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CONDITIONS FOR ADOPTING AN IRREGULAR DEFENSE STRATEGY

by

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CONDITIONS FOR ADOPTING AN IRREGULAR DEFENSE STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

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Given that ongoing conflicts differ from classical conventional warfare, two major questions arise: (1) Is irregular warfare still really irregular, or has it now replaced conventional warfare and become “regular”? (2) Is it wise to consider a professional irregular warfighting capability in defense strategy? Recent research proved the effectiveness of irregular warfare, and concluded that a combination of one of the general conventional models with irregular warfare techniques is desirable.

Through analysis of the major dominant irregular leaders' ideologies and their theories, and the case studies of three recent irregular wars, this research was conducted to provide a clearer understanding of the conditions necessary for waging a successful irregular campaign.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

During recent decades, more and more studies have argued the effectiveness of irregular warfare. Arreguín-Toft's research into the armed conflicts between 1800 and 1998 suggests that the weaker side was defeated 70 percent of the time. The number of victories achieved by the weaker side, however, has been increasing. Between the years of 1950 and 1998, the weaker side won 55 percent of the time. In those cases when the stronger side applied conventional strategy against the weaker side that primarily used an indirect approach, the rate of victory was 64 percent for the weaker side.¹ What alternative choices could these small countries possibly have? Existing literature² suggests four general options for smaller countries.

The first approach is simply pretending or trying to have a formidable conventional army and convincing the population that they are safe. A second method is to join an alliance and rely on collective-security. Though history shows cases where expected support did not materialize. This does not mean that an effective irregular defense strategy has to be excluded from the pillars that an alliance is built upon.

A third path a small country can take is to shield itself with (the reality or the threat) of weapons of mass destruction. While weapons of mass destruction can be an effective tool of deterrence, they can be extremely expensive. In addition, many countries signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty after the end of the Cold War, and since then the international community has paid especially close attention to containing the spread of these weapons.

A fourth approach is neutrality. A declared policy of neutrality can be and often is an effective way to maintain control over one's borders. It can fail quickly and painfully, however, when ignored by a stronger power.

¹ Ivan Arreguín-Toft, ed., *How the Weak Win Wars: The Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 106.

² Sandor Fabian, "Professional Irregular Defense Forces: The Other Side of COIN" (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 19–24.

These methods share several built-in pitfalls for small countries: unsustainable costs, unreliable security commitments, and precarious international agreements. Even though many researchers found that a professional guerilla force can overcome these obstacles, the conditions under which a small nation can effectively integrate IDS into its defense policy have been poorly determined.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis seeks to investigate this issue further. The research question thus becomes clear: Under what conditions is irregular warfare an effective form of national defense?

C. DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Most countries have had conventional defense strategies for centuries. It is hard to change from a strategy that has been in place for a long time. Considering the differences among countries concerning their military capabilities, it is clear that in case of invasion, many small states will not be able to resist by means of conventional warfare. Even though irregular warfare is as old as man and has been present in most conflicts since the beginning of war, it has seldom been considered a state-level military strategy to win a war. The purpose of this thesis is to study a possibly more effective defense strategy option—the Irregular Defense Strategy (IDS)—for those small countries that are having difficulties in sustaining larger armed forces. In detail, this thesis will explore when IDS is an effective strategic option and then explore how IDS is best employed by a weaker country against a more powerful aggressor. History shows that the conventional defense strategies have not always been the most effective way to defend a small country.

The primary scope of this research is to define the kind of characteristics of irregular warfare most pertinent to innovative national defense strategies. John Arquilla states, “...the RMA [revolution in military affairs] may provide a world of opportunity for the irregularization of warfare—an opportunity we ignore at our increasing peril.”³ One also has to consider the wide possibilities given by the Internet. T. E. Lawrence

³ John Arquilla, “The Confederacy Could Have Won—Unconventionally: A Thought Experiment for Special Warriors,” *Special Warfare* (January, 2001): 16.

famously said, “The printing press is the greatest weapon in the armory of the modern commander.”⁴ Even in that time, when the communication assets were far less effective, the media played a great role. Thinking about the twenty-first century, this can assist even more a successful irregular campaign.

This thesis will also consider the geographical conditions those best or least support guerilla-type armed activities. One of the most important characteristic can be the advantageous use of the terrain and the effective use of the element of surprise. In addition, this thesis will examine the cost of the war from both the aggressor’s and defender’s perspectives. In all countries, defense strategy heavily relies on resources. The smaller your country is, the more difficult it is to sustain a conventional army with the appropriate effect within an international conflict environment. Max Boot argues for IDS, “It is not hard to see why this mode of warfare has become so prevalent. For one thing, it is cheap and easy....”⁵ Lastly, the human factor will be considered. Many nations simply are not designed for conventional warfare. For example, back in the ancient ages Hungarians were rarely defeated while using irregular tactics, but lost uncountable battles while conventionalized. In a similar vein, tremendous effort has been put into building a conventional army in Afghanistan (around 300,000 armed personnel), which may nonetheless prove ineffective due to lack of motivation of its member; in that same country, however, some tribal men armed with simple weapons and unshakable resolve have time and again made the struggle extremely costly for the allies, both in human and financial resources.

Hypotheses 1: A beneficial use of the geographical environment coupled with a doctrine based on irregular strategy is more likely to achieve an effective defense for a small country.

Hypotheses 2: Under certain circumstances, a professional irregular defense strategy can be less costly for a small country than any of the four general alternatives.

⁴ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Liveright, 2013), 567.

⁵ Boot, *Invisible Armies*, xx.

D. METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the proposed hypotheses, this thesis will employ a heuristic framework to explore and distill the conditions under which IDS might provide an effective form of national defense. This framework will be predicated upon the assumption that some small nations are not able to sustain a large conventional army. The first part of this thesis will focus on the possible conditions for effective IDS that need to be considered by the state in order to reorganize or establish a new strategy. The main body of the research will be based on the following books and arguments: Max Boot's *Twelve Articles*,⁶ or the *Lessons of Five Thousand Years*, Von der Heydte's *Modern Irregular Warfare*,⁷ Otto Heilbrunn's *Partisan Warfare*,⁸ James Kiras's *Irregular Warfare*,⁹ Derek Leebaert's *To Dare and Conquer*,¹⁰ and John Arquilla's *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*.¹¹

In the second part, this thesis will examine three modern historical cases of irregular warfighting based on the congruence method. The first case is the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006. The expectation is to observe the effective use of low-budget weapon systems by Hezbollah, the advantageous use of terrain, and the organizational factor in order to determine the degree to which the strategy and geographical placement of battle affect irregular warfare. The second case is the invasion of Somalia by Ethiopia in 2006. Considering that Somali forces lacked conventional forces and did not have state-level allies or WMD, this case can provide a valuable base to research the conditions and test the theory given by the hypotheses. The third case is the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and its allies in 2003. This was a properly implemented

⁶ Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 557.

⁷ Friedrich von der Heydte, ed., *Modern Irregular Warfare, in Defense Policy and as a Military Phenomenon*, trans. George Gregory (New York: Franklin House, 1986).

⁸ Otto Heilbrunn, ed., *Partisan Warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1962).

⁹ James D. Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," in *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Derek Leebaert, ed., *To Dare and to Conquer: Special Operations and the Destiny of Nations from Achilles to Al-Qaeda* (Brown and Company, 2006).

¹¹ John Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits: How Masters of Irregular Warfare have Shaped our World* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

conventional military invasion and yet, after the invasion, the military occupation experienced a prolonged insurgency that ultimately led to the conclusion to withdraw from the occupied territory.

In all cases, irregular forces played significant roles in the resistance, and the expectation is to determine how human nature is related to the conduct of irregular warfare. This part of the thesis will conclude by analyzing what is more and what is less important to consider while building a defense strategy.

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II. MODERN IRREGULAR WARFARE

In the military realm, “Irregular Warfare” is an increasingly known and studied term, since regular warfare is “disappearing.” In its classic form—when divisions of armored vehicles supported by aircraft that are able to fly low and high or slow and fast face each other—conventional warfare is not expected to be the common form of battle in the near future. Submarines and aircraft carriers cruise the globe continuously to deter or prevent conventional conflict from happening.

Recently, information technology has evolved so much that its own creators have difficulties with controlling its capability. Satellites can look into backyards, and almost every square meter of the Earth is covered by them. These tools are part of what a general or other military leader would demand to successfully wage a regular conflict. The dominant powers of the world possess these capabilities making the conduct of conventional warfare more costly. Therefore, one can see why contemporary clashes tend to avoid the regular way to fight battles.

There are several reasons why conventional war is on the wane. One can be the fact that most of these powerful countries are democratic or in a position to become so and they try to solve their problems in a more diplomatic way. Another reason could be that deterrence works properly in those superpowers’ geopolitics. As von der Heydte argues, however, the most possible course of action is that the opponents do not want to expose themselves against such an overwhelming dominance: “In view of the superiority of regular forces, which cannot be compensated for, against civilian insurgents who do not have larger troop units on their side, such insurgents today...no longer have a real chance to achieve their aim in open combat.”¹² So, the question is inevitable: How will be the conflicts be waged in the future? It is hard to answer in a simple sentence, but the truth can be found in John Arquilla’s argument that, “The twenty-first century already

¹² Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 21.

shows clear signs that it will be a time replete with, if not dominated by, irregular warfare.”¹³

Regardless of the demonstrated regular military prowess in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Coalition forces led by the United States were unable to effectively or efficiently counter the threats that arose in these countries after the ruling regimes were overthrown. In his excellent study of irregular warfare, James D. Kiras observes: “The perceived failure of Coalition forces...to come to grips with irregular threats, which have been characterized as terrorism, insurgency, sectarian violence and civil war...”¹⁴ The more often capable countries use their modern militaries, and the more often they fail to achieve decisive results, the larger the chance is to lose local popular or international support for the conflict.

The United States and its allies are not alone in this frustrating suffering against irregular treats. Israel has had many problems in fighting against Hezbollah using conventional means and has been exposed to serious losses on land, in the air, and even at sea. Kiras argues that these are potential indicators of a new type of warfare: “The campaign in the summer of 2006 in Lebanon...is proof positive to 4GW (Fourth Generation Warfare) supporters that the clash of conventional armies is increasingly becoming an anachronism.”¹⁵

This does not necessarily mean that the time of large conventional forces is entirely over, but surely it means that something has recently changed, and the dominant way to wage wars in the future will be something else. In his recent book, John Arquilla argues the improper use of the generational concept, since history shows different experiments: “Better to think in terms of conventional and irregular warfare always coexisting, sometimes quite uneasily, with one or the other ascendant in different eras.”¹⁶

¹³ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 12.

¹⁴ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 227.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁶ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 8.

If one researches the contemporary literature about irregular warfare, it can be found that several definitions try to give us the clearest picture of this phenomenon. According to Kiras (the owner of the ‘Educator of the Year’ award for 2006–7), irregular warfare is, “...the use of violence by sub-state actors or groups within states for political purposes of achieving power, control and legitimacy, using unorthodox or unconventional approaches to warfare owing to a fundamental weakness in resources or capabilities.”¹⁷ As cited in Kiras’s “Irregular Warfare,” the Joint Staff publication approaches from a slightly different direction including an extremely important factor—the population—but fundamentally states the meaning of IW similarly: “A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population. IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.”¹⁸

W.E.D. Allen, a compatriot of LTC Orde Wingate in the Abyssinian battles, wrote his notes and definition about IW during World War II. His definition is also similar to the contemporary ones: “The term ‘irregular warfare’ is only one of many coined to describe conflict between those fielding conventional forces and capabilities against an opponent who refuses battle, uses hit-and-run tactics and even targets non-combatants indiscriminately in order to achieve their objectives.”¹⁹

IW is too complex to properly define it in a few sentences and these definitions give us only a broad picture of IW. Based on John Arquilla’s insights in his *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, a couple of significant discrepancies can be found in all the definitions. First, they do not identify what side (weak or strong) can resort to one of the types of IW. Second, they do not answer the question whether standing military forces should employ IW in a conflict? The above-cited definitions give some generic ideas about how it is that the weak are the ones who usually fight irregularly, the target usually

¹⁷ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 232.

¹⁸ Ibid., 233.

¹⁹ W. E. D. Allen, *Guerrilla War in Abyssinia* (New York: Penguin, 1943), 18.

is the military or the population itself, and the short range objective is the legitimacy and control over the population.

In order to merge these definitions into a much more compact explanation, one needs to add Friedrich August von der Heydte's notion about IW. He not only includes the small action groups as the best fit to wage irregular warfare "...in which the parties are not large units, but small and very small action groups..." (as cited²⁰) but also describes the main method as an attritional struggle in which "...the outcome is not decided in a few large battles, but the decision is sought, and ultimately achieved, in a very large number of small, individual operations, robberies, acts of terrorism and sabotage, bombings and other attacks" (as cited²¹). In order to understand how these can fit into the defense strategy, one needs more detailed understanding of the characteristics of irregular warfare. The following paragraphs will identify the types of IW, aims and goals of modern IW, why the weak prefer to wage IW instead of going into open combats, and finally how it can fit into a defense strategy.

From the wide variety of choices to determine the types of IW, Kiras distinguished five main categories.²² The first is *coup d'état*, which focuses on the overthrow of the government, if possible with little bloodshed and with secrecy as an extremely important factor; the main goal is to change national policies or ethnic or religious exclusion. The second is *terrorism*, which targets everything that is associated with the government (population, military, police, buildings, etc.), using their severely limited resources to spread fear (often broadcast by media outlets); terrorists seek to convince adversary audiences that the risks and prizes of a conflict are not worth the current and potential future cost.

The third is *revolution*. Similar to the *coup d'état*, revolution focuses on the overthrow of the government. It has two key factors: the organizers and an oppressed and dissatisfied population. The organizers agitate against the government and raise the

²⁰ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 8.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," 232.

consciousness of the oppressed. When the time is appropriate, a critical mass of the population will overpower the security elements of the regime and allow the ‘organizers’ to assume power.

The fourth of Kiras’s five categories is *civil war*. Here, the struggle is between competing factions within identifiable territories to gain control and recognition in order to become legitimate for governing a state. The fifth category is *insurgency*. It shares some characteristics of the other types of IW. Educating, organizing, and proselytizing the population against the existing regime or developing a ‘shadow government’ are key factors.

