

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

TOUCHSTONES FOR THE MILITARY  
LEADERSHIP ENGAGED IN ASYMMETRIC  
WARFARE

by

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## ABSTRACT

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While asymmetric warfare has undertaken a new and a broader dimension especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, in the title of this paper it refers to counterinsurgency warfare, wherein terrorism is employed by the irregular adversary as a means to subvert the rule of law and effect change through violence and fear.

This war is being waged in some form or the other in almost 71 countries of the world and the perceivable contours of the futuristic international security landscape portend a threat for its proliferation. Resultantly, the militaries around the world will have to gear up to counter this scourge, which offers different battle space dynamics and challenges for the military leadership. Such warfare underscores the need for different knowledge structures, wherein military's mass and energy, in concert with other elements of national power, is applied for 'control' as against 'destruction'.

This paper attempts to capture the key features of an asymmetric warfare arena that may provide the military war fighters suitable touchstones in the planning and conduct of a counterinsurgency campaign. This effort besides digging into a plethora of literature also takes into account the experiential base of the author.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... viii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ..... x

TOUCHSTONES FOR THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP ENGAGED IN ASYMMETRIC WARFARE ..... 1

**UNDERSTANDING THE TERRORISTS AND ORIENTING TO THE ASYMMETRIC BATTLE SPACE ..... 2**

    KEY FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE TERRORISTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT ..... 8

**Terrorists’ Center Of Gravity ..... 8**

**Critical Vulnerabilities ..... 10**

**Terrorists’ Resolve ..... 10**

**Fidayeen Actions ..... 11**

**Blurring of the Distinction between the Front and Rear ..... 11**

**Perception Management ..... 11**

**NATIONAL STRATEGY: SALIENT INGREDIENTS ..... 12**

    NATIONAL END STATE ..... 12

    FOUR PRONGS OF THE NATIONAL THRUST ..... 12

    CONDUCT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS ..... 13

**Military End State ..... 13**

**Indicators of A Secure Environment ..... 14**

**Overarching Concept of Military’s Application ..... 14**

**Integrated Approach ..... 15**

**Focus of Military Operations ..... 16**

    INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS ..... 17

**Strategic Intelligence ..... 17**

**Operational and Tactical Intelligence ..... 17**

**Establishing Interface for Passage of Intelligence ..... 17**

<b>Exploiting Intelligence .....</b>	<b>18</b>
CONSERVING OWN COMBAT POWER.....	18
CIVIC ACTIONS .....	19
GAUGING SUCCESS.....	19
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>21</b>
ENDNOTES.....	23
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	27

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE 1. REASONS FOR JOINING MILITANCY.....3

FIGURE 2. KEY PLAYERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT .....4

FIGURE 3. TERRORISTS CELLS AND TEAMS.....6

FIGURE 4. STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL CENTERS OF GRAVITY.....9

FIGURE 5. CENTER OF GRAVITY AFTER IRAQI GOVERNMENT IS IN PLACE.....9

FIGURE 6. PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT .....12

FIGURE 7. APPLICATION OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER .....13

FIGURE 8. INDICATORS OF A SECURE ENVIRONMENT.....14

FIGURE 9. SUGGESTED ORGANIZATION OF AN APEX SECURITY MECHANISM.....16

FIGURE 10. GAUGING SUCCESS.....20



## TOUCHSTONES FOR THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP ENGAGED IN ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

The term 'asymmetric warfare' has undertaken a new and broader dimension especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. While it has been used to describe a number of terrorist related threats and activities, in the title of this paper, it pertains to 'counterinsurgency warfare', wherein, terror is employed by the irregular adversary as a means to subvert the rule of law and effect change through violence and fear.<sup>1</sup>

Insurgency is an asymmetric conflict driven by a philosophy that undermines human needs and aspirations. At the bedrock of such an armed struggle, therefore, always exist grievances that could be historical or generated by inefficient and at times partisan governance. Inept governance provides conditions for the generation of discontent on economic, social, religious, cultural or ethnic lines that over a period manifest into collective aggression and ultimately an armed struggle. Such warfare seeks to overthrow a constituted mechanism or arrangement of governance and employs subversion and terror as its primary means. Countering insurgency therefore, entails executing an imaginatively evolved campaign on multiple fronts to address the root causes of the imbroglio. It therefore, needs to be remembered by the military pundits formulating asymmetrical war fighting strategies that neutralizing armed cadres of the movement is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Such warfare besides impinging on the conventional war fighting capabilities of the militaries also imposes on them restrictive rules of engagement, in a battle space marked by a very high degree of unconventionality, uncertainty and irrationality.<sup>2</sup>

Today, asymmetric warfare is being waged in some form or the other in approximately 71 countries of the world including Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> While the US led international campaign against terrorism<sup>4</sup> is making significant progress, the underlying conditions of poverty, corruption, religious and ethnic conflicts coupled with Al Qaeda's enunciated goal of Jihad<sup>5</sup>, are likely to continue providing grounds for the growth of insurrectionist tendencies. Militaries in various parts of the world, therefore, will have to gear up for this warfare that owing to different battle space dynamics, requires different war fighting skills and competencies.

This paper attempts to capture the key features of an asymmetric warfare environment that may provide the military leadership suitable touchstones for the planning and conduct of a counterinsurgency campaign.

Besides digging into a plethora of literature on the subject, this effort also blends the experiential base of the author in counterinsurgency warfare in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeastern states of India.<sup>6</sup>

## **UNDERSTANDING THE TERRORISTS AND ORIENTING TO THE ASYMMETRIC BATTLE SPACE**

The armed cadres of almost all contemporary insurgency movements show scant regard for the security of civilians, which the traditional insurgents or guerillas of the yester years showed.<sup>7</sup> Today, almost all insurgency movements are witnessing a very high profile of terrorist activity that aims to cause anarchy, paralysis and disorder and helps the perpetrators to shape the asymmetrical battle space.<sup>8</sup> This trend has blurred the distinction between an insurgent and a terrorist. Hence, the noun 'terrorist' will be used in this paper to describe all armed cadres of an insurrectionist movement.

The terrorists, beyond doubt are the most critical element of any asymmetric environment as they introduce asymmetry into the environment through an irrational, indiscriminate, unpredictable and ruthlessly destructive *modus operandi*.<sup>9</sup> Knowing their characteristics, capabilities, sources of power from which they derive freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight are, therefore, *sine qua non*.<sup>10</sup>

The individuals who decide to break away from society and join the terrorist cadres are generally motivated by their needs. These needs could range from the desire for some livelihood owing to intolerable poverty-stricken conditions, to compensation for low esteem status, to religion and/or ideology driven needs to lastly, the vendetta driven need, wherein individuals want to 'right the wrongs' with force.

The relevance of the above motivations varies from region to region and is dictated largely by the underlying causes of insurgency. Therefore, there may be a need to examine each group and perhaps each individual separately to understand the pulls and pressures that take individuals towards violence. However, the trends evinced from a study based on the interrogation of a large number of Pakistani terrorists caught in Jammu and Kashmir, are highlighted in the succeeding paragraphs.<sup>11</sup> Since Pakistan encompasses the Islamic region that is the epicenter of terrorism, these trends are likely to find some relevance in other parts of the Muslim world as well.<sup>12</sup>

The study, in line with the findings and assertions of some other analysts, highlighted that approximately 70 percent of the terrorists belonged to extremely poor families and were lured into terrorist outfits with petty sums of money ranging from \$ 15 to \$ 25 a month. These cadres were illiterate, unemployed and socially alienated individuals.<sup>13</sup> After initial monetary inducements, approximately 30 percent were not paid and were kept wedded to terrorism through coercion or blackmail. Only about one fifth of the total interrogated had genuine religious fervor as the driving force and the ones with low esteem status and vendetta driven

needs comprised only about five percent in each category. The vendetta driven need inspired those, who thought they could ‘right the wrongs’ by taking to arms. The possession of a weapon fulfilled their psychological need for power.<sup>14</sup> Such terrorists wanted to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir to ‘even out’ scores of alleged atrocities by the security forces. Some however, were also motivated by a combination of two or more reasons to become militants. The broad breakdown as highlighted by the study is shown at Figure 1.

