

# LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

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DATE: 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 1975

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation, entitled "Low Intensity Conflict", submitted by Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jha, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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## PREFACE

Disagreement in perception, objectives among individuals in any group or society, if cannot be accommodated otherwise causes conflict. It is deeply rooted in human nature and thereby basic feature of any society. At the political level is focus of any politics is disagreement. In other words, conflict lies at the heart of any politics.

At the international level conflict consists of the dialectic of nation state, two opposing wills using their national element of power to resolve their dispute. Conflict may occur in social arena where differing cultures, competing ideology and religious and ethnic interests collide. Conflict may occur in economic arena also.

Political and military conflict exist as a corollary to social and economic conflict. Nation-states continuously engage in diplomatic manoeuvring for influence in the international arena. Additionally, nation-states develop military capability to use directly or as a deterrent in pursuit of their interest. Between two nation-states, all of these factors combine in a dynamic system that varies the relations between nations from consonance to dissonance.

Armed conflict arises from competition in one or more of a nation-state. War as an organised, deliberate and planned form of violence is unique to human being. It has been used both for self-preservation and self-aggrandisement, whereas it has brought about massive destruction and untold misery of human kind, it has also been used to achieve liberty, democracy thus bringing about a social change. In international relation war serves a definite purpose and that is the reason why the man has continued to preserve and develop this institution.

However, importance of war to nation-state may be sensitive to national leadership, ideological movements and international influences as well as many other internal and external factors. Also the level of intensity is dependent upon the perspective of the nation-state engaged in the conflict. It is a relative measure that terms a continuum reflecting the degree of commitment of available element of power to achieve national objectives. Also the intensity is determined by the end that should be met through logical application of this means. That means war seeks to achieve

a political objective and its nature is subject to change over a period of time.

In the nuclear age unconventional war, guerrilla war, insurgency, counterinsurgency, revolutionary war, protracted war, partisan war and low intensity conflict (name given to such wars in 1970s in addition to terrorism counteraction, anti-drug trafficking operations, peacekeeping operations etc.) emerged as a most prevalent form of warfare which were intra-state rather than inter-state in which casualties, fear, destruction were greater than conventional wars. Thus both in terms of occurrence and lethality the importance of low intensity conflict enhanced. After the end of the cold war, there is a strong argument that since the economic factor has become dominant in international relation, war can no longer serve as an acceptance instrument of policy so disputes among nation-states have either to be lived with or settled by alternative means. War does not make sense as an instrument of policy, if there is no worthwhile gain or the cost of it is not commensurate to the

results expected or achieved. There is also a growing awareness that war is not a rational instrument to settle disputes.

But the end of the cold war has not created a peaceful world. We are living in an extremely dynamic world with several grey areas like disintegration of nation-states, problems of opposing nationalism in an increasingly interdependent world, ideologies at the extremes of left right spectrum, multinational narcotic industry, international terrorism and other factors like problems of governance because of an increasingly universal yearning to hold governors accountable to the governed, to provide meaningful social and economic development, the increasing role of non-state actors, proliferation of small areas etc. The result is the growing importance of low intensity conflict in politico military response of nation-states.

This dissertation is an attempt to understand the importance of low intensity conflict and possible response of nation-states to it. As the concept evolved in America



in the wake of its renewed involvement in third world conflict after the Vietnam war and presents an American perspective of international relation, the main focus of this dissertation is on the American experience in counterinsurgency.

The first chapter examines the evolution of the concept in the history of warfare. It also analyses various definitions in the light of changing threat perception and problems in having any satisfactory definition.

The second chapter deals with strategy and doctrine of low intensity conflict. As an undeclared war between a state and non-state actor, with military playing a secondary role, the low intensity conflict has posed a serious challenge to the strategists. The chapter examines the military and non-military dimension of strategy and problems in evolving any universal strategy. It further analyses the development of low intensity conflict doctrine over a period of time.

The third chapter deals with vulnerability of developing world. It underlines the importance of third

world countries as potential arena of low intensity conflict due to internal factors and external influences.

The completion of this dissertation is a matter of great satisfaction for me. It also provides me with an opportunity to acknowledge that such works cannot perhaps be done without active support of one's well wishers or in absence of favourable circumstances.

I am indebted to Professor M. Zuberi. He took affectionate care right from my having located an appropriate subject, involving right framework and having carried my work on right track. Without his patience guidance and scholarly companionship it would have been impossible to accomplish this work. The intellectual stimulation derived from him not only helped me during this work but will be with me forever. I would like to thank Mr. Swaran Singh for his valuable suggestions at various stages of research and helping me locate appropriate materials. Thanks also goes to University Grants Commission for providing me Junior Research Fellowship.

Much of my works was done in the libraries of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, United Services of India and American Centre. I would like to express my thanks to the staff of these libraries for active cooperation they extended to me.

I express my thanks to my brothers, Lalit, Shailendra, Sudhir and friends, Praveen, Saurav, Manish, Abha, Sabir, Deepak, Birendra for encouraging me at various levels to sustain this work. At last I am thankful to Mr. Om Prakash for typing this dissertation very efficiently.

