

that “classical theory is necessary, but not sufficient, for contemporary counterinsurgency. Mastering it may require new mental models.” I agree. He proposes, for instance, that modern COIN may not be 80% political, as David Galula suggests, but rather 100% political due to the nature of the global media and the increased relevance of public perception and political outcomes vs. battlefield victories. Every combat action sends a political message – nearly instantaneously – in this new environment. This places increased emphasis on the integration of military operations with strategic communications.

Strategic communications – or the ability to counter the insurgents’ messages through words and deeds – has historically been a monumental challenge in counterinsurgency. Commenting on his experience in Algeria in the 1950’s, Galula asserted that “If there was a field in which we were definitely and infinitely more stupid than our opponents, it was propaganda.” I think many of us believe that statement continues to apply, perhaps with even greater force, today.

Ironically, crafting an all-of-government strategic communications strategy for today’s threat is both enabled and complicated by new technologies in the internet age. Traditionally, our comparative advantage in warfare has been technology. Communications technology has enabled a network-centric approach to warfare that gives us greater battlefield awareness than ever before. At the high end of the conflict spectrum it has enabled us to win spectacular victories on the battlefield in Iraq and Afghanistan, in the major combat phases.

On the other hand, the enemy is also enabled by technology. At this lower end of the conflict spectrum the advantage in use of these technologies may shift to our enemies. As a global insurgent movement, Al Qaeda uses the internet as a “virtual sanctuary” where it promotes its ideological vision, raises funds, recruits and trains new members around the globe. Counter-terrorism expert, Audrey Cronin, observes that the internet is facilitating a “cyber-enabled mass mobilization” of such enemies. According to Cronin, this “cyber-mobilization” is the 21st century version of the French *levee en masse*, which revolutionized warfare in the 19th century by allowing a nation-state to raise nationalist armies with common sense of commitment. Today’s “*levee en masse*” looks much different, as it is global, non-territorial, and disconnected from the nation-state. Yet it may be no less revolutionary. Our ability to understand this phenomenon and to use our own technological advantages to counter it, will be a key enabler of victory in our current struggle. Likewise, we should consider how we might help our partners develop capabilities to do the same.

In sum, today’s insurgencies require careful consideration of our past experience and prudent application of historical lessons learned. From methods of organization to fund raising and the use of media and technology, today’s adaptive enemy has learned from the past and has evolved. As he learns and adapts, so must we.

Adaptation will be complex and challenging, even within our individual organizations. I know that changing my one component of the Office of the Secretary of Defense has been all consuming. Success will require adaptations that cross the bureaucratic lines of the executive branch and are developed with the close collaboration and support of the Congress.

We have some successful new tools thanks to close interagency cooperation and support from Capitol Hill: The Commander’s Emergency Response Program lets U.S. forces quickly meet the needs of the local population; Section 1207 authority lets the Department of Defense shift resources in extremis to the State Department for urgent stabilization missions; Section 1206 authority lets us more quickly train and equip partners when an opportunity or need arises.

These and other recent adaptations have come mostly from the urgent needs of this war rather than from a comprehensive strategic review of how the nation can meet new challenges. But more strategic processes are taking root. Ambassador Tobias is leading the transformation of foreign assistance; Ambassador Herbst is continuing the development of S/CRS; DoD is implementing QDR roadmaps for Irregular Warfare, Strategic Communications, and Building Partnership Capacity. This year, DoD will consolidate its proposals for building partnership capacity into a single piece of legislation. With leadership and vision, such efforts can provide a solid foundation for more sweeping changes to foreign and security assistance that will give us all the tools we need to integrate our efforts and meet the challenges of global insurgency.