

Don't Break The Bank With COIN

Re-setting U.S. Defense Strategy After Iraq & Afghanistan



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Disclaimer

The views presented in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Government, Department of Defense, or Department of the Navy.

CONTENTS

Preface

- I. Introduction & Thesis
- II. The Post-Cold War National Security Strategic Baseline: 1993-2001
- III. The Strategic Perturbation of 9/11
- IV. Costs Of Executing FM 3-24 COIN Campaigns In Afghanistan & Iraq: 2007-2010
- V. Re-setting U.S. Defense Strategy

Prologue

PREFACE

I expect that this thesis will draw voluminous criticism from numerous circles within the national security establishment of the United States. I would like to use this preface to explain what this thesis is NOT about in order to preempt some of that criticism.

It is not an examination of the geo-political events and subsequent policy and strategy decisions that formed the *casus belli* for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Likewise, it is also not an examination of the rationale for the changes in policy and strategy that occurred in reaction to the course of those wars – namely, the political & military decision making to shift to counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies. It will also not examine the effectiveness of the execution of those two specific COIN campaigns, or the theoretical military effectiveness of the COIN doctrine outlined in the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 3-24, “Counterinsurgency” (alternately titled Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, or MCWP 3-33.5). Finally, it is also not simply a parochial attack on the U.S. Army or Marine Corps; FM 3-24 outlines the requirement to integrate and synchronize the efforts of Joint, Combined, Inter-agency, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) forces to conduct an effective COIN campaign.

When examining American military strategy, it is important to keep in mind the primacy of the principle of civilian control of the military. Accordingly, the authority and responsibility for deciding to enter a war and commit the requisite resources lies with the President of the United States and the Congress. However, the U.S. military has a responsibility to provide the Commander-In-Chief and the Congress with a comprehensive range of military advice to inform that decision making. FM 3-24 does not fully account for the resources required to execute a full-scale COIN campaign in accordance with its doctrine.

Therefore, my intent is twofold. First, I will examine the fiscal costs of executing the Iraq & Afghanistan COIN campaigns. Additionally, I will look at the opportunity costs – what elements of the existing national defense strategy the U.S. had to forego or curtail in order to marshal the necessary resources to execute those COIN campaigns. Secondly, I will attempt to make the case that in light of the looming economic trends for the U.S., it is not fiscally feasible for the U.S. military to sustain the standing forces required to execute COIN campaigns, nor is it fiscally feasible to deploy and employ those forces in protracted COIN campaigns.

Ultimately, I am endeavoring to add value to the dialogue on America’s future national defense strategy. This thesis will attempt to convince the reader that spending an inordinate amount of resources in executing a relatively narrow segment of our national defense interests – COIN – will undermine America’s future national security.

“The United States is now fighting two wars with many thousands of our men and women deployed in harm’s way, and hundreds of billions of dollars dedicated to funding these conflicts. In Iraq, we are supporting a transition of responsibility to the sovereign Iraqi Government. We are supporting the security and prosperity of our

partners in Afghanistan and Pakistan as part of a broader campaign to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qa'ida and its violent extremist affiliates.

Yet these wars—and our global efforts to successfully counter violent extremism—**are only one element of our strategic environment** and cannot define America's engagement with the world.” [emphasis added by author]

-2010 National Security Strategy Of The United States

I: Introduction

The course of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has led to a phoenix-like renaissance of counterinsurgency doctrine (commonly referred to as “COIN”) within the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. Today’s military journals and blogs¹ are flush with references to the primacy of COIN strategy and tactics – many authored by self-styled “COINdinistas”², who profess that victory in war requires the employment of large numbers of “boots on the ground” for long periods of time.³

The COINdinistas’ strategic vision - if it endures - portends a shift away from more than two decades of subscription to the Weinberger/Powell doctrine, which calls for the employment of overwhelming conventional force to achieve rapid, decisive victory in war.⁴

From an American perspective, the Iraq War reached its strategic nadir in 2006 – sectarian violence, Iraqi civilian casualties, and attacks on U.S. troops had reached unprecedented levels, while Iraqi political reconciliation and economic reconstruction had stalled due to the untenable security situation. It was during this bleak period that the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 3-24, “Counterinsurgency”, was authored by a hand-picked group of U.S. Army and Marine Corps officers, in conjunction with selected COIN historians, under the charter of then Lieutenant General David Petraeus for the Army and then Lieutenant General James Mattis for the Marine Corps.

The change of U.S. strategy in Iraq – popularly known as “The Surge”- that occurred in concert with General Petraeus’ assumption of command of the Multi-National Forces-Iraq in February, 2007 ultimately produced tangible improvements to the security situation in Iraq and enabled the other elements of the COIN campaign to gain traction – sectarian reconciliation, the exercise of legitimate political authority, and the reconstruction of economic infrastructure and activity. The general narrative as of the time of writing this thesis is that General Petraeus’ COIN strategy transformed the security environment in Iraq and enabled the U.S. and coalition partners to further achieve their political and military objectives.⁵

Upon assuming command of the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan in June 2009, General Stanley McChrystal petitioned the National Command Authority, NATO, and other coalition partners to change the direction of the Afghan war into a COIN campaign

¹ For examples, see <<http://smallwarsjournal.com>> or <<http://www.counterinsurgencyblog.com>>

² The precise origin of the term is unknown; however its usage is fully inculcated into the military vocabulary. See Thomas E. Ricks, “The COINdinistas,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 176, 15 Dec., 2009: 63.

³ Per FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency, 20-25 counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents. In Afghanistan, a country of

⁴ See Colin L. Powell, “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 5 (Winter, 1992): 38-40

⁵ For example, see Thomas E. Ricks, “A Winning General Picks A Losing Battle,” *Washington Post*, 27 Jun., 2010: B4

along the lines of General Petraeus' campaign in Iraq.⁶ The elements of that COIN strategy are now in place in Afghanistan, and only time will tell whether they produce the desired political and military objectives.

Both of those shifts to FM 3-24 COIN strategies resulted in massive surges of manpower, machines, and materiel - underpinned by massive quantities of money to finance the execution of the strategy. In the case of the Iraq War, Multi-National Forces-Iraq was granted an additional 28,000 U.S. troops, raising the total number to 160,000 U.S. troops.⁷ In Afghanistan, General McChrystal was granted an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to execute his COIN strategy, raising the number of troops from 70,000 to more than 100,000.⁸

Barrels of ink have been spilled over the political decisions to initiate the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the determination of their initial policy and strategy objectives; the decisions to shift to COIN strategies in each war received even more rigorous and often acrimonious public debate. Rather than rehash that history, this thesis will examine the fiscal costs of executing the COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and attempt to illustrate why the costs of executing full-scale FM 3-24 COIN campaigns in the future are unaffordable and pose risk to our future "strategic solvency", to use the words of Richard K. Betts.⁹

When viewed through the lens of the current U.S. Federal fiscal projections, the costs of building, deploying, and sustaining a military force capable of executing large-scale, protracted counterinsurgency operations – as prescribed by FM 3-24, "Counterinsurgency" – would result in significant under-investment in other areas of the U.S. national security portfolio and induce risks to U.S. national security. Upon conclusion of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Department of Defense should re-balance its defense spending portfolio and refocus on its stated role: "...to field, sustain, and employ the military capabilities needed to protect the United States and its allies and to advance our interests"¹⁰ – rather than focusing on preparing to win the past two wars – COIN wars.

"Insurgencies are protracted by nature. Thus, COIN operations always demand considerable expenditures of time and resources."

FM 3-24, "Counterinsurgency"

⁶ Mark Tran, "Afghanistan Strategy Must Change, US Commander McChrystal Says", *The Guardian*, 31 Aug. 2009, 9 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/31/general-mcchrystal-afghanistan-bull?INTCMP=SRCH>>

⁷ Michael E. O'Hanlon and Jason H. Campbell, "Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq", Brookings Institute (Washington, DC) 1 Oct. 2007: 5.

⁸ Alex Spillius and Ben Farmer, "Barack Obama To Announce 30,000 Troop Surge In Afghanistan", *The Telegraph*, 1 Dec. 2009.

⁹ Richard K. Betts, "A Disciplined Defense: How to Regain Strategic Solvency", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2007): 69

¹⁰ Quoted from "Quadrennial Defense Review Report," Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2010: 10.

II: The Post-Cold War Strategic Baseline: 1993-2001

In order to comprehensively examine the differential strategic effects of the adoption of COIN strategies in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is necessary to establish baselines from which comparisons can be drawn.

