

GOLIATH'S TRANSFIGURATION: *Preparing the Infantry for Netwars*

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“In the period that Einstein was active as a professor, one of his students came to him and said: ‘The questions of this year’s exam are the same as last year’s!’ ‘True,’ Einstein replied, ‘but this year all answers are different.’”

(<http://www.twilightbridge.com/humor/einstein.htm>)

In his May-June 2007 *Military Review* article “Fourth Generation Warfare Evolves, Fifth Emerges,” USMC Colonel (Retired) T.X. Hammes, one of the most prominent contemporary military commentators, wrote, “...most military thinkers, for a variety of reasons, continued to dismiss the 4GW [fourth generation warfare] concept. In fact, about the only place 4GW was carefully discussed was on an al-Qaeda website. In January 2002, one ‘Ubed al-Qurashi quoted extensively from two *Marine Corps Gazette* articles about 4GW. He then stated, ‘The fourth generation of wars [has] already taken place and revealed the superiority of the theoretically weak side. In many instances, these wars have resulted in the defeat of the ethnic states [duwal qawmiyah] at the hands of ethnic groups with no states.’”

The quotation reveals facts that are hardly ever mentioned by scores of counterinsurgency analysts. Even if al-Qaeda is an organization barbaric in its means, callous and inflexible in the

pursuit of its irrational political goals, its strategists are far from being blind fanatics. The clarity of their analysis of contemporary warfare and their receptiveness to novel concepts is proof to the contrary. Western journalists and analysts alike have difficulties dissociating the planners from those implementing their designs. Documentaries, books and reports on suicide bombers, the Taliban and low-level terrorists abound. However, we know very little about the men recruiting and training them. We know even less about how the recruiters and the strategists are trained and recruited. Where do they come from? What motivates them? Do they have the same motivations as common suicide bombers?

In a conversation I had with a NATO officer who recently returned from Afghanistan, he summarized his tour by saying: “We’re fighting simpletons with rusty Kalashnikovs.” Sadly, the reality is slightly different: we’re fighting articulate, inventive, intelligent men, using simpletons with corroded assault rifles to achieve their objectives. Our inability to inflict severe, debilitating defeats on what appears to be a rudimentary enemy makes the public opinion in the West impatient and in the Middle East angry, politicians everywhere nervous, and al-Qaeda strategists jubilant. This is precisely what they seek: not military successes, but the destruction of our political will to fight, according to Hammes in his book *The Sling and the Stone*.

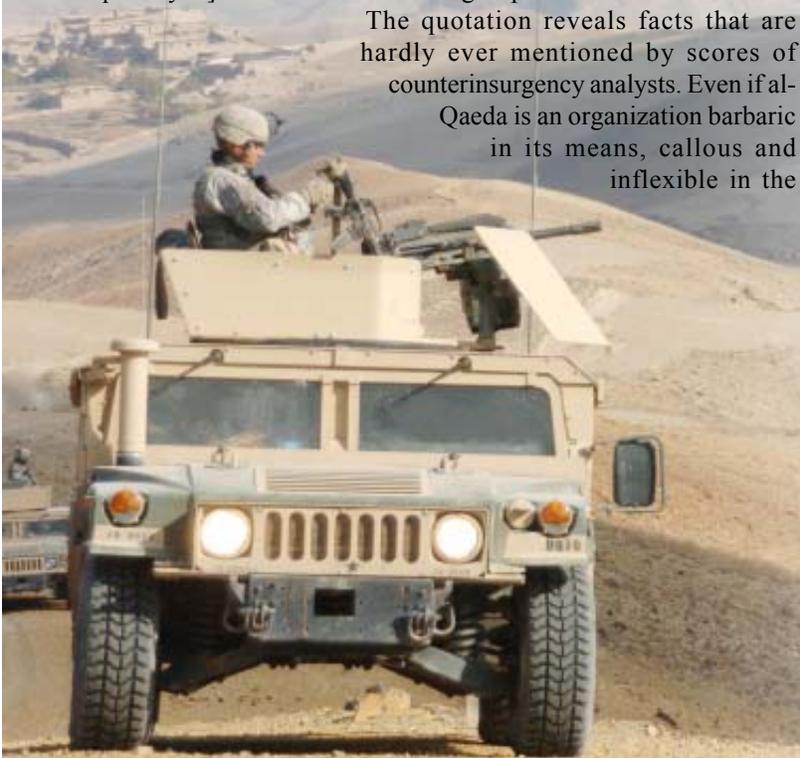
In a videotape posted on the web, Ayman al-Zawahri, al-Qaeda’s number 2, intimately associates military defeat with intense pressure from public opinion to withdraw. He stated, “The American forces [in Iraq] are defeated and looking for a way out. Their government is faced with an incredible popular demand to withdraw.”

