CHAPTER

13

Military Instruments: Small Wars
In April 2008, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, stated that the Pentagon was planning for “potential military course of action” against Iran, action he said would be “extremely stressful” but not impossible for U.S. forces. Still, he stated that he had no expectations of conflict with Iran in the immediate future. Earlier in the week, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated that war with Iran would be disastrous on a number of levels but that the military option must be kept on the table, given its destabilizing foreign policy and pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Neither Mullen nor Gates specified what form American military action against Iran might take. They left that to the Iranian imagination. While many remember Operation Eagle Claw, through which the Carter administration sought to rescue the 53 Americans taken hostage in Iran in November 1979 following the fall of the Shah, most do not remember that this was neither the first nor the last time that military force had been used by the United States in a “small war” context against Iran, making Mullen’s comments particularly open-ended to Iranian leaders familiar with the past. In the previous chapter, we examined the use of the military instrument in big wars. In this chapter, we continue to look at the military instrument but shift our attention to small wars.

**CASUS BELLI**

An obvious difference between big and small wars is the level of societal effort and political commitment that lies behind them along with the level of destruction that they entail. An additional reason is found in the language we use to talk about them. Large wars have combatants and are fought according to generally accepted (in the West) rules of law. Small wars have insurgents and often appear to be wars without rules. Just as importantly, we use different language to discuss why big and small wars happen.

In the case of large wars, we speak of windows of opportunity, where leaders calculate they can win; windows of fear, where leaders do not believe they can win but see the consequences of inaction as so dire that they feel forced to try to go to war; and accidents, where neither side wanted war but find themselves fighting one. This language also underlies our efforts to stop big wars. Deterrence is intended to convince an opponent that no window of opportunity exists. Arms control seeks to close windows of fear and reduce the potential and consequences of accidents. In all cases, it is assumed that a major threat to one’s national interest is at work.

The language of small wars is different. Here, we tend to start by talking about the reasons for wars, the casus belli. This is not to say that they do not involve the national interest but that this phrase by itself does not convey a sense of why the war began. They often appear to be wars of choice rather than wars of necessity. In talking about small wars we tend to classify them in terms of the concrete issues that gave them life.

One major source of small wars involves access to energy supplies. Access to clean water and food supplies are also seen as potentially...
significant causes of small wars. Looking beyond natural resources, it is clear that ethnicity is a cause of small wars. In some cases, this takes the form of separatism, where one ethnic group seeks to leave a state and form a new state in order to better protect itself. In other cases, it takes the form of irredentism, where a state reaches out and tries to bring its kin group into the state by expanding its boundaries. In still other cases, it takes the form of genocide, as one group seeks to eliminate another ethnic group from its territory. While the end of the Cold War may have marked the end of ideological competition between the East and West, ideologies, religions, and belief systems in general continue to play important roles in small wars by structuring the way in which we see the world and determining what is acceptable and what is not. This comes through quite clearly in how different parts of the world view American hegemony and the spread of globalization.

BRIDGING THE CONVENTIONAL–ASYMMETRIC WARFARE DIVIDE

Two forms of military action, often involving the use of large numbers of conventional forces short of engaging in traditional wars, have had a reoccurring presence on the international scene. They are humanitarian/peacekeeping operations and stability forces. They serve as a bridge for our thinking about the use of military power as we move from big wars (discussed in the last chapter) to small wars.

Humanitarian/Peacekeeping Operations

Operation Restore Hope (Somalia), Operation Provide Comfort (Northern Iraq), Operation Restore Democracy (Haiti), and sending troops to Liberia are prominent examples of post–Cold War U.S. military interventions that at least in part can be classified as humanitarian in nature. A similar operation took place in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime was defeated by U.S. forces in 2002.

Humanitarian military operations grew out of an earlier generation of efforts referred to as peacekeeping operations. Carried out by neutral United Nations (UN) forces, their original purpose was to provide a way to stabilize an international or domestic conflict without involving U.S. or Soviet forces or creating a situation where either side had “lost” the conflict. In this sense, they provided a second-best solution for each side. Peacekeeping forces did not arrive until all sides to the conflict were ready to end the fighting. Over time, the scope of these efforts was expanded to include interventions undertaken outside of the UN system and under conditions where fighting continues.

Opposition to humanitarian and peacekeeping undertakings has been expressed from across the political spectrum. In part, objections are directed at the multilateral nature of these operations. Deeper issues, however, have
also been raised. Neoisolationist commentators have questioned whether humanitarian interventions are really in the American national interest. Arguing that U.S. security interests were not involved in the Somalian operation, they compare it to bungee jumping: “A risky undertaking for which there is no compelling need.”

Advocates of military humanitarian interventions reject the argument that American interests were not at stake in Somalia, Bosnia, or Haiti. They contend that definitions of American national interest that focus only on the physical security of the United States or the health of its economy are anachronistic. Just as important as these traditional foreign policy goals is the creation of an overall international environment that is supportive of American values. Humanitarian interventions are an important aspect of such a strategy. At the same time, it is recognized that military humanitarian operations are complex endeavors that are fraught with danger. If they are to succeed, care must be taken that the mistakes made in Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti are not repeated.

It is argued that three lessons can be learned from these experiences that will make humanitarian interventions more effective in the future. First, international military interventions should be timely and robust. Second, because of serious shortcomings in the UN secretary general’s command and control system, U.S. forces should remain under U.S. or NATO command. And third, regional organizations are not viable alternatives to the UN for carrying out such missions.

