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Features

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Tech Edge

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Viewpoint

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Editorial

Eleven years into the American-led "War on Terror," terrorism and insurgency remain significant threats to the national security of many countries. In Iraq, coordinated insurgent attacks continue to wreak havoc in the precarious security situation following the American withdrawal. In Afghanistan, Taliban infiltrators in the security forces turn on their trainers, undermining Coalition troop morale even as their leaders struggle for an exit strategy. Globally, the recent "improved underwear bomb" plot demonstrates that despite the loss of their leader, Al Qaeda retains the capacity to plot mayhem. This issue of *POINTER* features articles on the many challenges that global terrorism and insurgency pose to conventional militaries, including the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

LTC Goh Churn Yen, Tom explores the military's role in fighting terrorism. In "With a Helmet or a Badge: Is the Counter-Terrorism Effort More Effectively Undertaken by the Military or the Police?," LTC Goh draws on case studies of the British and Israeli counter-terrorism efforts to argue that the police is most suited to the task. Given the need to preserve social order and win the public's confidence, law enforcement, with its emphasis on minimal force and rule of law, is the most effective instrument for countering terrorism. Militaries such as the SAF are thus best employed in a supporting role, particularly in the areas of surveillance, monitoring and disaster management, where they possess advantages in resources and expertise. LTC Goh suggests an integrated approach, centred on civilian law enforcement but supplemented by SAF capabilities when required, as the best means of achieving success. "The Evolution of Insurgency and its Impact on Conventional Armed Forces," by LTC Tan Giam, explores some of the practical considerations when militaries are faced with insurgency. While as old as war itself, insurgency has evolved over the ages and conventional militaries are constantly challenged to adapt accordingly. In order to handle complex urban environments, heavy civilian presence and intense media scrutiny, the SAF must be willing to learn from past counter-insurgency efforts, placing special emphasis on force reorganisation, full spectrum training and leadership development.

MAJ Samuel Song Yong Chiat examines international counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism efforts in "The Global War on Terror: The Most Extensive and Successful Coalition Ever?" He concludes that while the American-led effort has severely damaged Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, they retain the ability to regenerate their losses and mount further attacks. The Coalition faces a long struggle to dilute the appeal of Al-Qaeda's ideology and weaken its recruitment base. MAJ Song's conclusion reinforces the need to tackle terrorism at its roots—body counts and territorial control are inadequate metrics for measuring success against an asymmetric opponent. "Did the Terrorist Attacks of 11 September 2001 Confirm the Thesis that 'Intelligence Failures are Inevitable'?" by COL Seet Uei Lim addresses the vital role of the intelligence community in averting terrorist attacks by examining its greatest failure in recent times. Instead of the fatalistic conclusion that "intelligence failures are inevitable," SLTC Seet provides a more nuanced view of the United States (US) Intelligence Community's performance. Examining the actions of the various agencies, he concludes that the Intelligence Community gave sufficient advance warning of an impending Al-Qaeda attack at both the political and strategic levels, but an effective policymaker response was not forthcoming. Furthermore, while the community failed to anticipate the exact details of the September 11 attacks, this was due as much to Al-Qaeda's sophisticated counter-intelligence measures as any mistakes on their own part. The US intelligence community thus did not perform as badly as commonly thought—indeed, the real problem was that they were not taken seriously enough. SLTC Seet's article underscores the need for information to be backed up by action—the best intelligence on terrorist activity is useless without the appropriate policy response.

In this issue's Tech Edge article, "Opening the Black Box: How do Command Teams Sensemake?," SLTC Lim Beng Chong, PhD examines the complexities of team sensemaking—while all people can sensemake as individuals, team efforts do not come intuitively and there is a tendency for vital information and alternative viewpoints to be overlooked when teams try to understand a situation. Team sensemaking is a vital skill for the Third Generation SAF as it confronts an increasingly uncertain security landscape.

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Finally, "We are the Sons of Singapore: Why Some NSmen Keep Going and Going" by COL (VOL) Leonard Yeow Ghim Chee sheds light on the motivations of long-serving NSmen and serves as a timely reminder of the stake we all have in our national defence. The loyalty and commitment of these NSmen should resonate with us as the SAF prepares to face the future.

POINTER would like to bid PTE Lim Rui Jin a fond farewell as he leaves for medical school. His positive attitude and meticulous work ethic have been a great help despite his short time with us. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

The *POINTER* Editorial Team

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With a Helmet or a Badge: Is the Counter-Terrorism Effort More Effectively Undertaken by the Military or the Police?

by **LTC Goh Churn Yen, Tom**

Abstract:

While some countries attempt to resolve the terrorist problem with police power, others rely on military might. This essay seeks to unpack the complex phenomenon of counter-terrorism and explore whether the police or the army is more effective in the fight against terror. Social support for the counter-terrorism effort denies terrorists both legitimacy and recruitment opportunities. This in turn limits the ability of terrorist organisations to carry out attacks and to regenerate losses, reducing the overall terrorist threat. A police force that works closely with society is well-poised to lead the fight against terror, though we must not discount the capabilities of the military in supporting this herculean effort.

Keywords: Counter-Terrorism; Minimum Force; Liberal Values; Measure of Effectiveness Framework

INTRODUCTION

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks (9/11) captured the world's attention, the burning twin towers a stark reminder of terrorism's horrors. Yet terrorism is not new to modern history—the British faced "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland and the Israelis are still struggling with Palestinian terrorists. Some countries resolve the terrorist problem with police power while others rely on military might. Who is right and who is wrong? Is there ever a right answer at all? In the fight against terror, should we use a helmet or a badge? We will attempt to answer this question by unpacking the complex phenomenon of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

In May 2007, the Singapore Parliament passed the Singapore Armed Forces (Amendment) Bill, giving the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) enhanced powers to assist the Singapore Police Force (SPF) in domestic security operations.[1] This begs the following questions—will the SAF be assuming a greater role in Singapore's fight against terror? Can we measure effectiveness in the fight against terror? Is there a framework to determine whether the military or police will do a better job? What can history tell us? This essay argues that police leadership, with the military playing a supporting role, is more effective in countering terrorism.

SHOULD THE POLICE BE IN CHARGE?

What is the Nature of the Threat?

Terrorism, according to Bruce Hoffman, is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or threat of violence in the pursuit of political change.[2] The end goal is political change and the means to achieve it is fear through violence. Fear within the population, generated by violence from the terrorists, causes panic and an expectation that the authorities will alleviate that fear. If this expectation cannot be adequately met, the population will lose confidence in their government's ability to protect them. Conversely, if the response is too drastic and counter-terrorist measures are draconian, such that personal privacy and civil liberties are severely infringed or restricted, society will be paralysed. Either way, this breakdown in social order is the ingredient for political change that terrorists aim to achieve. Terrorism is a tactic with political objectives at its core. Maintaining the support of the people is vital as terrorism is political in nature—terrorists cannot effect political change without any support from the populace. Understanding the political nature of terrorism is crucial to assessing its effectiveness and the choice of instruments available to the state in countering this threat.

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The Military's Role in Countering Terrorism

The traditional role of the military has been to repel external threats, usually from another state, thus preserving the geographical integrity and political sovereignty of the state and protecting the lives of its people.[3] In the case of countering terrorism, the enemy could be anyone living in our midst. The traditional approach of winning battles—through the concentration of superior force at a decisive point—suddenly appears useless.[4] With no familiar doctrine to refer to, the military frequently resorts to extreme measures to seek a return to order. In an effort to limit the operational freedom of terrorists, drastic measures like curfews and door-to-door searches may be carried out by soldiers who have no training in legal procedures and sensitivity to civilian privacy or liberty. The mission-oriented mindset of soldiers may cause them to execute their tasks without due consideration of the impact on the surrounding population. Thus while some terrorists are caught or killed, this comes at a significant cost to the people living in the area, especially when innocent civilians are killed or injured in the process. This translates into loss of support for the counter-terrorist cause amongst the population and may even push the disaffected into the arms of terrorist recruiters. To a large extent, operating amongst the people to ensure order, security and the apprehension of terrorists is constabulary work that requires different skill sets not usually found among soldiers. Police are trained to de-escalate situations, use minimum force at all times and draw their weapons only as a last resort. Military doctrine and training, on the other hand, favours the decisive use of maximum force against an identified enemy.[5] As such, overreliance on the military in countering

Understanding the political nature of terrorism is crucial to assessing its effectiveness and the choice of instruments available to the state in countering this threat.

A Police Coast Guard Vessel and an Anti-Submarine Patrol Vessel Intercepting a Suspicious Small Boat in an Exercise

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Medical Response Force Soldiers from the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosive Defence Group Await the Arrival of Casualties in a Simulated Exercise

terrorism frequently runs the risk of alienating the populace, especially when the terrorist organisation has already established a foothold and gained some popular support. There can be no purely military solution to a problem that is essentially political.[6]

Is the Military Irrelevant in Countering Terrorism?

Is the military irrelevant then, given the host of problems and limitations associated with it in the fight against terror? Far from being irrelevant, the military possesses qualities and resources that constitute one of the more important, if not the most important, sources of state power.[7] For a start, the military possesses sophisticated hardware and reconnaissance capabilities not available to civilian agencies. It has competent personnel who are used to contingency planning and speedy deployment of force and has experience in establishing control of an area quickly to monitor the movement of people and equipment.[8] Various arms of the military like the Air Force and Navy provide capabilities such as airborne surveillance and precision strikes and can secure vital economic arteries like Sea Lines of Communication. Similarly, as observed by Jeffrey H. Norwitz, "only the military can truly deal with catastrophic events such as biological and chemical attack(s) as well as radiological release and consequence management." He adds that "the organic capability for superb military investigation, intelligence analysis and fact finding can be an invaluable augmentation of state and local authority during a calamity."[9] The inherent qualities and capabilities highlighted above make the military an important asset to consider when planning or dealing with national emergencies, including counter-terrorism.

The Silver Bullet?

What makes the police the most suitable instrument of the state in dealing with terrorism? Essentially, the superiority of a police-dominant approach, as compared to one led by the military, rests upon two pillars: minimum force and liberal values. Minimum force, as observed by Thomas Mockaitis, is

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the key principle in winning the hearts and minds of the people. Force remains of limited use in any internal conflict as the real objective is the loyalty of disaffected people.[10] This is also the most important difference between soldiers and police officers in approaching a conflict. Police officers are trained to respond to violence with the minimum force necessary to accomplish the task. This principle of minimum force is alien to a soldier.[11] Paul Wilkinson observed that "as a cardinal principle of liberal democracy, one must never be tempted, however serious the situation may be, to use methods that are incompatible with the liberal values of humanity, liberty and justice."[12] The police, by virtue of their commission to enforce law and order in peacetime as well as their training to meet this calling, are most suitable as guardians of liberal values. To substantiate this claim, objective criteria will be used to measure the effectiveness of the police *vis-à-vis* the military in countering the terrorism threat. The following chapter proposes a framework for measuring the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism effort, which can help evaluate whether the police or the military is more effective in countering terrorism.

Measures of Effectiveness in Countering Terrorism

Daniel Byman argued that successful counter-terrorism is notoriously difficult to measure. He added that while it is appealing to use "body counts" or numbers of arrests as a measure of success, this is a deeply flawed approach because the size of the terrorist structure and its ability to regenerate is not taken into account. More importantly, he contends that a "body count" approach fails to reflect the impact of counter-terrorism measures on the adversary's morale, recruitment, fundraising and residual ability to conduct sophisticated attacks. Byman suggested five measures of success in countering terrorism: 1) Restricting terrorist freedom of operation; 2) Removing terrorist leadership and command structures; 3) Maintaining high levels of domestic support; 4) Disrupting terrorist recruitment; and 5) Reducing terrorist attacks.[13] Understanding these metrics of effectiveness against terrorism is essential in evaluating whether the police or the military is more effective in dealing with the threat.

Restricting Terrorist Freedom of Operation

This measure entails removing secure areas or sanctuaries from which terrorists can plan and organise their strikes with little fear. Keeping up the pressure on the terrorists and denying them respite prevents them from orchestrating elaborate plots and restricts their ability to coordinate successful attacks.

Removing Terrorist Leadership and Command Structures

Success in this regard is predicated on understanding the command structure and organisation of terrorist networks. In a sense, it is a measure of the state's intelligence processing and execution cycle to discover the enemy and target their leadership. Successful human intelligence and acute understanding of networked organisations are critical to linking up the nodes and targeting the hub where the terrorist leadership resides. Targeting this leadership is critical to weakening terrorist organisations. Arrests and interrogations may yield valuable insights into the workings of a terrorist organisation and information to facilitate future arrests.

Maintaining High Levels of Domestic Support

In addition to tacitly supporting the counter-terrorism effort, ordinary citizens must be encouraged to actively help prevent terrorist operations and attacks. The fight should not be restricted to police, soldiers and government officials—the public must be made to feel that they are part of the fight against terror. The long-term nature of terrorist threats justifies this investment. Additionally, successfully encouraging the public to support unpopular policies (such as those which encroach on freedoms) will yield long-term dividends. By enlisting domestic support and internalising a "look-out and play your part" mentality, states can draw upon the public to enhance their sensing capabilities and intelligence sources. This will also prevent terrorists from operating freely.

Disrupting Terrorist Recruitment

Terrorist networks are by nature resilient and can easily regenerate when individual cells and even hubs are eliminated. Disrupting recruitment to prevent recovery is therefore a vital measure of success.[14] Physically shutting down terrorist recruitment centres

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is one means of accomplishing this but terrorists have other means of enlisting new members. Winning in the ideological arena is therefore critical to disrupting a terrorist network's ability to influence, radicalise and recruit new members. The ideological battle is a social one and the tools to wage it are also likely be found within society. Social communities and institutions can play a major role in shaping perceptions, values and norms, all crucial ingredients for winning hearts and minds. However, should winning support prove too difficult because of an entrenched ideological stranglehold on the population, then measures to convince would-be followers of the high cost of pursuing violent political change must be firmly implemented.

Reducing Terrorist Attacks

The fifth and final measure of effectiveness is whether terrorists are still succeeding in their attacks despite the implementation of countermeasures. This measure reflects the severity of the overall terrorist threat and the success of terrorist groups in continuing to attract recruits and raise funds. Terrorist organisations must demonstrate their continued relevance by mounting successful attacks—if their plans are thwarted for a prolonged period, potential supporters will turn elsewhere.[15]

The factors discussed above are very much interrelated and will reinforce or impact each other. The overall Measure of Effectiveness framework will be used to gauge the level of success in countering terrorism, be it undertaken by the police or military, using historical case studies involving Britain in Northern Ireland and the Israeli experience with Palestinian terrorists. A third case study involves a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of Singapore's counter-terrorist effort that is dominated by the police force and augmented by the military.

BRITISH EXPERIENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Irish terrorist threat can be traced back to the struggle against British rule after the Anglo-Irish War of Independence, which ended in 1921 with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The Free States of Ireland, composed of 26 mainly Catholic

Mural of "The Battle of Bogside" Depicting a Boy in a Gas Mask Holding a Petrol Bomb

southern counties, became independent while the six predominantly Protestant northern counties chose to remain with Britain. Years of grievances suffered by the minority Catholics in Northern Ireland as well as their desire to unify Ireland led to the formation of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA or IRA).[16] The British struggle against PIRA, a terrorist organisation, from 1970 to 1998 when the Good Friday Agreement ended the fighting, is known as "The Troubles." PIRA's aim was to defend the Catholic enclave in Northern Ireland against Protestant loyalist attacks and to unify Ireland in the long term. PIRA's strategy was to mobilise and recruit Catholics and make Northern Ireland as ungovernable as possible through violence to break the unionist government at Stormont and force the British to interfere by sending troops. Terrorist attacks would then provoke a hard-line British response that would turn the Catholic population against them.[17] Initially the British did respond forcefully with a massive deployment of Army troops to quell the violence, alienating the people and aggravating the situation. It was not until a policy of police primacy was instituted in 1976 that the terrorist problem slowly came under control.[18]

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Effectiveness of the British Counter-Terrorism Effort

Restricting Terrorist Freedom of Operation. PIRA's aim of provoking overreaction by the British Army culminated in "The Battle of Bogside" where Britain mobilised troops to quell sectarian fighting and rioting in Northern Ireland. "Operation Motorman," a massive deployment of 28,000 military troops including 5,300 Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers supported by armoured vehicles, heavy weapons and some local police was initiated.[19] The overwhelming force was tactically successful in breaking up the barricaded area, driving PIRA rebels into the countryside and restricting PIRA's ability to operate freely.[20] However, the large army footprint played into the hands of PIRA propaganda that portrayed the British as foreign invaders.

Removing Terrorist Leadership and Command Structures. In an attempt to target PIRA's leadership and organisational structure, the British Army invoked the 1922 Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act to arrest, detain and intern anyone suspected of acting or having acted or being about to act in a manner prejudicial to the preservation of peace and maintenance of order in Northern Ireland.[21] Curfews, door-to-door searches and detentions without trial were the order of the day. This alienated the Catholic population and increased PIRA's popularity in Northern Ireland.[22]

The military is a very blunt instrument when deployed in a civilian context, and this is true even for an impeccable and well-trained outfit like the British Army.

Maintaining High Levels of Domestic Support. The initial high-handed British response included torture.[23] To paraphrase James Rudolph, if the British had pulled their troops out and handled Northern Ireland with normal laws and policing methods instead, much of the support for the IRA would probably have disappeared.[24] The military is a very blunt instrument when deployed in a civilian context, and this is true even for an impeccable and well-trained outfit like the British Army.

In the late 1970s, the British changed strategies from a counter-insurgency approach to one undertaken by the local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which acted in accordance with the law. The army played a supporting role and acted like a security blanket to quell violence when it was beyond the control of the police. With emphasis on minimal use of force, this move was well received by the British public and perceived as more appropriate and effective.[25]

Disrupting Terrorist Recruitment. During the initial military phase, PIRA enjoyed widespread support from Catholic nationalists. Recruitment was never a problem for the terrorist organisation because new volunteers were readily available.[26] Ambush killings undertaken by the Special Air Service (SAS), especially when they involved innocent civilians, provided excellent anti-British Army propaganda.

As Britain changed her policy to place a greater emphasis on law and order, the criminal prosecution approach undertaken by the RUC and the political involvement of Sinn Fein within the political arena led to increased domestic support for the RUC. There was also a reduction in the attractiveness of political violence due to the availability of an alternate path for PIRA to meet its political aspirations. A policy of police primacy to win support from the domestic population paved the way for a peaceful political process which starved PIRA of new terrorist recruits.

Reducing Terrorist Attacks. According to statistical evidence, the highest levels of violence were experienced during the initial years.[27] Shootings and bombings reached a height in 1972 and remained high until 1976.[28] The implementation of police primacy and criminalisation resulted in the reduction of PIRA terrorist attacks.[29] According Lloyd George, "the Irish job ... was a policeman's job supported by the military and not vice versa."[30] British troops eventually left Northern Ireland on 31 July 2007, ending decades of counter-terrorist operations against PIRA.[31]

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ISRAELI EXPERIENCE AGAINST PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE

After World War II, the United Nations (UN) proposed the partitioning of Palestine into two independent states, one Palestinian and the other Jewish, with Jerusalem internationalised. The Jewish state proclaimed independence in 1948 as the state of Israel. During the Six Day War in 1967, Israel occupied Palestine and many Palestinians fled or were expelled. In December 1987, a mass uprising against the Israeli occupation began—this is known as the First Intifada.[32] Palestinian demonstrators used household tools to attack soldiers from the Israel Defence Force (IDF).[33] Massive numbers were arrested by the IDF and special camps had to be built to contain them. Israeli methods resulted in heavy casualties amongst Palestinian civilians. Various peace talks broke down due to Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) terrorist activities and harsh reprisals from the IDF. The Second Intifada broke out in 2000. This time, the uprisings were even more violent as the Palestinians, frustrated with Arafat and the Palestinian leadership and fuelled by the extremist Hamas jihadi movement, were convinced that violence was the only way to remove the Jews from their land. The Israel-Palestine issue remains unresolved and prospects for a long-term peace are bleak.

Effectiveness of the Israeli Counter-Terrorism Effort

Restricting Terrorist Freedom of Operation. The IDF has been extremely successful in limiting Palestinian terrorist movement both within Israel-occupied territory as well as in neighbouring states. In an effort to contain the terrorist threat, large areas were sealed off and road access was blocked. Walls were also built to cordon off the problematic Gaza Strip and West Bank and numerous checkpoints were set up to screen travellers. These measures have worked well and terrorist attacks originating from the cordoned-off areas were significantly reduced from 2002 onwards.[34]

Removing Terrorist Leadership and Command Structures. The IDF has been able to utilise its intelligence service to single out key terrorists for arrest or assassination. In the two years of the Second Intifada, there were reportedly at least eighty cases of Israeli forces gunning down or blowing up Palestinian militants involved in the planning and execution of terror attacks. Such measures drew violent protests from the Palestinians and heavy criticism from the international community.[35] With their leaders dead or in jail, many terrorist cells were left directionless and demoralised.[36] Nonetheless, key terrorist losses were often quickly replaced.[37] Therefore, while IDF punitive actions against individual terrorists were successful, the overall impact on the Palestinian terrorist leadership and command structure was limited.

Maintaining High Levels of Domestic Support. As the IDF's use of force increased, resentment from the Palestinians, Israeli civilians and even within the IDF increased as well. There were accusations that the IDF had conducted indiscriminate and even deliberate strikes against non-combatants, resulting in public and international political backlash.[38] The perceived excessive use of force by the IDF against Palestinian civilians has had a negative impact on domestic support, as seen in the high number of conscripts evading combat service.[39]

Disrupting Terrorist Recruitment. During the First Intifada, massive arrests were made by the IDF, including those made by "Arabist" infiltrators that looked and spoke Arabic. In terms of numbers of arrests ("body counts") and the frequency of IDF strikes against the terrorists, the results were impressive and tactically brilliant. However, all this was mitigated by rapid replenishment of terrorist losses, frequently by the relatives of those who were killed or imprisoned.[40] As there remains no shortage of terrorist volunteers ready to die for their cause, it is apparent that the Israeli counter-terrorism effort has not significantly reduced terrorist recruitment. If anything, the perceived excessive use of force by the IDF may even have helped the extremists justify their violent tactics.

Reducing Terrorist Attacks. Israeli counter-terrorism measures, particularly the building of walls and fences along Gaza Strip and the West Bank towards the end of 2002, were effective in reducing the number of terrorist attacks from the cordoned area. Over a period of three and a half years from 2002, only two out of 125 attacks originated from the Gaza Strip. Similarly, the killing of terrorists by IDF strikes across neighbouring states has also weakened Palestinian

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terrorist organisations. In this area at least, it would appear that the terrorist threat has been somewhat contained.

While tactically successful in targeting terrorists and reducing their operating freedom, the hard-line and military-intensive counter-terrorist approach adopted by the Israelis against the Palestinians cannot completely remove the terrorist leadership and organisational structure due to their ability to regenerate. Similarly, IDF actions have neither significantly deterred nor blunted Palestinian terrorist recruitment of suicide bombers. In the process, the Israeli military has built a reputation for using excessive force against a weak but determined Palestinian people and has had to withdraw time and again when faced with mounting domestic and international discontent. It would appear that the IDF may be too blunt and powerful a weapon against terror, resulting in much collateral damage that has alienated both domestic and international opinion. The IDF has not been very successful at winning the support of the public, as evidenced by the high percentage of conscripts who have refused to report for duty.[42] This has in turn made collection of intelligence on terrorist activities difficult. While the building of the security wall has reduced terrorist attacks, most Israelis remain convinced that no amount of countermeasures will bring Palestinian resistance to an end.[43] Thus, the IDF's counter-terrorism measures have not been very effective based on the Measure of Effectiveness framework.

SINGAPORE'S COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORT

Singapore's counter-terrorism effort is the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and is executed by the SPF. The SAF, under the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF), has been enlisted to assist the civil authorities in its counter-terrorism duties. The SAF's involvement includes surveillance and interception of suspicious aircraft headed towards Singapore, surveillance and interception of vessels within Singapore's territorial waters and protection of critical installations on land. Overall, Singapore's counter-terrorism effort has been primarily led by the police and augmented by the military in areas of expertise beyond traditional police capabilities. As a last resort and when resources are stretched, the SAF can be activated to assist the police in a domestic security role.

