

Since World War Two, the United States has first become a global superpower, and then THE global superpower. Unfortunately, our conventional military hegemony has not given us the degree of domination predicted by previous conventional thought. The reason has been insurgency, or open-source warfare. A prime example is Iraq: 12-20,000 insurgents (from a nation with an average IQ of 87 and a per capita income of \$3,197¹) have been able to bog down hundreds of thousands of US troops for seven years and counting, inflict over a trillion dollars' worth of costs on the US economy, damage our standing in the eyes of the world and our allies, and generate repeated propaganda coups². This is despite the fact that the insurgents in Iraq are, on average, not particularly well trained, motivated or supported by the population. This has been attested to by a wide range of sources, from the anecdotal evidence provided by numerous US servicemembers to the writings of Abu Musab Zarqawi (a large part of whose efforts was dedicated to causing Shi'a reprisals against the Sunnis in order to address the Sunni insurgency's lack of motivation and popular support.³) With this kind of massive return on investment and no other viable options for fighting the US, insurgency will only increase in the future.

Of course, the US has successfully dealt with insurgencies before World War Two, from the Civil War to the Indian Wars, the Moro Insurrection and to the various interventions

1 Lynn, Richard and Vanhanen, Tatu, 2002, *IQ and the Wealth of Nations*, summary available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IQ_and_the_Wealth_of_Nations

2 Duss, Matthew, Juul, Peter and Katulis, Brian, 2010, *The Iraq War Ledger: A Tabulation of the Human, Financial, and Strategic Costs*, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/05/iraq_war_ledger.html

3 Zarqawi, Abu Musab, 2005, Correspondence, <http://old.nationalreview.com/document/zarkawi200402121818.asp>

in Latin America. However, when we look at primary sources, these counterinsurgencies seem to have been viewed and fought completely differently from those of today. Three factors have changed: hegemony, global systemic efficiency and our own organizational culture. Let's go through them one-by-one:

Hegemony means that everything everywhere is our business, from Latin America to East Asia. We have friends and enemies everywhere, and their successes or failures affect us directly. This means that we must be strong everywhere, but as Sun Tzu said, he who is strong everywhere at once is also weak everywhere. We can only dedicate so much to the war in Iraq while simultaneously maintaining a war in Afghanistan, 11 aircraft carriers, pirate suppression in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, operational readiness to fight a regional power such as China or Iran, and so on. Paradoxically, a weaker, non-hegemonic pre-World War Two US was able to dedicate a larger percentage of its resources to defeating an insurgency, while having less to lose.

Our hegemony is intricately linked to global systematic efficiency, which is a property of the networks linking all the nations of the world and moving goods and services between them. These have been optimized for maximum efficiency and minimal redundancy, in order to minimize costs and maximize return on investment. Due to similar considerations, our financial system leverages these networks. This increases our vulnerability to insurgent attack, and the insurgents' corresponding return-on-investment. A prime example is the skyrocketing price of oil in 2007, which was at least partially driven by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Nigerian Delta's attacks on the

Nigerian oil-producing infrastructure⁴. It is therefore possible to inflict massive damage on the United States economy by attacking network nexuses across the world and causing cascades of failure. The United States approaches this problem by taking the fight to the enemy and ends up fighting counterinsurgencies on the other side of the globe. The US forces are themselves supported by highly efficient and minimally redundant global networks, which they rely upon for everything from fuel to parts to food.

Our organizational culture has changed drastically since the beginning of World War Two. Technology has made it possible for commanders at the field-grade level and higher to micromanage their troops on the ground to an unprecedented degree. There is an exponential increase curve from the telegraph of the Moro Insurrection to the radio telephone used during World War Two in the ability of high-level commanders to control ongoing operations below from a helicopter during Vietnam to the current situation, where a Predator with a radio link overhead can allow multiple echelons of command micromanage an operation in real time from any point on the globe⁵. This, combined with the increased political impact of operations (as exemplified by the strategic corporal concept,) has led logically to a culture where commanders are averse to risking failure through innovation and to delegating control and responsibility downwards. It takes a long time and a lot of verbiage to get anything new approved. The insurgents don't suffer such constraints; they are fragmented into many small groups, which are constantly trying different Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP's.) Those which succeed

4 Robb, John, 2007, *Global Guerrillas Journal: MEND expands in Nigeria*, http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2007/05/journal_mend_ex.html

5 Smith, Herschel, 2010, *The Captain's Journal: More Rules of Engagement Examples from Afghanistan*, <http://www.captainsjournal.com/2010/07/11/more-rules-of-engagement-examples-from-afghanistan-ii/>

rapidly spread and are improved upon. Our technology and politics have led us to cripple ourselves and give the insurgents an advantage in the size of their Observe, Orient, Decide, Act (OODA) Loop⁶. They react to us faster than we react to them, forcing us to always be on the defensive and to cede the initiative. Our massive, expensive support networks are vulnerable to their interference; a major fraction of American casualties have been sustained by troops conducting supply convoys to support operations targeting the enemy, as opposed to those operations themselves.