**Stability Forces**

Peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions focus on developments in a state and generally occur after a crisis has already begun. Stability operations in contrast may focus on internal situations, but may also have a broader focus seeking to prevent interstate violence from breaking out or trying to prevent an international conflict from spilling over into neighboring states. One area in which stability operations are seen as growing in importance to U.S. security interests is Africa. This recognition led in 2007 to the creation of the U.S. African Command or AFRICOM. Its purpose is to work with other U.S. agencies and international organizations to strengthen regional stability and security and, if need be, to deter aggression and respond to crises. In the words of one commentator, AFRICOM’s mission is conflict prevention not conflict reaction.

Already AFRICOM’s goals are proving difficult to implement, as the marriage of political and military objectives has created concern in many quarters. American embassies in Africa are raising questions about who is in charge of U.S. policy. African governments are raising concerns about AFRICOM signaling a new wave of American imperialism on the continent and questioning American designs on its oil and mineral wealth. Complicating matters even more is the fact that many humanitarian and civic groups are reluctant to become identified with AFRICOM for fear of creating distrust among the people they rely upon to achieve their development and humanitarian objectives.
COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE

In the eyes of many strategists, the greatest military challenge facing the United States today stems from a basic asymmetry in military capabilities between the United States and its enemies. Matching the U.S. conventional strength is simply not an option for them. Instead the United States has to be fought by other means. Where the United States relies on precision air strikes guided by the latest technology and “shock and awe” bombing strikes, the enemy counters with suicide bombers, kidnappings and assassination, and hit-and-run attacks. What type of military forces and strategies are best to use in meeting asymmetrical challenges has been a point of major debate within the military and among strategists. For example, traditional Western “just war” principles stress the proportional and discriminating use of military power. It is unclear what this means in situations in which the enemy may be a stateless actor or is employing all of its resources against the United States and not abiding by these same principles.

George W. Bush entered office as a strong supporter of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) concept, in which precision and lethal technology rather than large numbers and brute strength become the core of the military’s power projection capabilities. Such a force posture proved highly effective in removing Saddam Hussein from power but not for fighting the war that followed. The Iraq experience provided the impetus for a thoroughgoing review of U.S. military doctrine and a change in emphasis from fighting conventional wars to fighting counterinsurgencies (COINs) as the primary task of the U.S. military.

The 2006 Field Manual (FM3-34) coauthored by General David Petraeus, who oversaw the change in strategy in Iraq following the surge in forces in 2006, defines counterinsurgency warfare as a protracted conflict that involves a mix of offensive, defensive, and stability operations. It requires that soldiers be both “nation builders as well as warriors.”

COIN differs from traditional peacekeeping operations because in peacekeeping operations the primary objective is the absence of violence. In COIN, the absence of violence may actually hide preparations by insurgents for combat. COIN is defined as struggle for the support of the people. It requires the coordinated use of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions. As such, while the military plays an important role in COIN operations, it cannot succeed itself. Using a medical analogy, COIN operations are seen as moving through three stages. Stage I involves stopping the bleeding by providing the patient with emergency first aid. Here, the goal is to protect the population and break the insurgency’s momentum. Stage 2 involves inpatient care. The goal is to restore the patient’s health and move it on the way to a successful long-term recovery. Stage 3 is outpatient care. Here, the goal is to move the patient to self-sufficiency, with more and more of the governing functions being carried out by the patient. At each stage, attention needs to be given to a wide range of activities, including providing security, providing essential services, promoting good governance, and promoting economic development.
With the U.S. presence in Iraq scheduled to end in 2010, COIN attention has shifted to Afghanistan. In February 2009, General Petraeus observed that the situation in Afghanistan had deteriorated markedly in the last two years and warned of a “downward spiral.” The Obama administration plans to send more than 30,000 additional U.S. troops there, bringing the total U.S. and allied deployment to about 66,000. Germany is the single largest NATO contributor with 3,500 troops. U.S. forces are expected to remain in Afghanistan for three to four years, with the majority of them destined for service in Taliban strongholds in the ethnic Pashtun southern region.

Moving COIN’s best practices from Iraq to Afghanistan is anything but automatic. The geography, ethnicity, politics, and economics of the two countries all differ to significant degrees. For COIN advocates, these differences point to a central truism: COIN tactics and strategies must be adjusted to the country and region where they are being applied. To others, these differences in context foreshadow failure. Among those pessimists is former secretary of state and national security advisor Henry Kissinger, who calls for rejecting COIN in favor of a more focused military strategy of working with local chiefs to prevent the emergence of a coherent jihadist state within Afghanistan that can destabilize the rest of the country and the region.6

A very different critique of U.S. COIN thinking comes from those who question the logic that guides it. A fundamental problem they point out is with the notion of victory. From the U.S. perspective, wars are fought to be won. Yet, for insurgents, this is not necessarily (or ever) the case. Wars are fought because they are a source of profit and influence. When the war ends, that influence is gone and so is the profit that comes from having received American or terrorist aid. The goal then is to keep the conflict going. In fact, these observers argue, most insurgencies degenerate into criminal enterprises and need to be recognized and dealt with as such.7