There is a distinct difference, however, between insurgency and revolution. Insurgents may intimidate, coerce, or terrorize the population in order to gain support. They also recruit from the local population and persuade residents that the government is not able to govern their territory and it is much better to support the insurgency either passively or actively. This form of IW might be the most flexible one, since the territorial defeat of its forces does not necessarily mean the war is over. Members are merged into the population, and even if the regime is thought stable, these members can cause serious damage, so the threat of the insurgents remains. This contradicts von der Heydte’s argument that revolution and civil war are not categories of IW, but IW is an instrument of how these conflicts are waged: “Irregular war—also in the form of civil war—is not itself a revolution, but at most an instrument and, under certain circumstances, part of a revolution”²³ or “[i]f none of the rules modeled on the ‘conventions’ of international law emerge in civil war, rules which limit the employment of violence to certain persons and instruments, then such a civil war will take on the form of irregular warfare.”²⁴ Despite the fact that IW can be categorized into different forms or named as an instrument of a war, the main point is that when a group or organization chooses to adopt irregular warfare it might lack other capabilities such as conventional resources, nuclear assets, or simply financial support and is, therefore, unable to maintain a larger and more powerful military.

²³ Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

A. AIMS AND GOALS OF MODERN IW

When IW is chosen as an instrument of indirect action, the primary effect is psychological rather than physical. The main intent is to “outmaneuver” the adversary, not to beat them “decisively.” Von der Heydte says, “Anyone choosing to employ irregular warfare...His aim will be to make his own political aim appear as historically necessary, inevitable, and self-evident to his adversary.”²⁵ It is obvious that, even if one takes the terrain of the others or conquers all the decisive points, the war itself has not been necessarily won. History can provide numerous examples in which the final defeat of the enemy had not been accomplished until his will was broken. T. E. Lawrence did not support the decisive battle either. His strategic aim was to “...seek its [the Turkish army’s] weakest link, and bear only on that till time made the mass of it fall. The Arab army must impose the longest possible passive defense on the Turks...by extending its own front to the maximum.”²⁶

B. WHY IW?

Many groups, people or organizations that choose to wage irregular warfare rarely do so because this potentially dangerous lifestyle is attractive to them. To avoid unnecessary prolonged struggle, leaders of insurgency would prefer to have more sophisticated conventional arsenals, even nuclear resources. Kiras argues that, “Most groups adopt IW because other, more decisive, forms of political violence are unavailable to them.”²⁷

Von der Heydte sees it from a different perspective. His view originates from the modern weapon system era, in which insurgencies have difficulties not only to gain or possess heavy weapon systems (i.e., tanks or aircraft), but also to train and use them especially when the considerable part of the armed forces have no common cause with the insurgents. Von der Heydte concludes that, “[i]n view of the superiority of regular

²⁵ Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 38.

²⁶ T. E. Lawrence, “Science of Guerrilla Warfare,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed. (Edinburgh: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1929), 248.

²⁷ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 232.

forces, which cannot be compensated for, against civilian insurgents who do not have larger troop units on their side, such insurgents today, despite their courage and willingness to sacrifice, no longer have a real chance to achieve their aim in open combat. The only way to success which still offers itself in such a case is irregular warfare.”²⁸

C. HOW CAN IW FIT INTO A DEFENSE STRATEGY?

After World War I, modern international law superseded classical international law. One of the two exceptions to the prohibition of the employment of armed forces was the war of self-defense in which a state that has been the victim of an unprovoked invasion or attack wages a war in order to defend its sovereignty. Most likely, a weak state that is attacked by a much more powerful adversary will be able to fight against the invader by only irregular means. Under certain circumstances, this warfighting becomes “allowed;” the actions and tactics used during the struggle, however, are confusing and only partially covered by the rules of engagement.²⁹ International law and strategy are co-dependent. With this “legitimate” international viewpoint, a small state can purposefully plan an irregular pillar in its defense strategy.

Von der Heydte argues that, “Military strategy is not necessarily a strategy of war. The real art of a military strategy is to achieve the political aim sought for without war—by means of the mere demonstration of military power.”³⁰ Obviously, this strategy will not deter a strong adversary but it could menace the invader in time and space like Yugoslavia demonstrated its “irregular” capability in 1971.³¹

Yugoslavia wanted to deter Soviet political threats or invasion with a clear statement that an occupation would have serious consequences and the effort would have extremely high cost; it also would be bloody and prolonged. Their new doctrine—total national defense—consisted of three main pillars. The conventional forces would mount a defense to slow the enemy’s ground, waterborne, and airborne movements and then

²⁸ Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 21.

²⁹ Ibid., 31.

³⁰ Ibid., 37.

³¹ Ibid.

withdraw to avoid frontal battles. The enemy then would be flanked and attacked from the rear by irregular and territorial defense forces. Finally, the occupying force would face a total resistance of the local population. Even though it was not a pure military deterrence, it had a similar function.³²

There has never been a guerrilla-type war waged when the guerrillas were superior to their adversaries; rather, they have always been outnumbered on a great scale. Furthermore, they have rarely been purposefully and professionally better trained than their conventional opponents. Guerrilla warfare can benefit more from small trained elite formations than from massive maneuvers. The last few decades turned this warfare into a highly specialized art of war; hence, military planners can do well to prepare for small or limited war in advance.

Guerrillas and special units have common approaches to wageing war, such as demolitions, destruction, and back-alley ambushes often dressed in indistinguishable clothes from the local population.³³ They also have specially skilled men like the half-naked Viet Cong slipping through dense barbed wire equipped with explosives to eliminate command posts, or Palestinian shooters sniping at Israeli cabinet members; these are not, however, the reasons for their success. Derek Leebaert summarizes how guerrilla forces and special operations forces can be related, and how military planners might start thinking about guerrilla actions as a more effective way of a defense:

The special operation melds into guerrilla warfare when expert cadres arrive as a vanguard outfit in what has up till then been a localized conflict. They may serve as advisers or combat leaders as they mobilize indigenous people against a common enemy. And as guerrillas are becoming increasingly professional, more professional soldiers are fighting with guerrilla techniques, with no one side having a monopoly on reaching out across into the heartland of the other.³⁴

³² Ross A. Johnson, *Total National Defense in Yugoslavia* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, [1971]), 1.

³³ Lewis H. Gann, *Guerrillas in History* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1971), 88.

³⁴ Leebaert, *To Dare and to Conquer*, 25.

III. CONDITIONS FOR WAGING IRREGULAR WARFARE

IW is dynamic in its characteristics and is shaped by several factors: social, environmental, and technological. Waging a war by irregular methods, one has to adopt these factors in an efficient way in order to offset their military and organizational weaknesses. Insurgents are not forced to use one specific means or method, but they are to make the best use of them to suit the environment.

Lewis H. Gann compared two scholars' arguments about the necessary conditions that are required for successful guerrilla warfare. Both—Clausewitz's modern, and Giraldus Cambrensis's from the middle ages—regardless of their many centuries of time difference, came to similar conclusions as to what these conditions are: (1) inaccessible and difficult to traverse extended geography, (2) strategically on the defense but tactically with the initiative, (3) the material character, and (4) the absolute importance of morale.³⁵ It would be more than mistaken to state that these conditions would fulfil the entire list of requirements for a successful guerrilla war, but certainly they are the fundamentals. This chapter will examine these conditions in detail, what their factors and characteristics are, and how they influenced the outcomes in some respective battles.

A. STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Similarly to Clausewitz's renowned argument that "war is a continuation of policy by other means," Galula paraphrased that, "Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means."³⁶ IW's strategy is hardly definable in a way that can be put into a doctrine used by defense planners. Noteworthy irregular leaders, mainly based on their personal experiences, ended up with different strategies with slight or considerable differences, but they all had one common factor. There had been no sharp contours between the conditional prerequisites of a successful outcome. The following paragraphs in this section will present some major irregular fighters and leaders and their

³⁵ Gann, *Guerrillas in History*, 22–23.

³⁶ David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 3.

strategic thinking of how to wage war irregularly and conclude what contemporary military planners should consider.

Mao Tse Tung listed several obvious and intuitive rationales: force the enemy to disperse, strike the weak points, avoid pitched battles unless you have overwhelming forces, etc. His strategic perspective, however, has some unique features that are different from other notable ones: (1) the relationship between offense and defense at the tactical and strategic levels; (2) The three phases (strategic defense, stalemate, strategic offense); and (3) the primacy of politics and the military actions in support of it. Unlike other theorists, he argued that, “tactical guerrilla actions alone, however cleverly executed or destructive, are insufficient to drive an enemy from one’s territory.”³⁷

One of Mao’s staunchest followers, General Vo Nguyen Giap, shared Mao’s strategy, but with a minor difference. During his studies, he absorbed the ideology of wearing down the stronger opponent; instead of adopting entirely Mao’s formula, which was the rural hit-and-run rather than taking the battle into urban area; Giap, however, believed that the irregular campaign needed to be conducted in the rural and urban area simultaneously.³⁸

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara together accomplished probably the most improbable guerrilla victory in history. With a few hundred fighters against some ten thousands they would not have been able to succeed without a great strategy and popular support. It is known that the Cuban army under President Batista was not in the best shape; they were conscripts and unwilling to fight. The Batista regime was already unpopular when Castro and Guevara came along, and here is where the two genuine guerrilla fighters prevailed in their strategy. They combined the small-scale attacks that were mainly directed by Che, and the large-scale publicity effort driven by Castro who had always shown a great capability to turn even unsuccessful military actions into propaganda triumphs. One can also see similar strategy in Al-Qaeda’s struggle, though

³⁷ FMFRP 12–18, *Mao Tse-Tung: On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. BG Samuel B. Griffith (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy), 73.

³⁸ Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 230.

with totally different causes and grievances; they are also experts in using media and the Internet or applying propaganda.

T. E. Lawrence was a British intelligence officer who worked with the Arabian army against the Turks in 1916. Lawrence's strategy was to wage irregular warfare and attack vulnerable points along the railroad supply lines of the Turks, and he also looked to avoid pitched battles with them. He believed that the superior maneuverability of his camel-mounted Arab allies would overstretch the Turkish capability to defend against their mobility. The insurgency would force the Turks to defend against "phantoms" and further undermine their security, generating ever more targets for Lawrence and his associates. Lawrence was successful in incorporating technology as well as desert wisdom into his maneuvers.

Regardless of what approaches a country decides to fit into its defense strategy, or what combination of the others would work, an extremely important saying of Mao Tse Tung is worth considering: guerrillas need a strategy. History provides examples to show that no irregular strategy worked perfectly. They have either lacked some features that were needed to be successful or were not applied when it was necessary. It is hardly possible to list all the influential features, so the following paragraph will summarize some important characteristics to be taken in account when thinking about either the tactical or strategic level of IW.

(1) *Public opinion*: During the American Revolution, the insurgents manipulated the population in an effective way that helped to offset the advantages of their opponent. Public opinion has also played a decisive rule in the following centuries of British and U.S. history, in Greece in the 19th century rebellion against the Turks, or just recently in Lebanon, where Hezbollah skillfully used this relatively new weapon. Along the same lines, (2) "*winning the hearts and minds*" was a declaration of the famous counterinsurgent Gerald Templer in Malaya; it is highly emphasized that popular local support can decisively affect the outcome of the conflict, as the (3) "*population-centric*" believer of counterinsurgency General David Petraeus appreciated in Iraq, too. Another important thing to consider is (4) *outside support*. It can provide tremendous support in different areas. A third party's security forces can tie down and overload the adversary, as

the French forces demonstrated by their continual attacks against the British army in the American Revolution. They can also provide insurgents with material support that is significant in turning the struggle to their advantage; for example, the Mujahidin were able to challenge the air superiority of the Soviet troops after the Stingers arrived from the CIA. Though not as substantial as the earlier two, passive support can effectively help guerrilla forces, for example by giving them space to maneuver, or in a case of neighboring countries, just not supporting their adversaries at all. Another fundamental point is that, in order to accomplish strategic goals, guerrillas are not required to defeat the enemy in a (5) *decisive battle*.

Von der Heydte argues, “Irregular warfare actions only obtain their importance in the psychological reaction they elicit in the adversary...irregular warfare is fundamentally war of attrition.”³⁹ Since guerrillas are mostly outnumbered and inferior in power they need even more understanding and (6) *knowledge of the background and culture of their foe*, so they can surprise and outmaneuver them.⁴⁰ Without understanding their opponent, guerrillas would not be able to accomplish one of the strategically important tactical considerations by Mao: “Although the element of surprise is not absent in orthodox warfare, there are fewer opportunities to apply it than there are during guerrilla hostilities. In the latter speed is essential.”⁴¹

Similar to (7) *surprise*, some other factors have important roles in regular warfare as well, but the main difference is that in guerrilla warfare there are not too many chances to conduct certain missions more than once. So guerrilla fighters have to be particularly skillful in applying their expertise or extraordinary capabilities like the Arabs used their special (8) *mobility* throughout endless deserts to surprise and outmaneuver the Turks in 1916–18 or, as Von der Heydte puts up an excellent question regarding (9) *cover and concealment*: “Who isolates whom—psychologically and materially?—that is an issue in covert warfare.”⁴²

³⁹ Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 38.

⁴⁰ Gann, *Guerrillas in History*, 88.

⁴¹ FMFRP 12–18, *Mao Tse-Tung: On Guerrilla Warfare*, 97.

⁴² Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 157.

Finally, and probably most importantly, an excellent tool in a guerrilla group's hand is the wide variety of (10) *media and mass communication* systems. It is not only a great asset to influence public opinion, but also to mobilize supporters, organize financial support bases, recruit members, conduct propaganda activities, distribute training materials, establish logistic system, etc. Even though terrorism—in its contemporary international interpretation—is not an exemplary method of IW, it is a fact that Al-Qaeda uses the media in an extremely skillful manner: “Bin Laden...was convinced that the ‘the media war’ was one of the ‘strongest methods’ of promoting jihadism—its ratio may reach 90 percent of the total preparation of the battles.”⁴³

B. GEOGRAPHY

Back in ancient times, the Roman army was probably the most formidable fighting force, and almost no one could defeat them while in open terrain. They moved in massed but flexible legionary formations, and effectively deployed their weapons (seven-foot-long javelin, rectangular shield, and double-edged gladius short sword) with an accompanying psychological effect that was a terrifying scream. Also, numerous specialists supported these legions from the rear, such as road-building experts, artillery mechanics, bridging, logistics, etc. The morale standard was also high. As soon as this tough army was caught in treacherous terrain and stressed by skillful guerrillas, however, their superiority quickly disappeared. This is what exactly happened to Cestius Gallus's army:

It marched along narrow, winding mountain paths from Jerusalem heading for the Roman-held cities of the Mediterranean coast. The legionnaires and their local allies were beset by lightly armed Jewish fighters who would fire their slingshots or javelins from above and dash down to pick off stragglers with swords and knives. With their heavy armor and equipment, weighing up to a hundred pounds per man, the legionnaires were too slow to catch these nimble harassers...All they could do was cower under their shields and pray to their deities.⁴⁴

⁴³ Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 523.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.

