV visualized an idealized form of conventional warfare to maximize the Army's capabilities, and the nature of "restoration of the political territorial integrity" since the Diem regime was only marginally capable of effective governance. A focus on the destruction of an elusive enemy, coupled with a presumed dominance in conventional warfare, led Westmoreland to employ an approach of attrition. This is illustrated in the oft-cited discussion between an American and a NVA colonel during negotiations in 1975, in which the American colonel asserted that the NVA never defeated them on the battlefield. The NVA colonel pondered this, and presciently responded that this was true but irrelevant.<sup>172</sup>

Westmoreland contended that these large-scale search and destroy operations were erroneously portrayed in the media as a strategy instead of a tactic, which is a fair assessment.<sup>173</sup> However, he held the notion that rural areas did not hold intrinsic value except when the enemy was physically there, instead of understanding that their value lies in the ability to gird the

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<sup>171</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-5* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1954), 6.

<sup>172</sup>Summers, 1.

<sup>173</sup>William C. Westmoreland, "A Military War of Attrition" in *The Lessons of Vietnam*, ed. W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson Frizzell (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, 1977), 64.

population and resources thereby denying them to the VC.<sup>174</sup> Hence, the approaches of attrition and pacification were practically separate affairs for much of the war. MACV still saw pacification only as a corollary to military operations through 1967, and still discounted it in 1968 as a reason for VC village-level losses in rural areas. Intelligence analysts incorrectly attributed VC losses to the effectiveness of search and destroy operations, the internal displacement of over 2 million Vietnamese within SVN, and the VC's transition to main force operations.<sup>175</sup> Pacification was always a dominant element in policy but not in practice, evidenced by the low amount of American resources directly allocated in comparison to offensive military action.<sup>176</sup> Just prior to the NLF's Tet Offensive in January 1968, MACV established the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program to weight pacification efforts. Westmoreland and former presidential advisor Robert Komer melded the existing Office of Civil Operations and the MACV Revolutionary Support Directorate into one organization.<sup>177</sup> In the aftermath of extreme VC losses in the Tet Offensive, President Thieu initiated the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) in order to exploit the opportunity afforded counterinsurgent forces. This was not a new concept, but an acceleration of resources guided by CORDS's

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<sup>174</sup>Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 150-151.

<sup>175</sup>Komer, 142; Headquarters, US Military Assistance Command - Vietnam, *Viet Cong Loss of Population Control Evidence from Captured Documents* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive, 1968).

<sup>176</sup>Komer, 147.

<sup>177</sup>Richard Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 82, 87-92. Komer and General Creighton Abrams took positions as deputies for pacification and ARVN forces, respectively. Specifically, Westmoreland delegated command authority for pacification efforts to Komer, but as a civilian he was deliberately not a Deputy Commander. CORDS did not run through military unit chain-of-commands below Corps level, but instead via GVN administrative divisions down to the district level. This was an effort to prevent meddling by tactical military leaders as seen in Operation CEDAR FALLS. CORDS had civilian and military supervisor-subordinate roles and vice versa, to include ratings. It maintained the same six departments as the OCO (Refugees, Psychological Operations, New Life Development, Revolutionary Directorate Cadre, the *Cheu Hoi* program for Communist defectors, and Public Safety), plus four additional administrative departments (Management Support, Research and Analysis, Plans, and Reports and Evaluations).

contentious Hamlet Evaluation System.<sup>178</sup> The effect of the APC is that Communist forces began to rely on specific resources from the Ho Chi Minh Trail for the first time in the war, and the NLF ordered some VC forces to return to Phase I operations.<sup>179</sup>

One possible conduit to link the security line of operation and the pacification line of effort was through local security, the Territorial Forces.<sup>180</sup> Local security formed three rings: American and ARVN forces fighting Communists outside of populated centers, RF elements fighting smaller units to keep them from infiltrating towns and villages, and the PF or police units countering Communist infiltration within the villages.<sup>181</sup> The handbook for American advisors stressed the advantages of a locally raised security force because they understood local political

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<sup>178</sup>Eric Bergerud, *The Dynamics of Defeat: the Vietnam War in Hau Nghia Province* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 223; Vincent Davis, writing to John Paul Vann as cited in Sheehan, 697; Vietnam II Panel Discussion, US Army Command and General Staff College Art of War Scholars Seminar, 18 January 2011, Fort Leavenworth, KS. The Hamlet Evaluation System attempted to quantitatively rate the qualitative indicators of pacification's progress at the lowest level. Military veterans of CORDS politely describe it as "tedious," or derisively as the "body count for pacification."

<sup>179</sup>Bergerud, 223, 224, 226, 234, 237, 246; Tran, 183; Ngo, 94; Summers, 96-97. The GVN and ARVN leadership saw the APC as the only effective way to meet the communist organizations head-on in accordance with American policies and goals. These measures were essentially coercive; only designed to provide a military presence in contested hamlets. CORDS viewed APC as the most successful GVN program to date, and VC-controlled hamlets dropped from 16.4% in January 1968 to 2.8% by December 1969. It also forced American and Vietnamese counterparts to align their effort, but American soldiers still exhibited distrust for ARVN. The APC also unwittingly masked the fact that the GVN was not stronger; the VC was just significantly weaker after the Tet Offensive. Thus, APC ensured that the real losers of the Tet Offensive was the VC, since it ensured the eventual victory would be dominated by cadres from the DRV.

<sup>180</sup>Vietnam Veteran, Interview BA030 by Aaron Kaufman and Dustin Mitchell, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 24 February 2011; Vietnam II Panel Discussion, US Army Command and General Staff College Art of War Scholars Seminar, 18 January 2011, Fort Leavenworth, KS; Krepinevich, 173-175. Earlier attempts to establish effective local security forces included Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG). CAPs began as a test program in the I Corps area, utilizing Marine elements to live at the village level in an attempt to destroy VC support networks, protect the population, organize local intelligence nets, and train the Popular Force. Unfortunately, Marine leaders failed to arrange CAPs in critical areas akin to the 'oil spot' principle, and Army leaders successfully cast this as a do-nothing approach. CIDG elements, advised (and sometimes led by) American Special Forces advisors, operated in remote areas of operation in the central highlands to secure the population against VC infiltration. As such, they did not always have organic support capabilities and consequently served a limited, but successful role.

<sup>181</sup>Jesse Faugstad, "No Simple Solution," *Military Review* (July-August 2010): 34-35.

context, social conflicts, and terrain.<sup>182</sup> However, local security failed to unify the logic of attrition and pacification due to their lack of support, and the presence of an American unit remained the best correlation to security, as evidenced in the Tet Offensive.<sup>183</sup>

Ironically, *Vietnamization* was the only approach which effectively unified attrition and pacification.<sup>184</sup> On the heels of the APC and successful counter-offensive of 1969, President Johnson deliberately countered Westmoreland's advice to launch a large-scale conventional counteroffensive, with Westmoreland claiming that Johnson "ignored the maxim that when the enemy is hurting, you don't diminish the pressure, you increase it."<sup>185</sup> The nuance that Westmoreland missed was that *Vietnamization* sought to increase pressure indirectly through an improved ARVN and pacification. General Creighton Abrams succeeded him as the MACV commander and described *Vietnamization* in three phases: the transition of ground combat to ARVN, increasing their capabilities for self-defense, and reducing American presence to assume a strictly advisory role.<sup>186</sup> For the first time, the effort in SVN oriented on protecting the population from Communist subversion rather than the destruction of the enemy force itself.<sup>187</sup> *Vietnamization* sought to serve as a unifying logic for all lines of effort in SVN, but it ultimately failed owing to poor execution and political constraints.<sup>188</sup> Some ARVN leaders recalled that the

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<sup>182</sup>Headquarters United States Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, *RF-PF Handbook for Advisors* (Saigon: United States Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, 1969), 6.

<sup>183</sup>Faugstad, 39, 41.

<sup>184</sup>Graham A. Cosmas, *U.S. Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal 1968 to 1973* (Washington, DC: US Army Center for Military History, 2006), 128-139. Although this was an attempt to arrange tactical actions, contemporary literature alternatively described it as the One War Strategy.

<sup>185</sup>Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 334.

<sup>186</sup>James Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 21.

<sup>187</sup>Bergerud, 223, 241.

<sup>188</sup>Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations - U.S. Department of Defense, *A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam, vol I* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1966), 1-2; Komer, 142. *Vietnamization* was not the first initiative to unify these lines of effort. The March 1966 report "A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam"

process actually looked more like the *Americanization* of ARVN since it integrated US military equipment without an equal focus on doctrine, organization, or training to utilize it. When the American congress cut funding for ARVN advisory in response to the untenable political climate on the homefront, the psychological effect on the GVN and military leaders was even more deleterious than the material deficit.<sup>189</sup>

## Analysis

Ultimately, these operational approaches failed to disrupt the Communists' logic of violence. In the strictest of interpretations, they were not operational approaches at all but rather attempts to achieve strategic success through a cumulative effect of tactical success. Certainly political constraints influenced this, but the chief failure was the inability of MACV to defeat armed *dau tranh* and political *dau tranh* simultaneously. Sir Robert Thompson wrote in 1969 that the focus in SVN should be on creating an intelligence structure to defeat the VC support network. This was an attempt to break the unifying logic of protracted *dau tranh* warfare, reflected in his assertion that “[i]n a People's Revolutionary War, if you are not winning you are losing, because the enemy can always sit out a stalemate without making concessions.”<sup>190</sup>

National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger added that “[t]he guerrilla wins if he does not lose.

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(awkwardly abbreviated as PROVN) asserted that “Victory can only be achieved through bringing the individual Vietnamese, typically a rural peasant, to support willingly the Government of South Vietnam. The critical actions are those that occur at the village, district and provincial levels. This is where the war must be fought; this is where that war and the object which lies beyond it must be won.” It offered six recommendations: Concentrate operations at the provincial level, give rural construction primacy among joint US-ARVN efforts, authorize direct involvement of US officials in local GVN affairs, designate the US ambassador as the sole manager of all US activities, direct the sole manager to develop a single unified plan, and re-affirm to the world the strategic objective of a free and independent non-communist SVN. Ultimately, MACV suppressed the report but several of the themes were satisfied with CORDS.

<sup>189</sup>Hoang, 136; Willbanks, 285-286. Willbanks offers four conclusions on *Vietnamization*: it should have started earlier, earlier efforts should have focused on developing ARVN to counter the Communist subversion threat, later efforts towards a conventional ARVN should have focused on collective fire and maneuver skills instead of American technology and firepower, and the GVN should have addressed internal issues like corruption and poor leadership.

<sup>190</sup>Westmoreland, “A Military War of Attrition,” 70; Briggs, 250.



The conventional army loses if it does not win.”<sup>191</sup> MACV fundamentally failed to disrupt this logic and actually bolstered it by pursuing a strategy of attrition. By engaging in disjointed search and destroy missions throughout the earlier phases of the war, the VC were never isolated from their base of support and simply had to survive to win.<sup>192</sup> MACV nominally disrupted the logic when the VC organization came unglued in the aftermath of the failed Tet Offensive, and the GVN consolidated these gains with the APC and RF improvements. Once these were in place, the NVA resorted to limited subversion to enable conventional campaigns in 1972 and 1975. This is perhaps the most ironic feature of the American experience in Vietnam; in that once the logic for violence was temporarily disrupted the enemy adapted a new logic which transitioned the conflict almost exclusively into regular warfare. The Communists no longer sought protraction, because they no longer needed American exhaustion.

