21st Century Conflict:
From “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA) to a “Revolution in Civil-Military Affairs” (RCMA)

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Working Draft
Updated February 15, 2018
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The U.S. and its allies need to take a close look at the evolution of conflict during the first decade of the 21st century, and consider how the “RMA” or revolution in military affairs must change. One only has to look at a given day’s headlines about any of America's ongoing wars—Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria—to see how much national security threats are changing. Developing new forms of cooperation with allies, strategic partners, and host countries are needed to help develop security and stability in the countries most affected by extremism, terrorism, and insurgency.

The need to reexamine the nature of conflict is changing. How the U.S. should cooperate with host countries and strategic partners is driven by a wide range of factors; such as the steady mix of shifts in military technology and tactics that Marshall Nikolai Ogarkov and other Soviet strategists first emphasized in the 1970s and 1980s. Andrew Marshall and the Office of Net Assessment made these shifts a key focus for reshaping U.S. forces, and likewise, China has focused upon its military development. The U.S and its allies have seen the practical impact of such changes ever since the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and they have steadily changed every aspect of deterrence, competition, and warfare with nations like China and Russia.

At the same time, U.S. military action in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the other states that are threatened by extremism and insurgency show that the need to redefine security is also being driven by a very different kind of military revolution; a revolution in civil-military affairs, whereby the civil dimension of warfare is as important as the military one.

This revolution in civil-military affairs is one where the political and economic dimension has a steadily growing role, and is being shaped by the ability of weak (and sometimes failed) states. It is a revolution driven by asymmetric warfare between state and non-state actors where the ability to win the loyalty of the major faction in the civil population is as important as the ability to win battles.

This new revolution has a global dimension. It is exemplified by the civil aspects of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine and the growing uncertainty as to the security and stability of Europe; by China’s combined use of military and economic pressure in the Pacific; by the civil conflicts and rising tensions in Asia; and by the brutal ongoing civil-military conflicts in North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Each region is experiencing new threats and the need for new forms of security.

These challenges are forcing the United States and its strategic partners to think and act in ways that go far beyond the RMA’s emphasis on the more conventional forms of warfare, and focus as much on the civil dimension and stability as the military dimension and security. The "Revolution in Civil-Military Affairs"—or RCMA—means responding to changes in 21st century conflict that include adapting to:

- New kinds of asymmetric or unconventional civil-military warfare, and the new role of national and transnational non-state actors.
- The combined impact of ideological warfare, terrorism and extremism, and insurgency.
- Coping with political, economic, and military attacks on the legitimacy of host country governments, and exploiting the fact that many are “failed states” in terms of at least some critical aspects of their politics, governance, economies, and levels of corruption.
- The problems created by failed leaders and leadership elites, regardless of whether they are authoritarian or elected.
The systematic exploitation of ethnic, religious, and other divisions and tensions within the population of given states and regions.

The use of civilians as a weapon of war for fund raising, exploiting terrorism, fundraising, and providing human shields.

The need for efforts at conflict resolution that can cope with the often-radical goals of threat forces, deep internal divisions within the population, and the critical failures of many host country and partner governments, and their failures to win (and deserve) the loyalty of their people or key factions.

The need for more flexible and adaptive security partnerships where the host country partner must take the lead in both bring security and creating the civil conditions that can win popular loyalty and create lasting stability.

Since 2001, the need for such changes has become all too clear from the pattern of threats and conflicts in North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Three of these conflicts—Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria—have directly involved the U.S. and its allies in both warfighting and major civil-military efforts. Other conflicts in Libya, Yemen, and many Sub-Saharan African states have led to smaller U.S. interventions, but ones where no military or security efforts can succeed without major progress at the civil level.

Each has involved combinations of violent religious extremism, ethnic and sectarian violence, mixed terrorism and insurgency, and given new roles to non-state actors and asymmetric warfare. At the same time, each has done so under conditions where the lack of political unity, effective governance, and economic development in the host country has been as much—or more—of a threat to any lasting peace and stability as the military operations of enemy forces.

These growing linkages between winning such conflicts at the tactical level and creating loyalty, security, and stability at the civil level are forcing the United States and its partners to rethink how they deal with internal security, to link civil-military operations, to make progress in governance, the economy, and political stability as well as on the battlefield. It is no coincidence that the worst challenges from extremism, terrorism, and insurgency emerge among the weakest and most divided states, and those that have done the least to unite their population and meet its civil needs.

Conflicts like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen are all too close to "failed state wars." They occur and continue because the host country government has not met the needs of its people, and does not create the civil conditions that can develop unity and broad popular support. The security threats posed by extremism and civil war are all too real, but so are the internal divisions, threats, and failures of host country governments that sustain such conflicts and turn them into self-inflicted wounds.

There is no way to shape a successful outcome of such conflicts that does not produce some form of both lasting security and stability. Winning such conflicts requires a U.S. ally and host country capability to "win" at the civil level as much as at the military level. The host country government or partner can sometimes be as much a threat at the civil level as at the military level. It forces the U.S. to make civil issues a key part of warfighting, develop new approaches to asymmetric conflict, and strategic partnership. It also requires the U.S. to educate its national security professionals to think in new ways.
The Continuing Need for Progress in the Existing “Military” Side of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)

As current U.S. strategy makes clear, these changes do not mean that the technical and tactical “revolution in military affairs”—or RMA—does not still have critical importance. Advances in precision strike, weapons of mass destruction, long-range warfare, sensors, situational awareness, jointness, intelligence, communications, cyber and space warfare, and every aspect of command and control continue to radically change the nature of 21st century conflict.

U.S. strategy cannot ignore the risks of having to compete in an increasingly multipolar world that is shaped by China and Russia. Smaller nations like Iran and North Korea could involve the United States in wars dominated by the military capability to deter and win battles. Competition with China and Russia, and threats like Iran and North Korea, need to be met with advanced, high technology, modern warfare, and heavy combat forces.

The Limits to a Purely "Military" Revolution in Military Affairs

At the same time, a focus on a purely military version in the Revolution in Military Affairs does not meet the needs of modern warfare or grand strategy in the wars the U.S. is now fighting. It is important to note that the early 1990s were a moment in time when the U.S. and Europe seemed to have emerged as the dominant in a mix of global military forces, and the U.S. seemed to be the world’s only “super power.” The Soviet Union had collapsed and Russia seemed poised to become a future partner. China had not emerged as a major power capable of achieving parity with the U.S.

More broadly, the 1990s was also a moment where the Internet and social networking created growing levels of global unity and focused on democratic reform, and when the steady expansion of world trade created a level of “globalism” that would unite and benefit the world. Few foresaw the rise of extremism and ethnic and sectarian conflict that would become a dominant aspect of U.S. and allied warfighting by 2005-2006.

That moment ended almost as quickly as the Cold War. It now seems almost nostalgic to remember that in 1991, a broad coalition of U.S., European, and Arab forces fought a war where fighting did not involve non-state actors, and only lasted from January 7th to February 28th. The battles to liberate Kuwait involved advanced tactics and technology, but relied on military operations fought by conventional forces in direct air-land engagements, and ended in a formal ceasefire between state actors.

It seems equally nostalgic to remember that many analysts saw the trends in warfare and force emerged out of that conflict as the “revolution in military affairs.” The “revolution” in the first Gulf War placed a traditional emphasis on joint warfare and engagements between attacking conventional forces. It focused on the use of precision-guided weapons and suppression of enemy air defense, or SEAD, followed by deep strike and an air-land battle, rapid maneuver, high tempo 24-hour conflict, radical advances in intelligence and targeting, and a near real-time decision cycle based on equal advances in secure communications and digital aids.
Stealth became a reality that showed how a single advance in technology could alter the battle, but missiles and missile defense also altered the nature of war. The Iran-Iraq War had already exposed the risk that weapons of mass destruction could be a reality in modern war, but during the conflict, it became clear that Iraq was also seeking to develop nuclear weapons and biological weapons—making proliferation an all too real element of the “revolution in military affairs.”