That is, in a nutshell, the definition of 4GW. Their way of waging war enhances the few strengths they have, while at the same time exploiting our weaknesses. And because they have the initiative, we have no choice but to deal with this new kind of conflict.

“Insurgents are living proof of why man is at the top of the food chain. We are the most creative, treacherous, loyal, aggressive, and determined life form to yet evolve. Any nation that assumes it is inherently superior to another is setting itself up for disaster,” wrote Hammes in *The Sling and the Stone*.

Their strengths? Both al-Qaeda and the Taliban leadership have something the West does not have: extensive manpower resources in the scores of disenchanting and unemployed youth in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, they have the will to use them coldheartedly, as suicide bombers, for example. Both al-Qaeda and the Taliban leadership prove to be highly flexible groups with truly post-modern organizations (this point will be further developed in the article). The overwhelming force of their enemies before and particularly after September 11, 2001, forced change upon them. They adapted in order to survive.

Our weaknesses? If there is something worse than ineffectiveness in the conduct of warfare, that is the tendency to underestimate one’s enemy, his actions, and his plans. Deriding the



enemy's appearance and parts of his equipment with little or no impact on his tactics is self-mutilation. It has happened before, such as during the Boer War.

In his book *On the Philosophy of Military Incompetence*, Norman Dixon wrote, "Of all the factors which contributed to the succession of disasters which marked the war, this underestimation of the enemy was perhaps the most important. Largely because they eschewed any form of sartorial elegance and preferred the wearing of civilian attire, dark cloaks and floppy hats to the sorts of uniforms affected by the British, the Boers were dubbed a rabble of illiterate peasants and their army utterly ludicrous. In reality, as events were to prove, it was the British, not the Boers, who despite their smart appearance showed up in a far from satisfactory light."

Moreover, the enemy's apparent weakness makes the threat he poses to Western societies less perceptible and discourages genuine military innovation in training, equipment, and the general way in which Western military establishments perceive warfare. Western armies are in a period of long and painful transition; they seek to adapt to the new challenges they are faced with in countries like Afghanistan while desperately trying not to radically change. One question arises: do they need a radical change in order to defeat insurgents? And if they do, will a sweeping change affect their ability to wage a high intensity conflict (HIC), the kind of war they were meant to wage in the first place? Other questions can be inferred from my original one, such as: on the short to medium term, will Western nations engage in HIC? Do we need at all to be prepared for such a type of conflict or is HIC a thing of the past?

In Afghanistan, the infantry is at the forefront of our struggle against the Taliban and al Qaeda. But, how prepared is the infantry to deal with such an inventive, resourceful, adaptable and ideologically driven enemy?

This article will identify the changes that the infantry, a factual Goliath, will have to go through in order to better adapt to 4GW. Given my limited experience and exposure, the essay is far from being an exhaustive study. It is merely the result of my personal concerns caused by a conflict that has claimed far too many lives.

The Invisible Enemy

One of the most important questions we

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need to ask ourselves is: does war evolve, or does it simply change as one of belligerents, usually the weaker side, tries to find ways to cope with the real or perceived superiority of his adversary?

Hammes preferred labeling the insurgents' way of waging war "fourth generation warfare," a term that implies much more than change — it involves a gradual progression. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt in the two breathtaking books they edited — *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age* and *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy* — preferred a different term: netwars.

There are, however, inherent dangers in labeling the challenges we are facing today in Afghanistan as fourth generation warfare. One of them resides in the close association between military technological innovation and the transformation of warfare. The so-called RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs) with its emphasis on technological advancement hinders if applied to asymmetrical threats. One of the victims of technology in times of conflict is leadership, particularly the warfighting ethos of "Follow Me," the trademark of inspirational and charismatic leadership. As John Keegan wrote in *The Mask of Command*, "The first and greatest imperative of command is to be present in person. Those who impose risk must be seen to share it..."