Effectiveness of Singapore's Counter-Terrorism Effort

Restricting Terrorist Freedom of Operation. Singapore's effort to restrict terrorist movement seems to have worked well, an excellent example being the arrest of a Singaporean member of the Jemaah Islamiya (JI), jihadist Abdul Basheer, in an undisclosed location in Middle East.[44] This may be attributed to the integrated intelligence network and robust legislation in the powerful Internal Security Act that empowers law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, to act swiftly and decisively against potential terrorists, forcing them to shift their operations overseas. The military also plays a significant role in tracking suspicious movements, with the Air Force monitoring our skies and intercepting unidentified aircraft straying into Singapore.[45] The Navy also patrols Singapore's coastal waters, boarding and inspecting vessels. Similarly, Army troops conduct joint patrols with the police at critical installations such as Changi Airport and Jurong Island Petrol Chemical Hub to deter and intercept infiltrators. The specialised equipment and skills required to restrict terrorist movement in the various domains would not have been available if either the SPF or the SAF had undertaken the task alone.

Removing Terrorist Leadership and Command Structures. The 2001 arrests of 31 members of the JI network in Singapore exposed a plot to carry out various terrorist acts on the US and Israeli Embassies as well as train stations and other targets in Singapore.[46] Subsequent arrests included that of Rijal Yadri Jumari, earmarked as a future JI leader, in 2008. This is indicative of constant effort to pressure and weaken the JI network and leadership, particularly that of its Singapore branch.[47] In this aspect, inter-agency intelligence sharing and effective police work has been crucial in the pre-emptive arrests of terrorist leadership and members. The intimate link between criminal activities, such as illegal trespassing, and terrorist activities means that the SPF is better able to draw connections that may lead to uncovering terrorist activities.

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Maintaining High Levels of Domestic Support. According to the 2003 JI White Paper, the initial police arrest of JI terrorists in Singapore was a direct result of information supplied by a fellow Singaporean. This indicates a positive relationship between the police and the public that produces timely and accurate intelligence. To further engage the public, the Traffic Police Department distributed pamphlets on spotting suspicious behaviour to all registered taxi drivers in Singapore.[48] Similarly, when Mas Selamat, a JI terrorist, escaped from police custody in February 2008, private telecommunication companies in Singapore pitched in to send out the fugitive's photograph, released by the SPF with an accompanying security message, to over 5 million mobile phone subscribers.[49] All these efforts involve reaching out to different communities within society, a task for which the SPF is the obvious choice. The evident positive support of the public demonstrates that the SPF has been successful in gaining high levels of domestic support in the counter-terrorism effort.

Disrupting Terrorist Recruitment. Recognising that prison is fertile ground for recruiting and radicalising JI members and sympathisers, the detainee rehabilitation program was initiated to keep detained JI members from being further radicalised and help them re-integrate into society. Since its inception in 2003, many have undergone the Religious Rehabilitation Program and according to MHA, detainees who have been released on Restriction Orders have responded well to counselling.[50] Apart from targeting terrorist recruitment in prisons, the SPF, in cooperation with Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, launched an effort to reach out to the population on the cyber front by setting up internet websites to amplify correct Islamic messages and debunk the deviant teachings found online on thousands of extremist sites.[51] The SPF and Prison Service have thus played an important role in disrupting terrorist recruitment.

Reducing Terrorist Attacks. There has not been a successful terrorist attack in Singapore since members of the Pakistan Peoples Party hijacked SQ117 in March 1991. In the view of Dr John Harrison of Nanyang Technological University, "[t]he fact that the attacks didn't happen shows that the security apparatus in Singapore is very good."[52] However, we must be wary of using the absence of terrorist attacks in Singapore thus far to conclude that the counter-terrorism effort has been effective as there is no point of reference for comparison, at least in recent times. In Singapore's case, it may be better to gauge effectiveness by measuring the confidence of the population to deal with a terrorist attack and the ability of society to stay united and resilient in the aftermath. This includes saving lives and mitigating the effects of any incident. In this regard, specific plans and exercises involving both the SPF and the SAF have been developed and practised to address conventional attacks like bombing and hijacking and non-conventional ones such as chemical, biological and radiological attacks.[53] In an independent 2005 Forbes research survey of 519 Singaporeans, more than 80% of those surveyed were confident that security measures taken to prevent terrorist attacks and to recover from an attack were sufficient. Sociologist Alexius Pereira attributed this confidence to increased police patrols and constant reiteration of the national security effort.[54] The integrated approach by the police and the SAF seems to have worked well to deter and prevent terrorist attacks. It has augmented the defence of key installations and established a system to contain and mitigate the effects of a successful attack.

The Singapore counter-terrorism experience is very much led by the SPF. The police have been effective in arresting terrorist leadership, both locally as well as in collaboration with its international and regional counterparts. The positive relationship that the SPF has established with the local communities while fighting crime and drugs over the years has built trust and support that can be useful and effective in providing intelligence on terrorists. Focusing its effort in rehabilitation within prisons has also been effective in preventing further radicalisation and terrorist recruitment. The spontaneous provision of public information that resulted in the arrest of JI terrorists and the contribution by taxi drivers and telecommunication companies suggests that the SPF has garnered significant public support in their efforts against terrorism. Nonetheless, the SPF recognises the important role of the SAF in limiting terrorist movement in areas beyond the capabilities of the police, as well as in handling chemical, biological,

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radiological and explosive (CBRE) threats. It is clear that the SPF takes the lead in Singapore's counter-terrorist effort, utilising the SAF's capabilities and resources when necessary. While it is too early to laud this approach as a success story, it remains promising.

COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS

We have used the Measure of Effectiveness framework to assess the British, Israeli and Singaporean experience in countering terrorism. The British and Israeli armies probably stand among the best military outfits in the world. Similarly, the SAF was rated by Tim Huxley as the most advanced military in South East Asia.[55] However, both the British Army and IDF experiences indicate that the military has not been effective in dealing with terrorism. In the case of Israel, the hard-line and military-intensive counter-terrorist approach against the Palestinians, while tactically successful in targeting terrorist organisations and reducing their strength, has not brought enduring peace to the country. For Britain, the tide turned only after the policies of police primacy and criminalisation were implemented, slowly winning over the population. Similarly, while recognised as an important national resource, the SAF acts only in a supporting role to the SPF. The analysis thus far demonstrates the benefits of strong police dominance in countering terrorism. In assessing whether counter-terrorism efforts are more effectively undertaken by the police or the military, it would be tempting to simply conclude that the police are more effective than the military. However, while the military is insufficient when engaging terrorism on its own, it possesses inherent capabilities and resources that should not be disregarded.

An Integrated Approach

The aim of terrorism is to induce fear, in particular an irrational anxiety that incapacitates people to the point of breakdown in social order.[56] When this happens, cracks along racial, religious or economic lines may develop. Terrorist organisations can exploit and capitalise upon such schisms to bring down the government and assert their own brand of politics. The violent and destructive terrorist threat is, however, too catastrophic for the police to handle alone. Where the effort required is beyond police capabilities, the military can be activated, as a last resort.[57] The police can then act as a guardian to balance force and liberal values, with the safety and security of the people constantly in mind. As such, while the police on its own is not the "silver bullet" for countering the terrorist threat, it is in the best position, when supported by the military, to provide safety and security for the public. Using the Measure of Effectiveness framework, the following section will explore how an integrated approach with police leadership supported by the military can be effective in countering the terrorism threat.

Effectiveness of the Integrated Approach

Restricting Terrorist Freedom of Operation. Recognising the need to deny sanctuary and space for terrorists to plan, operate and strike, the integrated approach adopts a complete view of the problem and utilises the capabilities and resources of both the police and military to pressure terrorist groups and restrict their operating freedom. Sophisticated military surveillance technology and command and control infrastructure can be utilised to monitor terrorist activities. Intelligence gathering capabilities, including military signal intelligence for intercepting radio transmissions, can be combined with police intelligence to piece together a more comprehensive picture of terrorist operations. Utilising military aerial and naval platforms, the police can extend its reach to enhance perimeter protection beyond what was traditionally available to the police, much like in the Singapore case study. It is important to note that methods to restrict terrorist freedom of operation must not impinge too much on civil liberties, personal freedom and privacy or it may draw a negative response from the very population that the counter-terrorism effort aims to protect.

While the police on its own is not the "silver bullet" for countering the terrorist threat, it is in the best position, when supported by the military, to provide safety and security for the public.

Removing Terrorist Leadership and Command Structures. An integrated approach leverages on resources beyond those of the police to target terrorist leadership and command structures.

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Sophisticated military satellite and precision tracking systems developed for warfare may be exploited during peacetime to maintain persistent surveillance and real-time situational awareness on the precise location and movement of terrorists so that the police may execute search and arrest operations with pin-point accuracy. Terrorist operations exploit bureaucratic organisational stove-pipes by cutting across ministerial jurisdictions. The integrated approach overcomes this by merging intelligence across all government agencies to keep track of leadership movements within terrorist organisations. Apart from technology, a positive relationship with local communities established over time can potentially yield valuable human intelligence information to help target terrorist organisations. Nonetheless, lessons from historic case studies caution that terrorist targeting is a delicate task that requires precise intelligence and more importantly, careful execution to avoid collateral damage. A legitimate judicial process to arrest and extradite terrorist leadership for criminal trial is much more palatable to the population and international community. As the integrated approach is likely to provide increased intelligence on terrorists and their movements, it will facilitate effective arrests and the removal of their leadership and command structures.

Maintaining High Levels of Domestic Support. In-depth analysis and historical case studies of the terrorist threat show that police primacy in counter-terrorism achieves high levels of support from the domestic population. The superiority of a police-dominant approach in generating high levels of domestic support, as compared to one led by the military, rests upon the two pillars of minimum force and liberal values. Police officers are trained to respond to violence with the least amount of force necessary to accomplish the task—a practice usually alien to a soldier.[58] The police are again most suitable in guarding liberal values while maintaining law and order. In both the British and Israeli experiences, we have seen how the military's excessive use of force and disregard for civil liberties alienated the population and lost their support. Since the nature of terrorism is political, support of the population is the key to effective counter-terrorism.

An integrated approach with the police leading and the military playing a supporting role will be restrained in the use of force when conducting operations. With the military in the backseat, the population will not be unnecessarily alarmed, knowing that the police will administer justice in a restrained manner with due consideration to civil liberties.[59] The police are the most visible arm of the state and their attitudes and behaviour will have a great impact on public sentiment.[60] Therefore, the police should always be the ones directly interacting with the people and the military should only be activated as a last resort. Even military operations in support of civil authority should be overseen by the police to balance force with liberal values.

It is important to point out that the police—as the guardians of the people—must be seen to uphold justice without fear or favour and with respect for civil liberties. Only when this principle is carefully observed will the people support the police counter-terrorism effort wholeheartedly without fear of unjust reprisal or marginalisation. In other words, if the police acted contrary to the principle stated above, popular support will not be forthcoming—it will not matter whether they wear a badge or a helmet.

An integrated approach led by an impartial police, accountable to the rule of law at all times and supported by the military, probably offers the best chance to secure high levels of domestic support from the population when fighting terrorism.

Disrupting Terrorist Recruitment. The police are well-positioned to lead the effort in disrupting terrorist recruitment because of the huge repository of personal information in their criminal databases and the links between terrorist recruitment and criminal organisations. The police are better able to undertake this task because they are perceived to have a legitimate need for accessing personal information and cross-checking criminal activities for possible leads on terrorist recruitment. The military's role should be to provide surveillance and tracking of suspected terrorist meetings or transmissions to assist the police in targeting and eliminating the core of terrorist recruitment. Once terrorist activity is detected, the military can provide the resources for contact tracing. This is similar to how the SAF's

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partnership with the Defence Science Technology Agency helped Singapore establish contact tracing in the nation's fight against SARS in 2003.[61] This is because terrorist recruitment requires communication and contact with the recruiter, either virtually or physically. The integrated approach hence provides the police with military resources to disrupt terrorist recruitment.

Nevertheless, terrorism's political nature means that intelligence gathering alone is insufficient when targeting terrorist recruitment. The unwavering support of the people is crucial for inoculating the population against terrorist propaganda and ideology. As demonstrated by the eventual success in Northern Ireland, alternative avenues must be made available for political expression through non-violent means in order to effectively disrupt terrorist recruitment. The challenge of an integrated approach is for the police, assisted by the military, to convince the population that they will be impartial and maintain law and order while allowing greater diversity in political representation within society. Without this assurance, violence offered by radical extremists may be the only political option available to disaffected communities.

Reducing Terrorist Attacks. An awareness that the terrorist threat can never be completely eliminated is the first step towards sustainable peace in an integrated counter-terrorism approach. Countermeasures shield the society from catastrophic terrorist attacks, but it is the population's resilience that will ensure that society continues to function. An umbrella in the rain cannot completely prevent you from getting wet, but can shelter the most critical parts of your body. Likewise, an understanding that one cannot avoid getting hit but can mitigate the consequences and carry on is the mindset that should shape the fight on terror. An effective integrated approach led by the police, supplemented by the capabilities of the military, will reduce terrorist attacks to a minimum and build resilience within society. This will allow us to weather the occasional setback.

CONCLUSION

The police are probably more effective than the military in fighting terrorism because they work with the populace to ensure domestic safety and security. Over time, a positive relationship can be nurtured with the people to garner their trust and support. This relationship creates a resource pool of human intelligence that can be used to restrict terrorist freedom of operation and target their leadership and command structures. The police operating environment and thus their training is orientated towards minimum use of force, only escalating if necessary. When their functions are carried out in a just and fair manner with respect to civil liberties and the rule of law, popular support will be forthcoming. This support for the counter-terrorism effort denies the terrorists legitimacy and opportunities to recruit new members. The impact on terrorist recruitment also limits their ability to carry out attacks and to regenerate losses. However, disregarding the military and its capabilities will reduce the overall effectiveness of the counter-terrorism initiative. Therefore, while the police are best positioned to lead the fight against terror, they must be supported by the military—especially when the immediate threat is beyond their capabilities.

In the summary of his book *Inside Terrorism*, Bruce Hoffman comments that the most sobering realisation about the fight against terrorism is that it can never be completely eradicated. The fact that there is no "magic bullet" or single solution,[62] underscores the complexity of counter-terrorism. As such, neither the police force nor the military can be completely effective on its own—the counter-terrorism effort requires both helmets and badges.

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The Global War On Terror: The Most Extensive and Successful Coalition Ever?

by **MAJ Samuel Song Yong Chiat**

Abstract:

This essay covers three key aspects of pre-9/11 politics in America and discusses the battle of ideas between western culture and global terrorism. It also explores America's efforts leading the Global War On Terror (GWOT) coalition in Afghanistan and Iraq. Furthermore, it uses several statistical measures to gauge the success of the GWOT. While the US and coalition forces have diminished the capabilities of terrorists, the means to reduce the appeal of Al-Qaeda's ideology and recruitment have been overlooked. This essay proposes the need to understand the root causes of terrorism and develop a sound strategy to undermine terrorist willpower in order to achieve success in the GWOT.

Keywords: Global War On Terror; Al-Qaeda; Iraq; Afghanistan

INTRODUCTION

> *"War ... is not merely a question of emergency, but rather of knowledge and encompassing strategy"*
>
> *– Sun Tzu, Art of War*

Although the United States (US) Coalition in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) may be extensive, the results are limited. Since 9/11, the struggle against Al-Qaeda has resulted in "a battle of ideas" between western and jihadist value systems. With insurgency and terrorism on the rise, both Iraq and Afghanistan are far from becoming liberal democracies. Furthermore, the already weakened Coalition has begun to fracture, with muddled chains of command and restrictive rules of engagement.

This essay has three parts. First, it will cover three key aspects of pre-9/11 American politics before discussing the battle of ideas between western culture and global terrorism. Second, it will explore America's efforts leading the GWOT Coalition in Afghanistan and Iraq. Third, it will measure the success of the Coalition forces in the GWOT by examining terrorist casualty figures,[1] the insurgency in Iraq, Coalition control of territory, the limits of the Coalition, the number and frequency of terrorist attacks, and the spread of liberal democracy. It will argue that the Coalition forces need to fight a long war as the appeal for Al-Qaeda's ideology increases.

AMERICAN POLITICS BEFORE 9/11

It is important to understand three key elements of American politics prior to 9/11. First, the US role as the world's sole superpower lends the notion of "assertive realism" to perceptions of America security. Second, there has been a rise in the influence of a strong neo-conservative or ultra-nationalist "New American Century," with America providing global leadership for shaping the world into a liberal market. Third, neo-conservatives believed that the 1991 Gulf War was "unfinished business" and therefore that there was a need to remove Saddam Hussein's regime.[2] At the end of the Cold War, the US military had geared itself towards global power projection in the face of an uncertain threat. Then came 9/11.

BATTLE OF IDEAS

Against the backdrop of 9/11 and previous trends in American politics, the National Security Strategy revealed that "the US is fighting a war against terrorism of global reach. The enemy is not a single political regime, person, religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism—premeditated, politically motivated

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violence perpetrated against the innocent."[3] The GWOT has changed the nature of modern warfare and is different from "Clausewitzian war" such as World War I.[4] Global terrorism is a battle of ideas and some analysts have argued that it is the result of resistance against western culture and democratic values.[5]

EXTENT OF AMERICAN-LED COALITION

Leading a Coalition sanctioned by the United Nations, America launched an invasion of Afghanistan barely three weeks after 9/11. The Coalition aimed to remove the Taliban regime, destroy Al-Qaeda bases and terrorist training facilities, and capture or kill Osama bin Laden. The invasion, known as Operation Enduring Freedom, saw the participation of 23 countries, led by the US.[6] Some historians have suggested that the launch of the war in Afghanistan marks the start of the GWOT.

Kreps argued that the US conducted the Afghanistan war unilaterally in combat operations and multilaterally in peacekeeping operations.[7] This argument supports his logic of "consequences" as specified according to (1) time horizon, and (2) operational payoff.[8] In the former, President Bush acknowledged that diplomacy or multilateral bargaining is time-intensive, which would in turn undermine America's short-term security challenges.[9] In the latter, the US expected a resource-intensive Phase IV operation, which would increase America's operational constraints and thus favoured a multilateral effort.

Since the fall of the Taliban and Saddam regimes, the Al-Qaeda movement seems to have transformed from a loosely organised network into an ideology used by jihadist groups or insurgents to justify terrorist attacks.

Rogers believed that the State of the Union address on 29 January 2002 by President Bush was "the high point of the war on terror," where President Bush extended the GWOT to a global campaign and singled out Iran, North Korea and Iraq as the "axis of evil" due to their sponsorship of terrorism and intentions to develop weapons of mass destruction.[10] Other analysts saw the GWOT as a means for America to increase its influence across Europe and Central Asia.[11]

In mid-July 2003, only ten nations had deployed to Iraq.[12] There was a lack of international support for the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 as compared to the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The US rationale for invading Iraq was weak and eventually proved to be groundless.[13] The Islamic countries and the NATO alliances (including France and Germany) strongly opposed the invasion. Hence, the US failed to obtain a UN Security Council resolution to justify their invasion.

Due to the war's unpopularity, there was limited participation by the Coalition forces in active combat roles (with the exception of the British). Even media reports from US-friendly Arab states opposed American foreign policies, especially on the sensitive Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Other critics suspected that the ulterior motive of the Americans was to gain access to Iraq's oil resources.[14]

On 1 May 2003, President Bush declared that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."[15] By August 2003, the US forged new bilateral ties with other nations, resulting in an addition of twenty-six countries to the Coalition forces in the GWOT.[16]

SUCCESS IN THE GWOT?

The US-led Coalition adopted a conventional military strategy against the terrorist and insurgent threat. This strategy was inherently limited as the opposition's will and morale were reinforced rather than undermined by superior Coalition firepower.[17] Although the initial military campaign in Iraq was a stunning display of American-led military capability, they failed to anticipate a fierce insurgent resistance bolstered by embittered locals.[18]

Since the fall of the Taliban and Saddam regimes, the Al-Qaeda movement seems to have transformed from a loosely organised network into an ideology used by jihadist groups or insurgents to justify terrorist attacks.

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US Soldiers and French Commandos Conduct a Joint Reconnaissance Patrol

Success in the GWOT needs to be viewed through both military and political lenses.[19] Hence, I will examine its success in the following areas: (1) terrorist casualty figures, (2) level of insurgency in Iraq, (3) Coalition control of territory, (4) limitations of the Coalition, (5) the number and frequency of terrorist attacks, and (6) success in spreading liberal democracy to Afghanistan and Iraq.

CASUALTY FIGURES

The Bush administration claimed that the high casualties of the Al-Qaeda leaders and associates were strong indicators that the GWOT was progressing well. However, O'Hanlon and Adriana warn that such data is inaccurate and does not represent the actual progress in the broader political struggle.[20] Arguably, the Vietnam War has shown that high casualty figures are not necessarily an accurate measure of progress in an ideological struggle.

Relying solely on casualty figures to measure progress also does not take into account key factors such as morale, recruitment and financing of terrorists.[21] Angstorm argued that problems with the casualty figures include positive identification of the bodies, manipulation of the data for political and morale purposes, and problems differentiating between terrorist leaders and mere foot soldiers.[22] Indeed, the Coalition's failure to capture or kill key Al-Qaeda figures for many years can be considered a victory for the terrorists.

INSURGENCY IN IRAQ

The insurgency in Iraq shows no signs of collapsing.[23] Although there were reports of more than 50,000 insurgents being killed or detained, insurgent recruitment and multiple-fatality bombings have shown a positive upward correlation.[24] US intelligence was weak and there were insufficient American, Coalition and government troops in Iraq to stamp out the insurgency.[25]

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Early April 2004 marked a strategic disaster for the Coalition mission in Iraq. Coalition forces and Iraq civilians suffered huge casualties in the assault on Fallujah and Sadr City.[26] Many foreign paramilitaries supporting the Al-Qaeda movement targeted the US and its Coalition partners. Iraq was seen as a valuable combat training area for generating new jihadists experienced in urban guerrilla warfare.[27]

CONTROL OF TERRITORY

The invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and the removal of the Al-Qaeda,[28] the Taliban and Saddam has not diminished the threat of terrorism. The Bush administration made control of territory a measure of their success.[29] However, the problem with this criterion is that the relinquishing of territory by insurgents does not mean the end of violence and the achievement of political aims. Whenever the Taliban or Al-Qaeda fighters faced an overwhelming number of US or Coalition forces, they chose not to fight but instead withdraw to sanctuaries among the local communities or across the border into Pakistan.[30]

Iraq was seen as a valuable combat training area for generating new jihadists experienced in urban guerrilla warfare.

Al-Qaeda was forced to transform into an ideology to influence local and regional terrorists by the power of its reputation. They have been very successful in this transformation. In the case of Iraq, the Coalition's occupation and control of territories simply bred more terrorists and insurgents than ever before. There was fighting in almost every province and the Al-Jazeera media coverage of the Fallujah offensive led to a rise in support for bin Laden and Al-Qaeda.[31] Meanwhile, the Al-Qaeda associates in other countries continued to be active, and attacks in Tunisia, Kenya, Pakistan and Indonesia were planned and carried out independently.[32] Thus, controlling territories in Afghanistan and Iraq was ineffectual in the GWOT.

LIMITS OF THE COALITION

The Coalition was portrayed by the media and the international community as a display of international cooperation in the GWOT. In reality, however, the Coalition was fraught with complexity and a lack of commitment.[33] Most nations joined the Coalition because of the economic incentives offered by the US Government.

The Coalition forces adopted restrictive rules of engagement, resulting in weak military offensive capabilities in Southern Iraq. Hence, the Muqtala al-Sadr's supporters successfully seized control of four provincial capitals in Southern Iraq.[34] History has also demonstrated that politicians frequently do not make the best decisions from a military standpoint.[35] In a Coalition force, politicians make decisions to pursue their individual interests rather than the interest of the "Coalition" or international community. Consequently, in Iraq, almost all nations had caveats which ranged from support agreements, geographical restrictions, rules of engagement, tactical requirements and chain of command.

The difficulties of Coalition command at war were also evident in Kosovo and Iraq—muddled chains of command were a constant. The 1999 Kosovo operations revealed that, in reality, most of the nations in the Coalition had to clear orders with their national political and military chains of command.[36] In the political realm, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo faced political, security and economic issues identical to the challenges faced by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq during the GWOT.[37] This included a lack of resources, national and international guidance in post-war operations.

