Rethinking the Subcomponents of World Order

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As we begin to imagine a post-Long War era, a renewed appreciation of the fundamental building blocks
of world order is required, with a greater focus on the tribe and other sub-, trans- and non-state entities.
Such subcomponents are not entirely unfamiliar to the student of classical realism; it was one of the
earliest sub-state entities, the *polis* of the ancient world with its markedly tribal approach to war, that kept
the Persian empire at bay despite its preponderance of military and economic power. While Alexander the
Great sought to impose a broader, indeed *universal* order upon the fractious world of the city-state and to
expand this universal order by conquest across the vast Persian empire, his effort was premature, entirely
too dependent upon the military, diplomatic, and political skills of its lone philosopher-king to endure; but
it planted the seed that would later become Rome, a more enduring and mature system that emerged in the
Hellenized footprint of Alexander's march, one of the first efforts by mankind to tame the anarchy of
world politics. After Rome's fall and the medieval chaos that followed, a new, more modest vision of
sovereignty would arise, in smaller units that corresponded to the emergent nation-state that after
Westphalia would supplant the frontier tribe and civilized city-states as the core building block of world
order.

But now, in our chaotic post-Cold War world, our primary military challenge has been presented, at least
since 9/11, by what David Kilcullen has called a *virtual state*, a globalized insurgency by a non-state
entity that aspires to overthrow the Westphalian order altogether and replace it with a neo-medieval
system in the footprint of the old Caliphate that once stood on the territories of the eastern Roman Empire,
the portion governed from Byzantium that endured long after the western Roman Empire had collapsed
under the dual pressures of external assault and internal decay. Our opponent aspires to overthrow the
very order composed of nation-states, and in our effort to meet this challenge we are finding the key
battlegrounds are weak and failed states where the Westphalian order never truly established firm roots.

In these frontier regions, we are finding clans, sects and tribes remain the most enduring units of political
order and the most viable subcomponents for us to weave together into a coalition of the willing – not an
alliance of free states like that which fought against Saddam in the desert war of 1991 or which stood side
by side against the Soviet threat throughout the Cold War, or which bravely rolled back the invading
forces of both the Nazi and Imperial Japanese empires – but of determined tribal entities that equally
oppose the neo-medieval vision of Islamist insurgents under Al Qaeda's banner of theological liberation.
Like the tribes of the Americas that were eventually conquered by force but which now find sovereign
expression as part of the more tolerant modern states that have emerged to govern the New World, these

new partners are diminutive, but nonetheless essential, and despite their small size their endurance across the ages is testimony to their strength. Like the quantum power unleashed when the atom was split, and a veritable tsunami of energy was released from the tiniest of specks of matter, these rugged tribal units are often stronger than the larger states that have long asserted sovereignty over their homelands. And it is to them that we must turn in partnership as we try to imagine a new order that looks beyond the artifice of the state, to a more durable edifice of world order.

International relations, and in particular its realist tradition, has for much of the post-Westphalia period been state-centric, since in modernizing Europe, the nation-state became the dominant unit in the European, and soon global, international order. As a consequence, modern international relations theory has followed from the European experience, positing the state as the foundational unit of world order. But this has not always been the case, even in Europe – and much less so elsewhere in the world. In fact, the current global asymmetry, while a break from the post-Westphalian tradition as understood through a western lens, is not as discontinuous with history as seen from other vantage points, whether from the tribal perspective along the modern state's fringes, or from the southern hemisphere where the modern states was itself imposed from the north, with traditional boundaries between languages and peoples often ignored, sometimes intentionally as a result of divide-and-conquer colonial policies. The tribe-state fault line is thus important for an accurate understanding of world order; but it is but one fault line in the complex sub-state topology of world politics. The real challenge for us is understanding how to assemble the sub-state components into states, and what sorts of sovereign units will make for a more durable world order. As with the debate over Iraq's future (and indeed, its existence during the darkest days of the war) as with the current debate over Syria's future, the answer is far from obvious. Indeed, it requires an understanding of the quantum level of world order, knowledge of the very foundational fabric of world politics.