Date 20<sup>th</sup> July 1995

Sanjay Kumar Jha  
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## CHAPTER I

### EVALUATING THE CONCEPT

The concept of low intensity conflict was developed during the 1970s in an attempt to define a wide range of politico-military activities which were less intense than modern conventional limited war. The concept was incorporated in American military doctrine in the background of renewed American involvement in the third world conflicts after a period of soul-searching and debate about the rationale behind use of force to protect American interests in third world conflict. However, the term low intensity conflict has been around for quite some time. The LIC arena was addressed by General Richard G. Stilwel in his 1961 report to the Secretary to the Army on "Army Activities in Underdeveloped Areas short of declared War". The words were also used effectively in 1971 by Brigadier Frank Kitson in his book Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping, (London: Faber and Faber, 1971).

The term denotes a wide range of activities, hence creating confusion among scholars, many of whom have used it interchangeably. Edwin G. Carr and Stephen Solan prefer to describe it by many names - small wars, regional wars,

revolutionary wars, the struggle for national liberation and protracted conflicts.<sup>1</sup> Similarly John M. Collins in his book America's Small Wars: Lessons for Future (Brassey's, USA, 1991) has used this term to describe American involvement in small wars throughout its history. One student of this phenomenon has compiled fifty-five such names.<sup>2</sup>

### Evolution

How and why scholars have incorporated a wide range of activities in low intensity conflict can be understood by analysing the evolution of this term as well as the complexities of modern warfare. The kind of warfare denoted by low intensity conflict is not new in the history of mankind and has been known by different names in different period.

In the sixth century B.C. Chinese tactician and military historian Sun Tzu engaged in insurgency and analysed it perceptively. He said "know your enemy and know yourself

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1. Edwin G. Carr in the Preface of Edwin G. Carr and Stephen Solan (eds.), Low Intensity Conflict Old Threats in a New World, (Boulder, 1992), p.XXXIII.
  2. William J. Oslon compiled such a list while he served as the acting deputy assistant Secretary of Defence for Special Operations and LIC. Quoted in Edwin Carr.

and you can fight a hundred battles without any disaster."<sup>3</sup>  
Later, irregular warfare was used by Romans against Hannibal and by Gauls against Caesar.

In the annals of Indian history the examples of Maharana Pratap and Shivaji are noteworthy for they resorted to irregular warfare against the mighty Mughal empire. The term guerrilla or little war was coined to refer to the insurgent Spanish resistance against the invading French armies during the years 1807 to 1814. Russian insurgents harrassed Napoleon's retreating army in 1812 and from 1821 to 1827, Greek insurgents operated against the Ottoman Empire. However, during ancient and medieval times this kind of warfare did not form a separate category and was considered essentially an adjunct to conventional warfare.<sup>4</sup>

The nineteenth century wars of colonial expansion witnessed increasing importance of guerrilla warfare resorted to by local people against mighty colonial powers sometimes putting the latter in great troubles. The roots of

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3. quoted from Mao's Strategic Problem of China's Revolutionary War: Selected Works, Vol.I, (New Delhi: 1954), p.187.

4. Beckett and Pimlott (eds.), Armed Forces and Modern Counterinsurgency, (London: 1985), p.2.

present Low Intensity conflict can be traced to this period.

Carl von Clausewitz was the first philosopher who conceptualised and theorised about Guerrilla warfare in detail. He devoted one full chapter of his celebrated work 'On War' to the military-theoretical analysis of guerrilla warfare.

Though he regards independent guerrilla forces as a viable alternative establishment, yet he considers it only an ancillary military methodology which can be spared in case the regular military force can achieve the aim.<sup>5</sup> However, a new ideology was to develop a few years later which continued to inspire guerrilla warfare for centuries. Marx and Engles laid down three principal aims for communists: formulation of proletariat into a class, overthrow of bourgeoisie supremacy and the conquest of political power by the proletariat.<sup>6</sup> Marx held that insurgency was the ideal method by which a weak force would actually defeat a strong one. Lenin further developed on this theme and led the first insurgency into establishing the dictatorship of

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5. Swaran Singh, Limited War in the Nuclear Age: A Study of America's Warfighting Doctrine and its Military Involvement in Vietnam, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to JNU, 1993, p.228.

6. Marx and Engles, The Manifesto of Communist Party, (Moscow, 1952), p.68.

proletariat.