The American effort also adopted an ill-suited uniform approach to hybrid warfare in SVN. The repetitive nature of search and destroy operations, harassment and interdiction fires, and aerial sorties seemed ideally suited to central statistical management.<sup>193</sup> This appetite for analysis led to a fruitless effort to create an independent variable for success in a complex environment. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara employed over 100 social scientists in an attempt to quantitatively model SVN on a computer and simulate national-level behavior, once dismissing a qualitative assessment by saying “[w]here is your data? Give me something I can put into the computer. Don't give me your poetry.”<sup>194</sup> This trend towards linearization and uniform solutions extended to MACV and ARVN leaders’ understanding of the hybrid threat. They viewed the Communist threat as already in a Maoist Phase III when regular US troops arrived in

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<sup>191</sup>Henry Kissinger, “The Vietnam Negotiations.” *Foreign Affairs* 47, no. 2 (January 1969): 214.

<sup>192</sup>Krepinevich, 170-171.

<sup>193</sup>Bousquet, 154.

<sup>194</sup>*Ibid.*, 121.

1965, instead of considering the regional aspects of the threat as parts of a whole.

Westmoreland's description of COSVN as a single unified command which directed the NLF also made it convenient to mirror image it as a conventional military headquarters.<sup>195</sup>

The overly linearized approach to separate attrition and pacification efforts is perhaps best understood through the metric of success, the body count. Aggregate Communist losses were carefully tabulated in an attempt to reach a conceptual *crossover point* at which attrition in SVN would exceed what the Communists could replace via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. However, this was an ill-framed concept since it assumed that increased forces and firepower would proportionately increase the body count, and that the VC and NVA were reliant on the DRV for resources. By 1966, VC requirements from outside of SVN were only 12 tons per day.<sup>196</sup> MACV refused to acknowledge these reports from national-level assets, along with journalist Bernard Fall's 1964 observation that the VC operation inside SVN was largely self-sufficient.<sup>197</sup> But after the Tet Offensive, MACV realized that warfare still had not reached a *crossover point* because the NVA (and the remaining VC) could control the tempo of fighting. Search and destroy operations were an inefficient way to gain and maintain contact.<sup>198</sup> In this instance, the adaptive nature of the hybrid threat emerges; both COSVN and the NLF ironically realized that they could reach their strategic aim of exhausting the American military and public with steady attrition as they

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<sup>195</sup>Westmoreland, "A Military War of Attrition," 62; *A Soldier Reports*, 55-57; Hoang, 4.

<sup>196</sup>Krepinevich, 168; Race, 198. All else was produced locally and infiltration from the north was negligible compared to locally-raised forces.

<sup>197</sup>Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 347; Van, 9-10; PAVN Officer, "Interview on the Intensified Military Effort, 1963 - 1964" in *A Vietnam War Reader*, ed. Michael H. Hunt (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 64-65. Other sources indicate a higher ratio of troops from the north, but still see a preponderance of recruitment from SVN. The debrief of a NVA officer in 1964 shows a clear pattern of replacing losses in liberated areas: "[e]ven if Hanoi stopped sending arms, supplies, and men to the Front, the Front would still be able to win because the Front responds to the aspirations of the people."

<sup>198</sup>Carter Malkasian, *A History of Modern Wars of Attrition* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 192.

embarked on increased pacification operations.<sup>199</sup> While American units considered operational efficiency to be a mixture of gross eliminations and linear ratios of “exchange” and “contact success,”<sup>200</sup> a COSVN planning committee displayed a much better understanding of this aspect in hybrid warfare:

While considering the situation, we should be flexible and avoid two erroneous inclinations. We should not adopt all principles too rigidly and neglect the evolution of the situation and the main, basic purposes of the Party; nor should we mix strategic policy with basic policy.<sup>201</sup>

Finally, the American effort failed to fuse tactical actions to strategic aims within the context that gave rise to a hybrid threat. This effort to amass quantitative data lacked any complimentary qualitative assessment to give it context, hence the actions this data prompted were in a fundamentally different frame of reference. By design, these systems were self-referential and therefore the context of social and political assemblages in SVN’s village-level struggle was completely alien to MACV.<sup>202</sup> In appreciation of this, one American officer recalled that “[i]n sum, we were not able to break into another culture and into the communist organization.”<sup>203</sup> Another break in context was rooted in the entire nature of warfare in Indochina. Communist leaders saw the revolutionary movement as a social progress with communal themes, while the GVN only saw it as a military process with nationalistic themes.<sup>204</sup> British advisor Sir Robert Thompson recognized in 1969 that adding resources to the GVN’s military process

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<sup>199</sup>Current Affairs Committee C69, *PLAF Assessment - Strategy* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive, 1969), 36-38; Ninth COSVN Conference, “Resolution on a Shifting Strategy” in *A Vietnam War Reader*, ed. Michael H. Hunt (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 105; Briggs, 244. This metric also failed to account for the fact that the American people would not accept a ratio which equated the lives of their sons with the lives of the enemy.

<sup>200</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Sharpening the Combat Edge: The Use of Analysis to Reinforce Military Judgment* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1974), 157-159.

<sup>201</sup>Standing Committee of A26, 3.

<sup>202</sup>Bousquet, 159.

<sup>203</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Sharpening the Combat Edge: The Use of Analysis to Reinforce Military Judgment*, 162.

<sup>204</sup>Race, 141, 179-180.

instead of bolstering the governance and development progress was akin to “doubling the effort to square the error.”<sup>205</sup> Arranging tactical actions only creates success when they can affect the adversary or their environment; independent search and destroy operations that are divorced from the context of a social and political struggle are the equivalent of re-arranging deck chairs on the *Titanic*.

## Conclusion

The preceding analysis should not paint a picture of doom and gloom over the canvas of hybrid warfare in SVN. By 1970, the combined forces of MACV and ARVN stood at a position of relative advantage, enabled by both the near-complete destruction of the VC as a viable force and a strengthened GVN. However, this was also when COSVN realized that the protracted conflict could still prevent the Americans from achieving termination criteria at a position of political advantage via a military advantage in SVN.<sup>206</sup> The NVA developed more regular warfare capacity for a conventional invasion, and increasingly used their irregular forces, means, and behaviors to enable this capability.<sup>207</sup>

The American military spent the post-Vietnam years institutionally wary of irregular warfare and counterinsurgency. If a theorist postulated the concept of hybrid warfare in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the Army may have institutionally avoided it as well. Then Iraq happened. As in SVN, they would spend years adapting and spending untold blood and treasure to fight a hybrid threat. This threat was like no other, and it required an operational approach like

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<sup>205</sup>Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*, 165. Apparently, Thompson recognized that complexity and non-summativative properties work both ways.

<sup>206</sup>Political Department, People’s Liberation Army, 16.

<sup>207</sup>Lewis Sorley, *Vietnam Chronicles: The Abrams Tapes 1968-1972* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2004), 376; Andrade, 147. Andrade refutes Krepinevich’s argument in *The Army and Vietnam* that a secured countryside would have withstood the NVA’s 1973 and 1975 campaigns; he illustrates that continued pacification would not have addressed “the enemy lurking in the shadows” (across the border) to sweep away these gains. This reflects Abrams’ earlier contention that “[y]ou just can’t conduct pacification in the face of an NVA division” no matter the standoff.

no other. However, in Iraq the Army would harness a more organizationally mature understanding of operational art, enabling this pathway to termination criteria at a position of advantage. In short, the Army would learn to charge the toreador instead of the bull.

## Operation Iraqi Freedom: The School of Piranhas

We're not playing together. But then again, we're not playing against each other either. It's like the Nature Channel. You don't see piranhas eating each other, do you?  
- *Rounders*, 1998<sup>208</sup>

Much in the way history views World War II as conventional warfare, it views Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as irregular warfare. Since this monograph considers hybrid warfare on a continuum instead of a distinct form of warfare in a series of discrete menu choices, the study of OIF through the lens of hybrid warfare may assist Hoffman's metaphoric attempt to break the pristine bins of Western categorization. Fundamentally, Iraq is one of those large gray spaces in between existing models. The model of an insurgency-counterinsurgency dynamic looks to be the correct framework for analysis at first blush, but this largely owes to the influence of the counterinsurgency doctrine which informed the ultimate operational approach. As such, it is bound to shape the way we view it in early attempts of qualitative historical analysis. However, it is fundamentally insufficient to separate the ground war of 2003 and the following stages of insurgency, terrorism, and communal conflict in Iraq. Likewise, it is insufficient to completely dismiss the episodic examples of regular warfare, no matter how infrequent they were. They are all profoundly interconnected. In contrast to a model of hybrid threat organization such as COSVN, the elements of the hybrid threat in Iraq were only harmonized by a common aim. In this way, the American Army in OIF faced a threat akin to the school of piranhas.

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<sup>208</sup>Matt Damon, *Rounders*, Directed by John Stahl, Santa Monica, CA: Miramax Films, 1998.

## The Context of Conflict in Iraq

Modern Iraq sits astride the fault lines between religiously distinct Shia and Sunni Muslims, as well as ethnically distinct Arab, Persian, and Kurdish populations.<sup>209</sup> At roughly 437,000 square kilometers, it is slightly larger than the state of California. The landscape is generally a vast desert, interrupted by fertile river valleys and rocky escarpments.<sup>210</sup> Demographically, the pre-war population of 24.6 million was roughly 60 percent Shia and 35 percent Sunni, with traces of Christian and other religious communities. Ethnically, the Arab population stood at an 80 percent majority, with a Kurdish minority of 15 percent and socially isolated communities of Turkomen, Assyrians, and other groups.<sup>211</sup> Consequently, most initial operational approaches were couched in terms of Shia and Sunni or Arab and Kurd models.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup>Johnson, *The Biggest Stick: The Employment of Artillery Units in Counterinsurgency*, 164-262. This section on *Context* draws heavily on the author's original work while researching the employment of artillery units in counterinsurgency operations. It is intended as a brief overview of the cultural, historical and strategic context, not an exhaustive treatment on the roots of conflict in Iraq.

<sup>210</sup>1st Infantry Division, *Soldier's Handbook to Iraq* (Wurzburg, GE: 1st Infantry Division, 2004), v. 1st Infantry Division issued this handbook to soldiers before deployments to Iraq in 2004. It is representative of handbooks developed internally by US Army units in the earlier years of the war. These handbooks are thick with background facts of Iraq and useful Arabic phrases, but neglect a thorough analysis of culture in Iraq.

<sup>211</sup>1st Infantry Division, v.; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8-9. Equally important is the demographic aspect of Iraqi society in terms of urban and rural populations. Iraq has many large and modern metropolitan centers, to include Baghdad at over 5.6 million residents, Mosul (in the north) and Basra (in the south) each have over 1 million inhabitants. Kurdish population centers in northern Iraq include Irbil (839,600), Kirkuk (728,800), and As Sulaymaniyah (643,200); predominately Shia Arab cities to the south include An Najaf (563,000), Karbala (549,700), and An Nasiriyah (535,100). Cities in the Sunni Arab heartland are considerably smaller: Fallujah and Ramadi in the Euphrates River Valley, and Balad, Samarra, Tikrit, and Bayji in Tigris River Valley.

<sup>212</sup>Interview BF020, Civilian Advisor to MNF-I, Interview by Richard Johnson and Aaron Kaufman, Boston, MA, 11 March 2011. Disaffected Shia exiles and nationalistic Kurds that influenced early US plans for civil re-development in Iraq drove this perception among strategists and planners. Arguably, urban Sunni and Shia nationalists had more in common than urban and rural Islamists from the same sect or ethnicity in 2003.