The first necessary baseline is a precise definition of the word “strategy” and its derivatives such as “strategic.” Mackubin T. Owens, professor of National Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval War College, wrote the following in his essay “Strategy And The Strategic Way Of Thinking:”

The word “strategy” is used in a variety of contexts. There are business strategies, coaching strategies, financial strategies, and research strategies. Over the past few decades, the concept of strategy increasingly has been applied to organizations. An organization develops a strategy based on its mission or goal, a vision of the future, an understanding of the organization’s place in that future, and an assessment of the alternatives available to it, given scarce resources.¹¹

Owens further writes:

Strategy is often portrayed as the interaction of ends, ways, and means, which is a useful formulation. In essence, strategy describes the *way* in which the available *means* will be employed to achieve the *ends* of policy.¹² [emphasis in original]

This paper will use that definition of the word strategy: strategy describes the *ways* in which the available *means* are employed to achieve the *ends*.

Having established a baseline definition of the word “strategy,” it is necessary to establish chronological baselines to examine the strategic effects of COIN campaigns in Iraq & Afghanistan. Two chronological baseline dates will be utilized: 1) 1948, when the first Department of Defense (DoD) budget was authorized, appropriated, and executed under the authorities of the National Security Act of 1947, and 2) 1993, when DoD budgets had stabilized to reflect the Post-Cold War geo-political reality of the demise of the Soviet Union. There are analytical problems with each of these baselines, but the rationale behind their selection follows.

The selection of 1948 permits continuous comparison of the allocations of budget authority between each of the three service departments – The Department of the Army, Department of the Navy (which includes statutory budget authority over the U.S. Marine Corps), and the Department of the Air Force. Prior to 1948, the U.S. defense budget was divided between the

¹¹ Mackubin Thomas Owens, “Strategy And The Strategic Way Of Thinking”, Naval War College Review, Autumn, 2007: 111.

¹² Ibid.

War Department, which included the U.S. Army and Army Air Corps, and the Department of the Navy. Therefore, any comparisons in budget authority between the services prior to 1948 suffer from analytical discontinuity.

The primary analytical problem with examining budget authority during the period of 1948-2010 is that the period encompasses massive perturbations in the global geo-political environment, ranging from the rise of the Soviet Union as a peer-competitor after World War II, to the Korean War, to the “missile gap” nuclear arms buildup, to the Viet Nam war, to the “Reagan buildup” of the 1980’s, to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. A secondary analytical problem over that time period is that U.S. strategy was not clearly articulated on a recurring basis – the concept of publishing recurring National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, or National Military Strategy documents evolved through the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, and the Quadrennial Defense Review process was initiated in 1997. Thus, it is difficult to compare and contrast how the interaction between *ways*, *means*, and *ends* evolved prior during that period.

Both of those analytical problems of the 1948-2010 baseline lend credibility to the utility of the second chronological baseline: 1993-2010. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980’s destroyed the bi-polar symmetry that underpinned the Post-World War II geo-political environment from 1945-1989, leaving the U.S. as the sole superpower after 1993.¹³ While some commentators profess that the rise of China portends a return to a bi-polar geo-political environment,¹⁴ or the rise of multiple powers such as the European Union, Brazil, India, and China are giving rise to a multi-polar world,¹⁵ the fact remains that as of the writing of this paper, the U.S. remains the sole superpower – just as it was during the period from 1993-2010, and will continue to be in after the termination of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Against the baseline of 1993-2010, it is possible to examine the recurring strategy documents and compare and contrast the *ways*, *means*, and *ends*. Upon being sworn in to office in March, 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin initiated a strategic review process that resulted in the publication of the “Report On The Bottom Up Review” in October, 1993.¹⁶ The U.S. Congress determined that the Bottom Up Review process added value to U.S national defense strategic planning, and therefore a recurring defense strategy review process was mandated in the National Defense Authorization Act of 1997:

The Secretary of Defense shall every four years, . . .conduct a comprehensive examination (to be known as a “quadrennial defense review”) of the national defense strategy, force

¹³ See Samuel P. Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, Mar.- Apr., 1999: 35.

¹⁴ For example, see G. John Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West,” *Foreign Affairs*, Jan./Feb. 2008, Vol. 87, Issue 1

¹⁵ See Daniel W. Drezner, “The New New World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 2, Mar. - Apr., 2007: 34.

¹⁶ “Report On The Bottom Up Review,” Office of the Secretary of Defense, Oct. 1993: iii.

structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the defense program and policies of the United States with a view toward determining and expressing the defense strategy of the United States and establishing a defense program for the next 20 years. Each such [QDR] shall be conducted in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁷

The table below (Figure 2-1) attempts to summarize the nature of the security environment, along with the *ways*, *means*, and *ends* as outlined in the 1993 through 2010 QDR's (1993 was titled the Bottom Up Review, or "BUR" before the process was formalized as a QDR).

	1993 BUR	1997 QDR	2001 QDR	2006 QDR	2010 QDR
Nature Of Security Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dangers posed by nuclear weapons & other WMD – NBC, as well as FSU stocks - Regional dangers – aggression by regional powers, ethnic/internal strife - Dangers to democracy & reform – FSU & E. Europe - Economic dangers to our national security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional dangers – Iraq, Iran, Israeli Peace, Korean Peninsula - NBC & technology proliferation - Transnational threats; terrorism, drug trade, organized crime, uncontrolled migrant flows - Threats to homeland ; nuclear & ICBM proliferation, WMD, terrorism, info warfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diminishing protection afforded by geographic distance - Regional security developments - maintaining a stable balance in Asia, access to Middle East energy - Weak & failing states - Diffusion of power & military capabilities to non-state actors - Developing & sustaining regional security arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional - Irregular - Catastrophic - Disruptive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shifting geo-political power – China, India - Growth in power of non-state actors - Proliferation of WMD - Competition for resources, climate change, pandemic disease, ethnic tensions
Key Missions <i>"Ways"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defeat aggressors in 2 nearly simultaneous MRC's - Maintain overseas presence to deter conflict and provide regional stability - Conduct intervention operations – peace enforcement/keeping, HA/DR - Deter WMD attacks against U.S. and allies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote regional stability - Prevent or reduce conflicts and threats - Deter aggression and coercion - Conduct smaller-scale contingency operations - Fight and win 2 major theater wars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defend the U.S. - Deter aggression and coercion forward in critical regions - Swiftly defeat aggression in overlapping major conflicts - Conduct a limited number of smaller scale contingency operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defeating terrorist networks - Defend the homeland in depth - Shape the choices of countries at strategic crossroads - Prevent hostile states & non-state actors from acquiring or using WMD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defend the US and support civil authorities - Succeed in COIN, stability, and CT ops - Build partner capacity - Deter and defeat aggression in A2 environments - Prevent proliferation and counter WMD - Operate effectively in cyberspace
Major Force Structure Elements <i>"Means"</i>	<p>Army: 10 Active Divisions 15 Reserve Brigades</p> <p>Navy: 11 CVBG's</p> <p>Marines: 5 Brigades 1 Reserve Division</p> <p>Air Force: 13 Active FW's 7 Reserve FW's</p>	<p>Army: 10 Active Divisions 15 Reserve Brigades</p> <p>Navy: 12 CVBG's</p> <p>Marines: 3 MEF's</p> <p>Air Force: 12 Active FW's 8 Reserve FW's</p>	<p>Army: 10 Active Divisions 15 Reserve Brigades</p> <p>Navy: 12 CVBG's</p> <p>Marines: 3 MEF's</p> <p>Air Force: 46 Active FS's 38 Reserve FS's 4 Reserve ADS's</p>	<p>Army: 42 Active BCT's 28 Reserve BCT's</p> <p>Navy: 11 CSG's ?</p> <p>Air Force: 86 Combat Wings</p>	<p>Army: 45 Active BCT's 28 Reserve BCT's</p> <p>Navy: 10-11 CSG's</p> <p>Marines: 3 Active Divisions 1 Reserve Division</p> <p>Air Force: 77-80 Combat Wings SOF: 660 SOF Teams</p>

Figure 2-1.¹⁸

It should be noted that the *ends* of U.S. national defense strategy were sometimes not explicitly identified in each of these QDR's; generally, the *ends* are derived from the next higher level of strategy document – The National Security Strategy, published by the President. The

¹⁷ "QDR 101: What You Should Know", U.S. Department of Defense, 29 March 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/QDR_101_FACT_SHEET_January_2010.pdf>.

¹⁸ This chart is an original production by the author. Data is gleaned from each of the QDR documents listed in the bibliography.

