

## Modern Irregular Warfare & Counterinsurgency – today’s military challenge within Campaigns and Operations, by, through and with people

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Peace and stability seems more and more difficult for conventional military forces to win or even shape conditions for in the modern operational environment. Afghanistan and Iraq shine bright as warning signals or maybe even stop signals. The military solutions have not been satisfactory and the military – civilian efforts that have been deployed and are so-called “comprehensive” have a long way to go. The question is how to turn this wheel and why the problem is so hard to solve.

This paper will address some of the problems of how to militarily adapt to the irregular operational environments today. This comes with the paradox that the more mature the irregular fight gets, the more regular or conventional capabilities are usually required to engage and win over the

formerly mostly unconventional aggressor. *Is it thus a matter of waiting the answer out?* Will the conventional traditional joint forces, after a period of time, again engage, and at last win linearly?

This is, however, not the focus of this discussion. The scope is, rather, to elaborate the more common situation, i.e. how to educate, train and engage what forces *from the beginning* of a crisis that for some political reason are to be engaged. The nucleus of the discussion is some thoughts of a possible development for a military coalition enterprise for crisis response operations or stability and reconstruction operations. The goal is to be able to deliver a *trustworthy* utility of *military* force for Irregular Warfare<sup>1</sup> and Counterinsurgency.<sup>2</sup>

This implies that the utility must be trust-

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1 *irregular warfare* – A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular Warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will. Also called *IW*. US DoD JP 1-02 As Amended Through 17 October 2008 <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict>

2 *counterinsurgency* – Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. Also called *COIN*. US DoD JP 1-02 As Amended Through 17 October 2008 <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict>

worthy to the people that are to be supported as well as to one's own people back home. Regarding Irregular Warfare, however, there is, compared to conventional war and warfare, a very limited theoretical basis, and, within the military systems in the western world, a fundamentally negative attitude. Real warriors do not want to deal with small wars. This attitude, elaborated on with great depth and analytical insight by John Nagl,<sup>3</sup> could be a core problem for adapting to postmodern military operations. Also, the academic world has mostly studied the big war, leaving the theory foundation for small wars more limited. This, in turn, makes the educational possibilities problematic, which could be a root problem.

## Background

Today's Crisis Response Operations, CRO, and Peace Support Operations, PSO, often take place in a challenging irregular warfare context. To engage in counterinsurgency operations has been something as reluctant as well as difficult for conventional military forces as long as the big war has been the main reason for existing military forces at all. Recollections of the world wars, including the Cold War, and the Clausewitzian theories understood and explained the Jominian way, have formed a way of thinking and training for war. The willingness and even possibilities for the military institu-

tions to think outside the way of conventional war have been very limited.

When now facing "the other wars" also within a multinational *coalition* the problem expands. Various national caveats, the absence of a common doctrine and different training levels and mindsets for COIN-operations form a fragmented military framework. Also, many CROs/PSOs have started with conventional warfare and the transition to the stabilization phase with parallel warfighting and the mainly non-combat profile of COIN-operations with the same units is a challenging issue. Frequent security operations from contractor firms add to the difficulty of shaping the vital connection and trust from the people living there. All this comes within an environment of a multitude of civilian non-governmental organizations, NGOs, and different private relief organizations that reject cooperation with the military force. The problem of reaching a comprehensive approach for the military and the employment of different civilian resources is well known and forms the problem of "multifunctional coordination".

Within the military dimension, the two different capabilities of warfighting and counterinsurgency outline the main aspects of warfare and operational art that are both necessary but seldom to be found within the same units. This is even more problematic when both the troops,

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3 Nagl, A. John: *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife, Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. The University of Chicago Press, 2005 (first published in 2002).

commanders and staff personnel rotate every 6-12 months. Finally, the operational planning and execution processes within the staff work are originally designed for conventional battles between armed forces and not for handling multiple insurgents, terrorists, criminal formations and pure mercenary forces supported by other nations or structures.

The pendulum seems to have swung rather far from yesterday's Revolutions in Military Affairs. We are moving from sensor to shooter to the opposite, i.e. hearts and minds and comprehensive counter-guerrilla boots on the ground. One can also notice a trace of the Cold War cloak-and-dagger activities in the U.S. Department of Defense's Irregular Warfare Joint Operations Concept (JOC)<sup>4</sup>. In this context, even in theoretical conceptual ideas, mixing overt and covert actions<sup>5</sup> within the same framework, has to be considered challenging especially when it has been said that the new irregular warfare effort has to be

carried out with partners<sup>6</sup>. Probably most engagements have to be executed under the hat of a coalition and this will bring forward questions for action and political explanation as to when and what has been done covertly and by whom.

This hybrid and dominantly irregular war, as General Rupert Smith describes it in his highly acknowledged "The Utility of Force",<sup>7</sup> is waged among the people. It is not to be argued that irregular struggles against stronger rulers or states is about being with, of, by and thus, among the people.

When seeking new ways of succeeding against irregular adversaries, the scope and reach for the military system becomes an issue. As irregular fights focus more on ideas than on physical targets, secret ways and means of influencing one's opponent become as interesting as just the use of blunt military armed forces. Even more ways and means than the conventional military "unconventional and secret spearheads", the Special Opera-

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4 DoD IW JOC Version 1.0 11 sept 2007, section 4.a. The Key Elements of the Central Idea, p. 20, the 5th paragraph "Attack adversaries using a combination of conventional and nonconventional methods and means rather than relying only on conventional military forces. Nonconventional methods and means might include clandestine or covert actions, operations in combination with irregular forces, or the nonconventional uses of conventional capabilities."

