America and Third World Conflicts: Prospects For the Future

by
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INTRODUCTION

The fear of another Vietnam is deeply etched in the American psyche, affecting American policy and strategic options. Nowhere is this clearer than in the American posture in Latin and Central America. On the one hand, Administration spokesmen argue that military force must be deployed in Central America, for example, if other components of policy are to be effectively implemented. On the other hand, Administration critics are quick to point out that military force can not solve the problem in Central America, as the United States should have learned by the experience in Vietnam. Indeed, they argue that the use of military force is likely to get America involved in another Vietnam.[1] What makes the matter more complicated and solutions elusive is the fact that many policy makers and most Americans have little understanding of the deep political and social issues in Central America, and even less understanding of the nature of revolution and counter-revolution.

The mass media has contributed, in no small way, to the misunderstanding and misinterpretations of the issues. Seeking to provide easy explanations of events and policy, the media tend to oversimplify the issues, aim at the dramatic, and preoccupy themselves with military aspects of American policy subordinating other components of policy. Thus, explanations and solutions tend to be packaged in relatively simple and coherent terms deemed understandable to the media audience.

Many of the problems of perception and evaluation are reflected in American traditions and values, which in turn evolve from the nature of American democracy, perceptions of war, and military posture. These are not new features of American society, but historical continuities stretching back to the beginning of the American nation. An understanding of these in the context of revolution is necessary in formulating a balanced and realistic evaluation of American policy and strategy in the Southern Hemisphere and the rest of the Third World.

The purpose of this paper is to explore these issues, draw conclusions and apply the findings to the current American political-military posture. This is not intended to be an operational analysis nor a set of policy prescriptions. Rather the intent is to provide a framework for developing analytical insights and a clearer understanding of the problems and prospects of the American posture in

Central and Latin America. Additionally, such a framework will, it is hoped, provide realistic perspectives regarding the character of revolution and counter-revolution. There are four major components to this study: democratic imperatives, American perceptions of war, American military posture, and the character of revolution and counter-revolution.

DEMOCRATIC IMPERATIVES

The philosophical traditions of American democracy presuppose a moral and ethical content stemming from the Judeo-Christian heritage. The sanctity of human life, justice, and individual worth are the wellsprings of this heritage. Thus, the ends of government are presumed to be based on the furtherance of the individual and developing a quality of life that allows and supports maximum freedom and liberty. In terms of the American political system, this means that power ultimately rests in the people; those who govern owe responsibility to and base their authority on the people. The people have, among other things, an inherent right to take an active and meaningful role in the political system. While the discussion of these democratic imperatives are necessarily oversimplified, it is nonetheless clear that the center of gravity and legitimacy of democracy rests on the pre-eminence of the individual in society and the political system.

Moreover, not only are the ends of government determined by the moral and ethical standards evolving from democratic imperatives, but the means to achieve these ends must also conform to such imperatives. Thus, not only the ends, but the means must also be "good." One result is that American policy tends to be judged from the same democratic imperatives. This is also true with respect to American involvement in war.

AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF WAR

American involvement in conflict must be based on moral and ethical foundations evolving from democratic imperatives, if there is to be sustained support from the American people. Save the world for democracy, fight for human rights, America must preserve justice and order—these are acceptable bases for American involvement, at least in the view of many Americans. Yet, as many observers point out, Americans tend to be idealistic not only in foreign policy, but in military policy as well. In general, this view tends to color American perceptions of their role in world affairs. Since the end of World War II, a great deal of criticism has been leveled at the United States from a variety of sources regarding the gap between ideals and reality of American policy. Still, the purposes of policy as well as its criticism evolve from the same source—democratic imperatives of the American system.

There are a number of other considerations related to perceptions of war. Most Americans expect their involvement in conflict to

be based on clearly defined purposes, policy, and strategy. This presupposes that the definition of the enemy is clear, American intent with respect to the enemy is also clear, and war policy is pursued vigorously, yet humanely. What this suggests is a "Pearl Harbor" mentality, in which the threat by the adversary must be perceived as critical, challenging, clear, and immediate.

