How America Will Be Attacked

Irregular Warfare, the Islamic State, Russia, and China

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[The Future Operating Environment] "will feature the erosion of sovereignty, weakened developing states, the empowerment of small groups or individuals, and an increasingly contested narrative environment favoring agile nonstate actors and state actors demonstrating persistent proficiency in the irregular domain."

—*ARSOF Operating Concept: Future Operating Environment*, U.S. Army Special Operations Command

You may not be interested in War but War is interested in you.

—Apocryphally attributed to Leon Trotsky

As this paper is being written, the U.S. national security establishment is under significant internal and external pressures: internally from the consequences of prosecuting the longest war in the Republic's history, which has seen unprecedented post-Cold War operational tempos, matched by constant downsizing of our forces and sustainment budgets; externally from the events occurring in the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and Africa, which has included the rise the Islamic State (IS), the most powerful jihadist organization of the modern age, and the concurrent displacement of more than sixty-five million refugees, a historic world record surpassing even World War II.

These pressures are not going to abate, which will most probably lead to the reality of our armed forces having to accomplish more missions with less resources. At the same time, both nonstate and nation-state adversaries of the United States who have become supremely adept at exploiting irregular warfare (IW) and unconventional modes of attack will exploit these forces. This article is an introduction to three of the most important enemies we face today and who we will also face in the future, and how these actors use IW and unconventional warfare (UW) against our interests: the Islamic State, China, and Russia.

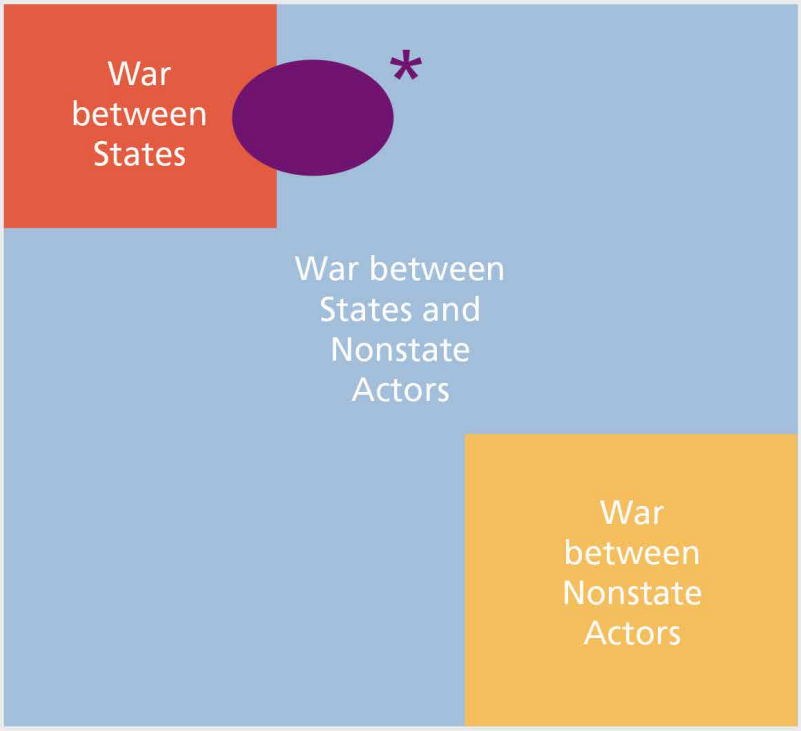
The Operating Context

There are many kinds of manouevre [sic] in war, some only of which take place upon the battlefield.[1]

—Winston Churchill

The United States is still engaged in the longest formal military campaign since the founding of the Republic. Launched in October 2001, the war against the global jihadi movement—including al-Qaida and IS—persists and will continue into the next administration. We may have weakened the original al-Qaida's operational capacity, but the threat has transformed and moved elsewhere in the last fifteen years to areas as diverse as Yemen, Mali, and Nigeria, and more recently to Libya and Syria, with IS becoming a fully-fledged insurgency mobilizing eighty thousand-plus fighters. Additionally, the jihadist threat to the continental United States has not subsided but increased as the bloodshed and mass violence of San Bernardino and Orlando attest. In fact, according the terrorist monitoring organization SITE, between 2 June 2016 and 1 August 2016, outside of Iraq and Syria, a jihadist attack is perpetrated every eighty-four hours.

Figure. Typology of Conflict: The Reality of War



LEGEND

Less than 20% of war in last 2 centuries has been "conventional," state v. state, soldier versus soldier

More than half of all conflicts in the same period have been state v. nonstate actor (counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, resistance warfare, counterterrorism, counterpiracy, peace enforcement)

The remainder are conflicts between nonstate actors, "warrior versus warrior" (such as inter-tribal)

* Boundary conflicts include special cases such as civil war

(Graphic courtesy of *Joint Force Quarterly*)

At the same time we have seen America's erstwhile enemy, Moscow, act in newly belligerent and destabilizing ways. Its invasion of Ukraine breaking the sixty-plus year European taboo on territorial aggrandizement through force together with military jet fly-bys of U.S. naval vessels and along the American seaboard harken back to the Cold War days of military intimidation and brinkmanship.

