# THE FUTURE OF WAR?

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"A ghost is stalking the corridors of general staffs and defense departments all over the 'developed' world – the fear of military impotence, even irrelevance."

Martin van Creveld

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF WAR

In theory, at least, the national security decision making process is rational. During this process, the decision maker establishes the desired goals of policy and develops a strategy for employing often scarce resources to achieve these goals. This rational calculus seeks to balance both ends and means.

But this rational decision making process is also vulnerable, and future adversaries of major powers such as the United States, the European Union, and Russia will target this vulnerability. To plan a strategy of direct engagement with conventional military forces, as Iraq learned in Desert Storm and the Taliban experienced in Afghanistan, is lunacy. The strategist of chaos – which most future adversaries will attempt to be – will manipulate future scenarios to best advantage while striving to *prevent* the introduction of military force. The target for the chaos strategist is *the decision to commit force,* not the response to the *employment of force.*

Chaos strategists, such as Somalia's Mohamed Farah Aidid, Serbia's Slobodan Milošević, or Iraq's Hussein successfully achieved strategic objectives in the face of

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the direct threat of, and even intervention with, multinational military coercion. Such coercion has tended to follow five general identities in any given crisis:[1]

- an apparent preference for multilateralism (whether through alliances such as NATO or international organizations such as the UN);

- an intolerance for casualties;

- an aversion to civilian suffering and sensitivity to "collateral damage"

- a reliance on high-technology, precision-guided munitions;

- a commitment to uphold international norms.

Granted, there are always exceptions to the above factors. The Kosovo intervention, in what could rightly be termed the first humanitarian war, did not achieve a "successful outcome" until *after* a significant number of civilian deaths took place, collateral damage occurred, and a massive air attack on civilian infrastructure in Serbia proper took place. (And, although often overlooked – or simply ignored – the number of non-combatants who died in Afghanistan as a result of "Western" intervention exceeded the number of victims who died in the attacks of 11 September 2001.)

Yet by shifting from a style of warfare that might be described as the annihilation of an enemy, the "West" seems to have developed a preference for coercion rather than annihilation. Coercion, in contrast to annihilation, is a dynamic process of move and counter-move and adversaries will likely shape their strategies to exploit apparent American weaknesses – or predictabilities – in a new era of coercive warfare.

If policy makers do not recognize or learn to adapt to the apparent vulnerabilities of these five general identities above, they should question the use of force at all. Though distasteful, perhaps, this course of action (or inaction, as it were) would be preferable to eroding military effectiveness and would not encourage counter-strategies – or strategies of chaos – that might induce the sort of suffering that policy makers had sought to avoid in the first place. Specifically, the chaos strategist will seek consistently to exploit the vulnerabilities of these five identities.

The "success" of airpower in bringing Milošević to the table of capitulation after 78 days of NATO bombing, for example, neither negated nor prevented the massive expulsion of over one million refugees from the Kosovo – the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II. While the author admits that Operation Horseshoe – the planned ejection and "cleansing" of Kosovar Albanians – *may* have happened even if there were no air campaign against Yugoslavia in 1999, the point is not whether or not NATO caused the massive exodus of refugees. But there is a difference between destroying an enemy's ability to fight back and protecting a civilian population, and this difference distinguishes humanitarian war from more traditional war. And one crucial question from the recent Balkan experience remains unanswered: How could coercive airpower have prevented this chaos from happening?

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[1] Adapted in part from Daniel Byman and Mathew Waxman, "Defeating US Coercion," *Survival,* Volume 41, Number 2 (Summer 1999): 108.

In the on-going war on terrorism, moreover, the practice of chaos strategy by *-non-state actors,* rather than by the leaders of recognized nation-states, may only complicate the security calculus for the United States and its allies. On the one hand, we will practice pre-emption against those who seek to harm our vital interests and our way of life. Military forces will increasingly be in the business of shooting archers, and not just catching arrows. (By "catching arrows," I mean to suggest that we may not be able to delay until chaos provocations to occur before we react.)

On the other hand, -non-state "chaos strategists" may soon recognize our overwhelming pre-emption capability, and strive to shift from acting as "archers" and seek to disappear as quickly as possible. The most effective non-state adversaries that we will face will likely display some of the following characteristics: the facility to operate effectively as a lateral (and non-centralized) network, the ability to learn, the capacity to anticipate, and the capability to "self-organize" – or, reconstitute – after they have been struck.

