21ˢᵗ Century Cultures of War: Advantage Them

By Anna Simons
Naval Postgraduate School

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"A nation must think before it acts."
– Robert Strausz-Hupé

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About the Author

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She is the author of *Networks of Dissolution: Somalia Undone* and *The Company They Keep: Life Inside the U.S. Army Special Forces*. Most recently she is the co-author of *The Sovereignty Solution: A Commonsense Approach to Global Security*.

Simons' focus has been on conflict, intervention, and the military from an anthropological perspective. Her work examines ties that bind members of groups together as well as divides which drive groups apart. Articles have appeared in *The American Interest*, *The National Interest*, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *Parameters*, and elsewhere. She is a member of the Board of Editors of FPRI's journal *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs*.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to sound two alarms. First, about "them." We Americans have long assumed many non-Westerners are more primitive, less advanced, and ultimately less capable than we are. This is a mistaken view. Not only are many much more sophisticated than we realize, but they are especially adept in the realm of social relations, which has never been our strong suit.

Consequently, one challenge we face is that in much the same way our technological prowess led the Soviets to overreach (and thus the Soviet Union to collapse), non-Westerners' ability to outmaneuver us in the field of social relations will lead us to continue to overextend ourselves. And worse, we won't achieve clear wins. In writing this I do not mean to imply that our overreach will be purposely orchestrated by any one actor or set of actors, although that remains a distinct possibility. Rather, people abroad (and here at home, working on behalf of people abroad) will continue to seek U.S. military assistance for a host of reasons, both venal and legitimate, and the effects will continue to be cumulatively corrosive. Just look at our current culture of war—which brings me to the second source of alarm: us.

Our technical ingenuity, our work ethic, and our productive capacity have long distinguished us. Engineering, one could say, is our forte. We Americans make things work.[1] All of which would appear to stand our military in good stead. And indeed, until recently, our "can do," problem-solving professionalism did advantage us. However, no longer. I write "no longer" because we no longer seem to want to apply our comparative strengths definitively. At the same time, "can do" overstates what we can accomplish.

It seems a foregone conclusion that we will continue to excel technologically. No one is likely to surpass us in the realms of technological inventiveness or organizational innovation so long as we continue to apply the scientific method to problem solving. However, in the realm of what humans can do with and to other humans we are being outstripped. Morally, we shouldn't want to compete in this terrain, but the problem is we will be competed against. Already, there are some developments—like suicide terrorism and "green on blue" violence—for which we are unlikely to develop sufficient counters. The implications are profound for what U.S. forces might have to contend with in the field and cope with mentally.

Political correctness and self-censorship deserve some, but not all of the blame for why no one addresses the *societal* sources of others' inhumanity. Since the advent of anthropology, the mainstream social science view has been that we humans are more alike than unalike cross-culturally; differences can all be overcome. But—what if that isn't the case? For the purposes of this paper my working assumption will be that we aren't all wired with the same sensibilities. At the same time, the more the world shrinks the more our status vis-à-vis one another will matter.

People(s) typically seek to alter their status in the eyes of others in one of four ways: a) they seek autonomy, which means they want to be left alone, b) they seek respect, which means they want to be treated as different but not lesser, c) they seek deference, which means they want to be treated as *more* equal than others, or d) they expect others to submit, which means they seek obeisance. Islamists, for instance, still seek our submission. In contrast, over time the USSR proved willing to accept obeisance from Eastern Europe and settled for deference from the United States.

More important than where exactly anyone might fall on such a scale is what happens when aspirations are immutable.[2] Then the motivation for fighting might ebb and flow, but the impetus behind it won't die away. This makes certain kinds of cross-cultural clashes much more dangerous than others, and the

side that doesn't want to submit had better inflict a definitive defeat on the side seeking its submission. Nor will simply declaring victory suffice. The side that is defeated needs to be made to disarm.

Unfortunately, inflicting searing defeats on others has grown increasingly difficult since WWII. One can point to three interlocking sets of reasons: 1) our sensibilities, 2) their methods, and 3) the fact that others will adjust their methods *to* our sensibilities in increasingly sophisticated ways. Insurgents everywhere, for example, purposely burrow into populations, which makes it next to impossible for a military such as ours, that doesn't want to cause widespread collateral damage, to root them out. Also, because al-Qaeda (AQ)—our only declared foe—has done none of the things people feared it might (such as orchestrate further attacks inside the U.S.), decision makers have not had to wrestle with what it would take to have to inflict an unmistakably searing defeat on an adversary. Decision makers have instead been able to kick the can down the road on what constitutes "winning."[3] That represents one problem. A second is that conditions hardly remain static and one can identify at least five ongoing shifts that have the potential to irreparably subvert our way of war. These are:

> 1) "who understands what about whom?"— a question that didn't used to, but increasingly does matter.

> 2) adaptability over time—we used to be able to afford early mistakes and failures, and could count on being able to successfully adjust. We are losing this edge.

> 3) restrained warfare—as a term, this should be an oxymoron, though one that made sense when mutual destruction was assured. Restrained warfare is very different from restraint *in* war, yet we inadvertently conflate the two. Non-Westerners don't.

> 4) soldiers are victims; soldiers are heroes; we increasingly act as though soldiers are heroes because they are victims—while some might consider our conflicted feelings about combat a sign of civilizational sophistication, all such views are corrosive and endangering when war is underway.

> 5) projecting menace—the extent to which American society has embraced the projection of menace as an acceptable means of securing social status is detrimental to soldiers, youth, and our stature in the world.

Other shifts reflect changes in technology, a topic this paper will avoid since, as it is, our fixation on technological innovation biases us against the degree to which others innovate in their use of human beings. This is also why, in the end, I will recommend concentrating on how to *un*do rather than outdo non-Western foes.

It should be a truism by now that people who don't fight via a professional military or abide by the Geneva Conventions or other laws of land warfare are much harder for us to deal with than those who do. The corollary is: without becoming more ruthless ourselves, we can't outdo adversaries who are willing to do things with and to other humans we can't countenance.

As for what it will take to undo (rather than outdo) others, the U.S. military does not specifically screen for wile. But it could. Wile requires a different set of traits than those needed for the kinds of unconventional activities being pushed today (e.g. advising, and "shaping and influencing"). William Donovan, founder of the OSS, dealt in wile. So did Edward Lansdale. The catch today is that non-Asian non-Westerners are considerably more sophisticated about us than they were in the immediate aftermath of WWII. We, on the other hand, are not much more sophisticated about them than we were

then.

PREMISE—THE (NON-EAST ASIAN) NON-WEST[4]

For all the arguments made over the past number of years on behalf of a "democratic peace," the surer bet is that no major war will be fought between the U.S. and another Western power, at least not in the foreseeable future.[5] Worst case scenario: even if the Eurozone collapses and conflict does engulf our Western allies, the nature of conflict there will likely differ considerably from conflict fought with or against non-Westerners.

Clearly no such thing as "a" (singular) non-Western culture of war exists. Nonetheless, one can discern a certain post-Cold War pattern. Professional militaries don't fight for loot and booty, don't rape women, and don't amputate limbs or otherwise maim non-combatants. Where we see such acts occur, we typically find undersocialized militaries, paramilitaries, local militias, and homegrown defense forces. Flip this around, and the presence of such actors signals non-existent, ineffective, or grossly under- resourced national militaries.

When a government can't fully police and/or protect large swaths of its territory that indicates it either controls (or is only interested in controlling) the levers of power in what amounts to a truncated dysfunctional state. Bureaucracy might still function, but little else does, which is how failure and fragility sucker us in. One problem with Western assistance, however, is that as soon as we arrive on the scene, the government we are aiding no longer has as pressing a need to resolve the problems we are there to help it address. We become more than a crutch; we act as a new and conveniently exploitable source of resources.

Once violence spins out of control—which it will without an overarching authority capable of (re)exerting itself—we see six effects. 1) Accidental guerrillas.[6] 2) Males with no prior exposure to military doctrine will use arms in all sorts of experimental ways. 3) Innovations in violence yield tactics, techniques, and procedures that others copy (think: the LTTE and suicide terrorism). 4) Transnational ties thicken—to arms dealers, drug smugglers, slavers, sex traffickers, etc. 5) Instability ripples. 6) Refugees and internally displaced persons pose regional problems and become pressure points used by local factions, neighboring governments, the aid industry, and others to elicit assistance.

Assistance brings us back to square one: a government and military that can't or won't take care of itself. Consequently, the starting point for intervention never signals the endpoint of violence. Instead, whatever assistance we provide has the potential to widen, broaden, and deepen the conflict. Feedback loops don't just speed up, but get more vicious over time, while those who seek to break these cycles end up in circular debates themselves, disagreeing over which to concentrate on first: insecurity or a lack of development. Tellingly, no one raises the possibility that the situation might reflect fundamental differences in values and priorities among combatants, or between combatants and those caught in their violence, or between any or all of them and us.

ROADMAP:

This paper consists of five parts. In the remainder of this section I will sketch what I mean by each of my assertions, before presenting additional supporting arguments in Parts 2, 3, and 4, and then tying various threads together in the Conclusion.

PART 1 OVERVIEW

1) *Who understands what about whom?* We Americans (and Westerners in general) have always better understood others' social structures and methods of organization than their values, while non-Westerners appreciated our values long before they were able to figure out the inner workings of our political system or social structure.[7] Non-Westerners have since caught up with us; we haven't caught up with them. By this I mean we still don't sufficiently appreciate how different their values, priorities, and notions of status are from ours. Nor is this just a matter of solipsism or hubris. Rather, it has everything to do with how the West triumphed over the non-West in the 16th-19th centuries.

To be brief, back in the days when our forebears didn't mind using might to take away others' rights, we didn't need to take into account what subordinates thought, while those we subordinated (tribal peoples especially) couldn't help but recognize that we had different values and priorities than they did, particularly since we made this obvious as soon as we subverted their autonomy and thanks to the fact that it was us trammeling their land. Over time, and as successful 20th century liberation struggles revealed, non-Westerners did learn what they needed to in order to rid themselves of outside rulers—thanks to working for, around, and with Westerners, being schooled by Westerners, and serving in militaries with Westerners, etc.

As a consequence, today countless non-Westerners aren't just significantly more familiar with our modes of organization than we are with their values, but they have the ability to operate in both arenas. We, on the other hand, aren't very comfortable in their world. This has profound implications for us (and them), but especially us whenever we conduct operations in the non-West, though in actuality we can't really *operate* in the non-West, at least not by non-Western standards. Yes, we Americans can conduct military and diplomatic business abroad—but we don't do so according to non-Western practices, on a non-Western clock, or in accord with non-Western codes of conduct. Even if we wanted to, we don't sufficiently know how.[8]

Meanwhile, non-Westerners' skill at operating effectively in both the non-West and the West would matter less if only we were willing to bypass, ignore, or get rid of those peoples we can't work with, which was a 19th and early 20th century prerogative. But today we can do no such thing—not when we are working in what are, legally, others' countries, nor given current sensibilities (to include sensibilities here in the U.S.). In fact, having entered the era of "war among the people" we now try to work with anyone who wants to work with us. As military officers home from Afghanistan or Iraq, or officers who have worked in embassies, acknowledge, we thereby set ourselves up to be used. We even know that we are being used, though we don't always know in what ways. Nonetheless, policy makers appear to think the trade-offs are worth it.[9]

This shift represents a total (and literal) reversal of fortune(s) between the West and non-West.[10]

2) *Adaptability over time.* According to accepted wisdom, the U.S. military often flails in the beginning but prevails in the end which, if you flip this around and reconsider it, means that the U.S. shouldn't expect to do well at the outset of any fight.

> Contrary to popular imagination, war has never been a set-piece affair. The enemy adapts to your strategy and you adapt to his. And so you keep the interplay going between policy and

strategy until you find the right combination at the right time. What worked well in Iraq will not necessarily work in Afghanistan. What worked well today will not necessarily work tomorrow. The day you stop adjusting is the day you lose. To quote one of war's greatest students, Winston Churchill, you can always count on Americans to do the right thing after they've tried everything else. Trying everything else is not weakness. It means we don't give up.[11]

The problem with acknowledging that we Americans don't usually do the right thing at the outset is that while this is surely historically true, historically we also had the luxury of time.[12] Given the speed with which today's media deliver messages, and the greediness of the 24/7 news cycle, we have much less time in which to correct our errors (and maybe even no time in some cases).

When the U.S. could out-produce and out-last others we *could* afford mistakes. We could also better censor them. The American people used to also afford policy makers at least some benefit of the doubt on foreign policy. However, with national security an increasingly partisan issue, Americans have come to display ever less confidence in and patience with leaders of both political parties, which is further exacerbated by the punditry's ceaseless Monday morning quarterbacking, which is another relatively recent development.

Thanks to all of these shifts, expectations about adaptation make us impatient enough that we want to see progress, which then leads us to mistake churn or changes at the margin for forward momentum.[13]

Or, to highlight what has happened from a slightly different angle, consider the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the attacks on 9/11. Both delivered shock and awe, to us. Few Americans objected (then or now) to FDR's response to Pearl Harbor, a deliberate raid that targeted and sank vital instruments of war. In contrast, growing numbers of Americans believe George Bush's administration overreacted to al-Qaeda, despite AQ's direct targeting of civilians. The contrast in reactions should raise serious questions about how long the U.S. might stay the course *as* a coherent nation after the next attack, particularly if the next attack is less overtly warlike than 9/11 was—a likelihood that any thinking adversary should already be considering.

9/11 is one reason the U.S. government is now investing heavily in soft power efforts abroad, as well as in stability operations and others designed to "shape and influence." Unfortunately, such activities overlook the fact that our presence in other countries is itself an irritant that can be used to stir up anti-American violence. Worse, it would appear proponents of this approach presume the relationships and networks we invest in won't be turned or compromised over time.[14]

As for who might accept our presence or ask for our assistance, willing hosts come in three types: 1) besieged regimes, 2) ineffective governments, and 3) underdogs. Unfortunately, banking on any one of these three generates its own set of problems since as soon as we render assistance to entity X we automatically guarantee enmity from those who oppose X. This is the dynamic found in all situations of chronic insecurity and is a third rail of civil wars.[15] Elsewhere I have described the nature of our blindspots.[16] Suffice it to say here that nothing currently being done will satisfy what we most need if we hope to pull off strategic diplomacy. Some of the shortcuts policy makers are being asked to support—whether in the form of Human Terrain Teams or Special Operations Forces working out of embassies—are just that. These won't yield individuals who can pay career-long attention to populations abroad. Worth bearing in mind is that monitoring situations is vastly different from trying

to shape or influence.[17] At a minimum we need the former in order to even attempt the latter. As it is, we have been trying to shape and influence conditions in countries like Pakistan and Iran for decades, to questionable effect.

As for preferentially "empowering" one strongman or set of actors over another in the belief we will then have leverage, such investments invariably boomerang.[18] No matter how liberally the word "empower" gets thrown around, what "empower" describes is a transfer of power. Vault someone into position and you cede to him whatever leverage over him you might have had; elevate someone and you show that individual just how important to you he is. That puts *him* in the power position and turns you into *his* exploitable resource.

3) *Restrained warfare.* Since the advent of the Cold War, every "war" the U.S. has fought has been limited which, by definition, means restrained; we neither go all out nor commit our entire arsenal to winning. The U.S. has been able to wage limited wars thanks to our positioning and resources. No one can out-produce us. Geographically, we remain impossible to overrun. Better still, in every conflict since the Mexican War, we have fought "over there." This has been hugely significant. It means that we actually could have fought with *less* restraint had we so chosen, and that *we* are the ones who have decided to limit the nature of war.[19] We like to think we have done so for ideological and moral reasons. But, on closer examination, this might be as much an artifact of the dawning of the nuclear age and the Cold War, coinciding with the luxury of no near-peer adversaries apart from the USSR. After all, no one we have fought against has *really* fought back: not Panamanians, Somalis, Serbs, or even the Iraqi Army.

World War II marks several watersheds. Among them, our rules of engagement have grown increasingly complicated and more discriminating, while non-Westerners increasingly target non-combatants. Or, as Zhivan Alach has put it, while "The West may be retreating toward restraint in warfare… non-Western actors may be charging headlong toward unrestrained methods."[20] Actually, the anthropologically correct observation would be that everyone demonstrates restraint—it is just that what constitutes restraint is cross-culturally contingent, and non-Westerners don't apply the same brakes we do. Not only are non-Westerners who seize power bolder in what they are willing to do, but they exhibit no discernible remorse.

For obvious reasons, comity between a society's conception of war and how combatants would fight if they were unconstrained is harder to achieve or maintain in democracies and heterogeneous states than in militarized (especially militarized tribally based) societies, which leads to yet another Western/non-Western rub. Those elements in a democracy that come closest to achieving both a collectivist and a "total war" mindset are combat units. Just in terms of fortitude— never mind combat power—combat units *should* have what it takes to prevail against the most committed foes. Thus, it is interesting to consider what ends up restraining them. From their point of view, policy is one constraint, civilians are another. But this is not exactly fair since a range of actors have helped ensure that modern militaries exist to shape and influence, rather than to destroy. At least since WWII, policy makers in, and not just out of, the military have helped habituate the Services to regard fighting as a signaling device.[21] Recall Vietnam—the U.S. bombed Hanoi to get the North Vietnamese to negotiate; bombing wasn't done to force them to give up. Or more recently there is the example of Kosovo and our 79-day-long air war.

Bowdlerized invocations of Clausewitz—and the conceit that war is but an extension of policy by other means—have helped shape current views about the purposes of militaries. Yet, treating war as a

messaging device overlooks two truisms about the use of force. First, in Western/non-Western contests, miscommunication is all but guaranteed. We only deceive ourselves when we assume others understand, or will want to understand, or will not want to purposely misunderstand the intent in our messaging. Second, fighting never feels semiotic to those engaged in it.

4) *Soldiers are victims.* This brings me to a fourth shift: the extent to which the American media, Hollywood, and large segments of the population now treat soldiers as "victims." Never before—and certainly never in the midst of war—have soldiers been so lionized as victims. It seems curious but telling that this doesn't provoke greater concern. Telling—because it suggests the degree to which we Americans have lost any ability to modulate. Beyond just treating soldiers as victims, we also call them heroes at every turn. The inevitable elision is victims = heroes.

This schizophrenia is decidedly unhealthy. As liberation struggles throughout the 20th and into the 21st century should remind us, the side with the clearer Cause and greater commitment will eventually prevail. While a modicum of ambivalence about war may be healthy for any society (after all, not even Sparta could maintain itself forever), too much ambivalence in the midst of war creates paralysis or churn, and (again) the illusion of progress.