The specter of possible failure raises the question of consequences. Does it matter if the United States walks away from Afghanistan without “winning”? The absence of an exit strategy and fear of the consequences of a premature departure have long haunted military planners and policy makers. One study of U.S. departures from Lebanon, Somalia, Vietnam, and Cambodia suggests the consequences for U.S. security may be minimal. No dominoes fell. No power effectively rushed in to fill the power vacuum, not that they did not try. What did happen was that the civil conflict often got worse.8

**COVERT ACTION**

Covert action seeks results by altering the internal balance of power in a foreign state. No instrument of foreign policy is more controversial or difficult to control. As the Tower Commission that investigated the Iran–Contra affair during the Reagan administration stated in its report, “Covert action places a great strain on the process of decision making in a free society.”9 Writing in a similar vein, two scholars who have studied the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) extensively assert that there are only two legitimate reasons to carry...
out covert action: (1) when open knowledge of U.S. responsibility would make the operation infeasible and (2) to avoid retaliation or to control the potential for escalation.¹⁰

In popular usage, covert action is all but synonymous with the CIA and secret paramilitary undertakings. Neither is true. U.S. covert action predates the CIA. The first forays into covert action were taken during World War II by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).¹¹ After a brief interlude in which the OSS was disbanded and in which no central intelligence organization existed, a permanent covert action capability was created in the newly established CIA. A number of different activities fall within its definitional boundaries, ranging from the clandestine support of individuals and organizations to assassination. In many cases, covert operations are becoming increasingly overt.¹² Today the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) supports political groups just as the CIA once did. It has been active in Venezuela, supporting the opponents of President Hugo Chavez. In the realm of paramilitary operations, estimates now place the number of CIA covert operators at 600–700, while the Pentagon has approximately 10,000 special force combatants. Similar trends exist elsewhere.

**Cold War Covert Action**

The most common form of covert action is clandestine support for individuals and organizations. This support takes many forms (financial, technical, or training) and can be directed at many targets (politicians, labor leaders, journalists, unions, political parties, church groups, or professional associations). Clandestine support was the major focus of CIA efforts in France, Italy, and West Germany in the immediate post–World War II.¹³ Between 1948 and 1968, the CIA spent over $65 million in Italy on these types of programs. A widely publicized case of CIA clandestine support involved efforts to block the election of Salvador Allende in Chile.¹⁴ These efforts succeeded in 1958 and 1964 but failed in 1970. Between 1964 and 1969, the CIA spent almost $2 million on training anticommunist organizers among Chilean peasants and slum dwellers. It spent $3 million on the 1964 election and almost $1 million on the 1970 election.

Another form of clandestine support is the provision of security assistance and intelligence training to foreign governments. Third World leaders are particularly responsive to offers of training and equipment to help them combat potential coups, terrorist attacks, and assassination attempts. A controversial example of such a training program was “Project X.” This was a U.S. military training program in Latin America and elsewhere that included instruction on clandestine activity against domestic political adversaries. Documents indicate that the operation was probably shut down in the early 1980s. In 1999, President Bill Clinton expressed regret for U.S. support of the Guatemalan military during that country’s 36-year civil war, which dated back to the 1960s. An independent commission had concluded that the U.S.-backed forces were responsible for the vast majority of the human rights abuses that occurred during this war.
A second category of covert action is propaganda. The CIA has used a number of techniques for dispensing its propaganda. One of the most primitive propagandas involved using balloons. In an effort to exploit dissatisfaction and increase internal unrest in China in the early Cold War era, the CIA loaded balloons with an assortment of leaflets, pamphlets, and newspapers. Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush both approved clandestine radio propaganda operations against Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega. Neither effort was particularly successful. Press accounts characterized the former effort as “half-hearted” and the latter as “inept.”

A third category of covert action involves economic operations. According to one account, comparatively few economic operations have been undertaken by the CIA, and they have not been very successful. As we have already seen, economic operations were an integral part of the CIA’s efforts to stop Salvador Allende. The goal was “to make the economy scream.” U.S. multinational corporations were approached and asked to cut off credits and the shipment of spare parts to Chile.

Available evidence suggests that the most persistent target of CIA covert economic operations was Fidel Castro’s Cuba. One of the most notorious programs is Operation Mongoose. Authorized by President John Kennedy in November 1961, it was designed to “use our available assets . . . to help Cuba overthrow the communist regime.” Operation Mongoose succeeded in getting European shippers to turn down Cuban delivery orders and sabotaging British buses destined for Cuba. Operation Mongoose was canceled in January 1963, but covert economic operations against Cuba continued. As late as 1969 and 1970, the CIA directed a program of weather modification against Cuba’s sugar crop with the hope of producing rain over nonagricultural areas, leaving the cane fields parched. The CIA has also been charged with infecting Cuban pig herds with an African swine flu virus. The result was a serious shortage of pork, which is a staple in the Cuban diet.

The fourth category of covert action involves paramilitary undertakings. A former practitioner defines paramilitary operations as the furnishing of covert military assistance and guidance to unconventional and conventional foreign forces and organizations. He argues that it represents a highly valuable “third option” between sending in the marines and doing nothing.