**The War in Afghanistan**

When a new series of war began in 2001, this “revolution in military affairs” still seemed to dominate 21st century conflict. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan after the attacks on the U.S. in 9/11 did involve the use of special forces and support of local forces, but it initially seemed to be a limited regular conflict that began on October 7, 2001 and ended on December 17, 2001. No one foresaw the recovery of the Taliban, the survival of Al Qaida, the impact of sanctuary in Pakistan, or the deep failures of the new Afghan government. It took more than a decade to fully understand that the U.S. would have to fight very different and more intense civil and military conflicts through at least 2020.

The U.S. and its allies tried to help at the civil level, but this help consisted largely of efforts to transform Afghan politics and governance in a Western image, create classic economic and governance reforms, and rely heavily on project aid. It did not create effective governance, economic progress, and ethnic and sectarian unity, and it was very slow to anticipate the need for effective Afghan forces. From 2004 onwards, the Taliban and its affiliates began to present a new, far more challenging combination of terrorism, asymmetric warfare, insurgency, and religious ideological extremism.

By the time that the Obama Administration came to office, the rise of the Taliban and the failures of the Karzai government had created a serious regional conflict. Its challenges had extended to neighboring states as well. Pakistan became and remains an uncertain ally to this day. Like Afghanistan, Pakistan now teeters on the edge of becoming a failed state, and has its own deep civil-military challenges, divisions, and violence.

**The War in Iraq**

Similarly, another U.S.-led coalition of largely conventional military forces invaded Iraq in 2003 to deal with the perceived threat of weapons of mass destruction. This coalition again relied on suppression of enemy air defenses and rapid, high-tempo sustained maneuver and the air-land battle. It built on the lessons of previous wars to make greater use of precision strikes in both line of sight and stand-off operations, and used a greatly improved mix of digital battle management and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

This coalition defeated and overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein in fighting that only lasted from March 20th to May 1st, and initially seemed to have ended in less than two months. However, this seeming victory also created a long irregular civil-military war that continues today—one vastly complicated by the series of political upheavals that began in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in 2011, and the interferences of outside powers like Iran, Russia, and Turkey—each fighting at their own level of both civil and military operations.
While the quick defeat of Saddam Hussein’s forces in 2003 initially seemed to validate the lessons of 1991 and the existing version of “revolution in military affairs,” this time window proved to be all too brief. Even by mid to late 2004, it was clear that the Taliban had found a sanctuary in Pakistan and were beginning to renew terrorist and military activity. It was becoming equally clear that a weak, divided, and corrupt Afghan government was not able to bring security and stability to Afghanistan.

By late 2005, it was becoming all too clear that the defeat of Saddam Hussein had opened Iraq to large-scale sectarian and ethnic tensions and civil war, a growing threat from religious extremism, and a level of insurgency that the previous efforts to define the “revolution in military affairs” could not cope with. As in Afghanistan, civil-military operations became critical, but the United States and its allies again were not properly prepared and resourced to conduct them.

An apparent victory in the fighting in Iraq between 2006 and 2009 was followed by rising civil conflict in 2011-2013, and ISIS’s takeover of much of the Sunni and Western portions of Iraq in 2014 and 2015. More than a decade of aid could not produce effective governance, development, military forces and the rule of law, or national unity between Arab and Kurd or Sunni and Shi’ite. Iraqi security forces virtually disintegrated when they were attacked by ISIS.

Moreover, the political upheavals that began in 2011 led to a major civil war in a neighboring Syria, helped empower ISIS as a major threat, and led to the emergence of a new protostate in the form of a "caliphate." In this “caliphate,” ISIS occupied a large portion of both Syria and western Iraq, created new tensions between the Arabs and Kurds in both countries, and brought in outside powers: First, Iran and the Hezbollah, and then Russia and Turkey. Each intervention created new civil as well as military problems, and offset the civil and military progress the U.S.-led coalition had made in Iraq between 2008 and 2011. Iran has also carried out its own revolution in civil-military affairs by shifting key elements of its force structure to focus on irregular warfare, and the support of non-state actors in other countries.

**Coping with the Emergence of a Revolution in Civil-Military Affairs**

History did not end with the Cold War, and neither did the need for continuing revolutions in military affairs. In retrospect, even in the early 1990s, strategists, politicians, and military analysts should have done a better job of remembering just how many forces continued to divide the world, how rapidly history evolves, and how rarely one decade’s expectations turn into the next decade’s realities.

From 2006 onwards, the U.S. and its allies have faced a major set of civil-military challenges in what have become two "long wars"—one in Afghanistan, and one in Iraq and Syria. Both wars have been heavily driven by the failures of the host governments involved to cope with the needs of, and divisions within, their populations. Both wars were dominated by non-state actors using unconventional or irregular warfare, and both became caught up in broader regional civil-military challenges—particularly from Pakistan and Iran.
Quite aside from Afghanistan and Iraq, the Israel-Hezbollah War in 2006 showed how Iran's sponsorship of a non-state actor and creation of a non-state force with rockets, missiles, and all the tools necessary for irregular warfare could change the regional balance. By the time the U.S. and its allies won a massive victory in a conventional fight against Saddam, the events of 9/11 had already made it clear that emerging forces were changing the nature of conflict. The way the U.S. and its security partners had to shape their force became the “revolution in civil-military affairs” or RCMA.

They also were caught up in the failures of host country governments to deal competently with any major aspect of their civil needs: politics, governance, economics, or forging national unity. Like most of the countries in the MENA region (Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Central Asia) they faced massive stress from population growth, the need to create growing modern economies that could create jobs for their youth, the need to limit corruption and favoritism that profited from a narrow ruling elite at the expense of the vast majority of their people, and the need to bring together sectarian, ethnic, and other factions with some degree of equity.

**The Rising Importance of Civil Instability and Failures in Modern Warfare**

In retrospect, the U.S. and its Western partners should have paid far more attention to the warnings about these civil problems by international organizations like the UNDO, IMF, and World Bank, NGOs line Transparency International, and a wide range of think tank and academic experts. For example, a series of Arab Development Reports warned from 2003 onwards that the civil problems in many Middle East and North Africa (MENA) states had reached potentially explosive levels. There should have been no surprise that political upheavals suddenly threatened to spread throughout the Islamic world in 2011, and created new civil conflicts in states like Libya, Syria, and Iraq.

What some optimistically called the “Arab Spring,” in fact helped to lay the groundwork for the transformation of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) into what became the Islamic State or Daesh. By 2013, the Islamic State had spread from Syria to a wide range of other states, and revived the civil war in Iraq while helping to unleash an expansion of religious extremism into Africa, Central Asia, and other parts of the world.

Other short and long-term forces have contributed to these causes of instability, extremism, and war. The failures of secular governance influence elements of the population towards a wave of religious extremism. The Great Recession of 2007-2008 showed that “globalism” was scarcely a rising tide that brought on new levels of economic progress and development. Its’ lingering effects are still a source of tension and problems. More importantly, the civil forces that drove political unrest and upheavals throughout the Middle East and North Africa and much of the rest of Africa as well as parts of Asia have worsened in most developing states.

