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FAILURE TO ADAPT

Intelligence Failure and Military Failure as Functions of Strategic Failure?

David E. Firester

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Master's Thesis

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Affairs at the City College of New York

Advisor: Dr. Bruce Cronin

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Abstract

The following paper looks at intelligence failures and military failures through the lens of adaptation failure. This paper asserts that there is reason to believe that certain causal elements of alleged intelligence failures reside more so in the province of politics, than in the collection and analysis domain of intelligence tradecraft. This is not to say that failures are exclusively of a political nature, but that looking at politics and the relationship of policymakers to the Intelligence Community yields a preponderance of causal evidence. Secondly, it is suggested that a parallel set of underlying assumptions evident in adaptation failure theory may be observed in military failures as well. This leads to the final analysis, which tends to suggest that it is anything but final and therefore may be indicative of a superordinate realm: strategic failure.

Preface

Significance

Why had the United States, in recent history exhibited a slow response to environmental changes within the realm of national security? Since the end of the Cold War the U.S. appears to have been sluggish in adapting to the absence of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new threats. Namely, the Intelligence Community and the military have been unable to modify their perception of threats facing the U.S. in a timely fashion. This is not to say that there has been *no* significant change, but simply *too little*¹ (and perhaps a bit late) to meet the evolution of the global security milieu. This paper deals with *adaptation failure* as a theory that has recently been developed with regard to the Intelligence Community (IC). If the theory is robust it may resonate in other quarters. Therefore, we shall attempt to view the decision process and its effect on the application of force in Iraq (and Afghanistan to some extent) through the same prism².

This paper considers the following two questions: Did the process of changing the strategy in Iraq reflect the same failure to adapt to an unconventional war as that which had plagued the Intelligence Community with regard to global terrorism? Secondly, is there a larger adaptation failure at play, namely strategic failure? These questions are important because if there is a parallel set of antecedents leading to distortion in both categories then there is reason to believe that they may be subordinate to a broader issue.

¹ As will be discussed throughout this paper, there have been numerous commissions regarding “intelligence reform”. Though many of the same problems have been identified (e.g. a lack of: foreign language speakers, culturally aware analysts, and a sense of “corporateness” to name a few), they have persisted.

² While speaking of the “military” the author realizes that military decisions are inherently controlled by civilian leadership when addressing matters of Grand Strategy. Therefore, the term “military” represents not only the uniformed services, but their civilian masters as well.

If so, then perhaps it is destined to be repeated; not just within the halls of Langley and Arlington³, but possibly having implications beyond.

Methods

The approach here is threefold, in that, a brief review of intelligence failures and military failures should serve to highlight the problem. Proceeding forward, this paper will look deeper into the points of friction between policymakers and their subordinate intelligence and military communities. Then, as these interactions are highlighted, the processes that tend to show causative relationships will be analyzed forensically. It is hoped that by this method we can juxtapose the subsequent findings with the broad category of strategic failure. In this effort, the objective is to determine whether further research is warranted to test the hypothesis in the realm of Grand Strategy.

Sources

In order to approach the subject matter involved in this thesis it would be folly to limit research to the twin inventories of intelligence and military literature. To truly understand strategic decisions and how they affect policy (and the resultant effects that tend to follow) it is necessary to go beyond the comfort of a singular thread of academic discourse. It requires the consultation of seemingly boundless spheres of study; if only for the sake of the global impact that American strategic decisions may generate. It is therefore most appropriate that this paper has been spawned through research in a variety of areas including, but not limited to Organizational Learning, Organizational Psychology, Social Psychology, Political Psychology, Military History, Anthropology,

³ This is a reference to the cities in Virginia that are home to CIA and the Pentagon, respectively.

Middle East (Near East) History, Surprise Attacks, Intelligence Failures, Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies⁴.

Declaration of personal biases

It would not be fair if your author did not declare the following biases. (1) This paper is American-centric, as the terrorist acts forming the *casus belli* had targeted American interests, property, and lives. In coming to terms with a very potent transnational terrorist threat environment, and the outcome of American decisions, the author has become directly involved in both the intelligence and military organizations that have necessarily responded.

(2) Though various international relations theories provide insight here, there is an ever-present (yet hopefully nearly imperceptible) neorealist⁵ hue that may tend to color the author's articulation. It is tempered, however, by alternative perspectives. In the

⁴ As this paper deals with adaptation- the precursor for which is learning- the fields of organizational learning and organizational psychology have been useful in understanding the full spectrum within which decisions pertaining to a shift in organizational direction are made. Having a smattering of social and political psychology informs the reader/researcher of the individual and group processes by which decisions are taken, as well as explaining some of the impediments to that end. An understanding of military history, as it relates to the latter half of this paper, allows for the similarities/differences between military campaigns to be properly recognized in a more concise form. This perspective tends to place in context, interactions within and between the multitude of agencies, and to gauge the efficacy of policy pursuits to achieve military "victory". Middle East history describes the conditions under which the post-9/11 threat environment had emerged. As for intelligence failures, they are often found to be largely inextricably linked, as a forceful independent variable in surprise attack literature. Admittedly, this link does not fully explain what effect policy choices have had in forming the exploitable vulnerabilities that render a state susceptible to disaster. The success of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies tend to be explained through the prisms of anthropology and sociology. Invariably the latter two regions of study are human-centric approaches to the broader phenomena of the former two.

⁵ The neorealist school of thought that the author subscribes to is admittedly most applicable under normal, conventional conditions. That is, the structural relationships between nation-states in an anarchic world (lacking a central sovereign) tend to produce certain interactive dynamics geared toward self-preservation. *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth N. Waltz, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., (1979). While this Westphalian states system is assumed to be the "norm", and power-balancing an outcome, the author recognizes that neorealist thought has been challenged and has spawned theories of "Complex Interdependence", as developed and advanced by, among others, Keohane and Nye. See: *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977).

interest of space and scope this paper will not entertain, on theoretical grounds, the merits of international relations theory since the primary focus is centered on transnational terrorism and unconventional warfare.

Introduction and Thesis Statement

For some time now, studies have been indicating that the events of 9/11/01 were not detected and defeated in advance as a consequence of intelligence failure(s). While this is a very broad category and much has been written on it, there is a particular strand of literature that this paper seeks to explore and perhaps even apply to another category of perceived failure: strategic failure as it relates to the application of military force. Recently, a very robust case has been made by Amy Zegart regarding a “failure to adapt” by the Intelligence Community⁶.

Following the surprise attack on 11 September 2001⁷, the U.S. has been engaged in wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and globally in its campaign against “terror.”⁸ Following initial conventional military victories in both Iraq and Afghanistan, symptoms have appeared that are consistent with Zegart’s “adaptation failure” hypothesis. Namely, the requisite shift from conventional military operations to Irregular Warfare geared toward the insurgencies that followed the American military intervention in the heart of the

⁶ The sum, substance and citation for Zegart’s work will follow in the second chapter.

⁷ The attacks of 11 September were at the operational level a manipulation of American security shortcomings, while the tactical level consisted of suicide attacks that used airplanes as precision guided munitions. Suicide attacks are not a new phenomenon. Additionally, as Pape points out, the logic of suicide as an implement of war is not limited to the adherents of Islam and has a history dating back to 66 CE: “The best known suicide operations before 1980 also had coercive aims. The Zealots, the Assassins, and the kamikazes all sought to coerce their political opponents, either to remove foreign military forces from their homeland or to prevent imminent military invasions.” See *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Robert A. Pape (New York: Random House, 2005), quote from p. 33.

⁸ It is a bit odd to declare that war is being waged against an emotional adjective. Even less clear, if “terror” is a verb, then it appears to lose meaning when employing military action against such an abstract concept. What makes matters even more nebulous is that engaging in a course of armed combat with “terrorists” presupposes that *all* enemies are engaged in “terrorism.” Some members of the adversary groups may see themselves as resisting invasion and domination. If their target set consists of a foreign army that is not indigenous to the area, then perhaps the “terrorism” label has few legs on which to stand. However, when the target set consists of civilians there is no disputing the patent facts. The unintended effect of using such a label in such a broad manner cheapens its currency. A similar case would be labeling all autocracies as “evil” and equating them with Adolf Hitler. Such language should be reserved to describe a very limited number of regimes and characters.

Middle East. Specifically, counterinsurgency (COIN) has not been applied early enough to avoid the bloodletting.

This paper compares some of the causal lines drawn by Zegart and explores whether they are applicable to the recent war in Iraq⁹. Specifically, the thesis is: *If the U.S. Intelligence Community failed to adapt to a changed post-Cold War threat environment and this failure was paralleled by comparable missteps in the military realm, there appears to be ample evidence to signal that the bases of their malfunction potentially reside in another category of failure: strategic failure.*

⁹ Though Afghanistan may be just as appropriate to study, this paper is mostly limiting the majority of its scope to Iraq.

Chapter 1: Adaptation Failure in the Intelligence Community

... Some observers believe that intelligence agencies may be in for a period of transition and adaptation exceeding the one that followed immediately upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

-Richard A. Best Jr.¹⁰

The New World Order Revisited

While the primary American enemy has ceased to be the Soviet Union, U.S. foreign policy response had been ill-defined in the decade that followed. As the stability of the structurally bipolar world had disintegrated the United States found itself atop a unipolar¹¹ global landscape. The balance of power reconfiguration had caused stagnation in terms of strategic vision and the role of the U.S. in world affairs¹². The U.S. had a full decade to adjust its focus, yet seemed not to have been able to achieve a healthy sense of clarity. It was as though intellectual inertia and ambiguous prioritization had displaced

¹⁰ *Issue Brief for Congress: "Intelligence Issues for Congress"*, Richard A. Best, Jr. (Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, Congressional Research Service); updated 1 October, 2002, IB10012; p. CRS-2.

¹¹ The term "unipolar" here describes the global power structure. For instance, "bipolarity" had been used as a shorthand term to illustrate the balance of power between the Soviet Bloc and Western powers during the Cold War. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, "bipolarity" was no longer. Though some may argue that "multipolarity" defines what had remained, the United States and her allies held at least some primacy in the period that followed. This does not negate the possibility that rising global competitors may seek regional dominance, hence "multipolarity" would probably be a more appropriate descriptor (though admittedly it is a bit odd to declare more than two poles to be in existence).

¹² This period of time could perhaps be defined as transitional. The policy arguments of the 1990s seemed to be geared toward returning to isolationism, or some form of retrenchment. The threat environment was being looked at through a host of concerns from environmental and population factors to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as a threat short of total annihilation. For a more full treatment of these arguments see *At Issue: Politics in the World Arena*, Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin eds, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994, 7th Edition) and *The Future of American Foreign Policy*, Eugene R. Wittkopf and Christopher M. Jones eds., (New York: St. Martin's/Worth Publishers, 1999). It seems that there was awareness of the changing global social and political landscape, but the threat environment was not named to reflect something akin to "The Cold War." The term, "interregnum" was used to describe the period, but it was not conceptually helpful. See *Foreign Policy*, Summer 2000, itself entitled, "What Comes after the 'Post-Cold War'"; pp. 44-46 addresses the interregnum (Christoph Bertram).

its ancestral lucidity, during the Cold War. The Grand Strategy¹³ of that time was simple: containment¹⁴.

As the moribund Grand Strategy¹⁵ of the prior half-century had not yielded a new approach, spillover effects appear to have trickled down to its subordinate national security apparatus¹⁶. Hence, the IC had been unable to meet the demands of the rising specter of global jihadist terrorism. In a similar vein, the military and civilian policymakers have had a hard time maintaining an adaptive capacity with regard to war fighting in Southwest Asia.

Though the 2003 Iraq War had initially been similar to the conventional *firepower* and *maneuver* warfare of the past century, it soon morphed into something *seemingly*

¹³ B.H. Liddell Hart defines strategy as, “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy”, whereas Grand Strategy is “... practically synonymous with the policy that guides the conduct of war...” in *Strategy*, B.H. Liddell Hart (New York: Meridian, second revised ed. 1991); quotes found on pp. 321-322. Liddell Hart holds that Grand Strategy is superordinate to strategy, though both ultimately serve policy.

¹⁴ Jeremi Suri claims the absence of a coherent conceptual model during the 1990s was applicable to both the administrations of George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton. Suri describes that time period as being akin to an “anti-strategy.” He asserts that what makes the formulation of a Grand Strategy rather difficult to come by is the pluralistic structure of American society. “Grand Strategy requires consensus which is very difficult to build and sustain amidst the competition of interests and ideas that define American democracy.” “American Grand Strategy from the Cold War’s End to 9/11”, *Orbis*, Fall, 2009, pp. 611-627; the quote was drawn from p. 626. Therese Delpech essentially equates the 1990s with the period between WWI and WWII in “The Imbalance of Terror”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 25: 1 (Winter 2002) pp. 31-40. One might say that the *fog of interwar* is what impedes policy imagination.

¹⁵ According to Henry Kissinger, “... the deepest reason for America’s difficulty in the 1990s with developing a coherent strategy for a world in which its role is so central was that three different generations with very different approaches to foreign policy were disputing America’s role.” He indicates these three generations to be of the 1950s/60s Cold War, the Vietnam protest movement that followed and the generation that followed both and was unable to appreciate their predecessors’ paradigm. *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?: Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001); p. 28.

¹⁶ The Intelligence Community is a broad term conferring a sense of unified agenda and outlook upon 15 member organizations. The Department of Defense is a large constituent element of national security, which contains all of the service branches’ intelligence units (and DIA- Defense Intelligence Agency). In a democracy, all members of the IC are necessarily subordinate to policymakers’ priorities as informed by their comprehension of international affairs. This can be skewed by biases on either side of the divide (a major theme of this paper).

foreign: irregular warfare in the form of insurgency¹⁷. Both the IC in the period 1991-2001 and the military in the period 2001-2006 were woefully unprepared to meet the threats that the U.S. had faced. The reasons why, it is hoped, will be adequately addressed regularly throughout this paper.

Terrorism as a tool had taken on new meaning in 2001. The weaknesses of Western intelligence were effectively exploited on 11 September. What was different in this new environment were the limitless objectives of the terrorists, their use of American openness, an inability to be deterred (as suicide-homicide had been *the chosen method* of attack), and the knowledge that the American IC was bound by legal constraints that prohibited the requisite penetration of the HUMINT (Human Intelligence) target: dirty assets.¹⁸

Defining Adaptation Failure

The main theme of this work is centered on adaptation. Therefore, it is worth defining in precise terms. Adaptation is distinguished from change in a very specific way. To simply change is a more basic action, similar to a modification in appearance.

¹⁷ Insurgency is not a new concept. As will be discussed later, the Vietnam War had been fought largely by America's adversary as an insurgency, whose aim (by definition) was to upset the legitimacy of the ruling government in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). The American experience in that war left a bad taste in mouths of the would-be military leaders in the decades to come. Also, the U.S. had often played the supporting role for a variety of insurgencies during the Cold War, a subject beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁸ There are costs associated with such a moral soiling. This point is noted by Gregory F. Treverton in "Covert Action and Open Society", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 5 (Summer, 1987), 995-1014. It has been argued that the political consequences of dealing with persons such as those who perpetrate acts of terror against a civilian populace are too costly to bear. This case was made in part in J. Cilluffo, Ronald A. Marks, and George C. Salmoiraghi, "The Use and Limits of U.S. Intelligence", *The Washington Quarterly*, (Winter, 2002), 61-74. One useful depiction of the changed threat environment is made on p. 65: "Part of the changing face of international terrorism, referring to al Qaeda in particular, involves the terrorists' ultimate objectives. These networks no longer seek a seat at the negotiating table; instead, they want to blow up the table and build a new one in its place."

To adapt is to alter one's approach to better match the environmental challenges it faces. It involves more depth and breadth. An example that illustrates the difference between the two follows: When a police department decides to switch to a new uniform it is a mere change. When the department decides that a new approach to crime-fighting is necessary to suit the level and nature of crime in the community, it has adapted¹⁹.

As a theory, "adaptation failure" has been generated and pursued by Amy B. Zegart, and shapes the central argument of this paper. Though Zegart has studied adaptation failure with respect to the IC, it is a useful discussion to have as the second half of this paper asserts that the difficulty experienced by the IC in adapting to the post-Cold War threat environment may not only apply to the military, but to other elements of national import as well²⁰.

Zegart has had an opportunity to analyze failed intelligence reforms prior to 9/11²¹. She views efforts to reform as having suffered from a failure to adapt. *Adaptation*, Zegart asserts is a more appropriate term than *change*. Adaptation connotes something entirely distinct from change. When an organization experiences change it is a partial measure. A more robust change may be measured by its magnitude, which may

¹⁹E.g. *proactive* policing (actively seeking criminal behavior, such as establishing a counter-narcotics unit), is an adaptive approach, whereas *reactive* policing (responding to a complaint and relying on luck and circumstance to detect illicit narcotic activity) may be the standard protocol.

²⁰F.G. Hoffman has implied that there is reason to believe that such an adaptation failure applies to the military, "The Anatomy of the Long War's Failings", *Footnotes*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, May 2009, Vol. 14, No. 16. This assessment is drawn heavily from *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, Eliot Cohen and John Gooch (New York: Free Press, 1990). The term "adaptation" is defined here as "the ability 'to handle the changing present' and the interactive nature of war." The 2006 edition of this book in paperback addresses the American military experience in Iraq, though briefly; pp. 247-251. Cohen and Gooch claim that American failure in Iraq is owed to a failure to anticipate, but more so to a failure to learn. This paper asserts that these categories of failure are merely subordinate children to their parent cause: adaptation failure (which they include as a conceptual equal to the other two). Moreover, as the subtitle indicates, this book is a study of failure *in war*, not in the preceding decision phases *leading* to war. Nonetheless, their case studies are quite thorough.

²¹ Amy B. Zegart, "An Empirical Analysis of Failed Intelligence Reforms Before September 11", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 121, No. 1 (2006), 33-60.

be seen as a transformation. Yet adaptation indicates a recognition that an “improved fit” must develop between an organization and its external environment²². Zegart asserts that awareness of a changing environment prior to 9/11 had been prevalent within the IC and Congress, and numerous recommendations to better meet the new threats had not produced the requisite adaptation.

The adaptation referred to here is that of an apparent organizational nature. During the post-Cold War period of the 1990s the IC did begin to focus more on combating terrorism²³. Apparently intelligence officials and policymakers were cognizant of a need for organizational change in response to such emerging threats.

Between the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and 11 September 2001, no fewer than twelve major bipartisan commissions, governmental studies, and think tank task forces examined the U.S. intelligence community and U.S. counterterrorism efforts. All of their reports urged reform within intelligence agencies, across the intelligence community, and between the intelligence community and other parts of the U.S. government.²⁴

Awareness is a necessary, but insufficient precursor for adaptation. Zegart asserts that a failure to adapt was ever-present during the period 1991-2001. She has observed 340 recommendations for change from the above-mentioned twelve studies of the IC. Of those, Zegart notes that ten percent were fully implemented²⁵. Even where commissions had convened to study the role of law enforcement in counterterrorism, a large part of their recommendations focused on the IC.

²² Ibid.; pp.35-36.

²³ Ibid.; p. 40.

²⁴ Ibid.; pp. 45-46; see Table 2 on p. 46 as it tallies the above-referenced studies. (Also see *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11*, Amy B. Zegart [Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007]; pp. 32-33).

²⁵ Ibid.; p. 52.

Four common findings were observed during this period²⁶. First, from an organizational leadership perspective the IC was structurally misaligned. The DCI (Director of Central Intelligence) was both the head of the IC itself and head of the CIA. Given that the Secretary of Defense had 85% of the intelligence budget, the DCI was really placed in a position of impotence with regard to resources and funding. As he delivered the CIA-prepared PDB (President's Daily Brief – which is now a community-wide product) he was still the CIA's director. This makes the task of remaining unbiased toward any particular member unit of the IC difficult. Second, prioritization for collection and analysis was not only ineffective, it was observed to be lacking order and standardization.

