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THESIS

**TRANSFORMATION: A BOLD CASE FOR
UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE**

by

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June 2004

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TRANSFORMATION: A BOLD CASE FOR UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

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ABSTRACT

Our “Bold Case for Unconventional Warfare” argues for the establishment of a new branch of military service called the Department of Strategic Services. The single mission for this new branch of service would be the conduct of Unconventional Warfare (UW). The thesis statement is: Unconventional Warfare is a viable tool for achieving national security objectives under certain circumstances. There are two hypotheses. Hypothesis One states that in order for UW to be effective it must be managed in accordance with specific principles. Hypothesis Two states that, to optimize UW, a new branch of service under the Department of Defense is required.

The first part of this study thoroughly deals with the concept of UW. Chapter II establishes the strategic requirement and lays the foundation of our argument by explaining the differences between UW and conventional warfare. Chapter III explains the requirements for dealing with substate conflicts. The salient point is that substate conflicts are essentially local conflicts. Therefore, intimate “microclimate” knowledge of a given local level environment is necessary for proper solutions to be applied. Chapter IV is essentially the heart of this study. In it we articulate our operational construct for UW, which revolves around an indigenous-based force used to provide security at the local level in order for the US to gain influence in a targeted population. A UW Model is offered to support this operational construct.

In the second half of this thesis we build our case for the creation of a new UW branch. Chapter V analyzes policy directives given to the DoD by civilian leadership, military doctrine, and schooling. In sum, these reveal a conventional military aversion to the use of UW. Chapter VI includes a comparative case study analysis of US Special Forces efforts in the Vietnam War and El Salvador. The conceptual discussion in Chapters I thru IV supported by the research and analysis of Chapters V and VI together make up “A Bold Case for UW.”

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I. A BOLD CASE FOR UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

Military transformation has less to do with technology than it does bureaucracy.

--Robert Kaplan¹

Most Department of Defense (DoD) think tanks, when they consider how the military must change to meet the threats of the new century, do not associate “transformation” with unconventional warfare. Instead, transformation is seen as making the force better linked, more high-tech, agile, and lethal. These components are certainly valid areas for improvements, but what are they transforming? As Kaplan states, modification *to* the bureaucracy is the real transforming idea. Indeed, a complete turn of mind is necessary to truly transform. The DoD must not only focus on how to make the existing force more functional (which is essentially what current transformation efforts are focused on) but also rethink its approach to warfare. The fundamental question is this: Can the US rely on diplomacy/deterrence, or if that fails, power projection to accomplish all of its’ strategic objectives? The authors of this thesis do not believe it can. Rather, we see a gap between what can be accomplished through diplomacy and what can be accomplished with traditional military power. In the attempt to bridge this gap, we offer Unconventional Warfare (UW) as a solution. But what is unconventional warfare? And why is it so different from traditional warfare?

The need for the US to understand the phenomenon of unconventional warfare has never been so great. Immersed in conflict across the globe, from the low-level counter terrorist operations in the Philippines, to the more intensive combat-zones of Afghanistan and Iraq, the US has never had to deal with unconventional conflict on such a grand scale.

¹ Robert Kaplan, “The Global Security Situation in 2010 and How the Military Must Evolve to Deal with it,” speech given at the Marine Memorial Hotel, San Francisco, Jan 2004.

Just a decade ago the US was in a much better position. The Former Soviet Union (FSU) had collapsed and the nation looked forward to an indefinite period of peace and prosperity. But as US interests expanded into the FSU's sphere of influence, the dynamics of globalization and all of its associated problems—to include terrorism—began to emerge. Now, the US finds itself in a continuous state of conflict. And the US military, with its penchant for large-scale, swift, high-tech war, is incongruent with the current state of affairs.

We posit, like Kaplan, that this is an institutional problem rather than a lack of will, training, or even appropriate doctrine. This problem of which we speak is a product of numerous factors, among them: a century-long focus on Clausewitzian-based conventional war, a preference on the part of the military to exclude itself from complex situations like substate conflicts, and an institutional bias that views unconventional conflict in the same terms as conventional war; meaning, the same thing only at a lower intensity.

Assuming the US does not abdicate itself from dealing with newfound threats, we see three possible alternatives for the US military to cope with these institutional defects: 1) undertake *wholesale* change and force the military to adapt to the new threat environment; 2) promote the growth, development, and proper operational use of the tools the military already has; or 3) create a new organization, under Department of Defense control, whose sole purpose would be to conduct unconventional warfare on a global scale.

The first scenario must be dismissed. No matter how much the military transforms, it cannot divorce itself from its primary responsibility—to fight and win conventional wars. Accomplishing this objective requires the military to be adept at conventional war. It must be trained and equipped to defeat the most dangerous foe on the battlefield. This requires a conventional army. Also, the deterrence and coercion capabilities of a conventional army are so valuable that they cannot possibly be quantified. Transforming the military to embrace unconventional warfare would ultimately negate the overall effectiveness—in

warfighting as well as the more indirect usages of the force—and this, we posit, is an impossible transformation.

The second alternative, albeit better than the first, would only be marginally effective. The primary tool for UW in the US Military arsenal is the US Army's Special Forces (USSF) controlled by the Special Operations Command (SOCOM). Certainly SOCOM has come to the forefront of our nations' military strategy since 9/11, but we assert that they have neglected unconventional warfare and have demonstrated a penchant for a more "hyper-conventional" role. This is due, we believe, to an institutional deficiency that does not comprehend the power of UW. This is not meant to be an indictment of SOCOM, although they are not totally without blame. SOCOM, like all other major commands, must act within the parameters set by theater² commanders. Consequently, an inevitable conventionalization of Special Operating Forces (SOF) occurs. Even if SOCOM assets were not subordinated to theater commanders, the Pentagon's Joint Staff often shapes any unconventional solution into one the conventional military is more comfortable with.³ Secondly, even within SOCOM, only portions of its subordinate commands (like USSFC⁴) are trained in unconventional warfare. All one needs to do is to take a quick survey of the SOCOM staff to see that a minority of the staff are trained unconventional warriors. Most of SOCOM is actually dedicated to the direct action (DA) mission, either in support or execution. The skill of these units is without peer in the US Military, and indeed throughout the world; however, they are highly trained commando units, not

² By "theater" we not only mean the geographical commanders (PACOM, EUCOM, CENTCOM, etc.), but also the Joint Task Force commanders in the operational theaters of Iraq and Afghanistan.

³ The best example of this is the story of how the "unconventional" plan for overthrowing the Taliban regime was dismissed by the Pentagon. CENTCOM, with the JCS endorsement, preferred to wait until the northern passes thawed so an armored invasion could be launched. The 5th Special Forces Group became involved not due to the Pentagon's insistence but rather the CIA's. It was the CIA who briefed and received execution authority for what came to be known as Operation Enduring Freedom. As explained by one of the operational commanders, SF teams from 5th SFG were inserted under the presumption they would be of limited use. The main invasion was to come in the spring.

⁴ USSFC: United States Special Forces Command. This is the organization that resources all of the Special Forces (Green Berets) Groups whose primary mission is UW. The acronym USSF pertains to the Special Forces Groups.

unconventional warriors. Really, these units are best termed “hyper-conventional” rather than unconventional due to their commando origins. Because these are the units that have received the majority of SOCOM’s attention and whose missions are understood by conventional military thinkers, the institutional incentives naturally favor the hyper-conventional over the unconventional.

Therefore, we see the best way for the Department of Defense to develop an unconventional warfare tool is to separate this capability from the conventional military—to create a separate service. If done properly, unconventional warfare could be employed across the spectrum of conflict in both peacetime and war. Unconventional warriors would then be able to advance their careers along parallel lines of their conventional peers without negating their regional expertise, contacts, and educational requirements such as language training. This is of paramount importance since the nature of UW is so distinct from conventional war. UW operator training should reflect that. Moreover, the benefits of a separate UW service (we offer the name the Department of Strategic Services⁵) better serves the needs of our nation, as opposed to the other previously mentioned alternatives, because it would give civilian decision-makers, namely the Secretary of Defense, more options to deal with unconventional threats rather than relying on “conventional” or even “hyper-conventional” solutions.

A. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

We see our task as a two-part process: first, to make a case for UW by explaining its uniqueness and strategic utility, and second, to support our call for a separate service. Of course, within this process we must also describe in detail what exactly Unconventional Warfare is.

In regard to the first part, the requirement for UW must be established. Our notion of UW is not that it is a panacea for every conceivable national

⁵ Hy Rothstein, thesis advisor for this project, originally advanced the idea and name of a Department of Strategic Services in an unpublished DoD report, “The Challenge of UW” 2003.

security problem but rather a solution when certain circumstances exist. These “preconditions” will be established in Chapter II.

Also, the dynamics at work in unconventional conflicts must be explored. We believe that the majority of unconventional conflicts take place at the substate level. For example, it is popular to describe the War on Terror as a global insurgency. Although this sentiment is correct in many respects it does not capture the correct arena. A better way of looking at the War on Terror is to view it as numerous substate conflicts spread out all over the underdeveloped world. Therefore, the dynamics of substate conflict are important to our operational construct of UW. In short, these dynamics mandate a different kind of military solution different from those applied in traditional interstate conflicts.

But even when the circumstances are right, and the dimensions of a conflict are understood, there are also certain principles that should be followed when a UW campaign is initiated. Just as the well-known principles of war are consistent in conventional war, we submit there are enduring UW principles as well. In Chapter IV we offer five UW principles that will be consistent in any UW campaign regardless of the distinctiveness of the conflict.

In regard to the second part of our argument, we examine the US military as an institution and its past experiences with UW. This is done with the understanding that a nation’s experience in UW is unique.⁶ Shy and Collier point out that a nation’s operational concept for unconventional warfare (they actually use the term “revolutionary warfare”) is shaped by its own circumstances. Indeed, in the last century the French experience with UW was different from the British experience, which differed from the Maoist approach, etc. With that in mind, we will explain what UW represents in terms of US military doctrine and how this is codified in the institutional education process. A survey of the US Military’s education process should convince the reader that since the military does not teach UW, it is incapable of understanding its usefulness. This is done with the presumption that doctrine reflects institutional bias. Indeed, what we

⁶ See John Shy and Thomas Collier, “Revolutionary War” in *Makers of Modern Strategy* ed. Peter Paret (Princeton Press: 1986) 815-862

have found reflects a significant bias against using UW as an operational tool for achieving strategic objectives.

Admittedly, our task is difficult, but it has never been so important. With our strategic interests surpassing our nation's ability to secure them, an alternative to traditional military power must be examined. UW represents a strategy that can be particularly effective in dealing with certain threats for which the Military is currently not well suited to confront. Moreover, by relying on an unconventional capability to counter these threats allows the traditional military to excel in its primary mission—fight and win conventional war.

Also, we acknowledge that in covering the material in the manner described, this study becomes more broad than deep. But we feel this is appropriate given the nature of the topic. To understand unconventional warfare, attention has to be given to the nature of substate conflict; and to describe the military's aversion to UW requires that one show the military's penchant for conventional war. All of this, we think, is accomplished in this study but we are aware that there is room for future endeavors that can further support our assertions.

B. THESIS STATEMENT

Unconventional Warfare is a viable tool for achieving national security objectives under certain conditions.

By certain conditions we mean circumstances where traditional military power is either inappropriate or unfeasible.

1. Hypothesis One

Hypothesis One: Unconventional Warfare is a viable tool for achieving strategy objectives when managed in accordance with specific principles.

Since UW is best viewed as an operational tool, the management of it at the strategic level is critical to success. If mismanaged, the campaign is often conventionalized and fails to meet the overall objectives that it was designed to achieve.

2. Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis Two: Optimizing Unconventional Warfare capabilities requires a new branch of service under the Department of Defense.

A key component to Hypothesis One is that a mismanaged UW campaign is a result of misunderstanding the nature of UW. We argue that this cannot be overcome by a military dominated by traditional warfare tenets. Therefore, in order for a UW perspective to be heard at the senior decision-maker level, a reorganization of the DoD that gives UW a relevant voice is in order.

C. FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Before we begin the process of making our case for UW it is fitting to address the most obvious critique of our position up front. Why change? Isn't the DoD using UW in all of its ongoing operations? The short answer to the former is, we think, self-evident. The position the US now finds itself in, coupled with the evolving nature of conflict, requires the US to be able to confront unconventional threats more effectively. The answer to the later, is unfortunately no. There have been brief interludes when the DoD was on the cusp of harnessing the power of UW, but in every case, an inevitable "conventionalization" of UW efforts occurred. Indeed, even though the military considers itself to be deeply engaged in UW, it is not. UW is a *style* of warfare that must be executed by the right people and *managed in a specific way* for it to be effective.

One way to view UW is to look at it as social warfare waged at the local level—not social work, but a kind of social networking where the purpose is to get the population to side with "us" as opposed to "them." This is accomplished by

developing a competent, legitimate, indigenous security force. UW can be viewed as problem solving where solutions are based on local conditions and decisions are made at the local level. Granted, certain guidelines must be issued to UW operators but the real knowledge lies with the people on the ground—not in a Joint Task Force headquarters or in the Pentagon. Civilian leaders must monitor UW efforts but the less the conventional military is involved the better as we will demonstrate in Chapter VI. As a general rule, UW is so fundamentally different from conventional warfare that and conventional military leaders do not have the institutional experience and understanding to manage it.

For example, despite the limited UW-like successes experienced in Afghanistan, and to a limited degree in Iraq (northern Iraq), the US Military has fallen back on comfortable ground. As the notable strategist John Arquilla points out in a recent article:

Now our special operators face a challenge as daunting as defeating al Qaeda: persuading senior U.S. military leaders to support their unconventional approach to the war on terror. The issue is less one of material support than moral support, as special force operators are flush with resources for now. What they really need is to know that their concept of operations will be followed in a sustained way. The record is not encouraging. In Afghanistan, nimble, networked special operations by a few hundred soldiers gave way, after the Taliban's fall in late 2001, to a balking, hierarchical approach in which thousands of conventional forces engaged in fruitless sweeps for the enemy. The result: in 2002 and 2003, the Taliban and al Qaeda got back on their feet and reasserted control in many parts of the country. A new, close-held U.N. report confirms this, noting that 14 of the country's 22 districts are no longer under government control.⁷

The fact that the utility of UW is not understood by the US military lies, in part, in SOCOM's own predilection for direct action (DA). Much of this has to do with the original incentive to create USSOCOM. The Iranian hostage crisis and the botched Desert One⁸ rescue attempt resulted in the formation of the Joint

⁷ John Arquilla, "A Better Way to Fight the War on Terror," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, March 28, 2004.

⁸ Actually, the name of the mission was Eagle Claw but has since been referred to as Desert One due to the catastrophic failures at the refueling site, which was given the name Desert One.

Special Operations Command (JSOC) in 1982, and subsequently, the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in 1987. JSOC was given the specific directive of planning and executing special operations, and directly controlling the Army's Delta Force and Navy's SEAL Team 6, who have the primary responsibility for combating terrorism.⁹ Consequently, SOCOM emphasized DA over UW. As noted by one USSF general, "SOCOM has spent the last thirty years trying to correct the deficiencies found in the Holloway commission."¹⁰

Although modern Special Forces (SF) units have existed since 1952 and were the original core around which the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) was formed, by and large, officer career development has not been conducive to specializing in UW. Rather, SF officers are required to attend the same institutional schooling and hold certain career enhancing positions to be elevated up the chain of command. Consequently, the UW capability of these officers is diminished. Language training is neglected and contacts gained in one region are lost due to excessive rotations out of the officer's region of expertise. The bottom line is that SF officers require more regional education and longer assignments in their theaters of expertise than they do military assignments that compete with conventional career patterns.

Last but not least, unconventional warfare has never been truly appreciated by the military as a legitimate means of warfighting. This is not surprising since the stigma attached to unconventional, surrogate, or "dirty" war goes back to our nation's origins. General George Washington himself insisted on establishing a "proper" Army modeled after the Europeans.¹¹ This has continued throughout our history and became even more apparent in the post-Vietnam War era when the Special Forces were nearly disbanded. Proof of this stigma can be seen in both written doctrine and the institutional schooling

⁹ Lucien Vandenbroucke, *Perilous Options, Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 171-173.

¹⁰ The Holloway Commission was formed to investigate the failures associated with the Desert One fiasco. This comment was shared with the authors in a private conversation. The General Officer who made this remark will remain nameless upon his request.

¹¹ Thomas Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishing, 1998), 27.

curricula. Lieutenant General (Retired) William Yarborough stated a similar argument in a forward he wrote for the book, *Special Forces of the United States Army 1952/1982*:

Generally speaking, none of the United States' Armed Forces have been willing to allow any significant degree of individual specialization in the art of unconventional warfare without imposing what the persons involved have often seen as an unacceptable career penalty. Purely Service considerations have frequently prevented cross education in political and psychological matters essential to a fully qualified unconventional warfare expert. The cautious conservatism inherent in traditional military organizational concepts continues to work against promulgation within the regular military structure of the types of unusual and non-regulation formations that might work best in unconventional warfare situations.¹²

The point being that, as the US Military finds itself waging a war against an unconventional foe; it is once again learning how difficult counterinsurgency operations actually are but continues to frame unconventional conflicts incorrectly. This is telling since the enemy we face is likely to become more unconventional rather than more conventional. Indeed, there is every reason to expect that the threat will become even more complex and more dispersed. That transnational terrorists, localized insurgents, and transnational crime networks will become more intertwined is not only possible, but likely. The fact that these kinds of threats are on the horizon is not a particularly newfound realization. Sam Sarkesian, in his 1993 book *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era*, wrote:

The United States remains best prepared to fight the least likely wars (conventional European-style) and least prepared to fight the most likely wars (unconventional).¹³

We offer the above discussion as a counterpoint to those who may believe that the US Military is adapting to the security environment in which we now find

¹² Ian Sutherland, *Special Forces of the United States Army 1952/1982* (San Jose, CA: Bender Publishing, 1990), 6.

¹³ Sam Sarkesian, *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era, Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 14.

ourselves. Finally, any conception of UW must begin with the understanding that this type of warfare is an operational strategy that is conducted “through, by, and with” indigenous or surrogate forces in order to gain influence amongst a targeted population. Once this is understood, we hope the reader will realize that the requirements to execute this kind of strategy are not compatible with the traditional approach toward conflict.

D. PRELUDE TO INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS

1. Chapter II: Strategy—The Strategic Utility of UW

Any discussion of UW would be incomplete without first identifying the strategic requirement. In short, UW is an appropriate strategy when the strategic objective is important and use of traditional military power is inappropriate. Secondly, this chapter will show how distinct UW is from conventional war. The renowned military thinker Karl Von Clausewitz’ “trinity” will be used to show that an understanding of the “people” is of primary importance to successful conflict resolution in unconventional wars. Since the conventional approach to war is predicated on counterforce operations, conventional forces are not suited to cope with situations where the population represents the center of gravity.

2. Chapter III: Context—The Dynamics of Substate Conflict

Although we attempt to make a case for the application of UW on a grand scale, the arena for unconventional warfare will almost always be at the substate level. We use the term “substate conflict,” but in truth, many other terms could apply like: small war, low intensity conflict, proxy war, etc. One may ask, “Why worry about substate conflicts when the threat is transnational terrorists?” Indeed, terrorism is a valid concern but we believe, and there is evidence to suggest this is true, that terrorism and local insurgencies are inextricably linked. Although terrorists may have international “reach” more often than not their goals are local. Thus the dynamics that help shape the local population are critical to understanding why UW is so useful. Useful strategies in dealing with substate conflicts are also introduced in this chapter.

3. Chapter IV: Application—UW Applied Holistically

The term unconventional warfare, unfortunately, carries significant baggage. UW is often wrongly associated with illegitimate or dirty warfare. To be clear, we do not advocate anything that would be inconsistent with American values or morality. Unconventional warfare is not conventional because it relies on indigenous or surrogate forces, not because the methods used are outside of the parameters of proper military conduct. We view UW as a full spectrum operational construct rather than just a means to overthrow a hostile regime. The purpose of UW *can* be to undermine a hostile regime, but it can also be used to support a friendly ally. In this chapter we will outline our UW operational construct and conclude with a discussion of the characteristics of UW in order to determine a list of UW principles.

4. Chapter V: Resistance—Why the US Military is Resistant to UW

In this chapter we will attempt to make our case that UW should be represented by an independent service accountable to the Secretary of Defense. To do so, we examine policy directives given to the military by civilian leaders, doctrine, and the professional military education curricula. This is done under the presumption that how the military responds to policy directives reveals a preference, how that preference is codified is in doctrine, and how the preference is perpetuated is captured in the education process. By revealing that the military has a preference for conventional war solutions to military problems we will be able to support our hypothesis that for UW to be optimized it must be managed by its own independent service. That being said, it is not necessarily a bad thing that the military has a preference for conventional war. After all, that is its primary mission. To expect the same organization to also be proficient in unconventional war minimizes the overall effectiveness of UW *and* conventional warfare.

5. Chapter VI: Examples—A Case Study Analysis

To show that UW can work if applied correctly, we will analyze the case of El Salvador. What defines the successes of this UW campaigns is that the mission was executed without undo interference from the US Military's high command. This premise is supported in the first case study of the Vietnam Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG). Although the initial successes of the CIDG program were clear, US military "conventionalization" took its toll on the operation, which resulted in the abandonment of the program. Thus, the CIDG case study offers us an example of UW being used correctly, but managed poorly. Both of these case studies offer significant lessons that directly impact our assertion that UW can achieve strategic objectives but must be managed properly. Additionally, they speak to the necessity to separate the US Military's UW capability out from under the control of the larger, more conventional force-structure which includes SOCOM. These cases were selected not only for their merits but also with the understanding that they are part of history. We did not select the more recent examples of Afghanistan, Iraq, and other so-called UW efforts like Operation Enduring Freedom in the Philippines because they are ongoing and the final results have not been determined.

6. Chapter VII: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter we conclude this study with a summary highlighting the key points made in this thesis. In the end we hope to have made a bold case for UW as a unique and appropriate strategy for selected threats. Although this study focuses on why UW should be optimized and less on how this should be done, we would be remiss if we did not offer any recommendations. Therefore, in this chapter we also provide a few suggestions that will help the US realize the enormous potential of UW.

