

Counterrevolution in Military Affairs Ambushes the U.S. Army

by Carl Osgood

When the Bush Administration took office in January 2001, military policy discussions were dominated by the so-called “revolution in military affairs,” the idea that the information age was changing the way wars of the future would be fought. Buzz phrases like “effects-based operations,” “rapid decisive operations,” “operational net assessment,” and “standing joint force headquarters” were flying around the halls of the Pentagon and military think-tanks. As explained to this author in 2002, the hypothesis behind all this was that a standing joint force headquarters that uses operational net assessment and employing effects-based operations can achieve decision superiority, enabling rapid, decisive operations.

According to this hypothesis, a standing joint force headquarters (SJFHQ) is a team of qualified experts that is attached to the headquarters of a unified combatant commander’s staff, which can “plug in” to a task force commander’s staff and provide expertise on the region where a crisis has erupted and on conducting operations in that region. At all times, the SJFHQ is responsible for doing the operational net assessment (ONA). The ONA is a “nodal analysis,” which looks at the adversary as a “system of systems,” looking at not only his military capabilities, but also political, economic, and social factors, and information systems and economic infrastructure. Included in this assessment, is a look at the battlespace, U.S. capabilities, and how the enemy sees us. This assessment is used to answer the question, “What kind of effects do you want to achieve?” The means to generate the desired effects are not limited to military ones, but can include diplomatic, information, and economic means, as well. The desired effects are used to design an “effects-based” operation; and “decision superiority” means being able to make decisions faster than the enemy. All of this, employed together, is supposed to result in the execution of a “rapid, decisive operation.”

Somewhere between 2002 and September 2003, however, the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps got ambushed by something else: irregular warfare.

The ‘Clash of Civilizations’ Axiom

To be sure, the think-tankers at U.S. Joint Forces Command are still working with the concepts underlying the buzz

phrases. Early this year, JFCom released a pamphlet entitled *Commander’s Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations*, which is billed as a “baseline” for continuing the development of future doctrine that will incorporate concepts like effects-based operations. However, a different set of axioms emerging from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is now dominating the discussion. The invasion of Iraq proved to be neither rapid nor decisive, and U.S. military actions in Iraq have generated often unanticipated effects, unanticipated at least, by anyone who believed the Bush Administration propaganda about the war. The Army, in particular, is reorganizing itself on the basis of an entirely new set of axioms to fight the war that has resulted.

One axiom that remains constant in all this, however, is Harvard Prof. Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations thesis, first propounded in a 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs*. Indeed, the major war games designed to develop the future war-fighting concepts being espoused by JFCom, such as the annual Unified Quest war game at the U.S. Army War College, are premised on the notion that the future is going to be determined by clashes of civilizations.

Military historian Dr. Williamson Murray, until recently associated with the U.S. Army’s Strategic Studies Institute, wrote in his introduction to a recent volume of essays by students at the Army War College, that Huntington “captured the possibilities” that were already emerging in the early 1990s. “This author would and has argued that the future and its implications are even darker than what Professor Huntington suggested,” Murray added. “The confluence between the world’s greatest reserves of petroleum and the extraordinary difficulties that the Islamic world is having, and will continue to have, in confronting a civilization that has taken the West 900 years to develop will create challenges that strategists are only now beginning to grasp,” challenges that the military, at all levels, must have the expertise to face, Murray argued.

Whether Murray realizes it or not, the Clash of Civilizations thesis is a British Arab Bureau creation. Long before Huntington’s *Foreign Affairs* piece appeared, British Arab Bureau agent Bernard Lewis had crafted the “Arc of Crisis” policy for the Zbigniew Brzezinski-controlled Carter Admin-



DoD/James Bowman, USAF

Donald Rumsfeld is leaving, but will the Pentagon's failing counterinsurgency doctrines continue? The military brass is trying to reorganize itself to achieve an object which is unattainable. Here, President Bush with Rumsfeld and Secretary of Defense nominee Robert Gates (right), at a Nov. 8 press conference.