5 *covert operations* – An operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor. A covert operation differs from a clandestine operation in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the identity of the sponsor rather than on concealment of the operation. US DoD JP 1-02 As Amended Through 17 October 2008.

6 IW JOC, p. 1 "IW will not be won by the United States alone, but rather through the combined efforts of our partners".

7 Smith, Rupert: *The Utility of Force*, Alfred Knopf, New York 2007

tions Forces,<sup>8</sup> are under discussion and the outcome here will impact on a coalition's military possibilities. As a reminder of the many different actors in today's complex operational areas Jeremy Scahill *Blackwater: The rise of the world's most powerful mercenary army* is recommended.<sup>9</sup>

The challenges are both strategic and operational and they are indeed multidimensional. The problems embrace personnel, mindsets, multifunctional realism and possibilities, operational art and tactics, doctrines, training and education, military conventional warrior ethos versus a "peace-keeping" mentality, leadership and, at the end of the day, a thrust-potentiality for the whole operational concept and thus the utility of military force. Finally, in officer training in western countries, War Studies has until today almost totally focused on conventional warfighting, fostering a generation of commanders and officers who are single-mindedly programmed for "the big war". This is perhaps the most severe problem for the need of the transformation of a whole system and a generation

regarding mindsets on operational art and tactics. In order to handle this situation, both long-term educational efforts for the next military and political generation, and short-term realistic transformation as regards training, capabilities, operational art and tactics, doctrinal and concept developments have to be formulated in order to reach *more and better* military utility in today's modern Irregular Warfare operations.

The following parts of the article will discuss some of these areas linked to the main question of "*What are the military forces to do in Irregular Warfare and how will this be possible without losing the warfighting core capability?*".

### **The problem of understanding and practising war**

Before we discuss the previous problem areas for military forces in an irregular environment, we must say something about the time-consuming preconditions for understanding and waging war or military operations. The theory basis, the definition

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8 *special operations* – Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low visibility capabilities. Special operations are applicable across the range of military operations. They can be conducted independently or in conjunction with operations of conventional forces or other government agencies and may include operations through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets. Also called SO. (JP 3-05)

9 Scahill, Jeremy: *Blackwater: The rise of the world's most powerful mercenary army*. Nation Books, New York, 2008

language and the possibilities for reflection on the work after real-life military experiences are but all essential parts.

First, it is fundamentally hard to understand different aspects of war and power struggles in general when one tries to define them in distinct boxes with different “explaining labels”. Every effort to give aspects a frame and a label soon becomes the focus of different opinions and understandings. The original scope of trying to make possible a fruitful discussion of the actual subject sometimes vanishes in favor of the military mental obsession for definitions, traceability and distinct borders for every activity. Also, the way of waging war has nowadays, in its extreme form, been process-oriented. So, in a way, what the process guide does not explain in detail will be difficult to handle and sometimes, sadly to say, inflict more frictions than the art of war .

More emphasis on education and less focus on training is the answer, according to the academic world. A problem here is, however, that the limited time for training officers, and also for soldiers and sailors, does not allow for both an academic basis and the expanding process training that the NATO GOP and CJTF model demands without more available time.

Linking the conventional military mentality with the perception that war can be

explained from either a “regular” or an “irregular” perspective could make us end up with a rather complicated pattern of oversimplifications that more brings in “a fog of words” than clarification. Trying to do the explaining from different perspectives, for example the case of “irregular warfare”, soon develops into discussions of how to produce military capabilities, instead of developing a deeper and more fully comprehensive understanding of the nature and aspects of war and power struggles.

Aspects of power struggles are connected to each other regardless of the last 500 years’ experiments on tasking some activities to people in uniform and other activities to people without uniforms. The civilian power structures, depending on what is at stake, will employ ways and means of influencing the opponent, when suitable with uniformed actions and otherwise without military involvement.<sup>10</sup> They will even do so secretly and this is regardless of belonging to “east” or “west” or “south” in the world. Here we have forces *outside* the military structure.

The clash of possibilities to understand “ways of warfare”, military or political, as different or as some sort of sequential activities in a “peace-war” linearity, occurs when the phase of “irregular warfare” is analyzed in the same one-dimensional

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10 Aldrich J. Richard: *The Hidden Hand*. p. 637-645. Behind the scenes of history. John Murry, London 2001.

The book gives a very good picture of the UK and US use of non-military power structures for secret influences on each other as well as on some other nations during the Cold War.

way. This clash of theories is even more obvious if one includes the secret ways of war that Irregular Warfare and Unconventional Warfare are linked with. When one brings forward the overt-covert dimension of power struggle, it is possible for more fully understandable structures or models to emerge.

A conclusion of this is that it could be counterproductive to study, plan and address war in boxes of what is regular and irregular. Also, it could be counterproductive to discuss the challenges as *different wars*. The question is more how will the military forces of today develop in order to deliver utilities in *all aspects of war and power struggles*. What different perspectives have to be handled when the opposite number is not a state? Where is the *limit* or utility for conventional warfighting and what aspects could be stretched somewhat? The bottom line is that actors striving for power in any way will always do so. When not being able to bring in conventional military forces, they will fight clandestinely and covertly, also armed, as seems suitable for different reasons. The context of war is all around us, but pure military wars occur rarely and very seldom in the fully armed utility. Still, the power struggles and different kinds of wars are ever in existence.