And there is the Communist People's Republic of China. Although it has yet to use direct force against its neighbors or the United States, it has used a broad array of unconventional means to increase its military presence and strategic footprint—from very aggressive cyberattacks against U.S. interests, both governmental and commercial, to the manufacture of artificial islands in disputed waters as platforms for military installations.

Though none of these adversaries or enemies unilaterally could feasibly win a conventional war with the United States that still maintains a "hyperpower" position amongst the nations of the world, they have deployed old IW techniques as well as developed new ones with which to progressively both undermine our interests now, and weaken our allies and partners.

The sooner we as a nation, and our armed forces understand that the age of conventional warfare is a bygone and grasp how nations like Russia and China, and "super-insurgencies" like IS, are waging IW against us today, the sooner we will be able to defeat them or lessen their impact upon our own national security.

Irregular Warfare Is Dead; Long Live Irregular Warfare

Although history may not in fact repeat, as Twain is reputed to have said, it surely does rhyme.

The United States remains a true superpower, but mostly in one dimension: conventional warfare and kinetic direct action (DA). As our nation's response to the war in Vietnam, and the last fifteen years in Afghanistan and Iraq would seem to attest, we as a nation do not much care for fighting "irregular enemies." Nor does it seem that we are that often successful in such endeavors. This is a very serious problem given that IW is historically the most prevalent mode of warfare.

The *Correlates of War Project* at the University of Pennsylvania has collected all the most relevant data on every conflict since the age of Napoleon in one place. According to this data set, in the last two hundred years, there have been four hundred-sixty wars of various types. These can be broken down into conventional wars—state forces versus state forces, and unconventional or irregular conflicts—states fighting nonstate actors, or nonstate actors fighting other nonstate actors. The breakdown is expressed visually in the figure (see page 31).[2]

Therefore, among all the other information the database contains, one can draw a very significant conclusion: of all the wars since Napoleon (460), more than 80 percent (380) were irregular in nature, conflicts in which at least one of the fighting forces was not a representative of a recognized government. In other words, in modern history we see four times as many conflicts resembling our war in Vietnam, or the war with IS and the Taliban, than wars that look like World War I or World War II, or even the first Gulf War.

Subsequently, if the frequency of IW has been so high in the last two hundred years, we can, with a high degree of certainty, predict that in the coming decades American forces will frequently be called upon to fight and assist others in future conflicts that fall under this category.[3]

Eleven years after the 2001 attacks, the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCAO) division of the Joint Staff J7 published a set of reports titled *Decade of War: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations*.[4] Several of the J7's observations and conclusions concerning Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF and OIF) bear directly upon current and future missions. They include—

- a failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment, leading to a mismatch between forces, capabilities, missions, and goals,
- a slowness to recognize the importance of information and the "battle for narrative" in achieving objectives at all levels,
- difficulties in integration of general purpose and special operations forces (SOF),
- individuals and small groups exploiting globalized technology and information systems to shape the battlespace and near state-like disruptive capacity, and
- the increased state use of surrogates and proxies to generate asymmetric threats.[5]

There is widespread agreement among those who have been responsible for planning and running our more kinetic operations after 9/11 that on the whole the armed forces have performed without peer in the application of direct force. America's ability to execute strike- and maneuver-type missions has developed to such a degree that no other nation can come close to matching our capabilities in the conventional and surgical strike (SOF) domains.

But when we step beyond the application of "steel on target," and move into the indirect and unconventional domains, our peer position is rapidly lost to others who have devoted more time to these less obvious modes of attack. IS has a force that represents less than 10 percent of the forces the United States has at its disposal yet persists and is now bringing the jihadi way of war to our shores more frequently than ever before. China escalates its military adventurism daily without our doctrine providing an obvious response mechanism or our policy providing a lucid strategic end-state. And the Russian Federation has not only used established modes of UW in Europe in ways that would impress surviving members of the Office of Special Services (OSS) of World War II, but it also has deployed a full suite of psychological operations (PSYOP) and information operations in the Middle East, Europe, and even the United States that matches anything from the heyday of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

What follows is a brief primer on how these actors use their IW and UW techniques against our interests. It should be taken as the most basic of introductions on how America is being challenged today and will be undermined by these adversarial actors in the future.

The Islamic State and the Modern Way of Jihad

The modern movement for global jihad was born with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after World War I, refined by the fatwas of jihadi strategist Abdullah Azzam, and made a spectacular international phenomenon by Osama bin Laden and the attacks of 11 September 2001.[6] But in recent years, the global jihadi movement has transformed. With the death of bin Laden and the separation of al-Qaida in Iraq from the original parent organization, IS has become the new standard-bearer for Holy War

against the infidel and has done so in a way that makes it far more dangerous that al-Qaida ever was.