Non-state actors, in particular (whether or not they are sponsored by "nation-states" or by easily targetable organizations), can accomplish "vanishing acts" with far greater ease than adversarial leaders of problematic states. The implications are important as we assess new challenges in the war on terrorism. Moreover, we should seriously question if we are asking the rights questions about military transformation in the post-11 September security environment. After all, we are not the only ones asking "What went wrong?"

In the case of the September 2001 attacks on the United States, a feasible adversary strategy meant to induce not only fear but also a sense of extreme vulnerability in the American "homeland." As such, not only the United States but indeed perhaps the "West" at large entered a new security era in which attacks by non-state actors on the homeland proved possible and citizens, their way of life, and the specific liberties that they had been accustomed to were now *vulnerable* and at risk. (In many ways, prevailing *vulnerabilities* – rather than specific *threats* from other states – will become the critical security dilemma. Such vulnerabilities might include disease, hunger, unemployment, "youth" bulges in critical regions, crime, terrorism, social conflict, political repression, or environmental hazards, and may well become security issues for many in the "Cairo-Karachi-Jakarta arc of instability" – whether in Israel, the West Bank, India, Pakistan, or Indonesia. Therefore, these zones of instability may likely enter periods of dangerous transition during the next two decades and may well be where national and human security issues meet their greatest points of convergence.)

Admittedly, the attacks on 11 September represented an intelligence and interagency failure on a colossal scale; fortunately, the same intelligence network was able to track and prove the case against Usama bin Laden and al Qaeda with relative speed. Yet the vulnerability and transparency of the American system led military planners and former CIA officers to proclaim that, regarding the attacks themselves, "We couldn't do this. . . . I have never seen an operation go that smoothly."[2]

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[2] "September 11, 2001," *The New Yorker*, 24 September 2001, 60; 64.

In the future, chaos strategists may well seek gain through attacks that cause the excessive deaths of innocents and provoke further cultural, religious, and ethnic fault lines both among contending adversaries and potential allies. Despite all claims to the contrary, it is not yet clear that the United States or other major powers are capable of shifting from a style of warfare that might be described as the annihilation of a specific, targetable enemy to a style of warfare that requires far more intense "closework." In simple terms, are we planning for the wars we *want* to fight rather than for the wars we will *have* to fight?

In 1998, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, in reference to the future planning and the future "transformation" of the American military, declared on several occasions that "We're not looking for a fair fight." Indeed, neither is the chaos strategist.

## HOW CHAOS STRATEGY MIGHT WORK

Any adversary that risks engaging enemy military forces – particularly American forces – must employ a method that exploits the social dimensions of strategy to offset the disadvantages in the technical dimension.[3] Such an adversary would be wisest to target the process of decision making with the policy (social dimension) sector rather than, as a first step, planning how to engage military force (the technical dimension) once the employment decision has been made. The chaos strategist thus works best in the shadows, behind the curtain, off stage.

In the example of intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the "success" of particular warring factions often fell to those who could brutally apply force yet fell short of gross provocation of extra-Balkan states. Yet eventually, with direct NATO intervention in 1995, Operation Deliberate Force forced the Bosnian Serbs "to cease all offensive operations," remove all heavy weaponry from the area of Sarajevo, and, led, eventually, to the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

NATO military force in Bosnia sought to induce a *paralysis of response*. NATO airpower inflicted both real and symbolic damage (which demonstrated the potential for even greater destruction) on Bosnian Serb military capabilities while Bosnian Muslim-Croat ground forces simultaneously seized the advantage to wrest as much territory as possible in a limited time. As a result of this dual approach "knockout punch," the Serb leadership had little choice but to capitulate.

The "normal" response to an enemy's attack is to attack, of course, in kind and with a like response. In conventional war, this has always been the symmetrical reaction. While admittedly, *all* warfare tends towards asymmetry, in which one opponent seeks to exploit the weakness of an opponent and to rely on his strengths, the notion of rough force parity between opponents *has* remarkably shifted in the post-Cold War era. An opponent who can match the capabilities of U.S. armed forces, after all, does not presently exist, and will not appear for the near future.

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[3] Andrew F. Krepenevich, Jr., "Major Regional Conflicts: The Streetfighter Scenario," *The Bottom-Up Review: An Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Defense Budget Project, February 1994), part V, 42.