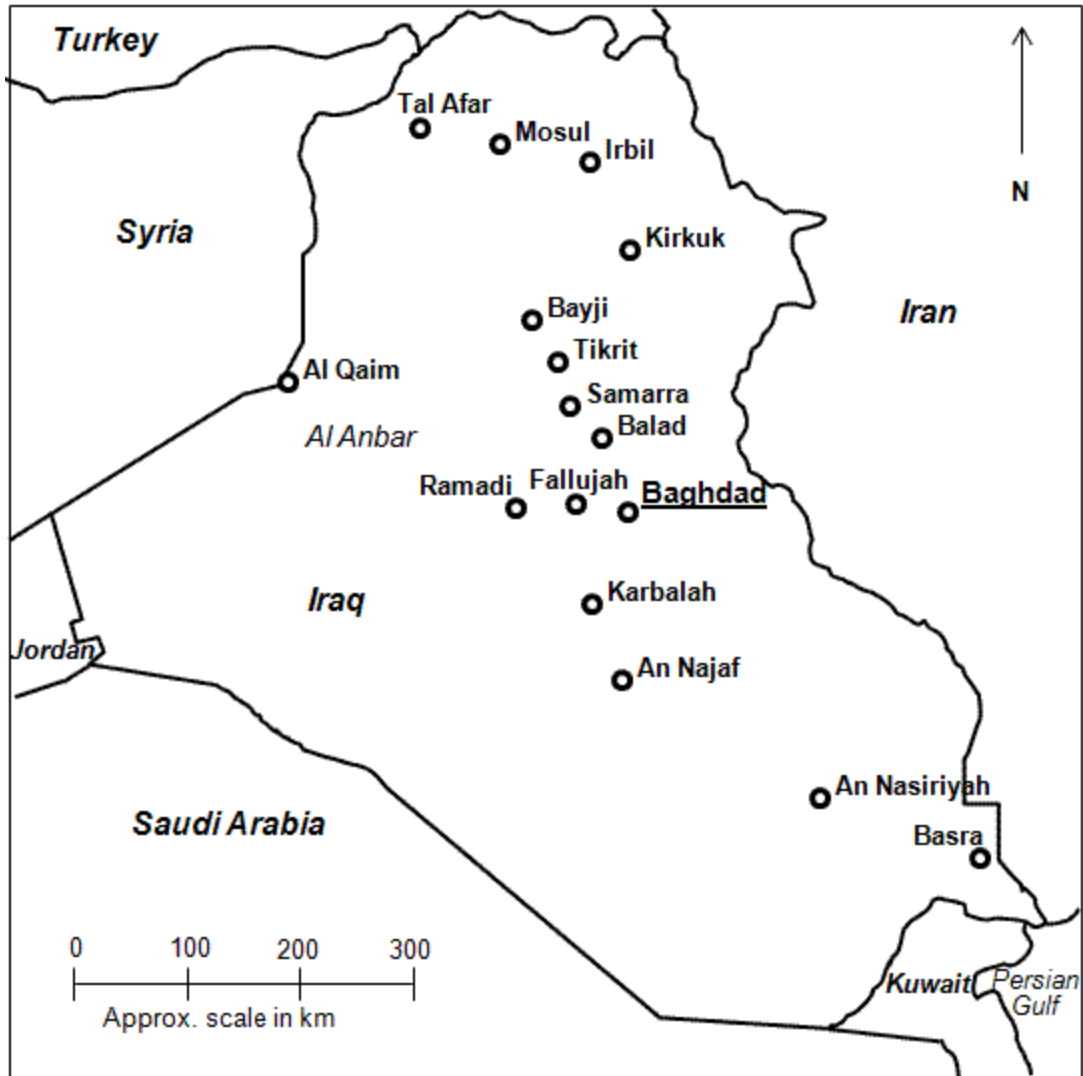


Figure 3: Iraq, 2003

American intervention in Iraq began in 1990 with Operation Desert Shield, followed by the ground invasion of Iraq in 1991.<sup>213</sup> After a decade of patrolling no-fly zones to protect Kurdish and Shia populations, US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz made a case for a pre-emptive regime change in Iraq almost immediately after the Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001.<sup>214</sup> The US secured a nominal international backing from the

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<sup>213</sup>Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco* (London: Penguin Press, 2007), 5-6. Critically, the Coalition force failed to destroy the core of the 80,000-strong Republican Guard during this campaign before terminating operations at a position of military advantage.

<sup>214</sup>Ricks, *Fiasco*, 13-15.

UN and formed a coalition of limited partners, eventually leading a multi-divisional ground offensive in March 2003.<sup>215</sup> Coalition forces took measures to avoid a perception of occupation, but they were the only form of security allowed in most areas immediately after the ground campaign culminated in the collapse of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime.<sup>216</sup>

## **The Hybrid Threat in Iraq: Passive Interconnection**

The complex organization of the hybrid threat in Iraq belied the Army's attempt to organize against a single yet amorphous enemy. As attacks rose dramatically during the summer of 2003, many analysts saw the threat in terms of a more cohesive quilt, but several commanders began to understand the patchwork nature: "we are fighting former regime-backed paramilitary groups, Iranian-based opposition, organized criminals and street thugs."<sup>217</sup> These formerly "mutually antagonistic" elements did not work together directly, except for in isolated instances. At least nine disparate organized groups concurrently emerged, and additional elements of tribal protection and criminality created a *passively* interconnected threat array.<sup>218</sup> RAND Corporation analysts John Mackinlay and Alison Al-Baddawy characterized this as a Federated Insurgency Complex, "the focal point of several different strands of violent energy....the product of different local, national, and international communities and subversive organizations."<sup>219</sup> The hybrid threat

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<sup>215</sup>Michael R. Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006). This is merely a summary of "The Ground War," which will be examined later as the first phase of hybrid warfare. One of the best sources for further research into this conventional campaign is Gordon and Trainor's comprehensive account and analysis.

<sup>216</sup>These measures included the prohibition from flying American flags or displaying any other overt signs of foreign power within direct view of the Iraqi population.

<sup>217</sup>Peter R. Mansoor, *Baghdad at Sunrise: A Brigade Commander's War in Iraq* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 356. At the time of this observation (June 2003), Colonel Mansoor was a brigade commander in eastern Baghdad.

<sup>218</sup>Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Insurgency in Iraq," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14, no. 3 (August 2003): 5-9. The notion of a "passive" interconnectedness is the author's own characterization.

<sup>219</sup>John Mackinlay and Alison Al-Baddawy, *Rethinking Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 58.



in Iraq was also adaptive, using its initial advantage in local perception and resources to develop lethal capabilities against militarily superior forces. This was particularly evident in Baghdad, where Shia-based groups adopted Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFPs) and sniper attacks against American forces.<sup>220</sup> Throughout the war, groups adapted punctuated lethal attacks that led to an American focus on individual force protection, making soldiers appear as “storm troopers” and vehicles appear as “urban submarines” while on patrol.<sup>221</sup> This effectively isolated the soldiers from the local population, once again giving the threat an advantage in their ability to penetrate the population.

Mixing regular and irregular means was also prevalent in Iraq, a further indicator of the adaptive nature of the threat. After the rapid advance of the initial land campaign by coalition forces, weapons were plentiful at many abandoned Iraqi Army bases. As some units approached, they discovered instances such as the one in Tikrit wherein a unit discovered thirty Iraqis openly looting weapons.<sup>222</sup> In a 2009 interview, one sheikh from Ramadi casually mentioned gaining 80 RPG’s and additional light machine guns from an unsecured base after meeting the coalition forces and telling them about it the day before.<sup>223</sup> The availability of small arms, indirect fires weapons and high explosives was another key ingredient in this petri dish for a hybrid threat: the enemy was bound only by its imagination to innovate complicated devices for coordinated attacks.

The hybrid threat in Iraq displayed a modicum of regular forces, but it was episodic at best. This may be the primary reason for a hesitation to view the “school of piranhas” as a hybrid threat, in that it nearly fails one of the most visible tests. However, this viewpoint predicated upon

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<sup>220</sup>Ricks, *The Gamble*, 172. Ricks cites the example of C/2-16 IN in Adamiyah.

<sup>221</sup>David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 137. At the time of his observations, Kilcullen was working as a counterinsurgency advisor to Petraeus.

<sup>222</sup>Gordon and Trainor, 447.

<sup>223</sup>Timothy S. McWilliams, *Al-Anbar Awakening: U.S. Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), 86.

the western martial tradition's concept of regular and irregular forces, not upon an eastern concept.<sup>224</sup> As such, the difference between regular and irregular forces' interactions in Iraq as compared to Vietnam or Lebanon is really a difference in degree, not a difference in kind. Although they never organized in hierarchical elements like VC main forces, disaffected professional military personnel acted in small but lethal ambushes, especially in Sunni strongholds close to former army bases such as Ramadi and Tikrit.<sup>225</sup> With smaller elements conducting similar tactics, it is harder to distinguish between regular and irregular forces unless one focuses on artificial externalities such as uniforms. Even so, regular and irregular forces worked synergistically as an aspect of warfare in Iraq during the initial campaign,<sup>226</sup> and in response to isolated clearing operations such as the ones in Fallujah.<sup>227</sup> But the question remains: why was there a tangible mix of hybrid means and behaviors, but only fleeting instances of hybrid forces? Most likely, it was because the initial campaign and overt clearance operations were the few times the threat had significant base areas and an opportunity to formalize the regular components' relationships. Since the mix of regular and irregular forces is the most

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<sup>224</sup>Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 172, 179. This is strikingly similar to the IDF's generalized preconception of an Arab enemy that pervaded the 2006 conflict in Lebanon, ignoring the fact that while Arab armies are historically less successful in regular campaigns, they have a decent record in irregular campaigns.

<sup>225</sup>Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 33.

<sup>226</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-16. The Hussein regime conceptually understood the value in an admixture of regular and irregular units, but did not implement them to sufficiently exhaust US forces indirectly. In spite of over 4,000 foreign fighters to complement the *Saddam Fedayeen*, they failed to stop (or even significantly delay) the approach to Baghdad.

<sup>227</sup>Carter Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq: May 2003-January 2010," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 290-291, 296; Matt M. Matthews, *Operation Al Fajr: A Study in Army and Marine Corps Joint Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 37, 45-46; Combat Studies Institute, *Eyewitness to War: The US Army in Operation Al Fajr, An Oral History* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006). The two battles of Fallujah (March - April 2004 and November - December 2004) included complex obstacle systems covered by fires, strongpoint defenses of 40 -50 fighters, and well-constructed fighting positions much like a contemporary US Army or Marine unit would defend urban terrain. For first-hand accounts of the regular warfare aspects of this engagement, see *Operation Al Fajr* and *Eyewitness to War*.

visible indicator of a hybrid threat, this is the primary reason most analyses overlook it and view the conflict through the lens of an insurgency-counterinsurgency dynamic.

## Hybrid Warfare in Iraq: Applying Kilcullen's Venn Diagram

This insurgency-counterinsurgency dynamic only addresses a portion of warfare in Iraq, albeit the vast majority.<sup>228</sup> However, it is fundamentally insufficient to explain the whole of the system with only a descriptive snapshot of a given space or time in the conflict. It is also an artificial distinction to separate aspects of warfare, and it is prone to errors if the cognitive boundaries are drawn incorrectly. Much in the same way an enemy can exploit physical unit boundaries when they are incorrectly overlaid on a high-speed avenue of approach, the adroit enemy can also exploit the seams between forms of conflict if a force task-organizes to fight them separately.<sup>229</sup> Additionally, it only addresses a certain set of population grievances which led to hybrid warfare, not the underlying reasons for protracted conflict.

