

Irregular Warfare Leadership in the 21st Century

Attaining and Retaining Positional Advantage

May 2–3, 2007

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Cover Caption: Afghan police search a section of Kabul after a German woman, who worked for a small Christian organization called Ora International, was kidnapped from a restaurant in Kabul, Afghanistan, August 18, 2007.

Photo: Getty Images
Photographer: Paul Bronstein

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**Cantigny Park
Wheaton, Illinois**

May 2–3, 2007

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Executive Summary

“Men make history, not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when skillful, courageous leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.” President Harry S. Truman

“We just didn’t see it coming” are words that have repeatedly reflected America’s surprise after being faced with the damaging effects of nonstandard adversaries across the spectrum of modern conflict and competition. The hope to never have to utter those words again was the impetus for a multi-disciplined working group assembled in May 2007, by the McCormick Tribune Foundation in partnership with Worldwide Impact Now. The group’s goal was to discuss how to better empower *irregular warfare leadership* to counter the range of compelling irregular challenges we face in the 21st Century.

What is Irregular Warfare?

Irregular warfare (IW) is defined as “a form of warfare that has as its objective the credibility and/or legitimacy of the relevant political authority with the goal of undermining or supporting that authority. Irregular warfare favors indirect approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities to seek asymmetric advantages, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence and will.” (*Working definition approved by Deputy Secretary of Defense, April 17, 2006.*)

What Are the Irregular Challenges We Face Today?

“Irregular challenges come from adversaries (people and groups) employing “unconventional” methods to counter the traditional advantages of stronger opponents. Increasingly sophisticated irregular methods (e.g., terrorism and insurgency) challenge U.S. security interests. Adversaries employing irregular methods aim to erode U.S. influence, patience and political will. Irregular opponents often take a long-term approach, attempting to impose prohibitive human, material, financial and political costs on the U.S. to compel strategic retreat from a key region or course of action. Two factors have intensified the danger of irregular challenges: the rise of extremist ideologies and the absence of effective governance.

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Political, religious and ethnic extremism continues to fuel conflicts worldwide. The absence of effective governance in many parts of the world creates sanctuaries for terrorists, criminals and insurgents. Many states are unable, and in some cases unwilling, to exercise effective control over their territory or frontiers, thus leaving areas open to hostile exploitation. Our experience in the war on terrorism points to the need to reorient our military capabilities to contend with such irregular challenges more effectively.” (*Definition per 2005 National Defense Strategy.*)

Why Irregular Warfare Leadership Development is Critical

Americans are facing a resurgence of open-ended irregular warfare—a form of conflict we have had difficulty with in the past. As a culture, we are uncomfortable with the chaos, the unfamiliar actors, the nontraditional methods and the indirect approaches characteristic of a range of irregular warfare threats that include a vast array of operations and activities (see Annex B). Unfortunately, trends suggest these threats will get worse in the future.

In order to address this problem we must: (1) develop and empower irregular warfare-minded leaders in public and private sectors who understand complex operating environments and wield a wide range of competencies and, (2) create a unity of effort across the two sectors to support these leaders. This unity is critical if we are to move from a *reactive* to a *proactive* to a fully *interactive*¹ leadership corps able to harness the full power of American resources and ingenuity.

Starting Points

The following questions framed the group’s discussion:

- How can we develop a leadership culture able to harness the full power of American resources and ingenuity?
- Why must we collaboratively take on this broad challenge?
- How can public and private sectors collaborate to give 21st Century leaders positional advantage over a broad range of irregular threats?

¹ Interactive” is the ability to understand and become one with the operating environment in order to use conditions and surroundings to your advantage in competition and conflict.

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- What specific training opportunities will improve leader performance in complex operating environments?
- How can existing leadership training opportunities be better complemented?

Focus Areas

The workshop group agreed that today's leaders face a range of shortcomings in their ability to anticipate and counter irregular threats.

The following are three main suggestions for building a strong irregular warfare leadership base:

1. Provide leaders with a continuum of opportunity through life-long development

The rapidly changing nature of irregular conflict and competition compels us to develop and empower adaptive unconventional leaders. To this end, the report addresses the following five essential objectives:

- Improve identification and recruitment of potential future leaders
- Provide and encourage life-long career opportunities
- Anticipate and nurture critical specialization skills
- Promote cross-agency and interagency development opportunities
- Provide progressive, linked incentives

2. Address our critical knowledge gap in understanding the "Human Factors"

Modern leaders need an advanced appreciation of the operating environments that typify 21st Century conflict and competition. In a "flatter world," as Thomas Friedman points out, our adversaries are proving able to significantly challenge our economic and military strength. In response, America must develop a more comprehensive understanding of the complex "human terrain." That is, to empower leadership with the insight, instincts and inspiration necessary to fully understand human variables in complex, highly sensitive operating environments. The following is the critical knowledge arsenal a competent leader will need:

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- Education in non-Western and nontraditional approaches to conflict and competition
- Experiential development in complex environments
- Extensive training in information operations
- Professional education in cultural intelligence
- Training in behavior-prediction skills
- Complex problem solving skills for U.S. interagency and multi-national business, military and diplomatic operations

3. Join efforts across public and private sectors

Our institutions tend to value individual initiative and competition over teamwork and shared information. Our adversaries, by contrast, using irregular warfare tactics, cooperatively work the seams to find gaps between our institutions and take advantage of our vulnerabilities. *We are hobbled by our internal discord while threats become better networked and unified against us.* In this light, the following actions are essential in leading the public and private sectors toward a more unified structure:

- Assess vulnerabilities and gaps that exist between our institutions and processes
- Promote inter-entity (all sectors of society) cooperation for irregular warfare leader development
- Establish incentives for sustained and cooperative leadership development that ensure quality of leader development and empowerment over time as threats evolve

Strategy

In order to set these changes in motion, the following steps must be taken:

- Charter an initiatives group to develop an overarching strategy for irregular warfare leader development by integrating concepts from this report's three focus areas.
- Implement a continuous "red-teaming" assessment of gaps, vulnerabilities and possible synergies that exist between agencies and institutions across public and private sectors.
- Promote unity of effort through creative legislation that provides incentives for public and private sectors to cooperate and collaborate.
- Create and empower a team of irregular warfare leader experts to fast track and guide best concepts through a system of forward-thinking pilot programs. Place emphasis on information operations, non-Western thinking and "predictive-behavior" skill development.
- Create an Irregular Warfare Leader Support Center that synthesizes best concepts and resources modeled on networked centers of excellence, academic institutions and business best practices.