Initially, paramilitary operations were targeted against the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellite states. Almost uniformly, they were failures. Numbered among them were efforts to support resistance fighters in Ukraine (the program ended with their defeat by the Soviet army); an effort to establish an underground apparatus for espionage and revolution in Poland (only after several years did it become clear that the Polish secret service had co-opted the network and was using it to acquire gold and capture anticommunist Poles); and an effort to overthrow the Albanian government (virtually every mission failed, and it later became known that the British intelligence officer in charge of the mission was a Soviet agent).

As the 1950s progressed, the more significant CIA paramilitary operations were taking place in the Third World. In 1953, the United States and Great Britain undertook a joint venture, Operation AJAX, to bring down the
government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq and return the Shah to power. In 1954, the CIA helped bring down the government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. Arbenz had taken office in 1950 and set out on a path of social reform and modernization. The initial U.S. response centered on using economic sanctions, but in 1953 President Eisenhower approved a covert action plan (PB/SUCCESS). As was the case with Iran, the paramilitary operation itself was relatively small in scale, and it was preceded by a propaganda campaign designed to frighten Arbenz into fleeing the country.

As the 1950s ended, so too did the string of CIA successes. In 1958, it supported an unsuccessful coup against President Sukarno of Indonesia. A still greater embarrassment came in 1961 with the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Originally conceived during the Eisenhower administration, the plan was approved by Kennedy in April 1961. Later that month a brigade of some 1,400 Cuban exiles was put ashore in Cuba, where it was expected to link up with Cuban opposition forces and topple the Castro regime. Everything went wrong. On the first day of the invasion, two of the four supply and ammunition ships were sunk, and the other two fled. On the second day, the brigade was surrounded by 20,000 well-armed and loyal Cuban soldiers. On the third day, the 1,200 surviving members of the invasion force surrendered. Almost two years later, most were released in exchange for $53 million in food and drugs.

The Bay of Pigs put a temporary dent in Washington’s fascination with paramilitary covert action programs, but it did not put an end to them. By the mid-1970s a controversial covert paramilitary operation was under way in Angola. A 1974 coup in Portugal signaled the beginning of the end of Portuguese colonial rule in Africa. In January 1975, agreement among the three rival independence movements in Angola led to the creation of a coalition transitional government that would rule Angola until elections were held in October. Angola’s independence was to be officially realized in November. The United States threw its support behind an alliance between the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) under the leadership of Holden Roberto and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi.

Covert operations began seven days after the agreement to establish a transitional government was reached, when the CIA was authorized to pay $300,000 to the FNLA. It was encouraged to attack the Soviet-supported Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), which was receiving military support from Cuban soldiers. The CIA maintained that no U.S. personnel were directly involved in the fighting or directly supplying the FNLA with funds. Evidence soon surfaced that this was not the case. Funds were being sent directly to Angolan forces, and CIA personnel were in Angola to help manage the war. Congress reacted angrily to these disclosures, passing the Tunney Amendment in 1975 and the Clark Amendment in 1976 that attempted to cut off all government spending in Angola.

The most controversial of the CIA’s paramilitary programs in the 1980s was its Nicaraguan operation. The impetus for CIA involvement in Nicaragua lay with evidence collected in the late 1970s that the Sandinista government there was increasing its shipments of arms to El Salvadoran rebels, intensifying
pressure on domestic opposition forces, and becoming the site of a substantial
Cuban-backed military buildup. The Carter administration responded to these
events with economic sanctions. They were continued by the Reagan adminis-
tration, but had little impact. In 1981, the Reagan administration authorized a
$19.5 million program of covert action to stop the flow of arms to El Salvador.
By November 1981 the program’s goals had expanded to include creating an
anti-Sandinista force (the Contras) that might effectively challenge the “Cuban
support structure in Nicaragua.”

The CIA’s paramilitary program in Nicaragua has had its successes. It is
credited with having slowed down the shipment of arms to El Salvador and
with hampering Sandinista offenses in 1983 and 1984. It has also been the
object of intense criticism. In particular, Congress became concerned with the
scope of the CIA’s program compared to the program of action that it had
earlier agreed to fund. As a result, in 1982, it passed the Boland Amendment,
which forbade funding the Contras for the purpose of overthrowing the
Nicaraguan government. In 1984, renewed questions were raised over the
mining of Nicaraguan harbors and the CIA-sponsored production of a psycho-
logical warfare manual that could be interpreted as calling for assassination.
This time Congress responded by cutting off all funding for the Contras. These
bans became the center of controversy when information surfaced that NSC
staffer Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North had been deeply involved in orches-
trating Contra operations and in securing foreign and private funds for them.

The largest, and in some eyes the most successful, Third World paramilitary
cover operation program run by the CIA was in Afghanistan. In FY 1985, the
CIA spent about $250 million, or more than 80 percent of their covert action
budgets, helping the Afghan guerrillas evict Soviet forces. In FY 1989, after
the Soviet Union had withdrawn, the CIA was still spending $100 million on
the Afghan operation. The Afghan paramilitary operation is also significant
because, for the first time, the CIA was authorized to send “made in America”
weapons to forces it was supporting. Until then, adherence to the doctrine of
“plausible denial” had blocked such transfers.