Our recommendations revolve around creating a separate service to manage global UW efforts. We will outline what kind of capabilities this new Department of Strategic Services must have, its concept of operations, support

and educational requirements. It is these kinds of reforms that we believe must ultimately be enacted for the US to fully realize the potential of UW. To try to “fix” the problem as we have defined it from within the current military structure will ultimately lead to conventionalization. This has repeatedly been the case over the last fifty years.

II. STRATEGIC UTILITY—WHY UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE?

Present circumstances call for even more than a new concept of war...

—Edward Luttwak¹⁴

Before the case for UW can be established, and certainly before we can support our call for a separate service within the DoD to manage UW efforts, we must first establish the requirement for UW. To be clear, when we refer to unconventional warfare we are not talking about an opaque concept like Joseph Nye's "soft power."¹⁵ Although Nye makes a great case for the US to optimize its soft power, we are referring to something more along the lines of what Luttwak advocates—a new concept of war. This new concept is not centered on multilateral state building, but rather on small teams with intimate knowledge of local conditions and personal contacts. This, in regard to how the US currently views conflict, is unconventional.

Ironically, there is nothing new about indirect approaches to war. The great Sun Tzu himself makes a solid case for war by other means through promoting tactics that require the commander to attack weakness, avoid strength, and above all else, be patient.¹⁶ This is consistent with what we consider UW to be—an indirect use of military power. By adopting a "through, by, and with" strategy toward war the US is able to exert influence without placing its national prestige on the line.

For many decades the western world, and especially the US, has split grand strategy into convenient stovepipes: diplomatic, economic, military, etc. Military strategy is predicated on defeating armies on land, at sea, in the air, or

¹⁴ Edward Luttwak, "Toward Post-Heroic Warfare," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1995, 122.

¹⁵ Power based on intangible or indirect influences such as culture, values, and ideology. Joseph Nye, of Harvard University, is the most outspoken proponent for soft power. He coined the term in the 1990s.

¹⁶ Shy and Collier, 823.

even in space. This leaves the US ill equipped to deal with substate conflicts where traditional military power is significantly less appropriate and often counterproductive. Therefore, to make a case for UW, one must first realize its usefulness. The case for UW has to show that it is better than the current US Military paradigm for dealing with at least one end of the so-called “spectrum of conflict.”¹⁷

This chapter is broken down into two parts. The first of these deals with the strategic need to be able to cope with situations where strategic interests exist, but the US does not have an optimal solution—at least in military terms. The second part is more esoteric. Essentially, it highlights why the US military does not currently have an adequate solution for problems that are not related to conventional war. To explain this we look at the writing of the renowned military thinker Karl Von Clausewitz. Clausewitz’ “trinity” will be examined to show that the fundamental nature of war has not changed, but the method in which we must deal with it is different in conflicts where “the people” are the center of gravity.¹⁸ Building on this point we will explain, in part, why conventional armies are so ill equipped to deal with these kinds of situations.

A. THE STRATEGIC REQUIREMENT

This discussion of strategy is focused on military strategy, not grand strategy.¹⁹ In the case of the US, our military strategy is sound. Our ability to carry it out is not. According to the National Military Strategy,²⁰ the US’ strategic principles of “Agility, Integration, and Decisiveness” are designed to:

¹⁷ The spectrum of conflict is a term that is often used in military circles that refers to a range of operations where US force could be applied. The spectrum ranges from low intensity operations like humanitarian assistance to high intensity conventional war.

¹⁸ DoD definition. Those characteristics, capabilities, or sources of power from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or the will to fight.

¹⁹ Grand strategy is often referred to as national strategy. The document that articulates the US’ grand strategy is the National Security Strategy.

²⁰ Department of Defense, “National Military Strategy—A Strategy For Today; A vision for Tomorrow,” http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/document_377_National%20Military%20Strategy%2013%20May%2004.pdf. 7

Support simultaneous operations through the application of overmatching power and the fusion of US military power with other instruments of power. These principles stress speed, allowing US commanders to exploit an enemy's vulnerabilities, rapidly seize the initiative and achieve end states. They support the concept of surging capabilities from widely dispersed locations to mass effects against an adversary's centers of gravity to achieve objectives. Our strategic principles guide the application of military power to protect, prevent and prevail in ways that contribute to longer-term national goals and objectives.

These are sound operational concepts for a super-power like the United States. But in reality, the US cannot execute them when: 1) the enemy is virtually undetectable, 2) the enemy is not easily located but rather intermixed amongst the population, 3) when the initiative cannot be gained because intelligence is lacking, and 4) decisive force meant to "mass effects against an adversary's center of gravity" is not possible because the center of gravity is the non-combatant population.

Yet these scenarios define the exact situation in which the US often finds itself today. As 9/11 proved, threats emerge from austere locations and are so small in scope that they cannot be detected by high-tech surveillance methods. Secondly, when the US is required to "project power" there are often significant gaps in intelligence about local conditions that severely limit the ability of the US to respond in the *appropriate* manner.²¹ What the US needs is a mechanism that is capable of achieving "situational awareness" at the local level prior to deploying military forces overseas. In sum, the US needs a capability that is somewhere in-between the CIA's intelligence gathering responsibility and the Military's warfighting expertise.

Andre Beaufre, the relatively unknown but astute French strategist, was thinking along these same lines when he wrote his treatise on Strategy.²² Beaufre views strategy as the sum of an overarching philosophy and an

²¹ See Jeffrey White, "Some Thoughts on Irregular Warfare," <http://www.cia.gov/csi/studies/96unclass/irregular.htm>. White refers to the "the considerable differences between modern and irregular warfare" which leads to fundamentally different intelligence requirements.

²² Andre Beaufre, *Introduction to Strategy* (New York: Praeger Inc., 1966)

operational concept. According to Beaufre, the aim of strategy is to fulfill the objectives laid down in policy by making the best use of resources. It is not a single-track approach. He states:

*Strategy cannot be a single defined doctrine, it is a method of thought, the object of which is to codify events, set them in order of priority and then choose the most effective course of action. There will be a special strategy to fit each situation; any given strategy may be the best possible in certain situations and the worst conceivable in others.*²³ (emphasis added)

Beaufre lays out five distinct patterns of strategy. The manner in which they are used are a function of: 1) the importance of the objective, 2) the resources available, and 3) freedom of action (meaning the feasibility of action whether it be political or physical). Although he does not specifically speak to unconventional warfare as being a tool with which objectives can be achieved, he does state that if the freedom of action is large but the resources available are inadequate to achieve a military decision, the state must embark on a protracted struggle at a low level of military intensity. He cites Mao Tse-tung as the chief advocate of this kind of struggle. Beaufre, whether he knows it or not, is talking about unconventional warfare. Granted, Mao's terror tactics are not something the US should duplicate, but the association of Mao with a protracted struggle is a good one because Mao understood that it is often necessary to trade space for time. The goal of his organization, at least in the beginning, was to survive and grow, not to defeat the Japanese Imperial Army.²⁴ Since the population is the center of gravity in any protracted struggle at the substate level, an operational concept designed to "win" the support of the population is certainly useful if not essential. The following table shows how Beaufre's operational concepts are related to his five patterns of strategy.

²³ Beaufre, 13.

²⁴ Although Mao was fighting the Japanese Imperial Army he was also in a contest with the Nationalist government headed by Chiang Kai-shek for the popular support of the Chinese People. Thus, even though Mao was fighting an invading army much of the conflict was governed by substate dynamics since he was forced to rely on popular support for his survival.

Figure 1. Beaufre’s Five Patterns of Strategy

<u>Strategy Employed</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Freedom of Action (Physical or Political)</u>	<u>Operational Concept</u>
Direct Threats	Moderate in Importance	Large	Limited	Deterrence/ Coercion
Indirect Pressure	Moderately Important	Inadequate	Limited	Diplomatic/Economic Pressure
Series of Successive Actions	Major Importance	Limited	Restricted	*Limited Engagements using Conventional Forces
Protracted Struggle	Major Importance	Inadequate to secure a military Decision	Large	Low Level of Military Intensity or **UW
Violent Conflict aiming at Military Victory	Major Importance	Large	Large	Major Engagements involving Conventional Forces

* Beaufre fails to articulate a specific operational construct for this strategy. Instead he cites examples of military adventures that had limited objectives. For simplicity, we call the operational construct a limited use of conventional forces.
 **Beaufre actually uses the term “low level of military intensity” but for clarity in this thesis the authors add UW.

Using Beaufre’s guidelines for the application of different strategies based on circumstances, we are able to come up with some parameters for when UW is an appropriate operational construct. Essentially, these can be viewed as “preconditions” for the employment of UW. These preconditions are:

1. When the Objective is of Major Importance

This precondition could easily be misinterpreted as the existence of an ongoing crisis. However, crisis response is not the ideal situation for UW. Rather, UW is best used to prevent crisis. Therefore, the precondition of an objective being “of major importance” really speaks to threats that are below the event horizon. This is important since there must be some kind of “bar” for when to employ UW for the simple reason that the US does not have the capacity to try to solve every unfavorable situation around the globe. The best way, we think, to establish that the objective is of major importance is to ask a question

reminiscent of the first condition of the now-famous Weinberger Doctrine. Does the emerging threat have the potential to threaten vital (or important) US national interests?²⁵

To be able to answer this question requires an understanding of what is important and what is vital. Fortunately, there is a tradition for this kind of language in US national security circles. Former Secretary of Defense William Perry articulates the difference between the two by stating, “vital” interests are those where, if threatened, the US’ survival is at stake.” These include “critical economic interests, and any future nuclear threat.” In regard to important interests, Perry characterizes these as, “not vital, but important” like protecting democracy and preventing chaos.²⁶ Perry’s comments offer a good standard for what kind of interests the US must protect. If one adds the *potential* for those interests to be threatened, the first precondition for the use of UW has been met.

2. When Resources are Inappropriate to Secure a Conventional Military Decision

Essentially, this precondition for the use of UW asks the question: Are conventional military forces likely to produce the intended result? As we will elaborate throughout this thesis, conventional operational concepts are not suited for unconventional conflicts. It is well documented that conventional forces require significant numbers to deal with unconventional conflicts, e.g. Napoleon in Spain, the Soviets in Afghanistan, the US in Iraq, etc. And, as these examples suggest, overwhelming conventional force is only marginally effective—if at all.

²⁵ Casper Weinberger, “The Uses of Military Power,” remarks presented to The National Press Club, Washington, DC, November 28th 1984. The first point of the Weinberger doctrine (often called the Powell Doctrine) states that US combat forces should only be deployed overseas if the particular occasion “is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies.” Our first precondition expands on this and suggests that if the potential for our vital interests to be threatened exists, UW can be an appropriate solution. The difference between these two points is that Weinberger speaks to an existing crisis while our precondition is directed at emerging threats.

²⁶ William Perry, “Let wisdom Guide our use of the Military,” *Navy Times* (May 8, 1995) 18. The situation referred to was the decision to protect democracy in Haiti and prevent massive refugee flows.

3. When Freedom of Action Exists

Beaufre's use of the term "freedom of action" must be further examined. He states, "Freedom of action is essential to retain the initiative which is a fundamental factor in maneuver."²⁷ Meaning, the purpose of all military action is to gain freedom of action and deny it to the enemy. Freedom of action is, essentially, a zero-sum game. The more one side has, the less the other possesses. This is a valid precondition for UW since there may be times when a US UW effort may not have any freedom of action in the targeted population. The example of North Korea under the Kim regime comes to mind. Certainly Kim Jung-Il is a brutal dictator and one might think there are exploitable vulnerabilities, but he also has the population "brainwashed" that he is a deity-like figure. Therefore, any externally sponsored campaign to overthrow the regime, we think, is bound to fail because there does not exist a reasonable amount of freedom of action for a UW campaign. That said, freedom of action could also apply to "freedoms" that are not associated with the targeted population, e.g. domestic or international constraints affect US response. The point being that a certain amount of "freedom" for UW operators to be able to conduct the necessary activities must already exist before a UW campaign is initiated.

By examining Beaufre, one is able to see that there are certain circumstances when the strategic requirement for action is apparent, but both diplomatic and traditional military efforts are incapable of achieving the desired result. This niche is where UW offers the most strategic utility. Why? To answer that question let us turn our attention to Karl Von Clausewitz.

B. UW AND THE CLAUSEWITZ TRINITY

According to Clausewitz, victory in war is a function of three distinct elements. These have often been over-simplified into the people, the

²⁷ Beaufre, 36.

government, and the army.²⁸ However, Clausewitz' actual words are more useful. He states:

War is...a wonderful trinity, composed of the original violence of elements, *hatred and animosity*, which may be looked upon as blind instinct; *of the play of probabilities and chance*, which make it a free activity of the soul; and of the *subordinate nature of a political instrument*, by which it belongs purely to reason.

The first of these three phases concerns more the people; the second, more the General and his Army; the third, more the Government. The passions which break forth in War must already have a latent existence in the peoples. The range which the display of courage and talents shall get in the realm of probabilities and of chance depends on the particular characteristics of the General and his Army, but the political objects belong to the Government alone.

These three tendencies...are deeply rooted in the nature of the subject [war/conflict] and at the same time variable in degree.²⁹

In other words, the outcome of conflict is the result of the interplay between emotion (the people), chance (the army), and reason (the government). How does this apply to unconventional warfare? Essentially, the aim of conventional warfare is to mitigate chance so as to increase the probability of victory. The more adept an army becomes at eliminating "friction"³⁰ on the battlefield, the better able it is to defeat the opposing force. By contrast, the aim of unconventional war is to mitigate (or incite) and shape emotion so as to compel the population to side with "us" as opposed to "them." The importance of these relationships—the army in regard to chance; and emotion in regard to the

²⁸ See Edward J. Villacres and Christopher Bassford, "Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity" *Parameters*, Autumn 1995, 9-19.

²⁹ Karl Von Clausewitz, *On War* J.J. Graham translation (London: Penguin Books, 1968) 121-122.

³⁰ Clausewitz says, "Everything is very simple in War, but the simplest thing is difficult. These difficulties accumulate and produce a friction ..." Ibid.164. Essentially, friction is the net result of complexity. It is also useful to view friction as variables. More variables equal more friction. Conventional war friction is mitigated by accounting for the enemy and friendly situation in addition to human terrain. We submit this requires, at best, second order effect calculations. Unconventional war friction is a result of human dynamics. To mitigate friction in UW, one must account for at least 3rd order effects. This is incredibly more complex.

people—cannot be overstated. Understanding these relationships is critical to being able to understand the difference between conventional and unconventional warfare.

The problem with Clausewitzian-based warfare does not lie in its concept of the “trinity,” but rather in the priorities by which victory is achieved. Clausewitz states:

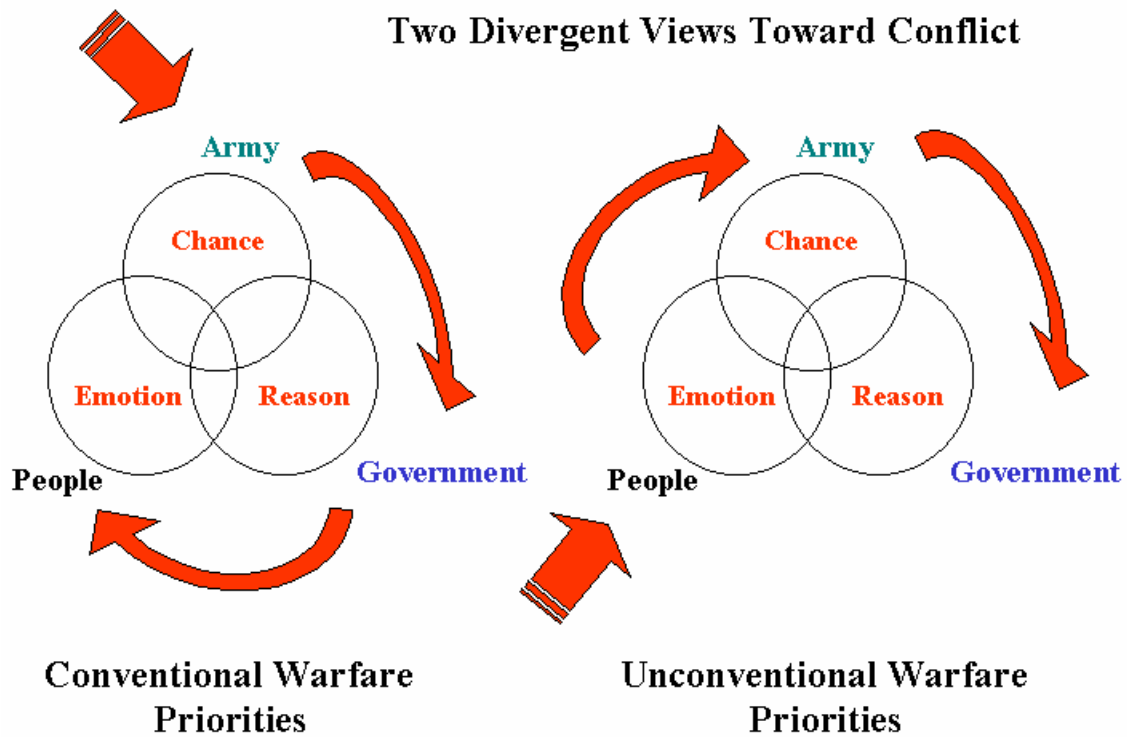
The *military power* must be destroyed, that is, reduced to such a state as not to be able to prosecute the War. The *country* must be conquered, for out of the country a new military force may be formed. But even when both these things are done, still the War, that is, the hostile feeling and action of hostile agencies, cannot be considered as at an end as long as the *will* of the enemy is not subdued...³¹

Clausewitz saw a precise order to war, even though he does concede that this order can change based on circumstances—a point lost on many. The military is defeated first, the country conquered second, and the will of the people subdued third. Thus, conventional warfare (what we have been calling Clausewitzian-based warfare) is designed to defeat the opponent’s military. But in situations where the enemy is not a regular force but rather a foe that is intermixed in the population, the first of Clausewitz’ priorities cannot be achieved before the “will” of the people is on your side. Consequently, the people become the center of gravity. In these situations the inverse of Clausewitz’ priorities become true. Just as conventional war is predicated on the defeat of the opponents’ military, unconventional war is based on co-opting the population. These two approaches to conflict are so diametrically opposed that the same force cannot effectively do both. No advocate of unconventional warfare would assert that UW efforts could defeat the Russian or Chinese army in a conventional battle, and similarly no conventional commander should expect that his forces are trained and equipped to defeat an unconventional enemy

³¹ Clausewitz, 123.

supported by the population.³² That conventional commanders think they can is well established. For example the US experience in Vietnam, which we will highlight Chapter VI, typifies this mindset. At any rate, the following graphic further illustrates the point that the approach to unconventional war must be different than the one taken in conventional war.

Figure 2. Clausewitz & UW



³² There is an exception to this, albeit a non-US example. In the Malayan Emergency of 1948-1960 the British effectively used conventional troops in an unconventional role. Security forces often had to conduct regular police functions and population control measures. Part of the reason this was so successful was that these British units had a long history of operating in Malaya—effectively it was their country. This fact should not be lost on US conventional commanders. The British troops were familiar with the “microclimate” of Malaya. This is hardly ever the case with US forces.

C. THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH—AN ORGANIZATIONAL MISFIT

Since the end of WWII, nearly every conflict (over twenty and counting) has been of the unconventional variety. What is even more fascinating is that when modern powers have engaged in what Van Creveld³³ calls “subconventional” war they are often defeated. The US in Vietnam, the Soviets in Afghanistan, the Israelis in Lebanon were all soundly defeated by irregular forces. Van Creveld cites two reasons for this phenomenon, both of which are environmental in nature.

First, unconventional wars take place in environments where roads, supply depots, and communication infrastructures are generally not well developed. They have to be created, and then once done, must be secured. Although counterintuitive, this gives the insurgent a decisive advantage because of the vulnerability of conventional forces created by having long unprotected lines of communication. Tanks, artillery, and long supply lines actually work against the conventional force because they require a great amount of logistical support. In fact, as Van Creveld points out, the more modern the army, the more disadvantaged they actually are in dealing with irregulars.

Secondly, the environmental conditions of unconventional conflicts are so complex, conventional war mechanisms are unable to cope. As previously stated, one of the aims of conventional warfighting is to minimize the Clausewitzian notion of friction. When faced with unconventional conflict, conventional armies must not only account for the physical environment (terrain) and the enemy’s military, but they also have to anticipate second- and third-order effects on the population. In conventional war, if an air-delivered bomb misses its target, it is just a wasted bomb. In unconventional conflict, if a bomb misses, the ramifications could prove to be significantly counterproductive to the overall effort. Thus, the sheer number of variables involved in this type of conflict makes the ability of a conventional army to cope with friction insurmountable.

³³ Martin Van Creveld, “Technology and War II: Postmodern War?” in *Modern War* ed. Charles Townsend (Oxford University Press, 1997).

Organizational theory helps explain why this is true. In Henry Mintzberg's *Structure of Fives*³⁴ he states any given environment is a result of stability and complexity. Stability can be associated with predictability, complexity with the number of variables. This interplay can be graphically depicted as follows:

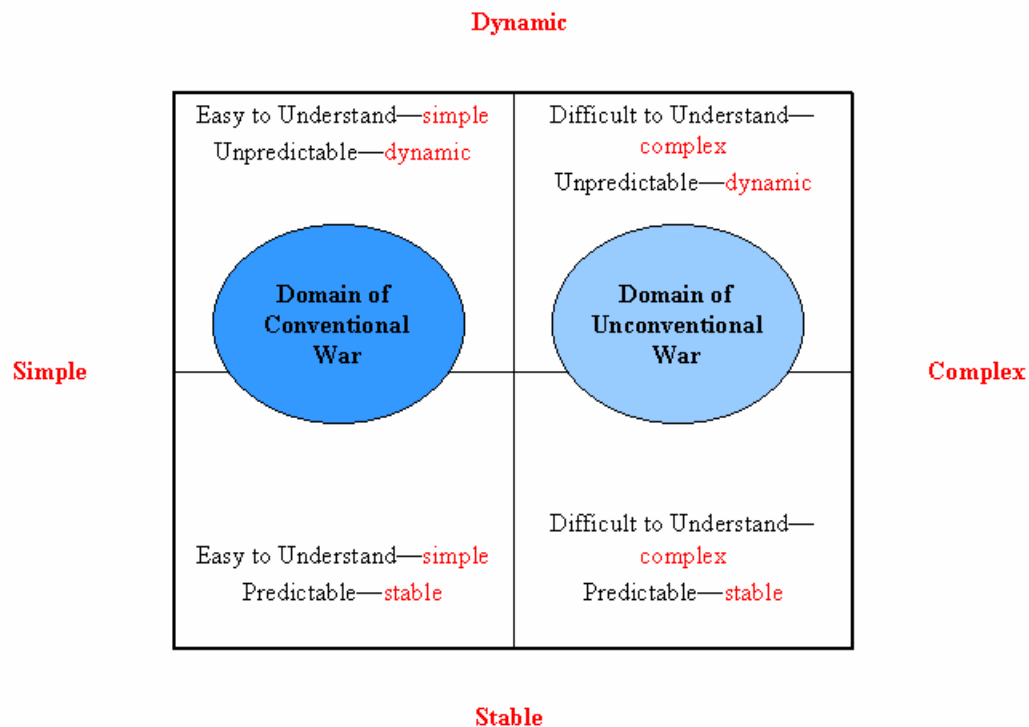


Figure 3. The Operational Environments of Conflict

As seen in preceding graphic, the domain of conventional war is distinctly different from the domain of unconventional war due to the relative complexity involved at the individual soldier level.³⁵ All conflicts are dynamic (unpredictable), but when operating in the domain of unconventional conflict

³⁴ Henry Mintzberg, *Structure of Fives: Designing Effective Organizations* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall Publishing, 1993) 135-145.