Under Lenin, guerrilla warfare with a distinct identity was given a shape. The importance of mass mobilisation under communist ideology was recognised. In his famous essay '*Partisanskaya voina*' which originally appeared in the newspaper '*proletari*', Lenin described '*partisan warfare*' as a combination of terrorism, robbery and ambush to support the revolutionary struggle. He once wrote "to accept a battle at a time when it is obviously advantageous to the enemy and none to us is a crime, and those political leaders of the revolutionary class are unable to manoeuvres to compromise in order to avoid an obviously disadvantageous battle are good for nothing... we have never rejected terror in principle, nor can we do so... terror is a form of military operation, that may be usefully applied and may even be essential in certain moments."<sup>7</sup>

Stalin in his works "*Marxism and National Question*" and "*Russian Partisan Directory of 1933*", prescribed two-fold mission for the guerrilla forces. These were *inter alia* "to harass the occupation forces and conflict maximum damage on

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7. Swaran Singh, n.5, p.229.



communication and logistics and also to make allegiance to the population".<sup>8</sup> His ideas also contained germs of later communist ideas about mobilising colonial people against the capitalist powers.<sup>9</sup>

It was, however, Mao Tse Tung who emerged as the greatest philosopher of revolutionary war. He was influenced by both communist philosophers like Lenin, Stalin and non-communists like Sun Tze and Clauswitz. According to him, throughout human history, armed struggle can be divided into two categories: **Just** and **Unjust**. To him all progressive wars are just and all wars impeding progress unjust. He held that if a poorly equipped and trained revolutionary force wishes to fight a relatively modern and well equipped army the only way to win ultimate victory lies in strategic protracted war.

As Robert Osgood has put aptly "...There emerged two strands to the resurgence of limited war theories and doctrines since World War II reflecting two different political perspective in the cold war. One strand, inspired by the

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8. Ibid.

9. Johns Pustay, Counterinsurgency Warfare, (New York, 1965), pp.27-28.

concept of Clausewitz and propounded by western political scientists and defence specialists, has sought to make force in both war and deterrence an effective instrument of containment against the Soviet Union, China and international communist parties aligned with them. The other strand, inspired by Mao Tse Tung and third world nationalism and propounded by revolutionary nationalists, has sought to use guerrilla warfare to abolish western colonialism and hegemony.<sup>10</sup>

For other reasons also 1945 is a land-mark in respect to insurgency warfare. Despite their gradual expansion into first America's and then into the Far East, American leaders had continued to behave even as late as till the signing of Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 or the Montevideo Pan America Conference of December 1933 , "That no state has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of others."<sup>11</sup> It was not until the end of the Second World War which resulted in the collapse of colonial powers and the emergence of communist superpower America decided to end its

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10. Robert E. Osgood, Limited War Revisited, (Boulder, 1979), p.28.
  11. John Garrant, The American Nation Since 1865: A History of the United States, (New York, 1966, pp.336-37.

isolation and come forward to defend the western interest around the globe.

However, the negative experience in Vietnam resulted in erosion of reliance on counterinsurgency as a response to wars of national liberation. This feature was a victim of 'no more Vietnam' sentiment and discovery of the formidable obstacles to successful US intervention in internal wars. This resulted from increasing doubts about the ability of the United States, to intervene effectively. Robert E. Osgood has captured this dilemma very aptly: "The US strategy of counterinsurgency since Kennedy period raised certain fundamental questions. First, about the political premises that underlay the Kennedy approved strategy of counterinsurgency as an instrument of containment and broadly about the premises behind the whole rationale of direct US armed intervention by any means in local wars in the third world. The premises behind US intervention have an operational military dimension but broadly they concern the nature of the US security interests and intrinsic capability of US armed forces to cope with them. In contrast to 1960s each

of the new premises qualified".<sup>12</sup>

The debacle in the Vietnam war reinforced the view that American involvement in the third world should be more selective and limited to aid and military assistance. The tendency was to evaluate the American security interests in an ad hoc manner, depending on the particular geographic and political conditions and the intensity Soviet involvement in a particular region.

An equally marked change of outlook was about the ability of the United States to intervene at a cost and duration that Congress and public can support. Summers in his book On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of Vietnam War argued that America did not loose in Vietnam militarily. Rather it was public opinion and lack of proper strategy and commitment on the part of the government that forced the US to withdraw. This mood was reflected in the 'Weinberger Doctrine'. The then Defence Secretary presented a list of conditions which he believed must be satisfied before American forces would be committed to combat:

(a) military action should not be used unless deemed vital

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12. Robert E. Osgood, n.8, p.68.

to our national interest;

- (b) if the use of combat force is considered necessary, the US should do so wholeheartedly and with a clear intention to win;
- (c) before committing, the government should have reasonable assurance of public support and of their elected representatives.<sup>13</sup>

The Congress reflecting the public opinion tried to forestall future debacles like Vietnam by passing the War Power's Act and specific pieces of legislation like Clark amendment. The department of defence meanwhile concentrated its attention on nuclear and conventional warfare and de-emphasised the role of its special forces during the first three years of Carter administration.

Secretary of State George Schultz was not entirely comfortable with this situation. The Department of State still perceived potential threats of Marxist insurgent groups or governments in the third world. The department's apprehensions were based on two grounds - first, increased

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13. Quoted from journal Small War and Insurgency, August 1990, "Rework to War: Appraisal of Weinberger Doctrine".

efforts to redefine threat perceptions from old as well as new adversaries. Secondly, some key premises regarding American perception of international relations and successive events in international arena accentuated that perceptions.