Lack of clarity is rarely good, but it is especially problematic when facing adversaries who aren't the least bit conflicted and don't share any of our same concerns.[22] This inversion represents *the* overriding asymmetry that will haunt our future. The U.S. military has pushed as hard as our current culture of war permits it to, operationally-speaking. Yet, what has the military gained itself (or us), apart from an impressive ability to perform certain kill/capture operations? This question is bound to become even more unsettling should Afghanistan and Iraq come to be considered retrospective lost causes.[23]

How societies reincorporate combat soldiers is also illuminating.[24] For instance, today U.S. combat veterans are being encouraged to engage in group therapy. Venues are being provided in which they can talk to other veterans. Even Medal of Honor winners from previous wars have been enlisted to urge returnees to reach out for help. One unintended consequence: this reinforces both veterans' *and* society's attitude toward soldiers-as-special.[25]

Two dangers inhere in the soldier-as-victim/soldier-as-damaged-goods trope. The first is that the more this attitude suffuses society, the more likely members of the military are to internalize it.[26] Second, the more conflicted soldiers are convinced they feel, the more this will drive the military to try to spare them undue anguish and PTSD. To the extent that casualty aversion helped alter the way we prosecuted wars in the 1990s, PTSD-aversion post-Afghanistan and Iraq is likely to prove even more warping in the 2010s.[27]

5) *Projecting menace.* In a 2005 paper I wrote on male youth, factional politics, and religion ("The Axis of Trouble"), I argued that the U.S. has lost the habit of effectively socializing young men. I made the point that the military is one of the few institutions that helps youth to mature. What I did not examine is what can happen when other societies that have a generation (or more) of under-socialized young males recruit their own "volunteer" forces to wage war—particularly when they motivate their young men to significantly different ends than we do.

Since I wrote "The Axis of Trouble," much has been published about what can (or should) be done to deflect young Muslim males from violence and extremism. Renewed attention has been paid to gang

violence in the U.S. Few authors, however, take into account Lionel Tiger's observations about young males and the allure of violence and illicitness.[1] Consequently, suggestions about structured ways to channel adolescent rebellion— e.g., via sports teams and music contests—do not go far enough. They pay insufficient attention to what will always be a driver for at least some young males: the urge to subvert and *change* the rules.

One under-remarked dynamic is that while engaging in illicit and violent acts may prove challenging for some young men, *excelling* at illicitness and violence motivates others, while for yet others nothing is better than organizing, orchestrating, and *prevailing* at organizing and orchestrating illicitness and violence. It is no coincidence that professional militaries take advantage of these very same propensities. Just consider: while serving in combat units and getting to engage in combat is sufficient for some, excelling at combat and climbing the rungs into ever more elite units motivates others. Leading such organizations is better still, though best of all—for the select few—is getting to build them.

To cut to the chase: all societies need suitable outlets in which males can compete over status. Men will devise substitutes whenever there are too few outlets or those that exist are too exclusionary. Those they come up with will, by definition, challenge the status quo. As is true for anything that upsets the status quo, violence will be one potential by-product. But violence can also result when society lauds certain kinds of behavior. For instance, when *acting* menacing is treated as an acceptable source of status, that opens the door to being able to act *on* menace. Violence is the inevitable outcome. Once violence ratchets up it can spiral through communities and eventually unravel states – a dynamic that has the potential to invite in international actors who will engage in proxy wars of their own. In other words, status competitions aren't just an issue for male youth. Status competitions have the potential to embroil us all.

* * *

In what follows I will address menace first because it is the least obvious, but potentially most far-reaching of the shifts we are experiencing. I will then tack back to who is more willing to do what to whom before reconsidering where this leaves our combat arms.

PART 2 UNDERLYING REALITIES—A STATUS-DRIVEN LIFE

Humans are status-seeking social animals. Academics might argue over which came first, status-seeking or sociality, but that only proves the broader point: we humans have long contested all sorts of issues related to status—who's smarter, faster, stronger, better, right. We also tussle over who deserves status, for what, displayed how, for how long, and so on.

Two unspoken contracts hold societies together: 1) their members agree that in any competition for status violence will not get out of hand, and 2) when violence does occur in competition—in sporting events, for instance, or when emotions get the better of individuals—any spillover effects will be contained. The fact that societies cohere in the face of relentless inter-personal competition is an indicator that everyone either plays by the same rules, to include how to change those rules, or understands the consequences when they don't.[28] Or, to restate the obvious and tie it back to status: societies remain orderly so long as status seeking is regulated and the regulations sit sufficiently lightly on the most ambitious and status-hungry members.[29]

Because order is relatively easy to maintain in gerontocracies, most societies still retain some gerontocratic features (though these are fast eroding, for reasons to be explained).   In pure gerontocracies, elders "rule" by controlling critical rites of passage. If you are a male, your reputation depends on how well you fulfill your duties as a boy, as a youth/warrior, and as a responsible head of household. Roles and responsibilities (and expectations) change every time you pass through another gate and move up to another status. There are benefits to be gained all along the way, though the ultimate reward for being a good citizen is that you get to become an elder yourself one day.

Because all males see the deference elders receive, youth recognize that all they need to do is what other males have always done and they too will eventually earn respect. This encourages them to want to *preserve* and not subvert the system.[30]   Better still, gerontocracies impel the most violent-prone members of society to compete against peers in other groups via raids, which serves to also limit young male disruptiveness within the community.

Other societies curb disruptive behavior somewhat differently. For instance, where people believe in witchcraft and sorcery, witchcraft accusations have a leveling effect.[31] Essentially, whenever someone is accused of being a witch (or of unconsciously harboring "witchcraft" substance) s/he is put on notice: "others consider you guilty of anti-social behavior; behave yourself—or else." So long as the "or else" includes the occasional corporal punishment, witchcraft accusations do a good job of keeping rivalries and social tensions in check, and from tearing communities apart.

A third method of social control more appropriate for larger settings involves beliefs in reincarnation and/or divine judgment. Neither requires witchdoctors nor is subject to human manipulation. Instead, people, of their own volition, strive to be non-disruptive in this life in order to assure themselves a better status in the next life or the Hereafter.[32] Or, for a slightly different wrinkle, there is the Zen practice of making the most out of your lot in life regardless of the station to which you were born.

All such methods pit individuals against an ideal and not just against one another. Though again, perhaps the most striking attribute such systems share is their ability to deflect men, and young men in particular, from wanting to rebel. Contrast this with our approach in the U.S., where disrupting the status quo isn't just actively encouraged, but rewarded.

We Americans share no overriding belief in divine judgment; we don't even all agree that heaven or hell exist. Instead, we (like other Westerners) employ police and all sorts of written rules and regulations to check our behavior. We encourage anyone and everyone to pursue success regardless of age, gender, or background. By marrying free market principles to meritocratic ideals we thus make the most of heterogeneity.[33] But this also means the sky is the limit when it comes to who is likely to try what, which (again) is why we need someone (police) or something (written laws and formal government) to regulate us.

Among the many impressive things our system accomplishes is that few individuals who chafe against the law find any real reason to want to undermine the system that polices them.[34] Thanks to our liberties, to include individuals' ability to succeed and fail and then succeed again, there is little interest in violent revolution or insurgency. This does not mean, however, that we can't fall prey to entropy, or aren't enamored of violence. To illustrate, just consider where our metrics for success have led us.

WHEN MONEY IS THE METRIC

There is no hierarchy *of* statuses in the U.S.[35] No method of *attaining* status is considered so much better than others that everyone vies to excel in "it." Whenever a career, profession, or identity becomes *the* career, profession, or identity to have, something else comes along to knock it off its perch. This is true for every money-making enterprise you can think of—in virtually all fields. Consider the professions: medicine, law, and business. Or science and technology. Who or what has had cachet? Engineers, astronauts, computer nerds…[36] Instead of the socialist mantra, "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," it is as if we operate by "from each according to his abilities, to each according to whatever the market (read: public) decides." Software moguls, sports figures, actors, politicians—all can earn untold sums of money. With money comes attention. With attention comes status.[37]

One result is that we have what amounts to a free market for status whose downside is that once status floats, infamy can attract as much renown (and remuneration) as does genuine achievement. While talent has never been enough to earn someone a world class reputation— timing, access, patronage, sponsorship, and a talent *for* attracting attention have also always mattered—in previous eras there were clear arbiters for who and what was deemed acceptable. There were rules that royals, aristocrats, members of the Establishment—those with the wherewithal to grant and withhold status—applied; they *were* the talent police.[38] It is only since they lost *their* status that status has become unmoored.

The argument I am heading toward is status unmoored > menace unmoored > recovery = difficult. To get there requires adding one more straw to the camel's back.

Once the market becomes the arbiter of status, money no longer simply ties people together economically, but suddenly gives everyone the same thing to shoot for: more.[39] What makes "more" such a useful target is that individuals can stop acquiring money whenever they feel they have enough. Or— they can keep going. The fact that some will always keep going, and will never be able to earn, inherit, or otherwise acquire sufficient sums means their competitors won't stop either. This has all sorts of inflationary effects, and ends up affecting us all.[40]

One happy by-product of the never-ending desire to out-do one's peers and predecessors is people will

push the edges of all sorts of envelopes.[41] For instance, just compare IT today with IT 20 years ago. Or energy efficiency, health care, or you name it, at least some of which is now driven by competitive philanthropy. Or take democratic freedoms. Activists' ability to raise money and awareness and break down or blast past barriers is exactly what liberty promises. In many regards, expanding opportunity represents status's (and not just freedom's) ultimate frontier. However, for anyone who believes that some kinds of limits or standards are critical to social order, money's solvent nature cannot be considered wholly benign or cost-free.[42]

Rather, money ends up blurring all sorts of distinctions, good and bad.[43] For instance, we no longer hierarchize occupations in the ways societies—to include our own—used to, and though it may seem a stretch to say that "anything goes" is antithetical to maintaining social order, an "anything goes" attitude does impact to whom and to what we pay respect.[44]

"ANYTHING GOES"—MENACE

In classic gerontocracies, standards of behavior were pegged to age. Elders needed to act with gravitas; they earned respect by pursuing responsibility, not fun. In contrast, consider who, or rather what, adults of all ages in the U.S. idolize: youth culture—which we then market en masse to the world. Nor is youth all we export. Along with youth we glorify menace. Just look at how we treat menace on the big screen, small screen, and computer screen, or in the music industry, and then reflect on how well we reward actors, producers, and directors of menace-as-entertainment. They earn so much money that they have turned the very *projection* of menace itself into a lucrative lifestyle and source of status.

What do I mean by 'menace'? Menace intimates power: defer, or else. In vulgar terms: "look at me/ don't look at me, I can f--- you up."[45]

Without question, being able to act physically menacing on the mean streets, in the Wild West, or in high school cafeterias has long served useful force protection purposes.   However, societies traditionally used to differentiate between those who acted menacing out of self-defense and those who acted menacing by choice. Thugs and bullies have always been able to command respect. But in civilized societies (to include all tribal societies), they never attained public adulation. Today they often do.

Whether we trace this development back to the rise of the anti-hero post-WW II, or to music parents didn't like in the 1950s, or to the large screen depiction of rebels, gangsters, and outlaws a suite of things in the second half of the 20th century began to encourage youth to be bad, and to keep being bad. Cable television, video games, social media, and marketers have further intensified and spread this meme.[46] From John Wayne and West Side Story to Rambo and the Godfather, to the Sopranos and the Sons of Anarchy today, menace's image has only grown crasser and slicker. Worse, radicalization hooks right into menace's allure. And thanks to what the U.S. exports, we are only just starting to experience some of menace's unanticipated downstream effects.

RETHINKING RADICALIZATION

Among the factors said to contribute to youth radicalization are anger, frustration, hopelessness, inherent idealism, the quest for peer approval, the search for identity, the desire to belong, the idea of adventure, and the need for Cause.[47] Unmoored adolescents might be motivated by any or all of these. In addition, they will usually need to test (as in discover) who comprises their most important audience:

peers, elders, members of the opposite sex, society at large, or just a small circle of intimates.[48] Without question, some adolescents face limited choices from the outset.[49] But even so, no healthy society *forces* youth to refuse to accept responsibility, defy authority, or break the rules.[50]

In traditional societies, elders figured prominently because they held the keys to marriage and the future. Young men had to prove themselves acceptable as potential sons-in-law if they hoped to head their own households one day; this was *the* societal ideal for *all* males. The fact that so many young men today do not see a future in which they will be able to make ends meet, attain a wife, or support a family is one important source of frustration. But that hardly explains violence among American youth who *aren't* trying to become heads of household.[51] Just the opposite describes them.

It would have been unthinkable in a traditional gerontocracy for young men to father children, act irresponsibly, and *still* be able to attract additional young women. Yet, not only has this become a possibility in the U.S., but few male elders dare vigorously condemn it. The result is that young women have been left free to choose the males that most suit them, and they often choose "bad" boys over good men, which in turn suggests that when the choice is left up to them, young women like menace and males who can dominate. Maybe most women do.[52]

Biological anthropologists would likely sum this up as evolutionary evidence of male-male competition and female choice. But we can also explain it sociologically. It can't be a coincidence that all successful societies used to set parameters for competition(s) that enabled the strongest, smartest, fastest males to display their dominance over others in venues that impressed young women, but where, while women could observe they couldn't compete. What better method was there for killing multiple birds with one stone, to include preventing young males from upsetting the local social order?

Societies today offer fewer of these venues. Take ours. Programs designed to combat gang violence and prevent youth from joining gangs sometimes include single sex activities like boxing or the martial arts.[53] But more often one finds lists of best practices that extol the virtues of:

- Addressing elevated risk factors for joining a gang. Strengthening families.
- Reducing youth's conflicts.
- Improving community-level supervision of youth.
- Providing training for teachers on how to manage disruptive students. Providing training for parents of disruptive and delinquent youth.
- Reviewing and softening school "zero tolerance" policies to reduce suspensions and expulsions.
- Ensuring that punitive sanctions target delinquent gang behaviors, not gang apparel, signs, and symbols.
- Providing tutoring for students who are performing poorly in school. Increasing adult supervision of students after school.
- Providing interpersonal skills training to students to help resolve conflicts. Providing a center for youth recreation and referrals for services.
- Providing gang awareness training for school personnel, parents, and students. Teaching students that gangs can be dangerous.
- Providing training for school resource officers in mediating conflicts.[54]

One reason I reproduce this list at such length is to draw attention both to what it doesn't include and to its units of amelioration: individuals, families, schools, and gang-afflicted communities. Yet, broader society is never invoked. Nor is the need to readjust societal standards. Instead, gangs are essentially treated as certain communities' problems. The connection isn't made back to broader mores, or the society-wide norms that will act as internalizable self-policing mechanisms.

What is written about gangs is of a piece with what is written about groups like al-Qaeda:

> …al-Qaeda inspired terrorism in the West shares much in common with other counter-cultural, subversive groups of predominantly angry young men. Being radical and rebelling against the received values of the status quo is an important part of being young. Ways must be found to ensure that young people can be radical, dissenting, and make a difference, without it resulting in serious or violent consequences.[55]

Or, as Scott Atran has written,

> It is… important to provide alternate local networks and chat rooms that speak to the inherent idealism, sense of risk and adventure, and need for peer approval that young people everywhere tend toward. It even could be a twenty-first-century version of what the Boy Scouts and high school football teams did for immigrants and potentially troublesome youth as America urbanized a century ago…[56]

Which is all well and good but, again, Atran concentrates on local—not societal—units of amelioration, and he never acknowledges menace's allure.

For a slightly different variation on this theme, John Venhaus categorizes those attracted to AQ into four types: the revenge seeker, the status seeker, the identity seeker, and the thrill seeker. To counter-act AQ's appeal, Venhaus touts service projects that would "provide outlets for at-risk youths to connect them with their communities." [57] He recommends music and sports for the revenge seeker; political discourse and call-in radio shows for the status seeker; sports leagues, model governments, student societies, community service programs, and adventure groups for identity seekers; and first-person shooter games and other sources of vicarious thrills for the thrill seeker.[58]

But laudable as these are, none again addresses the need (or desire) of some young males to prove just how effectively they can *literally* dominate others.[59] Yet if, as I am arguing, literal dominance matters for at least some males—as well as the females they hope to attract—then much like William James' moral equivalent of war, the remedies being proffered aim for an equivalence they can't possibly match since none addresses the ineffable appeal of getting to be bad, an appeal hyped by Hollywood and other outlets across society (and increasingly the globe).[60]

OTHER CATALYSTS
Meanwhile, although social scientists who write about radicalization concentrate on inequality and grievance more than they do on the male need to posture, their attention is not wholly misplaced. Most youth *will* react to rampant injustice with righteous indignation; all youth can feel profound outrage over *something*.

The grievances youth respond to can be direct—events they've experienced. Or they can reflect what

someone has taught or is teaching them.[61] Often it is said that youth (and adults) who feel they have nothing to lose feel that way because they have nothing to begin with and/or nothing to look forward to. Yet, individuals like these rarely lead violent movements. Instead, they make excellent foot soldiers, particularly when led by those who have been willfully, personally dispossessed and/or robbed of whatever may have been most important to them.[62]

In addition to the differences white hot anger or revenge can make, consider what Sierra Leonean novelist Aminatta Forna has one of her characters say:

> Have you ever wondered what it is that makes people do terrible things? I have since that day [when rebels showed up in Freetown]. I have set my mind to it many times. All of the stories of supernatural beings and yet those men and women out there were not so different from me, only that something inside them had been unleashed. So, where does it come from, the fury? A thousand indignities, a thousand wrongs, like tiny knife wounds, shredding a person's humanity. In time only the tattered remnants are left. And in the end they ask themselves— what good is this to me? And they throw the last of it away.[63]

Alternatively, thresholds can be buried so deeply inside people that they themselves don't know they are there until they have been crossed— this is how one Sikh woman explained her middle-aged husband's radicalization in the mid-1980s, at the height of Sikh separatism.[64] Or here is Rhodesian-born journalist Peter Godwin's description of a black colleague's reactions to revisiting Matabeleland, where 25 years previously his sister had watched their father being shot in the head: "Hearing all the recollections of the massacres seems to have triggered in him simultaneous feelings of anger and impotence"[65]

Amnesia can be highly adaptive in the face of knowing there is nothing you can do to change a situation. Or it can mask an inability *to be* articulate, which itself can become a source of rage.

> Linguistic dispossession is a sufficient motive for violence, for it is rage that has no words— rage that overwhelms one with darkness. And if one is perpetually without words, if one exists in the entropy of inarticulateness, that condition itself is bound to be an enraging frustration. In my New York apartment, I listen almost nightly to fights that erupt like brushfire on the street below—and in their escalating fury of repetitious phrases ("Don't do this to me, man, you fucking bastard, I'll fucking kill you"), I hear not the pleasures of macho toughness but an infuriated beating against wordlessness, against the incapacity to make oneself understood, seen. Anger can be borne—it can even be satisfying—if it can gather into words and explode in a storm, or a rapier-sharp attack. But without this means of ventilation, it only turns back inward, building and swirling like a head of steam—building to an impotent, murderous rage. If all therapy is speaking therapy—a talking cure—then perhaps all neurosis is a speech disease.[66]

There are several threads worth pulling here.

Well socialized individuals are rarely at a loss for knowing what to do, what to say, or how to act. When crises erupt or ruptures occur and people suddenly lose their bearings, such individuals step into the breach or rise to the occasion and *act* as though they know what is required. Not uncoincidentally this is how all long-lasting empires were governed: those in control remained in control, in part by

controlling their emotions. And control—not lack of control—was admired. However, where socialization is lacking, where no clear parameters exist, and where being "dangerous" earns respect (especially from young women), opportunists who seek to take advantage by whatever means they can will prosper, and in an "anything goes" free-for-all the means that prove most effective will invariably involve force. Then, once some use force, those bent on overcoming them will have to apply greater counter-force.[67]

This, in a nutshell, is why militaries exist— though if we look at all the purposes professional militaries serve, they don't just react to and rein in violence. They also socialize young men. Ironically, militaries provide youth with more varied outlets for competition and sources of status, to include allowing those who *want* to project menace to do so in controlled ways, than anything else humans have devised. They should be ideal for counter-alienation and counter-radicalization purposes.