Sustained population growth over more than half a century has created other critical problems. Population pressure, a "youth bulge" seeking jobs and careers, corruption, very low standards of governance, poverty, low incomes, religious tension and extremism, ethnic and tribal divisions, and violent non-state actors are worse problems than they were when the "Arab spring" began in 2011. Far too many nations face critical political,
demographic, and economic problems which can trigger lasting civil conflicts as well as critical constraints on their national security spending.

And, asymmetric warfare with a civil dimension has become a major threat in other regions. The Russo-Georgian crisis of 2008 proved to be the prelude to a far more serious Russian invasion of the Ukraine in late February 2014. It showed that “little green men” could implement a different kind of asymmetric warfare and revolution in military affairs. It again made European security a critical issue in the West, and it is still unclear how serious the new tensions between Russia and the US and Europe will become.

Russia showed in Georgia, the Ukraine, and Syria that it would be far less passive than it had been in the Serbian conflict, was equally capable of exploiting civil divisions in neighboring states, and that it was able to use what came to be called hybrid warfare in civil-military operations. At the same time, the Ukraine was crippled by its own ethnic divisions, corruption, and economic failures.

Elsewhere, China has developed its own new civil-military approaches to irregular or asymmetric warfare and strategic competition—ones that range from creating artificial islands out of coral reefs to increasing its strategic influence by creating a network of investments, ports and transit routes—that extend to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

Failed State Wars and Facing the Limits to Military Intervention

Hostile non-state actors, extremist movements, insurgents—and outside states as well—now operate in an environment where the host-country government is as much or more of a threat than the hostile force or forces. The host country faces a security threat because it has failed to provide political stability, effective governance, and economic security. The U.S. and its allies must find ways to make the host country deal with its political divisions, improve its governance, reduce corruption, and move towards economic security and development.

It most cases, the end result confronts the U.S. and its allies with four interactive sets of threats and behavior patterns that have a very different set of priorities from past conflicts. In order of priority:

- **Host Country Government and Security Forces**: Authoritarianism, failure to cope with internal divisions, poor governance and corruption, failed economic development and equity, population pressure and youth bulge, repression and violence by internal security forces, traditional and corrupt military.

- **The Overt “Threat”**: Active enemy forces and fighters. Often the result of a progression from moderate and peaceful movements that come under acute political pressure and shift to extreme and violent movements that feed on the civil-military divisions and failures of the host country governments.

- **Threats to the U.S. and its allies**: The patterns are all too clear: Relearn counterinsurgency yet again. Conduct separate military (tactical) and civil (project-oriented development) efforts. Focus on the military threat and downplay host country problems and weaknesses. Fail to create a meaningful overall civil-military plan and provide a net assessment. Rapid or annual rotations with limited expertise. Initial denial of the seriousness of the threat, then flood resources without adequate plans, controls, and measure of effectiveness. Rush to generate Host country forces only after threat is
critical, then leave too quickly. “Take note” of lessons, but then ignore them. Poor coordination and integration of effort; allied limits to engagement, national caveats, demands;

- *Other hostile and neutral nations*: Competing local and regional national interests, tolerate or encourage flow of volunteers, arms transfers, competing advisory missions, provision of de facto sanctuary, and low-level hostile action.

These challenges are not ones that outside military forces can meet on their own. Host country civil failures must be addressed at the civilian and civil-military levels. These challenges go far beyond purely military victories and the narrow limits of traditional stability that are part of military operations. They require new forms of civil-military partnerships, prolonged international cooperation in establishing and maintaining both security, and some form of stability in national politics, governance, the economy and civil society.

These challenges require changes in U.S. and allied plans and operations based on net assessments of all of the civil and military forces that shape today’s civil conflicts. In addition, they fuel ideological extremism and support for violent non-state actors, and give states like Iran and Russia leverage in using non-state actors and asymmetric warfare to further divide and exploit such conflicts.

These challenges require shifts in U.S. and allied military training and education to show officers and planners at every level how to measure and counter such divisions and look beyond tactical victories to create lasting civil-military stability and security. Lastly, these challenges require education and training of key civil elements during U.S. and allied civil efforts in the host country that deal with education, media, and civil society—thus creating new curriculums at every level of higher education and particularly at the staff college and national defense university level.

**The Civil and Human Costs of War**

The record of such civil-military efforts has so far been mixed at best at the military level and done poor at the civil level. Afghanistan remains in an unstable transition due to reliance on its own security forces. Afghanistan already has seen a rising threat in more than 10 of its provinces, and unacceptably high casualties to its security forces and civilian population. The fighting has forced many to move to cities which are still partially insecure. Living standards are dropping, medical services and education have been cut, poverty levels have increased since 2008, and forced repatriation of Afghans living in Iran and Pakistan has increased its problems. Recent studies by the World Bank and IMF warn of major budget and economic problems, and that economic progress is uncertain and does not meet popular needs.

At the same time, past U.S. and allied aid efforts have reflected major failures in civil-military coordination, planning and execution, and effective international cooperation. Afghanistan may still succeed, but it faces years of further conflict and uncertainty, and well over 32 million people remain at risk.

The UN's OCHA warned in early 2018 that humanitarian support was required for 3.3 million Afghans, 2.4 million of whom had conflict-related needs and no alternative lifeline. Life-saving responses related to trauma care, emergency shelter, food, nutrition, and safe water needed to be provided to 2.8 million people, including 1.6 million severely
food insecure, 585,000 acutely malnourished children and women, and 635,000 people living in damaged housing.

The war in Iraq against ISIS has been the fourth war the U.S. has led in that country since 1991, and it is not yet over. ISIS may have lost its "caliphate," but many fighters remain in Iraq and Syria. The tensions between Iraq’s Kurds and Arabs, and Sunnis and Shi’ites, are at least as great today as under Saddam Hussein, and threaten civil war. Problems have been compounded by various militia groups and Iranian presence and influence. Iraq still presents a major challenge in terms of post-conflict political and economic power-sharing federalism that must be resolved at both the civil and security levels.

Iraq also maintains crises in politics, governance, and economics. It is a nation of some 37 million people that are in an economic crisis, and the fighting has left many Iraqis without a home and in desperate need of aid. The UN estimated in January 2018 that there were 11 million in need, 3 million citizens internally displaced, and 6.2 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

Syria faces more direct and brutal threats. Far more than 250,000 civilians have been killed, and there is no meaningful estimate of the wounded. Syria has become increasingly divided along sectarian lines, and is now largely under the rule of a still repressive Assad regime. The UN estimated in January 2018 that a total of 5.4 million Syrians had fled the country, 13.1 million civilians—well over 50% of the population—were in need, 6.1 million were internally displaced, and 2.98 million were trapped in besieged and hard to reach areas.

Libya's factions have largely defeated ISIS, but have deteriorated into civil conflict, tribal and regional divisions, and some elements of violent religious extremist movements. Oil wealth has, to some extent, eased the problems that Libya's 6.3 million people face, but the UN estimated in early 2018 that 1.3 million were in need, and over 500,000 were internally displaced or returnees that needed aid to survive. Libya cannot avoid the growing cumulative human impact of ongoing violence and failed governance, development, and social order.

The war in Yemen continues to worsen, and like the previous three countries, it mixes religious extremism with growing sectarian tension and conflict. The fighting has pitched Saudi and UAE air against Houthi and other irregular non-state ground forces, combining high civilian casualties with the impact of a major naval embargo. Like Afghanistan, Yemen is extremely poor and far more vulnerable to the disruptions of war than wealthier states. It has a population of some 26 million, failed governance, a failed economy, and ongoing civil conflict. It is now the scene of a major cholera epidemic and the UN's OCHA estimates that,

An alarming 20.7 million people in Yemen need some kind of humanitarian or protection support, with some 9.8 million in acute need of assistance. This man-made disaster has been brutal on civilians. An estimated 17 million people – 60 per cent of the total population - are food insecure while a staggering seven million people do not know where their next meal is coming from and are at risk of famine. At least three million people have fled their homes, public services have broken down, less than half of the health centers are functional, medicine and equipment are limited, and there are no doctors left in 49 out of 276 districts. Access to safe water has become a major challenge and the lack of proper sanitation has increased the risk of communicable diseases.

