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War by Other Means

BUILDING COMPLETE AND BALANCED CAPABILITIES FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY

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With

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Summary

I. The Challenge

Defining the Problem

The difficulties and staggering costs that the United States has faced in trying to secure Iraq and Afghanistan raise a question this study seeks to answer: What capabilities does the United States need to counter such insurgencies, of which today's are unlikely to be the last?

The search for the answer must start with defining the danger to U.S. and world security that is violent Islam. As leaders of jihad—holy war against Islam's supposed enemies—would have it, America and its allies are engaged in aggression against Islam and must be opposed by desperate and daring measures, including suicide terror and counterattacks in the West. Beyond defending Muslims, jihadists aim to demolish the nation-state order in the Muslim world, which they claim the West devised and uses to subjugate Islam. Believing that the West cannot control the Muslim world without its regional proxies, jihadists aim to destroy them. To these ends, their strategy is to aid and exploit local insurgencies, making each one more dangerous, intractable, and consequential.

To grasp the jihadists' definition of this struggle is not to embrace it. If their strategic goal is religious war between the Muslim and Christian worlds, America's goal must be to defuse such a war, not to wage and win it. The U.S. capabilities required to engage in the conflict the jihadists seek differ from those required to protect U.S. interests while averting such conflict. Trying to crush insurgency by military brute force in the Muslim world risks validating the jihadists' claim, increasing their appeal, and replacing their losses. As the United States

considers what capabilities it needs, it should define this conflict as a contest to persuade Muslim populations to choose human dignity and progress and to reject violent religious tyranny.

This seemingly easy choice is complicated by the belief of many Muslims, not entirely unfounded, that they have fared poorly in a Western-run system that espouses dignity and progress, and by the fact that few states in the Muslim world actually offer their citizens either dignity or progress. The greatest weakness in the struggle with Islamic insurgency is not U.S. firepower but the ineptitude and illegitimacy of the very regimes that are meant to be the alternative to religious tyranny—the ones tagged and targeted as Western puppets by jihad. Success thus hinges on improving the performance and accountability of governments in the Muslim world. This is the essence of classical counterinsurgency and should be made the beacon for planning U.S. COIN capabilities. With success in this political contest will come improved security of the United States and its interests.

Understanding the spreading pattern of Islamic violence as having essential elements of insurgency is a first step toward forging a winning strategy and assembling the capabilities needed to carry out that strategy. Since 9/11, the global war on terror (GWOT) has inspired offensive U.S. military campaigns in the Muslim world, amid the very populations whose loyalty is being contested, against enemies who hide and operate in those populations. Of course, the United States should conduct energetic counterterrorist operations to find and eliminate terrorists who would kill Americans, while also enhancing homeland security. However, as a specific strategy, using large-scale military power in the Muslim world to protect Americans at home ignores the impact on and reactions of the people who make their home in the places being attacked and occupied. Indeed, the enemy's own strategy, to quote Abu Bakr Naji, a leading jihadist, has been to "force America to abandon its war against Islam by proxy and force it to attack directly."

Lost in the fog of GWOT is whether it is increasing Muslim hostility and violence. Polling data suggest that it is. Moreover, terrorist attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan—places the United States has chosen to wage GWOT—rose from roughly 1,000 in 2004 to 2,500 in 2005

to 4,500 in 2006.¹ If GWOT's aim has been the attrition of terrorists, the result has been the opposite. Also lost is whether the United States has been investing in the right capabilities, which this study addresses.

As a guiding concept, COIN is superior to GWOT because it calls our attention to the underlying contest and the capabilities needed to win it. Interpreting organized Islamic violence as insurgency does not lessen its significance and dangers. On the contrary, this clarification should dispel unwarranted optimism that the United States and its friends will readily and inevitably prevail. Isolated terrorist groups come and go, often abruptly, but the average insurgency lasts more than a decade. Once insurgencies gain full strength, their likelihood of success, empirically, is 50 percent. Even more sobering is that four of the strongest statistical predictors of successful insurgency exist in today's Muslim world:

- populations excluded from politics and estranged from the state
- authoritarian, unresponsive, inept, and corrupt government
- insurgents committed to destroying such government
- significant popular sympathy for insurgents.

Not all violence directed against the political status quo in the Muslim world is energized, much less controlled, by global jihadism. In Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, Pakistan, and to some extent Iraq and Afghanistan, violent opposition to the status quo is rooted in dissatisfaction with the regimes themselves. Where Islamic militancy is at work— Hamas, for instance—the primary goal may remain local and political—a Palestinian state—rather than holy war with the West and its proxies. At the same time, jihadist ideas and agents, homegrown as well as transnational, are increasingly active and influential. Thus, while al Qaeda clearly does not control Hamas, leaders of the latter warn of the danger that the Palestinian cause will be swept up into the

¹ Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, MIPT Terrorism Database, 2007. As of October 25, 2007: <http://www.tkb.org>.

wider, more radical, insatiable jihad unless Palestinian local demands are met.

Recognizing organized Islamic violence as insurgency, with local and global aspects, also demands that we face up to its scale, breadth, and shades. By one estimate,² of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims, some 250 to 500 million have some sympathy with jihadist ideology. Of these, 200,000 are believed to be combatants in one or another Islamic insurgency. Only a few thousand are terrorists. This means that the number of individuals prepared to fight against U.S. forces in the Muslim world is two orders of magnitude greater than the number of terrorists U.S. forces have been sent there to fight. Sending big armies to fight terrorists in Muslim countries almost certainly increases the number of Muslims who are hostile to the United States and to U.S. forces in particular.

Among the most telling data are that only 1 percent of Iraqis approve of terrorism, while over 50 percent approve of attacks on U.S. troops.³ The problem for the United States, in Iraq and among Muslims generally, has been not only the 1 percent who support terrorists but also the 50 percent who oppose U.S. military presence. Even among Muslims who reject terrorism, large-scale U.S. military presence in Iraq is seen to confirm the terrorists' claim that Islam is under attack. The COIN paradigm exposes and confronts this danger; the GWOT paradigm overlooks and aggravates it.

The advantage of recognizing broad-based Islamic opposition as insurgency is becoming apparent on the ground. By 2007, most U.S. military forces in Iraq were conducting themselves according to counterinsurgency principles. They have shifted from relying on episodic assaults and wholesale manhunts to stressing everyday public safety,

² Kurt M. Campbell and Richard Weitz, *Non-Military Strategies for Countering Islamist Terrorism: Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgencies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Project on National Security, 2005). As of October 22, 2007: <http://www.princeton.edu/~ppns/papers/counterinsurgency.pdf>

³ David C. Gompert, *Heads We Win—The Cognitive Side of Counterinsurgency (COIN): RAND Counterinsurgency Study—Paper 3* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, OP-168-OSD, 2007). As of October 23, 2007: http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP168/

empowering local tribes and “concerned citizens,” and giving responsibility to local forces, once trained and ready. Consequently, the very jihadists that U.S. forces have sought to eliminate are being isolated and chased off.