In fact, historically, illiterate or otherwise unskilled young men could often count on finding secure livelihoods (and identities) through enlisting. But, as Karl Marlantes points out, the advent of all-volunteer militaries has made this much more difficult.[68] So has advanced technology. Indeed, it is increasingly unclear what might fill this void for males who don't like to read, write, or compute. Which is not to suggest we should want our future military filled with un-educable youth. But it does raise the question: if the armed forces have always served as one haven for otherwise inarticulate young men, what will serve that purpose in an age of diminishing opportunities for such youth?

This hints at a very different kind of civil-military divide than the gap everyone usually worries about, particularly since young males are not likely to realize (or believe) that their long-term future looks as bleak as it does until society demands that they grow up and act like "men" which, should society ever decide to do so, would come too late for those it has never adequately socialized.

SLIPPERY SLOPES

To restate the challenge: given the volatility of young males, societies need to have some set of sanctions they can and will apply, but these also need to be sanctions that mean something to youth. Otherwise, youth won't see any need to act with restraint. For instance, in the documentary "Shake Hands with the Devil," former UNAMIR commander Romeo Dallaire is asked why he thinks young Hutus in Rwanda engaged in such gratuitous acts of violence against Tutsis? Why, for instance, did they escalate from chopping off people's feet to severing their legs? Dallaire suggests they did so out of one-upmanship, experimentation, and a sick sense of humor: once young males had machetes in hand, they competed against each other to see how much a human body could (literally) withstand.[69]

In other instances, a somewhat different dynamic can set off youth, such as has happened in Algeria, Palestine, or Pakistan, where older radicals inadvertently set their juniors up to outstrip them:

> … Rahman and JUI were no longer the toughest Islamists on the block. In 2002, they rose to power as the 'bad boys' on the political scene, with their turbans and Taliban talk. But five years later, they looked old and washed up, victims of the growing divide between the pro-Taliban leaders of yesterday and those of today. And if the high point of Rahman's career came in 2002, his low point came in 2007, during the insurrection of the Red Mosque.
>   From January through July 2007, when male and female rebels overran the children's library, then kidnapped a brothel madam, some police officers, and six Chinese masseuses, and finally holed up armed inside the Red Mosque, Rahman repeatedly tried to talk the Ghazi

brothers out of their reckless adventure, but his influence inside the mosque was limited. *"They are simply beyond me,"* he said at one point.[70]

The U.S. and our culture of menace surely can't be held responsible for these kinds of (d)evolution—except that U.S. exports *have* alternated between entertainment and arms sales for decades. This means we probably have helped promote the allure of projecting violence (to include terrorism) without realizing all the various ways in which it would converge with, and help accelerate, political instability. But, even if everyone purveying violence—from Hollywood studios to videogame makers to rappers and advertisers—were to suddenly stop glamorizing menace that would still not have sufficient effect. At least not so long as leaders the world over continue to want to associate themselves with larger than life muscle, to include our own politicians who happily pose in tank turrets, on the decks of battleships, or in front of MRAPs.

Bottom line: for better or worse, it is hard to find anyone immune from wanting to "feel the magic" menace confers.[71]

In some ways this is hardly new. As a threesome, "power, status, and the instruments of war" comprise the world's oldest iron triangle. However, what *has* changed is menace's appearance. Just compare footage of combatants from WWII (or even Vietnam) to footage from Iraq and Afghanistan. From tricked-out M16s to up-armored soldiers, the amount of gear, bulk, and heft one sees today is overwhelming. On a certain level the steroidal nature of our military makes sense: the U.S. *should* want to project an image of impervious, invulnerable, unbeatable strength. Indeed, ask most Americans what they would want our military to non-verbally communicate and they would probably answer: "don't even bother trying to fight us." But then, ask non-Westerners what they see when they look at U.S. forces bristling with menace, and at least some might say a Goliath.

One problem with Goliaths is that they attract Davids.

The most long-lasting exhilaration humans can experience comes from fighting against something bigger and more powerful than themselves. Outwitting, undermining, and tripping up the world's greatest army, navy, or country is bound to appeal to at least some youth everywhere for two reasons. First, nothing represents a more worthwhile Cause. Second, there is no faster way to prove one's worth as a leader (and thereby earn status) than to try to orchestrate a successful attack against Goliath.[72] We thus become a looming target for high risk, high gain types.

Of course, in reality, no contest ever pits one side's brains against another's brawn; that is far too cartoonish. However, Washington does end up Goliathizing America's presentation of self whenever it deploys our military abroad. No matter how much we might like to think warships delivering tsunami aid or doctors in camouflage conducting MEDCAPs and VETCAPs softens our image, such actions cross more signals than we realize. Not only does our largesse suggest overwhelming capabilities, but gratitude has the in-built potential to turn into resentment over time.[73] None of which is to suggest that we *shouldn't* want our military to project menace. Rather, my argument is that *since* we project menace, we then shouldn't pull our punches in a fight.[74]

PART 3 NON-WESTERN ADVANTAGES

We Americans are bound to misread how our power feels to others, especially when one considers we have been a global power since WWI. No living native-born American knows what it is like to hail from a non-power. In fact, with so much real power at our disposal, we would be hard pressed *not* to assume that if we just show up offshore (Iran), or demonstrate our ability to engage from on high (Kosovo), or promise shock and awe (Iraq) that should suffice to set things straight on the ground.

Unfortunately, the fact that we can out-perform (out-shoot, out-fly, out-finance, and out-supply) every other military now leads some to assume we can similarly out-maneuver others in the info-sphere as well. However, the supposition that if only we come up with the right narrative we will be able to control, convert, and/or coopt people elsewhere ignores a number of hard, impolitic truths. Among them: locals will always be able to outdo us in their language, on their turf, and when communicating with their relatives.[75] In fact, for us to assume that locals will accept our version of events when either they or those they trust can claim to have experienced those events for themselves is nothing short of wishful thinking. Worse, it insults others' intelligence and leads us to further self-deceive.

Consider, for instance, the following joke, which was making the rounds in Baghdad prior to 2007. In addition to offering a sly commentary about who is better able to take advantage of whom, it highlights how inadvertently useful we have made ourselves abroad:

> An American, a Brit and an Iraqi were in a bar one night having a beer. The Yankee gulped down his beer, threw the glass in the air, pulled out a gun and shot it to pieces. He looked at his companions and explained: "In the US our glasses are so cheap that we don't need to drink from the same one twice." The British guy was impressed, so he swallowed his own beer, tossed the glass into the air and shot it to pieces. He boasted: "In Britain we have so much sand to make glasses that we don't need to drink out of the same glass twice either." Their Iraqi companion paused for a moment, picked up his beer, drank it, threw the glass into the air – then pulled out his gun and shot the American and the Brit dead. "In Baghdad we have so many Americans and Brits that we don't need to drink with the same ones twice," he said.[76]

My assertion in this section is that non-Westerners don't have to catch up with us or surpass us technically or logistically. They have other methods by which to bog us down, exploit, and counter us. Conceptually they possess four advantages:[77]

> 1) their ability to code-switch
> 2) they know what they can get away with given our patterns of behavior
> 3) they are more sophisticated than we give them credit for – even when what they do seems primitive
> 4) they have a different conception of power, don't believe in fairness, and are willing to experiment with violence

UNASSAILABLE LOGIC, IRREFUTABLE FACTS

We Americans take an a-cultural approach to other people(s). Our modus is to work as hard as possible to make *ourselves* understood, the more insistently (and loudly) the better. This reflects our frontier mentality: we can make friends anywhere; we don't put down stakes; we know we'll move on; why look back? Getting others to "get" us is not only how we succeeded in absorbing immigrants

during the 19ᵗʰ century, but reflects what has been most consistent about our policies toward American Indians (the non-Westerners we should know best): "you become us; that precludes us from having to understand you." Additional factors that explain why we don't code-switch very well include our location, size, and Anglo heritage.

The non-West, on the other hand, is full of competing separable societies. Who dominates who shifts over time. The combination of hierarchy and foreign rule helped set the template; local elites had to become as skilled as possible at switching between local/non-Western and supralocal/Western codes if they hoped to remain elite. Given this kind of legacy—considerably different than ours—it only makes sense that those who rise to leadership positions would be particularly good at straddling multiple worlds. For example, consider Cote d'Ivoire's first president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny. Born in a village in 1905, he served as head of state from 1960-1993:

> …commonly assessed as a consummate opportunist and petty tyrant, [Houphouet-Boigny] was in fact a far more complex character. He was, until the last ten years of his life, a master politician who managed to combine like few others control over a relatively efficient 'modern' state and the workings of a more 'traditional' political economy of reciprocity. He was able to integrate the attributes of the wise, benevolent, 'traditional' chief with the qualities of the experienced 'modern' politician who had mastered the intricacies of parliamentary and electoral politics as an MP in the French parliament and a minister in the French government.[78]

Like Houphouet-Boigny, today's non-Western politicians continue to have to be able to appeal to villagers (a significant percentage of their electorate), and they have to be able to woo us, their Western donors. They also have to recognize which is more important to do, when. For instance, on taking office and "to bolster his position, Joseph [Kabila, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)] immediately embarked on a diplomatic offensive. As one political analyst of the region remarked, 'Devoid of any national constituency, he had decided to treat the international community as his powerbase.'"[79] Lacking a strong ethnic constituency of her own, Ellen Sirleaf (Liberia) has similarly counted on international supporters to bring in foreign aid, which has helped her stay in power.[80] In contrast, Paul Kagame (Rwanda), has managed the opposite. By rescuing Tutsi co-ethnics (and Rwanda) from the 1994 genocide with no Western assistance, he now uses this fact as a moral cudgel. Some of Kagame's critics have gone as far as to suggest that he purposely held back his army and didn't rout Hutu extremists and genocidaires as quickly as he could have, just so that he would be able to make political use of genocide—a cruel allegation to be sure, but one that reflects how cunning Kagame's political opponents think he is and how brutally they are willing to wield logic themselves.[81]

We tend to forget: in much of the world argumentation remains a high art. It also offers the ultimate non-kinetic weapon since even when it doesn't persuade it can disarm. Nor is there anything today that prevents non-Westerners from turning all sorts of readily available facts against us.

For instance, consider how adept President Joseph Kabila is at defending his record in Congo:

> "You criticize democracy here, but our elections turnout was over 80 percent – in the U.S., barely half of the voters show up," he told an American diplomat." When confronted with allegations of corruption, he countered with the Enron scandal in the United States and Silvio Berlusconi's manipulation of laws to protect himself from prosecution.[82]

Or here is Dr. Abdul Razzak Sikander talking to reporter Nicholas Schmidle at Sikander's madrassa in Karachi:

> "These boys [Sikdander's students] come to our madrassa because they want to become experts in Islam," Sikander said. "[Pakistani president Pervez] Musharraf says he wants them to become doctors. But they don't want to be doctors. If they wanted to do that, they would have gone to medical school. This is no different. So why is the government trying to tell students: 'If you want to specialize in medicine, that's o.k.' But if they want to specialize in Islamic studies, they are supposed to diversify? Why are my students having their rights denied? Why are we the center of your attention? Why not the Jewish institutes? Or the Christian ones? Basically all this talk about madrassa reform just shows that Western powers are trying to rule Muslims in every respect. In the West, gays and lesbians have rights. Why don't my students have the same rights?"
>
> I asked Sikander about his madrassa's relationship with the Taliban, but he ignored my question and continued.
>
> "You know, I recently had another American visitor. She was from the institute of peace… or something like that," he said, referring to the United States Institute of Peace, a think tank in Washington, D.C. "how can the United States have an institute of peace, and still be involved in so many wars?"[83]

Or how about Abdul Rashid Ghazi, Pakistani cleric and leader of Islamabad's Lal Masjid (or Red Mosque):

> when asked by a Western reporter "if his anti-vice activities signaled the 'Talibanization' of Pakistan, he replied, "Rudy Giuliani, when he became mayor of New York, closed the brothels. Was that also Talibanization? You would never say that."[84]

Or, finally, here is Rory Stewart's description of an encounter he witnessed in Iraq:

> An American democracy expert came from Baghdad to do 'capacity building' with the local council. On a white board he drew an oblong on its side to represent the council, and then beneath it four vertical oblongs, to represent its subcommittees. "He is drawing a dog," said a sheikh. "Are we back in primary school?" asked another. "We are an ancient civilization," said one cleric, "and they treat us like Congo cannibals."[85]

As each of these quotes should make clear, non-Westerners have plenty of facts at their disposal with which to skewer our conceits.

Numerous non-Westerners also find themselves well positioned to work other seams. Andrew Alderson learned this lesson while working with the director general of South Oil, the main oil production company in southern Iraq. According to Alderson (a British reservist and former banker), Mr. Waleed, his "advisee," "knew that there were two chains of command. One was the western one, under which I had to follow what my American counterparts in Baghdad were saying. The other was the Iraqi one… these parallel command chains didn't always talk to each other… Mr. Waleed knew how to exploit this to his advantage."[86]

Positioning always matters.

More than two decades ago, Ethiopia's President Haile Mariam Mengistu reached an unspoken agreement with what, at the time, was a still nascent aid industry. He allowed non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) to deliver food to the starving so long as they didn't report on the ethnic culling his regime was carrying out in the feeding camps their aid funded. Mengistu's implied threat: how would NGOs and PVOs be able to fundraise and keep themselves in business if he kicked them out of the country?

Fast forward to Darfur in summer 2003. Not only did Omar al-Bashir's government correctly calculate that the U.S. and Britain would be too busy in Iraq to intervene militarily in Sudan, but it succeeded in getting aid workers and NGOs to agree not to give out or publish "any information about the region that was deemed by the Sudanese authorities to be 'political' rather than strictly 'humanitarian' – as defined, of course, by the government…"[87] To enforce this 'understanding' the regime used its visa system:

> Quite simply, if an NGO worker or agency infringed the rules, then they were denied a visa to enter and work in the country, and all visas were short term. So rather than people being 'expelled' or 'deported', which would have attracted a great deal of adverse publicity, aid workers would simply not be allowed back into the country once their visas had expired…[88]

Very clever.

INNOVATIONS IN WAR

Refinements have also continued on the flip side of aid: war. In a recent book about warfare in post-colonial Africa, William Reno divides rebels into five types (anti-colonial rebels, majority rule rebels, reform rebels, warlord rebels, and parochial rebels) and comments on their growing adoption of mass media technology, videos, mobile phones, and "decentralized forms of communication."[89] The Arab Spring likewise has defense analysts and others aflutter about the significance of social media. But, no matter how important these developments may be, we shouldn't let new technology divert us from all the other ways non-Westerners can find to turn situations inside out and put non-technological asymmetries to use.[90]

Sticking strictly to Africa for the moment, there are a number of recent innovations that have little or nothing to do with technology, yet everything to do with cleverly using the non-material resources at hand: namely, other humans.

Child soldiers. John Garang first started absorbing orphans into the Sudanese People's Liberation Army in the early 1980s. Orphans showed up at his camps; he offered them security, food, and shelter in exchange for their doing camp chores; and over time some graduated to becoming soldiers. Next door in Uganda, Yoweri Museveni also put children to use. Where we see the real twist is in West Africa when Charles Taylor (Liberia) and Foday Sankoh (Sierra Leone) began turning children into orphans in order to use them as soldiers. There are some reports that children witnessed, if weren't forced to participate in, their own parents' murder.

It is hard to be objective about child soldiers, but if one suspends moral judgment for a moment they represent a diabolically clever innovation. Using children to commit atrocities before they have

developed consciences makes it likely that they never will develop them. Child soldiers need little sleep, can withstand tremendous hardship, don't know enough to question authority, aim to please, and are willing to experiment with violence. At least some of these are attributes Western researchers have been striving to duplicate via human performance enhancement drugs and other means for years. Best (or worst) of all, child soldiers aren't just useful in the present, but as they grow up have the potential to be eminently useful foot soldiers in the future.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). What started as a millenarian movement/reintegration effort has morphed into a self-sustaining war machine. The LRA is peerless when it comes to living off the land, which really means living off of other people. It rampages through an area, replenishing its stock of porters, bush wives, cooks, and young combatants, before moving on. Whether the LRA represents a wholly new form of unconventional warfare is hard to say, since similar columns may have roved at will through ungoverned/unclaimed territory in the past. But no insurgent or counterinsurgent force since WWII has proved as proficient—no doubt because none has been willing to be so ruthless.

Thanks to where it originated—northern Uganda, not far from war-torn southern Sudan and under-governed areas of the DRC and Central African Republic (CAR)—the LRA has long been good at border hopping. Because the areas in which it operates are marginal to the governments in all four countries, none has had a sufficient interest in reeling it in. But—precisely because it preys on people who *aren't* politically significant, its persistence has also proven politically useful. Some contend that keeping the LRA as a remote security threat has been crucial to Uganda President Youweri Museveni's longevity as ruler of his one party democracy, which also happens to remain a security state.[91]

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Fred Rwigema and Paul Kagame built the RPF when both were still Tutsi refugees in Uganda. They built it inside Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA). Rwigema rose to became the deputy commander-in-chief of the Ugandan Army; Kagame served as Museveni's head of military intelligence. Other Ugandan Tutsi refugees filled other important posts.[92]

What is remarkable is that Rwigema and Kagame deliberately assigned their fellow Tutsis to key roles in the NRA so that they could learn staff skills critical to running an army. Equally impressive is how effectively the RPF extricated itself from the NRA without burning bridges, how stealthily it moved itself into position to invade Rwanda, and how quickly it regrouped after a series of early disasters (to include Rwigema's death). While retired Canadian general and former UNAMIR commander Romeo Dallaire has referred to Kagame as one of the 20th century's greatest maneuver strategists, Kagame's even greater feat may have been putting together such a capable army so craftily years in advance of its first operations.

"The Fear" is how Zimbabweans refer to what President Robert Mugabe has wrought since 2000.[93] As Peter Godwin notes in his book of the same name, Mugabe is conducting "'smart genocide'… There's no need to directly kill hundreds of thousands, if you can select and kill the right few thousand."[94] Mugabe has been waging war with such low but chronic intensity that his actions don't just fall below the threshold of what the international community considers to be war, but Zimbabweans themselves haven't reacted as though they are at war.[95]   Among Mugabe's methods is "'the psychology of deprivation: Zimbabweans have learned to be self-reliant. There's a deep sense of individuality – no collective sense. We've become a nation of black-marketers, crooks. Robert Mugabe has subverted the revolution by keeping people busy just managing, just getting by. There's no employment but people are busy, busy…'"[96]

At the same time, Mugabe's government has not prevented anyone who wants to leave Zimbabwe from leaving, which marks a decisive improvement over the former Soviet technique of preventing its dissidents and malcontents from exiting. Even better, by draining the country of his most vigorous opposition, Mugabe thereby ensures a remittance diaspora which helps keep his economy afloat.

Mugabe's use of "war veterans" to seize white-owned farms has been equally clever. He has unleashed the war vets in such an arbitrary, piecemeal manner that their seizures generate little more than tragic human interest stories in the West. What makes it all the easier for the international community to feel bad but do nothing is the fact that whites do still own a disproportionate amount of land (or at least did), coupled with the lingering presumption that because whites benefited from minority rule up until a few short decades ago, they are now receiving their comeuppance.[97] Thanks to this racial dimension, black suffering, which is far more widespread, goes unreported. For their part, too, Zimbabwe's southern African neighbors continue to refuse to sanction Mugabe or his ruling party, proving that he and his inner circle aren't just adept at pulling the right domestic levers, but know how to work the right international levers, too.