Taken together, these four “failed state” conflicts have become long wars of attrition that affect the destiny of some 120 million people—even if one ignores the massive impacts
that their problems have on the nations around them. One way or another, the U.S. and its partners must try to find some form of lasting solution at the civil and military levels that can deal with each case, as well as with the risk that the spread of violent extremism will create new cases.

More broadly, the legacy of the political upheavals in the MENA region that began in 2008 has been a level of political and economic disruption that has affected virtually every state in the region, made its mix of civil problems worse, and created new incentives for civil conflict and for some elements to support extremism. Far too many reports on extremism and terrorism show that many other states can easily become the scene of future wars, and countries like the South Sudan and Somalia already have—along with a number of states in West Africa.

**Dealing with the Military Aspects of the Revolution in Civil-Military Affairs**

The United States and its strategic partners now have to deal with these realities, and they require major changes to both the military and civil sides of the Revolution in Military Affairs. So far, the U.S. has made far more progress on dealing with the military side than the civil side, but major challenges still remain.

*The Challenge of Non-State Actors and State Support of Non-State Actors*

U.S. and partner forces have recognized that non-state actors have become as much of a threat as states—as well as a weapon or tool that hostile states and international movements can exploit. The Algerian Civil War that took place between 1991 and 1998 provided an early warning of how serious a threat non-state actors can be in the 21st century. Since that time, non-state actors have become the major threat in each war the U.S. is now fighting, as well as a major threat in much of North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

With each conflict, elements of non-state actors have also become steadily better organized and more effective, and studying and countering their tactics, organization, funding, and efforts to win political and ideological influence has become more critical. Once non-state actors become a serious threat, they are extremely difficult to defeat. They often require specialized intelligence networks to target them, trained Special Forces, and new weapons and reconnaissance systems like unmanned aerial vehicles, (UAVs) and unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) to attack.

At the same time, non-state actors have learned to use human shields, exploit international law and human rights, combine terror and extortion with jobs and incentives, attack governance and the rule of law as well as national security forces, and even become protostates like ISIL (or Daesh).

Both military forces and all the other elements of national security forces—including civil efforts that shape popular support for governments and counter ideological extremism—need to develop training and expertise in dealing with the full range of threats from non-state actors.
National security forces and intelligence services need to steadily improve their education, readiness, and cooperation in dealing with the rise of non-state actors as major security threats, and especially in preventing them from making the transitions from terrorism to insurgency, and from insurgency to protostate.

They must be equally ready to prevent outside states from supporting violent non-state actors as proxies, being used in spoiler roles, or being used to gain leverage in dealing with other states or to fight non-state actors with other non–state actors. Additionally, security partners need to be ready to cooperate in dealing with a wide range of movements from religious extremists to the creation of such actors by hostile states using specialized elements like the Iranian Al Quds force.

At the same time, Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that even a long series of tactical victories can be strategically meaningless without effective aid and support at the civil, political, and economic levels. Moreover, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and other states have shown that the threat posed by state support of non-state actors has also risen and has evolved far beyond small movements of terrorists, preventing limited flows of volunteers, or controlling transfers of money.

**Rethinking Train and Assist Missions**

The steady evolution of the U.S. and allied posture in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other states has shown that the U.S. and its allies need to make major changes in the train and assist mission. Some of these changes have so far come with agonizing slowness when they should have been quick and decisive, but the U.S. has realized that it cannot produce instant host country forces, and that success requires prolonged, conditions-based effort.

It has been clear that both the U.S. military and their civilian leaders need to be educated to rethink train and assist missions. The course of such U.S. efforts in recent conflicts show that train and assist efforts need to focus on creating combat effectiveness in operations and particularly in the field— not just on generating new forces.

Force generation is a key part of military cooperation and education. New and replacement units need to be created by recruiting and training personnel, provide suitable equipment and facilities, and form the unit. No amount of training and force generation in the rear, however, really prepares new units or their leaders for combat, or ensures proper operational decision-making intelligence flow, exercise of command, reinforcements, and supply. Inexperience, toleration of incompetence, and corruption can create critical problems at every level of operation when outside or allied expertise and presence is lacking, and when experienced combat train and assist personnel are not deployed forward or are withdrawn.

This is particularly true when new or untried units are sent into combat—as the problems new and garrison host country forces encountered in the fighting in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan have shown. Units generated in the rear without broad operational and forward support have failed far too often. Until the U.S. began to send train and assist host country forces and units forward in Syria, and return them to more forward positions in Iraq and Afghanistan, far too many local forces took excessive casualties, withdrew, or were not properly supported, supplied, and reinforced.
Moreover, the initial fighting between Iraqi forces and ISIS reinforced a lesson from the collapse of the ARVN. Insurgents cannot be allowed to gain a massive advantage on the ground by simply learning the weakest links in opposing government forces, attacking and rolling-up the weaker units, exposing the flanks and position of the better units, and then forcing them into what, at best, is partially organized retreat.

Future cooperative efforts need to act upon these lessons. No one can create effective combat leaders and forces from the rear. New and weak units need to have a small, but experienced team of combat leaders embedded with them. New combat leaders and units need months of on-the-ground help in getting the essentials of combat operations right. Modern forward air control is critical, and the use of drones can make it effective far beyond the line of sight (but so is human intelligence, as well as the constant assessment of tactics, defensive positions, and patrol activity).

Train and assist teams or personnel are needed well below the corps or top headquarters level to monitor command quality, intelligence use, resupply and reinforcements—and often to flag and limit corruption and pay of ghost soldiers, while ensuring the proper supply and deployment of unit relief. With proven experience, and successful host country forces, support from the rear seems like it will be enough. However, several thousand years of military history serve as a warning that there are few times when leading from the rear is adequate in actual combat.

Building forward combat capability is even more demanding. Forward deployed train and assist teams—usually Special Forces or Rangers—are necessary to spot good combat leaders and warn against weak, ineffective, or corrupt ones. They are needed to provide intelligence backwards that static or inexperienced Iraqi leaders and units cannot. They are needed to be a voice for active patrolling. At the same time, they needed to be a second voice when resupply, reinforcement, regrouping, and relief are truly needed. Someone has to bypass the barriers, rigidities, and sectarian/ethnic prejudices in the chain of command and send the right signals to the top.

Military doctrine, education, and training need to emphasize forward support at the tactical level, while also emphasizing the need to protect civilians, provide immediate efforts to restore civil life, ensure that victories in irregular warfare does not mean the excessive use of force or revenge, and avoid leaving civilians without support, security, and immediate incentives to support and trust their governments. Forward deployed train and assist teams may also be needed to help encourage effective civil-military action in cases where a unit has a different ethnic or sectarian bias, or simply thinks in tactical terms rather than how to create a local capability to hold, recover, and build at both the military and civil levels.

**Airpower as an Equalizer**

The war is almost certain to come when the U.S. cannot use airpower in a climate of near total air superiority, where non-state actors acquire advanced surface-to-air missiles and/or highly capable unmanned aerial combat vehicles (UCAVs), or where a third country air force presents problems or provides air cover. This has already happened to some extent in Syria.