Anti-War Demonstration in London, 20 March 2005

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NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF TERRORIST ATTACKS

A decline in the number and frequency of terrorist activity may not reflect success in the GWOT. The Bush administration used the frequency of terrorist attacks to measure the success in the GWOT by claiming that at least ten serious Al-Qaeda terrorist plots had been disrupted since 9/11. Angstorm argued that this notion depends on a "counter factual" logic.[38] This is similar to the traditional problem with deterrence: the mere fact that there are no new terrorist attacks does not necessarily indicate that Al-Qaeda is inactive. In reality, the various Coalition actions led to an increase in terrorist activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.[39] In December 2009, there was a string of terrorist attacks by the Taliban in secure Kabul districts targeting foreign embassies, aid groups and government officials.[40]

The Al-Qaeda movement was more active after 9/11 and coordinated attacks continued to be carried out at a high level.[41] This did not include loosely coordinated attacks or attacks by jihadists in Iraq and Afghanistan. If those were included, the increase in terrorist acts by the Al-Qaeda movement in the mid-2000s is "six-fold compared with the start of the decade."[42] These widespread attacks highlighted the closely networked, yet dispersed nature of the Al-Qaeda movement and its supporters.

On the contrary, newly democratic states that were previously autocracies tend to be more violent and undermine the notion that the spread of democracy leads to a more stable world order.

SPREAD OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

The spread of liberal democracy is unlikely to contribute to any success in the GWOT. The Bush administration believed that regime change in so-called "rogue states" and spreading democracy in the Middle East will undermine the support and expansion of terrorist cells. On the contrary, Angstorm argued that the inherent openness of democratic societies makes terrorist activities easier to carry out.[43]

The reverse domino theory proposed that democratisation in Afghanistan and Iraq would lead to a wave of democratisation in Central Asia and the Middle East.[44] On the contrary, newly democratic states that were previously autocracies tend to be more violent and undermine the notion that the spread of democracy leads to a more stable world order.[45]

Washington "lost the plot" in the Iraq war as the initial efforts were focused on the immediate military campaign and there was a lack of post-conflict planning.[46] The idea that a US-led Coalition could occupy and reform an Arabic nation was "a gross misreading of regional politics, culture and religion."[47] History has shown that post-conflict operations are often overlooked by the Coalition. This is evident in Bosnia, Haiti, Somalia and Panama where wars won through tactical victory can turn out to be strategic failures.[48]

Furthermore, the prospects of an Iraqi government exercising true liberal democracy seem bleak. The Iraqi government is weak and made up of former exiles. In the face of complex violence and attempts to safeguard the government's interests, there are little incentives to cooperate within the government in nation building.[49] Many analysts in the Middle East were also suspicious of the huge investments pumped into the US Embassy in Baghdad and the five-year terms imposed by the CPA on the key Iraqi government appointments. The high insurgency rate also meant that the Iraqi government depended largely on US military power for survival.[50]

TOWARDS THE LONG GWOT

As the GWOT continues, there is a tendency to refer to it as "The Long War Against Islamofascism,"[51] the greatest threat to western civilisation. Other critics see the war as counterproductive to western security interests and with the potential to destabilise global security.[52] Coalition forces will need to prepare for a long war against terrorism. However, the Coalition is weakening, with the US, Britain and a few other nations making limited commitments towards the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Cross highlighted that the battle of ideas against an "invisible enemy" must be fought using diplomacy, foreign and economic policies, and the weapons of the information age.[53] The Coalition cannot be entirely successful in eliminating terrorism but can undermine terrorism as a force in international affairs through a long campaign in the battle of ideas.

CONCLUSION

Success in the GWOT has been limited. The US and Coalition forces have degraded terrorist capabilities, disrupted some of its plans and operations, and wiped out some of the key members in the leadership. But the need to reduce the appeal of Al-Qaeda's ideology and limit terrorist recruitment were grossly overlooked.[54] As Sun Tzu pointed out aptly in the *Art of War*, we need to understand the root causes of terrorism and develop a sound strategy to undermine the willpower of terrorists. Only then will we achieve success in the GWOT.

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ENDNOTES

1. However, success is more than just numbers, which will be examined in this paper.
2. Paul Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror* (Polity Press, 2008), 65-66.
3. *National Security Strategy of the US* (Washington, DC: White House, 2002).
4. Clausewitz wrote based on his experiences with Napoleon. World War I involved large scale attrition warfare between Germany and France. See Major General Timothy Cross, "Can We Win the War on Terror?" *The British Army Review*, no. 14, Autumn (2006): 24.
5. As the "enemy" lives amongst the people and needs to be separated from them, the GWOT aims to prevent terrorists (including suicide bombers) from achieving their objectives. The GWOT does not have a clear victory against any tangible entity like an institution or government body. In other words, the GWOT seems to be a fight against shadows. The GWOT has expanded from conventional visible battle to covert operations and from military actions to sanctions. See Cross, "Can We Win the War on Terror?," 25.

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6. Ricardo S. Sanchez and Donald T. Philips, *Wiser in Battle – A Soldier's Story* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 143.

7. Sarah Kreps, "When Does the Mission Determine the Coalition? The Logic of Multilateral Intervention and the Case of Afghanistan." *Security Studies* 17, no. 3 (July-September 2008): 537.

8. Kreps suggested that "consequences" are specified according to time horizon. Time horizon creates tradeoffs between the long-term benefits of multilateralism and short-term benefits of unilateralism. The nature of intervention will affect the operational payoffs of multilateralism. See Kreps, "When Does the Mission Determine the Coalition?," 531-567.

9. The incentives of unilateralism allow America to move faster, without the need to rally for UN support. Furthermore, campaign planning will be easier without the Coalition's restrictive rules of engagement and national caveats. See Kreps, "When Does the Mission Determine the Coalition?," 533.

10. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 80.

11. Ibid., 84.

12. In addition to US, Great Britain, Australia, Poland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Denmark and South Korea.

13. Saddam Hussein would provide weapons of mass destruction to terrorists.

14. Bruce R. Pirnie and Edward O'Connell. *Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003 – 2006)* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 63-64.

15 Sanchez and Philips, *Wiser in Battle – A Soldier's Story*, 174.

16. The Pentagon directed CENTCOM to accelerate the flow of the Coalition forces into Iraq. These countries include Tonga, Croatia, Nepal, Bosnia, Uzbekistan, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Ukraine, Slovakia, Macedonia, Thailand, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, New Zealand, the Philippines, Fiji, Portugal, Norway, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Japan and Singapore. See Sanchez and Philips, *Wiser in Battle*, 244.

17. The success of the GWOT is not measured by the side that possesses the most sophisticated or high technological weapons and systems. See Cross, "Can We Win the War on Terror?," 25. The Coalition nations are unlikely to impose their way of life or value systems by bombing the terrorist into submission.

18. Brian Michael Jenkins, *Unconquerable Nation: Knowing Our Enemy Strengthening Ourselves* (Santa Monica, CA, 2006), 38.

19. Thus far, the Coalition achieved little success because the GWOT in Afghanistan and Iraq was largely driven by American foreign policy whose main objective was to retain political power back in the US. For example, in mid-April 2004, the Bush administration ordered a cease-fire in Fallujah and halted the planned capture of Muqtada al-Sadr in Najaf. The Bush administration knew that the risk was high—they would have no time to recover before the November presidential elections if there were any serious mishaps in Fallujah or Najaf and in the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people. See Sanchez and Philips, *Wiser in Battle – A Soldier's Story*, 371; and Jan Angstrom, "Victory in the War on Terrorism," *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War*, eds. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 94.

20. O' Hanlon, Micheal and Adriana Lins de Albuquerque, "Scoring the Iraq Aftermath" *National Interest*, Winter (2004): 31-35.

21. Similarly in Jakarta, despite the deaths of several top fugitives, terrorist cells across Indonesia are actively recruiting members and planning attacks. See "Noordin Dead, but Indonesia Terror Cells Still Active," *Straits Times*, 23 December 2009, A10.

22. Angstrom, "Victory in the War on Terrorism," 101.

23. Iraq's resistance comprises a number of independent groups united in their goal to drive the Americans out of Iraq. There are some links to Saddam Hussein loyalists, purged Baathist Party members, Sunnis and Jihadist.

24. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 96.

25. Jenkins, *Unconquerable Nation*.

26. Freeman, *Freedom or Security*, 74.

27. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 96.

28. The Al-Qaeda movement aims to (1) evict crusader forces (US military presence in Middle East), (2) terminate the House of Saud (as a US ally), (3) replace pro-western regimes, (4) support Palestine and separatist movements, and more importantly, (5) re-establish some form of Islamist Caliphate. See Ibid., 126-127.

29. The US-led Coalition successfully invaded Afghanistan and Iraq to fight terrorists abroad and the Bush administration repeatedly made connections to the states that allegedly sponsored terrorism. See Angstrom, "Victory in the War on Terrorism," 102.

30. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 78.

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31. In the Fallujah offensive, the US government apparently did not seek consensus from the political leadership of the Coalition nations to attack Fallujah. This caused great discontent among the political leaders of the Coalition. Due to the large number of civilian causalities and the political instability of the Sunni council in Iraq, the Coalition nations were exerting tremendous pressure on US to stop the fighting. See Sanchez and Philips, Wiser in Battle, 353. Some Arab analysts point to the assault on Fallujah as "Arab's 9/11." The city was a centre for insurgent actions and thus presented huge problems for the US and the Coalition forces. The Fallujah assault had little impact on the insurgency. Moreover, the Middle East media coverage portrayed a violent and determined occupying power that was bent on wrecking a city to pursue its own objectives. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 110.

32. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 129.

33. Sanchez and Philips, *Wiser in Battle – A Soldier's Story,* 245.

34. Ibid., 336.

35. During the battle of the Bulge in World War II, General Dwight Eisenhower (Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe) had to contend with British PM Winston Churchill, US President Franklin Roosevelt, the Russian leadership and the rifts between the British and American generals on the ground in Belgium. See Ibid., 136.

36. Sanchez expressed that he had to "consider nation interests, internal national politics, cultural sensitivities and international political implication when developing a plan of action." See Ibid., 117 and 136.

37. The Coalition Provision Authority was assigned to administer post-war Iraq, with the military in support. However, the command and control channel between the CPA and military was poorly defined. See Ibid., 179.

38. Angstrom, "Victory in the War on Terrorism," 104.

39. The closing of Muqtada al-Sadr's newspaper *Hawza*, seizing Mustafa al-Yaqoubi, recovering ground occupied by Shiites and the offensive into Fallujah. This included blowing up oil terminals, cutting off line of communications, bombing of government buildings and targeting key Baghdad infrastructure locations. The insurgents had turned to kidnapping foreign diplomats and holding them for ransom or executing them. Among the victims were Italians and Koreans. See Sanchez and Philips, *Wiser in Battle*, 354 and 370.

40. "Suicide Attack at 'Secure' Kabul District," *Straits Times*, 16 December 2009, A13.

41. The attacks were primarily against western or pro-western targets. See Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 129-131. In 2003, there were bomb attacks in Casablanca, Riyadh, Jakarta and Istanbul. In 2004, there were more attacks in Madrid, Tashkent (capital of Uzbekistan), Jakarta and Sinai (Israel). In 2005, multiple bombings were reported in London, Bali, Karachi. In 2006, Dahab (Egypt), Karachi, Damascus, Abqaiq oil plant (Saudi Arabia) were bombed. In 2007, there were bombings in Algeria.

42. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 131.

43. These activities include reconnaissance, intelligence collection, planning and targeting. See Angstrom, "Victory in the War on Terrorism," 106.

44. Ibid.

45. This is evident in the December 8, 2009 coordinated suicide attacks that killed 127 people in Baghdad and undermined the new Iraqi government's claims of improved security ahead of the March 2010 election. See "US on Track to Leave Iraq," *Straits Times*, 10 December 2009, A28.

46. Stabilisation and post-conflict peace building leads to a liberal and democratic Afghanistan. Yet this was not the priority for the Bush administration. See Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 80. The Pentagon's key focus was to destroy the Taliban and Al-Qeada leadership and extend the war to Iraq.

47. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 92.

48. Sanchez and Philips, *Wiser in Battle*, 114.

49. Rogers, *Why We're Losing the War on Terror*, 113.

50. Ibid., 98-99.

51. Rogers argued that the events of September 11 were caused by Al-Qaeda, Hizbullah, Hamas, the insurgents in Iraq, the Taliban in Afghanistan and other radicals in Pakistan, all subsumed into a single entity. See Ibid., 119.52. David Boey, "Singapore on Hit List: Not Unexpected, Say Terror Experts," *Straits Times*, 16 March 2007.

52. Ibid., 119.

53. Cross, "Can We Win the War on Terror?," 26.

54. Following the failed 2009 Christmas Day attack on a US-bound passenger plane, the head of US national intelligence warned that "future terrorist attacks will be harder to foil" as Al-Qaeda and its affiliate organisations (including suicide terrorists) deepen their knowledge on US defences and design ways to

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get past them. See "Future Plots Harder to Foil," *Straits Times*, 1 January 2010, http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/World/Sotry/STIStory_472545.html. There is an emerging pattern of terrorists using new and imaginative ways to set off charges to destroy a plane in mid-flight ("Terror that mocks the imagination." 2009). The Al-Qaeda's latest statement "called on Muslims to declare an all-out war against the Crusaders in the Island of Mohammed (the Arabian Peninsula)." The young Nigerian bomber's privileged background also reinforced analyses that radical causes attract not only the marginalised or oppressed as "there will be more just like the young Nigerian who will strike soon." See "Plane Plot: We did it, says Al-Qaeda Wing," *Straits Times*, December 30, 2009, A1.

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Did the Terrorist Attacks of 11 September 2001 Confirm the Thesis that "Intelligence Failures are Inevitable"?

by **COL Seet Uei Lim**

Abstract:

While intelligence failure was a contributory cause of the September 11 (9/11) attacks, it was not the sole cause. Although it failed to provide plot-specific tactical warnings, the US Intelligence Community (IC) did provide political and strategic warnings to policymakers. Having warned policymakers at two out of three warning phases, one can argue that the overall performance of the IC was not a failure; at best, it qualifies but does not confirm the thesis that "intelligence failure is inevitable." Surprise was as much a policy response failure as it was a tactical warning failure. In this light, 9/11 instead validates the thesis that "strategic surprise is inevitable."

Keywords: 9/11; Surprise and Intelligence Failure; Terrorist Attacks; Tactical Warning

INTRODUCTION

The proverbial goalkeeper in a penalty shootout is in an unenviable position—there will be few praises for goal saving, but all-round condemnation when the team loses. Such was the situation for the US Intelligence Community (IC) when terrorists attacked its homeland on 11 September 2001 (9/11). As the esteemed English poet Alexander Pope once said, "to err is human." Given that the IC has to grapple with the imperfections of its collectors and analysts in addition to oversights inherent in all complex organizations, "the opportunities for mistakes are almost unlimited,"[1] and there seems a case for the thesis that "intelligence failures are inevitable."

Yet, in the context of 9/11, the application of this thesis needs to be judicious. Undeniably, 9/11 constituted a failure, but the character of the failure is equivocal because "many things went wrong in many places and at many levels, making the exact problems hard to pinpoint, diffusing responsibility and obscuring the path ahead."[2] There is an analytical need to distinguish intelligence failures from surprise attacks—the former is a cause, while the latter is a consequence. To determine whether 9/11 confirms the thesis that "intelligence failures are inevitable," there is a need to uncover evidence of intelligence failure, ascertain the extent these failures led to surprise, and establish whether there were other causal factors.

While intelligence failure was a contributory cause of the 9/11 attacks, intelligence failure did not by itself cause the surprise. This is because the IC did provide political and strategic warnings to policymakers, although it failed to provide plot-specific tactical warnings. Having warned policymakers at two out of three warning phases, one can argue that the overall performance of the IC was not a failure; at best, it qualifies but does not confirm the thesis "intelligence failure is inevitable," especially considering the

Collapse of the World Trade Centre During the September 11 Terrorist Attacks in New York City

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epistemological question of whether it is possible to uncover the "mystery" of terror plans when confronted with an innovative and suicidal enemy intent on fulfilling the duty "to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military."[3] Surprise was as much a policy response failure as it was a tactical warning failure. In this light, 9/11 instead validates the thesis "strategic surprise is inevitable."

This essay will first examine the theoretical underpinnings of surprise attacks and intelligence failures before proceeding to discuss the IC's performance at providing political, strategic and tactical warnings for the terror attacks *vis-à-vis* policymakers' response. It will conclude with a normative discussion on the inevitability of intelligence failure.

SURPRISE AND INTELLIGENCE FAILURE

Anything unanticipated may result in surprise, although not all surprises have the magnitude and scale of 9/11. Surprise attacks are defined in terms of the victim's lack of preparation in relation to whether, when, where, and how the enemy will strike.[4] This unprepared state may be a consequence of several factors.

First, intelligence failure, which may arise from the following: collection failure due to the inability to obtain relevant and timely information, such as the IC's failure to gather information on the time, target and type of the 9/11 attacks; analytical failure due to misjudgement or failure to connect various disparate information into actionable intelligence;

Below-Waterline Damage to the USS Cole

and communication failure between and within intelligence agencies, such as the failure of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to have the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) place Al-Mihdhar and Al-Hazmi on the watch-list.[5]

With reference to surprise attacks and given that "the ultimate object of intelligence is to enable action to be optimized by reducing ignorance,"[6] intelligence failure may be conceptualized as failure to warn. There are three stages of warning: first, political warning, which "comes from the increase in tension that raises the possibility that deterrence can fail"; second, strategic warning, which "comes from indications that the enemy is mobilizing and deploying forces in dispositions consistent with a plan to attack"; and third, tactical warning, which is "the detection of the initial movements of the attack itself."[7] Each warning stage is a response to developing enemy intentions and capabilities. A failure to provide warning at any stage may lead to surprise.

Second, despite accurate and timely warning, surprise may still occur if policymakers do not respond adequately to foil enemy intentions and disrupt their capabilities. In other words, "warning without response is useless."[8] Here, response is defined as actions aimed at preventing attacks, which may include passive (e.g. mobilization and readiness alert manning) and active measures (e.g. covert and overt military actions). This essay will show that both the Clinton and Bush administrations failed to respond to the developing Al-Qaeda threat, thereby contributing to surprise.

Third, surprise may occur through neither the fault of the IC nor policymakers because the attacks were a mystery. Here, one needs to differentiate secrets from mysteries. Intelligence is secret information required by policymakers for the purposes of furthering national security interests.[9] Secrets are information within the collection capability of the IC. A mystery, on the other hand, is information that is unknowable.[10] For instance, the IC cannot be reasonably expected to collect information that only exists within the minds of terrorists.

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In the case of 9/11, Al-Qaeda leaders actively prevented information leaks on the attacks through "compartmentation"—clandestine planning by a specially selected cell of operatives with no known terrorist credentials who kept all deliberations beyond the eavesdropping capabilities of the IC. In fact, Osama bin-Laden disclosed that he only revealed details of the plan to the hijackers on the morning of the attack, thereby ensuring that none could betray the plot.[11]

Armed with the above theoretical foundation, this essay will adopt the three stages of warning framework to discuss the extent to which the IC failed to prevent 9/11. It will use this framework to test the thesis "intelligence failures are inevitable."

POLITICAL WARNING: WARNING SUCCESS, RESPONSE FAILURE

One function of intelligence is the production of knowledge through the collection and analysis of secret information, in order to predict likely future scenarios for national security policymaking.[12] The IC fulfilled this function through providing policymakers political warning of US homeland vulnerability to terror attacks.

The IC had steadily highlighted terrorism as a significant threat to national security since 1994; in 1998, terrorism was ranked as a top-tier threat; and in February 2001, Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), George Tenet, briefed the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that "Osama bin Laden and his global network of lieutenants and associates remain the most immediate and serious threat."[13] The 2002 Congressional Joint Inquiry and the 9/11 Commission recognized that the IC had delivered persistent political warnings to both the Clinton and Bush administration.

Thus, when the attacks happened, the surprise was magnified by public ignorance, in spite of the IC's political warnings.

In fact, the IC's warnings successfully placed terrorism high on the political agenda. For instance, from 1994 onwards, President Clinton included terrorism in all of his State of the Union addresses; in 1995, Clinton was the first world leader to call for a global counter-terrorist effort at the United Nations (UN), a call repeated in 1998; in 1996, Clinton ranked terrorism as the top national security challenge.[14]

However, political declarations do not equate to response, and it was a lack of effective response that allowed the threat to actualise. First, in terms of active response, the futile 20 August 1998 cruise missile strikes on the Khowst training camp and the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant, as well as the lacklustre response to the *USS Cole* suicide attack, perhaps signalled to bin-Laden that attacking US targets "were risk free."[15]

Second, the prevailing law enforcement approach towards dealing with Al-Qaeda achieved only limited success—a notable example was the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui (the alleged twentieth hijacker) in August 2001. This was because policymakers failed to meld the instruments of national power; diplomatic, military and economic, to counter the threat. For instance, the failure to adopt a more active response, such as the elimination of Al-Qaeda safe-havens in Afghanistan and the seizure of known terrorist financial sources, enabled Al-Mihdhar, Al-Hazmi and the Hamburg group to receive training in Afghanistan and wire the funds used to carry out the attacks into the US unhindered. There was also no coherent diplomatic counter-terrorism policy *vis-à-vis* Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which in hindsight, was central to combating Al-Qaeda.[16] In short, policymaker risk aversion and adherence to accepted norms of international behaviour, in the face of an enemy which rejected and broke those norms, permitted perpetrators the space and time to plan, recruit, train and execute the attacks, while ensuring that its masterminds remained beyond the jurisdiction of international justice.[17]

Third, in terms of passive response, President Clinton refrained from specifying Al-Qaeda in all his pronouncements on terrorism to avoid giving Osama bin-Laden unnecessary publicity and enhancing the group's stature.[18] However, this had the unintended

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The Aftermath of the August 1998 Al-Qaeda Suicide Bombing of the US Embassy in Tanzania

consequence of not alerting the American public to the specificity, immediacy and severity of the threat.[19] Thus, when the attacks happened, the surprise was magnified by public ignorance, in spite of the IC's political warnings.

An examination of the political warning level-of-analysis reveals that the thesis "intelligence failure is inevitable" does not apply. This conclusion undermines the common view that surprise attacks occur because of warning failure. On the contrary, it corroborates the observation that in most cases of strategic surprise, leaders of the victim-state were warned, but failed to respond in ways that hindsight reveals were necessary.[20]

This is an important revelation because in post-9/11 attempts at rationalising the tragedy, the attacks have frequently been cast as an intelligence failure—the result of the IC's organizational and adaptation failure.[21] Such arguments imply that surprise can be avoided through systemic and procedural reforms within the IC. As this study has shown, such a belief is illusory and dangerous.[22] While such reforms may bring about marginal improved predictions, they do not address the political causes of surprises.

STRATEGIC WARNING: WARNING SUCCESS, RESPONSE FAILURE

A distinguishing feature of Al-Qaeda's jihadist-terrorism is its loose global network of religiously-inspired terror cells, which intentionally and routinely target civilian populations to produce mass casualties.[23] When extremist aims are coupled with rapid technological change, the terrorist-innovator possesses the critical unilateral advantage of surprise.[24] In this light, the IC becomes the nation's first line of defence by providing strategic warning.

In the case of 9/11, the IC served its role with strategic warnings of an impending attack on the homeland. For instance, in the first eight months of 2001, more than forty Al-Qaeda reports were presented at the President's Daily Brief (PDB); in that spring, terrorist threat warnings to policymakers reached a crescendo, with several reports of attacks planned for the homeland, notably the 6 August PDB which included an article entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US."[25] Of import, both the 2002 Congressional Joint Inquiry and the 9/11 Commission noted that the IC's strategic warning systems were "blinking red,"[26] that it had warned of attacks with "dramatic consequences on governments or [causing] major casualties," and that the attack would "occur with little or no warning."[27]

Again, these strategic warnings were not matched by appropriate responses. Here, the Bush administration's response failure may be analysed at two levels. Firstly, a perception failure, which led to the underestimation of the existential threat Al-Qaeda posed.[28] This was in part driven by the belief that the homeland was safe;[29] after all, Al-Qaeda attacks against US interests had taken place in Africa and the Middle East, and the 1993 World Trade Centre (WTC) bombing (with six dead) was a distant memory.

Furthermore, there existed "preconceived mind-sets" amongst senior Bush officials, which interpreted intelligence data according to what they "[wanted] to see."[30] For example, when presented with reports on the Al-Qaeda threat prior to 9/11, Deputy Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, accused the Chair of the Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG), Richard Clarke, of giving bin-Laden "too much credit," insisting that there had to be a state sponsor, and asserted, "just because FBI and CIA have failed to find the linkages does not mean they do not exist."[31]

Consequently, the Bush administration did not prioritize terrorism as highly as the Clinton administration had. For instance, the CSG was downgraded from reporting directly to the principals

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to their deputies, the principals meeting to discuss counter-terrorism for the first time only a week before the attacks happened—eight months after the administration was established.[32]

This lack of priority is a reflection of the failure of the Bush administration's prioritization process in general. The government "wanted to know everything about everything all the time," which further encumbered the overburdened IC; for instance, the NSA was given 1,500 formal requirements (this translated into 200,000 "Essential Elements of Information") prior to 9/11, covering virtually every situation and target.[33] Given that the intelligence cycle begins with "planning and direction" by policymakers, such lack of focus causes failures because limited resources cannot cope with insatiable demands.