In this battle, using the terrain effectively, the Jewish guerrillas managed to cause a humiliating defeat to the Roman army, who lost more 5,700 of its soldiers.⁴⁵

Another example when geographic condition played a decisive role in a conflict happened more recently. In written history, the only successful slave revolt occurred in 1804, in Haiti. Haitian independence was proclaimed on the first of January in that year. Despite the fact that in Jamaica other slaves, called maroons, developed surprisingly skillful guerrilla capabilities and managed to hold or counter the British attacks for decades, finally they got subdued. The only slaves that succeeded in toppling the colonial regime were the Haitians; a significant part of their victory, however, was that the tropical climate was an extremely favorable ground for mosquitos, which as Max Boot notes, “mosquitos that, unbeknownst at the time, spread yellow fever and malaria. These insect warriors, ‘the most terrible of all enemies’...accounted for the vast majority of casualties among European troops.”⁴⁶

There could be numerous examples from recent ages where terrain, weather, climate or population density influenced the outcome of a conflict, and even nowadays large, powerful armies are still facing great difficulties fighting against insurgencies in rough terrain. In the following paragraphs the influential factors of geography will be discussed based on David Galula’s excellent study on counterinsurgency. Even in regular warfare the essential factors are important. If irregulars do not attempt to exploit the advantages of their environment it can directly lead to failure; on the other hand, it can be highly beneficial if they find the effective use of it.

Galula lists eight different factors that have either advantageous or disadvantageous effects.⁴⁷ The first is *location*: It is disadvantageous to the irregulars if the land where the struggle happens is isolated by natural obstacles or surrounded by desert, sea or ocean. Also, if the neighboring countries are not sympathetic to the

⁴⁵ Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁷ Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, 26.

guerrillas' cause that makes it even more difficult to be supported by a "third party" if any is available.

The second factor is *international borders*: This factor relates to the location, especially when the countries alongside the borderline are sympathetic to the insurgents. In this case, the longer the frontier line is the more chance to get efficient support from abroad, and the more maneuver space the guerrillas have.

The third factor is *size*: The larger the country is, the harder it is to control for the regime in power. It gives more maneuverable space to the irregulars, which is probably one of their most valuable means to wage their war. As cited in Kiras's study, Colonel Charles Callwell (1906) appreciated that "irregulars possessed the strategic advantages of time, maneuver, intelligence, limited supply requirements, and the initiative to accept battle at a time and place of their own choosing."⁴⁸

The fourth factor is *configuration*: If a country can be divided into smaller parts or compartmentalized in order to keep control, it obstructs the insurgents. Due to the fact that Greek communist partisans stuck to their bases and had to defend them permanently, they lost because the national forces had an easy task to localize and overrun them. Also, if an area of operation of the conflict is an archipelago, like the Philippines, the freedom of movement is limited for the insurgents, and in this instance, sea power becomes more important.

Galula's fifth factor is *terrain*: This factor cannot be designated to either side as definite advantage or disadvantage. For sure it is favorable for the insurgents if the terrain is covered by mountains, swamps, and jungle lands or forest that are impassable by armored or motorized vehicles (e.g., the heavily forested mountains of Cuba helped Castro and Che, and the jungle of Malaya gave a robust advantage to the insurgents). If the terrain is sparsely covered by vegetation, however, or provides only limited ground for cover and concealment, the technological edge of the counterinsurgents will increase their advantage.

⁴⁸ Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," 249.

The sixth factor is *climate*: It is generally believed that extreme climate will be advantageous for the insurgent units, but it is not. First, the counterinsurgents usually have a much better logistical system and operational facilities to keep their equipment in appropriate condition; for example, the rainy season in Indochina was a perpetual headache for the Vietminh. Second, extreme temperatures can bring guerrilla activities to a standstill, as the winter months nearly stopped the FLN in Algeria, or more recently the Taliban in Afghanistan. Third, even though the insurgents are used to living in austere conditions, the prolonged hardship will even more negatively influence their morale in extreme climate conditions.

The seventh factor is *population*: From a geographical perspective, the population counts whether they are densely packed or widely distributed. A scattered population favors the insurgents, since it is more difficult to control. Also, the high ratio of rural to urbanized areas gives more advantage to the guerrillas.

Finally, the eighth factor is *economy*: This factor can work both ways. An economically weak country will be much more “hospitable” for guerrilla warfare, since they have not too much to lose, but it will not provide good conditions either to the insurgents or to the countering forces. A stronger country will, nevertheless, worry about their wealth, and if the guerrilla fight lasts too long, the population can easily turn against the movement, even if initially they were not hostile to it.

Although Galula’s list is wide enough for a thorough analysis of the geographical condition, it is worthwhile to acknowledge the fact that today most conflicts are waged in or at least near an *urbanized area*. Urbanized guerrilla warfare consists of many activities, ranging from marches to disruption, even political assassinations. The technological development, the unlimited availability of technical goods is more seen in large cities than in rural areas. Also those skillful people, who are either highly educated technicians or extremely talented “do it yourself” amateurs and who live in large cities, are much easier to recruit. A densely populated city will provide at least as good cover and concealment for insurgents as a jungle does. Additionally, it gives more possibility to organize the kind of mass movement that the strategy requires. Also, targeting the essential services that large cities depend on can be a useful tool against civil

disobedience. Nevertheless, though urban guerrilla warfare can provide tremendous opportunities for a good result; it also has its limitations. Attacking essential public services can alienate the population, the risk of exposure is more than in rural areas, and insurgents can only operate in very small units.

To conclude the geographical section, an ideal area for an IW to be waged from the perspective of the weak would meet the following conditions:

- a large land-locked country that has at least one neighboring country that supports the cause
- the terrain is mostly jungle covered and mountainous, or else has scattered swamps in the plains
- economically poor
- the population is widely dispersed in the rural areas, but there are a few larger cities.

C. HUMAN NATURE THAT IS DESIGNED FOR IW

Samuel Gridley Howe, while serving with Greek soldiers in their War of Independence early in the Nineteenth Century, wrote about their strengths and weaknesses:

A Greek soldier is intelligent, active, hardy, and frugal; he will march or rather skip, all day among the rocks, expecting no other food than a biscuit and a few olives, or a raw onion...But he will not work, for he thinks it disgraceful; he will submit to no discipline, for he thinks it makes a slave of him; he will obey no order which does not seem to him a good one, for he holds that in [these] matters he has a right to be consulted.⁴⁹

This behavior makes the Greeks seem cowardly; but Howe also observed that, if one let these soldiers fight in their own way, they were the bravest. In its classical interpretation, a “good soldier” does not necessarily fulfill the requirements of a good irregular soldier. So what human characteristics would make a good guerrilla fighter? This section will start with some historical examples where human nature was decisive in a successful irregular type of warfare. It will be followed with a list of characteristics that

⁴⁹ Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 103.

design an effective irregular type fighter. After that, it identifies some motivations of waging irregular war. This section will conclude the advantages of the weak from the human perspective.

The famous “Gideon effect” derives from his great deception against the Midianites; that operation, however, would not be successful against more than 30 thousand Midianites without the specifically selected 300 men. “Gideon’s purpose was to panic the enemy, not let panic creep into his own small force through men *insufficiently sound*.”⁵⁰ Because of their lifestyle, Native American Indians were masters of the dark forests. George Washington wrote in his memoirs, “Only Indians were a match for Indians. Perhaps a mere ten on their home ground were the equivalent of a hundred soldiers.”⁵¹ There have been always exceptions, however; in this instance, Rogers’ Rangers were a match for them.

In 1832 in Chechnya, the Murids fought with such a fanatical resistance that even the absolute superiority of the Russian forces did not convince them to surrender. Their only wish to the demand of capitulation was a message to their family: “We want no quarter; the only grace we ask of the Russians is to let our families know that we died as we lived, refusing submission to any foreign yoke.”⁵² Their leader escaped by a legendary action from this specific battle, but kept fighting for a quarter century and became a renowned guerrilla commander.

The above-mentioned examples give us a certain concept that some groups or individuals are specifically designed for guerrilla warfare. But what human capabilities make a guerrilla fighter even more successful? One is *patience*: Since it has been supported by several noteworthy scholars that irregular warfare is time-consuming, patience is a key factor in the human nature. Based on his own experience while fighting on the side of the British crown, Johann Ewald observed, “British troops were not really suitable for the small war, because they did not have sufficient patience for this difficult

⁵⁰ Leebaert, *To Dare and to Conquer*, 44.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁵² Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 156.

and laborious kind of warfare.”⁵³ In Marx’s mind the key to a successful revolution was the organization itself, and patience.⁵⁴

Another requisite human capability is *endurance*: Since mobility and maneuverability are some of the most important tactical considerations in guerrilla warfare, its fighters need to be exceptionally frugal. Absent the Arab’s frugality, T. E. Lawrence would not be able to use so effectively the Arabs against the widely dispersed Turkish defensive lines, amid the surrounding harsh terrain. Similarly, Robert Rogers would not be able to conduct so many long-range reconnaissance patrols behind the enemy lines without possessing an extreme enduring capability to live and hike for months in the field.

Adaptability is another necessary capability: Johann Ewald’s observation still holds true in modern doctrines. According to his written experiments, partisan leaders need independent thought to identify and exploit opportunities, preserve mobility, and make the best possible use of available assets.⁵⁵ Another capability is *Improvisation*: Cortés was not a named irregular leader, but rather a “special force” commander. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that he fought the Aztecs in an environment that fits into irregular warfare. During their struggle the Spanish were often outnumbered, their technological advantage did not count in urban areas, and they had poor outside support. Their “ability further to exploit the virtues of small size to move straight in while improvising continuously (not the hallmark of most big battle forces),”⁵⁶ however, took them all the way to their targets.

A final vital capability is a “*Desperado*” *mentality*: Similarly to the necessary guerrilla “mindset,” while recruiting for OSS and SOE this type of individual came in handy for Brigadier Dudley Clark and Colonel William Donovan. The latter demanded

⁵³ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 241.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 244.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 241.

⁵⁶ Leebaert, *To Dare and to Conquer*, 151.

soldiers who were “calculatingly reckless with disciplined daring, who are trained for aggressive action.”⁵⁷

It is not the intent of this paper to advocate some weird characteristics of tribal guerrilla forces, but if one hangs up moral judgment for a second, it can be accepted that *brutality* and *remorselessness* are still characteristics that supported several guerrilla leaders in some “Non-Western” countries. It is obvious to everyone that child soldiers, IEDs, and ruthlessly living off people are all totally inhuman actions, but as Anna Simons says in her study, “When a society doesn’t care what happens to members of a rival society, combatants will feel little to no compunction about indulging in acts we would never countenance.”⁵⁸ In modern irregular warfare, “Western countries” place more and more restraints on the procedures. The problem is that the potential enemies do not and increasingly target civilians.

Finally, *motivation* is probably the most important feature to analyze. There are several factors that can motivate irregular fighters. When the Boer and Filipino insurgents were defeated, Filipinos suffered much more, because the Boers were inspired by their great *nationalist sentiment*. Another good example of being motivated is the American militias who were able to take endless suffering for their *freedom and independence*. Being *humiliated* by the strong makes the weak even more willing to fight. In irregular warfare, youths are the dominant participants for just such motives. Besides the fact that their conspiracy is the most important, they are also motivated by (1) *seeking status* to test themselves for their adulthood and (2) *defeating the oppressor*, who is usually personalized as Goliath (while the youth see themselves as David, who represents the oppressed).⁵⁹

As with terrorism, in many insurgent movements the motives can be summarized thus: revenge, renown, reaction. Louis Richard argues that “terrorist movements pursue these two sets of long- and short-term motivations simultaneously. Moreover,

⁵⁷ William J. Morgan, *The OSS and I* (New York: Norton, 1957), 281.

⁵⁸ Anna Simons, “21st Century Cultures of War: Advantage Them,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute: The Philadelphia Papers* (2013), 25.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

philosophical or political aspirations are of greater interest to the leadership of the movements, while followers are more attracted by the nearer-term appeal of revenge, renown, and reaction.”⁶⁰

Having analyzed the human capabilities and characteristics, the motives that can formulate a “good” guerrilla fighter, based on Anna Simons’ observation, will be identified. (1) The weak can *out-communicate* the strong using language and “homeland” knowledge; (2) *code-switch*: Irregular leaders have a better knowledge how to communicate to their men, and also when it becomes necessary they can easily recognize what “language” the other side speaks. (3) “*They know what they can get away with given our patterns of behavior.*” Counterinsurgents are mainly aware of what organizations, or what types of networks the irregulars are operating in, but rarely understand what their values are. Contrarily, irregulars are aware of the values of the invaders and they can effectively harass those values (for example, time). (4) Irregulars are more sophisticated than they are given *credit* for. (5) They have a different conception of power, do not believe in fairness, and are willing to experiment with violence.”⁶¹

D. FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS AND FINANCIAL ADVANTAGES

The following section will analyze the financial condition of IW from two perspectives. One is from the insurgent’s side pointing out why IW is cheap, and how it can be supported from “above” and from “below” or from outside. It will be followed by indicating how the financial factor can support the insurgent. Finally, how would Special Forces reduce the expenditures of a country on its military?

Before one goes to a shopping center to buy a thing, a responsible person would check a few things: Is there an appropriate shopping center, do they carry the things that she or he needs, is transportation available, etc. The main point, however, is to see what is the amount that one can afford to spend, while still purchasing a good quality product. Similarly, a small country that cannot afford to spend a huge amount of money for its

⁶⁰ Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (New York: Random House, 2006), 81.

⁶¹ Simons, “21st Century Cultures of War,” 17.

defense may have to look for a cheaper solution, while still being able to effectively deploy forces to protect their sovereignty.

Many noteworthy scholars ended up with the same argument that insurgency is cheap and counterinsurgency is expensive. The common view is that guerrillas live from hand-to-mouth. That is true up to a certain point. In the preparation phase, they also need to think about their re-supply system, particularly ammunition and weapons. These are the most critical things that cannot be procured through civilian lines. Insurgents, however, do not need extremely heavy weapon systems. Rather, they need small arms and explosives that can be transported without being compromised and also easily hidden when not in use.