Translated to the conduct of war, American military forces are generally expected to operate according to the norms inherent in democratic imperatives. Thus, American military men and women are expected to act humanely on the battlefield, to observe the rights of non-combatants, and to afford proper treatment to the enemy. Even strategic and tactical operations must conform to certain democratic standards, dirty tricks and ungentlemanly behaviour are frowned upon, if not condemned outright. In sum, the rules of land warfare as interpreted by American democracy have a strong moral and ethical content and must be observed by American forces.[2] Indeed, if the American military expects to maintain its credibility and congruence with its own society (and it must), its strategy, tactics, and battlefield behaviour must be closely linked to democratic imperatives. This is further reflected in the American military posture.

AMERICAN MILITARY POSTURE

The major characteristic of American military posture is its conventional configuration. The military institution is organizationally structured to respond to conventional and nuclear warfare. Additionally, this structuring is designed to be compatible to a high technology, battle environment. This posture is reflected in American military professionalism, whose philosophical and intellectual dimensions stem from classic traditions and from experience in the American Civil War, World War I, and World War II. The profession also owes part of its heritage to the French, British, and German military traditions. The essence of this Western military tradition evolves from the Clausewitzian notion that the center of gravity in war is the defeat and destruction of the enemy armed forces.

This professional orientation is also seen in career patterns. For example, even though the American Army recently activated the 1st Special Operations Command (which includes Special Forces and Ranger units) and has recognized special operations as a career field, the primary thrust of career success remains in the standard command and staff pattern and in completing the standard sequence of senior level military schools. The curricula of these schools are oriented primarily to the conventional conflict environment. Moreover, career enhancing assignments follow standard military patterns, that is, conventional oriented positions.

Training of the vast majority of military forces is also focussed primarily on conventional conflict. This does not mean that American forces are limited in their training to the European battlefield. How-

ever it does indicate that most training is designed to prepare American forces to fight an enemy who is in the same general conventional configuration as the American military. It is also true that much of the equipment, weaponry, research and development is designed for conventional conflict.[3] Although there are basic differences between nuclear and non-nuclear conflicts, military organizations and training follow the same general patterns for both types of conflicts. It is presumed that forces trained and positioned for nuclear conflict can easily be deployed for non-nuclear conflicts. Further, it follows that training for one type is adequate for the other type of conflict. Forces trained and organized for nuclear/non-nuclear conflicts are assumed to be readily adaptable to unconventional warfare. The presumptions are virtually the same with respect to military professionalism.

Another important factor affecting American military posture is threat perceptions. Since the end of World War II, Americans have seen the Soviet Union and its European satellites as the major threat, primarily in the strategic nuclear arena and in conventional battles across the plains of Europe. More recently, the Soviet Union has shown the ability to extend its military power into non-European areas, either through surrogate or proxy forces, or by direct military assistance. Although American political-military policy has broadened it horizons to include these non-European considerations, most of America's defense budget, professional military focus, and military training retain their Soviet and NATO configuration. Outside of this European-Soviet framework, many questions remain regarding the proper posture and orientation of American forces, and their ability to engage successfully in low intensity conflicts, particularly with respect to revolution and counter-revolution.

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION: AN OVERVIEW

Definitions and Concepts

The complexity of revolutionary phenomena and the difficulty in identifying cause-and-effect relationships is reflected in the variety of concepts and terms used in the study of the subject.[4] Terms such as insurgency, internal war, people's war, revolt, rebellion, guerrilla war and war of national liberation are frequently used interchangeably and indiscriminately. Not only has this created a problem in conceptual clarity, it has made the task of trying to analyze operational responses that might be useful in policy formulation particularly difficult.

> We simply cannot isolate from the extraordinary diversity of history a single denominator that is common to and valid for all of these situations and would stand for structure. On the other hand, if we are to understand the phenomenon of revolution, we must take into account the entire society that produces it and not isolate a factor—political, social, or economic—as if it alone were the ultimate and determining one. We must look at all of

> them together and in relation to one another in order to see true conditions under which revolt and revolution have been possible and fomented.[5]

A few examples serve to illustrate the conceptual problem. One scholar writes that revolution is:

> . . . an acute, prolonged crisis in one or more of the traditional systems of stratification (class, status, power) of a political community, which involves a purposive, elite-directed attempt to abolish or to reconstruct one or more of said systems by means of an intensification of political power and recourse to violence.[6]

Another author suggests that "... an insurrection may be thought of as an incipient rebellion or revolution still localized and limited to securing modifications of governmental policy or personnel and not yet a serious threat to the state or the government."[7] In military circles, the term revolution and counter-revolution are rarely used and the term special operations has become fashionable, again. (This term was in general usage in the American military over two decade ago, then disappeared).

