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This report summarizes the proceedings of the workshop as interpreted by the assigned rapportuers and editors appointed by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this report.

This workshop adheres to a variation of the Chatham House Rule. Accordingly, beyond the paper presenters cited, no other attributions have been included in this workshop report.
Executive Summary

If the increased participation of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in international operations in recent years is anything to go by, it indicates that the security challenges confronting Singapore today and in the near future will be primarily transnational and “non-traditional” in nature. Moreover, the protracted insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan do suggest that conventional combat power does not deter highly determined non-state violent actors that fight asymmetrically.

Are conflicts with transnational violent non-state actors a historical aberration or long-term strategic trend? Are the “big” inter-state industrial wars of the twentieth century relics of the past—and amorphous intra-state “small” wars in failed or fragile states the normative face of the twenty-first century battle space? Attempts to grapple with these questions and their ramifications have spawned a vigorous response from subject matter experts drawing intellectual tools from diverse disciplines. But what does this mean for military officers trying to make sense of it all?

Organized into four distinct but inter-related thematic panels, this two-day workshop will draw upon the multi-disciplinary expertise of several subject matter experts to elucidate the complexity of fighting contemporary small wars and provide a forum of discourse for middle management and Senior SAF officers. The selected speakers are established academics and practitioners with substantial experience in policy and doctrine formulation.

The first panel will tackle various aspects of Security, Stability, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) both conceptually and in operational terms—with an emphasis on the military’s role in such operations. The second panel will address the salience of media, information and public opinion in the credibility-centric wars of the twenty-first century. The third panel will focus on national and institutional approaches to small wars, low intensity conflict (LIC) and counter-insurgency (COIN)—particularly on issues that bear a direct relevance to the SAF’s Contemporary Operating Environment (COE). The final two panels will come to grips with the challenges posed by asymmetry as well as possible approaches and intellectual tools that can be used to address such challenges.
BG (NS) Jimmy Tan, Director of the SAF-NTU Academy in his opening address reflected that when one spoke of war, the mental image was often one of an all-out military contest between nation states. This is not surprising, as the history of mankind in the last few centuries have been marked and shaped by conventional wars that are still discussed and studied today.

Wars, according to BG Tan, had become the yardstick by which policymakers and analysts made sense of a broad spectrum of military operations undertaking by many states today. Convenient catchphrases like Operations Other Than War (OOTW) and small wars are found to be useful terms for characterizing operations that are not quite the conventional wars that the world knows. War between states is unlikely, but it is little comfort that many nations are engaged in or threatened by small wars.

Singapore, as a responsible member of the global community is not isolated in dealing with such security challenges. Over the years, the SAF has been involved in peacekeeping and peace-support operations around the world, in places such as East Timor, as well as ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The SAF has also been involved in counter-piracy patrols in the Gulf region. With the current trends in the global security environment, the SAF will find itself increasingly involved in small wars, as well as stabilization, transition and reconstruction missions in the future.

Recognizing the scale and complexity of the problem is an important first step towards finding potential solutions. To address the issues associated with small wars, it is crucial that policymakers, analysts and operators spend time and effort to study this difficult aspect of military operations.

BG Tan commented that this was where academic institutions such as RSIS and the recently set up SAF-NTU Academy (SNA) could contribute, being part of academia and yet closely linked to the military through partnerships in professional military education. Both RSIS and SNA are well placed to bring about focus on topical areas of interest to both the military and academia. This research and education platform will foster greater discourse and aim to achieve a better understanding of current security challenges faced by practitioners.

The workshop, entitled “Fighting Small Wars in the New Century”, is one such platform to generate discourse and further the participants’ understanding on these challenges.
The Evolution of Insurgency

John Mackinlay noted that insurgency was a technique that evolved at the same pace as the society from which it arose. However, some societies have not moved beyond the pre-industrial era, while others are moving very quickly. The thrust of his presentation was to explain this process through an exploration of the evolution of insurgency since the time of Mao Zedong.

According to Mackinlay, Mao brought the techniques of insurgency across a very important threshold. His achievement was to develop it into a process by which to subvert populations on a large scale. Mao’s brand of guerrilla warfare was methodological, in which the people who lived in operational areas became the campaign winning asset. In Mao’s terms, insurgency is therefore characterized by the centrality of the civilian population—victory for the insurgents or the counter-insurgent hinges on the disposition of the people.

In tactical terms, if the goal was to win over the population, then the principal instruments used to achieve that aim must be predominantly political, not military. In addition to security, the process depends on political techniques such as subversion and education. From the Maoist perspective, the movement must have genuine political personality if it wants to be a credible threat to the government.

Post-Maoism, the conditions of globalization started to alter the monolithic nature of insurgency. With mass communications it became possible for groups of potential insurgents to contact and coordinate on a hitherto unknown level. The revolutionary nature of contemporary communication technology is altering these societies across the world.

The use of propaganda has become a defining characteristic of post-Maoist insurgency. For the organizers of insurgency and counter-insurgency, propaganda has become central to planning. For the insurgents, propaganda in the form of violent imagery has been used to galvanize groups of disaffected peoples around the world to join their movement. It energizes the uncommitted to start searching for more information and direction, potentially culminating in their radicalization and training elsewhere.