istration for fostered Muslim Brotherhood-led insurrections along the southern periphery of the Soviet Union. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the 1979-88 Soviet war in Afghanistan were two fruits of this policy. Lewis continued to agitate for a Clash of Civilizations policy, including joining with the likes of Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Frank Gaffney, and others from the right wing, in a 1998 letter demanding that President Clinton carpet-bomb Iraq and overthrow Saddam Hussein. In the preface to his 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington acknowledges the support of the right-wing John M. Olin, Bradley and Smith Richardson foundations for their financial support in making publication of the book possible (see Jeffrey Steinberg and Scott Thompson, "Bernard Lewis: British Svengali Behind the Clash of Civilizations," *EIR*, Nov. 30, 2001).

Imperial Policing Is the Model

The actual model for how the Army is trying to reorganize itself appears to predate even Lewis's and Huntington's promotion of the Clash of Civilizations, however. Maj. Gen. Jonathon Riley, the senior British officer assigned to U.S. Central Command, let the cat out of the bag, during a panel discussion at the annual conference of the Association of the U.S. Army on Oct. 10. He invoked the image of the 1950s British campaign in Malaya, "as the textbook example of counterinsurgency," and suggested that perhaps that may be the model for the future. British success in Malaya has been attributed to two things, Riley said: British experience in imperial policing, and the development of concepts and tech-

niques for waging limited war. Riley noted the 1966 book by Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency, Experiences From Malaya and Vietnam* which enshrined Malaya as the "touchstone" of British expertise in counterinsurgency, and said, "Now that the Cold War is over, perhaps the long view may give us a different perspective, although I think [Thompson]'s wrong to dismiss imperial policing, which one can characterize as an expeditionary campaign to seize the territory followed by counterinsurgency to keep it."

So, the invasion of Iraq would appear to follow the British imperial policing model, regardless of whether that was the original intention. The U.S. military quickly seized the country, but then has been forced to fight a counterinsurgency campaign to keep it, a campaign that was not anticipated by the Bush Administration, though it could

hardly *not* have been foreseen. Now, it would appear that the underlying assumption of the Army's reorganization is exactly what Riley spelled out: to be able to wage major combat operations to seize some designated piece of territory, then spend years waging a counterinsurgency campaign to hold on to it, and that this is the paradigm for the so-called war on terrorism. The only difference is that the empire being defended, today, is the empire of globalization.

The conceptual basis of U.S. military enforcement of globalization has been elaborated at length by Thomas P.M. Barnett, an analyst who lectures at the U.S. Naval War College, in his two books *The Pentagon's New Map* and *Blueprint for Action: A Future Worth Creating*. Barnett divides the world into two spheres, a "functioning core," and what he calls "the red zone," or "the gap." The "functioning core" is that portion of the world where globalization has taken hold, and "the gap," which encompasses Africa, the Middle East (except for Israel), Central Asia, and portions of East Asia and South America, is that portion of the world where it hasn't. The late Adm. Arthur Cebrowski, a collaborator of Barnett's and the one-time head of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's Office of Force Transformation, said in 2003: "Our business is exporting security from the core into the gap." The purpose of exporting that security isn't to strengthen national governments of countries within the gap, however. Barnett has written that "The integration of the Gap will ultimately depend more on private investment than anything the Core's public sector can offer."

Barnett proposes wars of occupation against any countries resisting globalization, and a military restructuring to con-

form to the needs of such a perpetual imperial war mission: light mobile Army units, backed by massive Naval and Air power (shock and awe strategic bombing) with loads of special forces, and using the Marines as the expeditionary force; then a totally separate occupation military force, which he dubs, in true Information Age fashion, the “sysadmin,” or system administrator, force. This is the kind of reorganization that Rumsfeld has been attempting to implement. Rumsfeld may now be gone, but the policy has to change too.