Iraq is not yet secure, and U.S. COIN there still suffers from shortfalls in civil capabilities for reconstruction and development. Moreover, the weak and divided Iraqi government is far from winning the trust and cooperation of the majority of Iraqis. Ultimately, only legitimate Iraqi leaders, reliable security forces, and competent government agencies can rid Iraq of the poison of global jihadism and address the grievances of those Iraqis who have been susceptible to it. Still, the tentative gains in security in Iraq validate the belief that COIN is the key to bringing a modicum of stability, hope, and progress to the population, which is the only lasting antidote to Islamic insurgency.

In sum, defining the mission narrowly as attacking terrorists hidden in the Muslim world so that they will not attack America risks increasing religious hatred and violence, and it may add more terrorists than it subtracts. To recognize Islamic violence as insurgency is to admit how expansive and deadly serious it is, how deep its roots go, how long it can last, and how unsure the outcome is. It is also the best way to identify capabilities needed to counter it, which is this study’s main interest.

That full-blown insurgencies succeed as often as they fail suggests how hard COIN can be and how inadequate sheer physical strength can be in deciding outcomes. For every success (e.g., the UK in Malaya and Oman, the United States in El Salvador) there has been defeat (e.g., France in Vietnam and Algeria, the USSR in Afghanistan). From this checkered history come enduring lessons and principles of COIN. Foremost is that there is no substitute for legitimate and able local government. Ordinary people, the contest’s prize, respond mainly to their government’s ability to provide public safety and service. If efforts to earn public support are not timely and sustained, the use of deadly force in COIN may be unavoidable. Yet force can fail if deemed illegitimate, and careless force can push the population into the insurgents’ arms. Foreign military intervention can further stiffen the resolve and widen the appeal of insurgents. In the end, isolating insurgents is usu-

ally more fruitful than killing them. Throughout, all COIN instruments and actions—political, economic, intelligence, police, and military—must fit into a coherent campaign strategy.

While these commandments of classical COIN remain valid, globalization has created new dimensions of insurgency that demand new capabilities for COIN. Ubiquitous communication networks, Internet access, satellite TV, and transportation links permit insurgencies to connect with, learn from, and get help from one another and from stateless extremist movements such as al Qaeda. Groups and persons who are dissatisfied with the nation-states in which they live identify with transnational communities, such as the global Muslim “nation of one billion,” or *Ummah*. Globalization can give insurgents extended reach and access to destructive know-how and materials, enabling them to directly threaten those they blame for the suffering of the people they claim to be defending. The spread of jihadism, the speed with which it can acquire energy in a given country, and the dispersal of inspirational messages, fighters, money, and methods are facilitated by global connectivity and mobility.

At this juncture, analysis of COIN capabilities must not only borrow from the past but also reach into the future. Accordingly, this study revisits insurgency and COIN in the light of globalization, the network revolution, 9/11, Iraq, Afghanistan, the spread of jihadism, the injection of religion into local conflicts, and the turmoil and anger roiling the Muslim world. While Islamic insurgency is the U.S. concern now, acquiring the capabilities to counter it should prepare the United States for any insurgencies the future holds (e.g., anti-American extremists in Latin America or neo-Maoist radicals in Asia). This study offers a general framework even as it concentrates on the main threat at hand.

Framing the Problem

For the purpose of identifying capabilities needed for successful COIN, this study uses four taxonomies: types of insurgency, phases of insurgency, aspects of COIN, and layers of COIN capabilities.

Types of Insurgencies

All types of insurgencies have certain common characteristics. They are organized movements to overthrow existing ruling structures by a combination of force and popular appeal. Their grievances, be they political, religious, ethnic, or economic, usually have some resonance in the population. While the traditional definition of insurgency has stressed armed opposition to national governing systems and authorities, with globalization has come the growth of insurgencies that are multinational in identity, reach, and aims.

Both the difference and the relationship between insurgency and terrorism have been widely misunderstood—a confusion sown, most recently, by GWOT. Insurgencies have an alternative vision of how to organize societies, and they use a variety of instruments, ranging from public service to terror, to realize that vision. Terrorism may thus be embedded in and subordinate to insurgency. But terrorism may also be animated by sheer revulsion toward the status quo, without offering or even striving for an alternative. Insurgencies tend to be large and enjoy at least some popular backing, whereas terrorist groups operating on their own may be small and neither have nor seek popular backing. Thus, to question GWOT as strategy, as this and other inquiries into the nature of the threat do, is not to question the need to combat terror but rather to insist that terror motivated by Islamic extremism is embedded in a larger pattern of insurgency that has popular appeal, even if the use of terror does not. Ignoring this inconvenient truth—we wish there were not so many embittered Muslims—precludes the defeat of terrorism without countering the insurgency of which it is a part.

The essential first step, then, is to understand insurgency, both in the classical sense and as it is manifesting itself in the era of globalization. Given how significantly globalization can affect the aims, scope, means, and implications of insurgency, it is useful analytically to distinguish insurgency types as segments along a continuum from least to most “globalized.”

Type I (Local): There continue to be insurgencies that are self-contained in cause, scope, and effects. Colombia is a good example (albeit with wider implications because of the drug trade). There is

no reason to expect globalization to make local insurgencies extinct. Indeed, weak, illegitimate, multiethnic, and synthetic states are more vulnerable to insurgency under conditions of globalization. While globalization seems to have reduced the incidence of purely local insurgencies, they remain the most common type: roughly 60 percent as of 2007.

Type II (Local-International): Insurgents often seek and receive external support—money, arms, expertise, media coverage, fighters, propaganda—as some 35 percent of insurgencies since World War II have done. In the end, however, their outcomes are basically decided by local factors, local insurgents, and the local population. Vietnam provides an example of an insurgency that garnered outside support but was controlled and ultimately decided by nationalists, something the United States did not understand until it was too late. The Muslim insurgency in Thailand, despite jihadist backing and rhetoric, remains essentially a separatist movement that could be satisfied with greater political autonomy.

Type III (Global-Local): A local insurgency receiving outside support can become part of a wider regional or global struggle. In Iraq and to a lesser extent Afghanistan, jihadist motives and methods—indigenous as well as foreign—fused with and altered local political (Iraqi Baathist and Pashtun tribal) agendas. When jihadism becomes the main fuel of an insurgency, its flame cannot readily be doused by local accommodation. While only 5 percent of insurgencies since World War II are of this type, with globalization they have become the fastest-growing type, especially in the Muslim world, where religious militancy resonates. Type III insurgencies are distinct but connected, loosely or tightly, to a common agenda, e.g., Islamic opposition to the Christian West and its proxies.

Type III insurgencies are not necessarily Islamic; the potential for them lies in the nexus of local-political violence, transnational fanaticism, and global mobility and connectivity. Yet, it is in Muslim countries with weak or arbitrary governments, disaffected populations, and currents of religious militancy that such potential exists today (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Palestine, Yemen, Indonesia, Somalia, Nigeria). Hezbollah may be approaching this point,

though radical Shiite aims appear less global than those of Sunni-Salafi jihadists. Because Type III insurgencies are so complex and dynamic, they are especially hard to stop.

Type IV (Global): Insurgencies may target not only states but also the nation-state order itself. Such movements predate globalization, e.g., the anarchist and pre-Bolshevik international communist movements of the turn of the 20th century and Che Guevara's attempt to rid Latin America of capitalism and U.S. influence. The more grandiose and ethereal their goals, the less able global insurgents have been to reach critical mass. Unless they concentrate their power in one or several nation-states, they tend to stall.