The interrogation also revealed that more often than not, the recruitment process, like most parts of the Muslim world, commenced at the Mosques, where the poor unemployed youth generally went essentially to get away from heat, dirt, noise and at times surveillance by either the government agencies or the terrorists. While in the Mosques, they were subjected to gradual indoctrination by the Mullahs and thereafter, manipulated by the terrorists to join their organizations.<sup>15</sup>

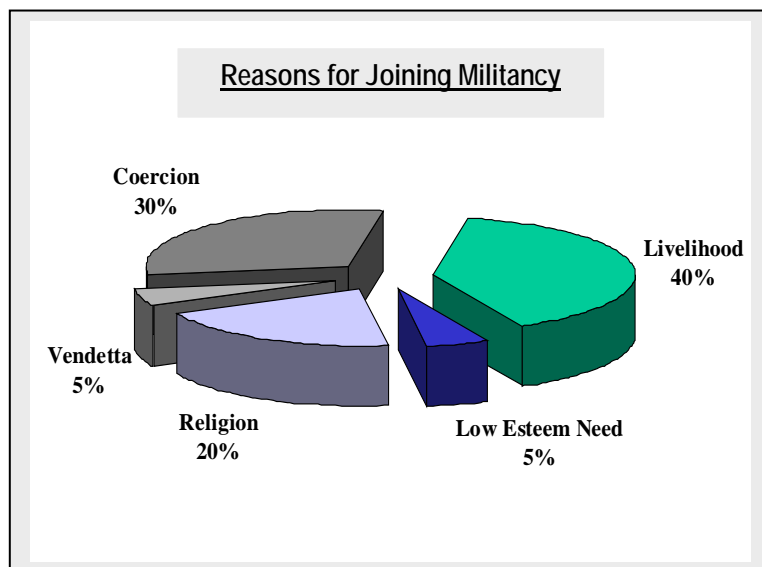


FIGURE 1 REASONS FOR JOINING MILITANCY

Some other findings revealed that for the low esteem category, the perceived luster of a ‘Robin hood image’ was also at times a motivator. However, this defense mechanism for fulfilling low esteem needs motivates the youth only in the initial stages of the insurgency movement when the security forces are not fully deployed and are in the process of identifying the shape and contours of an asymmetric arena. Eric Morris and others have described this phenomenon as only an enticement in the early stages of recruitment.<sup>16</sup> Since in this stage the terrorists invariably have an upper hand and are viewed as the saviors and/or the champion of the cause, their gun totting behavior appeals to most of the low esteem individuals. The terrorists belonging to this category tend to place unrealistically high demands on themselves and, when confronted with failure, their aspirations increase.<sup>17</sup> They are often boisterous and commit mistakes resulting in their neutralization mostly in the initial stages of the conflict. However, those who survive, go on to constitute the hardcore category of terrorists. On the other hand, individuals who take to arms as a means of livelihood are more pragmatic and tend

to operate with greater care and always exercise caution. They also lack the will to withstand vagaries of the hostile environment. They are susceptible to disenchantment with some disconcerting fatigue. The religiously indoctrinated, however, always constitute the bedrock of any Islamic terrorist outfit. They operate with dexterity and guile following the Quaranic maxims of war.<sup>18</sup> Over a period of time, they form the nuclei of various terrorist groups and ultimately advance into the tactical, operational and strategic terrorist hierarchies. Most of them learn the art of maintaining dual profiles to reduce their vulnerabilities. They undertake civil jobs by day and at night don the cloaks of terrorists.

The 'Fidayeen' are identified from the religiously indoctrinated category and comprise individuals who are prepared to die for the cause. Motivated by the maxims of sacrifice and prayer, they do not hesitate to even end their lives acting as human bombs.<sup>19</sup> However, at times, young boys are also duped into such acts. In Jammu and Kashmir, in one of the Fidayeen actions, a young schoolboy was offered money for driving a vehicle to the gate of an Army Formation. The boy not knowing that the vehicle was laden with explosives, agreed. The vehicle bomb was activated by employing a remote control device by the terrorists when he approached the gate.<sup>20</sup> At times, some adult terrorists are also coerced into such acts, however, that percentage is generally very low.

The populace provides the sea in which the terrorist must swim.<sup>21</sup> Without local support, a terrorist cannot survive and it is the population's 'will' that acts as a rheostat for the control of insurgency. The populace, based on their stance can be categorized into either

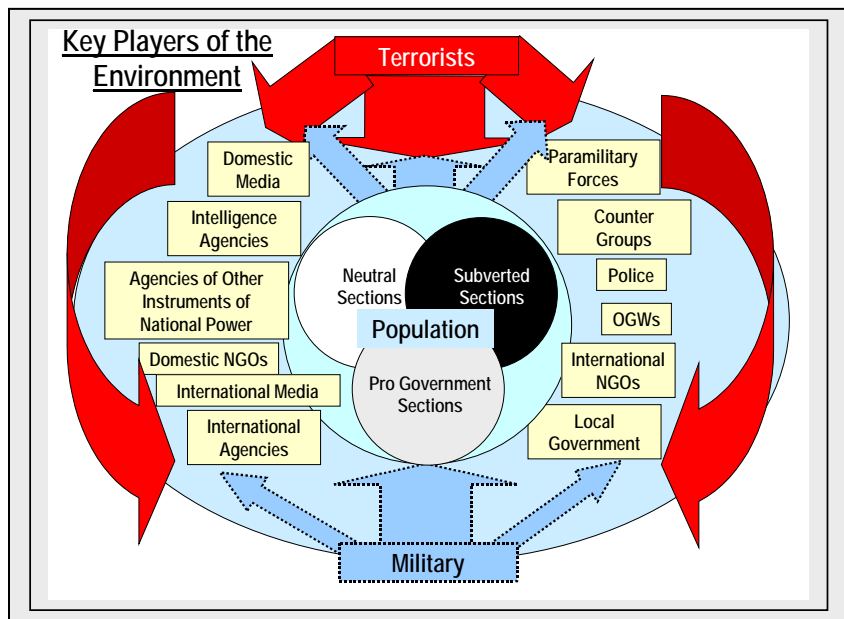


FIGURE 2. KEY PLAYERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

the protagonists (pro government); the antagonists (antigovernment and pro terrorist sections); and the neutrals, who are the fence sitters and can be swayed either way. Superimposed on these three shades of the population are the other state and non-state actors as depicted on Figure 2.

In the initial stages of the insurgency, there is great support for the cause and the populace practically nurtures the armed cadres as their 'military'. This support starts to decline as the fatigue from the conflict sets in and the population begins to feel the privations and become disenchanted with the armed struggle.