Today, after the collapse of Syria, the fall of Mosul in Iraq, and the multiple IS-connected attacks around the world, including the San Bernardino and Orlando massacres, very few people talk any more about al-Qaida or about its current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.[7] And for good reason, for on at least four counts, IS is now far more powerful than al-Qaida ever was:

1. Unlike al-Qaida, IS is a true transregional and global insurgency.
2. IS is the richest nonstate threat group of its kind ever.
3. IS has demonstrated stupendous recruitment capabilities, pioneering such recruitment through the global Internet.
4. Most important, IS has achieved that which all other modern jihadi groups have failed to achieve: the re-establishment of a theocratic caliphate, or actual Islamic state.

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The Islamic State Is a True Transregional and Global Insurgency

Elaborating further while comparing the two, al-Qaida, wherever it functioned after 9/11, never did so as a true insurgency. Instead, it maintained its identity as a globally ambitious and globally operational terrorist organization. Even when it was associated with a local insurgency, such as in Somalia and in Afghanistan, it was always in a parasitic fashion. Specifically, true insurgencies like Al Shabaab (al-Qaida's affiliate in Somalia) and the Taliban are defined by having a mass base of support and so many actual fighters that they can operate in daylight and capture territory with the intention of holding and governing it. In contrast, exclusively terrorist groups are by nature much smaller, without a mass base of support such that they must therefore operate covertly, and they do not attempt to govern the people they terrorize. Instead, they hide in safe houses when inactive or plotting, then rapidly execute an attack only to return immediately back to their covert locations.

Thus, by comparison, an insurgency functions as a quasi-military force that is able to muster recruits and deploy in formation not just to attack but to exercise lasting control over the territory it captures. For the insurgent, terrorist violence is but one tool with which to challenge government writ and not his or her reason for being. For the terrorist organization—which has no true military capacity—coercion and intimidation through violence is the reason the organization exists. Thus, al-Qaida was never a true insurgency, but an organization that was founded only to terrorize in campaigns the purpose of which was to seek revenge and inflict punishment. Even in those theaters such as Afghanistan and Somalia where it is linked to an insurgency, it never recruited its own mass base of support, instead leveraging pre-existing insurgencies such as the Taliban and Al Shabaab and piggybacking on top of them.

On the other hand, IS is all the more impressive because it took no short-cuts to quasi-statehood. It is not a terrorist group perched upon another pre-existing insurgency and does not have to borrow its fighters from another older threat group. IS has recruited its own mass base of fighters, at least eighty-thousand, in just a couple of years. And not only is IS more powerful than al-Qaida because it is an insurgency, it is additionally unique amongst all modern insurgencies.

By way of context to see just how unique, if one looks at the whole range of modern twentieth-century insurgent groups, there is one characteristic common to them all. Whether it be Mao Tse-tung in China after World War II, or FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) in Colombia, irrespective of ideology, they shared the same proximate goal: the defeat and displacement of the government they were fighting. Mao wanted to defeat and replace the nationalists and create a Marxist

China. The FARC wanted to defeat and replace the Hispanic elite of Bogota and create a Bolivarian people's republic. Similarly, whether in Asia, Latin America, Africa, or Europe, insurgents are set on replacing just one regime, the regime they were at war with.

In contrast, though IS shares the immediate goal of usurping Syrian and Iraqi governance in a wide geographic area overlapping both nations, it is far more ambitious and has global objectives. To that end, not only has ISIS built its own insurgent base with tens of thousands of fighters, it has managed to capture city after city in multiple countries. IS now holds territory in both Iraq and Syria as well as Libya, making it the first historic insurgency to control land in multiple countries in one region. On top of that success, it has spread into West Africa as well. Two years ago, Boko Haram, the black African jihadi group of Nigeria swore *bayat*—made the Arabic pledge of allegiance—to al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed caliph of IS. It had done so several times before, but this time its pledge was accepted by IS, and Boko Haram was accepted into the new "caliphate" under al-Baghdadi's leadership.

Not long after, the leaders of Boko Haram officially changed its name to the West Africa Province of the Islamic State, meaning that any of the territory under its control was de facto part of the new sovereign Islamic State. Never before has an insurgency successfully captured and held land in multiple nations of multiple regions.

The Islamic State Is the Richest Nonstate Threat Group in History

Secondly, IS is the richest threat group of its type ever. Unclassified U.S. government estimates put its income at U.S.$2–4 million per day, which comports with the *Financial Times'* own estimate of IS having a gross domestic product of $500 million. Considering that, according to the official 9/11 Commission Report, the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington only cost al-Qaida $500,000, this means that IS is in a completely different league than its progenitor and is in no way a "JV [junior varsity] team."

The Islamic State Has Demonstrated Stupendous Recruitment Capabilities

Thirdly, IS has been incredibly impressive when it comes to mobilizing jihadist fighters. According to the United Nations, in the first nine months of renewed IS operations in Iraq, it managed to recruit nine thousand fighters, and in the last few years, of the eighty-five thousand recruited, at least thirty-five thousand have been foreign fighters from outside of Iraq and Syria. The IS recruitment effort is all the more impressive given that when al-Qaida operated as the MAK (Arab Services Bureau) for *mujahideen* during the Afghan war of 1979–1989, its recruited only fifty-five thousand over a decade. This has been done through the use of truly pioneering Internet-based propaganda, which has enabled recruitment globally in ways that were previously unheard of when recruitment had to be done mainly face to face.