Secondly, this cognitive disjuncture was corroborated by political failure where the IC's strategic warnings were either ignored or responses delayed.[34] This explains the limited attention given to homeland counter-terrorism defensive measures under the Bush administration.[35] For example, before 9/11, policymakers decided against enhancing aviation security because the costs and potential negative repercussions of these defensive measures were high.[36]

Given that the intelligence cycle begins with "planning and direction" by policymakers, such lack of focus causes failures because limited resources cannot cope with insatiable demands.

Additionally, both the State and Defence Departments failed to adequately act on the strategic warnings. The State Department's diplomatic efforts were largely ineffective and the Defence Department was not tasked to deal with Al-Qaeda Afghan sanctuaries; both Departments were never fully engaged in the mission of countering Al-Qaeda, although this was arguably the most dangerous threat.[37] This was in stark contrast to the efforts of the CIA, which was highlighted in the 9/11 Commission to have worked tirelessly and done more than any other department to counter the threat worldwide. Even though the IC could not produce tactical intelligence of the attack, what it did submit to policymakers should have been sufficient to urge a response to heighten alert and implement additional defensive measures.[38]

In sum, the IC can only lead the policy horse to water but cannot compel it to drink. Again, this study of strategic warning does not confirm the thesis that "intelligence failure is inevitable," but substantiates the role policymaker response failure plays in contributing to surprise attacks. Evidently, the IC did well in warning policymakers on why and what Al-Qaeda aimed to achieve. Yet, as the next section will show, it failed to provide plot-specific intelligence on the where, when and how of the attacks.

TACTICAL WARNING: INTELLIGENCE FAILURE

The IC's primary counter-terrorism role is to provide early warning to pre-empt, prevent and disrupt terror attacks, as well as highlight key vulnerabilities for remedy.[39] The fact that a surprise attack on an undefended target took place suggests that the IC had to a certain extent, failed in its counter-terrorism mission.

This failure was an amalgamation of collection failure (e.g. both the FBI and CIA failed to capitalize on the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a.k.a. "Mukhtar," to obtain information on Al-Qaeda intentions and capabilities); analytical failure (e.g. CIA failure to link "Mukhtar" with Ramzi Binalshibh and Moussaoui, and FBI failure to connect Al-Mihdhar, Al-Hazmi, and Moussaoui); and communication failure (e.g. CIA failure to watch-list and track Al-Mihdhar and Al-Hazmi or notify the FBI that both possessed multiple-entry visas and had Al-Qaeda links, and the inter-agency failure to share information with the *USS Cole* investigators).[40]

Hence, this tactical warning failure constitutes an intelligence failure because, although the specific details of the plot remained a mystery, the Commission and Inquiry reported that had the above secrets been pursued deeper through collection, connected through

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analysis and communicated between agencies, more secrets surrounding the mystery could have been uncovered. The assumption here is that the revealing of these secrets could have at least disrupted the plot if not pre-empt or prevent it.

Of note, the failure occurred in spite of redirected resources to combat terrorism (e.g. direct spending on counter-terrorism roughly quintupled despite post-Cold War tightening of intelligence budgets);[41] reorganization within the IC to create special units specifically focussed on the Al-Qaeda threat;[42] and IC leadership emphasis on the terrorism threat (in December 1998, DCI Tenet issued a directive to his senior officials, stating, "we are at war. I want no resources or people spared in this effort, either inside CIA or the Community").[43] That failure resulted in spite of the above measures suggests that intelligence failures are inevitable.

WAS 9/11 AN INEVITABLE INTELLIGENCE FAILURE?

Eminent scholars studying the phenomenon of surprise attacks have reached the conclusion that intelligence failures are inevitable; 9/11 is no exception. First, Intelligence will fail due to human error. This is in spite of the latest technological advances because the problems innate in the human factor remain: "human psychology and politics; wishful thinking; ethnocentric biases; perception and misperception of reality; conflicting interests; political competition over scarce resources; organizational biases."[44]

Second, the organizational complexity of the IC worsens this human condition because bureaucratic hierarchy causes signals to be lost or filtered out. Like human imperfection, organizational failures may be improved at the margins but cannot be completely eradicated.[45] This explains recurring surprises despite attempts at systemic improvement.

Thirdly, the function of intelligence as knowledge is problematic. Hindsight offers crystal clear vision to aid separation of noise from signals, but before the event, signals are "obscure and pregnant with conflicting meanings."[46] Moreover, penetrating the mind of a vigilant and meticulous terrorist to unveil the mysteries of his plot is near impossible. This is especially so when language, ethnic and religious barriers hinder the IC from infiltrating terrorist cells.

Lastly, in the secret world of intelligence, one man's intelligence failure is another's counter-intelligence success. Al-Qaeda is an artful and sophisticated military organization that employs inventive tactics and exploits modern communications.[47] For instance, the nineteen hijackers entered the US legally, behaved inconspicuously and camouflaged their "carefully planned and brilliantly executed suicide attack that took full advantage of US technology and openness as a society."[48]

That said, in the context of 9/11, to proffer the notion that intelligence failure is inevitable gives the false impression that surprise can be blamed on intelligence failure alone. As argued, policymakers' response failure played a pivotal role too. Furthermore, focusing on intelligence failure generates a distorted view of endemic dereliction of duty within the IC, when in objective reality intelligence success was indeed prevalent.[49] In fact, the true surprise was that there had not been any major attacks prior to 9/11.[50]

As such, this essay submits that a more useful lens through which to study the 9/11 terrorist attacks is the thesis "surprise attacks are inevitable." This is because the factors that make intelligence failures inevitable also apply to policy makers and security forces. Moreover, intelligence failures frequently occur but not all lead to devastating and tragic outcomes. Thus, focussing on the consequences of failure rather than its component causes better allows students of surprise attacks to appreciate their complex, polycephalous and non-linear nature.

While it is prudent to acknowledge that intelligence will fail, and to erect defensive measures to survive and recover quickly from surprise, a more constructive mantra for the IC to adopt is "intelligence failures are not inevitable," and to continue the good work at providing warnings.

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From a normative perspective, to expect the IC to predict and prevent all surprises is unreasonable.[51] This is because the IC has been traditionally organized and tasked to acquire secrets from state-based targets, rather than unclassified but inaccessible mysteries from globally-dispersed networks living and operating in diverse physical and human terrains, from open multi-cultural societies to the harsh and hostile Hindu-Kush.[52] This fact was verified by the Crowe Commission, which concluded from the study of the 1998 Kenya and Tanzania US Embassy bombings that terrorist attacks were unlikely to be preceded by tactical warning.[53] In the case of 9/11, Al-Qaeda exploited known gaps within the IC, such as the foreign and domestic divide of the CIA and FBI, by planning, organizing and training the attacks abroad, while assembling and executing it in the US homeland.[54]

Lastly, from a social science perspective, the logical conclusion of the thesis that "intelligence failures are inevitable" is the futility of all intelligence reforms, because remedies are, at best, exercises in damage limitation.[55] Such defeatist fatalism is unhelpful from an operational perspective. While it is prudent to acknowledge that intelligence will fail, and to erect defensive measures to survive and recover quickly from surprise, a more constructive mantra for the IC to adopt is "intelligence failures are not inevitable," and to continue the good work at providing warnings. Better still is the maxim "intelligence successes are inevitable." This truism more accurately reflects reality by underscoring the IC's many successes. The positive trajectory not only motivates the IC to persist in improving their "batting average," it also has deterrent value against jihadist-terrorists who must operate knowing that the eagle-eyed watchmen never sleep.

CONCLUSION

When one's favourite football team loses in a penalty shootout, the emotional blame on the goalkeeper is understandable. However, football is a team sport and equal accountability must be demanded from the defenders, midfielders and strikers for not defending, creating opportunities and scoring during regular time. The same may be said of 9/11. While the IC failed to provide tactical warning, it cannot shoulder the responsibility for the surprise alone, because intelligence does not drive policy.[56] Policymakers were equally culpable, and credit also goes to the ingenuity of Al-Qaeda for its innovative terror methods and communication discipline.

This essay has argued that 9/11 qualifies, but does not confirm, the thesis "intelligence failures are inevitable," in view of the IC's successes at providing political and strategic warnings of the attacks. It proffers that a more valid thesis with which to study 9/11 is "surprise attacks are inevitable." As history has shown, surprise rarely happens without warning. 9/11 demonstrated that while warnings provide the potential victim with information, it does not guarantee an appropriate reaction.[57]

Finally, the official, public and academic post-mortem of 9/11 has not been kind to intelligence. This affirms President John F. Kennedy's observation of the IC: "your successes are unheralded—your failures are trumpeted."[58] To place the 9/11 intelligence failure in its proper perspective, "a world in which intelligence never 'failed' to foresee a terrorist attack would be a world in which there was no longer any terrorism."[59]

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The Evolution of Insurgency and its Impact on Conventional Armed Forces

by **LTC Tan Giam**

Abstract:

Better known as guerrilla warfare during the 19th and early 20th century, insurgency was employed by indigenous groups from defeated armies in opposition to foreign or colonial occupation. This form of asymmetric warfare is not outmoded and has since evolved under emerging ideological, political and economic imperatives. The 11 September 2001 attacks, 2003 Bali bombings and 7 July 2005 London bombings are clear evidence of its continued existence and development. This article explores the evolution of insurgency and the challenges conventional armed forces, including the Singapore Armed Forces, will need to prepare for when combating insurgency.

Keywords: Insurgency; Guerrilla Warfare; Counter-Insurgency; Information Warfare and Operations

INTRODUCTION

Guerrilla and insurgent movements have fought foreign occupation forces throughout history.[1] The Fabian Strategy applied by the Roman Republic against Hannibal in the Second Punic War of the third century BC can be considered an early example of guerrilla tactics. During the Peninsular War of 1812, the British provided aid to the Spanish guerrillas, tying down tens of thousands of French troops. Encouraged by the spontaneous mass resistance against Napoleon in Spain, the British backed the guerrillas because it cost them much less than equipping British soldiers to face the French in conventional warfare.[2] The Peninsular War was one of the most successful partisan wars in history and was where the term "guerrilla" was first used in its modern context. The forces of the Afrikaner Republics in the Second Boer War from 1899 to 1902 in South Africa employed guerrilla tactics extensively after being defeated by British Army and eventually regained their capitals of Pretoria and Bloemfontein. After the military failure of the Easter Rising in 1916, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) also resorted to guerrilla tactics during the Irish War of Independence from 1919 to 1921. These conflicts document the presence of insurgencies throughout the history of warfare.

Better known as guerrilla warfare during the 19th and early 20th century, insurgency was employed by indigenous groups from defeated armies in opposition to foreign or colonial occupation.[3] Today, this form of asymmetric warfare has not become outmoded and has instead evolved under emerging ideological, political and economic imperatives. The 11 September 2001 attacks (9/11), 2003 Bali bombings and 7 July 2005 London bombings are clear evidence of its continued existence and development.

Insurgency or guerrilla operations have been a constant threat since the dawn of human warfare. Nevertheless, most modern armed forces cannot credibly claim to have attained any clear victory over these evolving asymmetric threats. Militaries are still largely structured and organised for large-scale, high-intensity warfare. They mainly operate in a linear fashion and focus on defeating their adversaries through the destruction of military assets and capabilities. Traditional command and control, force structures, fighting tactics, techniques, leadership, doctrines and training are inadequate for combating irregular modes of low-intensity conflict, such as harassment, ambushes, sabotages and surprise attacks conducted by insurgents or irregular small combat units.

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OLD WINE IN A NEW BOTTLE – IS INSURGENCY JUST ANOTHER FORM OF GUERRILLA WARFARE?

In the early 19th century, guerrilla warfare was mainly defined by hit and run tactics adopted when a conventional army had been defeated or depleted of resources. The full potential of irregular modes of conflict remained unexplored. Eventually, guerrilla warfare became truly revolutionary in both intent and practice with social, economic, psychological and (especially) political elements grafted onto traditional irregular military tactics in order to radically alter the structure of a state by force. Weak and minority dissident groups sought power through a combination of subversion, propaganda and military action. Gradually, the term insurgency was used to refer to modern revolutionary guerrilla warfare employed strategically to achieve a particular political or ideological end.

The transition from guerrilla warfare to insurgency occurs when there is an intention to bring about political change through a political-military strategy of organised coercion and subversion and the attempt to mobilise a mass political base. While insurgents might routinely employ terrorism or intimidation in tactical terms, they have rarely done so at the strategic level. Consequently, it can be argued that terrorist groups, even if motivated by a similar ideology as insurgent groups, tend to employ terrorism indiscriminately and as a political demonstration without the intention of taking over the state apparatus or an attempt to arouse popular support.[4]

Viet Cong Fighters in the Vietnam War

Emerging ideological, political and economical imperatives coupled with new identity politics and non-state actors are constantly challenging traditional political systems through intrastate, low-intensity conflict. According to a 1997 article in *The Economist*, "the continuing proliferation of insurgent organisations to date suggests that insurgency is still widely perceived as an effective means of achieving desired political power and influence, or of bringing a cause to the notice of an international or national community. The end of European decolonisation and the collapse of the Soviet Union removed the motivational impulse for state actors to engage in high-intensity conflict between the late 1940s and the early 1990s."[5]

The ability of a small insurgency to exploit a minimal level of discontent and act as a catalyst for insurrection without consciously building a mass political support infrastructure is a characteristic of urban guerrilla groups inspired by theorists such as Marighela and Guillen in Latin America in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[6] The Maoist model of insurgency, however, suggests that insurgencies will ultimately succeed if they are capable of organising a sufficient mass political support infrastructure to sustain a prolonged conflict.[7] One reason for the prolongation of conflict in the Maoist model of insurgency is that the ultimate aim was always to eventually build a conventional army capable of undertaking moderate military operations in the final phase of conflict. Building a conventional army, as Mao and the North Vietnamese did,[8] and the mass political support infrastructure to sustain it was viewed as the key essence of insurgent success during the Vietnam War in the 1970s. The commonality between the Maoist model of insurgency and the one inspired by Marighela and Guillen is the use of combat power, albeit of a different scale level, against conventional military adversaries to achieve the desired end states.

The insurgency in Iraq that has developed since Operation Iraqi Freedom is more complex. Hashim writes that "the Sunnis and other variety of groups

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are united by 'negative' goals in opposition to the US and Coalition forces' presence. Some groups seek the former status quo in which the Sunni minority have exercised power since the Ottoman period. Others are clearly restoration groups drawn from the former regime: the Baa'th Party, the paramilitary Fida'iyn, and the Republican Guard."[9] Other groups are anti-Saddam nationalist groups with no desire to see Saddam restored but who resent the US and Western presence. Driven by a common desire to wear down their adversaries' power, the insurgents mainly employed asymmetric methods against US and Coalition forces over a protracted period.

Insurgency has existed for as long as the powerful have frustrated the weak to the point of violence. With no other valid options, the weak turn to protracted, asymmetric violence and psychological warfare. In some models, particularly the one developed by Mao Zedong, asymmetric methods are used to remedy an imbalance in conventional military power. Once parity has been achieved, conventional warfare will be used to secure victory.[10] In other examples, insurgents seek to attain their objectives directly by wearing down the dominant power. Guerrilla warfare and insurgency employ similar methods to achieve the same desired end state; the weak avoid defeat by prolonging the conflict, hopefully changing the balance of power and giving themselves a chance to grow in strength.

THE CONTINUED EVOLUTION OF INSURGENCY

Weaker military armed forces are expected to continue seeking asymmetries as this allows them to confront superior opponents. The basic objectives of insurgent operations are to wear down the enemy over a protracted war, erode his morale, disrupt his lines of communication and weaken his forces. Emphasising mobility, swift advances and withdrawals, and the rapid concentration and dispersal of forces, insurgents constantly harass enemy units and conduct continuous counter-attacks to dislocate the enemy. Declining to engage in frontal assaults and confrontations, the insurgents favour flank and rear attacks, using favourable terrain to their advantage.

It is likely that insurgency will continue to evolve through advances in technology and ideology.

Insurgency will also continue to attract non-state actors as they are not bound by internationally accepted standards of conduct. Insurgents will always seek to redefine the operating environment and create asymmetric conditions by quickly changing the nature of the conflict and employing capabilities which their stronger military adversaries are least prepared for.

It is likely that insurgency will continue to evolve through advances in technology and ideology. The sense of resentment and an inability to ameliorate these through legitimate political means will result in its persistance.[11] Changes or discontinuities will eventually affect the pattern of insurgency. Some of the significant changes or discontinuities are as follows:

The Meaning of Sanctuary

As there remain few geographically remote areas outside government control where insurgencies can gestate, the initial stages of development tend to take place hidden in plain sight: in cities and other developed areas. The ongoing global trend towards urbanisation means that future insurgencies will tend to form and develop in cities rather than rural areas.[12] While this is necessary for survival, this dispersion will make it difficult for insurgent movements to concentrate enough power to seize control of a state. Beckett notes that the "Maoist People's War was effective because it was able to weaken the regime psychologically and politically, and then launch decisive military blows. Modern insurgents may never be able to develop enough military power to undertake conventional operations and thus have to rely more on psychological and political means. Widely dispersed, networked insurgencies are difficult to eradicate, but also less likely to gain victory than the more concentrated insurgencies prior to and during the 20th century."[13]

Diversification of Support

Unlike in the Cold War, today's insurgents cannot rely on external support. Insurgents therefore must devote extensive effort to fundraising and income generation. This increasingly leads them into

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coalition with organised crime, possibly to the extent of becoming criminal organisations themselves. This diminishes their reliance on external sponsors and the support of the mass public. More than ever before, contemporary insurgents only need the passive acquiescence of the population rather than its active support. Extended global interconnectivity and information technology have facilitated the linkage of various insurgent movements and allied organisations, including criminal enterprises across regions and around the world. Coalitions and partnerships that would have been impossible during the Cold War are increasingly becoming a norm.

The evolution of insurgency is likely to continue. Insurgencies may become more networked, with no centralised command or strategy, held together only by a unifying objective. While this would make them even less effective in terms of seizing power or attaining other political goals, they would also become more survivable. Insurgencies may also develop connections or even alliances with legitimate political organizations sharing their resentment.[14] It is conceivable that insurgencies may also follow the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and turn into purely criminal organisations.

ARE CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH INSURGENCY?

There have been countless counter-insurgency (COIN) efforts by armed forces throughout the history of human warfare. Many of such experiences have indicated that the traditional armed forces may not be properly structured, organised and trained to deal with insurgency. For instance, many British soldiers died during active service somewhere in the world in every year between 1945 and 1997, but their conventional warfighting experience was confined to 35 months of the Korean War, 10 days at Suez in 1956, 25 days of the land campaign in the Falklands in 1982, and 100 hours of land operations in the Gulf in 1991.[15] As a matter of fact, it was low-intensity conflict or insurgency that inflicted most of the British Armed Force's casualties during this span of 52 years.[16] Many conventional armed forces are not prepared to acknowledge and accept their unpreparedness for combating insurgency, continuing to believe that existing warfighting concepts and capabilities still provide a level of security. Therefore, it is difficult to convince the military leadership that a major change in terms of force structure, operational methods and leadership styles is required to effectively manage threats that fall outside the conventional conflict spectrum.

When the British restricted Jewish immigration to the Middle East, Jewish Palestinian militants employed insurgent methods to bring in more Jewish refugees and turn the tide of British sentiment at home. Accordingly, "Jewish groups such as the Lehi the Irgn—many of whom had experience in the Warsaw Ghetto battles against the Nazis, fought British soldiers with insurgency tactics. The Jewish forces, composed of spontaneous groups of civilians working without formal military structure, fought the well-trained and experienced British, which had just emerged victorious from World War II. Some of these groups were amalgamated into the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and subsequently fought in the 1948 War of Independence."[17] The creation of the state of Israel was the result.

A major change in terms of force structure, operational methods and leadership styles is required to effectively manage threats that fall outside the conventional conflict spectrum.

Insurgencies tend not to follow regular patterns and generally go unrecognised in established and long-standing laws of conventional war. They are difficult to match with conventional military doctrines and capabilities as they deliberately aim to offset the strength and will of their adversaries. There is no established doctrine or strategy for dealing with insurgents and guerrillas. The French COIN experience in Algeria between 1956 and 1962 clearly indicates that the French Army was completely dislocated by insurgent tactics that the Algerian National Liberation Front (ANLF) adopted. French soldiers conducting COIN operations in the region were also generally insensitive to the local Islamic customs and culture. Furthermore, the brutal methods and systematic

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Car Bombing in Iraq, 2005: As Coalition forces respond to a car bombing in South Baghdad, a second car bomb is detonated, targeting those responding to the initial incident.

torture of detainees during interrogation culminated in increasing international and domestic criticism of the French Armed Forces.[18] The French Armed Forces withdrew from Algeria by the end of 1962, defeated by insurgents.[19] The IDF also suffered initial setbacks for their failure to fully understand insurgency—in accordance with conventional offensive doctrine, they had adopted instant retaliation as a means of destroying those responsible for insurgent attacks and thinning out their ranks.

Insurgent threats are difficult to detect. Firstly, although analysis of frequency and intensity data may indicate the beginnings of insurgent activities, current information processing systems are not capable enough to make a significant contribution to the early detection of insurgency.[20] Secondly, no matter how extensive the intelligence network may be, information is usually acquired in small bits and pieces, like those of a jigsaw puzzle. To obtain a clear and accurate picture of the threat, the various pieces must be put together in a number of patterns collated through the continuous input of new information. In order to do this, the intelligence service must possess an information processing system capable of retrieving and rearranging that information in various patterns for further studies and evaluation—a daunting task indeed.[21]

Even if insurgent activity is detected, conventional armed forces still face a level-of-response dilemma. They find it difficult to respond in the most discriminate, proportionate and effective manner because insurgents are usually interspersed among the civilians, often using them as shields and bargaining chips to attract outside attention and intervention. The Iraqi insurgents have successfully employed such tactics against the US-led coalition in Iraqi, where "tactics included bombing of vehicles and human targets, suicide bombings, ambushes and traditional hit-and-run raids using civilians as shields. It was estimated that they have injured more than 18,000 coalition troops and killed over 3,900, including more than 2,000 US soldiers. To date, the US and the coalition forces in Iraq continued to face mounting challenges in detecting, determining and responding to insurgent movement, activities and threats. Sunni insurgents continued to establish influence control over the Al Anbar Governorate and Diyala Governorate, despite a series of existing coalition campaigns within the region."[22]

THE CHALLENGES OF INSURGENCY FOR CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES

Modern armed forces should recognise that insurgency leverages on hit-and-run opportunities rather than direct conflict. This represents the new paradigm for military operations in COIN.

Operations in Complex or Urban Terrain

Insurgents are expected to focus on urban areas or complex terrain to negate technological inferiority in surveillance and weapon systems and to seek sanctuary from stronger adversaries. Such environments degrade military weapon standoff capabilities and are manpower-intensive. They also complicate the application of firepower due to the need to avoid collateral damage and civilian casualties. It is estimated that 45% of the world's population currently resides in urban areas and it is projected that this percentage will increase to 60% within the next ten years.[23] Thus, it will become increasingly more difficult for armed forces to avoid COIN operations in an urban environment.

Information Warfare and Operations

Technology has given both modern armed forces and insurgents the opportunity to observe the battlefield with greater fidelity and resolution than ever before. Instead of engaging in direct conflict, insurgents will attempt to destroy their adversaries'

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Command, Control, Communication, Computers, Intel, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities and platforms to gain an advantage in the information and psychological arenas.

Complex Relationships

Alliances and coalitions are already routine for any military operation in the world today. Partners from various armed forces will have differing views of end states and means, which requires compromise and tends to slow the pace of operations. This is particularly true in light of international economic interdependence and political engagement which require the armed forces to coordinate and work with allies, non-government organisations and other governmental agencies during COIN operations. Insurgents understand the weaknesses of coalitions and will seek to create alliances with nations who are more sympathetic to their cause. The presence of civilians, refugees and non-combatants within the military areas of operation also potentially confuses military forces and hampers their COIN operations. Insurgents inject multiple sources of motivation, ideology, interests, beliefs, or political affiliations to complicate military operations and breed civil unrest. Their presence forces militaries to consider the potential impact of civilian curfews, demonstrations, refugee camps, martial law, sabotage, information manipulation and civil affairs.