As these few examples illustrate, there is disagreement and even confusion marking the study of revolutionary phenomena. It is difficult to see how a coherent policy and strategy can be developed without some degree of agreement regarding the meaning of low intensity conflicts, the nature of revolution and counter-revolution and the causes of such conflicts.

Regardless of the conceptual problems, there are important factors common to revolution and counter-revolution that need to be identified if a basis is to be established for exploring American political-military policy. First, revolutions are aimed at overthrowing the existing system and substituting the revolutionary leadership, ideology, and social order in its place. Second, revolutionary organizations usually are rudimentary political systems competing against the existing system and usually include a leadership structure, cadre, and a field network. Third, revolutionary strategy and tactics are based on unconventional warfare which includes terrorism, assassination, ambush, and psychological warfare, as well as armed conflict in the conventional sense. Fourth, revolutions usually occur in states which have serious problems of economic development, are in the process of political change, and are characterized by some degree of internal grievance and dissidence; this includes virtually all of the Third World nations. Fifth, most Third World revolutions take their major themes and principles from Maoist and/or Cuban revolutionary concepts.

Counter-revolution is the other side of the same coin. It is a response or reaction to revolution. However, the counter-revolutionary system is forced to protect everything at all times, while the revolutionaries can select the time and place of engagement. The major objective of the revolutionaries, at least initially, is to survive. In brief,

to be effective, the counter-revolutionary system is thus faced with all of the problems of political change and economic development, while, simultaneously, trying to respond to internal conflict and challenges from the competing revolutionary system. For counter-revolutionary systems, most of which are institutionally fragile, this is a difficult and at times, an impossible task.

Moreover, rarely can revolutionary/counter-revolutionary conflicts remain isolated from external forces. In the case of revolutionary groups, many seek support from a variety of outside sources, including radical nationalistic groups, and Marxist-Leninist groups and states. Indeed, some may even seek support from Western states. In a number of cases, Marxist-Leninist groups have co-opted even the most nationalistic revolutions, as has occurred in several Latin and Central American situations. Counter-revolutionary systems, once realizing the extent and seriousness of the revolutionary situation, particularly when faced with external involvement, are likely to seek some form of external assistance for themselves. In brief, revolutionary/counter-revolutionary conflicts, regardless of their internal motivation are likely to develop an international character, especially in the context of the East-West conflict.

American Political-Military Policy and Conflict Characteristics

There are a number of characteristics of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conflicts that are particularly important to the American political-military posture. First, the conflict is likely to be asymmetrical. That is, the American involvement is likely to be limited. For the revolutionaries, however, the conflict is a total war and a matter of survival. This raises a host of questions regarding ideology, commitment, and survivability that detracts considerably from American effectiveness.

Second, the center of gravity of revolutionary conflict is in the political-social system, not necessarily in the actual battlefield, as defined in conventional terms. As Fall has noted:

> It is . . . important to understand that guerrilla warfare is nothing but a tactical appendage of a far vaster political contest and that no matter how expertly it is fought by competent and dedicated professionals, it cannot possibly make up for the absence of a political rationale. A dead Special Forces sergeant is not spontaneously replaced by his own social environment. A dead revolutionary usually is.[8]

This means that counter-revolutionary tactics must include involvement in the political-social milieu of the target area. Additionally, the definition of the enemy is obscure, since he is closely linked with various population groups. Further conventional indicators of enemy dispositions and/or his network rarely provide a realistic or comprehensive picture of the revolutionary system.