³⁵ Just because something is simple does not mean that it is easy. For conventional soldiers combat is far from easy but at least it is understandable. By contrast, a conventional soldier dealing with foreign cultures is invariably more complex situation. The point being that social settings involving a foreign cultures is more complex, not necessarily harder than conventional war, but more complex.

(dynamic and complex) a tremendous amount of foreknowledge is required to competently address the increased number of variables. To be able to understand these variables requires an intimate understanding of what White calls the local “microclimate.”³⁶ The point being that US conventional forces cannot possibly develop this kind of microclimate knowledge due to their inherent responsibility to respond to multiple threats around the globe. Thus, a conventional military in an unconventional conflict does not fit organizationally. In other words, it is an organizational “misfit.”

D. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER II

We have suggested in this chapter that there are certain circumstances where UW is the best operational tool to achieve US objectives. To determine if these conditions exist, we have developed a three-part test based on Beaufre’s patterns of strategy. First, the strategic objective must be important enough to require US action. In other words, the US cannot afford to leave the issue unresolved. Second, the use of traditional military force is not appropriate. This occurs when the nature of the environment is incongruent with the primary mission of the military—fighting a conventional war. These first two preconditions impact the third. When freedom of action in the conventional sense is reduced the freedom of action in the unconventional sense is increased. However, there are limits for UW operations. Therefore, the third precondition is best viewed as the freedom of action being large enough to allow US unconventional soldiers to interact with the population to produce the desired outcome.³⁷

Additionally, this chapter examined how UW efforts differ from more conventional methods. In sum, UW achieves its objectives by interaction with local populations rather than focusing on counter-force operations. Granted,

³⁶ Jeffrey White, “Some Thoughts on Irregular Warfare” <http://www.cia.gov/csi/studies/96unclass/iregular.htm>. Characteristics of this microclimate include: geography, ecology, history, ethnicity, religion, and politics. We would add to White’s list personal contacts and knowledge of key local figures.

³⁷ It is also important to note that freedom of action can also be limited by factors external to the targeted population.

counter-force operations are an integral part of UW but support from the indigenous population (to include a host nation's military) is the primary method from which these operations are conducted. Finally, the environment in which UW is best suited was explained using a simple organizational theory approach. The dynamics at work in this environment is the subject of the next chapter.

III. CONTEXT—THE DYNAMICS OF SUBSTATE CONFLICT

If you wish for peace, understand war—particularly the guerrilla and subversive forms of war.

—Liddell Hart³⁸

In the previous chapter, we discussed how the domain of unconventional conflict is markedly different from conventional conflict from the macro point of view. This chapter will present unconventional conflict from the micro point of view, covering the operational and even tactical considerations for operating in the unconventional conflict domain.

The famous military scholar, Liddell Hart, in his early writings coined the axiom, “If you want peace, understand war.” He believes, and we agree, that this phrase is better than the more commonly used dictum, “If you wish for peace, prepare for war.” Preparing for war tends to focus training on the most recent conflict, or on false assumptions about what the next conflict will be like. *Understanding* war, particularly guerrilla and subversive war, is an entirely different matter. This chapter takes up Hart’s challenge.

Much of the problem in understanding guerrilla and subversive war at the micro level is compounded by the literature on the subject. Guerrilla warfare, subversive warfare, or unconventional warfare (all of which are merely *styles* of warfare) is often used to characterize the environmental setting as well. But even when the environment is correctly described there is a surplus of terms. For instance, small wars, low intensity conflicts, substate conflicts, wars of liberation, insurgency/counterinsurgencies are but a few examples. There is such a plethora of related terms to describe atypical warfare and the environment in which it takes place that this could be distracting to the reader. Even the term “terrorism” can create difficulties since many see terrorism as something altogether dissimilar to from a traditional insurgency. We believe it is not.

³⁸ Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd ed. (London: Meridian Books, 1967), 361.

Terrorism is merely a tactic.³⁹ But terrorism aside, perhaps Colonel C.E. Callwell offers the best solution for reconciling the environmental setting with the type of warfare that exists within it:

Small war is a term which has come largely into use of late years, and which is admittedly somewhat difficult to define. Practically it may be said to include all campaigns other than those where both the opposing sides consist of regular troops.⁴⁰

As Callwell so aptly describes, whatever the term *de jour*, all of these warfare related adjectives and environmental descriptions are generally describing the same phenomenon. In the absence of two relatively equally matched opponents, a style of warfare may emerge that is employed by the weaker side to optimize its strengths and negate the advantages of the stronger opponent.⁴¹

Yet no matter the tactic used—whether it be terrorism or subversion—there are consistent aspects to these types of conflicts. They are, above all else, political, and local politics reign supreme. From this fundamental understanding, effective strategies to achieve ultimate objectives can be derived.

A. THE STRATEGIES OF SUBSTATE CONFLICT

Political control exists at basically three levels: local, provincial, and national. Tip O'Neil's often-cited maxim that "all politics are local" is prophetic when considering what political control in substate conflict means. The expansion from locally based control to the point where the insurgent's goals are realized (whether it be a national homeland or control of the entire state) is what

³⁹ Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, 97 (2003): 344. In this study, Pape empirically demonstrates that terrorist campaigns most often seek to achieve specific territorial goals, namely by the withdrawal of the target states' military forces from what the terrorists see as national homeland. This makes them essentially, insurgents. However, we concede that this view is not wholly accepted in government and academic circles. This would be one area of our study that deserves more attention. If one can show, along the lines of Pape, that the terrorist threat the US faces today is essentially a form of insurgency it could have a tremendous impact on the way the US approaches the War on Terror.

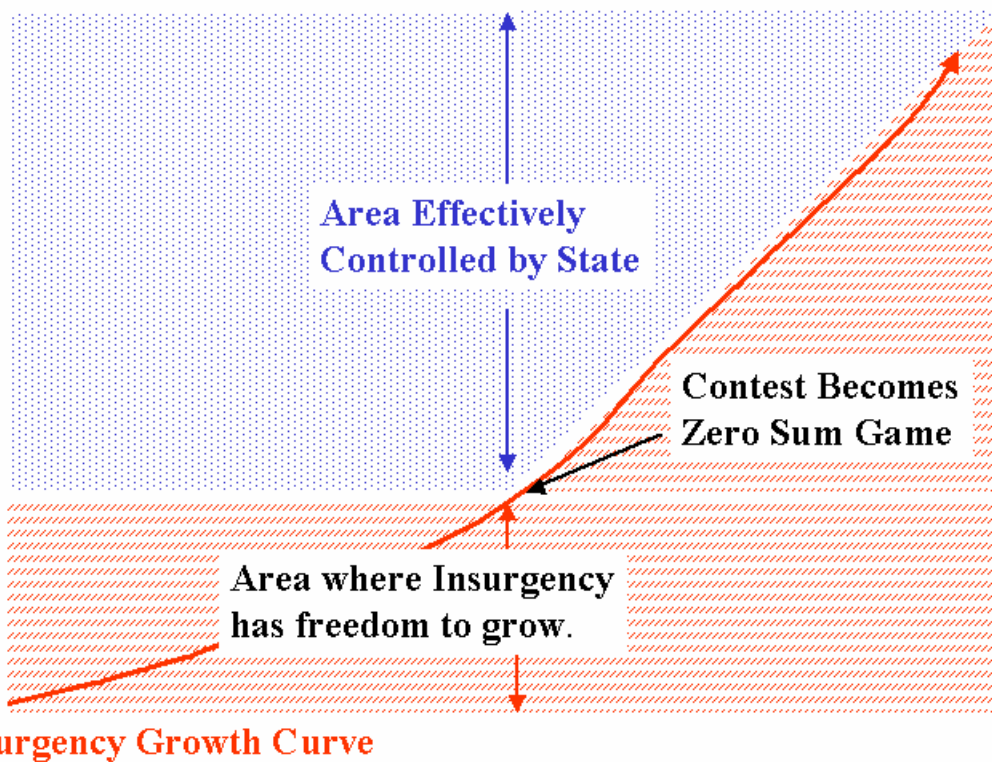
⁴⁰ C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars; Their Principles and Practice* (London: H.M.S.O., 1906), 21.

⁴¹ This dynamic explains terrorism as well. There are exceptions—like the apocalyptic minded Aum Shinrikyo—but by and large, the stronger versus the weaker paradigm holds true for those who employ terror as a style of warfare.

Gordon McCormick calls the insurgent’s “growth curve.”⁴² At some point on this growth curve the conflict becomes a zero sum game—what the insurgent gains, the government loses. However, before this point is reached, there is a certain degree of operating space for the insurgent. The following graphic helps explain this.

Figure 4. Insurgent Growth Curve

Any Given Political Space



Once the conflict reaches the point where it becomes a zero sum game it is a “winner-take-all” scenario: the state must either stop the insurgency from growing or it will no longer be able to maintain control of the population. Therefore, the most appropriate area for the state to focus its counterinsurgency

⁴² Dr. McCormick is currently the Department Head of the Defense Analysis Department of Naval Postgraduate School’s SOCOM sponsored SO/LIC program. He teaches a class on Guerrilla Warfare and much of what is contained in Chapters II and III, i.e. Clausewitz and UW, the insurgent growth curve, and the Mystic Diamond, all come from this course. McCormick is a former RAND analyst and continues to advise the DoD on irregular warfare topics.

efforts are in those areas where the insurgency is growing. This will preempt the growth cycle of the insurgency. In the operational construct for UW that we present in the next chapter, this is exactly the area where UW efforts should exist. Either in the counterinsurgency role or in support of an insurgency, US efforts that focus operations on this “contested” area will net the highest returns in a UW campaign. At any rate, this process is a locally based process. The “winner” of this contest is the one who, in the end, can control the vast majority of the local municipalities.

McCormick’s “Mystic Diamond” offers a macro-model from which one can understand the strategies necessary for the state, or the insurgent, to be able to accomplish objectives. His strategies, “one” through “five,” represent the priority in which the opposing sides should conduct their campaigns. These strategies mirror the argument made in Chapter II that the “people” must be co-opted before “the army” can be defeated (Figure 5). Yet even though McCormick’s strategies build upon one another, the model overall is not staged.⁴³ Each strategy can, and should, be executed simultaneously.

⁴³ Most staged models have proven to be ineffective. For example, the late COL John Boyd’s famous OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) Loop is often viewed as a staged model, but really it is a continuous process. At no point can the decision maker stop “observing.” For more information on Boyd’s OODA Loop see http://www.d-n-i.net/second_level/boyd_military.htm. Likewise, in McCormick’s Macro model, control of the population cannot be relinquished in order to focus on counterforce operations. Counterforce operations go hand-in-hand with strategy #1.

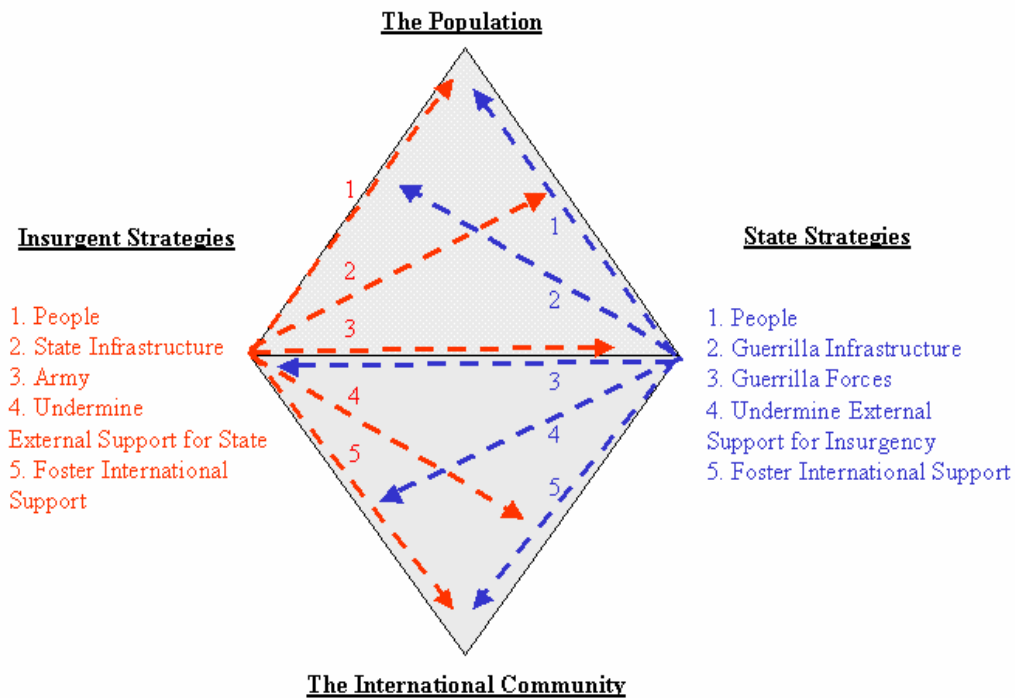


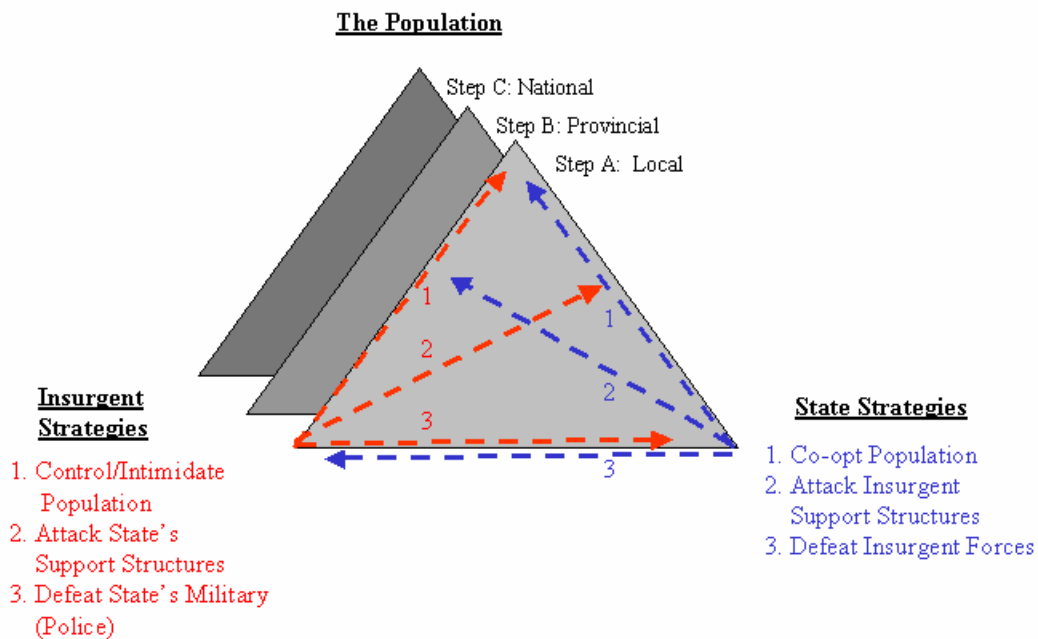
Figure 5. McCormick’s “Mystic Diamond” (Substate Conflict Macro-Model)

This simple but powerful model captures the necessity for both the state and the insurgency to focus their initial efforts on the indigenous population—not on counterforce operations. Whoever is able to do this more effectively will be in the position of advantage since initiative is predicated on information received from the population. This is the salient point of the model.

In the substate micro model (Figure 6), McCormick presents these strategies in even more detail, depicting the sequential progression from local political control to state-level political control. External support is cut off from the demand side (the local insurgent) of the insurgency rather than the supply side (external support). An example where this model was executed precisely in accordance with the model is the successful counterinsurgency waged by the British and Malayan security forces from 1948 to 1960. The British were able to

effectively “control” the local population by segregating them from the insurgency one locality after another. Once this was done, security forces were able to effectively exhaust the MCP (Malayan Communist Party), although it did take some time.⁴⁴

Figure 6. McCormick’s “Mystic Diamond” (Substate Conflict Micro-Model)



B. SUBSTATE CONFLICT STRATEGIES CORRECTLY APPLIED

In MSG Mark Bryant's presentation to the Defense Analysis students at the Naval Postgraduate School in September 2003, he described how his ODA⁴⁵ established control of his area of responsibility (local area) within four months. His team, in concert with indigenous security personnel, provided the security

⁴⁴ Although the Malayan Emergency was technically a twelve-year counterinsurgency campaign (1948-1960) the insurgency was essentially defeated by 1952. See Sam Sarkesian, *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1989), 70-72.

⁴⁵ ODA: Operational Detachment-Alpha: A Special Forces detachment consisting of 12 team members.

umbrella for local merchants to open shops and commute between villages without fear. In addition, Bryant's team dispensed medical care—albeit limited—to the local population, which resulted in a dramatic increase in popular support. The team helped organize a “Shura” council from which the local leaders could levy taxes to gain revenues for future projects. They also traded the scrap-metal associated with the disassembling of captured Taliban tanks and artillery pieces for cash. Trucks loaded with scrap-metal were sent across the border into Pakistan and sold. The local Shura then used the proceeds to fund projects that benefited the community. Essentially, Bryant initiated a comprehensive military, political, economic, and psychological strategy at the local level and gained control of the local population with minimal outside resources. Due to these efforts, Bryant and his teammates received generous amount of intelligence from the local community that resulted in the capture of numerous Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters. The ones who were not captured left the area altogether because they could no longer move about the area without their actions being reported to the Americans. This is the perfect application of McCormick's strategies one, two, and three (Figure 6), and a shining example of unconventional warfare working within the dynamics of a substate conflict. Bryant and his teammates, along with their indigenous fighters, won the support of the local population first. No large scale UN project was needed to accomplish this task, just a small team who worked closely with the local citizens to create local stability and security. The point is, by focusing on local concerns, Bryant and his teammates were able to accomplish their real objective which was to free the area of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters.

C. THE PERILS OF PUTTING COUNTERFORCE OPERATIONS FIRST

Unfortunately, the Bryant approach was not adopted by the US and coalition forces throughout Afghanistan—at least not at the time of this writing. Rather, the US has focused all of its efforts on strategy three (counterforce operations). This is the classic American response to counterinsurgency. One of the many lessons from the Vietnam experience is that counterforce operations

only work to the extent that a foreign force can count on local support for intelligence. In Kathy Gannon's article in *Foreign Affairs* about Afghanistan, she describes how the US made a pact with various warlords in the Northern Alliance, hoping that these Mujahadeen fighters would prove valuable in capturing and killing Al Qaeda and Taliban militants.⁴⁶ So far, this has not been the case. She states:

The mujahideen may have proved good at abusing their fellow citizens, but they have not done well at accomplishing their goal Washington has set out for them: capturing or killing al Qaeda and Taliban holdouts.⁴⁷

Granted, Afghanistan is an incredibly complex situation; and the final results are still unclear. Drugs, tribal rivalries, and two decades of conflict make it difficult to determine what is both in the best interests of the US and the Afghan citizenry. Furthermore, whether or not the US will change its' strategy to focus more on local concerns and abandon its warlord allies (to the extent that is possible) remains to be seen. However, readers of this study who are familiar with Afghanistan should ask themselves if the US approach is achieving the intended results, or is the overwhelming desire to kill and capture Al Qaeda clouding the judgment of senior decision makers. We are not saying that killing Al Qaeda operatives is unimportant—it is. Rather, we submit a strategy that is focused on providing local security will better achieve that goal. An Afghanistan policy more in line with McCormick's strategies one through five is what is really necessary. Certainly Gannon is not familiar with the substate conflict strategies presented here, but her conclusions are worth noting:

If Washington really wants to help, it must abandon its policy of working with the warlords and factional leaders of the Northern Alliance. [These men] have nothing to offer Afghanistan that would help move the country forward. Concessions made to the warlords will be met only with more demands for more concessions. Instead the United States should concentrate on training a police force,

⁴⁶ Kathy Gannon, "Afghanistan Unbound," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2004): 35-46.

⁴⁷ Gannon, 40.

which, along with a national army that the United States and France are helping to build, could provide security at a local level.⁴⁸

D. MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

Finally, to determine if substate strategies are effective, it is necessary to develop certain measures of effectiveness. Much has been made of Secretary Rumsfeld's memo asking his commanders if the US efforts in the War on Terror were actually being counterproductive. Rumsfeld asks:

Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?⁴⁹

Rumsfeld makes a good point. What are the most relevant measures of effectiveness in unconventional conflicts? Effectiveness metrics at the tactical level are easy to determine in conventional war—number of tanks destroyed, numbers of troops captured, amount of ground seized, etc. Unconventional warfare metrics are completely different. Unconventional metrics must be based on the population since the population is the focal point. We offer seven tactical and two strategic measures of effectiveness for any UW campaign:

- Tactical Level Measures of Effectiveness
 - Desertion rates: Desertion rates, both from the indigenous-based security forces and those of the enemy, offer a glimpse into the actual feelings of the population. Desertions actually show which side is perceived to be the stronger, more legitimate, and eventual victor of the conflict. (
 - Morale: Similar to desertion rates, the morale of indigenous security forces can show the degree to which they believe in their cause. If morale is low, commitment to the cause will also be low; if high, a corresponding commitment will be the result. Although difficult to measure, it is not impossible; local commanders can easily develop non-retribution surveys that measure unit morale.