Such military force predominance is emblematic of two not necessarily contradictory ideas: first, the notion popular among mid- and senior-level military officers that "you [the military strategist] can get inside his [the enemy's] decision cycle (often called 'the loop'), cut him off, and kill him"; second, the use of technology and American reliance (some would call an obsession) on firepower, allows for high enemy damages and low "friendly" casualties. Edward Luttwak has partially popularized this second idea with what he terms "Post-Heroic Warfare."[4]

Phillip S. Meilinger has suggested that warfare can be considered of four types: exhaustion, attrition, annihilation, and paralysis.[5] The conflict in Southeast Asia, a protracted war from which America sought to extricate itself after three decades of involvement with no lasting goals achieved, is an example of warfare of exhaustion; Operation Allied Force in Kosovo and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan – through coalition employment of high-intensity strikes, high-technology weapons, precise targeting, as well as the integration of special operations forces with indigenous forces to support and help direct firepower – are examples of warfare of paralysis.

Yet the opposing chaos strategist, by contrast, is fully aware of "Western" asymmetric, unmatched power predominance. The correct "target," as it were, is the "social dimension" of the national-level policy decision making as well as perhaps the population itself. In essence, the strategist attacks what we *value most*. The shift in chaos strategy is not subtle but it is crucial that we recognize the shift. In the future, successful chaos strategists may target us where we are most vulnerable and will work to avoid presenting themselves as any direct threat. Non-state actors,

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[4] Luttwak might also argue that the significance of "Post-Heroic Warfare" lies in a "careful, purposeful patience" in the application of predominant American and American-led military force, as well as a return to the "casualty-avoiding methods of eighteenth century warfare" – nominally based on ancient Roman economically conscious war. Edward N. Luttwak, "Toward Post-Heroic Warfare," *Foreign Affairs* (May-June 1995): 109-122. Economic embargoes and sanctions against adversary states may also prove more worthwhile than the traditional battlefield engagements that characterized previous wars. If so, they remain un-popular instruments of power (in contrast to the swift application of the military instrument) for policy makers. Economic sanctions against Serbia, for example, brought the Milošević regime to its knees; inflation, at one point during the last war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, ran by some estimates as high as 28,000,000,000 percent. The regime, nonetheless, stayed in place (as did the two regimes of Iraq and Iran under the policy of "dual containment" despite attempted economic isolation). Further, the individual prosperity of the average Serb plummeted while the vitality of Mafia elements, black market smuggling, and "sanction busting" practices soared. One other aspect of economic sanctions points to American selectivity: the May 1997 embargo against the military dictatorship of Burma (which calls itself Myanmar) proved less than effective because other nations, particularly ASEAN nations, continue to invest in Burma. The standards applied by the United States as justification for sanctions against Burma could also have been applied against China – which did not and will not be "punished" with economic sanctions. Burma does not represent a vital national interest for the United States; China does.

[5] See "Air Targeting Strategies: An Overview," from *Airpower Confronts an Unstable World,* Richard P. Hallion, editor (Washington, D. C.: Brassey's, 1997), 51-80.

in particular, will find this strategy shift far easier to accomplish than state-led chaos strategists (such as Somalia's Mohamed Farah Aidid, Serbia's Slobodan Milošević, or Iraq's Saddam Hussein).

Moreover, since our military forces are *not* sized and structured as a *counter-value* force, the chaos strategist will increasingly recognize that new vulnerabilities will present themselves through targets such as:

– critical infrastructure degradation or collapse – to include not only physical systems and structures, but also to contaminate food supplies or resources in ways difficult or impossible to detect,

– the spread of infectious disease that cannot be controlled (whether or not through the use of biological agents),

– intrastate as well as inter-ethnic conflict in failed or failing states,

– environmental stress, resource scarcity and depletion,

– the trafficking of drugs, small arms, and inhumane weapons, often coupled with conflicts that are claimed as insurgencies,

– cyber-war,

– and terrorism.