Child soldiers, the LRA, the RPF, and Mugabe's Fear—all represent major new wrinkles in how, with whom, and with what war can be waged, and these are but four examples. In none has technology been determinant.[98] Helpful, yes. Yet, if we were to ask most Americans—or members of the U.S. military—to point to the most significant inventions or innovations of the past few decades, they would likely cite all the *things* that have gotten faster, smaller, smarter, more powerful, and more precise. They would not point to innovations in practices, let alone practices in sub-Saharan Africa.[99]

Among novel developments that the U.S. military *has* paid attention to because they do directly impact it, are piracy, IEDs, suicide terrorism, and "green-on-blue" violence.

Piracy per se is not new. However, Somalis' involvement in it is, as are some of their methods—for instance, their use of motherships.[100] Similarly, if one thinks of **IEDs** as an improvement on landmines, the concept isn't particularly original, though their effects have been both costly and profound. In relatively short order they turned the same army that took Baghdad by speed into a plodding, easy-to-target force. Thanks to IEDs, the number of U.S. (and coalition) forces surviving Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs) is unprecedented. So are the numbers affected by PTSD. At the same time, the devices responsible for wreaking this havoc range from the very sophisticated to the very crude, a range that signals how much more comfortable our adversaries are at switching from high tech to low tech than are we. For instance:

> When the Pentagon responded with electronic jammers, the insurgents switched to pressure plates. When the Pentagon deployed metal detectors, the insurgents stopped using artillery shells and instead filled plastic jugs with homemade explosives, with fertilizer readily available at any farm.[101]

Not only does willingness to scale up or down extend the range of what is possible, but such flexibility enables people to plot in plain sight. The Taliban, for instance, are reported to have used pigeons as signaling devices,[102] while more recently anti-regime rebels in Syria switched from social media to rooftop fires.[103]

Suicide terrorism represents another low tech/high sophistication innovation. Over the past three decades, suicide terrorists have experimented with vehicles, vests, movie cameras, shoes, underwear, and turbans. Apparently, we will see surgically implanted devices next.[104] Real progress has also been made with suicide terrorism's spread—out of Iraq into Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria, and beyond. This shouldn't be surprising given its advantages: First, suicide bombers embody the deed *as* propaganda. Second, humans are not in short supply, making suicide bombers the world's most inexpensive precision-guided smart weapons. Third, no one has yet developed an effective counter. Nor is anyone likely to.

Not only does suicide terrorism point to non-Westerners' willingness to use techniques and resources that we would never consider, but it underscores their flair for weaponizing whatever they can.[105] Along these lines, but with the potential to be even more militarily damaging is **"green-on-blue" violence** or "insider attacks" in which soldiers we are training (or have trained) turn on us. Such acts have the potential to undermine Americans' desire to trust any locals, and to render plans to rely on proxy forces seriously flawed.[106]

Already we set ourselves up for potential counterintelligence failures whenever we have to rely on locals to vet locals for us. What compounds this is that where extended families comprise the social structure, families will invariably hedge their bets; they diversify. This is especially endemic in inequitable states where families double as social welfare nets. Sometimes heads of families consciously diversify their children, sending one into the military, another into government, a third into a profession.[107] But diversification can also emerge as siblings strive to differentiate themselves from one another and/or wives compete through (and on behalf) of their sons. Witness the Saud royal family, comprised of pro-Western progressives and ultra-traditional tribalists. Or consider the Karzais. No matter how short-sighted Ahmed Walid Karzai's corruption seemed to be to us, the money he siphoned off will stand the entire Karzai clan in good stead when his brother the president loses his office (or his life).

What is true of families in the capital tends also to be true of families at the village level.[108] Indeed, family members' loyalty to kin helps explain why trying to root the Taliban out of Pashtun areas of Afghanistan is an unrealizable fantasy. It would actually be foolish for any Pashtun family to *not* have some member associated with the Taliban—and, ideally, another who is on good (or at least alright) terms with us.[109]

Though to us this kind of bet hedging is cowardly, and even duplicitous, and thereby breaks the rules as far as we are concerned, what it should highlight is the inapplicability *of* our rules. All rules are cross-culturally contingent. The ways in which non-Westerners make use of other humans should itself drive this point home. Nor do we just differ from non-Westerners in our conceptions about rules.[110] There is also the issue of who should rule.

POWER, FAIRNESS, AND VIOLENCE
American children grow up assuming life should be fair. Parents often have to remind us that it isn't, but that rarely stops us from trying to make it fairer anyway. In contrast, people's starting assumption throughout much of the non-West is the opposite: nothing suggests to them that life can, will, or even ought to be fair.[111] And those in positions of authority use this acceptance of inequality and unfairness to advantage all the time.

Richard Dowden, former *Economist* correspondent, makes two telling observations. The first stems

from his experiences living in Uganda as a young man:

> Gradually I was acclimatized to Ugandan culture and ways of thinking. It was a painful process. My youthful arrogance lay not in thinking I knew better, but believing that principles such as equality were universal and self-evident. I had believed that truth was more important than politeness, but now I began to learn how to live in a deeply unequal society where politeness ranked far higher than truth.[112]

The second insight comes from his work as a reporter:

> Power [in Africa] is not just about physical strength or wealth or status. It has a spiritual dimension. .. A President's secret opponents will often admit that, despite the evil that he has done, they admire as well as fear him. I have often waited for an African President, chatting to African colleagues who openly expressed their disgust and hatred for him. Yet when the Big Man emerged, the same journalists ran forward, grasping his hand, fawning on him and throwing back their heads to howl with laughter at his jokes. Hypocrisy? To Western eyes, yes, but they were simply showing due diligence by respecting power.[113]

A typical dynamic associated with power is that people defer to X's authority because they see others deferring, while if others defer that proves X must be deserving. What helps turbocharge this logic in places where people believe in witchcraft and sorcery is the conviction that Big Man So-and-so *must* be tapping into some alternative and suprahuman source of power; how else explain his ability to amass more of what everyone else wants? He clearly either employs witch doctors and/or knows how to practice juju himself.

Just the intimation of practicing witchcraft serves as an invaluable pysop, especially since it can grant leaders the aura of not being able to be removed, while the longer an individual stays in office, the more his longevity convinces everyone he must have special powers.[114] We tend to scoff at such notions. Because Western publics no longer give credence to witchcraft, sorcery, or the Evil Eye, we judge those who do so as primitive and unsophisticated.[115] But this is a mistake. In many regards, this makes them vastly better at playing on others' emotions than we are.

Also, although we purposely distinguish among spiritual, healing, secular, or political and economic power, and likewise decouple justice from power, others don't see the same merit we do in these separations. Take astute autocrats. They typically engage in unjust rule, and often do so in the wake of bitter conflict. This makes little sense to us since the idea that "to the victor go all the spoils" would seem to guarantee nothing but worse trouble (and uglier payback) in the future. Our only reasonable conclusion: leaders like Robert Mugabe resist giving up power out of greed. But, according to at least one observer, Mugabe and other ZANU-PF stalwarts don't regard those they'd have to share power with *as* their equals. "To them, having fought in the [liberation] war gave them rights… in winning the war and ending white rule, they had earned a privilege that those who never fought—Morgan Tsvangirai, for example—could never have: the *right* to rule.[116]

Three points are worth drawing out here. First, in systems where people don't view life as having to be fair, those who can make it unfair in their favor will have no qualms about using all means possible to ensure it never becomes fair for others.[117] Second, because people with collectivist loyalties operate according to different us/them sensibilities than do we, then when others don't morally matter, what is

done to them can't matter either. Third, when violence is added into the mix, perpetrators won't feel remorse.

The flip side of remorselessness is ruthlessness, though probably a more accurate way to put this is that remorselessness and ruthlessness are co-dependent. When a society doesn't care what happens to members of a rival society (or to lessers), combatants will feel little to no compunction about indulging in acts we would never countenance. But neither will combatants feel particularly guilty after the fact. This may be hard for us to appreciate, but if this were not the case, most societies (to include our own) would have had a hard time persisting and/or warfare would have grown much gentler over time.[118]

Scan history and it quickly becomes apparent that conflict has long generated arms races (who can out-invent whom), organizational races (who is better at recruiting, training, planning, logistics, etc.), *and* atrocities races in which the competition is over who can better demonstrate disdain for whom. Thanks to our 20th and 21st century prowess at the first two— arms and organization—we assiduously manage to avoid the third. But again, others don't.[119] Consequently, people who regard themselves as morally superior, and/or look at us and see Goliath, will not feel the least bit pressured to fight us by any rules we recognize.

PART 4 OUR PROBLEMATIC SENSIBILITIES

There is how we Americans prefer to fight, and then there is the way others refuse to fight us. We continue to turn ourselves inside out in an effort to be as precise and discriminating as possible, which is an admirable goal, but one that cannot possibly produce definitive wins. As this section of the paper will argue, our ambivalence—about going to war but not being able to win—does not appear to be good for soldiers' mental health, and therefore can't be good for our military over the long-term.

To illustrate what I mean, let me make two sets of comparisons. First, drones and IEDs. Both have come into their own since 9/11. Use of drones appears to have solved a number of domestic political problems, since they are unmanned, can be flown into hostile territory without risking U.S. casualties, and lead to a much smaller U.S. presence in semi-permissive environments. But, worth remembering is that for all their seeming virtues, we are only in the preliminary stages of drone-based warfare. Drones *could* prove to be a game changer in our favor. Or, we could be in what is only the first blush of a classic "first contact" problem: initially, the "natives" are intimidated, but once they get used to drones their awe and fear quickly dissipate.[120]

Intimidation has to be sustained to work. Yes, drones hover and then assassinate. But—because they go after individuals they don't sow generic fear. They don't make populations alter their behavior or shift their support from bad guys to good guys. In this sense, despite their technical wizardry, drones are actually less effective than IEDs when it comes to a population-centric impact. This is because drones, unlike IEDs, are supposed to be discriminate, and so they should cause no collateral damage. When they do, or when they kill the wrong (meaning innocent) people, our mistakes are immediately turned against us. Those whom we are targeting whip up public wrath. All sorts of other people try to take advantage, to include foreign governments which demand concessions. At the very least we end up hoisted on a variety of our own petards— since violating other countries' sovereignty in order to kill people against whom we have not declared war defies the essence of how we say "war among the people" should be fought: transparently, by earning trust, building relations, respecting our partners, etc.

In contrast to the high regard in which we hold drones, we treat IEDs as weapons of the weak. We cite our adversaries' willingness to use them (and other forms of dirty war) as proof that they don't dare fight us directly; we are too strong. And, to be sure, it would be foolish for anyone to try to combat us conventionally. However, when we describe our adversaries as though they have no choice but to fight us underhandedly, we inadvertently grant them the status of being Davids to our Goliath. In doing so, we also help legitimize their use of IEDs, or any other weapon they turn to—since, as we ourselves say, what choice do they have?

In other words, for people who think we can control a narrative, we provide opponents with plenty of ammunition—which is not to suggest that we abandon drones *or* make war a fair contest. Rather, it is to highlight how riddled with contradictions our approach is, and how eagerly our adversaries seize on this.

Our current reliance on drones is problematic for one more reason. Their use reveals the extent to which we are hedging *our* bets: we won't fully commit to removing governments that can't police their own populations, yet we certainly don't want to rule those populations ourselves. Instead, we act as though we believe that with the right application of blandishments and threats we can successfully

"shape and influence" offending (and offensive) regimes, although a cynic might contend that the efforts we expend to try to get regimes to become less corrupt and more legitimate are really only for show: we'll continue to do what we need to do (targeted killings), they will continue to do what they need to do, and occasionally our interests might align. This describes the state of relations with numerous "partners" or "allies" in the non-Asian non-West, from Pakistan to (now) Mali.

FEATS, YES—DEFEAT THE ENEMY, NO

Or, consider Iraq and Afghanistan, where the U.S. (and Coalition forces) set up air, information, and logistics systems half a world away that far surpassed anything that previously existed in either country—a true feat. For all intents and purposes, the U.S. essentially operated highly efficient countries within other countries. Beyond just being able to deliver different flavors of ice cream and fresh iceberg lettuce to multiple giant eating facilities at different ends of two broken countries, the systems we set up made it possible to carry out complex kinetic operations from behind computer screens, at night, every night—a total inversion of the Vietnam experience. In Vietnam, we couldn't prevent the Viet Cong from "owning" the night. Today, night vision (and other) technologies have reversed this cycle.[2] However, just because we have inverted when we wage war does not mean we have yet figured out how to effectively counter an insurgency.

Arguably, no one has waged successful counterinsurgency in someone else's country without pro-active local participation.[121] This brings me to the second comparison I want to make—back to warfare in the pre-Cold War era.

When wars were fought between two clearly delineated sides, every combatant knew what was required: your side had to get through (to) the objective to win.[122] It is only since the advent of people's wars, or wars among the people, that both "getting through" and the "objective" have become inchoate. In a certain sense, "getting through"—as in "getting through *to* the locals" and making yourself understood—*have* become the objectives. Yet, when locals are resistant this can't work. Worse, "getting through"—as in finishing and moving beyond the war—becomes extremely difficult.[123] Vietnam may be the touchstone for a messy non-win, but it is emblematic of post-WWII warfare in general, beginning with Korea.[124]

While we can't yet know whether the era of so-called conventional war (in which uniformed forces fight uniformed forces) is well and truly behind us, what we do know is that through WWII Americans could openly hate and dehumanize the enemy; soldiers and Marines saw a lot of death and destruction; there were clear physical objectives—not just in terms of "take that hill," but "take that whole country;" and deployments were not determined by a rotational calendar.[125] In marked contrast, exponentially fewer casualties today makes each one extraordinarily painful; soldiers are expected to treat foes with humanity even if they display none themselves; "a" tour or deployment is just that—a discrete trip; and strategy is opaque.

If it sounds like I am about to suggest that soldiers should be allowed to brutalize the adversary, use whatever weapons are available, and rack up casualties till the enemy submits, that wasn't politically palatable even when President Eisenhower, Curtis LeMay, and others contended that devastation needed to be so unsparing no one should want to engage in war at all.[126] However, Eisenhower and his contemporaries did have a point.

Arguably:

> 1) if you are not prepared to wipe out the enemy, why fight?
> 2) if you won't or can't wipe out the enemy, death and destruction are the wrong foreign policy tools to use.[127]
> 3) and if you aren't willing to either inflict or take large numbers of casualties, the cause must not be sufficiently existential. So again, why fight?

Confusion about the nature of 21st century warfare is rampant. For instance, in *The Untold War*, Nancy Sherman criticizes Lt. Gen. James Mattis for remarks he made (after Haditha) that reveal, in her words, "a familiar pattern of machismo… His remarks are patently offensive, all the more so because they are made from a person in a highly prominent and visible leadership role, the kind of person we expect and entrust *to prosecute war using his better humanity.*"[128] Prosecuting war using one's better humanity is a bizarre idea, although the fact that an academic teaching at a military school might think it possible to defeat a ruthless foe by being humane simply underscores the point that, as a nation, we haven't considered any of our recent wars to be existential.[129] We have treated all of them instead as so limited that they haven't had to be won.

To be fair, Sherman's concern isn't with winning or losing, but with combatants' mental well-being—a bailiwick that usually belongs to psychologists and psychiatrists. However, as the rising number of military suicides and PTSD diagnoses suggest, perhaps the problem is less that we have too few or the wrong kind of mental health professionals, or that the military has taken too long to respond than that its units of amelioration are wrong.[130]

Undoubtedly the most haunting question anyone can ask after a war is what was it all for, a question that suggests the outcome was less than satisfactory and/or not worth the losses incurred. Some participants are likely to ask this after every war, even outright victories. But—when such questions are posed in the midst of war, in a democracy, in the information-saturated 21st century, that cannot be good. If today's soldiers don't feel, don't want to feel, or can't feel connected to the locals, yet connecting locals to their government (and destroying their connections to the insurgents) is the "war" aim, it is hard to see how combatants can find any larger meaning in what they do. Smaller, self-involved meaning is surely available. It always is. The problem comes when smaller meaning takes on too much import.

Significantly, we've seen no new style of war memoir emerge since Vietnam.[131] Most of today's war literature is still all too reminiscent of Michael Herr's *Dispatches*.[132] With so many similar first person accounts having been produced by veterans and journalists, it thus becomes hard (maybe impossible) to escape their echo chamber effect, making it very difficult to get a bead on what veterans feel vs. what they think they should feel vs. what they have been socialized to think they should articulate.[133] Nevertheless, one detects very little nationalist fervor. Patriotism, yes. But not any sense of "there but for the grace of God goes the U.S.—if we don't win this war we're lost." Individuals instead are said to (and themselves say they) perform on behalf of their unit.[134] Their motivation is said to be to not lose face among their peers; very few believe they are fighting to save the nation from impending doom.[135]

Contemporary accounts don't just reflect but reinforce these unit-centric attitudes. Journalists, politicians, presidential candidates, and even general officers who visit soldiers and Marines in combat

zones invariably return impressed and full of praise for our young men and women in uniform. It has become standard for them to tell audiences that this is the finest military the U.S. has ever fielded, and to point to just how well units have adapted to difficult circumstances. Yet, what no one prods them to have to address is why, if military personnel are so good at adapting, are they not coping better when they get home?[136] Could it be as simple as that family is no substitute for unit? Or, is there a deeper issue everyone glosses over?

COMBAT

While academics debate whether the character of warfare is changing, certain features of combat clearly aren't. For instance, try dating this description of combat: "It's such a pure, clean standard that men can completely remake themselves in war. You could be anything back home—shy, ugly, rich, poor, unpopular—and it won't matter because it's of no consequence in a firefight, and therefore of no consequence, period."[137]

In describing life at Restrepo and other isolated outposts in Afghanistan, Sebastian Junger goes on to note:

> These hillsides of loose shale and holly trees are where the men feel not most *alive* – that you can get skydiving – but the most utilized. The most necessary. The most clear and certain and purposeful. If young men could get that feeling at home, no one would ever want to go to war again, but they can't.[138]

Of course, when the conflict drags on too long with too few obvious gains, the goal of getting to fight another day begins to wear thin. Nonetheless, as Major Rusty Bradley describes his experience in combat:

> … a primal rage consumed me. The feeling is indescribable. There are very few in our society, other than soldiers, who understand it. It is the physical combination of adrenaline, testosterone, exhaustion, and emotion. My rage surfaced, and it unleashed a previously harnessed power. Whatever it is that the brain produces during those moments, I liked it – no, I loved it.[139]

Karl Marlantes remembers much the same from Vietnam. He describes achieving feelings of "godlike transcendence."[140] "Combat is the crack cocaine of all excitement highs – with crack cocaine costs."[141]

Two additional themes recur in first person accounts about combat regardless of the era or war: the way the world shrinks to the immediate and the quotidian, *and* one's detachment from almost everything else. Writing on the heels of the First Gulf War, British veteran George MacDonald Fraser describes his WWII experiences in much the same vein as Vietnam-era veterans or captains and majors today—with one major exception. According to Fraser, no one in his generation was encouraged to talk about emotions. He blames the media for this unhealthy preoccupation with feelings:

> … the media seem to feel they have a duty to dwell on emotion, the more harrowing the better, and to encourage its indulgence… The pity is that the public shapes its behavior to the media's demands… no interviewer in our time was so shameless, cruel, or unpatriotic as to badger us into admitting our human weakness for public consumption, and thereby undermining public morale, and our own…

Tell people they should feel something, and they'll not only feel it, they'll regard themselves as entitled and obliged to feel it.[142]

But, Fraser may err in pointing his finger only at the media, since, as we saw with menace, plenty of other factors shape what people accept and expect. In the case of combat, there are multiple influences. Professional military education (quasi-official learning) along with popular culture—from movies through memoirs—play especially important roles when it comes to instilling the feelings one is supposed to have. First person accounts play a particularly interesting role since, like mirrors, they can also reveal more than the author intends.[143]

Take Patrick Hennessy's *The Junior Officers' Reading Club*. After six-plus years in the British Grenadier Guards, Hennessy's single deployment to Afghanistan provided him with everything he sought. Over the course of six intense months, he proved to himself he had what it took in combat; mentally recorded a lifetime's worth of battlefield images; learned how addicting fighting can be; and realized that if he stayed he'd only keep chasing the dragon, seeking ever more elusive highs. In other words, he checked all his personal blocks.