Most modern international relations theory posited the state as the foundation of world order, with an international "system" in which they struggled to survive; during the Cold War, the "system" came to surpass the sub-systemic components to some, known as the "neorealists" or "structural realists" who became wedded to the very mechanisms of international order that they theorized about. As a consequence, even smaller units such as the solitary and foundational individual, the archetypical "man" at the starting point of Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State, and War*, and small aggregations of men below the threshold of the state like the clan, sect or tribe, were all but ignored. But it was these sub-systemic components that would come to define the conflicts of both the immediate post-Cold War period, and the Long War. And once can expect that that they will continue to be enormously influential, especially as new information networks like the Internet, the proliferation of social networking sites, self-publishing tools like blogs, and other platforms around which smaller groups can coalesce, fostering their unity.

Waltz became famous for his three images, around which the three distinct levels of analysis coalesce, defining the architecture of world order and consigning all sub-state forces to the second or first image. But the sub-state dimensions of the world order are in fact more durable, and while not always sovereign or independent, they are sometimes nearly so, enough so that in times of conflict, they emerge as driving causal catalysts. At this level, causality can be said to be rooted in what I have described as the "fourth image."[1] It need not always be tribal. There is the smaller clan, the extended family network so powerful in pre-state indigenous societies, and the ethereal sect, as we saw during Christianity's fractious origins, and like we see today in the many Islamist and Jihadist movements and groups organized along sectarian lines. Clan, tribe, sect may be all thought of as members of the fourth image, sub-state but causally distinct and politically and militarily efficacious. But they are also different, especially the sect, since this is a spiritual or theological distinction, albeit one that can be mapped to tribal or clan identity in many cases.

In the process of exploring the underlying sub-components of world order, I have developed a new taxonomy that is distinct from but ontologically linked to the perennial levels of analysis concept (famously described by J. David Singer as the "levels of analysis problem in international relations" in his 1961 *World Politics* article[2] of the same title), whether Singer's two-level framework proposed therein, or Waltz's more famous three images as presented in his seminal 1959 work, *Man, the State, and War*, and which Singer himself found to be illuminating but unnecessarily restricted to a discussion of causality of war; as Singer noted, "An important pioneering attempt to deal with some of the implications of one's level of analysis, however, is Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, New York, 1959. But Waltz restricts himself to a consideration of these implications as they impinge on the question of the causes of war."[3] Singer also noted that "during the debate between 'realism' and 'idealism' the analytical implications of the various levels of analysis received only the scantiest attention; rather the emphasis seems to have been at the two extremes of pragmatic policy and speculative metaphysics."[4] Just as Singer and Waltz found some order of methodological clarity in their discussions of the levels of analysis, we may turn to them to help organize our thinking on this quantum level of world politics operating in the sub-systemic, and often in the sub-state, realm.

Singer ties the levels of analysis problem back to the fundamental issue of ambiguity in assessing causality in international politics, returning to the riddle addressed by the quantum theorists who probed the seemingly chaotic and at times baffling world within the atom, where uncertainty reigned, and where limits to not only human knowledge and perception but to causal certainty itself, which seemed to be resolved so neatly in the Newtonian world far above, but which at the micro-level was at heart unresolved and full of ambiguities. The problem is not so much the boundary between order and chaos as argued by the complexity and chaos theorists but rather between what is knowable (and thus predictable) and what is inherently not (and thus forever uncertain but not necessarily chaotic). This riddle of inherent ambiguity, with every bit as much salience as found in quantum theory, is what ultimately confronts the theorist of international politics, and perhaps was best understood by the classical realists and their idealist counterparts who took a leap of faith and tied their theory to a fundamental view of human nature, rooting international causality, ultimately, in the human heart, the ultimate sub-state level of analysis, and endeavoring to nurture forth a more ordered world nonetheless. Singer reminds us that, importantly, "the problem is really not one of deciding which level is most valuable to the discipline as a whole and then demanding that it be adhered to from now unto eternity. Rather, it is one of realizing that there *is* this preliminary conceptual issue and that it must be temporarily resolved prior to any given research undertaking. And it must also be stressed that we have dealt here only with two of the more common orientations, and that many others are available and perhaps even more fruitful potentially than either of those selected here."[5] He thus opens the door to a further granularity in the levels of analysis, suggesting potential for analytical levels below the national state, a hint that looking inward, and not outward to the broader international system as Waltz and the neorealists did, may prove fruitful in time: Singer thus writes, "Moreover, the international system gives many indications of prospective change, and it may well be that existing institutional forms will take on new characteristics or that new ones will appear to take their place. As a matter of fact, if incapacity to perform its functions leads to the transformation or decay of an institution, we may expect a steady deterioration and even ultimate disappearance of the national state as a significant actor in the world political system. However, even if the case for one or another of the possible levels of analysis cannot be made with any certainty, one must nevertheless maintain a continuing awareness as to their use."[6]