Thus, regardless of how we label “war”, the question remains; what are to be the tasks and the capabilities within the armed

forces and what are not to be? This question is even more vital now when the needs for many forms of non-military tasks are quite obvious and also when suggestions might be put forward that military operations are to handle covert activities. As for covert activities, it should be clear that it is for obvious reasons difficult to handle them in a military force structure. Special organizations have to do what they are organized to do in order to provide facilities that cannot be linked to any actual government. This is the whole point. Difficulties in handling covert activities within an irregular environment is described in Mark Urban’s interesting book *Big Boys’ Rules*<sup>11</sup> about the British Army, Special Forces, Police and Intelligence operations, and, in particular, the covert actions of the SAS against the IRA during 1976-87.

As for being able to “understand” war and actual ways of war, the possibilities of being educated in theory and being trained in execution are fundamental. Practical experiences linked back to ongoing research and new theory-building then becomes the quality control of the theories. The situation today for understanding the “military problem”, however, is problematic.

In a simplified way, one can say that yesterday the balance of theory available and the training possibilities were somewhat in balance. The 20th century’s focus on the Big War fostered a generation of military people and politicians with a definite view

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11 Urban, Mark: *Big Boys’ Rules, The Secret Struggle against the IRA*. BCA, London 1992

on military utility of force, theoretically gone through and in practice experienced many times in real-life war.

Today, the same generation as well as a new one is facing irregular warfare and counterinsurgency, not only as a small war, but as *new* small wars with a global reach and short of big war solutions. This is with almost no theoretical background but with uncountable opportunities for practice.

At the same time, with the warfighting theories still at hand, the possibilities for practising big war and upholding the knowledge and experience are almost non-existent. This is the situation for Swedish officers, which understandably forms a new problem regarding the old war that still had to be handled.

Yesterday's both educational and training possibilities have turned to today's situation with a limited educational basis and almost escalating needs for practical execution.

### **Some views of today on military forces for Irregular Warfare**

A question of today is about the U.S. concept of Irregular Warfare and thus in what direction the defence transformation of NATO and the EU countries will take, all with the goal of being able to handle today's and tomorrow's demands for their armed forces. These forces now have to be "expeditionary" in deployment ability and also be in a *mindset* especially for the not yet so "expeditionary-oriented" nations. The stress is that there is an emphasis that the

forces must work both abroad, for a long period of time, and multinationally. The expeditionary profile is also underlined as necessary for relevant civilian agencies and state functions that, it is said, have to work fully side by side, with, by and through the military function. The latter has become more and more addressed as the one of many but not only necessary tools for stability operations, particularly when counterinsurgency operations and strategies are employed.

In short, the dominant operation context is a new one, and at least very different from what western military forces have been designed for. Also, the multinational *coalition force* for dealing with operations in an irregular environment must be multifunctional in capabilities and in command, although it is not exactly clear yet how this is to be achieved. The tools in the box have to be much more mix-able and versatile both from a military and a civilian point of view, especially regarding COIN-capabilities.

As for the "Forces" or "direct security structures", which, in a simplified way, can be described as military units including Special Forces, Police and Intelligence structures, a wider scope and somewhat deeper toolbox is now narrowing the design table. The exact meaning of this and to what extent what is to be "deployed" and "employed", are but many questions to be discussed. In turn, this brings forward a deeper dimension. What tools shall or will states and nations deal with *at all*,

by themselves and particular in coalition operations – open, clandestine and even covert?

The Pandora's box for a traditional military force or structures is the area of Unconventional Warfare,<sup>12</sup> which, for example, includes subversion and sabotage.

The border to police and law enforcement work on the one hand and, on the other hand, the border to other governmental special activities or actions,<sup>13</sup> as covert actions seem to be called nowadays in the U.S. DoD dictionary, is unclear.

The debate for the creation of new Unconventional Warfare capabilities in the USA is interesting. Even more interesting are the voices for a new Office of Strategic Service outside the Department of Defense, obviously with many different meanings, as always with political speeches, but still very straightforwardly addressed in John McCains's Speech in Foreign Policy, 27

September 2007.<sup>14</sup>

One thing is what it takes to handle an irregular warfare context, even more so if Unconventional Warfare seems to be an old/new golden key. Another matter is whether an operation should be carried out in a civilian, military or mixed way. Before diving into discussions of possibilities, it might be good to recapitulate the near history when the political struggle of West-East brought forward some solutions for handling the *three* areas of forces: political/diplomatic, intelligence/special operations and, the most frequently discussed area regarding "utility", the military forces. The classic internal wars between foreign affairs, intelligence and covert activities and the uniformed military services are here to be considered again.