An important point worth noting is that even though the United States partially retreated from involvement in insurgency during 1970s, the international dimension of insurgency and local conflict remained important because of the continued involvement of communist powers and action of the regional states. Insurgencies continued in Eritrea, Thailand, Oman, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Also new regional actors were motivated by real-politik, ideological considerations or combinations of both.<sup>14</sup> To achieve their aim against regional rivals various governments backed insurgent groups across the borders and sometimes beyond. For example the Shah of Iran gave aid to Kurdish rebels in Iraq to gain leverage against Baghdad in negotiations over land and border disputes Algeria assisted the Polisario rebels in western Sahara. The action of some governments were in-

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14. Bard E. O'Neil, Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare (Brassey's, Washington, 1992), p.7.

spired by ideology. Libyan leader Gaddafi propagated what he called his 'Third Universal Theory' a stand of Pan Islamic, Pan Arab, and socialist tenets that he believed should be adopted everywhere. This fusion of racial, tribal and ethnic animosity with national rivalries in the Third World with the distinct possibility that small and medium power will increasingly seek Soviet help and would impose a threat to US security created an environment in US where renewed American involvement could be justified.<sup>15</sup>

This renewed environment of conflict assessment reflected in the thinking of State Department and a list of literature that flooded on this topic. Such conflicts were called 'Low Intensity conflicts' and proper conceptualisation of this concept provided rationale for renewed American interest. One principal aspect of conflict assessment was that US interests outside the principal area of confrontation with the Soviet Union, according to Richard H. Schultz Jr. and Alan Ned Sabrosky, was certain to grow in importance in future and world impact on foreign and defence policies. They further argued for those many years Europe has played a central role in US foreign policy. But armed conflict in

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15. Robert E. Osgood, n.11, p.72.

Europe was more unlikely than in almost any other part of the world.

Another aspect of third world conflicts which American policy makers pointed was their unpredictability. Given the nature of regime posing challenge and the nature of warfare, the United States could not wait for the outbreak of hostilities before initiating military preparation.<sup>16</sup> This argument was a counter to the Weinberger doctrine. The expanded threat perception that United States was expected to face extended across a full spectrum of conflict ranging from terrorism and unconventional warfare. This was further conceptualised in a November 1981 conference by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The main conclusion of the conference was that the balance of strategic deterrence between East and West would survive the decade on a sufficiently high plateau of credibility to preclude high intensity warfare between NATO and WARSAW pacts. However, the conference maintained, "there can be no complacency about the broad spectrum of conflict from third

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16. Robert W. Komer, "How to Prepare for Low Intensity Conflict in the 1980s" in William J. Taylor and others (ed.), Strategic Responses to Conflict in 1980s (Lexington, 1984), p.21.



world through insurgency, proxy war, subversion, terrorism.... It does not help much that most of these conflicts will be of relatively low intensity."<sup>17</sup> As. Dr. Brzezinski, one of the participants put it, "The United States must create a wider international system deemphasising its preoccupation with Europe and addressing Soviet challenges and other potentially dangerous situation in the world."<sup>18</sup>

These developments can be understood in terms of some key premises about American view of international relation. First, it was a common assumption that the world continued to shrink in real political space while growing more interdependent economically, ecologically, politically and militarily and any adverse development in any of these areas could affect American security interests. Secondly, containment of Soviet power was still seen to be the important objective of US security policy and any Soviet attempt of Soviet to enhance its influence in third world had to be

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17. William J. Taylor, Jr., Maaranen Steven A. Gong Gerritt W., Strategic Responses to Conflict in the 1980s, (Lexington, 1984).

18. Ibid., p.XIX.

taken into account.<sup>19</sup> Since the nature of threat was multi-dimensional and not properly defined except for its probable intensity, it was given the name low intensity conflict.

**Definitions:**

Almost all definitions of LIC derived from the belief that there is a continuum of conflict that extends from no conflict on the one hand through total nuclear war on the other. US Army Field Manual (FM 100-1) provides a discussion on the spectrum of conflict. It says, "In a narrow sense war is the clash between opposing military force in a broader sense it includes the integration of orchestration political, economic, psychological, technological and diplomatic means to attain the rational political purposes... confrontation and conflict can occur without involving military option."<sup>20</sup> It describes three kinds of conflict: general war, limited war and low intensity conflict.

FM 100-1 defines low intensity conflict as a limited politico military struggle to achieve political, social,

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19. Robert E. Osgood, n.11, p.89.

20. Colonel Richard H. Taylor and Lieutenant Colonel John D. McDowell, "Low Intensity Campaigns", Military Review, vol.68, no.3, March 1988, p.4.

economic or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and ranges from diplomatic, economic, psychological pressures through terrorism, and insurgency. Low intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic area and is often characterised by constraints on weaponry tactics and level of violence.<sup>21</sup>

There is a brief discussion of LIC in the May 1986 version of FM 100-5 operations. It outlines that there is a range of activities that are short of war, but more intense than regular peaceful competition among nations. The military activities short of war include assisting nations to defend themselves, discouraging unfriendly coercion etc.<sup>22</sup> It further includes that there is a larger possibility of low intensity conflict and corresponding low probability of high intensity conflict.