Third, among the many intelligence disciplines, HUMINT was sorely wanting for reasons related to legislation banning contact with human rights violators; which is precisely the class of individuals whom HUMINT collectors must co-opt, subvert, or otherwise coax for information.²⁷ The fourth theme centers on personnel. In one sense a deficiency in this category represents a more detrimental failure to adapt than the other categories do. The reason is because in the post-Cold War world the rising threat was foreign terrorism. This required a necessary response by the IC to attract and incentivize the educational enhancement of people who have the appropriate language proficiency and cultural appreciation to know one's enemy (a central tenet in both war-fighting and intelligence tradition- usually attributed to Sun Tzu and Carl Von Clausewitz). Lacking

²⁶ Ibid.; pp. 53-55. Note that these four themes are reviewed here in a cursory fashion. It is in the interest of avoiding redundancy that these matters are not explored more heavily at this point. However, if one reads this paper carefully it should become apparent that such themes are dealt with more insightfully at other points.

²⁷ See, "We Have Not Correctly Framed the Debate on Intelligence Reform", Saxby Chambliss, *Parameters*, Spring 2005, pp. 5-13.

the will to fire poor performers also served as a hindrance. Intelligence information sharing was also deeply deficient. The IC could have done a better job of ensuring cross-agency temporary rotations and encouraging an environment of information sharing.

Causal Logic

Zegart maintains that the key causal factor in adaptation failure was politics. Three seemingly simple, but insurmountable “enduring realities” appeared to be at play²⁸. The “nature of bureaucratic organizations”, the “rational self-interest of political actors”, and the interests of national security bureaucrats with all of their attendant protectionist proclivities to guarantee they are secure²⁹.

If Zegart is right about an adaptation failure- and it is this author’s position that she is, then perhaps there is an application that can be made to other areas of decision-making. Understanding what an adaptation failure looks like is important. More important, however, is to understand what its component parts consist of. This will enable one to view with clarity the phenomenon as it unfolds. If such clarity could be had, then it may be possible to identify the antecedents of adaptation failure in order to mitigate its pernicious effects. Should this be the case it would potentially have infinite application across many fields of government concern.

The reason that recognizing adaptation failure in its incipient phase is critical can be seen in every area of private and public life. In the former, if a firm manufactures an outmoded product because it is unable to adapt to a changing market it will go out of

²⁸ Zegart, “An Empirical Analysis of Failed Intelligence Reforms...”, p. 59.

²⁹ Ibid. 59; note that the third point is paraphrased, whereas the first and second were drawn as a direct quote.

business. It is nice to produce a horse-drawn carriage, but since consumers are demanding cars, buses, trains, and planes it is ineffectual.

Studying Intelligence Failures:

A large body of work regarding intelligence failures has centered on surprise attacks.³⁰ As Richard K. Betts argues, it is quite ordinary for an IC to experience failure, as it has been suggested that failure is inevitable, natural, and to be expected³¹. In many ways this idea had become a matter of accepted wisdom in the IC:

In the best-known cases of intelligence failure, the most crucial mistakes have seldom been made by collectors of raw information, occasionally by professionals who produce finished analyses, but most often by the decision makers who consume the products of intelligence services. Policy premises constrict perception, and administrative workloads constrain reflection. Intelligence failure is political and psychological more often than organizational.³²

Insofar as the individual analysts' cognitive barriers exist- and there are many such barriers- they are not the biggest cause of intelligence failure. Indeed, it is the knowledge that intelligence consumers (policymakers) have themselves a number of cognitive barriers and biases that appear to have the greater impact on the intelligence failures. The consumption end of the spectrum is composed of... "political men who

³⁰ Richard A. Posner presents a useful analysis of "surprise attacks" in his book, *Preventing Surprise Attacks: Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11*, Richard A. Posner, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005). Special attention should be paid to Chapter 3 entitled, "The history and Anatomy of Successful Surprise Attacks" (pp. 73-97).

³¹ Richard K. Betts, "Analysis, War, and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable", *World Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Oct., 1978), 61-89. "Intelligence failures are not only inevitable, they are natural"; p. 88.

³² *Ibid.*; p.61.

have risen by being more decisive than reflective, more aggressive than introspective and confident as much as cautious.”³³

Betts suggests that awareness of this phenomenon by analysts and producers may serve to diminish such misperceptions³⁴. Still, the attacking party has certain advantages of which it is difficult, if not impossible, to disarm them³⁵. That is, the victim may be lulled into a false sense of security by the attacker, built upon the victim’s own proclivities toward inaction. Additionally, no one can afford to continuously warn of an impending attack, lest they be labeled as one who “cries wolf”, causing “alert fatigue” and resulting in a loss of credibility. A “self-negating prophecy” may also be produced³⁶. What’s more, as Betts indicates elsewhere, “deception is cheap. Little investment in men and material is necessary, and the return is very high.”³⁷

Warning as the Less Significant Source of Failure than Decision:

Decision makers are part of the intelligence process; intelligence failures implicate them as well. For example, decision makers often say they want warnings when they actually do not. Warnings usually imply a need to reorder priorities, including the allocation of resources.

-Jennifer E. Sims³⁸

³³ Ibid.; p. 83.

³⁴ Ibid.; p.84.

³⁵ Richard K. Betts, “Surprise, Scholasticism, and Strategy: A Review of Ariel Levite’s *Intelligence and Strategic Surprises* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987)”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Sep., 1989), 329-343.

³⁶ Ibid.; p. 339. The concept of a “self-negating prophecy” is explained elsewhere in *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, Thomas C. Schelling, (New York and London, 1978); pp. 115-119. Schelling discusses a number of “prophecies.” They all have the commonality of origin: expectations.

³⁷ “Surprise Despite Warning: Why Sudden Attacks Succeed”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 95, No. 4 (Winter, 1980-1981), 551-572; p. 564.

³⁸ “Understanding Friends and Enemies: The Context for American Intelligence Reform”, Jennifer E. Sims, in *Transforming U.S. Intelligence*, Jennifer E. Sims and Burton Gerber, Eds., (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005); Chapter 2, p. 16.

The function of intelligence is primarily that of warning. Warning focuses on two categories: capabilities and intentions³⁹. The former is a Western strength (similar to “bean counting”⁴⁰), whereas the latter is more difficult to know, given that select few in the adversary’s chain of command may be privy to such information.

Western warning intelligence will be excellent though imperfect, persuasive but not irresistible. The proficiency of intelligence can also be a mixed blessing. Monitoring capability that is properly recognized to be excellent encourages reliance on warning, but since the principal of surprise is decision rather than warning, this dulls sensitivity to the possibility of sudden attack.⁴¹

Still, the problem of timely warning is not as influential as human psychology and politics are⁴². “Hedging against surprise is hard because the causes are deeply embedded in human psychology, political uncertainty, military complexity, and organizational viscosity.”⁴³

The Essence of Warning:

The fact of surprise at Pearl Harbor has never been persuasively explained by accusing the participants, individually or in groups, of conspiracy or negligence or stupidity. What these examples illustrate is rather the very human tendency to pay attention to the signals that support current expectations about enemy behavior. If no one is listening for signals of an attack against a highly improbable target, then it is very difficult for the signals to be heard.

-Roberta Wohlstetter⁴⁴

³⁹ *Anticipating Surprise: Analysis for Strategic Warning*, Cynthia M. Grabo, (Lanham, MD: University of America, Inc.: 2004); pp. 4-18. At the tactical level, warning is more concerned with capabilities. However, at the strategic level, it *should* be more concerned with intentions. “Strategic warning” is still ill-defined.

⁴⁰ *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*, 3rd Ed. Mark M. Lowenthal, (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2006); p. 223.

⁴¹ *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning*, Richard K. Betts, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982); p. 198.

⁴² *Ibid.*; p. 286.

⁴³ *Ibid.*; p. 309.

⁴⁴ *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, Roberta Wohlstetter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); p. 392.

The “signal-to-noise” ratio may cause distortion in perception. That is, the ability to collect is not necessarily the problem of warning as much as the ability to discern what a clear indication of enemy intentions may be. There is a wealth of literature explaining the perception barriers to effective intelligence, which oftentimes leads to disastrous outcomes.

The attack on Pearl Harbor is not in any way an anomaly. Numerous *conventional* surprise attacks before and after Pearl Harbor seem to have suffered from very similar symptoms in that the signals were buried amongst the cacophony of noise. However, the thorough case study of that *conventional* surprise attack has provided much of the foundation for the examination of *unconventional* surprise attacks that have followed⁴⁵.

“Apparently human beings have a stubborn attachment to old beliefs and an equally stubborn resistance to new material that will upset them.”⁴⁶ This problematic truth has not been diluted much since the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. If anything, it is often made worse by the increasing ability to collect vast amounts of data that are unable to be processed by analysts (producers) in a timely fashion and digested by decision makers (consumers) who have their own paradigmatic predispositions regarding the global milieu and the source and nature of threats that abound.

⁴⁵ Some examples of conventional surprise attacks that have been analyzed in detail were the 1941 Nazi advance into The Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa), the 1968 North Vietnamese Tet Offensive, the 1973 Egyptian crossing of the Suez in the Mid-East October War (also called the Yom Kippur War, or the Ramadan War) to name a few. This paper is more inclined to look at the so-called “unconventional” surprise attacks, such as that which had occurred on 9/11/01; Al-Qa’ida vs. the U.S. There have been many cases of successful *conventional* surprise attack in the past century. Though an initial advantage was tactically successful, what stands out about the history of surprise attacks teaches us that the short term gains are usually followed by a long term strategic loss. Still, the initial shock value is enough to cause the public to inquire as to the causal origins. The public record indicates that it is gauged as an intelligence failure and through this prism an inquiry is undertaken. We shall address this matter in the coming pages.

⁴⁶ Wohlstetter, “Pearl Harbor”; p. 393.

It has been further argued that perhaps equal parts blame are to be found in both the analysis and decision sides of the equation. In a study of the Beirut bombings of the U.S. Marine Barracks and State Department, Erik J. Dahl has argued that lack of “focused imagination” had been significant despite adequate intelligence⁴⁷. Dahl argues that analysts and consumers were not imaginative enough to have recognized a shift in tactics that would have revealed the changed threat environment. Subsequently, in the link between producers and consumers the emerging unconventional threat was not adequately communicated:

Most of the classical problems associated with warning and surprise were, however, evident: cognitive limitations prevented analysts and decision-makers from even imagining what they were facing, while modern intelligence and communications technology produced a numbing overabundance of information. The verdict of history has largely cleared the intelligence community of significant blame in this case, supporting the orthodox view that warning of terrorist attack is extraordinarily difficult and failure can only be expected. But this is wrong, for our case study indicates the intelligence community must share an equal portion of the responsibility, both for passing on a flood of intelligence data without conducting the necessary analysis, and - just as important - for not ensuring that the intelligence was being received and understood properly by commanders.⁴⁸

The “Fault” Lines

The “ambiguous language of intelligence”⁴⁹ is an outgrowth of the somewhat speculative nature of intelligence analysis⁵⁰, which in turn hinders the degree of certainty

⁴⁷ Erik J. Dahl, “Warning of Terror: Explaining the Failure of Intelligence Against Terrorism”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 31-55, February 2005.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; p. 49.

⁴⁹ *Surprise Attack: The Victim’s Perspective*, Ephraim Kam, (Cambridge, MA/London, England: Harvard University Press, 1988, reprinted in paperback 2004); p. 24.

⁵⁰ One delineation to make with regard to analysis is related to its subdivision into two categories: Substantiated analysis and speculative analysis. The former indicates “exact, verified, and up-to-date data”, as the latter is “based on a generally good acquaintance with the other side’s way of thinking and past behavior”; Shlomo Gazit, “Estimates and Fortune-Telling in Intelligence Work”, *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Spring, 1982) 36-56; quote from p. 44. This may present a source of some difficulty for the consumer, who is attempting to discern truth. The analyst may choose to indicate whether they are informed by scientific knowledge (substantiated) or reasonable wisdom-based knowledge (speculative). The article highlights many of the complexities within the relationship between producers and consumers.

that the consumer may place in the assessments they make based on intelligence products⁵¹. In the interplay between decision makers and intelligence producers, Ephraim Kam suggests that there are three injurious effects that tend to obstruct the intelligence process:

- 1-“...analysts are not always sensitive to the needs of decision makers and do not properly direct their production toward issues that are important to policy.”
- 2- “...intelligence analysts find it difficult to assess and predict the enemy’s intentions and willingness to take risks since these depend to a large extent on their own government’s future moves.”
- 3- “... intelligence analysts are sometimes unaware of the costs and benefits of their own assessment, especially when the issue is as critical as predicting a coming war.”⁵²

Moreover, the burden placed on decision makers is very acute, and has far-reaching consequences. It is *they* who must choose wisely from among the multitude of possibilities in order to formulate the appropriate policies and countermeasures⁵³. This challenge further strengthens as the decision makers have little time to devote to finished intelligence products⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Ephraim Kam, *Surprise Attack*, p. 28. There is much evidence of the friction between intelligence producers and consumers. Shulsky and Shmitt have observed that this can be due to several factors. Namely, that policymakers become upset when intelligence fails to be fully supportive of policy, the dependent (as opposed to independent) relationship that the IC has with policymakers, and the perceived level of expertise that may or may not exist at either end of the spectrum. Therefore, they argue that the only way to insulate the IC from policymakers is to have service chiefs with the “...willingness and ability to protect analysts from outside pressure.” *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence*, Abram N. Shulsky and Gary J. Schmitt, 3rd ed., (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2002); pp. 133-141.

⁵² Ephraim Kam, *Surprise Attack*, pp. 207-208. Though these three effects describe a conventional environment it is worth considering that such differences exist between the two realms. This illustrates the required division of labor and their unintended impact. These are by no means the only impediments to effective intelligence analysis. Others, such as those related to conceptual rigidity, are explored a bit later in this paper ; pp. 85-114.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; pp. 211-212.

⁵⁴ This is a recurring theme in the study of intelligence failures, as Roger Hilsman had studied in the early days of the IC’s codified existence. See Roger Hilsman, Jr., “Intelligence and Policy-Making in Foreign Affairs”, *World Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Oct., 1952), 1-45. This point is made on pp. 11-13, and 37. Hilsman also treats producers’ and consumers’ lack of introspection with the prescription that both ends

There are inherent impediments within the “intelligence cycle”⁵⁵ that pertain to every step in the process. As this paper is naturally unable to address them all, there is an area in which to focus: the nexus between the policy-minded consumers and the managing body of the producers⁵⁶. Whereas “politicization” is normally considered to be a pejorative term, Richard Betts relaxes the definition to incorporate a sense of normalcy⁵⁷. It is the concept, that since policy drives intelligence and in turn, intelligence informs policymakers, there are naturally going to be political players on the consumption side of the equation.

It is important to note that *politicization* is not equivalent to *corruption*. That would be the extreme form of politics meddling in intelligence affairs. Rather, it is the appreciation of its presence that analysts, particularly managers, must bear in mind when editing intelligence products. As politicization can’t be eliminated, awareness of its existence may provide the managers in the IC to be in a position to reduce its harmful

must not only consider the source of their own biases, but that “At the same time the researchers must become policy-oriented.” p. 43. Again, this is a recurring theme: *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in American National Security*, Richard K. Betts, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); p. 40.

⁵⁵ Traditionally, the “intelligence cycle” starts with Planning and Direction, based on policymakers’ needs. It then flows to Collection, Processing and Exploitation, then Analysis and Production, Dissemination, and presumably back to Planning and Direction. While the “cycle” refers to a seemingly cyclical pattern, it is somewhat incomplete. There are times in which feedback and policy needs dictate that the cycle revert back to an earlier stage, for instance Analysis and Production. It may therefore be better to illustrate the “cycle” in a more linear fashion. See Lowenthal, *Intelligence*; (Third edition, 2006), pp. 65-67.

⁵⁶ Following the surprise nuclear tests by India in 1998, Melvin Goodman wrote, “The Indian fiasco has exposed the three major deficiencies evident at the CIA for the past several years: politicization, bureaucratization, and a fundamental misunderstanding of the proper interaction between intelligence and policymaking.” “US intelligence failure shows need for reform”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 08827729, 18 May, 1998, Vol. 90, Issue 120.

⁵⁷ Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*; pp. 76-79. One aspect of politicization is of interest here, and that is the explicitly stated object of inquiry was to determine if politicization was at play in the Iraq WMD investigation. The inquiry began in 2003 with pronouncements that policymakers not only misused intelligence, but that they had *manipulated* it to improve its suitability with policy preferences. The fact that this allegation was made by Democratic opponents against the Republican administration implies that there is some preliminary political shading that fuels such an inquiry. On the other side of the coin, the Republican administration used Executive Privilege to circumvent such charges. See “Robust Intelligence Oversight Stalls at White House Door”, Helen Fessenden, *CQ Weekly*; 26 July 2003, Vol. 61 Issue 30, p. 1917, 5p, 2bw.

effects⁵⁸. So too may their subordinates and superiors, as well as the consuming policymakers.

The criticism of DCIs past has been either that they are too close to the president and/or his most influential policymaking circle, or that the president shuns them. Betts has suggested that the solution is probably not realistic, but nonetheless it is a solution of sorts:

There is a solution to this dilemma in theory, although not in legislation: select a president and an intelligence director with particular personality traits. The best chief of intelligence is one who has the personal confidence and trust of the president, but who delights in telling the inner circle what it does not want to hear. This relationship can be sustained, of course, only if the president likes to have his thinking challenged and his job complicated- something more common among intellectuals than among politicians.⁵⁹

Impediments

Cognitive Impediments

As mentioned above, delving into the intricacies of the “intelligence cycle” is not a priority here. However, many of the problems *within* the cycle seem to indicate that they affect both producers and consumers. Since we are exploring the zone between the two, it is important to discuss what some of the seemingly irreducible cognitive barriers are, that may influence both. Richards J. Heuer Jr. has illuminated many of these within the context of deception, a key element in any surprise attack⁶⁰. Though Heuer had

⁵⁸ Ibid.; While managers may be mindful of politics, it is ultimately the DCI (Director of Central Intelligence) and the DNI (Director of National Intelligence- a position that was recommended for decades, but was not implemented until *again* it was recommended in the Terrorism and Prevention Act of 2004) who have the president’s ear. It would not be incorrect to say that they are political actors to some degree as well.

⁵⁹ “The New Politics of Intelligence: Will Reforms Work This Time?”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (May/June 2004) 2-8. This quote was drawn from pp. 7-8.

⁶⁰ Richards J. Heuer, Jr. “Strategic Deception and Counterdeception: A Cognitive Process Approach”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Symposium in Honor of Hans J. Morgenthau (Jun., 1981), 294-327.

focused on the destructive forces militating against analysts' perceptions, it is certainly applicable to the policymakers as well⁶¹.

The inelasticity of mental frameworks tends to withstand discrepant information, which in turn is advantageous for the attacking party. It is far easier to deceive an adversary if one is exploiting the victim's presumptions, rather than luring them into a different set of preconceptions⁶². The existence of such a rigid set of biases is an outgrowth of the need to establish order in one's thinking, so that the human need to understand the world around them may yield the genesis of causality and perhaps a vision of what is to come⁶³.

A couple of interesting facts were discovered in a study of international crises, as they relate to the policymakers' role. "The most commonly observed symptom was failure to reevaluate alternatives, which was found in 15 of the 19 cases"⁶⁴. This cognitive rigidity sets the stage for disaster. In other words, even given adequate intelligence that a crisis will unfold, policymakers may choose to cling to what is most comfortable. Secondly, "individuals who display a capability for analytic decision making do not always use it."⁶⁵

In another area of study regarding premature cognitive closure, Uri Bar-Joseph and Arie W. Kruglanski have identified two types of needs associated with either

⁶¹ *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Robert Jervis, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). Jervis had made this point specifically in his tremendously rich study of decision-makers' ignorance of the historical record, as having incorrectly learned from surprise attacks- among other jolts to the system; owing in part to their cognitive recalcitrance. This is evident on pp. 218, 224-225, 237, and 307.

⁶² Heuer, "Strategic Deception and Counterdeception"; pp. 298, 304 and 317-318.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; pp. 310, 314 and 322-323.