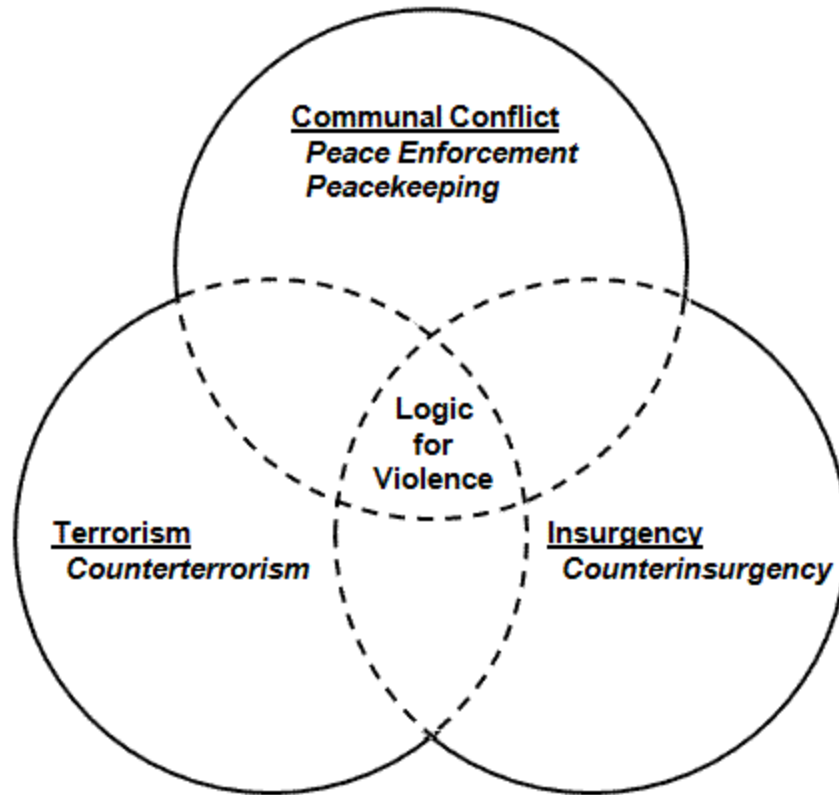
David Kilcullen's explanatory model for warfare in Iraq provides this critical insight, highlighting its nature as warfare across multiple domains of conflict. Insurgency, terrorism, and communal conflict formed the major domains of conflict created by the underlying dysfunction of collapsed national systems in need of rebuilding.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup>Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, xviii; Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), p. 3-14. Hashim points out that the insurgency began during a perceived foreign occupation, before the constitution of a legitimate host nation government. Interestingly, according to US Army counterinsurgency doctrine (developed specifically to address doctrinal shortcomings highlighted in OIF) this would categorize it as a "resistance movement" which would "tend to unite insurgents with different objectives and motivations."

<sup>229</sup>Hoffman, "The Hybrid Character of Modern Conflict," 46. As Hoffman observes: "It is not clear how we adapt our campaign planning...in Iraq we continue to separate warfighting from "population-centric counterinsurgency," or think of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency as two separate approaches."

<sup>230</sup>Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 148-151.



**The Underlying Dysfunction of Collapsed Institutions**  
***Nation-building***  
***Security Force Assistance***

Figure 4: One Model of Hybrid Warfare in Iraq<sup>231</sup>

Kilcullen proposes in *The Accidental Guerrilla*:

Iraq, then, is not a pure insurgency problem but a hybrid war involving what we might call “counterinsurgency plus.” .... Effective counterinsurgency is a *sine qua non* for success, but it is still only one component within a truly hybrid conflict.<sup>232</sup>

Although population-centric counterinsurgency approaches proved successful, they were not enough to deal with the broader issues. As a complex and constantly changing set of problems, interconnected forms of warfare amplified conflict in Iraq. An action to address a problem in one domain exacerbated conflict in another, often times unpredictably. As such, any analysis of OIF

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<sup>231</sup>Ibid., 150. This graphic is adapted from Kilcullen’s original work, to apply his graphical representation with the terminology and context herein.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid., 152. Emphasis added.

must bear in mind that there was not a definitive *enemy* in the traditional sense, since various groups alternately considered each other as enemies or partners based on the ecology of the conflict. Relative to coalition forces, it is somewhat more accurate to view the disparate insurgent or sectarian groups as *rivals*, each with their own brand of security and governance as the goal.

The clearest example of this is counterinsurgency actions intensifying communal conflict. Even in applying nuanced local solutions, they were framed in the aforementioned Sunni-Shia or Arab-Kurd model and subsequently fanned the flames of sectarian violence that was relatively unheard of in Iraq's recent past. As one senior political advisor to Multi-National Force - Iraq (MNF-I) described it, “[y]ou don’t have a history of large inter-communal violence. If you go into any society and collapse its institutions, what is the outcome?”<sup>233</sup> Terrorism exploited opportunities in this setting, with Al Qaeda and Quds force activities seeking to further their transnational extremist goals. Supra-domain combinations arose as well, enabled by the trend of increasing global Muslim awareness from Niger to The Philippines arising from new access to the internet and dedicated satellite media such as *Al-Arabiya* and *Al-Jazeera*.<sup>234</sup>

This was the synergistic effect which faced coalition forces as warfare increased in intensity from 2003 to 2007. Distinct from the deliberate aims of *dau tranh* in Vietnam, this was an inadvertent consequence of the school of piranhas. The sum effect of warfare in Iraq was considerably more than the constituent parts. This initially led to many commanders' frustrations as to why an army, which swiftly defeated a large conventional force, could not contend with a handful of insurgents. This was evidenced in the fact that early attempts to introduce a purely military or purely political solution in one problem set masked or negated gains in another problem set, reinforcing the notion that “[w]hile ‘war amongst the people is political,’ it is still a

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<sup>233</sup>BF020, Interview.

<sup>234</sup>Mackinlay and Al-Baddawy, 39-42.

kind of war.”<sup>235</sup> The experience of one unit’s attempt to mentor paramilitary forces and put an Iraqi face on operations in 2004 provides an illustration of the non-summative results in a profoundly interconnected environment:

The national police commandos that they brought up were very aggressive – we didn’t know it at the time, but the guys that were being brought in were getting after the Sunni population in Samarra and we thought it was great – but it really was the beginning of the sectarian violence. We didn’t recognize it at the time, but it was just an opportunity to whack Sunnis and they didn’t care if they were insurgents, terrorist or otherwise.<sup>236</sup>

Although the synergy of hybrid warfare was not a purposeful effort since it relied on the harmonization of disparate elements, the effort to protract warfare in order to exhaust American forces was a deliberate aim by all. With respect to coalition military forces in Iraq, rivals sought to make warfare so untenable and uneconomical that the psychological strain would be too much to bear in an American cost-benefit calculation.<sup>237</sup> Insurgents posited that they could outlast the coalition via slow attrition from continued attacks, since they perceived this was just another chapter to a long struggle in which coalition forces lacked resolve.<sup>238</sup> In the realm of communal violence, Shia groups in Baghdad tried to weaken the vulnerable Sunni population by mixing lethal extra-judicial killings and legitimate government actions. One Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Commander recalled that by these means, “[t]hey were trying to get the Sunnis to quit

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<sup>235</sup>Brian Burton and John Nagl, “Learning as We Go: the US Army Adapts to COIN in Iraq, July 2004-December 2006,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 19, no. 3 (September 2008): 323.

<sup>236</sup>BD010, Field Grade Officer, Interview by Benjamin Boardman and Dustin Mitchell, Fort Knox, KY, 14 March 2011. The respondent had direct knowledge of Operation Baton Rouge, a combined operation to clear insurgent and terrorist forces in Samarra.

<sup>237</sup>Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, 178-179.

<sup>238</sup>Carter Malkasian, “The Role of Perceptions and Political reform in Counterinsurgency: The Case of Western Iraq, 2004-2005,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 17, no 3 (September 2006): 379-385. Malkasian describes four events that reinforced this notion within Sunni groups (the April 2004 uprisings, the ceasefire in Operation Al Fajr I, the June 2004 transfer of sovereignty, and continued promises of a timetable-based US withdrawal), and five events that reversed the notion (suppressing JAM in Najaf, Operation Al Fajr II, partnered presence for security, successful national elections, and the adoption of a conditions-based withdrawal).

through a campaign of exhaustion.”<sup>239</sup> Sunni Arab groups such as AQI employed the same logic, economically starving Shia and Turkomen communities in the north to complement targeted killings, in a broad attempt to exhaust and realign the population.<sup>240</sup> With respect to the American homefront, rivals sought to increase casualties in Iraq “to the point of making the authority in charge of the occupation guilty before its own citizens.”<sup>241</sup> Ironically, the growing gap between the American public and the all-volunteer military made this much less likely than in Vietnam.<sup>242</sup>

### **The Operational Approach in OIF: Resolve and Opportunity**

Another benefit of this all-volunteer force is that many of the same commanders and planners would return to Iraq repeatedly during OIF. This directly enabled the adaptation of improved understanding and context, a collective intuition that in turn created refined tactics and approaches to the complex environment. While this study strives to avoid a narrative of early villains yielding to later heroes in OIF, the marked improvements over time are undeniable.

As with the Vietnam War, strategic context framed operations and the characteristics of hybrid warfare. In the incipient phases of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), President George W. Bush augmented the grand policy traditions of containment through deterrence with the option of pre-emption.<sup>243</sup> In this manner, the initial charter for OIF was running out politically, prompting the Baker-Hamilton Commission’s report to Congress in the summer of 2006.

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<sup>239</sup>BH020, Field Grade Officer, Interview by Mark Battjes, Ben Boardman, Robert Green, Richard Johnson, Aaron Kaufman, Dustin Mitchell, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, Washington, DC, 21 March 2011.

<sup>240</sup>BH070, Iraqi Mayor, Interview by Mark Battjes and Robert Green, Washington, DC, 25 March 2011. This mayor had direct knowledge of these efforts in Tal Afar.

<sup>241</sup>Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, 179.

<sup>242</sup>BF010, Former Army Officer, Interview by Richard Johnson and Aaron Kaufman, Boston, MA, 11 March 2011.

<sup>243</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 86; BF010, Former Army Officer, Interview by Richard Johnson and Aaron Kaufman, Boston, MA, 11 March 2011. This strategic analyst (with experience as an Army officer) provided the following insight in 2011: “The purpose of the GWOT when it began, to my mind, was

Until then, General George Casey's Transition Bridging Strategy personified the operational approach.<sup>244</sup> This approach used the logic of transitioning Iraqi security responsibility and provincial control as capabilities matured. As such, coalition forces would retreat to larger Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). Many commanders expressed this with the phrase "as we stand down, they stand up."<sup>245</sup> Consequently, Casey directed the establishment of *transition* as a separate line of effort rather than as a unifying logic, against the advice of some of his staff.<sup>246</sup> With tactical units stressed to leave urban areas for remote FOBs, there was not an adequate provision for those units who did not have a competent Iraqi counterpart yet.<sup>247</sup> One officer remarked that this was a flawed operational construct, in that "[w]e were always six months from leaving Iraq."<sup>248</sup> Communal violence and terrorist actions rose considerably in 2006, with killings peaking at about 125 per night in the *amanat* of Baghdad alone.<sup>249</sup> Even in the face of such

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informed by a conviction, an honestly held conviction by people in the Bush administration, that the only way to really guarantee there wouldn't be another 9/11 was to fix the dysfunction of the Islamic World; to transform the Islamic World, and therefore remove those conditions giving rise to *jihadism*."