The manipulation of the environment by the terrorists aims at enhancing the credibility of the cause and terrorists relevance to the environment. They target various actors to make them believe that their armed struggle is justified and the most plausible option to fulfill societal aspirations. Their strategy in this regard encompasses systematic maligning of the government machinery and concurrent glorification of their own actions. They demonstrate the government's incompetence at safeguarding the societal interests and, through the use of terror, generate a ground swell that favors their cause and alienates the population's predisposed loyalty to the government.<sup>22</sup> The domestic media plays an important role in this process. It is intimidated for spreading subversion and for furthering the terrorists' nefarious designs.<sup>23</sup> The terrorists can also imaginatively employ foreign media to further their cause especially if a hostile state or non-state actor supports them.

Terrorists also resort to direct and indirect measures to influence the government and its agencies psychologically, and to keep the fatigued and disenchanted segments of the populace committed to the cause. The methods employed are either mass disruptive or mass destructive.<sup>24</sup> In the former, the emphasis is on sabotage and in the latter on engineering mass casualties to convey the requisite message to various players. It has been seen that while the terrorists claim all killings to show their combat potency, they generally disassociate with all depredatory activity that is undertaken as mass destructive or as part of reprisal killings. However, at times, killings to include ethnic cleansing may be claimed but only if such acts are supported by some sections of the population.<sup>25</sup>

Barring the military, paramilitary and other central government agencies that either have inherent security or are provided dedicated security, most of the other players in the environment either leave or adapt through some degree of compromise. This compromise could manifest in the form of either total or partial passivity or at times a stance that enhances the relevance of the terrorists in the environment. Such subversion poses profound challenges for the military leadership, which has to interface with all players of the environment in pursuance of a multi pronged and faceted conflict management campaign. What and how much to share on the intelligence and operational fronts, therefore, become the dilemma of all military leaders. The insecurity generated by such subversion, compels the military to take over additional responsibilities, which in the long run, impinge on its primary role.



The terrorists operate in small teams that are controlled by a cell, which, de facto is also a team, but controlled by a senior member of the terrorist group. Each team generally comprises five to ten terrorists working on a 'failsafe' principle, i.e., if one component of the organization

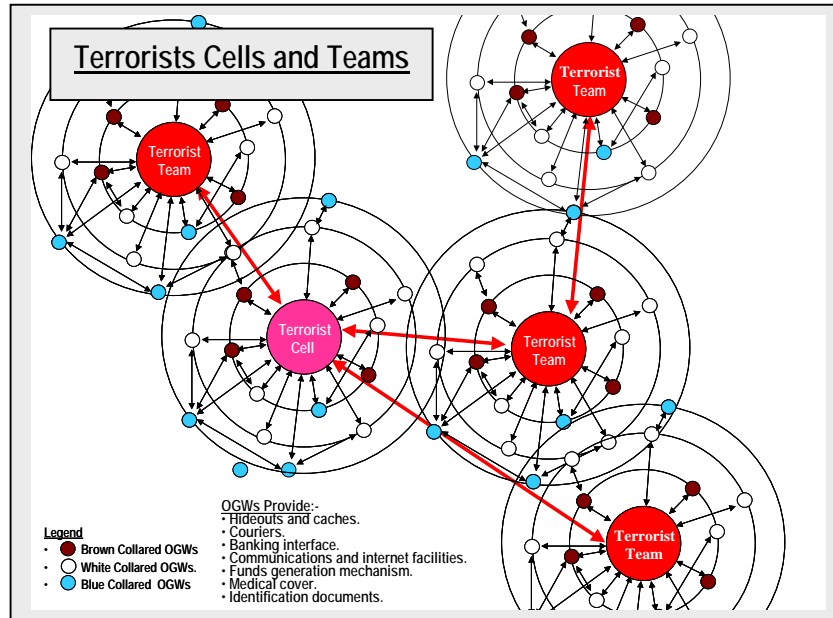


FIGURE 3. TERRORISTS CELLS AND TEAMS

fails, the consequences on the total organization will be minimal.<sup>26</sup> Sun Tzu has called such an arrangement as 'The Devine Skein'.<sup>27</sup> The structure of the cells is evolved to provide organizational efficiency and to cater to security requirements. Each team creates a circle of Over Ground Workers (OGWs), who either volunteer support to the terrorists or are coerced into it. These individuals are cultivated and/or recruited from all sections of the society and as such, can be categorized into the Blue, White and Brown Collared OGWs as shown on Figure 3. The Blue Collared generally comprise the subverted local politicians and government officials. The white collared are recruited from the police and reasonably well to do families who either own businesses or are employees of private firms. Lastly, the Brown Collared, category comprises individuals, whose poverty drives them to affiliate with the terrorists for petty sums of money. Therefore, it will be seen that the OGWs facilitate the terrorists to merge with the populace and play a key role in enhancing their survivability and relevance in the environment. In specific terms, they not only provide eyes and ears but also help in providing fake identity documents, hideouts, caches, logistics infrastructure and communications support. The proliferation of the OGWs especially in the government machinery substantially reduces terrorists' vulnerabilities in the environment. The methodology employed for inducing such subversion entails encouraging the potential Blue Collared OGWs to amass wealth and indulge in unlawful activities. After

having taken them to a point of no return along this unscrupulous garden path, seeking reciprocal concessions. Where necessary, blackmail is included in the modus operandi for eliciting maximum concessions. These subverted government officials virtually become puppets in the hands of the terrorists and do exactly what they are told to do. In turn, this enhances the terrorists' locus standi as the populace begins to seek terrorists' assistance for obtaining jobs, contracts and gun licenses including official identity cards. A high degree of such subversion enables the terrorists to start running a parallel government, wherein the movement begins to resemble an industry, from which all the inimical and subverted elements benefit. Such politico-terrorist nexus also helps legitimize the generation of funds through drug cultivation and trafficking, which is an important terrorist portfolio. This not only helps in the generation of revenue for supporting terrorists' activities but also helps to weaken the moral fiber of the target society through widespread addiction.<sup>28</sup>

In relation to the military, terrorists' operations strive to negate the military's conventional combat power and make it 'bleed through thousand cuts'.<sup>29</sup> They endeavor to cause unacceptable attrition in personnel and material by the use of unpredictable and unconventional fires and improvised use of explosives. Since no non-state terrorist group can ever challenge the might of a national military, it suits them to fight in the lower end of the spectrum of conflict where they can not only merge with the populace but also manipulate it to cover their actions. This manipulation exposes the population to military's fires. The subsequent political, legal and moral issues compel the military to operate with restrictive rules of engagement.

Terrorists' tactics also encompass adherence to the time tested hit and run technique, wherein the advantage always rests with the initiator of fires. Terrorists never engage in pitched battles unless they are surrounded or when their writ is challenged in areas traditionally their accepted domain like the tribal belts of Pakistan's NWFP.<sup>30</sup> Along with their hit and run tactics, human bomb tactics are employed by the Fidayeen squads to generate a fortress mentality and impact the morale and will of military leaders and personnel. Fortress mentality results in the employment of more than necessary combat power on defensive duties that makes the terrorists' operations relatively easier with lesser offensive military capability. Misuse of mosques by terrorists is another dimension that if not handled well furthers terrorists' cause and shows security forces and the government in poor light. The Islamic terrorists' operations in various parts of the world will show that these sanctum sanctorum have been repeatedly exploited by the terrorists for the purposes of creating hideouts, caches and taking refuge. Shaping attitude among the population that mosques are inviolable and must not be used for

the purposes of terrorists' activities must be undertaken in the initial stages of the campaign, with full respect to Islamic sensitivities.