The sub-state realm is not new to theorists of international relations, though the intensity of focus since 9/11 on non-state actors suggests an entirely new level of analysis, but it is only the realization of this sub-state level's importance that is newly rediscovered; since 1959, it has been known by many as Waltz's

first image, or part of Singer's sub-systemic but imperfectly named ("national state") level of analysis. In his comparison of his two primary levels of analysis, the international system and the national state, he writes, reminiscent of Waltz's concluding thoughts in *Man, the State, and War* and of his later elaboration in *Theory of International Politics*, "In terms of description, we find that the systemic level produces a more comprehensive and total picture of international relations than does the national or sub-systemic level. On the other hand, the atomized and less coherent image produced by the lower level of analysis is somewhat balanced by its richer detail, greater depth, and more intensive portrayal."[7] Intriguingly, Waltz's later work, which laid the foundation for neorealism and which embraced the third image for its causal primacy, and which postulated an ordering effect induced systemically by the ubiquity of international anarchy, mirrored the dual-image presented Singer nearly two decades earlier, and which similarly saluted the comprehensiveness and the totality of the picture provided by the systemic level, while noting the granularity of the subsystemic level (which was not without importance, even in its lack of comprehensiveness.)

If we step back to the foundational "trinity of war" so many attribute to Clausewitz (and which as a theoretical structure permeated his work, punctuating it with numerous manifestations of trinitarianism), or further back to the three pillars of order enunciated by Machiavelli in his separate works aimed at separate readers, or even further back to the three pillars of order that brought stability to Plato's just city in his *Republic*, we can see elements of the levels of analysis problem, especially so in Clausewitz's work whose trinity of war interconnected the subsystemic (i.e., domestic political as well as human emotional) dynamics with the systemic (the surface boundary of the battlespace, in which two nations, two armies, and two commanders come face to face, with eddies of chaos, an infusion of friction and fog, to disrupt any expectation of linear outcome, as Beyerchen has noted eloquently in his work.) Clausewitz thus grasped not only the ambiguity of the levels of analysis but the supreme importance of charting their boundaries and knowing their limits, something Machiavelli likely comprehended as well, even if his theoretical presentation was, owing to its early-modern emergence, less sophisticated (and therefore, less nonlinear). But the endurance of the levels of analysis problem, and its connection to the famous trinity of war, or as I call here, the trinity of order that defined the western polity and which has endured the passage of two millennia and the evolution from the polis to the modern state (and its fragmentation in some quarters), is notable. If we look to Waltz's famous three images, we can see in them a familiarity, an echo of Clausewitz's trinitarian structure. Indeed, Waltz's three images may be understood as a reformulation of the Clausewitzian trinity, and which convey their interactive complexity (as noted by Beyerchen in his discussion of the complex, nonlinear movement of the pendulum caught between the magnetic fields of three magnets). The key connecting thread is the inherent ambiguity of causality, which the commander had to contend with in a life-or-death manner, not unlike the strategic theorists of the nuclear age, who also knew that a similar ambiguity (as seen in the doctrinal debates between the pure deterrence theorists and the "warfighters" who came to believe their threats were more credible and thus less likely to be challenged.) The enduring ambiguity, as articulated by Waltz in his early articulation of the three images in his dissertation and his classic *Man, the State and War* more so than in his later articulation of neorealism in *Theory of International Politics*, and also reflected in Singer's thoughtful (and in many ways prescient) discussion in his 1961 *World Politics* article, which in a very eloquent nutshell contains the essence of the neorealist argument, must not be overlooked.