All these aspects provide breeding ground for future warfare.[6] These nightmare zones present targets of opportunity. Moreover, while none of these aspects are necessarily new, the capacity to induce chaos is greater today than ever before. We know, for example, that the Soviets experimented with "strategic biological weapons" such as smallpox that could be delivered with ICBMs.[7] (Soviet weapons experts recognized, however, that smallpox could be released far more secretly on enemy territory; thus, in an age of globalization where disease knows no borders, chaos strategists recognize this advantage as well.) Further, the capacity and power of modern laptop computers is roughly equivalents to the entire computational power that the U.S. Defense Department had in the mid-1960s.[8]

In the past, state-led chaos strategists at least partially achieved their objectives even in the face of U.S. military force. As one result, Somalia was a failure; Iraq remains "unsolved"; Bosnia-Herzegovina is ethnically cleansed and, like Gaul before it, is divided in three parts; Kosovo is an inter-national protectorate but still part of Yugoslavia; and Afghanistan's viability as a future state stands in question.

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[6] By the use of "counter-value" as a possible military role, I am broadly referring to nuclear weapons targeting theories that refer to counter-force targets (hardened military systems and forces) and counter-value targets (that is, what we *value* most – our cities, our population, and our way of life). Western militaries are *not* sized and structured as counter-value entities.

[7] For an in-depth examination of the Soviet biological weapons program, one of the best available sources is Ken Alibek's *Biohazard* (New York: Random House, 1999).

[8] Thomas Homer-Dixon, "The Rise of Complex Terrorism," *Foreign Policy,* January/February 2002, 54.

But the chaos strategist wants to avoid force engagement. Even when force is introduced and troops are stationed on the ground, as in Bosnia or in Saudi Arabia, the chaos strategist wants to prolong ambiguity. Above all, the desired outcome remains *decision paralysis*. Accordingly, in light of the September 2001 attacks in the U.S., nonetheless, the assailants made a crucial error. The attacks *did* affect vital national interests, the American will to accept casualties appeared to be high, and all roads – rightly or wrongly – almost immediately led to Kabul.

The problem with military predominance and rational strategic decision making is that it is, ironically, a weakness that most Western defense planners consider a major strength. The immense advantages of firepower, technology, and forces available, after all, are seen as clear and distinct application of means to reach strategic ends. The U.S. Weinberger and Powell defense doctrines, for example, which mandated clear definitions of political goals and American interests prior to intervention, worked in Desert Storm because they "fit" Desert Storm. [9] (These same defense doctrines would have prevented American intervention in Southeast Asia and did prevent, up to a point, American intervention in Bosnia. [10])

One Asian expert has provided a description of war in the ideal type as three distinct phases: engagement; chaos; chopping of heads [*jiaofeng; luan; zhan*]. The master of this "Intellectual" approach to warfare, of course, is Sun Tzu, who employs *jiaofeng, luan, and zhan* through instantaneous, differential shock wave application. This same authority refers to von Clausewitz's theory of warfare victory as an "Engineering" approach with equally distinct phases: battle; campaign; warfare termination – all occurring in cumulative, integral stages. [11] Thus, when American warfighters speak of "cutting off and killing" an enemy, they mean "to chop heads" in the metaphorical sense; when the chaotic warfighter speaks of *zhan*, or its linguistic equivalent in a different culture, he is being literal. The chaos strategist and the chaos warfighter prefer the removal of the enemy in the purest form. In Serbian, one would call this form *etničko čišćenje*: "ethnic cleansing."

Ultimately, the best guarantee of success comes when the chaos strategist has brought chaos to his enemy without battlefield engagement. As L'i Ching, remarking on Sun Tzu's own warfare practices, noted: "From antiquity, the number of

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[9] One of the best critiques of the Weinberger doctrine, with examples of its applicability to various interventions, can be found in Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 2nd edition (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 185-203.

[10] During the White House debate on the question of intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993, then UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright asked General Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in frustration, "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?" (One is reminded of Sun Tzu's adage: "If you cannot succeed, do not use troops.") Source for anecdote: Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 576.

[11] Based on lecture notes and drawn from discussions with Professor Arthur Waldron, the University of Pennsylvania. The "Engineering" approach bears remarkable similarity with the thought process and implementation of the "Bottom-Up Review" as well as the 1997 *Quadrennial Defense Review*.

cases in which a chaotic army [that is, with chaos induced among its ranks] brought victory [to the enemy] can never be fully recorded."[12] That, of course, is precisely what new operational concepts and employment sought to produce in crushing the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in 2001 – through a network of unmanned aircraft that led to increased battlefield awareness, coupled with SOF forward spotters and indigenous forces, precision major fires delivered by various means, and rapid maneuver to cause the enemy to break. This led to battlefield success, though not necessarily to strategic victory.