Therefore, insurgency has evolved from the Maoist model, which is hierarchically structured, highly labour intensive and territorially defined. Today, it is almost the antithesis of the Maoist model—highly unstructured, less reliant on labour and almost completely without defined geography.

Contemporary insurgency is more agile, with a swifter decision-making process cycle, than any coalition of military forces and civil agencies could ever achieve. Insurgents are agile because they are not territorially constrained and the swiftness at which insurgent attacks happen outstrips reactive counter-striking. The lack of a defined structure gives insurgent groups the advantage, because the counter-insurgent cannot decapitate their leadership. The insurgent group simply moves and regroups to strike again at a more favourable location and time.

In closing, Mackinlay asserted that the impulsive, structureless and constantly evolving form of contemporary insurgency was quintessentially a twenty-first century phenomenon. The international response to this form of insurgency, however, remains inadequate and the lack of progress by recent military campaigns have demonstrated this deficiency.

Cutting the Gordian Knot: Control and Security in Counter-insurgency

Justin Kelly opined that insurgency and counter-insurgency was just another form of warfare that the world was familiar with. All forms of warfare attempt to manipulate the consent of a target population. In COIN, we are trying to manipulate the consent of a group of people in other to bond them to the government we are supporting.
The role of any government is to ensure civil order and peace, and to protect the lives and well-being of its citizens by means such as the rule of law. This is security and it rests on a government’s ability to control its territory. The first objective of any COIN campaign is, therefore, to establish control of the situation, and through it achieve the necessary security. This, in turn, establishes the ability to govern. Other inducements can then contribute to the progressive development of the right to govern.

All wars are attempts to re-distribute political power and political power is derived from the consent of the people. But because war is a dialectical struggle, Kelly asserted that warfare is therefore the combination of means to manipulate the consent of the enemy’s people while protecting the consent of our own.

Kelly said that the intractable problem of insurgency could possibly be solved by the proper application of the military force. But first the problem must be understood and the military’s role should not be put above all other forms of intervention. However, the role of the armed forces cannot be underestimated as well. Kelly remarked that security depended on the existence of a government having the power to coerce compliance with its laws. The authority of the law extends only so far as its enforcement is able to reach.

In conclusion, Kelly outlined his ideal COIN campaign. The first phase of any campaign needs to be the establishment of control over the operating environment. This means that military force should be applied to seek the annihilation of the enemy initially. This protects the consent of our own populations and is the shortest path for a military exit. The annihilation of the enemy establishes the ability to govern. Aid, reconstruction and all the other forms of engagement can then proceed to cement the right to govern. Control also means that we can, for a time, protect the population from predation by their own government.

The Evolving Role of the Military in Peace Support

Stuart Griffin said that despite the attention on the martial aspects of fighting small wars, the role of peacekeeping and peace-support operations is still very important. In the United Kingdom, it seems that these matters are being studied less and less. Because of current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, much of the U.K.’s attention is on COIN. However, that is only part of the dimension of these interventions.

Peacekeeping is no less relevant and it could be argued that it should be even more important than before. There are more peacekeepers deployed worldwide now than five to 20 years ago. The missions themselves are larger in scale and in scope.

In practice, the key ideas of peacekeeping were undermined by the nature of the missions. For example, in Congo in 1960–1964, the situation caused the initial peacekeeping mission to shift into a peace-support mission—large-scale deployment of over 20,000 troops and heavy fighting on the ground.

Why should we study this topic? The need for peacekeepers did not disappear throughout recent history. So the need to understand its environments and what has to be achieved is therefore important. We see a steady rise in peacekeeping numbers, which is a reflection of how broad these missions have become.

There are still valuable lessons to be learnt from the various peacekeeping missions ongoing around the world, such as UNAMIT in Darfur, missions in Chad and the central African republics, as well as the large-scale mission in Congo. These missions are going to have implications for the future. Peacekeepers are likely to be expected to do much more.
The Discovery of Afghanistan, a Baudrillardian Twist

Rene Moelker presented an overview of the Dutch forces’ activities in Afghanistan. According to him, around 2,000 soldiers are deployed in the Uruzgan province, engaged in a variety of missions such as policing, reconstruction, and COIN. But what the Dutch forces are really doing is transplanting Dutch society in Uruzgan.

Dutch forces impart a simulacrum of democracy, using what Moelker termed the “Dutch approach”. This approach heavily utilizes negotiation as a tactic. The Dutch approach to security in the province comes in marked contrast to the more robust anti-insurgency measures farther north.

That initial enthusiasm has waned as the local population struggles with high unemployment, a weak economy, and lack of basic food supplies and fuel. But for the Dutch, maintaining the initial goodwill is the key to ensuring continued stability. When searching a suspected militant’s home, for example, the Dutch troops hang back, allowing the local police to conduct the operation.

Moelker assessed that the methods used by U.S. forces were becoming mellower. In the beginning their approach was forceful, but in recent times have begun to focus more on winning the hearts and minds of the population. Discussion and negotiation with the population’s leaders are increasingly prevalent.