QDR Independent Panel, convened by the Secretary of Defense and Congress in the spring of 2010 to review the results of the 2010 QDR, summarized the enduring *ends* of U.S. national defense strategy in the following paragraph:

America has for most of the last century pursued four enduring security interests:

- a. The defense of the American homeland
- b. Assured access to the sea, air, space, and cyberspace
- c. The preservation of a favorable balance of power across Eurasia that prevents authoritarian domination of that region
- d. Providing for the global “common good”, through such actions as humanitarian aid, development assistance, and disaster relief¹⁹

An examination of Figure 2-1 reveals the strategic stability of the Post-Cold War period from 1993-2001, at least in terms of *ways* and *means*.

A compendium of the *ways* of the 1993, 1997, and 2001 strategy reviews follows:

1. Defend the homeland - (“1”)
2. Deter aggression through forward presence in key regions - (“4”)
3. Fight and win in two nearly simultaneous Major Regional Conflicts (MRC’s) – (“2”)
4. Conduct smaller scale peacekeeping and contingency operations – (“1”)

These *ways* were formally codified in the 2001 QDR (pg. 17) and became known as the “1-4-2-1” strategy. The stability of the *ways* of those three strategy documents was remarkable, given the fact that they were signed out by three different Secretaries of Defense serving two different Presidential administrations. In fact, the only significant change is that the precise number and location of “key regions” was not explicitly stated in the 1993 BUR or the 1997 QDR; however, they were codified as Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Middle East/Southwest Asia in the 2001 QDR (page 20).

Additionally, there was remarkable stability in the *means* of the same three strategy reviews (see Fig. 2-1 above). In the case of the U.S. Army, the prescribed force structure remained constant at 10 Active Divisions and 15 Reserve Brigades. In the case of the U.S. Navy, the prescribed force structure increased slightly from 11 aircraft carrier battle groups (CVBG’s) in 1993 to 12 CVBG’s in 1997 & 2001. The U.S. Air Force transitioned from using Fighter Wings (FW’s) as their basic force structure blocks in the 1993 and 1997 reviews to Fighter Squadrons (FS’s), which induced some analytical discontinuity; however, the force structure remained relatively constant. The same goes for the U.S. Marine Corps, with both the 1997 & 2001 QDR’s calling for a force structure of three Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF’s).

This remarkable stability in the *ways* and *means* of U.S. national defense strategy consequently resulted in remarkable stability in the allocation of budget authority between the

¹⁹ “The QDR in Perspective: Meeting America’s National Security Needs In the 21st Century”, United States Institute For Peace, Washington, DC 2010: vii.

three military departments during the period from 1993-2001 – see the yellow highlighted area in Fig. 2-2 below:

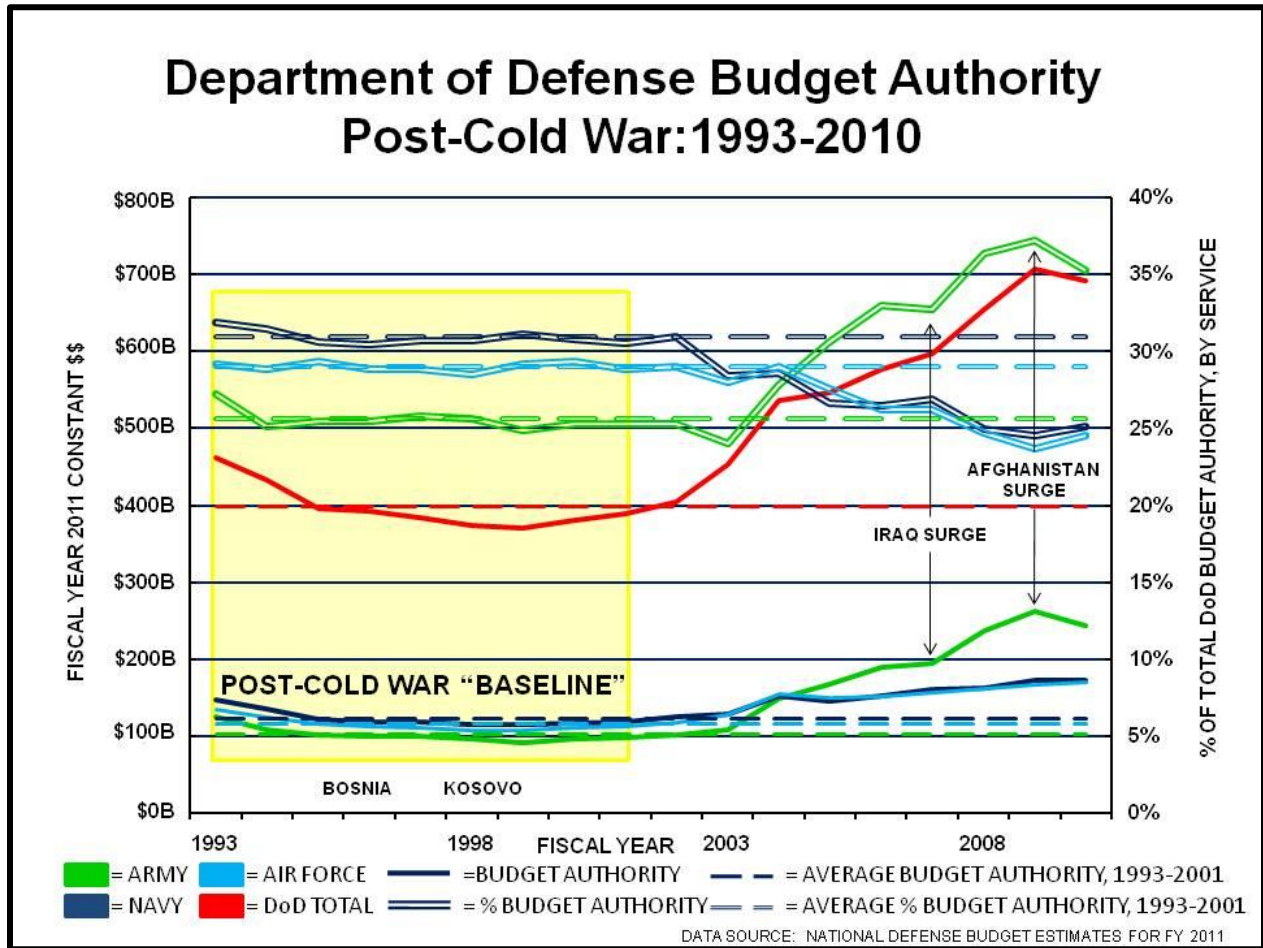


Figure 2-2.²⁰

The chart depicts relatively stable amounts of budget authority – the solid lines, measured against the left-hand vertical axis - in real terms (constant Fiscal Year 2011 \$), and an even higher degree of stability in the percentage of budget authority apportionment between the services – the hollow lines, measured against the right-hand vertical axis. In fact, during this period, the annual service budget authorities exhibited an average deviation of less than 0.40%.

²⁰ The data behind this chart is derived from National Defense Budget Estimates For FY 2011, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Mar. 2010: Table 6-3, 73-78. This publication is commonly referred to as “The Green Book” in DoD budget circles. This chart is an original production by the author; the spreadsheet data behind the chart is available upon request.

The average annual percentages of budget authority during this period were 30.9% for the Department of the Navy, 29.0% for the Department of the Air Force, and 25.6% for the Department of the Army.²¹

It should be noted that the period of 1993-2001 was not a particularly peaceful period. U.S. military forces exercised the final “1” in the 1-4-2-1 strategy on numerous occasions – conducting “smaller scale peacekeeping and stability operations” during humanitarian interventions in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Sierra Leone, and East Timor; non-combatant evacuation operations in Liberia, Albania, and Guinea-Bissau; air campaigns in Iraq (repeatedly throughout the decade) and Serbia; and finally, counter-terrorism strike operations in Afghanistan and Sudan following the U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.²² However, it should be noted that the design of those campaigns did not necessitate significant additional defense resources, in terms of budgetary authority, in their execution. For example, DoD received a \$2.05 billion supplemental appropriation in FY 2000 to cover the additional costs of the Kosovo conflict with Serbia in 1999, which was only a 0.5% supplement to the FY 1999 DoD budget.²³ This amount stands in stark contrast with the \$94.7 billion supplemental appropriation to cover the costs of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in FY 2007.²⁴

In a broader historical sense, this pattern of stable budget authority allocation between the services is also apparent during the “inter-war” periods within the Cold War period from 1948 - 1991. During the periods of 1953-1965 and 1973-1990, the ratio of spending between the services remains relatively constant (see Figure 2-3 below). The exception to this observation is the case of exceptionally high percentages of investment in the U.S. Air Force during the period of 1953-1965 beginning first with the Eisenhower administration’s “New Look” strategy that emphasized the Air Force’s “massive atomic capability” to deter Soviet aggression and created Strategic Air Command and two legs of the nuclear triad: the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and intercontinental bomber forces.²⁵

²¹ Note that the sum of these percentages do not add up to 100%; this discrepancy is accounted for by the fact that there is a portion of the DoD budget that is categorized as “Defense-Wide”, and is not allocated to the services. Examples of this portion of the budget include “Defense Related Activities” such as the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Defense Health Program, Atomic Energy Defense Activities or Special Compensation Trust Funds. This “Defense-Wide” budget authority will not be included in this analysis.