Colonel Savo Drljevic, a comrade-in-arms of Tito, listed what the important weapons for a modern guerrilla are: rifles, light and medium mortars, machine guns, grenades, explosives, and various light rockets, to name but a few.⁶² Since the counterinsurgents' most effective assets are helicopters, it is wise to think about anti-air rockets as well, as these helped the Mujahidin fighters against the Soviets. When the conspiracy comes "from above," it is easier to supply the insurgents with these, since governments, authorities, and military commands can legally possess them prior to the conflict. To support the movement "from below" (i.e., the population) with weapon systems is more problematic and barely can be legally procured through the commercial market system. Whether "from below" or "from above," however, this equipment is significantly cheaper than jet fighters, submarines, up-armored vehicles, or drones. Furthermore, even though Al-Qaeda or the Taliban represents the dark side of globalization, they still mount a successful fight with the cheap and reliable AK family, RPGs and either home-made or former military explosive ordnance.⁶³

The interested "third power" can be likewise a great supporter, not only in the communication field to provide a propaganda platform or geographically by offering maneuver space or training areas, but also by delivering weapons, ammunition or

⁶² Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 143.

⁶³ Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 517.

advisors.⁶⁴ The other significant financial feature is accommodation and food. In ancient times the Mongols, the Arabs, the Huns, and many more nomad tribes—the ones who fought irregularly according to the contemporary doctrines—could live without major supply in a harsh terrain for longer than their adversaries.

Nowadays, these nomads are not a determining factor, but guerrillas also have the possibility to live without major logistical bases or dining facilities that are often able to feed 20,000 people three times a day plus midnight meal for duty personnel. Their great advantage is that their basic living needs are either provided by themselves, when they pause guerrilla operations and live as regular members of society, or by other sources that are not involved in the fight at all. One of the greatest issues in conventional warfare is the mobilization of forces. Taking into account that it requires transportation, fuel, maintenance, and human resources, guerrillas have another financial advantage, since they are mobile on their own, and do not require a great logistical system to move troops from point A to point B.

Another perspective on financial disruption relates to how it supports the insurgents. Galula argues in his study of counterinsurgency that, “Promoting disorder is a legitimate objective for the insurgent...it serves to undermine the strength and the authority of the counterinsurgent. Moreover, disorder—the normal state of nature—is cheap to create [and] very costly to prevent.”⁶⁵ It is really easy to create disorder. A few phone calls can create a fully disrupted airline schedule, and blowing up Metro vehicles can paralyze the public transport system.

From a military perspective, to blow up one or two bridges would force the occupying force to reinforce each bridge. Cutting wires on the streets would compel the counterinsurgent to mount protective measures to each vehicle or change their entire standing operational procedures. Or, as happened in Indochina or in Algeria, when insurgents burned a farm, other farms and village requested protection.⁶⁶ Since occupying

⁶⁴ Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare*, 179.

⁶⁵ Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

forces cannot neglect the need to maintain order, their expense ratio will be far higher than the guerrillas.

Like in Algeria, the FLN's estimated annual cost of waging their war was approximately 30–40 million USD, an amount that the French had to spend every two weeks. "Because of the disparity of cost and effort, the insurgent can thus accept a protracted war, the counterinsurgent should not."⁶⁷ As Lewis H. Gann wrote, the French withdrawal from Vietnam supports this idea, as well: "Dien Bien Phu did not by any means knock out the French Army, but the French were tired of fighting a desperately bloody and expensive war...and in 1954 they gave up the struggle."⁶⁸

Since 1648, when the Treaty of Westphalia called for the release of POWs without ransom, "The state is thinking in large-scale rational administrative terms: strategy is as much dutifully financial as gloriously military."⁶⁹ Regardless of how wealthy a country is, it has been a great consideration for some centuries to wage a war as economically as possible.

Special operations are similar to guerrilla warfare in several aspects. Both conduct operations mainly independently or semi-independently in small units behind an enemy's lines or rear. Beyond others, their tactical advantages are speed, surprise, accuracy, and mobility. Obviously, special operators are not grown just anywhere. Their training is time-consuming and compared to regular "mass-produced" infantry soldiers is more expensive. As soon as a special operator is fully operational, however, their employer can benefit much more than from those that are trained on an equivalent amount of money. The largest advantage of Special Forces against guerrillas is that they are specifically trained, equipped and organized before the preparation phase; being so, they will not produce as much wasted energy or unnecessary losses as an inexperienced, newly recruited guerrilla fighter would do.

⁶⁷ Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, 9.

⁶⁸ Gann, *Guerrillas in History*, 72.

⁶⁹ Leebaert, *To Dare and to Conquer*, 229.

IV. THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON IN 2006

A. BACKGROUND

Since its infancy in 1981, Hezbollah has fought for over three decades in accordance with the classical interpretation of terrorist tactics. In its tactical repertoire one could find several different tactics, from high-profile attacks to low-profile harassments. The group's main form of attacks were (1) *hijacking*: the most famous was the capture of a TWA flight in 1985, resulting in the murder of one American sailor; (2) *suicide bombing*: between 1981 and 1999 the organization conducted many vehicle-, man-, or motorbike-borne suicide attacks mainly on Israeli headquarters, U.S. military installations, or even public places, killing hundreds of foreign soldiers and civilians; and (3) *hostage taking*: in the 1980s, nearly 100 hostages were seized, and not all of them have been released alive.⁷⁰

Hezbollah's main cause was to force out the unwelcome Israeli "invaders" of the lands of Lebanon. Following the example of Iran, it also sought to create an Islamic Republic. Thanks to a thoroughly calculated strategy and substantial Iranian support, Hezbollah was successful in driving the Israelis from Lebanon in 2000. The struggle between the organization and Israel, however, remained.

Hassan Nasrallah, who like Mao and Ho recognized the importance of politics, is a prominent Hezbollah leader. Under his guidance, Hezbollah became a political party and basically expanded its strategy with three extremely important factors. First, it started to provide social services for the poor Shi'as in order to gain more popular support; second, it ramped up its media campaign, in which it was more successful in sending out its messages than the entire Israeli state; and third, it demonstrated an increased capability to fight the IDF using irregular warfare. Nevertheless, with this extended strategy Hezbollah finally compelled the Israeli troop withdrawal from Lebanese lands in 2000. It also made a fresh demand for Israeli-occupied farms on the Golan Heights. That did not really help a final consolidation of peace between Israel and Hezbollah, and in 2006 the

⁷⁰ Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 504–505.

prolonged tension led to a “34-day invasion” of Lebanon that included several air strikes (Israeli Air Force-IAF), naval blockade and naval gunfire (Israeli Navy-IN) and ground assault (Israeli Land Forces-ILF) into Hezbollah-controlled territories.

The Lebanon Campaign started on the 12th of July when Hezbollah infiltrated into Israeli territories and killed three and captured two Israeli soldiers while patrolling. In retaliation, the following day Israel started an air campaign targeting Hezbollah strong points, observation posts and rocket launcher sites. Hezbollah did not possess significant anti-air assets, so while being bombed by the IAF they started a severe retaliatory stream of rocket fire into Israeli territories. As a result of IAF bombings, they lost numerous rocket sites; the IAF, however, still had difficulties in detecting and knocking out the famous Katyusha sites, since it took only minutes to set up such sites.

The first major IDF ground movement started on the 19th of July. The Israeli advance faced a much tougher defense than had been expected. During the first half of the invasion, Israeli ground forces did not attempt to hold positions systematically. This changed after the 31st of July, when Israeli leadership ordered its troops to take and hold a security zone alongside the border area, 10–15 miles deep in Lebanese territory. The Israeli intent was to push the advance north all along the border. Hezbollah had no front to defend, so they could attack the IDF from unexpected directions; this they did proficiently enough that the IDF lost significant numbers of soldiers and material.

The turning point, however, came with an even more dangerous weapon: Hezbollah used the media so expertly that international pressure dramatically increased on Israel to cease the offensive. Finally, on the 14th of August, a cease-fire agreement went into effect, Israeli troops withdrew behind their borders, and Hezbollah remained in the southern part of Lebanon.⁷¹

⁷¹ Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign* (Monograph, Strategic Studies Institution).

B. STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Again, Mao's excellent observation applies perfectly to Hezbollah's overall actions during this short war against Israel: "tactical guerrilla actions alone...are insufficient to drive an enemy from one's territory."⁷² It is hard to define what exact model of warfighting Hezbollah followed, but it was neither a "clear guerrilla" nor a "clear conventional" approach. On the strategic level, putting too much effort into holding ground, seeking concealment mainly by the terrain instead of intermingling with the civilians, and the "over-concentrated" forces represented major differences from an irregular movement. On the other hand, the overly permissive yielding of territory, the dependence on harassing fire and unattended minefields, the excessive dispersal of Hezbollah forces are considered more in accordance with irregular warfare.⁷³

Hezbollah's tactical and operational skills were far from perfect, but operated on a significantly higher level than many states in the Middle East. Soon after their formation, Hezbollah became a well-honed and very effective guerrilla force. Hezbollah fighters expertly exploited their knowledge of the local terrain and population. After the incident on the 12th of July 2006, Hezbollah did not expect such a large-scale invasion as a response from Israel, and their strategic plan did not mirror any renowned guerrilla strategists' work.

From Mao to Che, or from Giap to T. E. Lawrence, one might see only a minor irregular strategy applied during this conflict. Giap believed in *the simultaneous attack in rural and urbanized terrain*. It is hard to say Hezbollah's intent was to follow Giap, but for sure their strategy did not draw a line between the cities and rural areas. Most likely, their most effective weapon in their strategy was the *media*. As has been already shown in history, media has sometimes had much more significant effect than any type of weapon system. Castro and Che would not have been able to accomplish their goal without an expert influence on public opinion, and T. E. Lawrence himself referred to the

⁷² FMFRP 12-18, *Mao Tse-Tung: On Guerrilla Warfare*, 73.

⁷³ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign*, xiii.

printing press as the greatest weapon; similarly, Hezbollah would have never succeeded without the excellent manipulation of the worldwide media:

The turning point of the war was the July 30 Israeli air strike on suspected Hezbollah positions in the town of Qana. An apartment building was flattened, leading to the death of seventeen children and eleven adults. (Initially casualty estimates were much higher.) The resulting footage of mangled bodies being pooled out of the wreckage, which Hezbollah made sure received widespread distribution, increased pressure on Israel to halt its offensive, which was said to be “disproportionate.”⁷⁴

Hezbollah not only gained the pressure against the Israeli Defense Forces, but certain sympathy came to its cause from more and more dominant actors.

In their study, Biddle and Friedman identified four variables to gauge whether the 2006 campaign was a classical guerrilla war or its conventional opposite.⁷⁵ The first one was *the balance of brute force and coercion*: Hezbollah, as the much weaker actor of the conflict, was aware that Israel could invade Lebanon with no major difficulties and destroy the short-range rocket sites before their desired effect had been reached. A brute force defensive capability—certainly not a classic guerrilla tactic—was needed in the southern part of Lebanon that might be able to interrupt an Israeli invasion for long enough to enable a coercive strategy to succeed.

The second variable is *the relative concentration of combat power*: Hezbollah was much more concentrated than many guerrilla forces in recent history, but not even close as dense as any standard conventional procedure dictates, and was far outnumbered by the IDF.

The third variable is *the military organization of the theater of war*: It is hard to find any unclassified documentation about Hezbollah dispositions during the conflict, but from IDF reports it is possible to see that IDF could occupy many areas without any countering forces, or against only very light resistance. There were, however, much stronger defensive preparations in some villages. These were located in the vicinities of

⁷⁴ Max Boot, “Iraq: Baghdad without America,” 511, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.newsweek.com/iraq-baghdad-without-america-65997>.

⁷⁵ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign*, 47–53.

key road junctions or those villages nearest the border. Another important factor was that “Hezbollah exercised a degree of hierarchical, differentiated command and control over subunits operating in key areas during the campaign, making apparent decisions to favor some sectors over others, hold in some places but yield in others, counterattack in some locations but withdraw elsewhere.”⁷⁶

Finally, the fourth variable is *the sensitivity of dispositions to the political orientation of the population*: Guerrillas heavily rely on the population. In southern Lebanon, the Shiite and Christian distribution might have seriously influenced the dispositions of forces, so in this factor, unlike the others, Hezbollah methods approximated the guerrilla extreme to a high degree.

Another important distinction is that guerrilla fighters do not necessarily need to be expert in many areas, but it can help them. On the tactical level, Hezbollah was significantly skillful in many areas. The group demonstrated proficiency in camouflage and cover and concealment, placing minefields to canalize Israeli forces into concentrated engagement areas, small-scale coordinated attacks, coordination of supporting fire often from different directions, consistent fire discipline, to name but a few; however, they were short of the conventional standards of larger-scale maneuver, combined arm operations, individual marksmanship, and flexibility to changing conditions.

C. GEOGRAPHY

Four major geographic landscapes form Lebanon. There are two mountain chains running from the South to the North. Between these two mountains a large fertile plain lays, the Bekaa Valley, which was basically the birthplace of Hezbollah. Besides Israel, the other neighboring country to Lebanon is Syria whose ruling regime is mainly supportive of Hezbollah’s cause. With significant Syrian cooperation, Hezbollah located most of its training in camps in this valley. The fourth landscape is the narrow coastal strip, where the capital and most of the major cities are located. The coastal part is fairly large to allow trading sea lines stay open; however, Israeli Navy could blockade some of them.

⁷⁶ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign*, 59.

One can see that the geographical location of the country is not ideal, but it is advantageous from several contexts. Where the majority of the conflicts happened, the terrain provided good cover and concealment not only for fighting positions, but for maneuvering in small units. “Hezbollah made very effective use of local cover and concealment...but this was obtained almost entirely from the terrain—both natural and man-made.”⁷⁷

The chief battlefield of the campaign was the rural area; there was little urban fighting. The moderately urbanized borderline also provided advantageous maneuvering space for its units, and great cover for surprise attacks; though, during their preparation phase, Hezbollah had difficulties in the built-up areas with the population. Demographically, the dispersion of the people did not support the cause in every case: “The geographic distribution of Christians and Shiites....may have reflected the difficulties in making systematic defensive preparations amid an unsupportive population—and especially, in keeping those preparations covert and hidden from Israeli intelligence and target acquisition.”⁷⁸ Despite this, Hezbollah successfully dug tunnels between houses in order to be able to move between firing positions, or even years before the war, especially on the border areas where the construction of civilian houses was influenced by military considerations to reinforce the side from which the Israeli approach was expected.