However, he questioned the nature of the enemy. The Taliban are the Pashtun, and the Pashtun are the people. The Pashtun also make up around 30 per cent of Afghanistan’s population. So one cannot fight the population, which is a fundamental error in COIN strategy.

The Dutch forces have brought their simulacrum into Afghanistan, but it is only partially successful. After the Dutch forces leave, Afghanistan will probably cease to exist for the Dutch people. In conclusion, Moelker remarked that he felt ambivalent about the Dutch government’s decision to remove its forces. Retreat, according to him, might not be in the best interests of the COIN effort in Afghanistan.

Images to Icons: How Insurgency Works in the Virtual Dimension

David Betz focussed on insurgency within the virtual dimension which employed the use of iconic images to power global insurgency movements. The world is in the Information Age and, as a result, we exist within a complex information ecology.

Conflicts are the norm in human history and are occasionally punctuated by periods of confrontation. For the most part, conflicts are conducted through non-military means. The problem manifests itself when one tries to force these essentially political challenges into a war-and-peace paradigm.

All insurgencies are social movements. Because of this, they naturally reflect the societies from which they emerge. In the Information Age, insurgency operates in accordance with the precepts of a network society. Thus, to understand derivative concepts of insurgency and COIN, you must start by understanding the virtual territories of the mind in which it operates.
The Internet has empowered every person with the ability to communicate to a mass audience very cheaply. There are three basic uses of information—one can transmit it, process it or store it. Modern communication technologies have enabled information to be transmitted with greater speed and quantity. According to Betz, it has enabled insurgent leaders to effectively direct their followers.

In conclusion, Betz remarked how society had been undermined from beneath by insurgents exploiting modern information technologies. These directions are manifested in the form of narratives or stories. Narratives have some basic functions—they diagnose the problems to be solved, it offers solutions to the problems and provides the rationale for collective support. These narratives are simple. They resonate because they appeal to emotions and are often done through visual imaging. A picture is worth a thousand words, indeed.

**Information Warfare? The Case for an Asian Perspective on Information Operations**

Alan Chong discussed the hacking incidents that afflicted Estonia—the most wired state in Europe—and crippled banking and government services, as well as caused slowdown in Internet traffic for the rest of the world. He remarked that the Estonian government was engaged in a well-publicized spat with Russia over the removal of a historical monument when the Internet attacks occurred, but the amorphous nature of the Internet meant that it was impossible to implicate any party for the attacks. This is the nature of Information Warfare (IW). But how does one begin to study such a phenomenon?

IW generally refers to the battlefield interpretation of the use of information as a weapon to win a war. This is either done through discovering an enemy’s secrets or protecting one’s own decision-making processes from enemy discovery. IW involves a range of tools, such as psychological warfare (PSYWAR), to propaganda and even to public diplomacy.

Chong believes that insights from different Asian strategists, with their particularistic philosophies, would be useful guides in understanding IW. According to him, attitudes towards understanding IW in all its complexities can be enhanced through interaction with a non-western body of pre-digital wisdom such as the writings of Sun Tzu, Mao Zedong and Vo Nguyen Giap.

IW in mainstream strategy enjoys a somewhat secure position because of its utility to policymakers. For example, influential writers like Machiavelli have written about the importance of information as a political necessity, which then in turn translates into military necessity—one needs to fight by manipulating information. Thus, it emerges as an art of reading the proverbial “tea leaves” of achieving national goals using the right policy instruments adapted to circumstances.

Mao’s thinking on military affairs possessed a do-it-yourself quality to them that was also motivated by ideologies attractive to the underdog in a revolutionary struggle.

While Mao postulated strategy in the light of Chinese geopolitical and ideological circumstances, Giap adapted its execution in a much smaller theatre of war and possibly against much more technologically superior enemies. Appraisal of French imperialists: unjust cause, domestic division over support for war—target them.

Today, despite the promise of the Internet to revolutionize government interaction and make it more transparent, it also created vulnerabilities as the Estonian government had discovered. Theorists have posited that in the future, potential Internet assailants may seek to discover the inner workings of an adversarial government and plant “virtual bombs” that disrupt decision-making processes. However, this means that an adversary may do the same thing. Such concerns are increasingly being acknowledged in policy documents around the world.
Transforming Militaries for Small Wars: Trends, Possibilities and Constraints

David Ucko argued that modern war is not solely about winning the battle. Historically, the post-Second World War (WWII) occupation of Japan illustrated the plausible SSTR roles for militaries. In order to adapt to the contemporary operating rigour of small wars, Ucko proposed that a complete re-conceptualization and better integral understanding of war itself was required. Pertinent questions need to be asked by militaries: What makes the use of force militarily effective? And what are the requisite needs for skill sets and capabilities needed to achieve such effectiveness? These are somewhat difficult questions to be addressed and painful decisions have to be made.

Military transformation in preparation for small wars, Ucko pointed out in his presentation, involved the development of concepts and doctrines. Military education was also crucial in applying relevant concepts, such as political violence, to COIN operations. In parallel, troops could be trained in an environment that closely replicated the real-life operational theatre. However, one of the most crucial initial steps towards transforming militaries for small wars, he argued, had been the filling of capability gaps.