Even as neorealism sought to scale back the reach of ambiguity, identifying a greater causal probability if not outright causal certainty in the third image, it never slayed this Jabberwock, leaving us with the unresolved riddle of ambiguity that faced Clausewitz as well as the quantum theorists who, through their perseverance and open minds, helped give birth to the nuclear age. As Waltz tried to narrow the reach of ambiguity, emphasizing one level of analysis above the others (in contrast to Singer's more balanced

approach or even Waltz's own earlier approach), he imagined a system that was, at heart, unbalanced, and which proved unstable. This instability becomes evident if we imagine the Waltzian images as counterparts to Clausewitz's trinity of war. Waltz eloquently articulated a trinitarian balance inherent in the three images, with man, state and war largely corresponding to levels of analysis (the individual level, national level, and systemic level) much the way Clausewitz described the trinity of war, with the people (the aggregation of the many individuals who define the first image and who in their collectivity become the *demos* or popular will, the embodiment of the nation but separate from the institutional structures of the state), the government (the structures of governance that defined the state or the sovereign), and the armed forces (the agent of war that operated at the boundary between competing states, sometimes marching across these borders, where they might interact with the raw popular will, which when armed for insurgent resistance as Napoleon learned in Portugal and Spain, and again in Russia can prove to be a lethal as a regular army.) The interaction of these three pillars takes place both within the domestic political space, as well as in the more anarchic international arena, and sometimes in the enemy's domestic political space; the result can be a complex series of outcomes, from the conventional clash of battle to popular insurgency, with countless variables to consider.

The core pillars of order, the balanced relationship defined by the people, the state, and the armed forces, are found in all manner of states and even many sub-state polities, from the sectarian and tribal militia-dominated neighborhoods of insurgent-plagued Iraq, to the tribal militia-dominated enclaves of Afghanistan, not to mention other ethnically complex weak states such as Burma, where numerous ethnic and tribal militias limit the reach of the national government. Clausewitz's trinity, in essence, defines the limits of sovereignty: where people, state or sub-state governing entities, and armed force find a balance, an organic equilibrium is achieved that defines a stable sovereign boundary inside of which there is domestic order of some sort. Where any one of these pillars fails to achieve balance with the others, we find instability; for instance, the ideological fanaticism of the Nazi Party induced a dangerous expansion of German military power, well beyond the traditional confines of the nation-state and in marked contrast to the more limited ambitions of Frederick the Great, who sought largely to unify Prussia into a cohesive and geographically contiguous polity. Similarly, the revolutionary fervor unleashed by Napoleon and the magnification of military power by his levee en masse similarly led to an over-extension, with his military power expanding well past the point where a natural equilibrium of people, state and armed forces could be sustained (hence the rapidity of the collapse of his European empire, with the same speed and tragic scale of destruction as experienced with the Nazi collapse.) Interestingly, closer to our own time, the Soviet collapse, which unfolded with a similar rapidity, occurred without the same level of physical destruction, in part because its collapse was brought on by the reunification of the people and the armed forces, two core pillars of Clausewitz's trinity, leaving the Soviet state in a state of fatal frailty. It was well-armed, perhaps too well-armed, for the price it paid to maintain strategic parity with the West deprived the East Bloc's populace of the same quality of life experienced on the other side of the Iron Curtain, resulting in the mass defection of popular support during Gorbachev's loosening of state controls, when dissent was tolerated for the first time in a generation—and with it went the support of the armed forces, which sided with the people against the state and led to a Gandhian-styled restoration of independence without violence or force. Just as the Soviet system over-emphasized strategic military power and in so doing became vulnerable to a popular insurgency, the world imagined by the international relations theorists and in particular the neorealists proved equally overcommitted to strategic military structures, leaving the fundamental trinity of power unbalanced and at risk of rapid destabilization.

Waltzian neorealism saw order in anarchy, but misread the central importance of uncertainty in anarchy, and the dangers therein. As Clausewitz observed in the wake of Napoleon, the trinity of war was both remarkably complex, but at the same time essential to the maintenance of order; imbalances in any one of

the three core pillars could prove catastrophic, and thus the apparent order enjoyed at such high cost (and grave risk to humanity's very survival) during the Cold War evaporated with a suddenness that few theorists of our time had predicted, but which Clausewitz may well have understood intuitively, knowing that a grand convergence of interconnected causal factors at various levels of analysis had taken place—just as it did in his own time. The order that the neorealists imagined was, in many ways, a period of profound disorder, and the chaos many saw at the Cold War's end, may in fact be a grand restoration of order as sovereignty itself finds a more organic and hence sustainable equilibrium. Indeed, the Cold War's brief bipolar order was in large measure a synthetic construct, and was thus destined to be ephemeral. The world that is now re-emerging and has been emergent since the Soviet collapse has the potential to be more organically sound, structurally balanced, and, if fortune smiles upon our generation, durable.