So, how can we defeat the insurgencies of the future? The first two enabling conditions, US hegemony and global systemic efficiency, are outside the scope of this paper. We can't slow down the evolutionary rate of insurgents' TTP's, or make their decision-making process less flexible and efficient; we can't, in other words, make their OODA Loop larger. We must therefore change our organizational culture to match their advantages, and make our OODA Loop smaller. We must make the delegation of decision-making to the lowest level the rule, not the exception, and push down resources to the men on the ground. We must not only provide them with the force-multiplying resources that they currently have, but the discretion to use them without real-time second-guessing by multiple echelons of command. We should give them the latitude to formulate and reform local policy to adjust to and anticipate the enemy's actions. In order to ensure that they are capable of making an informed decision at any given moment, we should permanently assign them to a specific area of operations. This will give them the opportunity for a deep understanding of the context and human terrain in which they

6 Bohorquez, Juan Camilo, Gourley, Sean, Dixon, Alexander R., Spagat, Michael, and Johnson, Neil F., 2009, *Nature*, *Common ecology quantifies human insurgency*, <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v462/n7275/full/nature08631.html>

operate, instead of the current situation, where, in the words of one of GEN McCrystal's aides, “we haven’t been fighting in Afghanistan for eight years, we've been fighting in Afghanistan for one year, eight times in a row.”⁷ Their chain of command, too, should be permanently assigned to their area of operations, allowing trust and familiarity to be built up and down the organizational structure. Trust and familiarity make it easier to delegate decisions down and to make good faith decisions in the assurance that should something go wrong, the chain of command will stand behind the man on the ground.

As much as possible, the elements on the ground should be minimally reliant on external support; in the majority of Iraq and Afghanistan, the locals can and will gladly sell as much food as necessary. It is probable that given enough of a financial incentive, it will be possible to purchase fuel on the local economy as well. A Pelican case full of cash used to buy food and fuel from local sources is a lot safer and easier to deliver than a convoy carrying the equivalent amount of food and fuel. It also gives the local community a stake in ensuring that food and fuel get to the American forces; a massive resupply convoy provides no incentives to the locals aside from the possibility of being paid to attack it, and imposes costs ranging from traffic to the possibility of accidentally being shot by a turret gunner. Parts and electronics can largely be manufactured on the spot from raw materials using various Fab Lab-linked technology, such as the Mobile Parts Hospital which the US Army has fielded in Kuwait for the same purpose⁸. As this technology moves forward, the troops will be able to create more and more solutions to

7 Schmitt, Eric, New York Times, 2009, *In Afghanistan Assessment, a Catalyst for Obama*,
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/22/world/asia/22strategy.html?_r=1

8 Williams, Meg, Army L&T Magazine, 2004, *Moving Technology Forward -Mobile Parts Hospital Manufactures Replacement Parts in Kuwait*,
http://www.cleggind.com/50_Moving_Technology_Forward.doc.pdf

their problems on the spot, instead of relying on expensive and vulnerable resupply networks.

This would be a radical departure from current US Standard Operating Procedure. Fortunately, the path has already been blazed for us. During the 19th century, the British were able to control modern-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh with approximately a third of the troops committed to Operation Enduring Freedom, at a fraction of the technology. They procured the vast majority of their supplies locally. Even at the low point of their administration, during the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, they were able to quickly bring the insurgency to a halt and re-establish order⁹. As technology and understanding of the principles of counterinsurgency increased, the British were able to do even more with less, controlling the territory of modern-day Egypt and the Sudan, along with its ten million inhabitants with 5000 troops in the beginning of the 20th century, with no major insurgencies or unrest⁹. The hard work of figuring out how to do this has been done for us; all we have to do is adopt the lessons that the British learned at great cost to our own situation.

I realize that this would be a bitter pill to swallow for a US military which has shaped itself around the Air-Land Battle Doctrine and a culture where every commander is personally responsible for every action committed by his subordinates and has his career determined by an annual Officer Efficiency Report, with all that implies. However, our

9 Cromer, Evelyn Baring, 1908, *Modern Egypt*, http://books.google.com/books?id=gd8TAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=cromer&hl=en&ei=K9k7TlePKsO78gbb4ayNBg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCgQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false

current way of doing business is unsustainable. Even if we win the current counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan tomorrow, its costs will be so large in comparison to its benefits that it will have been a Pyrrhic victory. Our enemies will have inflicted enough losses on us in terms of political and economic costs at a low enough cost to themselves that they will not hesitate to engage us in another insurgency.

We must adopt a fundamentally new, exponentially more cost-effective way of counterinsurgency. If we fail, we will find ourselves involved in constant unaffordable and draining counterinsurgency operations, which will damage our prestige, strain our armed forces to the breaking point, and leave us incapable of reacting to threats posed by regional powers. If we succeed, we will be able to conduct successful counterinsurgency operations at minimal cost with a small number of troops, leaving the main body of our armed forces free to secure our interests across the globe. Insurgency against the US will quickly become seen as a losing proposition, and cease to pose a threat. No less than our nation's future as a global superpower is at stake.

I request this essay to be published on the Lint Center for National Security Studies, Inc website with my name appearing as follows: "Boris K."