Moving Beyond
Force-on-Force Planning

by James Cricks

> ***"The commander should wargame each tentative COA [course of action] against the most probable and the most dangerous adversary COAs (or most difficult objectives in noncombat operations) identified through the JIPOE [Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment] process."***
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> ***—Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operational Planning***

There was a time when the prevailing thought was that the world was flat. That construct seemed logical to most people, even educated ones. It is difficult now to imagine the earth as a disk floating in water with the sky above. There is a similar flaw in current military planning for operations that focus solely on friendly and adversary forces while ignoring other major players. The Blue Team (friendly forces) and Red Team (the adversary) construct, while useful for conventional wars of the past and the Cold War, has not adequately prepared U.S. forces for recent operations.

Various noncombatants and other third party players, including resident civilians; refugees; warring clans; ethnic minorities; religious competitors; employees of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); officials and technicians from international organizations (IOs), such as the UN and World Bank; international businessmen; and even competing gangs of criminals complicate today's battlefields. These disparate groups of players or "neutrals" constitute the majority of people in any war zone and receive scant attention in the American military planning process. A new planning process must be created to better account for these neutrals in the complex environment of modern warfare.

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High Cost for Civilian Populations

U.S. forces need a new process to protect, assist, and cultivate civilians, particularly if Soldiers are to win their "hearts and minds" in ideologically- or religiously-driven insurgencies. Civilians account for the vast majority of casualties in modern armed conflict. "The safest place on the modern battlefield is to be in uniform," according to Ambassador Robert Seiple from the U.S. State Department. During the last first years of Operation Enduring Freedom to free Afghanistan from Taliban control, 1,268 U.S. and coalition (military/civilian) personnel have been killed; however, over 10,000 Afghan civilians have been killed.[1] The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan-Human Rights (UNAMA HR) recorded 2,412 civilian deaths in 2009 alone. That number appears to have been the highest toll of civilian deaths for any year since the fall of the Taliban regime but is not believed to be more than twice the average of the previous seven years.

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Similar dangers existed for civilians during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). As of August 2010, there were 4,421 U.S. (military/civilian) personnel killed during OIF. In contrast, the Iraq Family Health Survey conducted under the auspices of the World Health Organization estimated 151,000 civilian deaths were due to violence from March 2003 through June 2006 (the survey holds a 95 percent certainty range). The Brookings Institution estimated 118,631 deaths from May 2003 to April 2009.

Modern warfare also causes upheavals in civilian populations and generates large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. According to estimates by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 4.7 million Iraqis have been displaced since OIF began, and as of September 2008, some 38 percent of the 1.6 million internally displaced persons had not received any humanitarian assistance during their displacement. Today, Jordan and Syria are struggling with 2 million refugees who are reluctant to return to Iraq.[2] Historically, the world saw an even greater outflow of refugees from what is now Israel into neighboring areas, and from Afghanistan to Pakistan during Soviet operations in the 1980s. As is well known, the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Afghan Taliban began in the camps created by those refugees.

The Kosovo War also demonstrated the lack of attention that planners give to civilian needs on the battlefield. In the build up to war over Serbia's alleged violation of human rights in Kosovo, allied analysts and planners focused on the Serb military and potential military targets. They never fathomed that the Serbs would forcibly drive hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Muslims toward Albania and Macedonia. The movement of 863,000 Kosovar refugees had a dramatic impact on the fragile governments of those neighboring states and nearly precipitated their collapse. As a result, allied planners had to shift airlift and other resources from logistical combat support to humanitarian operations quickly which led to NATO's Operation Allied Harbour in 1999.

The lack of adequate advanced planning for Kosovar refugee support led to problems in coordinating U.S. Air Force and Army activities. While the Air Force was reacting to the worsening refugee situation, the U.S. Army was still following the original plan, deploying Task Force Hawk to conduct a ground offensive through the area the refugees were then occupying.[3] Instead of being empty

places, the battlefields were full of civilians caught between two warring sides. If Kosovar refugees had stayed in Albania and Macedonia after the war, they could have had an even greater, negative impact on regional stability by creating significant refugee communities.