At the same time, globalization makes diffuse insurgencies more formidable, durable, and deadly by reducing the importance of holding territory and by expanding the options for violence that come with mobility and connectivity. The carnage of New York, Washington, London, and Madrid shows why global insurgents cannot be dismissed as transitory nuisances just because they cannot overthrow the governments of the countries they target. Still, unless they acquire weapons of mass destruction, the capabilities of diffuse insurgencies are limited. Therefore, if jihadists are bent on destroying the nation-state order in the Muslim world, they are bound to take action against vulnerable states of that order by fomenting and commandeering local insurgencies. Because Type III insurgency, not Type IV, is the main path of jihad, the United States must be better prepared for it than it was for Afghanistan and Iraq—and is today.

Challenges of Counterinsurgency

Understand, Shape, Act

Whatever the type of insurgency, countering it requires capabilities to understand it, to shape the human terrain in which it competes, and to act directly against it. Understanding is especially challenging for complex, dynamic insurgencies that blend local-political with global-religious aims and means (Type III), such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan. Understanding must permeate COIN from top to bottom and from capital to field. Past failures and recent successes in Iraq show how

strongly operational results correlate with the depth of understanding among officers in the field of both the insurgents and the population whose loyalty hangs in the balance. Because Islamic insurgencies are so fluid, COIN demands nonstop learning. Outrage over insurgent atrocities must yield to fierce objectivity about what does and does not work. Because understanding depends on sharing and using information, networking and cognition figure importantly in COIN.

Understanding insurgency sets the stage for shaping the political, material, and psychological contours of the contest for the population's support. The more energetic the effort to enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of local government, the less likely it is that insurgency will reach the point at which deadly force is needed. Effective shaping can also inoculate local insurgency against jihadism, since religious extremism may be less compelling when government shows that it can and will address its population's concerns. Yet shaping can be the hardest part of COIN. After all, if conditions were conducive to good governance, there should have been no viable insurgency in the first place. Robust insurgencies imply deep grievances about the competence, fairness, integrity, and inclusiveness of the state. Statistically, the factor most critical to COIN success is able and accountable government. Yet we know from Afghanistan and Iraq that erecting new political systems is harder than smashing old ones.

Unless an insurgency is starved of popular support, forcible action will likely have to be taken in response to its violence. Any government that fails to provide for its citizens' safety will be unworthy in their eyes and that much more vulnerable to insurgency. Whereas shaping must be ambitious and broad, force must be judicious and selective. Treating COIN as just another form of warfare can be a ticket to failure or to success at exorbitant cost. History reveals that insurgencies can be outgunned by COIN military forces yet prevail if they enjoy more popularity than the incompetent, greedy, or brutal governments they seek to oust.

Military force may be needed to protect the population, control territory, protect essential infrastructure, deny sanctuary, and destroy insurgents. Increasingly, however, insurgents are able to survive and function by dispersing among urban populations, making the control

of territory both harder and less useful, the use of deadly force riskier, and the attitude of the population more critical. Though force may be needed, a strategy of attrition is unlikely to work and may make matters worse. In Iraq, from 2004 through 2006, during which time some 80,000 suspected Sunni insurgents were killed or detained, their estimated numbers grew from 5,000 to 30,000, and average casualties per insurgent attack grew from 10 to 60.⁴ Since the United States shifted to COIN strategy in 2007, the scale, extremism, and destructiveness of the Sunni insurgency appear to have abated.

A better indicator of military effectiveness than insurgents slain is the ability of local government to deliver public service (which is still seriously lagging in Iraq and Afghanistan). The best indicator, perhaps, is whether the use of force in COIN is causing citizens to be more likely or less to furnish information on the identity and movements of insurgents: To the extent it makes them less fearful of insurgent violence, they may be more forthcoming; to the extent they are enraged by government violence, they may be less forthcoming.

Timing

Insurgencies gather strength over time, unless they are stopped by effective COIN or burst full-blown out of a cataclysmic event (e.g., war or foreign occupation). Most go through a proto-insurgency stage in which they are small, narrowly based, vulnerable, and incapable of large-scale violence. During this gestation, the most crucial task of COIN is to understand the group, its goals, and its potential to tap popular grievances, lest it be dismissed as a criminal gang or fringe movement. A government that fails to comprehend the potential for insurgency may fail to take steps to raise its standing in the eyes of its citizens and thus divert support from the insurgency. If direct action is needed against proto-insurgency, intelligence and law enforcement should suffice and are generally preferred over military force. Trying to destroy an insurgency by force without or instead of improving government performance often fans the fire and ultimately fails.

⁴ Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, MIPT Terrorism Database, 2007.

When a young insurgency survives and attracts followers in growing numbers, it may commit more destructive acts to demonstrate its capabilities and the state's weakness and to increase recruitment. If the state then fails to meet the public's needs for safety and other basics, the insurgency may gain momentum, receive global media attention, control swaths of populated territory, damage the economy, obtain external help, and, as we saw in Iraq in 2004, radicalize. Although military action against insurgents may then be unavoidable, shaping the political contest becomes more essential, not less. Of course, civil measures to remedy economic and political problems can become dangerous for those involved as violence increases.

When an insurgency exceeds the means of the state's security services, the fateful question of foreign military intervention arises. The large-scale presence of foreign troops will alter not only the balance of forces but also the balance of legitimacy—now between insurgents and foreign forces—in the public's eyes. Insurgents can then appeal not only to the population's antigovernment sentiment but also to patriotism and hatred of infidels. As we know from Iraq, a state cannot win its citizens' confidence if it depends on foreign troops to provide security or even its own survival. Consequently, when an insurgency reaches the point that only foreign intervention can save the state, the insurgency tends to grow stronger and bolder, and the chances of defeating it decrease rather than increase. This is borne out by historical data, which reveal an inverse relationship between large-scale foreign intervention and successful COIN.

Empirically, the odds of COIN succeeding worsen from one stage to the next. Whereas roughly 1 percent of proto-insurgencies become full insurgencies, 50 percent of full-scale insurgencies since World War II have ended in the defeat or collapse of the government. Thus, by the time all options short of military intervention are exhausted, the odds of success are even at best.

Capabilities

COIN capabilities include territorial control, organizational structures, kinetic force, information networks, and cognitive abilities for planning and making decisions. Habitually, the United States relies mainly

on territorial, organizational, and physical capabilities, as evidenced by its campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, its creation of new bureaucracies in Washington, and its bulging investment in new military equipment since 9/11. But in the era of global communications, ubiquitous media, and transnational identity, insurgencies are increasingly skilled on higher planes: information and cognition. Using Western network technology and infrastructure, they can operate and influence effectively while remaining distributed and slippery. This accounts for the growth and dangers of Type III and IV insurgencies. A reasonable hypothesis is that the United States must improve COIN capabilities, especially on the higher—information and cognitive—planes.