This campaign climate had no significant effect on either party to the conflict for two reasons. One is that the entire conflict lasted only 34 days, so even if Hezbollah had to live in a harsh environment they could stand it with no problem. Second, in summertime, when humidity or precipitation is very low, the weapons and other war materials require much less maintenance.

⁷⁷ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign*, 44.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

D. HUMAN FACTOR

In 1982, when Hezbollah was formed following the Israeli invasion Lebanese youth were motivated by the resistance movement against the invaders. The spectrum of motivational factors has not changed today, but it is significantly extended. The degree is well defined by Nicholas Blanford in his article: “Today, however, the motivations for joining Hezbollah are more multidimensional, blending religious observance, hostility toward Israel, and the Shi’a commitment to justice and dignity.”⁷⁹

There are several human factors that characterize Hezbollah fighters, and without these factors they probably would not be as successful as they had been in their struggle against Israel. First and probably most important is their deep *religious affiliation*. Sheikh Khodr Nouredine—Hezbollah’s former political chief in south Lebanon—said: “Our Islamic beliefs make these young men refuse to accept injustice. They will do anything to resist Israel. I know the West does not understand, but our youth cannot live with Israel.”⁸⁰ What really helps to commit to this extreme resistance is the fact that Hezbollah orients its recruitment process at an early age. Children are welcomed in Hezbollah’s youth movements, they receive propaganda in schools, organized plays, lectures even sporting events are held by the movement, so the first step to become a resistance fighter is consequentially established.

From a weaker side’s perspective motivation has a meaningful importance to offset the material and numerical superiority. Hezbollah believed in the same: “...the unremitting religious and ideological instruction creates a combatant far superior to his opposite number in the Israeli army and helps overcome the organization’s material shortcomings in technology, weapons, and funds compared to Israel.”⁸¹

After becoming a fighter, only a few are selected to become martyrs. Regardless that Hezbollah is associated with suicide bombing, they have rarely conducted such operations; however, martyrdom is not only the privilege of the suicide bombers, but the

⁷⁹ Nicholas Blanford, “Joining Hezbollah,” accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.aucegypt.edu/gapp/cairoreview/Pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=92>.

⁸⁰ Blanford, “Joining Hezbollah.”

⁸¹ Ibid.

ones who were selected to specific missions. Blanford explains this notion in his article: “This type of martyrdom is an alien concept in Western philosophy, which emphasizes the sanctity of life, but for many Hezbollah combatants, seeking death is a desirable outcome, one that is nurtured and constantly reinforced by the religious and cultural environment in which he lives.”⁸²

According to the reports of “veteran” Hezbollah fighters, their training is similar in many contexts to the “Western standard” special forces training. It is hard to obey the orders after several weeks of difficult training, endless marches, reduced portions on food, or extreme weather conditions. So self-discipline and obedience are also important human characteristics of Hezbollah members. The training not only given them military skill, but helps building up the esprit de corps: “Hezbollah’s military successes...helped convey among the cadres a sense of fraternal and communal pride, achievement, and empowerment, sentiments that also inspire new generations of volunteers to join the party.”⁸³

They also believe the quality and the integrity of the leadership was a great integral character of Hezbollah that supported the movement throughout of his struggle against Israel. Their belief, martyrdom, and leadership qualities are of great value in waging their war, as it has been summarized by Sheikh Naim Qassem, a Shi’a Hezbollah politician:

Imagine the single machine gun with a faith in God and readiness for martyrdom and a faith in, and interaction with, the leadership, and then you have a person of great power who does not fear death. This differs from the enemy on the other side that does many calculations to protect itself]. Then our machine gun becomes more powerful than their artillery. This moral issue is quite essential.⁸⁴

⁸² Blanford, “Joining Hezbollah.”

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

E. FINANCIAL FACTOR

Hezbollah is a typical example of a non-state actor that relies on the financial support of a third party, as well as internal support. One of the most important resources of Hezbollah is Iranian state sponsorship due to Iranian interest in the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some Western diplomats estimated Iranian support at between 100 and 200 million USD per year. The majority of the income arrives in cash, but a significant amount of support is received in the form of weapons and communication systems, or by establishing training programs and camps. Another important resource is Syria. That country integrates Hezbollah fighters into its military training system, and also provides them weapons and ammunition support, including 220mm rockets. Syrian agents often cooperate with Hezbollah operatives in planning and executing terrorist attacks in Israeli territories. One of Syria's chief contributions is the hosting of the greatest concentration of Hezbollah training camps. This support frees up funds for Hezbollah that are gained from other different sources.⁸⁵

Despite the fact that Iran and Syria provide significant support to Hezbollah, and they do not need to rely on other sources as much as Al-Qaeda or Hamas, Hezbollah still raises its funds through other means. These include expatriate remittances from Lebanese living in Africa or North America, as well as charities and front organizations that are used to conceal their fundraising activities. Also, Hezbollah is involved in a wide variety of criminal acts ranging from smuggling to drug and illicit diamond trafficking.⁸⁶

The conduct of the 34-day war itself did not cost an extreme amount of money for Hezbollah. There are no available statistics about how much the group spent during the war, but several facts allow one to draw the conclusion that the type of war Hezbollah waged is more economical than the classical conventional one. The group did not use aerial vehicles that consume great quantities of fuel and cost large amounts of money and manpower. On land, they had weapons systems that required the least care, such as the AK-47 family, PKMs, and RPGs. These weapons are powerful and accurate enough

⁸⁵ Matthew Lewitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God," accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hezbollah-finance-funding-the-party-of-god>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

against infantry and light armored vehicles, and perfectly designed for prolonged usage with minimum maintenance.

To reach its strategic goal—bombarding Israel—Hezbollah’s most effective weapon was the Katyusha rocket. The group had several thousand of them from mainly third-party support, but similar to the individual weapons, these rockets are the modest ones that can be operated with no significant supporting systems. Vehicular movement was also limited in Hezbollah strategy. Fighters stayed hidden as long as they could, and moved only when it was necessary. This also saved on fuel consumption and maintenance cost. The third main area that was cheap during the war was the way in which fighters were fed. It is true the Hezbollah fighters did not get overweight by the end of the war, since food did not come through central logistic support. They mainly fed themselves from either their own re-supply chain (families, friends, kinship) or were observed in several cases searching abandoned or still inhabited houses for food—in other words: “living off the land.”⁸⁷

Hezbollah’s preparations for war were more costly; some decisions, however, directly or indirectly reduced the cost. In some instances this involved using civilians for the construction of defensive positions. The evacuation of villages before the invasion decreased the collateral damage that would increase the expenditures after the war. On the tactical level, fighters were (for example) trained to not switch their weapon to automatic in order to not waste ammunition.⁸⁸ Their payment system is quite effective, and explained by Hezbollah very clearly. The recruits receive very little or no payment from the organization for two or more years. One Hezbollah official noted, “If we gave them all Range Rovers, they wouldn’t want to fight anymore.”⁸⁹ Hezbollah’s leaders believe that “the lure of cash can easily dull the sharp edge of commitment to the cause.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign*, 58.

⁸⁸ Blanford, “Joining Hezbollah.”

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

From a financial perspective, Hezbollah had probably fewer difficulties than other similar non-state actors on the “weaker side,” but this does not necessarily mean that they did not have to worry about financial problems. In a recent study, the RAND Corporation identified a mitigating variable that needed to be considered in case of state sponsorship:

More support may not always be better for the non-state group in the long term—a group that becomes highly dependent on support may collapse when assistance is reduced or terminated. The motivation of the external sponsor is also a critical mitigating variable. In some cases, the sponsor may manipulate and undermine the capacity of the non-state group in order to ‘decommission’ or control it more effectively.⁹¹

F. CONCLUSION

It is almost impossible to identify properly what mode of warfare Hezbollah practiced. There were signs of irregular warfare, such as having no front lines, avoiding decisive battles, reliance on harassing fires and unattended minefields, and an over-emphasis on coercion. But clearly it was not just a guerrilla fight. The group put too much effort into holding ground, the cover and concealment relied almost entirely on terrain instead of population, members intermingled and wore their own uniform, and their forces were too concentrated.

In this chapter, the second Lebanon war has been analyzed from different perspectives. In the *geographical* sense, it can be concluded that from several aspects this condition for Hezbollah was more favorable than unfavorable. The *human characteristics* of Hezbollah’s chief manpower were perfectly applicable in a fight consisting of those social factors of Lebanon and the type of warfare that Hezbollah conducted. Finally, the *financial* background of the group’s fight was far better supported than such an organization might wish. Hezbollah is comfortable now, but this can have negative consequences in the long term.

Finally, but most importantly even though the Israeli invasion was certainly unexpected at the time, the implemented *strategy* was suited extremely well to the given

⁹¹ David E. Thaler et al., *Improving the U.S. Military’s Understanding of Unstable Environments Vulnerable to Violent Extremist Groups: Insights from Social Science* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, [2013]), 21.

conditions. From the strategic point of view, two major critical decisions are worth considering. First, Hezbollah applied great and effective tactics to hold or delay Israeli land forces to allow their “strategic” rocket capability to prevail. Second, while being successful on the ground, in the virtual world Hezbollah’s operatives influenced public opinion exceptionally well via their own media assets and the Internet, not only to enhance the “disproportionate” offensive act of the IDF, but to gain sympathy for their own cause.

Overall, Hezbollah’s new “transitional” way of warfighting between the guerrilla and the conventional style opens up new dilemmas for defense planners. How to counter an adversary who emphasizes this type of warfighting, and would it be worth considering for one’s own defense strategy?

V. THE ETHIOPIAN INVASION OF SOMALIA IN 2006

A. BACKGROUND

The information to summarize the historical background of the invasion was taken from Ted Dagne's research published by the Library of Congress's Congressional Research Service.⁹²

In 1991, Somalia could hope for a positive change in their existence since Siad Barre's 22-year dictatorship, which led the country into a lost war, unprecedented starvation and economic collapse, had been overthrown. The anti-Barre warlords, however, turned against each other and provoked a bloody civil war. Even the UN peacekeeping missions could not help, and none of the warlords had the edge over the others, so the country stayed in anarchy. After several failed attempts, including American intervention in 1992–93, in 2004 the fighting clans were able to establish a temporary government, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Its authority had been proportionally distributed between the clans, and it had its meetings in Baidoa from 2006. Nevertheless TFG's authority stayed limited, since in the spring of that same year the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control of central and southern Somalia.

ICU was formed in 2000 from 11 local Islamic autonomous courts in order to unify their decision making across clan lines and consolidate order under Islamic law (Sharia). In its initial phases, ICU managed to increase security and control in its territories. It re-opened the Mogadishu airport, pushed down the robbery and murder rates, and restarted waste management after 15 years without that service. Even the UN had some intent to influence TFG to start peace negotiations with ICU. Unfortunately, the internal conflict of ICU ended up with the victory of ICU radicals led by Sheik Aweys. The over-rigorous implementation of Sharia and the provocative speeches of Sheik Aweys against Ethiopia brought discontent into Ethiopian statecraft. It made it even worse that the ICU openly supported anti-Ethiopian resistance groups, and also they

⁹² Ted Dagne, *Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace*, CRS Report RL33911 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2011).

protected three Al-Qaeda top leaders. Ethiopia decided to prevent the ICU from establishing a radical Islamist country, so on the 24th of December 2006 they launched an invasion into Somalia against the ICU.

The attack was unexpectedly successful, and by the end of January 2007 the Islamist forces had lost the war, but the consequences of this success were less favorable. The TFG-Ethiopian-U.S. triumvirate was very unpopular in the region—the U.S. did not open another front in her struggle against terrorism, but provided financial, economic, and military support to Ethiopia.

TFG moved to Mogadishu to set their government facilities, but since their success was basically gained by the extremely disliked “ancient enemy” their prestige and power were very low. With African Union troops’ support—however very limited in numbers—and the involvement of moderate ICU members TFG had a chance to increase their legitimacy, but they refused to negotiate with “terrorist” Islamists. Consequently, frequent attacks happened against TFG and the peacekeeping forces by Islamist militias and the former ICU supporters. There were some reconciliation attempts in different locations and times, but all of them ended in failure. The security situation is continuously worsening due to the lack of authority of TFG, the increasing number of former ICU supporters infiltrating back from neighboring countries, and the interest of the international region, especially Eritrea.

In the following sections ICU will be analyzed as the weaker side of the conflict from those preliminary conditions that have been described in Chapter III.

B. STRATEGY AND TACTICS

In 2006, the ICU’s success alarmed neighbors and sent warning signs through the international community. The TFG and Ethiopia simply labeled ICU as a terrorist umbrella organization supported by several foreign jihadi fighters, and Ethiopia intended to overrun the group if it acted against the TFG. ICU’s response was a defensive jihad and a rejection of all further peace talks under Arab League auspices. This was a mistake, as the group fell more quickly than it had originally risen. Within two weeks, Ethiopian and TFG forces—backed by U.S. military advisers, Special Forces and aerial support—

killed several hundred Islamist fighters and dispersed the rest in a fast offensive. On 27 December, ICU dissolved itself and surrendered political leadership to clan leaders.⁹³

Before the invasion, TFG received a large amount of arms; nevertheless, ICU had much more significant military force than TFG, since its support from internal and external parties was larger in quantity and more sophisticated in the type of arms, as well as in military material and financial support. Without external support, TFG would never have been able to defeat ICU. In a UN observer group's report, ICU is characterized from a strategic perspective as follows:

...they are focused, and have the drive and will to pursue their aims; they are proactive; they have a master plan, and strategies for accomplishing their plan that is substantially supported by elements from outside of Somalia—strategic guidance; and they are also operationally and tactically guided and directed with the help of outsiders; they have organization, cohesion—notwithstanding internal disagreements—and discipline; and importantly, they have the means.⁹⁴

ICU's means included a gradually organized military-style force with a certain military command and control (C2) system, different forms of military training, the material and logistic systems that were necessary to support military operations and, very importantly, financial and economic strength. Against the existing temporary government, ICU's strategy seemed to be working. It established C2 centers in diverse geographical areas, with an appropriate size of military units in order to maintain military superiority. Numerous training centers were established across its area of responsibility, where new members were recruited both from Somali militias and foreign fighters. Significantly adding to the insight of the ICU training was the experience of those "volunteers" who arrived from Middle Eastern and Asian conflicts. The ICU provided a certain degree of conventional training to its fighters, but from a long-term perspective foreign experience gave them far more:

⁹³ Africa Briefing, *Somalia: The Tough Part is Ahead* (Brussels/Nairobi: International Crises Group, [2007]).