The U.S. military was utilized as a case study in Ucko’s presentation due to its extensive experience in transforming militaries for small wars, taking Afghanistan and Iraq for instance. He pointed out that the U.S. military was not well configured for SSTR duties. As the American experience had shown, transformation was slower than anticipated, due to a multitude of factors, one of which being bureaucratic inertia resisting change within the military establishment. This problem was not unique to the U.S. military, but to militaries worldwide, too. The entrenched, traditional mindset governing the scope of military missions represented one of the major impediments against innovative institutional change. Some problems hampered effective transformation of militaries to small wars, taking the U.S. military experience as an example.

One pressing problem concerns the civil-military division of labour in SSTR operations, especially in the context of scarce resources. Other than the military, significant civilian inputs are also required in SSTR operations. However, there is often a reluctance to devote adequate civilian investments. As a result, military forces have to accomplish tasks that normally are performed by civilian agencies. To cope with the demands of SSTR operations, two options may be considered: one being heavier military involvement; the other being increased civilian involvement. The first option appears attractive in the face of scarce civilian resources. However, Ucko pointed out, military forces might find themselves overstretched and there could be an unintended consequence of deferring the development of viable civilian alternatives.

Besides political, legal and moral complexities involved in the transformation of militaries for small wars, the other key problem lies within the broader strategic aspect: to what extent are such endeavours linked to the wider national interests? As the U.S. military experience has shown, there was an apparent lack of strategic thinking, prioritization and financing in the development of relevant capacities. Altogether, these conundrums create shortfalls and hamper investments filling the capability gaps to tackle small wars of the present and future.

Naval Forces in Small Wars

Don Inbody noted that since WWII all armed conflicts being waged were not considered major, but small (and limited) wars instead. Most countries were only able to fight small wars; and in his presentation, the focus was on the role of naval forces in fighting small wars.

Inbody first compared naval power concepts envisaged by historical naval thinkers, Alfred Thayer Mahan and Julian...
Corbett. While Mahan’s thinking centred on worldwide sea control, the concentration of fleet power with the objective being the enemy fleet itself, Corbett’s thinking was more concerned with local sea control, the dispersal of sea power and envisaged the variation of objectives according to the nature of war. Inbody concluded that Mahan’s thinking was largely irrelevant in fighting small wars, especially for smaller countries with much smaller naval forces. By contrast, Corbett’s thinking was more relevant to small wars, embodying the following characteristics such as the power of the defensive; limited quantity and application of resources; as well as limited objectives.

Next, the difference between maritime strategy and naval power was outlined. The former essentially drives the whole campaign or war, through aspects such as the use of sea lines of communication (SLOCs), the fleet’s force structure and its application for varying mission needs. Naval power, by contrast, refers to how and where to use the fleet, while possibly also involving air and land forces under the rubric of combined/joint operations. The advantages of naval power in fighting small wars are immense: through the combination of strategic and operational manoeuvre with stealth, the ability to remain on station for extended time using sea base of supply and more secure SLOCs (compared to on land), and the ability to wait until the most opportune moment to strike at the enemy.

Taking a leaf from James Cable’s works on gunboat diplomacy, Inbody related the use of naval forces in fighting small wars with the various applications of naval force: expressive, purposeful and catalytic. Of the different levels of operational and resource requirements, he pointed out, most navies were generally able to accomplish simple fleet (unopposed tasks beyond individual ships) and simple amphibious (unopposed landing) operations for example. These missions were generally in sync with the low-intensity tempos of small wars. Few navies had the requisite skills and resources to accomplish more demanding, high-intensity operations such as superior fleet (numerous ships in the presence of expected resistance) and opposed amphibious (landing in the face of expected resistance).

Several important criteria are essential for small navies in fighting small wars. First, a well-trained (which does not necessarily mean the best) navy fleet and naval infantry/commando force (necessarily involving also the air force and intelligence components) are needed. These forces have to be attuned to a well-practised doctrine of combined force operations. Furthermore, there is a need for a national doctrine that permits sufficient independent action on the part of commanders. In addition to these technical, doctrinal and training capacities, Inbody argued, sufficient political will was essential to accomplish this endeavour. This final aspect concerns the psychology of leadership, internal politics and civil-military relationship. Only with the above criteria accomplished would naval force be well suited to fight small wars.

Evolution of the British Approach to COIN Doctrine

Charles Story pointed out that COIN involved civic actions to defeat the insurgency (not insurgents, he stressed) and to resolve its root causes. A framework governing successful COIN operations, from the British COIN experience since the twentieth century, involved all three essential factors: development, governance and security.

The British COIN experience spanned over three eras: that of imperialistic expansion; control (imperial policing) and the contemporary. It was found that minimum military force should be utilized to suit the minimum needs of a COIN campaign. Furthermore, it was necessary to “fear first, then shape local needs”, Story pointed out. The British experience also showed that, in executing a successful COIN mission, the “human terrain” had to be clearly understood. The political leadership must also have a clear political objective; which is to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country that is politically and economically viable. To this end, COIN authorities must function according to law, possess an overall strategic plan and to prioritize the defeat of political subversion instead of insurgents.
A successful COIN campaign also needed to take into account population perceptions of the COIN authorities, Story pointed out. A combination of legality, construction and results of SSTR would generate popular support for the government. Contrariwise, illegality combined with destruction and mere promises would swing popular support towards the insurgents. Taking lessons from the British Malayan COIN campaign, for example, there was a need to ensure the quality of the local civilian police to avoid corruption. Moreover, the Malayan campaign showed that proper army-police coordination as well as intelligence sharing is necessary. Right from the start of the campaign, he emphasized, civil-military cooperation was a crucial requisite criterion.