Rules of Engagement (ROE)

A ROE is a directive issued from competent military authority which delineates the circumstances and limitations under which the armed force will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces encountered. Insurgents will study these rules and attempt to exploit any indecisiveness by their adversaries.

Tarmiya, Iraq (2006): US Army soldiers hand out maps and information to the residents of Tarmiya on safe routes to take when entering or leaving town due to ongoing counter-insurgency operations.

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Media

Insurgents will seek to control the media and exploit it to its fullest potential. The pervasive media presence gives insurgents an open source of continuous news information and good situational awareness on their adversaries. Media coverage of military operations and real-time dissemination of information can dramatically sway international response and strategic interaction to the insurgents' advantage.

Asymmetry

Due to their inferior combat capabilities, insurgents will always attempt to exploit the weaknesses of their adversaries. Some of the asymmetric warfare tactics adopted by insurgents are deliberate, developed over time after a careful study of their adversaries. Others are developed spontaneously as opportunities present themselves. They combine multifaceted means with very flexible methods of operation. These asymmetries are harder to predict and are significantly more dangerous, complicating the future battlefield of COIN.

The SAF must be able to learn from the valuable lessons and experiences gathered from past COIN responses and brace itself for this evolving threat, focusing on its force organisation, training and leadership development.

PREPARING THE SAF FOR COMBATING INSURGENCY

Like many other modern armed forces, the SAF does not have much experience in COIN operations. The SAF must be able to learn from the valuable lessons and experiences gathered from past COIN responses and brace itself for this evolving threat, focusing on its force organisation, training and leadership development.

Force Organisation

The enclosed urban environment and complex terrain will reduce the advantage in range and accuracy which advanced weaponry provides. The insurgents, deployed in depth and widely dispersed, often choose not to engage adversaries at long range but will let some forces pass into designated ambush areas before striking. Snipers may be teamed with systems to destroy high value targets. Remotely-detonated or "trip-fired" Claymore-type systems will be employed against dismounted infantry. Self-healing minefields and anti-helicopter mines are also emerging possibilities. Precision munitions are increasingly common: long range rocket artillery, potentially integrated with systems such as counter-fire radars and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) increases the potential for rapid, accurate and lethal deep strike capabilities. Urban battles have proven to be especially difficult when the enemy employs human shields. These are some of the prevailing challenges of COIN operations.

The required force organisation for such an environment should comprise a full range of conventional mobile ground forces to allow greater flexibility with modularity and enhanced capabilities for direct action missions such as raids rather than mass engagements. Special Operations Forces (SOFs) or unconventional forces should also be configured for the purpose of containing civilians, refugees and non-combatants on the battlefield, and specialise in conducting strategic raids and COIN operations. The US and UK Special Operations Forces are both involved in COIN operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the force structuring approach of their SOFs are different. The US expanded their SOF and made some of their Army Units more SOF-like. The British Special Air Service (SAS) has led the way in developing certain aspects of COIN, although the vast majority of its current doctrine was drawn from lessons learned by the British Army as a whole. The SAS are often on exercise or attachment with friendly countries to provide training in COIN. Along with the regular British Army and Royal Marines, the SAS has carried out most of the COIN operations since the World War II.[24]

Full Spectrum Training

The training of future combatants will need to do more than just impart conventional "soldiering skills." The training environment must replicate key

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variables of the future operational environment with its wide spectrum of threats, and simulate insurgent methods of operation and asymmetrical end-states. Some of these situational variables include: operating in complex and urban terrain; dealing with civilians, refugees and non-combatant actors; managing multi-ethnic or fractured populations; containing internal and external information mechanisms; countering hostile Information Warfare (IW) attack capabilities; managing pervasive media presence; dealing with Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); containing a hostile population with the potential to resort to guerrilla-type activities; dealing with criminal organisations and drug trafficking elements; and counter-terrorism.

Combat in urban and complex terrain is likely to dominate future conflicts. Based on their many years of experience in COIN campaigns around the world, US and UK forces advocate that the principles of COIN are generally classified as: recognition of the political nature of the insurgency; establishment of a civil-military command and control structure with civilian supremacy; importance of intelligence and proper human intelligence gathering; splitting the insurgents from the population by propaganda and winning over hearts and minds; destroying the insurgents if opportunities present themselves; and political reforms to prevent recurrence. Their training scenarios incorporate the basic differences between the two types of conflict: while conventional war envisions the destruction of the main enemy forces and makes military goals paramount, COIN envisions the military acting in support of a civil authority and seeks to understand the political, social and economic (as well as military) aspects of the campaign.[25] The SAF must invest more resources and time into training for urban combat and build capabilities for COIN in such operating environments.

Leadership Development

SAF commanders must understand that clarity, accuracy and completeness of information concerning situation, events and context will determine the degree to which operational and strategic decision-makers get directly involved in tactical actions. Commanders must possess clear and concise communication skills and report contextually. They must also have a feel for the operating environment, battlefield calculus, political issues and civil-military relations (CMR). In Oman,[26] and other successful COIN campaigns such as Malaya during the 1960s, clear political objectives were articulated for the population and understood by the military leadership.[27] Coordination of civil and military effort was ensured through an established committee structure. A combination of physical and psychological security measures combined with political incentives successfully isolated the insurgents from the population, while minimum use of force by the military ensured that the armed forces did not alienate themselves from the general population. Moreover, the incentives offered had sufficient long-term promise in addressing political grievances to prevent any resurgence of discontent. Malaya and Oman remained politically stable under British governance during that era.[28]

SAF Commanders must also acknowledge the presence of non-combatant agencies and organisations on the modern battlefield. These third party actors may have humanitarian, political, economic, or demographic interests congruent to state and military interests; their presence will thus have an impact on the conduct of any military activities. These actors may, intentionally or otherwise, hinder military actions and add to the "fog of war." SAF Commanders must also seek to generate confidence, understanding and rapport with general society and the civilian leadership it serves. The media will provide the mechanism to perform that function and the commander or leader must not ignore it.

Insurgents will always attempt to stay below the threshold of clear aggression. Future SAF combat fighting tactics, techniques and procedures must thus embrace non-linear aggression insurgency patterns as well as traditional force-on-force conditions.

CONCLUSION

Insurgency is not an entirely new form of warfare but an evolution of guerrilla warfare. In the most basic sense, insurgents succeed by a direct or indirect strategy through which they erode the strength of the regime until they can confront it on equal terms, usually over a considerable period of time.

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In the 21st century, modern armed forces should expect less high-intensity conflicts between conventional forces as protracted low-intensity conflicts and asymmetric warfare are fast becoming the norm. The SAF must progressively restructure and reorganise to meet this expanded spectrum of potential threats, which demands more flexible and innovative responses compared to conventional combat. The readiness of SAF for COIN will depend on the context and conditions of its training environment, which must reflect current realities and incorporate the methods and capabilities employed by potential insurgents. This will ensure that the SAF's force structure, doctrines and training will always remain relevant.

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ENDNOTES

1. Guerrilla Warfare is defined as combat operation characterised by hit-and-run tactics conducted by irregular forces. These forces operate mainly as a military combat unit, attacking enemy military forces and seizing and holding territory occasionally. Typical guerrilla operations include harassment of the enemy, ambushes, raids, cutting lines of communication and surprise attacks. Insurgency is defined as a strategy adopted by weaker groups that cannot attain their political objectives through conventional means or by quick seizure of power. It is generally characterised by protracted, asymmetric and psychological warfare conducted in complex terrain (jungles, mountains and urban areas) to shield the insurgents from government retaliation and eventually alter the balance of power in their favour. They avoid direct combat, where they are the weakest, and focus on psychological and political, where they can usually operate on a more equal footing.
2. Gates, David, *The Spanish Ulcer: A History of the Peninsular War* (Pimlico, 2002), 33-34
3. Beckett, Ian F. W., *Insurgency in Iraq: A Historical Perspective* (January 2005): 2.
4. Terrorism is defined as an activity rather than a type of war. Terrorism is "the use or threat of violence, a method of combat or a strategy to achieve certain goals ... its

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aim is to induce a state of fear in the victim ... it is ruthless and does not conform to humanitarian norms, and publicity is an essential factor in terror strategy." Terrorism is a strategy that relies on acts of violence against civilians to achieve political intimidation. Common terrorist activities would include assassination, bombing, arson, robberies, hostage-taking, hijacking and chemical-biological attacks. See Ibid., 3.

5. "The Future of Warfare," *The Economist*, 8 March 1997, 15.

6. Marighel was the author of *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* and also an active leader of Action for National Liberation (ALN). Guillen was an anarcho-syndicalist veteran of the Spanish Civil War and had a great influence over the Argentine Tacuara Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNRT) fugitives in Montevideo. He also wrote *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*.

7. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq*, 3-4. For Mao's analysis of the concepts of aggressiveness, initiative, mobility and deception, and flexibility, see Mao Tse-Tung, *Basic Tactics*, trans. Stuart R. Schram (New York: Praeger 1966), 55-66, 83-89, 270; *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. I, 238-240; *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. II, 85-87, 157-165, 170-174; Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 42-46, 98-105.

8. Mai Elliott, trans., "Part Three: Military Organisation and Activities," *Documents of an Elite Viet Cong Delta Unit*, ed. David W. P. Elliott (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1969), v, 63, 64; see also Truong Chinh, *The Resistance Will Win*, 181.

9. Ahmed Hashim, "The Sunni Insurgency in Iraq," Middle East Institute Policy Brief, 15 August 2003; Ahmed Hashim, "The Insurgency in Iraq," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14, no. 3 (2003): 21-22.

10. Mao Tse-Tung and Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (London: Cassell, 1961), 31-32, 41-42.

11. Steven and Metz and Raymond A. Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualising Threat and Response* (Strategic Studies Institute US Army College, November 2004), 12.

12. Ibid., 12.

13. Ibid., 12. See also John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman, 1965-75* (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1982); Tony Jeapes, *SAS Secret War* (London: William Kimber, 1996); and Peter Thwaites, *Muscat Command* (London: Pen & Sword, 1995).

14. Ibid., 13-14.

15. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq*, 1.

16. Charles Callwell, "Lessons to be Learnt from the Campaigns in which British Forces Have Been Employed Since the Year 1865," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 31, no. 139 (1887-1888), 362. See also Caldwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, 3rd edition. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1906).

17. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (London: Nash Publishing, 1951); David Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945-47* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 121-122.

18. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq*, 11.

19. Alf Andrew Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Algeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); John Talbott, *The War Without A Name* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1980); Martin Alexander, Martin Evans, and J. F. V. Keiger, eds., *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954-62* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); *Beckett, Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, 159-168.

20. Conley, Michael C. and Schrock, Joann L., *Preliminary Survey of Insurgency in Urban Areas* (Washington: American University Special Operations Office, February 1965), 8.

21. Russel, Charles A. and Hildner, Robert E., "Intelligence and Information Processing in Counterinsurgency," *Air University Review,* July-August 1973.

22. Steven Metz, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq," *Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2003-04): 25-36; Hashim, "Insurgency in Iraq," 1-22. Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Current Military Situation in Iraq* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 14 November 2003), http://www.csis.org/features/031114current.pdf, 14-15.

23. The figures and data are extracted from Steven Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2002).

24. Marston, Daniel, "Force Structure for High- and Low-intensity Warfare: The Anglo-American Experience and Lessons for the Future," discussion paper for National Intelligence Council Workshop, "Changing Nature of Warfare," Washington D.C., 25 May 2004, 9.

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25. Ibid., 8. This has been the chief role of the military as described by various COIN theorists, including Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations and Bunch of Five* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010); Douglas Blaufarb, *The COIN Era*; Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*; Peter Paret, *French COIN Warfare from Indo-China to Algeria*; John Nagl, *COIN Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*.

26. British operations in Oman are an important case study for COIN. The British role in the area was significant but has always been downplayed. To this day, the role of the SAS is not advertised in Oman. For more information on the campaign, see Tony Jeapes, *SAS Secret War* (UK: HarperCollins, 2000); John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman, 1965-1975* (Salisbury: Michael Russell Publishing Ltd, 1982); Kenneth Perkins, *A Fortunate Soldier* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988); Ian F. W. Beckett and John Pimlott, eds., *Armed Forces and Modern Counter-Insurgency* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); and Thomas Mockaitis, *British COIN in the Post Imperial Age*.

27. High Commissioner Malaya (Federation), *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya* (Malaya: Government Press, 1952); *A Handbook on Anti-Mau Mau Operations* (Nairobi : Government Printer, 1954); *Keeping the Peace (Duties on Support of the Civil Power)* (London: War Office, 1957); *Land Operations Volume III: Counter-Revolutionary Operations,* 1969 and 1977 editions; and "Counter Insurgency Operations," *Army Field Manual 1* (2001). The current text devotes nearly 200 pages to insurgency and COIN. It discusses the past and ends by articulating the principles of British COIN.

28. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq*, 16.

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Opening the Black Box: How Command Teams Sensemake

by **SLTC Lim Beng Chong, PhD**

Abstract:

Teams are an increasingly common feature of many organizations. In the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), we create a variety of teams to carry out the many requirements of the organization. For example, we create and develop combat teams to perform the tactical actions required in combat and command teams at all levels to perform the critical function of command and control during operations. In peacetime, we create project teams and working committees to perform tasks that further enhance the SAF's organizational effectiveness in the areas of human resource and organizational structure optimization, technological development and implementation, and organizational culture and learning. The objective of this article is threefold. First, the concept of sensemaking is examined. Second, some of the pitfalls that may affect the quality of the collective sensemaking process are discussed. Finally, a number of recommendations to mitigate the effects of these pitfalls are proposed.

Keywords: Collective Sensemaking; Team Leadership; Problem Solving; Organizational Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

> *"When a task is beyond the capability of an individual, organizations often rely on teams to work together to accomplish goals. Military command teams are a good example. The combined cognitive and behavioural capability of a team allows it to achieve goals that an individual probably cannot. However, simply putting a group of people together does not ensure they will operate as a team."*
>
> *– COL Ong Yu Lin and LTC Lim Beng Chong, PhD*[1]

Teams are an increasingly common feature of many organizations. In the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), we create a variety of teams to carry out the many requirements of the organization. For example, we create and develop combat teams to perform the tactical actions required in combat and command teams at all levels to perform the critical function of command and control of our forces in operations. In peacetime, we create project teams and working committees to perform tasks that further enhance the SAF's organizational effectiveness in the areas of human resource and organizational structure optimization, technological development and implementation, and organizational culture and learning.

Indeed, teams are critical to the success of many modern organizations. In particular, the effectiveness of organizations that operate constantly in complex, if not chaotic, situations is often determined by their combined cognitive and behavioural human capability.[2] Many large organizations today, especially those in the technology sector, are operating in an increasingly complex business environment. Likewise, many military organizations find that their battle space has evolved substantially. Their adversaries are no longer clearly defined. and what constitutes mission success is often vague and subject to change depending on the shifting socio-political and security environment. This is the new reality SAF commanders face today.

Like many successful organizations, the SAF has responded well to this new operating environment. Its responses include organizational renewal and restructuring, process reengineering, human resource optimization, technological renewal and acquisition, and the constant training and retraining of its people. In sum, the response is the Third Generation SAF.

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To sustain its most important asset—its people—the SAF has to constantly recruit the best, provide the best training and development and continuously motivate its people to ensure that they contribute optimally to the organization. As such, over time, the SAF is able to develop groups of individuals who have expertise in the various functional areas critical to the functioning of the organization.

However, "simply putting a group of people (experts) together does not ensure they will operate as a team."[3] The next wave of substantial improvements to organizational performance will have to come from harnessing the multiplying effects of the cognitive and behavioural capabilities of these individual experts. In other words, how do we transform "teams of experts into expert teams" with the potential greater than the sum of their parts?[4] In short, how do we make sure that 1 + 1 > 2?

As highlighted in the earlier *POINTER* article by COL Ong and LTC Lim, there are perhaps at least ten key components that can potentially affect the performance of a team,[5] especially team decisions. The key components include five that belong in the cognitive domain (i.e., team mental models, team situational awareness, collective sensemaking, collective understanding of command intent, and leader's mental models) and five in the social domain (i.e., team self-correction, team communication, team orientation, mutual trust and team leadership).

This essay will focus on collective sensemaking for the following reasons:

1. Neither collective nor individual sensemaking has been well researched and it remains one of the least understood components that affect team performance.

2. Collective sensemaking is an important first step to team performance. Without having a good grasp of the situation, teams cannot make good decisions and act appropriately. How then does a team perform collective sensemaking? What are the factors that will affect the quality of the collective sensemaking process? How can we mitigate any negative effect? How can we ensure 1 + 1 > 2 in terms of collective sensemaking?

This essay will first examine the concept of sensemaking. Although the focus is at the team level, it will briefly discuss individual sensemaking so as to provide the foundation for subsequent discussion on collective sensemaking. Specifically, it will propose a model describing the collective sensemaking process, commonly observed in a team confronting a novel situation. Second, it discusses some of the pitfalls that may affect the quality of the collective sensemaking process. Finally, it puts forward a number of recommendations to mitigate the effects of these pitfalls before concluding.

INDIVIDUAL SENSEMAKING

> *"A problem defined is half solved."*
> *– Old management axiom*

Sensemaking is one of the most important key human processes. Without it, people will not be able to size up situations and respond appropriately. Sensemaking is defined as:

> The process of creating situation awareness (**cognitive certainty**) in situations of uncertainty by putting the **available information** about the situation **in context** and **identifying patterns** that exist. It goes beyond what is happening or may happen to what can be done about it. It utilizes individual or team experience on the available information to construct relevant, meaningful understanding of the situation or events at both the individual and group levels. It is typically triggered by unexpected changes or other surprises that cast doubts on initial understanding. Through the accurate construction of meaning, clarity increases and confusion decreases.[6]

Figure 1 depicts the proposed model of sensemaking at the individual level by COL Ong and LTC Lim. This essay will only briefly discuss individual sensemaking to provide the foundation for the discussion on collective sensemaking.

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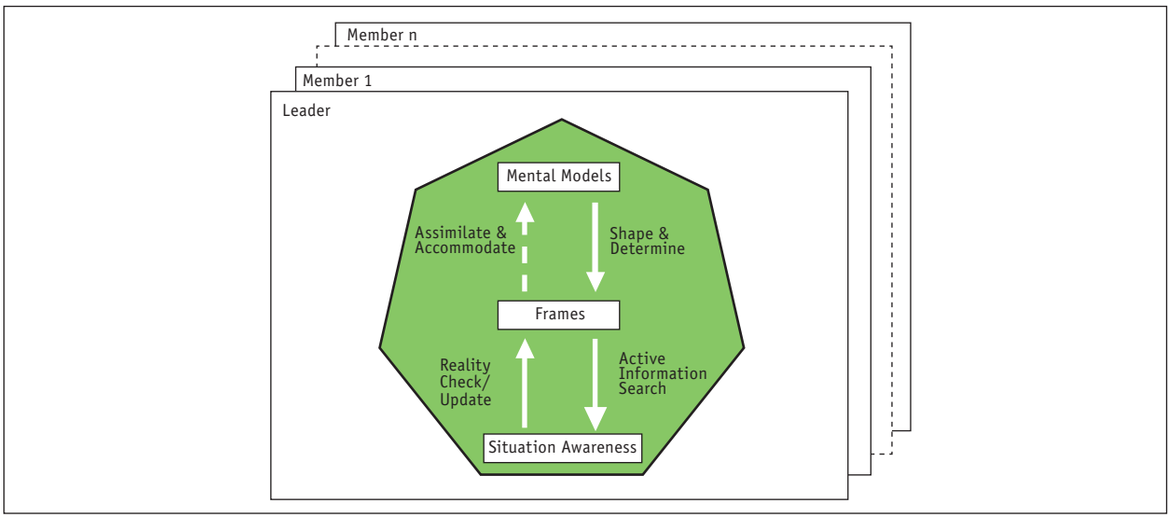

Figure 1: A Proposed Model of Individual Sensemaking Processes.[7]

Essentially, a situation perceived either as a potential problem or an opportunity, especially a novel situation, will trigger off the sensemaking process. At the individual level, sensemaking is primarily a cognitive process. It is an ongoing process of reflecting, refining understanding, constructing meaning and taking action. The starting point is a cognitive frame, analogous to a sheet of paper. This preliminary frame may well be a blank sheet of plain paper, but most of the time it should already contain some information in it. This preliminary information is based on what is readily available in the emerging environment. However, as this preliminary frame is likely to be incomplete or incoherent, it engenders the sensemaking process.

As his frame gains clarity with decreased perceived ambiguities, the individual becomes more confident in his framing of the emerging situation. However, this does not mean that his frame is the correct representation of the situation: it simply means that he thinks he has a good grasp of the situation, which may or may not reflect reality.

Two parallel cognitive processes will jump-start the sensemaking process. First, existing mental models: a repository of one's experiences and knowledge acquired over time, aid the building up of the preliminary frame by providing relevant information acquired from similar situations in the past. With this additional input, the prevailing frame may become clearer, like an image viewed through a camera becomes sharper as we adjust its optical lens. In other words, existing mental models shape and determine the nature of the preliminary frame by enhancing its clarity and reducing its ambiguities. At the same time, it also helps to identify the inconsistencies and gaps in the emerging frame and subsequently helps to formulate questions that will guide further information seeking efforts.

Second, cognitive dissonance, a driving force to reduce the discomfort experienced in the mind which arises from ambiguities in the prevailing frame,[8] propels the individual to engage the environment in order to actively seek out information that reduces the ambiguities present in the prevailing frame. New information which is brought to the awareness of the individual is subsequently used to update the frame. One possible pitfall, however, is that inconsistencies which may prove relevant are likely to be ignored as they increase the cognitive dissonance rather than reduce it.

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This active searching for information and updating the frame are two iterative processes. After a number of iterations, the evolving frame becomes clearer and less ambiguous to the individual. As his frame gains clarity with decreased perceived ambiguities, the individual becomes more confident in his framing of the emerging situation. However, this does not mean that his frame is the correct representation of the situation: it simply means that he thinks he has a good grasp of the situation, which may or may not reflect reality. If he then finds that his understanding of the emerging situation is wrong, he risks being "situationally" surprised.

Assuming that his prevailing frame is the correct representation of the situation, and that the sensemaking process has led him to react appropriately and successfully to the situation, the newly acquired frame will subsequently be integrated into his existing mental models through the process of assimilation and accommodation.

With every successful sensemaking cycle, the individual will gain expertise in his specific domain. This expertise resides in his mental models. Thus, it is not surprising that it takes time and effort to develop expert mental models in any domain. On the other hand, expert mental models are inherently resistant to change, leading to the risk of being wrong with dire consequences—fundamentally surprised. This issue will be revisit when discussing sensemaking at the team level: there are ways in which we can harness the power of the framing process and expert mental models, yet reduce their vulnerabilities.

On the other hand, expert mental models are inherently resistant to change, leading to the risk of being wrong with dire consequences—fundamentally surprised.

COLLECTIVE SENSEMAKING

This essay has briefly discussed how sensemaking occurs in the cognition of an individual when faced with a situation that requires action. However, sensemaking can occur at both the individual and the team level.

At the individual level, sensemaking is a cognitive process whereby one conceptualizes a cognitive representation of an emerging situation, first by paying attention to the most salient cues and information in the situation and then by allowing existing mental models to shape understanding of this preliminary set of information to determine the initial frame. Subsequently, an active information search is conducted to enhance clarity and reduce ambiguities, sharpening the preliminary frame. This process is iterative. The individual sensemaking process continues until the individual has his cognitive dissonance reduced and is confident that the frame is an accurate cognitive representation of the emerging situation.

Similarly, when a group of experts are confronted with an emerging situation, sensemaking will be triggered. While each of the experts will conduct his own sensemaking, a team will also trigger the collective sensemaking process. In other words, collective sensemaking can occur when a group of individuals encounter an emerging situation where they share responsibility and commitment to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion. Whether the individual sensemaking by the various members will enhance or impair the collective sensemaking is very much dependent on a number of factors, including team dynamics.