A final form of covert action involves the assassination of foreign leaders.
The existence of a unit for the planning of “special operations” can be traced
back to the earliest days of the CIA. By all accounts, no actual assassination
operations or planning was ever done by it, but suggestions for assassination
were put forward. By 1961, another CIA unit had been established for
“disabling” foreign leaders, including assassination as a last resort. A former
CIA official has stated that between 1959 and 1962 the White House, the NSC,
and the CIA all talked seriously of killing foreign leaders. The most thorough
investigation into U.S. involvements in assassination plots was carried out by the
Church Committee. It investigated five cases of alleged U.S. involvement:

Cuba
Congo (Zaire)
Dominican Republic
Chile
South Vietnam

Fidel Castro
Patrice Lumumba
Rafael Trujillo
René Schneider
Ngo Dinh Diem
The committee concluded that only the Castro and Lumumba cases involved plots conceived by the United States to kill foreign leaders. In the case of Trujillo, the United States did not initiate the plot, but it did aid dissidents whose aims were known to include assassinating Trujillo. In the Diem case, some U.S. officials sought his removal from office, but there is no indication that these officials sought his death. Schneider’s death is linked to the Nixon administration’s efforts to spark an anti-Allende military coup after he was elected president. In the Congo, it appears that events overtook U.S. policy and nullified U.S. plans to assassinate MPLA leader Patrice Lumumba. U.S. authorities had authorized Lumumba’s assassination in the fall of 1960, and CIA officers in the Congo urged his “permanent disposal.” Toxic substances had been selected as the method for Lumumba’s assassination. CIA planning went so far as to send vials of poison to the CIA’s Léopoldville station for an assassination attempt. In December, Lumumba was captured by forces aligned with the United States. Several weeks later his death was announced. It appears that the CIA knew the likely consequences of Lumumba’s capture but was not involved in the assassination.

The Church Committee found concrete evidence of at least eight CIA plots to assassinate Fidel Castro between 1960 and 1965. One former CIA official characterized these efforts as ranging from “the vague to the weird.” Proposed assassination devices included arranging an “accident,” poison cigars, poison pills, poison pens, placing deadly bacterial powder in Castro’s scuba-diving suit, and rigging a seashell to explode while Castro was scuba diving. Although most of these approaches never went beyond the planning stage, some were attempted. Twice, poison pills were sent to Cuba, and on another occasion, weapons and other assassination devices were provided to a Cuban dissident. Cuban officials state that the closest the CIA came to assassinating Castro was in 1963, when a poison pill that was to be put into a chocolate milkshake by an assassin/waiter was delivered by a Mafia official. The plot failed when the capsule froze and broke open when the waiter went to get it.

In 1972, following the kidnapping and assassination of Chilean General René Schneider, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms issued a directive banning assassinations. This ban has since been included in the presidential executive orders. Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President George W. Bush asserted that the ban on assassinations did not prohibit the United States from assassinating terrorists or acting in self-defense.

**Post–Cold War Covert Action**

Covert action programs did not disappear with the end of the Cold War any more than did nuclear weapons. The CIA ran a Cold War–style operation against Saddam Hussein between 1992 and 1996. The goal was to remove him from power by encouraging a military coup and reducing his control over Iraq’s outlying regions, such as Iraqi Kurdistan. The cost of the program is estimated to have approached $100 million. Included in the funding was support for a clandestine radio station in Jordan, which blanketed Iraq with
CHAPTER 13  Military Instruments: Small Wars

Project Ajax

Iran has long been a valued and contested country. Commercially significant quantities of oil were discovered in 1908. By then Iran had already been divided into Russian and British spheres of influence. Iran would be occupied by British and Russian forces during World War I and World War II. It was during World War II, on September 16, 1941, that Mohammad Reza Pahlvai became the Shah. His father had come to power as the result of a coup in 1925 and was now forced to abdicate. United States entered the war. American soldiers were sent to Iran to handle supply operations. By 1944, approximately 30,000 U.S. troops were there, and Iran had received $8.5 million in Lend-Lease aid.

Iran’s post–World War II independence and territorial integrity were agreed to by the Allies at the Tehran Conference of 1943. This agreement soon unraveled when, unhappy with Iran’s refusal to grant it oil concessions, the Soviet Union organized pro-Soviet independence movements within Iranian territory and refused to pull its troops out as agreed upon. With the backing of the British and Americans, Iran took its case to the UN, where an agreement was reached. The Soviet Union received oil concessions, its troops left, and it sent its forces into the breakaway regions and reestablished its control over them. Soon thereafter, the Iranian legislature rejected the agreement, thus denying the Soviet Union access to oil.

As the Cold War intensified, the Shah came to be seen as a key force in containing the Soviet Union. His rule, however, was challenged by Mohammed Mossadeq, who was Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 to 1953. Mossadeq played a leading role in organizing Iran’s National Front, whose goals were to establish democracy in Iran by ending foreign influences on its government and nationalizing the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, something he accomplished on May 1, 1951.

Mossadeq’s action set in motion a spiraling conflict with Great Britain. It responded by establishing a de facto naval blockade around Iran so that it could not sell any of its oil. Mossadeq expelled all British citizens from Iran, and in October 1952, the two countries broke diplomatic relations. Other oil companies immediately began increasing production elsewhere in the Persian Gulf. British actions brought Iranian oil production to a standstill and led to an economic crisis within Iran. A power struggle with the Shah over the extent of his powers and his nationalization policies led Mossadeq to resign in July 1952, only to be reappointed five days later after mass protests and tepid military support for his position; the Shah reappointed him Prime Minister.