Restoring World Order, One Tribe at a Time

Coalition warfare with sub-state tribal allies has become an increasingly important method to ensure victory in the Long War, especially in the numerous complex border regions where the assertion of state sovereignty remains most muted, and where the roots of protracted conflict remain most firmly planted. Here we encounter a boundary zone between state and tribe that is akin to a highly porous membrane in whose myriad nooks and crannies, tribal sovereignty remains unextinguished well into the third century since Westphalia. These enduring tribal zones define the new front lines in the Long War, formerly known as the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and more described as a series of interconnected Overseas Contingency Operations by Obama Administration policymakers eager to distance themselves from their predecessors, but whose aspiration to disaggregate marks a sharp contrast to the aspirational virtual state Al Qaeda has long sought to construct at a regional level, suggesting our opponents, for all their division, are united by a grand strategy that is as real as their desired neocaliphate is virtual. Viewed from the Obama White House, these conflicts seem to have little in common with one another, and can be wound down according to a fixed time-table determined by the domestic U.S. election calendar. Viewed from the mountain strongholds of Al Qaeda central, however, the struggle remains a very Long War waged for a clear goal: the formation of a new form of sovereignty, one that is trans-state and theocratic – nothing short of a full medieval restoration across the Islamic world.

When viewed from on high, the Long War's scattered zones of conflict present numerous commonalities, and even while as diverse as they are dispersed, they may be effectively viewed as a single theater of operations, which we could describe as global operations in tribal territories where sovereignty is still defined by ethnic identity at the sub-state level. A comparative look at the ideas that undergird the great theorists of popular insurgency, the revolutionists against modernity itself, has yielded much food for thought – whether Gandhi's nonviolent, people-powered movement against British rule; Mao's now classical approach to guerrilla strategy placing it along a progressive tactical/strategic/grand strategic continuum; Bin Laden's jihadist model of insurgency as a "Holy War" against both colonial rule and western secularism; even the indigenous Zapatista movement, one of the first post-Cold War rebellions against the modern state in what has been described as the world's first "netwar," presenting a template for tribal rebellion that can help inform our current efforts to restore order to the GWOT's tribal zones. Most of GWOT's battlespaces are along porous borders where sub- and trans-state tribes continue to live a largely traditional lifestyle, and where state sovereignty remains a figment of the mapmaker's imagination. In these tribal zones, governance remains a tribal affair with age-old systems and structures in place to ensure a social and political order. While sometimes described as "ungoverned," this is a misnomer: in the absence of an overarching assertion of national sovereignty, there remains a continued tribal sovereignty as there has been for eons. It is this continued tribal sovereignty, if properly understood, that can lay the foundation of an enduring world order, and which can ensure an enduring peace if properly understood, effectively nurtured, and properly engaged.

During the last few years, we have re-learned the art of tribal warfare, and more important, coalition warfare with tribal allies, a military and diplomatic art we have long excelled at, from our pre-revolutionary engagements in King Philip's War, to our decisive conquest of the western plains during the three long centuries of the Indian Wars. While seldom celebrated, these strategic experiences have defined our nation's approach to military power, adapting European strategic concepts to our new, frontier nation emerging from the virgin wilderness of the New World. When America went out into the world in the twentieth century as a world power, its approach to war was intimately shaped by these engagements, and the lessons learned along a chaotic and expanding frontier where state sovereignty collided with the remnants of tribal sovereignty. America's colonial experiences in the Philippines and in the Americas were marked by its offensive application of methods cultivated during its Indian Wars, and used against foreign opponents on distant battlefields. While the Long War has been perceived largely as a civilizational clash between Islamist forces and the West, it is more accurately a continuation of the same millennial conflict that began when European states and pre-Colombian indigenous tribes collided in the Americas, and on other continents as well from Africa to Asia, and even throughout Europe's own fractious medieval history. The perpetuation of these intense, asymmetrical, and often annihilatory clashes between modern states and pre-existing tribes has been a recurring axis of conflict for centuries, but has less often been perceived to be the salient fault-line of conflict—perhaps in part because the historical legacy of America's own military expansion tends to be under-emphasized in favor of the preferred narrative of its founding myth: the triumphant victory of democracy over tyranny. Properly understanding the underlying tribal dynamic, however, is nonetheless essential—and can spell the difference between military defeat and decisive and enduring victory.