Irregular Warfare Working Group
McCormick Tribune Foundation,
September 2007

Preface: Appreciating the Modern Security Environment

(Chinese symbol for both Crisis and Opportunity)

危机

This preface provides the context for the report's concepts and recommendations for needed progress in empowering American leadership to meet 21st Century irregular threats. This premise—that our leaders are not prepared—is based on the realization that our leadership culture is flawed in collectively anticipating and addressing modern security challenges.

Globalization has allowed previously minor, sub-national actors to step into the spotlight as modern brokers of new and awesome power. They are motivated by the will to use this power recklessly and ruthlessly against governments, economies and civil society. Globalization has allowed modern organized crime, high-tech gangs with international reach and private interests without national allegiances to emerge as new economic and military powers. At the same time, our physical and virtual borders are more and more vulnerable to uncontrolled immigration, radicalized thought, narcotics trafficking, infectious diseases and cyber intrusion. The networking of these various actors constitutes a new dimension in threat complexity that compels us to rethink our traditional mindset and methods if we are to retain strategic advantage.

As Americans, uneasy with the ambiguity of a complex array of threats and the uncertainty they create, we find ourselves surprised too often. In response, we must develop a strong leadership corps able to handle the broad range of evolving 21st Century irregular threats to our security, stability and prosperity. Only 21st Century street-smart leadership can make this shift from reactive leadership to proactive leadership to interactive leadership by unifying all possible sources of power. For leadership to be successful, we will need better cooperation among the government, academia and the private sector.

Experience since the events of 9/11 has proven that traditional models of leadership are not up to the challenges of 21st Century irregular warfare. The collective leadership has been challenged in bringing every tool in the American arsenal of resources to bear their fullest effect in complex battle space, marketplace and cyberspace.

Preface: Appreciating the Modern Security Environment

The present war in Iraq is a critical test of our nation's authority and legitimacy in bringing all elements of national power together in concert in a complex operating environment. This complex environment and its challenges are symptomatic of an increasingly more dangerous global threat. In this light, Iraq should not be regarded as an anomaly, but as a battle laboratory—an introduction to the future realities of conflict and competition we will surely face. This is a chance to learn from those challenges and take a creative conceptual approach that sees the opportunities beyond the threats.

With this in mind, we must develop leaders who have a full grasp of the concept of *Threats-Challenges-Opportunities*—that which will kill us, that which will hobble us and that which demands constructive creativity. Understanding and distinguishing these considerations allows leaders to avoid the trap of assuming that all threats can be countered with traditional physical dominance. Instead, we must begin to look toward deep knowledge of “human factors”² as one of our best strategies. This new group of leaders must be adaptive, *comfortable in chaos*, able to balance diverse demands and creatively wield mixes of standard and nonstandard elements of power.

² “Human factors” relate to the culture and social structure of a people within a particular theater or area of operation. Human factor analysis blends historical anthropology and social psychology as it relates to the operation and its intended effects. This analysis can help determine proper methods of engagement by examining an irregular adversary's intent, strengths and vulnerabilities.

Introduction: Why We Should Care About Irregular Warfare Leader Development

“*Through indirections, find direction out.*” Shakespeare

A multi-disciplined working group with broad expertise from the public and private sectors convened in May 2007 at the McCormick Tribune Foundation's Cantigny Park in Wheaton, Ill., to discuss how to address the challenge to leadership posed by the 21st Century's complex operating environment. The group looked at leadership in the context of irregular warfare. For the purposes of this discussion, irregular warfare encompasses a variety of nonstandard activities, operations and strategies ranging from terrorism, information operations, organized crime to piracy and more. (See Annex B.) These are the unconventional methods by which diverse adversaries and competitors now seek to dominate us and our allies.

The goal of this report is to provide actionable recommendations on how to enhance the development and empowerment of irregular warfare-savvy leaders across the public and private sectors whose common interests are U.S. national security, stability and prosperity. In discussing how to address irregular warfare-leader development, participants were asked to keep in mind two main objectives for a successful strategy:

1. Integrate into a coherent leadership development system continuous service to the nation, essential knowledge of complex operating environments, integrated leader support and quality assurance.
2. Create a unity of effort across all sectors that will harness the nation's diverse resources to better develop and support irregular warfare-minded leaders with the goal of retaining perpetual positional advantage over adversaries across the spectrum of 21st Century conflict and competition.

Leader Scope

The participants of this workshop agreed that we will need to develop irregular warfare leaders that include academic experts, subject-matter experts in industry and non-governmental organizations and critical position staff officers, as well as commanders, senior executive officers and managers. It will take unified expert leadership on all fronts to succeed.

Introduction: Why We Should Care About Irregular Warfare Leader Development

Culture Gap

While our traditional American leader culture values are structure, obedience, control and efficiency, our current threats call for teamwork, innovation, risk-taking and effectiveness. This discrepancy means that our adversaries are able to stay one step ahead of us by using speed and surprise. Modern U.S. leaders need to address this shortcoming by adapting to irregular approaches and adopting some of their own. We want these future leaders to become innovators in irregular warfare, putting our adversaries one step behind.