Third, revolutionary conflict is usually protracted and unconventional. Unable to overthrow the existing system quickly, revolutionaries adopt the tactics of the weak; that is, they usually avoid a direct challenge to the armed forces of the existing system, except when the advantage is clearly on the side of the revolutionaries. The main revolutionary effort is directed at eroding the existing systems' political and social control, legitimacy, and psychological hold over the populace. As is well know, such strategy and tactics usually necessitate a relatively long period of incubation and implementation. One author characterizes revolutionary conflict as the war of the flea.[9]

Fourth, American involvement in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conflicts usually means that American personnel must operate in an alien culture, one that is far removed from the notion of democracy and conventions of American society. As one observer and participant in the Vietnam War has written:

> The intrigue and duplicity of the insurgency escaped us, as did the real meaning of living under the ever present threat of violent death at the hands of one's neighbors. For most Americans in Vietnam, the dynamics of the Vietnamese villager's dilemma were impossible to grasp, and the barriers to understanding posed by the linguistic and cultural differences between our two peoples were insurmountable.[10]

Not only does involvement in such conflicts pose liguistic and cultural challenges, but it affects personal relations between Americans and indigenous people. In Vietnam, for example, a Vietnamese counterpart told an American officer, "you can't help it if you're an American, but you should always remember that very few of our people are capable of genuine positive feelings towards you. You must assume that you are not wholly liked and trusted, and not be deceived by the Asian smile."[11]

Furthermore, the socialization of American military men and women in democratic values is likely to preclude a close empathy with the counter-revolutionary system. In this respect, there are few, if any, democratic systems defined in terms of American democracy in the Third World. Consequently the support of a number of non-democratic systems may be the only real alternative available to the United States, at least in the short range.

In sum, the strategy and tactics of revolution do not generally conform to conventional patterns, nor do they necessarily follow democratic norms. Neither do they follow patterns of war as generally perceived by Americans. Thus, of all types of conflicts, America appears least prepared to engage in revolutionary/counter-revolutionary conflict.

GUIDELINES FOR THE FUTURE: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

It is clear, in retrospect, that the American political system and its military institution are in a highly disadvantageous position in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conflicts. (This is particularly true with respect to Latin and Central America, where historical experience has created distrust of American involvement.) Democratic imperatives, American perceptions of war, and the character of low intensity conflicts create limits on the use of American military power and in the conduct of war, among other things. The difficulty of the American posture is exacerbated by the apparently contradictory operational dimensions of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conflicts, which are rarely addressed in the literature or in public policy formulation. These dimensions have to do with the *conduct* of low intensity conflict against the revolutionary system and *counter-operations* against low intensity conflict being conducted by the revolutionary system. Capability in one does not necessarily lead to capability in the other; missions differ, intelligence requirements differ, and targets differ.

The conduct of low intensity conflict against the revolutionary system requires an offensive counter-revolutionary posture. This means that it requires more than a response to protect the existing system. A policy and strategy must be designed to create a "revolution" within the revolutionary system and territory that it may occupy and control, a revolution that forces the revolutionary system into a counter-revolutionary posture. In the main, such a posture requires a dedicated indigenous civilian and military elite willing to take the fight to the "enemy." American involvement in this type of situation requires a high degree of caution and prudence, since taking the fight to the revolutionaries requires striking at the heart of the revolutionary political system. It means the implementation of political and military policy, strategy, and tactics that are unconventional and aimed at destroying the revolutionary system. In essence, such a counter-revolutionary posture is based on the recognition that the center of gravity of such conflicts is in the political-social system necessitating change or destruction of political-social targets. Such a policy and strategy is not likely to conform to democratic imperatives. Yet, it is this type of posture that may well reduce the costs of involvement and more likely lead to counter-revolutionary success.

Americanizing Conflicts

The characteristics of the Third World and the nature of revolution and counter-revolution, however, require that in the first instance, conflicts and existing systems not be "Americanized." Therefore, American policy must be aimed at affecting not only the particular conflict, but also the existing system in a way which preserves the legitimacy and presence of the indigenous culture, indigenous decision makers and governing elite. At the same time, the governing

elite must be motivated to respond to legitimate demands of their people and to initiate reforms. This is a tall order and in many cases cannot be done without doing great damage to the existing system. The very nature of the reforms expose the system to revolutionary forces and can lead to its own demise. Rarely, therefore, can American policy and strategy proceed in a coherent and orderly pattern with the expectation that the existing system is going to respond properly or that the conflict can be directed effectively. In such cases, there is a tendency on the part of America to overwhelm the existing system, either directly or indirectly, in trying to get it to adopt effective policies. The visibility of Americans increases proportionally with the increase in efforts by the United States to move the existing system in the "right" direction.