In all, the British COIN experience since the beginning of the twentieth century has yielded a range of key factors to consider for present and future COIN operations. First of all is the primacy of political purpose and unity of effort. It is necessary to gain and maintain popular support, and to operate according to law. To accomplish this, the “human terrain” needs to be clearly understood and this can facilitate the integration of intelligence efforts among various agencies. The population has to be secured and insurgents to be neutralized in order to stabilize the COIN campaign. Finally, COIN authorities need to prepare for the long term; so is the indispensable need to learn and adapt faster than the adversaries. Unless military forces are well trained and able to adapt to rapid changes in the operating environment and the adversary, Story concluded, a COIN operation will drag on needlessly.
A question was raised on whether there was any unique post-colonial COIN model, taking the case of Dutch “small power” approach to such missions. One of the speakers remarked that, being a smaller “great power” of that era, the Netherlands was more capacity-constrained than, say, the United Kingdom then. Hence, the Dutch needed to adopt a “small colonial power” COIN approach when performing imperial policing in far-flung, distant colonies.

A speaker commented that where armed troops were deployed for COIN duties for example, possible gunfights had to be anticipated. In order to minimize the use of armed force in OOTW, it would be better to deploy forces other than armed troops. An instance brought up in the discussion had been the recent Israeli interception of the Gaza-bound sea convoy. The Israeli Navy’s involvement failed to avoid a gunfight at sea, provoking questions as to whether naval forces were indeed the most optimum tools to execute such missions. The speaker further added that there had been a disturbing trend of misusing military forces for the wrong missions.

Most successful COIN operations in the past had been executed by relatively small forces. One participant commented and questioned whether the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) deployed in Afghanistan could accomplish similar feats, given its large, diverse multi-national mix of constituent units. In response, one of the speakers pointed out that the U.S. supreme commander overseeing the ISAF had a clear policy objective that served as the basis on which the multi-national forces, notwithstanding their varying national policies and other differences, could work together. The key factor of success was not the size and mix of the coalition forces but security and governance.

Another speaker highlighted the need to learn from past lessons in COIN operations and also argued that individual political-military leadership was more important than institutionalization for the success of the COIN campaign. Special operations forces of different nationalities in a coalition, the speaker pointed out, commonly operated at high levels of professionalism and this factor might reduce the difficulty of collaboration as well.

A participant wondered how COIN concepts could be made more relevant and easier to appreciate by tactical commanders in order to properly execute operations on the ground. A speaker remarked that individual political-military leadership is the key to such dissemination of ideas from the highest down to the lower echelons. One consideration is also the practical difficulty of
attuning all levels of command to the intricacies of COIN operations, given entrenched traditions within the military establishment. For instance, the British Army had made a mistake right at the beginning for thinking that, so long as its forces were able to prepare exclusively for conventional, high-intensity war-fighting, they could tackle low-intensity operations with ease. Hence, there is a need for militaries to improve on their professional military education and training, involving all levels of the command. With proper and adequate education for the troops, a sufficient grasp of knowledge of the COIN concepts can be attained and be translated into higher operational effectiveness in COIN tasks.

The relevance of colonial small wars as a historical lesson for contemporary American COIN doctrine was discussed. A speaker commented that there was no “model” country on which to specifically base COIN strategy. Nonetheless, there was a tendency to adopt lessons garnered in past COIN campaigns, especially those conducted by the country with the most extensive experience. Due to its rich experience in COIN operations, the British lessons had been one of the most commonly used for the development of contemporary COIN strategies. The speaker noted the need, however, to balance between “generic” and “context-specific” requirements. This could be attained by devising a strategy that is flexible enough to adapt to the varying operational context of the COIN mission. Linked to an earlier discussion, it was also pointed out that there had been no historical precedent of indicating whether a multi-national COIN force was feasible. If the ISAF managed to succeed in Afghanistan, it would become the first historical example of a successful COIN campaign conducted by a multi-national force.

A comment was raised about whether it is feasible to fight insurgents almost exclusively in their home territory based on the notion that a successful COIN campaign will prevent them from carrying out subversive activities abroad. This was a concern given the decentralized, dispersed nature of subversive elements worldwide, taking Islamic radicalism as an example. One speaker pointed out that the threat of subversion may not necessarily emanate from without (the insurgent’s home territory) but may originate from within the country.

A participant queried about the considerations of public opinion when devising a COIN strategy. One of the speakers pointed out that public opinion certainly has to be taken into account by the political leadership when deciding on whether or not to dispatch forces for COIN campaigns abroad. However, having decided to commit forces, the political leadership and general public will have to anticipate casualties. One of the considerations of the political leadership involves a moral dimension; the need to justify staying on to complete the COIN mission, against all odds. The United States, for instance, feels it is morally obligated to ensure that Afghanistan and Iraq are left in better shapes before COIN forces are withdrawn.