To date, however, airpower has provided the "equalizer" that can rescue host country forces in Iraq, eastern Syria, and Afghanistan; and give them an edge in offensive operations.
Increases in U.S. air strikes have played a critical role in limiting threat operations in Afghanistan. U.S.-led airstrikes flew 1,100 missions that released at least one weapon in the first 11 months of 2017. This compares with 615 sorties in all of 2016, only 411 in 2015, and 1,136 in 2014—the last year U.S. combat forces were still present.

A focus on support of Afghan forces also allowed the U.S. to sharply reduce the number of total close air support sorties involved. The U.S. only flew 4,253 such sorties in the first 11 months in 2017. It flew 5,162 in all of 2016, 5,774 in 2015, and 12,978 in 2014. Tanker sorties also dropped by nearly 50%, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance sorties dropped from 15,009 in the first 11 months of 2017 to 19,681 in all of 2016, 21,634 in 2015, and 32,999 in 2014.

As long as the U.S. and its allies can deploy such an equalizer, they must plan on doing so. They may be able to put even more reliance on various forms of unmanned aerial vehicles or cruise missiles in the future, but the United States must count on providing sufficient force to both protect its host country forces and give them an opportunity to win. In most cases, train and assist power will not be a substitute for adequate killing power.

Providing Enough Rather than Constantly Asking How Much: The Need for Decisive Force

This, however, raises another lesson. Support of host country forces does not eliminate the need to provide enough advisory and air support effort to be decisive. It may still take years to win or force an opponent to a credible peace. The United States, however, should never return to the kind of slow, incremental build-up of its advisory and air support effort warfare it fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. It took years for the U.S. to admit it faced a serious resurgence of the threat, and took more years to recommit enough train and assist and airpower to be credible. Creeping incrementalism is not a credible option. It is either worth committing enough forces to matter, and have their impact before the enemy can build up experience and capable forces, or the U.S. should stay out.

There also is no point in being so risk adverse that you do not provide a level of adequate effort and then still take the risk. There were nearly three years in Syria when limited U.S. military action could have deposed Assad without the massive Iranian, Russian, and Turkish intervention that followed. As has already been discussed, the end human cost to Syrian civilians of failing to act has been immense. Assad seems likely to remain power indefinitely, and Iran and Russia have gained at U.S. expense, while U.S. relations with Turkey have suffered badly.

Premature withdrawal in Iraq and Afghanistan cost more than it was worth—both to the Afghan and Iraqi people and the U.S. in terms of spending and casualties. More decisive action might have led to early or sustained success. Asking how much is too little and too late is just as important as asking how much is enough.

Human Shields and Propaganda: Rethinking Rules of Engagement, Targeting, and Strategic Communications

The U.S. effort to adapt to the military side of the Revolution in Civil-Military Affairs must also address the key issue of how to fight wars in which the opponent uses civilians as key
weapons—as shields, targets, and sources of revenue. Providing sufficient force is not just a matter of force size, but a matter of the way in which force is used and how its impact on civilians is judged.

It is all too clear that the extremists and insurgents the U.S. and its allies are fighting in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan are fully prepared to exploit civilians in any way they can, and use them and civilian facilities as shields. Moreover, non-state actors, ideological extremists, and supporting outside states have combined to focused on the use of human shields, exploiting civilian casualties and collateral damage, and finding ways to limit or paralyze the proper use of military force.

The problems created by dealing with these forms of irregular and ideological warfare should not be allowed to make it impossible to make effective use of the advances in targeting, precision strike capabilities, and UAVs and the other advances in IS&R that can make airpower so decisive a tool. They also should not be analyzed in ways that ignore their real impact for an illusion that the wrong kind of constraints do more good than harm.

The use of air and missile power should take careful account of humanitarian considerations and political sensitivities. However, the current focus on minimizing daily casualties is precisely the wrong approach. The U.S. should make every feasible effort to limit cumulative civilian casualties and collateral damage, but not at the cost of prolonging a war. It needs to rethink the steady rise in the limits imposed by its rules of engagement, shape restrictions on the use of airpower in ways which focus on terminating conflicts with the lowest cumulative level of casualties and collateral damage that can be decisive, and reshape its strategic communications to both honestly describe the limits of what its military systems do and explain the rationale behind its use of force.

Non-state actors cannot be allowed to make human shields a new constant in every form of irregular and potentially conventional war. This ignores the grim realities of war. There is nothing humanitarian about saving a small number of civilian lives and opening whole towns and cities up to prolonged occupation by threats like ISIL. There is nothing humanitarian about prolonging wars, producing far higher net-casualties because force is not decisive and effective enough to matter, and adding to the massive totals of displaced persons and refugees.

The horrors of war are not shaped by a single target or day in time, but by the cumulative impact of a conflict. There also is nothing cowardly about using force at a distance to strike at threat forces that butcher minorities, civilians with different religious beliefs, and prisoners of war. But, the U.S. and allied militaries need to come to grips with the fact that the body counts that matter are not increases in enemy dead, but increases in the number of civilians dead, injured, displaced or made into refugees.

Military education, training, and exercises must emphasize the facts behind the use of airpower, and focus on the cumulative impacts of war and their impacts on civilians. Effective strategic communications must explain the real-world limits to the use of airpower and long-range strike systems, explain the real-world necessities of war, and how tactical victories lead to credible efforts to “hold and build” and stability operations that have a major civil and humanitarian dimension.
Dealing with the Civil Aspects of the Revolution in Civil-Military Affairs

Major changes are required in the civil aspects of civil-military operations as well as in the military ones. At one level, the U.S. should increasingly be prepared to meet the challenges posed by ideological and religious threats. At another level, military operations must be linked to building stability and security through better civil governance, efforts to use civil means to resolve and eliminate internal disputes and tension, create jobs, fight corruption, implement economic reform, and raise living standards. All these changes also call for improved forms of both military and civil professionalism and education in civil-military affairs and what amounts to nation building.

New Forms of Ideological Warfare and Struggles for National Unity

One key area where military and civil operations interact is the need to fight new kinds of ideological battles using new kinds of weapons. Ideological warfare at the secular level has been largely replaced by warfare at the religious level, religious extremism, and by the ideological aspects of ethnic, racial, tribal, and sectarian tensions and conflicts.

These new forms of ideological warfare—many which also involve new forms of communications technology—are a critical threat to internal security in much of the Islamic world, as well as in Asian countries, and other parts of the world. They drive violent non-state actors to commit widespread acts of terrorism and launch violent new forms of insurgency, divide nations and religions, and produce retaliation in kind.

Religious extremists are fighting their ideological battle using all of the tools of the Internet, as well as other forms of media, modern communication, social networking, and civil society. They are exploiting charity as well as international financing systems. They have turned extortion, kidnapping, drugs, and the smuggling of petroleum and archeological artifacts into both new methods of fundraising and further weapons of ideological intimidation.

The U.S. must help host countries deal with the immediate threat such ideological movements pose in given wars, but it must also work with as wide a range of strategic partners as possible to improve the ties between military and civil operations by helping them create stronger and better-trained counterterrorism and counter insurgency forces. It must help them create new civilian security capabilities that cut across the dividing line between military forces and civil government and law enforcement. This includes creating new relationships between military forces and paramilitary forces, police, and intelligence services, and new levels of jointness and professionalism. It also requires an approach to internment and imprisonment that can convert extremists and make a safe release possible.

It has been clear since 9/11 that there is a critical need for countries that have advanced intelligence capabilities to assess extremist and violent state actors’ use of the Internet, media, social networking and other recruiting, revenue raising, and communications tools to assist nations with less capability to identify and track what is happening.