With a deeper historical view on the "utility of forces", there may be different ways ahead, at least regarding in which

12 *unconventional warfare* – A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes, but is not limited to, guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery. Also called *UW*. (JP 3-05)

13 *special actions* – Those functions that due to particular sensitivities, compartmentation, or caveats cannot be conducted in normal staff channels and therefore require extraordinary processes and procedures and may involve the use of sensitive capabilities. (JP 3-05.1)

*special activities* – Activities conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives that are planned and executed so that the role of the US Government is not apparent or intended to influence US political processes, public opinion, policies, or media and do not include diplomatic activities or the collection and production of intelligence or related support functions. (JP 3-05)

US DoD JP 1-02 As Amended Through 17 October 2008 <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict>

14 John McCains speech on foreign policy at the Hudson Institute on September 27, 2007 "I would also set up a new civil-military agency patterned after the Office of Strategic Service in the World War II....." [www.cfr.org/publication/14336/john\\_mccains\\_speech\\_on\\_foreign\\_policy.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/14336/john_mccains_speech_on_foreign_policy.html)

areas the military forces should develop and become more comprehensively assessed.

### **Irregular Warfare, Special Operations and Unconventional Warfare**

Irregular Warfare is an item that is so old yet it is quite new, also with some quite new attributes that will challenge the training for the boots on the ground as well as for the whole military business as it has been shaped in modern times. Not only that, however, the context is also seen as being more demanding than ever for the civilian part of the crisis management apparatus. This is because the heart of COIN is in *civilian* resources and strategies, not in military operational art and tactical capabilities. The latter are merely support functions.

Although there is a need for more COIN-trained troops and staff elements, the need for stringent heavy force-on-force warfighting has definitely been endorsed by most actors – both in a scenario of tomorrow in the spirit of General Rupert Smith as supporting COIN, and as of course in the next bloody centuries as outlined by Colin S. Gray.<sup>15</sup> Both of them rest, in their own ways, on Clausewitz grammar and on the views of Sun Tzi as regards clandestine and covert activities.

Seen from the small state perspective, the new focus on Irregular Warfare will

bring forward some bonus regarding military thinking. As small states usually experience war and other armies than their own on their soil, from time to time COIN and unconventional warfare moves from distant troubles in remote countries to very intense questions of life or death for freedom in one's own backyard. At least in traditional western defence forces the interest for "small wars" is usually somewhat underdeveloped and with Cold War glasses regarded as "a distant problem".

The equation could thus be laid out as "expeditionary coalition-comprehensive" civilian and military formations for counterinsurgency within the bigger umbrella, Irregular Warfare around the globe and when needed, also within coalitions, and military warfighting capabilities – a dagger in one boot and one hand on the combined – joint direct approach military machinery (a blueprint from the global defence industry).

As Irregular Warfare is said to be a direct link, even more than regular conventional warfare, to the political sphere it could be a start to glance at principal structures of "Forces" in the state arsenal for influences. Being seen as "war short of open state-on-state clashes", irregular war includes more dimensions of influences than "military war" traditionally deals with. There are more "force structures" in operation than on-top-acting military units.

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15 Gray, S Collin: *Another Bloody Century – Future Warfare*. The Orion Publishing Group Ltd. London 2005.

If *diplomacy* is the fuel for politics and the *armed forces* are the guard to armed aggressions, we have to see clandestine diplomacy and *intelligence* as the search-lights for correct political directions and decisions. As part of the global power struggle, or when being severely threatened or occupied, *covert activities* and influencing actions have their place. These four tools; diplomacy, military, intelligence and secret actions can be seen as the basic arsenal for making politics.

These four tools have to be considered when entering an Irregular Warfare environment. Is there already work going on in the area with some of the tools when the multinational force arrives? If so, by whom and where and how? We just have to mention civil security contractors beyond the influence of the Force Commander and subsequently the secret formations of different intelligence organizations that are also beyond military control.

Between utility of military force and utility of humanitarian aid, there is the paramilitary constabulary dimension on the horizontal line. For internal security the *police*, with its many different forms, constitutes a fifth tool that is essential for a state's survival.

Linking to the Malayan Emergency, the basic triangle of the *State* (Administration) at the top and below, the *military* and the *police* became a model for how to organize efforts against irregular warfare and for conducting counterinsurgency. Here one may say that the intelligence dimension in

itself also has to be very firmly connected to the triangle and within the intelligence sphere the most secret and clandestine, and also covert, functions are established. All four tools have to be firmly led.

The most different forms that the military organizations are used to is the fact that the operations are led by the police and the intelligence services, as Irregular Warfare is waged among the people. The military forces are a support. Thus it is of vital importance that police functions in quality, quantity and experience are very quickly involved in the planning of the operation. The military seizes the area and defends against more open attacks or raids from irregulars; the police organize and start almost immediately with the police work, which also includes gendarmerie operations. A challenge here is that police organizations mostly work on a tactical level. Only some part of the police have an operational or strategic perspective. Possibly there has to be established here a top-down (EU) police structure that brings together all different police branches (forensics, narcotics, special branch, investigations, etc) to a unified police "force" including a gendarmerie that deploys into the COIN-area of operations. Instead of having the gendarmerie in the military box, it should strengthen the police structure.

Then on the vertical side, between open military armed force actions and day-to-day diplomacy are two different, sometimes overlapping, grey area structures. The intelligence organizations and

the covert or clandestine diplomacy actors with active action/special operations capabilities are to be found here.

This development could be looked upon also from a historical perspective. After World War II, the civilian special operations services first closed down, then opened up as a new organization for a while and then closed again. Some parts were transferred into the new CIA and some to the armed forces with the birth of U.S. Army Special Forces.