If only Hennesy's compatriot, George MacDonald Fraser, were still alive he would doubtless find such an account extremely illuminating, in large part because it is so self-absorbed. Here we have a bright, capable officer who did one combat tour, then separated from the military. He never felt plugged into anything beyond his unit, and clearly felt no need to stay the course.[144] His tenure epitomizes *Problem #1*— no existential need for combat service.

Problem #2 comes from the fact that Hennessy's Afghanistan tour was just long enough to change him forever in his own mind, but not so long that the experience came to feel ordinary. In other words, his time in a combat zone set *him* apart. This feeds a somewhat different civil-military dynamic than the usual one that separates those who serve from those who don't, since Hennessy now has combat bragging rights whose true weight others have no way to either gauge or vet, but to which they will defer.[145]

Problem #3 is how few Afghans figure as individuals, let alone as a people, a Cause, or a purpose in Hennessy's or most other contemporary accounts.[146] For instance, Afghans make virtually no appearance as sympathetic figures in Sebastian Junger's record of outpost warfare in the Korengal Valley. This is significant because outposts were the vanguard of the Coalition's counterinsurgency efforts at the time. Small groups of Americans (or other forces) were inserted into the heart of bad neighborhoods, along traditional smuggling routes, wherever their presence might thwart or disrupt Taliban and al-Qaeda activities.

A cynic might point out that what was done in places like the Korengal is eerily similar to what didn't work in Vietnam, where small teams of very young men were likewise sent to occupy select terrain, and ended up disconnected across space as well as through time thanks to year- (or six-month-) long tours of duty and changeovers in personnel. Equally demoralizing is that Americans have no more managed to hook Afghans to the central government in insurgent-affected areas in Afghanistan than Americans in Vietnam managed to successfully connect South Vietnamese villagers to the national government in Saigon.

However, unlike the domestic animosity that the Vietnam War generated, which made it hard for

veterans to easily reintegrate when they returned home, the post-9/11 public has gone out of its way to welcome back today's veterans. Thus, it is somewhat puzzling that so many are having such a hard time readjusting. This suggests that something else must be out of kilter. And again, the military's response to elevated rates of alcohol abuse, domestic violence, murder, and suicide while, initially desultory, has grown more robust over time—to include efforts to de-stigmatize mental health help.[147] So the fact that this is not proving sufficient suggests something else amiss: namely, the possibility that veterans' problems don't lie with(in) themselves alone.[148]

SOCIETY'S RESPONSIBILITY

It is clear that, as with menace, *society* transmits mixed messages. On the one hand, the public wants members of the military to fight the nation's wars and win— and expresses gratitude to them for doing so. But it also wants them to feel conflicted, and likes to see them express at least some angst over what they have done, seen, and contributed to.[149] The public's interest in, and yearning for, wounded souls lurks in almost every movie featuring soldiers or Marines aired since 9/11, as well as in most journalists' accounts.[150]

There are several reasons why I raise the possibility that society's ambivalence may be a root cause of veterans' readjustment problems. First, as I suggested in Part 2, at least some young men are drawn to violence. They want to be able to break things and kill people—or, at least test themselves against others who are trying to do that to us. Combat usually loses its allure once casualties mount.[151] Once combatants see enough, see too much, and/or mature, they lose the need to see more death and destruction. Clearly, individual thresholds vary and, historically, societies' thresholds have varied, too, for what constitutes 'enough.' However, thanks to the lopsidedness of most firefights and the proficiency with which air assets respond to "troops in contact" today, many young Americans never get a chance to move beyond their unit's first casualties.[152] Instead, every casualty becomes a searing loss.

Contributing to this dynamic is that the fewer our overall casualties, the less inured everyone becomes *to* loss.[153] At the same time, fighting is done in fairly short spurts.[154] Combat is less an ongoing exchange than a series of disconnected ambushes. And, since keeping and holding ground is rarely the objective, and the enemy is "of" the people—and thus, by definition, may be impossible to permanently rout—nothing, really, can lead to satisfaction, as in a job well done, so nothing really can compensate for the unit's loss(es), which is exacerbated by every member's unit-centric conviction that he is who each other is fighting for.

Clearly, it would be impolitic of me to suggest that wars should produce more casualties in order to make getting through war easier. But, the evidence does suggest a strong correlation between having a large and obvious national purpose and being able to respond with ruthlessness and remorselessness. No society has asked combatants to be as careful or as self-reflective as ours has.[155] Again, by way of comparison, consider Fraser's reflections on his WWII experiences with 50 years' worth of hindsight:

> Glad I was there; I wouldn't have missed it for anything… No regrets about it, and much gratitude. I can almost hear an interviewer saying: "What about guilt?", to which I could only reply: "What's to be guilty about? I didn't ask for the bloody war." He might speculate, because it seems to be the fashion nowadays, on guilt for having survived where others did not – which is one of the silliest notions I have ever heard. If you feel someone got killed because you let them down, that's a reason for guilt, no question – but to feel guilty because the man

next to you caught it when you didn't, that's pointless. Remember him, revere him, but don't feel guilty.[156]

What seems to especially complicate the situation today is the extent to which attention paid to feelings confuses individuals about whether they are feeling what they are supposed to feel:[157]

> "Killing people isn't like what you think. Even the first guy I killed in Iraq, it just didn't affect me that much," Eastridge said later. He assumed killing would somehow change him, but it didn't. He expected it to be a monumental event, but Groundhog Day just kept repeating. The most striking thing about it was how easy and inconsequential it was. "It doesn't bother you. And then it starts to bother you that it doesn't bother you. But you get over it. It just isn't that big a deal," he said. "Even after some of our biggest firefights I would just get in the truck and fall asleep, or go back and play video games."[158]

Eastridge eventually did break. The verdict: PTSD.

Alternatively, Patrick Hennessy writes as though, with the right external validation, all can be made well: "… we wanted documents signed in black and white and glinting metal forged with our names to shout to the rafters that what we had done was not wrong, not bad, but glorious and heroic, and we weren't sick to feel that it had all been such fucking good fun."[159]

But is this truth or trope?[160]

The same could be asked of the 2-16 Battalion David Finkel shadows in Iraq. One sergeant whom Finkel respects assesses his unit this way: "'They're angry. Very angry' he said of the platoon, which of course included himself. 'How can anybody kill and function normally afterward? Or see someone get killed and function normally afterward? It's not the human response.'"[161]

Except—for most of human history, and for plenty of combatants even today, being able to function normally *is* the human response. Yet, as sentiments like "maybe the ultimate wound is the one that makes you miss the war you got it in" become the accepted norm, there is the danger that veterans' *in*ability to cope will not only be de-stigmatized, but will actually become romanticized.[162] That surely won't be healthy.[163]

Already, Vietnam (or the un-winnability of war post-WWII) casts a long shadow. When Karl Marlantes writes the following he isn't just relaying to the current generation how resentful members of his generation still feel for having had to try to heal themselves. He is also projecting:[164]

> So ask the now twenty-year-old combat veteran at the gas station how he felt about killing someone. His probably angry answer, if he's honest: "Not a fucking thing." Ask him when he's sixty, and if he's not too drunk to answer, it might come out very differently, but only by luck of circumstance – who was there to help him with the feelings during those four long decades after he came home from war. It is critical for young people who return from combat that someone *is* there to help them, before they turn to drugs, alcohol, and suicide.[165]

Marlantes wants current veterans to benefit from his generation's experience. This includes learning to be more resilient in advance.

The military, to its credit, is now trying to instill resilience.[166]   The aim is to fortify soldiers and Marines before they deploy, which is surely prudent. But, resilience still won't redress reintegration issues. It can't—not until society is re-normed, since society is a key part of the equation.

RETHINKING REMEDIES

Psychologists and psychiatrists aren't known to view individuals holistically; they don't examine context from multiple perspectives. In contrast, anthropologists do. So, from an anthropological perspective, it only seems natural to conclude that until we Americans are made to reexamine our attitudes toward war, our default treatment of soldiers as either clichés or caricatures will continue to undermine whatever progress the military might make at steeling warfighters for future wars.[167] Actually, resilience will fall short on two grounds. First, it is reactive. Resilience may help individuals deal with the aftereffects of certain experiences. But it won't help them (or us) defeat ruthless foes. (Nor will it help with TBIs, which are a by-product of ruthlessness.)

Compare Americans' attitudes today to American attitudes during World War II, when the more atrocities the Japanese committed, or the more aware GIs became of the horrific things the Japanese and the Germans were doing, the more resolute this made the U.S. Resolution doesn't just subsume resilience, but absolves combatants from having to feel (or having to think they should feel) conflicted over what war entails.

Today, resolve is left up to individuals to muster, perhaps because we have an All-Volunteer Force. Further complicating matters is the tortured position adopted by many members of the public over the past decade—"love the troops, hate the wars"—which splits impossible hairs, particularly since anyone who enters and then stays in the combat arms does so because he (or she) doesn't object to being sent abroad to fight.[168] Not only do civilians do a disservice to those in uniform when they regard anyone in the military as a hero—thereby shortchanging soldiers and Marines the exemplars they really do need—but they add insult to injury by regarding Service members as victims since this implies they are all dupes.[169]

Yet, it is not just the public that views the military unrealistically. Civilian and military leaders in the Pentagon and the Services are also at fault. How often within recent memory has any senior military leader publicly responded "no, we can't" in a House or Senate committee hearing? Yet, according to Richard Rumelt, "Good strategy requires leaders who are willing and able to say *no* to a wide variety of actions and interests."[170]

There are many reasons why military leaders don't like to sound negative—at least not out loud or with taxpayers listening. And, at the same time, all of us (citizens) who depend on those in uniform for our security do need our protectors to be unwaveringly positive and to possess a "yes we can" attitude and a problem-solving mindset. Yet—we and they also need someone to serve as a reality check.

Under the current dispensation, civilians are responsible for making policy that the military then executes. Senior military leaders expect to be asked to advise policy makers. But, at the end of the day, their attitude is that they can only do the best they can with the policy they receive. What this in turn enables, unfortunately, is senior leaders' ability to point to flawed civilian decision-making after the

fact and claim to not be at fault.[171] Worse, such an arrangement facilitates a situation whereby senior military leaders don't have to say "no" *and* don't have to achieve a "win" since, by deferring to policy makers, they can maintain a modicum of morale within the ranks ("it's not our fault") *and* retain high public approval. While some of this surely represents an improvement over what transpired during the Vietnam era, and is proof of the military's ability to learn and adapt, it does raise the question: what then is the point?

I do not mean to suggest that military leaders should (or do) want policy to be opaque or confused. But, over time, those who have risen to the top have clearly learned to accommodate themselves to this likelihood, and have learned to try to make the best of incomplete, non-existent, or bad policy. As it is, when no one can offer a compelling overarching plan, officers at all levels will default to what they do know how to do, which is to perfect processes.[172]

At every level, leaders know they can ask their subordinates to conduct operations, and that every operation will yield *something*—whether contact with the enemy, intelligence, training, or "just" practice. Ideally, over time, discrete or semi-coordinated operations may even add up to overall success.[173] As it happens, the military has also developed myriad techniques for making success look likely. For instance, take 21st century operations centers. They pull in endless streams of information which staffs thin slice and reassemble in an effort to spot patterns and trends. Countless hours are then devoted to putting together color-coded maps and charts and boiling down storyboards and sitreps for higher-ups' consumption. The aim: ideally someone with sufficient rank will be able to see the forest in addition to the trees.

Unfortunately, one problem that occurs when reports from outposts X, Y, and Z, and forward operating bases A, B, and C are blended together is that they automatically create a narrative. Narratives convey momentum, and since momentum is what everyone needs to see, events in the field begin to be treated as "effects." Operations can then all too easily start to look as though they have been executed more (or less) according to plan, regardless of whether anything is actually gelling on the ground. And, since the military runs on reporting: the more operations, the more reports, the more progress.[174]

Being able to accurately read and assess trends has always posed a military challenge, and explains why armies have historically concentrated on casualty figures (or body counts and kill ratios) as well as ground gained. It seems telling that, to this day, no one yet has come up with better metrics. As Brent Clemmer points out, more honors continue to go to those who demonstrate valor in combat than to those who excel at advisory or non-kinetic counter-insurgency activities, which means that despite what general officers have *said* population-centric effects require, their actions—in terms of what and who they reward and promote—belie their words.[175] It is not just society, then, sending mixed messages. Crossed signals are equally endemic within the military.

As for who bears the greater responsibility for un-crossing signals, policymakers or general officers, the answer should be obvious: general officers. They are the individuals their subordinates obey. General officers are supposed to be the repository of military wisdom. They represent the only reality check short of reality. Only general officers can prevent the public and policy makers from falling prey to a variant of the CSI effect, and the idea that the military—and classified Special Operations units in particular—are capable of winning under any circumstances. Operationally-speaking, SOF and other units can do a lot. But as the last decade should make clear, that doesn't mean that they (or anyone)

can wage clean, soft, zero-defect warfare the way the public and policy makers expect war to be fought, or that, even were they able to achieve this, it would lead to overall and not just occasional operational successes.

At the same time, in the division of labor between who bears the responsibility for being realistic about what is possible, and who needs to still be able to believe anything is doable, operators (soldiers and Marines in the field) do need to believe they can do anything asked. In this paper's view, the way to square the circle between optimism and realism is to put the onus squarely where it belongs. General officers need to own the war they plan *and* need to commit to seeing it all the way through to its conclusion—which must entail either our adversaries' defeat or ours.[176] Anything less attenuates everything, to include combatants' mental health.

* * *

As previously mentioned, Afghanistan's and Iraq's longer-term costs will partially depend on how and when both these incursions "end," though without declarations of war and without anyone having defined what winning means it is not clear either *can* end. We have consequently laid plenty of mine fields for ourselves—in individuals, in the body politic, *and* in Central and Southwest Asia.

To cite just one example: much has been written over the past several years about tribal codes, and Afghan and Iraqi attitudes toward us. Yet, none of the experts who have advised general officers about how to wage counterinsurgency more effectively have weighed in on how blood feuds really do end. A question for them then is: *do* blood feuds end? And, if the U.S. has not successfully dismantled non-Western codes of conduct in places where Americans have spilled blood, couldn't—or, more to the point, *shouldn't*— we expect revenge? This is a question that increasingly extends beyond Afghanistan and Iraq to Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Iran.[177]

How, meanwhile, does any of this relate back to the American conviction that, over the course of a war, we will sufficiently learn from our mistakes and, if not correct them and move on to victory, then at least move on—as we did after Vietnam?[178]

Three answers. First, by not convincingly winning long wars, we teach any future or wannabe adversaries that they should *want* to embroil us in long wars. Second, by not thinking it necessary to deliver a knock-out punch at the outset, we remain unprepared to go all-out from the get-go, and thereby undermine what would enable us to convincingly win. Third, the corollary to long wars no longer favoring us is that besides doing our troops no mental favors, they cause our military to get very good at spinning its wheels and then patting itself on the back for the distance it has traveled, as if this reflects progress made.[179]

CONCLUSION

One sub-theme of this paper has been that the more confused and confusing the signals sent and received regarding violence—whether as a style (e.g. menace) or as an instrument (e.g. in combat)—the harder it will be to win wars.[180] A second sub-theme has been that societal problems require societal solutions. Violence is a societal problem. It is the one sure thing that, if not handled properly, threatens the integrity of any society, to include how those who engage in violence are handled.

Essentially, two realities about *us* bracket a reality about *them*. First, menace's appeal suffuses our society. Second, PTSD and the aftereffects of a decade at war are only just beginning to manifest themselves. Certain things may be able to be done in the near-term to mitigate both of these. But, to fully address either requires acknowledging that we cannot continue on our present course vis-à-vis non-Westerners.

While there has been a re-realization, post-Afghanistan and Iraq, that we Americans cannot impel people elsewhere to practice good governance, many in the State Department and DoD do still believe that if we just continue to invest in helping people re-build their institutions we will help them stabilize their fragile, under-governed, and post-conflict states. As I have written elsewhere, all aid—except for acute disaster relief, and un-pocketable education and training—undermines sovereignty. We only fool ourselves and enrich others when we send U.S. taxpayer dollars abroad in pursuit of stability and reconstruction. Until non-Westerners seek our help because they share, or want to adopt, our ethics and values, our cajoling them to make themselves over won't work—with one potential exception. There is a chance, but only a chance, that we could help make a difference through military-to-military assistance.

To momentarily revisit the debate about which should be addressed first in the face of instability—security or development—those who have actually succeeded in rendering terrorist threats inert are adamant: security must always take precedence over development. In their view, it makes no sense to build on a foundation of sand; without a secure environment, whatever inputs are provided will be looted, coopted, or destroyed.[181] My argument is complementary, but slightly different. Because development is always political it feeds friction. Disputes will inevitably arise over which community gets what project, who will be put in charge, who will benefit, etc. In contrast, protecting citizens and the integrity of a country is a potentially apolitical endeavor. Better yet, when security services are incorruptible, state subversion becomes virtually impossible. Even with corrupt politicians, a flawed justice system, and ineffective media, if members of the security services refuse to behave like thugs, politicians have no one in uniform to whom they can reliably turn for muscle or protection. One consequence, then, of having professional apolitical armed forces is to curtail politicians' ability to intimidate. A second is that even if members of the public doubt they can count on the state for full protection, they at least know it won't brutalize them.

The significance of apolitical, uncorruptible security services cannot be overstated. They are especially critical in countries with strong communal loyalties. Where extended families reign, elections amount to little more than demographic contests. Our version of democracy— one man/one vote—is not workable when people are morally (and logically) bound to vote for the individual who will best represent their interests: a fellow family, clan, or tribal member. Nevertheless, just because our variant of democracy may not fit, does not mean that there aren't other forms of representative government that would protect minority rights in the face of majority rule. The challenge is for people to devise

systems that no one within those systems can unfairly game, given the reality that unfairly gaming systems is what communal allegiances call for.

For all the reasons described in this paper, and because we do not sufficiently appreciate (or particularly respect) non-Western values, it would be prudent for us to desist from advising non-Westerners about *anything* related to governance in the future. Instead, if we Americans have to proselytize, we should shift our energies to supporting a looser but bolder principle: the separation between governance and politics.