⁹⁴ Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, *UN Monitoring Group Report on Somalia*, Security Council resolution 1676 (2006), 42.

...foreign volunteers also provide training in guerrilla warfare and special topics or techniques consisting of bomb making and the use of bombs against different targets such as a variety of different types of transport and buildings. Other techniques include kidnapping and the conduct of assassination by ambush and sniping.⁹⁵

ICU's objective successes are the result of the combined effect of all of these characteristics, but it could not match the incursion forces' superiority in numbers and quality in a decisive battle. U.S. air and ground forces supported Ethiopian forces and the TFG took Mogadishu back from ICU and quickly overturned all their existing strategic gains.

With ICU's defeat in hand, the Ethiopian and TFG alliance could not gain significant long-term success. There has been no clear plan for stabilizing the country, so soon after the ICU was overthrown, the former head of ICU called for an insurgency, which soon coalesced under a group named Al-Shabaab. It was a completely battle-ready movement given that: "Somalia's history is replete with fighters who have experience with asymmetrical warfare, small unit tactics, and a wide array of weaponry. One tactic that Al-Shabaab is said to have introduced to Somalia is suicide bombing. They have also carried out assassination attempts against Somali government officials."⁹⁶

By 2008, former ICU members and their successor organization still waged their war so competently and effectively with a significant reliance on outside support that the Ethiopian government could not maintain its occupation of Somalia; in early 2009, Ethiopian troops left the country.

C. GEOGRAPHY

From the perspective of a "weaker" side, Somalia does not really fit into the ideal geographic posture. It is located in the "Horn of Africa," with probably the *longest coastline* on the continent: about 3000 km.⁹⁷ Besides the well-known pirate ships, the

⁹⁵ Al-Nasser, *UN Monitoring Group Report on Somalia*, 42.

⁹⁶ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "The Strategic Challenge of Somalia's Al-Shabaab," *Middle East Quarterly* XVI, no. 4 (2009): 25.

⁹⁷ "Countries and their Cultures, Culture of Somalia," accessed March 15, 2014, <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Somalia.html>

ICU and its successors did not have any significant sea power, so their opponents could blockade the entire shore line if it was necessary. The few *neighboring countries* were neither a potential advantage nor disadvantage. Ethiopia obviously did not support ICU's cause; the southern Somali border with Kenya, however, provided large maneuver space to the ICU leaders after their defeat and during their consolidation phase. TFG did not even possess the capability to effectively control some of the major cities, so the *size* of Somalia itself was enough to outmaneuver the temporary government forces.

Most likely, one of the most effective resources of ICU was the “technical.” These thin-skinned 4x4 pick-up trucks mounted with different types of machine guns were great assets for maneuvering through the large plains that followed the coastal part of Somalia, and also the streets of the urbanized area. The terrain and vegetation throughout of the country did not give great opportunities to the insurgents for the purpose of *cover and concealment*. Especially in the southern and central areas, the endless plains supported the invaders, since they had air superiority, so it was hard to take cover while in open terrain. The vegetation is generally sparse everywhere except for the area between the two main rivers of Somalia.⁹⁸ This obviously supports the invaders and counterinsurgents as well. In this part of the continent, the climate is a primary factor. Somali people distinguish four seasons: two wet and two dry. Generally, the temperature is hot, especially during the dry season, but since the fighters of ICU grew up in these circumstances, and are in their homeland where they are able to live off the land, it has no significant effect of their fighting capabilities.

From a geographical perspective, the scattered population in the rural areas favored the insurgents far more than TFG. There has been no official census for decades in Somalia, however, though according to some official reports approximately three quarters of the Somalia people live in rural areas and one quarter in the cities.⁹⁹ In the rural areas, it is hard to control the population, so it is easier for the insurgents to live off them. In larger cities, ICU has gained popularity within the population by restoring some public services.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Countries and their Cultures, Culture of Somalia,”

D. HUMAN FACTOR

It is very difficult to find a longer period in Somali history when they either lived in peace or in an environment where most of the Somalis did not have to suffer from poverty in a very harsh environment. The pastoral nomadic life, however, is advantageous from the context of guerrilla fighting. These people are used to living in hard circumstances for an extended period of time. Especially in the rural areas, families and smaller kinship groups move from place to place all around the year to find water and have to work extremely hard to get it from the wells. As I. M. Lewis experienced it, "...it took four days to water a hundred sheep and goats in small groups, and the wells had to be dug by day and by night to yield water."¹⁰⁰

Additionally, to this hard life, Somali people train to be warriors throughout their life. They must fight continuously, either for water or food for their livestock: "...fighting starts from necessity to gain access to water and grazing. In the rainy seasons on the other hand, conflict tends to result from the desire, often long matured, to revenge previous wrongs and to satisfy *honor and 'name'*, as the pastoralists put it."¹⁰¹

Due to the fact that it is almost indispensable for a man to be a good fighter in order to survive, historically the Somali people gave privileges to the warriors: "Somali society accorded *prestige to the warrior*...and rewarded military prowess. Except for a man of religion...and they were few in number, all Somali males were considered potential warriors. As a result, a culture of military readiness flourished throughout a long history of foreign invasion, colonial occupation, domestic conflict, and wars with neighboring countries."¹⁰²

Similar to Native Americans, another dominant characteristic of the Somali fighter is his *pride*. Especially the northern Somalis have never been permanently subjugated. As I.M. Lewis concluded in his extended study of Somaliland colonialism, "Somali have been colonized they have never really been conquered.... By the

¹⁰⁰ I. M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 45.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "Mongabay, Somalia," accessed May 2, 2014, http://www.mongabay.com/history/somalia/somalia-the_warrior_tradition_and_development_of_a_modern_army.html.

establishment of international frontiers the great movements of the clans have to some extent been arrested, but the pastoralists' *inordinate pride* and *contempt for other nations* remained unchallenged.”¹⁰³

The motivations for their fight come from three main directions. One of them is their *opportunistic mindset* as a result of everyday suffering, and missing a better perspective. Second are the deep roots to the *collective clan affiliation*: “... it is his unity with his kinsmen against aggression, and his collective responsibility with them in feud and war, which dominates the way in which the pastoralist values the support of his kin.”¹⁰⁴ The third motive comes with the rising Islamist ideology: “The purpose of declaring a jihad against Ethiopia—a country that has a 45–50 percent Muslim population—is to provide religiously-indoctrinated Somalis the motivation to fight Ethiopian troops.”¹⁰⁵ Also, Fuad Mohammed Kalaf, an ICU educational official, recognized the *youth as the most potential fighters* for their cause: “The students are seen as ideal for this role because they can be easily indoctrinated and are energetic followers.... There is nothing wrong with our plan to train students. There are a lot of countries in the world that carry out such exercises.”¹⁰⁶

E. FINANCIAL FACTORS

Expanding its influence on the political, military and geographical factors of Somalia, the ICU also paid significant attention to its financial and economic resources. While other non-state actors depended on mainly outside support, ICU leaders managed to derive their sources of revenue from three main areas: The first is the *local administration*: In June 2006, ICU made a partially successful attempt to create a viable administration: “the most evident elements of this process include a partial removal of checkpoints in Mogadishu and the refurbishing of infrastructure of long-time unused key

¹⁰³ Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy*, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 301.

¹⁰⁵ Sunguta West, “Somalia’s ICU Declares Holy War on Ethiopia,” *Terrorism Focus* 3, no. 40 (2006), accessed May 12, 2014.
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=934%3E%20-%20UyCYb86a-SQ#.U2L47ldN18F](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=934%3E%20-%20UyCYb86a-SQ#.U2L47ldN18F).

¹⁰⁶ West, “Somalia’s ICU Declares Holy War on Ethiopia.”

public assets, such as the Mogadishu seaport and airport, and they have instituted a program of taxation.”¹⁰⁷ In smaller cities, however, the ICU faced difficulties since local businesses were resistant to pay different fees from the ones they were already paying.

The second area of incoming revenue is *financial support from the business community*—the ICU made strategic financial alliances with major leading businesses in Somalia that benefited both sides. From the ICU’s perspective, it was beneficial because it was not an improvisation, but a deliberate and well-planned/established cooperation. The business area also had advantages from the restoration of law; the reduction of checkpoints lowered the operational cost and an increased quantity needed to be imported. One UN observer team in Somalia concluded in their report: “At the moment, the ICU seems to have a broad mosaic of economic sectors headed by businessmen ready to provide the necessary financial support.”¹⁰⁸

The third area is the *increasing contributions from inside Somalia and foreign countries*: ICU’s attempt to create a more stable environment in 2006 generated much popular support. According to official reports from Somalia, ICU had better support than the acting temporary government:

...the Islamic Courts received support from the population in areas it controlled....the group had constituencies from multiple sub-clans and had broad support among Somali women....people provided crucial support by feeding their forces and working with Islamic Courts officials in bringing peace and stability.¹⁰⁹

There have also been large amounts of individual contributions from inside of the country in different amounts ranging from several hundred thousand dollars to millions.¹¹⁰

Outside support came from two different main areas. One was the wealthy Somali diaspora. They have either used the normal banking system and added an extra 5 or 10

¹⁰⁷ Al-Nasser, *UN Monitoring Group Report on Somalia*, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁹ Dagne, *Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace*, 19.

¹¹⁰ Al-Nasser, *UN Monitoring Group Report on Somalia*, 39.

percent of their regular remittance, or donated money via the Hawala system¹¹¹ from Somali communities settled in mainly European countries. The other (and most likely the more significant) support arrived from those countries that supported ICU's cause. Both waterborne and airborne support including arms, military materiel and even combat troops that frequently arrived from Iran, Saudi Arabia or Eritrea regardless of the trading embargo.

In 2006, the ICU had much larger and better support than the acting temporary government. Nonetheless, with the external support of U.S. air power and the entire Ethiopian army, in a very short war TFG overthrew ICU in the southern and central part of Somalia, and basically forced ICU top leaders to flee the country. Shortly after the invasion, however, the rising insurgency still had enough resources to wage a guerrilla-type war to drive the Ethiopian forces out of the country. From the financial perspective, ICU and its followers used both internal and external support in a very effective way.

F. CONCLUSION

The invasion and the insurgency afterwards reflected several aspects of an “irregular defense strategy.” ICU might have been aware of the overwhelming offensive forces, and did not show a willingness to wage a definite battle against the Ethiopians. After the initial conventional defeat, however, their *strategy* led them to a successful insurgency, and caused the withdrawal of the occupying forces. In their strategy, the obvious signs of irregular warfare were no front lines, avoiding decisive battles, and reliance on harassing attacks. The latter used more than the typical guerrilla tactics like suicide bombings and assassination, so one might say it was not a pure guerrilla fight. The *geographic* characteristics of the country are not dominant in the outcome of the main invasion and the insurgency, but the chief advantage that the urbanized area can give to a fighting group has been effectively used by the insurgents. The *human*

¹¹¹ “Hawala is an alternative remittance system. It exists and operates outside of, or parallel to ‘traditional’ banking or financial channels....often referred to as ‘underground banking,’ this term is not always correct, as they often operate in the open with complete legitimacy, and these services are often heavily and effectively advertised...Hawala works by transferring money without actually moving it. In fact ‘money transfer without money movement’...” Patrick M. Jost (FinCEN), Harjit Singh Sandhu (FOPAC), *The Hawala Alternative Remittance System and its Role in Money Laundering* (Lyon: Interpol General Secretariat, January 2000).

characteristics of ICU's paramount manpower were appropriate in a fight consisting of those social factors of Somalia and the type of warfare that ICU conducted. The *financial background* was similar to other resistance groups, but it had greater emphasis on the internal business world.

Overall, a properly implemented irregular defense strategy forced a numerically superior force to withdraw, so the dilemma arises again for defense planners: would it be worth considering this type of warfare in one's own defense strategy?

VI. THE U.S. INVASION OF IRAQ IN 2003

A. BACKGROUND

The Iraq War (or the Second Persian Gulf War) had two major phases. The first one was a classical conventionally fought war by the Coalition forces. In this phase, the allied troops—predominantly U.S. forces—invaded the country and gained a quick victory over the Iraqi military forces that had shown only very weak resistance in most cases. Then, a much more painful and bloody phase occurred for both sides. The U.S.-led alliance was opposed by an insurgency.

The prelude to war: After the Taliban regime had been overthrown (and, hence, al-Qaeda's main supporting platform destroyed), President Bush could focus on other targets of the war on terrorism. The U.S. intelligence system reported that the main danger originated from Iraq. Saddam was a great threat to peace in the Middle East. He had tried to acquire the capability to build nuclear weapons; this had never been implemented, however. He used chemical weapons against Iran and his own Kurds in the late 1980s. He had supported the assassination attempt against President George H. W. Bush.¹¹² He harshly suppressed the uprising of the Kurds and Shi'a. The UN discovered a variety of prohibited armament systems and technology throughout the country. Even after the bombing of some military installations in 1998, Iraq refused to allow UN inspectors to reenter the country, a move that irritated the international community.¹¹³

The Bush administration strongly but wrongly believed that Iraq was providing safe haven for different terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda (the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack). Even though his association with al-Qaeda has never been proved—Saddam was an *Arab secularist*, bin Laden was a *Salafist* (“a believer in a Muslim world without political institutions”)¹¹⁴—this did not stop the U.S. As John Keegan writes: “Unfortunately for Saddam, official America after 9/11 was uninterested in distinctions

¹¹² John Keegan, *The Iraq War*, 1st American ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 99.

¹¹³ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, “Iraq War,” accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/870845/Iraq-War>.

¹¹⁴ Keegan, *The Iraq War*, 99.

between one sort of Arab extremist and another. Osama was violently anti-American. So was Saddam. The decision was taken to eliminate his régime.”¹¹⁵ Despite the objection of some other world leaders, President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair ended the diplomacy and gave an ultimatum to Saddam to leave Iraq.

