

Unraveling the Gordian Knot of Strategic U.S. Military Engagement: Asymmetrical Relationships, Unconventional Means and International Conflict

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Paper prepared for:
15-18 November 2011

Cultural Diplomacy and International Relations: New Actors, New Initiatives and New Targets
Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, Annual Conference
Berlin, Germany

Comments welcome. Draft only, not for citation without the express consent of the authors.

Abstract:

The asymmetrical relationship between the United States and the various countries of the Middle East, as well as the violence that it inspires in fringe groups throughout the world, is one of the most salient features of American foreign policy today and adheres to what Hammes refers to as the 'fourth generation' of war. With this shift, warfare consists of different forms of warfare ranging from conventional and unconventional to limited and asymmetrical warfare, which can moreover include both hard and soft forms of power depending on whether short-term military battle tactics, or by contrast, longer-term national building strategies are considered. That these terms are used interchangeably, yet are treated as separate types of warfare, can confuse any attempt to discuss the political ramifications of each of these forms of conflict, when encountered in the international community. This paper addresses this definitional weakness by constructing a comprehensive analysis of contemporary forms of warfare, including the recognition that symmetrical/asymmetrical forms of warfare are not mutually exclusive and can involve the most complicated mix of conventional and unconventional tactics, which will in turn provide the foundation for a systematic approach to war that differentiates between various elements of combat that will help to explain how and why the United States cannot simply rest on the fact that it has the largest conventional military power in the world underpinned by a comprehensive nuclear program that could annihilate much of the population of the world. By respecting the historic development of Islamic culture, separate from the perverted stance of terrorism, the American government has a chance to change the ever-present power imbalance between the two regions from one of asymmetry to one of strategic commitment.

Introduction

The Just War Theory is grounded in western and Christian ideals that build from principles dating from medieval times and germinating in the doctrine of St. Augustine. Often forgotten, however, is that this theory also draws heavily on ancient Greek philosophy, as well as precepts from the Islamic holy text, the Koran. According to this theory, various strict criteria must be met, before a declaration of war can be considered just (see Mingst, 2004:217):

- There must be a just cause (self-defense or the defense of others, or a massive violation of human rights).
- There must a declaration of intent by a competent authority (currently interpreted as the Security Council).
- The leaders need to have the correct intentions, desiring to end abuses and establish a just peace.
- Leaders must have exhausted all other possibilities for ending the abuse, employing war as a last resort.
- Forces need to be rapidly removed after the humanitarian objectives have been secured.

Such principles have underpinned warfare for centuries and can be easily applied to cases of international conflict fought according to the norms of conventional wars fought up to and through the twentieth century. In these instances, standing military forces stood ready to engage in combat aimed at protecting national borders, thwarting aggressive behavior by evil dictators or redressing wanton human rights violations that defy international conventions related to the protection of human rights.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, most conflicts were primarily cases of conventional warfare. Each of the combatants had individual strengths and weaknesses, but they were (for the most part) fairly equal in the final equation, since they were all states with comparable economic, political and military strength. As outlined by Hammes (2004:16-24), there were three generations of war during this period, each predicated on changes in technology and the capacity of the warring states. The *first generation* of war was associated with the Napoleonic wars. It emerged in conjunction with the shift from the feudal system in Europe to one based on the development of nation-states. A second dimension was added to the change process here when the invention of gunpowder, lightweight artillery, etc. and advances in agriculture and transportation are also factored into the equation. The *second generation* of war is associated with the changing tactics (in particular of the French army) leading into World War I. This type of warfare was characterized by machineguns and rifled artillery, as employed in trench warfare. The *third generation* of war is associated with the German Wehrmacht and its use of the Blitzkrieg (lightening war), whereby “speed and surprise” were the key tactics used “to bypass the enemy’s lines and collapse their forces from the rear.” The stabilizing factor in each of these generations of war, however, is that they were all fought by states, on a definable battlefield involving battles that had clear objectives, a discernible beginning and an agreed upon end.

Each of the preceding generations of war is in direct contrast to the evolution of what Hammes characterizes the *fourth generation* of war, which transitions the discussion from conventional to unconventional warfare. This generation of war has its roots in Mao Tse Tung’s resistance in China during the early 20th century, as epitomized in the wars the U.S. is fighting in the ongoing war against terror. For Hammes (2004:16-24), as this type of warfare is the only one noted to be effective when

fighting against a superior military/political entity, it challenges “the state’s monopoly of force and returns to the uncontrolled combat of pre-modern times.” Under these conditions, rather than fighting according to predictable, conventional means, groups within smaller states use tactics meant to use their strengths against the hierarchical tendencies of the larger power and thereby “weaken the technologically advanced opponent’s will to win.” For Hammes, the fourth generation of war thus effectively “blurs the lines between war and politics, soldier and civilian, peace and conflict, battlefield and safe zones.” In this politically-charged environment, any individual has the potential to be a combatant, any situation has the capacity to promote violence and any city center can thereby be transformed into a battlefield. More specific to this paper, however, is the fact that in this environment, conventional military structures of the larger powers in the world have had to change their standing operating procedures to cope with the shifting combat norms currently found in the international community. To understand exactly what this means, certain definitional ambiguities related to the emerging nature of asymmetrical combat, at least when viewed within the context of the twenty-first century must be addressed.

For example, there are different forms of warfare ranging from conventional and unconventional to limited and asymmetrical warfare, which can moreover include both hard and soft forms of power depending on whether short-term military battle tactics, or by contrast, longer-term national building strategies are considered. That these terms are used interchangeably, yet are treated as separate types of warfare, can confuse any attempt to discuss the political ramifications of each of these forms of conflict, when encountered in the international community. This is particularly problematic in the twenty-first century, given that the First and Second World Wars were the last fully conventional wars fought by western powers. Beginning with Korea and then solidifying with Vietnam, most of the conflicts involving western powers have been asymmetrical (fought against smaller powers), have been fought in areas outside the western world and have involved groups of combatants using unconventional tactics not out of desire, but rather out of necessity. Recent events have not changed this trend. If anything, the trend has intensified given the religious dimension associated with more contemporary conflicts. While most of these conflicts can be assessed according to pragmatic concerns, the addition of religious legitimation to the conflicts has made it increasingly important for the West to find more holistic ways to become involved in Middle Eastern affairs without appearing to force moves towards democracy from above.

When viewed in the West, there is an automatic assumption that the western powers use conventional warfare exclusively because it is the right and moral thing to do. Unconventional warfare, by contrast, is used by the (cowardly) enemy forces because, as is often hypothesized, they lack the civility and the restraint shown by western powers, each of which adhere to the Geneva Conventions and the principles of Just War. This assumption presupposes that the two combatants are of a similar (or at least a comparable) size and that the spoils of war are agreeable to both parties once the hostilities have ended. Excluded from this model of thought are those situations where one of the two combatants does not have the resources to defend itself properly and/or that the outcome of conflict involves consequences related to the actual survival of the state. In either of these scenarios, it is naïve to believe that the country will not use whatever means are at its disposal to avoid such dire consequences. A more valuable approach would be to assess the different types of warfare from a strategic perspective, meaning that any assessment of why a country would resort to unconventional warfare must be tempered by an understanding of strategy and mutual cost-benefit analyses.

Because of these factors, it is clear that the dynamics of unconventional warfare is not easily transferrable to the dialogues associated with conventional warfare, meaning that world powers must, despite their military and economic strength, change their strategies, if they are to be successful in

the longer-term. As maintained by Mrozek (1998:86-87), the implementation of a 'one-size-fits-all' military policy in America has often come into difficulties, since it inevitably stumbles "over the distinctive conditions and different mentalities encountered in specific conflicts." To be successful, America must employ what has recently been termed by Joseph Nye (2008:xviii) as 'smart power,' which is the effective combination of hard power (i.e. military might) and soft power (diplomatic entreaties) to achieve desired results without losing critical resources. Contextually, this means that the United States should return to the statement by Teddy Roosevelt that American might should be premised on the idea of 'treading softly while carrying a big stick,' meaning that there are times to use existing hard power resources to their best potential while recognizing the changed international environment and acting accordingly by employing other softer power options to entice other countries to do what is desired without having to force the matter.

This is, however, much easier said than done. It firstly requires a more comprehensive analysis of contemporary forms of warfare, including the recognition that symmetrical/asymmetrical forms of warfare are not mutually exclusive and can involve the most complicated mix of conventional and unconventional tactics, which will in turn provide the foundation for a systematic approach to war that differentiates between various elements of combat that will help to explain how and why the United States cannot simply rest on the fact that it has the largest conventional military power in the world underpinned by a comprehensive nuclear program that could annihilate much of the population of the world. However, to develop military and foreign policy strategies associated with what could be termed 'smart power', it is first necessary to understand the different types of war. Moreover, to understand the multifarious, interrelated nature of the different forms of warfare that exist concurrently in the international community, the subject must be approached as a multi-sided and multi-dimensional prism. The analysis of the different patterns of war thus requires inquiry into a variety of interrelated issues that should be considered in isolation from the others and then in combination to bring all of the issues together, while at the same time allowing the various elements to stand alone. To this end, the analysis begins with the most basic distinctive definitions associated with warfare and combat, symmetrical and asymmetrical size differentials to demonstrate how the idea of size and strength impact the understanding of modern warfare leading further into the twenty-first century.

Asymmetrical versus Symmetrical Patterns of Conflict

At the most basic level, combat and warfare must be discussed according to the size of the two combatants, as this is the level that allows the most direct comparison of countries and provides strategic analysis to begin. Quite simply, this view of the prism provides basic comparative insight into how combat will proceed according to how closely the two (or more) combatants match. Are there, for example, two discernibly similar groups fighting against each other, or is it a 'David-Goliath' situation, where one combatant is so clearly superior (at least on paper) that it is difficult to see how the smaller combatant could ever prevail in a conflict situation? It is from this basic level that all other considerations of warfare transform and mutate into actual foreign policy perspectives. Before making the decision to go to war, after all, a country's leadership is going to tally up its resources and directly compare it to what is known about another country. For example, Country 'A' will consider the number of tanks, aircrafts and troops at its disposal in relation to those of Country 'B' to make a prediction about the likely costs and consequences of war. Will the combat be short-lived and the gains worth the sacrifices made nationally, or will it be brutal and prolonged, which will in turn complicate any decision to go to war unless there simply was no other alternative. To begin the discussion, this section considers whether or not combat is symmetrical (involving two

comparable adversaries), or asymmetrical (involving completely mismatched opponents where one is predicated to dominate the other) and how this impacts the course of conflict observed.

Symmetrical warfare is more commonly associated with conflicts where conventional warfare tactics are employed precisely because it *is* symmetrical, meaning that the two sides of the conflict are of a similar size, or because they have comparable resources at their disposal. It is thus associated with conflict situations where the two potential combatants are comparable in size (whether in terms of land, population or the size of their respective militaries). This can involve larger states, such as the historical wars between England and France at the time of the American Civil War, or it can involve two smaller states (i.e. Iraq and Iran in the 1980s) that while not competitive to the existing western superpowers, are nevertheless symmetrical opponents when compared one to the other. Alternatively, such as happened in World Wars I and II, two comparative coalitions can band together and fight as two clearly defined combatants despite the multiple number of states involved on each side. In these cases, the two sides will usually engage in predictable patterns of war that more often than not adhere (at least overall) to the tenets of conventional warfare. There are, after all, clear participants in the conflict, clear objectives and discernible battlefields associated with the parties involved. Again, however, this does not mean that unconventional warfare will never be used, i.e. when Hussein decided to use chemical weapons against Iran late in the conflict to try and bring a more expedient close to the prolonged conflict that had cost both countries dearly in both monetary terms but also in terms of military personnel. These situations are nevertheless more comparable to the western conception of warfare, since the two sides have equal resources to utilize in combat and usually have clear objectives to obtain or not, as the case may be.

This type of conflict can be assessed according to the dictates of the Cold War and the intense rivalry between the United States and the former Soviet Union. In the aftermath of World Wars I and II, and with the consolidation of the Cold War, which pitted the United States against the former Soviet Union in international affairs, something unexpected occurred. With the horrors and destruction associated with these conflicts, western countries, predominantly those in Europe, sought ways to cooperate economically and politically and thereby avoid open combat in the longer-term. The sentiment echoed throughout Europe post-WWII was that all steps should be taken to preclude the potential for another world conflict as those experienced within a 50 year period. The cost had simply been too great to not try and find alternative ways to resolve conflict, other than through the barrel of a gun. Equally important to this attitudinal shift, however, was the use of the atomic bomb at the end of World War II by the United States against Japan. When the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was considered, the countries that subsequently gained nuclear weapons immediately realized the great responsibility that came with a weapon that could so easily destroy not only the enemy's chances of success in combat, but the actual economy and well-being of the country itself. It was at this point that the idea of 'mutually assured destruction' entered the political dialogue of the nuclear powers of the world and prompted the signing of a number of nuclear proliferation treaties across the globe. For the purposes of this section, the point to be made is that these developments signaled the need to assess the strength of the various countries of the world not only according to their military forces, but also according to the type of weapons included in the arsenal and the possibility that in some conflicts, economic competition was more effective in changing relationships between countries than preparing for war. It was, after all, now possible that a smaller country could pose a symmetrical threat to a much larger country, if nuclear power had been achieved.