Complexity, Uncertainty, and Brutality

Any analysis of COIN capabilities that assumes predictability should be eyed with suspicion. There are, after all, at least four main actors in classical COIN: insurgents, local authorities and their international allies, and a population whose loyalty is in doubt and in play. In Iraq, there are at least twice that number. The complexity of classical COIN is compounded by the effects of globalization and the merging of global and local insurgent goals and means. Insurgents tend to be highly motivated—readier to persevere, commit heinous acts, and die than “regular” troops fighting without necessarily being personally attached to the cause. Lacking the means of states, insurgents must be, and tend to be, resourceful, ingenious, stealthy, and ruthless. Lacking the structures of states, they can be flexible, adaptable, and unruly. Insurgents can bring out the worst in counterinsurgents, making COIN not only difficult but also sometimes brutal.

These conditions help explain why failure is as common as success in COIN, even when the state and its backers hold advantages in troops and money, and why smooth COIN theories and plans often crumble in practice. The United States was not prepared for the growth and radicalization of Iraq’s Sunni insurgency, the resilience of the Taliban in Afghanistan, or the adaptation of both to changes in U.S. strategies and capabilities. Suicide bombing, largely unstoppable, has been especially effective: The grisly results have prevented both the Iraqi and

Afghan governments thus far from gaining the trust and cooperation of their populations.

By building more complete and balanced COIN capabilities, the United States should be more able to counter the type of insurgency it faces in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, ideal outcomes are rare in COIN. Insurgents react in ways that make COIN less effective than expected. No one should assume that the capabilities proposed here will guarantee success: They can only increase the probability of success, if skillfully employed. Unpredictability demands capabilities not only to carry out COIN as planned but also to respond if plans go awry.

Countering Type III Insurgency

A key thesis of this study is that if the United States can develop capabilities adequate to counter complex, dynamic global-local insurgencies—like those in Iraq and Afghanistan—then it should be able to counter other types. Accordingly, requirements are, for the most part, based on our analysis of Type III insurgency.

By infecting local-political insurgency with hyper-violent global-religious extremism, Type III insurgencies can be more volatile, dangerous, and difficult to counter than familiar (Type I and II) ones. Iraq and Afghanistan show how jihadist ideas (e.g., the appeal for holy war) and techniques (e.g., suicide bombing) can alter, worsen, and prolong local insurgency. Today's Type III insurgents exploit global networks and media, ebb and flow across borders, enjoy sanctuary within and funding from Muslim populations, function in both urban and remote settings, learn from global experiences, and pose a credible threat of counterattack virtually anywhere in the world. States that exhibit some of the indicators of such insurgency—shaky political systems, alienated population segments, religious militancy—include Pakistan, Algeria, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Palestine, and Lebanon. While Type III insurgency in any one of these states may not be probable, their number and significance should cause enough concern to invest in better COIN capabilities.

Operationally, Type III insurgents are distributed and elusive. Psychologically, they are highly toxic, using religious rage to convert,

with stunning speed, green recruits into suicide-bombing martyrs. Politically, they abhor compromise and cannot be placated by power sharing, autonomy, or other concessions. Mixing religious, patriotic, political, and survival motivations, Type III insurgencies pack a lot of energy. Consequently, the time available for COIN to defuse proto-insurgency and insulate local insurgency from complicating factors—such as the entry of jihadists into Iraq—can be severely compressed, short-circuiting understanding, overtaking shaping, and provoking hasty, possibly clumsy force.

With all types of insurgency, there is a danger that force in COIN can harden the resolve and intensify the violence of insurgents. But Type III Islamic insurgencies are animated by an especially potent story: that the United States and its Christian, Zionist, and local secular accomplices are out to destroy Islam, starting well before 9/11. As a consequence, the use of Western military force amid—they say against—Muslim populations can lend credence to the jihadists' call to resist this latest in a long history of religiously motivated Western assaults against Muslims. Given wide Muslim identification with the *Ummah* and acceptance of the defensive premise of jihad, large-scale U.S. use of force in the Muslim world (under the heading of GWOT) can fuel insurgency even among populations who, for the most part, disavow terror.

The difficulty of large-scale combat operations against Islamic extremists is compounded by insurgents' ability to blend with the population, making every Muslim male a suspect and thus a potential casualty or detainee of COIN. Every noncombatant killed or detainee abused by the forces of the state is an opportunity for insurgents skilled in cognitive warfare. The "paradox of force," whereby insurgency may gain strength from force used against it, is especially acute in Type III Islamic insurgency, and most severe when the force used is Western.

The key in COIN is not to monopolize force but to monopolize *legitimate* force. Among Muslim populations already resentful of Western power, U.S. military forces are presumptively illegitimate, as reflected in polls showing that a majority of Iraqi Arabs believe that

violence against U.S. troops is justifiable.⁵ This legitimacy gap must inform analysis of capabilities required for COIN. In short, the United States needs to reduce its reliance on direct, large-scale U.S. military force in the Muslim world while also becoming more effective in Type III COIN. This implies a strong and pressing need to develop other U.S. COIN capabilities. It also implies that the chief mission of U.S. forces should be to improve and support effective and legitimate indigenous forces.

In line with this analysis of Type III insurgency, borne out by Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States should place priority on

- *civil capabilities*—to serve and compete for the population
- *information and cognitive capabilities*—to outsmart the enemy
- *local security services*—to make force legitimate and effective.

This is not to say that U.S. military forces are either irrelevant to or currently adequate for Type III insurgency, for they are neither. But U.S. military requirements need to be rethought and retooled to reduce reliance on large-scale ground presence, to support civil capabilities, to make more and smarter use of information, to prepare and enable local forces, and to perform critical military tasks that only they can.

In sum, the United States needs a more complete and balanced set of capabilities than it currently has to counter Type III insurgency.

II. Required Capabilities

Civil Capabilities

Although it is widely conceded that the United States is grossly short of civil capabilities for COIN, there is no accepted analysis of the scale and makeup of that shortcoming. Such analysis must include a strategy for civil COIN and an assessment of the skills and numbers of people as well as the funding needed to implement that strategy.

⁵ Gompert, *Heads We Win*.

Three alternative civil COIN strategies have been tried and studied: carrot-and-stick, hearts-and-minds, and transformation. Carrot-and-stick dispenses public services conditionally, rewarding pro-government behavior and punishing pro-insurgency behavior. Facing Type III insurgency, this approach, however tempting tactically, will not convince the majority of the people that their government is genuinely deserving of their confidence and allegiance. Hearts-and-minds, by sharing public services generously, may prove that the government cares and thus earn it wide popular support. However, it will not, in and of itself, make the government more able and worthy.

Transformation, in contrast, goes to the heart of the problem of governance that usually fuels insurgency in the first place. Empirically, insurgencies rarely succeed against capable, responsive, and inclusive governments. However, transformation takes years or even decades, by which time insurgency—especially Type III insurgency—can overpower a state. Therefore, efforts to transform must begin at the proto-insurgency stage or earlier. Insofar as these efforts depend on scarce civil COIN capabilities, the United States will need a good indicators-and-warning (I&W) system to flag countries at risk of insurgency. Also, quick-impact measures, distinct from but consistent with transformation, can help keep insurgencies weak and jihadism from infecting them.