Prof. Sam C. Sarkesian who has studied this term's evolution writes, "earlier attempts of defining or explaining this term/concept were based on the size of the forces engaged and purpose of the conflict. The primary distinction, however, rests with the character of the con-

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21. Ibid., p.5.

22. Ibid.

flict than with the level of intensity on the specific number of forces engaged".<sup>23</sup> In this particular article Sarkesian arrives at the conclusion that LIC and revolutionary wars are essentially identical. Sarkesian goes on to note that some include both limited conventional war and terrorism but asserts that, "the substantive dimension of such conflicts evolve primarily from revolutionary and counter-revolutionary strategy and course"s.<sup>24</sup>

A 1979 conference on LIC at Loyola University, Chicago adopted a working definition of LIC as "the range of activities and operations in the low end of the conflict spectrum involving the use of military or a variety of semi-military forces (both combat and non-combat) on part of the intervening power to influence and compel the adversary to accept a particular military and political condition." The group went on to say, "the employment of force and its perceived use can influence the environment and action of other states

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23. Sam C. Sarkesian, "LIC: Concept, Principles and Policy Guidelines", Air University Review, Jan.-Feb. 1985, p.16.

24. Ibid., p.18.

without necessarily resorting to battles".<sup>25</sup>

The definition of LIC approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and adopted by the army in FM 100-20 (July 1986) holds that "LIC is a limited political military social economic or psychological objectives". LIC the circular says, "involves the actual or contemplated use of military capabilities upto but not including combat between regular forces". Another view was presented in testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee, January 1987, when General Paul F. Gorman made three significant observations about the concept of LIC. He called it "genre of resources to violence for political purposes... it included terrorism, insurgency and regional wars of the third world".<sup>26</sup> He presented a unique graph of conflict probability and intensity that showed a break in the curve between mid and high intensity of conflict. Gorman explained this break as reflecting a categorical difference among conflicts pitting US forces against those of the Soviet Union or another power armed

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25. Sarkesian, "American Policy and Low Intensity Conflict - An Overview" in Introduction to the US Policy and Low Intensity Conflict - Potential for Military Struggle for 1980s, ed. by Sarkesian and William Scully (New Brouswick NJ: Transaction Book, 1981), pp.2-3.

26. Military Review is one journal which carried articles on such aspects, for further details see December 1987, vol.67, no.12 issue.

with weapons of mass destruction of intercontinental ranges and conflict with lesser adversaries. He then went on to separate LIC from mid intensity conflict at that point where one begins to use conventional forces for support or manoeuvre. He observed trenchantly with regard to the use of US combat forces in LIC: "...we would no longer be talking about LIC. US combatants would transform the intensity of any conflict". He also observed that "in our system of government LIC is an interdepartmental activity conducted under the lead of the Department of State coordinated by the National Security Council."<sup>27</sup>

The President's National Security Strategy Document of January 1987 says that "LICs take place at levels below conventional wars but above the routine peaceful competition among states. This division of activities implies a quadripartite division of international conflict between states - peaceful competition, LIC, conventional war and presumably nuclear or total war".<sup>28</sup>

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27. Rudolph C. Barnes Jr., "The Politics of Low Intensity Conflict", Military Review, vol.68, no.2, February 1988, p.5.

28. National Security Strategy of US 1987, p.32.

For the Pentagon, however, the definition of LIC encompasses more than a category of violence. It is first an environment in which conflict occurs and second a series of diverse civil military activities and operations which are conducted in that environment.<sup>29</sup>

An analysis of the above discussed definitions shows the broadness of this concepts. It includes

- 1) Foreign Internal Defence (FID) - counterinsurgency encompassing those actions taken by the United States to assist friendly governments resisting insurgency threats;
- 2) Proinsurgency - the sponsorship and support of anti-communist insurgencies in the third world;
- 3) Peacetime contingency operations - short term military activities rescue missions, show of force operations;
- 4) Counteraction against terrorism;
- 5) Antidrug operations - the use of military resources to attack and destroy overseas sources of illegal narcotics;
- 6) Peacekeeping operations.

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29. Michael T. Klare and Peter Kombluh (eds.), Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency and Anti Terrorism in the 1980s, (New York, 1988), p.7.

7) Economic sanctions.

For years the term Low Intensity Conflict was often combined with or even confused with special operations. As Loren Thomson says, "There is a considerable overlap between the two fields, yet it is important not to confuse Low Intensity conflict with special operations."<sup>30</sup> According to Thomson, special operations are unorthodox military missions that are conducted by forces with special training and weapons, e.g., hostage rescue, sabotage, abductions, assassinations, military raids etc. Although the skills of Special Operations Forces (SOF) are often well suited to the conduct of Low Intensity conflict, they also have application in conventional and nuclear war.<sup>31</sup> However, in low intensity conflict the military has secondary role to play. It was only in 1988 that it was officially placed on record that LIC and SOF are not interchangeable terms and should not be so confused. While LIC has a much wider scope and could be defined almost like an environment, SOF is rather specific to a particular mission.