Establishment of a Theocratic Caliphate

When a country is being subverted it is not being outfought; it is being outadministered.[8]

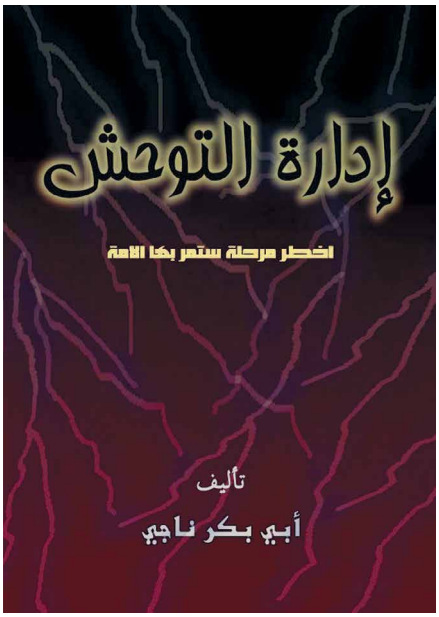
—Bernard B. Fall

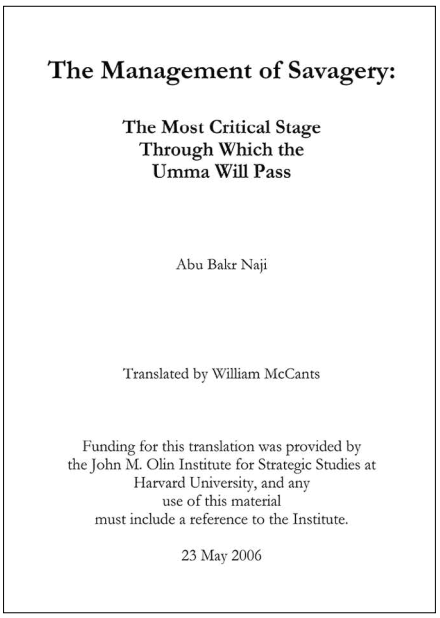
But the last facet of IS that makes it truly stand out from other groups with similar motivation and objectives is what its leader al-Baghdadi managed to achieve on 29 June 2014 from the Grand Mosque in Mosul. When he declared reestablishment of the caliphate—the theocratic Islamic empire—and proceeded to exercise true control over a population of more than six million people in a territory larger than Great Britain, he achieved that which no other jihadist group has in the last ninety years. Here it is crucial to remember that the caliphate is historically not just the fabulist whim of extremists but was a true political and religious entity for over a thousand years, established in Mecca and then headquartered respectively over the centuries in Damascus, Baghdad, and lastly, Istanbul. Moreover, the caliphate in fact existed just one hundred years ago in the form of the Ottoman Empire. Yet it dissolved because of the Ottomans being on the losing side in World War I and the decision of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the head of state of the new Republic of Turkey, to do away with it in order to clear the way for modernizing his nation. In doing so, he officially dissolved the caliphate by decree in 1924. Ever since then, jihadist organizations have been trying to bring the caliphate back, starting with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was created just four years after Ataturk disbanded the empire.

Subsequently, literally hundreds of extremist organizations were created over the next nine decades with the

express purpose of reversing what Ataturk had decreed. Yet every single one of them failed, including al-Qaida. Even after winning the elections in Egypt, the descendant group rooted in the original Brotherhood failed when it tried to Islamize too rapidly and was dethroned by Egyptian Gen. Fattah el-Sisi and the military.

This invokes the question, "How, exactly, has the Islamic State succeeded where all other jihadist groups failed?" The answer is a twofold one. The first answer has to do with how effectively IS has leveraged a religious narrative, specifically an eschatological one that portrays their "holy war" as the final jihad prior to end times. (For detailed background and discussion beyond the scope of this article, see my article in the May-June 2016 edition of *Military Review*.[9]) And the second answer has to do with an Egyptian jihadi theorist of IW.





The Management of Savagery:

The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass

Abu Bakr Naji

Translated by William McCants

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23 May 2006

The Management of Savagery by Egyptian jihadist Abu Bakr Naji closely parallels Chinese communist leader Mao Tse-tung's theory of revolutionary war as it outlines the process of waging insurgent jihad in stages. A link to the complete English-language translation, by scholar William McCants, can be found within endnote 10.

Prior to the success of IS, the key strategists of the global jihadist movement were less than pragmatic. The majority saw violence as a sacred act with the fate of their movement wholly contingent on the will of Allah. If the holy warriors of Allah were faithful in the execution of violence against the infidel in an escalation of operations, the caliphate would be miraculously established.