American leaders instinctively want to see things in black and white. However, irregular warfare comes in never-ending shades of gray, and leaders must learn to succeed in this uncertain environment. This challenge is the focal point of our report.

Facts

- We have a uniquely American cultural filter through which we view the world. American confidence in itself and its formulas masks a cultural blindness to others' values and concepts of power, security and prosperity.
- Experience in contemporary operating environments is helping evolve American leader competencies in those cases where leaders operate in the "human dimension." Those who don't, however, face a disadvantage in training and experience that needs to be bridged.
- Trends show that threats and adversaries are better networked, are technologically and intellectually advancing, and adapting faster to changing environments than we do.
- America has a wealth of best ideas and practices in public and private sectors that can be coordinated to enhance modern leader effectiveness. We don't need to radically change institutions or create new bureaucracies. Instead, we need to explore options that complement existing leader development, growth processes and programs. There is an opportunity to link existing ideas and practices with progressive ideas to better empower modern leaders.

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- People and organizations generally respond better to incentives than to disincentives.

Assumptions

- Threats will increase in lethality, complexity and cooperative action over time.
- Operating environments will continue to demand leaders with better irregular warfare competencies.
- U.S. institutions will naturally tend to stay siloed in leader development approaches unless compelled otherwise.
- When thinking about new ways of training and preparing irregular warfare leaders, we should focus on those strategies that complement existing leader development opportunities.

Objectives

- Complement existing leader development processes that are effective.
- Protect the investment in leadership by promoting opportunities for continuous service on a life-long basis.
- Emphasize "human factors" savvy and the implementation of all elements of national power in highly nuanced environments.
- Integrate the study of non-Western and nonstandard methods and mindsets in leader development programs.
- Incentivize public and private sector unity of effort in developing and enabling leaders.

Discussion

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.”
Abraham Lincoln's Second Annual Message to Congress, Dec. 1, 1862.

Present leadership effectiveness is hampered by the failure to effectively nurture our investment in “human capital” over time; an inadequate understanding of “human factors” in complex operating environments; and the disunity of effort within public and private sectors. With this in mind, this section of the report will explore three critical areas of leader development and empowerment: life-long leadership development opportunities, understanding “human factors” and unity of effort.

A. Life-long Leader Development Opportunities

Leaders should be able to develop and sustain critical areas of expertise through successive, linked careers if we provide opportunities in a more coherent and integrated manner. In our current system, first career retirees, who may easily have another 20 years of service to offer, have few chances to continue using their knowledge and experience in an impactful way. We believe that adjustments can be made to help develop a corps of second career expert irregular warfare leaders in various fields.

The five critical components of a viable life-long leadership development strategy include: continuity of excellence, incentives, identification and recruitment, specialization and quality assurance.

1. Continuity of Excellence

Provide linked career tracks that move the most knowledgeable and experienced leaders and experts forward in successive careers that serve our nation. This *continuity of advanced expertise* is a critical part of gaining “positional advantage” against threats.

Goal: Advance experts in a coherent progression from practitioners to master trainers and from supporters to quality assurers or mentors. As a part of this goal, promote career tracks for military commanders, corporate executives and a range of specialized experts in ways that facilitate development and opportunities across agencies or across departments.

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These leaders should be channeled according to proven individual aptitudes and competencies, and not merely according to personnel management formulas. We suggest taking the following steps toward realizing this objective:

1. Create seamless transitions to next careers
2. Clearly link advanced schooling and skills training to next jobs
3. Encourage specialized credentialing
4. Create positions coded by job category
5. Promote cross-training with agencies and organizations outside of current employer
6. Break down internal and external assignment barriers
7. Develop fast-tracking options for potential leaders

Examples: The following are examples of cooperative continuity of leader development:

Leader: *The retiring Commander of the Army's only active duty Civil Affairs brigade transitions to a federally funded PhD program in a field related to his expertise. (first career) This degree, in turn, is linked to a number of coded Federal Government billets, such as in State Department's Office of Reconstruction. (second career) This assignment pattern is then linked to a number of follow-on, federally funded, competitive chair positions in university centers of excellence in the fields of conflict resolution, civil/military relations or disaster response. (third career) These chair positions are part of an advisory consortium of experts serving government, private enterprise and academia to overwatch specified disciplines related to national security.*

Subject-matter Expert: *A law enforcement expert in the field of conflict resolution participates in a long-term federally funded personal development program. As with the example above, this multi-career program provides a combination of options that include private sector training opportunities; exchange tours with military; co-training with other agencies; advanced military strategic planning fellowship (War College); advanced academic credentialing (PhD); independent operational research (funded by a nonprofit organization); sabbatical, chair positions at universities; and coded billet assignments within government.*

Discussion

Academic: *A leading academic expert in human relations could similarly advance through cooperatively funded personal development programs. These could include operational research with government and industry; fellowships; chair positions in government and military professional education institutions; tours of duty with government and military agencies; observer duty; work-study programs; and training with industry.*

The above three individuals, through centrally guided career tracks, could collaborate across the public and private sectors under an integrated strategy.

We must keep the following questions in mind as we evaluate the feasibility of this strategy:

1. Is our present approach to a leadership continuum optimal in its ability to use our human capital to its fullest?
2. If not, how can we better advance or complement existing opportunities for professional development?
3. What next practical steps should be taken?
4. What are the implications of not taking these steps?

2. Incentives and Professional Motivation

Individuals today have an array of educational, training and professional options to choose from. In such a “free market” system, the best way to encourage potential leaders to choose the path that will best serve their nation is to provide incentives. These incentives—financial, professional, developmental—can have the effect of retaining and advancing the best and brightest to create a continuity of service over time. In light of the threat spectrum we face today, we need to establish an integrated incentives framework that gives people opportunities to fully express their talents and improve themselves, be part of a team with unity of purpose and ideological mission, and work in positions that offer stability and security.