Unlike individual sensemaking, collective sensemaking in a team is a socio-cognitive activity. The following example illustrates the difference between individual sensemaking and collective sensemaking:

Imagine that a tsunami has just struck one of our neighbouring countries and a brigade commander has been tasked with the Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief (HADR) mission. News from the disaster zone is just trickling in at this point. Incomplete information abounds—some of it contradictory. At this juncture, there is no way to confirm the toll in both

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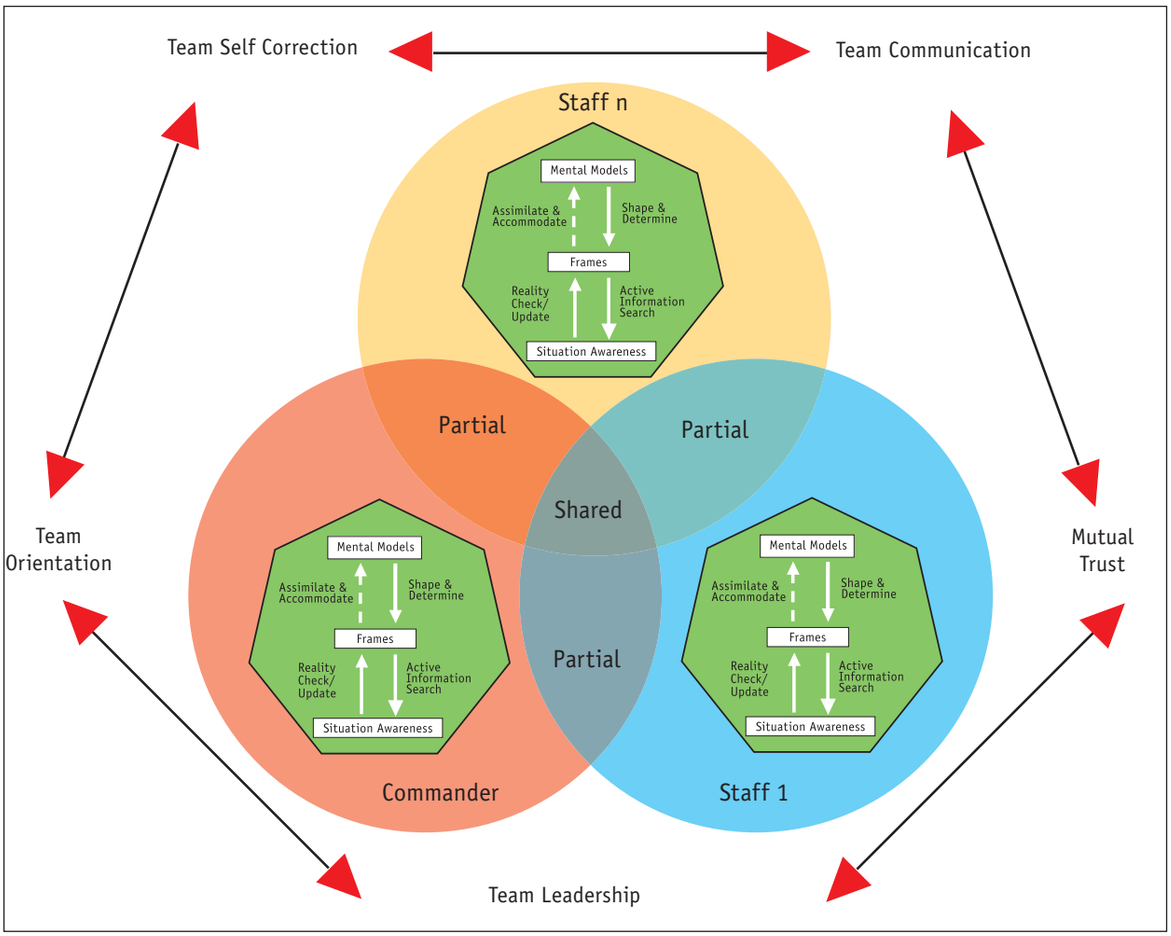

Figure 2: A Proposed Model of Collective Sensemaking

infrastructure and human lives. In his command centre, the commander and his principal staff are trying to make sense of the emerging situation by going through bits and pieces of information as they trickle in from all sources.

How then does this command team make sense of the emerging situation? For a start, the commander and his staff would have brought different mental models to the team due to varying experiences and training. These mental models might overlap in some aspects among members of the team, depicted as "partial overlap" in Figure 2. It is also highly likely that the commander and his staff have some aspects of their mental models fully overlapped as shared mental models, given prior interactions and the fact that they belong to an organization where standard operating procedures and doctrine abound. Obviously, there are also aspects of each member's mental models that are not shared by others in the team. These non-overlapping aspects, optimally harnessed, will provide the greatest potential for the team to outperform any of its members individually.

PRELIMINARY INDIVIDUAL FRAME VERSUS PRELIMINARY COLLECTIVE FRAME

Due to their differing mental models, the preliminary individual frame of the commander and his staff may or may not be similar. As indicated previously, here lies the potential strength of having a team as compared to an individual. The team mental models, aggregated from the mental models of all the members, are definitely much more extensive than any

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one individual's, as depicted in Figure 2. These team mental models have much greater potential to provide a more comprehensive framing of the emerging situation. However, there are many challenges facing a team trying to fully harness the power of its collective mental models. As mental models are resident within each individual's cognition, the challenge is making each of these mental models explicit to other team members so that their relevant aspects can be aggregated for the benefit of the team in the creation of a more extensive preliminary collective frame—one more comprehensive than any individual frame.

Unlike individual sensemaking, collective sensemaking is a socio-cognitive process as the attainment of the preliminary collective frame requires the creation of shared meaning and understanding among team members through communication and the exchange of ideas and perspectives.[9] In the process, relevant aspects of individual mental models are brought to bear on the team's preliminary collective frame.

TEAM PROCESSES THAT ARE CRITICAL FOR COLLECTIVE SENSEMAKING

Consistent with the framework proposed by COL Ong and LTC Lim, within the decision making process in a team context,[10] there are at least five team processes that are critical for a successful collective sensemaking process:

(1) **Team Leadership.** Traditionally, leadership is often perceived as residing within an individual. In the context of the military, that individual is the commander. However, leadership is different from authority, and the two should not be confused. The commander will always have the final authority but leadership qualities can also be exhibited by other team members. Team leadership is about sharing the responsibility of leadership among its members. It is as important for any member of the team to exhibit leadership as it is for them to be team players. Leadership should be provided by the member with the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities for resolving the issue facing the team at any given moment.[11] This form of leadership departs from the traditional view of leadership. Team leadership is a form of team-related behaviour that is highly effective for complex tasks.

If the commander dominates the sensemaking process, his mental models will dominate the preliminary frame and probably subsequent frames as well. While this may be necessary under certain circumstances (such as when the commander is the only expert), it is probably more effective for the mental models of the other members to contribute to the team mental models and the preliminary collective frame. Referring back to Figure 2, it is easy to understand why a commander-centric framing of the emerging situation may not be optimal, especially if there are other experts on the team. The commander's mental models will become the dominant mental models and will prove in most cases less comprehensive than team mental models aggregated from the views of all the other team members. Moreover, a commander-centric sensemaking is not a collective sensemaking process, but an individual sensemaking process. Hence, the presence of team leadership is critical for collective sensemaking, and commanders hold the key to creating a climate where team leadership flourishes and members feel comfortable to lead when necessary.

(2) **Team Orientation.** Once the climate for team leadership is established, team orientation and mutual trust, which will be discussed later, are often the result. When team members feel that they can contribute and have contributed to the team, they become stakeholders. They want only the best for the team and will be willing to make sacrifices. Members of a team that focuses on team orientation tend to have a strong team identity, believe in a team effort when achieving goals, have faith in the team's ability to face adversity, and are highly

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committed to team goals. Team orientation is critical for collective sensemaking as it motivates members to contribute and work together with each other. In sum, highly team-oriented members are more likely to transcend self-interest and give their best for a higher collective purpose. In terms of sensemaking, they are likely to be more proactive in seeking information and will meticulously tap into their mental models in order to contribute to the team.

(3) **Mutual Trust.** Mutual trust is another source of motivation for team members to work together for the benefit of the team. Together with team orientation, mutual trust is important as it reinforces bonding and creates an open climate for team members to speak their mind, without fear of penalty or embarrassment. This is of paramount importance for collective sensemaking because key elements in the environment may be overlooked if members are held back by self doubt. Subtle but important relationships among these key elements may also be ignored if team members are only comfortable in bringing out the obvious.

(4) **Team Self-Correction.** Members of a team high on team orientation and mutual trust will want to do what is best for the team. However, they are also likely to seek consensus and alignment with one another. While a lack of consensus and alignment are common characteristics of bad teams, it does not mean that good teams must always seek consensus or alignment. On the contrary, effective teams often have differences over what team tasks should be (task conflict) and how the team should go about doing these team tasks (process conflict).[12] The basic difference between good and poor teams is that good teams have mechanisms to resolve these task-related and process-related conflicts. The lack of an effective conflict resolution mechanism in poor teams results in these conflicts boiling over and becoming interpersonal conflicts that harm relationships between members.

In short, apart from high team orientation and mutual trust, effective teams have also developed what researchers call "team self-correction." Self-correction behaviours include: questioning assumptions and rationales; engaging in mutual and team performance monitoring; constantly reviewing mental models and prevailing frames; validating hypotheses and assumptions; and being ready to provide and receive feedback. It does not take much for one to realize that these team self-correction behaviours are potential sources of task and process conflicts. Indeed, in any team, these types of conflicts are inevitable. However, the difference is that they are actually welcomed in effective teams as they will improve performance in the long term.

A team's ability to self-correct is a critical aspect of collective sensemaking due to the tendency for humans to utilize heuristics (e.g. anchoring and adjustment, recognition heuristics and similarity heuristics) in making sense of the world to ensure cognitive efficiency and prevent information overload.[13] Conformation is also more likely in a team context. Hence, there is a need for team members to continuously check one another's mental models and assumptions to prevent cognitive pitfalls from creeping into their sensemaking process.

(5) **Team Communication.** Last, but not least, is team communication. Team communication is the vehicle through which ideas are exchanged, information is shared, assumptions are questioned, mental models are made explicit, and conflicts and disagreements are resolved. Hence the importance of open and constructive communication in a team cannot be overemphasized—it is instrumental for collective sensemaking to take place.

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These five team processes can be viewed as centrifugal and centripetal forces constantly pushing away or pulling towards the centre. Collectively, these forces produce either a contracting or expanding band which leads to different degrees of sensemaking overlap between members. It is a contracting band when these five team processes are optimal and producing good outcomes and an expanding band when they are not. Obviously, it is not always necessary for the band to contract or expand evenly along its circumference as team processes can exert different amounts of influence and their effects on individual members may also differ. Intuitively, this visualization is sound, as it can be expected that not all team members will "bond," "feel," "view" and "accept" in the same way and the "closeness" between some will be greater than others. This explains a common observation in teams where some members have a better shared understanding of the situation than others.

However, as individuals operate in teams, individual problem conceptualization is insufficient.

These five team processes are critical for the development of the preliminary frame because they determine the extent to which each team member's mental models are brought to bear on its development. If the processes are not optimized, it means that not all the team members' experiences and expertise are being used for the benefit of the team. Moreover, it also means that team members are likely to possess different preliminary frames. These differing views of the emerging situation may disrupt the subsequent framing process such that the sensemaking process takes longer than necessary, or the team is not able to achieve a shared collective frame at all.

Like mental models, frames can be shared, partially overlapping, or not overlapping as depicted in Figure 2. In the event that the team does not share a common frame, the collective sensemaking process has failed. What happens is simply individual sensemaking. Problem conceptualization involves the construction of the problem space. However, as individuals operate in teams, individual problem conceptualization is insufficient. Shared conceptualization is necessary for effective team problem solving; a team's comprehension of the critical problem components should contain a substantial amount of overlap. These five team processes thus play an important role in ensuring an optimal collective sensemaking process.

SHARPENING THE PRELIMINARY COLLECTIVE FRAME

Assuming that the team has a preliminary collective frame (i.e. individual frames are more or less shared), the active information search by team members and updating of both individual and collective frames are two iterative processes that will continue until all the team members have their cognitive dissonance reduced and are confident that the collective frame is an accurate cognitive representation of the emerging situation. After going through a number of iterations, the evolving collective frame becomes clearer and less ambiguous to the team as a whole. As this frame gains clarity and decreased perceived ambiguities, the team becomes more confident in its framing of the emerging situation. Again, this does not mean that the frame is the correct representation of the situation. It only means that the majority, if not all, of the team members think that they have a good grasp of the emerging situation.

Assuming that this prevailing frame is the correct representation of the situation, and this sensemaking process has led the team to react appropriately and successfully to the situation, the newly acquired frame will subsequently be integrated into the team's mental models through the process of assimilation and accommodation.

If there is a preliminary collective frame, this would mean that individual preliminary frames are at least partially overlapped, if not shared. On the other hand, there will be different degrees of understanding among team members if they do

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not share a preliminary frame, leading to different interpretations of the evolving situation in subsequent discussions. This can further damage the already suboptimal team processes by allowing task and process conflicts to turn into interpersonal conflicts, inevitably affecting the subsequent sensemaking process. This situation is, at best, a collection of many independent individual sensemaking processes rather than collective sensemaking.

Collective sensemaking is critical for team performance. However, there are a number of inherent pitfalls, some occurring in the individual sensemaking process, others in a team context.

PITFALLS TO EFFECTIVE SENSEMAKING AT THE INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM LEVEL

As individual sensemaking is a cognitive process and collective sensemaking is both a cognitive and social process, there are a number of cognitive and social biases that can affect the quality of these sensemaking processes. This section discusses some of the common pitfalls that may impede effective sensemaking at both the individual and team levels. Hopefully, one can mitigate some of these negative effects by being aware of their existence.

Table 1 depicts some of the common pitfalls in the literature. To aid understanding, I have classified them into the following nine categories:

1. **Initial tendency to anchor.** Humans have the tendency to seek an anchor as a starting point when sizing up a situation. This anchor can either be found in the current situation or from mental models based on past experiences. This anchor is analogous to the preliminary frame discussed earlier. Once determined, it forms the basis for the assimilation of subsequent information and data. Hence, it is of paramount importance that we are aware of the inadequacy of this preliminary anchor and not fixated on it.

   a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

   - Be aware of this cognitive tendency and try to question the validity of this initial set of information, especially if it contradicts subsequent information received.
   - Leaders should avoid anchoring their subordinates. During initial stages, reveal as little as possible about one's own ideas, estimates, and tentative decisions.
   - Get members to develop their preliminary frame independently before conducting collective sensemaking.

   b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

   - Have other team members focus on an equally feasible set of information as their starting point so that the team will not be fixated on a particular set of information.
   - Build team self-correction mechanisms.
   - Encourage groups of individuals in the team to have different starting frames.

2. **Fixated on the status quo.** Humans have the tendency to be fixated on the status quo. In terms of sensemaking, this means that team members are likely to maintain the preliminary frame longer than necessary, even when confronted with contrary information. Under these circumstances, team members are likely to perpetuate the inappropriate frame by investing even more resources seeking additional information and data in hope of validation. This tendency stems from a sense of commitment and ownership for the original frame.

   a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

   - Leaders should not cultivate a failure-fearing culture that leads subordinates to perpetuate their mistakes.
   - Be aware that there is no necessity to appear consistent to others, especially when one encounters information that runs contrary to one's frame.
   - Always remember it is about the idea, not about the person.

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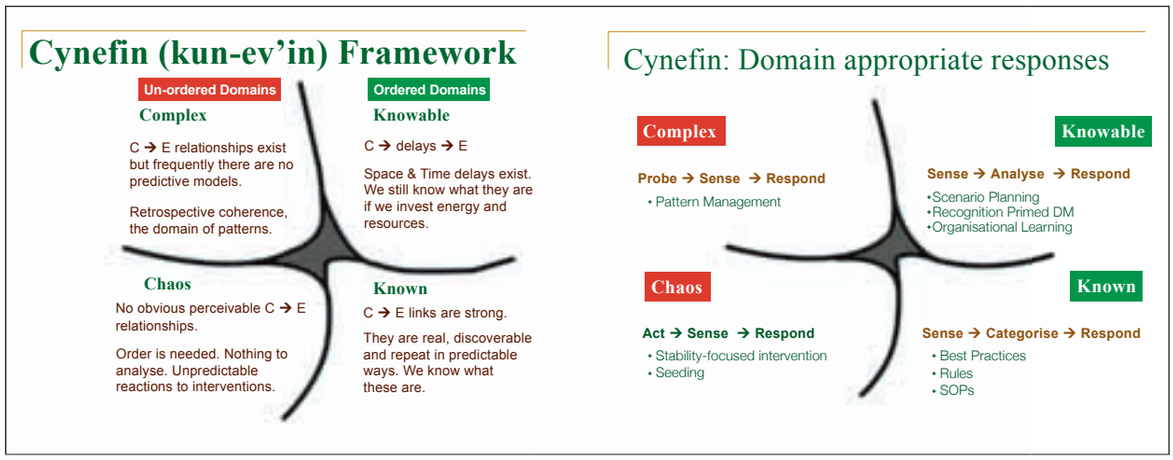

Figure 3: Snowden's Cynefin Framework

b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

- If the team is big enough, try breaking it up into two to three smaller groups to conduct subgroup sensemaking before coming together for collective sensemaking. Alternatively, have a small group of team members as observers or playing devil's advocates.
- Build mutual trust in the team so that members are willing to admit mistakes.
- Build team self-correction mechanisms.

3. **Always remembering the sore thumb.** Humans are likely to give undue weight to recent, dramatic events, even if these events may not be as relevant to the situation at hand compared to information collected earlier on.

a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

- Be aware of the inadequacies of the human brain in its inability to recall information or events. In addition, human brains are more likely to encode dramatic and hence emotionally charged events and information more deeply. Consequently, these events and information also become more frequently accessed.
- Ask yourself, how would the perception of the situation be different without the inclusion of that dramatic event?

b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

- Keep records of the information flow in the team. Constantly review them to keep them updated.
- Review discarded data and information to see whether they are relevant in the current situation .

4. **Humans as biased information seekers.** Humans often subconsciously seek information to reaffirm preconceptions. When confronted with information that contradicts their prior perception, they would either be overly critical of the information or simply ignore it.

a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

- Avoid the tendency to accept confirming evidence without question.

b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

- Get someone to play the devil's advocate and to argue against the confirming evidence.
- Get a small group of members to build an alternate frame by giving more weight to inconsistent information. Then, check it against the original frame to identify discrepancies between the two interpretations of the situation.

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5. **Humans as poor fortune tellers.** Humans have the tendency to believe that they can control or influence outcomes which they clearly cannot. This is particularly problematic in complex or chaotic situations.[14] Humans are likely to insist that cause must have an effect and every effect must have a cause. According to Kurt and Snowden's Cynefin model, there are four problem spaces: ordered domains (knowable and known) and unordered domains (complex and chaos). In the ordered domains, where the cause-effect links are strong, one can certainly try to determine how the situation will evolve through its current state. However, as we move into the unordered domains, the cause-effect links may not be obvious and, most of the time, they are likely to be too complex to discern. Our commanders are more likely to operate in the unordered domains. Therefore, efforts committed to predicting future states in these situations or determining specific desired end states may be futile.

   a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

   - There is no one-size-fits-all problem solving strategy. One should determine the domain one is operating in before devising a strategy to deal with the emerging situation. In the ordered domain, one should first conduct sensemaking before acting. However, in the unordered domain, one may have to probe or act first before one can sensemake. See Figure 3 for more details.

   b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

   - Always help to keep some members in check, especially when they become too zealous with predicting future states, in particular those in the distant future.

6. **Humans see patterns when none exist**. Similar to the tendency to look for cause-effect links, human minds are hardwired to look for patterns within the environment. This tendency often works well for us. Unfortunately, in situations where no systematic patterns exist, our minds try to imagine one. This tendency stems from the belief that things are not random phenomena and are connected in some way.

   a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

   - Question proposed linkages between events and information, especially if they are far apart in terms of time and space.

   b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

   Appoint devil's advocates to propose equally feasible linkages between the same set of events and information.

7. **See, I am right!** Humans have pre-existing predilections and beliefs. While these may be subconscious, their influence on thought processes and actions are significant. In sensemaking, one's perception of the situation is very much influenced by personal experiences and beliefs. Humans are likely to engage in behaviours that will elicit results which will confirm or further reinforce their belief or initial prejudice. This is especially true in ambiguous situations.

   a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

   - Be cognizant that one's experience should only be a guide.

   b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

   - Open and constructive team communication.
   - Practise team leadership in the team. This is especially important in mitigating the negative effects of a leader's mental models if he is wrong.

8. **We are all the same.** Humans are social creatures. Under normal circumstances, humans do not want to be the oddball in a group. Hence they have the tendency to do or believe in things that the majority does. This often leads people in social groups to seek consensus rather than encourage dissent and critical analysis. Moreover, as people would like to think that they are no different from many others, they tend to

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POTENTIAL PITFALLS	EXPLANATION	LEVEL	
		IND	GRP
INITIAL TENDENCY TO ANCHOR			
Anchoring Trap	The tendency to rely too heavily, or "anchor," on one trait or piece of information when making decisions.	√	
Primacy Effect	The tendency to weigh initial events more than subsequent events. Leads one to give disproportionate amount of attention to the first information one receives.	√	
FIXATED ON THE STATUS QUO			
Status Quo Trap	One's bias toward maintaining the current situation—even when better alternatives exist.	√	√
Sunk-Cost Trap	Inclines one to perpetuate mistakes of the past.	√	√
Escalation of Commitment	The tendency to invest more resources in a course of action despite its trajectory towards failure.	√	√
Endowment Effect	The tendency for people to value something more as soon as a sense of ownership is made.	√	√
Post Purchase Rationalization	The tendency to persuade oneself through rational argument that a purchase was good value.	√	
ALWAYS REMEMBERING THE SORE THUMB			
Recallability Trap	Leads one to attribute undue importance to recent and dramatic events.	√	
Von Restorff Effect	The tendency for an item that "sticks out like a sore thumb" to be remembered more than other items.	√	
Recency Effect	The tendency to value recent events more than earlier events.	√	
HUMANS AS BIASED INFORMATION SEEKERS			
Confirmation Bias	The tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that validates one's preconceptions.	√	
Discomfirmation Bias	The tendency for people to extend critical scrutiny to information which contradicts their prior beliefs and uncritically accept information that is congruent with their prior beliefs.	√	
Ambiguity Effect	The avoidance of options for which missing information makes the probability seem "unknown."	√	
Selective Perception	The tendency to be influenced by prior expectations to interpret only certain, selected information.	√	
Information Bias	The tendency to seek information even when it cannot affect action.	√	
Availability Bias	The influence of the relative availability of objects or events (their accessibility through memory, perception, or imagination).	√	
HUMANS AS POOR FORTUNE TELLERS			
Illusion Control	The tendency for human beings to believe they can control or at least influence outcomes which they clearly cannot.	√	√
Planning Fallacy	The tendency to underestimate task completion times.	√	
Overconfidence Trap	Makes one overestimate the accuracy of forecasts.	√	√
Prudence Trap	Leads one to be overcautious when one makes estimates about uncertain events.	√	√

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HUMANS SEE PATTERNS WHEN NONE EXIST			
Clustering Illusion	The tendency to see patterns when none exist.	√	
Gambler's Fallacy	The tendency to assume that individual random events are influenced by previous random events—"the coin has a memory."	√	
Illusory Correlation	Beliefs that inaccurately assign a relationship between certain types of actions and effects.	√	
SEE, I AM RIGHT!			
Self-Fulfilling Prophecy	The tendency to engage in behaviours that elicit results which will (consciously or subconsciously) confirm our beliefs.	√	
Positive Outcome Bias	A tendency to predict and overestimate the probability of positive results and situations.	√	
Implicit Favourite Bias	The tendency to have a preferred alternative and although not fully aware of this preference, to engage in a process of considering alternatives that merely confirm the initial prejudice.	√	
"My Side" Bias	The tendency for people to fail to look for or to ignore evidence against beliefs they already favour.	√	
Personal Experience Bias	The tendency to be influenced by strong personal experiences to the point of ignoring other information.	√	
Belief Bias	The tendency to base assessments on personal beliefs.	√	
Self Serving Bias / Group-Serving Bias	The tendency to claim more responsibility for successes than failures. It may also manifest itself as a tendency for people to evaluate ambiguous information in a way beneficial to their interests.	√	√
WE ARE ALL THE SAME			
Bandwagon Effect / Groupthink	The tendency to do (or believe) things because many other people do (or believe) the same. The tendency to seek consensus rather than encourage dissent and critical analysis.		√
False Consensus Effect	The tendency for people to overestimate the degree to which others agree with them.		√
Projection Bias	The tendency to unconsciously assume that others share the same or similar thoughts, beliefs, values, or positions.		√
Illusion of Transparency	People overestimate their own and others' ability to be perceptive.		√
HUMANS ARE NOT OBJECTIVE WHEN THEY ARE TOGETHER			
Risk / Cautious Shift	The tendency of a group to favour riskier or more conservative actions when responsibility is shared.		√
In-Group Bias	Preferential treatment people give to those they perceive to be members of their own group.		√
Halo Effect	The tendency for a person's positive or negative traits to "spill over" from one area of their personality into another in the perceptions of others.		√

Table 1: Common pitfalls

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overestimate the degree to which others agree with them by assuming that others share the same or similar thoughts, beliefs, values, or positions.

a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

- Be aware that high level of team orientation does not mean that team members have to agree with one anotherat all times.

b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

- Build team self-correction mechanisms.