That idealist attitude was challenged when the Egyptian writer Abu Bakr Naji published his e-book, *The Management of Savagery*.[10] Although Naji was killed not long after the book was made public, the work remains extremely influential, and thus very dangerous, as it has injected a level of IW understanding into the jihadist movement that we had not seen previously. The importance of *The Management of Savagery* as it relates to fomenting global Islamic insurgency is illustrated by the fact that it informs most of how IS operates today.

All national security professionals should read the full translation of the book, but the summary is as follows. Like all jihadis, Naji believed that a Muslim must live under a caliphate, and that war must be waged until the Empire of Islam covers the world. However, he is explicit that violence alone will not magically result in the appearance of a functioning caliphate. Instead the jihadi movement must follow a comprehensive phased plan of operations that systematically builds layer upon layer until the final theocratic reality is achieved. The phases Naji describes in his book are:

Phase One: The Vexation Phase (IS four years ago). In the initial stage the jihadist organization will apply IW to execute dramatic terror attacks against the infidel and his regional partners. The goal here is to attrit and weaken the infidel and apostate governments and prepare the battlespace for Phase Two.

Phase Two: Spread Savagery (IS two years ago). Under this stage, the IW attacks are drastically increased in size and frequency. According to open source reports, when Ramadi fell, two hundred vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices were employed in a twenty-four hour period; this is exactly what Naji prescribed. The objective of Phase Two is to dislocate the local government from its own territory, making it functionally impossible for it to govern. This illuminates IS strategy for focusing on operations to sever the Syrian government or the administration

in Baghdad from the people to prevent the respective governments from exercising sovereignty. The jihadist organization thus aims to engender such a level of chaos that the resultant doubt of the population in the viability of legacy state structures positions the threat group as the only viable governance alternative.

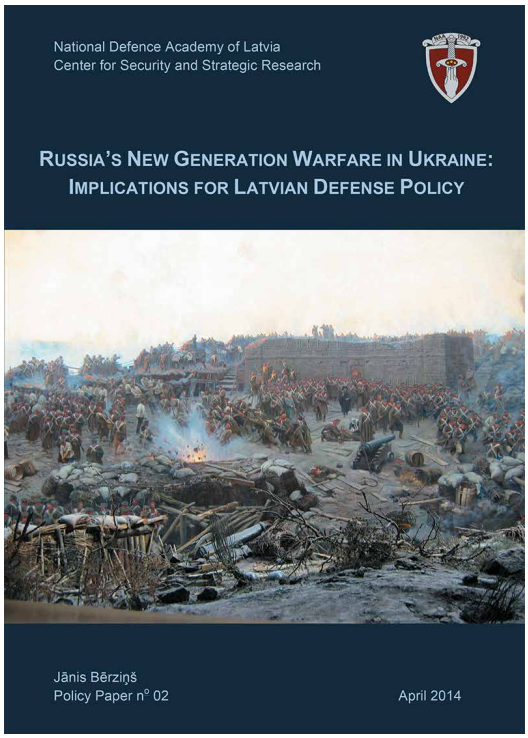
Phase Three: Administer Savagery—Consolidate Expand (IS now). In an echo of our own manual, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, this is the stage when the enemy consolidates its hold on captured territory, members of the local population are integrated into new fighting units, and a new governance structure is put in place that weds provision of services to the population with imposition of a draconian judicial system based upon sharia law.

The territory thus captured is gradually converted into a new "base state," or giant forward operating base, to be used as a launching platform for new Phase One and Phase Two type operations in new territories such as Libya, Yemen, Jordan, or Saudi Arabia.

The significance of Naji's work is that it injects a dose of pragmatism and an understanding of IW into the global jihadi movement that had been lacking for ideological and theological reasons. Additionally, Phase Three is really a transitional stage after which the final global caliphate will be achieved. As such it represents a period under which the jihadist enterprise is functioning as a quasi-nation-state with a fixed territory, borders, administration, and a monopoly of force.

In contrast, prior jihadi strategists had rejected the Westphalian nation-state as a heretical construct of the infidel West. Naji's great contribution—and a very dangerous one at that—was to argue in *The Management of Savagery* that even if one does not like the nation-state conceptually, it is an evolutionary stage the movement must pass through if it is to finally succeed in its global mission. And, unfortunately, his pragmatic approach has been effectively implemented by Abu Bakr and his IS.[11]

Only when we understand that IS understands IW as an instrument to obtain specific pragmatic objectives far better than al-Qaida ever did will we be intellectually focused on understanding the true scope of their aspirations and then better positioned to formulate effective ways and means to defeat them both on the battlefield and, more importantly, in the war of ideas.



Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy is a detailed analysis of Russia's current approach to conducting warfare in the twenty-first century by Latvian military scholar Janis Berzins.

The Russia Federation: War by Other Means

Turning to consideration of Russia as a growing IW foe, it is well to observe that today's Russia is not the Soviet Union: it is not an existential threat to the United States.