Of the many capabilities a local government needs to perform, those with the greatest payoff in COIN, generally speaking, are

- targeted job training and placement, especially for ex-fighters
- justice systems—efficient yet fair courts, judges, and prisons
- lower education capacity—ample classrooms, books, and teachers.

The U.S. government is weak in these competencies: The federal government is not in the business of job training; it does not have spare judges to supervise creation of foreign justice systems; and its role in U.S. lower education is peripheral.

More generally, the United States has a gaping deficit of deployable civilians with the professional skills required for civil COIN.

Extrapolating from experience in Vietnam and Afghanistan, it would take roughly double the entire current 1,300-person staff of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and double the entire \$22B annual U.S. Overseas Development Assistance budget to provide adequate civil COIN for two medium-sized countries battling Type III insurgency, and that much again to prevent insurgency in another dozen vulnerable countries. Thus, given the potency of such insurgency, the United States could need 5,000 persons and \$40B in annual aid *for COIN alone*.

The estimate for the U.S. civil COIN personnel gap is borne out by the judgment of a senior military commander that 25 percent of U.S. troops in Afghanistan are performing civil COIN.⁶ Assuming that the percentage in Iraq is only half of this, and that civilians are twice as productive as soldiers at civil COIN, this implies a gap of about 15,000 civilians in these two countries. This suggests that the estimated need of 5,000 is if anything low.

By enlisting U.S. allies and multilateral organizations in civil COIN and by developing a good I&W system to establish priorities, this demand could be trimmed by, say, half. Much of this should be targeted on the deficiencies just mentioned: job training, justice, and general education. Given that counting on allies and on I&W both entail risk, anything less in added personnel and funding would leave the United States unprepared to counter severe or multiple Type III insurgencies. This approach would leave the United States with an additional need to mobilize both personnel (e.g., through a civilian reserve) and funds (through emergency appropriations) if future COIN needs are at the level posed by Iraq and Afghanistan combined.

Information Capabilities

Like building stronger civil capabilities, unlocking the promise of information power is crucial to countering Type III insurgency, with or without the large-scale use of U.S. force in the Muslim world. But unlike building ample civil capability, the opportunity for swift prog-

⁶ Interview with author in Afghanistan, 2007.

ress in creating information capabilities for COIN is at hand, ready to be taken.

The sharing and use of information in Afghanistan and Iraq by U.S. forces and agencies, coalition partners, and local security services have been poor relative to (1) what is needed, (2) how well sophisticated (Type III) insurgents use information, and (3) what today's technology allows. Islamist extremists and insurgents are using the Internet, wireless communications, satellite TV, and other Western inventions with more cunning, creativity, and success than COIN forces, at negligible cost. With modest investment, existing network technology and infrastructure can improve not only COIN operational effectiveness but also the competence, responsiveness, and accountability of local government—retaking from insurgents the lead in using information.

Information networking among U.S. forces has gotten better in 2007 in Iraq and Afghanistan. Special Operation Forces and other U.S. forces now exploit technology more effectively to fuse intelligence from disparate sensors and to pass “actionable” information to quick-response units. But this is an exception that proves the rule: When information power is used correctly, creatively, and ambitiously, better performance follows. Moreover, such sharing remains restrictive: U.S. troops and civilians are not communicating as they could and should; allies have spotty access to valuable information; and local forces and authorities are generally presumed to be untrustworthy and thus denied access. Perhaps most important, the concept of sharing information with, and thereby getting more information from, the population has yet to be broadly adopted.

Information resourcefully gathered, widely shared, and wisely used can engender healthy pluralism and expand the awareness and options of individuals. It can be used to pry apart local insurgency and global jihad, improve operational decisionmaking, and sharpen the precision and effectiveness of force. When seen and treated as a strategic asset, information power can help redefine the struggle with Islamic extremism from one of spiraling violence to one of competing truth, from a self-perpetuating war of attrition to a winnable war of cognition.

The United States and its allies can dominate the digital domain of COIN, but only by embracing the principles by which information is shared and used in society at large. The first step toward this goal is for the U.S. military, intelligence, and diplomatic establishments to stop treating information as the property of those who originate it and start treating it as a vital resource of those who need to use it. The guiding idea of the information age—that success derives from sharing information, not from controlling it—is as relevant to COIN as it is to any endeavor, civil or military. Because of its complexity and ambiguities, COIN puts greater demands on sharing and using information than regular war does. Yet the mainstream U.S. military establishment has wrongly thought of networking mainly for the latter—as if COIN requires more boots instead of more bytes. A key discovery of this study is that better information gathering, sharing, and use could enhance every aspect of COIN, making the use of force at once less necessary and more effective.

This study generated 160 specific operational requirements for information from the standpoint of a hypothetical junior officer leading a small military unit working with other military, police, intelligence, civilian, local authorities, security services, and citizens. From these data, it was learned that

- COIN users need an exceptionally large volume of exceptionally diverse information
- timeliness of information is usually crucial but must not come at the cost of reliability and relevance
- classifying information and securing networks are often unnecessary and block access, constrict collaboration, and impede operations, thus damaging COIN
- information about the population (identity, location, well-being, attitudes) is as important as information about insurgent forces
- needed information is likelier (90 percent in our analysis) to come from the population and other COIN users than from secret sources and methods (10 percent).

These findings suggest that information networks for COIN should be designed and managed according to three principles—*user dominance*, *inclusiveness*, and *integration*—the opposite of the regime of originator control, exclusion, and compartmentalization that prevails today. The impediments to acquiring and using improved information capabilities for COIN are cultural and bureaucratic, not technological.

Several specific capabilities for acquiring, disseminating, and using information, all technologically available, could improve COIN markedly. Universal cell phone use and linking cell phones to the identity and location of individuals would make government and security services more aware and responsive, as would systems of population registry, census, ID cards, and vetting. Three-dimensional urban mapping and mounted video cameras would permit critical locations and situations to be observed and secured. National “wikis” would promote sharing and understanding of information, attitudes, and needs on the part of the population. Simple protocols would make it easy for information *users* (i.e., those involved in COIN operations) to be more efficient information *providers* without deflecting attention from their missions. Information gathered by means such as these could be disseminated by an “Integrated Counterinsurgency Operating Network” (ICON) for use by U.S., coalition, and local forces, civil providers, local authorities, and the local population. The information in ICON would be shared based on principles of user dominance, inclusiveness, and integration, with security by exception.

We estimate that existing information capabilities would meet 25–50 percent of the 160 COIN information requirements mentioned earlier, whereas ICON would meet an estimated 50–100 percent. Moreover, assuming that the principles of user dominance, inclusiveness, and integration are upheld, the information would be more timely, relevant, and reliable. Reduced information security, if any, would be mitigated by greater operating speed and superior cognitive performance. Such enhancements in the availability and value of information could substantially improve COIN against cyber-savvy Type III insurgents. Again, such enhancements could be made quickly and affordably.

Perceptions and Cognition

COIN could be further improved through smarter use of information in analysis, strategy and planning, and operational problem-solving. Better cognition in COIN and other military endeavors is largely neglected and thus untapped potential. Personnel policies, for recruitment, retention, assignment, education, training, and promotion, should stress the mental abilities that are most precious in COIN: anticipation, learning in action, the ability to blend intuition and reasoning, fast and adaptive decisionmaking, and self-awareness. Command and control should favor decentralized decisionmaking and horizontal collaboration.