The Taliban and al Qaeda made a classic mistake in Afghanistan: they were stupid enough to fight back. They apparently had forgotten the lessons of chaos, or never learned them. The true chaos strategist would have looked for ways to *never* engage American military force directly or would have engaged methods that our emerging style of warfare is not able to handle well.

Nearly four decades ago, Roger Trinquier claimed in *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* that modern war is an interlocking system of political, economic, psychological, military actions and conflicts. Trinquier argued that armies tend to fight *traditional warfare* and, in modern war, are doomed to failure, despite overwhelming firepower.[13] (Even American intelligence assets, in terms of technology and capabilities the most superior in history, fall short when it comes to the unclear art of human intelligence and human unpredictability. As one military officer remarked decades ago in Southeast Asia, "If only the little bastards would just come out . . . and fight like men, we'd cream them."[14] Such comments cause the strategist of chaos to beam with pleasure.)

Admittedly, with the advent of network warfare and remarkable advances in military technology, Trinquier's gloomy prophecy may not be as set in stone as some once believed. At the same time, in view of the incredible American military successes since the end of the Cold War, one might reasonably why we are pushing so hard and fast towards military transformation when there are clear and present vulnerabilities that transformation does not affect, yet which the chaos strategist will likely target.

## THE MANIPULATION OF CHAOS

When a nation-state conducts a foreign policy that has anticipated contingencies and maintains clear direction for the conduct of such policy, national security decision making processes proceed in a fairly straight direction forward. The chaos strategist, nonetheless, recognizing this sequential decision process, will attempt to "ratchet

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[12] *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, translation and commentary by Ralph D. Sawyer, with Mei-chün Sawyer (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 199), 333.

[13] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (New York: Praeger, 1964).

[14] Remarks made by a frustrated military officer to journalists; drawn from a January 1996 lecture by Professor William J. Duicker, Pennsylvania State University.

up" the timeline, induce pressure – real or imagined – aand invoke (or avoid) media response with its instant global reach to benefit the strategist's ends and means.

As a result of these pressures, intensified timelines, and media outbursts, the national security decision making process often becomes little more than crisis response. Former CIA Director Robert Gates admitted that media pressure, of itself, most especially from CNN, is something policy makers ought to "discipline" themselves to avoid: "You can't think about what you were paid to do . . . [which is] to make policy."[15]

During the war that dismembered Bosnia-Herzegovina, media coverage displayed little understanding or interest in the complex dynamic at play in the former Yugoslavia, as well as little knowledge of historical precedents: "The greatest difficulty for west European politicians and commentators [when they first dealt with Yugoslavia]," wrote Slavko Čuruvija in, "is that most knew next to nothing when they delved into its crisis. Now that everything has come loose, they are disgusted by the chaos and their powerlessness to change anything overnight."[16]

Moreover, a qualitative and quantitative analysis of news reporting from the former Yugoslavia over a three-month period in 1993 showed almost eighty-five percent of these reports included what constitutes simple hearsay evidence; for the same period, ninety percent of the stories published originated in Sarajevo while only five percent originated in Belgrade or came from Serbian sources.[17] News reporting failed to mention refugees in Serbia, despite the fact that up to six hundred thousand Bosnian Muslims sought refuge in "enemy territory" – that is, within Serbia.[18]

News reports most often referred to Serbs as "orthodox Communist generals," "Eastern," "Byzantine," orthodox," "orthodox Communists"; Croatians, by contrast, were most frequently characterized as "Western," "nationalist," "wealthiest and most advanced," "most developed," and their "nationalist" system was one of "Western-style democracy."[19]

In the interim between conflict outbreak and conflict cease-fire, the strategists of chaos (of which Slobodan Milošević was likely the prime practitioner in the former Yugoslavia) often found, to their eventual surprise, victims of chaos and media misinformation. Further, e opinions of various media reporting on culprits and culpability, victims and victimizers in the last Balkan war increasingly came to mirror the opinions of many national decisionmakers. How influential the media became in shaping the attitudes of those who made policy is non-demonstrable by specific proof. Yet the presence of "hyperbole, hypocrisy, and racism," as Charles Lane termed it in an introspective essay, was ever-present.[20]

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[15] Johanna Neuman, "Has CNN Replaced Envoys?", July 1995, 30-31.

[16] Quoted in Peter Brock, "Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press,", Winter 1993-1994, 159.

[17] Nikolaos A. Stavrou, "The Balkan Quagmire and the West's Response,", Winter 1993, 28.

