HISTORICAL CONTEXT

BACK TO THE FUTURE

THE ENDURING CHARACTERISTICS OF INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

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These problems (of guerrilla warfare) are of a very long standing, yet manifestly far from understood—especially in those countries where everything that can be called 'guerrilla warfare' has become a new military fashion or craze.

B H Liddell Hart[1]

INTRODUCTION

Liddell Hart's words seem as relevant today as when first published in his book *Strategy*. Since the terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, a tsunami of ideas about the future has swept over the study and practice of military and strategic affairs from an ever-growing sea of terrorism and insurgency experts. Nearly two centuries ago Carl von Clausewitz suggested that the most important and far-reaching judgment that a statesman or commander could make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking. There is no shortage of advice for those engaged in that task today. In a short time they have been subjected to theories of global insurgency[2] and generational war,[3] seen the Pentagon sold a new map,[4]

been informed about counterinsurgency redux,[5] and witnessed the development of a form of international neo-McCarthyism with states containing Islamic insurgents supplanting communists as objects of fear and loathing.

A problem arises for much of this new wave of theory: many of its ideas do not float when it comes to satisfactorily explaining conditions on the ground in the contemporary environment. Proving the aphorism that 'nothing is impossible for the man who does not have to do it',[6] theories that appear so convincing from the conference stage or the pages of a strategic affairs journal, when tested against the realities and critical requirements of counterinsurgency in the field are found to have little or no utility. This may account for the alacrity with which many of them have arrived and then departed from the stage. A maxim offered by the strategist and academic Colin S Gray sums this up: 'The future is not foreseeable: Nothing dates so rapidly as today's tomorrow.'[7] This article asserts that despite the superficial attraction of the novel, enduring characteristics of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare evident in contemporary conflict, they can provide a useful framework from which to develop understanding. A paper suggesting a framework for understanding should provide background information for the establishment of context. Accordingly, explanation of the identification and development of the characteristics, definition of the key terms used, and the case for history will precede their description.

IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHARACTERISTICS

The eight enduring characteristics of insurgency and nine of counterinsurgency identified in this paper were developed to assist in explaining the operational environment to members of the Multi-National Force Iraq (MNF-I).[8] The characteristics originated from consideration of a range of inputs. These included a literature review of the author's study of counterinsurgency and a range of interviews and discussions with former insurgents, counterinsurgents, theorists and historians over the last decade. The literature review highlighted that historical texts appeared to provide better insight into what is seen in Iraq today than that afforded by recent efforts at analysis. The author's experiences and insights gained working in the Iraq Theatre of Operations at the MNF-I Counterinsurgency Center for Excellence (COIN CFE) also influenced the selection and discussion of the characteristics chosen.

The characteristics presented in this paper are not from any other discrete work or list. It aims to express the characteristics in such a manner that they might be considered on their own merits, free of the intellectual baggage and possible prejudices that they may carry if they are too readily associated with previous works or doctrine. The list is brief; a criterion applied to the selection of a characteristic

for inclusion was that it must be universal. Many did not meet this criterion and subsequently were not included. There are parallels between the enduring characteristics of insurgency and counterinsurgency suggested here and ideas expressed elsewhere.

Originality is not claimed regarding the ideas behind any particular characteristic identified other than in the manner of their selection, presentation and explanation. Counterinsurgency is not alchemy; no amount of new theories will turn lead into gold, so this paper will work with the lead.[9] Some of the characteristics may appear as statements of the obvious; however, there is not an instance in military or strategic affairs where cleverness, complexity or obscurity is useful in explaining already complex phenomena.

> 'The future is not foreseeable: Nothing dates so rapidly as today's tomorrow.'

There is no hierarchical order to the characteristics. This article does not imply the relative importance of any one characteristic over another—the impact of each of these inter-related characteristics will vary dependent upon the specific circumstances of the conflict. What it does warrant is that each of these characteristics will be present, in some fashion, in all insurgency-related conflict.