To take this a step further, despite the fact that the collapse of communism in 1989-1991 brought to light to economic discrepancies between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the antagonism between these two superpowers during the Cold War is representative of a symmetrical

relationship. During the duration of the Cold War, after all, as concluded by John Lewis Gaddis (1986; reprinted in Mingst & Snyder, 2001:14-15), stability in the world came from several factors, the relative strength of the two superpowers, especially in terms of the nuclear capabilities of the U.S. and the former U.S.S.R., but more specifically because of the fact that they were geographically distanced one from the other and not economically dependent in any significant way. For this reason, “geographical remoteness” helped to ensure that there was no real chance that disputes would emerge such as those witnessed over Alsace-Lorraine, the Polish Corridor, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and/or Jerusalem. For the purposes of this paper, however, the perceived parity of strength between the two superpowers is important to note, primarily because of the implications this holds for the conception of war. In this stable environment, the norms and established practices associated with conventional warfare – a struggle between two fairly symmetrical antagonists, each trying to exert its power over the other in a short-term conflict with a clear start and finish that ends in a return to stability and normalcy (Metz, 2007:4) – prevail and are understandable to all involved.

This type of environment created predictability and stability, since all the actors had defined roles to play. What does this mean exactly, especially given the massive inequalities found between the economic development of the former Soviet Union and its satellites and the United States at the end of the Cold War? To be reiterated is the fact that during the Cold War, these inequalities were not obvious and the former U.S.S.R. was seen as an equal to the U.S., most notably with regard to the exploration of space and in the area of nuclear capabilities. Not only was Sputnik launched into space before similar missions from the United States, but America “lost its monopoly on nuclear weapons in 1949 when the USSR achieved a secure nuclear retaliatory capability.” Through a series of arms negotiations, the two superpowers achieved what Payne and Walton term a *strategic stability*, whereby neither side was able to “achieve a useful nuclear advantage over the other.”

As described by Brown (2006:16), the bipolarity of the Cold War system inhered not just in the existence of two countries more powerful than any of the rest, but also in the massive gravitational pull ... by each superpower on others.” The result of this was a political environment characterized by a “condition of two-sided polarization,” whereby the superpowers were expected to take care of their own affairs, while simultaneously guaranteeing the security of those countries choosing to align themselves to them and operate within their sphere of influence. The fight between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. was thus seen as one waged between equals, meaning that it involved a sense of symmetry. When, for example, former U.S. President stood in front of the Berlin Wall and charged Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall, the world viewed this as something akin to a sibling rivalry, where Gorbachev had the final say in whether or not he pursued that course of action. While there are those that say that Reagan won the Cold War, after all, this overlooks the steps taken by Gorbachev domestically that ultimately led to the overthrow of the Soviet system. Whatever the origins of this change, however, the fight (when viewed from the international community) was pursued by more conventional means whereby negotiations preceded any consideration of open warfare, but if combat broke out, it would have definable goals and a definite timeframe.

Asymmetrical warfare, by contrast, involves two warring states where one of the two is decidedly larger, or has more powerful resources at their disposal. This type of warfare, as opposed to symmetrical warfare, refers to situations where the two rival combatants are mismatched in size, but are nevertheless thrust into situations where conflict emerges over such issues as scarce resources, border disputes, the aggrandized plans of a dictator, or the imperial ambitions of an aspiring (or a continually expanding) imperial power, to name only a few possible reasons. This type of warfare is primarily associated with the resistance of a smaller country to colonial aggression or domination, such as the historical struggles of the Indians (among others) to the British, the Latvians, Lithuanians

and Estonians (again among others) to the Soviets or the Cubans (yet again among others) to the United States. An alternative scenario where asymmetrical conflict emerges is found when conflicts within state borders is considered, i.e. where smaller minority groups compete against the majority for resources, political influence and tangential power. Yet another would be conflicts where two countries are comparable in some areas but not in others, i.e. the six-day war between Israel and Egypt, where Israel destroyed Egypt's entire military structure within hours of the start of hostilities, despite initial assessments of the relative power of the two countries. In these cases, the patterns of conflict change dramatically from those discussed above, precisely because of the size differentials involved. Given the uneven balance of resources available to one of the two rival combatants, unconventional warfare is often used to try and even the playing field, meaning that the smaller country will utilize whatever is at their disposal to try and secure and/or protect national interests. Combat in these situations are thus more unpredictable, longer in duration, and involve different conceptions of what constitutes victory in battle, i.e. the loss of the capital does not signify automatic capitulation and national defeat.

One of the most basic questions encountered here is why the smaller state would even decide in the first place to engage in a conflict that will ultimately involve military confrontation with a larger power, especially when the power differential is so great that the smaller state faces unquestioned defeat. It seems to defy logic. A more rational approach would seem to be for the smaller power to find a way to engage and cooperate with the larger power in other spheres of influence, i.e. the political and/or the economic, in exchange for the protection of the larger power. Given that this rarely happens, the decision of a smaller power to fight against all odds, and in spite of serious consequences involved, requires more discussion before the tactics involved can be fully appreciated. The determination of a smaller power to fight for its survival in the face of certain defeat – while seemingly irrational to Americans today – instead has to do with expectations of post-conflict discrimination and strategic calculations of possible future subjugation for the defeated population by the dominant power.

Asymmetrical conflict is not new and is found in the writings of Thucydides related to the Peloponnesian War. In this work, written in 431 BCE and reprinted in Williams *et al* (2004:40-48), Thucydides outlines a possible dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians, whereby the larger power (Athens) tries to reason with the Melians about why they should submit and do what is asked of them. This dialogue is useful when attempting to analyze the relationship between the United States and the Middle East. Using arguments that the Athenians considered both “persuasive and incontrovertible,” the Athenian leaders made it plain that resistance on the part of the Melians would only bring about the unnecessary destructions of their country, whereas cooperation would guarantee their security and stability. The assumption that they could do this came from the old-world logic that “when ... discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” for practical reasons.

Found within the sub-text of the dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians, however, is an understanding that even in the face of certain defeat, smaller powers are often likely to try and defend their sovereignty and national honor. When the Melians see nothing coming from surrender except slavery, for example, the Melian leaders make it completely clear that they intend to fight, arguing that “fortune sometimes makes the odds more level than could be expected from the difference in numbers of the two sides. And if we surrender, then all our hope is lost at once, whereas, so long as we remain in action, there is still a hope that we may yet stand upright.” The explanation provided by Metz (2007a:73) is that there are times when “honor, justice, and revenge matter more than schools,

roads, and jobs,” especially if the insurgents are seen as giving them security and outside forces are seen as destroying that. This may not seem rational from the larger power, especially as it is often the case that these states believe their influence to be beneficial for the success of the smaller country. Sincerity of intent, however, does not always translate into favorable results for all involved. Moreover, even when it does, such developments can still come across as a form of subjugation to the smaller country. Consider, for example, the response of the people in the Middle East to modernization. While desiring prosperity and valuing development, many Middle Eastern countries have resisted adopting western values in total, preferring instead to maintain their cultural integrity and pride. This returns to the idea that democratization relies on grassroots support, which must coincide with the cultural context in which it emerges, if it is to be successful. As summarized by Amanat (2001:25-26), many people in the Arab world feel that their cultural values are “under siege from the modern world,” as symbolized by the United States. Accordingly, “the Arab world has been radical in its politics, monolithic in its approach, and defiant towards the West.” It is not that they do not want to succeed in the international arena, only that they want to do it on their own terms.

Hence, returning to Thucydides, while the Athenians insist that there should be no sense of “honor on one side and shame on the other” when it is a question of survival, the prospect that the Melians are involved in a fight they cannot win does not render the most practical outcome. That they ultimately lose the fight does not diminish their determination to resist their impending doom in the first place. What exactly is Thucydides trying to say in this passage? One perspective is that he is almost presenting a comedy of errors, where the Melians are doomed to play the buffoon that is too simple-minded to choose the path that everyone can see is the most logical. After all, the path that they choose does indeed lead to their ruin. From the Athenian point of view, this assessment makes sense. The fact remains, however, that Thucydides does not present the Melians in this light, but instead presents them in a heroic stance, albeit a tragic one. Rather than simplistic arguments on the part of the Melians, Thucydides has the people of this small island talk about issues such as “fair play and just dealing,” while at the same time giving the impression that it would be better for the Athenians to accept them as neutral and impartial observers to the events taking place around them. When the Athenians counter that they have no choice but to use military force against the Melians, since (from their perspective) any form of democracy would show them as weak and ineffective and thereby undermine their reputation for military and political strength. The Melians counter this by asking: ‘Is it not certain that you will make enemies of all states who are at present neutral, when they see what is happening here and naturally conclude that in course of time, you will attack them too?’

Thucydides thus highlights that while the dominant powers have an expectation that their superiority in military means would automatically translate into submission – after all, resistance is not only seen as futile, but it would most likely lead to the same country’s destruction – this is not always the case. Whereas such an assessment makes sense, as long as the smaller country has a reason to play by the established rules of the game and see themselves as a modern state worthy of engagement. To reach this level, however, certain developmental steps must have been achieved, whereby the state in question has reached a level of security and stability that allows them to operate as autonomous, sovereign states within the overarching international community, whether or not they have a large army to protect national interests through military power. In these cases, the decision to integrate into the international community is more than recognition by those in power that it was not in their best interests to fight a larger power that would destroy them. Instead, they see value in integrating and agreeing to play by the rules, even if some of their basic interests and freedoms must be forfeited. From this arrangement, after all, will emerge a type of social contract at the international level, whereby the states are unable to do whatever they want whenever they want, yet they still gain benefits by virtue of operating as a modern state in the established international system. For example,

a decision to cooperate can imply that the leadership of these countries believes that if left alone, they can prosper in regional interaction and business arrangements, so long as they do not counter the interests of the existing power-wielder(s). An alternative strategic consideration might be that they believe that their cooperation will result in their ability to participate in lucrative alliances with larger powers that would allow them to prosper in ways that they could not achieve on their own. An important aspect of this type of cooperation, however, is the belief on the part of the national populous that even without a military presence, their country is nevertheless left to its own devices to pursue business alliances that benefit them and that they have a choice in what happens, i.e. their own future.

If, by contrast, a country is not integrated into the larger international framework, the decision to cooperate will be interpreted as akin to submitting to slavery, as it is viewed to entail a complete loss of autonomy. Rather than calculating success and failure in terms of battles and resources lost, groups in this type of environment are more likely to keep fighting for whatever territory they can maintain, i.e. mountainous terrains or outposts. This type of reaction requires a different approach from the stronger power, as the end of a perfectly executed, conventional military campaign does not necessarily signal the end of conflict, but rather the start of future insurgencies intent on protecting every village and town, whatever the means and/or cost. In certain respects, this signals a shift away from the modern state, i.e. those that calculate strategic losses in terms of how they related to the international community. In this scenario, surrender is viewed as completely unacceptable, either because they feel that they will lose their entire identity or alternatively because they do not trust the dominant powers to treat them equitably after surrendering, meaning that it is better to die with honor than to live in shame and servitude. In the final equation, this means that when a smaller power sees no other option but to fight or be destroyed, they will use whatever means are available to try and protect their borders and livelihood in the longer-term, which brings the issue of conventional and unconventional warfare into focus.

Conventional versus Unconventional Warfare

Conventional warfare is the most common form of conflict between states. It is normally fought openly between two (or more) powers of at least comparable size and military/economic capacity. In this form of warfare, strategic military plans target the military personnel, facilities and resources of the opposing army using clear-cut goals and objectives. Because the two sides are comparable in these areas, troops meet on the battle field and fight until one side has gained enough of an advantage that the battle ends either through a clear-cut victory over the adversary or a cessation of hostilities and the implementation of a peace treaty. Unlike in the more traditional settings, modern conventional warfare does not culminate in change state borders. If anything, given the tenets of international law, many modern wars aim to restore borders that have been unlawfully violated by a larger aggressor. More than this, when established states are involved, there are clear military targets and leadership figures to target and threaten with imminent consequences. Hence, when international law is breached, there are clear channels to be followed before war is enacted, but more importantly, there is a clear enemy to be targeted. There is also the possibility that individual states will not have to engage in military combat alone, since the international community has the legitimacy to respond to cases that breach international law. Even more comforting, however, is the promise of a clear beginning to hostilities, followed by an unambiguous conclusion to combat that culminates in the designation of the winners and the losers. In cases of conventional warfare, there is a clear aggressor with clear strategic targets and the promise of an end to open hostilities in a reasonable period of time. Moreover, when conventional warfare is mobilized, the states involved will usually move to formulate a treaty or international diplomatic solution before there is a single undisputed loser, rather

than fighting doggedly on until they completely destroy each other. In this scenario, each of the combatants have more to lose than simple honor, i.e. resources and the overarching quality of life of its citizens, which in turn makes it unlikely that extreme solutions will be sought, provided the conflict is not part of a larger world war.