Towards the end of the plenary discussion, a comment was brought up regarding the need to distinguish between tactical and strategic victories, given the entrenched military tradition of winning tactical victories yet ironically, the inability to sustain till the end in order to achieve an overall strategic victory as the current case of post-2003 campaign in Iraq had shown. One speaker pointed out that, in a COIN campaign, pride tended to be placed before wisdom—a potential pitfall that might risk defeat for the COIN forces. One of the participants commented about the need to examine expediency and thus define “victory” in the most appropriate manner, by predetermining it on “outcomes” rather than success versus failure or victory versus defeat alone.
Fault Lines and Small Wars

Terence McNamee described fault lines as the root of all insurgencies. These fault lines were often of social or political origin, and in some senses were timeless. In many instances, they could have just as well existed more than a hundred years earlier. Additionally, ill-conceived attempts to address them, stemming from a simplistic appraisal of complex circumstances, often inadvertently fuelled insurgencies. These insurgencies often varied from case to case, with multiple fault lines, with no single template solution to solve them. McNamee cited the racial tension in Nigeria as an example.

McNamee noted that in the present, with the exception of the African continent, war between states was rare. Rather, the main cause of death was through political violence along fault lines. All countries, he observed, had divisions. This was especially the case in areas with a colonial history, fragmented societies with obvious economic and religious differences and governments that did not have legitimacy. The African continent was an example, McNamee provided. Thus far, many attempts to address these fault lines had backfired. McNamee, however, did stress that fault lines were not fundamentally irreconcilable.

McNamee argued that there were four key issues which needed to be recognized when addressing fault lines: (i) good governance, (ii) the value of elections, (iii) the nature of engagement and (iv) flexibility in the approach by the international community.

For any government, their biggest challenge is not to allow those who have lost the elections to be marginalized, disenfranchised, yet accumulate significant power through other means. It is imperative that an elected government find a way to keep the “losers” weak lest they disrupt the management of the country. It is also important that the elected government not simplify fault lines into a dichotomy of two exactly opposing views. In reality, there are often shades of grey and the government must be cognizant of this.

It is also important to correctly value elections. McNamee pointed out that many of the most divisive fault lines occurred in countries that were ostensibly democratic. He argued that many external observers over-emphasized the importance of elections and saw the conduct of them as the “be all and end all”. In reality, however, many insiders felt that such elections were hollow, having witnessed the inequity of the electoral process. These insiders would also equate the lack of transparency as a sign of governmental weakness and illegitimacy. Although elections might be deemed as a quick fix by external parties, they also created an “us-versus-them” dynamic which might have negative consequences. One such consequence, McNamee noticed from his research, was the isolation of the winners from a wider society.

McNamee also cautioned that the West would do well to avoid engaging the developing world in a condescending manner. He noted that in this age of globalization, the developing world actually had a better idea of the West than vice-versa. McNamee observed that the West lagged in its understanding of how the developing world was using technology. This mastery of technology had allowed the developing world to manipulate the West and circumvent some of its rules.

McNamee suggested that the international community needed to be more flexible in its responses. Military solutions were now a less viable approach, with international mediators now in greater demand than ever. That noted, peacekeepers were still in demand. McNamee also argued that the West should apply its standards circumstantially and not be too rigid and “by the book”. He pointed to the success of Somaliland (as opposed to Somalia) as a viable state even though the country’s government still fell short of Western standards.

In conclusion, McNamee reiterated that fault lines were
universal because there was no such thing as a “natural state”, good governance was key to preventing violence, the role of elections had been over-emphasized and the international community must come to terms with its own limitations, especially in the imposition of standards.

The Role of Sanctions in Conflict Situations

Clara Portela began by highlighting that sanctions had acquired a bad reputation and had been largely discredited as being an effective foreign policy tool. She suggested that this was too broad a conclusion, and attention needed to be paid to individual sanction regimes instead of dismissing sanctions generally. Portela pointed out that there were two types of sanctions, classical and targeted. Classical sanctions had indeed proven to be largely ineffective because they were too broad. They had also caused perversive, inadvertent effectives, resulting in humanitarian complications. Targeted sanctions, on the other hand, had achieved greater success because of their preciseness. They were aimed at the country's leadership specifically and thereby limited any humanitarian fall-out.

Portela suggested that sanctions could be useful in “small” wars. She began with the examples of Libya and South Africa. These sanctions focused on arms-deals and occurred in limited conflicts where there was little actual violence. A key element to success, however, was the accompanying use of incentives to encourage the offending regimes to comply with international demands.

Portela, however, said in some instances, multiple layers of sanctions were required because of non-compliance with earlier ones. A case in point was Liberia, which needed several sanctions regimes, as well as accompanying pressure from the United Nations, to remove Charles Taylor’s support of rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Portela also pointed out that timing was essential in the implementation of sanctions. They were often most effective at the start of a conflict. In the case of Angola, sanctions did eventually prevent the country's export of blood diamonds, but greater success could have been achieved had they been implemented earlier.