As the crisis progressed, Great Britain approached President Harry Truman about removing Mossadeq from power in order to forestall a possible communist takeover, but was turned down. Great Britain renewed its proposal when Dwight Eisenhower became president and now met with a sympathetic response from his administration. U.S. and British officials met in Cyprus in May 1953 to lay out the basic plan. According to the plan, the CIA would persuade Shah, whose powers were by now largely ceremonial, to issue royal

HISTORICAL LESSON
anti–Saddam Hussein propaganda. Little was achieved. In June 1996, Saddam Hussein arrested and executed more than 100 Iraqi dissidents and military officers associated with the CIA plan. Political infighting among Kurdish leaders further crippled CIA efforts to remove Saddam from power.

The CIA has also played a pivotal role in the overt–covert operation along the Afghani–Pakistan border to target drones on key al Qaeda figures, an operation that officials characterize as “taking the fight to the enemy.” On January 1, 2009, a CIA strike killed two al Qaeda leaders said to be responsible for a series of suicide bombings in Pakistan, the 1998 attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and a failed October 2007 assassination attempt on former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

An additional post–Cold War covert action program became public on September 6, 2006, when George W. Bush acknowledged the existence of a program in which suspected terrorists were kidnapped and taken to prisons located outside the United States, where they were subjected to what he referred to as “enhanced interrogation.”
to as “tough” but “safe and lawful and necessary” interrogation methods carried out by specially trained CIA officers. Nearly 100 detainees were held in these prisons until they were shut down when Bush made his speech. Fourteen “high-value” terrorist suspects were moved to Guantanamo Bay. Whereas Bush characterized the interrogation methods as legitimate, others condemned them as torture. Interrogation techniques included feigned drowning (“waterboarding”), extreme isolation, slapping, sleep deprivation, semi-starvation, and light and sound bombardment.27

The “renditions” program, as this policy of forcibly abducting suspected terrorist suspects and transporting them to non–U.S. prisons for interrogation came to be known, was the product of two different post-9/11 concerns.28 The first problem was what to do with high-ranking al Qaeda leaders. One option was assassination. Another was to capture and then interrogate them. President Bush authorized both courses of action in a Presidential Finding signed six days after 9/11.

The second concern that led to the renditions policy was what to do with terrorist suspects captured in Afghanistan. At first they were sent to prisons in Egypt and Jordan, but soon the number of captured suspects grew too large, and the decision was made to leave most prisoners under the control of the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance. The first agreements on “black site” rendition and interrogation facilities were reached in mid-2002 with Thailand and an Eastern European country. Publicity about the Thai site in June 2003 led to its closing, and agreements were then signed with other countries. Public reports indicated that Egypt, Indonesia, Poland, and Romania were among the countries to which suspects were taken.

In August 2009, Obama announced that his administration would continue the renditions program but more closely monitor the interrogation methods used by assigning oversight responsibility to the national security council. He also announced that a new interrogation unit, the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group, was being created within the FBI to question key terrorist suspects. This removed the interrogation process from the jurisdiction of the CIA.

The Covert War Against Osama Bin Laden

The CIA’s pre–9/11 efforts to capture Osama bin Laden took a number of different forms.29 Perhaps the earliest involved the recruitment of a family-based team of Afghan tribal members. Known by the code name TRODPINT, they were originally formed to capture Mir Aimal Kasi, a Pakistani national who killed two CIA employees at the CIA headquarters in 1993. Kasi was captured in Pakistan, and TRODPINT was then given the task of trying to kidnap bin Laden so that he could be taken out of Afghanistan by U.S. Special Forces. The last effort before 9/11 involved the recruitment of Northern Alliance guerrilla commander Ahmed Shah Massoud in 1999 by a team of CIA operatives known as JAWBREAKER-5. Massoud had a long history of dealings with the CIA, many of which were not positive. At one point he had been given $500,000 to attack Afghan communist forces, but no attack apparently ever occurred.
In between these two operations, the CIA contacted and recruited at least three proxy forces in the region to try and capture or kill bin Laden. One plan involved using a Pakistani commando team that was trained, supported, and equipped by the CIA. The Pakistani government made the offer as a counter to rising pressure from the Clinton administration to cut its support for the Taliban. The unit was ready to act in October, but a coup brought into power a new government that refused to condone the operation. At the same time, U.S. intelligence officials had grown concerned that the operation was compromised as a result of security breaches within the Pakistani intelligence services.

Formal authorization for the CIA to pursue bin Laden had been obtained in 1998, following the bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, when Bill Clinton signed the first of a series of findings consistent with the Hughes–Ryan Amendment. The original finding emphasized the goal of capturing bin Laden but permitted the use of lethal force. The first Memorandum of Notification expanded the covert operation to include using lethal force against bin Laden and his forces even when there was little chance of capturing him. The second expansion permitted the intelligence community to target his top aides. It is believed that fewer than 10 individuals were identified and that they were to be captured or killed. The third expansion permitted the intelligence community to shoot down a private or civilian aircraft if bin Laden was a passenger.

Counterproliferation

In the last chapter, we examined arms control and defense as ways of addressing threats to the United States. Both are passive and targeted most frequently on major threats. Another strategy, counterproliferation, is the use of military force to deter countries from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against the United States. Its principal targets are smaller states such as Iran and North Korea. Proponents of counterproliferation start from the premise that nonproliferation efforts have failed. They see the United States as operating in a postproliferation international security environment. It is one in which defense lags behind advances in offensive nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare capabilities and in which inspections do not provide an effective long-term solution to U.S. security needs.