Similar patterns of conflict can be found when considering regional conflicts, since many of the same rules of conventional warfare apply and the same debate over symmetry between nations exists. Many of these conflicts are either inter-state and are fought over resources, or they are civil wars that have crossed borders and become interstate either because another state gets involved or because the previously existing state disintegrates and splinters into at least two, sometimes more, separate entities. In these cases, the responsibility for national defense falls primarily on the warring states or contiguous states, whose existence might be threatened by any escalation of warfare in the region. This can involve either the military, if the conflict involves open combat, or homeland security forces, if the conflict involves non-state actors that use political violence against state entities.

Unconventional warfare, by contrast, is better characterized as campaigns meant to spread fear in the hearts of one's enemies. To achieve these ends, rather by design or a lack of alternatives, these campaigns often include the use of weapons and/or tactics that overstep the boundaries of civilized combat, i.e. the use of chemical weapons, the misuse of nuclear technology, the lack of concern for civilian casualties, etc. In these situations, while combatants may still target military sites, it is not primarily through open combat, but rather through covert or guerilla tactics meant to "spread subversion and propaganda" throughout enemy territory (Mingst, 2004:211-212; see also Michaud, 2005:36), or to achieve more immediate goals that cannot be secured through conventional means. What this means is that in cases involving unconventional warfare, strategic targets are less obvious to the larger power, the end goal is seemingly less obtainable, the terms of success and failure are blurred, and the timeframe involved is calculated in terms of years and decades, rather than months and years.

One explanation for this: conflicts involving unconventional warfare are often presented, through propaganda, to the people living within the state or regional area as intimately tied to the cultural, religious and ethnic norms of particular groupings of people, which conversely means that the combatants may find additional reasons to continue fighting, even if the odds of success are not rationally available. Numerous examples of such motivational tactics are found in history, including but not limited to Hitler's campaign against the Jewish communities in Germany, Slobodan Milosevic's campaigns against the Croatians and Bosnians within the former Yugoslavia, the racial divisions and conflicts between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, to name only a few. The most salient examples of this type of conflict, however, can be found in civil wars that erupt within the boundaries of a single state or in tribal/ethnic/religious conflicts that cross borders, but at the regional, rather than the international levels. An example of this would be the Taliban, which has groupings in neighboring states including Afghanistan and Pakistan. As long as these groups were incorporated into the two separate states, their activities were distinctive and did not necessarily related one to the other. With the changes in power relationships within both states, by contrast, the ethnic ties between the two groups foretell the possible interaction of the two groups to try and achieve common ethnic goals. It moreover marks a definitive shift away from the rules of conventional warfare given the associated loss of meaning to state sovereignty and control.

Given the timeframe involved and the associated costs, the question is why unconventional warfare would ever be the option of choice for a potential combatant. In many cases, the answer is that there is no other alternative but to pursue this track. If conflict is inevitable between states and the most

logical outcome is the destruction of one of the two states, it stands to reason that they will find alternative ways to succeed, or at least to die trying. Why? When a smaller country considers its options to defend its territory, those in power often realize that to do so, they must find less conventional ways to try and gain the advantage over a much larger army. After all, if it cannot meet the enemy face-to-face on the battlefield and expect anything other than sure defeat, especially if the battle takes place within the borders of the smaller country. Hence, the latter will use whatever resources it has (i.e. terrain, knowledge of local territory, etc.) to its best advantage to convince the larger power that it is too costly to continue a war of this nature.

Additionally, this question again ties into the scenario outlined above by Thucydides, where there comes a point where the leaders (and by extension the people) of a country view themselves as having lost control of their own destinies because of the interference in their affairs by an outside power. Whether this means that they see themselves as no better than slaves, or to bring this debate into more contemporary terms, as in danger of losing their cultural identity and/or religious piety through the exposure to ideas and customs directly challenging the traditional order of a country, is immaterial to this debate. The point to understand is that the people are prompted by circumstance to fight for their national and/or ethnic pride, despite the odds. This often occurs either when the business deals pursued with the larger country fail to bring the expected benefits, or alternatively changes come (and/or are implemented) that are so widespread and quick that they disrupt the cultural and religious identity of the population. While change is inevitable in society, it has typically been gradual, meaning that it has become part of a country's national identity over time and is therefore not as confronting to the people.

Other changes, by contrast, such as those associated with modernization and/or globalization, are overarching enough to be viewed with suspicion, if not outright hostility by the people most directly impacted. The industrialization process in England, for example, prompted Karl Marx to contemplate the inequalities between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as he formulated his theory of communism. Another example more directly related to the discussion at hand would be the reaction of the people in the Middle East to the abrupt implementation of liberal policies into society during the twentieth century. While meant to bring the countries in the region of the world into line with the developmental potential of their counterparts in the West, the actual experience of the people was often one of widespread corruption and frequent disorientation, which in turn has led different groups to despair and turn to political violence as a seeming answer to their problems. Underpinning this response, after all, is a feeling of helplessness by smaller countries when confronted by the military and economic superiority of larger powers that seemingly dictate the terms of modernity to the leaders of the former group. Often this prompts the population to view their own leaders as either powerless to change the country's fortunes, or more problematically as having 'sold out' to the larger powers by appearing to worry more about keeping up appearances with the existing power structure in the international community than about the continuation of whatever distinguishes the country from those around it. In these circumstances, if there is no standing military that can conventionally compete with the forces that seem to threaten a country's national security and pride, other unconventional means will be found to assert a state and/or group's independence. This in turn completely changes the responses needed by the international community to ensure a workable balance of power that both endures, but also respects the rights and needs of the smaller countries that cannot assert their interests in terms that more traditionally fall into the category of hard power. This reality requires unpacking, if a more holistic approach is to be found when assessing holistic approaches to emerging patterns of asymmetrical conflict in the international community that possess elements of both conventional and unconventional warfare simultaneously, or at least in tandem.

Falling into the Alice's Looking Glass: Addressing the Various Elements of the International Community Simultaneously

In the current political environment, unconventional warfare has come to be associated with both regional and transnational terrorist campaigns and as such, it is considered the 'cowardly' tool of the enemy. In light of the discussion above, this grossly underestimates the nature of unconventional warfare and thereby cripples the ability of the West to respond to its use. While unconventional warfare indeed includes tactics adopted by terrorist organizations that are not operating according to the accepted rules of the battlefield, there are other situations where this type of warfare will be encountered, especially in the current international atmosphere, where the majority of conflicts are no longer between combatants of comparable size but rather involve the intervention of western superpowers in the affairs of smaller countries across the globe. Consequently, it is important to have an understanding of how the different forms of warfare discussed above interact, as well as the ways in which they are both similar and different through a comprehensive comparative analysis of contemporary warfare.

At the most basic level, it must be understood that asymmetrical and symmetrical conflict can involve conventional *and* unconventional tactics, despite the size differentials involved between combatants. The determining factors, when making these distinctions, have to do with the combatant's perceptions of the rules of the game. If clear objectives are involved, then conventional rules apply, no matter the size of the countries involved in conflict. If the combatants do not agree to play by the rules of just war, by contrast, then it does not matter whether or not the competing groups are symmetrical or not in size, as they are both going to do whatever it takes to win. This implies that the timeframe will be longer and the terms of what constitutes success less evident to the outside observer. It also often involves the use of tactics that are not associated with the standing armies of western powers, i.e. a clear entrance and exit strategy, established standards for the treatment of prisoners and a legitimately negotiated peace at the end of the hostilities. In these instances, guerrilla tactics and terrorist attacks are viewed as acceptable alternatives, if they are required to gain the upper-hand in combat.

Such arguments effectively highlight common misperceptions about the differences between conventional and unconventional war, and by association symmetrical and asymmetrical warfare as well. There is, to state it plainly, an assumption that if there is an asymmetry of power between two possible combatants, the use of unconventional warfare will be inevitable. Likewise, the expectation held, when two symmetrical powers come into conflict (whether at the local, regional or international levels), is that the ensuing conflict would be routinely conventional and automatically adhere fully to the tenets of the conventional 'gentleman's war.' Whereas such expectations might seem realistic for the majority of cases witnessed prior to and including those in the twentieth century, they oversimplify the issue when the scope is widened to include all of the countries of the world. There have been cases, after all, where dictators, even when fighting countries of a similar size, use unconventional warfare as a matter of course. Consequently, such states have been labeled as rogue states, because they are intimated to have little more scruples than individual terrorists and as such are to be dealt with accordingly. What this overlooks is the fact that while some dictators are unconcerned with humanitarian concerns, it could also be that they do not have enough resources to fight a protracted, conventional war, meaning that they would make a calculated decision to try and achieve certain goals quickly without wasting resources unnecessarily or (equally importantly) attracting significant hardships and losses that would befall their citizens negatively. After all, all national leaders must be aware of the experience of its citizens, whether or not free elections are held that allow the people to have a direct say in what happens at the national level. It may, after all, seem

that dictators can do whatever they want, but that does not mean that they should. If things become too bad and the people begin to suffer terrible consequences, there is always a chance that they will decide that even the consequences that befall rebellion are better than what is happening around them, which would in turn provide more challenges for the leadership to achieve its goals. In these situations, it could be decided that the use of unconventional means is worth the potential fallout, if it means that the people will not be adversely affected by combat.

There are also situations where the larger power, when faced with the continuation of a campaign that has no apparent end, will resort to tactics meant to overrun the enemy completely and in the process to take no enemies. An example of this would be Sherman's decision to burn the landscape of the South to prevent the continued operation of smaller, rogue bands fighting alongside, if not vicariously for, the Confederate Army. A more contemporary example would be the decision (mentioned above) by Saddam Hussein to use chemical weapons against the Iranian troops towards the end of the Iran-Iraq War in an attempt to bring the long-lasting, resource depleting conflict to a hasty conclusion (Coughlin, 2004:185-191). Other examples from World War II, or more specifically the close of WWII, have also already been discussed in other sections but are again applicable here. These include the decision by the Allies to bomb entire German cities (including Dresden), not because of their military, strategic value, but because it would force the German population to understand the nature of the war and thereby force Hitler and the Nazi leadership to realize that the consequences of a decision to prolong the war would be too costly to endure. The decision to use nuclear weapons in Japan to avoid committing Allied troops to a prolonged, bloody military campaign in the Pacific provides another poignant decision.

There are even other circumstances where the leaders will publicly support one course of action but approve unconventional tactics in covert operations that are enacted, as the name implies, without the express knowledge of the public. An example of this would be Lyndon Johnson's outward vocal support for a "total bombing halt" in Vietnam in 1968, just before his term in office was about to end, as opposed to his instructions to his top general to "go all out in the ground war in South Vietnam in quest of an early victory" before the end of his term (Sorley, 1999:86-87). The hope here was that if the war could be ended before Johnson left office, then not only would he more than likely be reelected, but he would go into the history books as a hero, as opposed to being remembered as a president tainted by an unpopular war.

Changing focus somewhat, there are situations where even when both sides/combatants are engaged in a war that adheres to conventional principles overall, individual battles get out of hand and descend into an environment where the implementation of drastic measures are the only way available to ensure the self-preservation of the troops involved in the open combat. In these instances, troops will be tempted to use whatever tactics (guerilla tactical maneuvers) and/or resources (chemical weapons) to ensure that they are not annihilated in the field. This option might be taken, for example, if it is understood that no prisoners of war will be taken or that any prisoners taken are unlikely to ever be released. Rather than tainting the overarching conflict, however, these situations should be rare and infrequent. More than this, those involved are likely to face tribunals to determine if charges should be brought against the participants, or if they should be excused from blame on the principle of self-defense.

There is even another set of circumstances that must be recognized, i.e. where unconventional warfare are used by elements operating within the ranks of comparable forces engaged in conventional warfare without the express consent of those in power. This includes situations where individuals under the command of a national government and its military structure decide to 'go

rogue' and apply their own rules of combat to individual situations, not because they are supposed to, but rather because they panic in crisis situations and use whatever means they can to survive, they do not care enough about the people they are in charge of to treat them with respect because of a sense of revenge or distain, or because they believe that the use of torture could provide quick answers to urgent questions that have remained unanswered through the use of conventional tactics. Examples of this include the use of war to enact revenge on another country for past offences, the use of torture by American forces on Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghirab after the second Gulf War, as well as the decision by some American G.I.s during the Vietnam War to kill prisoners outright that had already surrendered rather than take them to prison camps operating according to the norms of international law.

To understand why this would be relevant, Allison and Zelikow's (1999:2-7) model for assessing international relations according to a three-tiered typology that recognizes that countries must be assessed not only by what their national leaders do, but also according to the decisions of smaller groups and individuals included within the overarching national context as well, provides insight. Just as a country is made up of people who may or may not agree with the decisions of their government but have to submit to its authority anyway, the government cannot act effectively without the cooperation of its constituent parts. The same is true of the military. Without the support of a working bureaucratic structure under his/her command, the most brilliant military strategist will be unable to achieve victory, which in turn highlights the limitations that leaders face because of the resources they have, or do not have.

A similar point can be made about the moral integrity of an organization. While an entire organization cannot be rightly judged according to the actions of every individual operating under its direction, bad decisions by subordinates have an impact on the integrity of the leadership structure of that organization. In the case of a military, there are situations where the official policies are provided for all to see and yet the rank and file members of the military nevertheless engage in activities that overtly challenge these rules. Distinguishing these situations from the intentional use of unconventional warfare by a state is the fact that this type of behavior is a misnomer and is not representative of the conduct of the state and/or military organization as a whole. For one, in these instances, it is expected that those responsible for executing such decisions will have to face the consequences of his/her actions through court martial proceedings.