## KEY FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE TERRORISTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### **Terrorists' Center Of Gravity**

The 'will' of the people virtually acts as a rheostat for the control of insurgency and therefore, emerges as the terrorists' center of Gravity. Without popular support no insurrectionist movement can be sustained. Pro insurgency and/or terrorism populace is therefore, the 'center of all power and movement, on which everything of the terrorists depends'.<sup>31</sup> It is the source of power from which the terrorists derive their freedom of action, physical strength and will to fight.<sup>32</sup> One of the imminent speakers at the US Army War College has also referred to this strategic center of gravity as the 'attitudes' of people.<sup>33</sup> In this regard, therefore, it needs to be understood that if 'will' and/or 'attitudes' of the people are to be transformed then firstly, it is possible only through a protracted campaign and secondly, all actions and reactions of the military will have to be so executed that they contribute towards generating the requisite groundswell for peace. Attitudes take decades if not generations to form and therefore, there can be no quick fix solutions to insurrectionist movements. It has taken India almost 50 years of unrelenting conflict management to change attitudes of the Naga people and bring them to the negotiating table.<sup>34</sup> The effective management of the internal and external dimensions of the populace is therefore, one of the most significant components of the overall strategy for creating an environment conducive for conflict resolution. At the operational level as well, the centers of gravity remains the same, however, they more closely relate to the antagonist population centers. Terrorists have to operate in and off these for survival and logistics sustenance. Amongst these, the demographic, ethnic, religious, economic and terrorists' leadership related nuances generally decide their *inter se* importance.

In the context of ongoing operations in Iraq, the populace will remain the strategic center of gravity only until an Iraqi government takes over. Thereafter, while the populace will remain the center of gravity for that Iraqi government, the Iraqi government per se, will become the center of gravity for the US forces. The US efforts thereafter will have to focus on strengthening the hands of the Iraqi government to deal with terrorism and the US military's operations will have to be more defensive in nature and conducted with mutually ratified arrangements. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the above contention.

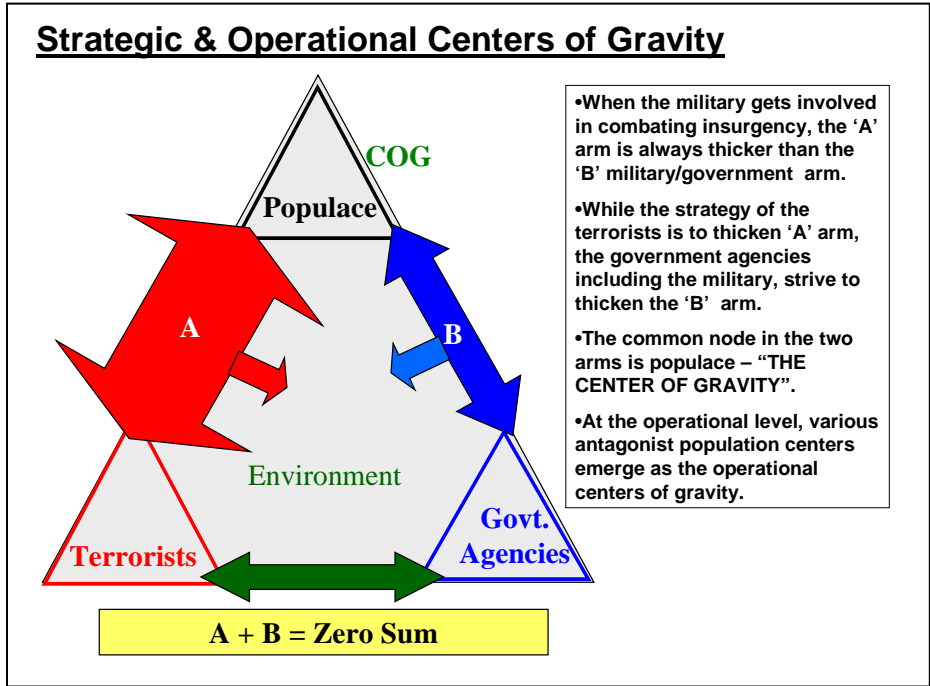


FIGURE 4. STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL CENTERS OF GRAVITY

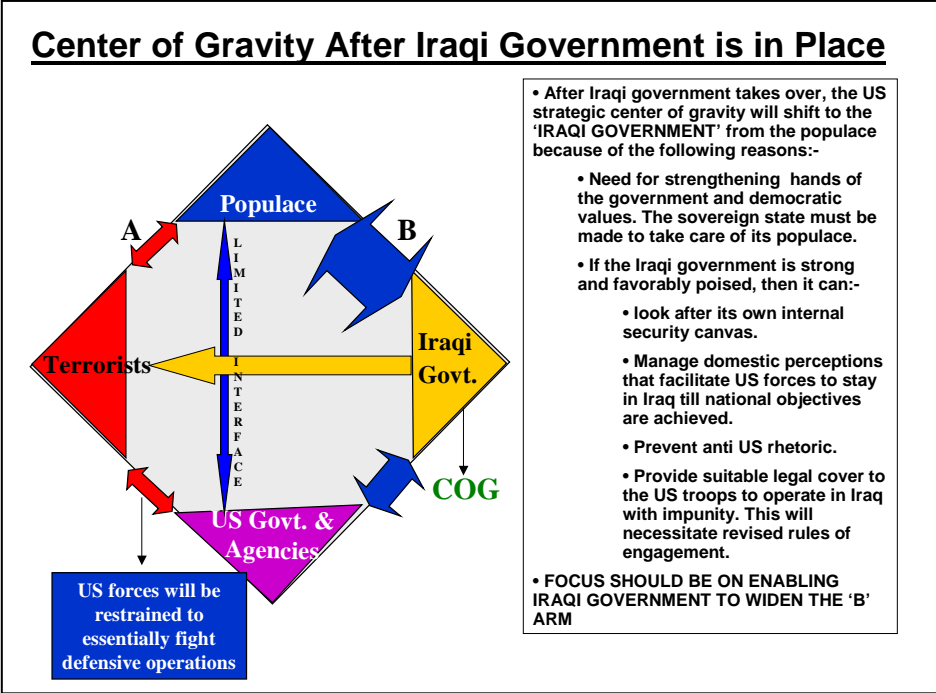


FIGURE 5. CENTER OF GRAVITY AFTER IRAQI GOVERNMENT IS IN PLACE

## **Critical Vulnerabilities**

There are weaknesses that can be exploited to undermine, neutralize and/or defeat enemy's center of gravity.<sup>35</sup> Within the antagonist sections of the population, the terrorists create their complex operating systems through the OGWs. The three categories of OGWs, besides reducing the terrorists' vulnerabilities also provide sustenance and are enablers for execution of their operations. Their neutralization can break the backbone of the terrorists to operate with impunity. However, such neutralization, in the overall interest of the campaign must always be done as per laws of the land for to do otherwise plays into the hands of those who demand to be treated as a distinct group precisely by so treating.<sup>36</sup> The other vulnerability of the terrorists is created by their religious needs. The Islamic terrorist must pray five times a day and on Fridays, must go to the mosque, especially the religiously motivated element.<sup>37</sup> While they are the critical category of any terrorist outfit, their religious requirements turn them into a critical vulnerability. They must attend all religious functions and pray as prescribed lest they be viewed as second rate Muslims, lacking unflinching allegiance to the cause. Therefore, come what may, they must pray at the mosques identified by their OGWs. Prayers are also very important for an Islamic terrorist, as it is one of the Quranic maxims of war.<sup>38</sup> This pattern, with due considerations to religious sensitivities, is exploitable and as such, emerges as a critical vulnerability. Also, an Islamic terrorist will always keep contact with his family members and this trait also is an exploitable vulnerability.