Since Saddam refused to leave his country, the invasion began in March 2003. It started with precision-guided bombings against military and government installations. The ground incursion took only days for U.S. forces to invade the country from Kuwait, with the greatest resistance from irregular groups of Baath Party supporters (also called Saddam’s Fedayeen).¹¹⁶ The northern part of Iraq showed similarly low resistance. Even though the Turkish government did not allow U.S. forces to invade Iraq from their territory, the combined force of U.S. Special Forces, paratroopers and Kurdish fighters had only minor difficulties in seizing the northern cities. The central area fell since the disorganized Iraqi Republican Guard—responsible for defending the capital—could not resist the raids by U.S. Marine Corps units. Nevertheless, some groups loyal to the regime continued fighting, but President Bush declared an end to the main war on May 1.

The outbreak of irregular warfare (the second phase), however, prevented peace in Iraq. In their study group report, James A. Baker and Lee H. Hamilton summarized the greatest challenges the allied forces faced: “The challenges in Iraq are complex. Violence is increasing in scope and lethality. It is fed by a Sunni Arab insurgency, Shiite militias and death squads, Al-Qaeda, and widespread criminality. Sectarian conflict is the principal challenge to stability.”¹¹⁷ Saddam eventually anticipated his defeat but hoped that the U.S. war aims were limited and it would not overthrow his regime. He thought there would be a disciplinary air campaign and an attempt to seize the northern oil fields. Saddam’s intent was to build a conventional force supported by irregular forces to oppose the ground threat. In preparation, he distributed weapons to his regime’s supporters, stocked armaments in schools, mosques, and hospitals, and let foreign fighters into the

¹¹⁵ Keegan, *The Iraq War*, 100.

¹¹⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, “Iraq War.”

¹¹⁷ James A. Baker and Lee H. Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), xiii.

country with official encouragement. It is hard to prove that Saddam was planning to conduct a postwar resistance, but for sure his prewar preparations helped the emergence of the insurgency.¹¹⁸

The most difficult task for the occupying forces might have been to restore law and order, especially when their effort was exacerbated by frequent attacks that soon reflected the full spectrum of guerrilla warfare. The Bush administration did not like this term and they preferred to use “sectarian violence.”¹¹⁹ The brutal killings by the two main rival Shi’a and Sunni militias inflicted massive chaos on the country for several years. Beyond those two principal forces, other factions such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and various Shi’a and Sunni groups added to the destabilization.

1. The Sunni Insurgency

The overthrow of the former regime, as well as the general breakdown in order, left a power vacuum in the country that provided a promising condition to different insurgent groups to try to gain control of the country. The Sunni Arabs commenced their movement about three months after the invasion, and proved to be a “...thinking, adaptive, and even growing force against the Coalition forces and the Shi’a-led government.”¹²⁰ Its three main motives were resistance to occupation, overthrow of the new government, and establishment of an Islamic state.¹²¹ From an organizational perspective the Sunni Arabs were similar to contemporary terrorist groups. They were organized into a “web of networks” and mostly linked by personal, tribal or organizational ties. Also, their financial support came through the ‘classical’ chain: “former regime financial network, traditional hawala networks, and charitable religious endowments.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Mansoor Moaddel, Mark Tessler, and Ronald Inglehart, “Saddam Hussein and the Sunni Insurgency: Findings from Values Surveys,” *Political Science Quarterly* 123, no. 4 (Winter, 2008), 623–644, 2.

¹¹⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, “Iraq War.”

¹²⁰ Moaddel, Tessler, and Inglehart, “Saddam Hussein and the Sunni Insurgency,” 623–644, 624.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹²² *Ibid.*, x.

At tactical and operational levels, the Sunnis could maintain a high level of activity despite the Coalition's counterinsurgent activities and resulting significant personnel losses for the insurgents. The IED operations were frequently coupled with complex attacks exacting an increasing toll on the Coalition forces as well as the Iraqi civilians. More importantly, they achieved vital strategic objectives, as has been assessed by Michael Eisenstadt and Jeffrey White: (1) establishing themselves as a social and political force; (2) gaining popularity by attacking Coalition forces; (3) deterring any pro-government segments of the population; (4) creating a complicated political transition by boycotting the elections in 2005; and (5) influencing the dissatisfaction of the U.S. population regarding how the war was handled, and hence the likely decision of withdrawal.¹²³

The Sunni Insurgency's main strengths were its *financial independence*; given that they received a large amount of external support, they also had access to all kinds of internal support. Their *network-based organization* made them very flexible and adaptive. The organization had a certain amount of political presence. Very importantly, *they were aware of the constraints of the Coalition forces* in using force against the insurgents. Their weaknesses, however, significantly reduced their potential whenever those weaknesses were exploited by the counterinsurgent campaign or the Iraqi government. Many Sunnis *had ambivalent feelings* about the insurgency. The movement *did not have a unified leadership*, so it could not really formulate a steady political strategy, further limiting its popularity. Probably one of its weakest points was the *extreme beliefs* of its member and the *brutality* with which they implemented their actions, alienating many allies and Sunnis.¹²⁴

Even though the Sunni Arab insurgents are a tough opponent, they are not undefeatable; the fight against them, however, is definitely costly and protracted, and it is even harder for the Coalition forces and the Iraqi government when these extremists are not alone.

¹²³ Moaddel, Tessler, and Inglehart, "Saddam Hussein and the Sunni Insurgency," 623–644, xi.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

2. Al-Qaeda in Iraq

Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) had been officially formed in 2004 when Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi linked his militant group with al-Qaeda. The organization consisted of radical Sunni militias and had a slightly different ideology than al-Qaeda: "Zarqawi was sometimes critical of al-Qa'ida's willingness to cooperate with "apostates" against other enemies and, unlike Bin Laden, fervently argued that al-Qa'ida's "Near Enemy"—apostates and the Shi'a—were more dangerous than its "Far Enemy"—the United States and the West."¹²⁵ Zarqawi wanted to launch a sectarian war in order to prevent the Shi'a movement from controlling Iraq, and also to maintain instability and thus push the Coalition forces out of the country.

At the beginning of its struggle, AQI targeted Shi'as, Coalition forces and the Iraqi government, but in the later phases in 2009 it seemed to change strategy and members' objectives were primarily government and Coalition officials. They also began to vie with other Sunni militants for being the dominant leader of the insurgency, so in their target package other Sunni groups could be found, as well. Their long-term goal remained: "Establishing a fundamentalist Muslim state in Iraq as a precursor to ensuring the return of the Islamic caliphate."¹²⁶

The group zealously used suicide bombings and IED as their main tactical method to destroy targets. Also, they demonstrated extreme brutality, using chlorine gas with conventional explosives. These ruthless tactics, the bombings of three hotels in Amman, the large number of Shi'a killed, and the large number of the destroyed Shi'ite religious sites resulted in a disagreement by al-Qaeda leadership, and also alienated potential supporters. Al-Qaeda leadership strongly opposed AQI strategy, since it would be extremely hard to be politically dominant after the U.S. withdrawal if Muslims were still being killed.

¹²⁵ Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Al-Qaeda's Foreign Fighters in Iraq* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007), 4.

¹²⁶ Stanford University, "Al-Qaeda in Iraq," accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/1#note5>.

Another vulnerability of the organization was the large number of foreign fighters and leaders in it. This originated from the large-scale support from foreign countries. Syria supported AQI with fighters and weapons, but they received support from several other countries as well (Saudi Arabians, Libyans, and Algerians, to mention only the largest contributors).¹²⁷ After the death of Zarqawi in 2006, his successor al-Masri declared the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) in order to give a more Iraqi image to AQI and “... to unify resistance to U.S. occupation, inspire support from al-Qa’ida’s global supporters by imposing Islamic law, and ensure that al-Qa’ida was prepared in case of a precipitous U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.”¹²⁸

ISI faltered from the start since there was no significant proof to the Iraqis that the organization was indigenous, rather than led or particularly influenced by foreign actors. Consequently, one of the definitive strategic challenges of al-Qaeda in Iraq was to promote their ideology to relatively secular Iraqis. Also, AQI was severely damaged by the “outpost network” strategy pursued from 2007 to 2008 and by the social network building of the “Awakening” movement. Nowadays, AQI lacks significant political power, but militarily still remains one of the dominant insurgent groups, and keeps the country destabilized. The situation in Iraq reflects the symptoms—outbursts of violence, jihadist groups acting without control—of another insurgency, especially since the Coalition forces left the country.

The following sections of this chapter will analyze the Mahdi Army—also known Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) and led by Muqtada al-Sadr—in more detail. Despite the fact that it was not the most influential insurgent group from 2003, it still played a significant role in the insurrection and became a dominant political force.

¹²⁷ Stanford University, “Al-Qaeda in Iraq.”

¹²⁸ Felter and Fishman, *Al-Qaeda’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq*, 5.

B. STRATEGY AND TACTICS

It is easy to summarize Muqtada al-Sadr's strategy in a few words: violent movement against the invader—gaining popular support—involvement in politics. It looks like a classic example of waging a guerrilla war from its beginning to the end like the one by Che and Castro in Cuba, or Hezbollah against Israel; it was not that simple in real life, however.

Violent movement: Right after the U.S. and its alliance had overthrown Saddam's regime, Sadr sought to fill the position the Ba'athist system left behind. He condemned the U.S. occupation and its proposed interim government. Sadr's army consisted of several thousand fighters mainly recruited from young impoverished Shi'ites from and around Baghdad. Their ability to apply asymmetric warfare was bounded, but still very effective:

Both the Mahdi Army and the—special groups have shown they have elements skilled in the tactics of asymmetrical warfare. Most of their successes come through the use of indirect fire and extremely primitive yet effective explosives. JAM and—special groups have proven more than capable against both U.S. and ISF forces when fighting head-on. However, of greater importance is their ability to stop fighting, via ceasefires or clandestine retreats in order to prevent eradication. Even more impressive is their ability to end fighting without ever having to give up their weapons.¹²⁹

Throughout his struggle, Sadr fought several bloody battles, not only against the invaders but against Iraqi security forces and other Shi'ite rival parties. During these fights, the Mahdi Army's actions included even more asymmetric tactics: "Sadr's critics held JAM responsible for brutal acts of retribution against Sunnis, including kidnapping, killing, torture, and the destruction of mosques and property."¹³⁰ As a major part of his tactical maneuvers when the pressure on him and his militia increased, he simply ordered a freeze on all military activities in order to reorganize. Once, he even left Iraq to Iran—likely to escape from the increasing pressure and in an attempt to regain credibility.

¹²⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman and Jose Ramos, *Sadr and the Mahdi Army* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, [2008]), 17.

¹³⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v., "Muqtada Al-Sadr" accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1008510/Muqtada-al-Sadr>.

Gaining popular support: Most of the Shi'ites looked at Sadr as a hero because he used his militia not only for fighting against the invaders, but for protecting the majority of his own people against the Sunni insurgents. Also, he provided the population valuable public service when he “had attracted millions of Shi’ite followers across Iraq...to whom he offered a variety of social, educational, and health services. He also maintained tight security over the areas he controlled and established a court system based on Shari’ah (Islamic law).”¹³¹

Involvement in politics: At the very beginning of his struggle, Sadr realized that he needed to focus on the political realm of Iraq since his violence movement alone would not accomplish his goals. In order to have another pillar in his strategy, similar to the “Hezbollah-model,” he ordered his militia to be greatly engaged in social work that won 32 parliamentary seats in the 2005 national elections.¹³² Sadr gave definitive support for pushing Nouri al-Maliki to the position of prime minister, and this was not the only focus of his political involvement. He extended his interest in other social ministries (e.g., health, transportation, and municipal government) as well.

The pressure on him, however, increased both internally and externally. More and more areas of his military activity were targeted, which increased the need for a ceasefire. Also, Mahdi fighters opposed his embrace of the national political system. He was still able to maneuver this with a great strategic decision: “Al-Sadr stated that he was dividing his Mahdi Army into two distinct wings. The largest wing would be made up from most of his followers. This group was designed to act as the political and social services wing. The smaller group would be turned into new special companies of elite experienced fighters tasked with resisting the occupation.”¹³³ This and the continuous government pressure had led to the dissolution of the Mahdi Army itself. Nevertheless, Sadr’s involvement in politics remained definitive even after his final withdrawal in February 2014.

¹³¹ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v., “Muqtada Al-Sadr”

¹³² Greg Bruno, “Muqtada Al-Sadr,” accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/muqtada-al-sadr/p7637>.

¹³³ Cordesman and Ramos, *Sadr and the Mahdi Army*, 3.

C. GEOGRAPHY

Iraq's geography consists of four main regions: the desert in the west and southwest, the mountainous upland between the upper Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the highlands in the north and northeast, and the sandy plain through which the Tigris and Euphrates flow. The most dominant geographic feature in the conflict—in the invasion itself and the insurgency that followed—was the desert. In the age of scientific military developments, this ancient hazard continues to pose challenges—but also gives good opportunities.

The *flat, featureless terrain* gave more advantage to the technologically more advanced and armor-protected allied force, since their pace was much more rapid in their advance. Also, in clear *visibility* the Coalition forces had covered larger distances with their high-tech optics; neither of the opposing forces, however, had a good chance to use the terrain for cover and concealment. Also, ground target acquisition is quite difficult for both parties in a situation of low visibility, creating a constant risk of friendly fire. For this reason the main incidents outside the urban areas happened in the near vicinity of the highways or the improved road network.

Not only did IEDs and roadside bombs cause serious headaches for allied convoys, but the extremely fine dust caused mechanical breakdowns for many vehicles during convoy operations that basically concluded the majority of the operation, since a huge occupying force needed to be re-supplied. The engines got overheated during the *particularly hot days*, and the tires got softer, flatter, and less durable from the heat of the road surface.

Desert weather is variable and causes trouble for everyone, as evidenced by those sand storms that turned Operation Eagle Claw into a catastrophe on the ground in 1980 during the Iranian hostage crisis, and limited the aerial advantage in general. For the occupying forces, these extreme climate and geographic conditions made the war even more expensive in terms of water, food and its storage, transport, maintenance, etc. The cost for the insurgency was not as prohibitive, since they had the knowledge of how to live off the land and their technology required much less maintenance.

The *unevenly dispersed population* is probably the most important to a military campaign, where the media is basically glued to the combat troops and civilian casualties need to be avoided more than ever. At least, it is much more considered nowadays than it was in ancient wars. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers basically define the majority of the inhabited Iraq, and the center of it is Baghdad, where nearly 20 percent of the Iraqis live.¹³⁴ From the insurgents' perspective it was a great chance to use it with all of its advantages, and from the invaders' perspective it was probably the hardest thing during the occupation, as it is neatly summarized by Brian Handwerk from *National Geographic*: "Simple human density makes avoiding civilian casualties difficult, and affords cover, security, and perhaps even anonymity for those who would take advantage of urban geography."¹³⁵ It is certainly contradictory to the discipline of the Mahdi Army, because al-Sadr clearly announced in his statement: "Absolutely avoid military actions in cities."¹³⁶

Regardless of the technologically far advanced occupation forces, the Iraqi geography had a major impact on the war. First, it made the invasion and the "after war" period more costly for them; second, the population pattern pushed the operational focus into the urbanized area that definitely supported the insurgents more than the alliance.