9. **Humans are not objective when they are together.** In large social groups, humans have the tendency to form subgroups. This is inevitable as different people have different comfort levels with one another depending on race, gender, and background, among other factors. Subsequently, people may treat other group members differently depending on whether they perceive them to be members of their subgroup. In addition, they may be willing to take greater risks collectively than they would individually. The reverse is also possible. Hence, the influence of the group on individuals cannot be underestimated. In terms of sensemaking, this preferential treatment of in-group members and the tension between sub-groups may impede information sharing and objectivity, leading to suboptimal sensemaking at the group level.

a. What individuals can do to prevent this pitfall:

- Be aware of this tendency. Make an effort to know everyone in the team, including those that one feels uncomfortable with from the outset.

b. What the team can do to mitigate this pitfall:

- Conduct team building to ensure that team vision, rules, roles and relationships are well-established.
- Always have some members acting as devil's advocates or observers to question the team's assumptions, beliefs and decisions.

CONCLUSION

Sensemaking is an important human activity. Although some of us are better at sensemaking than others, we are generally quite good at it. However the same cannot be said of teams. Collective sensemaking does not come as naturally—simply putting a group of people together does not mean they will operate as a team.

Systematic efforts have to be put in place to build a team and its collective sensemaking process. Hence, in addition to the specific actions that teams should adopt during their collective sensemaking process, this essay ends off with three more systems-level recommendations for enhancing the collective sensemaking process of our command teams in the SAF.

1. **Leadership Training.** Increasingly, we need leaders who are comfortable with having their team members taking the lead when necessary. Third Generation leaders should speak less in order for the team to say more. In addition, Third Generation leaders must possess the ability to build teams and establish a climate where team members are not fearful of failure and are willing to question the assumptions of other members and even the leader.

2. **Education**. Commanders and staff should be educated on the potential pitfalls of individual sensemaking and collective sensemaking.

3. **Procedure for Collective Sensemaking.** Despite the paucity of research on collective sensemaking, enough is known for the development of a procedure to train the SAF's command teams in conducting collective sensemaking. This procedure should be akin to our battle procedures except that its primary purpose is for a command team to sense up an emerging situation quickly and more comprehensively. It should be equally applicable to both conventional operations and operations-other-than-war.

In conclusion, we are only beginning to make sense of sensemaking, especially collective sensemaking. 1 + 1 > 2 is achievable in a team context. Collective

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frames and team mental models are far more robust than individual frames and individual mental models respectively. Hence, command teams that take the time and effort to develop a collective frame will be less susceptible to situational surprise. Likewise, command teams with well-developed team mental models will be less prone to fundamental surprise.

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7. Ibid.
8. Cognitive dissonance is the perception of incompatibility between two cognitions, which can be defined as any element of knowledge, including attitude, emotion, belief, or behavior. The theory of cognitive dissonance holds that contradicting cognitions serve as a driving force that compels the mind to acquire or invent new thoughts or beliefs, or to modify existing beliefs, so as to reduce the amount of dissonance (conflict) between cognitions. See "Cognitive Dissonance," *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_dissonance.
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12. Karen A. Jehn, Gregory B. Northcraft, and Margaret A. Neale, "Why Differences Make a Difference: A Field Study of Diversity, Conflict, and Performance in Workgroups," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44 (1999): 741-763.

13. In psychology, heuristics are simple, efficient rules of thumb which have been proposed to explain how people make decisions, come to judgments and solve problems, typically when facing complex problems or incomplete information. These rules work well under most circumstances, but in certain cases lead to systematic cognitive biases. See "Heutrisitc," *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heuristic.

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Sons of Singapore: Why Some NSmen Keep Going and Going

by **COL (VOL) Leonard Yeow Ghim Chee**

Abstract:

The *Straits Times* feature "Some NSmen Keep Going and Going" focuses on Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (NSmen). 1WO (VOL) Frederick Seah, 44, and COL (VOL) Clement Hendricks, 58, shared their views and personal perspectives on why they served as long as they have. The article gave timely recognition to a special group of long-serving NSmen who have gone way beyond the basic obligations of National Service (NS). This article aims to help Singaporeans understand why some men in their family or work circles continue to serve NS long after their obligation and liability periods end.

Keywords: Long-Serving NSmen; In-Camp-Training; National Defence

1WO Frederick Seah and Family

On Saturday 29 January 2011, The *Straits Times* feature "Some NSmen Keep Going and Going," on page A8, focused on Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (NSmen). 1WO (VOL) Frederick Seah, 44, and COL (VOL) Clement Hendricks, 58, shared their views and personal perspectives on why they served as long as they have. This article also gave timely recognition to a special group of long-serving NSmen who have gone way beyond the basic obligations expected of all able-bodied male citizens: a mandatory two years (previously two-and-a-half) of Full-Time National Service plus 10 years (previously 13) of follow-on National Service (NS). While Fred and Clement could have easily walked away long ago, having fulfilled their own NS requirements and more, something "keeps them going and going." As Fred said with the deepest conviction in the article's conclusion, "I will continue to volunteer and serve until my knees give way." Admirable words and spoken quite bluntly, by a smart-looking citizen soldier posing with his beautiful family. One could almost hear readers ask, "Are these words real? Are they sincere?" For sure, sceptics of NS will say, "Is this for show?"

As a long-serving NSman myself, I would like to add my personal views to this story. These views are not the official views of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). My hope is that this essay will help Singaporeans understand why some men in their family or work circles bother to devote precious time and effort to serving NS long after their obligation and liability periods end.

Within this special group, many of us long-serving NSmen know both Fred and Clement personally. Both of them meant every word said about why they chose to keep going. We consider it a special privilege and honour to serve alongside people like Fred and Clement. Having spent so many years working together, both directly in the same combat units and professional courses, or indirectly during exercises, we have come to know each other well. We have watched each other mature, raise children and develop our careers (yes, we compare notes regularly

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when we come back to serve or gather for events). We have also aged with each passing year and decade. This has become our extended family, a community of like-minded peers. We cannot fake our intentions for long—people can see our lack of sincerity, especially if we serve for the wrong reasons. That said, most of us also try to stay out of the limelight, preferring to focus on our NS roles and responsibilities.

Fred Seah is the managing director of a home-grown advertising firm and Clement Hendricks is an architect. Both are professionals and entrepreneurs who need to ensure that despite their NS responsibilities, they continue to succeed in their businesses yearly to be able to provide for their families and staff. These are not idle people with a lot of spare time to while away. On the contrary, they have to diligently eke out time, energy and capacity from somewhere else to contribute to their NS roles and responsibilities. It is really quite amazing, but within the pool of long-serving NSmen we can also find other entrepreneurs as well as lawyers, doctors, dentists, educators, advertising leaders, bankers, financiers, property company leaders and professional senior managers or vice-presidents working for local and foreign Multinational Corporations (MNCs)—i.e. leaders from all kinds of professional backgrounds. Several of these men hold important leadership roles in full-time jobs with senior level responsibilities, top-line revenues, bottom line measurements and busy regional and global travel schedules.

These are not idle people with a lot of spare time to while away. On the contrary, they have to diligently eke out time, energy and capacity from somewhere else to contribute to their NS roles and responsibilities.

We could have used this time and energy to make a lot more money for ourselves and do more great things for our companies and businesses. During our "non-work, off-work or weekend" time, we could do what most other Singaporeans do when they rest: spend time with our families, on our hobbies, or eating, enjoy success and wealth, build up personal investment portfolios, or fully experience the many modern leisure activities like shopping, gaming and sports. These options are readily available in Singapore today, thanks to the hard work, blood, sweat, tears and toil of the government, our leaders and the generations of Singaporeans before us who have built up this nation.

We will not pass judgement on anyone who has chosen not to extend their NS and continue serving as we have done. Everyone is free to decide what they want to do for themselves with their own time and resources after completing the obligatory NS liabilities. We are, of course, still able to enjoy many of life's rewards. However, our extended NS service requires a conscious decision—it has cost us something, in the form of time, emotions, wealth (or opportunity costs), talent and a lot of hard work and effort. Frankly, it is often difficult to explain to people why we still wear the SAF uniform at our age, when most just cannot wait to finish their NS liability and forget about the whole thing. We are often misunderstood by others, including close friends and family members who consider us strange or unusual, even unwise with our priorities. Our family lives are also affected when we choose to serve longer. When we are busy with soldiering responsibilities in camp or out in the field, our wives and other family members have to step in and take over our duties as husbands and fathers. Hence, we know very well that we can never serve without the total support of our dear spouses and families. Professionally, we also have to make sure we complete our business commitments and tasks before we step away for an In-Camp-Training period, while remaining contactable by phone to ensure that key business decisions can still be addressed—we cannot ignore or delegate our primary job responsibilities.

Soldiering is not a walk in the park. I confess that there are days during a long exercise, especially at night, when I find myself wondering at three AM in the morning: "What in the world am I doing here

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in the middle of nowhere? I miss my bed, my wife, my kids and my creature comforts. I must be crazy to be doing this at my age." We need to be sure that we are doing all this for the right reasons. Why do we do it? Why do Fred and Clement keep doing this?

For glory and honour? Realistically, it is usually not worth all the pain, effort and inconveniences. There are many other smarter, quicker and much more comfortable ways to gain personal glory and honour. For wealth? Many of these NSmen are professional heavyweights and the SAF can never fully repay the years of youth, service, lost revenue, commissions and the many opportunity costs that they forgo in order to serve, even if, as Clement comments, "after several years, we [learn] to manage the two sides well". Make-up pay is only meant to defray the cost of NS training—it merely "makes-up." As for the goodies that the government dishes out from time to time—tax rebates, Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT) incentives, cash incentives—these only help to move things forward and offset some of the smaller sacrifices. While the NS community fully appreciates and welcomes all of these goodies—each year, a dedicated government team explores new ways to reward NS—such incentives are not what drive long-serving NSmen.

We do not judge those who have finished their liability and have decided to stop volunteering and to move on. In fact, we tirelessly encourage our juniors, who form the bulk of NSmen, not to defer but complete their ten-year liability as soon as possible, so that they can then concentrate on their families and careers.

However, we also recognise that it takes a long time to be trained and to acquire the knowledge, capabilities and experience of thinking soldiers and commanders. As long-serving NSmen, this is where we can make a unique contribution to the SAF and the country—we sometimes jokingly refer to ourselves as "the irregulars." However, without the professional regular force and their support, help, guidance and professional input, we NSmen would not be able to fulfil our roles. They are the professionals who help us to rapidly acquire and hone our soldiering skills and

In-Camp-Training: An NSman section commander from 657 SIR getting the signal to move his section forward.

competencies to the highest levels. It is the strong partnership between the professional SAF core and NSmen (including long-serving ones like us), which has enabled NS to be such an outstanding national institution. This credit must be shared with all those involved in building and sustaining our citizen army.

Never again must there be a repeat of World War II, when Singapore fell to the Japanese in a short span of time.

We understand that Singapore is vulnerable and that everything can change within a short period of time. We can never take the peace we enjoy today or the security of the country for granted, even if it seems that we have "arrived." Most of us do not have the firsthand experience of the young Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who saw and felt the insecurity and instability as he made his way home alone during the racial tensions and riots in early years of Singapore (as narrated by Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew in his latest book). However, MM Lee's description of Singapore as "an 80-storey building standing on marshy land" should resonate with us. On the face of it, Singapore's existence does not appear particularly precarious, especially to those encouraged by a false sense of confidence in our arrival as a "First World" country. The average Singaporean has come to assume that this peaceful and secure country will remain this way forever. Increasingly, we meet people who say that there is no real threat to Singapore and that we should not be paranoid by imagining worst case scenarios.

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This is very far from the truth. What are we serving? What are we defending? Upon reflection, the real answers go beyond what is usually said in polite conversation. In fact, most people are too busy chasing their dreams and living their lives to consider these questions, which is understandable. But for those of us who have served for a long time, we see things from a much different perspective and know that this peace and prosperity we now enjoy is fragile and cannot be taken for granted. This is the gist of MM Lee's book.

We believe that we are defending our right to be our own country and nation. This includes the freedom to have our own way of life and to do what we know is best for ourselves. To have our own place that we can call home. To be able to marry and rejoice, to mourn and bury, in peace. To raise children and enjoy the sacred privilege of parenting, to bring up our sons and daughters to be great people—greater than us, hopefully. To be able to study in peace in our fine educational institutions—now rated amongst the best in the world, giving us the opportunity to have good careers and to be professionally competitive on the world stage. To be able to enjoy our many favourite local foods, hobbies, music, dances, plays, festivals, holidays and anniversaries. To be able to bid for and organise the Youth Olympic Games and equivalent international events. To host Formula One races, both for the spectacle they provide and the opportunity to showcase our fine country to the rest of the world. To attract the best talents to our land to grow our national wealth, widen our talent base and maintain our competitive advantage in many fields. To indulge in the many luxuries we have now earned the right and the financial capacity to pay for. To be able to walk around at night safely; to go for an early morning jog or walk in relative security. To be able to lie down at night after a hard day's work and sleep in peace.

In fact, we hope that it will motivate more NSmen to consider serving beyond their NS liability and taking over our duties eventually. This is true NS—giving to something larger than yourself.

It is so easy to forget that what we enjoy today is not a given. Many Singaporeans travel widely and frequently these days, and we can see that conditions in other countries are often different. We certainly do not need to judge others, but if we are honest with ourselves, we should realize that conditions here can also change fast if we are not careful. When they do change, will we be able to react quickly and get back on our feet, to move on as a nation and people? What use is your property valuation doubling, if there is uncertainty on the horizon? It will quickly come back down, or crash.

There is a place for military NS. We must be able to fight for ourselves if necessary. Never again must there be a repeat of World War II, when Singapore fell to the Japanese in a short span of time. We need a robust economy and a vibrant society to be able to sustain our national defence. Military defence cannot just be the responsibility of the active regulars and servicemen—NSmen form a key component of our citizen army. We must train well and maintain professional competence in the art of soldiering, ready for the call to action. At other times, we are ordinary citizens going about our daily lives, contributing to the economy of the country. These are the convictions of us long-serving NSmen who persevere.

If and when the chips are down, it is likely that some will choose to leave this country, and it is estimated that 20% of the population have the financial means and ability to buy a one-way air ticket out of this country should they decide to. The remaining 80% will have no choice but to fight. There is no way around it.

Unfortunately, not everyone thinks this way. For many citizens, especially younger men who were born and grew up amidst Singapore's success, the comfortable life today is their one and only reference point. This is a truth we must accept, like many

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other nations and cities around the world. Some say this is the "curse of successful national building"—your next generation does not remember the initial sacrifices. Compulsory Full-Time NS is very much regarded as an unwelcome intrusion into one's life, plans and ambitions. We hear complaints all the time, and know that we cannot convince or convert all of these unhappy people, but perhaps, as an older generation who still can remember, albeit sometimes vaguely, the way Singapore was in the early years of development, we can invest in some ways to help to bridge the expectation gaps and to remind everyone of our inherent vulnerabilities. We should not sound the "gloom and doom story" constantly, but in a way that does not discourage or dishearten the younger generations.

The world has changed. Since the September 11 attacks, the security landscape both globally and in Asia has changed drastically. Governments and countries do not just worry about conventional conflicts between opposing armed forces—lone perpetrators or cluster attacks like the 2008 Mumbai attacks are potential threats. We cannot take peace for granted, nor ignore the long-term need for a credible standing security force like the SAF, with national servicemen as a key component. Serving in the SAF for extended periods allows us to share these convictions with our fellows, especially the younger ones.

My hope is that more articles like the *Straits Times* feature story on Fred and Clement will remind us of our inherent vulnerabilities as a nation, generating greater interest and discussion about doing more for NS. In fact, we hope that it will motivate more NSmen to consider serving beyond their NS liability and taking over our duties eventually. This is true NS—giving to something larger than yourself. Most of us will not have an impact on national issues within our lifetimes, as we are neither part of the government nor key decision makers. However, by serving NS longer than most people, we have a chance to contribute to this nation in a tangible way.

In conclusion, if you propose the same question asked of Fred Seah: "how long will you continue to serve?" to every other long-serving NSman, you will probably receive similar answers. Many of our parents were immigrants, but as sons of Singapore we hope to serve in NS for as long as we can—weak knees and all—assuming of course that we continue meet the service criteria of fitness, good health and professional competence.

We know it is not possible to keep going indefinitely. An overseas career posting can take us out of the country for an extended period of time. An illness or change of personal circumstances will require us to prioritise where we should spend our time—and this is the right thing to do. We need to sustain our businesses and our companies, for both our colleagues' and our own sakes. There will surely come a time when we can no longer serve in actual appointments, roles and responsibilities in the SAF, and must give way to others who follow in our footsteps. Yet, this same spirit of wanting to give our best to NS and national defence remains very strong, and will probably remain with us for the rest of our lives. We certainly hope to be able to encourage, inspire and develop future generations of NSmen. Hopefully, when we have finally gone the ways of the ancients and left the stage of life, there will be others like Fred Seah who can say with full conviction, "I will continue to volunteer and serve until my knees give way." This will warm our hearts very much.

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COL (VOL) Leonard Yeow Ghim Chee enlisted in the SAF as a Full-Time National Serviceman in June 1981. He holds a Bachelor in Engineering (Hons), majoring in Computer Engineering from NTI/NUS in 1990 and attained his MBA (International Business) from Golden Gates University in 1997.

He is currently the Chief Executive & Managing Director of The Eximius Group Pte Ltd, the Singapore office of MRINetwork, a US-headquartered executive search organisation, working with various businesses and senior executives across Asia Pacific.

Within the SAF, COL (VOL) Yeow is currently the Officer Mentor and Chief of Staff COS Div Hub 2 in the Div HQ, 2PDF. The notable achievements in his SAF career include twice winning the Best NS Infantry Unit for 95/96 and 96/97, NSman of the Year 1997, serving as Honorary ADC to the late President Ong Teng Cheong, and being awarded the SAF National Service Commendation Medal (Military) 2005, the SAF Good Conduct Medal 1988 and the SAF Long Service Medal (Military) 2010. He has served on various SAF committees and previously sat as a civilian member on the Supervisory Board of the Defence Manpower Group (DMG).

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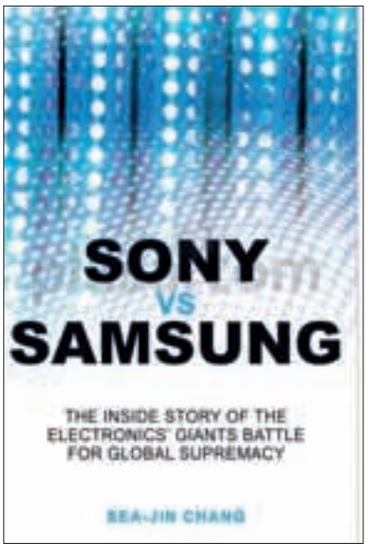
Book Review



Chang Sea-Jin, *Sony vs. Samsung: The Inside Story of the Electronics Giants' Battle for Global Supremacy*, Singapore: Wiley, 2008, 250 pages.

by **ME5 Calvin Seah and Malini T. Deepan**

INTRODUCTION

In this book, Professor Chang Sea-Jin explores why Sony's decades-long domination of market share in the electronics industry has dropped so rapidly.[1] In comparison, Samsung Electronics, then an obscure Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), emerged from nowhere and gained a foothold in the electronics industry. In his analysis of both companies, Professor Chang is convinced that performance differences between Sony and Samsung Electronics are not due to their differing strategies, but to their organisational processes and executive leadership. He argues that Sony's independent business units quickly became silos when its top management leadership was questioned, whereas Samsung's strategy of responding to commoditisation with speed and its militaristic organisation may have contributed to its stellar performance. This review will examine his comparisons of the two organisations and draw observations on how a militaristic organisation can succeed in the commercial world or in the areas of innovation.

BEGINNINGS AND STRATEGIES

In Chapters 1 and 2, Chang details the beginnings of both Sony and Samsung Electronics and their overall strategies:

Sony

Beginnings

In 1946, the year after Japan's defeat in World War II, Sony was incorporated as the Tokyo Telecommunication Engineering Corporation. As Sony-brand transistors became a hit overseas, the company changed its name to "Sony" in 1958 which is a combination of the Latin word *sonus*, which means sound, and "sonny," a nickname for a small boy. This name evoked the image of vibrant youth and reflected the company's ambition to grow. Though Sony has long been regarded as a market leader, since 2003 its sales have been either stagnant or on a downward trending. In addition, its profitability has been on the decline since 1997.

New Product Development

All of Sony's management resources have been concentrated on the development of new

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products. Sony's capability to develop innovative products originated from its founding principles of "Freedom and Open-mindedness." Sony's founders believed that they could not compete with big companies by imitating what they did. Instead, they have been innovative, doing things which others could not. Sony's key capability was not in breakthrough scientific discoveries but in commercialising new, inexpensive, well-made products with large consumer potential that other companies neglected.

Internal Research and Development (R&D)

Sony found creative ways to market its offerings, even when other firms did not consider them commercially viable. Because Sony pursued innovative products, it geared its research towards this goal. Sony's commercialisation capability relied entirely on internal research and development; it could not imitate others because it created products that had never existed before and it relied on its own research centres for new product development. Sony established a corporate culture that not only encouraged originality in research activities but even treated failure generously. However, such a system meant the possibility of costly failures, as well as researchers and developers using Sony's funds to pursue their own interests.

Diversity in Products

As Sony had not set any direction for the future trajectory of the firm's technologies, technological development typically occurred sporadically or by accident. As such, Sony was stretched thinly by too many products and rivals as it battled on a very broad front. At the same time, different business divisions could coincidentally develop similar devices separately without any cooperation or communication, thus creating competing products within its own brand.

Industry Jet Setter

Sony frequently attempted to establish its own technology as the industry standard. However, owning unique standards is risky as well as costly and may alienate consumers who care about compatibility between products. At times, Sony's efforts to develop new products in conjunction with other firms have been inhibited because it is swimming against the industry tide.

Samsung Electronics

Beginnings

Samsung Electronics, a subsidiary of Samsung Group, was established in January 1969 with an investment of 330 million won. Samsung Group established Samsung Electronics in order to diversify into the electronics business. Until the early 1990s, Samsung Electronics was an obscure Asian company that was known mainly for exporting cheap and generic OEM products. In fact it has only achieved laudable success recently. What is really noteworthy is its ability to gain a strong position in such a short span of time.

Borrowed Technology

Samsung had no technological capability when it was first established in 1969. Until the late 1970s it was capable of nothing more than assembly, and it imported all its key components from Japanese suppliers. When it first began producing its own goods, many were of extremely poor quality.

Production Process Technology

The R&D and production departments within Samsung Electronics' Semiconductor division worked closely to improve production. This was in contrast to a traditional, sequential approach where process engineers came in only after design was completed and test engineers took over only after the production process was done. Samsung Electronics continuously promotes process innovations that enhance productivity, even after mass-production is initiated.

Focus on Technologies with Clear Trajectories

Unlike Sony's focus on unique and differentiated products, Samsung Electronics produced commodities with a focus on competitive cost advantages. It invested in technologies that had trajectories with clear evolutionary progress and industrial standards, and businesses with the highest returns given its resource level. Unlike Sony, it has not hesitated to source technology from other firms and other countries.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Sony has become a synonym for "smart and unique products, good

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performance, and outstanding design." People are so familiar with Sony that some Western consumers never realise that Sony is a Japanese company. As a global brand, Sony is rated as highly as Coca-Cola and Nike. In comparison, Samsung was a completely generic brand until the mid-1990s. Its products sat unnoticed at the bottom of store shelves. Consumers once perceived them as cheap, though this gap in perceptions has narrowed considerably. Professor Chang explains the reason for this:

Sony

Culture of Freedom and Openness

Freedom and open-mindedness have long been the foundation of Sony's corporate culture and organising principles. Its founding statement of purpose clearly states the guiding maxim of its corporate culture, "Let's make a company where everyone feels happy to work." During employee training, new recruits were told: "We did not draft you. This is not the army, so that means you have voluntarily chosen Sony. This is your responsibility and normally if you join this company we expect that you will stay for the next 20 or 30 years." Sony also practiced on-the-job training (OJT). It sent new employees straight to its business units without any formal training because it believed employees could best enhance their skills when faced with real work and that they would grow more when tasked with a job initially beyond their ability. Sony also hired outstanding foreign employees for key positions to facilitate global localisation. Sony's organisation became horizontal, not hierarchical or authoritarian. The Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Sony's founding generation managed Sony through charismatic leadership and even those holding dissenting views had few objections to their leadership.