## **Terrorists' Resolve**

About 25 percent of the terrorists have strong resolve and unflinching allegiance to the cause. These terrorists belong to the religiously motivated and low esteem categories. Terrorists from the latter category show strong resolve essentially due to the psychological motivation of exhibiting their might and for proving that they are second to none. The remainders 75 percent, based on their recruitment motivations and/or pressures are susceptible to becoming disenchanted with the onset of fatigue generated by the conflict. However, they are kept wedded to terrorism with direct and/or indirect coercion by the hardcore 25 percent. Therefore, the counterinsurgency campaign should focus on the possibility of weaning away terrorists from the 75 percent. However, such effort is only likely to bear fruit if the rehabilitation package is imaginatively chalked out and caters to the security and esteem needs of the terrorists. They must never be made to look like the vanquished and besides protecting them from the hardcore terrorists; efforts must be made to rehabilitate them in a secure environment. In Kashmir, special accommodation was furnished for such cadres in the close vicinity of security forces

bases and some of them were also allowed to keep weapons for their self-defense. The intense family bonds should be exploited for this purpose to motivate terrorists to return to the main stream. Experience shows that mothers and children of the Islamic terrorists can play an important role in this regard.

### **Fidayeen Actions**

While all other offensive terrorist actions aim at causing attrition on the security forces, the Fidayeen actions aim at generating terror in the minds of the security forces to constrain them to employ maximum combat power on defensive duties. Terror struck into the hearts of the enemies is not only a means; it is the end in itself.<sup>39</sup> The generation of fortress mentality enhances the terrorists' survivability and the idiosyncratic use of irrational violence compels the security forces to prepare for Fidayeens throughout the entire AOR and, when such preparations are made everywhere, as Sun Tzu says, you are weak everywhere.<sup>40</sup>

### **Blurring of the Distinction between the Front and Rear<sup>41</sup>**

The pronounced non-linearity and non-contiguity of an asymmetric warfare arena, blurs the front and rear boundaries of the traditional battlefield. In turn, this blurs the distinction between a logistician and a combatant and therefore, demands each and every soldier to be a more versatile multifaceted warrior. With regard to military leadership, it results in the strategic and operational military leaders: -

- Getting increasingly involved in operations at tactical levels either due to the proximity from terrorist incidents or because of the need for enhanced monitoring of the overriding political, religious, legal or moral sensitivities of some operations.
- Experiencing enhanced fatigue and stress levels as a result of sleep deprivation and disturbances of their circadian rhythm.<sup>42</sup> However, suitable frames of reference do provide necessary tools for assisting in decision making under high stress conditions.

### **Perception Management**

Perception management is necessary to motivate various actors in the environment to adopt or maintain a favorable stance that furthers the national and military agendas of the campaign. This should be undertaken not only through information warfare but also through deeds as actions always speak louder than words. It necessitates concurrent employment of all elements of national power, wherein the military operates with a 'velvet gloved steel fist', as against a 'steel fist'. A people friendly fist that while making the environment secure also generates a groundswell for peace. The use of force must be so directed that it contributes as

far as possible to the legitimacy of the operation as a whole.<sup>43</sup> Figure 6 shows the aim of the perception management campaign and ways and means available for its achievement.

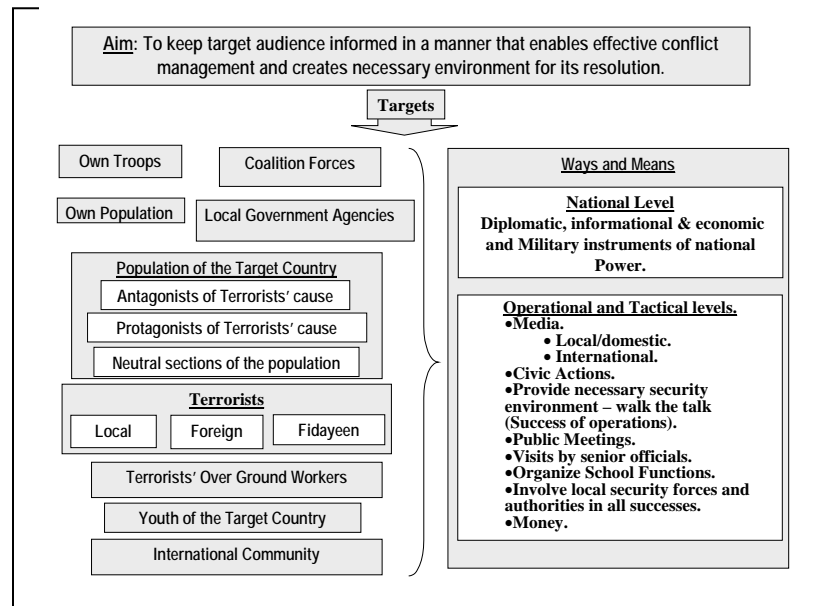


FIGURE 6 PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT

## NATIONAL STRATEGY: SALIENT INGREDIENTS

### NATIONAL END STATE.

The end state sought by a national counter insurgency campaign is always 'conflict resolution', which succeeds conflict termination. This entails demilitarization of the conflict and shaping the environment wherein the issue can be pursued without violence. The requisite shaping of the environment is affected through a concurrent application of all elements of national power. It entails the root causes of the problem being addressed in right earnest. It is an arduous long haul, which requires consistency, clarity, credibility and consensus.<sup>44</sup> A counterinsurgency campaign would normally have four prongs, each being addressed simultaneously by two or more elements of national power.

### FOUR PRONGS OF THE NATIONAL THRUST.

These are: -

- The creation of a secure environment so that other elements of national power can operate without fear of the terrorist gun and the political process (where political aspirations need to be addressed) can commence. Military has a lead role to play in the accomplishment of this goal.

- The prevention of any external support to the terrorists, which could be in the form of moral, financial, material or personnel assistance. The accomplishment of this goal has both internal and external dimensions and therefore, while the military is applied on the internal scene for preventing infiltration by terrorists and smuggling warlike material, other elements of national power address the external dimension.
- The addressing of local aspirations under a political or governmental process after the fear of the terrorist's gun has been eliminated and the populace is more favorably poised for a negotiated settlement.
- The management of perceptions of all state and non-state players in the domestic, regional and international environment through projecting the truth and where necessary through, cover, deception and psychological operations.<sup>45</sup> This is essentially an information operation that is conducted concurrently throughout the campaign. In fact, this campaign must also cater to the needs of the governmental forces including military so that all governmental and military personnel view all developments in the correct perspective and inimical forces are not able to impact on their morale. The interplay of various elements of national power for conflict resolution is shown at Figure 7.