At the end of 2009, there was an estimated 43.3 million people forcibly displaced worldwide.That number is rising because fewer refugees are returning to their home countries. UNHCR's António Guterres has noted that, "Major conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo show no signs of being resolved. Conflicts that had appeared to be ending or were on the way to being resolved, such as in southern Sudan or in Iraq, are stagnating."[4]

In addition to threats to civilian populations and the problems caused by refugees, military planners need to consider other noncombatants in war and stabilization zones. Recent statistical analysis on threats to aid workers worldwide published by the Overseas Development Institute reveals that attacks on humanitarian personnel, facilities, and assets have increased significantly in recent years. Host nation nationals, in particular local contractors of UN agencies and NGO staff, continue to be the most vulnerable, though there has also been a sharp increase in attacks on international staff in the past three years. In Iraq, the lack of acceptance of and threats to UN and NGO personnel by militia groups has resulted in heavy reliance on the remote management of humanitarian programs. Whether issues involve civilian populations, refugees, NGOs, or aid workers, military plans should address the needs of noncombatants on the battlefield and in the aftermath of war, or planners will pay for the long-term consequences.

Future Scenarios

In addition to planning better for the presence of third party players, the U.S. government should consider new types of threats forces might face in the future. The U.S. should consider, in particular, possible climate-change scenarios, their potential impacts on various populations, what role the military might be called upon to play, what scale of military and interagency resources might be required, and how roles might change through time.

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For example, to enhance training, military planners might develop a scenario that deals with the consequences of a severe drought in a place like Darfur or the Sahel. In this drought scenario:

- Populations would move from more arid to less arid areas, resulting in fierce competition for scarce water between the migrants and resident farmers and ranchers.
- Severe wind storms would damage crops.
- People would largely have to fend for themselves or rely on aid provided by international organizations.
- Rival gangs would prey on all parties and disrupt the distribution of humanitarian aid.
- Food riots would occur.
- Religious leaders with links to terrorist organizations would become more prominent and use strong anti-Western themes in their information campaigns.
- Unemployment would climb to an all-time high, with an expanding population losing hope.

- In addition to an ongoing AIDS epidemic, a cholera outbreak would occur and be exacerbated by poor personal hygiene and inadequate sanitation, refuse, sewage, and drainage systems.

Parts of Africa, in fact, have been dealing with these problems for decades and their situations could deteriorate further. Education at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College describes the current environment but does not fully prepare field-grade officers for dealing with these future planning problems.

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Where we are today

Over the last decade, national strategic planners and the military have increasingly recognized the need to address the needs of civilians in wartime and its aftermath, as well as to look at what new challenges they may face in the years and decades ahead. Changing methods, procedures, and operational principles—what the military calls doctrine—is difficult to accomplish in any organization and particularly difficult in one of over 1.4 million men and women, but the process has begun. As implied by the focus of this journal, planners are addressing federal interagency coordination as one step in changing doctrine. It is assumed that civilian departments working closely with the Department of Defense (DoD) will be better able both to define and address threats to national security than if DoD operates as a separate entity as it has in the past.

DoD Directive 3000.05 "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations" outlines how DoD fulfills its role as defined under National Security Presidential Directive 44, Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization. It notes that integrated civilian and military efforts are key to successful stability operations and charges the department to work closely with other U.S. government departments and agencies, foreign governments, global and regional international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector.

Counterinsurgency manuals (Army Field Manual 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5) stress that "civil considerations are often the most important factors" in planning military operations. They also note the requirement to focus on groups beyond the host nation and the adversary. Wayne Michael Hall, an American intelligence theorist, has outlined a holistic plan to think in complex environments by incorporating impressive techniques to create a more sophisticated mission analysis.[5] Major General Michael Flynn, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence in Afghanistan, acknowledged the problem that the U.S. has focused the overwhelming majority of collection efforts and analytical brainpower on insurgent groups and was unable to answer fundamental questions about other aspects of the operational environment.[6]

The operational planners at geographic combatant commands (GCC), such as the U.S. European Command, Pacific Command, and Central Command, have habitual relationships with a few interagency representatives. The State Department and intelligence agencies are usually represented by permanent personnel at each GCC. U.S. European Command, for example, has an integration planning cell that adds representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice, and

the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).[7] These interagency representatives vary widely in their expertise, on-going operations, and established relationships with the GCC. One of the most important roles of these representatives is to reach into their respective organizations to find subject matter experts.

The GCC may also have a "J9 staff group" or Interagency Directorate that engages and collaborates with international governmental and non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, think tanks, and other organizations.

Within the broader interagency community, the U.S. has Policy Coordination Committees (PCCs) at the strategic level within the NSC. The various interagency PCCs may include officers from the Departments of State, Treasury, Commerce, Labor, Defense, and others to coordinate the formulation and clarification of policy on particular issues. In addition to PCC working groups, the NSC established two special interagency groups to better coordinate the activities of the large commitments of U.S. military, reconstruction, and diplomatic contingents in Afghanistan and Iraq.[8] For DoD, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has the mission to integrate interagency and multinational partners into planning efforts as appropriate.