However, it is an anti-status quo actor that intends to antagonize, undermine, and frustrate accomplishment of U.S. goals, a spoiler controlled by a thuggish former KGB officer who called the dissolution of the USSR the "greatest geostrategic calamity of the twentieth century." Consequently, it needs to be acknowledged that Moscow is committed to re-establishing a sphere of unchallenged dominance in Central and Eastern Europe, and beyond that, to achieving an approximate level of influence globally that the Soviet Union had during the Cold War.

Unfortunately, its invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine resulting in the annexation of Crimea is a masterful example of how to do UW in a post-Cold War and post-9/11 world. Similarly, its exploitation of the vacuum caused by the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq in 2011 that enabled it to become a key player in Syria proves just how ambitious the Kremlin is to reshape the geopolitics of the Middle East also.

How has Russia done this? Some have argued that it has developed a new mode of "hybrid war." This is not in fact true. Moscow has simply further developed and recalibrated old Cold War tools in a new combination that emphasizes a less direct and more subversive approach to war that Sun Tsu would have instantly recognized. As those nations under greatest threat after the invasion of Ukraine, the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are doing some of the most important work in showing the world just how it is that Russia is winning its wars without recourse to conventional means.

The best English-language summary of the revamped Russian approach to war is in the 2014 report of the National Defence Academy of Latvia's Center for Security and Strategic Research. Titled *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy*, Janis Berzins summarizes Russia's approach as emphasizing the following guidelines for war in the twenty-first century:

1. from direct destruction to direct influence, and from direct conflict to "contactless war";
2. from direct annihilation of the enemy to subverting them internally;
3. from war with kinetic weapons and an emphasis on technology and platforms, to a culture war attacking the will of the enemy;
4. from war built around conventional general-purpose forces to subconventional war using specially prepared UW forces and irregular groupings and militias;
5. from the traditional three-dimensional perspective of the battlespace to an emphasis on information operations, PSYOP, and the "war of perceptions";
6. from compartmentalized war to a total war, including the targeting of the enemy's "psychological rear" and population base;
7. from war focused on the physical environment to war targeting human consciousness, cyberspace, and the will of the enemy to fight; and
8. from war in a defined period of time to a state of permanent war—war as the natural state for the nation to be in.[12]

These guidelines, each of which can be illustrated in the campaign to subvert Ukraine, were used to politically, psychologically, and economically undermine it as a nation prior to any hostilities breaking out. They were further employed in concert with unmarked SOF units covertly deployed as UW force multipliers to conduct operations to assist fifth-column local militia assets.

The guidelines are, according to Berzins, implemented in a set of clear phases.

First Phase: Nonmilitary Asymmetric Warfare. Synchronized informational, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, and economic measures supporting the overall Russian plan to establish a political, economic, and military environment favorable to the interests of Moscow.

Second Phase: Special UW Operations. Actions designed to mislead the adversary's political and military leaders through coordinated measures on diplomatic channels, through the media, and via key government and military agencies, utilizing the "leaking" of false data, and counterfeit orders and directives.

Third Phase: Subversion. Intimidating, deceiving, and bribing adversarial government and military officers with the objective of making them abandon their service duties.

Fourth Phase: Propaganda. Information operations targeting the civilian population to increase discontent amplified by the arrival of Russian-sponsored and trained bands of militants, escalating subversion.

Fifth Phase: Military Measures below Open War. Establishment of no-fly zones over the country to be attacked, imposition of blockades, extensive use of UW units and direct action in close cooperation with armed "opposition" units.

Sixth Phase: Open Use of Force. Commencement of military action, immediately preceded by large-scale reconnaissance and sabotage missions. Employment of all means of attack and types of assets, kinetic and nonkinetic, including SOF, space capabilities, electronic warfare (EW), aggressive and subversive diplomacy, and intelligence assets, industrial espionage, allied force-multipliers, and embedded fifth-column actors.

Seventh Phase: Force Escalation. Intensification of targeted information operations, increased EW, air operations, and harassment, combined with the use of high-precision weapons launched from multiple platforms, including long-range artillery, and the use of weapons platforms based on new physical principles, including microwaves, radiation, and nonlethal biological weapons targeting the will to resist.

Eighth Phase: Assert Control. Roll over and neutralization of all the remaining points of resistance, use of SOF and stand-off platforms to destroy remaining combat-effective enemy units, deployment of airborne assets to surround last points of resistance, execution of "mop up" and territorial control operations with ground forces.

As can be seen, none of the above together constitute a new type of war. However, the focus and combination of modes of attack have changed. Instead of the Cold War scenario of all-out war under which all means of attack are to be used initially, including chemical, biological, and nuclear, and during which *maskirovka* (deception) was an integral part of the plan to defeat the enemy, the Kremlin's new priorities put indirect and nonkinetic measures first.