Goal: Integrate an incentives structure across the public and private sectors that optimizes long-term leader engagement and motivation.

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Strategy: In support of this goal, incentives (organized and linked between government, industry and academia) could better develop, orient and utilize leaders through combinations of advanced degrees; skills credentialing; master skills training; work-study opportunities; apprenticeships; internships; experiential development; long-term career opportunities; work in multiple agencies; fellowships; sabbaticals; grants; scholarships; funded breaks in service; salary; incentive pay; family benefits; GI Bill equivalencies; and enhanced retirement services.

The packaging of multiple incentives for development over time will better produce the leader talent we need by not leaving this grooming largely to individual initiative and chance. The greatest value in creating incentives is manifested in a new community of motivated individuals with an intangible mix of morale, confidence and unity. This community can be a powerful tool in overcoming threat advantages.

Example: *An academic expert in unconventional warfare history competes for a funded program of development and placement. This program provides a linked series of advanced education; operational research; adjunct faculty tours with the military or law enforcement education institutions; fellowships at service academies; staff colleges and war college history departments; service as a subject-matter expert aboard fleet deployments; work on mobile lessons learned teams in conflict zones; life membership in a consortium of unconventional warfare centers of excellence; defense department think-tank service; training-with-NGO tours into conflict zones; hazardous duty pay entitlements; as well as tenure and retirement credit for all work rendered within this program, and all punctuated by funded sabbaticals. In this way, the valued expert is better groomed, managed, taken care of and optimized in a coherent, deliberate manner in the interests of national security.*

3. Locating and Recruiting Potential Leaders

We must be able to identify aspiring leaders and then provide the channels necessary to best employ their talents and passions. This effort should apply to both the younger generation of up-and-coming leaders

Discussion

and to established experts whose experience and knowledge can be used across sectors.

Goal: Establish an integrated system of developmental programs through public and private sector cooperation that will maximize the talent and potential of aspiring leaders in support of national security.

Strategy: An effective strategy for identifying leadership-quality talent early on is to look at who is participating in advanced placement classes, specialized skills programs, work-study programs, service projects, advanced language proficiency courses and certain types of professional developmental programs. We should also consider expanding JROTC and ROTC programs to include national service in other government agencies as well as multi-agency collaborative recruiting programs. It is important to focus on young leaders with native language and cultural expertise, and to enable established experts to transfer to other agencies where their talent might be better used.

Example: *A college senior decides to pursue a career in conflict resolution. We should provide two years of federally funded advanced placement electives for college credit in the fields of humanitarian relief and disaster assistance; funded local community service projects; summer mission trips; subsidies working with governmental and non-governmental organizations; college scholarship in the field of social anthropology linked to funded work-study programs in humanitarian contexts. This optimally prepared graduate is then offered a variety of jobs linked to incentivized career tracks relating to national security.*

We recommend creating a Public Service Academy (a civilian counterpart to the military academies) which would create a pool of qualified leaders who could be picked up by other branches of government critically short of the experts they need to face irregular warfare challenges around the world.

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4. Specialization (Critical Skills)

Emerging threats and complex operating environments increase the need for new expertise. Yet, our education system and training opportunities don't always keep up with the evolving realities of the irregular warfare environment.

Goal: Establish an interagency capability that continually assesses the need for and supports fast-tracking critical specialization skills to anticipate and counter emerging threats. In so doing, we overcome the limited ability of single agencies and institutions to address skill gaps that constitute vulnerabilities in national security-related fields of interest.

Strategy: To overcome knowledge gaps, we must:

1. Assess discrepancies of skills between agencies, institutions and enterprises
2. Identify new skills and career fields that are applicable across agencies and sectors
3. Identify new career fields and areas of expertise relating to information age and knowledge management.
4. Identify new specializations in light of "human factors" and complex operating environments

Examples: *This effort may result in a variety of new specialties such as tribal liaisons, human terrain experts, cyber reconnaissance scouts, knowledge networkers, information expeditors, continuity controllers and gap managers. In certain cases, such capabilities may prove to be the vital connectors or synergizers we need to effectively out-think, out-network and out-innovate our adversaries.*

The above goal is significant in attaining and retaining *positional advantage through timely, relevant expertise that covers critical knowledge gaps*. In its advanced state, such specialization proactively addresses the gaps in our threat defenses and capabilities.

Discussion

5. Quality Assurance and Performance Evaluation

In this century of globalization and mass communication, we are fatally and irrevocably interconnected and interdependent. A single point of failure in the quality, character and competency of a leader can ripple widely. The string of modern corporate executive scandals and the lack of military leadership in the Abu Ghraib Prison incident are vivid examples of such failure. To avoid these types of scenarios, we need to develop better oversight and quality assurance.

Goal: Establish an integrated quality assurance process that ensures the competency of critical leaders by linking selection, advancement and evaluation with the goals of improving the recruitment of aspiring leaders, channeling them according to their talents and systematically evaluating their performance.

This effort involves combining multiple screening methods, placement processes and a broad range of modern evaluation tools to integrate a variety of assessment, developmental and evaluation methods using physical processes and advanced virtual technology.

Strategy: To this end, consider combinations from the following list: psychological screening; 360-degree leader evaluations; self-evaluation techniques; self-development technology; aptitude and behavioral screening; situational and environmental reaction courses; skills and competency assessments through virtual technology; flight-simulator-like skills qualifications; leader “gut checks;” advanced simulations and rehearsal tools; advanced mentoring methods; external and third party evaluation boards; and changes to command and executive selection criteria.