⁴⁸ Gannon, 44.

⁴⁹ Donald Rumsfeld, "Rumsfeld's War-on-Terror Memo", *USA Today*, October 22, 2003, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm>.

- Recruiting: Again, similar to desertion rates and morale, ease of recruiting local security forces can be a good indicator of the legitimacy of the cause. If recruits are hard to come by, that will be telling as well.
- Number of guerrilla/terrorist incidents: A traditional metric of effectiveness in unconventional conflicts, yet a good one nonetheless. Although not a definitive key to success, or lack of it, generally speaking, a rise in incidents indicate an insurgency is growing.
- Counter guerrilla reporting from the population: Arguably the most effective metric in unconventional conflicts, credible reports from the population on insurgent activity shows preferred choice. One way to ensue this is an effective metric is to not reward reports with cash but with some other intangibles like medical vouchers and public recognition. Incentives that appeal to one's honor will always have more credibility than monetary-based programs.
- Increased indiscriminate government violence: When the government has to increasingly rely on extreme measures to control insurgent activities it is a signal the government is losing control of the population.
- Redeployment of military/police assets around the capitol versus the countryside: This simple metric is useful to determine if the government deems their own survival is at risk. Unfortunately, once this occurs it may be too late to do anything to stem the tide of the insurgency.
- Strategic Level Measures of Effectiveness
 - Increased international recognition of insurgents: Signals the degree to which the insurgency is gaining legitimacy in the international community.
 - Decreased international support for government: The inverse of the above.

E. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER III

This chapter takes up Liddell Hart's call to understand guerrilla and subversive war. We examined the micro dynamics at work in substate conflicts and concluded that these conflicts are, above all else, a social phenomenon with its roots at the local level. Certainly there are radicals who will not be dissuaded from their ultimate goals, however, without popular support they cannot survive in

the long run. Thus, strategies to effectively deal with substate conflict must be based on gaining local control. The way to accomplish this is not with large numbers of intimidating foreign security forces draped in body armor but rather through local forces that work in concert with US unconventional warriors who are familiar with the local microclimate.

We also discussed a typical insurgency growth cycle, demonstrating that at some point the contest becomes a zero sum game between the insurgent and the state. For the state to effectively deal with insurgency, it must counter the insurgency's "space" and begin to exert control in contested areas. This is where US UW efforts should be focused—contested space. To measure progress in these efforts we have offered five tactical level metrics that are indicative of progress in any contested region. Exactly how the US should approach these kinds of operations is discussed in the next chapter.

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IV. EXPLAINING UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

If we can come up with a purpose for UW that everyone agrees with, we will have accomplished a lot.

—COL (R) Mark Boyatt⁵⁰

The last two chapters have attempted to capture the differences between unconventional warfare and conventional war, and also to explain the dynamics at work in substate conflicts both at the micro and macro levels. We now turn our attention to the primary purpose of our thesis—developing an operational construct for UW. As Boyatt points out, a generally acceptable UW construct does not exist in the military, even within SOCOM. It is our purpose to establish one.

Perhaps it is best to state our proposition up front. By doing so, the reader will be better able to understand all that follows in this chapter. Any operational construct for UW must ultimately be designed around the purpose of UW, as Boyatt is so keenly aware. We submit the “purpose” behind UW efforts revolves around a distinction between strategic and tactical objectives. The strategic objective can include the deposing of a hostile regime or the strengthening of a friendly one. But the tactical purpose should almost always address creating a secure local environment to a target population. This tactical objective is compatible with counterinsurgency efforts *and* support to insurgencies. In the case of the former (COIN), the importance of security for a population is easily understood, but the later, support to an insurgency, also is founded on local security in that an alternative to the current regime will be more advantageous for the targeted population. The method, or instrument, to accomplish local security is an indigenous or surrogate force. And the endstate of all UW operations will be to realize US strategic objectives (the strategic purpose) as a result of the

⁵⁰ COL Mark Boyatt, private conversation with the authors, November 2003.

influence gained in the population by providing a secure local environment. Thus, our operational construct for UW can be summed up as:

- **Purpose:** To establish a secure environment for a targeted local population.
- **Method:** By assisting/supporting indigenous forces with training, equipping, advising, and participating in security efforts.
- **Endstate:** In order to create relationships vital to influencing local leaders in support of US objectives.

This construct differs from large-scale “hearts and minds” campaigns in that the requirements for the US involve the deployment of operators in contested areas who have the requisite microclimate knowledge and the military acumen to be able to sustain themselves indefinitely through an indigenous support structure. In other words, military competency coupled with area expertise (to include language skills) will lead to access in “contested” areas, such as those described in the last chapter. From access the US gains influence.

A. UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE—A HOLISTIC APPROACH

“Through, by, and with” is the single most distinguishing aspect of UW, as emphasized in the DoD definition:

Unconventional Warfare—A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape.⁵¹

According to the Special Forces Doctrine, the following areas are aspects, or subcomponents, of Unconventional Warfare⁵²:

⁵¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.201, Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Operations* (Washington DC: GPO, April 2003) 1-1

⁵² FM 3-05.201, 1-1 to 1-3.

- Guerrilla Warfare
- Sabotage
- Subversion
- Intelligence Activities
- Unconventional Assisted Recovery (Escape and Evasion)

It is easy to see from this list of “related aspects” to UW that the US Army does not view UW in a holistic manner. Rather, the military views UW as those activities that are directed against a hostile state or power. We feel this framework only represents half of the UW spectrum. UW should be viewed not only in the context of undermining a hostile regime but also those activities designed to support a friendly ally’s counterinsurgency efforts. It bears noting that the US Army’s John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) has experimented with the term “Full Spectrum Unconventional Operations” (FSUO) to describe all operations conducted through, by, and with indigenous or surrogate forces, but at the time of this study, FSUO is not officially recognized or accepted. Nevertheless, FSUO is defined as:

FSUO—US Army Special Forces operations conducted primarily through, with, and by indigenous or surrogate forces to achieve US objectives in peace, contingencies, and war. FSUO are composed of three broad types of operations: UW, FID, and unilateral. FSUO may be the main military effort or they may support conventional operations. They are often low visibility operations that frequently occur in politically sensitive remote locations and require close coordination with Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency, and other organizations.⁵³

Indeed, what we describe as UW is probably better stated as unconventional operations since FSUO conveys a set of operations that occur across numerous environmental settings. Although we disagree with the “unilateral” aspect of the above definition, FSUO is an improvement over the current UW definition. If unilateral action is required, we submit it must only be undertaken in support of ongoing UW efforts because if unilateral military

⁵³Department of the Army, *TRADOC Pamphlet 535-3 (2002 Draft) Military Operations: Special Forces Operational and Organizational Plan* (Fort Monroe, VA: Training and Doctrine Command, 11 April 2002), 4-5. Also, the term Full Spectrum Special Operations (FSSO) is being considered. The definitions for JSUO and FSSO are essentially the same.

objectives are pursued they may not necessarily support the ongoing UW campaign. That being said, it is not our aim to critique the current UW definition, but rather to describe what UW is, and what it is not.

We see two distinct environments in which a UW campaign can take place—permissive and non-permissive.⁵⁴ In the latter, the purpose would be to undermine a hostile regime by incrementally gaining control of a given population under the hostile regime’s control. Conversely, in a permissive environment, the purpose is to extend the host nation (HN) government’s control of the population by undermining the subversive elements to that HN government. This is undertaken predominately in contested areas where the insurgency has a large degree of influence.⁵⁵

Aside from the operational environments in which these activities take place, the DoD has existing terms that describe UW-like operations in each of these environments. These must be reconciled before we can continue.

Those activities that are designed to support friendly government have traditionally been viewed as counterinsurgency (COIN) operations or as Foreign Internal Defense (FID). A FID⁵⁶ operation is consistent with many aspects of

⁵⁴ Current military doctrine subscribes three possible operational environments—permissive, hostile, and uncertain. However, we use the terms permissive and non-permissive. A permissive environment means that the US has permission to act within the HN country’s borders. A non-permissive environment is the opposite; meaning, the US does not have permission of the targeted government to act within its borders. We feel permissive and non-permissive are better used in a UW context because of the ambiguity created by the use of the word “control” in the doctrinal definitions. As doctrinal terms, permissive, uncertain, and hostile may adequately describe the environment for the larger military; however, they are not useful for UW operations. UW should almost always be conducted uncertain environments. Whether the US is operating with permission or without is more important because it significantly impacts the manner in which operations are carried out. Having permission is much easier than not, no matter how many people are shooting at you.

⁵⁵ See the discussion on “contested space” in Chapter III for a more detailed picture of why it is necessary for the state to be able to influence the population in contested regions. In essence, failing to confront the insurgency earlier allows it to continue to grow.

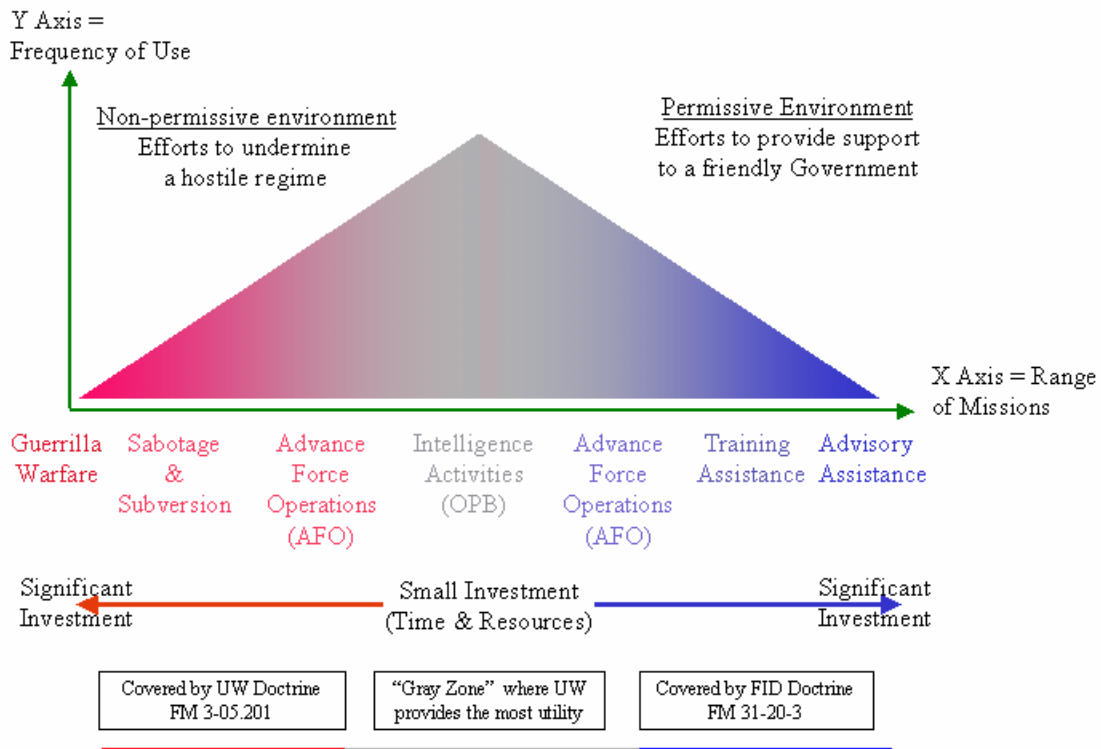
⁵⁶ FID is the doctrinally correct term to describe the environment in which the United States seeks to support a friendly government. As JP-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense*, states: “US military involvement in FID has traditionally been focused toward counterinsurgency. Although much of the FID effort remains focused on this important area, US FID programs may aim at other threats to a host nation’s (HN) internal stability, such as civil disorder, illicit drug trafficking, and terrorism.” [p. I-3]. In sum, COIN efforts are a subcomponent of a FID. Since it is unlikely for the US to engage in COIN outside of a FID umbrella, we will describe those efforts to provide stability to a friendly ally as FID.

unconventional warfare, but viewing all FID activities as unconventional warfare is a mistake. FID conveys conventional, overt, State Department supported activities that utilizes all the tools of statecraft to counter the conditions that create an unstable environment. The advisory assistance duties in which Special Forces are regularly engaged are only one aspect of FID. Joint Publication 3-07.1 demonstrates that FID is an operation that is designed to support a nation's IDAD (Internal Development and Defense) program. Nonetheless, FID is the appropriate terminology for UW efforts when they are conducted in a permissive environment. Although incongruent with FID doctrine, we categorize the UW aspects of FID as follows: advisory assistance, training assistance, and intelligence activities.

In a non-permissive environment, guerrilla warfare primarily defines the military tactics employed. This is consistent with doctrine and reflects the traditional understanding of unconventional warfare. As stated earlier, the related aspects of UW according to FM 3-05.201 (Special Forces UW Operations) are: guerrilla warfare, sabotage, subversion, unconventional assisted recovery (UAR), and intelligence activities. In reality, sabotage, subversion, UAR, and intelligence activities are all subsets of guerrilla warfare. In short, any mission that takes place in a non-permissive environment that is done through, with, and by, indigenous or surrogate forces is also rightly called unconventional warfare.

Thus, if advisory assistance represents one end of the spectrum, and guerrilla warfare the other, there also exists a tremendous amount of middle ground. Much of what UW has to offer falls into the realm of this middle ground. In Figure 7 we introduce a model that can help explain UW. The purpose of this model is to not only to show the range of activities that should be categorized as UW missions but also to depict the frequency of use. Indeed, just because guerrilla warfare and full-fledged advisory missions are rarely undertaken does not mean they are not useful. In addition to activities and the frequency of use, the model depicts the progression of commitment, both in time and resources.

Figure 7. The UW Model



B. UNDERSTANDING THE UW MODEL

The following explanation of the model will begin with the “non-permissive” side, then move to a discussion of the “permissive” side, and conclude with a discussion of the middle ground or “gray zone.” We present this model as a way to explain how useful UW can be if used correctly—even under the current “system.” But even under a newly created Department of Strategic Services, this model will still apply. Gray Zone activities would constitute the bulk of UW efforts serving to set the conditions for the more “risky” activities of offering support to an insurgency and/or support to an ally in the form of advisory assistance.

1. Non-Permissive Environment

Guerrilla warfare⁵⁷ (GW) is rarely undertaken by the US. Arguably, the US military has only once sponsored an insurgency in the post WWII era—the Contras in Central America (The CIA sponsored the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in the 1980s.). The effort to overthrow the Taliban in 2001/2002 does not meet the criteria for guerrilla warfare since many of the aspects of guerrilla warfare, like the cultivation of a shadow government, were not present, only counter-force operations. Moreover, the operations conducted were not against a superior enemy but rather a symmetrical clash between two relatively equally matched opponents with US firepower tipping the favor to the Northern Alliance. Even calling these efforts unconventional warfare becomes problematic since we have defined UW as those efforts designed to produce local security. Nevertheless, we concede that the campaign was largely unconventional (through, by and with), but certainly referring to Afghanistan in 2001/2002 as guerrilla warfare is a stretch. Stephen Biddle supports this assertion in his *Foreign Affairs* article titled “Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for the Army and Defense Policy.”⁵⁸ Afghanistan aside, even though the US may not use Guerrilla Warfare regularly that does not mean possessing this capability is not useful. Just because guerrilla warfare is not regularly used does not mean that it never will be. Secondly, teaching guerrilla warfare to unconventional warfare students develops their understanding of what it takes to succeed when the opponent controls the operational space. This makes unconventional warriors better able to conduct counterinsurgency operations.

⁵⁷ FM 3-05.201 *Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Operations* (April 2003) defines GW as: “consisting of military and paramilitary operations conducted by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces against superior forces in enemy-held or hostile territory. It is the overt military aspect of an insurgency.”

⁵⁸ Stephen Biddle, “Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for the Army and Defense Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, November 2002, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/2002/afghan/afghan.pdf>; Internet; accessed 16 April 2004. Biddle, in referring to the 2001/2002 Campaign specifically states, “This [was] not guerrilla warfare.” He bases this conclusion on the relative symmetrical nature of the conflict; e.g. the Northern Alliance armed forces supported by the US versus the Taliban regime’s military forces.

2. Permissive Environment

Like guerrilla warfare on the left side of the spectrum, advisory assistance (often called combat advisory assistance) has a relatively low utility. Granted, advisory assistance can take many forms, but we distinguish advisory assistance from training assistance by the close proximity of advisors to actual combat. For example, advisory assistance best describes the situation in Vietnam and El Salvador—two case studies that will be examined in Chapter VI. Training assistance best describes the role of US military advisors in Sri Lanka, the training efforts in Africa under the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), and the more recent examples of the Columbian counterdrug efforts (Plan Columbia) and Operation Enduring Freedom in the Philippines.

As noted before, our model limits the UW missions⁵⁹ in a permissive environment to advisory assistance, training assistance, intelligence activities, and advance force operations (AFO).⁶⁰ This is a departure from doctrine. FM 31-20-3⁶¹ (FID TTPs for USSF) lists twelve different missions under the FID umbrella. These missions are listed in Table 1, along with our explanation of why we do not consider them applicable to the UW spectrum.

⁵⁹ Missions should not be confused with USSF core tasks, which are: Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), and Counterterrorism (CT), etc. These core tasks generally represent tactical actions that USSF is organized, trained and equipped to conduct rather than a mission. Missions are assigned by commanders and contain a task and purpose.

⁶⁰ Intelligence activities and AFO actually apply to both sides of the continuum; these missions will be discussed in detail later.

⁶¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 31-20-3: Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces* (Washington, DC: GPO, 20 September 1994), 1-17 to 1-20.

Table 1. USSF Missions in FID Manual

Mission Listed in FM 31-20-3 (FID TTPs and USSF)	Characterized in Authors UW Model
Training and/or Advisory Assistance	We distinguish between the two. Advisory Assistance missions entail closer proximity to the “battlefield” than a strictly Training Assistance mission.
Intelligence Activities	Intelligence Activities ⁶²
Civil Affairs	Not included. Civil Affairs are part of the larger COIN effort. Although SF may indeed conduct civil affairs like projects they should not be used exclusively for CA.
Security Assistance (SA)	Not included. SA contributes to the HN’s Internal Development and Defense Program. Whatever USSF contributes to this will be in the form of Training or Advisory Assistance.
Military Operations	This would be best characterized by an advisory assistance mission
Consolidated Operations	Advisory Assistance
Strike Operations	If combined, Advisory Assistance. If unilateral—excluded. Unilateral operations can support UW efforts but by themselves they are not UW.
Remote Area Operations	Advisory Assistance
Border Operations	Advisory Assistance
Urban Area Operations	Advisory Assistance
Support to US combat Forces	Advisory Assistance
Humanitarian/Civic Assistance	Not included

⁶² FM 31-20-3 defines intelligence activities as: “...operations [that] penetrate the insurgent’s screen of secrecy and permit the host nation (HN) government to take advantage of its superior resources. HN and US intelligence operations support COIN (counter-insurgency) planning and operations by informing on the area.” p. 1-17. Also, it is implied that intelligence activities would be undertaken through, by, and with, indigenous forces.

3. The Gray Zone

The gray zone describes a situation (either a time or place) where advisory assistance and/or guerrilla warfare is inappropriate, but where strategic interests exist. The gray zone can also be viewed as a situation under consideration for future, more robust, US investments. Essentially, Gray Zone activities set the conditions for follow on UW efforts. They are a starting point designed to produce the necessary required microclimate knowledge. Consequently, missions in the gray zone are intelligence-based. This is appropriate since the one mission that is both common to the related aspects of UW listed in FM 3-05.201 [Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Operations] and FM 31-20-3 [FID Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces] is intelligence activities.

Activities in the gray zone mostly consist of Operational Preparation of the Battlefield (OPB)⁶³ and Advance Force Operations (AFO).⁶⁴ The best way to view the difference between these two activities is that OPB is passive and AFO is active. OPB and AFO make up the gray zone activities because these efforts alone do not represent the resources (or incur the political risk) associated with guerrilla warfare or a FID mission. Under our UW construct, OPB and AFO would be focused more on the human terrain and limited military actions like small-scale direct action missions. Above all else, OPB and AFO are done in a “through, by, and with” manner although there may be times when unilateral actions are required. A host nation government may request it or the US may deem swift unilateral action is required, but if this is the case, it is best viewed as what it is—unilateral action—not UW.

⁶³ Operational Preparation of the Battlefield (OPB), SOCOM definition (U): “The conduct of activities prior to d-day, h-hour, in likely or potential areas of operations, to prepare and shape the battlespace to mitigate risk and to facilitate success.” We are cognizant of the fact that OPB doctrinally consists of two interrelated missions, however, since one of these is classified, we have chosen to present OPB as simply “intelligence activities.” The key concept here is that OPB is a passive process and should be focused as much on the human terrain as the physical terrain.

⁶⁴ Advance Force Operations (AFO), SOCOM definition (U): “Operations conducted by selected, uniquely capable elements which precede the main forces into the area of operations to further refine the location of the enemy/target and further develop the battlespace...” AFO are those activities involving active measures to develop contacts/networks that will benefit future operations.

We can illustrate intelligence-based activities in this gray zone by using the concept of social mapping. In Malcolm Gladwell's bestseller *The Tipping Point*, he describes how social phenomenon develop. Movements in the social realm are rarely due to everyone in society doing an equal amount of work. Gladwell points out that there are only a precious few who are responsible for energizing a given population. These are society's social entrepreneurs, and there are three types. These are the "connectors," who are acquainted with so many people that, not only do they know who to go to in order to get things done, but also others bring their problems to them because they are cognizant of the power this "connector" yields. The second is the "maven" who is a clearinghouse for information. If something is worth knowing, there is generally a maven in every society who has the intimate details of a given subject. The third kind of social entrepreneur is the "salesman." Salesmen are exactly what they sound like. These types are crucial to starting social movements because they can effectively sell not only products, but also ideas.⁶⁵ Societal entrepreneurs are extremely valuable to UW intelligence efforts. By building rapport with connectors, mavens, and salesman, UW operators can establish the necessary network from which to gain a decisive advantage over the opponent more quickly than relying on the less influential population at large. Knowing who the social entrepreneurs are and then co-opting them should be a large part of activities carried out in the gray zone. Admittedly, this notion of social mapping is easier said than done. But the salient point of this discussion is that intelligence activities they should be focused on the human terrain so that follow on operations can be carried out with the help of the indigenous population.