⁶⁴ Gregory M. Herek; Irving L. Janis; Paul Huth, "Decision Making during International Crises: Is Quality of Process Related to Outcome?", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Jun., 1987), 203-226; p. 214.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; p. 215.

personality, position, or both, that are observable⁶⁶. First, is the “urgency principle” (“seizing”); the imperative time constraints that demand quick closure. The second is the “permanence principle” (“freezing”); the notion that once closure has been made, inconsistent evidence will be deflected as insignificant, or it may be misinterpreted to conform to the established intransigent schema⁶⁷. What exacerbates these effects, according to Bar-Joseph and Kruglanski, is the sense of prestige and influence that one may have within the halls of power⁶⁸. This may also trickle down, if even in subtle form, from authoritative personalities to their subordinate members⁶⁹. In the case of the Iraq WMD “failure” (discussed shortly), it may have had a similar systemic impact. This seems to be in consonance with Zegart’s assertions of causality for adaptation failure (discussed earlier).

Systemic Impediments

One way to envision the distinction between policy and intelligence is to see them as two spheres of government activity that are separated by a semipermeable membrane. The membrane is semipermeable because policymakers can and do cross over into the intelligence sphere, but intelligence officials cannot cross over into the policy sphere.

-Mark M. Lowenthal⁷⁰

The above quote represents the unilateral boundary crossing that characterizes the dynamics of subordination. One implication of this dynamic seems to be that in a subordinate-superior relationship the former will be more likely reticent than the latter. Historically, the relationship that the president and his staff have had with the DCI

⁶⁶ “Intelligence Failure and Need for Cognitive Closure: On the Psychology of the Yom Kippur Surprise”, Uri Bar-Joseph and Arie W. Kruglanski, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2003; pp. 75-99.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; both points are found on p. 81.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*; p. 82.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*; p. 81. On p. 84 they illustrate this adverse impact very convincingly.

⁷⁰ As cited above, Lowenthal, *From Secrets to Policy* (Third Ed.); p. 4, with a diagram on p. 5.

explains much of the executive branch's influence on "face time", or lack thereof. It seems to be a function of personal like/dislike between the two that impedes successful national security policy formulation and implementation⁷¹. This may explain why some intelligence is (mis)used and some is (dis)pleasing to policymakers.

There is another point worth bearing in mind, in that each of the national security members of the intelligence cycle are bound by certain realities, stemming from the anarchic structure of international relations. Therefore, clinging to the comfort of a policy that has been proven useful in the past is a natural tendency that is hard to alter, much less eliminate. The inherent condition of uncertainty in international relations often inhibits policymakers' imagination and restricts their menu of choice in order to cope with it:

Most foreign policy is based on a high degree of continuity, inertia, and incremental decision-making that is rarely questioned by those who participate in the implementation process. Nevertheless, it is often claimed that 'the uncertain nature of international affairs creates a demand for flexibility as a safety valve.' In reality, the shapers of foreign policy seldom avail themselves of this safety valve. Instead of exploring new, imaginative courses of action in order to cope with uncertainty, *political leaders usually cling to the 'security' of well-known policies.*⁷²

⁷¹ "Managing the Intelligence Community", Stephen J. Flanagan, *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Summer, 1985), 58-95; see pp. 67-68, 73, and 88 for a discussion of this topic. Also, for the below matter concerning bureaucratic politics and rivalries, Flanagan discusses these themes throughout; particularly on pp. 73, 75, 78-80, 82, 85-86, 88-89. Graham T. Allison has recalled how DCI John McCone was seen by President Kennedy to have been hawkish in the lead-up to the Cuban Missile Crisis in "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Sep., 1969), p. 712: "What the President least wanted to hear, the CIA was most hesitant to say plainly. On August 22 John McCone met privately with the President and voiced suspicions that the Soviets were preparing to introduce offensive missiles into Cuba. Kennedy heard this as what it was: the suspicion of a hawk. McCone left Washington for a month's honeymoon on the Riviera." The distinction between "offensive" and "defensive" weapons was created by the Kennedy Administration.

⁷² Michael I. Handel, "Surprise and Change in International Politics", *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Spring, 1980), 57-85; p. 59, emphasis added. Though this was a study of "diplomatic surprise" the idea of playing it safe by sticking to a potentially outmoded paradigm seems to be a common practice among policymakers. David Corn highlights the difficulty in secretive organizations, "How do you get any bureaucracy- particularly a clandestine one- to behave creatively and responsibly? Inertia and infighting have often derailed well-intentioned intelligence reform..." See "Impaired Intelligence", David Corn, *The Nation*, 23 September, 2002, pp. 6-7.

It seems that the genesis of policymakers' conceptual rigidity appears to be a product of subconscious necessity in coping with ambiguity, and not a result of consciously adopting the most optimal choice from among competing policy alternatives⁷³. This appears to be a key element to consider, as it bolsters Zegart's causal logic; mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Turf wars are also palpable at every level. Such impediments seem to further hamper clarity and infect the decision-making process. For national security bureaucrats, turf is often a major concern; yet it is to the detriment of national security itself. "A government agency that surrenders turf, even turf it doesn't particularly want, signals weaknesses that may invite further raids by competing agencies, as the CIA is learning to its sorrow."⁷⁴

This last point should not be taken lightly; as it illustrates the conditions under which the national security apparatus was constructed following The Second World War. Its persistence also informs the debates on reorganization that had followed each commission charged with investigating subsequent "intelligence failures."⁷⁵

Organizational Tendencies and Political Realities

⁷³ The cognitive limitations of the human mind, time, and available information (in our case, intelligence) have been noted by James March and Herbert Simon (among others) as salient factors in creating the bounded rationality within which decision makers must operate. Their works will be cited in the final chapter.

⁷⁴ *Remaking Domestic Intelligence*, Richard A. Posner, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Press, 2005), p. 29.

⁷⁵ See *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC*, Amy B. Zegart (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). This work will be referenced again, near the end of this chapter.

One's organizational association also accounts for the mental set to which members tend to cling⁷⁶. Organizations have their own culture⁷⁷. Their members are most likely to view problems, causation and perhaps solutions through such a cultural prism⁷⁸. If an organization is suited to adaptation, it is a function of humility and *learning how to learn* that will galvanize its evolution⁷⁹.

Members of an organization, particularly career officials, come to believe that the health of their organization is vital to the national interest. The health of the organization, in turn, is seen to depend on maintaining influence, fulfilling its mission, and securing the necessary capabilities.⁸⁰

This leads to the topic of *organizational learning*, which will be revisited in the following chapter. Graham Allison has built on the work of James March and Herbert Simon (among others) that informs us of the means through which change (read:

⁷⁶ Heur, "Strategic Deception and Counterdeception", p. 323. There is also an appealing quality of belonging to an elite organization. One may sense that in insulating and protecting the organization's focus becomes less and less attached to the rationale that established its existence. This point is generally formulated from a variety of sources, of which one stands out: "An Approach to a Theory of Bureaucracy", Phillip Selznick, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (Feb., 1943), pp. 47-54.

⁷⁷ *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, James Q. Wilson, (US: Basic Books, 1989). Insofar as "organizational culture" is concerned, Wilson defines the term as "... a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual." See p. 91.

⁷⁸ How organizations view themselves in terms of where they fit in is a point to consider. For instance, in the pre-9/11 world the FBI had not truly viewed itself, "...as part of the national security apparatus and did not share information with the national security community." See "Strategic Surprise and the September 11 Attacks", Daniel Byman, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2005; 8: 145-170, quote on p. 159. Byman also stresses that CIA had logically focused where they were mandated to: outside of the U.S.

⁷⁹ The preceding sentences are an attempt to summarize Schein's work on organizational adaptation and becoming a perpetual learning organization. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Edgar H. Schein (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, third edition, 2004); pp. 88, 97, 108, 389-397. Jack S. Levy describes the complexities of the organizational learning process, which must start with the individual in the organization. See Jack S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield", *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring, 1994), 279-312. Exactly *how* complex is discussed on pp. 283- 289.

⁸⁰ Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications", *World Politics*, Vol.24, Supplement: Theory and Policy in International Relations, (Spring, 1972), p. 48. They also apply this idea to intelligence organizations on p. 59, "Intelligence organizations are not perfect and neutral transmission belts. They notice what their images of the world lead them to think will be important to senior players. They report events and options according to established procedures and in ways designed to protect their own organizational interests." The next chapter will address this matter with regard to the military; here is a primer from p. 49, "Organizational interests are often dominated by the desire to maintain the autonomy of the organization in pursuing what its members view as the essence of the organization's activity, e.g., flying for the Air Force."

adaptation) takes place. Allison has made the point that changes do occur in organizations, but “Learning occurs gradually, over time. Dramatic organizational change occurs in response to major disasters.”⁸¹

For all the recommendations that have been made for reforming the IC over the second half of the 20th Century, few have centered on “understanding the basic mission of intelligence and how it must *adapt to changes* in the larger society, economy and global environment”⁸². The “containment” organizing principle⁸³ that guided national security concerns throughout the Cold War had not yielded an equally concise concept during the post-Cold War “Information Age.” Therefore, re-organizing a community that has an embedded culture is perhaps the hardest task of all⁸⁴. As Berkowitz and Goodman have stated, “Whether the intelligence community will adapt to the Information Age depends much on whether its culture can adapt. The record of bureaucracies adapting to changing conditions is not encouraging. Bureaucracies are insulated from most of the forces that make other organizations adapt.”⁸⁵

⁸¹ *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Graham T. Allison, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); p. 68. Some of the accelerating conditions of organizational learning and change are: budgetary feast, prolonged budgetary failure and dramatic performance failures (as repeated on p. 85: “Dramatic change occurs usually in response to major disasters”).

⁸² *Best Truth: Intelligence in the Information Age*, Bruce D. Berkowitz and Allan E. Goodman, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); pp. 27-28, emphasis added.

⁸³ *Ibid.*; p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; pp. 63, 67, 71. The IC is what Berkowitz and Goodman have termed to be a “protected cartel in the government bureaucracy” (p. 54), whose culture (p. 80) is defined by secrecy (p. 149), thus making it uniquely inhospitable to the Information Age (p. 151), which revolves around openness and networking.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; p. 165. Berkowitz and Goodman also offer the prophetic wisdom that either the bureaucracy will become irrelevant, or it will “muddle along until a catastrophe exposes the organization’s unseen weaknesses” (also on p. 165). Elsewhere, Berkowitz and Goodman discuss the problems that secrecy and compartmentalization produces within the IC and between the IC and the policymakers. The secrecy aspect cuts both ways, in that policymakers often do not reveal what they have learned through their own investigations. *Strategic Intelligence for American National Security*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1989), Chapter Five: “Intelligence and Problems of Organization”, pp. 110- 136. Berkowitz has also suggested that successful private sector business practices should be applied to the IC’s interaction with policymakers. “Better Ways to Fix U.S. Intelligence”, Bruce Berkowitz, *Orbis*, 00304387,

Charles Perrow has noted that “Politics changes drastically when large organizations appear. Politicians come from them, work through them, and are beholden to them.”⁸⁶ That being said, national security bureaucracies do exhibit some of the negative qualities mentioned above. Still, this paper is not taking a cynical view of bureaucracies; rather it is placing them in context, so that the reader may see more clearly the inefficiencies that tend to inhibit the adaptation process. Bureaucracies should not be viewed with an absolute contempt for their existence, but with an understanding of their origins, roles, and interconnectedness to policy and society. In a related point, Perrow argues the following:

Bureaucracy was not a demonic invention of evil elites; it simply offered elites an assist that gave them unprecedented (but anticipated) control over the society, given the scope and complexity of that society, since it provided such exquisite control over the institutions that were absorbing society- the bureaucracies they were establishing.⁸⁷

This paper is not so much about organizations as it is about how adaptation is enabled, or disabled. In this chapter there is some discussion of the organizational learning that has or has not taken place within the IC, as it relates to changes in the threat

Fall 2001, Vol. 45, Issue 4. This was also discussed in *Best Truth*, referenced as a “Virtual Corporation” (pp. 75-82) and “Market-Based Management” (pp. 82-83).

⁸⁶ “A society of organizations”, Charles Perrow, *Theory and Society*, 20: 725-762, 1991; p. 726. In his study of “factory bureaucracy” Perrow had claimed that “... the term ‘bureaucracy’ is virtually synonymous with organizations.” P. 729. Herbert Simon has defined “organizations” as “systems of interrelated roles” (and the term “role” as a “system of prescribed decision premises”). See “Bounded Rationality and Organizational Learning”, Herbert A. Simon, *Organization Science*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Special Issue: Organizational Learning: Papers in Honor of (and by) James G. March (1991), pp. 125-134; the above was cited from p. 126. He also states, “A major topic, therefore, in organizational learning is an understanding of the mechanisms that can be used to enable an organization to deviate from the culture in which it is embedded”; p. 128. This is an important point, as organizational learning may be influenced by both internal and external forces. No less significant to emphasize here is that knowledge of history doesn’t necessarily mean that learning the correct lessons automatically follows. “Even within a single organization, there are severe limitations to organizational learning as an instrument of intelligence. Learning does not always lead to intelligent behavior.” See Barbara Levitt and James G. March, “Organizational Learning”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 14 (1988), p. 335.

⁸⁷ Perrow, “A society of organizations”, p. 743.

environment. The next chapter looks at how the defense establishment has or has not been adaptable in relation to unconventional war fighting. This discourse is meant to set the stage for understanding what forces lay outside the control of the organization that may be more significant to study; namely, strategic choices and mechanisms that promote or prevent adaptation.

Two Cases: Iran and Iraq

In a recently declassified postmortem on the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Iraq WMD debacle (not yet fully declassified), Robert Jervis has produced a most insightful and honest accounting of the CIA's missteps. What is equally important, are the reasons for failure that reside in both the political sphere as well as the analytical realm⁸⁸. There are a number of key points that lend credence to Zegart's findings that politics more often are at fault than the IC itself. Though this seems to be a correct assessment of the Iraqi WMD mishap, the opposite seems to be correct for the Iranian Revolution's emergence. The messy middle ground between producers and consumers is explored with some depth. Both cases are useful for understanding how the IC is *able* to fail. To better summarize Jervis's findings it may be useful to bullet them below.

The Iranian Revolution (Failure from within the IC?)

- Neither the analysts, nor the policymakers applied the social science methodological approach to intelligence. "... CIA officers writing on Iran were

⁸⁸ *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War*, Robert Jervis (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 2010). The book is a rich source within which the student of intelligence failures may find the keys to unlocking the often over-classified postmortems that may be inaccessible.

more like journalists than social scientists.”⁸⁹ Peer review was not viewed as a valuable endeavor. It was to their estimative detriment.

- The IC had been linguistically challenged in that there were “... almost no Americans on the scene [who] spoke good Farsi.”⁹⁰ Though cables from the State Department’s in-country personnel were on the mark, it went unnoticed at CIA.
- The expectation that the Shah would eventually engage the growing unrest by military suppression was based on his past performances (as recent as 1977), which did not take into account his more recent character changes.⁹¹ It was logical, but ultimately erroneous.
- *Policymakers devote their time to the most pressing issues of the day. As the Iranian unrest was viewed as mostly blowing off steam, it was not of immediate concern to policymakers, which in turn explains CIA’s lack of dedication to the protesters*⁹².

⁸⁹ Ibid.; p. 23.

⁹⁰ Ibid.; p. 18. This lack of sufficient language (and cultural) skills has never really gone away. It has been observed to be a major deficiency of the IC, as highlighted by numerous commissions charged with studying intelligence failures. If one consults the bulk of recommendations made by Congress and other students of intelligence, they will find that this point is raised and repeated more than most others. Still, there seems to be little effort to ameliorate this condition on a grand scale.

⁹¹ As Jervis notes, the Shah was said to have appeared to be “vulnerable”, as his conciliatory gestures to the opposition were viewed as an indicator of his impotence, further emboldening them (p. 71). The Shah was reported to have appeared “frightened and upset; no longer exud[ing] confidence”; descriptions of his response to the latest round of protests as “indecisiveness, nervousness and imprecision” (p. 93- in quotations in the original). It was noted that he had appeared “weak and indecisive” (p. 94- quotations in the original); “depressed, nervous, dispirited, uncertain” (p. 95); and there was the sense even as his position had not been reported to be in question, his “...underlying doubts about his worth” were noted in November 1977 (p. 95- quotations in the original). The Iranian elite perceived these characteristics, but it is curious that it was included in a number of reports, yet not to have stood out as a *significant* anomaly. It was perhaps a function of disregarding information that clashed with the long-held confidence in the Shah, that would have been viewed as discrepant information and psychologically discomforting to the analysts.

⁹² Ibid.; This point was discussed further on pp. 46-48.

- Open-source (OSINT in IC parlance) sources and interaction with the universe of academic experts would most likely have produced some key disconfirming evidence to generate the discovery of alternative explanations.
- Both analysts and policymakers had mistakenly judged the Shah's liberalization program as being beneficial to his population; mirror imaging can be a dangerous blunder. Though the Shah's main concern was the handover of his throne and rule to his son, it clashed with his desire to westernize his country. Further, his drive to liberalize more rapidly seems to have caused social displacement⁹³.
- There was a faulty belief that the protest movement would somehow divide into factions that were easier to suppress. This never happened.
- The role of religion was underestimated in Iranian society. Related to the above conjecture that the factions would split was the surprise that Ayatollah Khomeini had managed to subjugate his co-religionist Ayatollahs. What was even more surprising was that the central role of religion had the effect of solidarity on the populace. As the Shah was viewed as the worse of two evils, Ayatollah Khomeini's strong faction was appealing not so much for its religiosity, but for its revolutionary appeal to the poor. Even the secular elites realized reluctantly that if they didn't get on board bad things could happen to them.
- The analysts had never realized how much the Shah's subjects had hated him.
- The fact that there were so many demonstrations may have dulled their significance to the analysts. In other words, there was a sense that the common

⁹³ Ibid. ; p. 63.

practice of public protestation had not been cause for alarm, but rather a reaffirmation of views already held about Iranian society.

- The intra-IC sharing and challenging of assumptions was mostly absent. (Economic analysts and political analysts seemed not to posit their own sense of the situation, so that their contradictory assumptions did not produce the requisite analytical discord that may yield a more comprehensive and accurate depiction of the breadth and depth of the disorder in Iran).

There were many reasons why the fall of the Shah was missed by Western intelligence (read: American IC). Culturally there was difficulty understanding how religion could play such a central role in politics, as it was generally viewed in the West as two influences that should not cross paths (a secular bias)⁹⁴. In fact, one could say that religious leaders in Iran are analogous to Congressmen in the U.S⁹⁵. They are the spokespersons for the voiceless, and they operate with the knowledge that their repression would be very costly for the government.

The Shah's liberalization policies seemed to have been running counter to his autocratic rule. There appears to have been a direct relationship between the speed of reform and the intensity of civil unrest. Further, though the Shah's self-image had been

⁹⁴ Ibid.; p. 87. This was not only an erroneous view held by the producers, but the *consumers* as well. "... large numbers of people hated the Shah and viewed the religious movement opposition as the symbol of and carrier for opposition to the regime." p. 105.

⁹⁵ Ibid.; p. 90. It should be noted that Jervis does not say this directly. It is merely an inference.

deteriorating (along with his physical health), he appeared to cling to the idea that his rule was benign⁹⁶.

Jervis had explored the possible effects of policy bias on the analysts, but was not able to detect a patent influence⁹⁷. It is in the dissenting remarks from senior members of CIA that supports the idea that politics mattered just as much- perhaps more than, the analytical failings. Bruce Palmer is rather critical of the postmortem:

... the analysis did not delve very deeply into US policy aspects which had *enormous influence* over both the analytical and operational/collection sides of the Intelligence Community. Thus, a broader examination of the matter would no doubt lead to some much different conclusions. In my own view, our 'failure' in Iran was considerably more one of a policy nature, to include the *lack of adequate policy-intelligence linkage*, than an intelligence breakdown.⁹⁸

Though Klaus Knorr agrees that policy influence was not discovered, he does concede that it is possible that it has yet to be discerned:

US policy toward the Shah may well have had a major impact on Iranian developments. In ways as yet unclear and speculative, the intelligence failure may have resulted in part from this policy, (a) in terms of structuring attention to Iranian realities and the procurement of information; (b) in terms of discouraging intelligence analysts from pursuing questions that might have been, or were felt to be, uncomfortable to policymakers (because they were assumed to cross the boundary between intelligence and policymaking) and (c)- and perhaps most of all- because US policy helped to bring about the actual course of events in Iran.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Ibid.; pp. 93-94.