Sun Tsu wrote that the ultimate skill in war was to achieve victory without fighting, and the Kremlin has taken Sun Tsu to heart and modified its approach. As has been demonstrated in its actions relative to Ukraine and elsewhere, for Russia, the approach is now to win without fighting too much. The Russian Federation has even established a pseudoscientific theory upon which its new approach is based. This repurposed Soviet-era theory is called Reflexive Control and is the science of how to shape the information environment in such a way as to make your enemy take decisions that are preferable to your victory and detrimental to his success. This more aggressive version of "perception management" is well worth studying by the U.S. military and intelligence community. An excellent primer is Timothy Thomas's "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military" from the *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*.[13]

The New Sun Tsus: "Making Trouble for the Troublemakers"

In 1999 two senior colonels of the Communist Chinese People's Liberation Army, with experience in political warfare, published the work *Unrestricted Warfare*.[14] Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui proposed with their work that the context of conflict had drastically changed and that this change required a "new" type of war without limits.

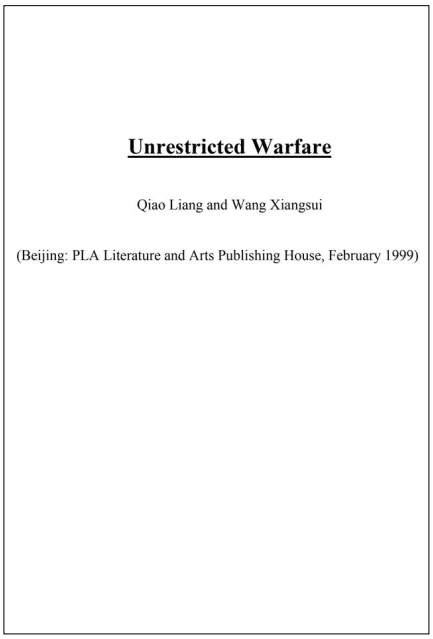
In their work, the colonels focused first on the geostrategic and geopolitical changes that necessitate "unrestricted warfare." This discussion included excursions on the topic of globalization, the waning power of the classic nation-state, the rise of "super-empowered" actors such as hackers and cyber warriors, and a lengthy discourse of the significance of the First Gulf War in demonstrating the new "omnidirectionality" of combat, wherein integration is at a premium and the instruments of war are deployed in all dimensions and directions at the same time. This then led to the authors enumerating the eight principles of UW:[15]

- Omnidirectionality. A 360-degree perspective guaranteeing all-around consideration of all the factors related to war and when observing the battlefield, designing plans, employing measures, and combining the use of all war resources to have a field of vision with no blind spots. Warfare can be military, quasi-military, or nonmilitary with the "battlefield" existing everywhere with no distinction made between combatants and noncombatants.
- Synchrony. Conducting actions in different locations within the same period. Synchrony accomplishes objectives rapidly and simultaneously.
- Limited Objectives. Limit objectives in relation to measures employed. Objectives must always be smaller than measures used to obtain them.
- Unlimited Measures. Once objectives are limited there should no restrictions placed on the measures used to achieve them. Hence UW.
- Asymmetry. Understanding and employing the principle of asymmetry correctly so as to find and exploit an enemy's weaknesses.
- Minimal Consumption. Use the least amount of combat resources sufficient to accomplish the objective. (Analogous to the U.S. principle of economy of force.)
- Multidimensional Coordination. Coordinating and allocating all forces, which can be mobilized in the military and nonmilitary spheres covering an objective (this includes nonmilitary assets, such as cultural warfare).
- Holistic Adjustment and Control of the Entire War Process. Continual acquisition of information through the campaign to allow for iterative adjustment and comprehensive control.

As even a cursory glance will demonstrate, none of these principles is at all new. In fact, several are as old as Sun Tsu's *The Art of War* itself. And others are simply good common sense. Likewise, the contextual factors that lead to these principles being evinced are not new

either, with scores of Western authors, such as Phillip Bobbitt and Ed Luttwak, having discussed them after the end of the Cold War.

Nevertheless, we should not disregard this work, or rather, we should not conclude that there is nothing new about how China has been thinking about and exercising its power in the post-9/11 world. Every nation—and even individual nonstate actors—has its own unique strategic culture. China is shaped by two specific historical experiences the most. The one is the original period of the warring states which brought us the wisdom of Sun Tsu, and the other is the nineteenth and early twentieth-century experiences of modern China. The former imbued the strategic personality of China's generals and leaders with an obsession for maintaining internal cohesion to a degree that far exceeds any reasonable attitude other nations have toward maintaining internal peace and harmony. And, the second created a suppurating psychological wound in the mind of the political elite that China must never again be exploited and humiliated by foreign powers as it was for so long in the modern age.



Original cover of *Unrestricted Warfare* by Chinese People's Liberation Army Cols. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, published in 1999. Several commercial translations are available. See endnote 13 for a partial translation originally made by the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

What has this resulted in today when it comes to China's strategic goals and actions? Liang and Xiangsui may not have expounded a revolutionary new way of war for their nation, but Beijing is most definitely practicing a very shrewd form of IW that seems to reflect its prescription for war. Less aggressive than Russia's in that its primary purpose is not subversion, this approach is focused less on remote political control than on intimidation and economic control.