More broadly, the U.S. must help partners improve their strategic communications and find better ways to ways to communicate with their people. Military and internal security efforts
must work with every possible civil element to cope with the extraordinary challenge of dealing with religion, the problems and expectations of a nation’s youth, and countering other internal divisions.

It is also clear that the U.S. military and security forces involved in such counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts need expert help to explain to their populations and the outside world why force is being used in given ways, to counter extremist propaganda, warn when given types of military and internal security action are counterproductive, and deal with detainees and prisoners.

The effort to find the best mixes of civil and security efforts, and finding the best methods necessary to win this new battle of strategic communications, need to be continuously refined, shared, and made available to every security partner. Counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, recruiting, and fundraising need to be cooperative efforts, and the West needs to learn from the Islamic world how to best reach its growing Muslim population with respect and reassurance, rather than repression.

At the same time, the focus of such ideological efforts must look beyond targeting and influencing the comparatively small number of people who become active extremists and the violent partisans of sectarian, ethnic, tribal, and other causes. Governments need to convincingly communicate the fact that they are actually serving and helping their people. The alienation or indifference of much of the population, or unfocused anger and opposition, can easily be as dangerous in causing the rise of terrorism and insurgency as ideological extremism.

This means U.S. allied and host country military and security forces must also work with civil partners to develop new approaches to education and all forms of media and communication that can counter extremist propaganda. This means finding—and institutionalizing—new ways to exploit modern communications, media, the Internet, and social networking that can preserve national security while imposing the smallest possible burdens on civil society.

**Dealing with the Causes Rather than the Symptoms**

Nation building is a phrase which now provokes almost instant resistance. However, success in the civil side of practical nation building during a conflict will often be the foundation of any lasting success to win at the ideological level. The best way to prevent ideological and extremism violence is through effective governance, successful development, national equity between all elements of society, and an effective rule of law.

Winning the ideological battle means dealing with the causes of anger, alienation, and indifference as well. It means convincing a nation's people, and its divided factions, that they will receive fair benefits in politics, governance, the economy, and rule of law. These broader aspects of the civil dimension of warfare must also be supported by security and counterinsurgency operations, in limiting civilian casualties and collateral damage, in protecting the population, and by providing for civil recovery after operations take place.

Where possible, civil prevention will also be far better than any civil-military or military cure. Once the threat of terrorism or insurgency becomes serious, however, the host country government and/or the forces seeking peace and stability must deal with the reasons key
portions of the population that have become violent, support violent movements, or stand aside from the conflict.

The transformation of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula into ISIL, the rebirth of the Taliban, the flow of foreign volunteers and money to violent extremists and other armed factions in Africa—and the rise of non-state actors and fighters in many parts of the world—have also shown that ending conflicts in ways that bring lasting stability must address the key causes of civilian unrest and violence in any given case.

Terrorism, insurgency, and the rise of violent non-state actors are rarely driven by ideology per se. They are symptoms of a wide range of causes of instability and lack of support for given governments, and not the disease. The use of force and efforts to counter extremist beliefs and ideology can at best suppress such symptoms, but not provide a lasting cure.

No form of military victory can successfully terminate, and bring enduring stability to a conflict where the "winner" loses the population or fails to win its support. Today's ideological and civil conflicts are being fought in ways that both exploit the broader fault lines in a given state's civil society and on a generational level. A large share of those who have become extremists and now fight this conflict on the web and in the field are younger men and women alienated from the power structure in their countries and their traditional religious leadership.

The reasons why young men and women become extremists or join other forms of violent movements are not driven by any one cause and the need to understand their motives better and how much they vary by movement and country has become a critical aspect of developing a more effective response to the revolution in civil-military affairs.

Some of these non-ideological forces are clear. Virtually all of the asymmetric wars that the United States has fought since 2001, and all of the uprisings that have begun since 2011, have been affected by demographic pressures that have made a more than fivefold increase in the population of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since 1950.

These population pressures have cause youth “bulges” and unemployment, rising poverty levels and dead-end careers, dislocation out of rural and traditional social structures and growing hyperurbanization. These problems have been compounded by politics and ruling elites that have led to grossly unequal incomes and to economies dominated by nepotism and crony control of wealth.

Here it is interesting to examine the summary conclusions of the 2016 Arab Development Report issued by the United Nations Development Programme:

- The Arab world is the global center of conflict and human distress: It has 5% of the world's population. From 1947 to 2014, it had 17.6% of the world's conflicts. It 1989-2014, it had 27.7% of the world's battle deaths, and it had 68.5% in 2014.
- It had 45% of global terrorist attacks in 2014.
- It had 57.5% of the world's refugees in 2014, and 47% of its internally displaced persons.
- The Arab world needs to create 60 million more jobs by 2020 in an Arab world where youth unemployment (15-24 years) is already close to 30%, and rising.
- Unemployment rates for Arab youth (47%) are twice the 24% rate for middle income countries. Young woman's participation in the labor force is 24% versus 50% globally.
• The average age of Ministers is 58 in one of the youngest regions in the world. Youth voting rates—where permitted—were 68.3%. The lowest in the world and versus 87.4% in middle income countries.

• Youth participation in public protests exceeded 18% versus 10.8% for middle income countries.

If one looks more broadly at the sources of violent extremism and civil military conflict, the same population pressures emerge in most other regions where extremism, political upheavals, factional warfare, and insurgency pose an active threat. At the same time, so does a correlation with the existence of authoritarian and/or corrupt regimes that do not service the interest of most of their peoples, severe discrimination by sect, ethnic group and race, and regional differences. Problems that fester for decades eventually explode.

There is also a broad correlation between violent extremism, insurgency, civil conflict and other factors. The UN Human Development Reports—and UN data on poverty, medical conditions, and food supplies—show a striking lack of progress in many such conflict states. The World Bank's ratings of governance and the barriers to doing business often reflect critically low rankings and a remarkable lack of progress in each such area. The same is true of states with high-rankings for corruption from respected organizations like Transparency International.

A wide range of public opinion surveys in such states show that anger over corruption and unemployment are key factors that create broad popular alienation and the narrower support for extremism. In case after case, a review of the World Bank economic analysis of a given conflict country reveals the need for major economic reform and new development activity—in some cases the same needs that existed a decade or more earlier. The same is true of the IMF's Article 4 reports and economic summaries for conflict states.

One key problem in dealing with the revolution in civil-military affairs, however, is that most current studies of politics, governance, and economics focus on the entire country, and not its internal divisions, tensions, and inequities. Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations often center around such internal division and fault lines, but the charters of international organizations lead them to avoid addressing the problems that shape ethnic, sectarian, regional, and tribal tensions; and that create major inequities and sources of tension in conflict in given states.

For the same reasons, most studies by international organizations do not seriously address the steady concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, and the scale and impact of corruption. They do not fully address the human impact of mismanagement of the financial and state enterprise sectors, failure to expand and improve infrastructure, crony capitalism, and excessive military spending.

**Conditionality and Reform Rather than "Marshall Plans" and Project Aid**

Another key problem is the reluctance of the U.S. government to honestly address and deal with the fact the failures of host country governments are often as much of a threat as the enemy. It is these failures that generate and sustain extremism. Insurgent forces are shaped by bad governance and acute corruption, and favoritism to given sects, ethnic groups and tribes. In virtually every case, such violence has been heavily driven by major inequities in income distribution, rapid social changes, forced immigration, alienation of key factions,
and a host of other structural pressures. These factors ensure that extremism and violence can capture a significant portion of the population.