⁹⁷ Ibid.; pp. 106-107. The policy bias refers to the American support for the Shah's government and its implied beneficence, juxtaposed with American human rights policy, which may have subdued the perception of the Shah as overly oppressive. It should also be noted that the revolution was viewed as an anomaly by most, and hence a search for patterns that would have led to it were not considered. Not everyone agreed with this judgment. What is rather unique in this case is the input of the members of NFAC (National Foreign Assessment Center [preceded and supplanted by the DI- Directorate of Intelligence]). Klaus Knorr (p. 109) agrees with Jervis, whereas David Blee recalls, "... the DIA representatives were under orders to oppose my title, 'Iran: How Reliable an Ally?' because it seemed to cast doubt on the wisdom of our military aid program."(p. 112).

⁹⁸ Ibid.; p. 114. Both emphases were added by your author.

⁹⁹ Ibid. ; pp. 115-116.

Knorr makes another point in the above. Item “(b)” indicates the sensitive subject of boundaries and a potential for not wanting to cross them, in an effort to stay true to the singular mission to report and not meddle in policymaking. William Leonhart highlights the “relation between policy and analysis.”¹⁰⁰ His view is that the collaboration between the two was profitable to some extent:

It does not seem to have occurred to the authors that a closer relationship between policymakers and the Intelligence Community might have had advantages in assessing the implications or consequences of policy options *before* decisions were taken on the directions and use of US influence.¹⁰¹

Leonhart continues his criticism of the postmortem by underscoring the authors’ biases, and its transference to the postmortem:

These reflections seem part of those ‘general beliefs’, about which the authors dilate elsewhere, that they feel largely pre-determined the subsequent analysis of the Iranian problem. Their view of analysts, particularly those at senior level, seems curiously constricted. But those who hold similar organizational preferences will no doubt be more responsive to the line of criticism which the authors make of NFAC performance during the period reviewed- criticism which in turn generally reinforce their predilections on desirable organizational mold. The point is not so much that the authors’ arguments are right or wrong, but that their implicit assumption appears to color much of their own analysis.”¹⁰²

In essence, the postmortem of the Iranian Revolution seems to indicate that there is some politicization, but it appears to different participants in different forms and degrees of influence.

The Iraq WMD Intelligence Failure (Comprehensive Failure?)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.; p. 117.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.; p. 117, emphasis in the original.

¹⁰² Ibid.; p. 119.

It has been suggested that whereas the IC had failed on 11 September, 2001 to deliver enough warning, in the case of the Iraqi WMDs it had over-compensated by “providing too much.”¹⁰³ As it was suggested earlier in this paper, focusing on *intentions* rather than *capabilities* is a more arduous task. The failure to discover WMDs in Iraq was a consequence of the failure to understand intentions, while focused on capabilities. Further sustaining this supposition was the secretive tone that Saddam Hussein had maintained, while attempting to circumvent UN resolutions to stop the flow of non-emergency goods. It was later learned that Hussein had simply wanted this uncertainty to deter his nemesis: Iran. This failure was influenced by the specious belief that he had been pursuing a WMD program, as well as the attendant stockpiles, and associated equipment to produce WMDs. Jervis argues that the conclusions reached about the existence of Saddam’s WMD program was logical. Absent any strong disconfirming evidence, the same conclusion may have been reached, irrespective of the shock of 11 September. Whatever the policymakers would have decided was not for the IC to influence.

The surreptitious procurement procedures that Hussein had used to acquire what was determined to be single-use weapons material had encouraged the theory that he had something to hide. Both the political and intelligence communities shared this mistaken assumption. Each one seems to have had a reinforcing effect upon the other. One could conclude that the policy-intelligence relationship had been corrupted to some degree. If so, this would exemplify the negative form of politicization¹⁰⁴. Robert Jervis has

¹⁰³ Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁴ Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails* (cited earlier). It appears that politicization was a very subtle force, and that it had been more palpable after a decision was already made to invade Iraq; pp. 131-136. To be fair,

criticized the received wisdom that the IC was improperly reliant on the Western consensus (Britain, Australia, etc.). He claims that the investigation that had followed the “intelligence failure” was flawed for the same reasons as the original failure that was being investigated: “the postmortems neglected social science methods, settled for more intuitive but less adequate ways of thinking, and jumped to plausible but misleading conclusions.”¹⁰⁵

Connecting the Dots

External Loci of Responsibility

Insofar as “adaptation” is concerned, it appears that “overlearning” from past mistakes had occurred.¹⁰⁶ With the 11 September attacks being such a recent and impactful event it would have naturally provided an incentive to adapt to the new threat environment *as it was believed* to be. This led to over-correcting the warning function regarding the new threat. The resultant stress placed on the IC had contributed to “...premature cognitive closure.”¹⁰⁷ This created an atmosphere conducive to misadventures.

Further, given that intelligence serves policy, any potential alternative explanations would have been difficult to impart for two reasons. First, there were

on 21 June, 2006, DNI (Director of National Intelligence) John D. Negroponte did respond to the Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee Pete Hoekstra’s request for a declassified “key points” memoranda summarizing NGIC’s (National Ground Intelligence Center) findings. Most of the points had consisted of the common conjecture linking terrorists’ pursuits to acquire WMD with the WMD that actually *was* recovered. However, the DNI did state in his opening point that, “Since 2003 Coalition forces have recovered approximately 500 weapons munitions which contain degraded mustard or sarin nerve agent.” Still, the recovery of a degraded inventory merely implies that there *were* weapons at one point, but does not have the force of claiming that there *is* a current stockpile.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.; p. 123.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.; pp. 138-139.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; pp. 144.

weaker indicators that Saddam's WMD program was dead; however, such a possibility that could not provide strong disconfirming evidence would have been costly. It would have conflicted profoundly with the administration's view of Iraq in the context of the post-9/11 threat environment. As Steve Chan notes, "... to some extent decision makers legitimately discount warnings from dubious sources (e.g., Cuban refugees, spies like Richard Sorge), sources which are ideologically suspicious (e.g., Churchill and Roosevelt for Stalin, Panikkar for Truman), or sources with a track record of false alarms..."¹⁰⁸

The obverse side of the coin explains the subtle, yet ever-present recognition of one's position and purpose relative to the consuming powers that be:

Like other bureaucrats, intelligence analysts have to conform to the regime's basic views about the nature and morality of international relations if they wish to be treated as 'responsible' and 'serious'. Therefore, they refrain from asking the really 'tough' but crucial questions such as the aggressiveness of the Soviet Union, the morality of the Vietnam War, and the validity of the 'domino theory.'¹⁰⁹

Being that the IC was alleged to have blundered in 2001, as a result of not having had enough confirmatory evidence, it was rather hesitant to commit the same error again. (As mentioned above, 9/11 was more a failure to connect the dots, whereas the Iraq WMD debacle was the result of an overabundance of dots that were hastily connected- or misconnected).

Secondly, there was a sense that the upper echelons of political power had their *own* "reliable" sources that were in keeping with the assessment that Saddam posed a grave risk to U.S. interests in the region. The cost of making a weak case that the

¹⁰⁸ Steve Chan, "The Intelligence of Stupidity: Understanding Failures in Strategic Warning", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Mar., 1979), 171-180; p. 172.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*; p. 178.

administration was wrong would have caused political and psychological discomfort and might have risked calling into question the IC's loyalty.

Even Congress fell into the same category. Under the conditions of the new threat environment- and the rawness of the recent pain that was so deep, most politicians could not afford to seem soft on terrorism and WMD. The *rally-around-the-flag* mentality built the bandwagon that most had ridden on the path to war.¹¹⁰

Shared Loci of Responsibility

Logic and the history of the IC (and other organizations) give few grounds for optimism. Because intelligence is unpopular and better intelligence may be even more unpopular, political leaders are likely to be content with decrying intelligence's performance.

-Robert Jervis¹¹¹

The central theme of this paper is adaptation failure as it concerns the IC.

However, after reviewing the case of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (and the less in-

¹¹⁰ Both this paragraph and the preceding one are an attempt to summarize some of the pertinent arguments that Jervis makes on pp. 157- 174. He also demonstrates how the political composition of the 9/11 Commission had plagued the resultant judgments, in that they were naturally going to avoid the assertion that politics (politicians/politicization) would have been at fault. Jervis is not alone in his assessment. One of the structural impediments to intelligence sharing was the legislative "wall" that was created in 1995 to separate different agencies, as their intermingling could have produced an unconstitutional condition. The reason: FBI is a law enforcement agency that is defined by its investigative capacity to seek evidence for the purpose of prosecution in a court of law. CIA is an agency that pursues secret enemy intentions and capabilities in a manner that may contravene U.S. legal code. The sources, methods, and technology used to carry out this function require secrecy and compartmentalization in order to protect foreign assets and American strengths and weaknesses from exposure. Further, CIA does not have authority to carry out its mission within the borders of the U.S. One serious criticism of the 9/11 Commission was that the architect of the "wall" was Commissioner Jamie Gorelick, who, as some argue, could not have been expected to remain impartial in the investigation process. See "Gorelick must go", Paul Rosenzweig, *The Washington Times*, 27 April, 2004, p. A17 and "Rule Created Legal 'Wall' To Sharing Information", Neil A. Lewis, *The New York Times*, 14 April, 2004, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; p. 19.

¹¹¹ *Why Intelligence Fails*, p. 196. This is not an exclusively American problem. Following the Yom Kippur War, Avi Shlaim had studied the *Agranat Commission of Inquiry* (the Israeli commission established to review the intelligence failure in 1973). He contends that "when a nation suffers such setbacks as a result of being caught unprepared, a search for scapegoats frequently takes place; the blame is often laid at the door of the intelligence community"; "Failures in National Intelligence Estimates: The Case of the Yom Kippur War", *World Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (April, 1976), 348-380; p. 349. He had also attributed the failure as being derived from theory hugging and the suppression of alternative arguments from *within* the IC; pp. 353, 356-359.

depth Iraq WMD mishap), it appears that there is, at minimum, a *shared* failure between policymakers and the IC. In accordance with academic honesty, there is a conscious attempt to remain skeptical about Zegart's theory. This paper will not duplicate, nor supplant her work in any form; simply building upon it is the objective here.

Nonetheless, there seem to be some variegated gradations of failure that fall into the intelligence-policy realm. While it is not surprising to see this trend, it is a bit disquieting to come to the partial conclusion thus far that the space between the two looks more like an abyss; or more pessimistically, a black hole. If this characterization is accurate- and it may not be, it allows for each end of the "intelligence cycle" to dodge accountability. If it is not party A's fault and it is not party B's fault, then it could be more comfortable for each party to point the culpable finger in the direction of that grey area between the two.

At the end of the day, however, the intelligence function is a consumer-driven pursuit. The IC exists to produce timely, accurate and relevant information on the issues that are most important to consumers. At a colloquium held at Georgetown on 30 November, 1994, then Representative Lee Hamilton had counted himself as an intelligence consumer for three decades, as he noted:

There needs to be much broader agreement on the priorities of intelligence, which ought to be driven by the foreign policy objectives of the United States. Sometimes I think we just collect intelligence for the thrill of collecting it, to show how good we are at it. This is *not the fault of the Intelligence Community; it is a fault of the policymakers*. We don't make clear to the Intelligence Community what the priorities really are.¹¹²

¹¹² "The Intelligence Community: Is It Broken? How To Fix It?"- John H. Hedley, accessed on the CIA's website cia.gov on 29 February, 2004. Emphasis added.

Such a pronouncement from the *policymaking* side of the intelligence cycle seems to jump out at the reader a bit. That was in 1994! Former NSC staffer and CIA Middle East specialist Reuel Marc Gerecht has taken a rather cynical view toward the mismatch between Washington’s view of their impact on the world and the reality that it appears to be in stark contrast with their purported national security priorities:

I think it’s very, very much true that senior officials in Washington often think they’re doing a great deal about a national security issue. But out in the field, whether it’s with the CIA in stations and bases or the FBI in the United States—in actual practice, they’re actually not doing very much at all. I mean, I certainly remember many instances when I was overseas with the agency, and I would be seeing commentary either in the press or in official statements about what we were doing overseas, and certainly it didn’t match at all what the practice was.¹¹³

In an interesting parallel set of conditions, both the Iraq WMD mishap and the Yom Kippur “surprise” attack seem to have each suffered from over-reliance on a single source. In each case, the source received special attention from the highest policymaking elements in the respective governments. Thought to be more accurate than any other intelligence that could have been gathered through “conventional” means, both the U.S. in 2001 and Israel in 1973 had been sucked into a carefully scripted plot that had ripple effects long after the subsequent wars. In the former, the source was “Curveball”¹¹⁴,

¹¹³ As accessed on 23 May, 2004, “Reuel Marc Gerecht and Daniel Benjamin discuss several points of Condoleezza Rice’s testimony today before the 9-11 Commission”, National Public Radio (NPR), on the program “All Things Considered” (9:00 PM ET) 8 April 2004.

¹¹⁴ Mentioned in Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails*, pp. 136-137 and in Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, p. 119. “Curveball” was cited 355 times in the *The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction Report to the President of the United States*, March 31, 2005, also known as the WMD Commission and as the “Silberman-Robb” Commission. It can be accessed on the F.A.S. (Federation of American Scientists) website: www.fas.org. “Sometimes a single source can make all the difference”, wrote former DCI George Tenet in his autobiography, *At the CENTER of the STORM: My Years at the CIA*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2007); p. 330.

whereas in the latter it was “The In-Law”¹¹⁵, who had duped the Israelis in the lead-up to the 1973 war. In each case the “reliable” source turned out not to be so reliable after all.

Even though CIA had judged Curveball to be unreliable, the warning that he was a fabricator went unheeded by the policymaking political class. As can be seen in this case, discrepant information was not granted much, if any, attention. As noted above, there are strong human tendencies that resist psychologically discomfoting information. In the case of the In-Law, his disinformation campaign had been so well crafted that he was able to convince the Israelis that there would be an Egyptian attack in October (which was true), but gave the Egyptians a 4-hour lead.

Internal Loci of Responsibility:

This paper may appear to favor the IC over the policymakers. This is not the case. In order to balance the idea that adaptation failure was a unique product of policymaking origin, it is necessary to look at failures from *within* the IC. *Prima facie*, this may appear somewhat to be hampering Zegart’s hypothesis that politics were to

¹¹⁵ Whose real identity was Dr. Ashraf Marwan, as cited in *The Eve of Destruction: The Untold Story of the Yom War*, Howard Blum, (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); p. 330. Blum had also called him “...the most effective spy in the history of the Middle East...” in “Who Killed Ashraf Marwan?”, *The New York Times*, 13 July, 2007 Op-Ed section. In a number of articles in the public press, Marwan is depicted as an Israeli spy. However, as Blum notes in his above article, the uppermost echelons of Egyptian government and military (including President Hosni Mubarak) attended his funeral. If Marwan was working for Egypt, he appears to have followed the protocols of “surprise attack” studies. He lulled the Israelis into a trap by giving them TOP SECRET Egyptian military documents (known as “chicken feed” in intelligence parlance) that were vetted and gauged to be true. Then he announced in April of that year that the Egyptians and Syrians would attack on 5 May, 1973. Israel had activated its reserves at great cost. This would have served two purposes: (1) To see how serious the Israelis would take his (dis)information, and to assess how far up the policymaking chain it went. And (2) to “cry wolf” and cause “alert fatigue” (it cost Israel \$35 million to activate in April), so that the last warning would be dismissed and the necessary time to breach the Bar-Lev line (Israel’s fortified Sinai defensive position on the East bank of the Suez Canal) would be shortened, hence allowing for deeper penetration into the Sinai. If Marwan was *not* working for Egypt, one would have expected detailed invasion plans (the Egyptians had burst through the high sand walls with hoses). Either way, it is an interesting case to study if/when some more declassified publication by the Egyptians and/or Israelis becomes available.

blame. Nonetheless, looking at both the consumers and producers is useful in that it allows flaws to be revealed for what they are. Metaphorically, to see either a tree or a forest and not walk through the forest to observe individual trees is tantamount to committing to tunnel vision.

In the above analysis of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, many of the failures came from all directions, but the IC had more than its fair share. Regarding the 9/11 attacks, agencies within the IC, the FBI in particular, were held to the illogical preferences of their top leader. As reported in *The New York Times*:

[Former FBI Director] Mr. Freeh was notoriously averse to using computers himself—he did not like to use e-mail, for example—and his critics have attacked him as failing to commit himself to upgrading the bureau’s system. The bureau’s computers were so inadequate that after the Sept. 11 attacks, the bureau had to send photographs of the hijackers by overnight mail because they were unable to e-mail them.¹¹⁶

What was equally disturbing was that Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) had expressed how this was not news, and it was common knowledge that the FBI had suffered from this technological shortcoming for years¹¹⁷. If it were known to have plagued the agency for so long, one would think that Congressional oversight committees would have called attention to it and compelled Mr. Freeh to bring his agency up to the standard of his counterparts in the IC. So, while there are deficiencies within the IC’s top leadership, there is a historical record of apathy- and a concomitant lack of accountability-¹¹⁸ from the Congressional oversight system that monitors the IC, seizes

¹¹⁶ The New York Times, 13 April, 2004, Eric Lichtblau, “Tough Security Questions Are Likely for Ex-Chief of F.B.I.”, Sec. A; Column 3; National Desk; p. 20.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. The 9-11 Commission’s executive director, Philip Zelikow, contends that “the bureau, as it existed before September 11th, was unsuited to combating global terrorism”, in “The wrong people doing the right job; Reforming the FBI”, *The Economist*, 17 April, 2004 under the sub-heading, “Rethinking America’s spooks.”

¹¹⁸ “The U.S. Congress and the CIA: Monitoring the Dark Side of Government”, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Nov., 1980), 477-499, p. 494.

on a glaring problem, makes recommendations, and evaluates the progression (or stagnation) of adaptability to the changed environment.

Theoretical Gaps and Semantic Obfuscation

Theoretical Absence

Though we have defined “adaptation failure” to be more in concert with Zegart’s definition there may be some who feel it isn’t parsimonious enough¹¹⁹. However, it is in keeping with the social science necessity to have a mental framework with which to work. The alternative being that no revolutionary theoretical advancement would materialize. What is most troublesome is that there is a persistent deficiency with studies of intelligence: there is no agreed-upon “Theory of Intelligence.” This is an important point, which serious scholars have elucidated on numerous occasions past and present:

From years of reading and reflection on strategic intelligence, I am convinced that the functions of intelligence constitute the largest gap in understanding how foreign policy decisions are made. Discussions of intelligence “failure” abound, but *we lack an acceptable theory of intelligence* that permits systematic evaluations of performance by clearly defined criteria.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Rovner and Long have criticized Zegart’s thesis as being too centralized and as ignoring the failure of 9-11 as owing to policymakers. They claim that the intelligence community had provided all necessary warnings to their political bosses. “The blame is therefore misplaced: September 11 was a national failure, and responsibility must be shouldered in large part by policymakers. The intelligence community gave specific warnings about al-Qaida and proposed a variety of counterterrorist operations before the attacks, most of which were ignored or halted by policymakers.” Joshua Rovner and Austin Long, Amy B. Zegart, as they appeared in the Correspondence section, under the title, “How intelligent is Intelligence Reform?” in *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Spring 2006), pp. 196-208. The preceding quote is from p. 200. Zegart responds (pp. 203-208) in partial agreement with Rovner and Long (even pleading “guilty” to the charge of being slanted toward centralization). However, she infers that their criticisms are deficient, as it is not simply a matter of policymakers failing the IC, but an intra-organizational recalcitrance on the part of policymakers to implement the *more important* recommendations that were crafted prior to 9-11. Supporting this point, she does note the policymakers as deserving of some blame, but more importantly, she is dealing with the question of why the reforms were not able to proceed, even with the heads of CIA and FBI in agreement with many of them.