Governance/politics. Imagine if, in the 21st century, there was a liberation in the non-West equivalent to what the separation of church and state achieved over the course of the past several centuries in the West. Imagine if electricity, clean water, food safety, protection from disease, physical security, and other essential services whose accessibility and regulation citizens need to be able to count on were delivered by professional civil services, while everything else was relegated to political contestation. This is more or less the model the world's largest democracy successfully applies, and India is a country that remains riven by communal loyalties. India has developed a federal backbone that maintains order despite, or in the face of, fierce sectarian politics.

Clearly, in any governance/politics split, determining what should count as an essential service versus what politicians should get to distribute as patronage, represents a contestable challenge in and of itself.[182] But, separating governance from politics would hardly require a singular solution. For instance, what might best limit crony capitalism in the U.S. would no doubt differ from what would suit Zimbabwe. The only likely commonality would be that security would wind up being considered an essential (if not the first most important) good, if for no other reason than once one country develops a capable professional military, others in its region should want to develop the same (for prestige even more than for self-defense).

Here is where we come back to the one institution the U.S. *could* help other countries strengthen, since all *professional* militaries share certain key features—from meritocratic personnel systems to similar functional specialties.[183]

Civic action. One of the few successful post-WWII counterinsurgencies the U.S. helped wage was against the Huks in the Philippines during the early 1950s. Edward Lansdale, who served as an advisor to Minister of Defense and later President Ramon Magsaysay, credits himself with introducing "civic action" as a term.[184] What he meant by civic action was that the Philippine military needed to prove to Filipinos that it existed to protect rather than prey on them. Lansdale and Magsaysay used the army to help police free and fair elections in 1951 and 1953. They also encouraged the military to engage in other measures designed to earn the public's trust, the important point being that it was the Philippines' own forces that did this in the Philippines—not the U.S. military.

"Legitimacy" has become an important watchword post-Iraq and Afghanistan. Common sense alone suggests that we should never want to work with or beside a government (or insurgent force) that lacks legitimacy and doesn't care about its own people.[185] A simple rule of thumb *should* be that if we have to "teach" others the importance of fulfilling a social contract, we are embarking on a lost cause from the outset. In other words, civic action could be used as a canary in the mine: governments that don't want their militaries developing a civic action capability are governments we can't help. As for assisting governments that are willing to develop a civic action capability, we should offer military-to-

military training, but with the proviso that we and they only use the resources at hand.

No question, working within such limited means would present a challenge to advisors, and civic action would surely not be the only mil-to-mil assistance advisors would have to be limited to assist with. But it does represent an ideal test and proof of concept.

It also flies in the face of arguments still being made about Vietnam— e.g., had the U.S. only done certain things somewhat differently we could have won. Similar arguments are already beginning to echo in counterfactual quarterbacking regarding Iraq and Afghanistan, leading some to push the idea of a permanent advisory corps and a much more robust unconventional warfare capability. This, however, ignores the second lesson to be learned from Lansdale's example. Lansdale only ever operated with a small team, and did so at the highest levels. He was thus perfectly positioned to take the temperature of government(s) *before* the U.S. committed further resources. More importantly, he was a master of wile—and wile can hardly be supersized.

Wile. Wile requires at least four attributes: 1) the ability to identify that feature or set of features in an adversary's culture that can be used as *the* fulcrum by, with, and through which to permanently alter conditions, 2) the ability to read all players so that you know how to appeal to, neutralize, and/or outwit each equally well, 3) an intuitive ability to tease, test, and probe so that you can make your own opportunities and don't operate on others' timeline(s), and 4) an appetite for twitting others, which means relishing the idea of turning the tables on adversaries in order to cause them to undo themselves.

At best, the most unconventional U.S. units today strive to "screw with others' heads," which they can generally do only after commanders figure out how to wrest the right authorities from the right agencies and bureaucracies.[186] Then, should such individuals succeed at fusing their information operations, psyop, strategic communications, and operator capabilities to sow dissension and distrust, at best they can cause problems at the tactical and operational levels: they usually don't have the wherewithal to strategically coordinate beyond their area of operations. This is why to truly "screw with their heads" requires that commanders be able to apply wile: a) locally, b) coordinating across locations *and* over time, and c) supralocally in order to both buy *and* control time.

Of course, to give the military its best shot at mastering a situation so that others can't effectively maneuver it, or anything else, against us—to include youth, accidental guerrillas, or public sentiment— calls for unrestrained warfare.[187] But, given current sensibilities, this hardly appears an option. Thus, seeking to "screw with others' heads" provides one way to augment the use of force. Or, replace it.

However, we would make a massive, but classically American mistake, to assume that wile is something the military can either teach or train. William Donovan and the OSS recognized how uncommon an attribute wile is. They also realized it was a trait that needs to be selected for, though today the selection techniques used during WWII (famously described in *Assessment of Men*) would need to be modified since during and immediately after WWII the OSS and other behind-the-lines organizations were most interested in Americans who had European rather than non-Western sensibilities, especially since those they sent to operate in the "East" could only really do so via proxy.

Not surprisingly, the idea of using *proxies* has attracted renewed attention in the wake of Afghanistan and Iraq. The benefits are obvious: proxies would help save U.S. blood and treasure. Plus, proxy forces don't just look and sound like locals; they are locals. However, use of proxies is far from risk-

free. Units we train can turn rogue en masse, as the Zetas did in Mexico. Or, individuals can launch "insider attacks," as has been occurring in Afghanistan.

However, an even more profound problem is that proxies are almost never a wise choice if Washington's aim is long-term stability. Here is why: those responsible for training proxies (usually U.S. Special Forces) are understandably drawn to local forces who have a reputation for being effective fighters and natural guerrillas, especially when such groups are led by appealing and even charismatic leaders, and actively seek our assistance. These are among the reasons we gravitated to the Montagnards and Hmong during the Vietnam War, have favored the Kurds in Iraq since the First Gulf War, and rode into Afghanistan with the Northern Alliance in 2001. But, regardless of how proficient such groups are at warfighting, which of them has been able to help us rebuild their country, or their country's military? The short answer is: none. Take the Uzbek, Tajik, Hazara, and rump Pashtun members of the Northern Alliance. They were ideal military assets at the time. But, without the numbers or moral authority to establish control outside of their home areas they also proved to be political liabilities. This is inconvenient fact #1. Inconvenient fact #2 is that once we ally ourselves with groups viewed as marginal and lesser, we alienate and/or don't sufficiently cultivate those who could potentially control their country—if what we seek is what we claim to seek: namely, majority rule.[188]

Here, again, is where our inability to read local dynamics and/or our desire to do what seems most expedient actually militates against (rather than facilitates) our being able to get in and out of a situation quickly—a task that will only get harder as others develop *their* ability to use our habits and norms against us.

In other words, we hardly have a lock on wile.

Status/menace. Non-Asian non-Westerners are bound to try to maneuver against us in the future for a host of different reasons, and not just because we are "there" in the non-West competing against them. Nor will they target us just because we represent a classically convenient target gratis our being both foreign *and* Goliath-like. Surely these will remain motivators. But so will the pursuit of status.[189] Or, to reframe this in terms of the Clausewitzian argument that war is a contest of wills, international competition is bound to remain oriented as much toward proving worth as gaining wealth—particularly in the post-conquest 21st century, when populations can't be overtly subjugated and territory can't be openly seized. Under these circumstances, violence serves as a proxy—used to determine who defers and/or submits to whom, with "who can control what" serving as the ultimate proof of deference and submission.

In other words, no matter how much *we* might analyze wars as though they are fought for material ends, this is a very Western outlook. It does not necessarily explain others' primary motivation(s). Yes, gaining control may well be materially important, since money, resources, and loot are essential to attaining and staying in power. But, if power is the "end" being sought, and these are the "means," then control really only represents the material manifestation of status. In the most ironic of all inversions, this doesn't just flip our notions of war aims on their head, but makes conflict a means to a different (non-)end than the end we envision.[190]

Another problem we face is that while states have more or less learned how to contend with other states, democracies continue to flail when confronted by non-state actors, terrorists, guerrillas, and

others. One reason non-state actors have proven such a problem for Western democracies is that they know they gain more by refusing to comply with Western rules and norms of combat. In fact, the less decently non-Westerners behave, the more they ensure the world's best armed, most capable militaries *can't* effectively fight back, which then attains them a stature they otherwise would never receive.[191]

Like any other set of **conventions**, norms of combat are all too easy to breach. To maintain them generally requires that they be so morally freighted and/or tightly woven into the social fabric that jettisoning them jeopardizes too much. This makes conventions akin to paradigms, which is why, when a clash occurs between "old" and "new" or competing sets of norms or paradigms—think: Western and non-Western conceptions of what is or is not appropriate in war—that puts the force with the stricter, more transparent, and better publicized code of conduct at an automatic disadvantage.[192]

It shouldn't be hard to see where this leads, especially since it has also become increasingly difficult for even outrageous acts of violence (or insult) to ignite populations—which is a good thing, I don't mean to suggest otherwise. But the downside is that as wars waged by the U.S. have come increasingly to be fought for interests, not national passions, the side that should win (us) has grown afraid to wipe out the side that should lose, while we also find it increasingly difficult to discern who is *on* a side thanks to there being no readily distinguishable impassioned mass to point to. Ironically, while *we* have grown too sophisticated to get inflamed, *they* have become too sophisticated to don uniforms. This, too, marks a sea change since WWII.

Actually, if we were to catalog all the various forces WWII unleashed, we would likely find that from wars of liberation through warlordism we have allowed (and even helped enable) conflict to grow so existentially discomfiting that our discomfort makes it all the harder for us to regroup and recover our resolve, regarding either war or peace. I include peace because, as Afyare Abdi Elmi points out, peace is not the absence of conflict, but conflict worked out through non-violent means.[193] He writes this as a Somali, cognizant that no single Somali clan (or clan-family) is strong enough to beat the rest, that all strive instead to be first among equals, and that no political arrangement will work if everyone can't fight.

Elmi's observations are in keeping with the inconvenient fact that those humans who are good at fighting *like* to fight. Often they spoil to fight, which makes their fighting for spoils (or as spoilers) ancillary.

Thus, one imperative for how to re-contain (and re-constrain) war should be to provide people some kind of stakes to fight over. And, though it would be Pollyanna-ish to assume that a separation between governance and politics alone would do the trick—particularly when violence remains the default path for some males, along with the women their menace attracts—it could at least siphon off some energy. So could what should be the second 21st century separation worth contemplating: how to split menace from status, especially since this combination represents the most dangerous shortcut to power there is. At the very least, menace's imagery needs to be overhauled. One way to do this would be to put menace in uniform and keep it under hierarchical control (via national service, for instance). That is what gerontocracies did. Of course, classic gerontocracies also managed to control young women in ways that aren't possible today, although reorienting young women *to* more responsible males can surely still be done—at least in theory.[194] The catch is accomplishing any of this requires society's participation. Unfortunately, without society, the best the military can strive for is to get smarter about wile and act wiser about status.[195] Both are long overdue.

ENDNOTES

[1] Clotaire Rapaille discusses Americans' work-oriented identity in *The Culture Code: An Ingenious Way to Understand Why People Around the World Live and Buy as They Do* (Crown Business, 2007).

[2] I am purposely avoiding the terms "faith-based" or "religious," because even though "religious" would describe Islamists it does not describe Hutus intent on wiping out Tutsis.

[3] For instance, one argument made by some of my colleagues is that if AQ, the Taliban, or you-name-the group can just be driven into a remote enough area of a country, they will eventually wither away.

[4] No doubt some of these arguments would also apply to the Asian non-West. But being less familiar with Asia east of Central Asia, I draw my examples from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. My arguments also draw on my professional judgment as an anthropologist who has spent 14 years closely interacting with U.S. and international SOF officers. These interactions have occurred in the classroom and on military bases in the U.S. and abroad—to include visits to Afghanistan, Iraq, numerous African countries, and India. I draw on all of that "fieldwork."

[5] If for no other reason than that all European militaries are shells of what they once were and are utterly reliant on us.

[6] A term popularized by David Kilcullen, in his book of that name.

[7] This is an argument I made at greater length in "Seeing the Enemy (or Not)" in Anthony McIvor (ed.), *Rethinking the Principles of War* (Naval Institute Press, 2005).

[8] This is one reason why our attitudes toward corruption, which we treat as *the* impediment to the "developing" world's development, are more reflective of our misplaced judgments than of non-Westerners' irrational behavior. See Lawrence Rosen, "Understanding Corruption," *The American Interest,* March/April 2010.

[9] For instance, for actionable intelligence.

[10] With billions being transferred.

[11] Mackubin Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* (Continuum, 2011), p. 192.

[12] Nor is it necessarily just we Americans who suffer from this: "When it comes to COIN, the British are slow learners" (Andrew Mumford "Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth: Britain and Irregular Warfare in the Past, Present, and Future," Strategic Studies Institute monograph, 2011, p. 2). Mumford continues, "In COIN terms… the British have been consistently slow to implement an effective strategy and achieve operational success" (p. 3).

[13] Of course, believing that we will (and/or can) always adapt is convenient and maybe even necessary for morale, since such a conviction allows members of the military to avoid defeatism and remain optimistic. Optimism is especially important since, as Mackubin Owens suggests in the quote cited above, never considering quitting is necessary (even if not sufficient) to win a war.

[14] Take Saudi Arabia, for instance. We were working with the Saudis for decades prior to the advent of AQ, an organization that even with Saudi help we still haven't successfully penetrated, while to what extent Saudis have penetrated AQ would be interesting to know. Maybe someone in the intelligence community does know. However, if so, AQ should have been undone by now. That it persists points to a number of possibilities: AQ is very good; the Saudis have ISI-like issues with us and/or an ISI-like relationship with AQ, etc. ISI is worth citing

not just because of its alleged complicity in hiding senior AQ members, but because we have been working closely with the Pakistani army off and on for decades. Partnerships—*if* partnering with others is to be the sine qua non of our security arrangements going forward—clearly need to be based on something different than they have been thus far, especially if we plan on counting on them as our preemptive defense.

[15] Of course, just speaking logically, if we had perfect information before getting involved—if we really knew everything we needed to know about a local situation—we would know exactly how to apply sufficient leverage to never have to worry about going to war. On the other hand, where we can't know enough about who we should side with or against (which Shift #1 suggests will be the case from this point forward), we have two choices: 1) pursue our immediate interests and forget about gaming the future. In other words, we shouldn't try to maneuver against those who know how little we know about them. Or, even more prudent would be 2) to decide to side with no one and worry instead about quarantine.

No one talks seriously about quarantining another country, let alone what it would require to maintain a quarantine abroad. However, for health security reasons alone, we should be investing in such a capability.

[16] Most recently in Anna Simons, Joe McGraw, and Duane Lauchengco, *The Sovereignty Solution: A Commonsense Approach to Global Security* (Naval Institute Press, 2011).

[17] Without making too much of the analogy, perhaps ethnographic sensors are best thought of as socio-meteorologists: checking temperatures, pressures, wind speeds, and comparing patterns over time.

Nor is research or book learning sufficient. As Rory Stewart writes, "Many of my colleagues were well respected Arabists with extensive experience in post-war reconstruction, but none of them could guess the exact effect of a foreign invasion, the toppling of the President, and a society turned on its head. No library could tell you about the Prince of the Marshes; there were no polls that would reveal his popularity, now that events tested his strength. I continued to study Iraqi history; I visited neighboring governorate coordinators in four Shia provinces. But what mattered most were local details, daily encounters with men of which we knew little and of whom Iraqis knew little more" (*Prince of the Marshes: And Other Occupational Hazards of a Year in Iraq* [Harvest Books, 2007], p. 46).

[18] See Hilton Root, *Alliance Curse: How America Lost the Third World* (Brookings Institute Press, 2008).

[19] Who, after all, would dare declare war against us? For 53 years, from 1945-1998, this was a rhetorical question. AQ changed that—but not our post-WWII conviction that we should refrain from ever making use of our full conventional arsenal.

As Adrian Lewis notes, "With the advent of nuclear weapons came a new form of limited war, *artificial limited war*, where nations placed imaginary restraints on the conduct of war… Because the government could not satisfactorily explain this new form of limited war, could not explain Communist ideology, and could not explain why American sons should fight to defend the people of South Korea and South Vietnam, Americans came to oppose the draft and war as never before. *Artificial limited war and fighting against ideas and for people that were not directly related to the security of the United States violated major American cultural tenets of war*" (*The American Culture of War: A History of U.S. Military Force from World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom* [Routledge, 2012, 2nd ed.), p. xviii.

[20] Zhivan Alach, "The New Aztecs: Ritual and Restraint in Contemporary Western Military Operations," Strategic Studies Institute monograph, June 2011, p. 28.

[21] I intentionally use the word "fighting"—which differs from sending signals via war games or by mobilizing or moving troops, ships, etc.

[22] Among others who have written about non-Westerners' willingness to do things we won't are Lee Harris, Christopher Coker, Ralph Peters, Victor Davis Hanson, Robert Kaplan, and Martin Van Creveld.

[23] "The U.S. military, carefully designed to inflict crushing high-intensity force, spends $1 million per year to put each soldier in Afghanistan. You don't want to have been a tool of the United States when these forces are drawn down and the Taliban return to power" (Richard Rumelt, *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy*: *The Difference and Why It Matters* [Crown Business, 2011], p. 162).

[24] Interestingly, despite its persistence, a close read of the history of the British regimental system reveals that British soldiers' attachments changed, and needed to be changed, over time. The regiment turned out to be the ideal organization for fostering the necessary ethos and attitude – but only for about 100 years.

[25] Some might contend that the VFW and American Legion conferred a similar status on veterans in the past. One major difference is that they thrived during an era when there were plenty of other fraternal, as well as self-segregating, organizations of a type that most members of the Boomer and post-Boomer generations eschew.

[26] Or, as Zhivan Alach ("The New Aztecs") notes, "… if the West continues to demand that its forces treat its enemies with extraordinary respect, take maximum care to avoid collateral damage, and even avoid the killing of enemy combatants, the end result may well be an increase in the public cachet of the enemy. Expectations determine perceptions" (p. 38). Or, as he also writes, the longer the West "continues to fight in a constrained manner, the more normalized that methodology" (p. 37).

[27] Anecdotally I can see divides in my students between those who think PTSD should be treated more seriously and those who are increasingly dismissive of fellow officers who claim to be suffering from it. As for casualty-aversion, consider the choices we made in Kosovo: to fight from the air rather than joining the KLA on the ground, and then flying too high to be accurate with our bombing.

[28] Members of society either internalize their code of conduct or they look to those in authority to establish and police this for them.

[29] This does not just include alpha males (or alpha females). Often, non-alphas may be even more disruptive because they chafe at not being able to win and/or because they don't have sufficient charisma (or whatever it is that's needed) to attract the followers, subordinates, or circle of admirers and dependents they think they deserve.

[30] In classic gerontocracies—age grade societies in East Africa, for instance—younger males will often agitate to be initiated into the next grade, and try rocking the boat in that sense, but they don't agitate against the system per se.

[31] Later I will make the point that witchcraft and sorcery can be *purposefully* used as a source of power by individuals bent on tilting the playing field (and keeping it tilted) in their favor.

[32] Or, at least they believe they do so out of their own volition and not because anyone impels them to.