Finally, Portela argued that contrary to popular belief, sanctions could have an operational effect in addition to a strategic one. In Kosovo, military operations were limited because of restrictions caused by sanctions. This desirable effect, however, had been hampered by the slow and only gradual implementation of sanctions. As Portella argued earlier, sanctions had to be decisively and quickly implemented without hesitation.

Portela concluded with three main points. First, in deciding the sanction regime to be used, the nature of the conflict had to be understood. There could be no one-size-fits-all approach. Second, it was important to understand how individual groups within the targeted country would be affected. The country could not be appraised monolithically. Finally, there should be as much focus on the implementation of sanctions from start to end as on their initial construction.
From Corinth to Kandahar: Soldiers and Cities Across the Millennia

Russell Glenn began by describing the four characteristics of the ancient approach to urban warfare—devastate and perpetuate, devastate and govern, devastate and purge, and devastate and populate. With present norms, these approaches were not adoptable. Yet, with urbanization occurring rapidly across the world, urban areas would undoubtedly be a key terrain that militaries would have to grapple with. Borrowing the principles of Sun-Tzu, Glenn therefore proposed three key challenges, and their accompanying solutions, to address this important area.

Extraordinary density was the first challenge Glenn highlighted. Density could be used with reference to space (items per unit volume) and time (activities per unit time). Therefore, density manifested itself in three dimensions, in both the physical and in the timeline of activities. The second challenge was the so-called law of unintended consequences. Glenn argued that chaos would be omnipresent given the density of the battle-space, resulting in a greater chance that operations would result in unintended effects. Additionally, because of the stakes and violence involved, these effects could be magnified exponentially. The third challenge is for militaries to appropriately understand the concept of responsibility.

Glenn observed that when taken to its extreme, “responsibility” could become a self-inflicted wound because of the sophistication of society’s conscience. This, in itself, was not necessarily wrong, but Glenn cautioned that militaries were also responsible to its soldiers and should not necessarily value collateral damage higher than the lives of their own forces. This tension, Glenn concluded, was not an easy one to reconcile.

Glenn suggested that these challenges could be addressed by maintaining a system of systems of approach, where a complicated problem was broken down into component parts, and a system of solutions was applied instead of collectively addressing them at the macro-level. Doing this effectively required changing how threats were perceived. Glenn offered threat lines were often seen as three or four individual factors that occasionally overlapped but were largely understood to be distinct.

He suggested a new approach where threats might be disconnected from the start, but would gradually intertwine. More importantly, not all threats were of equal severity and importance. Glenn pointed out that it was imperative that friendly forces prioritized threats accurately as even if the inter-twined threats were frayed, the enemy might still be able to function. At the operational level, this would require a re-assessment of manoeuvre warfare that was not limited to just kinetic military responses but involved other external agencies as well.

Glenn also highlighted that these challenges could not be overcome quickly and patience was required. Finally, militaries must learn to manage their own expectations and not over-estimate their abilities.

Special Operations Forces: The Right Tool for the Wrong War?

James Kiras began by urging the audience to always keep three questions in mind when examining Special Forces: (i) Why are Special Forces special? (ii) How have they been misused? (iii) How does the current operating environment impact the role of Special Forces?

Those questions, noted Kiras, provided an overview of Special Operations Forces in the United States. They were created to distract the enemy, overcome any inferiority in conventional forces, go on missions which conventional forces could not, exploit emerging technologies, be a force-multiplier to conventional forces, undertake risky missions that could result in high pay-offs and solve
unique operational and strategic problems. He also highlighted the so-called Special Operations “truths” which included putting people first, emphasizing quality over quantity, understanding that Special Operation Forces could never be mass produced, that they could also not be only established in times of emergency and that they would only function optimally if they were provided appropriate assistance. Kiras also stated that it was U.S. strategy to use Special Operations Forces in an indirect and direct manner. This flexibility was possible because Special Operations Forces developed their own specialized tactics and equipment, they accepted a greater degree of risk, employed unorthodox methods of problem solving, and held themselves to very high standards.

Kiras then highlighted the cycles of Special Operations Forces development. He suggested four stages of development: (i) establishing the need for such forces, (ii) creating and training them, (iii) investing resources to allow them to grow, and (iv) disbanding them. This often happened in a general highly political environment shaped by the partiality of the elected government to exercise the Special Operations Forces option, and the social and/or political image that the Special Operations Forces had in the eyes of the public. Kiras pointed out that the unfairly constructed image of Special Operations Forces being “cowboys” above the law would cause political inconvenience to governments wishing to employ them.

Another example Kiras gave of the need for a politically favourable environment in order for Special Operations Forces to grow was the U.S. Air Force’s own Special Operations Group. He noted that despite the high success rate of such missions, up to 80 per cent of overseas requests for assistance could not be fulfilled because of limited resources. A logical way to overcome such an obstacle would be to grow the group’s capabilities. Yet, this was problematic because the political environment was not favourable.

Kiras then outlined the current operating environment Special Operations Forces operated within. He noted that their missions were protracted, indirect and clandestine. They were also subjected to special authorities, organized into sub-regional task forces and assisted by other agencies. Such an environment was the result of the changing character of war, which would continue to morph. How exactly war would continue to change was uncertain. Kiras argued that threats would be hybrid in form and command structures would resemble networks as opposed to rigid hierarchies.