The United States and its partners cannot allow insurgents to continue to hold an advantage in using information and cognition to influence popular attitudes. In the struggle for legitimacy, both performance and perceptions matter. With improved information capabilities in vulnerable countries comes the opportunity to conduct more effective information operations (IO). However, efforts by the United States to get out *its* message must yield to an approach more suitable for the contest over the allegiance of Muslim populations. The keys are

- to deemphasize attempts to peddle a pro-American narrative (defending U.S. ideals and policies) in favor of one supporting the local alternative to jihad: responsive government
- to recognize that nonviolent Islam, however radical, is the key to isolating jihadism and therefore must not be described as part of the problem or confused with the enemy
- to offer hard evidence (e.g., from Afghanistan and Iraq) that jihadists have no concept, no plan, and no ability to govern, much less offer Muslims a promising (non-fantasy) future
- to accent the jihadists' own position that the sole purposes of the state are to enforce and protect adherence to puritanical Islamic law, not to serve much less answer to the people.

IO along these lines makes all the more crucial the inclusion of local authorities, groups, and citizens in new information networks, which may be motivated by COIN but can help create information

societies in which truth, freedom of ideas, and the requirement of government to listen are the best antidote for insurgency.

Indigenous Security Capabilities

Reducing reliance on direct, large-scale U.S. military power in the Muslim world, while improving COIN, implies not only improved civil and information capabilities but also more capable local security services. The rise of Type III insurgency makes this emphasis both more important and more challenging. Based on Iraq and Afghanistan, on the need for legitimate force, and on analysis of the (often weak) potential of local states to field and manage security services, the following capabilities are considered to be high priority, both within a typical COIN campaign and for purposes of planning investments:

- *Leadership, institutions, and support structure:* senior uniformed command, management capacity (for police, military, and intelligence services), and logistics (spares and supplies for local forces)
- *Law enforcement:* well-trained and well-led community police and quick-response, light-combat-capable (constabulary) police
- *Intelligence and information:* access to and use of ICON, human intelligence, border security systems, and “low-end” technical surveillance and reconnaissance (e.g., unmanned aerial vehicles, infrared sensors, and stationary land surveillance devices) and IO
- *Combat forces:* Ground forces for area presence, defensive, and offensive operations, with precision direct fire and short-range indirect fire; and special forces for high-value targets.

Adequate numbers of COIN-trained indigenous ground combat forces are particularly important to handle sophisticated insurgents while reducing reliance on U.S ground forces. In Type III insurgencies, these must include forces for protracted presence, control, and general public security, complemented by light, fast forces able to respond to tactical warnings and exploit fleeting opportunities using improved sensing and networking. Air-mobile forces are advantageous

but require foreign air-mobility assets and management, which likely exceed local capabilities.

U.S. Security Capabilities

U.S. requirements for capabilities to provide security in COIN fall into three categories. First, the United States needs the competence and capacity to *prepare* indigenous security services to perform effective COIN. Second, it needs forces equipped to *enable* indigenous forces by providing critical support in operations. Third, it needs capabilities to *operate* directly in those tasks only U.S. forces can perform. Judging by U.S. performance in Iraq and Afghanistan, and considering the challenges of Type III insurgency generally, the United States is not adequately capable of preparing or enabling effective local security services.

Obviously, the more capable the United States is in preparing and enabling indigenous forces, the fewer the tasks its own forces must perform. Because of the paradox of force, COIN forces must be both effective and legitimate. Frustrations in Iraq and Afghanistan notwithstanding, making local forces effective should be easier than making foreign (i.e., U.S.) forces legitimate, especially against global-local insurgents who can rally the people to resist and expel foreign “infidels.” The implication is that building and aiding local security forces for COIN must be among the highest priorities of U.S. military missions, which is not so today.

To be more specific, taking account of (1) the strategic and operational problems posed by Type III insurgencies, (2) goals for improving indigenous security capabilities, (3) limitations in indigenous capacity, (4) the challenges of U.S. and local services operating together, (5) U.S. performance in COIN in Iraq and Afghanistan, and (6) the growing advantages afforded by information sharing, this study finds that the United States needs to improve its capabilities for

- *Strengthening local capabilities:* security institution-building; leadership development; improving local IO and human intelligence; training, organizing, and equipping police; training, organizing, and equipping ground forces; networking with local forces

- *Providing operational support:* advanced surveillance systems; border and coastal monitoring; tactical and theater air mobility; professional advisors; protecting civil COIN
- *Selective combat:* Direct action against high-value targets in remote or populated areas; clandestine operations; precision strike.

Also critical is the building of high-quality local constabulary forces—though this is beyond U.S. competence, it is an area in which Italy, France, and Spain excel.

Because efforts to conduct civil COIN and to upgrade local forces may not succeed completely, the United States must hedge by improving the capabilities of its own ground forces for COIN operations. However perilous and dubious the idea of large-scale, protracted U.S. military intervention in the Muslim world may be, it must remain an option. At a minimum, U.S. forces should be capable of responding swiftly and effectively to aid and enable local forces, with the latter providing the bulk of the ground presence. If pressed into direct COIN operations, U.S. ground forces need to be *more skilled, more mobile, less reliant on deadly force, more informed, and more durable* than they are now. Thus, they need (1) more COIN training than they now get, (2) a spectrum of options for nonlethal force, (3) improved (e.g., faster yet more survivable) land mobility, (4) improved information collecting and sharing capabilities, and (5) the ability to carry on COIN for many years. In addition to specific investments in these enhancements, U.S. Army and Marine Corps plans to transform their forces for net-centric operations can be as useful for COIN as for the major combat operations for which they were originally meant.

These priorities differ from DoD's current plan to enlarge U.S. ground forces for COIN. While it is true that U.S. ground forces have been weakened by the ordeal of Iraq, it does not follow that they should be expanded for future COIN. It would be an error to deduce from the experience of U.S. forces in Iraq that the right way to counter Islamic insurgencies generally is to send bigger armies to fight them. To be clear, this study does not address whether U.S. ground forces are large enough at present to meet the totality of U.S. global defense needs. But it does find that large-scale use of U.S. ground forces in the Muslim

world is neither effective against distributed and shadowy insurgents nor welcome by the people among whom those insurgents hide.

History provides no basis for expecting large-scale foreign military intervention to make COIN victorious. Rather, there is a correlation between large-scale foreign military intervention and unsuccessful COIN. The larger the foreign troop presence—France in Algeria, France and the United States in Indochina, the USSR in Afghanistan—the worse the outcome tends to be. Of course, causality is ambiguous: Was large-scale foreign intervention a response to the inability to prevail over insurgency by other means, or did it contribute to failure? Nevertheless, large-scale foreign military involvement is at best unproductive; at worst, it is counterproductive. (Conversely, two of the most clear-cut cases of successful COIN since World War II, Malaya and Oman, involved light but patient foreign military presence, mainly to train and advise local forces.) If large-scale foreign military intervention has failed to produce success in COIN historically, it is if anything even likelier to fail when viewed as an attack on Muslims and their faith.