In sum, regardless of the strategy and policy, tactical and in-country operations must remain primarily those of the indigenous political-military system. The long range security effort however, may require an American military presence that is low visibility, firm, and enduring. This is not necessarily accomplished by periodic and dramatic shows of force that gain wide publicity and highlight the military instrument, although it may have a minimum impact on the direction of the conflict. Such shows of force may cause destabilizing tensions within friendly countries in an area which may be unable to reconcile American military visibility with their own attempts at creating nationalistic sentiment and regime loyalty against revolutionary systems.

To minimize the Americanization of a situation and, simultaneously, to provide a means of bringing some American power to bear, it may be best to avoid unilateral actions, if at all possible. Multilateral actions or operating through an existing regional structure, such as the Organization of American States, is the desirable course. Yet, such courses of action may be the least effective way to achieve American goals. In this respect, there are limits to what American power and effort can accomplish in Third World countries regardless of the means used.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the United States cannot or should not respond to low intensity conflict. Indeed, given the nature of conflicts in the post-World War II period, low intensity conflicts are the rule rather than the exception. Further, in several instances such conflicts have been seen as challenges to America security interests. More importantly, a number of low intensity conflicts have the potential to endanger American objectives and security interests, particularly in the Southern hemisphere.

Policy Congruency and Coherency

An effective American political-military posture responding to low intensity conflicts must be based on the recognition of at least one fundamental factor: the lack of congruence between democrative imperatives, American perceptions of war, and the nature of low intensity conflicts (revolution and counter-revolution). American objectives

and policy goals are usually based on laudable and idealistic notions associated with democracy—justice and self-determination. However, as we have shown, these are difficult to translate realistically into strategic and operational guidelines. Nonetheless, if American political-military policy is to be implemented in direct response to low intensity conflict, strategic and operational guidelines must be developed, not limited to philosophical and intellectual generalities, but at the level of operational units.

This must begin with understanding of revolution, its historical and geopolitical dimensions as these relate to the conflict area, while developing a perspective that synchronizes American policy and strategy to revolution and counter-revolution. In brief, American civilian and military policy makers must develop a conceptual synthesis of the nature of revolution and counter-revolution and formulate an organizational strategy designed specifically for such conflicts.

Conceptual Synthesis

The American experience in Vietnam showed that within policy making and implementing agencies and organizations there was a great deal of disagreement regarding the nature of the war and how to respond. These differences extended into the strategic sphere reflecting disagreements regarding American objectives and overall political-military policy. This is not to suggest that during the Vietnam War, there was not a coherent view of what should be done, as Halberstam has shown (although the coherency of these views were characterized by misjudgements and misperceptions). But such a groupthink syndrome reflected more the formative period of American policy rather than the period following the Tet Offensive in 1968, the event which dramatically showed the American people, rightly or wrongly, that American policy and strategy would not lead to success. By that period of time, important voices within and outside the government were challenging the presumptions of American policy, resulting in a variety of ideas, plans and programs regarding the U.S. and Vietnam. From this experience it was clear that there was very little agreement and a great deal of misperception within policy making bodies and the intellectual community regarding an effective democratic response to revolution. The lack of conceptual consensus within the policy making environment as well as the intellectual community are characteristic of the current American posture.

The basis for a conceptual synthesis has been outlined earlier in this paper. Fundamentally it requires a shift from the Clausewitzian notion that the center of gravity of war is on the destruction of the enemy armed forces, to one more attuned to the observations of Sun Tzu, where moral influence and winning without bringing the enemy armed forces to battle are more important considerations.[12] The "essence" of revolution and counter-revolution is in the ability of one side or the other to affect the political-social system and develop a political-psychological hold on the major political actors within the

political system. Although armed forces and combat soldiers may be important in such conflicts, they usually are on the periphery. Political cadre and instruments of psychological warfare are the main actors. Thus, the Clausewitzian perspective must be reformulated. It follows that the conventional posturing and organization of conventional armies must reflect this reformulation.