Constructing a Stratified Analysis of Contemporary Warfare

The challenges outlined in the previous section highlight that a more stratified analysis of warfare is needed to distinguish between fact and fiction and thereby dispel certain myths about the best ways for the U.S. military to conduct the ongoing 'war on terror.' Table 1 below outlines the various levels and aspects to contemporary warfare, in that it directly compares conventional and unconventional war in terms of the symmetry, or lack thereof, of resources between combatants. This will provide a firm foundation from which an analysis of other relevant aspects of contemporary warfare.

Table 1:
Conventional and Unconventional Warfare Compared

	Conventional			Unconventional	
	Symmetrical		Asymmetrical	Asymmetrical	Symmetrical
	Modern			Classical or pre-modern	
	State-based			Clan-based	
	Standing Army		Standing Army or highly organized oppositional group	Militarized Group	Standing Army
	Clear Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treaties • Sovereign borders • Military solution 		Modified Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of foreign intervention. • State survival 	Event specific end goals and objectives	Clear, but limited objectives
	Tactics				
	Limited Timeframe punctuated by negotiated peace		Limited Timeframe marked by cessation of aggression by smaller state or withdrawal of larger power.	Extended Timeframe lasting decades	Extended timeframe marked by a negotiated peace (often by an external power)
	Interstate Wars			Civil War	
	Global or World Wars			Regional and/or tribal-based conflicts	
	Total War			Insurgency campaigns	

As outlined in Table 1, the different aspects of warfare can be broken into its constituent parts, which in turn provide a better understanding of the different forms of combat. The most basic distinction highlighted in Table 1 is not surprisingly between conventional and unconventional warfare. While this article has already shown that these distinctions are not mutually exclusive by any means, it is nevertheless a distinction that is at the heart of the current debates about how the ongoing 'war on terror' should be conducted at the international level. As already highlighted, after all, the most worrying aspect is the idea that the West is using conventional warfare and thereby deserve more moral sensitivity while the countries of the Middle East are wantonly using unconventional warfare, not because they are strategically predisposed to this type of combat, rather because they are viewed as culturally and religiously drawn to the use of non-sanctioned violence in the pursuit of their national goals. Unfortunately, this creates an environment where the focus of analysis is misplaced, since it is precisely the fact that the United States and its allies are fighting according to conventions that do not give them the upper hand in the international community that has cause many of the problems encountered thus far in the course of the Afghani and Iraqi wars and the subsequent attempts to consolidate working democracies in these countries. To be clear, however, this is not to advocate that the United States should embark on missions that wantonly use unconventional tactics, as well, under the auspices that the West does not, under any circumstances negotiate with terrorists. To take this stand, it is important to determine who the terrorists actually are, as opposed to groups and individuals that are fighting for different reasons than those usually attributed to radical Islamist terrorists.

To take these considerations into consideration, Table 1 further subdivides *both* conventional and unconventional warfare into symmetrical and asymmetrical groupings to demonstrate that such tactics are used by both sides, depending on the strategic needs and considerations of particular campaigns. The next distinguishing features of these two groupings have to do with the types of warfare associated with them. In the conventional column, in addition to the examples of World War I and World War II are most inter-state wars where the two sides are fighting over clarified political goals that will either be achieved or not on the battlefield in a reasonable amount of time. Conversely, when considering unconventional warfare, whether the combat is between two equally sized groups or not, the battles are likely to be more intense, longer in duration, are likely to involve less than obvious success markers, as they are often related to the cultural and ethnic norms of a particular group and are not always easily transferrable to the dialogues associated with conventional warfare. The most salient examples of this type of conflict can be found in civil wars that erupt within the boundaries of a single state or in tribal/ethnic/religious conflicts that cross borders, but at the regional, rather than the international levels. An example of this would be the Taliban, which has groupings in neighboring states including Afghanistan and Pakistan. As long as these groups were incorporated into the two separate states, their activities were distinctive and did not necessarily related one to the other. With the changes in power relationships within both states, by contrast, the ethnic ties between the two groups foretell the possible interaction of the two groups to try and achieve common ethnic goals.

Embedded within this component of the chart is a realization that a second differentiation must be made between classic and modern forms of conflict, as they often correspond with the divisions found at the most basic levels between the conventional and unconventional groupings. To be conventional, the terms of combat will be couched in modern, state-based terminology; hence the standing army, negotiated terms between governments and the adherence to established legal-rational norms. Unconventional warfare, on the other hand, usually emerges when the existing powerbases within a state become unbalanced, the central government loses control of the situation and different ethnic, religious and/or cultural groupings begin to vie for political control and dominance. In these

cases, the question of whether or not the two groups are relatively similar in size (or not) is immaterial, because without a legal framework in which to operate, the two sides are prone to resort to different rules when engaging the enemy. The fighting is consequently longer in duration, less rules oriented, involves larger segments of the population and is fought in towns and villages rather than on a remote battlefield, which when taken together mean that the terms of success and failure become blurred and post-conflict resolution becomes more complicated. Battle becomes personal and is associated not only with national pride but with religious ideals and family identities.

Conventional war, by contrast, has been traditionally characterized as fought between two powers of comparable resources. The clearest example of this can be found in the alliances drawn during the first and second World Wars. The various countries involved were western or Asiatic powers that had standing armies, large populations and respective government intent on engaging their populations in combat. Even the posthumous assessment of the resources open to the Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War does not discount the fact that the former Soviet Union and the United States were considered equal combatants and the two major powerhouses of the world during the duration of the Cold War period. The distinctive aspect of this conflict of course came from the possession on both sides of nuclear weapons that brought about what has been termed the threat of mutually assured destruction. As a result, rather than rushing rashly into combat, the U.S. and the former U.S.S.R. would engage in arms talks and negotiations. The cost was simply too high to proceed into combat that would ultimately result in the loss of life, currency and territory for what was viewed as too little to gain.

For this reason, it becomes clear that size differentials do not ultimately determine the way that conflict progresses. Neither does it mean that post-conflict negotiations would be the same. There is a distinct difference between the operations of a state and the reaction of groups of people, whether in unorganized bands or in coordinated insurgency groups. The state has clear-cut responsibilities and standard operating procedures. When states are involved, there is a clear beginning to hostilities by virtue of a declaration of war where the people of the country are alerted to the fact that they may be called up to defend their country. There are battle plans and the military is mobilized to find the most efficient means to bring victory to the country and thereby defend its borders and its interests. There are discernible battles where the military is either successful and has achieved its objectives, or it is not successful and counteroffensives must be considered. In these instances, quantitative statistics help leaders to decide what is advantageous for the country and what is not. The number of troops is compared against the weapons arsenal at their disposal. This information is then compared against the resources of the opposing country and battle lines are drawn. More importantly, there comes a point in the conflict where it is decided that one of the two combatants has exhausted its resources and cannot end without destroying its country. At these points, either the flagging country will fight on until it is entirely destroyed and can fight no longer or treaties will be drawn up and discussed to bring a clear end to the hostilities. Hostages in these instances are to be treated with respect and while civilians will be part of the casualties, they are not to be targeted.

When considering non-state actors, by contrast, the dynamics of conflict transform immediately. First and foremost, other ways to assess success and failure must be found. For example, treaties mean very little to groups of people who operate within transnational channels, but outside the confines of state borders. If they have no definite state to worry about, they are not directly responsible for the people that fight for their ideals. Clearly provisions will be made to bring benefits and protection (whenever possible) to the people that fight their battles, but if a person is killed in battle or taken prisoner, they are not bound by the same rules that a state would be to secure their release or take care of the family that is left behind. Instead, these are simply viewed as the potential costs of

engaging in this type of conflict. A state, by contrast, is responsible for the welfare of its citizens, whether or not they choose to support the dominant values of the society or not. Consider, for example, a situation where a transnational group gains more members because of a successful insurgency and/or terrorist campaign, as compared with a situation where a country gains territory at the end of a successful military campaign. The new recruits to a group bring additional resources with very little reciprocal demands. The newly acquired land tracts, by contrast, become the sole responsibility of the conquering country. In these instances, the state is bound to provide for its new citizens, even those that did not want to become part of that country in the first place.

General, Contemporary Warfare and its Constituent Parts

➤ Pre-Modern and Modern Political Systems, Classic and Modern Warfare

One of the first subsections to be considered is the differentiation between classic and modern forms of conflict, as they often correspond with the divisions found at the most basic levels between the conventional and unconventional groupings. To be conventional, the terms of combat will be couched in modern, state-based terminology; hence the standing army, negotiated terms between governments and the adherence to established legal-rational norms. Unconventional warfare, on the other hand, usually emerges when the existing powerbases within a state become unbalanced, the central government loses control of the situation and different ethnic, religious and/or cultural groupings begin to vie for political control and dominance. In these cases, the question of whether or not the two groups are relatively similar in size is immaterial, because without a legal framework in which to operate, the two sides are prone to resort to different rules when engaging the enemy. The fighting is consequently longer in duration, less rules oriented, involves larger segments of the population and is fought in towns and villages rather than on a remote battlefield, which when taken together mean that the terms of success and failure become blurred and post-conflict resolution becomes more complicated. Battle becomes personal and is associated not only with national pride but with religious ideals and family identities that are seemingly under threat from external forces such as globalization or modernization.

As often happens, this category is again complicated by the use of similar words in different disciplines. In political science, for example, distinctions are made between modern and pre-modern political systems. Whereas pre-modern societies were characterized by agriculturally based economies, political systems based on traditional authority patterns and national borders protected only by the possession of a stronger army than ones enemies, modern political systems are industrialized, if not post-industrial, secured by legal-rational systemic authority and the rule of law, and bounded by state borders made sovereign and immutable by international legal norms. These differences, while relating to distinctions associated with classic and modern forms of warfare, are not readily tied together.

In military dialogue, there are a couple of ways to interpret the differences between pre-modern and modern conceptions of war. For example, prior to the Treaty of Westphalia, wars were primarily religious in nature and were perpetuated by the contest between “the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church in Central Europe and the Protestant decentralization of religious authority” underway in western Europe. In the eighteenth century, by contrast, wars were “limited in scope, ... fought for limited objectives” and primarily related to national concerns. The most defining feature of warfare at this time, however, is that the armies involved were “expensive tools” made up of “highly trained professionals” (Rapoport, 1968:18-19). With these characteristics, it follows that success would be found not in the complete annihilation of the other army, but rather in a strategic

assessment of cost versus benefits related to how many troops must be lost to achieve the desired national goals. Other conceptions of this debate are more specific to the types of military hardware used in battle. Referring back to the four generations of war outlined by Hammes (2004:16-24), for example, each new generation had to do with the changed weapons made available to the warring soldiers in different eras beginning with the invention of gunpowder, running through the use of trench warfare in WWI and the modern inventions associated with WWII including fighter jet planes and mobile tanks, to the use of unconventional means by terrorist and/or insurgent groups to level the playing field against larger, more technologically advanced states.

While not marking the onset of modern states and/or warfare, the twentieth century and the formulation of a more tangible approach to international law further transforms this debate, especially as it emerged to address the changed political realities in an international community marked by increased trade between countries, colonization and imperial conquest. International law, to demonstrate this principle, is characterized as a “series of interrelated normative statements ... backed by a promise of coercion” that are generally accepted as the framework for international security and the peaceful interaction of states. The intention of international law is to provide a way to forge a compromise between the “unavoidable tension [that exists] ... between the aim of maintaining the state and maximizing power, on the one hand, and of preserving the international system, on the other” (Coplin, 1965, reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:303-304).¹ Given that the state is the basic functioning of the international system, it stands that international security rests on maintaining state borders, meaning that conventional warfare is justified when current borders are threatened by another, more aggression state intent on domination and/or subjugation of surrounding countries. This has culminated in the idea of collective security, whereby all states are responsible for the security of those around them, or as described by Inis (1964, reprinted in Williams, *et al*, 2006, 290), there is a “proposition that aggressive and unlawful use of force by any nation against any nation will be met by the combined force of all other nation.”

At the theoretical level, there are a couple of problems with these assessments that are not immediately obvious, but nevertheless lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges of counterinsurgency, in particular when enacted by conventional military forces. For one, to again cite Coplin (1965; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:308-310) the concept of international law is in a state of “arrested ambiguity” in that it is caught somewhere between the ‘old,’ including principles such as legal equality, war spoils and territorial jurisdiction and the ‘new,’ which include the autonomy of international organizations and transnational activity. What this means is that international law developed in response to the negotiation of treaties and changing borders at the end of military conflicts, but is now used to mediate situations where borders are to remain sovereign and absolute. This creates problems for realists, who believe that self-interest and the pursuit of power lie at the heart of a country’s foreign policy. To again cite Inis (1964; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:296-298), collective security allows for little ambiguity, since it is “directed against undue power” whether that be at the hands of a “giant which threatens to grow to earth-shaking proportions or by a pygmy which has scant prospect of becoming a major factor in world politics.” Of consequence of this policy, states must reject both “pacifism and the right to use war as an instrument

¹ Coplin (1965, reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:303) describes domestic law as a framework for society that aids in the socialization of the individual. It does this by providing an ‘authoritative mode’ by which the “the ideals and purposes, the acceptable roles and actions, as well as the very processes of the societies” are communicated to the citizens of that country. The success or failure of social policies thus relies on both factual and normative ideas generated by domestic legal principles that in turn help build consensus within the population about various social, political and economic policies underpinning the overarching institutional framework of society

of national policy, while standing ready to resort to force for the fulfillment of their international obligation.”