DEFINING INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

Adequate definition is critical to consideration of the characteristics of particular phenomena. Meanings matter, not least because the lexicon we choose informs and shapes our understanding of the problem. This in turn defines the boundaries of our understanding and any solutions. Contemporary military doctrine and insurgency literature offers a bewildering number of often contradictory definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency. For the sake of simplicity, this paper uses the emerging Australian Army doctrinal definitions of the terms insurgency and counterinsurgency.[10] Accordingly, the definition of insurgency is:

> … an organised, violent and politically motivated activity conducted by non-state actors and sustained over a period of time that typically utilises a number of methods in an attempt to achieve change within a state.

Whilst the term counterinsurgency will be taken to mean:

> Those actions undertaken by a state (and others) to defeat an insurgency.

The term 'terrorism' is often substituted for 'insurgency'. It is useful to put the relationship between insurgency and terrorism into perspective. Whilst there is an association between the two terms (terrorism is frequently one of the tactics used with success by insurgents), the two are not interchangeable. Examination of the historical record of the twentieth century also reveals that whilst a symbiotic relationship exists, insurgency and terrorism are not interdependent. This historical cue leads into examination of the utility of history in identifying the characteristics of a conflict.

THE CASE FOR HISTORY

> *History can be misused to 'Prove' anything, but it is all that we have as a guide to the future.*[11]

Liddell Hart introduced the first chapter of his seminal work *Strategy* with a quote attributed to Bismarck: 'Fools say that they learn by experience. I prefer to profit by others' experience.'[12] Liddell Hart goes on to say that '"History is universal experience"—the experience not of another, but of many others under manifold conditions.'[13] We do not start with a blank sheet when confronting modern problems of insurgency. Millennia of universal experience in dealing with such issues are available to counterinsurgents that turn to history to understand the nature of the fight confronting them. Critics of history argue that because each new conflict is unique, history is of little use. Such criticism is partially correct with regard to the singularity of each insurgent conflict, but incorrect with regard to the application of history to understanding them. Only fools and the soon to be defeated would slavishly apply the exact lessons of past insurgencies to new ones, as each insurgency is indeed *sui generis*.[14] However, study of the 'universal experience' of past insurgencies does suggest the existence of some enduring characteristics of insurgency warfare that a thinking counterinsurgent can use to develop an understanding of the current environment.

The nature of our current set of insurgency problems, when viewed against the historical record, is neither incredible nor unique. The works of Charles Callwell and Charles Gwynn[15] provide little doubt that if they could visit the Iraqi Theatre of Operations today, they would be comfortably familiar with the majority of what they would see. Identification of the characteristics of historical insurgency campaigns and contrasting them to the field evidence present in places

> We do not start with a blank sheet when confronting modern problems of insurgency.

such as Iraq leads to the realisation that linear evolution, rather than revolution, is evident in the development of insurgency-related conflict. Apparent ignorance of the broad scope and applicability of the history of insurgency is problematic to many of those asserting claims of modern novelty. The conflation of the use of 'new' means by insurgents and counterinsurgents to equal 'new' insurgency and counterinsurgency simply does not add up. Objective, broad analysis of the current situation, informed by history, reveals that the old ways and ends of insurgency are in fact enduring.

THE ENDURING CHARACTERISTICS OF INSURGENCY

IT IS CONDUCTED BY NON-STATE ACTORS

Insurgents do not own a 'state'—although this is often what they might be seeking. This creates some immediate and practical difficulties for the counterinsurgent. In 'conventional' or 'state on state' warfare a range of sanctions (beyond that of military forces fighting each other) are available to the protagonists. This is a function of the nature of statehood in the post–Westphalian era.[16] Such sanctions can range from diplomatic and trade sanctions to the use of force to destroy a state's infrastructure or population. Because insurgents lack the traditional apparatus of a state, they possess a unique advantage over state protagonists. Put simply, they have less that is vulnerable to direct attack or sanction, and hence exertion of influence upon them. Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) does not have a capital city that can be the subject of attack or destruction. This compels counterinsurgents to think quite differently about achieving strategic effects in comparison to conventional warfare. Targeting will invariably need to move from the physical realm into a cognitive one in order to be effective.

Confusion can sometimes arise about this characteristic because state actors frequently support insurgents. An important point of distinction arises here. If other state actors are involved in the fight, they are not insurgents. Technically they are participating in what might be termed 'good old-fashioned' state on state war. The fact that they may do so covertly, or that it might not suit the counterinsurgent state to acknowledge their role or pursue the matter, does not change the fact that these state actors are not insurgents. These actors have the vulnerabilities routinely associated with statehood that are available for exploitation if the political will or diplomatic, trade and military means exist in the counterinsurgent state.