Organizational Strategy

If the Vietnam experience, as well as earlier American experiences with low intensity conflict, is any guide, it seems clear that without an organizational strategy (that is, structures and command system), along with conceptual synthesis, designed specifically for low intensity conflicts, American response to such conflicts is likely to be *ad hoc*, conventional, and likely to lead to incongruence between the military and society. Only by the simultaneous development of conceptual synthesis and organization strategy can the proper posture be developed in accord with patterns suggested here.

At the present time, there are a variety of agencies within several government institutions (such as, the military, the CIA, and the Department of State) whose attention is directed to low intensity conflict. The recent activation of the 1st Special Operations Command within the Army is an example. But the fact remains that, given the nature of low intensity conflicts, particularly revolutionary/counter-revolutionary conflicts, the most flexible and effective structures are joint civilian-military types. Not only can this provide a continuing focus on such conflicts, but such an organizational strategy recognizes that low intensity conflicts are a unique challenge, generally divorced from other types of threats and contingencies, requiring specially trained agencies and units and an intellectual and policy perspective that is not bound by traditional and conventional horizons.

In this respect, it might be best to establish a separate political-military command system beginning at the highest level, that is, the National Security Council, with parallel structures in the military, intelligence and civilian policy areas. Such structures could include, for example, a military Unified Command at the level of the Joint Chiefs, and similar agencies at the Assistant Secretary level in the Department of State. These parallel structures would be placed under the operational control of a Joint Civilian-Military Directorate working through the National Security Council and extending down through the operational-tactical level. In other words, both military and civilian structures would be intermixed from the highest to the lowest levels. The relative mix would be dependent upon the various phases and progress of the low intensity conflict.

Organizational strategy must also consider the distinction between the conduct and the countering of low intensity challenges. The conduct of low intensity operations is best left to civilian-led organizations, since the nature of such operations, at least at the outset, are primarily overt, psychological and political, and may involve propa-

ganda as well as political-psychological operations aimed at civilian audiences within the indigenous area. Such operations can conceivably be administratively and logistically supported by military operations, but the fact is that the primary mission is best carried out by civilian command systems.

Countering low intensity conflicts is also likely to be initially undertaken by civilian-led systems, since the first priority involves the development of a counter-intelligence network, among other things, within the political social system. In the latter stages, assuming the expansion of the conflict and the emergence of a reasonably effective revolutionary armed force, the organizational strategy may shift to a military "heavy" command system. This does not mean the cessation of civilian-led systems, rather it means that the immediacy of low intensity military operations has temporarily overshadowed political-social efforts.

In any case, to develop a reasonably effective organizational strategy, American military and civilian agencies must be integrated into a joint command system that ranges from the highest level to the operational level. Moreover, such a system must be delegated the responsibility for the planning and training, as well as the conducting of operations (strategic and tactical) in low intensity conflicts.

Since security and military operations may involve various types and sizes of American forces, policies must be established that consider various degrees and intensity of involvement, ranging from Special Forces to conventional military units. This will mean that the American military institution must include an unconventional component that goes beyond Special Forces and encompasses standard line units as well as professional training and education.

The American Political System

While conceptual synthesis and organizational strategy are important in designing the most effective American response to low intensity conflict, they must be closely linked with the need for an increased awareness and understanding by major actors in the American political system. Americans, in general, need to recognize that Third World countries are trying to resolve problems of great magnitude in the political, economic, and social realms. Although most Americans assess these states in terms of the American experience, it is unrealistic to presume that such changes are or can be done in the context of parliamentary processes as defined by the United States. This is not to preclude the possibility that democratic processes can be followed. Nevertheless, the fact is that many, if not most, Third World systems tend to be authoritarian, whether left or right on the ideological spectrum. Changing from their present posture to a democratic system, is not an easy or peaceful process, even if such change should be the announced goal.

Further, Americans must be educated or educate themselves to understand the character of revolution and counter-revolution and

the problems these may pose to American policy and interests. Low intensity conflicts are not "gentlemen's" wars nor "splendid little wars." They are dirty, uncompromising, and unconventional struggles that create a morality and eithics of their own—hardly attuned to democratic norms. Such conflicts do not conform to the "Pearl Harbor" mentality, yet can be as challenging to the United States as massive and direct military attack. Unfortunately, many people do not understand the nature of low intensity conflicts, viewing such conflicts through conventional lenses. Moreover, most Americans still expect conflicts in which they are involved to follow patterns of democratic morality and ethical conduct on the battlefield. Thus, there is a need to reconcile realistically the ideals of democratic systems with the realities of low intensity conflicts. This is easier said than done and may require sustained efforts to develop public awareness of the issues.