²² See Daniel M. Gerstein, *Securing America’s Future: National Strategy In The Information Age*, Praeger Security International, 2005: 205-216.

²³ “Department of Defense FY 2000 Supplemental Request For Kosovo & East Timor Operations And Other Requirements,” Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller), 7 Feb. 2000.

²⁴ “FY2007 Supplemental Appropriations for Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Other Purposes”, Congressional Research Service, 2 Jul. 2007: CRS-4.

²⁵ Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, “Regaining Strategic Competence”, Center For Strategic And Budgetary Assessments, 2009: 48.

Department of Defense Budget Authority 1948-2010

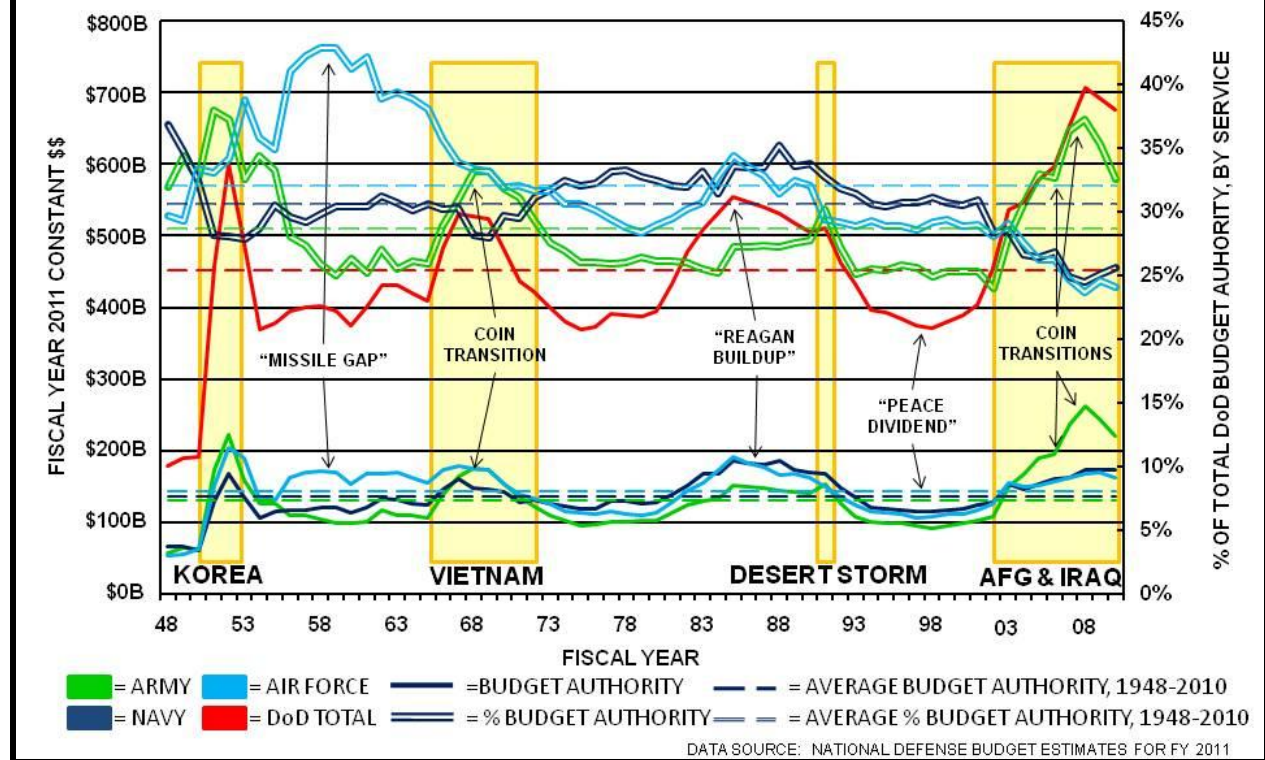


Figure 2-3.²⁶

The author draws the following conclusions from these exhibits:

1. During the post-Cold War period from 1993-2001, U.S. defense strategy was relatively constant, and focused on four core imperatives, or *ways*:
 - i. Defense of the homeland
 - ii. Sustaining forward presence to reassure allies and deter adversaries
 - iii. Preparing to fight and win two nearly-simultaneous MRC's, and
 - iv. Preparing for and executing smaller-scale contingency operations
2. This constancy in *ways* resulted in a correlating constancy of required force structure, or *means*. This subsequently resulted in a constancy of the allocation of budget authority between the services.

²⁶ The data behind this chart is derived from National Defense Budget Estimates For FY 2011, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Mar. 2010: Table 6-3, 73-78. This publication is commonly referred to as "The Green Book" in DoD budget circles. This chart is an original production by the author; the spreadsheet data behind the chart is available upon request.

3. The relative apportionment of budget authority among the services is directly related to their relevance across the entire spectrum of the four core imperatives, or *ways*. While all four services have relevant roles and missions across those four imperatives, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force, which are key to sustaining global presence, security, and mobility in the global commons of the air, sea, and space domains, receive higher proportions of the DoD budget than the Army in the absence of major combat operations – or what some may refer to as “peace.” The U.S. Army is critical to the guaranty of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th imperatives, and also contributes to the sustainment of forward presence through overseas basing agreements and rotational contingency deployments. However, the Army exerts little presence in the “global commons” – the air, maritime, and space domains, through which much of the world’s commerce and information flows in war and in peace - and this fact accounts for the relatively lower levels of budget authority during peacetime, when the Army reverts to being a garrison force.

It would be a mistake to deduce that fiscal stability is a desired outcome of the DoD planning, programming, and budgeting process. However, it can be deduced that fiscal stability is derived from strategic stability, as was the case in the Post-Cold War period from 1993-2001. The nature of the security environment was relatively constant during this period, and accordingly, U.S. defense strategy remained relatively constant in determining the relationships between *ways*, *means*, and *ends*.

One final counter-point: some commentators have concluded that the strategic stability (and subsequent fiscal stability) of the 1990’s actually depicts a lack of strategic innovation and a failure to transform the U.S. military for the changing security environment of the post-Cold War world. For example, Franklin Spinney wrote the following in 1997 following the release of the 1997 QDR:

On May 19 the Defense Secretary Cohen released the results of the Defense Department’s Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). It was the Pentagon’s third attempt to construct a post-Cold War military strategy, and like its predecessors, it failed to weave forces and budgets into a coherent military policy. By avoiding the hard decisions, the Pentagon made it easier for reactionary elements in the military-industrial congressional complex to protect their parochial interests at the expense of our fighting forces and the taxpayers who pay for them.

...The QDR acknowledged the changed conditions of the post-Cold War world, yet it ducked the hard decisions needed to adapt to them. It reaffirmed the strategy of being prepared to fight two major regional wars nearly simultaneously, but it also committed the military to a strategy of global engagement, wherein a large portion of our forces are deployed overseas in peacekeeping operations such as Bosnia, Haiti, and no-fly zones over Iraq, etc. Although the QDR made a few minor changes in force structure, most

notably a reduction of 15 warships and a transfer of one Air Force fighter wing to the reserves, it retained the main elements of the Defense Department's combat power: 10 active Army divisions, 3 active Marine divisions, 12 carrier battle groups, 12 amphibious ready groups, 20 active and reserve Air Force tactical fighter wings, and 187 strategic bombers. Many observers, including myself, do not believe this force structure is large enough to execute these strategies, particularly when the high rates of overseas rotations reduce readiness by wearing out equipment, degrading training, and depressing morale.²⁷

The National Defense Panel was more somber in its criticism of the 1997 QDR, yet expressed similar reservations about the 2 MRC construct and the lack of transformation:

Current defense strategy states that U.S. forces should be capable of fighting two regional wars at almost the same time. Potential threats in North Korea and Southwest Asia define the type of threat we may confront. This two-theater war concept is predicated on the belief that the ability to fight more than one major war at a time deters an enemy from seeking to take advantage of the opportunity to strike while the United States is preoccupied in another theater. Moreover, this posture dictates that, should the second enemy strike, we would swiftly deploy the necessary forces to defeat the second aggressor while continuing to successfully engage the first.