[33] Of course, it also has everything to do with how the U.S. was settled, and by whom, etc.

[34] Gangs are proof of this.

[35] Was there ever one? Some might argue yes… Others, no…

[36] This is not just true in the U.S. A Pakistani officer who recently attended NPS said he became an Air Force pilot because all young boys of his generation wanted to become either pilots or engineers.

[37] As many quip, lots of people who are featured on television or on the internet today are famous for simply being famous. Much of this is a function of media outlets that have too many hours of time or bytes to fill. While some might blame the rise of "reality" programming, for decades film and television have been effectively blurring the lines between reality and perceptions of reality, to the point that many now accept as fact the assertion that "perception *is* reality." Ironically, members of the military often say this and shrug their shoulders even though, in their own reality, these are individuals who can surely tell the difference between live fire and dry fire exercises.

[38] Of course, often they did so to guard their own prerogatives.

[39] Thought question: What else could we use? Who *does* deserve more recognition: the academic who publishes 200 articles and 10 books, or the quarterback whose team entertains tens of millions every weekend, or the corporate executive responsible for 10,000 employees? Meanwhile, because we don't want there to be any one person or set of persons sitting in judgment and setting standards, we privilege the market.

[40] This includes fields that eschew money – in each of which those at the top of the field still earn, and presumably don't object to earning, more than their 'peers': think academe, or quote unquote non-profits.

[41] Not a "happy" by-product if you are skeptical of cloning, stem cell research, etc.

[42] Here I refer to "solvent" in the chemical sense, as in a "liquid[ity] capable of dissolving another substance."

[43] In many societies, still, it is considered taboo to use money acquired through nefarious means for certain kinds of purchases; it also shouldn't be mixed with money acquired honestly. Otherwise, one risks misfortune or worse. For more on this see Parker Shipton, *Bitter Money: Cultural Economy and Some African Meanings of Hidden Commodities* (American Anthropological Association monograph, 1989).

[44] We see at least three untoward effects: 1) violence gets turned inward against members of one's own community; 2) some begin to experiment with ever edgier violence; and 3) organizations or individuals involved in crime (or subversion) have an easier time recruiting thugs—"join us and you'll earn status even faster."

Alternatively, think gangs and how they 'jump in' new members; think rapes and impalements, or "short sleeve" or "long sleeve" amputations in Sierra Leone; or think about who warlords, to include sitting presidents (from the late Slobodan Milosevic to Omar al-Bashir and Robert Mugabe), have used to do their dirty work for them.

[45] Caitlin Flanagan, in a book review, comments that Anita Shreve "writes boldly about the ways that male adolescence differs from female, especially in the way that boys suddenly become so much larger and stronger than girls, lending every sexual encounter the potential for menace and domination. As [one of her male characters] muses… 'There was a subtle moment in time when boys turned into men, and it had nothing to do with age or facial hair or voice timbre. It had to do, he had decided—and he had seen this happen hundreds of times over the course of nearly twenty years in a secondary-school setting—with musculature, the set of the jaw, the way the male held himself'" ("Love, Actually: How Girls Reluctantly Endure the Hookup Culture," *The Atlantic*, June 2010, p. 95).

[46] Worth remarking is that with no rites of passage, there are no firm distinctions between adolescence and adulthood, so innumerable adults in the U.S. stay in the hunt for being cool (men) or hot (women).

[47] In addition to other sources cited in footnotes, for a recent overview see Simon Cottee and Keith Hayward, "Terrorist (E)motives: The Existential Attractions of Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* V. 34 #12, 2011.

[48] Youth seldom sufficiently appreciate that impressions made when they are young can stick. This is one downside to no longer living in extended families, where bad social actors serve as objects of withering

commentary and thus as object lessons for how not to behave. Another irony worth remarking is that just as adolescents finally feel their identity is theirs to shape, others (peers especially) will begin to lock them in to the identity they project.

In a *Wall Street Journal* weekend interview (December 31, 2011), Jalen Rose (of the Leadership Academy in Northwest Detroit) said: "'I feel like the eight most at-risk years for young men or young women are the four they're in high school and the four they should be in college. You ask any adult whose dreams didn't come true or goals they didn't get accomplished, they point back to that eight-year period when they started driving, their hormones started taking over, they started having sex, they started partying... That's when you're in a position to make those poor decisions and actually execute them. That's why I really wanted to influence this age group.'"

[49] It also can depend on upbringing and personality, but not necessarily in predicable ways, which is what makes determining who is most at-risk so difficult. Who matters by way of a preferred audience can often change as individuals mature.

[50] Two exceptions are: some child soldiers, and sex workers trafficked without their consent.

[51] This may change with the state of the economy.

[52] Tellingly, for all the attention computer geeks are thought to get today, the geeks who matter are geeks who 'run' something, and have a bank account and/or the subordinates to prove their worth.

[53] The HBO television series The Wire featured boxing.

[54] James Howell, "Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, December 2010, pp 15-16.

[55] Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell, and Michael King, *The Edge of Violence: A Radical Approach to Extremism* (London: Demos, 2010) , p. 13.

[56] Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Faith, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists* (Ecco, 2010), pp. 290-1.

[57] Colonel John M. Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," USIP Special Report, May 2010, p. 11. Or as Venhaus notes, youth should be provided "with more choices and alternative definitions that allow them to find productive and *positive* self-definition" (emphasis added).

[58] Ibid, p. 13.

[59] It seems exceedingly ironic that while hazing and bullying are increasingly condemned, menace remains so widely broadcast. Alternatively, perhaps nothing better epitomizes the mixed messages being sent (and received) by adolescents today than the sports figure-as-role-model debate, a debate that recurs whenever players in the U.S. are caught engaging in inappropriate or illicit behavior off the field. The questions invariably asked in the wake of such scandals are whether role models should have to live up to higher standards: just because someone swings a club or bat well, makes lots of money, and youth look up to him, why should he have to live like a saint? Curiously, what no one counters with is that there *are* global figures who everyone can agree *do* project indisputable moral character—Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama, for example. No athlete points to them and says *they* should be the only individuals kids are raised to emulate.

But even if all of the sports world's greats did say this, it wouldn't matter. Not when athletes remain a money-making center of attention and we lack a clear hierarchy of statuses. A second reason: at the same time it has become harder to hide bad behavior, thereby making it easier for others to expose your transgressions, the

penalties for getting caught have also become less severe.

We'll probably never know whether the rate of bad behavior is higher among today's 'elite,' but illegitimate behavior is certainly more easily legitimized than ever before. It is as if, minus a few exceptions (e.g. child molestation), the more illicit acts high profile members of society openly engage in (e.g. drugs, alcohol, buying sex), the fewer the long term consequences of getting caught *for anything*.

With scandal itself a source of fame, why *should* young people gravitate toward only good behavior?

[60] While it may be true that, as Steven Metz writes, "states [like the U.S.] not susceptible to insurgency have proxies for youth boredom and the need for excitement which drains these impulses into less destructive channels, whether video games, violent movies, sports, or fast cars" ("Psychology of Participation in Insurgency," *Small Wars Journal,* January 27, 2012, p. 6)—none of these, still, substitute for getting to indulge *in* menace.

[61] For example: Geronimo, whose wife and children were slain; Hitler, denied a career in art; or even George Washington, who felt robbed of a commission in the British Army. The distinction I am drawing is between the disenfranchised and the alienated. The terms are used interchangeably, but shouldn't be. Members of populations that have never been included, but have been chronically marginalized and treated as though their members are second class, are likely to be less skilled at leading social movements than people(s) who *were* somebodies or were on their way to becoming somebodies when that status was wrenched away. (Of course, whether the disenfranchised are those who were formerly enfranchised and the alienated are those who have never been included, or whether the terms and definitions should be reversed, is debatable. The important point is to distinguish between people who haven't been included within living memory vs. those who have been willfully demoted, and cast out or aside.)

[62] Actually, one could fill a paragraph with examples. For instance, Sir John Philby (father of Kim Philby), embittered by his treatment in the British Civil Service, is the man said to be responsible for the U.S., not Britain, acquiring access to Saudi oil. Military examples would have to include Douglas MacArthur and his quest to retake the Philippines and Joseph Stilwell and his quest to retake Burma.

[63] Aminatta Forna, *Ancestor Stones* (Grove Press, 2007), p. 296

[64] Cynthia Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

[65] Peter Godwin, *The Fear: Robert Mugabe and the Martyrdom of Zimbabwe* (Back Bay Books, 2011), p. 293.

[66] Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (Penguin, 1990) p. 124.

[67] Or, their threat about the use of force has to be credible.

[68] Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), p. 243.

[69] Which represents a twist on the arguments about gratuitous cruelty Daniel Goldhagen makes in *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (Knopf, 1996). In Goldhagen's view, gratuitous cruelty grows out of eliminationist attitudes toward specific categories of others.

[70] Nicholas Schmidle, *To Live or to Perish Forever: Two Tumultuous Years in Pakistan* (Henry Holt, 2009), p. 201, emphasis mine.

[71] "Feeling the magic" is a term Special Operators use to describe what non-operators often seek by meeting with them.

[72] Gamal Abdul Nasser (Egypt) was a master at this.

[73] Which may help explain the wars between Rwanda and Uganda in DRC, and between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In both cases, who helped whom attain autonomy festered into bad blood.

[74] As Robert Merry writes, "In his book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman calls America 'the ultimate benign hegemon.' But if there are lessons in history, certainly one teaches that there is no such thing as a benign hegemon. Hegemonic ambition inevitably inserts the hegemon into environments that turn out to be threatening, brutal, and savage. And then, if it wants to remain a hegemon, it can no longer be benign" (*Sands of Empire: Missionary Zeal, American Foreign Policy, and the Hazards of Global Ambition* [Simon & Schuster, 2005], p. 221).

[75] By this I mean shared religion, tribal bonds, nationalism, ethnicity, and so on. Or, as Abdulkadir Sinno points out, "The Taliban was able to co-opt or sideline many entrenched and hardened Pushtun [sic] local leaders by 1) undermining the leaders' support through a vision that appealed to their followers, 2) making effective use of their specialized knowledge of the Pushtun power tapestry and sophisticated strategies to sideline opposition at little cost, and 3) benefiting from their own momentum to increase their appeal to local leaders and their followers" (*Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* [Cornell University Press, 2009], pp. 236-7).

[76] Andrew Alderson, *Bankrolling Basra* (Constable and Robinson, 2007], p. 186.

[77] The reason I write "conceptually" is because at the tactical and operational levels there *are* members of the military who can code-switch and do appreciate how sophisticated non-Westerners can be.

[78] Patrick Chabal, *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling* (Zed Books, 2009), p 74.

[79] Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (PublicAffairs, 2011), p. 313.

[80] See Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa's First Woman President* (Harper Perennial, 2010).

[81] The same argument was made about Bosnian leader, Alija Izetbegovic re: Srebenica and other "safe zones" (see the documentary, "The Death of Yugoslavia").

[82] Stearns, p. 315.

[83] Schmidle, p. 62.

[84] Ibid, p. 132.

[85] Stewart, p. 265.

[86] Alderson, pp. 56-7.

[87] Richard Cockett, *Sudan: Darfur and the Failure of an African State* (Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 246-7.

[88] Ibid.

[89] William Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[90] Virtually all relationships are asymmetric. This is why terms like "asymmetric warfare" are misleading. As Richard Rumelt notes, "No one has an advantage at everything. Teams, organizations, and even nations have advantages in certain kinds of rivalry under particular conditions. The secret to using advantage is understanding this particularity" (p. 161).

[91] True cynics would now likely contend that Museveni must be benefitting more from whatever the U.S. is giving him as we try to capture/kill Joseph Kony than he profits from Joseph Kony roaming through the CAR and Congo, or wherever outside of Uganda the LRA might be. Again, the fact that Museveni's critics believe the LRA has long been beatable, but that he never destroyed, it points to their regard for his political skill.

[92] See Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (Wiley, 2008).

[93] "The people have given this time of violence and suffering its own name… They are calling it *chidudu*. It means, simply, 'The Fear'" (Peter Godwin, *The Fear,* p. 109).

[94] Ibid.

[95] Also, Godwin makes the point that the MDC has not taken up arms—so the UN has no reason to intervene

[96] Ibid, p. 25. This is actually a tried and true practice, very reminiscent of Mobutu Sese Seko's command to Zairois to "debrouillez-vous"—essentially, fend for yourselves.

[97] In reality, a good number of white farmers emigrated *to* Zimbabwe after Mugabe took office in 1980.

[98] For a somewhat different kind of case, consider MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta), which began as a PR-savvy effort to stand up for the Delta's peoples and credibly represent "the grievances of the local population against government corruption, environmental degradation, and perceived mismanagement of oil revenues"[http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-World-Insurgency-and-Terrorism/Movement-for-the-Emancipation-of-the-Niger-Delta-MEND-Nigeria.html (retrieved 7/13/12)]. Some claim MEND is just another front for thugs – but an exceptionally media-savvy one.

For this paper's purposes, what is interesting about MEND is less its purposely decentralized structure or its ability to code switch between village level and boardroom level politics—e.g. "As Dokubo-Asari stated in an interview with Sahara Reporters in 2007, 'MEND was created not as an organisation but as a name for the purpose of issuing unified statements'" (ibid). Instead, what is worthy of attention is how skilled MEND has proved to be at presenting itself as a cutting edge 'organization,' while actually accomplishing very little. In describing it, website entries use all the latest COIN jargon. The fact that MEND has been able to convince certain COIN 'experts' that it represents the cutting edge of asymmetric warfare is the true triumph, since this legitimization earns it a cachet few other groups can match. This means that in MEND's case it may not just be elements within the Nigerian government (and defense forces) that have their own reasons for treating MEND as a menace, and allowing it to remain one; MEND's seeming fulfillment of some experts' predictions about the direction hybrid or 4th generation suggests an even grander inadvertent collusion.

[99] To include non-Westerners' use of Western practices – like internet and phishing scams, which Nigerians now excel at. No account better explores how, with what flair, why, and with so little remorse Nigerians engage in 419 scams than Adaobi Nwaubani's novel, *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* (Hyperion, 2009).

[100] Piracy also isn't conflict per se, but a by-product of opportunity. Thanks to the fact there is no one onshore to stop them, Somali pirates can take advantage of a target rich opportunity offshore. Interestingly, recent reports suggest piracy may be on the wane, which is further evidence it is opportunistic and not connected to any larger Cause.

[101] Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq* (Random House, 2008), p. 281.

[102] http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/02/world/asia/02taliban.html?_r=1 (accessed 7/17/12).

[103] Nour Malas, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *Wall Street Journal,* July 15, 2011. The more people turn customary practices into code, the harder a time authorities will have separating signals from noise. And then, even if they can do so, that only leads to the next challenge: separating the guilty from the non-guilty without trammeling on the latters' rights.

[104] Daniel Klaidman and Christopher Dickey, "The Body Bomb," *Newsweek,* May 21, 2012.

[105] Consider this twist: there are reports that a female member of Ansar al-Sunna, an AQ-affiliated group purposely had women raped so that she could then recruit them to join the jihad. The recruitment pitch was that joining the jihad would allow them to reclaim their purity. Rape was also allegedly used as a recruiting tool by the LTTE ("Evolution of the Global Jihad: Women in the Insurgency in Iraq" ms. submitted to *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2012).

[106] This is yet another reason why current plans to increasingly rely on proxy forces in the future are problematic. See the Conclusion for more.

As of August 10, 2012, there were at least 22 attacks "in which Afghan forces or insurgents disguised in Afghan uniforms have turned their guns on international troops" according to an Associated Press tally.

[107] Tamim Ansary's grandmother did this in Afghanistan in the 1950s (*West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story* [Picador 2003]*)*.

More recently, during the Liberian Civil War "it was important for the family to have a 'big man' in the rebel movement around so that their estate and property would not be looted and ravaged. It was therefore good to have at least one son join the military, or at least to be related to people with important posts in a particular rebel movement. It was even better if one of the daughters was having a relationship with a local commando" (Mats Utas, *Sweet Battlefields: Youth and the Liberian Civil War*, Uppsala University Dissertations in Cultural Anthropology, 2003, p. 177).

[108] Change the references to Sudan in the following, and Alex de Waal could be describing Afghanistan: "Politics is *ordinary* in a striking way: the 'big men' in power in Khartoum and the 'little men' with only local authority behave in much the same way, following the same logic of securing their positions whether to control a village or a country. At every level, every institution from the village or lineage to the presidency is factionalized, to the extent that this can be seen as the defining feature of Sudanese politics—elsewhere I have called Sudan the 'turbulent state.' It is hard to separate the 'customary' and the 'modern,' despite the efforts of a prior generation of Sudanese political scientists and activists: the 'native administration' and the 'modern administration' are mutually assimilated. It is common to find that in a single prominent provincial family, one son is the chief of the tribe, and his brothers or first cousins will include an army general, a commissioner, a senior party member, a businessman and a professor—and also today a senior NGO or UN official. If the family is placed at a particularly strategic political intersection, brothers may hold high ranks in different competing parties, and perhaps one will also be an influential member of an armed opposition movement" (Alex de Waal, "Vernacular Politics in Africa (1)," http://blogs.ssrc.org/sudan/2009/09/28/vernacular-politics-in-africa-1, accessed 2/12/2010).

[109] This dynamic, writ large, also explains much about U.S.-Pakistani relations. Arguably, even we hedge our bets – but just in different ways, to different ends, and we call it 'balance' when we do. If we weren't hedging, we would choose the factions we want to side with abroad at the start of every 'battle,' whether in politics or in war. In South Asia this means we would side either with India *or* with Pakistan.

[110] Of course, we also have differences with our closest Western allies—e.g., over capital punishment.

[111] This is underscored by religious beliefs many places, where gods don't represent or mete out anything approaching 'justice.' In fact, the correlation would seem to be that Judeo-Christian and even Muslim conceptions of justice have everything to do with a single God; all other gods have 'trickster'-like qualities.

[112] Richard Dowden, *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles* (PublicAffairs 2009), p. 29.

[113] Ibid, p. 82.

Is Russia Western or non-Western? In late June 2012, *The Economist's* 'Schumpeter' wrote: "In private a striking number of businesspeople admitted to embarrassment about Mr. Putin's return to the presidency… But when Mr. Putin turned up to deliver his speech the delegates, Westerners included, were transformed into slavering sycophants. The hall was packed – the bigwigs up front and their underlings at the back" (June 30, 2012, p. 70).

[114] A psyop Saddam Hussein also used re: WMD, but which proved him too clever by half.

[115] Leaders who can keep their rivals and citizens guessing, intimidated, and/or cowed clearly have a facility for juggling numerous balls. The fact they do this *without* having to resort to daily polls and focus groups means they also have an intuitive knack for politicking.

[116] Douglas Rogers, *The Last Resort: A Memoir of Mischief and Mayhem on a Family Farm in Africa* (Three Rivers Press, 2010) p. 238.

[117] Nor do they have to worry about one of their own betraying them. This can change, of course, under duress. But for anyone who benefits from being part of, or close to, the ruling circle there should be no reason to experience duress.

[118] Another proof: warrior societies have rarely if ever grown gentler on their own.

[119] For another example of a low tech/high sophistication act: internet beheadings. In a different era this would have provoked members of the American public to bay for bloody—very bloody—revenge. Think: scalping.