> Insurgencies are wars waged within societies, in contrast to conventional wars, which are wars between societies.

IT HAS A POPULAR OBJECTIVE AND SUPPORTING NARRATIVE

Insurgencies are wars waged within societies, in contrast to conventional wars, which are wars between societies. People make up societies and, as long as their basic needs are satisfied, it normally requires strong ideas to motivate people to action against their own society. These ideas (or indeed, often the idea that basic needs are not being met) drive the formation of the popular objective of an insurgency. In successful insurgencies the popular objective, rather than any one individual, group or military asset, effectively becomes the centre of gravity in attracting support. Moreover, because it is human nature to respond to a good story, insurgents will fashion a suitable narrative to support and propagate the popular objective. An inextricable link joins the success of the popular objective and the supporting narrative. An idea not transmitted to others via a suitable narrative does not become a popular objective—it remains stillborn as a thought, and does not motivate people to the struggle. Similarly, a suitable narrative without a popular objective at the heart of it will ultimately lead to rejection of the insurgent aspirations. The Sunni 'Awakening'[17] within Iraq's Al Anbar province is a topical example. Whilst by no means the sole reason for the Awakening, evidence suggests that the tribes of Al Anbar generally found the AQI narrative attractive at a certain level but eventually rejected the AQI objective. This was because the objective became associated with intolerable violence to which the population was subjected and the unacceptably extreme form of religious control it imposed upon them.

IT IS CRIMINAL

The criminality of insurgent actions is an important distinction between insurgent activity and legitimate political or social dissent. States normally have some form of political opposition to the group in power. Only when opposition and dissent from the 'ruling' view crosses outside the accepted, legal bounds of political behaviour does insurgency arise. All else is legitimate politics. The line between legitimacy and criminality is sometimes confusing and often in the eye of the beholder, particularly when otherwise seemingly unitary movements within a society have a number of branches. In the United Kingdom, the Sinn Fein Party and the Provisional Irish Republican Army is an example of this. In contemporary Iraq, such confusion might be seen in the relationships, real or perceived, between the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS), Jaish al Mahdi (JAM) and the Shia 'Special Groups'. The criminality of insurgent activity is one reason why counterinsurgency theorists such as Robert Thompson were strong advocates of the primacy of police forces,[18] recognising that it remained a police issue, and one not easily transferred to the military, with all of the political ramifications that brings.

IT IS VIOLENT

All insurgencies are violent. Even the most 'noble' of insurgent causes will find it virtually impossible to eschew violence at some level—this is often at least partially a factor behind the criminality of insurgent activity previously outlined. Violence within an insurgency can and frequently does range from low-level thuggery up to and including genocide, as Iraq demon-strates all too clearly. Insurgents will use violence to achieve effects that go beyond merely attaining legitimate military objectives. Many acts of terrorism perpetuated by insurgents are of negligible military value but enormous political, cultural or psychological value to the shape and conduct of their operations. The bombings of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq during 2006 and 2007, precipitating bloody civil war, provide a pertinent example.

> Even the most 'noble' of insurgent causes will find it virtually impossible to eschew violence at some level …

IT IS PERSISTENT (MAINTAINING WILL AND PATIENCE)

When people are motivated by a popular objective such that they are willing to risk literally everything (status, life and family) for it by becoming insurgent, one can reasonably expect that it is not a decision they have taken lightly. The act of making such decisions has a powerful effect on people. Their resolve increases. Having made both the mental adjustment and sacrifices necessary to become an insurgent, people are more likely to endure whatever it takes to succeed. There is also an obvious association between this idea and the capacity for insurgent violence previously discussed. Often after taking part in a particularly violent or bloody act, individual insurgents may feel that they have crossed some imaginary line that precludes them from ever rejoining normal society. They begin to think that since they cannot 'go back' the only option remaining is to win, no matter how long it takes. This characteristic highlights the issue of reconciliation between insurgents and their society as a way of reducing a factor that contributes to persistence. The engagement of many former Sunni insurgents within the 'Sons of Iraq' (SOI) organisation since late 2007 is one example of a practical reconciliation measure that has reduced the persistence of the Sunni insurgency in many parts of Iraq.