During the Cold War period, numerous battles were fought between East and West, but more often than not these conflicts were waged in weaker states, many only just emerging from the colonial experience. In several of these Cold War hot spots, sub-state indigenous minorities controlled substantial swaths of territory, and were engaged in protracted conflicts with newcomers to their homelands. The ideological lens that defined these conflicts was but a mask to an underlying clash of tribe and state; not in all conflicts, to be sure, but in many, from the bitter civil war in Guatemala that raged for half a century, pitting the descendants of Spanish colonists against the remnants of the Mayan nation that once ruled over the highlands of Central America, to the decade-long anti-Soviet Jihad in Afghanistan, where the United States entered into a unique war-time alliance with Afghanistan's tribal peoples. Today's Long War again features many of these same sub-state entities in the notoriously fractious state of Afghanistan, which is more an amalgamation of tribal enclaves, some of whom are allied with us, and others such as the Taliban, a post-Soviet movement that pacified much of post-war Afghanistan in the 1990s, and the Al Qaeda movement, which also emerged from the anti-Soviet struggle and whose founders were once part of America's war-time coalition against the Red Army. During the long anti-Soviet Jihad, it was Afghanistan's many tribes, never truly united apart from their common occupying foe, that rose up, under American arms, against the militarily superior Soviet armed forces, holding their own, and later turning the tide of that war, until Moscow's military commitment evaporated amidst the sweeping and frenetic pace of domestic reforms and revolution that resulted in the Soviet collapse. This unique coalition of tribal allies helped to rout the Red Army, proper payback for Moscow's earlier proxy victory over America and its allies in Indochina. Then, America's military alliance with the Montagnards and other indigenous allies nearly achieved victory over Vietnamese Communist forces; but in through that long engagement, it was America's will that evaporated first, resulting in an unforced strategic withdrawal after a decade full of tactical victories. And e in defeat, much was learned of long-term strategic and tactical application. But because that knowledge was not properly internalized or codified into doctrine, it was gradually lost—with painful consequences in the early years of the Long War.

While much of post-World War II international relations (IR) theory has been influenced by Kenneth Waltz's famously elegant but (dangerously) overly simplified "three images," with the individual, state, and system defining the salient levels of analysis for international relations, most of our post-Cold War challenges have taken place in the unrecognized nooks and crannies of the international arena, an unmapped *terra incognit*a of the Waltzian universe where a "fourth image" has long been at work, a tribal image that is not only pre-state but also trans-state and sub-state. It is "pre-state" in that modern state sovereignty remains only still emergent, a work in progress as we ultimately came to recognize in Iraq and Afghanistan. These places are neither ungoverned, nor truly failed states but are rather "pre-state" entities, and are thus governed in a manner more reminiscent of the medieval order, where sect and tribe often asserted a more salient ordering principle than the still developing state. The tools required to bring order to these regions are thus uniquely tailored to the pre-state realm, and will require a specific expertise. Traditional tools of statecraft, refined by the centuries of post-Westphalia diplomatic and military history, are of only limited utility here. In tribal zones, where formal state sovereignty has never fully reached, borders tend to be porous, and sub-state and trans-state tribes, stateless nations, and minority cultures tend to predominate at the local and regional level.