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30. Loren B. Thompson (ed.), Low Intensity Conflict: The Pattern of Warfare in the Modern World, (Lexington Mass, 1989, p.7.

31. Ibid., p.5.

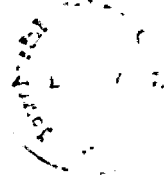
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These definitions, though very comprehensive, suffer from several limitations and fail to outline properly the boundary line between conflict and competition. Since LIC represents American perception of international relations, it does not help us analyse the different perspectives particularly those of third world. This creates conceptual ambiguity because what is low intensity in one country may not be low intensity in another.

The line between low and mid intensity war is ambiguous. It is defined mainly in military terms which is not so simple. On the battlefield the distinction is often blurred as is evident in the case of Vietnam war. Some of the ambiguities in definition are indispensable because of the multiplicity and ambiguity in threat perceptions. This problem is very complex because it not solely related with the behaviour of nation-state in international arena. The domestic setting of a particular country prevailing ideology and value system, nature of regime and its relationship with United States and the geographical setting of one particular state are also important factors.

### Characteristic of LIC:

Loren Thompson attributed the following characteristics to LIC:

- i) It is not the conflict in purely military sense. Hence it cannot be won by military power alone because it seldom involve formal military engagement;
- ii) The main objective in such conflicts is to influence the perceptions and loyalty of civilian population;
- iii) Military activities are circumscribed by political considerations.<sup>32</sup>

Martin van Creveld also prepared a list of principal characteristics of LIC but with several differences. He suggested that LIC will rarely involve regular armies on both sides but instead will most often be a core of regular forces from one side fighting guerrillas or even civilian women and children.<sup>33</sup> One major characteristic of LIC is that it is asymmetrical. For the revolutionaries the struggle is total.

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32. Alan Stephens, "Transformation of LIC" in Small Wars and Insurgencies, Vol.5, no.2, Autumn 1994, p.143.

33. Martin van Creveld, The Transformation of War, (New York: 1991), pp.20-25.

Low Intensity conflicts are often ambiguous. It is difficult to distinguish between friends and enemies. Moreover, the highly political social complexity of the conflict shifts the centre of gravity from the actual battlefield to the political social system. The revolutionary appeal is frequently more closely related to the moral and ethical principles of democracy than to those of the existing indigenous counterrevolutionary system. This leads to psychological and moral ambiguity.<sup>34</sup> Such conflicts are likely to be unconventional with political psychological patterns underlying the purpose of conflict.

LICs tend to be protracted. They tend to develop into wars of attrition. History shows that particularly democracies find it difficult to maintain consensus within the body politik to continue a war with no clear political goals. That is characterised by warfare that defies conventional response and promises to be long and drawn out.

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34. Taylor, Maaraven, Gong, n.21, p.45.

CHAPTER II  
STRATEGY AND DOCTRINE

Elaborate and organised strategic response to unconventional warfare evolved after the Second World War to fight against the new and organised form of insurgency warfare. Though its roots can be traced to the 19th century European war of colonial expansion.<sup>1</sup> Charles Calwell's celebrated small wars (1896) is perhaps the first work that says that purely military approach was not sufficient in itself in tackling insurgencies anymore.<sup>2</sup> T.E. Lawrence in his famous Seven Pillars of Wisdom echoed the same view, when he explained guerrilla warfare as an idea, a thing intangible, invulnerable without front or back drifting about like a gas. For him only a third of this war was a military problem and even this technical aspect depended fundamentally on political two-thirds.<sup>3</sup>

The experience of LIC has shown that the classical

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1. Mc Innes Colin and G.D. Sneffield (eds.), Warfare in the Twentieth Century, (London, 1988), p.206.
  2. Backett and Pimlott, Armed Forces and Modern Counterinsurgency, (London, 1985), p.2.
  3. T.E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, (London, 1962), p.198.

definition of strategy in terms of logistical operational aspect, like use of engagement for the object of the war (Clauswitz) the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the object of policy (Lidell Hart) and later technological aspect of strategy proved to be inadequate. Michael Howard in his famous article "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", emphasised the social aspect of strategy. After Second World War, the process of decolonisation and spread of communist ideology caused conflict in third world society which had wider political and international implications.

The roots of such conflicts were in the society. And inadequacy of the socio-political analysis of the societies lay at the root of the failure of the western powers to cope more effectively with the revolutionary and insurgency movements. Military thinkers in the West, extrapolating from their experience of warfare, tended to seek a solution to what was essentially a conflict on the social plane either by developing operational techniques of counterinsurgency or by implementing operational technology. When these techniques failed to produce victory, military leaders complained that the war had been won militarily but lost polit-

ically.<sup>4</sup>

Almost all theoreticians converge on the view that military plays not only a limited but also a different role in low intensity conflicts. The principal question that arises about the role of military is whether conventional military force is well equipped to deal with such situation. What are the parameters within which it operates? To what extent it can influence the campaign planning and what other role directly or complementary it is supposed to play.