<sup>244</sup>Ricardo Sanchez, *Wiser in Battle: A Soldier's Story* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 444-446; Burton and Nagl, 304, 306; Ricks, *Fiasco*, 173; George Packer, "The Lesson of Tal Afar," *The New Yorker* 82, no. 8 (10 April, 2006), [www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/04/10/060410fa\\_fact2](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/04/10/060410fa_fact2) (accessed 13 May 2011); Peter Chiarelli and Patrick Michaelis, "The Requirements for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review* 85, no. 4 (July-August 2005): 4. Through 2004, there was effectively no operational approach in Iraq. There was no link between the civil reconstruction effort at the Coalition Provisional Authority and the military headquarters, CJTF-7. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez did not have a published campaign plan during his command, nor did he provide the capacity to guide unified action. Sanchez claims that CENTCOM did not enact a plan for reconstruction in Iraq, and that he was initially unaware the plan even existed. Given this, and the fact that Army units still held a conventional mindset to win large-scale maneuver wars, many general officers doubt any commander could have done well.

<sup>245</sup>BA010, Brigade Commander, Interview by Richard Johnson and Thomas Walton, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 22 February 2011.

<sup>246</sup>BI020, Battle Group Commander, Interview by Aaron Kaufman and Thomas Walton, United Kingdom, 31 March 2011. The respondent augmented the MNF-I staff at the time.

<sup>247</sup>BA010, Brigade Commander, Interview by Richard Johnson and Thomas Walton, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 22 February 2011.

<sup>248</sup>BH030, Iraq Veterans Panel, Interview by Mark Battjes, Robert Green, Aaron Kaufman, and Dustin Mitchell, Washington, DC, 22 March 2011.

<sup>249</sup>Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 124, 126.



contradictions, Casey's command and CENTCOM continued to focus on operational disengagement via transition. One strategic plans officer recalls:

In 2006, after I went and spent time with 3ACR, I was on General Abizaid's staff. The CENTCOM planning assumption was that we were in a lockstep march from 20 to 10 Brigades by 2006. I don't know if you remember but 2/1 AD wound up being off-ramped and went to Kuwait, and 2/1 ID came in behind them. When things were at their worst in Iraq in 2006, the CENTCOM commander was off-ramping brigades.<sup>250</sup>

Within risk lies opportunity, even if it is thickly veiled. Unlike the Vietnam War, the strategic context in 2006 would avail just such an opportunity, but it required American forces to fundamentally reframe the operational approach. The Baker-Hamilton report advocated a conditions-based withdrawal relying on milestones for Iraqi national reconciliation, security and governance.<sup>251</sup> In response, the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI) developed a competing option for continued operations in Iraq, opening with the premise that “[v]ictory is still an option in Iraq.”<sup>252</sup> Dr. Frederick Kagan led the AEI effort to develop an alternative to the findings in the Baker-Hamilton Commission's report, which benefitted from both the official and unofficial involvement of military officers with experience in Tal Afar. Additionally, Kagan leveraged a personal relationship with retired General Jack Keane, who also mentored then-General David Petraeus and then-Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno.<sup>253</sup> In striking detail, the

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<sup>250</sup>BH030, Interview. The units that this respondent refers to are: the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 2nd BCT of the 1st Armored Division, and the 2nd BCT of the 1st Infantry Division, respectively.

<sup>251</sup>Baker-Hamilton Commission, *Iraq Study Group Report: Gravel Edition* (Washington, DC: Filiquarian Publishing, 2006), 9, 52, 55, 71, 72-76. Commonly known as the ‘Iraq Study Group,’ this report recommended a mix of an external approach to leverage regional powers like Syria and Iran (to responsibly encourage disaffected groups to reconcile), and an internal approach to make security force assistance the primary mission of American forces until withdrawal. Significantly, the report did not allow for additional troops since it saw their presence as the “direct cause for violence in Iraq.”

<sup>252</sup>Frederick W. Kagan, *Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2006), 1

<sup>253</sup>Ricks, *The Gamble*, 95-97. Keane's unofficial relationship with Petraeus and Odierno was unknown to Kagan at the time. Fortuitously, Odierno was already departing to take command of Multi-National Corps - Iraq, and Petraeus would soon follow to take command of the higher echelon, Multi-National Force - Iraq.

group visualized Baghdad as the decisive effort in Iraq with an operational approach which required: balancing improved Iraqi Security Forces with protecting the population, clearing Sunni and mixed-sect neighborhoods, maintaining security to reconstitute governance and services, supporting the Iraqi central government's ability to exercise power, and a surge of seven army brigades to support this expanded approach.<sup>254</sup>

Simultaneously, Odierno arrived in Iraq to take command of Multi-National Corps - Iraq (MNC-I). Within the first 60 days, he halted the effort to retreat to the large remote FOBs, in clear opposition to Casey's Transition Bridging Strategy. Significantly, Odierno operationalized AEI's approach by adding a focus on securing Shia neighborhoods against Sunni AQI-affiliated networks, and placing an equal emphasis on the Baghdad belts.<sup>255</sup> In this, Odierno provided the first elucidation of an operational approach to the complex warfare in Iraq, colloquially known as *The Surge*:

[Odierno] and Colonel Jim Hickey figured out that it was all about locating the enemy's safe havens and sanctuaries and disrupting those...that's what the battle of the belts was all about. I don't think anyone had that concept. Although I think Colonel McMaster had an appropriate solution, it was not applied on a broad scale and outside of a few isolated examples; no one really had a good solution or way ahead. I thought the contribution that MNC-I made was instrumental. Even with [Petraeus]'s new guidance, I don't think we would have been successful if we would not have had [Odierno]'s operational concept.<sup>256</sup>

Similarly, Petraeus worked to ensure there was a sound linkage between the operational approach and the strategic endstate from his command at MNF-I. He was able to place OIF in a

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<sup>254</sup>Kagan, 1. After vetting the concepts and operational feasibility of the plan with then-Colonel H.R. McMaster and some of his veterans of the Tal Afar campaign, it was refined by a council of colonels in the Pentagon. AEI presented the concept to several congressional representatives, then President Bush reviewed the resulting proposal, enacting the strategy in January 2007.

<sup>255</sup>Ricks, *The Gamble*, Appendix B, Appendix C. *The Gamble* illustrates this contrast between the two approaches: Appendix B contains the brief Odierno received upon arrival in December 2006, and Appendix C contains Odierno's inbrief to Petraeus, dated 8 February 2007. When considered sequentially along with AEI's original concept in *Choosing Victory*, the transformation of the approach in Iraq takes shape.

<sup>256</sup>BH030, Interview. By virtue of his position on the MNF-I staff at the time, this respondent on the panel had direct knowledge of this planning effort. For clarity, the author substituted appropriate surnames for the callsigns and nicknames in the respondent's original quote.

larger regional context, to not only disrupt the transnational accelerants of instability, but to also fundamentally link Iraq back to its Arab neighbors. This is in stark contrast to the previous approach, which treated the campaign in isolation.<sup>257</sup> Concurrently, the tactical acumen of coalition and ISF commanders continued their steady adaptation. Intuition gained through multiple experiences in Iraq, unifying guidance, and updated doctrine all contributed to the increased capability to employ nuanced, coherent local measures for security and governance.<sup>258</sup>

However, it would be incorrect to solely attribute success in OIF to the actions of the security force itself. American forces and their ISF counterparts did not just ply the approach of *The Surge* against a complex background of varied conflict and confusing social structures; they were one and the same. Owing to the complex nature of hybrid warfare, all actors are interconnected through feedback and dynamic responses. As such, the population played at least as large a role in pulling Iraqi society back from the precipice of collapse. Two themes illustrate this best: the exhaustion of communal conflict and the reconciliation of extremist support bases.

By the time the additional resources and a unifying vision for *The Surge* kicked in, it was clear that the Shia had prevailed in the communal conflict in Baghdad, effectively leaving the Sunnis to question their role in the new Iraq.<sup>259</sup> From this position of disadvantage, Baghdad's

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<sup>257</sup>Ibid. This respondent had direct knowledge of Petraeus' efforts, owing to his experience in the MNF-I Initiatives Group.

<sup>258</sup>BA070, Battery Commander, Interview by Richard Johnson and Thomas Walton, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 24 February 2011; BA010, Interview. Several measures influenced this, primarily the organizational increase in tactical commanders' experience, but also the advent of an in-country repository for counterinsurgency adaptation and the application of refined doctrine. The Taji COIN Center provided a unique means of harmonizing operations, since all incoming units studied the commanders' intents from multiple levels of the counterinsurgency effort. One commander said that since he understood these intents, he could adapt methods to a changing environment in order to obtain that desired endstate within his area. Doctrine encapsulated in Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* was perhaps the largest institutional effect, since it provided a common concept and lexicon for all deploying forces and augmentees. However, this was more evolution than a revolution, as many practitioners in Iraq held the view that this doctrine simply distilled practices and concepts that were already widely in use when it was published in 2006.

<sup>259</sup>BH020, Interview.

Sunnis relied increasingly on AQI or other *takfiri* elements for security.<sup>260</sup> Almost concurrently, Sunnis in Al Anbar province to the west actively rejected AQI's attempts to consolidate power and over-extend their influence into the population's daily lives.<sup>261</sup> In what would come to be colloquially known as *The Awakening*, then-Colonel Sean MacFarland and his Iraqi counterparts visualized operations that isolated insurgents to deny them sanctuary by: building the ISF through reconciled fighters, clearing and building combined combat outposts among the population, and engaging local leaders to determine which ones had the most local respect.<sup>262</sup> This successful integration of tribal forces into a security framework in Ramadi proved that Iraqis could remain armed to target the coalition's rivals and not descend into chaos.<sup>263</sup> An officer noted that it was like a wave of Sunni moderation emanating from Al Anbar, one which local commanders could exploit in Baghdad and the belts.<sup>264</sup>

Taken as a whole, the system engendered by *The Surge* begins to look like a list of ingredients: Petraeus and MNF-I's ability to unify effort in strategic context, Odierno and MNC-I's operational approach and focus on a spatially decisive action, the promulgation of refined

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<sup>260</sup>Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 126-127.

<sup>261</sup>Sean MacFarland and Neil Smith, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review* (March-April 2008): 42; BH040, Afghanistan Veterans Panel, Interview by Richard Johnson, Aaron Kaufman, Nathan Springer, and Thomas Walton, Washington, DC, 24 March 2011; Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq: May 2003-January 2010," 303; McWilliams, 91. AQI viewed Ramadi as the future capital of its caliphate in Iraq and enjoyed relative freedom of movement in the area, making it almost exclusively denied terrain in the eyes of coalition forces. However, AQI had already worn out its welcome by late 2005, attempting to take over the lucrative smuggling routes to the west. One of the first groups (the Abu Issa tribe) to actively oppose them took its cue from these earlier efforts against AQI in Al Qaim (by the Abu Mahal tribe).

<sup>262</sup>MacFarland and Smith, 43; William Doyle, *A Soldier's Dream: Captain Travis Patrinquin and the Awakening of Iraq* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2011), 200-206. One factor that enabled this was the leeway given to an Army unit serving under a Marine headquarters, corroborated in interview with Interview BA010 (the respondent had direct knowledge of the planning and conduct of these operations in Ramadi).