The Panel agrees fully that the United States cannot afford to ignore the near-term threats posed by Iran and Iraq in the Persian Gulf and North Korea in Northeast Asia. Our current forces, however, with the support of allies, should be capable of dealing with Iraq, which still poses a serious threat to the region and appears intent on acquiring an offensive WMD capability. The risks in Korea remain high, but the challenge in that theater is unique: a large, well-concealed force with extensive artillery and rocket forces and likely armed with chemical and possibly biological and nuclear capabilities. Forward bases could be put at risk, limiting the ability to deploy forces into Korea and sustain them. We must continue to work with South Korea to cope with this threat while we attempt to moderate it by political and economic means. As long as we retain the ability to introduce forces into the region, we have adequate combat power within the present force structure to deal with this threat. As a result, it is our judgment that our current force structure is sufficient for the regional threats that we see today.

The Panel views the two-military-theater-of-war construct as a force-sizing function and not a strategy. We are concerned that this construct may have become a force-protection mechanism -- a means of justifying the current force structure -- especially for those searching for the certainties of the Cold War era. This could leave the services vulnerable if one of the other major contingencies resolves itself before we have a transformation strategy in place, creating a strong demand for immediate, deep, and unwise cuts in force structure and personnel.

²⁷ Franklin C. Spinney, "Porkbarrels and Budgeteers: What Went Wrong with the Quadrennial Defense Review," *Strategic Review*, Fall 1997: 1-2.

The two-theater construct has been a useful mechanism for determining what forces to retain as the Cold War came to a close. To some degree, it remains a useful mechanism today. But, it is fast becoming an inhibitor to reaching the capabilities we will need in the 2010- 2020 time frame.

The issue is not whether the current posture is useful. The real issue is where we are willing to take risk. The current posture minimizes near-term risk at a time when danger is moderate to low. A significant share of the Defense Department's resources is focused on the unlikely contingency that two major wars will break out at once, putting greater risk on our long-term security. While we cannot identify future threats precisely, we can identify the challenges. Our priority emphasis (including resources) must go to the future.

Therefore, the Panel concludes (without understating today's security construct) that the Defense Department must move beyond its current focus to pursue a transformation strategy that safeguards our qualitative edge now and in the future. Incorporated in those efforts must be careful consideration of the forward deployed and forward presence arrangements and, most important, our relationships with allies in various regions of the world.²⁸

To sum up the remarkable strategic stability of this period, it is interesting to note that despite the multitude of criticism leveled toward the 2 MRC construct of the 1993 BUR and 1997 QDR, the 2001 QDR upheld and fortified its analytical underpinning, even after a change of administration to the opposing political party. In the author's opinion, this static nature of national security strategy was a prudent hedge against the uncertainty of the post-Cold War international security environment.

²⁸ "Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century," Report of the National Defense Panel, December 1997, accessed at <<http://www.fas.org/man/docs/ndp/front.htm>>, 20 Apr. 2011.

III: The Strategic Perturbation of 9/11

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 left an indelible mark on the American strategic landscape. For the first time since Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the U.S. homeland had been struck by a foreign force. The fact that this force – Al Qaeda – was a non-state actor fundamentally changed how Americans think about national security. While “defense of the homeland” has always been a principal objective for the U.S. military, in the post-World War II nuclear age, the threats to the homeland were envisioned to come from the armed forces of adversary states, primarily in the form of nuclear weapons delivered by intercontinental bombers or ballistic missiles. 9/11 permanently changed that calculus, and the enduring nature of the threat posed by Al Qaeda and its associated movements – witness the number of failed and foiled terrorist plots in the U.S. during the past decade²⁹ – represents an extant change in the nature of the U.S. national security environment.

This reality is reflected in the 2001, 2006, and 2010 QDR’s; the 2001 and 2010 QDR’s explicitly identify “the growth in power of non-state actors” as a defining element of the security environment (see Figure 2-1). Accordingly, “defeating terrorist networks” and “succeeding in CT [counterterrorism] ops” were identified as imperatives or *ways* in the 2006 and 2010 QDR’s. Additionally, both of the QDR’s prescribed increases in the required CT *means* – largely Special Operations Forces (SOF) to meet this new strategic reality.

The 2006 QDR contained the following CT force structure (*means*) mandates:

- Increase active duty Special Forces battalions by one third
- Expand Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units by 3,700 personnel (33% increase) to provide increased support for SOF and the Army’s modular forces
- Establish a Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) composed of 2,600 Marines and Navy personnel to train foreign military units and conduct direct action and special reconnaissance
- Increase SEAL Team force levels to conduct direct action missions
- Establish a SOF unmanned aerial vehicle squadron to provide organic capabilities to locate and target enemy capabilities in denied or contested areas.
- Enhance capabilities to support SOF insertion and extraction into denied areas from strategic distances.³⁰

The 2010 QDR contained the following CT force structure (*means*) mandates:

- Increase key enabling assets for SOF

²⁹ For example, the failed 2005 “shoe bomber” or 2009 “underwear bomber” airliner attacks or the 2009 “Times Square” attack. For a listing of failed or foiled terrorist attacks in the U.S., see <<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/04/30-terrorist-plots-foiled-how-the-system-worked>>

³⁰ “Quadrennial Defense Review Report”, 6 Feb. 2006:44-45.

- Increase COIN, stability operations, and CT competency and capacity in general purpose forces.³¹

The specific emphasis on bolstering these counter-terrorism *means* over the course of these two QDR's clearly reflects the shift in U.S. national security strategy to account for the threat posed by global terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and its associated movements. Additionally, this strategic shift appears likely to have long-lasting strategic effect, as depicted by the popular use of the term "The Long War" in describing the struggle against violent extremism.³²

However, while 9/11 was a seminal event in American history and certainly necessitated a retaliatory response to destroy/disrupt/degrade Al Qaeda and its enablers, it did not fundamentally alter the global geo-political situation. On September 12th, 2001, North Korea possessed nuclear weapons; Iran continued its nuclear weapons development program and sponsorship of terrorist groups throughout the Middle East; The People's Republic of China continued its rapid military expansion; and the threat of leftist revolutions and narco-terrorism continued to rise in Central and South America. Despite all of these major challenges to America's global interests, the application of the military element of U.S. national power decreased in each of these cases in order to generate enough combat power to execute the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. That part of the historical record is simple to comprehend; the fact that there remains a dearth of U.S. military presence in the Western Pacific, Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Caribbean regions a decade after 9/11 is difficult to comprehend, despite the gravity of the security challenges in those regions. The cause of that dearth of military presence is obvious – the cost – in terms of manpower, materiel, and money – required to execute two COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, as will be demonstrated in the next part.

³¹ "Quadrennial Defense Review Report", Feb. 2010: 24.

³² General John Abizaid, the Commander of U.S. Central Command from 2003-2007, is generally credited with coining the term "The Long War" in 2004. The term was used liberally throughout the 2006 "Report Of The Quadrennial Defense Review."

IV: The Costs Of Executing FM 3-24 COIN Campaigns In Iraq & Afghanistan

Determining the costs of wars varies widely in scope and scale with respect to time and the span of government and private sector spending associated with the war. For example, should future anticipated medical care costs for wounded veterans be factored in to the total cost estimate of a war? Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes posited a “deliberately conservative estimate” [their words] of \$3 trillion in total costs for the war in Iraq, and stated that actual total costs could rise as high as \$4.5 trillion after factoring in interest payments on the money borrowed to fund the war and hidden costs to the economy such as the loss of economic productivity by deceased and wounded soldiers.³³ In accounting based on Congressional Research Service data for the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the Department of Veterans Affairs appropriations for the wars in Iraq & Afghanistan, the Center For Arms Control And Non-proliferation estimated the total costs for Fiscal Years 2001-2009 at \$872.6 billion.³⁴

This thesis intentionally limits the scope of cost estimation to DoD budget authority only, and in line with the terms outlined in the Preface, will focus on the differential fiscal costs associated with the adoption of FM 3-24 COIN strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan. This approach has its own analytical flaws; elements of FM 3-24 COIN doctrine were in place in both Iraq and Afghanistan prior to “the surge” that occurred in 2007 and 2009, respectively. Thus, the depicted cost differentials do not equate precisely to “pre-COIN” and “post-COIN” strategies. For example, the combat enablers that were in place prior to “the surge” in each theater – intelligence, logistics, medical, detainee affairs, etc. – remained in place to support “the surge”, and in many cases were augmented by a corresponding surge in capacity. This fact – that the FM 3-24 COIN “surge” in each theater leveraged existing pre-surge capabilities and capacity – makes the scale of the differential costs even more significant.

Some “COINdinistas” have claimed that the failure to recognize that the conditions of insurgency existed in Iraq and Afghanistan - and therefore the delay in changing the strategy to executing a full-scale FM 3-24 COIN campaign - prolonged the duration of these wars, and therefore the expense of those wars. This theory is logical, but doesn’t alter the basic fact that the COIN campaigns resulted in huge expenditures over prolonged periods of time.