4. Summary of UW Continuum

In sum, our UW model represents the full range of activities that are conducted "through, by, and with" indigenous or surrogate forces. These operations have traditionally been viewed as either guerrilla warfare or as what we have termed advisory assistance—not both. We believe this is a mistake

⁶⁵ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2000)

because the only real difference between the two is the operating environment. UW operations are most useful in situations where the US is neither waging an all-out guerrilla warfare campaign nor sponsoring a full-fledged FID project but rather in the middle ground, or “gray zone.” Finally, the ultimate purpose behind all UW activities should be to develop a “through, by, and with” capability in order to gain influence among a given population. Again, if unilateral action is required, it must only be undertaken in support of ongoing UW efforts, rather than the other way around to ensure the local population is not alienated.

C. THE PRINCIPLES OF UW—HOW UW EFFORTS MUST BE MANAGED

FM 100-25 lists a set of “Special Operations Imperatives” that are designed to provide guidance for Special Operations. In short, the SOF Imperatives represent an operational “rulebook.” These imperatives are:⁶⁶

- Understand the Operational Environment
- Recognize Political Implications
- Facilitate Interagency Operations
- Engage the Threat Discriminately
- Consider Long-Term Effects
- Ensure Legitimacy and Credibility of Special Operations
- Anticipate and Control Psychological Effects
- Apply Capabilities Indirectly
- Develop Multiple Options
- Ensure Long-Term Sustainment
- Provide Sufficient Intelligence
- Balance Security and Synchronization

Albeit a well-developed list, these imperatives do not explain how distributed UW operations distributed around the globe operations should be

⁶⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 100-25 Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces (Washington DC: GPO, August 1999), 1-8 to 1-10

managed. As we have explained (Chapter I), there is a difference between special operations and unconventional warfare. Is a unilateral raid to rescue American hostages UW? Although it may be “special” it certainly is not unconventional in the terms we have described. Therefore, we see a need to develop a set of UW principles. If conventional war has certain enduring “principles,” and unconventional war is fundamentally different from conventional war, then it is necessary to develop similar enduring principles governing UW.

Given that no *joint* publication exists for the conduct of UW operations, we suggest the Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other than War (JP-3-07) is the appropriate starting point to evaluate any existing principles that would be appropriate for UW. Joint Publication (JP) 3-07 indeed has six principles that it defines as applicable to military operations other than war (MOOTW.) Of the six principles of MOOTW, the first three are derived from the better-known principles of war: objective, unity of effort, and security. The remaining three are MOOTW specific: restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.⁶⁷ In the following discussion we evaluate these principles and their applicability to UW. We will also make the adjustments necessary to develop a list of “UW specific” principles, which are listed in the conclusion to this chapter.

1. Objective

The principle of Objective in JP 3-07 is described as, “direct[ing] every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective.”⁶⁸ Setting aside the fact that the description of the principle actually uses the word to describe itself, the principle of Objective conveys the point that MOOTW objectives are described in military rather than political terms. The JP states:

The political objectives which military objectives are based on may not specifically address the desired military end state. JFCs [Joint Forces Commanders] should, therefore, translate their political

⁶⁷ Department of Defense, JP 3-07 *Joint Doctrine For Military Operations Other than War* (MOOTW), (Washington DC: GPO, 1995), 2-1

⁶⁸ JP 3-07, 2-1

guidance into appropriate military objectives through a rigorous and continuous mission and threat analysis.⁶⁹

Translating political objectives into military objectives is even more critical in a UW campaign since the political objective of the indigenous or surrogate force is paramount. We believe that there are essentially three political objectives the US could have if it chooses to employ UW: 1) overthrowing a hostile regime, 2) support a friendly ally in its counterinsurgency efforts, and 3) some kind of limited objective like capturing terrorist or securing WMD and/or related material. Consequently, in each of these scenarios military objectives will differ. Yet US military objectives must overlap with the political objectives of the indigenous force. If they do not, it is unlikely that US objectives will ever be obtained. It bears noting that UW solutions are rarely “perfect,” but nevertheless, the US should be very wary of supporting an organization whose political objective is in contrast to US values. However, if the short-term goal is worth the risk, the US must be willing to live with the outcome.

Assuming the indigenous force’s political objectives are congruent with US interests, achieving military objectives should not outpace the indigenous force’s ability to realize their political goals. Meaning, the tempo of operations must be slow enough to allow political objectives to be achieved—not necessarily in full, but certainly in part. This helps eliminate a potential power vacuum caused by the collapse of a hostile regime. This is not as important in the case of supporting a friendly ally but is still relevant. Any swift defeat raises expectations on the part of the population. It is better, we think, to have some kind of political mechanism available rather than to risk the chaos created by a power vacuum.

The MOOTW principle of “Objective” is a reasonable principle in regards to UW operations. However, just referring to it as the principle of “Objective” does not convey the necessity to have overlapping interests. Therefore, we will call the first of our UW principles the “Principle of Overlapping Objectives.”

⁶⁹ JP 3-07, 2-1

2. Unity of Effort

The MOOTW Principle of Unity of Effort emphasizes:

The need for ensuring all means are directed to a common purpose. However, in MOOTW, achieving unity of effort is often complicated by a variety of international, foreign and domestic military and non-military participants, the lack of definitive command arrangements among them, and varying views of the objective. This requires that Joint Force Commanders, or other designated directors of the operation, rely heavily on consensus building to achieve unity of effort.⁷⁰

This MOOTW principle does not appear to be a meaningful principle for the conduct of UW operations. Certainly, unity of effort is required on the part of the US at all levels (tactical through strategic levels of war) but the emphasis on international coalition building does not seem appropriate for UW operations in the substate context. Coalition building, when required, is best handled at the DOS level, not by the UW operator. Secondly, the issue of command relationships between US advisors and their indigenous counterparts is rarely a problem; or more accurately, a problem that can be mitigated by a better application of the Principle of Unity of Effort. Without a doubt, advisors often get frustrated with their counterparts. But in the case of operations in a permissive environment, advisors do not have command authority over host nation troops. And in a non-permissive environment, there is even less command authority but rather a relationship built on trust. After all, this unique command relationship—more like influence in reality—is one of the things that make UW, and the people who conduct it, unique.

Perhaps a better principle in this regard is the Principle of Decontrol. Robert Kaplan, in a speech given to the Marine Memorial Foundation in San Francisco (January, 2004), points out that “decontrol” is what is required when US forces are involved in complicated military, political, and social situations. He states to the effect that:

What we are involved in now is a global insurgency. The way to combat an insurgency is through unconventional warfare. To do

⁷⁰ Ibid. 2-3

this effectively we should be looking back into our history rather than try[ing] to reinvent it. We have been successful in counterinsurgency on the western frontier, in the Philippines from 1898 to 1902, and most recently in El Salvador during the 1980s. In fact, our global strategy should be an El Salvador writ large because of what was accomplished there with so few people. The problem arises when these types of operations become 'bureaucratically compromised.' The more Washington and their intermediate staffs become involved, the less effective these operations are. The reason being is that there is a direct relationship between bureaucratic accountability and risk adverseness. The best situation, as evidenced in Latin America is when the executors are able to make decisions rather than higher up the chain of command.⁷¹

A principle of decontrol would keep UW operations from becoming "bureaucratically compromised." Granted, a certain amount of "top sight" must be maintained to ensure senior and political leaders that operations are progressing in accordance to prescribed mission parameters. But an overemphasis on traditional command and control can be detrimental to mission success. Therefore, it is important to delineate where decisions are made; and since most decisions concerning the proper use of the indigenous force and conduct of US advisors should be made in the context of the local microclimate, it is better to decentralize decision-making rather than to consolidate it. So we offer as our second UW specific principle the "Principle of Decontrol." The best way to define it is that decisions are made "lower," rather the "higher" up the chain of command. This is better than the merely referring to it as decentralization since all UW operations (indeed all special operations) are inherently decentralized in execution. Calling it the Principle of Decontrol conveys where the decisions are made, not just how they are executed.

3. Security

In describing security, the MOOTW JP states, "Never permit hostile factions to acquire a military, political or informational advantage."⁷² This

⁷¹ Robert Kaplan, "The Global Security Situation in 2010 and How the Military Must Evolve to Deal with it. " Speech given at the marine Memorial Hotel, San Francisco, January 2004.

⁷² JP 3-07. page 2-3

MOOTW principle is so self-evident that it loses its relevance. Since we have articulated the tactical purpose behind UW efforts is to provide security at the local level incorporating a principle of security would be redundant. What is really important in regard to security and UW is that the physical security measures of UW operations are completely inconsistent with traditional force protection procedures. UW operators gain their best security when friendly indigenous personnel are around them. In the case of Bryant's team in Afghanistan, he was infinitely more secure in his surroundings than others who stayed within the confines of fortified walls. Establishing fortified security positions are worthwhile but restrictions that compel the UW operators to stay within these positions hampers their ability to conduct the kind of local population interaction that is essential to mission success. The best method to ensure that force protection measures do not interfere with mission success is to allow commanders at the lowest possible level to determine their own security requirements. Since this essentially requires force protection measures to be left up to the good judgment of the operators on the ground, we have opted to eliminate this principle from our list of UW principles.

4. Restraint

The MOOTW Principle of Restraint points out that: "Excessive force antagonizes those parties involved, thereby damaging the legitimacy of the organization that uses it while possibly enhancing the legitimacy of the opposing party."⁷³ Indeed, liberal use of firepower often creates excessive collateral damage and is thus counterproductive.⁷⁴ If we fall back on our previously stated notion that UW is fundamentally different from conventional war, we can add to our list of examples the best method for engaging hostile targets. In conventional war the best application of force is done through standoff (i.e. bombs, tank

⁷³ JP 3-07. Page 2-4

⁷⁴ Ironically, greater lethality is often counterproductive in conventional operations as well. See Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Harvard Press: 1987) 93-96. Luttwak explains that the more lethal a weapon system is, the greater the need for the enemy to respond becomes, thus negating the weapon system's effectiveness. However, US warfighting doctrine has yet to accept Luttwak's notion of relational maneuver.

rounds, artillery). This is how conventional forces are trained. The best method for killing in unconventional war is the intimate application of firepower. As John Paul Vann once told one of his colleagues, “You need to go after the guerrilla with a rifle at the village level and kill them face to face. And to do that effectively, you need local soldiers from the area to assist you.”⁷⁵ Thus, the MOOTW Principle of Restraint is valid and accordingly is the third of our UW principles.

5. Perseverance

JP 3-07, in describing the Principle of Perseverance states, “Prepare for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims. Some MOOTW may require years to achieve the desired results.”⁷⁶ UW operations can take months to years to achieve their intended objectives as well. However, this fact alone should not dissuade policy makers from using UW as a means to achieve important strategic objectives. Decision makers must remember that UW is an operational tool to be used when conventional military methods are inappropriate. A thought from the late President Nixon is appropriate when considering perseverance.

When a President sends American troops to war, a hidden timer starts to run. He has a finite period of time to win the war before the people grow weary of it.⁷⁷

By not committing large numbers of troops, a UW campaign extends this clock that President Nixon refers to. Yet the requirement for a lengthy campaign is tempered by the fact that in the absence of UW, nothing would be accomplished. This was discussed in length in the Chapter II when we established the strategic utility of UW. At any rate, the Principle of Perseverance is valid and is the fourth of our UW principles.

⁷⁵ Rick Webster, “COUNTERINSURGENCY: The John Paul Vann Model,” *Counterpart Quarterly*, Winter/Spring 2004, <http://www.geocities.com/equipmentshop/johnpaulvann.htm>

⁷⁶ JP 3-07, 2-4.

⁷⁷ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (NY: Arbor House Publishing, 1985) 88.

6. Legitimacy

In regard to the MOOTW Principle of Legitimacy, the JP states:

Committed forces must sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government, where applicable. If an operation is perceived as legitimate, there is a strong impulse to support the action.⁷⁸

Perhaps the most important principle, legitimacy represents the degree to which any UW campaign will be worthwhile in the long-term. Legitimacy in UW efforts practically ensures that future endeavors in the same area will be unnecessary. Yet the legitimacy of the indigenous force does not necessarily represent a precondition for UW efforts. It bears noting that there is a distinction between a legitimate cause and a legitimate force. Legitimacy of the cause is much easier to access than legitimacy of the force. Indeed the US may choose to align itself with the illegitimate force (as was the case of the Contras),⁷⁹ but the US should always avoid getting involved with an illegitimate cause. But if the cause is legitimate, like it was in El Salvador, an understanding that legitimacy can be gained, or lost, over time is useful for UW operations. Accordingly, our fifth UW principle is the “Principle of Fostering Legitimacy.”

7. Quality Over Quantity—A Characteristic More Than a Principle

There is a dynamic to UW operations that does not meet the standard for a principle but is a necessary component nonetheless. Just as the Principles of War do not address individual competencies our UW Principles should likewise not delve too far into the individual skill sets required for successful UW operations. However, we would be amiss if we did not at least mention the kinds of people who are best suited for this kind of work. UW is, in many ways, basic problem solving. It applies solutions based on mission parameters and local

⁷⁸JP 3-07. Page 2-5

⁷⁹ The Contras were a variety of US backed insurgency groups who were acting to overthrow the Communist regime in Nicaragua. Most of these groups used terror tactics and would by no measure be considered a legitimate force. See R. Pardo-Maurer, *The Contras 1980-1989 A Special Kind of Politics* (NY: Praeger Publishing, 1990) 46

conditions. To be able to do this effectively UW requires soldiers who are aware of the regional and local mores and have the training to cope with the military and social aspects of a given population. The conventional military, by and large, does not possess these kinds of skills. Nor are these qualities groomed in the hyper-conventional SOF units like the Rangers and Delta Force. Rather, the bulk of this capability lies in regional oriented USSF units. To again cite Kaplan, “In a day and age where a handful of guys who know what they’re doing can make a tremendous difference, thousands who do not make us [The US] impotent.”⁸⁰ This sentiment sums up nicely the need to make sure the right kind of people are conducting UW operations. As stated, we see this as more of a characteristic of UW operations rather than an enduring principle. After all, with the proper training and exposure, many conventional soldiers can (and have) excelled in unconventional operations. The reason this is important is because the military should not expect its conventional soldiers to effortlessly shift from conventional warfare to UW. These two very distinct forms of war require very different kinds of people. Some may consider the Principle of Quality over Quantity a valid UW Principle. Indeed, it may be. Nevertheless we think this component to UW operations is best stated as a characteristic rather than a principle.

D. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER IV

The first part of this chapter we offered an operational construct for UW that included both supporting an insurgency and assisting an ally in counterinsurgency efforts. Whatever the case, the central purpose behind UW efforts is to first gain influence by developing a competent, legitimate, indigenous force that is capable of providing security at the local level. We introduced a model for our operational construct that depicted not only the range of tasks associated with UW but also where the preponderance of the utility lies—the gray zone. In this middle ground the majority of the activities are intelligence related but even here, intelligence activities are conducted in a “through, by, and with

⁸⁰ Kaplan, San Francisco speech.

manner.” When unilateral action is required it should support UW efforts or stand alone as direct action. US-only operations are not part of our UW construct.

In the second half of this chapter we examined the MOOTW principles to determine if they were valid principles for UW operations—some are, some are not. Admittedly, we may not have an exhaustive list of all the UW principles; there may be some we have failed to capture. Nevertheless, what follows is an offering for the enduring principles of UW. These UW principles will be used as a framework to evaluate selected case studies of UW in Chapter VI.

- **The Principle of Overlapping Objectives**—US Military objectives must overlap with the indigenous force’s political objectives. If military and political objectives are incongruent, there will be extreme difficulties in achieving the military objectives the US is seeking to accomplish.
- **The Principle of Decontrol**—This principle preempts UW efforts from becoming “bureaucratically compromised.” Effective decision-making must be predicated on local conditions. Secondly, UW operators working with indigenous forces must be able to make snap decisions when required. Excessive command and control is a hindrance on UW operations.
- **The Principle of Restraint**—UW operations are characterized by the discreet application of firepower. This may imply greater individual risk on the part of the UW operators but the benefits far outweigh the costs.
- **The Principle of Perseverance**—This principle is best understood in the context that UW operations take time to develop.
- **The Principle of Fostering Legitimacy**—Perhaps the most important principle. UW operations with legitimacy have a better chance for long-term success. Legitimacy can be built over time but sacrificing legitimacy for expediency should not be done without careful consideration.

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V. CULTURAL RESISTANCE – WHY THE US ARMY FINDS UW TROUBLESOME

When they say no, they mean no; when they say maybe, they mean no; and when they say yes, they mean no, and if they meant anything but no, they wouldn't be there.

--Noel Koch⁸¹

This chapter will explain three reasons why the DoD, specifically the army, has failed and will continue to fail to incorporate UW as a tool for achieving strategic objectives. These reasons are: policy directives being ignored by the DoD, military doctrine, and institutional schooling. The assertion being made here is that the way the DoD responds to policy directives reveals a preference for conventional war; this preference is codified in doctrine, and perpetuated through the professional educational process. The analysis will show where the cultural bias is centered and why, as Koch stated in 1984, the DoD stubbornly resists change.

A. POLICY

1. 1946-1952

Two key points are significant in regards to the military and UW in the 1940's and 50's. The first is that it was the Secretary of War Robert Patterson in 1946 who initially realized the need for such a capability, not the uniformed military. Patterson issued a directive instructing Army Ground Forces to look into the establishment of a unit based upon the WW II Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and Jedburgh teams.⁸² The military, which never appreciated the utility of

⁸¹ Susan Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare, Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 107. Noel Koch in speaking about how Pentagon officials viewed any suggestion from Congress on increasing the tempo of SOF revitalization. Koch was confounded by the DoD lack of emphasis it placed in developing a SOF capability like the one envisioned by the Congress.

⁸² Bank, 157-156. Of course, the reader may see the parallel between the OSS and our DSS. This is intentional.

the OSS, dismissed Patterson's directive and instead recommended the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) be given responsibility for UW. As Aaron Bank, the Army's biggest proponent for a post WWII OSS organization, recalls:

[The JCS] apparently was fearful of what it perceived to be the stigma of having the military accused of engaging in sub-rosa, cloak-and-dagger activities in the event of disclosure. The JCS dared to put its toes into what it considered to be a murky UW pool of obscured depth, but it didn't have the fortitude to plunge in. In essence, the buck was passed to the CIA.⁸³

It was the CIA's attempt to take over the UW role during peacetime *and war* that got the Secretary of Defense's attention, compelling him to direct the JCS to re-look its position on UW. Thus, the precedent of policy makers giving direction, followed by DoD institutional resistance to following that direction was set.

The JCS reassessment of UW came in the form of various field studies that confirmed the need for a UW capability, specifically for the purpose of organizing, training, and leading large guerrilla formations. Despite the DoD's reluctance to make UW a part of its military capabilities, JCS approval did come in the form of the establishment of the Special Forces in 1952.⁸⁴

The second point that must be made in regards to the 1952 establishment of the USSF concerns the perception the Army had of SF. The answer to this question is illustrated in the employment of the newly formed 10th Special Forces Group (SFG). Upon their arrival in the European Theater, the Seventh Army's G3 "was completely incapable of producing a meaningful, effective plan that would utilize all our capabilities...They considered us to be a *super-Ranger / Commando* outfit rather than the organizers of a huge resistance / guerrilla

⁸³ Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets* (New York: Pocket Books, 1987), 157.

⁸⁴ Bank, 161. The key advocates for the creation of a SF were Colonel Bank, LTC Russell Volckmann, and Brig. Gen. Robert McClure from the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare (OCPW), the forerunner of today's Psychological Operations Group (POG).

force.”⁸⁵ The Army maintained the idea that SF units were no more than “high-speed” infantry or hyper-conventional forces. This overall perception has been reflected in the lack of emphasis on UW since the inception of SF.

Prior to the creation of the SF, the argument of separating special operations of a direct action nature from that of UW nature was prominent, as Bank himself argued:

The time had come to stop trying to sell Special Forces by passing them off as super-Rangers. We pointed out that it definitely showed duplication and overlap. The Special Forces mission should drop any reference to Ranger and commando operations and should define clearly Special Forces Operations (UW) with emphasis on deep penetration (strategic), an unlimited time factor, and exploitation of the guerrilla potential.⁸⁶

This same assertion, made over fifty years ago, is central to the argument in this thesis for the formation of a UW branch of service. Our argument is not to diminish or do away with any of the hyper-conventional specialties of SOCOM, but to bring the original charter of the SF, namely UW, back to the forefront with the appropriate level of visibility. This will allow this capability to be used to properly address today’s problems of insurgency, counterinsurgency and terrorism. Clearly, during the 1950’s SF’s role in the conventional military was established.

2. 1960-1980

The next significant policy directive came with the Kennedy Administration in the early 1960’s. President Kennedy had become aware of the Soviet Union’s new focus upon insurgent, revolutionary movements as a means of achieving their geo-political objectives. By 1960, the new strategy of “a flexible response” had been established due to the Soviets’ willingness to fight the Cold War by proxy. As Perino notes:

⁸⁵ Bank, 210.

⁸⁶ Bank, 169.

The turning point in the battle for a greater limited war capability came early in President John F. Kennedy's administration. On January 6, 1961, just two weeks before the Inauguration, Premier Nikita Khrushchev delivered a report to the Communist party organizations of the higher party School, the Academy of Social Sciences, and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. In it he stated that "wars of national liberation" were "local wars," not wars between states, but popular insurrections and that Communist powers must support them. By the 31st of January, President Kennedy had all the Government reading that speech. It was that speech which led him to set a new course for the armed forces.⁸⁷

Khrushchev's report represented the "tipping point" for Kennedy in establishing the direction he would take with national security. What was not immediately evident to Kennedy was the military's inability to truly develop a limited war capability while simultaneously maintaining its ability to fight the Soviets in Europe. Kennedy's directive, specifically to the army, could be no clearer than in a letter he wrote to the army on 11 April 1962:

Another military dimension – "guerrilla warfare" – has necessarily been added to the American profession of arms. The literal translation of guerilla warfare – "a little war" – is hardly applicable to this ancient, but at the same time, modern threat. I note that the Army has several terms which describe the various facets of the current struggle; wars of subversion, covert aggression, and, in broad professional terms, special warfare or unconventional warfare. By whatever name, this militant challenge to freedom calls for an improvement and enlargement of our own development of techniques and tactics, communications and logistics to meet this threat. The mission of our Armed Forces - - and especially the Army today - - is to master these skills and techniques and to be able to help those who have the will to help themselves. Purely military skill is not enough. A full spectrum of military, para-military, and civil action must be blended to produce success.⁸⁸

That the military failed Kennedy is evident, as seen in the subjugation of UW efforts in Vietnam to conventional forces and ultimately in the reduction of SF personnel from 13,000 to only 3,000 between 1969 and 1980.