Unfortunately, during the summer 2006 Lebanon War, "after-action probes found egregious cases where commanders relied on situational awareness provided by the sensor-fused data streaming into command centers instead of moving forward to assess critical points in the evolving battle," wrote Barbara Opall-Rome in her article "Does Technology Undercut War Leadership?" which appeared in the November 20, 2006, issue of *Defense News*. On August 12, 2006, a column of Merkava tanks was ambushed in a narrow gorge by Hizballah fighters armed with state-of-the-art Russian Kornet anti-tank missiles. Eight Israeli soldiers were killed and four wounded in the Saluki Wadi ambush due to command and control issues:

the commanders of the two brigades were managing their respective battles from a digitized post in southern Lebanon. Operation Desert Storm, a HIC, convinced many analysts that "electronic operations will be decisive in their own right, and aerospace systems incorporating electronic and information technologies will take warfare into a third dimension," wrote Opall-Rome. The technological edge is a great advantage in HIC; there is no doubt about that. But in netwars, it hinders instead of providing decisive benefits, a point which will be developed later on in the article. In recent guerrilla wars, many of the military fiascos can be attributed to the brass' fixation on technology as a universal panacea. Really worrisome is the fact that Western military establishments have constantly and relentlessly silenced the critics to such an approach to netwars.

One of the critics is former LTG James Helmy who quietly stepped down in May 2006 after completing a four-year tenure as chief of the U.S. Army Reserve. In an interview with Stephen Trimble for the June 21, 2006, issue of *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Helmy confessed: "I say 'transformation' has become a cheap moniker around the Pentagon. (...) I want a new piece of equipment that doesn't really change anything. It's just new, so I'll call it transformational. That's unfair to our leadership, so I said: No, I like the word change. Deep, profound change, and not just pieces of equipment but how we do business, how we train, how we organize our force."

Warfare does not evolve; it is not a life form that can be subjected to Darwinian principles. It simply changes, as the belligerent with the most flexible organization adapts to/or shapes the reality of the battlefield. Unfortunately for us, al-Qaeda and the Taliban leadership have the upper hand, since they control organizations which are ideally suited for the conduct of guerilla wars. These organizations are networks, not hierarchies. They are founded on strong social or personal ties, which can often be family ties.

As defined by Arquilla and Ronfeldt, networks come in three major typologies: chain, hub and all-channel, although there are other complex combinations and hybrids, such as spider webs. The structures themselves are self-adjusting constantly due to attrition and other

imperatives. The organizational structure of our enemies resembles an array of dispersed, independent, but interconnected nodes. Its main strength resides on information-sharing and free-flowing of discussion. The leadership at all levels exhibits the characteristics of *primus inter pares*, which encourages and facilitates flexibility through mission command-type tactics. The network system greatly facilitates insurgents by granting them almost absolute freedom of action. The only doctrine they have is not a sum of templates or procedures, but an oral tradition disseminated through the Internet that constantly stressed the importance of “the deed.” The Pashtun tribal system in Afghanistan exhibits many of the characteristics of a network-based organization. For the Taliban leadership adapting such a system to a network-based organization was not difficult, a task greatly facilitated by the information revolution. In stark contrast, NATO armies display rigid hierarchical organizations, predictable tactics and a doctrine which is far from being adapted to netwars. Dixon called network-based organizations “all-channel communication nets,” while hierarchies were dubbed “wheel nets.” This is what he wrote about the latter: “...the flow of essential information is to and fro between the leader and his subordinates rather than between all members of the group. Not very surprisingly, the wheel net, though no doubt gratifying to autocratic leaders, produces more errors, slower solutions to problems, and reduced gratification to the group than does the more democratic all-channel net.”

Arguably, one of the biggest missteps that NATO infantry is making in Afghanistan is that it is reacting, instead of acting. But, there is a good reason for that: human intelligence (HUMINT) or, to be more precise, the lack thereof. Confronted with overwhelming firepower, the Taliban adapted by operating discreetly, although very effectively. In order to maintain their authority and influence, they have to interact with the local populace; and that requires presence. At the same time, they have to be invisible, inconspicuous to NATO forces and its electronic eyes. Often lacking intelligence, in

order to find and neutralize insurgents, the infantry has to provoke them, usually through presence patrols and reconnaissance in force operations. The great disadvantage of such an approach is that the enemy retains the initiative, it imposes his own tempo, as he will fight at his convenience. The insurgent approach resembles *motti* tactics, a way of waging war introduced by the Finns in the 1939-1940 Soviet-Finnish War. In their book *On Infantry*, John A. English and Bruce I. Gudmundsson said, “The idea behind *motti* tactics was to strike so rapidly and at so many places that the enemy was deprived of his ability to effectively react. The means of doing this were small teams of infantrymen, often on skis and sometimes even using reindeer sleighs to carry heavy weapons. The chief techniques were the ambush, the hit-and-run raid, and maneuvers that make use of the peculiarities of the environment.”