Example: *Combat arms brigade command candidates would come up through a developmental system that includes such things as exchange officer tours with foreign armies, independent studies overseas, training-with-NGO tours and observer status with law enforcement agencies. Additionally, they will have undergone command “gut checks” at company and battalion levels through virtual and experiential means to test individual competency for decision-making in complex operating environments. As combat arms brigade command candidates (the future general officer bloodline), their selection for command is now based on a combination of (1) traditional officer evaluation board; (2) an independent review board*

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that reviews files without photos and names; and (3) 360-degree evaluations from peers and subordinates who are, in turn, reviewed by a third party board. The objectivity and rigor of this approach better prevent promotion of the wrong talent.

Caution: There is danger in over doing leader quality assurances, but at present we have not yet fully exploited all of our options. We have erred on the side of respecting individual privacy and assuming competency. However, in light of daunting threats, there is a need for advanced, involved development and screening for leaders.

Summary

A more purpose-driven, systematic continuum of life-long leader opportunity can create a pool of future leaders with broad expertise and experience who are able to think outside the box in a way that gives them decisive positional advantage against diverse threats. We cannot underestimate the danger of our adversaries’ speed in innovation, cooperation and action. Using the ideas mentioned above, we must counter this advantage by creating our own momentum in the form of continuity of best leader talent for greatest advantage.

B. Understanding the “Human Factors”

American institutions are challenged in developing the critical competencies and instincts leaders need to operate in the complex human dimension. It is no longer sufficient for us to rely solely on nuclear, conventional military and economic might as the sovereign panacea for every situation. The following five concepts—non-Western and nonstandard approaches, conceptual constructs, experiential development, human behavior and info-sphere mastery—provide an integrated framework for coherent progress in understanding “human factors.”

1. Understanding Non-Western and Nonstandard Approaches to Irregular Warfare

We face an open-ended era of conflict and competition with many adversaries hastening onward from near-peer status to peer status to potential enemy. American perspectives and solutions in a multi-spectral world come up short. In the same way that B-2 bomber technology is defense-

Discussion

less against insurgents controlling neighborhoods through campaigns of fear, super-power solutions for post-war Iraq and Afghanistan are hobbled by the agendas and tactics of “little people” operating in and beyond the shadows.

Context: Warfare in the historical sense of *expanding and controlling territory* is giving way to (1) warfare as *behavioral control* through information-based manipulation, fear and intimidation, and (2) warfare as the *economic control* of capital and resource power. In this context, Western leaders of today find it hard to anticipate future challenges. The speed of change—as well as the complexity of colliding players, power, technology, information, environmental factors and accident—is daunting.

We have little grasp of what the Chinese mean by “stratagems,” “confrontation capacity” or “packets of electrons” for informationalized warfare. Nor do we fully appreciate Russian “dialectic thought” or “psychotronics” exploration into mind control as a part of information warfare. We are even more uncertain about terrorists and trans-national criminals of all sorts who synthesize and apply the best ideas of others with uncommon speed. We lack the curiosity and energy necessary to seriously explore this, which is a sizeable blind spot. We need to look at modern conflict through new eyes and with new sensitivities.

Goal: Incentivize and support a system of linked, progressive leader education and leader support programs that continually infuse valid non-Western approaches to conflict and competition into mainstream education processes. In so doing, compel leadership institutions to balance Western and non-Western perspectives as a modern standard of excellence.

Strategy: Essential components of the strategy are (1) acculturating leaders to nonstandard approaches and offering specific training on prevailing non-Western mentalities about conflict and competition; (2) integrating best experts across a broad spectrum in decision-making processes; (3) translating non-Western and nonstandard approaches into American terms and concepts; and (4) adopting or adapting non-Western and nonstandard approaches—where appropriate—in operational, training, exercise and experimentation processes.

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Other ideas include the professional development of non-Western threat experts as career “red teamers;” the establishment of a consortium of threat universities or professional schools within the interagency and academic community of interest; the establishment of a collaborative network of chairs and fellowships for experts in non-Western approaches; the mandating of non-Western culture studies in career development programs; a continuous collaborative research program on the evolution of non-Western approaches; and funded experiential development opportunities overseas in non-Western contexts.

The above objectives are starting points for better integration of non-Western and nonstandard perspectives on conflict and competition as a part of the *modern Western leader knowledge arsenal*.

2. Conceptual Constructs

Modern leaders need to develop the ability to see through the fog of crisis and chaos to discern patterns and possibilities others cannot see. This ability can be particularly valuable in an interagency setting. Too often the perception of a given situation (conflict, crisis, opportunity) is clouded by an individual leader’s culture, which can result in a collapse of institutional cooperation.

Context: Experience in complex operating environments (dealing with a diverse range of impacts) implies seeing the links between physical, human, perceptual, temporal and spiritual and moral dimensions to capture the overall picture of the operating environment without overlooking any of the important elements. Omissions early on in assessing the environment, problem or mission could be fatal in later stages.

In the end, success comes down to anticipating and orchestrating a broad range of conditions, actions and effects. We need to address the way we analyze this environment, focus imaginatively within it, apply refined leadership and management measures, and appreciate the comprehensive suite of resources possible for full power in concert.

Goal: In order to more effectively connect the various abilities of our nation’s institutions and agencies, we need to create a set of baseline conceptual constructs that are relevant to all national security-focused agencies.

Discussion

Strategy: Create models or constructs based on the following critical functions: *see, analyze, target, lead and resource*:

1. Visual displays that capture the interconnected dimensions of the complex operating environment;
2. Interagency problem-solving and mission-analysis formulas able to address the complex environment;
3. A multi-purpose, relevant-to-all-users “targeting” model able to integrate lethal and non-lethal power applications;
4. An integrated appreciation of all the direct and indirect command and control principles and methods; and
5. A dynamic resource model that captures the full range of organic and non-organic resources one needs to consider for use in complex operating environments.