⁸⁷ Perino, 31.

⁸⁸ President John F. Kennedy, "To The United States Army," letter from the White House, Washington, DC, 11 April 1962.

3. 1980-1987

It was only due to the Communist insurgent threat in Central America and the rise of transnational terrorism that saved the SF from complete termination as an Army entity. According to a senior general officer within the SF community, "General Meyer (Army Chief of Staff in the early 1980's) was the last Army Chief of Staff that completely understood the 'complete tool kit;' he was the man that saved 7th SFG to fight the seven small brush fires in South America; he was the savior of UW thought by saving UW units. COIN in El Salvador kept SF alive."⁸⁹

In addition to Meyer, the Reagan administration also saw the need for a UW capability even if the military failed to do so. Reagan produced a repackaged version of President Kennedy's initiatives to add an unconventional warfare dimension to the "American profession of arms." The Reagan Doctrine was defined by "rollback" in reference to its objective of rolling back Soviet gains made in third world countries through the art of subversion and communist-backed insurgency. The idea was to provide support to anti-communist insurgencies. But there was one problem, finding the necessary military support for such an objective was almost impossible, as noted by Adams:

The kind of revolutionary support being contemplated by the Reagan government was pretty much absent from military doctrine and no one at the Pentagon was exactly sure of how to go about it. The whole notion of clandestine and/or covert warfare was far from the Napoleonic tradition or the principles of Karl von Clausewitz taught in military schools and colleges.⁹⁰

A recounting of the congressional hearings, investigative reports, NCA directives, and finally the actual laws that had to be passed in order to force modifications on the military, reveals the Defense Department's reluctance to accept UW. Only through the combined efforts of two terms under the Reagan

⁸⁹MG Geoffrey Lambert, Commander, US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and Schools, Ft. Bragg, NC, personal interview, 3 November 2003.

⁹⁰ Adams, 176-177.

Administration, with its clear foreign policy of support for anti-communist forces, and the unprecedented persistence of the Congress, were structural changes made within the DoD.

Two major catalysts igniting political pressure for the revitalization of SOF were the highly critical Holloway Report on the Iran hostage crisis, and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was the former that finally forced the Army Chief of Staff Gen. Edward C. ['Shy'] Meyer to realize "that the Central European focus of the Army's doctrine and operational planning was too narrow."⁹¹ Unfortunately, understanding that the Army was missing out on the real fight and making the institutional changes to enter that fight were two entirely different matters. Ultimately, Congress had to enact a law, which led to the formation of the US Special Operations Command, for true structural change to occur. The fact that it took the enactment of Cohen-Nunn proposal S2453 "as United States Public Law 99-661, Section 1311S167 (f), commonly know as the "Special Forces bill," is remarkable. The extreme difficulties inherent in the politico-military relationship throughout the 80's were clearly voiced in the below Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the legislation:

Although several elements of this provision [special operations reorganization] are more specific than may normally be expected in this legislation, the conferees determined that the seriousness of the problems and the inability or unwillingness of the Defense Department to solve them left no alternative. The action of the conference committee is fully consistent with the power provided in the Constitution for the Congress to 'provide for the common Defense'. The conferees determined that the failure to act forcefully in this area and at this time would be inconsistent with the responsibilities of the Congress to the American people.⁹²

Although the professionalism and commitment of the military leadership are not in question, what is in question is how, when given repeated, clear policy

⁹¹ Adams, 182.

⁹² Adams, 201-202.

directives to create an unconventional warfare capability, could the military “fail to meet the congressional objective of institutionalizing special-operations capabilities.”⁹³

4. Summary of Policy Directives

The policy review of the last fifty years reveals the following key points. First, from the end of WW II up to the present, the political leadership of the US has identified the need for the ability to conduct unconventional warfare. Through unprecedented political strong-arming USASOC (1983), and finally SOCOM (1987) were established.

Yet these commands still do not have the “support to insurgency” capability envisioned by the framers of the Special Forces Bill or a proper understanding of UW that is so desperately needed today. The units may be there (USSF, the “green berets”) but not the institutional acceptance of their role. What the US does have is the world’s premier capability to conduct hyper-conventional, direct action operations. The so-called technological revolution in military affairs has been married up with the elite light infantry capabilities of the 75th Ranger Regiment and Delta Force to produce not an unparalleled hyper-conventional military capability but the clearly established preference for its use.

Evidence of the missing UW emphasis within the conventional Military is apparent to many senior SF officers. BG Mike Jones, the USASFC Commander, repeatedly stated that what SF needed in order for it to be successful was policy change that would empower SF by authorizing them to “pay” and “employ” indigenous forces on the battlefield.⁹⁴ Jones clearly sees that without senior Military leadership endorsement UW efforts cannot gain the necessary “leverage” on the battlefield. BG Jones was extremely adamant about this, even to the point of frustration. Based upon the overview of policy guidance given to the US Military over the last 55 years and its reluctance to follow that guidance, the

⁹³ Adams, 200.

⁹⁴ BG Mike Jones, USASFC Commander, personal interview, Ft. Bragg, NC, 3 November 2003.

endorsement for UW that Jones desires is not likely to be forthcoming. Because the preference for conventional war is well codified in doctrine and shown in the way SF has been used.

B. DOCTRINE AND UTILITY

Why is doctrine important? Doctrine is important because it embodies the principles by which the military professional is *indoctrinated*. Doctrine reveals the military's proclivity for conventional war because that is the form of warfare for which it was created. Because UW is fundamentally different from conventional war, the military as an organization does not like to conduct it. The military's aversion to UW was solidified through its experience of fighting the insurgency in Vietnam, as noted by Bacevich et al:

Embittered by their defeat in Vietnam, the military services subsequently all but abandoned the subject of insurgency. The Army in particular embarked upon a cycle of doctrinal renewal after Vietnam that focused on the challenges of high-intensity warfare to the virtual exclusion of contingencies at the other end of the spectrum. In some respects, this process achieved salutary results. Yet by giving short shrift to small wars, the Army denuded itself of any doctrinal basis for the kind of problems that small wars presented.⁹⁵

As inferred by this statement, US Army doctrine does not adequately address Unconventional Warfare. As stated earlier, the simple reason for this is because the Army as an institution exists to conduct conventional rather than unconventional war. This intuitive fact can be seen through the doctrinal changes that have taken place from 1952 to the present. If doctrine embodies the "fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives,"⁹⁶ then it is crucial that those doctrines reflect the necessary principles and guidelines for operational military

⁹⁵ A.J. Bacevich, James Hallums, Richard White, and Thomas Young, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey International Defense Publisher, 1988), vi-vii.

⁹⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 101-5-1, MCRP 5-2A, Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1997), 1-55.

success. In situations where unconventional conflict defines the battlefield environment the dominant guiding doctrine is, at best, hyper-conventional rather than unconventional.

The term unconventional warfare does not appear in Army field manuals until 1955. Prior to that, the doctrinal military operation closest to UW was guerrilla warfare (GW), which is defined as those operations “carried out by small independent, irregular, or partisan forces, generally in the rear of the enemy, which includes passive resistance, espionage, and assassination.”⁹⁷ This definition clearly articulates that GW efforts were to be carried out independently of conventional forces and were exclusively indigenous-based. While GW is clearly not UW, it does comprise the essential elements that would later become central components of UW.

1. 1955-1965

A formal definition of UW was first published in the 1955 edition of FM 31-21 stating that:

Unconventional warfare operations are conducted in time of war behind enemy lines by predominantly indigenous personnel responsible in varying degrees to friendly control or direction in furtherance of military and political objectives. It consists of the interrelated fields of guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, and subversion against hostile states.⁹⁸

This definition in contrast to the 1951 definition of guerrilla warfare, backs away from the exclusivity of indigenous-based operations by stating that indigenous personnel “predominantly” carry them out. Admittedly, this is a subtle change, but as we will demonstrate, the trend to expand the scope of what constitutes UW was beginning to take shape. The more significant modifications to the UW definitions come out of the US military’s experience in Vietnam.

⁹⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 31-21, Organization and Conduct of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington, DC: GPO, October 1951), 2. The terms used in this manual also include “organized and directed passive resistance, espionage, assassination, sabotage, and propaganda, and, in some cases, combat.”

⁹⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 31-21, Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington, DC: GPO, May 1955), 2.

2. 1969-1997

The Army's relatively new Special Forces were put to the test in Vietnam—not through their conduct of what was doctrinally understood to be UW—but in a counterinsurgency (COIN) role. In this thesis we argue that COIN efforts are consistent with what we consider to be UW. The fact that in Vietnam SF was not employed in a support to insurgency role is significant. The SF counter insurgency role developed into the broader mission of Security Assistance that SF would become commonly associated with. Needless to say, the polarization towards the right side of our UW Model helped to de-emphasize the support to insurgency characteristics of UW. Also, as seen in the case of Vietnam, conventional commanders wanted access to the indigenous forces, as we will demonstrate in the Chapter VI. With access, comes accountability to conventional commanders and with accountability inevitably comes conventionalization of the force, and more importantly, the mission. This is not desirable since conventional solutions are almost always incompatible with unconventional threats. Nevertheless, in SF's attempt to find a more acceptable role in the larger conventional force it conceded (and in some instances sought out) this conventionalization, which is ultimately codified in the 1997 UW definition.

Unconventional warfare – A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held, enemy-controlled, or politically sensitive territory. UW includes guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, subversion, sabotage, direct action missions, and other operations of a low-visibility, covert, or clandestine nature. These interrelated aspects of UW may be prosecuted singly or collectively by predominantly indigenous personnel, usually supported and directed in varying degrees by an external source during all conditions of war or peace.⁹⁹

While the changes referring to “where,” and “when,” UW can be conducted strengthen it operationally, the additions of “a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations” and “direct action” better represent the tactical missions of today's hyper-conventional SOF than the original UW role of SF.

⁹⁹ Department of the Army, *FM 101-5-1, MCRP 5-2A, Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1997), 1-158.

It is the separation of these two types of operations (hyper-conventional and unconventional) that is essential to the argument in this thesis. UW must be conducted through, by, and with indigenous forces in order for it to be successful and in order for it to be truly UW. The 1951 definition of guerrilla warfare was admittedly too narrow. But guerrilla operations were *exclusively* indigenous based and were conducted *independently* behind enemy lines. During the Vietnam War the use of SF was broadened to embrace a much more “hyper-conventional” role. These changes built flexibility into the SF giving it a stronger function within the conventional army but at the cost of its UW focus.

SF had to conform to a conventional warfare paradigm in order to be relevant, but in doing so sacrificed the essential nature of its core competency. The understanding of UW, as fundamentally different from conventional warfare was lost, as well as the necessity to conduct it exclusively in a “through, by, and with” manner.

3. SOF Utility from 1980 to Present

If the reader finds the assertion that the doctrinal evolution of UW as depicted in UW definitions unconvincing, our premise is supported by how Special Operations Forces have actually been used over the last twenty years. In short, a historical overview reveals a decidedly hyper-conventional preference.

Starting in 1980 with Desert One in Iran one can see the use of a highly specialized SOF doing missions that fall outside of what can be considered UW. And, while we do not argue that there was not a necessity for a counter terrorism capability within SOF, we are saying that the development of such a capability came at the expense of its UW expertise. The trend continued throughout the 80’s with special operations conducted in support of the both Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada (1983) and Operation Just Cause in Panama (1989). Both supporting roles were fully characterized by DA combat operations and as noted by Adams when he says all the special operations missions in Panama “could

have been carried out by conventional forces.”¹⁰⁰ This trend continued in the Gulf even though the potential for UW efforts to support Kuwaiti resistance fighters existed.

Special Forces were deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Desert Storm/Desert Shield (1990) and established “almost immediate cell phone contact with Kuwaiti resistance”¹⁰¹ in Kuwait City. Through this contact SF provided 95% of all human intelligence to the CENTCOM J2 (Intelligence Officer) during Operation Desert Shield.¹⁰² Yet even though these contacts were eventually vetted to confirm their veracity, SF personnel were not allowed to infiltrate Kuwait City in order to conduct UW. Two reasons were cited for this denial. According to Plummer the biggest reason these efforts were stymied was because of the unfounded belief that UW operators needed some kind of “train up” to conduct operations they routinely train to carry out. Secondly, General Schwarzkopf told him, “When you [Plummer] find a “no-risk” solution to infil a pilot team then you can do it.”¹⁰³ Both of these reasons support the assertion that UW is not a mission that the regular Army understands or likes to do. The perceived requirement for a train-up of the SFODA, reveals a lack of understanding of the unique capabilities these UW operators possess. Furthermore, GEN Schwarzkopf clearly shows the military’s aversion to take risk especially in relation to a type of operation that is outside of their proverbial comfort zone. Plummer’s claims are supported by Adam’s who notes that General Schwarzkopf had forbidden SOF from crossing into Iraq in fear that they would get themselves in trouble and he would have to divert forces from the real war in order to rescue them.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Adams, 226.

¹⁰¹ COL (Ret.) Dave Plummer, USSOCOM, personal Interview, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, 5 November 2003. COL Plummer was a former commander of the 3rd BN, 10th SFG (A) that was deployed to Saudi Arabia and given the responsibility to establish a plan to conduct UW in support of the Kuwaiti resistance inside Kuwait City during the Iraqi occupation.

¹⁰² Plummer Interview. The CENTCOM J2 reported that 95% of his HUMINT came out of SF during Operation Desert Shield.

¹⁰³ Plummer Interview.

¹⁰⁴ Adams, 233.

That the military used SF operators in the opening salvo of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan (2001) may lead one to conclude that the military had changed its mind in regard to the utility of UW operations. Yet even here, OEF was more conventional in nature than many actually think. As noted earlier in this thesis, the Northern Alliance was a military force comparable to the Taliban in structure and maneuverability, and the fact that SF was employed in the first place was not as the result of the DoD, but of the CIA seeing the existing potential to exploit the Northern Alliance.¹⁰⁵ In the aftermath of the toppled Taliban regime, the military was able to assert its real preference for warfighting.

With the Taliban gone the military was able to direct Special Operations teams to “capture or kill” so-called High Value Targets (HVTs). These efforts, almost exclusively, were carried out unilaterally. The Military had no understanding of the post-Taliban environment. Instead of applying solutions based on the dynamics of the conflict, it preferred to pursue counterforce operations at the cost of indigenous based operations. That supporting indigenous security forces and establishing security at the local level would not net more HVTs than unilateral military operations was predictable. Unfortunately, most SF commanders went along with this approach.¹⁰⁶ This is not surprising since the definition of Special Operations actually endorses any mission so long as special operators carry it out.¹⁰⁷

Taken together, from this overview of how UW has been understood doctrinally and the history of how SOF have been utilized, one can see that the

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter I of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶ These assertions are based on the personal experiences of the author (Basilici) while deployed to Afghanistan in 2002.

¹⁰⁷Special Operations (SO) DoD definition (U): “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.” (Emphasis added)

conventional Military has really made SF and the SOF community a part of its conventional arsenal rather than a unique force capable of conducting a fundamentally different kind of warfare. This is understandable considering how officers are indoctrinated.

C. SCHOOLING

The following survey of the PME (Professional Military Education) will illustrate that institutional schooling is one-sided and insufficient in dealing with unconventional conflicts. Unfortunately, even if the curriculum were modified, it would come at the expense of conventional warfare doctrine. We posit this would result in a deterioration of the current standard of excellence in conventional war enjoyed by the military as a whole. And, since this could prove to be detrimental to national security, we submit that a new organization with its own unique educational requirements is necessary. Nevertheless, the five career/educational levels and their respective institutions are:

- Pre-Commissioning – service academies/officer training programs: Officer Candidate School and the Reserve Officers Training Course
- Primary level (pay grades O-1 through O-3) – branch, warfare, and staff specialty schools: the army’s Officer Basic Course and Officers Advanced Course
- Intermediate level (pay grade O-3 and O-4) – Intermediate-level PME institutions: Air Command and Staff General College (ACSC), Army Command and Staff General College (ACGSC), College of Naval Command and Staff (CNCS), Marine Corps Command and Staff College (MCCSC)
- Senior level (pay grades O-5 and O-6) – Senior-level PME institutions: Air War College (AWC), Army War College (USAWC), College of Naval Warfare (CNW), Marine Corps War College (MCWAR), National War College (NWC), Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), Joint and Combined Warfighting School (JCWS at JFSC)
- General/Flag level (pay grade O-7 and O-8) – capstone education at the National Defense University¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Brian Harp, “Preventing Solutions: the Conventional Paradigm” (diss., Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), 15.

The pre-commissioning and primary levels of training are mainly focused on basics and include only a cursory introduction to SOF capabilities. But even this is tailored more to the DA capabilities rather than UW. The intermediate level service schooling is almost as delinquent in education on UW and LIC as are the pre-commissioning and primary levels, as recounted by Harp:

A survey of the descriptions of courses offered at the Service Intermediate-Level Professional Military Education (PME) institutions shows that of the 129 courses offered (including electives) in these programs, only 5 specifically reference LIC or UW themes. And, only 12 others suggest that concepts related to UW or LIC may be covered.¹⁰⁹

It is important to emphasize that by the time officers reach the intermediate levels of education over half of the twenty year career commitment has been completed. The difficulty in introducing a fundamentally different form of warfare becomes evident when one considers the amount of time and effort the army spends on professional education. If the current curricula are necessary to educate and thus ensure the proper operation of today's conventional army, then introducing a second form of warfare may be too much for the educational system and the individual officer to handle. The trend in emphasis on conventional warfighting continues at the war college level:

A survey of the descriptions of courses offered at the Service Senior-Level PME institutions shows results similar to those of the Intermediate-Level. Of approximately 130 courses only 6 course descriptions specifically reference LIC or UW concepts, and only 8 suggest that concepts related to UW or LIC may be covered.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Harp, 15. This survey considered the information provided in the course description available at each institution's web site. In order to be considered as specifically referencing UW or LIC, the mention of these themes, taken in the context of the course description, had to imply that such themes would be covered as an alternate form of war other than conventional. Courses that did not specifically reference UW or LIC, but within the course description made reference to UW or LIC themes, were given consideration in the survey and classified as making reference to concepts tied to UW or LIC.

¹¹⁰Harp, 15. This survey was similar to and applied the same criteria as the survey of Intermediate-level institutions. The number of courses is a compilation of courses offered in the various departments at these institutions. Not all of the classes at these institutions are structured as individual courses; some are portions of courses. This was taken into consideration, and in cases in which portions of courses contained a strong emphasis on UW/LIC concepts, it was considered as a course on UW/LIC.

While the ratio of conventional to unconventional topics remains consistent throughout the professional education of the army officer, the USMC represents an exception to the rule. Marine Corps leadership seems to understand the "...importance of recognizing the possibility (if not probability) of existing paradigms losing their relevance under the pressure of changing conditions."¹¹¹ The USMC's appreciation for irregular warfare is not surprising when one takes into consideration the Corps' history of dealing with small wars. An additional factor is the Corps' smaller size, and its limited ability to project a large conventional force comparable to that of the army. The USMC appears to be more flexible and adaptable than the other services. That being said, the USMC should not be considered a UW force as we define it since they too must maintain the skills necessary to excel in their conventionally-based wartime mission.

The above levels of schooling represent the entire body of military education for the majority of officers throughout their careers. Typically, officers attending the army's Command and General Staff College (CGSC), at the intermediate level of schooling, have spent eleven years of service fully grounded in conventional doctrine. The next level of army schooling, the senior level at the army's war college, does not occur until after the officer has served an average of twenty years. Again, as noted in the Harp article,

Prior to the general/flag level of education, officer education focuses on technical subject matter, tactical and operational levels of warfare, and warfighting in a joint environment. By the time an officer has reached the general/flag level, he has spent his career viewing the military's environment in conventional terms. And for him, this has been 'correct' because it has served him well throughout his career.¹¹²

Arguably, this vision of what is considered "correct" by the military represents the greatest dilemma of a military confronted with unconventional threats.

¹¹¹ Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Course Description, 1 November 2003, <http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/csc/sawcur.htm>.

¹¹² Harp, 15.

D. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER V

Because of institutional pressures, UW has been de-emphasized as a Special Forces competency, as noted by Adams, who argues, “the fact that UW is not central to the Army’s view of the world is basic in understanding the conventionalizing of special-operations forces”¹¹³ This has certainly been the case in the SF community, which has struggled to become proficient not only in UW but also in Special Reconnaissance (SR), Direct Action (DA), and Counterterrorism (CT) in an attempt to create for itself a more acceptable role among its conventional counterparts.

In summarizing the three areas of analysis of this chapter the institutional pressure applied to SOF becomes strongly evident. The review of the reluctance of the military to carry out policy directives shows the unwillingness of the DoD to build a UW capability even when specifically told to do so by the civilian leadership. The doctrinal and utility reviews show the conventionalizing effects on SOF by the military. And the overview of the professional development system through schooling reveals a military institution that sees UW as an optional elective regardless of the trend of modern war. Van Creveld cites that since the end of WWII over three quarters of all conflicts are best characterized as unconventional.¹¹⁴ Two of these, Vietnam and El Salvador, will be examined in the next chapter.

¹¹³ T. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action, The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 20-21. Additionally, “The fact that UW is not central to the Army’s view of the world is basic in understanding the conventionalizing of special-operations forces. As long as UW was identified as the main function of SOF, and as long as UW was seen as a peripheral function, SOF were doomed to secondary status, the first choice to lose budget and resources. To put it another way: in order to be accepted as valuable players, SOF had to be part of the conventional armed forces,” 20-21.

¹¹⁴ Martin Van Creveld, “Technology and World War II: Postmodern War?” in *Modern War* ed. Charles Townsend (Oxford University Press, 1997) 309.

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VI. CASE STUDIES ON THE USE OF UW

If our recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq have taught us anything, it is that we do not learn.