IT IS ORGANISED

Every insurgency is organised in some fashion. The insurgencies currently operating in Iraq and Afghanistan are no exception. A bunch of people intui-tively rebelling in unison without coordination is not an insurgency but a mob.

The protracted struggle that is true insurgency requires a degree of organisation that, whilst not necessarily readily apparent or conventional in appearance, will always exist. If it is invisible to counterinsurgents, it is simply that their search is either unsophisticated, not looking hard enough or not looking in the right places. Organisation can be a strength and a vulnerability of an insurgency. Good organisation that retains operational security can hide insurgent design and plans whilst advancing the popular objective. A poor or security compromised organisational structure seriously retards the insurgent cause.

IT ADAPTS

All successful insurgencies have adapted. There is a form of Darwinism involved here. The insurgent invariably starts from a position of weakness—if they were not weak, they would just seize power or their objective immediately. Weakness brings with it the need to be agile in order to meet the many obstacles that their circumstance creates. Insurgency invariably is not a tactic of choice, but a compulsion of relative weakness. Since at some point they were not insurgents but average law abiding citizens, the path to successful insurgency necessarily involves a lot of adaptation and learning. Those insurgents that do not manage this tend to perish. This means that the survivors have had demonstrated and reinforced to them, from a very early stage of their insurgency, the benefit of being adaptive. This leads to institutionalisation of adaptive behaviour in their organisational performance. The obvious deduction arising from this characteristic is that counterinsurgents need to dedicate assets to counter or disrupt this adaptation cycle.

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IT IS SUPPORTED

Support is vital to insurgent activity, without it their struggle is even more difficult. Support takes many forms, from personnel support such as that demonstrated by the presence of foreign jihadists in Iraq; financial support from the Diaspora; or the provision of material support such as the arms and explosives that are currently smuggled into Iraq from Iran. Whilst being supported is a strength for an insurgency, it also is something that an efficient and determined counterinsurgent can target. Simple initiatives such as asserting positive border control, tracking and regulating capital flows into the country, and instituting effective public diplomacy campaigns in target populations can all serve to reduce insurgent support.

Table 1. The enduring characteristics of insurgency.

The Enduring Characteristics of Insurgency
It is conducted by non-state actors
It has a popular objective and supporting narrative
It is criminal
It is violent
It is persistent (maintaining will and patience)
It is organised
It adapts
It is supported

SUMMARY OF THE ENDURING CHARACTERISTICS OF INSURGENCY

The eight characteristics of insurgency are summarised in Table 1. The relative importance of each as a signature element of any given insurgency will vary, but each will be present in some form in every insurgency.

THE ENDURING CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNTERINSURGENCY

IT REQUIRES A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Counterinsurgency activity in the Iraq Theatre of Operations has lines of operation other than the security one typified by direct military action and development of indigenous security forces. An example of this has been the implementation of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) since November 2005. These are multi-disciplinary organisations that work to address lines of operation involving the economy, development, civil capacity building and governance. Acknowledgment of the need for a holistic approach to successful counterinsurgency activity is virtually universal.[19] The term 'comprehensive' has been deliberately selected to describe this characteristic rather than the 'whole-of-government' or 'inter-agency' labels used in Australia and the United States respectively. These terms have been used with such rhetorical abandon that they have become clichéd and thus effectively meaningless. They also unnecessarily restrict the counterinsurgent's thinking to action relating to the instruments of the state. It is noted that the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence has developed doctrine for a Comprehensive Approach.[20] Since insurgency is essentially societal warfare, counterinsurgency requires a 'whole of society' approach. Use of the word 'comprehensive' embraces this idea. It allows

for diverse approaches that incorporate, for example, commercial entities, religious elements and other non-governmental organisations as well as the instruments of state in any considered response to insurgency.

IT REQUIRES A CONSISTENT AND EFFECTIVE NARRATIVE

A consistent and effective narrative arguably provides the counterinsurgent state with its most effective weapon against an insurgency. This goes to the point previously made that it is an idea or ideas—the 'popular objective'—that motivates and mobilises insurgents. Ideas cannot be shot, imprisoned or exiled. The imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and the incarceration or banning of the rest of the African National Congress leadership by the apartheid era white minority government in South Africa failed to suppress the idea of democracy in that state. This is an example of the resilience of insurgent ideas to direct physical measures. The most effective way to counter an idea is to replace it with another. By creating a narrative that offers an effective 'alternative idea' to that being used by an insurgency, the counterinsurgent is able to directly address the root cause of the problem rather than merely addressing the outward manifestation of it through other direct actions, such as violence.