General Weyand, in addressing this issue with respect to American military professionals, stated,

> As military professionals we must speak out, we must counsel our political leaders and alert the American public that there is no such thing as a "splendid little war." There is no such thing as a war fought on the cheap. War is death and destruction . . . . The Army must make the price of involvement clear before we get involved, so that America can weigh the probable costs of involvement against the dangers of noninvolvement . . . for there are worse things than war.[13]

Additionally, care must be taken to avoid irrelevant and incorrect analogies with Vietnam. The lessons of Vietnam must be understood, but to equate every involvement in Third World areas with the Vietnam period is to distort history and to read the wrong lessons from a wrong war. Such a perspective is likely to develop a "never again" syndrome that precludes American involvement in any revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conflict on the presumption that they are all like Vietnam. Even more dangerous is to presume that all revolutions are inherently nationalistic and democratic. This leads directly to the assumption that America should only support democratic systems in the Third World, in effect precluding serious American involvement in the Third World for, after all, how many democratic systems are there in the Third World?

Given the susceptibility of revolutionary/counter-revolutionary conflicts to external forces and third power manipulation, American policy must be designed to clarify issues and distinguish between true nationalist revolutions that evolve from indigenous forces and are coopted by Marxist-Leninist factions supported by external forces, and revolutions that are exported simply to overthrow the existing system and replace it with an ideological system that may be as repressive, or more so, as the one it may replace. Thus, criteria must be established by the national leadership to determine whether America should support an existing system engaged in counter-revolutionary conflict and

the level and scope of this support, or whether America should remain on the periphery if that might be in the best interest of the United States. It may also be the case that the United States should support revolutionaries (on the presumption that they are non-Marxist) in their conflict against authoritarian systems, as is the case of Afghanistan and Nicaragua. In brief, policy and strategy must be based on long range American interests, avoiding quick fix solutions that usually exacerbate, rather than help, the situation.

It may be that no amount of American effort, short of massive military intervention, will change the nature and direction of the conflict and/or the existing counter-revolutionary system. In such instances, it may be best not to become involved in such conflicts, or once involved, to have the courage to withdraw before becoming inextricably entangled in a "no win" situation. Involvement in revolutionary/counter-revolutionary conflicts is usually a risk, but many times the risk is necessary because of American security interests. Occasionally, however, involvement leads only to a situation which threatens the interests of American security.

For the United States, involvement in low intensity conflicts poses moral and ethical difficulties, as well as practical problems and dilemmas. Current American policy and strategy, the mind set of policy makers, and the perceptions and expectations of the American people are unable to provide enduring support for the involvement of American combat forces in other than "Pearl Harbor" situations or quick fix, surgical combat operations. To be sure, there appears to be general agreement that economic assistance and certain levels of military assistance to selected Third World states is necessary. But even here, such policy is forced to be undertaken cautiously to avoid stimulating hostility in Congress and/or encouraging peace issue groups within the domestic arena to engage in vociferous denunciations of American policy. There are numerous examples of such situations: the Reagan Administration's aid to Nicaraguan revolutionaries (contras) in 1983, support of the existing system in El Salvador, and the more recent intervention in Grenada (1983). Interestingly enough, in Grenada the American military intervention, at least during the early phase, followed a classic, combined military, conventional operation, rather than anything bordering on low intensity conflict as defined here.

Finally, one of the most appealing postures for many Americans is noninvolvement in low intensity conflicts beyond economic support and modest training assistance. For many, such a posture may provide sufficient support to existing systems, if done in a timely fashion, precluding the need to confront the more serious questions of costs and consequences of military involvement. Not only is such a posture the easiest to implement, but it is morally "pure," since it avoids serious moral issues placing its justification in universal moral and ethical dilemmas, that will make it exceedingly difficult to achieve policy goals.