The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), utilizing its ties with UNHCR and others, has also assisted defense planners, to some degree. Much of the bureau's nearly $2 billion in humanitarian assistance programs involve conflicts and their aftermaths. These PRM programs directly support U.S. policy to stabilize and rebuild countries emerging from conflict and reduce the potential for renewed conflict, instability, and support for terrorism. Were PRM to broaden its efforts with the DoD to be more actively involved with operational planners, it could become a key asset in expanding the needed interagency planning process.

Current Doctrine

Given there is a general awareness at DoD and among all interagency partners for better coordination in pursuing national security interests on the battlefield and in other challenging arenas, actual progress has been slow. For example, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is responsible for developing the National Military Strategy, joint doctrine, policies, and procedures. Given the ancillary emphasis on interagency coordination, one might expect a good deal of interagency consultation by the chairman and his staff in producing such documents. Nonetheless, these documents are almost entirely developed within the military community. Weaknesses in interagency input and consultation are partially blamed on legislatively mandated timelines that larger interagency participation would make difficult to meet. In rare cases, DoD has made exceptional efforts to vet these documents with a range of potential critics and other

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interested parties. The writing and publication of FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 is an example of extensive coordination that has been highly-regarded across the government and academic communities.

Another area in which interagency coordination has progressed more slowly than desired has been the development of greater capacity in the civilian agencies to competently identify and express the needs, points of view, and challenges that might be presented by various noncombatants in war zones or chaotic humanitarian situations. To date, it is unclear if the State Department or USAID can or wish to fill this role. Some of their officers indicate they consider this mission to be beyond their organizations' charters and the capabilities of their representatives at military commands. Nonetheless, the role needs to be filled, and those agencies appear to be the most appropriate candidates. Accordingly, just as the military must make changes, so too should these agencies.

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Successful stabilization efforts that enable effective civilian government following conflict demand a better understanding of the concerns and perspectives of such groups as the specialized UN agencies, the Organization of African Unity, and other regional organizations and NGOs, as well as pillars of social power in the affected nations, including religious groups and tribal leaders. Who could possibly be (or become) better equipped within the interagency community to provide such information than the Department of State and its affiliate USAID? Without such information a military command is less likely to develop objectives, operations, and an end state in which peace and stability are assured. Joint Publication 5-0 directs geographic combatant commanders to work closely with civilian leadership to establish a clearly defined military end state, but for that process to be effective, the civilian side of the equation must evolve more than it has to date.

In partial response to this requirement and to bridge the gap until the civilian agencies could expand their capacities, legislation has required the military to set up joint interagency coordination groups (JIACGs). Each geographic combatant command has set up differently structured JIACGs, some with retired civil servants and Foreign Service officers and others with military officers who have experience working in other federal agencies. However they are structured, the objective of all the JIACGs has been to establish regular, timely, and collaborative working relationships between civilian and military operational planners at the GCC level. Joint Forces Command and U.S. European Command were drivers in these efforts to gain greater interagency participation. Unfortunately, JIACGs appear to have fallen out of favor while commanders continue to experiment with other organizations. No well-accepted organization has appeared.

Other Considerations

Gaining greater civilian interagency input on noncombatant or neutral issues is more than just an effort to gain additional technical capabilities. Human rights and other issues are appreciated differently in military and civilian circles. It is too simplistic to assert military planners will carry out civilian priorities, especially if civilians are not actively

involved at the planning level. Human rights opportunities, such as opening political prisons or developing gender protections, may be ignored in the operational calculus because they are not considered to be significant objectives by active duty military officers.

In 2004, the Triangle Institute for Security Studies Project on the Gap between the Military and American Society studied attitudes and found sharp differences when military connections were considered.[8] More than 35 percent of civilian nonveterans rated "promotion of human rights" to be a "very important" goal whereas less than 14 percent of active duty military officers shared this view. The use of force and initiation of a militarized dispute are other key aspects of courses of action which can be shaped differently by the addition of civilian viewpoints. Allowing active duty military planners to determine earlier phases of a plan does not make sense just because the military may have the largest role.

Getting non-military advice from a reasonably large pool of problem solvers will usually create better planning groups. Scott Page, a complex systems professor at the University of Michigan, discusses the power of this diversity dynamic for solving complex problems in his book *The Difference*. Page asserts that diversity is more important than homogenous ability because problem solvers improve iteratively upon previous work and take the process forward into new areas that were previously unexplored. Implicitly, Page is criticizing what is often called "stove piping" or the production of plans within a homogeneous or limited group, without much consultation or input from other, often affected groups or agencies. As previously discussed, stove piping has been a hallmark of military planning and of other agencies.