Unlike regular Finnish soldiers, the insurgents do not have to defeat us conventionally. Their attacks do not have to be simultaneous and coordinated. It is no longer about military success, but public relations coups. Netwars have become strategic communications campaigns supported by guerilla and terrorist operations, according to Hammes in his *Military Review* article. The ultimate goal of the Taliban is not to attrite our own forces,

but to erode public support in the West through isolated attacks. Presence patrols turning into hasty attacks in case of an ambush and reconnaissance-in-force operations are not an effective way of defeating the terrorists. Hasty attacks require time (although very little time) to prepare, which is more than enough that the enemy needs to fade away in an environment very often hostile to NATO forces. Moreover, the attacker always retains the momentum and the initiative. No matter how well-prepared, well-equipped and well-led we are, we will invariably be caught off balance.

NATO doctrine, as it is taught in infantry schools in the West, stresses the importance of reaction: “react to enemy fire,” “win the firefight” once attacked, etc. These drills are very useful when one is dealing with static or quasi-static forces. But when you’re fighting an enemy whose main characteristic is mobility, they are ineffective. To paraphrase Einstein: yes, the question is always the same: how can I defeat the enemy? The answer is different depending on the nature of the enemy. Netwars will be won not by those seeking battle, but by those avoiding it until a crushing blow can be delivered to the enemy when he is vulnerable and exposed. Even forces involved in HIC, such as the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS applied this principle.

In his book *Panzergranadier Divisions*,



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Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment take cover after being fired upon during a mounted patrol in the Farah province of Afghanistan August 2, 2008.

1939-45, Chris Bishop wrote, "As late as 1942, the U.S. Army analysis of German offensive doctrine was that its primary aim was to encircle the enemy and destroy him. 'The objective of the combined arms in attack,' a staff paper concluded, 'is to bring the armoured forces and the infantry into decisive action against the enemy with sufficient firepower and shock. Superiority in force and firepower, the employment of armoured forces, as well as the surprise element play a great part in the offensive.' The truth was very different. German tactics did everything they could to avoid a decisive engagement, relying on speed and flexibility to wreak havoc in enemy rear areas. ...The Germans substituted mobility for power..."

Just like the Taliban, in order to defeat them, we need to be invisible but still present: invisible when they need to find and strike us; present when we need to destroy them.

Applying such a tenet is not feasible as long as we do not know the location of enemy lines of communications and his rear areas. Therefore, the responsibility for defeating the Taliban cannot be placed entirely on infantrymen's shoulders; it also rests with the Intelligence branch. Furthermore, before implementing a strategy, one has to be clearly defined. And that is beyond the control of the "lowly" infantryman.

At this point, a few key concepts (guerilla warfare, netwars, 4GW) and the affiliation they share need to be clarified. Guerilla warfare is always the strategy adopted by the weaker side, in quantifiable advantages such as equipment, technology, and training. The ultimate goal of the weaker side is to convince its adversary that it cannot win. It usually achieves this through attrition, both human and material. Severely attrited, the strong side eventually realizes that victory has become too expensive (financially and politically), as it concedes defeat. The problem with such an approach is that the perception of attrition is relative: some generals and/or politicians are willing to accept higher costs than others. But the guerillas know that public opinion has a lower tolerance for casualties than many politicians or generals; so instead of letting them concede defeat, the weaker side simply short circuits the (strategic chess) board by manipulating public opinion. And this is where 4GW comes into play. 4GW uses the information revolution (media, the Internet) to win wars. Guerilla warfare encompasses the tactics leading to military victory. 4GW is about politically exploiting it in an efficient way. Netwars focus primarily on organizational aspects. Guerilla warfare, netwars, and 4GW are far from being synonyms, but they are complementary concepts. Therefore, the technology involved in 4GW through the information revolution should not prevent us from carefully studying the organizational aspects of the Taliban and al Qaeda and from adapting to their tactics. Personally, I prefer the terminology "netwars," since "guerilla warfare" is too broad of a term, while "4GW" focuses too much on the political facets of military conflicts and can be confusing.