The first exhibit in depicting the costs of the shifts to COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan is the aggregate DoD budget, or what is commonly known in budgeting circles as the “top line.” In 2008, the DoD top line was \$707 billion in constant Fiscal Year 2011 dollars – a \$130 billion or 22% increase over the 2005 top line, when the U.S. was fully engaged in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – but not yet executing FM 3-24 COIN strategies in either conflict. To give some historical context, that 2008 budget was \$109 billion (18%) more than the peak of defense spending during the Korean War (in 1952), and \$167 billion (31%) more than the peak of defense spending during the Viet Nam war (in 1967). The red line in Fig. 4-1 below clearly

³³ Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, “The \$3 Trillion War”, excerpted in Vanity Fair, Apr. 2008.

³⁴ “Iraq and Afghanistan War Costs to Date”, Center For Arms Control And Non-proliferation, Jul. 2008, accessed via <http://armscontrolcenter.org/policy/securityspending/articles/supplemental_war_funding/>, 19 Apr. 2008.

depicts DoD topline budget trends, including the effect of transitions to COIN strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007 & 2009.

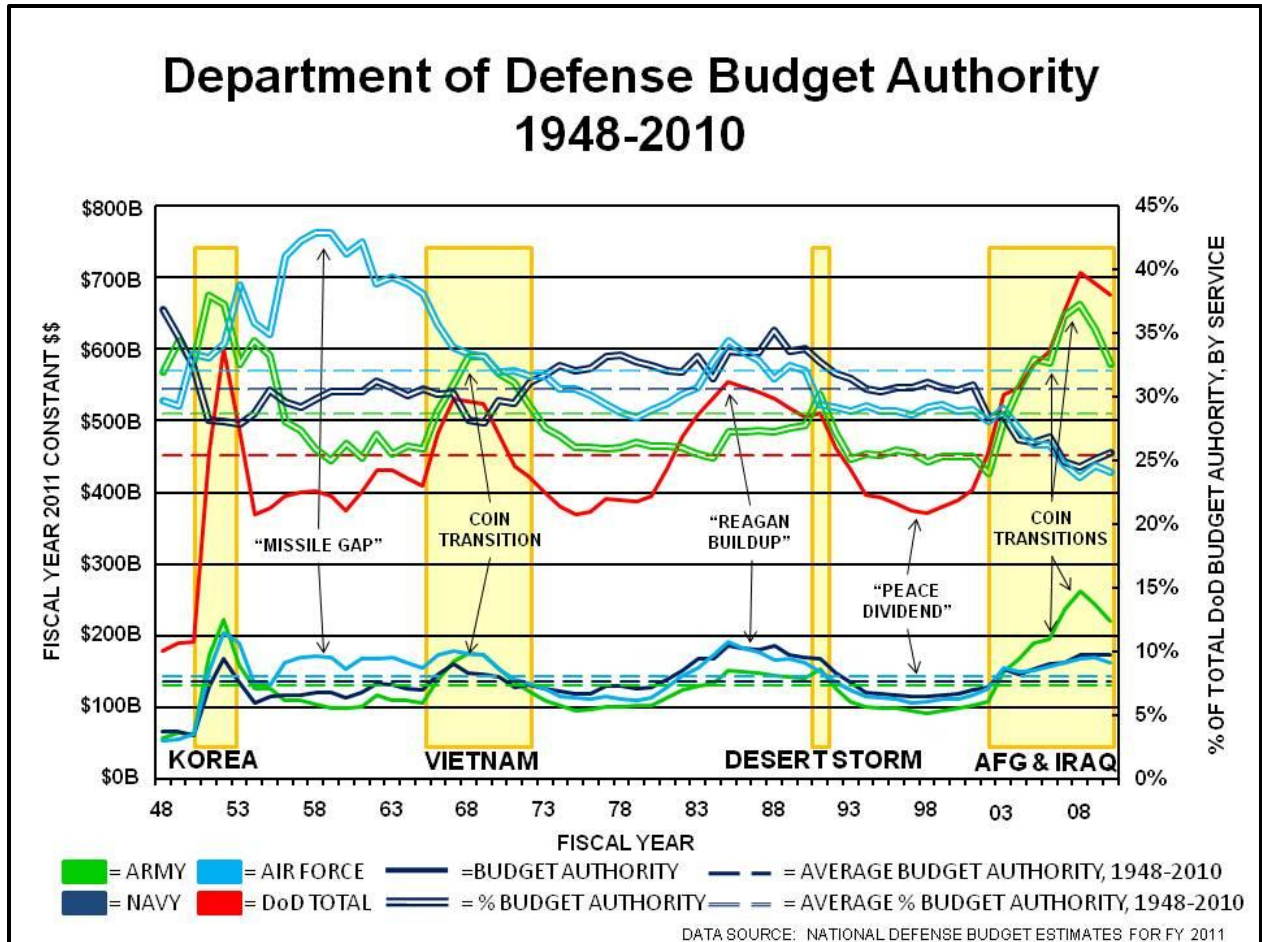


Figure 4-1.

Fig. 4-2 below depicts the estimated incremental costs of each of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The costs of the Iraq War surged by 32% to execute the first year of “The Surge” COIN strategy in 2007. In Afghanistan, DoD appropriations nearly tripled during the two year period from 2008 – 2010.

**Estimated Appropriations Provided for U.S. Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and for
Other War-Related Activities, 2001 to 2011**

(Billions of dollars of budget authority)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 ^a	Total, 2001- 2011
Military Operations and Other Defense Activities ^b												
Iraq	0	0	51	70	50	85	113	133	90	58	43	693
Afghanistan	0	12	12	13	8	12	24	29	38	86	101	335
Other ^c	<u>14</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>117</u>
Subtotal	14	18	80	88	69	110	152	175	140	150	150	1,145

Figure 4-2.³⁵

However, the increase in DoD spending to the highest levels since World War II tells only a portion of the story of the costs of executing COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition to the massive aggregate costs of those wars, the opportunity costs within the DoD budget need to be examined. The nature of FM 3-24 COIN operations – large numbers of boots on the ground for long periods of time – necessitated increased investment in manpower and operations & maintenance funding.

During the period from 2001 – 2009, Army manpower funding increased 71% in constant Fiscal Year 2011 \$, and Army Operations & Maintenance funding increased 170%.³⁶ Additionally, Army procurement funding increased by 113% during the same time frame.³⁷

During the same period (2001 - 2009), Navy manpower and operations & maintenance funding increased by 26% and 31% respectively, while Navy procurement funding increased by 46%.³⁸ It should be noted that those funding increases are Department of the Navy funding increases, which includes the U.S. Marine Corps and its increased funding requirements to meet the demands of the FM 3-24 COIN surges in both Iraq and Afghanistan. During the period from 2001 – 2009, the U.S.M.C grew its manpower by 22,000 personnel – a 12% increase – to meet the demands of the FM 3-24 COIN campaigns, while the U.S. Navy shrank its manpower by 46,000 personnel – a 12% decrease.

Manpower and operations & maintenance funding has an insidious effect due to a short duration of efficacy. It generates capacity in current readiness to execute military operations, but does not generate future readiness of the force, at least not without sustaining that level of funding in subsequent years. Procurement funding – at least for long service life items such as ships, aircraft, and combat vehicles - generates both current readiness and future readiness.

³⁵ Congressional Budget Office, “The Budget and Economic Outlook: Fiscal Years 2011 to 2021”, January 2011: 77.

³⁶ National Defense Budget Estimates For FY 2011, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Mar. 2010: Table 6-16, 152-153.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid: 159-160.

FM 3-24 COIN doctrine thus threatens the future readiness of our armed forces by consuming inordinate amounts of manpower and operations & maintenance funding, at the opportunity cost of procurement funding. This assertion partially explains the fact that despite 5 consecutive years of record high DoD spending (Fiscal Years 2006-2009 – see figure 4-1 above), the U.S. Navy ship inventory is at its lowest total since 1919, and the U.S. Air Force Total Aircraft Inventory (TAI) is at its lowest total since the creation of the Department of the Air Force in 1947. In a post-Cold War context, in 2001 the U.S. Navy ship inventory was 316 ships; by 2009, it had fallen to 285 – a 9.8% decrease.³⁹ During the same period the U.S. Air Force TAI declined from 6,692 aircraft in 2001 to 5,988 in 2009 – a 10.5% decrease.⁴⁰

The U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force are partially culpable for the reduction in the inventories of ships and aircraft due to their failure to contain spiraling acquisition costs and requirements creep on their capital platforms. However, that doesn't mask the fact that despite 5 consecutive years of record DoD spending, the U.S. inventory of ships and aircraft – the key enablers of U.S. supremacy in the global maritime and air domains – has fallen by 10%. FM 3-24 fails to account for this opportunity cost in demanding the high levels of manpower and operations & maintenance resourcing required to execute a manpower intensive, protracted COIN campaign.