Counterproliferation is not a new strategy. In its short history, counterproliferation thinking has already undergone several changes from when it was first proposed. Bureaucratic infighting within the Pentagon over the costs of proliferation and the military’s unease over preemptive war and opposition from arms controllers soon transformed it from an offensive policy to a largely defensive and reactive one. This orientation changed again after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The George W. Bush administration’s embrace of a national ballistic missile defense system and its rejection of deterrence in favor of preemption effectively places counterproliferation at the center of its strategy for dealing with WMD.
In 1993, Bill Clinton’s secretary of defense Les Aspin unveiled a “counterproliferation initiative.” Its details were never spelled out at the time, but most who embraced the idea identified two prominent features. The first was a military capacity to operate against states that possess nuclear weapons and other WMD. The second was the construction of a defense system against ballistic missiles. Significant challenges exist on both fronts. Constructing a military capability to attack states (or terrorist groups) that possess an immature nuclear or WMD capability is quite different from constructing one to counter an adversary with a robust capability. An additional complicating factor is the timing and political context of the planned military action. Is it part of a prolonged crisis, an ongoing war, or a “bolt-from-the-blue” response carried out in a time of international quiet? Only in the last case can surprise be expected. In the others, the target is likely to have advance warning and will be able to prepare for that contingency and develop retaliatory strategies. Decisions must also be made on what targets to attack. Possibilities range from the WMD themselves to infrastructure and support systems, conventional forces, and the political and military leadership of the adversary.

Few historical examples of counterproliferation exist. The most frequently cited are Israel’s 1981 raid on Iraq’s Osiraq nuclear reactor, the bombing of Iraq’s unconventional weapons during the first phase of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, and U.S. cruise missile attacks on the al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan in 1998. Contingency plans were also developed for using military force against North Korea in 1994 and against China in 1963–1964. In each case, context-specific considerations make it difficult to develop any clear-cut generalizations as to guiding principles for a counterproliferation strategy. Among the factors that have weighed heavily on engaging in counterproliferation military action are the possibility of triggering a full-scale war, uncertain intelligence, and concerns about high levels of collateral damage to people and the environment.

The most talked about potential target for a counterproliferation military strike is Iran. Israel is believed to be a strong advocate of such a military action. In 2005, it destroyed a building in Syria housing a suspected nuclear reactor that was being built with North Korean help. The Bush administration remained largely silent on the military action, although U.S. intelligence reports were said to have indicated that it had only a low level of confidence that the site was at the heart of the Syrian nuclear program.

The value of military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities is widely debated. Supporters point to the success of the 1981 raid on Iraq’s Osiraq nuclear facility. Skeptics assert that Iran’s nuclear program could not be dealt a similarly crippling blow. Now largely self-sufficient and with nuclear facilities dispersed throughout the country, Iran’s nuclear program would recover fairly quickly following a military strike. In 2009 the Obama administration rejected an Israeli request for deep-penetration bombs that could be used to attack underground and fortified nuclear enrichment facilities.
ARMS CONTROL AND SMALL WARS

Nuclear weapons receive most of the attention when arms control is discussed, but they are not the only proliferation problem facing policy makers today. The proliferation of chemical and biological weapons (along with the missile delivery systems that they use) and conventional weapons has also been the subject of arms control efforts. Collectively we refer to chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons as weapons of mass destruction.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Chemical and biological weapons may be constructed around a number of different agents. Among the most significant chemical agents are mustard gas, which causes blistering over the entire body, blindness, and death by respiratory failure, and sarin, which interrupts the flow of oxygen to cells. Significant biological agents and toxins include anthrax, which causes pneumonia and organ failure; ricin, which attacks the circulatory system; and smallpox, which in the view of many is the most deadly biological agent. The modern historical record documenting the use of chemical and biological weapons typically begins on April 22, 1915, when Germany used chemical weapons in World War I. Saddam Hussein employed chemical weapons, principally sarin and mustard gas, against Iran in the Iran–Iraq War as early as 1983. He then used poison gas and possibly anthrax against Kurds in northern Iraq to solidify his hold on power following that war. At the turn of the twenty-first century, it was estimated that about a dozen countries had offensive biological weapons programs. Also, in 2000, it was estimated that at least 16 countries had chemical weapons programs. Great fears also exist that terrorist groups might seek to acquire chemical and biological weapons.

Just as problems stand in the way of producing a nuclear weapon, neither biological nor chemical agents are readily produced. For example, microbes used for biological weapons often lose their effectiveness when exposed to sunlight, water, and other natural elements. They are also difficult to use militarily because of the challenges involved in spreading them out over large areas. Chemical agents, on the other hand, have caused widespread death. An accident at a Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, in 1984 killed almost 4,000 people and seriously injured another 200,000. The commercial value of chemicals used for weapons creates significant problems for controlling or eliminating their production. An estimated 850,000 facilities in the United States produce, process, consume, or store hazardous chemicals.