[120] The pattern with 'first contacts' of previously undiscovered 'natives' usually consists of awe and curiosity when outsiders first show up. As soon as it becomes clear the visitors aren't gods, spirits, aliens, or super-human, locals begin angling for advantage and/or they turn hostile. Think Captain Cook on his third visit to Hawaii; he was killed. Or see the documentary "First Contact."

[121] I use "participation" rather than support because support implies being amenable to our presence, and that is hardly sufficient. Government forces have to actively *seek* to beat insurgents in order to win.

[122] Karl Marlantes in an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* ("The Truth About Being a Hero," August 20, 2011) suggests that war is about getting through to the other side. He's talking physically, in terms of the objective. My point is that his observation is far more profound than he realizes, especially when one considers that getting through "to the other side" has become, in all senses, more difficult given the unclear nature of "sides," and the referent "to."

[123] Arguably, every war scars a generation in its own way; it is only post-WWII we have had the luxury of focusing—or talking about how we need to focus—on remedies.

[124] Korea is unresolved but delineated.

[125] Again, too, through WWII we declared war. But for that argument (again) see *The Sovereignty Solution*.

[126] See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2005), as well as Barry Goldwater, *With No Apologies: The Personal and Political Memoirs of United States Senator Barry M. Goldwater* (William & Morrow, 1979). Or, for Lemay: "LeMay's theory of war—his doctrine—in its most simplified form came down to this: a nation should think long and hard before it makes the fateful decision to go to war. But once that decision is made, then that nation should be willing to hit the enemy with every conceivable weapon at its disposal to end the conflict as quickly as possible. If a nation is not willing to do that, it should not go to war in the first place" (Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay* [Regnery, 2009], pp 96-7).

The Sovereignty Solution makes a similar argument except we eschew the use of nuclear weapons. Notably, the Weinberger Doctrine also aligns with this view. The Powell Doctrine does not, since having to have an exit strategy suggests that you intend to do either more (such as nation-build and stabilize) *or* less (such as negotiate) than incontrovertibly defeat and dictate terms to your named enemy.

[127] Just being realistic, maybe you *can't* single out your foes. Maybe they are too few and too burrowed into the population—or too powerful. Maybe the costs of collateral damage appear too high. Or maybe you don't have the stomach for large numbers of casualties. But if any of these are the case, then #3 can't hold: you clearly don't consider the cause sufficiently existential.

[128] Nancy Sherman, *The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers* (W.W. Norton, 2010), p. 77, emphasis mine.

[129] At least not in most Americans' eyes, while our one post-World War existential struggle never did involve direct combat between us and the Soviets.

[130] A critical caveat is in order regarding TBIs, whose effects are not yet fully understood. *If* most PTSD can be linked to TBIs, and there is a somatic cause for mental health problems, then what I describe in the text will need to be amended. Society won't just be responsible for understanding what combat demands, but will be responsible for ensuring that fewer combatants suffer TBIs by redressing *how* we wage war – something that could be achieved by sending fewer troops patrolling up and down roads and by more pummeling via artillery and air.

[131] Caveat: since completing my paper, reviews of a new novel, Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*, suggest that it is this generation's breakthrough novel.

[132] "Before Sandhurst the joke was that they gave you the Bible and *Stalingrad* to read and told you that only the latter was important. All they should have given anyone was Michael Herr's *Despatches* [sic], which, quite apart from being the best writing on war, period, was probably as culturally influential as anything written in the second half of the twentieth century" (Patrick Hennessy, *The Junior Officers' Reading Club: Killing Time and Fighting Wars* [Allen Lane, 2009], p. 238).

[133] It may have been forever thus, with every era shaped by expectations conveyed via images, literature, memorials, storytelling, or by what Martin Van Creveld refers to as a society's 'culture of war' (in his book of the same name).

[134] Here is Karl Marlantes: "When the basic psychology of the warrior—to feel oneself to be the protector of lives in one's relevant unit—has been violated… the only way to get it right again, to get feeling lined up with one's gut instincts, is for unit loyalty to shift. In this case it shifted downward" (150). Which he further elaborates as "If the unit's integrity or safety is at stake, then you will do what the unit needs to do to save itself. My unit had become the company, not any greater entity like the Marine Corps or the nation, because my basic psychology had been violated…" (*What It Is Like to Go to* War, p. 151).

[135] Here is Sebastian Junger: "The platoon *was* the faith, a greater cause that, if you focused on it entirely, made

your fears go away. It was an anesthetic that left you aware of what was happening but strangely fatalistic about the outcome. As a soldier, the thing you were most scared of was failing your brothers when they needed you, and compared to that, dying was easy. Dying was over with. Cowardice lingered forever." (*War* [Twelve, 2010], p. 210).

Or: "Combat fog obscures your fate—obscures when and where you might die—and from that unknown is born a desperate bond between the men. That bond is the core experience of combat and the only thing you can absolutely count on. The Army might screw you and your girlfriend might dump you and the enemy might kill you, but the shared commitment to safeguard one another's lives is unnegotiable and only deepens with time" (p. 239).

[136] Or arguably even before the fact—a la Major Nidal Malik Hasan at Ft. Hood.

[137] Junger, p. 234.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Rusty Bradley, *Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds* (Bantam, 2011), p. 211.

[140] Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War,* p. 64.

[141] Ibid, p. 160.

[142] George MacDonald Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here: A Harrowing Tale of World War II* (Skyhorse, 2007, 3rd ed.), pp. 89-90.

[143] Of course, too, those who write memoirs enter into a status competition of sorts—whether consciously or by default (as a by-product of writing-as-catharsis).

[144] Being British would have made him feel more attenuated since England wasn't attacked on 9/11. Nonetheless, London was targeted in July 2005.

[145] As Tracy Kidder puts it (writing 30 years after his non-combat Vietnam experience), "I'm sure that many set out for Vietnam feeling confused or unhappy, as adolescents tend to do, and deep down many probably thought they would return with improved reasons for feeling that way. But of the roughly three million Americans who went to the war dressed as soldiers, only a small minority returned with Combat Infantryman's Badges, certain proof of a terrible experience. Imagine all the bullshit stories Vietnam inspired" (*My Detachment: A Memoir* [Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006], p. 8).

[146] Caveat: Hennessy has a newly released book (September 2012), *Kandak: Fighting with Afghans*, not yet available in the U.S.

[147] "The health and survival of service members hinges on the removal of the stigma associated with mental health care… Military leaders recognize the importance of removing this stigma… DOD leaders at the highest levels have urged service members to seek mental health care as needed" (Margaret Harrell, "Losing the Battle: The Challenge of Military Suicide" [CNAS Policy Brief, October 2011], p. 5).

[148] Again, TBIs represent an entirely different category of challenges.

[149] Robert Goldich puts it somewhat differently: "The U.S. military has become the shield behind which civilian society can hold fast to its pacifist views about the absolute supremacy of kindness and compassion. The entire military, in turn, not just the career force, has become a refuge for those who question the basic orientation of

civilian society and do not wish to live within many of its central boundaries. There appears to be a gap—if not a chasm—between an increasingly sensate, amiable, and emotionally narrow civilian world and a flinty, harshly results-oriented, and emotionally extreme military, for career and non-career personnel alike." I believe Goldich overstates the emotional divide; otherwise, members of the military wouldn't be as conflicted as they are ("American Military Culture from Colony to Empire," *Daedalus* 140, 3 (Summer 2011), p. 7 [html].

[150] I write "most" only because I haven't read all. I suspect "all" would be accurate, too.

[151] I would argue that what constitutes "enough" clearly shifts over time and correlates with healthy civil-military relations. Lack of an overarching strategy also leads to disagreements over what is "too much."

[152] Exceptions would include Special Operations Forces who conduct frequent capture/kill missions. As an example of what I am talking about, take Craig Mullaney's *The Unforgiving Minute: A Soldier's Education* (Penguin Press HC, 2009). Over the course of 100 days he was in two firefights, each of which deeply disturbed him for different sets of reasons. Interestingly, he writes at one point "After more than a hundred days in combat…" Is this just a literary slip?

[153] The randomness of death is surely another factor: "The enemy now had a weapon that unnerved the Americans more than small-arms fire ever could: random luck. Every time you drove down the road you were engaged in a twisted existential exercise where each moment was the only proof you'd ever have that you hadn't been blown up the moment before… Good soldiers died just as easily as sloppy ones, which is pretty much how soldiers define unfair tactics" (Junger, p. 142). But while 'new' to this generation, the unfair luck Junger describes is as old as war.

[154] Often, too, today's combatants on the ground are saved by close air support and continuous resupply of prodigious amounts of ammunition – which also help make firefights one-sided in terms of who *will* win, leading (again) to discomfiting questions about what so many "wins" add up to. In *The Unforgiving Minute* Craig Mullaney describes a mind-boggling number of assets—to include Apache helicopters and an A-10—used to inflict a relatively small number of casualties. The battle damage from his final firefight: three enemy dead.

[155] An exception might be Israel, post-1982 and the invasion of Lebanon.

[156] Fraser, p. 222.

[157] Again, this may not be new. But being encouraged to indulge in paying attention to feelings is.

[158] David Philipps, *Lethal Warriors: When the New Band of Brothers Came Home* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 68.

[159] Hennessy, p. 310.

Here is Hennessy describing what we might characterize as a cross-contamination problem: "Montages, the work of a few hours on any standard piece of laptop software, changed the way soldiers went to war. Previously the mini-epics had been exclusively in our heads… the problem was always how to stream these heroic images back home into the astonished living rooms of all the guys you wanted to silence and girls you wanted to fancy you… E- mails were fun, but as we got back into 'it' we realized nothing was going to trump the glorious montages we'd play back on our laptops, immortalizing ourselves as the heroes we had obviously always wanted to be" (p. 102).

Here, meanwhile, is another reader's overall assessment of Hennessy's book: "So far, so canonical. Yet his tale's true originality lies in Hennessey's media-saturated reflections on media-shaped campaigns. Here, postmodernism dons desert fatigues. These kids act like a band of brothers in part because they watch Band of Brothers. Prior to one encounter, they prime themselves with the supremely silly Spartans-vs.-Persians anime, *300*. As for their video montages of real skirmishes, 'the work of a few hours' on standard laptop software, they have 'changed the way

soldiers went to war'. When it comes to the soundtrack to Basra, forget Vietnam-era rock: 'the rampant consumerism of gangsta rap struck a chord with our little oil war'. No surprise that hard-core action in Helmand first "felt more like being on set than real life" (http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-junior-officers-reading-club-by-patrick-hennessey-1719368.html, accessed August 11, 2012).

An altogether different, but more disturbing example of life imitating expectation is then-candidate Barak Obama's sporting of a commemorative KIA bracelet. When candidate Obama couldn't remember the name on his bracelet during a 2008 Presidential debate, and had to look down to read it off his wrist, a Special Forces officer I watched the televised debate with had to leave the room. Once he regained his composure he explained what was wrong: "to him it's just a piece of campaign jewelry."

[160] My point is that it may no longer be possible to answer this question—a realization that initially occurred to me while reading Mullaney's *The Unforgiving Minute,* a memoir that received a stunning amount of advanced praise. In it, Mullaney echoes what numerous others have written about West Point, leadership concerns, and 'band of brothers' sentiments over the years. Yet, in repeating what objective readers might consider to be little more than a series of clichés, Mullaney actually reveals just how thoroughly all these tropes have been internalized; they clearly represent core values for those steeped in them – which may be West Point's purpose.

[161] David Finkel, *The Good Soldiers* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009), p. 117.

[162] Junger, p. 268.

[163] There is also the possibility that too much mental health probing will create a self-fulfilling dynamic. The problem, of course, is that no one knows what the best or right course of action is. Will the sorts of things no one wants to have happen now be likelier because everyone fears they might happen? And is it possible to gauge that, individual by individual?

Here, for instance, is David Finkel's account of a conversation between a wife and husband who is heading home as a combat stress casualty: "I'm scared of what you might do." "You know I'd never hurt you," he'd said, and he'd hung up, wandered around the FOB, gotten a haircut, and come back to his room, where he now said, "But what if she's right? What if I snap someday?" (p. 188).

[164] Doug Peacock, author of *Walking It Off: A Veteran's Chronicle of War and Wilderness* (Ewu Press, 2005), is a case in point.

[165] Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like to Go to War,* p. 47.

[166] For instance, the précis to Brian Mockenhaupt's "A Military State of Mind" (*Pacific Standard,* July/August 2012) reads: "To train future soldiers, the Department of Defense is using new technologies and centuries-old techniques, like yoga and meditation, to hone their minds, help them make better decisions on the battlefield, and prevent trauma."

For a thoughtful analysis see, too, Kevin Felix, "A Case for Human Dimension Training: Decision Science and Its Potential for Improved Soldier Resilience and Decisionmaking at Every Level," The Land Warfare Papers No. 85, October 2011.

[167] Calling everyone in uniform a "warfighter" is symptomatic of just how conflicted even the military has become over how to validate what some—or all?—members do.

[168] When describing Marine advisers, all of whom were volunteers for a second tour in October 2010, Bing West writes, "They don't need a patriotic war or sacrifices by the public. We cannot explain why they choose the rough life. They march to a different drummer. They like to fight and are highly skilled at it" (p. 253). Among West's

shibboleths is the enfeeblement of the warrior ethos. Yet, as both *The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy, and the Way Out of Afghanistan* (Random House, 2011) and his earlier book (*The Strongest Tribe*) make clear, the warrior ethos has hardly been enfeebled; he extols grunts' courage and love of fighting at every turn. Society, on the other hand, is a different matter.

[169] Or to borrow from a British officer Bing West quotes in *The Wrong War* "… In the U.S., the military is admired. In the U.K., we get sympathy – the 'poor you' treatment. Our press portrays us as puppets fighting America's war. Rubbish. We British are fighters and proud of it" (p. 146).

[170] Rumelt, p. 20.

[171] What I am describing is a very smart survivalist technique—and, ironically, is just what the word "inshallah" encapsulates.

[172] Or, in plainer English, when there is no cogent explanation for "why," officers will concentrate on "how."

[173] Focusing on operations not only makes *not* being able to achieve overall success more tolerable—something that is doubtless vital to preserving a professional military's morale. But—can a superpower military afford to think some wars might not be winnable? It is also hard to imagine anything more useful than optimism, idealism, and a 'can do' attitude. This, too, is why figuring out how members of the military might learn when to say 'no' represents such a challenge.

[174] My overwhelming impression after reading David Finkel's *The Good Soldiers* is that Battalion 2-16 left Baghdad (2007-8) totally unclear about what, if anything, the battalion had accomplished. Nor would General Petraeus necessarily have had any better idea at his level. But—it is also not evident that someone at General Petraeus's level needed to be clear so long as what Battalion 2-16 did seemed to be working. Only if it wasn't working would commanders at the top have required greater clarity.

[175] For more on this see Brent Clemmer, "Aligned Incentives: Could the Army's Award System Inadvertently Be Hindering Counterinsurgency Operations?" Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2009.

[176] Unless, of course, there is cause to relieve them.

[177] Note: I'm only talking blood here – not whatever people believe their religious duty might demand.

[178] Though—*have* we moved on since Vietnam? That would be one impertinent question. A second would be to ask how many times we can afford to not win and *still* retain our edge?

[179] Or as my *Sovereignty* co-author, Joe McGraw, wrote in an email (July 2011): "Drone strikes can provide tactical success (which is parlayed into political points) and domestic support, without the risk associated in declaring war, or stating strategic objectives, or placing Americans in near-term risk. Unfortunately, unless our strategy is to piss off lots and lots of people, they have no way of achieving anything approaching successful attainment of ends. So drones provide the ultimate solution to sustaining the application of violence for short-term political success with zero short-term risk of American life. Couple this with the 'no strategy' strategy of never stating our end game objectives, and therefore never defining success (or failure), and so never achieving success (or failure), and we've a perfect way to allow the application of political violence for political gain indefinitely."

[180] Winning war and prosecuting war are two different things.

[181] I am alluding to India's experiences in particular. For more, see Prem Mahedevan, *The Politics of Counterterrorism in India: Strategic Intelligence and National Security in South Asia* (I.B. Taurus, 2012) and Sudeep Charavrati, *Red Sun: Travels in Naxalite Country* (Penguin India, 2008).

[182] India's Indian Administrative Service and its division of labor between state authorities (politically elected) and federal authorities (meritocratically appointed), while certainly not perfect in practice, offers a more worthwhile model than that of any Western country.

[183] One reason professional militaries are so similar is because none can afford not to be. All militaries pay close attention to their likeliest rivals. All, also, pay attention to militaries that do well.

[184] See Edward Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (Fordham University Press, 1991) and Rufus Phillips, *Why Vietnam Matters: An Eyewitness Account of Lessons Not Learned* (Naval Institute Press, 2008).

[185] Two questions should be asked: Does the host-nation military already have a civic action capability? If not, is it willing to develop one? Our military should never engage in well-digging or school building itself. Nor should we sub-contract or outsource work to local contractors. Rather, it should always be up to other militaries to develop their own capabilities in-house, using their (not our) equipment. We can show them what such a capability consists of. But, unless there are immediate force protection issues, we should never unilaterally do anything. Nor should we succumb to the cosmetic ruse of simply putting a local 'face' on U.S.-sponsored projects.

[186] Based on discussions with Colonel Scott Brower in Iraq, June 2011.

[187] See *The Sovereignty Solution* for more on this argument.

[188] Which isn't to say we could have worked with anyone else instead. Rather, the argument is that when we side with minorities who are already on the outs with the majority (which is one of the reasons they gravitate to us) we tend to rely on them. This makes it harder for us to want to work with the majority who, typically, aren't as likable because: a) they don't need us as much as minorities do, b) they're more corrupt and more complacent about the status quo, and/or c) they aren't as interested in fighting. Or fighting beside us.

[189] Or, as Richard Betts suggests in a review essay of two recent books by Francis Fukuyama and John Mearsheimer: ".... [Fukuyama] worries that economic plenty and technological comforts are not enough to keep history ended, because "man is not simply an economic animal." The real story is the moral one, the struggle for recognition. Fukuyama frets that Nietzsche's idea of the will to power – that people strive to be not just equal but superior will reignite the impulses to violence that the end of history was supposed to put to rest... This spiritual dimension gives power to nationalism (which Mearsheimer sees as a major engine of international conflict) and religion (which Huntington sees as the most underestimated motivating force in politics" ("Conflict or Cooperation? Three Visions Revisited," *Foreign Affairs,* November/December 2010, p. 191.

[190] Just think about Iran, and all the ways in which that regime's war posturing advantages it domestically and internationally.

[191] This isn't just true of us, but of NATO and other Coalition forces that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[192] Or, as Theo Farrell describes them, norms double as both moral codes and technical scripts for war (*The Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict* [Lynne Rienner, 2005]).

[193] Afyari Abdi Elmi, *Understanding the Somali Conflagration* (Pluto Press, 2010), p. 12.

[194] This is actually the obverse of how female genital mutilation is likely to end: which will be up to males, and young males in particular who, the more they choose their wives in love matches (vs. arranged marriages) the more adamant they are about wanting to not cause them any pain. Similarly, young women *could* put a stop to gangsta behavior if only their interests could be redirected.

[195] Irony of ironies, military members are intimately familiar with the significance of status and deference, what people will be willing to do (and sacrifice) to attain either, what some will do to undermine those whom they don't consider deserving, and how long some are willing to harbor grudges.

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