The second problem is interrelated to the first and is entangled with the idea that borders are sovereign and immutable. As explained by Majeski, for example, when people are in trouble, financially or personally, they always have the ability to move somewhere else, or to locate and use different types of resources to better their circumstances. A state, by contrast, is a fixed entity. Unlike people, nation-states do not have the ability to relocate, or often to even procure different types of resources, meaning that they must find other ways to survive. It follows that this would often involve fighting against those around them to try and improve the standard of living of their people. In the international community, given the rigidity of the state system, this too is unacceptable (Majeski, 2004:457). According to the principles of collective security, whenever a state oversteps its boundaries and invades a neighboring country, the remaining countries in the world are expected to respond in such a way that the aggressive country retreats back into the existing borders. From the perspective of the country that has just been invaded, this makes perfect sense. From the perspective of the aggressor, given that they invaded in the first place to try and secure more sustainable resources, this is a problem. A country will work to ensure its survival, so what happens when there is no other way to survive than accept the terms dictated by a larger power.

The conclusion drawn by Organski (1968; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:287) when considering these dilemmas is that international politics is currently guaranteed by “two erroneous assumptions,” one of which is that “nations are fundamentally static units whose power is not changed from within.” Within this framework, stronger states may be content with an unchanging balance of power, but smaller states are often threatened by a perceived loss of influence and security. If the only recourse to strengthen your country, or even secure its survival, rests on increasing stockpiles of armaments, conquering and subjugating new territories or winning allies, it stands to reason that states “cannot actually gain in power without infringing upon the rights of other nations.” Problems quickly emerge when this scenario is tied to the former concept of collective security, where the various countries of the world have the responsibility to band together and challenge the aggressor to recant and return to the previous state of normality. Given that states are expected to fight for their survival, this arrangement allows no legitimate way for a state to overcome its own internal problems without engaging in actions that cause it to be at political odds with the rest of the countries in the world. A permanent dilemma is thus created in that political strength is still calculated according to military might and the associated victories in warfare, “but war is viewed as a breakdown of the system,” one that must be overcome in the final analysis.

Further complicating this component of analysis is the realization that it is possible that both classical and modern forms of conflict can be used within the context of a single country, or at least within the context of a single war campaign. Take the differences observed with regard to conflict patterns and insurgency responses when the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq respectively as examples. Within Iraq, while various insurgencies emerged in response to the U.S. invasion in both the early 1990s and 2003, the actual battles adhered to the rules of conventional warfare in that when the U.S. military achieved military superiority in part of the country, the entire country submitted to the consequences of defeat. There were moreover official reasons offered for entering into war on both occasions (even if the international community did not unanimously support the rules for the 2nd Gulf War). When considering the actual course of conflict, there was a clear beginning to both wars, clear objectives to be achieved, and a recognized end to hostilities with the surrender of the Iraqi army to the U.S. military.

The telling aspect of this analysis comes, however, when the events following the two wars are considered. In Iraq, in line with conventional norms for international conflict during the twentieth century, Saddam Hussein recognized that he would be defeated easily, if he were to approach the U.S. military from a purely conventional fashion. Rather than resorting to unconventional warfare such as using chemical weapons (after all, he had been threatened with the unconventional destruction of his country if he resorted to such means [Coughlin, 2004]) –or outright guerilla warfare campaigns, he staged a desperate (but conventional) use of alternative tactics through his decision to fortify Baghdad with whatever military power he had left. The idea was to protect the capital to the expense of the outlying regions of the country, which again highlights his recognition that the fall of the capital was one of the primary signals in international conflict that a country had been defeated by another power. Even more telling, when it became clear that Iraq would lose the war, rather than retreating to the rural areas of Iraq and fighting on with guerilla forces, he disappeared, thereby allowing the U.S. military to oversee the implementation of another governmental regime. He admittedly called for forces within Iraq to engage in terrorist insurgency campaigns to resist the role and influence of the United States in the post-transitional re-development of Iraq, but he did not attempt to fight to the very last rural province.

In Afghanistan, by contrast, the Taliban did not respond as the Hussein regime did, at least once they were removed from power. Rather than accepting defeat and disappearing from politics, the Taliban melted into the non-state political atmosphere and have fought as a guerilla force for every small village and town. This has created a situation where state-based efforts have resulted in an Afghani government that must now content with ethnically-based, Taliban insurgencies that bring the post-conflict reconciliation into question. While this same example will thus be considered in the section differentiating between state and non-state actors, it is included here because of the fact that the Taliban had seized control of the Afghani government leading into the 2001 invasion and was (at least at that time) acting as a state actor, which has implications for the discussion here. The question is why, since they were acting in an official capacity, the outcome was so different from the Iraqi example. For one, Afghanistan is such a fractured state ethnically, that the Taliban was never fully accepted throughout the entire country as the legitimate leadership structure. This was particularly true in the capital, Kabul, which while retaining some traditional elements of Afghani identity, had also adopted many aspects of modern life, including social services, as well as expanded rights for women, which were severely curtailed when the Taliban took power. As described by Michael Griffin, the “society ... envisioned ... [by the Taliban] went so far beyond comparable movements of spiritual revival that it made the ayatollahs look like liberal progressives” (Griffin, 2001:5-9). Their success nevertheless highlights the inherent tension between the modern elements of parts of Afghanistan and the fragmented (traditional) rural segments of the countryside, each of which have competed for prominence throughout the country’s existence. These contradictions have created an environment where the western world has misinterpreted Afghani politics as part of the modern world, when in reality the country is still so fragmented that it will take awhile for conventional forms of government and warfare to develop, which in turn brings the next set of differentiations into focus, i.e. state actors operating according to legal-rational norms versus non-state actors often operating according to clan-based, ethnically and/or religiously driven engagement with the enemy.

➤ **Military Objectives, State Interests and Tribal Loyalties**

Using Zelikow and Allison’s approach to analyzing international politics, where it must be recognized that there national decisions are based on an understanding of how the different levels of society work together to achieve the desired goals. For example, one of the main aspects of state power comes from the size and capacity of the military forces found within the country.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the objectives of the military and the state would be the same. Whereas military leaders make plans on the best way to win the war, national politicians are also interested in the political aspects of any military campaign. How will the attacks impact the Country B's population? What diplomatic fall-out will occur from civilian casualties, even when they were purely accidental? How do you sell the costs of an international military campaign to a local population that sees little benefit from what is happening somewhere across the world? Will it be necessary to take steps to win a military campaign that will be so unpopular with the local population that the politician in question will not be re-elected? This is not to say that the interests of these two groups do not intersect in that good military leaders will think about the collateral damage of their decisions and good politicians will recognize that sometimes decisions must be made for the good of the country, even if the population does not understand why. The point to understand here is that while working toward the same goal, these two elements of a state have different ways of achieving their objectives. For this reason, if a state is to be effective in combat, these different approaches, not to mention the issue of whether or not a military force is ready for action, must be taken into consideration before hostilities are initiated.

In a similar way, the interests and perspectives of the people are often different from both that of the state and/or the military, which complicates national foreign policy considerations further. For example, it is natural that a country is ruled either by the majority through democratic processes or by a minority that is powerful enough to retain power the authoritarian means. Whatever the political regime type, there are minority groups within the state that have interests that can often diverge greatly from official state policies. This is particularly true in areas of the world, i.e. Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East, where state borders were administratively drawn, not to mention that some states ceased to exist while others were artificially created after World Wars I and II. Consider, for example, that at the end of WWI, state borders were administratively applied to a region by foreign powers without explicit cooperation from the people most directly affected. Through a policy of self-determination, as outlined by Michael Gasper (2011:40-41), three new republics emerged (Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia) and seven semi-colonial political entities called mandates (Iraq, Jordan [Transjordan], Syria, Israel [Palestine] and Lebanon). Similar tactics were employed in central Europe with the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, whereby the former Czechoslovakia was formed by combining Czech and Slovak populations and Yugoslavia was created in an attempt to provide a common homeland for the Slavic people of the former Empire. To understand why these developments were so detrimental to international stability in the longer-term, the ongoing conflicts between Israel and its Middle Eastern neighbors, as well as the peaceful break-up of Czechoslovakia, but more specifically the extremely violent break-up of the former Yugoslavia need only be considered. Of relevance here is the point that ethnic groups within a state can oppose official national policies to such an extent that they can create a potential conflict within the borders, often resulting in the onset of civil wars and more far-reaching regional conflicts.

Before continuing, one further point must be considered, that state interests and the objectives of insurgents and/or terrorist groups can converge, thereby simplifying certain aspects of asymmetrical warfare while complicating others. On the one hand, for example, if a transnational organization is clearly working with a recognized state, such as the links that existed between the Taliban in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda, more conventional forms of warfare can be used to attack the perpetrators of terrorist activities against a particular state. The logic employed here is that any attack on the political infrastructure of the state will help to weaken the groups that rely on that state's protection and/or support. This is one of the reasons why fewer international objections were voiced against the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, as opposed to the subsequent 2003 invasion of Iraq. While it is unlikely that Saddam Hussein would have condemned the Al Qaeda attacks on the U.S., there were

clear reasons why he would not do it overtly, i.e. the certainty that such links would bring imminent attack on his country.

Other times, it is not even possible in these cases to separate fully the type of asymmetrical warfare enacted by states and the transnational operations of insurgencies and terrorist groups. There are, after all, many historical cases of state-terrorism, where a state has direct ties with a terrorist group. In these cases, to cite Whittaker (2002:11-17), states can either harbor an individual terrorist, turn a blind eye to training camps within its borders or it can actually “back covert terrorist methods to contain a larger threat.” Clear examples of this can be found in the contemporary political actions of states such as Libya and Syria. Following 9/11, to take this line of reasoning further, the reason why attacks on Afghanistan were less problematic than those on Iraq stem from the fact that there were clear, unambiguous links between the Taliban and al Qaeda. Other cases have been less clear. For example, there were persistent rumors that Pakistan, an ally of the U.S., was simply overlooking al Qaeda training camps in certain less-hospital regions of the country. In this case, while not directly harboring these groups, the authorities were accused of not actively looking for these terrorist training camps, which in turn allowed them to continue operating.

Ties between states and insurgency/terrorist groups, however, are not always straightforward or easy to quantify. Just because a group is operating within the borders of a particular state does not mean that state has the resources or capacity to eradicate them completely. This is indeed one of the most prevalent myths about the fourth generation of war, i.e. that these groups can be defeated and their threat neutralized in the same way that modern states can. In reality, this is not the case. Since they do not fight like conventional armies, at least in the ways that are most important to the conduct of conventional war (such as recognition for what constitutes victory and defeat), they cannot be approached in exactly the same way. Terrorist groups and insurgencies must instead be managed through a combination of domestic laws enacted through the relevant governmental departments (homeland security) and/or criminal justice agencies and, given the international aspect of these conflicts, the efforts of a country’s military force. To be understood here, however, is conveyed through the use of the word managed. Since the objectives are different and groups are organized precisely to be effective whether or not they are in direct contact with the acknowledged ‘leader’ of the group/movement, it stands to reason that they will not be defeated by the mere removal of any particular individual. In this respect, states may or may not have been negligent in their counterterrorism efforts, even when the actions of smaller rogue groups continue to operate within their borders. To be clear, this does not completely excuse states from fighting the good fight. While these groups/movements cannot be fully eradicated in the traditional sense, their activities must be contained, if a sense of stability and peace is to be maintained. Moreover, a state that is not making efforts to contain terrorist activities could just as easily be enabling them, meaning that concerted efforts must be made to eliminate all safe havens are eliminated, or at least minimized to help in the fight against the spread of terrorism.

➤ **State and Non-State Actors**

When discussing conventional warfare at the beginning of this article, all of the scenarios mentioned involved one state challenging another state directly, even if the power imbalances involved meant that they used remarkably different styles of warfare to achieve their goals. Increasingly, as different asymmetrical scenarios were considered, other types of actors gained prominence as additional tiers of analysis were added. To explore this further, it is important to make a distinction at this point between state and non-state actors.

As dictated by Weber in his lecture *Politics as Vocation*, the state is a “human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force” over its population. Without it, Weber conversely asserts that anarchy would prevail (Weber, 2000). This has implications for the discussion at hand. After all, if it is logical to assume that the state is the officially-sanctioned form of power and retribution within the state, any move against the state, if unsuccessful, will culminate in the incarceration, if not death of the treason-ist rebels. Hence, if the combatant groups are acting in the context of an existing state, they will (more likely than not) pursue predictable, state-based solutions to existing societal problems. Legal-rational norms and the rule of law are often involved in this scenario, since these groups, while engaging in protests, are looking for negotiated solutions to their grievances that help perpetuate the viability and longevity of the existing regime. While often involving a longer-period of time to resolve difference, these negotiations are often at the basis of a longer-term legitimacy for an established democratic regime.