¹²⁰ “Being Intelligent about Secret Intelligence Agencies”, Harry Howe Ransom, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 74, No. 1. (Mar., 1980), pp. 141-148; quote from p. 147 (Emphasis supplied). Ransom also discusses how secrecy is an impediment, which tends to amplify the already difficult study of

The paucity of theoretical propositions regarding intelligence is in large part, unfortunately, due to the cultural secrecy and compartmentalization between and within the various intelligence agencies¹²¹. The IC itself has been described as a “loose confederation”, whose cultural norms preclude the discovery of elements that might assist in forming a theory¹²². “Thus CIA was (and, we suspect, is yet) a confederacy, in some respects similar to the Pentagon.”¹²³ As Daniel Byman makes clear:

Many of the problems of the CIA, the FBI, the military, and other institutions involved in counterterrorism can be laid, at least in part, at the feet of policy makers. It is the duty of elected officials to impose their will on unelected elements of the government, and they

the subject by scholars. He also mentions a secondary impact of the secretive nature of intelligence: morality is reduced by covert actions that sometimes require ethical misdeeds. E.g. subversion, inciting riots, playing on the weaknesses of others, fomenting discontent and furthering armed revolt, murder, and dealing with unsavory people whose human rights violations are well documented. As the 1970s had revealed many embarrassing facts about the IC, commissions convened and their recommendations had followed. Few of them were implemented, but assassination was stricken from practice (Executive Order 11905), and the President had to notify approximately six committees of covert action (the Hughes-Ryan Act, later replaced by the Intelligence Oversight Act). Dealing with human rights violators was later forbidden in the 1990s (the so-called “Deutch guidelines”, named after the DCI at the time John Deutch). On the legislative history of the interplay between Congress, the president and the IC see Loch Johnson (cited above) “The U.S. Congress and the CIA”; and also by Johnson, “Legislative Reform of Intelligence Policy”, *Polity*, Vol. 17. No. 3 (Spring, 1985), pp. 549-573.

¹²¹ Just trying to understand the filing system, or lack thereof, is a murderous process. See “Researching the Intelligence Agencies: The Problem of Covert Activities”, Athan G. Theoharis, *The Public Historian*, Vol. 6, No.2 (Spring, 1984), pp. 67-76. Theoharis highlighted numerous “filing” systems in the FBI as well as CIA (with a brief discussion of the NSA). As many such systems were made public during the hearings of the 1970s, there was an enormous lot that could never be used by agency historians trying to reconstruct and understand the agencies’ past. Some were destroyed, or locked into a secret file room, or slated for destruction at a later defined date (e.g. six months, or 60 weeks, etc.). Luckily, the “Tolson File” came to light, indicating the magnitude of the research problem; pp. 72-74.

¹²² Ibid.; see also “Bricks and Mortar for a Theory of Intelligence”, Loch K. Johnson, *Comparative Strategy*, 22: 1-28, 2003; quote from p. 9. Johnson also echoes the allegation made by many that policymakers’ lack of ability or willingness to “... articulate clearly their intelligence priorities” leads to the logic that blame for “intelligence failures” should be more correctly assigned to policymakers; the quote is from p. 4, whereas the idea regarding blame is drawn from pp. 12 and 25. Therefore, it is no surprise that one of Johnson’s recommendations is that improved communication between the IC and policymakers must develop. William E. Odom takes a similar view, yet divides blame in half and attributes it to both the policymakers and the IC: “To pretend that lack of warning of the al Qaeda attacks of 11 September was not an intelligence failure is self-deluding. Yet to see it as an intelligence failure is not to absolve political leaders—who are, after all, in charge of the Intelligence Community—of the ultimate responsibility. This disaster is a failure of both intelligence and policy.” See *Fixing Intelligence: For a More Secure America*, 2nd Ed. William E. Odom, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); p. 187.

¹²³ *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers*, Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 218.

have the authority to do so. Policy makers, however, did a poor job imposing their will on various bureaucracies that were not aggressive in counterterrorism.¹²⁴

Building and improving upon a clear understanding of what an intelligence theory would look like is impeded further by the parochial concerns within the IC; e.g., the drive to maintain autonomy, insulation, and organizational survival, as it is common practice in most organizations.¹²⁵ Perhaps the reason for the absence of a theory of intelligence has to do with the way in which national security agencies are configured in their embryonic phase. According to Zegart, the very creation of the modern IC was a function of inter-service rivalry and partial compromise that led to it being “flawed by design.”¹²⁶

The development of national security agencies being forged out of inter-service rivalry, political maneuvering and presidential weakness yields a paradox of sorts: national security agencies are supposed to deal with national interests¹²⁷, but if insufficiently designed, they may not fulfill their purported ethos.

Semantic Haze

¹²⁴ See Byman, “Strategic Surprise and the September 11 Attacks” (cited earlier), p. 161.

¹²⁵ In *Fixing Intelligence*, Odom states on pp. xiv-xv, “Talk about reform among senior intelligence officers, therefore, tends to be either incoherent babble or designed to mislead others in order to protect one’s parochial organizational interests.” Odom’s work highlights the origin and persistent presence of bureaucratic turf battles in the IC.

¹²⁶ As cited earlier, Zegart: *Flawed by Design*. Having read Zegart’s later works, it was useful to study the genesis and pathology of her thesis in her prior work. The case that Zegart makes in this work is that politics had played a powerful role in forming the CIA, JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) and the NSC (National Security Council). Zegart develops a “National Security Model” to explain the evolution of the IC. This model is rooted in new institutionalism, as Zegart makes the case that realism is ill suited for the task of analyzing domestic agencies. Underpinning the assertion made earlier regarding Congressional indifference to intelligence affairs, she notes that Congress being composed of elected officials are more interested in the matters pertaining to their constituents, and of course, reelection. The exception occurs when there is a big scandal, which captivates the attention of the civilian populace and consequently forces Congress to pay attention. We should note that domestic attention regarding an “intelligence failure” spawned by a surprise attack has a reinforcing logic of its own.

¹²⁷ Arnold Wolfers, “‘National Security’ as an Ambiguous Symbol”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (Dec., 1952), 481-502. Wolfers suggests that national security interests should reflect core values.

The semantic matter revolves around the terms used to describe what needs to happen to the IC in order to “fix” it. It may seem trivial to mention; however, there are differences in the concepts “reform”, “evolution”, “revolution” and “transformation”¹²⁸ that seem to have implications, which may offer insight into why it is *presumed* to be “broken.” When the term “broken” is used to characterize the IC, it undoubtedly implies that the resolution is to “fix” it. Similarly, when designating a successful surprise attack as a “failure” for the target state, there is a tendency to presuppose that successfully thwarting the plot of the attacking party indicates the absence of failure.

To better illustrate the above discussion, it may be useful to imagine a counterfactual scenario. For example, the 9-11 commission had found eleven opportunities that were missed by the IC. If one of those opportunities was seized upon—hence foiling the attack in part, or in whole—would it be fair to say that the IC’s “success” negated the remaining ten? It would not be an accurate judgment for two reasons. First, if the attack was realized in advance, the ten remaining elements that purportedly defined the failure would not have been addressed. Second, the attack may have proceeded, perhaps producing less damage, and obviating the need for a commission to find fault in the IC. This topic is not going to be covered here, but simply raising the point may stimulate further research.

Recommending Reorganization as a Political Safety Net

¹²⁸ “It Is Time to Transform, Not Reform U.S. Intelligence”, Deborah G. Barger, *SAIS Review* vol. XXIV no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2004). Barger notes that the idea of “reform” is backward-looking, whereas “transforming” is oriented toward adapting to the changed threat environment in a manner similar to the way in which successful corporations either “change, become irrelevant, or cease to exist.” P. 28.

March and Olson have shown that the mere public assertion that there needs to be reorganization is all that is required to gain public support. Even if no change follows, it is better politically for both Congress and the President to have made calls for reorganization, irrespective of whether such reforms occur¹²⁹. In large part this seems to explain why so many committees' recommendations for reorganization and retrofitting go unheeded and are not subject to repercussions. It is a political "dog and pony" show approach to address the public (electing constituents') concerns with government response to publicized failures. This bold assertion is supportive of Zegart's "enduring realities" mentioned earlier¹³⁰. As Richard Betts so eloquently brings to light:

Those informed insiders who propose a revolution in intelligence tend to become ambivalent when they consider the risks. [Deborah] Barger, for example, endorses concurrent revolution and evolution, 'parallel processes' and 'competing streams of change activity' that combine bold experimentation and gradualism. This is theoretically possible, just as an emphasis on the high-technology forces and strategies of the revolution in military affairs [RMA] should be able to coexist with old-fashioned, low-tech counterinsurgency in the Defense Department. But such a combination is very hard to manage. It is difficult to turn a system upside down and tweak it at the same time.¹³¹

Chapter Summary

So far, we have looked at some of the links in the chain of failure that have usually been associated with the IC. However, we have gone beyond that prism in an

¹²⁹ "Organizing Political Life: What Administrative Reorganization Tells Us about Government", James G. March and Johan P. Olson, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, No. 2. (June, 1983), pp. 281-296; see pp. 290-291.

¹³⁰ Zegart, *Spying Blind*; Chapter 4, entitled "Fighting Osama One Bureaucrat at a Time", pp. 61-100. This chapter looks not only at the executive and legislative disincentives for following through on reform recommendations, but on the potent organizational forces operating among and within the affected communities: Loyalty to one's own agency, turf battles, competing for scarce resources between the DOD (Department of Defense) and the other members of the community, organizational autonomy and the attendant survival and enlarging proclivities to support it, secrecy as a weapon, Congressional power plays, risk-averse mentalities as a result of previous public attention to opprobrious acts (CIA and FBI), and the constraints of bounded rationality are just a few examples that illustrate the costs of reorganizing. The benefits are difficult to predict, let alone calculate in relation to the heavy costs. For the most part, it seems to deflect negative attention from Congress and the President.

¹³¹ Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*; p. 184.

effort to understand what the “chain” truly represents. Therefore, it could be said that while intelligence failures are inevitable, there are forces at play beyond the IC’s control that may induce or facilitate such failures. In the next chapter, we will attempt to determine whether there have been similar influential relationships in the realm of military doctrinal development.

Chapter 2: Strategic Adaptation and War

Methods of Analysis

To truly apply Zegart's adaptation failure theory to the military, a much longer and more in-depth study would be in order. As there are inherent limitations on this paper's length, depth, and breadth the objective now is to seek whether or not the hypothetical core precepts are indeed as apparent as they are assumed to be. As this paper asserts, there should be elements of a political quality that shade strategic choices regarding military action. To keep in perfect step with Zegart would be impossible, as we are dealing with a much larger set of organizations under the Department of Defense (DoD).

Where the "enduring realities" are concerned, it should be recalled that the impediments to adaptation are centered on the nature of bureaucratic organizations, political actors' rational self-interest, and national security bureaucrats' interests. In the case of the military, this task seems a bit less difficult as the element of secrecy plays a less important role. However, what makes it more difficult is the vast amount of publicly available material with which to sift and reduce to digestible quality. Therefore, this chapter will take a slightly different approach in terms of style and method.

In order to demonstrate the significance of adaptation failure in a military context, a few "conventional" conflicts deserve brief attention. The aim being to identify the pitfalls that result from the perpetually repetitive missteps associated with mis-learning the lessons of previous conflicts. Also, it is hoped that the reader begins to develop a sense of failure stemming from the tenacious attachment to a failing strategy. Following

this review there will be more focus on the forms of combat that lay outside the traditional force-on-force pitched battles that have consumed so much attention in the past centuries. Then, we will briefly identify the context of the counterinsurgency literature, which will hopefully provide the reader with an understanding of the stark contrast between COIN and traditional views of warfare. This should set the stage for the final discussion regarding the necessary aspects that create learning organizations, which are capable of adaptation and the conditions under which politico-military dynamics tend to enable (or enfeeble) them.

Conventional Wars

The First World War

Should a new war be fought without regard to the evolution of emerging threats it will be at one's own peril. This unfortunate phenomenon had occurred in World War One (WWI). As European states had approached the emerging possibilities of a Great Power War, a "Cult of the Offensive"¹³² mental framework had materialized. It became more obvious only after the belligerents became bogged down in the trenches on the Western Front that a grave miscalculation was made. The offense-defense balance was misunderstood to have been more favorable to the offense when in fact conditions were

¹³² See "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War", Stephen Van Evera, *International Security*, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (Summer, 1984), 58-107. Also, see the partial refutation on the reasoning behind such a mentality in "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense and Instability", Scott Sagan, *International Security*, Vol. 11, no. 2, (Fall 1986), pp. 151-175. Sagan asserts that the requirements of secret alliances had fed European desires to strike the first blow, lest they be left to negotiate a peace in a disadvantageous position.

quite the opposite¹³³. Thus, the strategy was supplanted by a defense-dominant orientation. This is in every sense an example of a mismatch between means and ends.

The Second World War

It is a common criticism of military leaders that they are always planning to “fight the last war”; that is, the previous war that was fought. As a defense-dominant understanding was so painfully learned in WWI, it would soon be succeeded by an offense-dominant Blitzkrieg campaign of firepower and maneuver in The Second World War¹³⁴. This is not an uncommon phenomenon, nor is it limited temporally and spatially to early or mid-20th Century Europe (as will be shown later in this paper).¹³⁵

When incorrectly gauging one’s threat environment based on outmoded thinking, a strategic miscalculation may follow and eventually catastrophe may be the unintended consequence. So, it could be said that a tenacious attachment to one’s sense of comfort in assuming that the threat environment remains static may inadvertently negate such thinking if one does not reconfigure their approach to suit the possibility that such

¹³³ Conventional wisdom of the 19th Century, as delineated by Clausewitz, had been that defense is naturally the stronger form of war. See *On War*, Carl Von Clausewitz, (New York: Everyman’s Library, Alfred A. Knopf, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, 1993 edition), p. 428. “The Somme, 1 July 1916 gives a chilling example of how truly disastrous a human endeavor was the requirement to fight a defensive trench warfare campaign, while having the obsolete assumption that war could be an offense-dominant venture.” *The Face of Battle*, John Keegan, (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1985 edition). Chapter 4, (pp. 207-289).

¹³⁴ Clausewitz had not lived to see tanks and planes working in tandem to circumvent the Maginot Line and defeat the French in record time in 1940. Paul Fussell offers an account of the horrors of WWII on the Pacific Front in unsettling detail in *THANK GOD FOR THE ATOM BOMB AND OTHER ESSAYS*, (New York: Summit Books, 1988);pp. 13-37. Also by Fussell, see *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Chapter 18: “The Real War Will Never Get in the Books” [a quote associated with Walt Whitman, located on p. 290].

¹³⁵ David Kilcullen draws on the analogy of these “chateau generals” of 1914 to illustrate contemporary misguided thinking in *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); p. 287.

accepted wisdom is no longer applicable¹³⁶. This conceptual rigidity is particularly hazardous if the signs of environmental change are observable, but dismissed out of hand.

The 1991 Persian Gulf War

After Iraq's Army had crossed its southern border, successfully invaded, and occupied Kuwait in August of 1990, the combined coalition forces (under the auspices of the UN) had reversed the aggression and returned the region to the *status quo ante bellum*.¹³⁷ The heavy application of conventional firepower and maneuver, combined with the initial (and continuous) application of air power and an overall American technological supremacy had proved efficacious. The 1991 Persian Gulf War was perhaps the last known successful conventional endeavor in modern warfare.

The Space between Conventional and Unconventional Wars

The reader may notice that the Vietnam and Korean Wars were not addressed here. They will be taken up shortly, as they did not fit neatly into the conventional war typology. In the early 1980s a new strategy began to dominate the American DoD: Air Land Battle.¹³⁸ This doctrine held that the Army would need a variety of mostly heavy land forces coupled with CAS (Close Air Support) from the Air Force to win any conventional wars to come. It was based on the Cold War idea that if an East-West nuclear war had not erupted, a conventional war might. Hence, preparedness for that

¹³⁶ "Military strategists tend to mislearn, in cyclical fashion, the lessons of war concerning the relative dominance of offensive and defensive capabilities." See earlier citation regarding Betts, "Surprises Despite Warning"; p. 569.

¹³⁷ *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹³⁸ *The American Culture of War: The History of U.S. Military Force from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Adrian R. Lewis (New York: Routledge, 2007); pp. 301-304. This work will be referenced a number of times.

possible mode of combat needed consideration. This was largely an effort to match the echelon-based Soviet doctrine of the time as it related to the projected European theater.

The Air Force, however, had viewed CAS as less than prestigious. They preferred the WWII long-range strategic bombing approach¹³⁹. The growing pains of the Air Land Battle paradigm were painfully evident in Grenada during Operation Urgent Fury.¹⁴⁰ The operations in Grenada, Panama and Haiti are considered to exist somewhere between the realm of conventional and unconventional forms of warfare. As far as the intensity spectrum of conflict is concerned, they were low.¹⁴¹

Unconventional Wars and Asymmetry

Usage of the terms “conventional war” should be interpreted as conflict that is non-nuclear and descriptive of the forms of warfare that have been commonplace between and amongst the Great Powers throughout centuries past. There are, of course, developments in technology and war-craft that have altered the means employed in conducting combat¹⁴², but the concept survives. “Unconventional war” in this paper refers to that which lies outside of the realm of the aforementioned. This may lead to “asymmetric warfare”; that is, a concept describing the correlation of forces as it relates

¹³⁹ Ibid. p. 303.

¹⁴⁰ See Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, pp. 144-145, 230-231. The costly invasion of Grenada had been an outgrowth of budgetary inter-service wars, the attendant parochialism, and poor inter-service communication. See the specific inter-service communication errors and the resultant deaths in “Grenada, Panama and Haiti: Joint Operational Reform”, Ronald H. Cole, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn/Winter 1998-99; pp. 57-64.

¹⁴¹ James Berry Motley discusses some of the friendly fire costs of the operation in Grenada and the operation’s importance as a harbinger of low-intensity conflicts to come in “Grenada: Low-Intensity Conflict and the Use of U.S. Military Power”, *World Affairs*, Vol. 146, No. 3 (Winter) 1983-84, pp. 221-238.

¹⁴² For example, the use of rigid formations of infantry and archers, chariots and crossbows, light cavalry and heavy cavalry have mostly been supplanted by rapid-fire repeating machineguns, artillery barrages, tanks, planes, mechanized forces, precision guided munitions, cryptologically secure communications, etc. This does not negate the historical application of other forms of war as opted for by a variety of warring parties.

to a mismatch in capabilities between adversaries. This condition may lead one or more inferior belligerents to attempt to offset the conventional power disparity by means that seek to circumvent enemy strengths and exploit enemy weaknesses.¹⁴³

Korea, Conventional, or Unconventional?

The Korean War was in many ways a conventional campaign. There were tanks, planes, infantry and artillery. However, both the North Koreans and the Chinese had opted for a form of combat that was very much a part of recent Far Eastern history: guerilla warfare¹⁴⁴. North Korea had at the ready “a large, well-equipped, well-trained guerilla force that had infiltrated into South Korea to instigate an insurgency.”¹⁴⁵ What is relevant to this paper is that the NKPA (North Korean People’s Army) had both a conventional and unconventional array of forces at their disposal. The United States did not.

From early on (26 October, 1950), the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) had ordered the People’s Volunteer Army (Chinese People’s Volunteers- CPV) to surreptitiously cross the border with North Korea and engage the U.S. Army in a hit-and-run assault, or guerilla-style warfare. The sole purpose for this belligerent act was to give credibility to the previous warnings that encroaching on the Chinese sphere of influence by crossing the 38th parallel would meet resistance. On 24 November 1950, it became

¹⁴³ In a National Public Radio interview, LTC John Nagl had made the following point that, “Until we demonstrate that we’re just as good at counterinsurgency as we are at conventional warfare, our enemies are going to go where we’re comparatively weak.” “Beating Insurgents Takes Unconventional War”, *National Public Radio*, 12 February, 2008 (“All Things Considered”).

¹⁴⁴ A definition for the term “guerilla warfare” is in order. The U.S. DoD defines it as “Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces”; Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 8 November 2010 (As Amended through 31 December 2010).

¹⁴⁵ Adrian Lewis, *The American Culture of War*; p. 89. Much of the remaining discussion of the Korean War derives from pp. 83-145.

apparent that the PRC's (People's Republic of China) warning went unheeded. As a result, the CPV became fully engaged and committed to turning back the virtually unencumbered progress. The CPV followed the American Eighth Army's advance with a very forceful counter-attack and pushed the Americans south into a defensive retrograde¹⁴⁶.