> The most effective way to counter an idea is to replace it with another.

The aspect of consistency is critical because it goes to the heart of the issue of trust. Narratives can and should evolve as the situation changes, but the core internal logic of the narrative must remain consistent. If the state's narrative is inconsistent, it will raise difficult questions in the population's minds as to whether its position was honest or trustworthy to begin with. This characteristic draws attention to the criticality of an effective information operations campaign when engaged in counterinsurgency.

IT EXERCISES CONTROL

The successful counterinsurgent practises control in the widest possible sense of the word. This encapsulates control of the population, borders, information and narrative about the war. History is full of examples of control aiding counterinsurgent success. The British use of 'protected villages' during the Malayan Emergency reflected the success they experienced with the concentration camps they had employed during the Second Boer War to control the Boer civilian population. Of all the counterinsurgency characteristics identified, this one is perhaps the most problematic to modern democracies. However, its difficulty does not diminish its importance. Examples of control within the Iraqi Theatre include using concrete 'T' walls to segregate elements of Baghdad's population to information and identity control, and through the use

of biometric data to identify and track rogue elements of the population. Ideally, counterinsurgents achieve control with the cooperation of the target population, but with or without the acceptance of the population, it must occur.

IT IS PERSISTENT

Persistence was previously identified as a characteristic of insurgency. It is also an enduring characteristic of counterinsurgency. It has been described how insurgents are radicalised and thus motivated to endure the necessary cost. If the wider population of the counterinsurgent state is diffident or opposed to the cause the polity will find it increasingly difficult to justify and continue in its actions. This obviously links to the need for a consistent and effective narrative that has already been discussed. Similarly, the violent characteristics of insurgency can have a severely negative impact upon the will of those not committed to the course of action that the state is embarked upon. Successful counterinsurgents must practice time tolerance and persistence in all their endeavours. David Galula suggests a reason why this is important:

> As the war lasts, the war itself becomes the central issue and the ideological advantage of the insurgent decreases considerably. The population's attitude is dictated not by the intrinsic merits of the contending causes, but by the answer to these two simple questions: Which side is going to win? Which side threatens the most, and which offers the most protection?[21]

State persistence is an effective tool against insurgency because it creates doubt in the minds of the uncommitted elements of the population and any wavering insurgents about the rebellion's likelihood of success.

IT IS CULTURALLY AND SOCIALLY APPROPRIATE

Since insurgencies are wars within societies, it is logical that the best methods to use in fighting them are ones that have a cultural and social fit. This characteristic, whilst seemingly straightforward, is often misapplied. The emphasis is frequently simplistic, and often ridiculous when viewed in the context of the wider actions the counterinsurgent is taking. Coalition forces attempts at this in Iraq provide an example. During pre-deployment training soldiers receive advice of the 'do not use your left hand/point the soles of your feet in Arab culture' variety. Not offending Iraqi Arabs through such cultural transgressions becomes a moot point when compared to the offence that actions such as forcefully entering homes in the middle of the night and searching

The counterinsurgent must use approaches and methods that resonate appropriately in the target culture and society.

may cause. The counterinsurgent must use approaches and methods that resonate appropriately in the target culture and society. This is the area where suitable anthropological and sociological advice can come into its own for the 'foreigner' undertaking counterinsurgency support to a host nation. For example, within deployed units of MNF-I this function is now fulfilled by 'Human Terrain Teams' (HTT).

IT ADAPTS

The successful counterinsurgent is able to identify changes occurring in the theatre and is agile enough to adjust their campaign accordingly by taking necessary measures. Three elements identified as key to adaptation by counterinsurgents: a deliberate system of critical review and analysis that reports to a leadership that will listen and act as and where necessary; an education system to pass the necessary adaptive measures onto the full range of counterinsurgency actors; and a sound doctrinal basis against which to evaluate what is happening. The improvement in the situation in Iraq since the surge of 2007 is arguably the result of successful counterinsurgent adaptation, incorporating the three key elements outlined above.