[18] Lois B. McHugh, "Yugoslavia: Refugee Assistance,", 22 September 1992, 3.

[19] Stavrou, 28.

[20] Brock, 161-162. Such hyperbole was not, of course, confined to the American media alone. Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, was reported to have told members of the Security Council that "women, children and old people are being killed, usually by having their throats cut." Ogata claimed this information came from uncorroborated broad-

What can these examples of the manipulation of chaos show the chaos strategist? Perhaps they demonstrate how Western media, often historically and culturally uniformed, tend to react to "instant" (and even prolonged) crises with a focus on the sensational and not the substantial. Such a practice tends to exploit, as well as cheapen, human suffering and human dignity. Yet the media is a powerful force; with its instant global impact, it has become a "fourth" instrument of national power, as powerful in some ways as the economic, military, and political instruments of power.

Balkan observer Susan Woodward has acknowledged the media as "indisputably a weapon of war, and everybody knows it."[21] The true chaos strategist knows "it" as well, and that this instrument of power can be manipulated to advantage – to make one's grievances against an adversary seem legitimate and the adversary's grievances barbaric. Thus, whether consciously or not, Balkan chaos strategists sought the advantage of attacking policy decisions to either prevent war as consequence or to seek the intervention of military force on their behalf. As a result, Serbs and Croatians denied certain mili-tary involvements or reneged on previous cease-fire agreements whenever possible while still seeking to prevent – or forestall – the wrath of the "West" during the Balkan wars of 1991-1995. Equally, the Bosnian government (from 1992-1995) and Kosovar Albanians (in 1999) sought NATO intervention whenever possible. In retrospect, all such strategists recognized an element that could be worked to individual comparative advantage: Chaos had been in-voked.

## ADAPTING TO CHAOS

In the spring of 1946, scientist Robert J. Oppenheimer, the "father" of the atomic bomb, was asked in closed congressional testimony whether it would be possible to smuggle elements of such a bomb into New York and then blow it up. "Of course," replied Oppenheimer, "and people could destroy New York." When allegedly a nervous senator then asked how such a weapon smuggled in a crate or suitcase could be detected, Oppenheimer simply answered, "With a screwdriver."[22] The document that eventually came out of that testimony, known as the "Screwdriver Report," remains classified to this day. In essence, though, there seems to have been a recognition six decades back that, although there was no direct threat, we were clearly vulnerable to chaos attack.

While this essay does not suggest that chaos strategists will inevitably defeat major European or trans-Atlantic powers, such strategists can – and often do –

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casts from unidentified ham radio sources in eastern Bosnia. UN troops arriving in the region, nonetheless, often disproved such reports.

[21] "Making Sense out of Chaos: Reporting the War in Bosnia," panel discussion, School of Communication, American University, Washington, D.C., 5 October 1993.

[22] Reported in Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin, "The First Line Against Terrorism," *Washington Post,* 12 December 2001. <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Dec2001/e20011212line.htm> (12 December 2001)

bedevil the national security decision making process. Used with the right measures of surprise and undetectability, a chaos strategy could disrupt – and possibly destroy – the Clausewitzian trinity in which the people's faith in government is erased and the third leg of that trinity, that of the commander and the army, can do little to do nothing to prevent that destruction.[23] Moreover, the culture of future war may differ radically from the eighteenth century (Clausewitzian) tradition of European powers who sought . To the contrary, future war may consistently represent a  – and to preserve at all costs civilizational, cultural, religious, and ethnic distinctions. Such warfare may resemble nothing so much as Old Testament Warfare: fought with brutal methods but in the belief of an always just cause.

In truth, chaos strategists cannot defeat the U.S. or its allies in any traditional sense. We will be targeted, however, where the symbols of our strength reside. Although the Word Trade Center was not a critical node in terms of economic power, and even with the astounding resiliency that the U.S. displayed in recovering from these attacks, the total cost of lost worldwide economic growth and decreased equity value as a result of the 11 September attacks could exceed one trillion dollars.[24]

Even as the United States has the capacity to bring massive firepower on the battlefield – along with an increasingly sophisticated network of intelligence systems, information architecture, unmanned systems, and joint and combined force operations – we should expect to see chaos strategies come into play in future engagements. Too exclusive an emphasis on technological solutions in warfare – and in determining political outcomes – may well prove problematic. Although a cliché, it remains true that we must prepare for the warfare we may find it necessary to fight, and not plan for the wars we want to fight.