As long as such causes endure, they ensure that degrading or repressing a given movement by force is extraordinarily difficult. Even seeming military success will almost inevitably see the rise of some successor. No war that grows out of such forces can be won on a purely military level, but neither can one be won at a civil level. But, there is no military solution or use of international security forces, no mix of tactics and military technology, that can produce a lasting victory in this ideological battle without civil efforts to address its causes.

A close examination of the development of politics, governance, and economics in "failed states" like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen—and in the successful development of states like South Korea and Taiwan—does show that aid can sometimes be a key catalyst in economic development. It also, however, shows that simply providing aid can do very little—if anything—in countries whose governments fail to help themselves.

At best, aid to such countries tends to create showpiece projects rather than real growth. Far too often, it is simply wasted or stolen, or is so poorly managed and controlled that it creates even higher levels of corruption. This misuse or mismanagement distorts developing economies as their technocrats and elites shift to take advantage of aid income while prices rise in the areas where aid is concentrated.

Even when there are initial benefits, they tend to be highly selective as to the portion of the population that receives them. They often fade or disappear, and given sectors, ethnic groups, and political elites often benefit in ways that increase—rather than reduce—internal tensions.

Aid that is not tied to effective economic policies and reform—and to transparency, demanding accountability, evidence of progress and completion, and monitoring of continued effectiveness—encourages factional preferences and problems in recipient country politics and governments.—. In contrast, corruption efforts have a long history of failure. They produce scapegoats and symbols, are used to win internal political battles, and usually lead to the firing or pigeonholing of anti-corruption officials.

Efforts like the Marshall Plan consisted largely of massive catalytic transfers of money to states that already were developed and knew how to use it. These states had been nearly bankrupted by war and were dependent on money rather than reform. Their primary need was getting enough money to begin full recovery.

Aid did help the small number of countries in the developing world that have emerged as major successes since the end of World War II and the colonial era. However, in every case—such as Asia's "tigers"—the key to success was a clear political focus on development, more effective governance, and choosing the right economic policies over time and making necessary economic reform. In other key cases like Japan, wartime spending during the Korean War, and trade and other policies geared to Japan's status as a strategic partner, were at least as important as aid.

These points are reinforced by IMF, World Bank and UN studies of government and economies of nations like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria—especially in their field work and special studies of the impact of recent conflicts. It is reinforced by the examinations of U.S. aid efforts by the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction (SIGIR) and the
Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR), and by several unreleased U.S. studies of the impact of poor governance and corruption on the failures of U.S. aid recipients in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Accordingly, "nation building" needs to concentrate on encouraging wartime reform and planning for post-war recovery. It needs to focus on broad national policies and plans, and serious efforts to improve governance as well as economic policies that stimulate development and help unite the country's factions. Military and civil aid need to be made conditional on countries developing and actually implementing such reform efforts. Far too often, plans remain unexecuted contentions.

"Whole of Government" versus "Hole in Government"

Another key lesson that the civil side of recent failed state wars has made all too clear is that there often are severe limits to what outside powers can do. Supporting a given government or faction requires an honest assessment of whether a given host country or faction within it is really worth supporting. In most such cases, it will be necessary to understand from the start that most civil efforts cannot fund and implement a massive exercise in nation building. They can only provide limited support and encourage reform.

The U.S. and its partners in aiding conflict countries—need to accept the fact that there is little point in providing either military or civil aid to host country governments that cannot shape their politics, governance, and economic policies to use it effectively. It will often be better to publicly identify their problems and failures—and wait for a potential shift in politics and governance—than waste resources on long wars that have no clear probability of ending in stable success.

Providing limited conditional military and civil aid, however, will often be justified and strategically necessary. The current bias against "nation building" in some elements of the U.S. government and Congress is even more damaging than wasting aid money and the wrong kind of aid. What U.S. failures to date have shown is that effective action requires a new form of civil military partnership within the U.S. government, and a "whole of government" rather than a "hole in government" approach.

It requires a civil-military partnership with the host country that focuses as much as possible on help that builds on existing national systems, goals, and values—to paraphrase Lawrence, on "doing it their way," rather than trying to transform a partner. This means that encouraging partners, offering aid more as a catalyst than a way of funding major changes, and relying heavily on internal reform at a pace that host country governments can actually implement and their peoples will accept.

Cases like Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen have shown that these aspects of cooperation are critical, and that new forms of civil-military cooperation are needed if Western or non-Islamic forces with different cultures and values are to work successfully with local police, militias, and other non-state actors—not only to build trust between outside and national forces, but to minimize the tension between different ethnic groups and sects.

U.S. aid planners and officials need to understand that civil activity and policy must be tied to the kinds of reforms and actions that help win a conflict, and lead to necessary reform and increased national unity. The U.S. military needs to see the civil side of war as critical
to meaningful military success. Military victories are a critical step in making a broader and more lasting form of victory possible, but there are no lasting victories when host country governments and factions cannot “hold and build,” and when they have not laid the groundwork for peace and stability. Moreover, no amount of outside or partner military force can save a host country government from itself and from its people.

At the same time, the U.S. needs to reexamine the need for such aid efforts in potential conflict countries and failed states. Once again, preventive civil action is far better than responding to extremism and insurgency. U.S. strategy must anticipate problems, not simply respond to them. Far too many cases have shown that forces that shape "failed states" eventually push them to the breaking point. Repression and better internal security eventually reach the point where they cannot contain the civil problems that cause extremism and insurgency.

Every major insurgency, civil conflict, or case where terrorism has taken a foothold to date is a warning that governments and security efforts must not concentrate on extremists or violent elements as if they were the only source of such threats. They also warn that security forces must be tied to the rule of law, new approaches to detention and prison sentences, and efforts to win back volunteers and supporters of extremism.

The Need for a Civil-Military Approach to National Security

For all these reasons, military and internal security forces must have close civil partners in taking a “whole of government” approach. The “failed state” wars and broader upheavals that have taken place in the world since 2011 are all struggles where governments must support their national security forces by seeking to heal the divisions within their society, and deal with the reasons their populations take sides and extremism can find recruits and funding.

There have already been all too many cases where conflicts, ideology, and the actions of violent non-state actors steadily divided nations along sectarian, ethnic, tribal, and regional lines. If these divisions go too far, even the best internal security efforts cannot prevent political upheavals that can destroy the structure of governance and political norms and prevent the emergence of new national leaders and forces for national unity.

The governments involved must face these divisions and challenges, rather than minimize or deny them. Their national security forces and the civil elements of their governments must honestly examine the impact of internal demographic pressures, urbanization and population movements, limited economic development, poor distribution of income, and inadequate government services.

They must address unemployment, corruption, and other structural civil threats to internal security that divide states and push them into civil conflicts. National security forces must also objectively assess such factors, and shape their tactics and operations around an approach to civil-military efforts that will minimize the impact of military operations and build civilian confidence and trust wherever possible.

In short, the need for a broader civil-military approach to national security really does require revolution in civil-military affairs. It requires:
• New forms of international cooperation in finding the best civil and military approaches to the problem. It requires new forms of planning that integrate civil-military efforts, use the best methods to actually implement them, and assess the effectiveness of the rest and the ways in which resources are spent. It requires new forms of formal training as well as the development of suitable case studies to use in national security education.

• Expanding the role of intelligence far beyond simply identifying terrorist and insurgent threats, and it means military forces must do far more than achieve tactical success and find civilian partners that can actually implement “win, hold, and build” to counter extremist and insurgent influence and create civil-military efforts that can earn the lasting support of the local population.

• A new approach to military operations that ties analysis of the threat, and planning for actual security operations to intelligence, net assessment, planning and operations that focuses as much on the civil dimension, ideology, asymmetric warfare, and non-state actors as on conventional warfare and military technology.