IT COMPROMISES

At one level there might be a case to question the wisdom of the Iraqi Government's acceptance of the Sunni 'awakening' and reconciliation with former insurgent fighters. The ancient Roman philosopher Cicero suggested over two thousand years ago that 'an unjust peace is better than a just war,' raising the idea of compromise as an adjunct to war. History confirms that ideas cannot be bludgeoned out of people—and even if it were possible, it would be inappropriate for modern democratic liberal states to pursue such an option. Adjustment of ideas occurs through the process of dialogue and engagement with other ideas. A form of reconciliation between the opposing elements of society is necessary if the counterinsurgent is to begin to address adequately the grievances that lie at the heart of an insurgency.[22]

IT IS COSTLY

Counterinsurgency is a costly business and the costs are not always obvious. Beyond the cost of so called 'blood and treasure'[23] there is an opportunity cost that is not always as apparent but is perhaps more important. Societies preoccupied with insurgency will not attend to other matters as well as they might otherwise. These include development, social justice, education and health. Violence, fear and exertion in a society scar and potentially sow the seeds of future discontent and trouble. Measures taken to pre-empt the development of the conditions that are ripe for insurgency to occur are often a wise investment. Successful counterinsurgents are able and prepared to bear the wide range of costs associated with the conflict. There is no such thing as a 'cheap' counterinsurgency.

IT REQUIRES RECTITUDE

Successful counterinsurgencies have a moral 'good' that can be identified somewhere near the core of its objective. This point is not stating that 'moral rightness' can only exist on the counterinsurgent's side, nor is it not trying to assert moral relativism, or judgment that insurgency equals bad and counterinsurgency equals good. Use of the problematic term 'legitimacy' is deliberately avoided. The fact is that participants in an insurgency make decisions as much by what is in their hearts as by what is in their heads. Protagonists lacking rectitude will have profound difficulties in getting people to accept the morally ambivalent or inappropriate things that might be implicit in their position. The apartheid era South African Government is an example of failure associated with a lack of rectitude. The state had a well developed and comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy supported by capable and highly effective military and security forces that were rarely beaten in direct action. Despite this apparently overwhelming advantage the state lacked rectitude—the extreme iniquity of its apartheid policy meant that the population was never going to accept anything less than its removal.

> … participants in an insurgency make decisions as much by what is in their hearts as by what is in their heads.

SUMMARY OF THE ENDURING CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNTERINSURGENCY

Table 2 summarises the nine characteristics of counterinsurgency that have been identified and discussed.

CONCLUSION

Enduring characteristics of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare are evident, and while these characteristics are enduring they are not static. They change gradually by evolution and not revolution. Rapid development of the technological 'means' available to prosecute an insurgency strategy should not be confused with 'new' insurgency as history reveals that 'ways' and 'ends' continue to demonstrate a stable and linear association with the past. Counterinsurgents should identify an appropriate balance between the demonstrably enduring features of counterinsurgency warfare and the fashion of contemporary interpretations and opinion in approaching their task. The simple but enduring characteristics of insurgency and counterinsurgency identified and discussed here are evident in current theatres of operations such as Iraq. Having an understanding of them helps make sense of

Table 2. The Enduring Characteristics of Counterinsurgency

The Enduring Characteristics of Counterinsurgency
It requires a comprehensive approach
It requires a consistent and effective narrative
It is controlling
It is persistent
It is culturally and socially appropriate
It adapts
It makes compromises
It is costly
It requires rectitude

the operational environment. The same cannot be said for many insurgency and counterinsurgency theories promulgated since 11 September 2001.

If the contemporary record and that of the previous century is any reliable guide, it is unlikely that Charles Callwell's advice that '… guerrilla warfare is a form of operations above all things to be avoided'[24] can be followed. The majority of the conflicts that will occur in the future are likely to involve insurgency. The characteristics of insurgency and of counterinsurgency outlined in this paper will be present in such conflicts. The enduring characteristics identified cannot provide specific answers to the unique challenges that each individual conflict will generate—no theory or list can. They will, however, greatly assist to establish the necessary understanding that Clausewitz urged regarding the nature of war. Knowledge of the enduring characteristics of insurgency and counterinsurgency can be the first step to developing the understanding of the operational environment that is required for success.