III. Organizing and Investing

Multilateral Counterinsurgency

The United States will be hard-pressed to create and maintain all the capabilities needed to counter Type III insurgency, especially those for improving the performance of local government and security services. Fortunately, U.S. allies (e.g., NATO and EU members) and international organizations (e.g., the World Bank and UN agencies) have competence and capacity that correspond to U.S. deficiencies, e.g., those needed to

- build indigenous public education, health, and justice systems
- offer targeted job training and placement (e.g., for ex-combatants)
- organize, train, and equip local police and constabulary forces
- reform local security institutions
- monitor and manage borders.

Besides these valuable capabilities, broad multilateral COIN can impart legitimacy and durability to COIN, internationally, at home, and to some extent in the countries facing insurgency. However, planning, assembling, and employing multilateral COIN capabilities involves vexing issues of coalition legal mandate, leadership, political authority, decisionmaking, military command, and information sharing. These issues cannot be resolved in the midst of crisis: Prior political understandings, joint planning, and established processes are needed, which are bound to be technically and diplomatically complex. Moreover, the need for integrated strategy and operations cannot be suspended because COIN involves many nations: It just gets harder. In sum, multilateral COIN is as knotty as it is necessary.

Fortunately, workable institutional options are available, though obstructed by political disputes that can and must be overcome. In particular, the combination of NATO's prowess in preparing and mounting complex security operations, starting in the Balkans, and the EU's potential for civil COIN suggests that cooperation between these two groups, which have largely overlapping membership, could serve as the core for organizing and enhancing multilateral COIN capabilities. NATO could concentrate on capabilities to prepare and enable indigenous security forces and to manage security operations; the EU could complement and cooperate with U.S. civil COIN. (The EU alone does not have the means to meet the military demands of large-scale COIN.) Such an approach is in some respects being tested in Afghanistan, with successes, shortcomings, and lessons to be mined.

While NATO, in cooperation with the EU, has considerable potential to expand and maintain capabilities for multilateral COIN, its direct involvement in campaigns to counter Type III insurgencies is another matter. As this study has found, large-scale use of foreign forces, especially Western forces in the Muslim world, will not necessarily be productive and could be counterproductive. Although intervention by NATO may be somewhat more acceptable locally and internationally than unilateral U.S. military intervention, it still carries the risk of intensifying insurgency in order to resist "the new Crusaders." Moreover, if COIN is successful in preventing full-blown Type III insurgency by improving local government and security forces, heavy

and obtrusive NATO presence would be unnecessary, and a variety of other multilateral instruments—UN, regional organization, ad hoc—would be both adequate and more suitable. Therefore, to be clear, the primary value of NATO and of NATO-EU collaboration in COIN would be in ensuring that more balanced and complete COIN capabilities are available multilaterally, whatever the chosen vehicle for their actual use. Such capabilities would include not only forces but also the means to pursue civil COIN and to expand local capabilities, military and civil. In addition, in those instances in which large-scale foreign intervention is advisable, far better that it be under multilateral auspices than U.S.-only. Thus, in preparation for the worst case, these Western organizations must be prepared to act effectively, not only to serve as a warehouse of capabilities.

While NATO-EU cooperation is key to building balanced and complete multilateral COIN, there are institutional and political obstacles to such cooperation. In particular, France and Turkey are opposed, for different parochial reasons. Overcoming these obstructions and developing a reasonably unified Western answer to Type III insurgency is important for U.S., European, and global security. The deeper issue is whether today's transatlantic schism over the utility of military force against Islamic insurgency is bridgeable. Perhaps an integrated civil-military-developmental approach to COIN could span European and American philosophies on this. If the military and colonial connotations of "counterinsurgency" give Europeans pause, "comprehensive approach"—NATO's current expression of choice—could be a more palatable expression.

Creating a NATO-EU core for multilateral COIN capabilities would require purposeful planning. NATO should produce an analysis of the threat and the security demands of Type III insurgency, drawing on lessons from both Iraq and Afghanistan. The EU and the United States should assess needs for civil capabilities. A new NATO-EU COIN planning cell should integrate and present the results for adoption by NATO and the EU, with members pledging to meet the requirements. Prospective partners other than members of NATO or the EU, e.g., Australia and Japan, would be invited to join in all aspects of analysis, planning, and pledging.

In the event of agreement by NATO and the EU that a major COIN campaign should be launched—perhaps based on a common I&W scheme—coalition leadership should be based on the nature of the campaign, the balance between civil and military COIN, and relative contributions, with NATO, the EU, and the United States the chief candidates. Within an overall campaign construct, military command and control would be integrated, whether under NATO or some other arrangement. In keeping with the principles of inclusiveness and integration, most information would be freely shared via ICON across national and civil-military lines, with specific exceptions.

Given the dangers and demands of global-local insurgency, multilateral COIN, including but not limited to NATO and the EU, is a necessity, not an option. Creating able and legitimate governments and security forces in vulnerable parts of the Muslim world is beyond the means of the United States alone, but not of the United States, its allies, and the international political and economic institutions they manage.

Investment

Provided the United States is committed to organize multilateral COIN, it can in turn target its investment on deficient capabilities that its partners cannot adequately offset, especially:

- *Civil*: job training for ex-fighters; public-education and justice-system capacity-building
- *Indigenous Security Services*: reforming local security and intelligence institutions; organizing, training, equipping, and advising COIN-capable indigenous police and ground-combat forces
- *Military Capabilities*: operations against high-value targets in urban areas; border and other surveillance; nonlethal force
- *Information and Cognition*: integrated, inclusive, user-responsive networking; support for local IO; improved research, analysis, and understanding of insurgencies; improved COIN strategy-setting, planning, shaping campaigns; improved decisionmaking.

Note two salient themes for U.S. COIN investment: capabilities to build local governance and security capacity, and enhancements in the sharing and cognitive use of information.

This study offers an analysis of the annual costs of these investments, assuming matching partner capabilities:

- *Civil*: Bare-bones civil capability to prevent and counter medium-sized insurgencies: \$1–2B for additional people and \$10–15B for additional U.S. foreign aid dedicated to COIN, assuming (1) I&W permits targeting of preventative efforts, (2) a significant fraction of existing aid is directed to COIN, and (3) the United States can mobilize additional resources (e.g., civil reserves) if insurgency poses greater danger than expected.
- *Local Security Services*: Requirements to build, advise, and enable local security institutions and forces for COIN: \$2–3B.
- *U.S. Forces*: Enhancements in key U.S. military capabilities for COIN (e.g., special operations forces; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; nonlethal force): \$3–4B per year.
- *Information and Cognition*: Developing and/or financing the information capabilities of ICON for use by U.S. and local counter-insurgents in vulnerable countries: \$4–6B.

Thus, a very crude estimate of the cost to give the United States more *complete and balanced* capabilities to conduct COIN is on the order of \$20–30B (or twice that in the absence of multilateral COIN).