In addressing these five areas, modern leaders would learn to:

- Be visually cued to multi-dimensional danger areas and decision points through linked graphics in operations centers;
- Examine sophisticated options that address critical nuances in time, space and the human dimension;
- Harmonize multi-agency operations against threats and target audiences using the fullest range of lethal and non-lethal, direct and indirect and constructive and destructive means;
- Use a creative menu of command and control options; and
- Leverage the full range of dynamic resources beyond the scope of traditional logistics.

Unity of effort in addressing these challenges will give us *conceptual positional advantage* against a number of adversaries who are presently out-thinking us. We need relevant planning and problem-solving constructs that help agencies and entities see the imminent threats, then work together effectively to address them.

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3. Experiential Development

Formal education focused solely on academic approaches to professional development falls short in helping leaders prepare for complex operating environments. Instead, learning is most effective when it combines formal theory with hands-on experience.

Goal: Provide a range of *linked “experiential development”* opportunities over the course of an individual’s extended career in order to progressively develop requisite instincts, insights and competencies for operating in complex environments.

Strategy: This effort should include a packaged *succession of offerings* such as internships; work-study programs; apprenticeships; secondments (i.e., the transfer of a military officer or corporate executive to another post for temporary duty); humanitarian service tours; observer duties; exchanges; on-the-job training with non-government organizations; operational research; experiential sabbaticals; and training in advanced virtual experience technologies.

These experiential offerings need to be conducted within the context of hostile fire zones; regions in crisis; austere environments; urban zones; economic developmental zones; areas of future strategic interest; at-risk populations; groups of future significance to U.S. national security; and critical allies and counterparts.

If we consider the combined effects of early experiential development of aspiring leaders followed by incentivized specialization and career tracking, then further enhanced by linked experiential development, it is easy to foresee future leaders with significantly enhanced experiential advantage.

Example: *A military police officer after pre-accessions development and a college degree in criminal law is provided—at intervals in a long-term career track—such offerings as secondments to U.S. law enforcement agencies; exchange tours with foreign law enforcement agencies; work-study advanced degree programs in urban crime; independent operational research; training in crime-related technology; and service on interagency task forces. In such a context, promotion and opportunity are closely linked to breadth of experience.*

Discussion

Linking best experiential development practices from all sectors of society for the more purposeful grooming of individual leaders will help these leaders succeed with greater certainty in increasingly diverse and challenging operating environments.

4. Human Behavior

We are faced with a broad range of powerful adversaries and we must be able to anticipate how they will act and interact locally, regionally, strategically and inter-personally. As with decryption systems used to break written code, we must seek to “break the code” of our human adversaries’ behavior, regardless if they are individuals or groups.

Goal: Give our leaders positional advantage by emphasizing training skills, competencies and expertise related to “human factors” as a key component of a comprehensive leadership knowledge arsenal. Such a program should emphasize behavioral sciences in professional development institutions to groom future leaders in history, social anthropology, psychology, regional cultures, foreign languages and religion.

Strategy: We must provide leaders with access to best experts in the above-mentioned disciplines. Any modern effort focused on a complex environment needs to have a wide array of such professional perspectives at the table in at least an advisory capacity. This will necessitate close cooperation among government, private enterprise and academia and will require decisive measures, as well as codification of programs and support to seriously move forward. This set-up will compel an improved integration of such resources as on-call experts from the private sector, knowledge reach-back, deployable experts, remote planner support and virtual expert interfaces with leaders.

There are also several behavior-prediction methodologies being used today in war zones, urban crime centers and other settings that have unique relevance in irregular warfare. Specialized professional development can help leaders develop the ability to predict certain situations that the untrained eye wouldn’t foresee.

We must sense how to creatively interact with possible allies in order to anticipate the behavior of our adversaries and foresee their actions in the context of their cultures. The ability of leaders to be able to get into the heads of others in order to negotiate, sell a message, intimidate or moti-

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vate disparate players, personalities and groups is critical. These aspects of the predictive trait of leadership need to be developed over time, but this will not happen unless there is a focus on specific programming, support and individual development programs.

By better packaging and prioritizing human behavior development, we have the potential to give future leaders a significant advantage in orchestrating effects in complex operating environments in which “human factors” are dominant. This competency cannot be delegated to others, as there is no substitute for leaders having their own instincts, insights and intuition.

“Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than 1,000 bayonets.”
Napoleon Bonaparte

5. Information Operations

Our leaders seek to influence the behavior of many players, whether they are enemy, neutral, or friendly, by fighting for their hearts and minds through tailored messages and information. In the same vein, a terrorist’s lethal methods also reflect an understanding of how information warfare can be used as a deadly tool against the Western world.

Context: The current harsh operating environments drive us toward a nuanced effects-based approach³ to strategy and operations—one that seeks positional advantage in many dimensions using mixes of lethal and non-lethal power. A young U.S. Army sergeant in Southern Iraq who became an honorary Shia sheik through his humanitarian work with locals is an example of this phenomenon. So also is the American NGO who, through capacity building programs in Muslim communities in the Southern Philippines, was successful in empowering moderate leaders who then firmly opposed extremist influences. These examples hint at solutions to more effective leadership in complex human contexts with an appreciation of *soft targeting and information’s dynamic applications*.

Goal: Promote leader development processes and operational support oriented on effects-based operations skills and competencies that place a premium on information operations.

³ An effects-based approach is an approach focused on planning, executing, and assessing activities for the effects produced rather than merely attacking targets or markets or simply dealing with objectives.