D. HUMAN FACTORS

During the struggle against the Coalition, the movement was subdued technologically, financially and—considering the numbers of fighters—human resources. Nevertheless, some human characteristics helped the extremist movement to stay balanced and caused so much trouble for the occupiers. The main features that made these fighters a potentially dangerous opponent were *their religious-based inspiration, territorial and national integrity, capability to adapt, and improvisation*, as well as the fact that most of them were *young* with a demand to seek status for their adulthood.

¹³⁴ Brian Handwerk, "Geography Shapes Nature of War in Iraq," accessed May 2, 2014, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/03/0327_030327_wargeography.html.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Cordesman and Ramos, *Sadr and the Mahdi Army*, 25.

Religious inspiration: Despite his father's pedigree, in his childhood Sadr never studied in any religious institution; his overall strategy, however, flaunts religious credentials in order to maintain the devotion of his supporters. He encouraged his followers to attend more and more religious activities, and announced that he would attend a seminary in Najaf.¹³⁷ Babak Rahimi, a Shi'ite expert, wrote: "Sadr's religious move indicate a major change in the movement's structure that could have serious repercussions for the future of Iraq."¹³⁸ Rahimi also added that Sadr's inspiration may also be to "reinforce his Iraqi identity."¹³⁹

Territorial integrity has its origins in the 1920s when the post-WWI British occupation forces created modern Iraq. Since then, the Shi'ite dream has been only nourished to rule and control the central and northern parts of Iraq, where the substantial revenue from the oil wells can be owned. National identity is also tied to this era, when the power struggle between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites occurred. Despite their similarity in the ethnic and cultural fields, the political territory had two different directions: "Whereas the Sunni ruling elite adopted a wider Arab nationalism as its main ideology, the Shi'as have preferred Iraqi nationalism, which stresses the distinct values and heritage of Iraqi society."¹⁴⁰ The overall opposition to the U.S. can be traced back to their territorial and national integrity as well:

They abhor the idea of an Iraqi government installed by the United States to further America's interests...In spite of repeated assurances by the Bush administration that Iraq's oil belongs to its people, the Shi'as still seem worried that the United States is essentially seeking to dominate the oil resources of their country.¹⁴¹

One can consider the Mahdi Army an extremely young organization from more perspectives. One is the relative *young* age of its members. It gives the feeling that these

¹³⁷ Bruno, *Muqtada Al-Sadr*.

¹³⁸ Babak Rahimi, "Jamestown Foundation: Becoming an Ayatollah," accessed May 2, 2014, http://www.cfr.org/iraq/jamestown-foundation-becoming-ayatollah/p15817?breadcrumb=issue/publication_list?id=422#.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Yitzhak Nakash, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq," accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58994/yitzhak-nakash/the-shiites-and-the-future-of-iraq>.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

youth can be successful against a much more powerful enemy. Similar to other guerrilla organizations or resistance movements, these young people are motivated to seek status for their adulthood and trying to defeat “Goliath.”

Improvisation and ability to adapt: Even though the organization still did not possess practical combat experience, it was fairly effective in using asymmetrical warfare in a number of clashes against the U.S. and its allies, and they could remain the most prominent and most risky Shi’a militia in Iraq: “Their ability to adapt to military tactics and technological advancements has put further stress on the U.S. military both financially and mentally, and their ability to develop and/or employ devastating weapon systems has been a serious problem.”¹⁴²

E. FINANCIAL FACTORS

Despite its popular support, Sadr’s financial support remains inconsistent, but somehow classical and based on two main directions. One of them is the *internally produced revenue* and the other one is the *external stream of income*. Within its area of control, the Mahdi Army produced money more like terrorist groups, rather than the more popular guerrilla organizations, such as Hezbollah: “Cash is believed to be generated from a number of criminal enterprises, including petroleum smuggling, theft, and cash-for-services—including armed protection of merchants and businesses.”¹⁴³

Another way to gain money was not the purest technique, but it worked pretty much effectively for the organization. First, it offered some extremely-needed services, for example generators, but in this country—as part of the public services—the electricity runs only few hours a day, so those generators that are provided by the JAM would have a popular impact. JAM has often provided power generators at high rates and tried to block the central government from providing other services by threatening the contractors. A prominent international study gives a short summary how they had gathered a large part of their proceeds: “Using mafia-like tactics have allowed the JAM to become involved—at all levels of the local economy, taking money from gas stations,

¹⁴² Cordesman and Ramos, *Sadr and the Mahdi Army*, 15.

¹⁴³ Bruno, *Muqtada Al-Sadr*.

private minibus services, electric switching stations, food and clothing markets, ice factories, and even collecting rent from squatters. The JAM was able to control parts of their operation through exploitation and threats.”¹⁴⁴

The other significant backing was from *external support*. The Mahdi Army and its allied extremist groups were properly equipped to resist, and this equipment and material support mainly arrived from their Iranian sponsors. Iran provided basically the full spectrum of “guerrilla-type equipment,” ranging from man-portable rockets to ready-to-use Explosively Formed Projectile/Penetrators (EFP) that were able to penetrate even the thickest armor. The Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard basically wanted to repeat their successful sponsorship with Hezbollah, and create another state-within-a-state organization in order to effectively fight for their cause: “In late 2011, representatives of Asaib Ahl al-Haq attended a conference at a four-star hotel in Beirut with Hezbollah, Hamas, and other members of the ‘axis of resistance’ to plot strategy against the Little Satan (Israel) and the Great Satan (the United States).”¹⁴⁵ In addition to its material funding, Iran also provided religious support by sending students and scholars to the larger “strategic” important cities of the Sadrist movement. Also, the economic reconstruction of Iraq plays a definitive role in Iran’s foreign policy that opens beneficial opportunities for the extremist groups. The social support included giving extreme Shi’ite parties a safe home base during the supremacy of Baath Parties.¹⁴⁶

Similar to Hezbollah and the Somali Islamic Courts Union, the Mahdi Army used mainly small arms that were cheap and cheaply maintained. The dominant weapon system of the Shi’ite armed groups was the AK-family, specifically the AK-47. Also, the “very light” infantry basic weapons were popular, such as grenades, RPGs, sniper rifles, and machine guns. The heavier weapons—IEDs, Explosively Formed Projectile, Improvised Rocket Assisted Mortar, even BM-21 rockets—caused most of the civilian and military casualties.

¹⁴⁴ Cordesman and Ramos, *Sadr and the Mahdi Army*, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Boot, “Iraq: Baghdad without America.”

¹⁴⁶ Lionel Beehner and Greg Bruno, “Iran’s Involvement in Iraq,” accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/irans-involvement-iraq/p12521>.

An important financial consideration in this Iraqi case is the occupiers' high cost. The insurgents could use these weapon systems very effectively, and embedded this capability into a well-conceived strategy that made the defense against them even more difficult and expensive: "The use of these weapons has given the JAM a political impact much larger than its military impact....special groups have been able to use such weapons and limited resources in attacks on Coalition forces that have been expensive in lives, cost billions of dollars, and have had a major impact on U.S. domestic politics."¹⁴⁷

F. CONCLUSION

The *strategic idea* of Sadr's resistance movement is probably best described by al-Sadr himself in an interview on a news channel: "The Sadrist movement first resorted to peaceful resistance, then to armed resistance, and finally to political resistance."¹⁴⁸ That can basically be a classical example of a guerrilla movement. The *geographical* conditions did not provide extraordinary advantage or disadvantage to either side, but two major features certainly had a major impact on the entire invasion and the prolonged resistance. One is the population pattern that influenced the concept of operations from the alliance perspective, and undoubtedly helped the insurgents. Second is the climate that raised the expenditures of the invading forces. Similar to Hezbollah, the *human characteristics* of the Mahdi Army's manpower fit seamlessly into a fight consisting of those environmental factors of Iraq and the type of warfare that al-Sadr conducted. Additionally, in this war the national identity just increased the enthusiasm of the insurgent fighters. *Financially*, it is apparent that, from the insurgents' point of view, it cost far less to resist to an occupying force than it cost the occupying force to try to build and establish a new state and order, especially given the prolonged timeframe from 2003 to 2011.

Overall, even though al-Sadr's political aspirations and his Mahdi Army were not the only fighting power against the occupation, surely his was the most dominant overall force, when one includes political strength within the total Iraqi resistance movements.

¹⁴⁷ Cordesman and Ramos, *Sadr and the Mahdi Army*, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Bruno, *Muqtada Al-Sadr*.

No one can claim a definitive victory over the occupiers, but similarly to other guerrilla-type movements in history, al-Sadr's irregular way of waging his war significantly helped to drive the occupying forces out of his country. Now, they may be involved in an irregular war against the Sunnis—the outcome of which hangs in the balance.

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VII. CONCLUSION

According to the existing literature, irregular warfare can and should be seen as a robust warfighting method. To support this idea, one can see in today's more than 30 conflicts that none are fought in a clear conventional way. Why has IW become so "popular"? Why does at least one of the opposing forces involve civilian populations and urbanized terrain in its fight rather than moving to large, open, uninhabited plains and doing their business there, hurting fewer civilians and causing less collateral damage? The best approach to answering these questions could be to take a quick look at the opponents in the wars or conflicts of recent decades. From military, technological, financial and human resource perspectives, one side has been significantly more powerful (stronger) than the other (weaker).

Obviously, if the weaker side wants to be successful it has to choose a method that could overcome the disadvantages of being outnumbered and out powered. The four main general options were not always affordable or advantageous (alliance, conventional army, WMD, or neutrality) for the weaker side, especially in the age of the rapid advance of technological development. So, the leadership had to choose a strategy that, if coupled with the given geographical environment, is more likely to achieve an effective conduct of the fight. There is no specifically developed irregular strategy, but principles that are applied in irregular warfare within specific conditions, as is observed by von der Heydte: "Strategy of irregular warfare is nothing but the application of generally valid maxims of a strategy of war under the special circumstances of an irregular war."¹⁴⁹ These valid maxims need to be used in a way to suit those specific conditions that were identified by Clausewitz and other renowned scholars from earlier ages in order to successfully wage an irregular war: geography, material character, morale, and the strategic defensive with a tactical offensive.¹⁵⁰ Based on the facts that were found during this research, the likely ideal geographic conditions are when the terrain provides good cover and concealment, the climate does not affect the logistic (maintenance, storage) and human existence, the

¹⁴⁹ Von der Heydte, *Modern Irregular Warfare, in Defense Policy and as a Military Phenomenon*, 69.

¹⁵⁰ Gann, *Guerrillas in History*, 22–23.

population is dispersed and rural, but it also has some larger cities, and at least one of the bordering countries is supportive. These characteristics were used effectively by Hezbollah during its struggle against the Israelis in 2006. Understandably, when this “ideal” posture is not available, the irregularly fighting side will adopt and wage its war accordingly, as happened in Iraq and Somalia where most of the battles were in the urbanized area or the near vicinity of it, using probably the most advantageous tactical considerations and intermingling with the population.

Considering Clausewitz’s second condition, the material character is an extremely important fact, especially from the weaker side’s perspective, that an irregularly waged conflict is much cheaper than a conventional one. Irregulars have rarely used heavy weapon systems (if ever); their logistic requirements needed far less budget than the regular armaments (including Navy, Army, Air Force) and the conventionally garrisoned troops. They also mostly lived off the land, and most of the time was not well paid but fought by motivation, like Hezbollah fighters had done for the first couple of years of their “beginners” period. A large part of the necessary resupply system can be pre-positioned prior to the war, such as Saddam Hussein did during his prewar preparation or Hezbollah put out clandestine storages in a hidden bunker system. A noteworthy financial factor is that using light weapon systems and maneuvering to rural areas to fight (like Hezbollah) would reduce the collateral damage, so after the conflict in case of “victory” for the irregular side the reconstruction would cost significantly less.

The next condition that this paper focused on was the human factor. More specifically, the research was conducted to identify those human characteristics that make a person a good guerrilla fighter. Most likely the one on the top of this list would be the level of motivation that can be based on religion, or territorial and national integrity. Another important factor is the affiliation of origin. A “spoiled westerner” elite soldier will probably never be able to compete with those that grew up in rough conditions. If someone is planning to wage an irregular warfare against a superior power, a prolonged war needs to be considered. The ones who have fought for their food and existence since childhood tend to have more patience, endurance, and adaptability for the long term, especially when they fight in their homeland. Last, the youth in all resistance movements

play a dominant factor due to their “desperado” mentality and the extreme will to seek recognition as adults.

Finally, the most important factor is that the previously mentioned conditions need to merge into a strategy. Even though there is no specifically designed irregular doctrine or strategy, Mao Tse Tung noted that guerrillas need a strategy. Hezbollah used a new “transitional” way of fighting that consisted of conventional and irregular features as well, but this unique strategy worked. In Iraq, a more classical way of irregular warfare was dominant (at least by Muqtada Al-Sadr): a peaceful movement, followed by an armed resistance, then a political resistance against the acting government. In Somalia, the strategy was based on a more battle-ready movement after the invasion and the attrition of the TGF since the occupiers had no clear plan regarding security. In all cases, the weaker side had its own way and a well-thought-out plan to cause enough loss and trouble for the occupying forces to make them withdraw.

However, one cannot simply copy those strategies and build his own defense on them. Even if all these conditions are available, the implementation of an irregular defense policy would raise some dilemmas for governance. Would it work for every weaker country? Who should be taught to fight irregularly, the entire population or only the “professionals”? What would be a proper proportion of the combination of irregular defense forces and conventional forces in case there is no consensus between the different stakeholders to stand a pure professional irregular defense strategy?

The analyses of these case studies showed that the applied strategies were effective enough to be considered as potential pillars of a state defense policy. Further research also identified several facts that support the idea that under certain circumstances a professional irregular defense strategy can be less costly for a small country than any of the four general alternative choices. Furthermore, based on the case studies and the wider conceptual research of this topic, it is likely acceptable that when a beneficial use of the geographical environment and the availability of the “appropriate” human characteristics couple with a doctrine based on irregular warfare, it is more possible to achieve an effective defense.

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