• Improved civil-military cooperation in fighting the ideological threat, in creating a broad structure of strategic communications that reaches every key element of the population, and efforts to use new media, classic media, and all elements of education to fight extremism, build national unity, and find peaceful solutions to civil divisions and tensions.

• Both civil and military reform of government—and credible levels of transparency—to reduce corruption to acceptable levels and build public trust in every aspect of government. Such efforts must be matched in the justice system and creating acceptable honest and effective rule of law.

• Effective and transparent government efforts to develop the economy, provide effective essential services and infrastructure, eliminate poverty and gross economic inequities, provide education and medical services, reduce cronyism and wasteful state sectors, and reduce divisions between regions, sects, ethnic groups, and other key divisions.

It also requires U.S. and host country civil-military efforts that look forward to some lasting form of post-conflict stability. The challenge will never simply be to win the current fight. It will always be to create the civil-military foundation for a lasting peace. This can never happen if civil progress is deferred to the surrender of the last terrorist and extremist, or the end of the last battle with extremists.

**Strategic Partnerships**

All of these developments reinforce the need to build more meaningful strategic partnerships, and highlight the need for new approaches to structuring such partnerships. They show the need to go beyond formal security cooperation and create civil-military partnerships that are flexible and less formal, and are tailored to the specific problems and conditions that threaten given partners.

**The Military Dimension**

They show the need for such partnerships to have both a military dimension—which must often respond quickly and effectively to asymmetric wars dominated by an ideological and civil dimension—and a civil dimension that can go from tactical victories and “win” to civil security, healing deep civil divisions, and giving real meaning to “hold and build.”

One key step is to find more effective ways to transfer arms and technology and deal with the resulting impacts on logistics and sustainment. This requires focusing on the need to take full account of the key shifts in military technology and the related tactics in dealing with irregular warfare and civil conflicts. It means educating and organizing to ensure the proper degree of interoperability, logistics, and sustainability.
It means tying future purchases to tests and evaluations that truly validate a given buy, ensuring that there is a valid plan for maintenance and sustainment as a key part of every arms sale, and ensuring suitable national and joint training and exercise plans. These are all key areas for cooperation in both train and assist missions and creating new military education programs, as well as cooperation in transfers and creating effective operational responses.

At a technical level, it means planning joint secure communications and data exchange systems, and arrangement for integrating key aspects of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems—adapting in the process to the growing need for near real-time coordination, the rising tempo of operations, and the special real-time demands of new force capabilities like theater missile defense.

This is particularly true when the partnerships go beyond bilateral limits and involve regional security arrangements like the Gulf Cooperation Council. As past NATO force planning exercises have demonstrated, truly effective and interoperable security cooperation requires long-term planning, a careful attention to resources, and focusing on common mission priorities.

At the same time, there is a need to evolve new approaches to such partnerships that focus on the growing diversity in the forms of asymmetric and irregular warfare, and on forms of conflict that increasingly combine ideological, military, political, and economic means. Land, sea, air, and missile warfare can be linked to political intimidation and warfare, economic sanctions, terrorism, and insurgency. Conflicts can go on at multiple levels, while rapidly altering the level of deterrence and the structure of alliances.

**The Civil Dimension**

The second key step is for such partnerships to go beyond military operations and to work together in finding ways to help partner countries create the best possible mix of civil and military capabilities to deal with local threats on their own. Simultaneously, these partnerships must also create the best mix of capabilities to support allied reinforcement and power projection capabilities when needed.

Partners need to work together to develop and implement mission-oriented force plans, programming, and budgeting that take full account of ideological threats, efforts to exploit ethnic and sectarian tensions and divisions, and the political and economic problems that help shape the broader “battlefield” in today’s different kinds of wars and military interventions.

They require plans that can implement “hold” and the restoration of civil order and the rule of law, heal internal divisions with aid and the rapid recovery of conflict areas, restore confidence in governments and rebuild trust. They require an understanding and civil-military effort that reflect the fact that stability operations will often be the most important aspect of the conflict. The use of military force cannot be meaningful or justified without enduring civil success.
**Redefining Security and the Priorities for Cooperation**

This is a complex and daunting list of ongoing 21st century challenges that interact in many different ways. It is particularly challenging because we are now talking about two “revolutions in military affairs” and not just one.

All of the traditional problems in creating effective military forces and security cooperation still exist. However, the preparation of forces for 21st century conflict is further complicated by rising costs, constant shifts in technology and related tactics, a growing need for new levels of military professionalism—and by changes in military education and curriculums that can prepare both officers and civilians for new challenges:

- Preparing for asymmetric and irregular warfare as methods of conflict that have equal importance to conventional warfare, and whose political and economic dimensions will often be as or more important than their tactical dimensions.

- Accepting the fact that there will often be no clear dividing line between terrorism, insurgency, and the divisions created by other forces within nations that sometimes approach the status of failed states.

- Accepting and responding to the challenge of religious ideological extremism as a key element of war, and the exploitation of sectarian, ethnic, tribal, regional, and other differences and fault lines as methods of irregular warfare.

- Developing new forms of net assessments that produce a clear civil-military picture of the forces driving the emergence of non-state actors and internal civil tensions and conflicts, and the relative strength and weaknesses of threat forces, host country forces, and outside strategic partners.

- Creating strategic and tactical plans that look beyond a military “win” to create and implement civil-military stability operations that can produce both a quick response and lasting solution to “hold and build.”

- Preparing both military and civilians, and foreign aid personnel, for an effective whole of government approach to such conflicts.

- Rethinking strategic communications to respond to ideological threats and threats from non-state actors, to explain and justify the necessary military operations and civil actions, and wage ideological warfare as a key element of asymmetric warfare. Developing new rules of engagement, conflict assessment, and methods of strategic communications to find the best balance between effective methods of waging war and the need to limit cumulative casualties and collateral damage.

- Redefining strategic partnerships to have the flexibility to be effective in given conflicts.

- Developing new case studies, models, and exercises that reflect the successes and failures in past conflicts, and learn the civil-military, ideological, and broader lessons of past wars.

Moreover, dealing with the civil-military challenges presents special problems for cooperation. Every power must adapt its military forces, training, and education in its own way. One size definitely does not fit all. Virtually every state faces a different mix of these challenges, and has different priorities for dealing with them.

Many of these challenges have political, religious, and ideological aspects that make them hard for governments to openly admit and deal with, creating new barriers to security cooperation even among allies that can cooperate in many other ways. Each major aspect of this second “revolution in military affairs” involves areas that have acute political sensitivity in given countries. Each aspect creates a natural tendency to respond with empty
reassurances and public relations exercises, with denial and delay. This ultimately leaves governments in limbo, to focus on more traditional forms of conflict and military education.

It is all too clear that the U.S. is still less than ready to teach, than to learn. There have been all too many areas in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria where the U.S. has failed to face the seriousness of these challenges, the limits to its own civil-military operations, and the need to change and adapt. General Petraeus put it all too well when he was asked whether the U.S. learned from the lesson of past wars. He responded by saying “Well, we take note of them.”

The last two decades have provided consistently brutal lessons about the cost of ignoring any of these 21st century changes in the nature of war. It has shown again and again that successful military and national security operations must redefine security to meet new threats, set new priorities for cooperation, and be ready for new forms of conflict.

The key message that we should take out of these lessons is not that the Revolution in Civil-Military Affairs is difficult or somehow impossible to deal with. Rather, the lesson is that all of us—civilian policy makers, military commanders, planners, educators, and NGOs—must work together to learn the lessons of the revolution in civil-military affairs, and act upon them. These are challenges that we must not only accept, but embrace.