ENDNOTES

1   B H Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd revised ed, Meridian, New York, 1991, p. xv.

2   D J Kilcullen, 'Countering global insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 2005, pp. 597–617; David W Barno, 'Challenges in fighting a global insurgency', *Parameters*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2, 2006, pp. 15–29; Thomas Donnelly and Vance Serchuk, *Fighting a Global Counterinsurgency*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 2003, <www.aei.org/publications/pubID.19546/pub_detail.asp>.

3   Thomas X Hammes, *Insurgency: Modern Warfare Evolves into a Fourth Generation*, Strategic Forum Series No. 214, National Defense University, January 2005, <www.ndu.edu/inss/press/nduphp.html>.

4   Thomas P M Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century*, G P Putnam's Sons, New York, 2004.

5   D J Kilcullen, 'Counter-insurgency redux', *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 2006, pp. 111–30.

6   Colin S Gray, 'Why strategy is difficult', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 22, Summer 1999, p. 7.

7   Colin S Gray, *Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on Peace, War and Strategy*, Praeger Security International, Westport CT, 2007.

8   This idea arose during a discussion between the author and Dr Daniel Marston at the Multi-National Force Iraq Counterinsurgency Center for Excellence in January 2008. We were finding that doctrine lacked clarity for the task of explaining in a simple fashion the operational environment to coalition soldiers. See Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency*, United States Government, Washington DC, 2006; and, British Army, *Army Field Manual, Volume 1, Combined Arms Operations, Part 10, Counter Insurgency Operations (Strategic and Operational Guidelines),* revised and updated version, March 2007. The Australian Army does not have a current counterinsurgency doctrine manual.

9   This is adapted from an observation made by Colonel Alex Alderson, British Army and HQ MNF-I. The author gratefully acknowledges Colonel Alderson's assistance and comments in reviewing the draft version of this paper.

10   Australian Army, *Author's Brief, Land Warfare Doctrine 3-0-1, Counterinsurgency*, Land Warfare Development Centre, Puckapunyal, March 2008.

11   Gray, *Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on Peace, War and Strategy*.

12   Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 3.

13   Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 4.

14   A description suggested by a British officer, see John Kiszely, *Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Creating a Comprehensive Approach. A British View*, paper presented at 'Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Creating a National Framework', Washington DC, 2006.

15   Callwell and Gwynn are two British officers from the late nineteenth/ early twentieth century who developed a considerable body of thought on the conduct and countering of small wars, insurrections and guerrilla campaigns. See C E Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, 3rd ed, Bison Books—the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1996; and Charles W Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 2nd ed, Macmillan and Co, London, 1939.

16   The Treaty of Westphalia, signed in Europe in 1648 at the end of the Thirty Years War, is widely recognised as signalling the start of the modern era of international relations amongst states.

17 The 'Awakening' is a term used to describe the rejection of AQI and its particular
    brand of *wahabiism*, combined with a form of reconciliation with the Iraqi
    Government by the Sunni Tribes. This phenomenon began in the western parts of
    Al Anbar province in very late 2005 and has now spread to most Sunni areas of Iraq.

18 Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, Hailer Publishing,
    St Petersburg, FL, 2005.

19 There are a few exceptions to this, such as the US retired military officer and
    commentator Ralph Peters. See Ralph Peters, 'In praise of attrition', *Parameters*,
    Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, Summer 2004.

20 The UK Cabinet Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the
    Department for International Development (DfID) all acknowledge the need for a
    Comprehensive Approach (strategy, leadership/ direction) but current legislation
    does not currently require anything further than cooperation. Also see United
    Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Joint Discussion Note 4/05 – The Comprehensive
    Approach*, Chiefs of Staff, UK Ministry of Defence, Swindon, January 2006.

21 David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956–1958*, RAND Monographs,
    RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2006, p. 246.

22 The idea of compromise is further examined in the introduction to: Daniel Marston
    and Carter Malkasian, eds, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, Osprey Publishing,
    Oxford, 2008.

23 There is also the potential for damage to reputations domestically and internationally,
    such as we have seen in some quarters for member states of the 'Coalition of
    the Willing'.

24 Callwell, *Small Wars*, p. 125.

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