A slightly similar approach in Britain resulted in some capacity for covert actions transferred to the MI6 (the bitter rival of SOE) and some resources and tasks were directed to the rebirth of the Army's Special Air Service.

For obvious reasons it is hard to do research on how it is organized today, but it is possible enough to obtain its characteristics in history. As some parts of the archives of World War II British Special Operations Executive and their younger U.S. cousin the Office of Strategic Service (OSS) were opened up in 2007 and research is ongoing, there is the possibility of getting a grip on the "vertical structures" of political force and how western states have thought of their utilities.

Richard Aldrich's enlightening *The Hidden Hand*<sup>16</sup> is highly recommended as

a start for those who are unfamiliar with views of *vertical* forces' utilities. As for covert activities in Sweden during World War II, the recent research of Pia Molander<sup>17</sup> is of great interest.

The linkage to Irregular Warfare and Special Operations Warfare in general illustrates in particular the area of Unconventional Warfare. This is even more the case when it comes to today's discussions of who should best handle a development of capabilities for unconventional warfare in the U.S., which is within the idea that unconventional warfare could be a new key for success in irregular warfare. At least it is a necessity compared to special forces, air strikes and headhunting as the prominent special operations warfare utility at hand. If this is the case, the challenge has emerged as to who and where this old-new capacity is to be established, and within the coalition context, who is to have the lead and command these resources? Already special forces command in parallel with conventional forces is a complex matter.

The Naval Postgraduate School professor and former career SF officer Hy Rothstein argues for a new organization for unconventional warfare outside the U.S. Department of Defense and thus may be narrowing down today's mission area

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16 Op. cit. footnote 10

17 Molander, Pia: *Intelligence, Diplomacy and the Swedish Dilemma: The Special Operations Executive in Neutral Sweden, 1939-45. Intelligence & National Security*, Vol 22, Routledge, 2007

for Special Forces in America.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. Department of Defense's lead for the Irregular Warfare Joint Operations Concept, the US Special Operations Command, seems, not surprisingly, still to include the UW-field inside the department. As usual in the USA, the power struggles between the rather large organizations often lead to long and hard internal battles and the outcome has yet some hills to climb.

The point is to be aware of how covert actions or clandestine diplomacy for quite different reasons has been the hidden utility of state forces over time. If Irregular Warfare is now to become the main overt coalition answer to today's evil, and previously hidden hands are dusted off and one tries to apply them not only side by side with conventional forces, but also multifunctionally, what will then happen? Will this not risk collapsing the IW-balloon before it has even begun to lift?

There is, due to unorthodox techniques and little insight, a clear mistrust from the conventional military branches and definitely also across the civilian humanitarian area of activities for Special Forces in general, not to mention covert activities.

Rightly or wrongly, attempts to boost and enlarge activities where the reasons are to provide small and discrete resources for

sensitive tasks at the strategic level, easily end up as a Potemkin village doing more harm to everybody, especially to themselves, than bringing forward sustainable new capabilities.

As for understanding more of the very circumstances that many of the more secret, but existing, force structures are engaged in and live under, a small-state perspective can be found in the memoirs of the Swedish head of the T-office during World War II, especially regarding how he was directed and tasked from the government.<sup>19</sup> The key word is *trust* and here we find the very essence also in Irregular Warfare activities, Unconventional Warfare, Special Operations and Intelligence, and definitely regarding other covert activities short of intelligence aims.

From bottom to top and between soldier or operator and the people they have not only to be among but have to live among, trust is the only sustainable fuel for the machinery. Trust takes time and is not rotational every 6-12 months.

In a way we are standing here with six new trends for war among the people as General Smith outlines it;<sup>20</sup> condition-shaping as the goal instead of destruction of the opponent's military forces, the battle is among the people and not in a traditional

18 Rothstein, Hy: *Afghanistan and the Troublesome Future of Unconventional Warfare*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006

19 Palm, Thede: *Några studier till T-kontorets historia*, sid 96-97, Kungl Samfundet for utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, handlingar del 21, Stockholm 1999.

20 Op. cit. footnote 7, p. 269.

military battlefield. Conflicts that tend to be never-ending fighting in a striving to preserve forces, implies not taking any risks at all. New uses for industrial war material and organizations are invented in the new conflicts. We now find sides where we have mostly non-state actors and a core of multinational armed groupings on one side and non-state groupings or parties on the other.

In a way the irregular method of warfare with the classic guerrilla *modus operandi* of only fighting on one's own conditions and foremost at the tactical level, could, ironically, be seen as being welcomed by the industrial armed forces of today. Although they are unfamiliar with the people who occupy the battle spaces, the almost complete lack of resupply of material and personnel would no longer permit industrial force-on-force engagements. This is in order to be able to deliver utility of force to the politicians for today's diplomacy with arms around the world. Today's western politicians apparently need armed forces on a nearly day-to-day basis, and for long commitments. In a way the opponents have adapted to this very well so far.

The problem in the irregular arena is, however, not static. One fact that is rather commonly shared today is that industrial, tactical, and in some way operational, formations and capabilities still stand. Thus, conventional capabilities definitely have their place as the genuine framework for delivering traditional armed utility of force.