³⁹ Ronald O'Rourke, "Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service, 17 Aug. 2010: Table D1, 31.

⁴⁰ James C. Ruehrmund Jr., and Christopher J. Bowie, "Arsenal Of Airpower: USAF Aircraft Inventory 1950-2009", Mitchell Institute Press, Aug. 2010: Appendix B, 25.

V: Re-Setting U.S. Defense Strategy

The looming U.S. Federal fiscal situation inevitably portends shrinking DoD budgets in the future. A historic record national debt of \$14 trillion, coupled with rising non-discretionary Federal spending requirements (i.e. MEDICARE, MEDICAID, Social Security, unemployment compensation, and interest payments on the existing Federal debt), will almost certainly reduce discretionary spending capacity – including DoD spending – in order to control the burgeoning Federal deficit and debt, as depicted by the Congressional Budget Office charts in Figures 5-1 through 5-3 below.

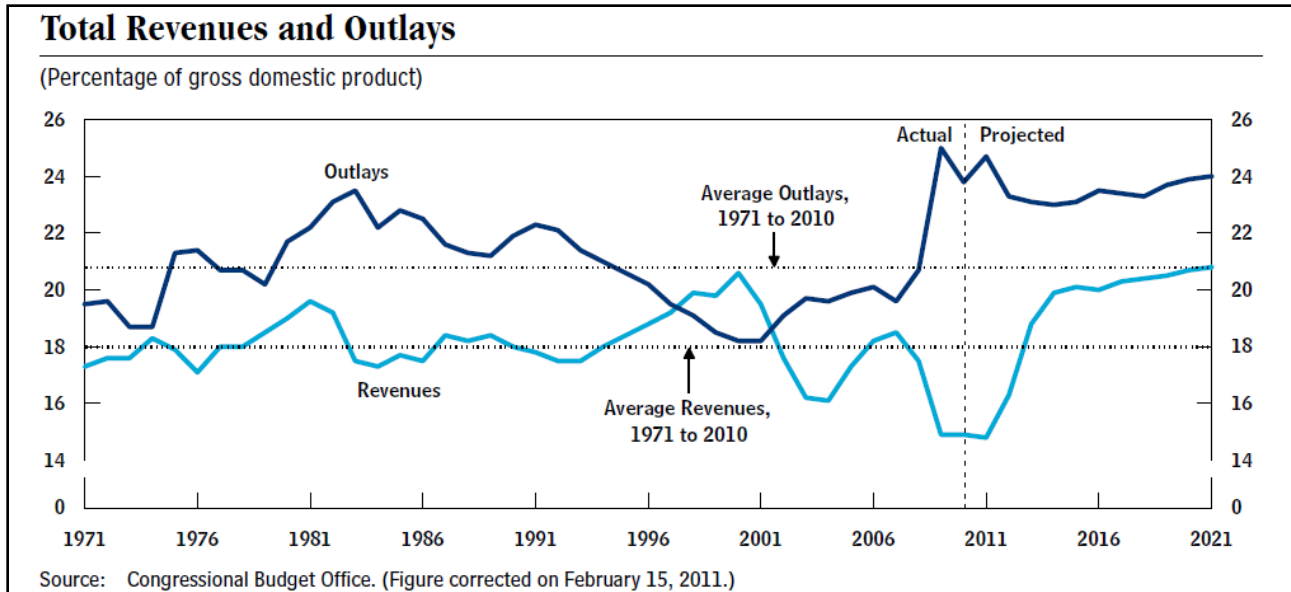
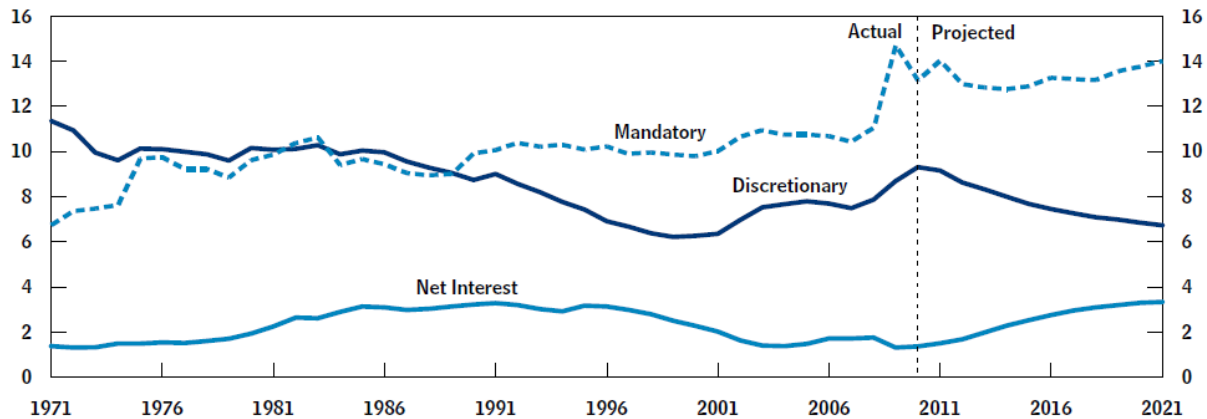


Figure 5-1.⁴¹

⁴¹ Congressional Budget Office, “The Budget and Economic Outlook: Fiscal Years 2011 to 2021”, January 2011: xv.

Outlays, by Category

(Percentage of gross domestic product)

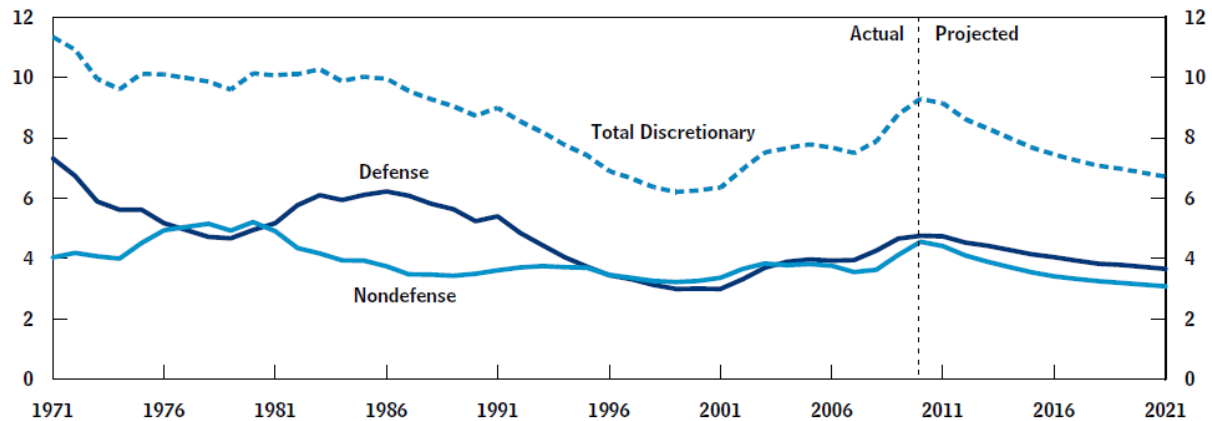


Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Figure 5-2.⁴²

Defense, Nondefense, and Total Discretionary Spending

(Percentage of gross domestic product)



Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Figure 5-3.⁴³

The overwhelming consensus of Federal fiscal projections led Andrew Krepinevich and Barry Watts to conclude in 2009:

... The United States has also become the world's principal debtor nation, and is now suffering from a financial crisis that, by many accounts, will produce the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression. The country can no longer afford — if it ever could — a “rich man's” strategy of solving national security problems by throwing

⁴² Ibid: 57.

⁴³ Ibid: 79.

money at them. Instead, the United States needs to devise “smarter” strategies — strategies that husband resources, engage allies, and impose disproportionate costs on adversaries by focusing our strengths against their weaknesses. US national defense strategies, as well as the forces and capabilities they call for, must be both affordable and sustainable over the long term.⁴⁴

It is against the canvas of this larger fiscal backdrop that the author offers the following prescriptions for re-setting U.S. national defense strategy. Consistent with the definition of strategy in part II of this thesis, the prescriptions will be focused on the *ends*, *ways*, and *means* of U.S. national defense strategy.