There was no denying that the CPV had chosen to use infiltration and night operations, enveloping the American-led UN forces and causing their rearguard and vanguard elements to fight for their southern retreat. It took a month or so, but General Ridgway had identified some of the American Eighth Army's weaknesses. This included low morale, a tendency to remain road-bound, thinking in terms of a conventional WWII force-on-force approach, and a bunker mentality.

The American Experience with Irregular Warfare in Korea

Ridgway had made the appropriate requests to support his soldiers, boosting their morale and fighting strength. He had also ordered his soldiers to constantly engage the enemy where they operated most effectively: the mountains. He had ordered all patrols, including night patrols to be increased. Ridgway had also not only ordered all units to travel in open jeeps, but had himself demonstrated this tactic. As a "... function of cultural learning..."¹⁴⁷ he had realized that the American soldier had to "...adapt to new conditions and a new enemy."¹⁴⁸ In order to recover lost ground and lost spirit, General Matthew B. Ridgway had to *break with tradition* and *adjust* to the changed threat environment.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.; pp. 105-106.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.; p. 110.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.; p. 112.

Who Was Victorious and Why?

There probably is no definitive answer to the question of victory. What seems to stand out is the marked difference from the prior decade's war practice. This war was limited, a foreign concept to most U.S. citizens. Taking up the cause of an isthmus on the other side of the world, for a people that are culturally alien could not produce the same level of domestic support in the United States that would have characterized the potentially existential threat facing America's allies in WWII. One main objective of the UN forces was to return the NKPA back to their side of the 38th parallel. Another was to destroy the NKPA. Both were accomplished.

On the other hand, fighting a limited war requires limited objectives, as opposed to a total war's aim: absolute victory. Fighting to a stalemate with the CPV and losing initiative (and lives), while negotiating under static attrition warfare is hardly a decisive victory. What is more, the service cultures had stymied the appropriate application of force to meet the threat.¹⁴⁹ The newly created Air Force (formerly the Army Air Force) was enamored of its decisive role in WWII, a result of strategic bombing. As Adrian Lewis assesses:

The Air Force entered the Korean War unprepared to fight the type of war required of it by political leaders. The Tactical Air Command (TAC) was too low on the Air Force's list of priorities to adequately prepare for a limited war; in fact, by January 1949 the TAC had been demoted to a planning headquarters stripped of its units and absorbed into the Continental Air Command. Army protests and the arguments within the Air Force, caused the restoration of the TAC in July of 1950. Nevertheless, the Strategic Air Command had been the primary focus of the Air Force, receiving the majority of resources – energy, intellect, budget, talent, and prestige. By experience, training, doctrine, technology, and culture the Air Force was geared and oriented toward strategic bombing and more total war. In limited wars, the Air Force could not fight the way it

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.; p. 115.

was designed or had planned. The Air Force, thus, had to adapt its strategic bombers and other technologies to conduct tactical missions.¹⁵⁰

Though the Air Force did not see fit to employ strategic bombers in support of ground operations, the Navy did. However, the Air Force made its best efforts to prevent the Navy from doing so¹⁵¹. This was another example, among many like it, where inter-service rivalry had produced very little benefit and a reinforced organizational rigidity.

Lessons Learned

It appears that the American forces in Korea learned very few lessons. Even when U.S./UN air dominance was established (through the use of Navy Aircraft Carriers), the CPV and NKPA employed the tactics of guerilla warfare to undermine its effects. “Americans, however, would not learn this lesson. For America this conclusion only meant that better technology was needed.”¹⁵² Unfortunately, this still seems to have been true in Vietnam (and today as well). In Korea, the U.S. Army had to adapt *during* war to meet the NKPA and CPV tactics (although too late to produce definitive results; a stalemate that relied on defensive attrition could hardly be viewed as a victory).

Vietnam, Conventional, or Unconventional?

The Vietnam War was both conventional and unconventional. The North Vietnamese Army and its Viet Cong cohorts were using subversion and unconventional means of attack, supply, and movement. The American Army was stuck on the conventional tactics and operations that reflected the strategy of meeting a modern military. As patently obvious as it became, tanks could not operate in tunnels and forests,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.; p. 117.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.; pp. 119-120.

¹⁵² Ibid.; p. 122.

planes and helicopters could not see through thick jungle canopies, and soldiers focused on finding and killing the enemy- while sacrificing the needs of the civilian populace- could never properly defeat a guerilla insurgency.¹⁵³

The North Vietnamese had adopted a guerilla strategy until the period 1968-1972, in which they had switched to a conventional approach¹⁵⁴. The Americans had relied on a conventional strategy that was predisposed to believe in the usefulness of air power as a coercive implement of war. Due to the mismatch in strategy, the Americans could not have achieved victory, as it would have required "... exploiting the vulnerabilities in the opponent's strategy"¹⁵⁵. Robert A. Pape has analyzed the efficacy of airpower and coercion and concluded that the only relatively successful American bombing campaigns were Linebacker I and Linebacker II in 1972. He asserts that this success was a direct result of the choice by North Vietnam to adopt a conventional war strategy, which in effect had to rely on conventional support mechanisms that were vulnerable to interdiction.

Conventional LOCs (Lines of Communication- such as roadways, railways, airports, waterways, communication networks, etc.) serve conventional mechanized forces. On the contrary, guerilla LOCs are not as significant to the maintenance of the fighting units, and in fact run in the reverse order (from front to rear, whereas

¹⁵³ Kalev I. Sepp goes into some detail regarding the application of a successful COIN strategy in Kalev I. Sepp, Ph.D., "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency", *Military Review*, May-June, 2005, pp. 8-12. On p. 11, in reference to the Soviet experience in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the American experience in the 1960s-70s, he draws the parallel that, "...Americans and Soviets employed massive artillery and aerial firepower with the intent to defeat enemy forces by attriting them to a point of collapse, an objective which was never reached."

¹⁵⁴ *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, Robert A. Pape, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996). Specifically, Chapter 6: Vietnam 1965-1972, pp. 174-210. Even more specifically, pp. 176, 191, 195, 200, 209. Elsewhere in the book, pp. 75-76.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; p. 175.

conventional LOCs run from rear to front)¹⁵⁶. Guerillas operate in smaller units and require little support from the rear. Their food supply is secured as they manipulate the population and thus the center of gravity¹⁵⁷. Pape found the main cause of failure to have been American civilian and military leaders' deficient thinking as it related to "...American military action and the *enemy's* goals".¹⁵⁸

The American Experience with Irregular Warfare in Vietnam

The American Army in Vietnam did not adapt to meet the changed threat environment in Southeast Asia. It was not for a lack of knowledge that the enemy's preferred approach to combat was unconventional. In fact, Mao Tse-Tung had managed to effectively employ guerilla warfare to secure and hold power in China (and wrote a manual/book about it). What is more, unconventional guerilla approaches to war have been successfully employed in Europe, North Africa, Asia, Cuba, etc.¹⁵⁹ In referring to guerilla warfare as "camouflaged war", Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart stated:

It is not too late to learn from the experience of history. However tempting the idea may seem of replying to our opponents' 'camouflaged war' activities by counter-offensive moves of the same kind, it would be wiser to devise and pursue a more subtle and far-seeing counter-strategy. In any case, those who frame policy and apply it need a better understanding of the subject than has been shown in the past.¹⁶⁰

In Vietnam there were glimmers of success, however. Primarily, these could be seen in the Special Forces, CAPs (Combined Action Program), and CIDG (Civilian

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.; p. 191.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.; "... guerilla warfare required little in the way of supplies and next to nothing at all from North Vietnam"; p. 192. Also, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.; p. 210, emphasis in the original. He concludes on the same page, "Consequently, American leaders failed to realize that no coercive air power strategy could have succeeded during 1965-1968. The cheap, quick solution they so badly wanted did not exist".

¹⁵⁹ B.H. Liddell Hart had referenced the term "guerilla" to have been popularized in Spain against the conventional army of Napoleon. He also speaks of allied subversion against the Nazis in Europe in WWII and the growth of guerilla strategies of warfare during the Cold War. See *Strategy*, B.H. Liddell Hart (New York: Meridian, second revised ed. 1991). See Chapter XXIII: Guerilla War; pp. 361-370.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.; p. 370.

Irregular Defense Group) programs.¹⁶¹ It was not as though policymakers were unaware of the changed threat environment; they were just so fixated on mechanized engagements in the European theater of war as *the* alternative to global nuclear war.¹⁶²

Who Was Victorious and Why?

You can kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours, but even at those odds, you will lose and I will win.

-Ho Chi Minh¹⁶³

The U.S. Army was beholden to its “Army Concept” of war, which had envisaged a mid-intensity, or high intensity conventional campaign, geared toward the use of technology to carry out its objectives¹⁶⁴. Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr. has offered that:

While throughout its Vietnam experience the Army encountered a number of signs indicating that a change in its Concept was required in order to combat the insurgency more effectively, the Army leadership persisted in approaching the war within the framework of the Concept.¹⁶⁵

As a result of such biases, resource allocation¹⁶⁶ and personnel promotion incentives¹⁶⁷ reflected the Army’s cultural aversion to paramilitary and civilian-led

¹⁶¹ The Kennedy Administration had placed an emphasis on paramilitary operations, but “the Army culture proved incapable of adapting to this form of warfare...” Adrian Lewis, *The American Culture of War* pp. 226-227. Lewis cites the period 1961-1963 as the most successful matching the strategy of the North Vietnamese. He also notes that the downward spiral in effectiveness was marked by the absorption of these forces into the MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) and its subsequent subordination to conventional war support.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*; pp. 220-222. On p. 221 he cites Bernard Fall’s calculation that the war in Vietnam was the forty-eighth small war of the Twentieth Century. The term “small war” is synonymous with “guerilla” (as it is derived from Spanish).

¹⁶³ Ho Chi Minh’s warning to the French in 1946, as cited by Stanley Karnow, *Time*, 13 April 1998, Vol. 151, Issue 14, p. 157.

¹⁶⁴ *The Army and Vietnam*, Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; 1988 paperback ed.), pp. 4-7.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; pp. 6-7.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; p. 215.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; p. 220.

efforts at counterinsurgency (e.g. CORDS- Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support)¹⁶⁸.

Lessons Learned

Krepinevich contends that “if the Army has learned any lessons from Vietnam, it has learned many of the wrong ones”¹⁶⁹. It isn’t only the Army leadership’s view that is to blame; it also had to operate in an inauspicious political climate. “In sum, it seems that the military is more concerned about the intestinal fortitude of the executive and congressional leadership and the will of the American people than it is about the tough questions of its own doctrine and force structure”¹⁷⁰.

Krepinevich concludes his 1986 study with what would prove to be very prescient thoughts:

Low-intensity warfare [the realm of guerilla insurgencies] represents the most likely arena of future conflict for the Army, and counterinsurgency the most demanding contingency.¹⁷¹

The paradox that obtains from this prophecy is best stated as follows:

For in spite of its anguish in Vietnam, the Army has learned little of value. Yet the nation’s policymakers have endorsed the service’s misperceptions derived from the war while contemplating an increased U.S. role in Third World low-intensity conflicts. This represents a very dangerous mixture that in the end may see the Army again attempting to fight a conventional war against a very unconventional enemy.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.; p. 221: “Unfortunately, paramilitary forces did not fit the Army’s perception of the war and its propensity for seeking solutions through conventional means”. Also, see pp. 232-233.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.; p. 269.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; p. 270. On pp. 270-271 Krepinevich explains the outcome of such conventional leanings, “Thus, in Vietnam the Army ended up trying to fight the kind of conventional war that it was trained, organized, and prepared (and that it *wanted*) to fight instead of the counterinsurgency war it was sent to fight” [emphasis in original]. After the war, the Army’s disdain for anything outside the mainstream conventional view remained constant and was even geared toward discouraging the study of counterinsurgency. Again, Krepinevich notes, “Indeed, once the Army completed its pullout from South Vietnam, the service sought to expunge the memory of the counterinsurgency experience from its officer corps”. Also, see p. 275.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.; p. 274.

¹⁷² Ibid.; p. 275. How correct he unfortunately was.

Evolving Generations of Warfare

Colonel (COL) Thomas X. Hammes makes the case that warfare is not revolutionary, but evolutionary¹⁷³. He highlights the First Generation Warfare (1GW)¹⁷⁴ as being line and column face-to-face attrition battles, whereas the 2GW had consisted of massed firepower. The 3GW was focused on maneuver, and 4GW being the current iteration of warfare as embodied in the low-intensity, unconventional application of force as a means to achieving political objectives. Hammes argues that the precursors for such an evolution were demonstrable for the last seventy years, with each successive 4GW engagement evolving and improving.

T.X. Hammes claims that evolutions in warfare seem to coincide with political, economic, social and technical changes. In short: as society evolves, so does warfare. He illustrates how 4GW has continued to evolve from the initial failings and eventual successes of Mao Tse Tung's (also written Mao Zedong) People's War in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Mao had to experience tremendous loss (as exemplified in the "long march" westward) and learn from it.

In Vietnam the Communists under Ho Chi Minh had successfully implemented Mao's strategy against the French in the 1950s and eventually achieved victory over the U.S. in the decades that had followed. "Changing the correlation of forces" was the outcome of a campaign focused on the U.S. center of gravity: political will, as a manipulation of the democratic system through public relations and an intolerable body count.

¹⁷³ *The Sling and the Stone: on War in the 21st Century*, Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, USMC, (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006).

¹⁷⁴ 2GW being shorthand for Second Generation Warfare, and so on.

In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas were all but defeated in the early 1960s. Eventually they had learned from their previous mistakes and began to use public relations, diplomacy and a deceptive democratic appearance, in order to internally and externally balance their power. After nearly twenty years, success was achieved.

COL Hammes has indicated how the grassroots successes of the Palestinian Intifada (Intifada I) in the 1980s-1990s were later reversed in the Second Intifada (Intifada II, aka- the al Aqsa Intifada, 2001- ?). The key refinement in Intifada I was the extent to which the message had reached the world that the Palestinians wanted the Israelis out. This message was lost in Intifada II when it turned into being about the annihilation of Israel. This was further exacerbated by Arafat and his PLO, who were not key components of Intifada I and its subsequent evolution.

He also argues that the way the U.S. failed to grasp the 4GW nature of Vietnam is the same problem the Israelis had in Intifada I. The Israelis, however, were able to learn (one might even conclude that they had adapted) by the al Aqsa Intifada and began to counter the Palestinians through the same medium. Hammes asserts that the U.S. has been stuck on 3GW since WWII, and seems to plan for the current wars the same as it does the future wars. The theme of Hammes's book is very clear: The U.S. should have recognized the symptoms of a change in the nature of warfare, but failed to adapt to reflect a matching strategy in kind. Instead, the U.S. DOD has been battle-focused, as opposed to war-focused and has sought technological solutions over human-centric ones. The most glaring cause for such an adaptation failure seems to be rooted in the nature of bureaucracies and their consequent inflexibility.

This leads to another point, which is that the assumption that 4GW as the final expression of strategy would be foolish and shortsighted. “We have to assume fifth-generation warfare is out there”.¹⁷⁵ In fact, one can already see some evolution toward that end. China has been focused not only on conventional aspects of military strategy, but also on the ability to not even engage in armed conflict, hence applying a strategy in technical terms¹⁷⁶.

Three examples illustrate an emerging 5GW: the Chinese attempt to knock out a satellite in space and the recent compromise of global internet security, which had reportedly penetrated the U.S. DoD’s system¹⁷⁷. The purported Israeli “Stuxnet” cyber-attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities is another example of evolution in war-fighting¹⁷⁸. Both China and Israel seem to be gravitating toward a high-tech means of achieving some form of victory without firing a shot. This does not mean that either state has sought to eliminate their conventional military means. One final realm has surfaced lately, which could be viewed, perhaps, as useable under conditions of asymmetry: the “Wikileaks” debacle and its implications in the national security realm¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.; p. 274.

¹⁷⁶ See “Power in Cyberspace”, Nigel Inkster, *International Institute for Strategic Studies, IISS Global Perspectives* forum, from a speech given on 18 January, 2011 in Bahrain. Both the U.S. and China seem to be incorporating “Cyber Warfare” into their lexicon. In the case of the former, a US Cyber Command was recently established. In the latter, the doctrine of Integrated Network Electronic Warfare has been adopted.

¹⁷⁷ See “Worldview: The United States needs defense against cyberattacks”, Trudy Rubin, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 December, 2010. The article highlights a speech given by former White House “counterterrorism czar”, Richard A. Clarke, to Philadelphia’s Foreign Policy Institute.

¹⁷⁸ See “Stuxnet virus sets back Iran’s nuclear program by 2 years”, *The Jerusalem Post*, Yaakov Katz, 15 December, 2010.

¹⁷⁹ See, “Cyberwarriors Wanted”, *Daily News* (Sports Final Edition), editorial p. 22, 13 December, 2010.

The U.S. and Iraq (2003- ?)

The United States military entered Iraq on 21 March 2003, in a conventional combat operation. The primary military objective at hand was of a common, conventional nature: to destroy the Iraqi military forces and topple the regime of Saddam Hussein (the latter objective is admittedly less common than the former). Bearing many resemblances to the previous war of 1991, the United States military (and coalition forces) prevailed with swiftness. A secondary objective, which would necessarily require a longer stay, was driven by ideology: to liberate the Iraqi people from tyranny and plant the seeds of democracy¹⁸⁰.

What followed shortly after the initial invasion was anything but conventional. Asymmetric operations had erupted the very next day¹⁸¹. As Iraqi military units began to disappear and dissolve into the civilian population, the U. S. military found itself increasingly facing an unanticipated irregular threat: guerilla war. Until the end of 2006 the U.S. political leadership and most of the military hierarchy had been tenaciously recalcitrant and dedicated to a mismatched conventional strategy. There were, however,

¹⁸⁰ The plan to invade Iraq and cause a regime change was certainly a central objective, along with the search for and destruction of WMDs. See the National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book #326, which may be accessed at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB326/index.htm. The Grand Strategy behind the Bush Doctrine was transforming the Middle East, see "A Grand Strategy of Transformation", John Lewis Gaddis, *Foreign Policy*, No. 133 (Nov.- Dec., 2002), pp. 50-57.

¹⁸¹ On 22 March, 2003 a guerilla-oriented attack had occurred, whereby the armed subjects attacking the U.S. forces wore no uniforms and appeared to be civilians. See Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (2nd Edition, Penguin: 2007), p. 118. It was apparently inconceivable that the war in Iraq would transform so rapidly into an insurgency campaign. Yet, in the middle of conventional combat operations, the Iraqi military was changing out of their uniforms and engaging U.S. forces in civilian garb; see *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, Steven Metz (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), pp. 141-143.

dissidents within the military (active and retired) and academia, whose voices were suppressed until the obvious became intolerable¹⁸².

What is interesting for this paper is not that the American administration and military leaders were so spellbound by their conventional “wisdom”, but that they remained so in spite of overwhelming evidence that the policy was impotent and the strategic objectives were far-fetched. In ways similar to the above discussion of the pitfalls of intelligence adaptation failure, there seems to be a constant principle at play. Namely, that until a past failure is perceived, cultural and cognitive rigidity will inhibit future adaptation. Perhaps it could be said that one way to overcome this handicap requires that an appreciation of its presence is invoked by a sense of humility, and sustained by learning the *correct* lessons. This principle does not alone account for adaptation failure (or success), but may serve to describe the conditions under which policy and strategy re-align with reality. That being said, there are other matters with which to contend, that speak more to the core of this paper’s focus.

As was discussed in chapter two, the IC is a tool for serving policy needs. As for the role of force, Clausewitz had long ago instructed that, “war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means”¹⁸³. However, if policymakers are beholden to a faulty policy, then the application of military means toward those ends are bound to produce failure. In other words, if military leaders are pursuing a military strategy that complements an unrealistic set of policy aims, it is doubly damaging. Therefore, the policy and/or the strategy for

¹⁸² This point is underscored numerous times, and indeed forms a main theme for *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*, Thomas E. Ricks, (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).

¹⁸³ *On War*, p. 99.

achieving it (the application of force in the case of Iraq) must adjust to bring means and ends into harmony. In 2003- 2006 Iraq, it appears that this point was nearly lost, whereas in 2006- 2007 it was discovered. What it took to adapt and steer away from complete failure follows.