Samsung Electronics

Office of Secretaries

The greatest difference in the organisational structure between Samsung Electronics and Sony is that the former is controlled by an Office of Secretaries, renamed the Group Strategic Planning Office in 2007. It is a group-level staff organisation that helps the Chairman of Samsung Group oversee individual affiliates. Its core functions are finance and accounting, auditing, planning, public relations, and human resource management, including the hiring and firing of all executives within Samsung Group. All important strategic decisions and sizable investment decisions, even at the individual affiliate level, have to be reviewed by this Office. In other words, all the important decisions made by its Chairman were with the assistance of this Office.

RISE AND FALL

Samsung Electronics

Emperor Management

Samsung's governance structure can be characterised by the powerful authority held by the chairman of Samsung Group which was sometimes referred to as "emperor management" or "dictatorship." The immediate benefit of this power structure is that is has enabled the organisation to make decisions quickly and aggressively, yet still taking full responsibility for its strategies. Samsung Electronics has had several turning points when important strategic decisions were made under conditions of uncertainty, which was important as timing is crucial in the semiconductor business. Samsung Electronics was able to make decisions swiftly and concentrate on improving efficiency because it had a centralised structure with the chairman as its head.

One-Man Decision Making

The problem with Samsung Electronics' governance structure is the uncertainty of leadership as there is no guarantee that good leadership will be sustained. Furthermore, even good leaders can make mistakes and matters can be made worse because there will be few courageous enough to oppose the leader. In Samsung Electronics' case, the few that expressed concern or opposition were fired. Because the firm was a latecomer to the electronics industry and technological trajectories were clear, it was not difficult for it to emerge at the top—catching up with market leaders through hard work and ingenuity was enough. However, Samsung Electronics is now a leader, not a follower, thus an autocratic system may no longer be optimal and wrong decisions could prove disastrous.

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Excessive Centralisation

All the major decision-making power is held by the Chairman and his Office of Secretaries—there are no measures in place to check their decisions even when they are wrong. In Western companies, strong corporate governance structures guard against such absolute power, ensuring that firms are not run into the ground by a few managers. Furthermore, while investment analysts and the media often serve as a check against untrammelled executive power, this safeguard does not exist in Korea where the media praises everything the Samsung Group does.

Organisational Fatigue

Samsung Electronics is also experiencing organisational fatigue induced by "fear-based management." Its employees and board members can be dismissed for any reason by the Chairman, the Office of Secretaries, or other superior managers. Working under such stress, the employees suffer accumulated fatigue and their performance suffers as a result.

Lack of Creativity

Lack of creativity is another of Samsung Electronics' weaknesses. As long as it had a clear target to pursue, it could surmount its considerable disadvantages by benchmarking against other firms and having its employees work around the clock. The firm's corporate culture, management goals, values, and resources have been optimised to capitalise on the benefits available to a late entrant. Having become a market leader, it now has no one left to imitate. It has few creative employees who can generate unique and new ideas. Furthermore, both engineers and managers fear failures, which make them focus on projects that give immediate payback and are low risk. The firm has also failed to accumulate technical expertise in developing new products because its R&D divisions have been focused primarily on improving production efficiency.

Sony

Constant Restructuring

The CEOs of Sony's founding generation managed Sony through charismatic leadership. As it switched from a charismatic leader to an administratively-oriented new CEO in 1994, it had already restructured many times. The new CEO wanted to introduce the "complexity theory" into management and he was a pioneer in experimenting with a new way of organising business. His frequent experiments, however, worsened pre-existing problems in Sony's organisational structure. With the frequent restructuring, managers did not have enough time to improve performance. As such, their strategies became inconsistent and employees became dispirited.

Silos

Sony implemented a company structure in which individual product divisions have separate balance sheets and income statements, operating almost like independent companies. Such a divisional structure offers clear accountability but individual divisions can become too independent. Sometimes product divisions in the same firm were "silos" and competed with each other rather than cooperate. In Sony's case, some of the product divisions refused to share resources or transfer technology to each other.

Absence of Headquarters (HQ) Control Function

Under the company system, Sony HQ was supposed to be like a holding company that would take responsibility only for investing in new businesses and overall coordination. Sony HQ was defined as an "active investor," which was to maximise shareholder value and the board of directors' role was only supervisory. As such, Sony HQ was a staff organisation that could not force individual companies to act. Due to this non-interference by HQ, there were frequent disagreements as well as internal dissent. Consensus was hard to come by.

Cultural Change

Many problems that Sony encountered, however, resulted from the attempt to transform Sony from a traditional Japanese firm into a westernised global firm. Even though Sony implemented a Western board system, company structure, and evaluation measures like Economic Value Add (EVA),[2] it is questionable whether Sony's executives and employees were ready to accept those systems and operate within them. At its heart, Sony remained a Japanese firm. At the same time, dividing Sony's top managerial powers in terms of CEO

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and Chief Operating Officer (COO) titles added to the confusion as these titles were difficult for Japanese businesses to understand and apply.[3] The proliferation of titles confused both outsiders and Sony's own employees.

BRIGHT SPARKS FOR PROMOTION OF INNOVATION

There are also many examples of initiatives or "bright sparks" that have helped both companies achieve innovativeness. Many of these initiatives are found in our MINDEF initiatives as part of our PRIDE movement.

Technology Strategy Meeting

Sony geared its research and development towards innovation. It held technology strategy meetings where divisional managers, researchers and developers met to formulate research projects for each division and exchange information.

Internal Knowledge Sharing System

Samsung Electronics built an internal knowledge sharing system where detailed information collected during development and production processes are stored. It also assigns more than half the engineers who have worked on existing lines to build new ones, enabling knowledge sharing between existing and new lines.

Focus on Process Improvements

Samsung Electronics continuously promoted process innovations that enhance productivity, even after mass-production is initiated. Though most companies would be glad to sit back and let production take off, Samsung Electronics did not rest on its laurels and continued to strive for process excellence.

Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

Samsung Electronics created the CTO post to manage mid to long-term basic research, road-mapping and patent standardisation, and to integrate and control the R&D functions of each general department. The CTO helped to prevent overlaps in R&D and decrease the competition between divisions.

Strategic Product System

Samsung Electronics created this system to develop new products. The system instituted a tight time schedule where employees generate ideas for product concepts from March to April and the business division presidents present these ideas to the CEO in May and June. Three items are then chosen as the strategic products for the following year. This system is strategic and allows a bottom-up process of idea generation.

CONCLUSION

Professor Chang's analysis of Sony and Samsung Electronics provides lessons that any organisation can learn from. A militaristic organisation can succeed in the commercial world, as seen by Samsung Electronics' success. However, an organisation that is centrally managed needs to carefully select leaders as well as maintain checks and balances to avoid falling into the pitfalls of "emperor management" or "organisational fatigue" as evident in Samsung Electronics' recent years. Organisations also need to watch out for the usual habit of "transforming" without proper change management plan, exemplified by Sony's difficulties. They should continue to invest in R&D to become industry trendsetters, but should avoid going against the prevailing tide.

ENDNOTES

1. Professor Chang Sea-Jin is currently Provost's Chair Professor, NUS Business School, National University of Singapore. He received his BA and MA in Economics from Seoul National University and PhD in Strategic Management from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he was a Dean's Fellow.

2. EVA or Economic Value Add is a financial performance method to calculate the true economic profit of a commercial organisation.

3. The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisation and typically reports to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

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Sir William Orpen (1878–1931)

by **Ruben Pang**

Sir William Orpen, Self Portrait, 1913

INTRODUCTION

Major Sir William Newenham Montague Orpen was a profoundly successful and versatile portrait painter working in 20th century Britain.[1] He was also commissioned as an official War Artist and served on the Western Front from 1917-1918. During this period, he produced a variety of works from portraits of senior military and political figures to paintings that depicted trench warfare. Following the war, Orpen documented the Paris Peace Conference. His extensive body of work eventually earned him knighthood in 1918 and the recognition of being the most prolific war artist of his time.

EARLY LIFE

Orpen was born in Stillorgan on 27 November 1878 to an affluent protestant home. His early interest in art was supported by his mother, who enrolled him into the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin at the age of 13.[2] He was a natural artist, winning major accolades for his work during his years in school. At the age of 18, Orpen was accepted into London's Slade School of Fine Art. It was there he associated with equally dynamic contemporaries, including Augustus John and Henry Tonks, both of whom also served as war artists on the Western Front.[3]

THE INFLUENCE OF IMPRESSIONISM

Sir William Orpen's aesthetic sense was highly influenced by Impressionism, one of the most prominent art movements during the late 19th century. Originating in Paris during the 1870s, the Impressionists were a group of avant-garde painters who sought to create atmosphere and visual effects through gesture and texture.[4] Adapting this new expression across a variety of genres from landscapes to portraits, their paintings accomplished a heightened sense of vibrancy and movement, often at the expense of detail—emphasis was placed on expressing the sensation of seeing over rendering specific features of a perceived subject.[5] Essentially, the idea was to capture reality in a way which photography could not.

Impressionists experimented with a diverse range of paint manipulation techniques. They were particularly interested in methods which accommodated spontaneity and speed. A distinguishing mark of an Impressionist painting was the manipulation of short, broken brush-strokes and the use of raw colors.[6] This approach allowed the figurative nature of any subject

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to be captured quickly within one sitting (*alla prima*) and equipped artists with the means to paint outdoors (*en plein air*)—an advantage Orpen applied to his work on the Western Front.

THE WAR ARTIST

Orpen was an influential lecturer in his alma mater, the Metropolitan School of Art, when World War One broke out.[7] By then, he had already established himself as a versatile and fashionable artist. In British and Irish art scenes Orpen was a renowned draughtsman who synthesized the skills of the Old Masters with a modern flair. Imparting techniques from Slade, Orpen introduced European classical realism to a new generation of Irish artists. Orpen also enjoyed the patronage of wealthy clients and became a member of the New English Art Club through the recommendation of John Singer Sargent, another commissioned war artist.

Portrait of a Grenadier Guardsman

In 1914, Orpen supported the war effort by contributing his services to fund raising auctions for the Red Cross—where blank canvases were sold to the highest bidder to have their portrait painted. A year into the war, a sense of patriotism compelled him to undertake a commission under the British Army Service Corps.[8] By dint of his client, Quartermaster General Sir John Cowans, he was given the rank of Second Lieutenant and served briefly as an administrative clerk at Kensington Barracks.[9] Orpen's artistic expertise was quickly identified by the head of the War Propaganda Bureau, Charles Mastermant, who formally appointed him as a war artist in 1916.[10] Assigned the task of painting the portraits of senior military personnel, Orpen was sent to the trenches along the Western Front in France. Anticipating the need to endorse the artist's autonomy, Cowans facilitated Orpen's promotion to the rank of Major before dispatching him.[11]

THE WESTERN FRONT

Painting the Ranks. Orpen arrived at the Western Front in spring 1917. During this period, he continued to paint the portraits of senior military and political figures, as he did in the early stages of the war. His subjects included Winston Churchill, who at the time was the commander of the 6th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers; Hugh Trechnard, the commander of the Royal Flying Corps who helped oversee the creation of the Royal Air Force;[12] and Sir Douglas Haig, a controversial general who accomplished an effective British advance along the Western Front which led to the Allied victory in November 1918.[13] Orpen particularly admired

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Sir Douglas Haig's character and they became close friends during the course of war. Orpen described Haig as a "strong man ... (who) understood, knew all, and felt all for his men, that he truly loved them; and (they) loved him."[14] It was Haig who encouraged Orpen to expand his painting repertoire to include the varieties of characters on the front. During a painting session, he said to Orpen, "Why waste your time painting me? Go and paint the men. They're the fellows who are saving the world, and they're getting killed every day."[15]

Orpen adapted to the new environmental constraints by approaching his subjects with a sense of economy; a considerable shift from the meticulous romanticized style he was known for. With this bravura style, Orpen's mantra was "A painting well drawn is always well enough painted." The artist Harrington Mann, noted of Orpen's focus on precision and efficiency in his book *The Technique of Portrait Painting*:

> "The face of the man before him was like the page of an open book which he read with astonishing insight. He made a literal transcript which he handed on to anyone who cared to know. It is the physical character which is of interest to the painter, but he knows that if he can but get this skin-deep truth, he has got everything ... Even with his Irish sense of humour, Orpen always told the truth. This is real portraiture."[16]

Comedy and Tragedy on the Front. Although obliged to focus his efforts on billet portraits, Orpen dedicated a substantial amount of his practice to stylized studies of war and its ironic incarnations. *In The Mad Woman of Douai* (1918), Orpen depicts a particularly memorable encounter while travelling around St. Quentin, France. In the foreground lie two improperly buried casualties, the eponymous mad woman and her equally disturbed company are juxtaposed against a ruined church's surviving crucifix. Orpen never tried to hide the grim details of war from the viewer, allowing them to see through the eyes of soldiers behind the lines. The narrative to this painting is found in his memoir, *An Onlooker In France*:

> "In one spot in the mud at the side of the road lay two British Tommies who had evidently just been killed. They had been laid out ready for something to take them away ... Death all round, and they themselves might be blown into eternity at any moment ... Another day I went to Douai, and there I saw the mad woman. Her son told us she had been quite well until two days before the Boche left, then they had done such things to her that she had lost her reason. There she sat, silent and motionless, except for one thumb which constantly twitched. But if one of us in uniform passed close to

The Mad Woman of Douai, 1918

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Theipval, 1917

her, she would give a convulsive shudder. It was sad, this woman with her beautiful, curly-headed son."[17]

Orpen's personal touch and choice of subject matter was well received in exhibitions and publications. He captured the front in a way which the cameras could not. The novelist Arnold Bennet, who was an influential affiliate of the War Propaganda Bureau, said of Orpen and his work: "William Orpen, having discovered a new subject, composes it newly ... Landscape, shell-holes, ruined trees and buildings, dug-outs, tents, and the tragedy and comedy of human existence—he sees them as though nobody had ever seen them before; and he arranges them in fresh patterns of contour, colour, plane. His ingenuity in manipulating the material is simply endless, and yet he is never tempted to falsify the material."[18]

The War Landscape. World War One was the first fully industrialised war of the twentieth century and the scale of its destruction literally scarred the earth; entire battlefields were rendered unrecognizable. Orpen observed and documented battlefields in different states, from the putrefaction of trench warfare to the beauty of nature's gradual reclamation though the seasons.

In the summer months of 1916, the British and Germans engaged each other in an intense battle in Thiepval, Somme. Orpen returned to the battlefield after a few months to find human remains and fragments of spent equipment amidst fine weather and efflorescence. The abject beauty of this landscape is captured in his painting titled *Theipval* (1917).

Orpen describes the initial environment in *An Onlooker in France*: "I shall never forget my first sight of the Somme battlefields. It was snowing fast, but the ground was not covered, and there was this endless waste of mud, holes and water. Nothing but mud, water, crosses and broken tanks; miles and miles of it, horrible and terrible."[19] And its transformation: "The dreary, dismal mud was baked white and pure-dazzling white. White daisies, red poppies and a blue flower, great masses of them, stretched for miles and miles."[20] A similar atmospheric contrast is seen when comparing *Thiepval* (1917) to the adumbrated, lifeless landscape of *Zonnebeke* (1918) and *Dead Germans In A Trench* (1917).

Zonnebeke (1918) is Orpen's depiction of the carnage left behind by the 3rd Battle of Ypres, part of the Passchendaele campaign from June to November 1917. A combination of heavy rain and continuous artillery shelling had turned the area into a muddy swampland. Terrible losses were suffered in repeated attacks and counter-attacks; both sides had each lost 250,000 men.[21] In November 1917, the British concluded the Passchendaele offensive after pushing their lines only five miles forward.[22] By then, Zonnebeke was rendered unrecognizable.

Letters, Paintings and Drawings from the Front. Although Orpen's experience of conflict was comfortable compared the conscripted men, he was still brought face-to-face with the

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Zonnebeke, 1918

horrors of war on the Western Front.[23] In a letter addressed to his wife Grace, he had described waterlogged trenches, destroyed shell-holes and the accumulation of unburied corpses. As a result of prolonged exposure to this contaminated environment, Orpen contracted blood poisoning in October 1917 and subsequently suffered from influenza. Orpen never fully recovered from these illnesses and continued to suffer from them until his death.[24] Despite this, he continued to produce around 125 paintings and drawings, chronicling the war environment and those who endured it.[25] He then compiled this collection and presented the entire series as a gift to the nation.[26]

POST WAR

War Memories. In 1921, Orpen published *An Onlooker In France*, an insightful account of his experiences on the Western Front containing selected paintings and drawings to supplement the narrative. Orpen wrote passionately of the variety of personalities that he painted; Tommies, Generals and civilians alike. Most notable was his affinity with the men on the front, especially the ordinary soldier, which he describes with fascination and admiration. In "Chapter Two: The Somme," Orpen recalls being deeply affected by the "endless stream of men ... all pressing along with apparently unceasing energy towards the front. Past all the little crosses where their comrades had fallen, nothing daunted, they pressed on towards the Hell that awaited them."[27]

In contrast, he indicted the political elite, whose avarice and mismanagement of the war resulted in the sacrifice of readily forgotten soldiers. In "Chapter Ten: London," Orpen finds himself disturbed by the general attitude of the "frocks"; office holders who complained of the burden of war work; long hours, overwork and the inconveniences of air raids. For Orpen, it was clear that the population who had not experienced the front-line could not appreciate the gravity of the sacrifices that the soldiers had made. He was repulsed when the "hand-shakers" spoke of their grievances as though "they were well in the middle of the world war; they were just the same as the fighting man in France or on some other front."[28]

The Paris Peace Conference. Following the war, Orpen was appointed the official artist of the Paris Peace Conference, producing *The Peace Conference At The Quai d'Orsay* (1919) and *The Signing of Peace in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles* (1919).[29] It was a sombre affair as the Allies' initial feelings of jubilation had succumbed to an anti-climatic exhaustion. Orpen chose to render these principal scenes with an ominous palette, dwarfing its personages while emphasizing negative space and a vertical gravity. His summary of the event is recorded in "Chapter Fifteen: Paris During The Peace Conference" of *An Onlooker In France*:

> "Then, amidst a mass of secretaries from the French Foreign Office, the two Germans, Hermann Müller and Doctor Bell, came nervously forward, signed, and were led back to their places ... All the "frocks" did all their tricks to perfection. President Wilson showed his back

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teeth; Lloyd George waved his Asquithian mane; Clemenceau whirled his gray-gloved hands about like windmills; Lansing drew his pictures and Mr. Balfour slept. It was all over. The "frocks" had won the war. The "frocks" had signed the Peace! The Army was forgotten. Some dead and forgotten, others maimed and forgotten, others alive and well—but equally forgotten ..."[30]

Orpen painted a third tribute in reaction to the injustice he felt for the forgotten soldiers. It was also intended to be an allegory of the political elite's administration at the expense of soldiers on the front line. Titled *To the Unknown British Soldier in France*, it depicts a coffin flanked by two ghostly figures, draped with tattered blankets from the trenches and set in contrast against the ornate background of the Paris Peace Conference. The haunting image's ambiguity garnered mixed reactions from the public and was attacked by the press.[31] Due to the controversy, Orpen was subsequently required to paint over the images of the dead soldiers. The painting was eventually accepted and exhibited in the Imperial War Museum in 1927.[32] Even after its revision, *To the Unknown British Soldier in France* is often cited as Orpen's most moving painting within the museum's collection.

To the Unknown British Soldier in France (After Amendment)

Critical and Commercial Success. The publicity Orpen received from his War Artist status substantially boosted his reputation. In May 1918, his war paintings exhibition at Agnew's Gallery in London was held in critical acclaim by the Pathé news and drew 10,000 visitors.[33] The general public especially connected with his harsh portrayal of war. Within a year, Orpen was knighted for his contributions in support of the war.[34] On a success streak, he returned to portrait painting, enjoying a stream of new commissions that fetched ever-increasing prices. In 1929, he was reported to have earned over £54000 within the year. Over the course of his career, Orpen produced over 600 paintings, dedicating the majority of his practice to portraiture.

Today, Sir William Orpen is remembered as a frisson of history and personality. Within the art world, his vocations were as varied as his paintings: brilliant student, influential teacher, master portraitist and perhaps the most formidable war artist of the 20th century.

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Quotable Quotes

It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front when you celebrate victory and when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership.
– ***Nelson Mandela*** *(b. 1918), South African president.*

The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.
– ***Dwight D. Eisenhower*** *(1890-1969), US president.*

No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings.
– ***Peter Drucker*** *(1909-2005), US writer and management consultant.*

If I have seen farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulder of giants.
– ***Isaac Newton*** *(1642-1727), English scientist.*

As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.
– ***Bill Gates*** *(b. 1955), US businessman, chief executive of Microsoft.*

I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others and you can become a leader among men.
– ***Lao-Tzu*** *(604-531 B.C.), founder of Taoism, in Tao Te Ching.*

Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them.
– ***John Maxwell*** *(b. 1947), Christian pastor and author of The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership.*

If I have the belief that I can do it, I will surely acquire the capacity to do it, even if I may not have it at the beginning.
– ***Mahatma Gandhi*** *(1869-1948), prominent leader of the Indian independence movement.*

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.
– ***Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*** *(1749-1832), German writer, artist and politician.*

Find what scares you, and do it. And you can make a difference, if you choose to do so.
– ***J. Michael Straczynski*** *(b. 1954), US writer and television producer.*

No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent.
– ***Abraham Lincoln*** *(1831-1881), US president.*

There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle, or to be the mirror that reflects it.
– ***Edith Wharton*** *(1862-1973), US novelist and designer.*

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Instructions for Authors

AIMS & SCOPE

POINTER is the official journal of the Singapore Armed Forces. It is a non-profit, quarterly publication that is circulated to MINDEF/SAF officers and various foreign military and defence institutions. *POINTER* aims to engage, educate and promote professional reading among SAF officers, and encourage them to think about, debate and discuss professional military issues.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

All articles submitted are reviewed on a rolling basis. The following dates indicate the approximate publication dates of various issues:

No. 1 (March)
No. 2 (June)
No. 3 (September)
No. 4 (December)

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- Military Campaigns or history and their relevance to the SAF
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All articles in *POINTER* use endnotes. Note numbers should be inserted after punctuation. Each endnote must be complete the first time it is cited. Subsequent references to the same source may be abbreviated.

The various formats of endnotes are summarized below. Punctuate and capitalise as shown.

Books

Citations should give the author, title and subtitle of the book (italicised), editor or translator if applicable (shortened to "ed." or "trans."), edition number if applicable, publication information (city, publisher and date of publication), appropriate page reference, and URL in the case of e-books. If no author is given, substitute the editor or institution responsible for the book.

For example:

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Articles in Periodicals

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For example:

Chan Kim Yin and Psalm Lew, "The Challenge of Systematic Leadership Development in the SAF," *POINTER* 30, no. 4 (2005): 39-50.

Chan and Lew, "The Challenge of Systematic Leadership Development in the SAF," 39-50.

Ibid., 39-50.

Mark J. Valencia, "Regional Maritime Regime Building: Prospects in Northeast and Southeast Asia," *Ocean Development and International Law* 31 (2000): 241.

Articles in Books or Compiled Works

Michael I. Handel, "Introduction," in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, ed. Michael I. Handel (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 3.

H. Rothfels, "Clausewitz," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, eds. Edward Mead Earle and Brian Roy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 102.

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David Boey, "Old Soldiers Still Have Something to Teach," *The Straits Times*, 28 September 2004, 12.

Donald Urquhart, "US Leaves it to Littoral States; Admiral Fallon Says Region Can Do Adequate Job in Securing Straits," *The Business Times Singapore*, 2 April 2004, 10.

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Liaquat Ali Khan, "Defeating the IDF," *Counterpunch*, 29 July 2006, http://www.counterpunch.org/khan07292006.html.

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International Committee of the Red Cross, "Direct participation in hostilities," 31 December 2005, http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/participation-hostilities-ihl-311205.

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