Commonly discussed means for the delivery of WMD include dispersal from an aircraft or drone and from artillery shells, rockets, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles. Of most concern are ballistic and cruise missiles. With few exceptions, countries in possession of, or seeking, such weapons all have ballistic missiles. Another 15 countries have ballistic missiles but are not seeking WMD. The number of countries with cruise missiles is even greater. Some 80 countries have them, and 18 countries make them.
After the collapse of the Soviet Union, widespread concern existed that poorly guarded facilities and unemployed scientists would become the center for a black market in WMD and missile technology. Revelations in 2003 of the existence of a black-market ring led by Pakistani scientist and director of its nuclear program A.Q. Khan made it clear that a far greater proliferation danger existed.

The principal vehicle in place for controlling the proliferation of missiles is the voluntary Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). It was formed in 1987 by the United States and other advanced industrial states for the purpose of developing export policies that restrict the global proliferation of key missile technologies. The original focus of control efforts was on nuclear capable delivery systems; an agreement in January 1993 extended the regime to include systems capable of delivering chemical and biological weapons.

**Conventional weapons**

Traditionally, efforts to curb conventional weapons proliferation have focused on restricting the sale or transfer of major weapons systems from one state to another. For a brief period of time, it appeared that conventional arms transfers were becoming less pronounced in world politics. Between 1989 and 1991, worldwide sales fell 53 percent and U.S. sales fell almost 34 percent. This downward trend has since been reversed.

Relatively little attention has been paid to the problem of curbing arms transfers. Conventional Arms Transfer Talks were held between 1977 and 1979, but they ended with no agreement being reached. The United States and the Soviet Union entered these talks with conflicting agendas that prevented any agreement from being reached. In the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, a new conventional arms control initiative has taken place in the form of a UN Arms Transfer Register. The register identifies seven different categories of conventional weapons, and countries are requested to submit to the UN an annual statement of the number of these items it exported or imported during the previous year. The goal is to bring a heightened degree of transparency to the arms transfer process and thereby reduce the military advantages that arms transfers bring to states. The danger, according to one observer, is that because the system is a control mechanism, it may have the unintended effect of legitimizing those arms transfers that are registered.

Not all conventional arms controllers agree with the focus on major weapons systems. The global scale of small arms trade is also imposing. The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency has estimated that some 13 percent of the global trade in conventional arms is made up of small arms and light weapons. In 1996, the State Department and the Commerce Department approved the export of more than $500 million worth of small arms. One author estimates that 10–20 percent of the $62 billion in U.S. military grants between 1955 and 1994 consisted of these weapons. In addition to direct sales and grants, a third source of small arms is surplus sales. One source estimates that between 1990 and 1996 the United States gave away 200,000 machines through the Excess Defense Articles Program. Recipients included Mexico, Taiwan, Latvia, Bosnia, Israel, Thailand, and
the Philippines. In 2001, a voluntary international agreement was reached that was designed to stop the international trade in small arms. The United States blocked efforts to include regulations on civilian ownership of military weapons and to restrict small arms trade to rebel movements.

Yet another dimension to the problem of curbing the proliferation of conventional weapons has also emerged. It involves the globalization of the arms production process. Cutbacks in defense spending and shrinking military establishments have led major arms producers to engage in a growing number of joint ventures, strategic alliances, and foreign acquisitions. This is transforming the security environment facing the U.S. military by placing increasingly advanced military equipment in the hands of potential adversaries. It has also led to the development of sophisticated Third World arms industries. Between 1986 and 1993, there were 27 joint ventures, 23 strategic alliances, and 78 mergers or acquisitions among defense firms around the world. Among others, the United States has entered into coproduction agreements on the F-16 fighter with Israel, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Greece, and Indonesia. About 40 Third World states now possess significant defense industries; almost 100 major conventional weapons systems have been licensed for coproduction in the Third World; and seven Third World states have the ability to produce land, sea, and air combat weapons.

OVER THE HORIZON

In looking over the horizon, the immediate challenge for U.S. foreign policy in the area of small wars is already evident. It is Afghanistan where many already predict a military presence that will be deadly, longer, and more expensive than Iraq. Looking further over the horizon, we can see potential small wars involving the United States in Pakistan and Africa. Regardless of where and when the United States finds itself involved in such conflicts, three questions will demand answers: (1) what are its boundaries, (2) who is the enemy, and (3) how is the military instrument best used.

In thinking about these questions, we find ourselves back at the beginning of American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, Future, where we introduced comments by then secretary of state Condoleezza Rice to the 9/11 Commission. Replacing the reference to al Qaeda with one to the Taliban, we get: you don’t have an approach against the Taliban until you have an approach against Afghanistan. And you don’t have an approach against Afghanistan until you have an approach against Pakistan. And until we could get that right, we don’t have a policy.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How can insurgents be best stopped from acquiring weapons?
2. What types of actions are best taken covertly; what actions should never be taken covertly?
3. What is the most likely cause of a U.S. small war in the next 5 years and in the next 10 years?
CHAPTER 13  Military Instruments: Small Wars

KEY TERMS

- casus belli 340  
- peacekeeping 341  
- window of fear 340  
- counterinsurgency 343  
- stability operations 342  
- window of opportunity 340  
- counterproliferation 353  
- weapons of mass destruction 355  
- covert action 344  
- paramilitary 346  

FURTHER READING


NOTES

15. Marchetti and Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, p. 167.


30. For critical accounts of the attempt to capture bin Laden, see Richard Clarke, Against All Enemies (New York: The Free Press, 2004); and Anonymous, Imperial Hubris (Washington, DC: Brassey’s) 2004.