Every single military engagement since the end of the Cold War suggests that the United States has dispatched its adversaries with relative ease on battlefields and in direct engagements. This would seem to be an argument *against* rapid transformation of the armed forces. Why bother, after all, to change the military when no one else can stand up to it? Increased battlefield awareness, the likely increased future use of SOF and indigenous forces, precision major fires delivered by various means, and rapid maneuver to cause the enemy to break, as well as what one observer has called the phenomenon of "Marines turned Soldiers," has fundamentally altered how we fight.[25]

In truth, the United States proven so successful in our post-Cold war military improvements that the likely increased costs for transformation envisioned by the

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[23] Clausewitz described war as a "remarkable trinity" composed of "primordial violence, hatred, and enmity" (the realm of the people); "chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam" (the realm of the commander and his army); and the "element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes [war] subject to reason alone" (the realm of the government).

[24] Thomas Homer-Dixon, 58.

[25] Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Marines Turned Soldiers: The Corps vs. the Army," *National Review Online*, 10 December 2001.

Bush administration may well prove unnecessary and too expensive. Transformation skeptics, such as the Brooking Institution's Michael O'Hanlon, counterargue that the US military is *already* innovating at an acceptable rate – in what he terms a process of "ambitious incrementalism" – and simply does not need to radically accelerate the pace of technological advance.[26]

But the arguments that suggest that constrained resources and the dictates of the political economy are what most constrain transformation seem to miss the mark completely. What may well be lacking is the need to recognize "closework." As Larry K. Smith phrases it:

Overwhelming force implies, almost by definition, a lack of precision. That won't work now. What we're going to need is a much greater emphasis on the concentrated application of street smarts. I call these sorts of operations "closework." They are extremely precise missions that are used when the results are absolutely crucial. They demand the very highest standards of intelligence, of training, of preparation, of timing and execution. We haven't been particularly good at this in the past.[27]

Closework also suggests that urban warfare and often brutal forms of engagement will be likely in the future. Rather than relying more on distance warfare and precision engagement, we may fundamentally turn in a new direction. If it is true, for example, that one of two people on the face of the earth will live in urban environments and one out of two people on the face of the earth will live in "water-stressed" areas at some point within the next two decades, then the complexity of intersecting forces can bring about profound – and often vicious consequences. These consequences might include – but certainly not be limited to – critical infrastructure collapse, the outbreak of infectious disease that cannot be controlled, and intrastate as well as inter-ethnic conflict related to resource scarcities (such as water) and environmental stress. We may well be entering into chaos.

We can expect to enter into some debate about how best to meet the challenges of future war. Admittedly, there is a danger of overestimating one's real or potential enemy; there is a greater danger of not recognizing one's enemy at all. But there is a need to consider alternative ways to deal with future war. As General E. Shinskeki, Army Chief of Staff, admonished his own service and those who did not want to consider alternatives, "If you dislike change, you're going to dislike irrelevance even more."[28]

The arguments for transformation – and its relevance to protecting the vital interests of the nation – should reasonably have only just begun. To suggest that we actually understand the challenges of the future and can adapt our armed forces with relative ease is a flawed assumption. To the contrary, the science of com-

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[26] Ronald Brownstein, "Success in Afghanistan Clouds Military Transformation Plan," *Los Angeles Times,* 12 December 2001. <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Dec2001/e20011212 success. htm> (12 December 2001)

[27] Joe Klein, "Closework," *The New Yorker,* 1 October 2001, 45.

[28] Quoted in Owens, "Marines Turned Soldiers."

plexity, future uncertainty, and understanding what specific changes to make in protecting our vulnerabilities should all prove central to what will be one of the most vigorous debates in history.

Policy and decision makers will need to adapt to counter future "chaos strategies," where an adversary's essential aim is to achieve victory through avoiding defeat. Potential, though plausible, national security responses include the increased use of clandestine and covert actions, as well as special forces, in place of more traditional wartime forces and resources. In the end, it does not matter much if future chaos attacks will be illogical or disjointed. Chaos – and its intended effects – will prove more significant than cohesive strategy that viably links means to ends. As an adage in India claims, one way to kill a tiger is to distract it from so many different sides that it tries to run in every direction at once.

Will we adapt to the challenges of future war? That remains to be answered in the war that is still to come.