When, by contrast, non-state actors have either given up on the idea of reforming the state or have never agreed to state legitimacy in the first-place, the consequences are very different, as are the required efforts at countering their activities. If the challenge is coming from within the state, unconventional tactics will be considered. Thus implied, when protests evolve into insurgencies and/or terrorist campaigns, the very existence of the state is in question. Timeframes become infinitely longer, as success is measured in terms of outlasting the state, rather than in achieving legal changes meant to empower a certain minority group. Battles are thus more mental than physical, as they are aimed at either weakening the state establishment or at creating fear and anxiety throughout society in an effort to compromise the effectiveness and efficacy of the existing system, not at finding acceptable compromises with the state or even with overthrowing it. Power relationships are an integral part of this campaign, since insurgencies aim to pull legitimacy away from the government and thereby force a hard-power response that can ultimately be found inadequate to the task of maintaining societal stability and peace. For this reason, it becomes clear that size differentials do not ultimately determine the way that conflict progresses. Neither does it mean that post-conflict negotiations would be the same.

There is a distinct difference between the operations of a state and the reaction of groups of people, whether in unorganized bands or in coordinated insurgency groups. The state has clear-cut responsibilities and standard operating procedures. When states are involved, there is a clear beginning to hostilities by virtue of a declaration of war where the people of the country are alerted to the fact that they may be called up to defend their country. There are battle plans and the military is mobilized to find the most efficient means to bring victory to the country and thereby defend its borders and its interests. There are discernible battles where the military is either successful and has achieved its objectives, or it is not successful and counteroffensives must be considered. In these instances, quantitative statistics help leaders to decide what is advantageous for the country and what is not. The number of troops is compared against the weapons arsenal at their disposal. This information is then compared against the resources of the opposing country and battle lines are drawn. More importantly, there comes a point in the conflict where it is decided that one of the two combatants has exhausted its resources and cannot end without destroying its country. At these points, either the flagging country will fight on until it is entirely destroyed and can fight no longer or treaties will be drawn up and discussed to bring a clear end to the hostilities. Hostages in these instances are to be treated with respect and while civilians will be part of the casualties, they are not to be targeted.

When considering non-state actors, by contrast, the dynamics of conflict transform immediately. First and foremost, other ways to assess success and failure must be found. For example, treaties mean

very little to groups of people who operate within outside the officially sanctioned state channels, whether within a single state, combining ethnic groups in a regional area but including several states or even those transnational groups that operate completely outside the confines of state borders. If they have no definite state to worry about, they are not directly responsible for the people that fight for their ideals. Clearly provisions will be made to bring benefits and protection (whenever possible) to the people that fight their battles, but if a person is killed in battle or taken prisoner, they are not bound by the same rules that a state would be to secure their release or take care of the family that is left behind. Instead, these are simply viewed as the potential costs of engaging in this type of conflict. A state, by contrast, is responsible for the welfare of its citizens, whether or not they choose to support the dominant values of the society or not. Consider, for example, a situation where a transnational group gains more members because of a successful insurgency and/or terrorist campaign, as compared with a situation where a country gains territory at the end of a successful military campaign. The new recruits to a group bring additional resources with very little reciprocal demands. The newly acquired land tracts, by contrast, become the sole responsibility of the conquering country. In these instances, the state is bound to provide for its new citizens, even those that did not want to become part of that country in the first place.

The example of the Taliban in Afghanistan again provides a good example, because this one group represents an example of both a state actor and a non-state actor, just not simultaneously. As highlighted above, as long as the Taliban was in power, they could be directly targeted by George W. Bush for their open links with al Qaeda. It was in this context that the campaign in Afghanistan was premised, which had as its objective the removal of the Taliban from power. This was moreover achieved with relative ease, which led many to mistakenly believe that a post-transitional democracy would be easily created to fill the void left by the retreating Taliban regime. As had often happened previously in Afghanistan, however, this underestimated the “entrenched ... prejudices of Afghan society – between Pashtun and non-Pashtun, Ghilzai and Durrani, town and country, [and] traditional and modern” that never seemed to disappear completely when one political regime was replaced with another hosting a new national leader (Griffin, 2001:19). When they were taken out of power, they retreated into the countryside and continued to fight the U.S. military and the new, national leadership in Kabul.

Of more interest for this section, however, is the role of the Taliban as they sought to establish their power and legitimacy in the first place. Whereas political power forced them to change their tactics once in power, i.e. they had to act according to the norms and practices of a functioning state actor, they did not gain power in the first place as recognized state entities. They were instead a militant group of students who aligned themselves with rebels that had fought valiantly against the former Soviet Union during the 1970s and 80s during an intensely complicated civil war environment where various forces fought to gain ultimate political power and influence in Kabul during the 1990s. Acting according to the same principles that the participants of the 1979 Iranian Revolution used to justify their assumption of power, the Taliban promoted their reasons for fighting as being intimately aligned with a campaign inspired by the Koran to bring Afghani society back in line with extremely conservative ideals of Islamic purity and obedience to God.

➤ **International (Non-State) Actors**

While the terms of engagement have changed, the proclivity for larger powers to intervene in the affairs of neighboring smaller powers has not, as attested to by the passage cited above where Thucydides talks about the Melian response to Athenian attempts to control their domestic activities. Consider, for example, that leading into the twentieth century, the United States intervened in the

affairs of bordering (smaller) island nations, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii and the Philippines in the name of moral imperatives. With regard to the latter, the United States became involved in Filipino affairs when they invaded the country nominally to keep Spain from regaining sovereignty over the island, or alternatively because it was the moral obligation of the United States to help a country that was unfit to govern itself and needed to be civilized, but more plausibly because it was a strategically-important base from which to launch future U.S. naval campaigns originating in this region of the world. This was not to change over the next century. As explained by E. San Juan (1996:24), even in 1986, “almost a century ... after Admiral George Dewey defeated the Spanish flotilla in Manila Bay,” the politicians and military leaders in Washington D.C. “twisted in their sleep at the possible ‘loss’ of ... islands in the western Pacific – more specifically the ‘loss’ of several strategic military bases and installations” in the Pacific Ocean that helped to connect the United States and Europe geographically.

This sentiment is summarized by President Coolidge perfectly (cited in Beard and Beard, 1929:490):

“Without the Philippines as a commercial and military base We could not enforce the open door policy of equal trade opportunities for all nations in China, could not issue the limitless economic opportunities sure to accompany the awakening of the East and could not wage war effectively to protect our interests ... in the Orient’s economic and international life.”

Thus highlighted is that western powers have often used moralistic arguments to legitimate pragmatic decisions made according to economic necessities. In this case, the United States modified the colonial idea of the ‘white man’s burden’, whereby western powers exported their state infrastructure to the seemingly more primitive countries in an attempt to modernize their economies and allow them to compete effectively on an international scale, and argued that they would act as an imperial power intent on helping indigenous populations achieve modern development on their own through the external guarantee of stability offered by the United States.

At the end of World War I, the dynamics of regional conflict changed. Following the collapse of the Austria-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the victorious powers worked to create borders in regional areas that defied easy classification. Acting according to the principles of self determination, as espoused by former U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, the victorious powers of WWI took pains to create state borders that seemingly reflected the ethnic dimensions of the regions left without a central governing authority. There were a couple of problems with this arrangement. First, because the former Empires did not adhere to strict state borders, centuries of intermarriage and economic cooperation meant that the new state borders sometimes separated members of a single family. Second, whereas the borders in the United States and western Europe had developed organically over the preceding centuries and were thus viewed as legitimate by the people living within their borders, they were more enduring. Third, the very principle of self-determination had the potential to undermine these borders, since ethnic groupings were given justification to try and establish their own state, provided they could govern themselves. The multitudes of potential fissures were admittedly not completely obvious until the collapse of communism in 1989-1991, but the possibility for future problems was nevertheless provided.

One of the reasons why these divisions did not become immediately problematic can be found in the international political environment sustained throughout the Cold War. Referring back to the idea put forth by John Lewis Gaddis relating to the stability maintained in the context of a bipolar world, it cannot be ignored that from 1945 to the collapse of Soviet-backed communism in 1989-1991, the focus of smaller countries was either on the United States or the former Soviet Union, depending on

its ideological/strategic preferences. As explained by Thomas Barnett (2003:91), the juxtaposition of the U.S. and the former U.S.S.R. during the Cold War created a system of alliances where “we [the U.S.] had our friends to worry about and the Soviets had theirs.” This created situations where countries would align themselves according to pragmatic concerns couched in ideological arguments. Take the Middle East, for example. When it became obvious that the United States was going to back Israel, countries like Egypt naturally looked to the Soviet Union for backing, not because Islam was more compatible with communism (an oxymoronic argument given the fact that Soviet-style communism left no room for religion in its political structure), but rather because of more immediate strategic concerns. In a similar fashion, leaders such as Fidel Castro adopted communist slogans in an attempt to secure Soviet backing to gain leverage against the United States in an attempt to retain elements of Cuban sovereignty when engaging in international affairs. Conversely, Josef Bronz Tito of the former Yugoslavia used his ties and contacts with western Europe and the United States to gain bargaining power with the former Soviet Union during the Cold War. Turkey likewise clearly aligned itself with the western world, even becoming one of the first countries to apply for membership within the European Community at its inception. Hence, within this bipolar construct, the Cold War created an environment where the superpowers were sought out by the smaller powers to ensure the latter’s survival. While this was good in many ways, i.e. countries would change their political behavior ‘willing’ to continue working with their larger ally, this same arrangement often embroiled the larger powers in asymmetrical conflicts quite different from the conventional wars of the recent past. Consider, for example, the experiences of the United States in Vietnam and the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan, where both countries lost their size advantages when they were forced to engage in combat terrains that favored the insurgents over the foreign forces coming from the outside. While neither country was wholly successful in their endeavors in these wars, the way that the wars were fought have had ramifications on more current preparations for the wars now fought in the Middle East and northern Africa.

Another influential development during the Cold War was the emergence of functioning international organizations (such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, etc.) concurrently with regional alliances surpassing the levels of cooperation found previously (such as the creation of the European Community and ultimate consolidation of the European Union in the early 1990s). The concurrent emergence of a more tangible form of international law, despite its limitations, gave even more credence to these organizations, as rogue countries and errant leaders now had to worry about answering to the international community for their actions. It was not until after the collapse of Soviet-style communism in 1989-1991, however, that the role of these organizations became truly apparent. Within the changed atmosphere, there was a brief period where the countries of the world believed democracy to have triumphed, which in turn made the allure of multilateral action even more attractive. Through the doctrine of collective security, countries were expected to band together and respond to any situation where a single country (or group of countries) broke international law. Despite the loss of unilateral movement associated with this course of action, the First Gulf War demonstrated that when enacted through international organizations, it was possible to have countries from within the Middle East involved in a military operation against one of its neighbors, in this case Iraq under the leadership of Saddam Hussein.

Leading further into the twenty-first century, with the development of a multi-polar world and the increased provisions of a globalized society, countries are increasingly subjected to international scrutiny with regard to both domestic and international decisions. Moreover, whereas the most powerful states have always wielded influence regionally, new technologies and transportation solutions mean that international powerhouses command more attention than they did prior to the twentieth century. What used to be of concern only to the government(s) involved is now the domain

of all international actors. This does not mean that collective responses are always forthcoming, as the genocide in Dafur and Rwanda attest, but it does increase the chances an international response will be formulated. In this context, the start of interstate wars between two regional powers, the onset of civil wars within countries and/or the emergence of insurrections/revolutionary movements have increasingly become of interest to the dominant powers throughout the world, but predominantly in the West. Whereas the most dominant powers in a region could have just done what they viewed as most expedient to their interests during the pre-modern period, the twentieth century's insistence on the absolute inviolability of state borders meant that other ways of influencing intra-state conflicts had to be found.

Given that direct intervention became illegal according to international law, but that internal conflicts had the potential to spread to other states in a region and thereby create widespread regional instability, larger powers looked for ways to protect their interests without encroaching (at least openly) on international norms. Adhering (at least in theory) to the tenets of the Just War Theory, the larger powers couch their intervention in terms of a breach of international law, gross human rights violations and/or an imminent threat to the international community, if action is not taken. Even more interesting, however, was that after the collapse of communism in the CEE and Russia, as further explained by Barnett, a unique approach emerged in American foreign policy where "the Pentagon somehow felt so responsible for global security that it wanted to be able to reverse any significant act of aggression anywhere in the world" (Barnett, 2003:91). In what has been described as a modern twist to the idea of the 'white man's burden,' the United States took steps to embark on the path of democratic intervention, both unilaterally and multilaterally (albeit the latter was often adopted reluctantly). Leading into the twenty-first century and following 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the world is now coming to terms with yet another dimension to asymmetrical warfare, what comes after. While most in the West conclude that democratic consolidation is the answer, it has become increasingly apparent that this is not a simple matter of convening elections and saying 'ready, set, go.' Instead, successful military campaigns in the developing world must now be underpinned by programs meant to stabilize fledgling democracies that in many cases can be classified as nation-building.