There is a wealth of knowledge from America's tribal warfare experiences that could inform a new COIN doctrine, not one that overly emphasizes hearts and minds, nor one that overstates the complexity of the new environment of war, but one that more properly recognizes the inherent and enduring duality of war, not so much its nonlinearity as its contradictory and internally conflicting dimensions, such as the dual sovereignties of tribe and state, and the dual necessity to wage conventional and counterinsurgency warfare at the same time, against two distinctly configured opposing forces. Building on Jim Gant's "one tribe at a time" thesis, and embracing the detailed ecosystem approach of David Kilcullen, this new doctrine could replace the current focus on complexity with a reaffirmation of sovereign duality. As critics of COIN theorist John Nagl, like Gian Gentile, argue, conventional military power remains essential for victory, a pre-requisite for population-centric tactics, as we learned tragically in Vietnam, and nearly so in Iraq. In the former, our conventional withdrawal sealed the fate for our abandoned ally in the south; in the latter, our conventional victory came so quickly, we were unprepared to pacify the postwar environment as an insurgency erupted, forcing us to relearn the art of COIN that we had mastered in Indochina. Twice we forgot the essential, dualistic interconnection of conventional and counterinsurgent warfare; one without the other would by definition neglect one of the key pillars of order, one of the three legs of Clausewitz's trinity of war (mirroring Machiavelli's own trinity of political order). In Vietnam we won hearts and minds and defeated the long festering insurgency plaguing the south for a generation, only to neglect the conventional military power of our opponent, which, unchecked, quickly achieved a decisive victory. In Iraq, we quickly overwhelmed our opponent conventionally in our historic drive to Baghdad in a mere three weeks, largely because our opponent stood down in anticipation of its shift to guerrilla operations. But our initial neglect of the hearts and minds, and our strategic myopia that favored the technology of force transformation over boots on the ground, left the human terrain unchecked, and among which our opponent regrouped for its lethal counter-strike in the form of insurgent warfare. Our experience in Afghanistan was similarly myopic: we quickly achieved conventional battlefield dominance, but did not successfully leverage our decisive military victory, enabling the Taliban to similarly regroup, and to regain its footing for its long-simmering but no less effective counter-strike.

The challenge for us is to properly conceive of strategy as the masters of the art of war have done, as a dynamic process requiring constant balancing and rebalancing. The balance of power concept that dominated modern European diplomatic and military history, as a metaphor for the unsteady equilibrium of peace in a world of anarchy, serves us well when we consider our experiences at war in both Indochina and throughout the War on Terror; each time, we have neglected to sustain a properly dynamic balance,

though in Vietnam we tried for the better part of a decade before throwing in the towel. By recognizing the underlying, often tribal, political structures of our new conflict zones, and remembering our own frontier warfare experiences as our state expanded ever westward, integrating former tribal territories into its sovereign framework, we can better equip ourselves going forward, and remember that the trinity of war, across the ages, has required recognition of, and accommodation with, all three core pillars of political order: the government, the military, and the people.

The methods identified, operationalized, and systematized on the front lines of the Long War, whether Kilkullen's "28 articles" or Gant's maxims on tribal coalition warfare, present us with a valuable cornerstone for a new, and enduring, doctrine to guide military operations in tribal zones, one tailor-made to restore political order to the chaotic tribal belt that defines so many fronts where the Long War has been fought and where the Arab Spring has found its most fertile ground, and which no doubt will define the front lines of future conflicts where the modern state and pre-state tribal entities continue to collide.

Indeed, once the Long War concludes, these tribal zones will remain strategically important for the coming peace and could serve as vital bases from which American power can be nimbly projected in the event of new conflicts arising. Abandoning our hard-won gains in these tribal zones can only result in future setbacks to American power, as we witnessed after our Mujahideen allies routed the Soviet Red Army a generation ago only to see our commitment to their cause wane upon the Soviet collapse, when our attention turned elsewhere. Just as our continued, multi-generational military presence has helped ensure the peace in Europe, Japan and Korea, a similarly long-term commitment to the security of these tribal zones will be essential to ensure our hard-won victories in the Long War do not become tomorrow's missed opportunities—it is no coincidence that our past strategic withdrawal from chaotic tribal zones have blown back to haunt us, as evident from events that tragically unfolded in Afghanistan and Somalia upon our withdrawal a generation ago.

Notes

[1] See Barry S. Zellen, *On Thin Ice: The Inuit, the State and the Challenge of Arctic Sovereignty* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

[2] J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, No. 1 (October 1961), 77-92.

[3] Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, No. 1 (October 1961), 78, note 3.

[4] Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, No. 1 (October 1961), 78, note 4.

[5] Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, No. 1 (October 1961), 90.

[6] Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, No. 1 (October 1961), 90.

[7] Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics* 14, No. 1 (October 1961), 89.

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