--Seymour Hersh¹¹⁵

This thesis has advocated that UW is a viable tool for achieving strategic objectives, under certain conditions, when managed in accordance with specific principles. Based upon the three UW preconditions (borrowed from Beaufre's patterns of strategy), and the five principles of UW developed in chapter four, the case studies presented in this chapter will demonstrate the validity of our argument. We will examine two historical examples of UW: the first, the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program from the Vietnam War, will demonstrate failure, and the second, the US supported counterinsurgency in El Salvador, will show success. Collectively these cases studies will seek to strengthen our *bold case for UW*.

A. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Our analysis will be conducted in a sequential manner, first addressing the CIDG program in Vietnam, then the counterinsurgency in El Salvador. An initial assessment of the case studies will discuss the UW preconditions outlined in chapter two. These preconditions are:

- When the objective is of major importance
- When the resources are inappropriate (or inadequate) to secure a conventional military decision
- When freedom of action exists

An analysis of the preconditions in our selected cases will establish if indeed both of these UW efforts were undertaken under the circumstances that we have deemed conducive to UW success. On this point, it is important to reiterate that these preconditions' being met does not guarantee success.

¹¹⁵ Seymour Hersh in a Public Broadcasting Service interview, April, 2004.

Rather, they offer only necessary conditions for success. Therefore, to determine if a UW campaign was carried out in accordance with the UW principles, one has to first establish that our preconditions were indeed present. In both of the selected examples, this appears to be the case.

With the preconditions established we will then be able to look at each case through the lens of our UW principles. Both examples had the chance to succeed, but for a variety of reasons, the CIDG program did not while the counterinsurgency in El Salvador did. We submit this was because the UW principles were not, by and large, adhered to in the former and either directly or indirectly adhered to in the latter. Again, the five UW Principles making up the analytical framework:

- Overlapping Objectives
- Decontrol
- Restraint
- Perseverance
- Fostering Legitimacy

B. CASE SELECTION CRITERIA

To further isolate our examples we have chosen to select two operations that were essentially carried out by the same organization, in this case, the US Army Special Forces (USSF). Also, these case studies represent two operations that are sufficiently in the past. This aides us in the analytical work as well determining the eventual effectiveness of the mission(s). If we had chosen an ongoing UW effort like some of those associated with the War On Terror we would not have the clarity of hindsight.

The CIDG program carried out by 5th SFG (A) showed promising initial success, albeit short lived. Its evolution from 1963 to 1970 will demonstrate the misapplication of UW as a strategy, and the resulting failure.

The selection of El Salvador, which must be considered a success since the communist insurgents were ultimately eliminated as a threat to the El

Salvadorian government, is our second case. That the 7th SFG (A) carried out most of the operational and tactical advising makes the case even more appropriate.

The most obvious objection to the use of these two historic counterinsurgency case studies is that they were not UW because the US was not “supporting the insurgent” but countering him, and therefore the doctrinal definition (1951 definition) of UW does not apply. However, as was argued in chapter four, our understanding and explanation of UW includes both the “support to insurgency role” and the “counterinsurgency role.” The UW principles that were developed apply equally to both sides of the UW coin. Moreover, examples of the same organization conducting support to insurgencies are extremely lacking in the US military experience.

Beyond this objection, there are key differences between Central America and Vietnam that bear mentioning. The first difference was the perception that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) would intervene in support of North Vietnam if the US expanded its conventional war. A similar perception that the Soviets would intervene in El Salvador did not exist. The second difference between these two cases is that there was a large-scale conventional war involving the US taking place in Vietnam that simply did not exist in El Salvador. This could extremely prejudice our case selection if not for the fact that the conventional efforts in Vietnam began in spite of the successes experienced by the CIDG program. These points notwithstanding, both cases represent UW as we have defined it, both cases were conducted by USSF, and both cases will serve to highlight the need to conduct UW operations in accordance with the UW principles in order to achieve strategic objectives.

C. VIETNAM AND THE CIDG PROGRAM 1961-1970

1. Background

Ngo Dinh Diem became the Premier of South Vietnam in 1954. No one, especially the French, thought that his new government would succeed past 1955. Diem inherited a country with many internal problems, the most immediate challenges being the religious sects of the Binh Xuyen, Cao Dai, and Hao Hao. These religious sects contested Diem's political control of South Vietnam, which was alarming due to the fact that each of them commanded large armies of their own with which to challenge him.¹¹⁶

Despite the misgivings of his former colonial masters, Diem did survive through 1955, successfully dealing with the power hungry religious sects through either destruction or coercion. He also handled a very large refugee problem; housing and feeding 900,000 displaced North Vietnamese. Besides these accomplishments, Diem, with substantial aid from the United States including military trainers from the MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group), rehabilitated the South Vietnamese Army and established a 50,000 man Civil Guard. Diem's first three years in power ended with the achievement of establishing South Vietnam's constitution in October of 1956, leaving the government in a seemingly strong position.¹¹⁷

After Diem's strong start as premier in 1954-56 he made decisions that set South Vietnam on a path to war with the North. He abolished the election of village chiefs and instead appointed all provisional representatives personally. He refused to hold formerly agreed upon meetings with North Vietnam to establish guidelines for general elections, and he openly denounced the communist regime in the north as a threat and an enemy to the people of S. Vietnam.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Sam Sarkesian, *Unconventional Conflicts in a new Security Era, Lessons form Malaya and Vietnam* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 80.

¹¹⁷ Sarkesian, 80.

¹¹⁸ Sarkesian, 81.

North Vietnam seemed to be taking a moderate stance, with what appeared to be a patient “wait and see” attitude, in response to Diem’s outspoken denouncement of them. While the outward attitude of the North seemed to be one of patience, activities in the rural areas of South Vietnam began to reveal a serious attempt by North Vietnamese insurgents to gain control of growing numbers of farming villages. The final years of the 1950’s saw the establishment of communist insurgent control over much of the countryside through up to 1,700 executions of village chiefs and elders between the years of 1957 and 1960. Because of this brutal insurgent threat, villages were being abandoned in many areas causing a large influx of South Vietnamese into the cities.¹¹⁹ This indicated that the Diem government did not have effective control of its rural countryside, a fact that was capitalized on by the communist insurgents from the North.

2. UW Preconditions

The precondition of an “objective of importance” was certainly present in the case of the developing situation in Vietnam. The administrations of Eisenhower through Johnson believed Vietnam represented a clear threat to US vital interests.¹²⁰ In the midst of the Cold War, any Communist advancement was considered to be a direct threat to US national interests.

Our second precondition was also present in Vietnam, albeit unbeknownst to policy makers at the time. This precondition states that when “resources are inappropriate to achieve a decisive military victory,” (meaning, conventional military force is not likely to net the intended result), UW may be a viable alternative. The US conventional military response to North Vietnamese aggression was neither sufficient nor appropriate to achieve victory. Although military historians will continue to argue this point, it is nevertheless a historical fact, as noted by Boot, that:

¹¹⁹ Sarkesian, 82.

¹²⁰ We exclude the Nixon administration due to the fact that their sole purpose in the Vietnamese conflict was to disengage from it with US honor intact.

In short, the Communist insurgency really did win the war. Not by defeating U.S. forces on the battlefield – but that was never its goal. As General Giap later explained, ‘We were not strong enough to drive out a half-million American troops, but that wasn’t our aim. Our intention was to break the will of the American Government to continue the war.’ Westmoreland’s attrition strategy helped Giap achieve this goal by wearing out the U.S. armed forces on all those fruitless ‘search-and-destroy’ missions, generating heavy casualties and squandering public support for the war. Hanoi had accurately concluded that the war’s center of gravity was American public opinion.¹²¹

The precondition of “freedom of action,” which would allow US unconventional forces to interact with the population, was also present. U.S. Advisors, introduced into Vietnam after the French pullout in the early 1950’s and up until the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, enjoyed unprecedented freedom of action. Even after the assassination of Diem, with the country’s leadership being replaced time and again, freedom of action was largely maintained. This was true not only with the traditional lowland Vietnamese, but also with the central highland mountain tribes of the Montagnards. Freedom of action was actually diminished due to the waning of US popular support. Because of this, it is interesting to ponder what the domestic climate would have been if an unconventional model had been adopted.

3. The UW Principles

a. The Principle of Overlapping Objectives

The principle of “overlapping objectives” means that at least in one area, the political objectives of the indigenous force must overlap with the military objectives of the US. In order to do justice in the treatment of the CIDG program, a discussion of overlapping objectives must take place at several levels.

At the strategic level, the US Government and the Diem government both had the same objective of a communist free South Vietnam. At the operational level two separate relationships had impact on the CIDG

¹²¹ Boot, 316.

Program: the relationship between the CIDG and the USSF, and the relationship between the conventional US Military and the ARVN.

The principle of overlapping objectives was clearly met in the relationship between the CIDG and the USSF. The Montagnard tribes of the Central Highlands from which the CIDG force would come, first and foremost desired security from the brutal insurgency being waged by the Viet Cong.¹²² The Montagnards also desired the economic stability that would come from this security and the new relationship they established with the USSF. As for USSF, the military objective was to free select areas (Montagnard tribal regions) from communist influence and deny sanctuary. In exchange for security assistance, the Montagnards agreed to support the GVN. Thus the political objectives of the Montagnard tribes overlapped with US military objectives. The following list describes the general mission of the CIDG program:

- Establish a base camp for training Strike Force and Village Defenders
- Bring local populace under GVN influence
- Assist in the conduct of ARVN military operations when such operations furthered the CIDG effort
- Conduct PSYOP to develop popular support for the GVN
- Establish an area intelligence system including agent informant networks
- Conduct limited civil affairs projects.
- Where appropriate, conduct border screen¹²³

The mission of the CIDG program emphasized “village defense” and the conduct of ARVN military operations only “when such operations further the CIDG effort.” Furthermore, “border screen” operations were only to be

¹²² *Outline History of the 5th SF Gp (Abn), Participation in the CIDG Program 1961-1970*, Miscellaneous, 5th SF Gp (Abn). (SECRET. Issue date 1971? Date declassified DEC 14, 1983, Carlisle, PA: US Army Military History Institute), 2.

¹²³ 5th SF Gp (Abn), 4.

conducted “where appropriate” (meaning if adjacent to a Montagnard tribal area). A quote from the 5th SFG historical outline of the CIDG program summed up this objective nicely:

Organizing, training and arming the villagers for self-defense...the principle goal being to return trained and armed tribesman to their respective villages under village leadership.¹²⁴

The CIDG program proved to be very effective. The 5th SFG were able to expand the program from one village to one hundred villages in just over a year. This effectively gained control over large geographic areas that had previously been contested.

In regard to the relationship between the conventional US Military and the Army of Vietnam (ARVN), the principle of overlapping objectives did not exist. Although the ARVN was a military organization, to assert that various commanders also had political objectives is well documented.¹²⁵ These politically appointed corps and division commanders had the objective of consolidating their own power base in the regions under their command while simultaneously maintaining favor with Diem by minimizing casualties.¹²⁶ Consequently, the ARVN relied heavily upon the US Military’s strength while refusing to take the risk inherent in aggressive combat operations. The conventional US Military, on the other hand, had the single objective of decisively defeating the communist insurgents through aggressive counterforce operations. While the US Military pushed in one direction the ARVN ran in the other. Thus, the political objectives of the ARVN commanders were inconsistent with US Military objectives.

In the end, the conventional US Military–ARVN relationship took precedent over the USSF–CIDG relationship. After an extremely successful first year, the CIA requested that the CIDG program be expanded. An argument

¹²⁴ 5th SF Gp (Abn), 7.

¹²⁵ Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann in Vietnam* (NY: Vintage Books, 1988) Sheehan speaks to the political motivations of the ARVN commanders throughout his book.

¹²⁶ Sheehan, 127-200.

ensued over the jurisdiction of such an expansion but the dictums of “unity of effort” won out, and Secretary of Defense McNamara made the decision to centralize the program under the control of the Army.

It did not take long for the US Military to find conventional roles for the USSF trained CIDG forces. The Border Surveillance (BS) Program was initiated “generated by the need for intelligence of increasing enemy troop and supply infiltration into RVN,”¹²⁷ and the MIKE¹²⁸ forces, which had been developed as quick reaction forces for village defense, were used to augment conventional infantry units. The hijacking of the CIDG program was immediately evident to the SF Command in Vietnam, as noted in the unit’s history:

Special Forces Command in Vietnam, aware of the serious negative impact of these moves, protested to both MACV and Washington. MACV turned a deaf ear and continued the transition of SF personnel and village defense forces to conventional strike forces. The task of these conventionalized CIDG elements was, as articulated by MACV commander General William Westmoreland, to seal the Lao-Viet border.¹²⁹

Although it is easy to point to the dismantling of the CIDG program as a major blow to the counterinsurgency effort, ultimately, it was the failure of not applying a UW approach to the ARVN that resulted in the Military’s failure in Vietnam. Ironically, ARVN political objectives were not inconsistent with a UW approach. The idea that indigenous forces should be used to tie the government to the people and separate the population from the insurgents would have been consistent with properly applied UW principles while simultaneously allowing ARVN commanders to exercise control over their designated regions. Moreover, subsuming the newly trained CIDG forces into the conventional military was not in itself “wrong” but using them to support military objectives that were incompatible with the indigenous force’s (the ARVN) political objectives was flawed from the start.

¹²⁷ 5th SF Gp (Abn), 2.

¹²⁸ MIKE forces were quick reaction forces developed for village defense. They consisted of approximately 50 indigenous soldiers with a few US advisors.

¹²⁹ Adams, 89.

b. The Principle of Decontrol

The principle of decontrol ensures that the authority for key decisions is given to the individual on the ground that he has intimate microclimate knowledge of ongoing operations. This principle, if properly adhered to, allows operators at the tactical level to make decisions in a timely manner. As noted earlier, the CIDG program was independently executed by the 5th SFG “although planned and funded by the CIA.”¹³⁰ Entire villages and the surrounding areas were essentially handled by no more than 6 to 12 USSF advisors who lived and fought alongside their Montagnard and Vietnamese Special Forces (VNSF) counterparts. Practically any actions, deemed appropriate by the teams on the ground, were authorized. The limited objective of securing the local area enabled the principle of decontrol to work effectively.

However, the decision made by SECDEF to centralize control of the CIDG program under the Army began to erode this autonomy. The increased accountability of the CIDG program to conventional military commanders is reflected in the operational control of the A Teams as noted in the unit history:

In May of 1964 operational control over USASF ‘A’ detachments was assigned to the Senior Advisor in each Corps Tactical Zone. This control was exercised through the USASF “B” detachments then assigned at corps level. This new command relationship enabled the Corps commander to direct CIDG operations.¹³¹

With a greater degree of accountability to the conventional command, SF teams became buried under a multi-tiered hierarchical system of command and control. Perhaps this increased accountability could have worked if the Corps commanders understood the fundamental nature of the conflict, but since they were not experienced to deal with substate conflict, increased accountability only led to increased conventionalization.

¹³⁰ Adams, 84.

¹³¹ 5th SF Gp (Abn), 3.

c. *The Principle of Restraint*

UW operations are characterized by the discreet application of firepower. This may imply greater individual risk to the UW operator but the benefits far outweigh the costs. Needless to say, it does not take much of an argument to show the neglect of this principle in Vietnam.

During the early years of the CIDG program, “limited offensive activity was mostly confined to the vicinity of the village.”¹³² The objective was not to seek out and destroy the enemy by indiscriminate means, but simply to secure the immediate village and deny that particular space and population to insurgent control or manipulation.

In the first year after the conventional US Military took control of the CIDG program, specialized missions were developed to redirect the unique capabilities of USSF and their indigenous counterparts in order to support conventional operations. The afore mentioned Border Surveillance program and the attachment of MIKE forces in support of conventional units are the best examples of the lack of restraint shown in the conventional army’s use of the CIDG program.

These uses were expanded with the development of Project Leaping Lena, later renamed Project Delta which, “employed combined reconnaissance teams with an ARVN Airborne Ranger Battalion serving as a reaction/exploitation force.”¹³³ With the newly developed “hyper-conventional” use of USSF, the Principle of Restraint was no longer a concept that mattered.

d. *The Principle of Perseverance*

The Principle of Perseverance means there should be an understanding that UW efforts may take a long time to achieve their objectives. This simple concept must be foremost in the minds of strategic planners. Once the decision was made to commit conventional military forces, a very definite

¹³² Adams, 85

¹³³ 5th SF Gp (Abn), 14.

time clock began to countdown. With a large level of military commitment comes a requirement for political resolve backed by the approval of the American people. This resolve has a limited life span, especially if casualties are involved. Summers notes:

[I]t would be an obvious fallacy to commit the army without first committing the American people...without the commitment of the American people the commitment of the Army to prolonged combat was impossible.¹³⁴

What Summers fails to grasp, however, is that the American people have a right to not support military action. Certainly the American people are willing to sacrifice blood and treasure if the cause is deemed a matter of national survival, or if the prosecution of the war is showing good results. But this was not the case in Vietnam and the Nixon administration knew it as evidenced by their relentless pursuit of a diplomatic solution.¹³⁵

But what if a UW approach would have been followed? Certainly it is impossible to prove a “what if” assertion but the point is interesting to ponder. There would have been no draft, casualties would have been minimal, and if the effort ultimately proved to be ineffective, the US would have been able to disengage from Vietnam without significant damage done to her reputation. Wouldn't this have lowered the proverbial “bar” for US resolve?

Nevertheless, the Principle of Perseverance was ultimately violated in the CIDG program because the political resolve in the US diminished. But really, the program never had the chance to succeed due to the massive commitment of conventional military forces and the subsequent transformation of the CIDG program into something other than a counterinsurgency operation.

e. *The Principle of Fostering Legitimacy*

Fostering legitimacy is perhaps the most important UW principle. With legitimacy comes a better chance for long-term success. Legitimacy, if it

¹³⁴ Summers, 35.

¹³⁵ Boot, 312.

does not exist at the start of a campaign must be built over time. Also, legitimacy should not be sacrificed for expediency without careful consideration. “Every action, every operation, every effort to assist a country faced with an insurgency must be taken only after it is deemed a means of assisting the incumbent regime to enhance its legitimacy.”¹³⁶ This statement is a perfect description of how to properly employ this principle, and in the CIDG program this is exactly what USSF did.

Among other qualities, a unique aspect of the CIDG program “was that these SF soldiers lived in the villages and took an interest in the villagers while assisting with self-defense, providing help with development projects and participating in combat operations.”¹³⁷ There were difficulties. The Americans had a very difficult time reconciling the racial prejudices exhibited by the Vietnamese and the Montagnards. Nevertheless, the Montagnards sensed the commitment and personal sacrifice of the Americans working among them. The USSF and their VNSF counterparts represented the GVN to the Montagnard population. Everything they did was a reflection of the GVN.

However, the obvious successes in establishing GVN legitimacy by USSF in the CIDG program began to be offset through the redirection of the program by the conventional army. The implementation of the Border Surveillance Program often required the building of camps in uninhabited areas requiring the CIDG troops and their families to leave their homes. To the extent that the lives of the Montagnard were improved through the initial efforts of the CIDG program, it can be said that legitimacy was lost through the transition to conventional operations. The refocus of the program transformed the CIDG into a purely counterforce organization rather than one predicated on security at the local level.¹³⁸ In the end, the Principle of Fostering Legitimacy was violated.

¹³⁶ Max Manwaring & Court Prisk, *McNair Papers, Number Eight, A Strategic View of Insurgencies: Insights from El Salvador* (Washington: DC, The Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1990), 20-21.

¹³⁷ Adams, 84-85.

¹³⁸ 5th SF Gp (Abn), 13.

f. Summary of the CIDG Program

Through this analysis we have shown that UW was an effective tool when applied by USSF to the CIDG program even though the program must ultimately be considered a failure since there is now a unified Vietnam under Communist rule. Analyzing the CIDG program both before and after the US Military assumed control demonstrates how the conventional military turned a promising program into a counterproductive program.

The Principle of Overlapping Objectives clearly existed between the Montagnards and the USSF. The Principles of Decontrol, Restraint, and Legitimacy were all adhered to prior to the takeover by the US Military and is evidenced by the huge influence gained within a year of the initiation of the program. As for the Principle of Perseverance, the program was never given a chance to succeed. Whether the program would have succeeded without the introduction of conventional forces cannot be determined.

The Principle of Perseverance aside, once the CIDG program transitioned to conventional US Military control, all of the UW Principles were violated. The CIDG, a force that had been created solely to counter an insurgency at the local level, was redirected towards conventional military operations. The US Military's focus was on counterforce operations rather than local security and by displacing the Montagnards to areas that did not support their way of life all of the previous gains in legitimacy were effectively lost. The Principles of Decontrol and Restraint were also negated through the application counterforce operations. Decontrol, which gave authority to the individual SF teams, was lost when the control of CIDG forces was transferred to conventional commanders. The nature of the Principle of Restraint was also lost when local counterinsurgency efforts were transitioned to counterforce operations.

D. EL SALVADOR 1981-1992

1. Background

The abusive and brutal rule of an oligarchy comprised of powerful landowners and military officers controlled El Salvador up until the late 1970's. The 1979 victory by Sandinista guerrillas in nearby Nicaragua served as a wake-up call that compelled a group of junior reform minded officers to oust El Salvador's then government leader, General Carlos Humberto Romero. Three subsequent civil military juntas were established between 1979 and 1982, none of which was able to implement the economic and social reforms necessary to avoid revolution. Sixteen separate leftist factions organized together under the political title of Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR). The FDR's military counterpart was the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front).¹³⁹

Spurred on by the successes of communist revolutionaries in their takeover of nearby Nicaragua, in 1981 the FMLN launched what it called its "final offensive" in an attack on the Salvadoran junta with the expectation of a quick victory. The FMLN believed that their attack would inspire a popular insurrection that would sweep them into power, making the same mistake that the CIA made in the "Bay of Pigs" fiasco, and Che Guavera made in his attempt to inspire revolution in Bolivia. As in the case of the Bay of Pigs and Che's efforts in Bolivia, the popular uprising was not forthcoming and the FMLN was eventually driven off in a costly defeat. President Carter, not wanting to see the government of El Salvador fall, "recommended US aid for El Salvador and hastily deployed three teams of advisors to assist the ESAF (El Salvadoran Armed Forces) in 1981."¹⁴⁰

2. UW Preconditions

A decade after Vietnam the UW precondition of "objective of major importance" would present itself again in Central America, this time during the Carter and Reagan Administrations. Reagan's foreign policy, with its "rollback"

¹³⁹ Richard Downie, *Learning from Conflict, The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, 1998) 130.