A challenge is, however, how to play this piano and to be sure all keys are available: from the classic infantry formations to extremely well-trained civil affairs units, culturally (trustworthy) capable training teams for the people's own security forces and to the "first tiers" of mature special forces consisting of women and men who can both be provided with unconventional warfare capabilities that never degenerate to a low standard performance and who in the utmost degree can be heavily engaged in direct action utility, when and where most strategically/operationally needed.

### **The development for the armed forces to more utility in irregular warfare**

In one aspect, for "deploying", there is a need for the industrial war machine, but it should go from planning to execution, with the civilian resources forming the bulk of the "comprehensive" approach. When "employing" we see a need for a military and civilian formation more adaptable to irregular warfare. Also, something that is repeatedly addressed from the military side, it needs to be functioning directly with the security forces, working within the framework of a joint comprehensive command under a supreme civilian "Director of Operations" with, most importantly, a strong and resourceful structure of civilian capabilities.

If what has been stated above still for some time will not occur, the leadership of the world will have to accept the comprehensive frictions that both Iraq and

Afghanistan have shown very clearly and the pressure on the military forces will continue. This both involves handling the hybrid irregular case with armed force and “waiting for civilian assistance”, trying to accomplish the civilian affairs side of the coin.

It will probably take considerable time to come forward with a common understanding, multinationally and multifunctionally, of how to boost the civilian side. During this time, we shall see the military function, in itself quite different between nations with a degree of a mature mindset and adequate capabilities for fighting irregular warfare, developing different utilities for the irregular context.

Narrowing the scope to the armed branch, there are some questions to address here. First, all services probably have to analyze today’s *attitudes*, training and tactics. The Army will be tasked for the light-heavy balances, where the scope for the infantry may include special units for FID (Foreign Internal Defence) providing training of the supported/occupied countries’ own/new forces with inherent or separated additional armed police forces (the gendarmerie not being a part of the armed forces). The intelligence branch has to devote more attention to analyst training and generally to look into the capabilities of ISTAR-units in order to deliver actionable products – all under the challenges of

coalition intelligence cooperation. A vital focus is the attitude of the people and the intelligence service has to look into this area for threats and not only have an obsession for “key actor” analysis.

The blue services, the Air Force and Navy, including the Amphibious Forces, probably have some work to analyze the respective consequences of operations in an irregular environment. The effect of their own formations of special operations forces, surveillance and security formations and overall approach to an irregular context both on the tactical and operational levels have to be worked on thoroughly.

So far, the light blue and brown maritime areas are somewhat “untouched areas of interest” for modern irregular warfare. However, effects for world trade and for the western hemisphere if/when the world sea trade comes in focus will be uncomparable to the, in itself troublesome enough, operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Irregular warfare does have an option to reach coastlines and coastal cities and the people inhabiting them. In a historical perspective, the riverine contexts have forced forward irregular warfare capabilities for some navies, for example the Portuguese Navy during the Cold War era.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, there is not only a tactical problem for the ground forces in handling irregular warfare – it has a potential to become a truly joint problem. So far we have had the

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21 Cann, P. John: *Brown Waters of Africa: Portuguese Riverine Warfare, 1961-1974*. Hailer Publishing, St Petersburg, FL, 2007

luck of only dealing with a mainly operational and sequential case. Maritime and Navy expeditionary and logistic efforts, and subsequently ground and air assets, are two-service operations with special forces as key elements for the actual irregular antagonists.

### **COIN challenges – time-consuming and mindset-challenging training for non-conventional operations**

As for organizing and training military forces for better utility in counterinsurgency, there are problems. Not only in *what* is to be trained or how to use the troops among the population. The problem also lies in the very small defence forces that most nations in Europe have left. How to conduct counterinsurgency is both to be seen as a general capability and a speciality or main task, just as different units of infantry are specialized in mountain, arctic, urban and military police main tasks. In order to be able to train COIN-forces, every army has to consist of at least brigade-sized formations for warfighting and also an amount of COIN-marked battalions. If this is not the case, the conventional brigades also have to be COIN-trained after their first training period for conventional warfighting.

The training period has then to be long enough for this double capability. However, an added problem will emerge in the last form of production – the amount of training that undoubtedly has to be done in order to also *keep up* both competences. If double

competences are the answer, one needs to have a professional army and preferably a Northern Ireland-situation, which the British Army had for a long time. Practice is the mother of understanding. However, a “one solution” type of COIN-tactics will not be sufficient. Every irregular war or operational environment is unique and has to be analyzed thoroughly in order to meet with a suitable tactical approach. A bottom line is education and a mindset for both soldiers and officers beyond the narrow conventional warfare approaches.

If, however, the possibilities for the ground forces’ production of both conventional combat and counterinsurgency are arranged, it will be even more important to have an officer training that gives several opportunities for serving in staffs on higher levels and commanding forces in COIN-campaigns as well as in conventional combat. The situation is not so for Swedish officers.

If the above is *not* possible, the armed forces’ ability to produce forces for utility in COIN will be limited. Thus, the reverse occurs. The main “security-units” for COIN have to be produced and employed by the police force establishment, including an armed Gendarmerie as in France. This would also include the bulk of security-intelligence resources that all COIN-operations rely so heavily on.

The contribution from the armed forces will thus consist of all-round infantry units, Special Forces and support units. The COIN-staff and headquarters have to be set up by the police with support from the

military. This in turn will put new demands on police command and control capabilities well beyond the everyday working levels.