Elements of Military Adaptation Failure (and Success)

The question remains: why the adaptation failure from 2003- 2006? Further, what mechanisms allowed for adaptation success in the period 2006- 2007. Here we can delve into the realm of the military set of organizations that operate in a competitive environment, but not at the risk of discounting the political decisions, which caused the military to become engaged. The military organizational learning process will be explored first, particularly that of the army. One possible misinterpretation must briefly be addressed. The author is *not* suggesting that when one form of warfare is dominant, it will always be so. Rather, if an adversary's use of a potent form of warfare has achieved certain political objectives, or is successful in blunting the objectives of another, it should be recognized as *a* force (not *the* force) to be countered in future engagements.

As previously mentioned, the initial invasion of Iraq had appeared to be successful. As the Iraqi military had realized that it could not parry the coalition advance through conventional means, a different set of tactics had to be chosen, embodied in guerilla warfare. Guerilla warfare is not merely a regimen of routine tactics, but a *strategy* for addressing and counterbalancing the inequitable distribution of force mechanisms (men/women, materiel, technology, etc.).

Concerns regarding budget cuts and the attendant perceived diminution in importance for the organization are primal fears.¹⁸⁴ Military organizations are naturally defeat-averse and would only seek to avoid changes viewed as detrimental to the overall health of the organization. Further, James J. Wirtz states that “it is unlikely that organizations will develop measures of effectiveness that call into question the version of their own identity to which they are obsessively attached.”¹⁸⁵

Wirtz offers some insight into the history of the U.S. counterinsurgency school of thought. “A ‘never again’ school emerged, especially within the U.S. Army, which identified counterinsurgency and nation-building efforts as detrimental to the interests of the United States in general and the U.S. military in particular.”¹⁸⁶ This emphasizes the issue of “culture” in military thinking. He argues that in applying the principles of Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR), security should receive a relatively superior weight. Wirtz also suggests that a chief underlying impediment to implementation of SSTR is found in the bureaucratic nature of military organizations, as “they are deeply influenced by their operational/strategic ‘essence’ - an agreed-upon body of concepts that informs members about organizational culture and missions.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ This phenomenon is not limited to the realm of the military. In *Fixing Intelligence* (cited earlier), Odom states (on pp. 10-11), “The arcane and insular character of most intelligence activities also contributed to a lack of understanding of the problems confronting the Intelligence Community. Senior officials most often spend careers in a single agency, and therefore they arrive at senior posts largely ignorant of other parts of the Intelligence Community. Without a doctrine for intelligence operations and management, they have behaved as any organization theorist would predict: they have defended the parochial resource interests of their home agencies.”

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 281.

¹⁸⁶ James J. Wirtz, Chapter 8 “The Exquisite Problem of Victory: Measuring Success in Unconventional Operations”, Part III: Learning, Innovation, and New Initiatives. This is pulled from a study by the Strategic Studies Institute, entitled, “Interagency and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Roles”, edited by Joseph R. Cerami and Jay W. Boggs, December 2007, 605 pages. Chapter 8 consists of pp. 267-284.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 278-279.

The first three years of the American occupation of Iraq could be said to have been a complete disaster. More than anything else, two causal factors seemed to have been ever-present: the *interests of national security bureaucrats* and the *nature of bureaucratic organizations* (from Zegart's points regarding adaptation failure). As for the first point, there is evidence that political affiliations had been a potent force driving decisions from the top-down. This theme is a constant in Rajiv Chandrasekaran's *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*¹⁸⁸.

The possibility that an insurgency would erupt following conventional combat operations was not unanticipated. While willfully ignoring the State Department's "Future of Iraq Project" (which addressed the possibility for a prolonged occupation and reconstruction effort), the Bush administration had applied downward pressure to see to it that the report would not receive serious consideration.¹⁸⁹

As for the nature of bureaucratic organizations, it is instructive to recall the level of resistance that was- and had remained- culturally embedded in the military, particularly the U.S. Army during and after Vietnam. The "American army was not a

¹⁸⁸ *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), pp. 286-288. Political affiliation and favoritism were very palpable in terms of choosing who was going to run the occupation efforts and what policies were to be instituted. On the unrealistic aims see p. 321. Also, much of the essence of Ricks's *Fiasco* (cited earlier) had described the tenacious attachment that the Washington policymakers held in regard to both the conduct of the war (operations) and the overall objectives of the war (strategy).

¹⁸⁹ See "Learning the Right Lessons from Iraq", Benjamin H. Friedman, Harvey M. Sapolsky, and Christopher Preble in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, 7th edition, eds. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009). Specifically, pp. 300- 301.

learning institution during its involvement in Vietnam but was in fact organizationally disposed against learning how to fight and win counterinsurgency warfare.”¹⁹⁰

Failing to appreciate guerilla insurgency as a strategy, is to render oneself ineffective in countering it, as “conventional operations by themselves have at best no more effect than a fly swatter.”¹⁹¹ There are many features that make conventional forces vulnerable to unconventional tactics and strategy. Robert Taber (the only American fighting alongside Fidel Castro in the defense of Playa Giron) has highlighted many of the weaknesses of the conventional military when they are engaged with a guerilla enemy¹⁹². They cannot all be addressed here; however, awareness of the existence of just a few of them shows how much adaptation would be required in order to meet an insurgency on equal terms.

- “the guerilla has the initiative; it is he who begins the war, and he who decides when and where to strike”¹⁹³
- “The military has extensive holdings to protect”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, John A. Nagl, PhD., LTC U.S. Army (ret.), (University of Chicago Press: 2005 edition), p. 11. Nagl repeats this theme several times in his work: “The organizational culture of the United States Army precluded organizational learning on counterinsurgency during the Vietnam War.”- p. 180. Also pp. 198- 199. For a look at the organizational recalcitrance after the Vietnam War see pp. 204-208.

¹⁹¹ *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, David Galula, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1964, reprinted 2006), p. 51. Galula’s book is regarded by many as being central to understanding of both guerilla insurgencies and counterinsurgencies. On the “limits of conventional warfare” putting aside the political and economic factors and focusing on the military he says, “It is not a problem of means since the counterinsurgent forces are still largely superior to the insurgent’s, even though they may be dispersed. It is primarily a problem of strategy and tactics, of methods and organization.”- p. 50.

¹⁹² *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerilla Warfare*, Robert Taber, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2002). The title of the book is derived from the following oversimplified, yet appropriate analogy, “the guerilla fights the war of the flea, and his military enemy suffers the dog’s disadvantages: too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with. If the war continues long enough- this is the theory- the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anemia without ever having found anything on which to close his jaws or to rake with his claws”; p. 20.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*; p. 10. It is important to bear in mind that that the application of this maxim references the insurgency itself; in Iraq the conventional phase of the war had preceded, and arguably created, the insurgency.

- “The guerilla has the freedom of his poverty”¹⁹⁵
- Democracies are especially vulnerable as they “must maintain the appearance of normalcy; they can be *embarrassed* out of office. And they are triply vulnerable because they cannot be as ruthless as the situation demands. They cannot openly crush the opposition that embarrasses and harasses them. They must be woosers as well as doers”¹⁹⁶

The few (yet incomplete) points mentioned above are merely meant to show how a conventional modern army is faced with an enemy that is able to manipulate all elements of the political and military environment at a low cost and to good effect. In order to close the gaps with the guerilla forces, the persistent protection of the population is the only corresponding approach; for acting like a guerilla will be morally unacceptable and politically infeasible. This is very much counterintuitive for a modern army that is understandably indoctrinated to fight and win wars on a modern battlefield with the most advanced technology and equipment. Yet, it is this uncomfortable exercise in unconventional thinking that produces success.

It is not enough to think differently and act accordingly, but to re-write doctrine and training in an effort to institutionalize such a(n) (r)evolutionary approach. What makes matters most difficult is that this must be achieved by convincing or circumventing the stoic guardians of the norms that are to be contradicted; whose career incentives are inextricably linked to their existence. Additionally, while cutting through the seemingly immovable institutional obstructions, the policymakers must be convinced

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.; p. 11.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.; p. 11.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.; p. 15, emphasis in original.

that the conventional norms no longer apply and are apt to generate assured defeat. This was the environment in which GEN Petraeus and his merry band of Ph.D.s had thrust themselves.

Turning the Tide: Surging against the Insurgency

As was alluded to earlier in this chapter, the conventional application of force was not a winning strategy against the guerilla-style insurgency. In order to truly adapt to the enemy's strategy a political primer had to open the way for a bold, yet organizationally and doctrinally antithetical approach. Much of the process and progress, as well as the obstacles to adaptation have been well documented. This paper now turns to the manner in which the required steps were taken to overcome them. Much of the following is drawn from the honest accounting that Thomas E. Ricks has given in his most recent book entitled, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*.¹⁹⁷

There were a few strands of influence at play that seemed to have created the conditions for adaptation success. First, the political, then the organizational, and finally the doctrinal adaptation had to take root; *in that order*.

As previously addressed, the decisions that policymakers are tasked with *should* guide all other instruments of state power (be it military, intelligence, diplomacy, etc.). In chapter two this was illustrated by the policymaking-intelligence community relationship. In this chapter, the significance of a top-down approach –from the

¹⁹⁷ Previously cited. This work really maps out the “insurgency” within the politico-military realm that had birthed the counterinsurgency strategy, which had eventually prevailed. It should be noted that there is no assertion here that a counterinsurgency doctrine employs a mirrored approach to insurgency. That is, they are not the reverse/obverse of the same coin (ironic as the shorthand for Counterinsurgency is COIN).

uppermost echelons of political power down to the military chain-of-command and ultimately to the soldier on the ground –becomes clear.

A couple of political decisions had served as a major hindrance to success on the battlefield. First, not only did American political prerogatives cause the military to be involved, but they then shaped and fueled the insurgency. The evidence for this assertion is rather plain to see: Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order Number 1 (16 May, 2003) for “De-Baathification of Iraqi Society” and CPA Order Number 2 (23 May, 2003) Dissolution of Iraqi Entities (including the Iraqi Army). Such decisions were taken arbitrarily by L. Paul Bremer III (in charge of the occupation of Iraq). It isn’t clear if he had received the green light to do so, but he certainly was warned by military leaders and the CIA station chief that the effect would be the creation of armed, trained, unemployed, dis-empowered, angry Iraqis on the order of tens of thousands.¹⁹⁸

Secondly, Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Donald Rumsfeld had not only erred in trying to suppress opposition to his own doctrinal preferences, but had appeared to be so refractory that he became perhaps *the* biggest obstacle to the requisite adaptation. With the hierarchical structure of the military, it was an impermissible course of action for sitting generals to criticize policy. This took a different set of actors altogether. It took the status and prestige of those who would not suffer the consequences of challenging the SecDef, the military establishment, and most importantly, the president and his administration, to surmount the seemingly insurmountable political obstacles.

¹⁹⁸ Ricks, *Fiasco*. Chapters 8 (“How to Create an Insurgency [I]”) and 9 (“How to Create an Insurgency [II]”) address these matters with great attention. Also, see Nora Bensahel for a look at the impact of American mistakes had on the facilitation of the insurgency in, “Preventing Insurgencies After Major Combat Operations”, *Defence Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (September 2006), pp. 278-291.

General (GEN) Jack Keane (ret.) had the courage, wisdom, and gumption to pursue the top-down politico-military powers-that-be in order to break the strategic inertia.¹⁹⁹ Once he had gotten the ball rolling, his supporting cadre of retired generals (also having nothing to lose but face) had begun to publicize their dissent.²⁰⁰ This had the force and effect of generating political pressure toward ousting Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld²⁰¹ and taking up the strategy of COIN.

Having cleared the way and provided political cover to jump the chain-of-command GEN David Petraeus was enabled to step into the commanding role that would set the climate, and force upon the military –in a top-down fashion –the requisite cultural change (read: adaptation) to meet the insurgency’s strategy. To do this, he sought (in an iconoclastic fashion) to assemble the most inclusive list of participants in the process and implement a most counterintuitive doctrine.²⁰²

The mere fact that GEN Petraeus had been a COIN practitioner in his previous tour in Mosul was not in and of itself his most definitive contribution. Rather, it was his ability to break with military tradition and convene a meeting on 23-24 February 2006, at the U.S. Army School of Advanced Studies (Ft. Leavenworth, KS)²⁰³ that would include

¹⁹⁹ Ricks, *The Gamble*, p. 14, 79-81. Also, as cited on p. 88 in reference to a meeting that GEN Keane had with Rumsfeld and JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) Chairman Peter Pace: “‘We are edging toward strategic failure’, Keane warned the defense secretary.” David Ucko argues that the success or failure of COIN in Iraq will likely determine the penetrable power of COIN doctrine into the resistant military establishment’s historically rooted institutional distaste for unconventional wars. See Ucko, “Innovation or Inertia: The U.S. Military and the Learning of Counterinsurgency”, *Orbis*, Spring 2008, pp. 290-310.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*; pp. 38-39; e.g.: MG (Major General) Paul Eaton (ret.), MG John Batiste (ret.), MG Charles Swannack (ret.), MG John Riggs (ret.), LTG (Lieutenant General) Gregory Newbold (ret.), GEN Anthony Zinni (ret.), to name a few.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*; “a major obstacle”, p. 58. According to Philip Zelikow, Rumsfeld was lacking direction and vision, which had produced (or reflected) the unfortunate consequence of nebulous leadership; p. 77 (paraphrased).

²⁰² *Ibid.*; p. 168.

²⁰³ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, p. 119.

humanitarian experts, academics, COIN gurus, media elements, and critics of the war and its conduct.²⁰⁴ This key meeting would serve as the final revision of the COIN doctrine, as embodied in *Field Manual 3-24*.²⁰⁵

A common theme running through the above-cited works by Ricks, as well as the updated *FM 3-24* is of great significance to this paper: Politics appear to be both the obstacle, and the propellant that either inhibits or serves the interest of adaptation, respectively. At the level of the top policymaking personalities, the sense of humility and flexibility seem to have combined with a better appreciation of reality to produce the most favored political conditions for adaptation. It wasn't until GEN Jack Keane and a number of academics and colonels had made it clear to both President Bush and Defense Secretary Robert Gates (Rumsfeld's replacement) that the strategy of simply transitioning power to the Iraqis would not accomplish either the goals of democratizing Iraq, or exiting honorably from that country.²⁰⁶

No less an important persistent theme, is that related to the adaptation that had to take root within both the upper echelons of the military bureaucracy, and the organizationally resistant army itself. This pursuit also required the same successful adaptation attributes as had applied to the aforementioned political realm. What is more, the army had to become a *learning organization* and overturn many of the dearly held

²⁰⁴ Sadi Othman, Emma Sky, Sarah Sewall, to name a few. Again in Ricks, *The Gamble*, p. 157 "Few anti-war critics were as scathing of the conduct of the Iraq war as are Petraeus's staff, such as [MG David] Fastabend, his chief of strategy."

²⁰⁵ *FM 3-24 [Field Manual] The U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press Edition, 2007).

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*; pp. 122- 124, 133-137, 225-227, 261. It is in these pages that one can see that the features of humility and flexibility were of paramount significance as precursors to a strategic shift. The requisite interactive element appears to have been the honest conveyance of truth by the most authoritative general (Petraeus) to the most senior policymaker (President Bush). Simply put, no fear of upsetting the boss, just honest straight talk in the language of common objectives.

and culturally embedded tenets of military operations and tactics.²⁰⁷ Thomas E. Ricks

reminds us of this salient point:

The biggest single strategic change in Iraq in 2007, the one that preceded all others and enabled them, may also have been the least noticed one: a new sobriety in the mind-set of the U.S. military. It wasn't just the Bush administration that had taken years to face reality in Iraq. The military also was slow to learn.²⁰⁸

Even after operational planning began to reflect the necessary jointness among the service branches, it was not devoid of organizational parochialism²⁰⁹:

Concerned that the shift to irregular challenges would lead to a cut in its force structure and budget, the Air Force proposed a greater reliance on airpower in activities like counterinsurgency. As so often in the past, *service interests* were transmuted into strategic debates.²¹⁰

Further,

²⁰⁷ For the principles regarding organizational learning, see the multitude of forewords and introductions that occupy the *FM 3-24* (Chicago University Press addition, as cited previously), and for the counterintuitive aspects of a counterinsurgency strategy see pp. 47-52. See also, Eliot Cohen; LTC Conrad Crane; LTC (ret.) Jan Horvath; LTC (ret.) John Nagl, "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency", *Military Review*, March-April, 2006, pp. 49-53. Particularly, pp. 52-53. Also, the point that "counterinsurgency is still not a military activity and current doctrine should reflect that fact" is a fair assertion that Alexander Alderson makes on p. 35 in "US COIN Doctrine and Practice: An Ally's Perspective", *Parameters*, Winter 2007-08; pp. 33-45.

²⁰⁸ *FM 3-24*; p. 160. This was a very big step, as it ran counter to the technologically dominated, ideally envisaged battlefield of the future. See p. 161-164; on p. 163: "The new humility of American commanders amounted to the starting point for the new strategy." Also on p. 192, "The improvements in American operations were technical as well as doctrinal, tactical, and cultural." What is more, Ricks has said, on p. 223, that GEN Petraeus had "brought the means and ends of U.S. strategy more into balance." This point should not be taken lightly, as the task of harmonizing these very codependent elements are the purview of the policymaker.

²⁰⁹ Max Boot argues that the "network-centric" warfare that has become vogue still suffers from resistance from the Air Force, Navy (and Marines) to their changed mission roles. This is exemplified by their insistence on the relevance of new expensive and prestigious projects such as the F-22 Raptor and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. See, "The New American Way of War", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (July/August 2003), pp. 41-58; the aforementioned discussion is had on pp. 57-58.

²¹⁰ *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, Steven Metz (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008); p. 178 (emphasis added).

Just as the military has difficulty breaking away from its “big war” mentality, the State Department’s organizational culture tends to focus on diplomacy rather than the reconstruction or transformation of other states.²¹¹

In order for such an adaptation to take place, the “strategy vacuum”²¹² in the White House had to be reconciled. Still, GEN Petraeus had to contend with the ego of his CENTCOM (Central Command) Commander, Admiral William Fallon and engage the “bureaucratic infighting” among the JCS²¹³. The fact that these obstacles had to be bypassed represented for Admiral Fallon and the JCS an alarming prospect: that the chain-of-command was circumvented, and consequently rendered impotent. The psychological discomfort associated with this approach had been difficult to swallow. This radical break with tradition was the *only* way forward.

As alluded to earlier, Amy B. Zegart has asserted that the rational self-interest of policymakers is an enduring reality. This was evident beyond the bureaucratic realm and was indeed a matter that had placed congressional democrats in a political catch-22. While they could publicly oppose the war, they could not afford to appear to be unsupportive in funding the troops and being ultimately responsible for any disastrous failure that might attach.²¹⁴

Chapter Summary

The discussion in this chapter was aimed at addressing the obstacles to adaptation success by process tracing. One key theme that emerges here is that the comfort of a standard-bearing doctrine can, over time, lapse into intellectual torpor. This is further

²¹¹ Ibid.; p. 179.

²¹² Ricks, *The Gamble*; pp. 224 and 235.

²¹³ Ibid.; pp. 230-237.

²¹⁴ Ibid.; pp. 244-251. Also, within these pages it is clear that the political self-interest of Senators Clinton and Obama was a consideration, as they would later make a bid for the office of the presidency.

compounded by organizational hubris and strategic atrophy. The cure seems to be similar to what Richard K. Betts (cited earlier) referred to as the unrealistic solution of having a president who *likes* to be challenged, while being given the unvarnished truth without the threat of political reprisal against the messenger.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Betts, “The New Politics of Intelligence”, fn. 59. The term *president* could be easily replaced by Secretary of Defense, Director of National Intelligence, Secretary for Policy Planning, etc.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

For national security and defense matters, the organs that extend policy to its purported objectives are by definition organizations. If policy objectives are clear and a coherent strategy has been devised in earnest, normatively speaking, the intended outcome *should* be a success. However, when policy (Grand Strategy) objectives are unrealistic and/or the strategy developed for their implementation is inappropriate to suit the task, there exists an inherent deficiency in the means-ends continuum. This paper was formed with the express purpose of establishing where some deficiencies have developed between policymakers and two broad instruments of state power; namely, the Intelligence Community and the military.