Since the end of the World War I, scores of historians and military analysts agree on the fact that the monumental wastage of human resources during that particular conflict could have being avoided by technological innovation, namely the mass production of tanks. Ever since, technology is perceived as a militarily universal panacea.

The Missing Story

The term fourth generation warfare can be misleading for another



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A U.S. Marine convoy travels through the Helmand province of Afghanistan in May 2008.

reason: it implies that netwars are something new, unique, something with which Western armies have never dealt before (that is true only to the extent to which we overlay 4GW and the information revolution). The consequence of such an assumption is the neglect of past military experiences, dating back to the colonial wars of the 19th century. Military history is a priceless source of inspiration, such as the 1830 French invasion of Algeria. This is just one of the best examples.

Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo and his subsequent exile on Saint Helena prompted Louis XVIII's second restoration to the throne of France. The new monarch proved to be almost as unpopular as had been his brother, Louis XVI, who was beheaded during the French Revolution. Upon his death, Charles X became king of France. He was faced with the daunting task of reestablishing the prestige of the monarchy. The French monarch sought to do that by invading Algeria.

The Regency of Algiers was a relatively autonomous political entity within the Ottoman Empire. In 1830, France took advantage of its military weakness and successfully invaded the country. The attack and ensuing occupation made Algeria a French colony governed by high-ranking army officers.

Many Algerians were not happy with their new political status and, under the guidance of various leaders, (Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Muhyi ad Din, etc.) violently resisted the occupation. Arguably, the most successful of all the rebels was Muhyi ad Din's son, Abd al-Qadir.

Abd al-Qadir asserted himself as Amir al-Muminin, commander of the faithful, and declared jihad against the French. His rebellion

proved catastrophic for the colonial administration. The Algerian marauder used guerilla war, a type of conflict with which the French should have been familiar, seeing as in Spain between 1808 and 1814 and again during the Spanish Civil War of 1820-23, they were confronted with roughly the same tactics. But the French army had learned nothing from the past.

During the initial stages of the occupation, the French tried to militarily control Algeria by placing a multitude of garrisons, forts and outposts all over the country. The only way to supply them was by sending slow moving, highly visible, and therefore vulnerable convoys.

Geographically, Algeria is extremely diverse: the southern part is deserts with immense areas of sand dunes, while the northern part is dissected into mountains, plains, and basins. Numerous gorges, cliffs, defiles and sharp turns also created natural barriers or ambush points. Consequently, with the French lines of communication being so exposed, the resupply "soft units" were easy targets for al-Qadir's raiders. Thus, the garrisons scattered all over the country lacked most amenities and munitions. Morale was extremely low. Al-Qadir even went as far as besieging and destroying isolated outposts. Virtual impunity to his ambush and hit-and-run actions encouraged him. As for the French soldiers, when they were not killed by the insurgents, they wasted away in outposts "torn by human conflict brought on by boredom — fighting, insanity, even suicides and self-mutilation," according to Douglas Porch in his book *The French Foreign Legion, A Complete History of the Legendary Fighting Force*.

The French fought back by sending troops to deal with al-Qadir's insurgents. Long, slow-moving columns were hampered in their advance by heavy artillery and sluggish wagons carrying ammunition and food, senselessly tried to find an enemy that did not want to be found. Since the movement of wagons required good roads and because there were only a few in Algeria, the itinerary of the French was predictable. The raiders were ambushing the columns since they knew where to find them. The heavily armed columns were too slow to effectively fight a highly mobile army of insurgents.

The high-ranking French army officers were confronted with a military problem that

is all too familiar to NATO commanders in Afghanistan: how does an army burdened by modern equipment designed for continental warfare efficiently fight a war in a country with limited, if any, infrastructure, against a highly mobile, almost invisible enemy using hit-and-run tactics?

Marshal Bugeaud had the answer. Bugeaud's appointment as governor general and commander in chief of all French armed forces in Algeria came as a surprise for many of his contemporaries. He was vehemently opposed to the occupation of Algeria. Regardless, as soon as he stepped on Algerian soil, he started to work feverishly on an effectual counterinsurgency strategy.