<sup>263</sup>Panel discussion during US Army Command and General Staff College Art of War Scholars Seminar, Iraq Session, 3 February 2011, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>264</sup>BC030, Battalion Commander; Interview by Benjamin Boardman and Richard Johnson, Fort Bragg, NC, 1 March 2011. The respondent operated in the Baghdad belts during this "wave of moderation" emanating from the west.

security and development tactics, reconciliation techniques from *The Awakening* and operations in Ramadi, shape-clear-hold-build techniques from operations in Tal Afar, and finally the combat power to achieve it all.

## Analysis

The operational approach in Iraq evolved with successive attempts to properly frame the complex environment, and eventually disrupted the hybrid threat's logic and form of violence. To bring in the familiar metaphor from our previous Vietnam case study, early attempts to address violence targeted the cape, not the toreador. Only through the purposeful application of improved intuition did the coalition learn to leverage the interconnected nature of conflict in Iraq, as a bull might become aware of the entire arena. Coalition forces benefitted from a maturing view of Iraqi conflict, a change in the internal logic for action in Baghdad and the belts, and the propensity within the system itself.

Initially, these efforts borrowed much from high value assets targeting by Special Operations Forces (SOF) which was crudely mimicked by conventional forces.<sup>265</sup> Some American units began to detain all military aged males in anti-coalition pockets because of a lack of actionable intelligence, instead of killing or capturing specific leaders and facilitators.<sup>266</sup> Over time, these efforts began to focus more on the indirect aspects of security rather than raids to kill or capture the few individuals actively fighting in the conflict. Additionally, commanders began to understand Iraq more in terms of Kilcullen's Venn diagram of interconnected hybrid warfare rather than discrete mission sets in which they prosecuted security actions in a closed system. As

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<sup>265</sup>Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq: May 2003-January 2010," 290.

<sup>266</sup>Ricks, *Fiasco*, 224, 261, 280. These early efforts lacked focus; at one point in 2003 multiple intelligence analysts inside Abu Ghraib estimated that between 85% to 90% of all detainees sent there were of no intelligence value. Units such as the 82d Airborne Division adapted and began to discriminate by screening, detaining over 3,800 Iraqis between August 2003 and March 2004 but only sending 700 to Abu Ghraib.

one squadron commander reflected on the approach in Tal Afar, “[w]e tried to switch the argument from Sunni versus Shia, which was what the terrorists were trying to make the argument, to Iraqi versus *takfirin*.”<sup>267</sup> As with operations in Ramadi, reconciliation caused extremist groups to fundamentally alter their concepts of support, recruitment, logistics, and freedom of maneuver.<sup>268</sup>

The change in American forces’ underlying approach in Baghdad and the belts further disrupted the hybrid threat’s logic of violence. *The Surge* focused combat power to secure the population, which was not a key ingredient in past operations to deliberately clear or isolate areas. It is interesting to note that the *Jaysh al Mehdi* (JAM) did not adopt the same mix of regular and irregular forces seen in the attempts to clear Fallujah or Basra, or the early attempt to isolate Tal Afar. One possible explanation lies in the fact that the Shia initially viewed JAM as the only viable defenders of the population.<sup>269</sup> In combining American, ISF, and local security efforts, the population now had a sustainable alternative for security. Additionally, neighborhoods in the Baghdad area became increasingly homogenous as the communal violence peaked, owing to mass emigrations on both sides. When combined with American efforts to compartmentalize the city with physical barriers and checkpoints, the threat had to reconsider their ability to conduct attacks on anything but the security apparatus.<sup>270</sup>

Ironically, the propensity of the system itself may have provided the largest opportunity for disrupting the hybrid threat’s logic of violence when one views events in Iraq through a wider aperture. AQI’s drive to facilitate a sectarian conflict created a new dynamic within the system

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<sup>267</sup>Packer, “The Lesson of Tal Afar.”

<sup>268</sup>Ricks, *The Gamble*, 210; BA010, Interview. *The Gamble* illustrates this point in the story of an AQI commander in Salah-ad’-Din province, whose captured diary from 2007 indicated that reconciliation reduced his strength from 600 fighters to only 20.

<sup>269</sup>BH030, Interview.

<sup>270</sup>Panel discussion during US Army Command and General Staff College Art of War Scholars Seminar, Iraq Session, 3 February 2011, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

that coalition forces could exploit, but only briefly. Within an environment re-defined with the additional aspect of communal violence, which was mostly absent prior to the 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, the Coalition had a brief opportunity in the crisis to emplace population security, stabilize the environment, and come out in a position of advantage. Significantly, the shape-clear-hold-build framework signaled a resolve which made rivals reconsider their notion of exhausting the tactical force, just as *The Surge* made them question their ability to exhaust domestic America.

Over time, coalition forces learned to arrange tactical actions within the context that gave rise to the hybrid threat. Early operational art in Iraq was colored by the tenets of Effects-Based Operations (EBO) and Net-Centric Warfare (NCW), and in some ways the two theories were used as an insufficient substitute to arrange tactical actions instead of a means to foster holistic views of complex systems. EBO constitutes an approach to targeting critical vulnerabilities in an adversary's system with lethal and nonlethal means, in an attempt to achieve decisive effects through the defeat of presumably second-order capabilities. However, EBO was beset by the perception that it frames the environment from a detached perspective and overlays prescriptive categorization on the environment to assess action.<sup>271</sup> Similarly, NCW theory contended that networked information sharing leads to improved situational awareness, leading to collaboration and an improved ability to attack an adversary's network. Theoretically, NCW is an effective approach to a similarly networked enemy that is vulnerable to nodal disruptions, but this is based on a cybernetic nodal network instead of a biological network, one which may be more

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<sup>271</sup>James N. Mattis, "USJFCOM Commander's Guidance for Effects-Based Operations," *Parameters* 38, no. 3 (Autumn 2008): 18. EBO was effectively abandoned in 2008, with General Mattis' guidance for future dispensation of the model: "I am convinced that the various interpretations of EBO have caused confusion throughout the joint force and among our multinational partners that we must correct. It is my view that EBO has been misapplied and overextended to the point that it actually hinders rather than helps joint operations."

appropriate for complex social environments such as hybrid warfare in Iraq.<sup>272</sup> Both theories assume that an enemy is “mappable,” a relatively inert system which neither anticipates nor preempts action.<sup>273</sup> Kagan asserts that while the military failed in pursuing transformation through EBO and NCW theories, at least the attempt to treat systems holistically indicates an advancing appreciation for complex warfare.<sup>274</sup>

Additionally, early efforts in Iraq lacked an adequate understanding of the environment. Initially, commanders did not understand the scope of action required in this form of warfare: “[y]our responsibilities are everything. And there was this false expectation that it would just fix itself.”<sup>275</sup> Because of the aforementioned focus on security operations relying heavily on advantages in lethal firepower and force protection, American troops interacted with the populace from a defensive posture which effectively drove a psychological wedge between the people and their protectors.<sup>276</sup>

By distributing tactical operations and deploying combined forces among the populace, American forces gained the requisite context to align tactical actions in the same frame of reference which gave rise to the hybrid threat. The effect of combined American, ISF, and local

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<sup>272</sup>Bousquet, 233-234; Cordesman, 54. Significantly, NCW pre-supposed eventual advances and proliferation of military networking technology, much in the same manner that early strategic air power advocates pre-supposed dominant advances in aircraft. Cordesman’s assessment of IDF information sharing equipment in 2006 illustrates that modern forces do not have this capability yet, concluding that “A ‘Net’ is not a half-assed IT Dinosaur or a Failure Prone Toy.”

<sup>273</sup>Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Rapid Decisive Operations: An Assumptions-based Critique* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), 7-8.

<sup>274</sup>Frederick W. Kagan, *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), xv, 393-397; William J. Gregor, “Military Planning Systems and Stability Operations,” *Prism* 1, no. 3 (June 2010). Gregor’s analysis is an even account regarding the role of organizational culture and competing agendas as the American military struggled to adapt planning systems (to include EBO and NCW) in an era of persistent hybrid and irregular warfare among the populace.

<sup>275</sup>AA510, Former DivArty Commander, Interview by Travis Moliere and Jesse Stewart, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 4 November 2010.

<sup>276</sup>Ricks, *Fiasco*, 221. Ricks illustrates this with a 2004 quote by then-Major General Peter Chiarelli, who at the time commanded the 1st Cavalry Division.



security allowed commanders to address the drivers of instability and conflict within the same context as their rivals, within their “way of war:”

Indigenous forces have a lot of latitude that we don't have, they were not inhibited by ROE the way we were. It's rough justice...it's the messy and dark side of working with indigenous guys. You have to understand it and be willing to accept that. If you can live with that, and I can, then you're fine. If you're trying to change their culture and their way of war to be our way of war, then you'll be there a hell of a long time.<sup>277</sup>

In aligning areas of responsibility and spheres of influence with both ISF and local dynamics, American units could simultaneously address the immediate security issue and the underlying shortcoming with civil capacity.<sup>278</sup> Actions began to focus with a shared understanding between American forces and the local communities, enabling an eventual stimulation of local economies and a return to normalcy.<sup>279</sup> This focus on local solutions was a relative strength of coalition operations in OIF, as uniform country-wide solutions were widely avoided after the maligned De-Ba'athification effort in 2003.<sup>280</sup> In this, the utility of addressing rivals in a common environmental frame and developing tailored solutions becomes clear. As one officer described his unit's approach in Tal Afar:

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<sup>277</sup>BA010, Interview.

<sup>278</sup>Panel discussion during US Army Command and General Staff College Art of War Scholars Seminar, Iraq Session, 3 February 2011, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>279</sup>AA810, Battalion Commander, Interview by Ken Gleiman, Matt Marbella, Brian McCarthy, and Travis Molliere, Washington, DC, 13 September 2010; BH030, Interview. The latter, a Battalion Commander during this time in OIF added: “I could almost care less on who is JAM in my sector. You need to focus on the people who influence, use that information to inform the PRT [the Provincial Reconstruction Team]. What the bad guys were doing was almost irrelevant at that point.”

<sup>280</sup>BF020, Interview; Gordon and Trainor, 564, 586-590. This *Cobra II* contains the ORHA briefing slides and the actual CPA order. Against the counsel of many Iraqis (to include secular Shia interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi), the CPA declared that all Ba'ath Party members would be banned from holding senior in the army and government. This effectively dissolved most security forces, though a review of officer records indicated that only 8,000 of the 140,000 officers were committed Ba'athists. Collapsing the army also resulted in a mass of up to 400,000 military-aged males. Since Hussein's regime virtually required Ba'ath Party membership for any middle and upper class government job, there was an overwhelming dearth of civil service professionals. This directly contributed to the environment absent of effective local security in 2003, resulting in near-lawlessness that the American military simply could not address itself.

You can come in, cordon off a city, and level it, à la Falluja. Or you can come in, get to know the city, the culture, establish relationships with the people, and then you can go in and eliminate individuals instead of whole city blocks.<sup>281</sup>

## Conclusion

Kilcullen's introduction to Iraq in *The Accidental Guerilla* aptly summarizes the complexity of developing an operational approach to hybrid warfare:

If we were to draw historical analogies, we might say that operations in Iraq are like trying to defeat the Viet Cong (insurgency), while simultaneously rebuilding Germany (nation-building following war and dictatorship), keeping peace in the Balkans (communal and sectarian conflict), and defeating the IRA (domestic terrorism). These all have to be done at the same time, in the same place, and changes in one part of the problem significantly affect others.<sup>282</sup>

Army units prevailed in much of these aspects through steady adaptation, resolve, and exploiting operational opportunities as part of an eventually unified coalition effort. In the context of this chapter's metaphor, coalition forces were able to disrupt the inherent logic in a school of piranhas, such that some of the piranhas turned on each other. This was a mix of both purposeful action and the inherent propensity within the social construct of Iraq. Although this operational approach resulted in endstate conditions that achieved sufficient termination criteria, there will always be a degree of dissonance with the original concept of victory in Iraq as idealized in 2003. American forces undoubtedly left Iraq in a position of relative advantage and significant strategic gains in 2011, but the cost and efficacy of that advantage will surely be debated in the years to come.