This version of COIN-focus, as being mainly police operations with some military support, is probably the very best as COIN and Irregular Warfare and is positioned right in the very midst of the population. But it is also probably a long-term vision. Only the military structures have command and control capabilities that can handle extended operations.

Regardless of the main focus, where either the police or the military constitute the security bulk, the sooner the people themselves can take responsibility for their security the better. Here, the Military/Police-assistance and training units will be required in large amounts and as we are talking coalition COIN, there have to be some sort of EU/NATO standards for such units.

### **Negative attitudes on COIN and shallow theoretical foundations**

One problem with COIN and Irregular Warfare is the common military mindset and de facto the whole military organization. This problem is elaborated on by John Nagel in his very readable book *Eating Soup with a Knife*.<sup>22</sup> Just as the public health service is organized, trained and

equipped for common health problems, the common military organization is also the same for conventional warfighting. COIN and Irregular Warfare is for the military branch something special and beside the whole structure, mindset, core tradition and aim, just as what certain unknown diseases are for a general hospital.

Specialist treatment is then needed. In the COIN-case, no such specialists have been trained, units produced, or tactics developed within a designed operational context in western armies since World War II or since the Vietnam War, which for many different reasons was lost. This has often been compared with the British success in Malaya in 1948-60, not bearing in mind the very different settings of the scene with severe difficulties several years before unified intelligence machinery could turn the wheel.<sup>23</sup>

If we consider the settings, tactical and operational, military and even more comprehensive with or supporting the police work, as Irregular Warfare and COIN are quite a challenge within the military sphere, further aims at unconventional warfare will be even more problematic.

As we have to bring forward coalition interoperable solutions, a common understanding and willingness to tread in the same direction has to be reached. One way,

22 Op. cit. footnote 3

23 Op. cit. footnote 10, p. 494-518, Victory in Malaya (from the intelligence view).

Connor, Ken: *Elitstyrka SAS*, Historiska Media, Lund 1998. p. 32-59 Malaya 1950-58 (from a Special Forces view)

for example within the EU, is to deal with Irregular Warfare and COIN as if it were not necessary to be labelled and discussed as a case at all. Again, the theoretical foundation for military theory on COIN and Irregular Warfare is very shallow and diversified. The “Panta Rei”<sup>24</sup> landscape of definitions within this area shows this very clearly.

The opposite is, nevertheless, to formulate and adapt a multinational EU doctrine or concept for Irregular Warfare/COIN. In any case, NATO has to choose to adapt the U.S. way or to create a NATO-way, if not a Nelsonian “I really don’t see that signal” approach<sup>25</sup> is chosen. The “no-case” alternative is of course an option also. But already in the transformation way to more expeditionary capabilities for all members, the irregular context is wholly addressed even today. The next step should then be “how” to do it, after the counter-guerrilla boots on the ground have left the expeditionary keels from the sea.

Looking at the whole international system with states and other actors interacting on each other, their toolboxes have to be considered. As tools exist both for different functions and for different situations, both dimensions have, at least, to be un-

derstood to exist, if not fully opened up. This clearly starts with a sound interaction between real-life experiences on COIN and Irregular Warfare being documented and supported by an ongoing research effort in order to bring forward academically solid theories. The education effort is by far the most important strategic tool in order to mature the conventionally focused military system for the actual operational environment.

### **Development of unconventional approaches for irregular warfare operations/campaigns; Three ways ahead with different potentiality of utility**

With the above view of the future for irregular combat we shall outline some unconventional approaches to military operations for irregular warfare in comprehending the civilian dimensions and full joint military scope. Also, we will include a view on the vertical force dimension, from overt via clandestine, to the covert aspects of force utility. The last aspect can be problematic to think of as “coalition-coordinated”.

If Unconventional Warfare capabilities will be enlarged, due to a strategy built on such a base, what will be and can be the content in a coalition perspective? Also,

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24 *Panta Rei* latin for “Everything is floating”

25 A classic remark from one of the many battles Lord Nelson took part in. During the battle, the British higher command signalled to retreat. Lord Nelson was sure that it was possible to win, so he put his binoculars to his blind eye and said “I really don’t see that signal” and then approached the enemy. He succeeded and the enemy was beaten in the end. If this approach is a wise one for the COIN-challenge can only be assessed by tomorrow’s history research.

what content is possible and suitable to work on in terms of being unconventional? As for the original definition, the subject of subversion and sabotage might not be proper within a “peace force”.

One does not mix overt and covert activities. For obvious reasons, the whole point of a covert need is indeed that it is not to be addressed openly – not even as a definition regarding one’s own ambition. Rather, it falls under the actual “other governmental department” resources that will be there if different nations have such needs, and some will obviously have these.

This leads us to the need to frame the “unconventional warfare” content in rather a hard way compared to the original meaning of the concept. We need a comprehensive concept for covert, clandestine and also, when suitable, overt (at the surface) political, paramilitary and military actions. The whole dimension could be encompassed in one organization (although short or conventional warfare capabilities being the main force contributor).

UW “light” is probably the best that can be accomplished when we speak of coalitions, just as Intelligence “light” in a coalition National Intelligence Cell (NIC) -structure, which is well-known from the events in the Balkans and Afghanistan. More valuable collections are always directed on a nation-to-nation basis, as they always have been. Trust is a rare and expensive condition that cannot be risked too easily.