Thomas Robert Bugeaud de la Piconnerie realized that the main advantage of his enemy was mobility. This was the decisive feature that made the insurgents ghostlike, allowing them to melt into the environment. Hence, the only way to defeat al-Qadir was to make the French troops at least as mobile. One of Bugeaud's first decisions was to get rid of all heavy artillery. The decision met opposition from fellow senior officers.

In his book, Porch wrote, "...the general called the officers in his tent and lectured them on their mistakes: 'You drag thousands of wagons and heavy artillery with you which slows your movements,' he told them. 'Rather than surprise the Arabs with rapid, offensive marches, you stay on the defensive, marching slowly. Your enemies follow you and attack at their convenience. All this is going to change!' (...) 'To begin with, no more heavy artillery, no more of these heavy wagons, no more of these enormous forage trains... The convoys will be on mule back and the only cannons permitted will be light ones.' (...) The overwhelming opinion among the officers was that, by abandoning his heavy artillery, Bugeaud had just set out a recipe for collective suicide."

The brass' opposition to Bugeaud's measures was understandable though. After all, during Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt, heavy artillery proved to be a decisive factor in the defeat of the Mamluks. And since Al-Qadir's forces were not much different in their organization, skills and equipment from the Mamluk's, getting rid of all heavy artillery seemed irrational. What those resisting Bugeaud's measures ignored was the fact that unlike the Mamluks, Arab and Arabized Berber tribesmen were not on the battlefield long enough to allow the French

the deployment of their heavy artillery.

Western armies fighting colonial wars usually had the blind belief that mere technological superiority will give them an edge in battle, and that serious operational and tactical considerations can be replaced by technological innovations. This proved to be a sound mentality only when their opponents fought conventionally.

Bugeaud replaced all heavy artillery with light artillery carried by mules. He removed the burdensome backpacks of the infantrymen and placed most of the equipment on mule or camel backs. He also discarded all wagons, closed down some of outposts, forts and garrisons, multiplied the number of patrols while reducing their numbers. With an unrelenting pace of march, freed from previous physical burdens, the new French columns became more mobile than the Arab and Arabized Berber insurgents. The strategy made it impossible for al-Qadir's insurgents to move or to recruit tribesmen, as the French "flying columns," as they were called, were nearly everywhere, almost omnipresent. It also stopped the ambushes (there was nothing to ambush anymore), especially since Bugeaud's light and swift troops were no longer road-bound. It was this strategy that led to al-Qadir's complete defeat.

In Conclusion

In order to adapt to the challenges it faces in Afghanistan, the infantry has to reassess its tactics, organization and equipment. Tactics-wise, there are numerous lessons to be learned from the flawed 1830 French invasion of Algeria and from the successful implementation of innovative measures by Marshal Bugeaud. Trying to control a hostile territory by placing outposts, bases and garrisons at various strategic positions is a mistake. The inherent problem with any structure lies in its immobility.

Immobile should be defined as visible (vulnerable), likely to be the target of observation, of analysis and the subsequent and inevitable (if confronted with a resolute enemy) attack. The temptation of staying on the defensive is understandable; however, there are reasons for which Western armies fighting guerrilla wars prefer this particular approach. Defense is easier than attack, since it needs less organization, less movement, fewer communications channels and smaller numbers. Moreover, in an unsafe environment where the locals

have shifting loyalties, units on the defensive can create a relatively safe haven, being able, among other things, to take advantage of any natural protection the terrain has to offer. Furthermore, a force staying on the defensive is less casualty-prone. But it should be remembered, however, that no army won a battle by staying on the defensive. At some point a successful offensive has to be organized, at a strategic level.

Outposts and isolated bases should be built for two reasons: for supplying counterinsurgency units and as traps for insurgents, to force battle upon a ghostlike enemy using hit-and-run tactics. Nonetheless, this strategy is particularly risky and it can backfire, as it did at Dien Bien Phu. It should also be noted that, when used as a resupplying post, an outpost could succumb to enemy attacks if the counterinsurgency forces using it do not operate with sufficient aggressiveness in the adjacent area.