As this monograph concludes, we must therefore analyze the utility of current doctrine to determine if it imparts sufficient flexibility to defeat hybrid threats and achieve that position of relative advantage. Specifically, what is an effective archetype for an operational approach in hybrid warfare, and does the *Unified Land Operations* model provide a sufficient lexicon and

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<sup>281</sup>Packer, "The Lesson of Tal Afar."

<sup>282</sup>Kilcullen, 152.

ideals to articulate such a construct? Because as costly and as strenuous as OIF was for the Army, the next hybrid threat could incorporate a similarly reflective effort to build its own effectiveness. As the Winograd Commission’s final report succinctly captured this, “[w]hen speaking on learning, one should take into account enemies, too, are learning their lessons.”<sup>283</sup>

## **Synthesis: Operational Approaches to Hybrid Warfare**

It is so damn complex. If you ever think you have the solution to this, you’re wrong, and you’re dangerous. You have to keep listening and thinking and being critical and self-critical.

—Colonel H.R. McMaster, 2006<sup>284</sup>

Don’t ever forget what you’re built to do. We are built to solve military problems with violence.

—Former Brigade Commander in OIF  
Interviewed 23 February 2011<sup>285</sup>

This monograph began with an assertion that we gain a better context to develop operational approaches to hybrid threats by analyzing the US Army’s historical experience with hybrid warfare. Since the next adversary may guide its tactical efforts more coherently than the school of piranhas in Iraq, we therefore conclude with a review of the broad imperatives in hybrid warfare, an operational approach archetype, and a consequent evaluation of Unified Land Operations’ ability to provide sufficient structure to these themes. The scope of this short study tempers any formal conclusion, since much more analysis is required to build confidence in the model described thus far. Hybrid warfare in Vietnam illustrates a deficiency in the three imperatives for operational approaches, while the Army’s experience in OIF illustrates the adaptation to proficiency in all three imperatives. The resulting synthesis must avoid the

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<sup>283</sup>“Winograd Commission Final Report.” *Council on Foreign Affairs*, accessed at: [www.cfr.org/israel/winograd-commission-final-report/p15385](http://www.cfr.org/israel/winograd-commission-final-report/p15385) on 30 August 2011.

<sup>284</sup>Packer, “The Lesson of Tal Afar.”

<sup>285</sup>BA040, Brigade Commander, Interview by Aaron Kaufman and Dustin Mitchell, 23 February, 2011, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

temptation to highlight the contrasts between the two approaches, and cite only the principles in OIF as prescriptive keys to success in hybrid warfare. Using these imperatives to form the epitome of an operational approach reveals another inherent tension; one between the cognitive domain of understanding complex adaptive systems in hybrid warfare, and the physical domain of tactical efforts that leverage power relationships and violent action. The epigraphs above are perhaps the best illustration of this, from two commanders in OIF who were able to resolve this inherent tension in operational art.

### **Three Imperatives for Operational Art in Hybrid Warfare**

These explanatory fundamentals are not unique to hybrid warfare; they apply to all forms of warfare. However, the unique aspects of hybrid warfare merely illuminate three specific qualities in operational approaches, the broad methods that provide a basis to pursue strategic aims through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. Operational approaches to hybrid warfare must cognitively disrupt the hybrid threat's logic in the forms of warfare it employs, arrange actions within the same context that gave rise to the hybrid threat, and avoid uniform or prescriptive means across time and space.<sup>286</sup>

The first of these imperatives could be considered the first among equals, since it generates and describes the need to *act* within the system of hybrid warfare. A well-grounded operational approach must cognitively disrupt the hybrid threat's logic in the forms of warfare it employs, rather than focusing on physical methods to counter the hybrid threat's means and capabilities. Operational art must produce articulated tactical actions and a unifying logic. Those actions must achieve this disruptive effect, creating an opportunity for further action. Effectively, this provides for the continuation of operations rather than a culmination. In Vietnam, MACV

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<sup>286</sup>The requirement to arrange tactical actions in pursuit of a strategic aim is not listed as a distinct imperative to avoid redundancy, because by definition the operational approach is the broad, episodic employment of operational art in a specific context.

was unable to break the logic of *dau tranh*, which only became untenable to the Communist forces after their own operational over-reach in the Tet Offensive. In OIF, commanders leveraged their intuition of the environment to disrupt the rivals' logic for violence, creating opportunities via the ISF and local security forces.

Second, the approach must fuse tactical success to an overall strategic aim within the same context which gave rise to the hybrid threat. Fusion refers to the act of arranging tactical actions, and implies a conduit of success towards the strategic aim. But this transformative effort to address 'the gap' between the observed system and the desired system cannot take place in a frame which is artificially separate from the observed environment.<sup>287</sup> The American Army's approaches in Vietnam provide several cautionary lessons in this regard. Primarily, the military plans were self-referential, without sufficient regard for the social and political context of the war. The hybrid threat of Communist forces fundamentally viewed the war as a movement in social progress, not military confrontation; MACV lacked an appreciation for this rival narrative. In OIF, a growing appreciation for the environmental context of conflict enabled commanders to address the underlying accelerants of instability. The 2007 surge in troop strength was significant and enabled this effort, but it would not have been sufficient without an adaptive approach.

Lastly, an operational approach to hybrid warfare must avoid prescriptive or uniform measures across time and space. This is another acknowledgement that the environmental context in hybrid warfare is one of the chief characteristics of a relationally complex system. Since operational art must result in clear and concise guidance to arrange tactical actions, the operational approach cannot simply give commanders an appreciation for the complexity of the problem while dogmatically refusing to bound it. All guidance or unified effort will entail some

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<sup>287</sup> Author's discussion with Israeli Diplomat, 7 March 2012, Jerusalem, Israel; Author's discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Land Warfare Analyst, 8 March 2012, Latrun, Israel. The IDF's failure to consider the social and historical aspects which enabled Hezbollah's evolution is but one example of this.

degree of linearization or compartmentalization in order to clarify the environment, even through a simple narrative or order to subordinate echelons. This may be an immutable fact because sufficient clarity is required when aligning finite resources or combat power towards a specific purpose.<sup>288</sup> In Vietnam, MACV's pursuit of the *crossover point* provides an illustration of this. Within the effort to describe one unifying theme, the headquarters' intense focus on metrics such as the body count effectively precluded or stifled initiatives which were better adapted to local environments. OIF provides a positive example, as local solutions and distributed command models became the dominant model for both lethal and nonlethal efforts. These efforts were still harmonized by a common commander's guidance and doctrinal evolution, yet tactical commanders were able to develop internal measures of success.

## **An Archetype for Operational Approaches to Hybrid Warfare**

The three preceding imperatives explain characteristics of an operational approach to hybrid warfare, but not a holistic approach. The question remains, how can an effective commander and his planning effort use these aspects to arrange tactical actions in hybrid warfare? The operational approach should be uniquely adapted to address 'the gap' that emerges in a comparison of the observed state and the desired end state. This monograph pre-supposes a hybrid threat in a spectrum of adversaries rather than as a categorical menu option, but this type of threat is specific enough to allow a focus on common aspects. Therefore, the question is not "what is the best operational approach to a hybrid threat," it should be "given the characteristics of hybrid warfare, what does an effective operational approach to a hybrid threat 'look' like?"

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<sup>288</sup>Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 72-73. Conversely, the employment of sound operational art should not impart additional complexity to the environment. Fighting complexity with complexity is actually the antithesis of holistic systems thinking, since it is more effective to understand the underlying dynamic interrelationships and address it with a simple solution. As such, the linearity of a solution is not a similarly ill-suited characteristic when compared to a solution's uniformity and prescriptiveness in hybrid warfare.

From the imperative to cognitively disrupt the hybrid threat's logic in the forms of warfare it employs, there is a need to gain and maintain the initiative through continuous operations on a pathway to termination criteria. The requirement to utilize operational art within the same context which gave rise to the hybrid threat necessitates a focus on the overall environment, not simply an enemy. This also requires a commander and planner to see their force as an interconnected part of the overall environment, not as a detached spectator. Likewise, the imperative to avoid uniform or prescriptive solutions requires the approach to address the environment holistically, yet with appreciation to local variances.

These imperatives engender an archetype, not a stereotype. In this archetype, the combined action of shock and dislocation is the means to gain and maintain the initiative. Additionally, the operational approach must take special care to avoid a myopic view of the termination criteria and endstate conditions for conflict.

### Shock and Dislocation<sup>289</sup>

Operational shock reflects the notion that while it is impractical to destroy a hybrid threat's combat power in its entirety through attrition, a force can attack the coherent unity of the hybrid threat *as a system*.<sup>290</sup> If maneuver is conceived in purely linear terms, then spatial relationships become the dominant concern and a force may focus on issues like the amount of territory controlled, or the percentage of the population secured. However, if maneuver is conceived in the terms of Clausewitzian friction, nonlinear phenomena, and a holistic view of the

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<sup>289</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-5: Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1982), page 2-2. This discussion of shock and dislocation is not a unique concept, rather an amalgam of existing theory. For example, the 1982 version of AirLand Battle doctrine provides a similar exhortation: "...we must make decisions and act more quickly than the enemy to disorganize his forces and to keep him off balance."

<sup>290</sup>Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, 16-17; Paul J. Blakesley, *Operational Shock and Complexity Theory* (master's thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2005), 68-69. This assertion must be considered with the additional insight that the actor, the force attempting to strike a hybrid threat to induce operational shock, is also profoundly interconnected in the same system of warfare.

environment, then an entire array of a rival's vulnerabilities avail themselves to attack.<sup>291</sup> In an ecology of logic, form, and function, striking the logic inherent in a hybrid threat's system is a realistic goal, whereas striking the entirety of a hybrid threat's already fragmented form is not. This partially illustrates the requirement for a harmonized effort in hybrid warfare, one that disrupts or defeats the interconnections in a rival's system rather than sequential search-and-destroy operations.<sup>292</sup> In other words, the very hybridity of this type of adversary introduces internal tensions in their mode of operation, and these tensions are an opportunity for action.<sup>293</sup> A hybrid threat's logic is an abstract cognitive quality, but it can be struck through both cognitive and physical means.<sup>294</sup> For example, coalition forces in OIF shocked the metaphoric school of piranhas by developing local security forces. This not only enabled lethal direct attacks on the rivals' combat power, resources, and networks, it also fundamentally changed the nature of the problem they faced. This also demonstrates how operational shock creates opportunities in the re-defined environment, as one brigade commander reflected that these operations supported his overall theme of exploiting success to keep the initiative.<sup>295</sup> However, if the objective of operational shock is to neutralize the enemy's will to continue the conflict in pursuit of an aim,

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<sup>291</sup>Ofra Gracier, *Between the Feasible and the Fantastic: Orde Wingate's Long-Range Penetration - A Spatial View of the Operational Manoeuvre* (doctoral dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2008), 48-49.