US Army Field Manual 100-1 says that "modern warfare" requires the application of both the science and art of war. The science of war, driven by new technological developments, can radically change the nature of battlefield. The art of war, on the other hand, involves critical historical analysis of warfare.... For the strategists the principles of war provide a set of military planning interrogatives... a set of questions that should be considered of military strategy is to best serve the national interest. For the tactician these principles provide an operational framework

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4. Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", Foreign Affairs, vol.58, no.3, August 1979.

for the military actions he has been trained to carry out.<sup>5</sup>

A study of US Army's Field Manual FM (100-5), 1986, provides some understanding about the role of the military in low intensity conflict. It defines a campaign as a series of joint actions designed to attain a strategic objective in a theatre of war.<sup>6</sup> It is related to three central questions:

- i) What conditions may be produced to achieve the strategic goals?
- ii) What sequence of events, if successfully arranged, will most likely result in the desired conditions? and
- iii) How should resources be applied to produce that sequence of events.

The conditions and sequence of events in LIC cannot be defined in military terms alone. Usually the Department of State, the Treasury, the US Agency for International Development, the Commercial Banking Industry and the Drug Enforcement Administration are participants with very impor-

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5. Introduction of Chapter III, "The Principles of War and Operational Dimension FM100-1", Washington D.C., 1981.

6. Colonel Richard H. Taylor and John D. McDowell, "Low Intensity Campaigns", Military Review, vol.68, no.3, March 1988, p.7.

tant and sometimes decisive role in a campaign while overall command remains in the hands of unified commander guided by a single strategic perspective focussed in the ultimate goals of survival, and removal of the causes of conflict. Ideally strategic planning is considered at the national level in accordance with national priorities. However, this does not happen always and the unified commander is faced with the problem of assessing the situation. Quite often he finds that aims and objectives are not only difficult to determine but subject to change and modification as the national objective or global or local situations change. Also he does not control all the resources that are to be applied. He has to review the activities of other US governmental agencies to determine non-military actions complementing military activities or vice-versa.

Though these principles are elaborate and comprehensive, they suffer from several shortcomings. In 1981 General Edward C. Mayer as Chief of Staff of the Army said that army's force structure and capabilities were on the mid to high intensity side of conflict spectrum where the risk is higher should the war start but the probability of its occurrence is lowest... conceptual framework of basic opera-



tional doctrine is generally called mid intensity".<sup>7</sup> For David Galula counterinsurgency was a war between the lion and the fly where even though, the fly cannot deliver a knock out blow... the lion cannot fly.<sup>8</sup>

An examination of the dimension of operation in conventional war compared to low intensity conflict reveals some distinct differences. Whereas the objective in conventional conflict is to defeat the enemy forces on the ground, it may not be clearly defined in low intensity conflict. Apparently it may be to protect and further national interest without involving armed forces on the ground. But it is shaped by different external and internal forces and is often ambiguous. Summers in his famous book On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of Vietnam War discusses the disastrous implications of ambiguous objectives in the context of the Vietnam war. For him, "the strategic objective is employment of the armed forces of a nation in combination with measures of economic and political constraint for the purpose of effecting a satisfactory peace" and the tactical objective is

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7. Ibid., p.4.

8. David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice, (New Delhi, 1971), p.xii.

"destruction of enemy's forces on the ground."<sup>9</sup> He further maintains that the objective assigned to the military forces must be in consonance with the national objective.<sup>10</sup>

Low intensity conflict is generally asymmetric in nature, whereas for the insurgents the war is total, for the external power it is limited. Its strategic implication is that faced with a hostile external power the insurgents may capitalise on nationalistic sentiments, forcing the external power to cope with a hostile environment.<sup>11</sup> And since LIC is limited war for external powers, the use of military force is restrained. The primary emphasis is on the indirect applications such as security assistance, but specifically the employment of advisory assistance teams, engineers, civic action, mobile training teams and other resources.<sup>12</sup> However, in some cases direct military activity may be applied and transition from operations short of war to a shooting war can be almost instantaneous.

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9. Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy a Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War, (Lancers, 1992), p.94.

10. Ibid.

11. Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Loose Small Wars" in Desmond Ball (ed.), Strategy and Defence: Australian Essays, (Sydney, 1992), p.132.