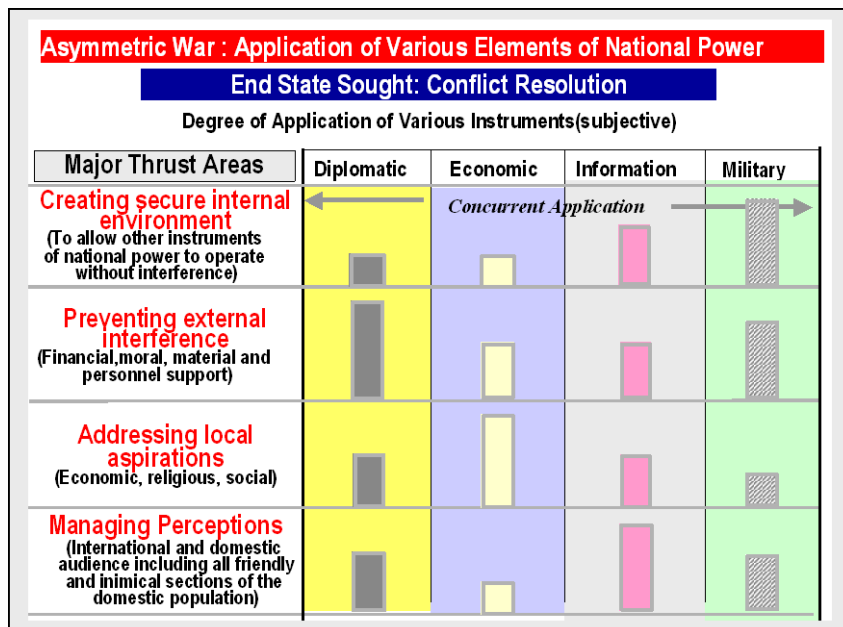


FIGURE 7 APPLICATION OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER

## CONDUCT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

### Military End State

The end state sought by military operations is a secure environment that will allow other elements of national power to function without hostile disruptions.



## Indicators of A Secure Environment

In very broad terms, these are: -

- Absence of the fear of the terrorist's gun.
- Transformation of the environment where law and order can be maintained by the civil administration through the employment of police.
- Smooth functioning of the government institutions.
- Return of normal way of life, wherein civil liberties get fully restored and the people are able to pursue their lifestyles with freedom, respect and human dignity. Figure 8 depicts the four qualifiers of a secure environment.

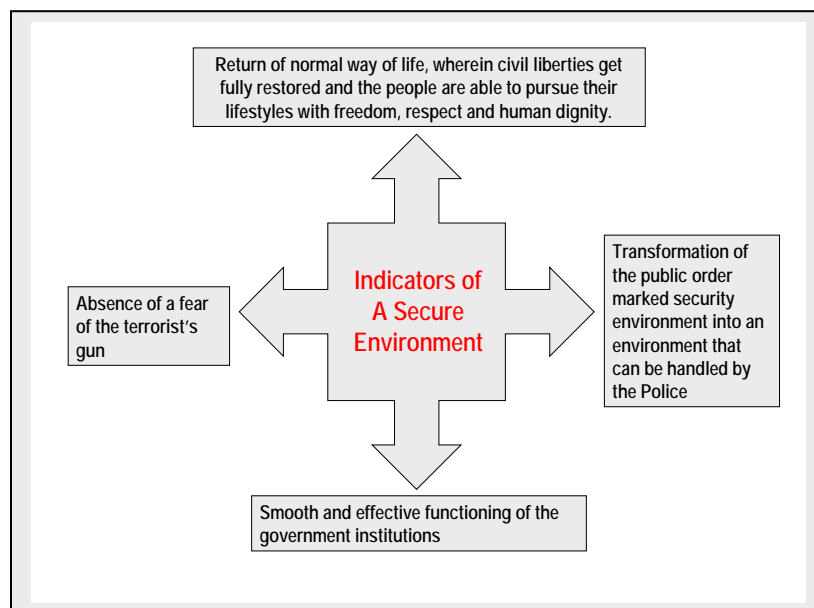


FIGURE 8 INDICATORS OF A SECURE ENVIRONMENT

## Overarching Concept of Military's Application

To attain a secure environment, the military operations, should aim firstly at neutralizing all inimical elements in the area of responsibility (AOR) that oppose or retard the peace initiatives and secondly transforming the will and attitudes of the people through a dexterous and integrated application of all resources. The neutralization of terrorists and their support base must be in consonance with laws of the land so that civil face of governance is always visible. Terrorists must be afforded full opportunity to surrender and only those terrorists, who do not accept the offer and continue to resist should be neutralized through kinetic means. The disposal of OGWs too must always be as per laws. The orchestration of the military operations should be such that they induce the desired degree of fatigue in the populace. The most suitable legal tool for this is the curtailment of some civil liberties through imposition of

population control measures. These measures are actually imposed for isolating the terrorists from the populace and to prevent their recruitment by the terrorists.<sup>46</sup> However, since this lever works both ways, it should be imaginatively employed, as it can prove to be counterproductive and can convert the champions of non-violence into violence seekers. The endeavor should be to bring about a realization that fighting the government is a no win situation and that their anti government stance is only delaying the return of peace and normalcy. Therefore, distancing from the terrorists is in their own interest and the only plausible course of action. However, the manifestation of such a realization can take from a couple of years to decades. Attitudes take time to form and time to change.

### **Integrated Approach**

Since the ultimate aim of the national effort is to strengthen the hands of the local civil authorities, the management of the campaign must always show a civil face. Therefore, the counterinsurgency operations, notwithstanding the primacy of the military in the initial stages, should always be coordinated at the highest levels through the creation of an Apex Security Mechanism (ASM) headed by the senior state executive, if state government machinery is in place, or from the interim governmental agency. Such an arrangement facilitates the monitoring of the four prongs of the campaign in the proper perspective. However, for facilitating synergy, all security agencies should be placed under the military and the senior most military commander should be the security advisor to the chief executive. A suggested model of an Apex security mechanism is given at Figure 9.

A joint force is always greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, synergy for military operations is a must and should be achieved for intelligence and operational effort. An integrated approach, inter alia, also facilitates the employment of maximum military effort on offensive tasks as defensive tasks can be assigned to paramilitary and other security agencies.

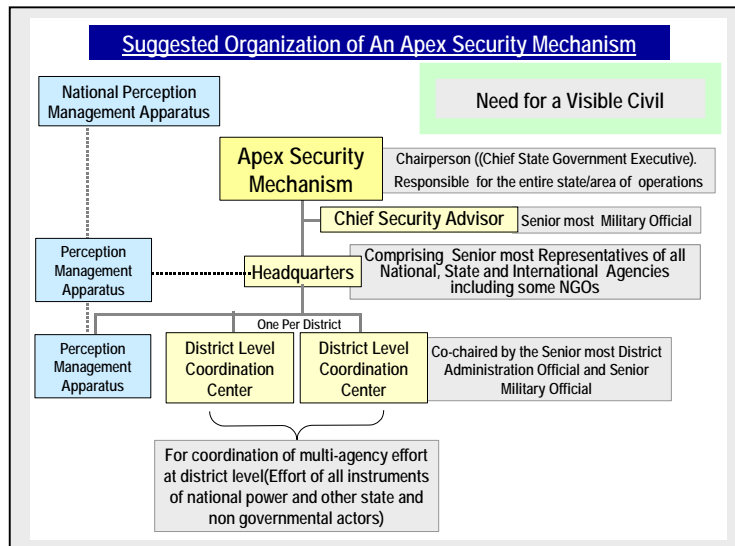


FIGURE 9 SUGGESTED ORGANIZATION OF AN APEX SECURITY MECHANISM

### Focus of Military Operations

The military operations should focus on interdicting external support, neutralizing terrorists' supporters and protecting public and government property and personnel. These operations require: -

- Pre-positioning of military combat power on the land borders, at sea and in the hinterland of the AOR on a grid pattern. The deployment should facilitate the domination of all population centers and various vulnerable areas and points including the military lines of communications.
- Cultivating sources in and outside the AOR to acquire real time intelligence on various facets of terrorists' activity and developing a secure and reliable interface for its timely passage.
- Structuring offensive capability that without arousing suspicion can react speedily at the designated targets.
- Developing capability to deal with various operational contingencies.
- Coordinating civic actions for facilitating the management of perceptions of various players in the AOR.

## INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS.

### **Strategic Intelligence**

No war can be conducted successfully without early and good intelligence.<sup>48</sup> For planning and executing a successful counterinsurgency campaign, there is a need to have the essential elements of the strategic intelligence made available to the planners. These are generally available with intelligence and government agencies and include causes of the conflict, demands of the estranged population and terrorists, the political and military hierarchy of various terrorist organizations, degree of local and external support, stated stance of the regional and international community on the conflict and their political leanings, domestic political and social sensitivities, essential components of the national conflict resolution strategy, economy of the area, terrain and weather constraints and location and functioning of various elements of the national power. In addition, while national polity would have given out some parameters for the conduct of military operations, it is axiomatic that the military leadership is fully sensitized to the constitutional and legal provisions so that laws of the land are always upheld while planning and executing the campaign. In view of the global war on terrorism, it is important that essential ingredients of the global counter terrorism strategy are known.<sup>49</sup> These inputs are generally available with government intelligence agencies.

### **Operational and Tactical Intelligence**

This necessitates acquisition of intelligence in relation to the operational centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities of the terrorists. In specific terms, this will relate inter alia, to intelligence on various terrorists groups, their support bases, nexus between groups, their hierarchical structures, combat potential, OGWs, infrastructure for the provisioning and replenishment of beans, band aids, bullets and bucks; hideout, caches, past patterns of violence and depredatory activity, hardcore terrorist cadres, sources of religious and/or ideological motivation and interface between external support base and methodology for the movement of men and material. In addition, there is also a need to acquire intelligence on terrain and weather and how these impact on the terrorists' activity and conduct of own military operations.

### **Establishing Interface for Passage of Intelligence**

The greatest challenge for military leadership is to establish appropriate interface with sources for passage of human intelligence in a real time frame. Terrorists institute checks and balances through the OGWs in a manner that it becomes virtually impossible for anyone to visit or speak to military personnel either directly or on the telephone. Not only do the OGWs create

necessary deterrence for sources through their physical presence in the environment, they also tap telephone lines at the telephone exchanges and other places. Therefore, the interface must address the security needs of the sources. While stale intelligence is available in plenty and only contributes to discerning patterns, it's the real time intelligence passage mechanism that has to be created imaginatively. The methods to be employed should not disturb normal behavioral patterns and should not catch the hostile eye. Therefore, use of codes in a normal conversation to convey disguised messages, making use of the daily chores in a manner as to convey a message has to be exploited to provide necessary security to the sources. It takes time to establish a worthwhile intelligence infrastructure. History bears testimony to the fact that even Caesar did not invent the Roman system of intelligence. It was the product of several hundred years of military experience.<sup>50</sup> For effective operations, military leadership should spend maximum time on intelligence generation.

### **Exploiting Intelligence**

The intelligence must be exploited, through application of resources from the troops deployed on a near grid pattern or earlier pre-positioning for an anticipated operation. Additional resources should thereafter be build on the first responders, as operationally necessary. However, move to the target areas must employ unpredictable and unconventional means and methods. The objective during neutralization should be to take maximum apprehensions and surrenders as this generates tremendous insecurity and turbulence in the terrorist cadres and their supporters. A live terrorist can also, after suitable de-indoctrination, be utilized for generating intelligence, for motivating surrenders and as a basis for an effective rehabilitation package.

### **CONSERVING OWN COMBAT POWER**

Attrition on own combat power is as a result of three reasons, *viz*, terrorists' action, friendly or blue on blue engagements and lastly, stress related attrition. At times, the stress generated by the vagaries of an asymmetric battle space, tend to cause breakdown of military professionalism and discipline.<sup>51</sup>

Some of the points to be borne in mind for conserving own combat power are to be unpredictable, unconventional, always presenting hard targets, learning to read the body language of the locals, catering for terrorists' ruse, choosing always the harder right instead of the easier wrong, sanitizing roads before vehicular moves and undertaking maximum move on foot, where possible. A common statement made by seasoned junior leaders in Kashmir is that "it is better to have a tired soldier at the end of the day than a dead one".

To obviate stress related attrition it is also imperative to ensure requisite rest and refit for the troops. They should get minimum 6 to 8 hours of sleep to be maximally efficient.<sup>52</sup> In addition, their social needs must also be addressed i.e., to allow them to speak home and be with their families at least once after every 3 to 4 months. To obviate blue on blue engagements, besides laying down boundaries, lateral sharing of operational plans must take place.

## CIVIC ACTIONS

These actions should be aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the local populace and as such, should always be identified by them. If not undertaken imaginatively, these actions lose their relevance and begin to be misconstrued as mere appeasement gestures. Therefore, the involvement of the populace from inception to completion of various projects is important.<sup>53</sup> For better impact, the local leaders should preferably inaugurate these projects. Necessary security arrangements should always be provided until the project becomes an inseparable part of the community life and its security is everyone's concern. Military leaders should also cater for the upkeep of all civic action projects and ensure these are maintained in good shape till taken over by the local government agencies. For facilitating a coordinated development, all civic action projects should be included in the government's overall development plan of the area.<sup>54</sup> This inclusion, besides eliminating duplication of effort, also helps to strengthen the hands of local governing bodies. Where the change in attitudes is likely to take a long time, it may be prudent to undertake projects that target the youth in terms of addressing their needs for education in schools as an alternative against Madrassas and for also generating jobs. Community projects like poultry, diary, carpet weaving etc prove to be immensely valuable in employing the youth and keeping them away from being lured by the terrorists.

## GAUGING SUCCESS

The number of terrorists neutralized alone cannot enable military commanders to gauge the success of their operations. It has to be gauged in the context of ground swell for peace that the operations have been able to generate within the populace.

The three arms of the triangle at Figure 8 and the degree of integration and seamless interface show the aspects that have to be analyzed for discerning the degree of success.



FIGURE 10 GAUGING SUCCESS

The people-terrorists equation is discerned from the type of assistance provided by the populace to the terrorists and their role in furtherance of terrorists' agendas. For example, when this arm of the triangle is strong, the people not only provide food and shelter to all gun carrying irregular forces, they also provide human shields for terrorists to escape. On the neutralization of a terrorist, they indulge in law and order related activities to undermine the government and malign the security agencies. The media reports too are unsavory and the allegations of human rights violations high. The role of OGWs in the environment is much more pronounced, as it is through them that the terrorists express their influence. However, as the operations begin to gain some success there is a change in the above-mentioned aspects for the better and this change is discernable.

The people-military arm of the triangle is extremely important as it is the weakest link when the military initially deploys. The stronger this arm gets, the better is the degree of security in the environment. The indicators for discerning success are the number of terrorists neutralized (killed, surrendered or apprehended) based on real time intelligence, number of OGWs neutralized, peoples' stance towards the military, successful functioning by the local state government agencies, degree of malicious media reporting, allegations regarding human rights violations and response of the locals to the neutralization of terrorists and OGWs.

An analysis of the terrorists-governmental agencies arm of the triangle enables the military commanders to discern the resolve of the terrorists. It is gauged by analyzing the

degree of subversion in the state government's machinery and the degree to which terrorists are accepting the rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives. For example, as the OGWs support dries up and the ground swell for peace increases, the terrorists begin to be favorably inclined for negotiations and towards accepting offers for their rehabilitation. There is also a decrease in the incidents related to the targeting of security forces and sabotaging of the reconstruction effort, especially the civic actions projects undertaken by the military.