Kiras was certain that Special Operations Forces would continue to play a dominant role in war because they were well-positioned to address any of these changes. He cited the example of the Philippines where the Joint Task Force formed by members of both the Philippines and United States armed forces were enjoying success in the Global War on Terror. He argued that Special Operations Forces were well-suited for the agreed strategy of counter-leader, stability and reconstruction, and information operations. Contrasting this with other options such as a conventional expeditionary mission that could be antagonistic, the use of Special Operations Forces was non-invasive and therefore desirable.
Workshop Agenda

2 August 2010
Day 1

09:05 – 09:15 Welcome Remarks
BG Jimmy Tan
Director, SAF-NTU Academy

09:15 – 10:45 Panel 1
Security, Stability, Transition and Reconstruction
Chair
Dr. Bernard Loo

The Evolution of Insurgency
Dr. John Mackinlay
RUSI, KCL War Studies

Cutting the Gordian Knot: Control and Security in Counter-insurgency
Brig (Ret) Justin Kelly
Land Warfare Studies Centre, Australian Army

The Evolving Role of the Military in Peace Support
Dr. Stuart Griffin
Joint Command and Staff College, U.K.

Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45 Panel 2
Information and Shaping Opinion
Chair
Dr. Bernard Loo

The Discovery of Afghanistan, a Baudrilliardian Twist
Dr. René Moelker
Netherlands Defense Academy

Images to Icons: How Insurgency Works in the Virtual Dimension
Dr. David Betz
KCL War Studies

Information Warfare? The Case for an Asian Perspective on Information Operations
Dr. Alan Chong
RSIS, NTU

Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Panel 3
National and Institutional Approaches
Chair
Dr. Emrys Chew

Transforming Militaries for Small Wars: Trends, Possibilities and Constraints
Dr. David Ucko
SWP-Berlin

Naval Forces in Small Wars
Dr. Don Inbody
Texas State University

Evolution of the British Approach to COIN Doctrine
Lt. Col. Charles Story
British Army Afghan COIN Centre

Coffee break

16:00 – 17:30 Plenary Discussion
Chair
Dr. Emrys Chew

18:00 – 21:00 Workshop dinner at Raffles Marina
(For speakers and invited guests)

End of Day 1
3 August 2010
Day 2

09:00 – 10:30 Panel 4
Asymmetry, Engagement and Approaches
Chair
Dr. Alan Chong

The Role of Sanctions in Conflict Situations
Dr. Clara Portela
Singapore Management University

Fault Lines and Small Wars
Dr. Terence McNamee
Brenthurst Foundation

Coffee break

10:45 – 12:00 Panel 5
Asymmetry, Engagement and Approaches II
Chair
Dr. Kumar Ramakrishna

From Corinth to Kandahar: Soldiers and Cities Across the Millennia
Dr. Russell Glenn
A-T Solutions, RAND

Special Operations Forces: The Right Tool for the Wrong War?
Dr. James Kiras
SAASS (The Role of Special Operations Forces)

12:00 – 12:20 Remarks by Discussant
Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Muniruzzaman
Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
List of Speakers, Chairs and Discussants

1. Dr. Bernard Loo
   Associate Professor, Coordinator (Military Studies/Transformation Programmes)
   RSIS, NTU

2. Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Muniruzzaman
   President
   Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies

3. Dr. James Kiras
   Associate Professor
   School of Advance Space and Air Studies

4. Dr. Russell Glenn
   A-T Solutions

5. Dr. Kumar Ramakrishna
   Associate Professor, Head (Centre of Excellence for National Security)
   RSIS, NTU

6. Dr. Terence McNamee
   Deputy Director
   Brenthurst Foundation

7. Dr. Clara Portela
   Assistant Professor
   Singapore Management University

8. Dr. Alan Chong
   Associate Professor
   RSIS, NTU

9. Dr. Emrys Chew
   Assistant Professor
   RSIS, NTU

10. Lt. Col. Charles Story
    SO1 COIN
    British Army Afghan COIN Centre

11. Dr. Don Inbody
    Senior Lecturer
    Texas State University

12. Dr. David Ucko
    Transatlantic Fellow
    SWP-Berlin

13. Dr. David Betz
    Senior Lecturer
    King’s College London, War Studies

14. Dr. René Moelker
    Associate Professor
    Netherlands Defense Academy

15. Dr. Stuart Griffin
    Senior Lecturer
    Joint Command and Staff College, U.K.

16. Brig. (Ret.) Justin Kelly
    Land Warfare Studies Centre, Australian Army

17. Dr. John Mackinlay
    Teaching Fellow
    King’s College London, War Studies
About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

The **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)** was officially inaugurated on 1 January 2007. Before that, it was known as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), which was established ten years earlier on 30 July 1996. Like its predecessor, **RSIS** was established as an autonomous entity within Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

The School exists to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of Asia-Pacific security studies and international affairs. Its three core functions are research, graduate teaching and networking activities in the Asia-Pacific region. It produces cutting-edge security related research in Asia-Pacific Security, Conflict and Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Area Studies.

The School’s activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia-Pacific and their implications for Singapore.

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