Simply looking at China's actions in Latin America and South Asia, with billions "invested" in countries like Venezuela and Afghanistan for access to natural resources such as oil and copper, we see how China uses the nonkinetic to realize its national goals. Add to that the privatization and co-option of the state China has perpetrated in Africa in places such as Angola and Nigeria, and we can agree with the label Rafael Marques has used to describe China's foreign policy: new imperialism.

While Russia subverts and buys individual actors, China buys the good will of whole governments in ways that are very reminiscent of the mercantilist ways of the West just a couple of centuries ago. In short, Beijing's approach is to exploit weak nations and corrupt regimes, while exploiting the weaknesses of strong nations. And when it comes to the strongest of its competitors, such as the United States, to quote Liang, from a CCTV interview in 2012 when he was already a general, the goal is "to make trouble for the troublemaker."

Irregular Warfare: Back to the Future

As the empirical data shows, war is most often "irregular" and "unconventional". With America's capacity to maintain an overwhelming competitive advantage in the conventional military arena, our adversaries and enemies will continue to develop and employ established unconventional and irregular modes of attack. Although not all of these are

revolutionary, or even novel, there are proving very effective already. The sooner our strategists and policymakers recognize and acknowledge this, the better able they will be to develop relevant counters and hone our own indirect and nonkinetic modes of attack to better secure our republic and all Americans in what has become a decidedly unstable and ever more dangerous world. ■

Biography

Sebastian Gorka, PhD, is a professor of irregular warfare and strategy and vice president for national security support at the Institute of World Politics, Washington, D.C. He is the author of the New York Times *bestseller* Defeating Jihad: The Winnable War. *Gorka can be found online at* http://www.The GorkaBriefing.com *or followed on Twitter* @SebGorka.

Notes

Epigraph. U.S. Special Operations Command, *ARSOF Operating Concept: Future Operating Environmen/ARSOF Operating Concept Phase 1* (28 June 2013), 17.

Epigraph. This quote has been apocryphally attributed to Leon Trotsky though no original source has been found.

1. Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 5.

2. Sebastian Gorka and David Kilcullen, "An Actor-Centric Theory of War," *Joint Force Quarterly* 60(2011): 14–18, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA535254.

3. Based upon the empirical data described and the frequency of unconventional wars in contrast to state-on-state conflicts, it would seem obvious that we should, in fact, doctrinally label irregular warfare as conventional, and see conventional warfare as the anomaly, not the standard. Even though these are the facts of the matter, I do not expect to see the Pentagon make such a switch in the near future.

4. The Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis findings were drawn from forty-six separate studies that looked at operations raging from *Strategic Communications Best Practices* to *Counter-IED Efforts* and *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan*.

5. Joint Staff J7, "Decade of War, Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations," Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (2012), 20 March 2012, accessed 4 August 2016, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/training/conferences/wjtsc12_1/wjtsc12_1JLL_decadeOfWar.pdf.

6. For a summary exposition of the key strategists of modern Jihad, including Azzam, see Sebastian Gorka, "Understanding Today's Enemy: The Grand Strategists of Modern Jihad," *Military Review* 96, no. 3 (May-June 2016): 32–39, accessed 10 August 2016, http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20160630_art009.pdf.

7. This is dangerous. Although the Islamic State (IS) is currently more impressive and capable than al-Qaida, that does not mean that al-Qaida is finished or dormant. On the contrary, Al-Qaida has, in fact, expanded its reach in many parts of the world outside of IS influence, including Africa. The war for the "crown of the Caliphate" is far from over.

8. Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Review*, 8 no. 34 (April 1965): 34.

9. Gorka, "Understanding Today's Enemy."

10. Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical State Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. William McCants (Cambridge, MA: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, 23 May 2006), PDF e-book, accessed 8 August 2016, https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf.

11. Note also that it is clear the IS has studied their Mao. The original al-Qaida had a more Guevarist approach to insurgency, believing that spectacular attacks would trigger a mass movement and mass mobilization of fighters. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has demonstrated an understanding of what Mao taught: the insurgent will be successful if he can establish the "counter state" and provide services to the local population in competition to a failing legacy government. Appreciation of what the hackneyed phrase "hearts and minds" truly means illuminates what makes IS much more dangerous than al-Qaida ever was.

12. Janis Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy,* Policy Paper No. 2, (Riga, Latvia: National Defence Academy of Latvia, Center for Security and Strategic Research, April 2014), accessed 5 August 2016, http://www.naa.mil.lv/~/media/NAA/AZPC/Publikacijas/PP%2002-2014.ashx.

13. Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004): 237–56, https://www.rit.edu/~w-cmmc/literature/Thomas_2004.pdf.

14. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999), accessed 4 August 2016, http://www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf. Some Sinologists prefer the translation "Warfare Beyond Limits."

15. Adapted from Maj. John A. Van Messel, "Unrestricted Warfare: A Chinese doctrine for future warfare?" (master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2005), accessed 4 August 2016, http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a509132.pdf.

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