These prescriptions will not advocate for particular service roles and missions or platforms – for example U.S. Navy sea-based Joint Strike Fighters versus U.S. Air Force land-based F-22’s to achieve Air Dominance; or U.S. Army land-based missile defense systems vs. U.S. Navy sea-based missile defense systems to achieve Force Protection; or U.S. Air Force air mobility aircraft vs. U.S. Navy strategic sealift ships for Global Mobility. Rather, these prescriptions are intended to center around strategic, doctrinal, or operational concepts, which will ultimately translate into material solutions in the DoD acquisition portfolio to execute those concepts.

1. Redeploy U.S. military forces to approximately match their pre-9/11 global posture.

Prior to 9/11, U.S. military presence was relatively balanced around the globe in accordance with the 1-4-2-1 strategy. As argued in Part III of this thesis, while 9/11 introduced a global geo-political shock, it did not fundamentally change the regional geo-political calculus in North-East Asia, the Asia-Pacific Region, the Mediterranean Region, or South America.

The U.S. emerged as a global power in the early part of the 20th century, and remains a global power at the start of the 21st century. As an example of this imperative for America to remain globally engaged, President Obama utilized the word “global” and its derivatives (globally, globalized, globalization) 184 times over the course of 52 pages in his 2010 “National Security Strategy.”⁴⁵

In light of this overarching national security guidance, it is imperative that the U.S. military is equitably distributed around the globe in support of U.S. global interests.

2. Reconsider returning to the 1-4-2-1 strategic planning construct. As stated in the concluding paragraph of Part II, in the author’s opinion the 1-4-2-1 strategy of the pre-9/11, post-Cold War era was a prudent hedge against the uncertainty of the future security environment. Additionally, it is the author’s opinion that the Department of Defense divested from the 1-4-2-1 concept due to the strategic reality (*ends, ways, means*) of the opportunity costs of investing an excessive amount of resources in two post-9/11 COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

⁴⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, “Regaining Strategic Competence”, Center For Strategic And Budgetary Assessments, 2009: 2.

⁴⁵ The White House, “National Security Strategy”, Washington, DC, May 2010.

The author posits a sole additive exception to this prescription: the imperative to maintain a global counter-terrorism force – capable of delivering global effects through agile intelligence, maneuver, and fires – in all of the domains of war – land, sea, air, space, cyber, and information – to counter the threat posed by Al Qaeda and associated extremist movements who have proven to present a clear and present danger to the homeland and U.S. interests abroad. Perhaps this imperative could be captured by adding an additional “1”, as in 1-4-2-1-1: Defend the homeland (1), maintain forward presence in 4 critical regions (4), prepare to fight and win in two nearly simultaneous regional conflicts (2), prepare for and execute smaller-scale contingency operations, and sustain a global counter-terrorism task force capable of rapid, precise counter-terrorism operations (1).

Of note – in light of the bleak Federal fiscal outlooks depicted at the beginning of Part V of this thesis, the 1-4-2-1(-1?) strategic construct may not be affordable. This issue deserves vigorous national debate on the future of U.S. defense strategy.

3. Re-balance the DoD investment portfolio. As depicted in Part IV of this thesis, the execution of two COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan has upended 50 years of DoD service investment trends, with the Departments of the Navy, Air Force, and Army receiving roughly proportionate levels of annual budgetary authority. In line with the global nature of U.S. interests and security strategy, DoD should re-focus investment on those aspects of the national security enterprise which bolster national security in the global domains of air, maritime, space, and cyber.

4. Reduce the end strength of the services to pre-9/11 levels – and beyond. In both the private and public sectors in the U.S., technological innovation is reducing the required levels of manpower in any enterprise. An exception to this is FM 3-24, which posits an enduring requirement for large numbers of troops deployed to an area of operation for extended periods of time. One of the principal advantages that the U.S. military enjoys over any adversary is technological overmatch. The excessive investment in manpower and operations & maintenance funding necessitated by the execution of two FM 3-24 COIN campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan has eroded DoD investment in procurement and research and development funding into future technologies that will preserve this comparative advantage.

5. Review the affordability of U.S. military operational concepts. Affordability – or the nominal capacity to generate the *means* to execute the *ways* to achieve the *ends* of military strategy – must be considered in any operational concept that is considered in the execution of a strategy. This prescription is offered not only in the context of FM 3-24 COIN doctrine; the looming Federal fiscal environment necessitates that all U.S. military doctrinal concepts should be examined on the basis of their affordability, and unaffordable concepts should be discarded.

6. Re-write FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency doctrine to balance “the interaction of *ends*, *ways*, and *means*.”⁴⁶ FM 3-24 should properly account for the fact that the scope and scale of any counterinsurgency campaign are determined by the *means* made available for that campaign. In

⁴⁶ Owens, “Strategy And The Strategic Way Of Thinking”, [Naval War College Review](#), Autumn, 2007: 111.

the case of the Iraq and Afghanistan COIN campaigns, FM 3-24 demanded the requisite *means*, with no consideration of the current and future opportunity costs in the U.S. national security investment portfolio.

The sociological phenomenon of insurgency in armed conflict is deeply rooted in the history of warfare and will likely continue to persist into the future of warfare. FM 3-24 states that ‘Insurgency and its tactics are as old as warfare itself’⁴⁷ and ‘...That is why insurgency has been a common approach used by the weak against the strong.’⁴⁸

Having acknowledged that, what must change is the notion that the U.S. military can afford to meet the FM 3-24 prescribed level of resources required to execute a COIN campaign – for example a 20-25 counterinsurgent ratio per 1,000 residents in an area of operations. Under FM 3-24 doctrine, a military campaign on the Korean Peninsula – long utilized as a force planning driver – results in a counterinsurgent demand signal of 400,000 to 500,000 troops in the event of an insurgency amongst the North Korean populace (~25 million people).

COINdinistas have often used the term “small wars” to describe counterinsurgency campaigns. However, FM 3-24 prescribes anything but a “small war” with its force planning requirements; by any definition, deploying 100,000+ troops abroad for an extended duration is not a “small war” in the modern context. And that 20-25 counterinsurgent per 1,000 residents ratio doesn’t account for the all of the combat enablers stipulated in FM 3-24 – intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, logistics, air mobility, sea mobility, fires, precision strike, detainee affairs, etc. – the list goes on.

If the reader accepts the assertion that the phenomenon of insurgency will persist in the future of warfare, and concludes that the U.S. military has an imperative to conduct counterinsurgency campaigns in support of U.S. national security objectives, then how should FM 3-24 doctrine be modified? Perhaps that answer lies in reverting to a previous definition of “small wars” – i.e. the anti-Communist counterinsurgency campaigns in Central America in the 1980’s, where American advisors numbering in the double digits trained, equipped, and mentored indigenous security forces in the art of counterinsurgency... or perhaps in the pacification of anti-colonial insurgencies in the Caribbean and Latin America in the early part of the 20th Century – but those theories are beyond the scope of this thesis.

If FM 3-24 is not re-written to account for the resources required to execute the doctrine, the doctrine will price itself out of the business of war.

⁴⁷ FM 3-24, “Counterinsurgency”, Dec. 2006: 1-1.

⁴⁸ Ibid: 1-2.

Prologue

There is one perplexing question that remains unanswered in my mind: If the U.S. (acting unilaterally or in concert with its allies and partners) decides that it will not commit to the execution of a large-scale COIN campaign as currently delineated in FM 3-24 doctrine, and then enters an armed conflict that subsequently develops into an insurgency, what are the strategic options?

The current military operations in Libya present this scenario. The U.S. and NATO have issued declaratory statements that ground forces will NOT be used in this campaign. As of the time of this writing, an air and naval campaign has failed to achieve the stated policy objective of removing the regime of Libyan leader Colonel Moammar Qaddafi from power. It is conceivable that even if Qaddafi was removed from power (irrespective of the means), his supporters would revert to an insurgency strategy to preserve their interests in the Libyan state enterprise. What then?... There are a number of strategic options that do not require the committal of resources required by FM 3-24. One is strategic patience; the air and naval campaign, coupled with the other elements of national power such as economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure, could be employed to gradually erode the insurgents' will to resist. A second strategic option is a coercion strategy – that which the insurgents hold dear could be held at risk until their will to resist is eroded. There are admittedly problems with this theory – such as determining what the insurgents hold dearly, and then figuring out a way to hold that at risk without endangering the neutral and friendly populace amongst which the insurgents seek sanctuary. Finally, a third strategic option is a “small war” COIN strategy, such as those employed in Latin America in the 1980's. Admittedly, the success of that strategy depends largely upon the human capital of the host-nation counterinsurgent forces – in the moral, mental, and intellectual domains – and the political capital of the host-nation government to extinguish the conditions that fuel the insurgency. These are complex variables that cannot be captured in a single doctrinal publication. On the other hand, we can't afford a single doctrinal publication that buys out the uncertainty of these factors by committing massive quantities of American military resources to solve the problem.

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