¹⁴⁰ Downie, 131.

strategy, embodied the same emphasis on employing an unconventional military solution to the communist insurgent problem as the Kennedy administration had. “By the beginning of President Reagan’s second term, ‘rollback,’ described as support for anti-communist forces, was a major theme in foreign policy rhetoric.”¹⁴¹ One reason for the emphasis and support Reagan gave to operations in Nicaragua and El Salvador was that Central America was not South East Asia, but considered America’s “back yard,” one short step from the American homeland itself. The alarming gains made by communist influences in Central America, especially the Sandinista takeover in Nicaragua, forced America to “draw the line” against “communist aggression.”¹⁴²

The precondition of “inappropriate or inadequate resources available to achieve a decisive military victory” was also present in the case of El Salvador. Although the Sandinista takeover in Nicaragua was identified by President Carter and emphasized by President Reagan as a serious threat to stability in Central America, the U.S. was determined not to “gringo-ize” the war.¹⁴³ Therefore, although the Reagan administration sanctioned military action, this action was to consist primarily of economic support, military hardware, and limited advisory support. In short, a conventional US Military response was ruled out as inappropriate.

In the case of the precondition of “freedom of action,” there are two points to be made. Efforts in El Salvador consisted of advisory support to the government in a counterinsurgent effort. As in Vietnam, there existed excellent freedom of action for US Military advisors to interact with the population. The real limits to USSF advisor freedoms were the restrictions placed upon the soldiers by the US Congress. US advisors were restricted from participating in

¹⁴¹ Thomas Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action, The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 176.

¹⁴² Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador, The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 1.

¹⁴³ A. Bacevich, James Hallums, Richard White, and Thomas young, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1988), 5.

Salvadoran operations and from conducting night patrols. It is important to note, however, that these restrictions often had to be violated for the US advisors to be effective.¹⁴⁴

3. The UW Principles

a. *The Principle of Overlapping Objectives*

“Rollback” was an objective of major importance to the US. But, the amount of support the US was willing to give in order to achieve that objective was much different from that of Vietnam. In El Salvador the support given to ESAF in order for the US to achieve its objectives was going to be limited.¹⁴⁵

As far as one could tell by the political rhetoric, the principles of overlapping objectives existed, but the translation of rhetoric into military action sent mixed messages. Although forthcoming military and economic support to El Salvador may not have been all the Salvadorians wanted, it did set a condition that would bear the fruit of a “UW approach” in the long run.

The USSF objectives at the operational and tactical levels, simply put, perfectly overlapped with those of their counterparts. Together they would build a professional military capable of conducting counterinsurgent warfare. The possibility for the development of additional objectives was precluded by the strict control measures enforced on the advisory teams by the US Government.

b. *The Principle of Decontrol*

The counterinsurgency effort in El Salvador is an ideal example of how the principle of decontrol works. Max Manwaring, in his analysis of US involvement in El Salvador, made the following observation:

The United States has not yet developed an understanding of the phenomenon (unconventional warfare) and what it will take to deal

¹⁴⁴ Taken from personal interviews with US advisor in El Salvador. In violating these restrictions, US advisors were putting their lives and careers on the line.

¹⁴⁵ Manwaring and Prisk, 5.

with it successfully, the hard work was left up to the operational-tactical level efforts.¹⁴⁶ (Parenthetical note added.)

Manwaring points out that the US simply does not have the understanding to deal with what this thesis has defined as UW. His assertion brings an important point in reference to decontrol to the forefront. Lack of institutional knowledge served to ensure that, as Manwaring put it, “the hard work of operational-tactical level efforts” of the USSF advisors on the ground who did understand counterinsurgency were not infringed upon. Essentially, the conventional military had learned that they did not want to have anything to do with substate conflict and as a result, left the operation up to the guys on the ground. This point is crucial to understanding the UW success in El Salvador. By not “micromanaging” the UW efforts in El Salvador the Military actually increased the chance of it succeeding.¹⁴⁷

Moreover, the congressional constraints imposed by Congress further ensured the Principle of Decontrol was not violated. :

Regular teams of advisor (generally no more than 2-3 officers and NCOs) lived, worked and trained with Brigade soldiers for six months to a year. It was not possible to send more to each location because in 1981 an agreement between the government of El Salvador and the U.S. State Department limited the number of official advisors in country to 55.¹⁴⁸

While the number of 55 was not strictly adhered to throughout the course of the SF mission, this restriction disallowed any formal authorization for

¹⁴⁶ Manwaring and Prisk, 17.

¹⁴⁷ That the US Military had a penchant for micromanagement in the same timeframe we are discussing is exemplified in the incredibly botched *Mayaguez* rescue operation in Cambodia. The poor planning aside, micromanagement on the part of the JCS, PACOM, and the US Support Activities Group (USSAG) in Thailand was astounding. The point being, if a mission was deemed important to the Pentagon—they micromanaged it. For a full discussion of this operation see Lucien Vandenbroucke, *Perilous Options* (NY: Oxford Press, 1993) 94-113

¹⁴⁸ Richard Stewart, Stanley Sandler, and Joseph Fischer, *To Free From Oppression, A Concise History of U.S. Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School* (Ft. Bragg, NC: US Army Special Operations Command Directorate of History and Museums, 1995), 104.

an increase of personnel or for the establishment of an institutional military bureaucracy. Perhaps because the mission was so small the Pentagon did not take it seriously.

c. *The Principle of Restraint*

Again, for political reasons rather than military ones, the principle of restraint was enforced perfectly. Based upon restrictions placed upon the USSF advisors by the US Government there was no escalation of force by the US, which was crucial in maintaining the limited approach that characterizes UW. While these restrictions effectively enforced the principle of restraint, they also served as a catalyst to promote legitimacy within the El Salvadorian Army. Restricting the use of military force kept the El Salvadorian Army from relying upon, and more importantly expecting, U.S. firepower in fighting the FMLN guerrillas. Instead, restraint was maintained at the lowest possible level and the US advisors reinforced this through their emphasis on the need to conduct operations that would not alienate the local population.

While this principle was established as a constraint upon SF advisors working in El Salvador, it was also emphasized by the USSF advisors who urged their counterparts to operate in such a way as not to cause collateral damage or injuries among the citizenry of El Salvador. While this advice was certainly not always heeded, there was a marked difference in how the military interacted with the population that proved helpful in subsequent counterinsurgency operations.

d. *The Principle of Perseverance*

The El Salvadorian Armed Forces (ESAF) understood they were involved in a struggle for their own survival. Likewise, the FLMN and FDR made repeated proclamations of their commitment to win regardless of how long it took. Their ability to command large formations of guerrillas in both of their so-called “final offensives” gave testament to their capability and commitment. As for the

ESAF, they identified early on that revolution was a serious threat and were proactive in countering it at all cost.

The seriousness of the threat to the El Salvadorian government was accurately conveyed to the US Government that consequently understood that success might require a long-term commitment. Of course, El Salvador persistently pursued the United States for military aid, desiring more hardware than personnel. But even if the administration had wanted to send more military equipment and personnel to El Salvador, a reluctant US Congress did not. The US did, however, sustain its commitment of US advisors with the understanding that they could maintain this minimal investment indefinitely. Thus, the Principle of Perseverance was established with USSF advisors and MTTs (Mobile Training Teams) maintaining a continuous presence in El Salvador from 1981 to 1992.¹⁴⁹

e. The Principle of Fostering Legitimacy

In Manwaring and Prisk's analysis of the counterinsurgency in El Salvador, they rightly called it "a legitimacy war—the achievement and maintenance of the moral right to govern." This, they continued, "was considered to be the major concern upon which everything depended, and the basic context of the conflict."¹⁵⁰ As was noted in chapter four, the principle of fostering legitimacy is perhaps the single most important UW principle. Without legitimacy true influence can never be gained over a target population. US Advisors knew this and strongly urged the Government of El Salvador to opt for a strategy that would establish its own legitimacy among the people.

The government of El Salvador, listening to their US Advisors, adopted this crucial strategy early on in the struggle. An interesting role reversal took place in El Salvador: the guerrilla's initially relied on their military ability to "sweep the government from power" while the government realized that the fight

¹⁴⁹ Stewart et al., 102-109.

¹⁵⁰ Manwaring and Prisk, 6.

would be won by gaining legitimacy with the people. As noted by Manwaring and Prisk:

In a struggle for the 'hearts and minds' of a people, the fundamental question is one of rectitude; it was here that the government response began. While the "revolutionaries" were concentrating their efforts on the military aspects of the war, the Salvadoran leadership made the struggle to gain legitimacy – and, thus, internal and external support – the first priority.¹⁵¹

To this end the government and military, along with USSF, embarked upon a new training program to professionalize the army, creating a military that could engage an enemy force without alienating the general citizenry.¹⁵²

As the ESAF increased its ability to effectively engage the enemy, the need to have US advisors in close proximity to combat patrols diminished. The US advisors effectively worked their way out of a job. Also, the appropriate level of involvement of US advisors in the tactical conduct of the counterinsurgency allowed the ESAF to fully own all of its tactical successes, demonstrating an excellent example of the Principle of Fostering Legitimacy. Legitimacy was fostered in this way by the USSF, but not without difficulty. USSF advisors constantly struggled with establishing their own credibility, which was linked to sharing ESAF hardships, while at the same time trying to back off enough to let the ESAF assume responsibility and ownership as independent professionals in their own right.

The ability to foster legitimacy in this way would not have existed, we think, with the presence of large US military commitment. The large US presence would, in most cases, disable any efforts to promote legitimacy among a newly trained foreign army. Because of political necessity, one can point to El Salvador as a case where the absence of such a force ultimately led to success. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the newly professionalized ESAF Military was reinforced through its subordination to a democratically elected government. And

¹⁵¹ Manwaring and Prisk, 11.

¹⁵² Manwaring and Prisk, 12.

likewise, the legitimacy of the Government of El Salvador was established because of the fact that this new military was clearly subordinated to it.

4. Summary of the El Salvador Analysis

The most important point that is shown from the preceding analysis is that USSF has a much better record of success in the conduct of UW when they are employed without the institutional military oversight that accompanies conventional operations.

Each of the five UW principles was adhered to either consciously or unconsciously because of control measures that were placed upon the advisors for political reasons. The successful adherence to these principles that accompanied the counterinsurgency effort in El Salvador created an environment that showed the viability of the application of UW.

Another key point was made by Manwaring and Prisk who note, "Legitimacy was reaffirmed as the factor that in the long-term proved to be more decisive than traditional military action."¹⁵³ El Salvador serves as a great example of a host nation properly identifying its need for legitimacy among its own population. But even if the El Salvadorian government understood the importance of legitimacy it was the US advisors who helped them "operationalize" this requirement by creating a professional, responsible force.

E. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CASES

There are significant lessons to be learned from the preceding case studies. In the case of the CIDG program, there was initial success followed by subsequent failure. The case of El Salvador was a clear example of success. There are striking similarities between both of these cases. Both cases satisfied the UW Preconditions. Both operations were conducted by the same organization. Both environments were characterized by Communist insurgencies which enjoyed strong support. And governments of dubious

¹⁵³ Manwaring and Prisk, 13.

character characterized both countries—although the South Vietnamese Government was decidedly more so. But in analyzing the application of the UW Principles a divergence between these UW campaigns begins to emerge. As shown in Table 2, a simple correlative relationship between adherence to these principles and success/failure exists.

Table 2: Use of UW Principles

<i>UW Strategic Principles:</i>	<i>CIDG Program (1963-70)</i> <i>A Case of Failure</i>	<i>El Salvador (1981-93)</i> <i>A Case of Success</i>
Overlapping Objectives	*	X
Decontrol	*	X
Fostering Legitimacy	X	X
Perseverance		X
Quality over Quantity	X	X
Restraint	*	X

(*Initially existed in the execution of the CIDG program from 1961 to late 1963.)

So, why did UW succeed in one of these cases and fail in the other? The answer to this question seems to be found in the involvement of the conventional Military. A key assertion in relation to these two cases is that the amount and type of direct involvement by the institutional military correlates to success or failure in UW operations. While two cases studies are insufficient to fully prove our thesis they are illustrative of how our theory operates. Indeed, if these two cases point to anything it is that UW campaigns cannot be successful if the conventional military is involved. Albeit a strong conclusion on our part it nonetheless is supportable given the similarities between the two cases and the eventual results. Would the CIDG program have eventually failed? Perhaps. Would a UW approach to the ARVN and the conflict in Vietnam as a whole have failed as well? Perhaps. But what is more important is to ask the strategic

question: What would have been the consequences if a UW approach to Vietnam failed? We submit the strategic costs would have been minimal. Because the UW approach offers a way for the US to engage in a protracted struggle to deal with important strategic imperatives, American prestige is not placed in jeopardy. This is the most beneficial aspect of using UW to achieve strategic objectives. UW offers a low cost high payoff method to get results. And if it fails, the US can “cut its losses” without losing its credibility. Moreover, that this low cost high payoff strategy is the most effective way to deal with substate conflicts adds further support to UW as a style of warfare. In the end, the US Military should simply accept this rather than trying to justify the conventional approach to war. As the closing remarks of *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador* states:

A first step toward success in future military interventions may be for Americans to see such things for what they really are. Let us not comfort ourselves with innocuous labels like nation-building or internal defense and development. Nor should we be misled by pedantic definitions of insurgency or “national liberation.” Recognize that more is involved than supporting some doctrine named for a departed president. Look beyond the functions of security assistance, training, and advice. Call it war, and having done so, act accordingly.¹⁵⁴

We agree with this proposition, but instead of calling the situation “war,” we would declare it “unconventional war,” and then act accordingly by creating the appropriate institution from which to conduct it.

¹⁵⁴ Bacevich et al. 50-51.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

– T. S. Eliot¹⁵⁵

This thesis has attempted to show that UW can be a viable tool to achieve strategic objectives under certain circumstances. In essence, we have established an operational construct for UW and have concluded that in order to optimize this construct, the Department of Defense must create a new service to coordinate UW efforts. This was not our original premise—thus the reference to Eliot cited above. However, when one really examines the nature of substate conflict—the environment in which UW is best suited—the realization that conventional military solutions are not only inappropriate but that the conventional military is fundamentally ill-suited to carry out unconventional warfare operations emerges. This is not necessarily bad. The real purpose of the nation’s military must be to fight and win conventional war. If it were to undertake the necessary changes that would make it adept at fighting in unconventional conflicts the overall purpose of the force would be diminished. The fact is that unconventional warfare and conventional war are so different that the same organization cannot do both effectively.

A. SUMMARY

We began this thesis by establishing the strategic requirement for UW. After all, to make the assertion that it must be optimized one first has to understand that there are times when US diplomatic efforts fail to bear fruit yet must respond even though the use of traditional military power may be inappropriate. It is under these circumstances where UW is rightly employed. Thus, in Chapter II we identified where the strategic utility for UW lies—in a protracted struggle. But still there must be some kind of “test” for when UW

¹⁵⁵ TS Eliot, *Four Quartets* (NY: Harcourt, Bruce & Company, 1943) 49

efforts are appropriate and when they are not. Our test is based on three preconditions that must exist before a UW campaign is initiated. They are:

- When the objective is of major importance
- When the resources are inappropriate (or inadequate) to secure a conventional military decision.
- When freedom of action exists.

In regard to the first precondition the question must be asked, 'Does the emerging threat have the potential to threaten a vital (or important) US national interests?' Also of note in regard to this precondition is that these threats do not necessarily represent a situation in crisis. Rather they are likely threats that are below the event horizon. Our second precondition is based on the anticipated result of commitment of conventional forces. Will they produce the intended outcome? This precondition can also apply to the availability of assets. If military assets are limited, as is currently the case with US forces, economy of force efforts must be considered. UW can be an economy of force option. The third precondition is that freedom of action must exist. Freedom of action is meant to describe the ability of US UW operators to interact with the local population but can also be thought of as the political freedom the US has to act.

Chapter II also describes how divergent UW is from conventional war. Karl Von Clausewitz' "trinity" was used to exemplify this. According to Clausewitz, the outcome of conflict is the result of the interplay between the emotion (the people), chance (the army), and reason (the government). Conventional war is aimed at defeating the opposing force first, the government second, and conquering the will of the people third. By contrast the aim of unconventional war is to mitigate (or incite) emotion so as to conquer the will of the people first. Only then can an indigenous based force be used to conduct counterforce operations.

In Chapter III we examined how to achieve success in substate conflicts. We explained how insurgencies grow and how they are countered. In short, one must first gain control of the local population by creating a secure environment. Basically, the aim is to get the targeted population to side with "us" as opposed to

“them.” McCormick’s “Mystic Diamond” was used to describe this. We also introduced seven tactical and two strategic measures of effectiveness to determine if UW efforts are being productive.

Chapter IV lays our operational construct for UW. It revolves around the need to gain local control in order to influence events. It was presented in the following manner:

- Purpose: To establish a secure environment for a targeted population.
- Method: By assisting indigenous forces with training, equipping, advising, and participating in security efforts.
- Endstate: In order to create relationships vital to influencing local leaders in support of US objectives.

Our construct considers both support to insurgency and assisting an ally in counterinsurgency efforts as parts of UW. We introduced a UW model (Figure 7) that depicts this but it also portrays a “gray zone” in between these two ends where UW can regularly be used. Chapter IV also introduced our five enduring UW principles, which, if followed, should greatly increase the chances for a UW campaign to succeed. They are:

- The Principle of Overlapping Objectives
- The Principle of Decontrol
- The Principle of Restraint
- The Principle of Perseverance
- The Principle of Fostering Legitimacy

In Chapter V we shifted our focus away from developing an operational construct for UW to showing how the conventional military does not, and cannot, accept UW. To support this conclusion we examined policy directives given to the US military from 1947 to present to show that the political leadership of the US has repeatedly identified the need for an unconventional warfare capability and that the Military, by and large, has rejected this advice.

An examination of the evolution of UW through the historical doctrine taken together with a review of the SOF history over the last twenty-three years served to support the assertion that SOCOM is primarily a conventionally

grounded organization. And, a review of the Professional Military Education system further supports our position that the US Military is an institution that is wholly conventional.

Finally, in Chapter VI a comparative analysis is conducted between two case studies where UW was actually employed by US forces. The CIDG case study showed what happens when the conventional army goes to war in a counterinsurgent environment and the case study on El Salvador showed that success is possible through a very minimal investment of quality USSF advisors working through, by, and with an indigenous force. In the case of El Salvador, all of the UW enduring principles were adhered to, while only one of the five were followed throughout the conduct of the CIDG program. This suggests that when the conventional Military is in control of a UW campaign, it fails to follow the UW principles. However, a more detailed analysis should be conducted to thoroughly prove this point.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

As we stated in Chapter I this thesis would be incomplete if we failed to offer some solutions designed to optimize UW. Our recommendations will be framed in conceptual terms rather than in precise changes to organizational structure and command relationships. We had originally thought we could offer “in house” solutions that would enable UW to be optimized, however, the overwhelming lesson of research has led us to conclude that any attempt to transform the current US Military institution from within will be flawed from the start. In light of this, our recommendations are solely focused on what kind of capabilities and support requirements a new Department of Strategic Services (DSS) must possess. Ultimately, we believe this is what is necessary to tap the substantial potential of UW.

1. A UW Concept of Operations

In order for UW to be operationalized the forces responsible for its conduct must be empowered to establish and maintain contact at the local level of a targeted population. This “targeting” should be based on emerging threats. Operations would be focused in the “contested” regions where this threat exists and consist of small groups acting independently of the military but consistent with the stated US policy objectives. The “synching” of DSS operations must support those objectives of the regional CINCs and the various country teams without impeding or interfering with UW operations.

The DSS would adopt the State Department’s approach to strategy, basing solutions on the unique circumstances of the individual country rather than a “one size fits all” approach. Of course, an overarching set of guidelines must be established, but these guidelines should not be incongruent with the UW principles articulated in this thesis. Finally, operations should be carried out in accordance with our UW construct and be executed in a manner that would be consistent with the substate strategies envisioned by McCormick.

2. DSS Education

Individual core competencies of personnel within the DSS would include a language capability. One cannot completely understand any culture without mastery of the language. Without a strong language capability there is no DSS. Additionally, an increased educational level would also be a requirement for the DSS. Programs that include regional affairs, negotiations, anthropology, psychology, and warfare with an emphasis on unconventional warfare would also be required.

3. DSS Support Requirements

The structural support must be in place to facilitate the forward deployed status of DSS soldiers and their families (if applicable) over an extended period of time. As stated in chapter IV, UW is a social form of warfare where the most

precious commodity is the individual soldier. This assignment profile requires a personnel system that is completely dissimilar to the current one employed by the US Military. Soldiers must remain in place for very long periods of time and the system must be designed to support this. Also, a sound incentive program that addresses timely promotion, special pays, and forward deployed compensation should also be considered. Additionally, intelligence packages would have to be developed and tailored to the specific needs inherent with UW operations.

Secondly, the appropriate mechanism must be established that would give a regional DSS Commander the authority to “pull” national level assets to support ongoing UW operations when necessary. DSS Commanders must have comparable budgetary authority to the other military services and be able to establish organic support assets including intelligence, aviation, communications, and any logistical assets required.

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To establish the ability to engage before the crisis and to efficiently assist during and after the crisis, there must be a large complement of civilian and military advisers and policymakers who are culturally aware, politically knowledgeable, and technically prepared.¹⁵⁶

If there is a single recommendation of this thesis it is to the political leadership of our nation. Legislation must be passed, not unlike the “Special Forces” bill which established USSOCOM in 1987, to create a service that deals solely with UW. Because, as Manwaring and Prisk note, “the United States continually fails to recognize the need to organize to fight this form of conflict.”¹⁵⁷ Political directives alone have not yielded the organizational change within the US Military required to meet this need. There is no reason to believe they ever will. Therefore, legislation must be passed that separates the UW capability from the conventional military by creating a new organization that could develop its

¹⁵⁶ Manwaring and Prisk, 22.

¹⁵⁷ Manwaring and Prisk, 19.

own unique UW culture designed to carry out UW operations—the Department of Strategic Services. Only through legislation like this can the DoD truly transform.

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