While such sums could be raised by increasing federal debt, raising taxes, or cutting domestic or non-COIN national-security expenditures, analysis of such tradeoffs goes beyond this study. However, the costs might also be covered by a shift away from spending on military capabilities that are presently being justified by GWOT but should be rethought in light of experience and objective analysis. For example, annual spending on operations and maintenance of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps has grown by about \$40B (from \$33B to \$74B) since 2001, and Air Force and Navy investment in new military systems has grown by \$27B (from \$71B to \$98B). The expansion of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps will cost an additional \$12B per year.

Broadly speaking, the government and armed services have predicated much of this growth in defense spending on GWOT. To the extent the growth is needed for other reasons, this has not been made sufficiently clear and should be. To the extent the growth is for GWOT, this study's analysis of the requirements to counter Type III Islamic insurgency does not support it. Thus, the \$20–30B cost of providing the United States with the more complete and balanced COIN capabilities suggested here may not necessarily require increased total federal spending.

Organizational Change

A commitment to build complete and balanced COIN capabilities will have organizational implications. Notwithstanding changes since 9/11, notably the formation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), the existing structure has not performed well in COIN. (DHS has virtually nothing to do with COIN, and DNI has not appreciably improved intelligence sharing in actual operations.) Although it would be a mistake to attribute U.S. failures solely to organizational shortcomings—deficient capabilities, planning, and execution are at least as important—it would also be wrong to exempt organizational structure from consideration of how to improve U.S. COIN. After all, organization affects how capabilities are funded, built, maintained, and used.

Of the options this study examined, several deserve closer consideration:

- Assignment of responsibility for maintaining COIN civil expertise to those agencies with the relevant core competencies, e.g., the Departments of State, Justice, Education, and Labor
- In view of such a distributed approach to civil capabilities, formation of a civil agency to guide, challenge, and measure the departments; manage the packaging and delivery of government-wide capabilities; and seed investment to address critical needs until the departments are ready
- Within the Department of Defense, enlargement of the scope of Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to serve as the core of

U.S. capability to prepare and enable indigenous forces for COIN and to operate directly in COIN; complemented by (1) surge capacity from the regular armed services revolving around the SOCOM core and (2) a counterpart defense agency to manage acquisition, interagency coordination, and other non-operating tasks.

- At the micro-structural (field) level, the formation of versatile, adjustable, deployable civil-military units for integrated COIN and to provide security for civil measures (akin to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams that are operating in Iraq and Afghanistan).

Such organizational reforms could improve U.S. performance not only for COIN capabilities, campaigns, and operations but also for post-conflict reconstruction, stability operations, and aid to failed states.

Will the Proposed Capabilities Work?

In no field of conflict is the gap between theory and reality wider than in COIN. Despite having stronger forces, greater resources, and the advantages of governing authority, COIN has clearly succeeded against only one-third of 89 major insurgencies since World War II. Because Type III insurgencies pose greater challenges than traditional types, it has to be asked whether the civil, information, local, and U.S. capabilities proposed here will *really* work.

Perhaps the best evidence of the efficacy of civil COIN is that some of the strongest predictors of insurgent failure—popular antipathy; competent, democratic, and popular government; and social-political inclusiveness—depend heavily on civil COIN. There are also notable cases in which robust civil COIN worked. The Civil Operations Rural Development Support (CORDS) program for coordinating civil COIN in Vietnam yielded impressive operational results against Vietcong insurgents. COIN success in the Philippines (1899–1902), Malaya (1948–1960), Oman (1968–1975), and Egypt (1992–1997) has been attributed largely to civil capabilities.

It is harder to show that ambitious use of advanced information capabilities produces success in COIN, for it has never been seriously

tried. The U.S. government has not adopted the requisite principles, practices, skills, reforms, and culture to exploit networking. The military has just begun to employ networking in regular warfare, and preliminary results are demonstrably positive. The potential of information power in COIN has been illuminated by an experience in Northern Iraq in which U.S. officers instituted information-sharing rules akin to those recommended in this report and discovered marked improvement in the timeliness of decisions and action. Also, contacts with U.S. law enforcement reveal that the networking solutions proposed here match the direction they are taking to combat analogous threats.

Capable local security forces are obviously more likely to achieve success than incapable ones. Less obvious is how feasible it is to build capable local forces in the Muslim world. Iraq and Afghanistan have been discouraging, especially in regard to police. Yet there is evidence that local forces are not necessarily weak, corrupt, or brutal. Iraqi-Kurdish forces are of high quality by any standard. Well organized, trained, equipped, supported, and managed by able civilians, they perform ably in cooperating with the (Kurdish) population and in countering sophisticated insurgents. Still, it is hard to dispel all doubt about the feasibility of creating high-quality local security forces, even with better U.S. capabilities to create them.

This doubt underscores the importance of improving U.S. military forces to counter Type III insurgency in the Muslim world, despite the pitfalls of using them. The experience of Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with the observed transformation of insurgencies—cellular, mobile, and information-savvy—suggests that special forces, mobile forces, precise and nonlethal force, and surveillance will work better than large, heavy, slow ground forces.

Conclusion

The United States cannot be confident of success in countering growing global-local Islamic insurgency with its current capabilities. Its heavy reliance on the use of large-scale military power in the Muslim world will not lead to the comprehensive defeat of this distributed,

elusive, fanatical, and increasingly urban jihadist-insurgent threat, however Iraq and Afghanistan turn out. Success requires the active cooperation of Muslim populations within which jihadist-insurgents operate—cooperation that the large-scale U.S. military occupation in the Muslim world does not engender. The enemy uses U.S. military presence as cognitive ammunition to gain support for resistance. The United States is at risk of being sucked into a whirlpool of growing Muslim hostility and perpetual jihad.

Since 9/11, over four-fifths of the growth in U.S. national-security spending has gone toward buying advanced military equipment and conducting U.S. military operations in the Muslim world. However, much of this equipment is of little or no use in countering this type of insurgency. The United States is not using its national resources effectively against the greatest danger it faces. When the United States has found itself in similar situations in the past—on entering World War II and then the Cold War—it did something about it.

The United States has three strategic options. Continued reliance on large-scale military intervention and occupation to counter insurgency in the Muslim world cannot withstand objective analysis of this type of insurgency. Another option is to disengage from COIN in the Muslim world, concentrating instead on defending the United States proper and its vital interests elsewhere, not unlike the way the United States disengaged from Indo-China after the Vietnam War. The United States discovered that Indo-China was not, after all, the apex of the struggle with Soviet communism, and by disengaging was better able to focus on and prevail in the larger East-West struggle. But today's situation is different. The United States cannot disengage from the reality of Islamic insurgency. It cannot abandon COIN without running grave risks to its interests and friends, to the fate of the Middle East, to global security, to global energy security, and to its own safety. Just as it would be dangerous to escalate the use of U.S. military power in the Muslim world, it would be folly to think that disengagement from that world would mollify the jihadists and end Islamic violence.

If the United States should neither disengage nor rely chiefly on the use of large-scale U.S. military power in the Muslim world, it must build more complete and balanced COIN capabilities and use them

wisely and steadfastly to enable legitimate local partners to win the contest for the Muslim people. This report offers a plan for doing so.

Beyond the danger of Islamic insurgency, implementation of the investments and measures prescribed here would prepare the United States to confront a host of unprecedented national-security challenges in the era of globalization.