A Little Push Back

A separate panel at the same AUSA conference where Riley spoke, led by Gen. William Wallace, the commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command (Tradoc), provided some evidence that the Army has not entirely blocked out the lessons of the Iraq invasion. The subject of the panel was “Developing the Future Modular Force,” and it was centered on the development of the Future Combat System (FCS), a system of 18 different combat vehicles and unmanned air and ground vehicles all connected by a network. Future combat formations are going to be organized, both structurally and doctrinally, around the FCS. Tradoc is developing the operational concepts, doctrine, and skills that will be employed by future FCS-equipped brigades, and is experimenting with them in exercises such as the annual Unified Quest war game.

The obvious question, of how FCS fits into a war-winning strategy, however, was only raised after the formal presentations were completed, and then, by a Canadian officer. Wallace had noted earlier that the traditional military doctrine of “seizing the objective” means that once that objective is seized, “you now own it,” and all of the problems associated with it. This is, as one veteran special operations expert pointed out, a belated recognition of a much older truth. In response to the Canadian officer, Wallace said, “You have to recognize that an FCS-equipped formation may not provide all the stuff you need after you take the objective.” He further developed the idea that “the new paradigm suggests that you have to understand” the operational environment, the context of the campaign, the nature of the enemy, and what will the culture degenerate to in the absence of an organized form of government. “If you can understand, you can visualize,” he said, “then you can campaign plan.”

Wallace added that consequence management has to be part of campaign planning. “If I am successful, how am I going to take advantage of that success?” he asked. By the same token, if the campaign is not so successful, how is the damage from that going to be mitigated? “This has to be part of operational planning, up front,” he said.

The kind of planning that Wallace was describing was exactly what was suppressed by Rumsfeld during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. When this reporter, in discussion afterwards, noted to Wallace that his remarks sounded like the discussions about Iraq in 2003, he said “I was talking about

Iraq in 2006. My experience suggests you can’t consider the end state. There is no end state. What’s beyond is an end state that’s continually evolving, and in my judgement, if you’re very thoughtful about understanding the environment, you can do something about predicting what the next step needs to be and that next step ought to be part of the operational planning.”

But Can Such Wars Be Won?

While the U.S. Army is arguing that it is reorganizing itself to successfully fight counterinsurgency warfare, more sober analysts are drawing the opposite conclusion: that such warfare cannot be won. Dr. Jeffrey Record, who teaches strategy at the U.S. Air War College in Alabama, during remarks at the Cato Institute on Nov. 1, argued that American strategic culture “is not conducive to success in protracted wars against irregular enemies.” He cited a number of reasons for this, two of which are that we are ahistorical—we’re not interested in the history of the places where we’re going to fight; and that we are culturally ignorant. On the second point, he says that the United States is just about the only country in the world where someone can be considered educated without having learned a foreign language.

Even more important is the political environment in which decisions were made that sent the Army to war in Iraq in the first place. *Washington Post* military reporter Tom Ricks, author of the book *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, argued in his book that the aim of the neo-conservative ideologues behind the drive to war in Iraq in 2002 and 2003 was not stability. Rather, stability was their *target*. When *EIR* asked Ricks, at the same Cato event, if the Army could ever get counterinsurgency “right,” given the nature of those political decisions, he said, “The Army has been fundamentally at odds with the National Command Authority [that is, the Bush Administration] in its conceptions of the Iraq mission. It keeps calling it ‘stability,’ when there’s no question in my mind, the U.S. National Command Authority’s intentions in Iraq were revolutionary.” Those intentions, Ricks explained, being the removal of the regime in power and the transfer of that power from the Sunni minority to the Shi’ite majority.

While “revolutionary” may not be the right word to describe the intentions of the Bush Administration in invading Iraq, that the Army has a different conception of its mission seems likely. The Army seems to think its mission is to fight counterinsurgency in order to bring about a stable political system to the country it is occupying, whereas the powers behind the Bush Administration are planning more Clash of Civilizations wars, such as against Iran. Yet the message that seems to be emerging is that the United States is in no way suited to fight long-term counterinsurgency wars to enforce globalization. The military establishment, it would appear, is not asking itself what might be the most crucial question: Is it trying to order its means to fit an objective which is unattainable?