Here we see two different possible approaches. Either UW-support from a new

large U.S. construction on a civilian base, a new OSS, which may probably not be a way that other nations will try for some time at least, or, UW-capabilities within SOF-structures, where embryonic resources are still to be found. These are the two ways ahead, but the latter may be the first we will meet in the coming irregular warfare-compatible forces.

Thus enlarged to the “full package coalition force”, which as an expeditionary force can be deployed and employed in an irregular warfare context, at least three different approaches can be drawn up.

*The first one* is the most *conventional*, but yet more developed than today’s option; conventional in the meaning that the bulk consists of a coalition Combined Joint Task Force under a UN/NATO/EU-mandate. We see a *more COIN-capable* approach among the soldiers and also more comprehensive staff work, more trained for 3-block warfare than today; also definitely more trained for multifunctional coordination, as that is the key to the population. The SOF units have adapted *more core-capabilities in unconventional warfare* but are still a narrow resource. The ongoing trend of mixing civilian intelligence units with SOF has developed, but is still a challenge to coordinate for the Force Commander. *Covert actions are not within the capabilities* or mandates for the Force Commander.

*The second* is a developed Joint Force that strategically, operationally and tactically rests on a *common COIN-doctrine*. The military forces have developed a prob-

ably British-oriented core of infantry units trained and with a mindset for operations *within* the people. It also rests on an EU-version of the U.S. Army/Marine Corps FM 3-24<sup>26</sup> guidelines.

The multifunctionality rests on a command structure with a civilian overall Director of Operations. However, we still see a lack of civilian units in quantity that rapidly fill in where the military creates pockets of security. The gendarmerie-production within the U.S. and the EU has been enlarged, but the mindset still has some way to go. The Special Forces are as mentioned above, but the FID-missions have been solved in a better way.

Besides needing more SOF for this, we also see Army units now dedicated for it. The Force Commander, and above all the Director of Operations, has a *clear capacity for traditional Unconventional Warfare within his/her command*. This could include, or not include, depending on the coalition members' opinion on political benefit or, more likely, on risks, *capabilities inside or supported by covert actions*.

*The third way is the most revolutionary in CRO-affairs*. The Coalition Joint Multifunctional Unit (CJMU), under a Director of Operations, is employed only after the Unconventional Warfare operations, in their full reach of an overt, clandestine and covert shaping phase have clearly reached their end state, i.e. the full and credible

wish of the population for the CMJU to arrive. The core of the gendarmerie seizes the order and is backed up with instant armed assets from behind.

The shaping phase is carried out first from other governmental resources. Now, it is not a U.S. but a *coalition non-military unconventional warfare organization, supported by the coalition military special forces* primarily dedicated to UW. Today's DA-engagement and direction for the air assets has been transferred to non-special forces such as Air Force commandos or equally well-suited Army Rangers or Marine commandos.

Here we see a fully all-governmental multifunctional comprehensive unit operating exactly as addressed in 3-24, with a British mindset – a lightened Army more “SOC”-capable unit for both DA and fire direction and also for FID, the inverted UW. The SOF, which mainly has a direct approach focus as it does today, but is more developed to work “combined” with intelligence and law enforcement units, is the force most UW-capable and the glue between the “shaping force”, *the fully civilian UW – force* supporting the Director of Operations. The Director of Operations should have the authority to command also covert affairs, thus leaving this outside the overt military force and command chain.

The described three ways forward should

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26 *The U.S. Army/ Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* – FM 3-24, MCWP 3-33,5, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2007

be seen as possible examples more than actual alternatives. Neither one will probably see the daylight of tomorrow outlined exactly as above. Nevertheless, in one way or another questions on how to enhance capabilities for COIN are waiting for a military answer as well for political and strategic decisions that can be compromised among the western countries. Multifunctional solutions that bring forward military, the gendarmerie and different potent police capabilities have probably to be found in order to be able to deal at all with COIN-operations.

The degree of military unconventional warfare capabilities will also meet with discussions, not least within the military system itself.

### **Conclusions and remarks**

The military problem of Irregular Warfare and modern counterinsurgency needs are multidimensional. The root problem lies in the limited theory apparatus and the traditional conventional military approach, or non-approach, to this form of war and thus the new need for military utility. This is an approach that has constantly neglected repeated experiences related to military efforts in irregular environments all over the world.

Secondly, there are the comprehensive challenges in order to either bring civilian sectors closer to the military, or to create some new “comprehensive units” under civilian command. Thirdly, a new effort in research regarding irregular warfare theory

has to be launched in order to support the needs for new doctrines. This probably has to be done in a multinational way and has to be broader than a “Special Operations University”.

Research, theories, doctrines and accepting experiences are vital cornerstones. The next step is by whom is this to be absorbed and used in its execution? Should it be the military still with a big-war mindset reluctantly hiding this, or a new generation of officers and soldiers with an understanding also of the small-war challenges and demands?

If one does not dare to take the second approach, the roads to irregular capabilities will still be as problematic as they are today. The decision for military development lies in the hands of the politicians.

In some ways the future of irregular warfare capacities also lies in the hands and minds of the military system and in the academic world connected to war studies. If neither of these groups recognize the needs or benefits of digging into the nonconventional world of war and warfare, more people will die and more hearts and minds will be lost and turned to enemies. As has been the case many times before, it seems wise to combine the use of both the sword and the pen in order to reach better military utility in actual warfare and operations.

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