Discussion

Strategy: In order to support the development of this area of knowledge, we must do the following:

1. Conduct a review of strategic planning models and re-evaluate the proper context for information operations as a “driver” in strategic design.
2. Promote funded chairs, fellowships, scholarships and work-study programs that work cooperatively across all sectors in the field of information operations.
3. Advance war-gaming methodology and technology toward an information operations focus
4. Support professional education programs that focus on effects-based operations with emphasis on “human factors” and information operations
5. Create a center that continually explores and synthesizes the best of Western and non-Western approaches to information operations
6. Sponsor an initiatives action group empowered to fast track advanced methods and means that assist leaders in the field

We are only beginning to grasp the potential of information in various configurations as both a powerful weapon and a creative tool for mass effects. The need to more effectively orchestrate a broad range of “human factors” in today’s environments requires our leaders to be highly competent in the field of information operations.

Summary

Modern operating environments, like Iraq and Afghanistan, are honing leader instincts and competencies. Leaders must see the importance of understanding “human factors” and employ information operations at all levels of conflict and competition. The next step is to learn from these experiences and enhance the leader development required to be prepared for new challenges. There is ample opportunity to explore and exploit the ideas presented above and the abundant possibilities at hand.

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“There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.”

President John F. Kennedy

C. Unity of Effort

It is crucial to close the collaboration and communication gaps between the public and private sectors. Current institutional and organizational cultures are too rigid in preserving themselves to naturally want to integrate for improved effectiveness as a whole. The result is that we fail to fully develop America’s wealth of resources to train and empower irregular warfare-minded leaders. We are squandering phenomenal wealth by keeping it unnecessarily compartmented with special interests’ hold in a sway over the common good.

In the meantime, threats to our Western values, security and prosperity advance with improving might, bonded by common hate, complementary interests and mutual benefits. Failing to breach these gaps in our ability to work together effectively is a blind spot that makes us vulnerable to adversaries. We will benefit greatly from making this issue a priority. Three possible starting points merit consideration:

1. Legislative Action

We must compel better cooperation and synergies within the U.S. interagency community in its broadest inclusion of the public and private sectors. Such a strategy needs to embrace and incentivize private initiative through advanced partnering concepts with government. We have learned lessons from the mistakes of the joint military community under Goldwater-Nichols—and from recent operations and initiatives around the world—which we can now apply to create effective legislation. Any legislation passed should be rich in incentives for innovation and should minimize overly prescriptive solutions and policies.

2. Leader Support Architecture

With or without the above legislation, we need to conduct a thorough review of the effectiveness of the diverse initiatives currently intended to support our leaders in the field. The review would involve an assessment of the combined effectiveness of centers of excellence; think-tanks; working groups; information reach-back initiatives; information technology;

Discussion

advisory efforts; support groups; mentors; out-sourced service; and so forth. We need to critically evaluate their collective efficacy as it applies to the well-rounded leader.

The challenge is to optimize support to leaders who must ultimately be successful in complex operating environments. These initiatives should all be chartered, driven and evaluated according to *integrated effects-based metrics* that should be driven by the realities of the operating environments leaders have to succeed in.

3. Minding the Gap

There is a pressing need to assess where the gaps, disconnects, blind spots, friction points and positive possibilities lie between all leadership-related processes, programs and agencies. The early part of the Stabilization Phase IV of Operation Iraqi Freedom is a classic example of a gap. Siloed initiatives, each focused on a distinct part of the Iraqi landscape, looked right past the most critical “human factors.” The situation has since exploded with ferocity. On the other hand, one positive example of closing a gap is seen in the Human Terrain Team initiative at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. These subject-matter expert teams are deployed with commanders going into war zones to cover expertise gaps in matters related to “human factors.” There is much to be learned by studying both examples.

Lateral knowledge sharing and ineffective “trickle down” of operational and tactical insights, constitutes a discrete area that merits specific assessment. Constantly pursuing a unity of effort means always being suspicious of our own institutional factionalism. Taking on this challenge as one team and erring on the side of the collective good gives us the needed advantage against broad-ranging adversaries.

Summary

In this modern era of sub-national player empowerment and the emergence of new powers, we continually witness how they use networking and cooperation to their advantage. Their individual factional interests often take second seat to the possible benefits derived from working together and networking smartly. This reality provides ample incentive for the American public and private sectors to consider how to better overcome their own current levels of institutional factionalism and explore viable possibilities for better teaming.

Moving Forward

Recommendations

1. Strategy: Charter an inter-disciplinary initiatives group to exploit this report’s major focus areas: life-long leader development continuum, understanding the “human factors” and irregular warfare unity of effort. Use this analysis as the basis for establishing an overarching strategy, identifying a system of integrated effects and providing oversight for piloting viable initiatives relating to irregular warfare leadership.

2. Fast Track: Attain critical momentum by empowering a fast-track team of experts to oversee the piloting of viable initiatives in irregular warfare leadership development and enablement. Emphasize skills development and competencies in the fields of information operations, non-Western approaches to conflict and competition, and behavior prediction.

3. Red Team: Establish an interagency assessment chartered to specifically evaluate (1) the shortfalls in institutional effort and cooperation across the public and private sectors, (2) the efficacy of irregular warfare leadership processes, and (3) the best opportunities for public and private sector collaboration on irregular warfare leader development and enablement processes, programs and practices.

4. Unity: Promote an operationalized unity of effort through creative legislation that incentivizes (not prescribes) cooperation and collaboration between the public and private sectors. Establish an inter-disciplinary working group from government, the private sector and academia to draft proposed legislation that capitalizes on insights from the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Identify points of attraction between agencies and entities that compel teaming, networking and mutual support.

5. Integrated Leader Support: Charter a working group to develop the concept for an *operational Irregular Warfare Leader Support Center*. This center should function as a crossroads for innovation in irregular warfare leadership in ways that harness the knowledge power of a consortium of expert institutions and agencies. It should be chartered as a living “battle laboratory,” enabled by a system of government/private sector and academia collaboration, and united in focus to provide support to leaders in the field and leadership-related institutions.