Adopting a simplistic "Pearl Harbor" posture and/or one that is rigidly tied to universalistic, philosophical notions of democracy and

morality can only lead to conditional support of other states. Thus, the United States will not support any state unless it is truly democratic, unless it is directly threatened by overt military aggression from external sources, and unless the situation is a clear threat to American security. For all practical purposes, this position could only lead to American withdrawal from any involvement in most of the Third World.

Involvement in low intensity conflict creates problems for the United States that parallel operations of America's intelligence system. Most Americans are uncomfortable with the necessity for intelligence operations, particularly covert operations. But many, if not most, also recognize that given the realities of international politics and security, democratic systems must develop an intelligence capability and become involved in operations that may stretch the notion of democracy to its limits, if the system is to survive. The critical question is how can a democracy control and supervise such activities to insure they do not go beyond acceptability?

The same problem holds true with respect to low intensity conflicts. Rarely are there going to be Pearl Harbor type situations or those that can be resolved by nice, neat, quick fix, surgical operations. Rather the kinds of conflicts that have characterized the post-World War II period, and are likely to be the case for the foreseeable future, are those that are protracted and unconventional, with their own sense of morality and ethics. The same sense of urgency and necessity that is associated with intelligence operations must be adopted for low intensity conflicts. This is not to condone involvement in areas that are clearly unresolvable by external force, nor to excuse policy that destroys the very basis of American credibility and legitimacy. Further, one does not condone conduct in the conflict area that defiles the usual standard of American conduct in war and serves simply to reduce combat troops to the level of terrorists. One must, nonetheless, remember that the moral consequences of doing nothing can be more damaging than the moral consequences of doing something.

In the final analysis, whatever policy and strategy is followed, a final accounting must be made to the American people. For as General Weyand has stated,

> Vietnam was a reaffirmation of the peculiar relationship between the American Army and the American people. The Army really is a people's Army in the sense that is belongs to the American people who take a jealous and proprietary interest in its involvement. When the Army is committed the American people are committed, when the American people lose their commitment it is futile to try to keep the Army committed. In the final analysis, the American Army is not so much an arm of the Executive Branch as it is an arm of the American people. The Army therefore, cannot be committed lightly.[14]

Footnotes

1. Whether the American invasion of Grenada in October, 1983 (shortly following the terrorist attack on the Marines in Lebanon), signals a basic change in the United States' political-military posture or is a passing phenomenon remains to be seen. At this writing, these events are too fresh to ascertain their long range impact with any degree of certainty.
2. See for example Sam C. Sarkesian and Thomas M. Gannon, eds., *Military Ethics and Professionalism (American Behavioral Scientist)*, vol. 19, no. 5 (May/June 1976); James Brown and Michael J. Collins, eds., *Military Ethics and Professionalism: A Collection of Essays* (Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1981); and *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response: A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983).
3. There are some organizational changes taking place in the American Army that are designed to respond to different conflict environments. For example, a high technology oriented division with high mobility has been organized. Additionally, a light infantry concept is being implemented; designed to be small, flexible, and strategically deployable, these units are organized to be foot mobile with a high tooth-to-tail ratio. Nonetheless, in this case the organizational structuring is more a modern version of the old line infantry battalions, rather than a true adaptation to the specifics of low intensity conflict (as defined here).
4. See for example, Sam C. Sarkesian, "Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare: An Introduction," in Sam C. Sarkesian, ed., *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, Inc., 1975), pp. 1-22.
5. Jacques Ellul, *Autopsy of a Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 27-28. See also, Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 4-5.
6. Mark N. Hagopian, *The Phenomenon of Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1974), p. 1.
7. Frederick L. Schuman, "Insurrection," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 116.
8. Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy: Insurgency in Indochina, 1946-63* (3rd rev. ed.; Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Co., 1973), p. 357. See also Sir Robert Thompson, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy 1945-1969* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 16-17.
9. Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1965).
10. Stuart A. Herrington, *Silence Was a Weapon; The Vietnam War in the Villages, A Personal Perspective* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1982), p. 39.
11. ibid., p. 23.
12. Anatol Rapoport, ed., *Clausewitz on War* (Baltimore, Md.: 1968); and, Samuel B. Griffith, *Sun Tzu, The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).
13. As quoted in Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1981), p. 25.
14. ibid., p. 7.