The first chapter began by briefly describing the emerging threat environment that had been developing for some time, which had climaxed in America having experienced its most destructive attack in history.²¹⁶ The substantive matter that followed was an attempt to build on Amy Zegart's work. By accepting the basic tenets of her work there was a conscious effort to go further and separate some of the cognitive barriers from the systemic constructs that advanced causal pressures, ultimately contributing to failure.

²¹⁶ This exogenous shock had provided the impetus for the U.S. military to thrust itself into the heart of central and southwest Asia. The rise of a "transnational insurgency" as some have called it, was committed to revising the established order of international affairs through subversion, sabotage and terrorism. Ralph Wipfli and Dr. Steven Metz, "COIN of the Realm: U.S. Counterinsurgency Strategy", *Colloquium Brief*, Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, January 2008; p. 3. Also see Steven Metz, "New Challenges and Old Concepts: Understanding 21st Century Insurgency", *Parameters*, Winter 2007-08, pp. 20-32. On p. 21, "Al Qaeda and its affiliates adopted a strategy relying heavily on the methods of insurgency- both national insurgency and a transnational one."

The systemic view did reveal some points of friction along the IC-policymaking line. Having examined two cases (Iraq 2002-3 and Iran 1979), by way of Robert Jervis's research, it became clear that though intelligence failures *appear* on the surface to be a product of the IC, it is not enough to simply lay blame at the doorstep of the organs of intelligence. Rather, it was necessary to expose the relational elements that appeared to be in operation between policymaking and intelligence production.

The second substantive chapter dealt with military cultural and doctrinal stagnation. It is hoped that the chapter was successful in elucidating the pathway from stasis to rapid change. The engine of adaptation was a necessary, but cautious, break with deeply embedded institutional norms. Kalev I. Sepp summarizes this concept best when he says, "American military strategic culture has retarded the transition of military operations from conventional to unconventional warfare."²¹⁷ Furthermore:

In actuality American military culture is grounded in the simple principals of firepower and mass. Mirroring both strengths and a notable weakness of the broader American society, its military forces are highly reliant on technology and logistics, and generally ignorant of cultures beyond their borders.²¹⁸

The process of becoming adaptable was not only a departure from military tradition, in that a strategy that ran counter to what was familiar and comfortable would be displaced by a paradoxical set of newly learned principles. There was also a sense that

²¹⁷ Kalev I. Sepp, "From 'Shock and Awe' to 'Hearts and Minds': the fall and rise of US counterinsurgency capability in Iraq", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2007, pp. 217-230. This quote was drawn from p. 222.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*; pp. 222-223. On p. 224, Sepp goes on to state that, "... the nature of the war in Iraq must be examined to determine how the war has changed over time- and whether the US military has changed with it." On p. 225, he recalls SecDef Rumsfeld's vision of "the 'transformation' of its [the military] services to fight rapid, decisive expeditions in preference to long, grinding counterinsurgencies." Another point that Sepp makes on p. 228 (while drawing on the work of Edward Luttwak) is that "...a large army has a large internal bureaucracy, which is inherently inflexible in any fundamental way, and resistant to adaptation above the level of its smaller tactical units."

the standard chain-of-command itself had stood in the way, in some cases all the way to the highest political levels.²¹⁹

Strategy Deficit²²⁰

... after 9/11... suddenly the foundations of the world had shifted a little bit, where the focus on conventional transformation, high technology, rapid maneuver, all these things that were known as the revolution in military affairs, people talked about just before 9/11, seemed to be a little less relevant to the environment than what we've seen now. And some people have described this as a counter-revolution in military affairs, led to a certain extent by David Petraeus.

–David Kilcullen²²¹

As was discussed earlier, the paradigmatic paralysis that perpetuated throughout the decade following the Cold War was suddenly jolted into consciousness on 11 September, 2001. No longer were the competing theories for peacetime engagement and retrenchment relevant options. America was in a state of shock, followed by a new opportunity. The new circumstances that were forced upon the United States provided an opening through which a narrow strategic focus could materialize. As any good strategy would be incomplete without a military component, a global martial response was devised to eliminate threats (both real and imagined) that had yet to develop.

For better or for worse, America assumed a preventive strategic posture in that she could not bear the thought of another surprise attack of such a magnitude. Perhaps

²¹⁹ Though it is noted by Beatrice Heuser that the success of *FM 3-24* had been the result of “high-ranking military leaders’ receptivity to new ideas...” She went on to praise SecDef Rumsfeld’s acknowledgment of this point, “... a few days before he resigned from office...” See p. 166 in Heuser, “The Cultural Revolution in Counter-Insurgency”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 153-171, February, 2007. Heuser’s point regarding Rumsfeld is not a very helpful one, as it was earlier stressed in this paper that he shared a relatively large portion of the blame for being *unreceptive*. That he suddenly had an attack of clarity on his way out of the Pentagon is too little, and too late to be praiseworthy.

²²⁰ As termed by Colin S. Gray in his foreword to Metz’s *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*. Throughout Metz’s book he draws attention to the idea that American strategic thought was stale. “Without a central strategic paradigm, American security policy tends toward astrategic meandering and ‘ad hocery’”; p. xxi.

²²¹ “David Kilcullen Interview – Part I”, *The Charlie Rose Show*, 5 October, 2007.

one of the greatest tragedies, aside from the death and destruction unleashed on that fateful day, was the zeal with which strategic choices were made at the cost of lucid thought. The old adage that “haste makes waste” is descriptive of the period that followed. It is common guidance that one should not make important decisions when one is angry. America needed a focal point; a monolithic entity toward which channeled enmity could have a sharpening effect on policy. America needed a strategy.

Naturally, the most comfortable approach to problem solving is that which is most familiar²²². At the political level this was accomplished by asserting that an “axis of evil” was hard at work, planning America’s downfall. At the same time, a linkage was drawn between rogue states’ leaders’ capabilities and terrorists’ intentions. The logic was all too fallible,²²³ yet it would suffice for the time being in that domestic support ran high for the president.

That policymakers lacked vision and clarity is not so much the point of this paper. Rather, it is the policy *choices* that are made under new threat conditions, and what the resultant revelations tell us about adaptability. Whether policy thinking properly guides the IC and the military is of some interest. Still, whether intelligence and military means are suitable in supporting strategy ends is the perpetual question explored in this paper.

These questions are not enough to inform the student of international relations as to the origins of failure. For this to be better understood it has been a central focus of this paper to look at intelligence failures and military failures through the various mechanisms that link them to strategic failure. This paper asserts that failing to adapt to an ever-

²²² Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, p. 80.

²²³ *Ibid.*; p. 97.

evolving threat environment seems not only to be prevalent with regard to the Intelligence Community-policymaker nexus, but also within the politico-military relationship. That similar causal forces seem to breed circumstances in which adaptation failure may result says something about the potentiality of corrective prescriptions that seek to forestall future failures. In other words, while it is easy to conclude that a reorganization of the IC would help to thwart future surprise attacks it isn't quite so simple.²²⁴ Additionally, to employ an incongruous military strategy to meet a strategic task is tantamount to committing to failure.

In order to gain insight into the underlying motivational biases that guide behavior, the levels of analysis in this work ranged from individual (key personalities) to group (organizational tendencies), and even systemic (polarity and paradigm-shifting) dynamics. The concept that truly gave life to this paper -and formed the arguments therein -may be illustrated best (though admittedly in a lengthy quote) by Dr. Metz:

The Iraq conflict showed the degree to which *idiosyncratic factors influence strategy*. It comes as no surprise that *personalities matter greatly*. Had not George W. Bush been president and Donald Rumsfeld secretary of defense, the 2003 intervention would have been much less likely, probably impossible. But organizational idiosyncrasies matter as well. In the 1990's each of the U.S. armed services promoted its own vision of the future security environment to shape defense transformation to their institutional advantage. For a variety of reasons, the Air Force and the Navy dominated. This led to the Joint Vision model of transformation. The Army was dragged along, stressing that it too could perform with speed and precision rather than arguing that speed and precision were not panaceas for all security problems. As a result, when the U.S. military found itself in a type of conflict not amenable to speed and precision firepower-counterinsurgency-it was unprepared.

The Iraq conflict demonstrated that Americans remain more comfortable with technological, operational, and tactical innovation than with *strategic adaptation*.²²⁵

²²⁴ *Uncertain Shield: The U.S. Intelligence System in the Throes of Reform*, Richard A. Posner, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006). For a discussion of the "blame culture" that Congress operates under and the fallacy of the reorganization argument see pp. 4-8, and 44.

²²⁵ Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*; p. 202 (emphasis supplied).

This extends well beyond the military's inter-service rivalry and bureaucratic bickering. The *strategy deficit* alluded to above is rooted at the political level:

When faced with challenges, the United States tends to reorganize and create new programs rather than alter or reconceptualize its strategy. In a broader sense, the Iraq conflict showed that outside the military, there is a dearth of strategic thinking and planning in the U.S. government. The National Security Council is not configured for developing true strategy with both a horizontal and vertical dimension. It formulates policies. While the State Department once had an impressive strategy-making capability in its Policy Planning Staff, there is little sign that the current manifestation of this plays anywhere near the role that its Cold War predecessor did when it included people like George Kennan and Paul Nitze.²²⁶

The U.S. national security apparatus created after WWII emerged under competitive organizational conditions.²²⁷ Although it may not have been the most ideal arrangement, communism presented an identifiable threat and the Soviet Union a distinguishable enemy. Further, such clarity had made the strategy of *containment* rather simple to understand and implement. Grand Strategy was nearly as straightforward in that the instruments of state power were arrayed in support thereof. After the Cold War had ended –and more so after 9/11 –the multifarious and diffuse nature of global terrorism has obscured the landscape in which threats had appeared.

This paper began with the notion that a *failure to adapt* characterizes both the IC's response to a global menace and the military's late reaction to a loosely aligned threat in the CENTCOM theater of combat. Like Amy B. Zegart's explanation of the contributory factors related to the former, there are at least some causal resemblance in

²²⁶ Ibid.; also p. 202.

²²⁷ This is the central theme of Zegart's first book, *Flawed by Design* (cited earlier). Through organizational "pulling and hauling" the 1947 National Security Act had been a compromise that suited the parties vying for President Truman's attention to their self-purported centrality to national security. Further, as Kilcullen asserts in *The Accidental Guerilla* (pp. 6-7), "The United States, with national security institutions developed mainly under the Truman administration, has struggled to adapt these institutions to post-9/11 threats."

the latter. When the two are juxtaposed for examination, it appears that both seem to suggest a paucity of *strategic vision*;²²⁸ the umbrella under which they tend to huddle.

The three “enduring realities” that Zegart had claimed were responsible for the purported “intelligence failures” appear to have also played a similar role in the initial military failures that followed. Recalling the triumvirate Zegart postulated:

... I argue that agency adaptation failure can be attributed to three enduring realities: (1) the nature of organizations, which makes internal reform exceedingly difficult; (2) the rational self-interests of political officials, which work against executive branch reform; and (3) the fragmented structure of the federal government, which erects high barriers to legislative reform.²²⁹

Although they appear in slightly different form in the military realm, the principles remain operational. Extrapolating from this explanatory model, the previous chapter sought to illustrate the first of these three points. On the second point, the term “political officials” could be replaced with any number of variables that reflect the obstructing personalities (and their resistance to change) within the Defense Department. The third point is best illuminated as follows:

... through the ‘military-industrial complex,’ a substantial portion of the American economy, and numerous jobs in almost every congressional district, are linked to the production of conventional war-fighting capacity. It takes factories, jobs, and industrial facilities to build battleships and bombers, but aid workers, linguists, and Special Forces operators are vastly cheaper and do not demand the same industrial base. So shifting spending priorities onto currently unconventional forms of warfare would cost jobs and votes in the congressional districts of the very people who control that spending.²³⁰

²²⁸ David Kilcullen summarizes the strategic flaw as follows: “Despite the undeniable tactical success of the surge, in the final analysis this study suggests that the large-scale, high profile, unilateral, *über-blitzkrieg* manner in which the Coalition invaded Iraq (and the inherent strategic concept of the Iraq campaign itself) was deeply flawed. In my view the war, in grand-strategic terms, was a deeply misguided and counterproductive undertaking, an extremely severe strategic error, and a model of exactly how *not* to do business.” Both emphases in the original, *The Accidental Guerilla*, p. 117.

²²⁹ Zegart, *Spying Blind* (cited earlier), p. 43. For an in-depth explanation of a “general model of agency adaptation failure” see pp. 49-59.

²³⁰ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, p. 27.

The above suggests a strategy trap, particularly as organizations become wedded to the resources that support the strategy; thus making the emergence of a different strategy for a different set of problems that much more difficult. One final theme that runs parallel with the foregoing is that, “All strategic possibilities (perhaps even the long-discredited scenario of territorial warfare in Europe) must be taken into account, and defence spending must not be allowed to become victim to strategic fashion.”²³¹ This point is important because it highlights the shortsightedness of strategic thinking and resource allocation.

There is no strategic panacea suggested here. National security threats will likely continue to emerge, evolve and transform in infinite ways. In order to effectively respond and adapt in a timely fashion it is necessary that policymakers and their bureaucratic subordinates be flexible and subdue political prerogatives in the interest of national security. Warning: if strategic choices are guided by *zeitgeist*, foresight will inevitably suffer. The result could be costly and deadly.

Policy Implications and Some Suggestions

Replicating the precise conditions under which success and failure had obtained is impossible. However, there are some policy implications and a few suggestions that flow from them that deserve some brief discussion.

Conveying policy priorities and their underlying logic: Given the repetitive miscommunication between policymakers and the IC, there appears to be a bilateral

²³¹ Paul Cornish, “The United States and counterinsurgency: ‘political first, political last, political always’”, *International Affairs*, 85: I (2009) 61-79. On p. 70 Cornish warns of the “enduring fallacy in strategic debates” in elevating one strategic paradigm to the neglect of others.

misunderstanding. That policy-makers have certain intelligence priorities is insufficient without a deeper understanding of why they seek what they seek. This circumstance is apt to produce assumptions that the managing authorities in the IC may be compelled to make in the absence of an adequate understanding. Further down the intelligence cycle this could lead to misguided collection.

Therefore, one suggestion is that more attention be paid to *why* certain intelligence is sought. The difficulty in so doing may cause conflict and an appearance of acting outside of the IC's appropriate subordinate role. Still, if one were told to search for a needle in a haystack it may help to understand the needle's significance to the requesting party.

Understanding one's own fallibility and the frailty of human cognition: Whether applied to the policymaker, the analyst, or the management betwixt the two, recognizing the limits of perception is not an easy task. Tenacious attachment to any concept may inadvertently satisfy the desire to maintain cognitive consistency, while reinforcing obsolete policies or assumptions. This comes at a heavy cost to sound judgment for both the IC and the military, as well as their political principals.

Perhaps it would be wise to have a class of honest truth-sayers at hand to moderate what may tend to look like the work of soothsayers. In other words, if disinterested advisers were made available to review the most important evaluations and decisions that were made then perchance the probability of failure might be diminished.

Flexibility must not be overlooked as an essential ingredient in adaptation: The more rigid a policy or doctrine, the less accommodating it will be. The same is true for

the personalities that uphold it. What stood out most as a common theme throughout this paper was the personal attachment (and their attendant vested interests) that some key individuals had to policies that were failing. This remained constant until more flexible personalities or paradigms were introduced.

One possible solution to this problem would be to follow the pathway that GEN Petreus has so clearly pioneered. For instance, not only did he have the courage to risk his meritorious career in order to avert the disaster that shortsighted and inflexible policymakers had triggered. He also had changed the promotion criteria for his subordinates to reflect the value of thinking “outside the box” and being bold and creative, rather than “toeing the line.” The IC could benefit from such personnel practices as well.

The continued misallocation of necessary resources may only serve to undermine adaptation to future threats as they emerge: As was alluded to numerous times throughout this paper, the promotion of expensive technologically superior implements of intelligence gathering and war-fighting do not promise to deliver that which only the human can. What should be clear by now is that a group of dedicated warriors with small arms can be a very effective adversary.

In answering an intelligence question, there is no replacement for a linguistically well-versed HUMINT asset on the ground. For example, detecting the presence of a military unit is not as significant as learning about that unit’s structure, morale, training and key personalities. If the center of gravity for a COIN campaign is the population, bombs and bullets will fail to convey the message that only a human can.

In sum, it is useful to highlight precisely what the changed threat environment means to the world's only remaining superpower: "For the first time in history, great power does not bring security. It is now the weak who threaten the strong."²³²

²³² Zegart, *Spying Blind*; p. 197.

Appendix

A Word on the INTs:

In order to better understand “intel-speak”, one must understand that the means of collection for the IC are separated into two very distinct categories of acquisition: TECHINT (Technical Intelligence) and HUMINT (Human Intelligence). TECHINT is further subdivided into subgroups, such as SIGINT (Signals Intelligence) and the subsets ELINT (Electronics Intelligence), TELINT (Telemetry Intelligence) and FISINT (Foreign Instrument Signals Intelligence) and so on. IMINT (Imagery Intelligence) and MASINT (Measures and Signatures Intelligence) are commonly heard terms and form a central part of the TECHINT spectrum.

HUMINT (Human Intelligence) is the human penetration of a target state/organization for the purposes of discovering secrets. This consists of further contact with a member(s) of the target state/organization who can be massaged for actionable information that would fill in intelligence gaps (or corroborate other intelligence sources) regarding capabilities, and more importantly, the intentions of the target state/organization. Motives for human assets are generally said to be a result of financial gain, disaffection with the regime/organization, promise of asylum, and sometimes a deceptive ploy by the target state/actor, producing a double agent. This sort of intelligence work is often romanticized about in spy novels.

There is another area of intelligence gathering that is arguably very accurate: OSINT (Open Source Intelligence). Intelligence analysts, academics, policymakers, and

the avid reader with an interest in such matters can often glean significant intelligence from OSINT. This may be a double-edge sword, as the following example illustrates:

In 1951 he [DCI Walter Bedell “Beetle” Smith] enlisted the services of a group of able and qualified academicians from one of our large universities for some summer work. To save their time he furnished them publications, news articles, hearings of the Congress, government releases, monographs, speeches, all available to anyone for the asking. He then commissioned them to determine what kind of an estimate of U.S. military capabilities the Soviets could put together from these unclassified sources. Their conclusions indicated that in a few weeks for work by a task force on this open literature our opponents could acquire important insight into many sectors of our national defense. In fact, when the findings of the university analysts were circulated to President Truman and to other policymakers at the highest level, they were deemed to be so accurate that the extra copies were ordered destroyed and the few copies that were retained were given a high classification.²³³

The reason the distinction between HUMINT, TECHINT, and OSINT is made here is two-fold. First, illuminating the various means of intelligence acquisition is useful in that many of the sources of contention within the IC may be attributed to interagency bickering and political maneuvering over budget, turf, and organizational relevance centering on the purported strengths and weaknesses of the various subordinate INTs. Secondly, to place in context the voices of reform, as they may represent certain interests that place them in a position of bias.

For example, CIA is divided into four functional directorates: DI (Directorate of Intelligence), NCS (National Clandestine Service, formerly the DO [Directorate of Operations]), DS &T (Directorate of Science and Technology), and DS (Directorate of Support). The DI is where the analysts reside, and the NCS is where operators practicing the tradecraft of HUMINT reside. Between the DI and the NCS the cultures are very

²³³*The Craft of Intelligence*, Allen W. Dulles, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); p. 240, chapter entitled, “Security in a Free Society” (pp. 237-255). In a later version of this work the quote underwent negligible modification: *The Craft of Intelligence: America’s Legendary Spy Master on the Fundamentals of Intelligence Gathering for a Free World*, (Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, re-print 2006 by Joan Buresch Talley); p. 238.

different; it is as though they speak different languages. Naturally, their interests are as disparate as their duties.

NSA (National Security Agency) deals with IA (Information Assurance), research, and SIGINT. By law, the head of NSA is a four star *Air Force* General. This creates the potential for bias, in that it is TECHINT heavy and partially reliant on air-breathing aerial SIGINT platforms.