➤ **Transnational (Non-State) Actors**

One further issue has emerged in the twenty-first century that must be addressed before moving away from the concept of non-state activities in modern combat. As postulated by Barnett, "in retrospect, where we should have been applying this concept of asymmetrical warfare was not so much to regional rogues but to transnational terrorist networks like al Qaeda" (Barnett, 2003:91). After all, much of the terrorist activity undertaken in the name of religious ideals is not conducted by states, but rather by interrelated terrorist cells operating across national borders. These groups are united by their core beliefs, which during the Cold War were often related to spreading communism throughout the world, but have more recently revolved around objectives meant to create conditions that are conducive to restoring the Golden Age of Islam in the Middle East, as witnessed in the rise of Al Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. The resistance demanded of these groups is to a larger enemy, which in this case is the west, most prominently represented by the United States.

One factor that immediately distinguishes transnational actors and organizations is that they do not operate within defined borders, meaning those involved have less constraint to worry with than states. While interstate cooperation has long characterized terrorist activities, the Internet has given rise to transnational organizational activities that easily "transcend borders," which in turn has "greatly facilitated the spread of virtual subcultures" by giving easier access to on-line training

courses and manuals and allowing diversified groups to interact with each other and formulate more sophisticated planning strategies (Kiras, 2002:227). These strategies are further enhanced by the fact that such groups are formerly not bound by treaties, human rights constraints or other political restraints facing established countries in the world. They also have the added advantage that they have enhanced opportunities to gain support and resources from a variety of state and non-state actors, meaning that it is more difficult for a single country, whether the United States or otherwise, to combat them effectively, i.e. to strike critical strategic sites with the potential to cripple the efforts of a transnational terrorist organization. Sanctions are also problematic since these must be taken against states and well-established banking organizations to be effective. If a state (and/or banking group) is sanctioned, these groups will find other ways to fund their activities and support their cause.

The primary strength of transnational organizations such as Al Qaeda, however, is their ability to adopt the qualities of a “virtual network operating as a leaderless resistance.” Why, exactly? It is extremely difficult to target and/or eliminate the leadership of such a group, since it is widely dispersed and consists of many different intertwined cells capable of operating with or within the direct contact of a single leadership figure. Individuals and/or groups in leaderless organizations “operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or single leader for direction or instruction.” This is particularly important in this day and age when enhanced surveillance capabilities used by states can easily zero in on hierarchical leadership structures and thereby eliminate the threat. In leaderless organizations, “leaders do not issue orders or pay operatives; instead, they inspire small cells or individuals to take action on their own initiative” (Stern, 2003; reprinted in Art & Jervis, 2005:434). In the case of al Qaeda, for example, it is now debated whether the death of Osama bin Laden would have any real impact on their operations, since it is so highly decentralized and able to operate independently of any other faction. Take the London subway bombings in 2005 as an example, where locally born and raised youth of Middle Eastern descent gained inspiration from Al Qaeda and took action against their own people in the UK.

What does this mean, exactly? Transnational groups differ from states precisely because they do not have to worry about the same type of political and economic restraints that prevent (both overtly and covertly) most states from engaging in destructive behavior. A state, to expand on this point, is constrained on many levels by virtue of what constitutes it as such. Unlike transnational groups, states are territorially defined and operate according to integrated political and economic norms within the international community. Whether ascribing fully to international organizations/bodies (such as the United Nations or the International Criminal Court), for example, they are not free to do as they please, whatever might be said. To cite one example, if a state decides to bomb another country, it would face almost immediate consequences. Either the country under attack would respond in kind or, if they lacked the resources, it is equally possible that the aggressive state would face bombing raids from or war with a united coalition of countries in the international community. In this case, sanctions can be implemented with the aim of forcing a state to reconsider its actions. There are admittedly debates about the effectiveness of sanctions, i.e. they hurt the average citizen and not the leadership of a state, a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper. This nevertheless highlights that when states are involved, political tools are available to the world community to try and discourage any such future activity.

Transnational groupings, by contrast, have an almost unlimited scope of action, at least when compared against the constraints put on states simply by virtue of the fact that they are states and are thereby responsible for the people living within their borders. While transnational groups also have members, they do not constitute the same type of burden that citizens do. By virtue of their decision

to become an active member of a transnational terrorist group, individuals demonstrate their willingness to accept the consequences of their actions, which in these cases often includes death or long-term imprisonment. The loss of one operative is thus a set-back, undoubtedly, but there are more people to take their place. This is, after all, the way that they are set-up in the first place. By dispersing both power and authority via such tools as the Internet, leaders of transnational groups intend for individual cells to operate independently, without explicit direction from the top. Activities are moreover dispersed throughout the world and can be enacted in any country and/or region, meaning that it is difficult to prosecute the top echelons of power through conventional military operations, even when combined with domestic criminal justice channels.

➤ **Tactics, Operations, Strategies and Campaigns**

A differentiation between tactics, operations, strategies and campaigns is one of the easiest to make and yet is one of the most important. As defined by Clausewitz, “strategy forms the plan of the war; and to this end it links together the series of acts which are to lead to the final decision, that is to say, it makes the plans for the separate campaigns and regulates the combats to be fought in each” (Clausewitz, 1832:241; reprinted in 1968). Within this context, tactics can be defined as a one-off action (even if it is used repeatedly) meant to achieve a particular goal in a specifically-defined situation. For example, in conventional terms, a battalion might decide to destroy the bridges in a particular region or cut communication lines between the government and its troops in an attempt to make the situation more favorable for its own combat troops once open hostilities commence. Taking this a step further, individual battles are important aspects of a campaign, not to mention that they include specific plans and tactics meant to enhance the chances of success, but they do not determine the ultimate victory or defeat of an overarching campaign, much less the war itself. These actions are, to be more specific, part of an overarching campaign, they can moreover in hindsight be pinpointed as a decisive turning-point of a war, but they do not (in and of themselves) constitute the means for complete military victory and the cessation of hostilities.

A similar assessment is necessary when considering terrorist activities, if a reasonable assessment is to be made of how to counter isolated incidents versus more coordinated campaigns pushing towards more concrete, longer-term goals. For example, a radical group ideologically opposed to abortion can decide to blow up a single abortion clinic in the area, but this does not mean that they have committed themselves to a nation-wide campaign against the constitutional right for women to have legal abortions. Another example is the desperate man that flew a light-weight plane into the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) building to express his personal outrage and desperation regarding his individual tax return. Yet another example was the decision of individuals to send anthrax through the mail following the 9-11 attacks. While attempts were made to link this with the actions of al Qaeda, these were not forthcoming. These acts, to be clear, constitute acts of terrorism, but they do not mark a larger campaign against the institutional foundations of the Supreme Court. Such actions, when enacted by *individuals* or individual groups against specific, *individual* targets can be better compared against mafia hits than in concerted efforts to overthrow the government or undermine its legitimacy. They have impact within certain limits, but they do not constitute a concerted effort to undermine the overarching political system of a country, or seriously challenge the inner-workings of its institutions.

Terrorist campaigns, by contrast, must be understood according to the longer-term goals and objectives involved, even if from the outside it could be perceived as random violence. Whereas it cannot be overlooked that a terrorist campaign from one perspective might be considered a legitimate social movement upholding the rights of a minority group within society from another, the point to

be made in this section is that campaigns are organized to obtain some future goal by enacting a series of activities that when taken together ensure that steps will be taken towards future goals. Consider the current environment in the Middle East, where the concept of democratization and nation-building come into play. Whereas the United States has never considered itself colonizing power, the recent campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought the issue of longer-term stability into focus, which hinges on the realization that while important, the hosting of national elections is only a first step towards the consolidation of an actual working democracy. Just because people and parties stand for office and are elected by the people in a national election, even those deemed relatively free and fair by international standards, this does not guarantee that the newly elected individuals and/or groups will automatically know how to govern effectively, or that the former rivaling groups will even have an interest in power-sharing exercises.

A more important aspect is creating a sense of effectiveness and efficacy for the transformed institutional framework of a newly democratized country. A large part of this is the provision of services to the people to help them rebuild society and return to a pattern of normalcy that is conducive to democratic development and perpetuation. Insurgents vying for power understand this reality, hence their proclivity for engaging in terrorist activities aimed at disrupting power supplies or the provision of security services to areas outside the capital territories. As explained by Metz, insurgents use terrorism and guerilla tactics in the operational sense, deterring those who supported the government and creating an environment of violence and insecurity to erode public trust in the [new] regime (Metz, 2007:7-8). More than this, in a pattern following that of organized crime in larger metropolitan areas, insurgents will often attempt to provide the same services, or at least appear to provide them to the beleaguered citizens. While these efforts could not be termed as nation-building, after all they are instead aimed at pulling legitimacy and power away from the newly established government, the end goal is the same from the perspective of the people. If they do not have a house to live in, they will pay attention to the groups helping to rebuild their community, whatever the motivation. If they have no heat in their house, they will notice who gives them blankets and oil for their lamps. If they do not have a job and cannot provide for their families, they will respond to groups that offer them pride and employment, even if it involves activities outside the legal realm.

This final point is particularly important and requires additional consideration. If the insurgent groups are able to create the simultaneous impression that not only are they the ones providing security for the small communities most affected by the collapse of the former government, but that they are moreover helping these communities to resist the corrupting power of a dominant, foreign power intent on exploiting their resources without providing anything in return, they have gained ground in the battle for the hearts and minds of the people struggling to stabilize their country and resume their normal lives. This is a critical aspect of fighting an asymmetrical campaign and gaining the upper-hand in normalizing regional relationships after conflict and/or revolution. Hard power in these instances is thus limited and must be combined with soft power measures, if longer-term success is desired. To do this, the people must be convinced that what appear to be similar activities actually have very different longer-term impact. Whereas the involvement of the United States is disruptive in the shorter-term, the people must be convinced that their longer-term needs will be better served by these initiatives.

➤ **Timeframe**

The timeframe of conflict is one of the most telling ways to differentiate between the various types of warfare. Conventional warfare, to reiterate, is of limited duration, since it has a definite beginning

and end and involves set objectives that once met, mark the end of hostilities. In the most common cases, the end of the war is marked by either the defeat or unconditional surrender of one of the two combatants, whether individually or as a coalition/group. Because these battles involve forces of comparable sizes, the decision to surrender can be calculated by a strategic calculation of how many troops have been lost and by the cost involved in continuing the war. When the costs outweigh the benefits and projected gains, the decision to capitulate is the most logical move. Alternatively, conventional warfare can be brought to a close, if the aggressive combatant, i.e. the one that broke international law in the first place, ceases the offending activities and returns to a state of normalcy. This can be seen in the case of Russia sending troops into neighboring Georgia during the XX Olympic Games in China. If Russia had remained in Georgia, a decision would have been made with regard to whether or not an international coalition would respond militarily as they did in XX, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait during the First Gulf War.

In contrast to most conventional forms of war, unconventional warfare (whatever the form) is traditionally of a longer duration, as it is not fought between two symmetrical powers hosting matching armies that can be strategically assessed through a straightforward cost-benefit analysis. To illustrate this point, it is instructive to consider the phases outlined by Mao Zedong for the success of an operation that adheres to the principles of guerilla warfare, as opposed to conventional warfare. Highlighting Mao Zedong's strategies for guerilla warfare, Baylis outlines three sequential phases that determine the success or failure of insurgents: the strategic defensive, the stalemate and the strategic offensive. The intention of this sequence is that insurgents start with the strategic defensive phase, during which they employ "tactical offensives" – as opposed to outright battles with the government – meant to strain government resources to the breaking point, whereby the cost of engagement is more than the potential gains. After this point, insurgents will engage in selected battles meant to further reduce their legitimacy with the people of the country and thereby cause the government to change tactics and start focusing on defensive strategic programs; this is the stalemate period. During the strategic offensive stage, which can take a long period of time to eventuate, the insurgents find ways to "employ overwhelming force to destroy weakened government forces occupying defensive positions." The conclusion drawn by Baylis when considering Mao Zedong: "Endless struggle without an obvious victory eventually leads to the exhaustion, collapse, or withdrawal of the enemy." Thus implied: because combatants employing these tactics are defined according to their mobility and anonymity, success comes only after there has been enough time for these forces to first "sap the resolve of its adversary and [then] build a conventional force capable of seizing control of the state" (cited in Kiras, 2002:212-217). What this means, as explained by Mingst, is that asymmetric warfare involves "organizing, thinking and acting differently from adversaries in order to exploit their weaknesses, seize the initiative, increase one's freedom of action, or maximize one's own advantages" (Mingst, 2004:211-212; see also Michaud, 2005:36).

This touches on the idea that there are situations where the rules of conventional warfare are thus simply not conducive to bringing a particular international conflict to a close. In Afghanistan, for example, while the actual war may have been short-lived, the fighting has continued seemingly indefinitely, albeit after the warring factions have retreated to the mountainous regions outside the reach of the newly established government. Of importance here is the realization that the end of a perfectly orchestrated military campaign is just the beginning of post-conflict peace. The defeat of a smaller country's standing army may signal the fall of the capital city and the implementation of a new government, but it does not automatically guarantee post-conflict stability and peace between the formerly repressive societal groups. Under colonialism, for example, it was a common practice for minority groups to be put in positions of power over the majority and for violence and repression to serve as the tools of social control. With the removal of the existing regime, the majority groups

have found their voices and are often unwilling to cooperate peaceably with those involved in the previous repressive regimes. Political purges thus often follow regime change, in an attempt to establish a more liberal regime based on the rights of all groups within society. The problem here is that these individuals are often the ones with the experience to run the government, meaning that corruption and collusion are likely to follow, as new political actors emerge and try to assume active roles within the newly transformed economy and political environment.