Such analysis should be done regularly on quarterly, half and yearly basis. The trends related to religiously motivated beliefs or terrain and weather conditions should be taken into account. For example, the period of Ramadan and dates that either signify some important religious activity or some milestones of the terrorists' campaign, generally see a much higher degree of terrorists' violence. This is because sacrifice as per Quranic concept of war denotes a bond between man and God and can be in the form of sufferings, hardships, want, hunger, thirst, fatigue, injury and death.<sup>55</sup> The belief that Allah praises making the ultimate sacrifice during religiously auspicious periods motivates a large number of terrorists to indulge in reckless violence.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the sowing and harvesting seasons along with the periods of extreme cold or hot climate show some distinct patterns that must be borne in mind while reviewing efficacy of military operations.

## **CONCLUSION**

A holistic approach is necessary for defeating insurgency. This entails the concurrent application of all elements of national power to address the root causes over a protracted period. Imaginative application of military constitutes an indispensable component of a national strategy for creating secure conditions that are sine qua non for other elements of national power to function.

In such warfare, the populace provides the medium in which the terrorist has to operate. It acts as a rheostat for the control of insurgency as without the will of the people no insurgency can thrive. All actions and reactions of the military in such an environment therefore, have to be people centric, aimed at addressing aspirations and managing perceptions on the futility and illegitimacy of the armed struggle and the importance of the rule of law for their socioeconomic growth and prosperity.

This paper has attempted to encapsulate the essential aspects of an asymmetric battle space, which may facilitate the military leaders to not only comprehend the complex contours of an insurrectionist environment but also plan and execute a counterinsurgency campaign with success.



WORD COUNT=7057

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> George W. Bush, *United States National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 2003), 1.

<sup>2</sup> C.C. Krulak, General, *Marine Corps Doctrine Publication 1, Warfighting* (Washington D.C.: United States Marine Corps, 20 June 1997), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Colin L. Powell, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counter Terrorism, May 2002), 69-84.

<sup>4</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2001), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Yossef Bodansky, *Bin Laden-The Man Who Declared War On America* (Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing Forum, 2001), IX.

<sup>6</sup> The author has served in 1973 in Nagaland, a Northeastern Indian state where insurgency started in the 50s. He also has the experience of commanding an infantry battalion and an infantry brigade in the counterinsurgency environment of Jammu and Kashmir.

<sup>7</sup> Leroy Thompson, *The Counterinsurgency Manuel, Tactics of the Anti Guerilla Professionals* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher C. Harmon, *Terrorism Today* (London, Frank Cass, 2001), 53.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, Joint Pub 3.0 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 10 September 2001), III 22.

<sup>11</sup> The author has personally interrogated a large number of foreign Islamic terrorists, who were apprehended by the security forces in his brigade area of responsibility in South Kashmir.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Pallone, "Pallone Assails Bush Administration Decision to Enter into Trade Agreement with Pakistan," 10 June 2003; available from <[http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/nj06\\_pallone/pr.jun10\\_trade.html](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/nj06_pallone/pr.jun10_trade.html)>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Rex A. Hudson, "The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?," September 1999; available from <<http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd,24.html>>; Internet; accessed 14 November 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Anatol Rapoport, *The Origins of Violence, Approaches to the Study of Conflict* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 153.

<sup>15</sup> Steven Simon, "The New Terrorism – Securing the Nation Against a Messianic Foe," *Brookings Review*, 21 (Winter 2003): 20.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Morris and Alan Hoe, *Terrorism: Threat and Response* (New York, St. Martin Press, 1988), 59.

<sup>17</sup> David E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism* (New York, The Free Press, 1990), 8.

<sup>18</sup> S.K. Malik, Brigadier, *The Quranic Concept of War*, with a foreword by General Zia –ul-Haq (New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 1992), 63 - 71.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 68 and 71.

<sup>20</sup> The author has quoted an incident that took place in June 2000 at Badami Bag, Srinagar, when he was posted at the Directorate General of Military Operations, Indian Army Headquarters, New Delhi, India.

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 17.

<sup>23</sup> Frank Kitson, *Low intensity Operations – Subversion, Insurgency & Peacekeeping* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1971), 17.

<sup>24</sup> Reich, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Powell, 69. (From perusal of Appendix A of the document, it is seen that only 38 out of the 118 significant terrorists actions in 2001 were claimed by various terrorist organizations).

<sup>26</sup> Jerry H. Tinker, Andrew R. Molnar, and John D. LeNoir, *Strategies of Revolutionary Warfare* (New Delhi: Rajindra Printers, S. Chand and Co., 1970), 60

<sup>27</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated and with an Introduction by Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 145.

<sup>28</sup> Rachel Ehrenfeld, *Narco Terrorism* (New York, Basic Books, 1990), XVIII.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence G. Kelley, "Afghanistan Revisited," *Parameters*, (Spring 2000): 132.

<sup>30</sup> Feroz Hassan Khan, Brigadier, "Rough Neighbors; Afghanistan and Pakistan", *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 2, January 2003; available from <<http://www.ccp.nps.navy.mil/si/jan03/SouthAsia.asp.htm>>; Internet; accessed 10 February 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Clausewitz, *On Strategy*, ed. Tiha Von Ghyczy, and others (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2001), 135.

<sup>32</sup> Joint Pub 3.0, GL5.

<sup>33</sup> The idea in this paragraph is based on the remarks made by a visiting speaker participating in a lecture to the War fighting Studies Program, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> The Naga peace talks commenced on 31 July 1997. The author was a member of the Government of India delegation for the talks and attended the first four rounds of the negotiations.

<sup>35</sup> Joe Strange, Doctor, *Perspectives on War Fighting, Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities* (Quantico, VA, Defense Automated Printing Center, 1996), 74.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Gilbert, *New Terror, New Wars* (Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press Ltd, 2003), 38.

<sup>37</sup> The World Book *Encyclopedia* 1.10, (Chicago, World Book, Inc., 2002), 463

<sup>38</sup> Malik, 71.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>40</sup> Sun Tzu, 98.

<sup>41</sup> Max. Taylor and John Horgon, *The Future of Terrorism* (London, Frank Cass, 2001), 47.

<sup>42</sup> Ashish K. Jha, and others, "Fatigue, Sleepiness and, Medical Errors," 6 December 1999; available from <<http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ptsafety/chap46a/htm>>; Internet; accessed 31 January 2004, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Chris Tuck, "Iraq and Rational Conflict Termination: War without End States?," *Defense Studies* 2 (Autumn 2002): 131-138.

<sup>44</sup> Long, 146.

<sup>45</sup> Timothy L. Thomas, "The Age of The New Persuaders," June 1997; available from <<http://leav-www.army.mil/fmso/fmsopubs/issues/maninfo.html>>; Internet; accessed 23 January 2004, 5. (While the description of perception management, as per this reference, is linked to external audience, the author in this paper asserts that in asymmetric warfare, where 'will' of the people constitutes the center of gravity, perception management is applicable to the domestic audience as well).

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Kidder, Colonel, Faculty Instructor at the US Army War College, (Seminar 19, Course 4 for the Class of AY04, Summing up points. Being quoted with permission).

<sup>48</sup> John Keegan, *Intelligence in War- Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al Qaeda* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 7.

<sup>49</sup> Bush, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 1-29.

<sup>50</sup> Keegan, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Department of the Army, *Leader's Manual for Combat Stress Control*, Field Manual 22-51(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 29 September 1994), 9-1.

<sup>52</sup> Edwin G boring, *Psychology for the Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C. Infantry Journal Press, 1948), 191.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, 75.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Malik, 68-69.

<sup>56</sup> Thompson, 75.

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