When confronting guerrilla forces, particularly in countries with limited infrastructure, roads are to be avoided at all costs. In a way, infrastructure is very similar to an outpost. It is static, exposed and used by conventional troops. It is also more vulnerable than any structure, lacking any protection against insurgents using it for ambushes.

When invading a country, reliable HUMINT is of paramount importance. Crushing technological preeminence, along with superior conventional training and equipment, is no panacea, and it is certainly not a surrogate for good human intelligence. It is also insufficient in confrontations with warlike and unorganized peoples living in a state of perpetual anarchy.

Bugeaud's use of light infantry when dealing with insurgents was at the core of his success. Arguably, special operations forces were the most successful units in Afghanistan. Many attributed their success to training, resilience, and fierceness. This is only partially true. Special operations forces were not only efficient because they were tough, but because they used the right approach (in terms of tactics and organization). Only units shaped in the likeness of guerrilla forces can defeat an enemy fighting unconventionally.

The key to victory in Afghanistan lies not only in the firm control of the ground. It also depends on the ability of all sides involved (government forces, NATO troops, non-governmental organizations, etc.) to present a unified political will and a unified military command. A comprehensible strategy with clearly defined objectives is also necessary. On the security side, round-the-clock saturation patrols carried out by light troops making use of reliable HUMINT will allow us to gain and retain control of the more problematic countryside. This approach is not new; it has been successfully implemented by U.S. Marines in Somalia before the situation deteriorated after U.N. forces took over.

"...saturation patrolling allowed us to gain control of Mogadishu. These tactics made use of the strengths of our Marines. They did well as 'beat cops' getting to know the neighborhoods they patrolled. They learned who should and should not be there. Their constant presence allowed a semblance of normalcy to return to the streets of Mogadishu and the outlying cities," wrote Hammes in *The Sling and the Stone*.

Aggressive saturation patrols would be an ideal deterrent against insurgents. This type of patrol has been more often than not associated with law enforcement. In the Afghani context, saturation patrols should be conducted exclusively by infantry units (preferably at section level). Such units should "hover" around villages,

discreetly observing local routines and patterns of behavior. Contact with the residents is to be made only after extensive knowledge is gained on the local activities. Inquiries should be conducted by the patrols not for the purpose of collecting information, but for the purpose of ascertaining the credibility of the locals. That is why prior information unnoticeably collected is of vital importance. If it is concluded that the inhabitants of a certain village are hiding something from NATO troops, the reason has to be known: is it fear, willing collaboration with the Taliban, transactions involving drugs? If it is confirmed that a village provides any kind of support to the insurgents, immediate action is to be taken against it. This is how we can get to the enemy's lines of communications. Movement and combat have to be carried out at night with observation during the day.

To be successful, NATO infantry forces have to become tactically more mobile and significantly more independent from centralized command. Its lines of communications will have to be considerably shortened. Burdensome equipment will have to be discarded, as some of it hampers freedom of movement. The utility of helmets, ballistic plates, vests, heavy communication devices and considerable quantities of ammunition will have to be reassessed. The practice of invariably conducting small-unit offensive operations by using the routine of fire and movement (a part of the unit provides a "base of fire" which compels the enemy to keep his head down, while a separate fraction maneuvers to take advantage of a guarded line of approach) has to be revised. Mobility and marksmanship will have to be privileged over firepower. Instead of engagement, avoidance is to be used. Hovering around the enemy and harassing him are practices that should be encouraged, instead of direct confrontation.

During saturation and recce patrols, raids and ambushes, creativity should be favored over drills, finesse over overwhelming firepower. The abusive utilization of vehicles is to be avoided as much as possible, especially infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), as they are conspicuous and out-of-place in the Afghan countryside. Achieving mobility while being dismounted is no easy task, and caution is key. Light armored vehicles (such as the LAV III) should only be used in reconnaissance roles. By circulating along certain routes, they could also be used to simulate lines of communications, where insurgents placing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) could later be ambushed. This way a known weakness could be transformed into a major strength.

Netwars have wide strategic-operational consequences. Planning, preparation, concentration and deployment are no longer major concerns. Logistics has become a key issue. The new kind of conflict also changed the basic requirements for the infantryman. Service in the infantry is not unskilled labor. Recruitment centers should enlist the brightest minds in the infantry. In Afghanistan the job requires a person for whom not only is combat like a second nature, but who is at the same time a PR consultant, a social assistant, and an intelligence officer.

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