These considerations must then be coupled with the point made earlier that the end of a perfectly conducted military campaign to remove a dictator from power is only the first day of peace. When dealing with the developing world, this is not a simple, straightforward affair and requires the implementation of stable institutional and structural norms that over time are to become legitimate in the eyes of the people. This is, of course, in addition to the longer timeframe involved in the actual combat phase of asymmetrical war. Without the implementation of post-combat redevelopment programs, fledgling democracies are predicted to often descend back into a cycle of violence as groups that were once marginalized (and in many cases terrorized) by the former power holders are expected to cooperate democratically and thereby jointly decide the future fate of their country, all within a state that has little to no recent experience with participatory forms of democracy. Such programs are moreover costly to the larger powers, meaning that they are often unpopular with the people 'back home' who do not understand why a country would not automatically start to operate like their home government, even within a compressed timeframe.

Concluding Analysis: Changing the Markers of Success

During the pre-modern era, the 'rules of the game' surrounding combat and any associated victory markers were quite different. As posited by Clausewitz, success in battle can be found in three elements: "the greater loss of the enemy in physical power, ... moral power, [or] the relinquishment" of all original objectives by the losing side (Clausewitz, 1832:313; reprinted in 1968). Stated succinctly, if a country was strong enough to take control of territory formerly held by another country, then theirs were the spoils of war. After the decisive battle was won, treaties would be drawn up, borders established and new ownership patterns would emerge that were respective by everyone involved until such a time that another country gained the capacity challenge the newly established order. Even beginning in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and leading into the twentieth, a more consolidated understanding of international law changed the way wars were fought through the creation of sovereign, absolute state borders.

Within this context, while it was not as acceptable for one country to simply take territory over because it had the military might to do so as it had been before, success and failure in battle were nevertheless easily discernable and could be noted definitively in the history books. War was no longer a matter of tribes fighting over tracts of land but rather a largely orchestrated game of strategy where standing armies are mobilized to achieve grandiose objectives and to effect a change in the existing balance of power among nations, thereby gaining more prestige and influence for the country in question. In these situations, soft power (couched in diplomatic engagements) was the precursor to war since war in these instances is costly, both in terms of currency, but in people as well. It also takes far longer to mobilize a national army meant to defend an entire country than to hold a line with a group of insurgents. Hence, beginning with Napoleon and continuing through to the end of World War II, conventional battles had a clear start marked by a declaration of war and a clarification of objectives, but the battles were localized and success was determined by a pragmatic calculation of the costs involved in continuing to fight versus the benefits involved in ceasing hostilities either unwilling through an outright defeat of an army or willing through a negotiated

ceasefire. Either way, however, the end of the war came when both sides of the conflict recognized that one side was victorious and the other was not.

With the development of nuclear technology, however, and the promise of mutually assured destruction (should such technology be used liberally in a combat situation), the dominant powers in the world struggled to find ways to avoid going to war with each other because the potential costs were simply too high. In the West, it was generally agreed upon that democratic development is a laudable goal for all countries of the world, since it has been noted that western democracies are more prosperous, do not tend to fight protracted wars against each other and host alternative legal and/or diplomatic channels in which to settle disputes. Theoretical support is provided for this conclusion by the *Democratic Peace Thesis*, which posits that democracies avoid outright violent conflict with each other to settle disputes because (see Amstutz, 1999:194):

- 1) Violence is an illegitimate course of action given the guiding principles of democracy;
- 2) Democracies have “structural and institutional constraints that impair centralized, autocratic decision-making”; and
- 3) Normative principles and cultural traditions exist that mitigate against violent tendencies and towards peaceful conflict resolution programs.

Moreover, given the levels of education that are common within western democracies, the people within a democracy are unlikely to support protracted, violent and seemingly pointless wars (Rowen, 1996:307-313), especially when the casualties of military personnel start to mount.

While the longer-term goal is indeed the world-wide development of democracy, this will not be a small endeavor and will not be consolidated in the near future. As a result, there should be other strategic considerations to highlight what countries are likely to cooperate on the world-stage in a predictable way, meaning that they play by the international ‘rules of the game,’ as established following WWII. In many ways, if the basic structures are put into place for longer-term development, the host country must be left to consolidate the developments themselves via grassroots activities and endeavors. This requires the West to recognize that there are different levels of democratic development and that democracy is an evolutionary ideal that is never truly achieved in actual practice. Whereas various states come closer to the ideal than others, the mark of a successful democracy is one that has taken every step possible to ensure that they are protecting the rights of minorities and creating economic institutional structures that give them the opportunity to advance in society. The issue is thus not that society is actually equal, but that the opportunity exists for minority groups to advance in society and have their voices heard in government.

What this implies is that the West, American in particular, needs to realize that there is a continuum of democratic development, rather than believing that because the Middle East has not immediately consolidated an American-style democracy does not automatically mean that they are completely resistant to democratic development in the longer-term. Just as there are significant differences in approach by the European social-democratic governmental structures to the capitalist democracy found in American, transitional societies consolidate democratic norms over time, not immediately.

The value of this investigation is that if there are other ways to assess the compatibility of states, then there might be better ways to engage with the smaller countries of the Middle East while at the same time (paradoxically) creating a peaceful situation that is more conducive to the longer-term development of democratic ideals within the region. Work done in 1969 by Galtung and recently

expanded on and debated by Klein *et al* (2008) and Gibler and Tir (2010) help to explain why this might be the case. Setting the framework for this analogy, Galtung differentiates between transitional and/or instable countries that develop and sustain a positive conception of peace versus a negative one. Whereas the latter is found at the point where there is only the absence of conflict between neighboring countries, i.e. serious rivalries still exist over scarce resources that could re-emerge at any time, versus the intentional movement toward a more sustainable form of peace that promotes harmonious and cooperative efforts between actors, whether within a state or between contiguous ones (Galtung, 1985:145). Klein *et al* (2008) have more recently taken these basic concepts and created a sliding scale to help explain the differences between positive and negative conceptions of peace between states. At one end of the scale, severe territorial rivalries exist that perpetuate an environment of conflict where one state is constantly concerned about the possibility of invasion by aggressive means, or alternatively about the emergence of serious calls for secession by the larger minority groups found within its borders. At the other end, by contrast, accepted borders prevail, meaning that conflict is not only deterred, but the groundwork is set for collective action between states that even more importantly helps to integrate them into the globalized world economy, albeit at a rudimentary level.

Focusing specifically on the issue of disputed borders between conflicting versus non-combative states, Gibler and Tir (2010:954) make the following argument:

“Positive territorial peace is found in those dyads that have resolved their border claims to the point where wars over territorial issues have become unthinkable. There are likely to be few restrictions on border passage, and institutions that integrate trade and communication across the boundary may even exist. To get to the point of positive territorial peace, the border needs to be considered highly legitimate. We argue that this happens when both state and leaders have mutually agreed upon border demarcations through past peaceful transfers of territory”.

Since some of the countries that would make the list of states experiencing the potential for severe territorial rivalry and conflict are democracies (i.e. Israel, Canada, etc.), it follows that the generic implementation of democratic institutions and norms is not a guarantee of democratic peace. To take this logic further, if it is not a simple construction of a democratic system that leads to the benefits posited in the democratic peace thesis, then the theory must be somewhat problematized to reflect need for the development of mature democratic institutional systems hosting supportive cultural ideals. And since this process is neither quick nor automatic, the West is arguably expecting changes in the Middle East that are unlikely to consolidate in the near future but rather take time to develop. It is moreover possible that this type of development will take alternative paths to finally end up as democracies. After all, many countries in the West have gone through less than democratic periods to ensure the longer-term survival and stability of the existing government.

This begs the question of which elements of democracy are needed to bring about positive peace, as opposed to a stalemated situation where states are simply marking time until the next conflict emerges. Conventional wisdom has focused on the implementation of a written constitution and holding elections, since these two democratic institutions create the ‘terms and conditions’ of the social contract to be developed between the new government and its people, but it more importantly allows the people to participate in the construction of the new leadership structure. Inherent problems exist, however, in the fact that this is just the first step in the consolidation process for democracy. Just because a leader is elected does not mean that democratic participation and compromise will immediately follow, especially in countries where the different groups in society have been working in opposition to each other under the former regime and are thus more likely to view the ‘Other’ as

oppressive antagonist, rather than a potential partner in government. Similarly, while the writing and consolidation of a written constitution is an important part of democratic consolidation, it does not immediately mean that the new government will actually operate according to the terms set out.

The question remains, however, as to what lessons the larger powers in the world must learn to be successful, given the constantly changing and increasingly asymmetrical world context. A combination of Thucydides, Morgenthau and Nye would be a good lesson to be applied to and understood in the context of the current conflict. Intersecting with the points above by Thucydides – that larger powers cannot just overrun smaller countries and expect them to do exactly what they tell them to do just because they are stronger militarily – is the political insight offered by Morgenthau and Nye respectively. Morgenthau, for example, while known primarily for his ‘principles of political realism’ that discuss objective laws and how they pertain to the study of power, also touches on issues of soft power, even if they are not couched in these terms. His *4 Tasks of Diplomacy*, to start with, argue that diplomatic endeavors are important when considering power relationships between states, but they must be “divested of the crusading spirit” and must consider the perspective of the other countries involved in potential conflict situations. He goes on to say that “all nations are tempted ... to clothe their own particular aspirations and actions in the moral purposes of the universe,” whether that be tied to religious ideals or a more secular understanding of the universal value of democracy. For Morgenthau, this is problematic since power and its use must be understood in the political and cultural environment in which it emerges, if it is to be effective in the longer-term. More than this, when maintaining that countries should be willing to find compromises with other countries on all issues that do not directly relate to national security considerations, Morgenthau again highlights the necessity and use of diplomacy (Morgenthau, 1973, reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:57-62; see also Tickner, 2007:17).

Finally, Nye provides a critical third dimension to this debate. In his article “Limits on American Power”, he clearly argues that “if the United States wants to remain strong, Americans need also to pay attention to ... soft power,” which he defines as those national attributes that make countries “want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, [and] aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness.” His intention, rather than trying to deny the importance of hard power, is to show that the two are interrelated and complement each other. Without soft power, smaller nations are likely to become suspicious of the military intentions of the United States and how it relates to their longer-term sovereignty and stability. Without hard power, by contrast, smaller states will not believe that the larger power has the ability to assert its power. It is instead a healthy combination of the two that helps to overcome adversity and conflict (Nye, 2002; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006: 710-713). Without this combination, hard power will ultimately find its limits at the most inopportune time. It has, after all, already been shown that conflicts now last years, even decades and that asymmetrical warfare allows combatant enemies the luxury of choosing their battles and then disappearing out of sight until conditions are more favorable for them. Extended timeframes thus give the advantage to the smaller power, if the larger power does not see its potential limits (such as having enough soldiers to invade multiple countries over a protracted period of time) and adapt its strategic planning accordingly.

According to this argument, the United States, and arguably all western states, will have more success, and will lose less resources (economic, military and population) while still having the capacity to *help* set the agenda of other countries. If the people of the smaller country *want* to adopt democracy, they will. It will more importantly have more chance of consolidation and success, if it is a grassroots level movement emerges internal to these countries that complement the course desired by the larger power. This would require the *guidance* of the larger power, rather than the use of force

and military might. Moore (2009:9) expands this idea and designates success as dependent on “national and regional strategic guidance,” whereby the larger power translates local knowledge into “actionable plans” coordinating the concerns of the people with the strategic interests of the larger power. Taking it a step further, and perhaps adding a contentious element to the debate, the prospect for success will also involve the United States understanding that democracy is a process that can lead to many different trajectories. Just because the countries of the Middle East might choose a different type of democratic institutional structure that includes aspects that seem foreign to U.S. observers, it does not automatically mean that democracy and Islam are incompatible, or that they will choose to adopt a fully Americanized vision of democracy. Such patience is difficult at a time when results are expected immediately and are globalized enough to have overcome the maturation process that was an important part of democratic consolidation and growth in the West.

Metz (2007a:72) concurs with and supports this assertion, arguing:

“If the U.S. is to be effective, it must be capable of long-term engagement, crossing presidential administrations, congresses, and the careers of the military and civilian officials who actually undertake the effort. This is difficult but vital. Despite the best efforts, when a unit which and developed local knowledge and contacts is replaced, effectiveness diminishes, ... for awhile.”

This realization is vitally important and supports the argument that rather the U.S. must find alternative ways to engage the Middle East as a region within the confines of global politics. As stated from the outset, rather than approaching these governments from the stance of a superpower – which will inevitably lead to perceptions of imminent threat to the smaller countries of the region, or equally damaging, as condescending attempts to provide charity to a proud region with a history of self-reliance and problematic ties to western forms of modernity – the United States must instead view the Middle East as a region with a rich religious and cultural heritage worthy of engagement and dialogue. By respecting the historic development of Islamic culture, separate from the perverted stance of terrorism, the American government has a chance to change the ever-present power imbalance between the two regions from one of asymmetry to one of strategic commitment.

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