<sup>292</sup>Naveh, "The Cult of the Offensive Preemption," 182. Israeli maneuver theorist Shimon Naveh develops this concept of an operational strike further, describing three chief components: "*fragmentation* - aimed at preventing the horizontal synergy among the components of the rival system from materializing; *simultaneous action* by the elements of the friendly system along the entire physical and cognitive depth of its rival's layout in an attempt to disrupt the hierarchical interaction among its various elements; and *momentum*, predicated on the initiation of a successive chain of tactical actions, guided by a single aim and operating within the decision-action loop of the rival system."

<sup>293</sup>Author's discussion with Israeli Military Analyst, 8 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel.

<sup>294</sup>Blakesley, 18-19, 73. A combat operation which induces operational shock not only changes the physical vestiges of the environment from the enemy's point of view, it also fundamentally changes the nature of the problem the enemy commander or command structure faces. This indelibly pushes the enemy's system towards a chaotic state, which in more colloquial terms may represent 'dissolution' or 'collapse.'

<sup>295</sup>BA010, Interview; Author's discussion with Israeli Military Analyst, 9 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel. In the Israeli experience, Hezbollah reorganized very clearly once the IDF could maintain contact with their forces on the ground, availing additional opportunities for action.



shock is not sufficient alone since the hybrid threat is less likely to serve extrinsic state-defined goals. As such, there must be a complementary effort to render the rival's current form of warfare irrelevant, a mechanism to defeat it.

One way to pursue a relative defeat of the enemy's remainder is through dislocation, "the art of rendering the enemy's strength irrelevant."<sup>296</sup> In other words, a force cannot defeat all of a hybrid threat's military, political, and social strength but it can change the environment so that the enemy's remaining strength is of negligible value to him.<sup>297</sup> Hart, Boyd, and Osinga develop the assertion that dislocation springs from the enemy's fundamental sense of surprise as a result of purposeful action.<sup>298</sup> In this lies the bridge between shock and dislocation, as their efforts should exhibit a reflexive quality: shock creates this sense of surprise, and dislocation presents itself in an opportunity.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, when dislocation seems sudden, it results in a sense of being "trapped."<sup>300</sup> To continue the OIF example, the shock of a re-defined environment dislocated the existing elements of combat power as rivals understood them, rendering their remaining power mostly irrelevant and trapped in an area which could be marginalized.<sup>301</sup> Conversely, it is

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<sup>296</sup>Leonhard, 66.

<sup>297</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0: Operations (Incl. Change 1)* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2011), page 7-7. This discussion casts dislocation with respect to functional relationships, a departure from the traditional military view of dislocation with respect to spatial relationships: "Dislocate means to employ forces to obtain significant positional advantage, rendering the enemy's dispositions less valuable, perhaps even irrelevant. It aims to make the enemy expose forces by reacting to the dislocating action. Dislocation requires enemy commanders to make a choice: accept neutralization of part of their force or risk its destruction while repositioning."

<sup>298</sup>B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 323-325; John Boyd, *Patterns of Conflict* (unpublished presentation), 98, 115; Osinga, 34-35.

<sup>299</sup>Author's discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Member of the Winograd Commission, 8 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel. One example of this could arise in a sequel to the 2006 war; as Hezbollah transforms its military to a more hierarchical system in the wake of the conflict, approaches like High Value Target (HVT) methodology may be considerably more effective in disrupting their new logic after the initial operational shock of 2006. Although it is pure conjecture, this opportunity may have emerged had the 2006 war lasted longer than 34 days.

<sup>300</sup>Hart, 327.

<sup>301</sup>Ricks, *The Gamble*, 210. The account of the AQI leader in Salah-ad'-Din cited in the previous chapter provides one example of this. Few, if any, unclassified sources describe or analyze a similar

doubtful that Hezbollah felt psychologically trapped in southern Lebanon in 2006, or if Communist forces ever felt trapped in SVN.<sup>302</sup>

## Avoiding Endstate Myopia

Shock and dislocation describe the effect of concrete tactical actions, while an effort to avoid endstate myopia reflects the abstract strategic context.<sup>303</sup> As this monograph often highlights, the inherent tension between these two domains is one of the principle difficulties in applying operational art. However, commanders and planners must maintain a long view because operations and strategy exhibit a reflexive relationship.<sup>304</sup> Initial actions change the environment, so the pathway to conflict termination and the conception of the endstate change as well.

If operational art provides for continuity instead of culmination, then a force must reconcile with the notion that it will not defeat a hybrid threat in one single maelstrom of genius and concerted violence. Hence, shock and dislocation apply in a complementary fashion. This also illustrates the utility in phasing operations, to extend operational reach over time towards

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mindset among AQI leaders in Fallujah or Tal Afar (roughly 2004), much less JAM leaders in Sadr City (2007-2008) or Basra (2009). However, it is likely they felt a similar sense of being trapped. Although a hybrid threat's individual elements can always find at least one physical rat-line out of town, the utility of dislocation lies in this being trapped in a psychological sense, not a physical sense.

<sup>302</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0: Operations (Incl. Change 1)*, pages 7-6 to 7-8. In the course of this study, the other three US Army doctrinal defeat mechanisms were analyzed for their utility in hybrid warfare. Destruction through a single decisive attack is highly unlikely to present itself in the course of hybrid warfare. The sequential application of destruction, attrition, is not a viable option to defeat the hybrid threat, as seen in the previous case studies. In any case, this defeat mechanism will prompt a cost-benefit analysis by the hybrid threat to continue conflict, which may be summarily resumed once combat power is regenerated. Isolation may be a useful local tactic, but is nearly impossible in both physical and cognitive terms in a war including irregular forces distributed among the populace. Consequently, disintegration is another ill-suited defeat mechanism owing to its reliance on prior destruction or isolation.

<sup>303</sup>The term "endstate myopia" first appears as a metaphoric affliction of commanders in: Steven Rotkoff, "Introspection and Emotional Vulnerability as Leader Development and Team Building Tools," *Small Wars Journal*, [www. smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/777-rotkoff.pdf](http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/777-rotkoff.pdf) (accessed 13 December 2011).

<sup>304</sup>Author's discussion with Israeli Strategist, 7 March 2012, Jerusalem, Israel. This imperative becomes increasingly important because American forces will almost always face questions of legitimacy from a rival organization during expeditionary operations, much like Israeli forces in 2006.

several objectives and decisive points. One hedge against a myopic view of the endstate is a continuous effort to analyze operational objectives, to determine if they constitute conflict termination or solely a decisive point which gains a marked advantage over the adversary. Hybrid warfare exhibits supradomain combinations of political and social aspects, operationalized in irregular warfare. Therefore, the operational approach must incorporate these decisive points along the metaphoric pathway towards conflict termination, with respect to the political and social grievances instead of focusing on a purely military-security endstate and relying on the rest of the environment to self-correct. As one former officer who served in the Gulf War recalled, “everybody thought that the thing was over. I find that as one expression of this tendency to think that good operations fix the problem and that therefore there’s no need to think beyond when the shooting stops.”<sup>305</sup>

## **The Sufficiency of Operational Art in Unified Land Operations**

As Airland Battle doctrine had a specific threat and strategic context to address, Unified Land Operations characterizes the hybrid threat as the chief form of adversary the US Army is most likely to face in the near-term. Significantly, it describes this threat in terms of synergy and protracted warfare.<sup>306</sup> Maneuver on land is not solely intended to occupy the adversary’s territory.<sup>307</sup> To this end, doctrine must provide an orientation to the force, especially given the high conversion cost between primarily regular warfare and primarily irregular warfare. To achieve this, Unified Land Operations discusses warfare through the lens of initiative and a full spectrum of operations.

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<sup>305</sup>BF010, Interview.

<sup>306</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 4.

<sup>307</sup>Author’s discussion with Retired IDF General Officer and Land Warfare Analyst, 8 March 2012, Latrun, Israel. Conversely, land maneuver should convince the adversary that its position is one of a relative disadvantage, given a continuous arrangement of the force’s tactical victories.

French Enlightenment and reductionist thought informed Jominian military theory, German Rationalism informed Clausewitzian military theory, and contemporary thought improves efforts in conceptual planning. In many ways, Unified Land Operations aligns itself with the emerging understanding of the world through nonlinear sciences, epistemological and ontological foundations.<sup>308</sup> In this, Unified Land Operations has great utility. The model of gaining and retaining the initiative through a spectrum of operations by the complementary means of CAM and WAS is one that commanders at all echelons can understand and leverage against complex systems in hybrid warfare. Significantly, the doctrine calls for articulated solutions to arrange tactical actions.<sup>309</sup> Tactical commanders require this clarity to give their actions purpose and ensure they understand their role within the higher commander's greater unifying logic to defeat a hybrid threat. Operational planners owe them a clear framework with at least this much.

### **Closing: Leveraging Legitimate Violence**

Through a deeply critical process, the commander and his planners may come to a greater understanding of the unique ecology of the complex hybrid threat they face: its form, its function, and its logic for violence. Arranging a specific tactical action should affect one aspect of this ecological trinity, lest the operational approach become too complex. A complicated, yet manageable solution is preferable.<sup>310</sup> Therein lies the rub for operational planners, and a caution against purely cognitive or abstract solutions. There is a significant difference between useful tools for conceptual planning, and useful tools for coordinating and synchronizing complicated

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<sup>308</sup>Dolman, 96-100; Bousquet, 189-191. This relationship between the three respective modes of thought and contemporaneous military theory was brought to the author's attention during a seminar discussion by Major James Davis, Australian Army.

<sup>309</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations*, 10.

<sup>310</sup>Department of Defense Joint Staff, *Planner's Handbook for Operational Design* (Suffolk, VA: Joint Staff J-7, 2011), II-5, II-8 - II-9. This reflects the difference between a system or solution which is interactively complex (what we see as truly complex or nonlinear) and one which is structurally complex (what we see as merely complicated or linear).

tactical actions.<sup>311</sup> In 2006, a general on Halutz's staff spoke of disrupting the logic of Hezbollah and creating a "spectacle of victory" in Bint J'beil, leaving many tactical commanders to wonder exactly what he meant.<sup>312</sup> The successful operational approach blends a holistic understanding of hybrid warfare with an appreciation for what the organization is structured to do, and its ability to adapt. It must be able to guide legitimate violence, or the threat of legitimate violence. This is supremely difficult, but then again "nobody pays to see a guy juggle one ball."<sup>313</sup>

This effort must pervade the operational approach to hybrid warfare, ensuring that it incorporates the three imperatives discussed above with a holistic understanding of the threat and environment. Hybrid threats will undoubtedly continue to seek the synergistic effect of regular and irregular qualities in order to protract the conflict. They will wage warfare in a resilient manner which is *built to last*. The US Army can effectively counter this if its operational approaches to hybrid warfare utilize shock and dislocation along a pathway to conflict termination; it must address the gap between the current state and the desired endstate in a manner which is *built to outlast*.

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<sup>311</sup> Author's discussion with Israeli Military Analyst, 9 March 2012, Tel Aviv, Israel. Despite the IDF's perceived predilection for SOD, this analyst succinctly asserted that it is a conceptual planning tool and not a method for coordination and synchronization.

<sup>312</sup> Bar-Joseph, 154, 156-157; Sultan, 54, 56; Harel and Issacharof, 119-120, 126-128, 136-139; Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared*, 45.

<sup>313</sup> Attributed to Colonel Patrick Roberson, who used this as an illustration of the inherent complexity in warfare during a discussion with the author.

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