Many times the military has a short-term role when a crisis devolves into violence that in later years is followed by civilian-led implementation and compromise. Rationally, military and civilian leaders should not pursue stove-piped approaches but rather coordinate activities from the beginning, agree on objectives, and forge a strategy in which military actions improve rather than worsen the chances that the civilians will be able to achieve a stable, long-term peace. The Dayton Accords in Bosnia are examples in which NATO played a prominent but stove-piped role in the 1990s, and now civilian organizations, such as the European Union, are leading efforts to create a stable social structure. In the interest of security and perceived time constraints, military headquarters did not often consult with the European Union and other groups. The artistry of operations planning is finding an imaginative way to incorporate interagency, intergovernmental, international, NGO, and other insights without stalling the process.

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Creating stable jobs and self-sufficient economies should also be important strategic success criteria, if the government's aim is to work better with noncombatants and neutrals. As Carl Schramm ably commented in the May/June 2010 issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "The United States' experience with rebuilding economies in the aftermath of conflicts and natural disasters has evidenced serious shortcomings." Schramm recommends the U.S. military increase its competence in economics. Surely the interagency process should better address

economics in the aftermath of warfare, but one can question or disagree with the premise that the military should take on that responsibility. The proposal is reminiscent of the Secretary Rumsfeld-era project of independent intelligence analysis within the Pentagon and the pitfalls of disregarding expert opinions from outside DoD. Leadership in assisting economic development would seem better placed with the U.S. Treasury, USAID, or the Economic Bureau of the State Department.

Other Ideas

Considering multi-sided problems should place a priority on sharing ideas, sometimes in intellectually-uncomfortable international settings. These interactions should be both written and verbal. The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College strategic communication program provides a good model. Students are required to interact on a blog site and write an article. An uneducated Internet search during planning is a poor substitute for focused research and lacks the depth of knowledge necessary to plan a multi-year campaign. There are other methods beyond changing doctrine to increase opportunities:

- Partnerships. Linking officers with non-military personnel early in their careers establishes contacts and develops different perspectives. Ideas arise as much out of casual conversations as they do out of formal meetings. Innovation comes from the interactions of people at a comfortable distance from one another, neither too close nor too far.
- Annual conferences. Periodic meetings on important topics, possibly in a technology, entertainment, design (TED)-type setting bring together thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give presentations concerning significant issues. These presentations are later distributed without charge on the Internet and translated into fifty languages.

Conclusion

Current planning was well designed to face a Cold War adversary, but it has not evolved to deal with complex situations. Doctrine including Joint Publication 5-0 must be changed to ensure neutrals are better considered during course of action development and wargaming. This change will involve knowledge gathering from a wider variety of sources and developing imaginative ways to break down communication barriers (including classification of documents) that have inhibited participation. Military leaders must see the benefits in sharing information at an early stage and creating deeper interagency solutions. Non-military education must be a component in this process beginning with focused interaction at the company-grade level.

Some analysts have already considered the implications of neutral activities and changed their focus in Afghanistan. Their efforts may improve one theater, but joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment, operational design, and the joint operation planning process must be redefined across the military. To continue with a default look at two sides does not recognize the current reality. ***IAJ***

NOTES

1 <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>, accessed on September 16, 2010.

2 "Iraq: Latest Return Survey Shows Few Intending to Go Home Soon," UNHCR, April 29, 2008.

3 Bruce Nardulli et al., "Disjointed War: Military Operations in Kosovo, 1999," The Rand Corporation, 1999, p. 80.

4 "Number of Forcibly Displaced Rises to 43.3 Million Last Year, the Highest Level Since Mid-1990s," UNHCR, June 15, 2010.

5 Wayne Michael Hall and Gary Citrenbaum, *Intelligence Analysis: How to Think in Complex Environments*, Praeger Security International and Association of the United State Army Books, 2009.

6 Major General Michael T. Flynn, Captain Matt Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, "Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan," *Center for a New American Security*, January 4, 2010.

7 USEUCOM House and Senate Armed Services Committee testimony, 2010.

8 Alan G. Whittaker, Frederick C. Smith, and Elizabeth McKune, "The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System," Research Report, November 15, 2008 Annual Update. Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, U.S. Department of Defense. pp. 14-15.

9 Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2004, p. 38.