Conclusion

The battle cry for unity: “Join, or Die,” first inspired by Benjamin Franklin in 1755, is as relevant now as it was then. The mass destruction and disruption potential of apparent and emergent threats today is compelling. In the face of these threats, we are unacceptably disjointed in how we develop and enable leaders across public and private sectors. Though we collectively possess a great wealth of solutions, we have not optimally packaged ideas, capabilities and resources in a way that fully takes advantage of opportunities and counter irregular threats.

Regardless of how one addresses these issues, there are areas for *evolutionary progress* in turning the corner on irregular threat advantages. How to proceed is a matter of priority, degree and energy. The best way to make such a determination is to explore and expand upon the concepts provided in this report. The goal of perpetual positional advantage is to prepare our leaders to become *the initiators of modern irregular warfare methods* that keep our adversaries reacting. As one of our one participants stated, “In all endeavors, leadership is the cause, all else is effect.”

We have clearly been innovators in various technological transformation movements in a young 21st Century. Leadership is the critical variable in all transformations, and the opportunity now presents itself to take *leader transformation* apace to the next level. In advancing irregular warfare-minded leaders, there is a continual demand to “stay hungry,” since what is irregular and unfamiliar today becomes regular and familiar tomorrow.

Out-thinking, out-teaming and out-matching adversaries are the primary functions of this new and improved leadership. Leader efficacy should be measured across battle space, marketplace and common place in terms of wisdom of action; moral authority; legitimacy; stature; status; impacts; desired effects; economies of power; resilience; access; popular support; stability; prosperity; vision and more. This effort will better prepare us to handle threats to humanity, security and prosperity.

Annexes

Annex A: Irregular Warfare Working Group Biographical Summary

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Annex B: The Irregular Warfare Family

General. The following spectrum of thought on irregular warfare provides the basis for the study group's broad focus on irregular warfare leadership.

For the purpose of this report, "Irregular Warfare Family" includes, but is not limited to:

- Irregular Warfare (IW)
- Irregular Challenges (IC)
- Insurgency
- Counter-insurgency (COIN)
- Terrorism
- Counter-terrorism (CT)
- Asymmetric Warfare
- Guerrilla Warfare
- Sabotage
- Subversion
- Surrogate warfare
- Foreign Internal Defense (FID)
- Stabilization, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Operations (SSTRO)
- Psychological Operations (PSYOP)
- Civil-Military Operations (CMO)
- Strategic Communications
- Information Operations (IO)
- Informationalized Warfare (Chinese concept)
- Intelligence and Counter-intelligence (CI) Activities
- Computer Network Attack
- Trans-National Criminal Activities
- Law Enforcement Activities Focused on Irregular Adversaries
- Illicit Financing
- Piracy
- Use of Front Organizations and Shadow Governments

Annex C: Leadership Shortfalls

The following symptoms were identified for the purpose of drafting leader development concepts to address contributing causes. This list of “negatives” does not suggest a full characterization of the present leadership culture. It addresses general negative tendencies meriting corrective action.

1. Promotes and perpetuates leaders in one’s own image instead of as needed for 21st Century complex operating environments
2. Favors protecting careers and organizations over daring to take legitimate risks
3. Punishes and restrains risk takers instead of encouraging them
4. Is too crisis management oriented
5. Does not know how to articulate or convey vision well and then tie operational design to it
6. Does not conduct mature mission analysis attuned to the environment
7. Is unwilling and or too busy to study the environment and environments in detail
8. Does not value exploration of root causes of conflict
9. Is arrogant, indifferent or belligerent toward non-Western and nonstandard approaches
10. Is still unfamiliar with effects-based planning and operations
11. Is dependent on a high degree of certainty versus being at home in unclear situations
12. Does not comfortably command with mission-type orders, but prefers centralized command and control
13. Is inclined to direct approaches instead of indirect approaches in leadership style
14. Prefers lethal force, fire power and kinetic solutions against clear targets and objectives
15. Does not grasp or value intangibles and nuances well
16. Remains reactive in the face of unfamiliar threats and uncertainty
17. Thinking is incompatible with the threats faced
18. Is too threat-oriented and doesn’t take challenges (friction) and opportunity (the creative, constructive, preventative) into proper account

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19. Does not understand all the inter-connected dimensions of the complex operating environment’s domains (Physical – Organizational / Functional – Moral)
20. Is over-dependent on technical intelligence, hi-tech systems and dominant fire power
21. Is blind to the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of these systems and processes
22. Does not understand the human dimension and “human factors” or belittles their relevance
23. Is not adaptive to rapid change
24. Tends to think of operations, success and time linearly, instead of geometrically
25. Stays within familiar comfort zones that were successful in the past
26. Persists on using old doctrine in situations that exceed the imagination and reach of that doctrine
27. Does not think positively in terms of opportunity and advantage in adversity
28. Fails to adapt to the terrain when the terrain varies from the map
29. Does not seek “positional advantage” in all dimensions of the complex environment
30. Does not think dynamically about the full range of “audiences” to be targeted
31. Is not fully developed in critical reasoning and critical thinking competencies per the rapidly changing demands of the complex operating environment
32. Does not take advantage of the full range of possible resources available in the environment
33. Does not integrate all possible organic and non-organic players and power brokers
34. Does not understand the nuances of command and control methods from softest to harshest and direct to indirect
35. Does not trust subordinates to use initiative
36. Does not grasp information operations well or at all
37. Lacks specialized skill in knowing how to leverage various available technologies and resources

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38. Is uncomfortable with networks and networking, preferring hierarchical organizations to command and fight against
39. Does not read much doctrine
40. Is not a student of military history or social anthropology
41. Is unfamiliar with other agencies, their cultures and resource capabilities
42. Is more inclined to compete with rather than cooperate with other agency cultures
43. Is rushed through a promotion system that does not allow adequate accumulation of experience
44. Is constrained by a career progression system based on post-World War II and Cold War imperatives, concepts, interests and threats

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