12. National Security Strategy of the United States, Washington D.C., January 1987, p.33.

Here it is important to note that long term consistent support during and after low intensity conflicts is critical to success. In case of asymmetry in objectives, if external support is withdrawn or provided inconsistently the possibility of success is significantly reduced. Likewise, failure to support an embattled government after success in guerrilla war has adverse impact because in most cases the guerrilla war regained momentum and the country continued to suffer.<sup>13</sup> Here consistency of support along with proper coordination between the external power and host country based on proper socio-political analysis of the situation is necessary. It is not to suggest that military aspect of strategy is not necessary. A proper use of force becomes necessary sometimes, particularly keeping in view the perpetuation of violence by the insurgents. But it should be used not to precipitate matters but to take advantage of situations where insurgents are weak. In this regard a proper understanding of non-military dimensions of strategy and their use along with military force simultaneously

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13. Edwin Carr and Stephen Solan (ed.), Low Intensity Conflict Old Threats in a New World, (Boulder, 1992), p.13.

becomes necessary.<sup>14</sup> Pustay describes the psychopolitical dimension of a military programme which includes improved military public relation exercise, military civic action programme, training of local para-military forces, organisation of independent village defence that can hold off insurgents until the arrival of assistance from regular military forces.<sup>15</sup>

#### **NON-MILITARY DIMENSION:**

Here non-military dimension of strategy becomes important. It starts from the proper analysis of socio-political condition of the affected country and efforts to seek support of civilian population. As Joint Low Intensity Conflict Project Final Report says, "The struggle between the insurgent and incumbent is over political legitimacy - who should govern and how they should govern. Accordingly one of the principal elements in this struggle is "the effort to mobilise public support, who ever succeeds at this will

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14. John S. Pustay, Counterinsurgency Warfare, (New York, 1965), p.92.

15. Ibid., p.94.

ultimately prevail".<sup>16</sup> The strategic centre of gravity in this key struggle is the relative rectitude of the contending organisation. For the targeted government the fight for legitimacy is the most critical factor for lasting success.<sup>17</sup> That legitimacy can be achieved only through mobilising public support. The focus is generally on meeting needs and aspirations of the indigenous population while denying legitimacy to the opposition.

In US military doctrine Civil Affairs is a part of Special Organisation Forces (SOF). During the Reagan period Civil Affairs Doctrine had four operational missions:<sup>18</sup>

- i) Foreign Internal Defence (FID) - It aimed at mobilising civilian support necessary for legitimacy in counterinsurgency efforts.
- ii) Unconventional warfare - It supports insurgency activities which are normally covert and conducted by guerrillas.

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16. Quoted in Michael T. Klare, "The Interventionist Impulse: US Military Doctrine for Low Intensity Conflict" in Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluk, Low Intensity Warfare, (New York, 1988), pp. 75-76.

17. Ibid., p.80.

18. Rudolph C. Barnes, Jr., "Civil Affairs: A LIC Priority", Military Review, vol.68, no.9, September 1988, p.40.

iii) Civil Administration - Here the aim is to assist friendly government in providing essential public services during peace and war and providing military government in occupied territory during wartime.<sup>19</sup>

iv) It has two aspects, first to prevent civilian involvement in combat. Secondly, acquisition of local resources to meet essential needs and compliance with legal and moral standards required for legitimacy.

There are two dimensions in civilian support required for success in LIC. First, the insurgent force or incumbent government supported by an external power must be perceived as legitimate not only by the insurgents but also by the population of the country supporting it.<sup>20</sup> The Contra affair illustrated the significance of domestic perceptions of legitimacy to the continued US support of insurgency. Overzealous and possibly illegal support of insurgency to the Contras aroused public opposition that led to suspension of aid by U.S. Congress. Secondly, foreign troops and agencies not fully aware of the socio-cultural feature of a

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19. Ibid., p.41.

20. John B. Hunt, "Low Intensity Politics and Support to Insurgency", Military Review, vol.68, no.6, June 1988, p.16.

country find it difficult to operate there and often take steps covertly or overtly to the detriment of their interest. Also if the nature of existing regime is atrocious and disliked by majority of the population such measures can further alienate the population.

However, the Civil Affair Programme proved to be of great help if properly organised. The 1983 intervention in Grenada is an example. Following brief hostilities, combat forces were withdrawn. Civil Affairs Personnels functioning as an extension of both military and diplomatic corps, helped improve public utiities, roads and public schools, establish training programmes for basic construction skills thus providing a source of legitimacy to the Grenadian government.<sup>21</sup>

Thus Civil Affairs Programme not only mobilises and organises common masses into development projects and restores confidence but also "gradually eliminates germs of revolutionary war".<sup>22</sup>

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21. Rudolph C. Barnes, n.18, p.45.

22. John J. McCuen, The Art of Counter Revolutionary War: The Strategy of Counterinsurgency, (London, 1966), p.78.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION

In the age of 'information revolution' this aspect of strategy assumes added importance. It can serve twin purposes to project the strong and just image of counterinsurgent forces and to sow dissension in insurgent rank and file. Pustay has dealt with this aspect of strategy. For him, psychological warfare helps increase pressure on insurgents which not only involves 'Come Home' cells to insurgents from their ex-compatriots, friends and families but also announcement of rewards against insurgent.

Talking about psychological warfare, Thomson laid stress on informational campaign with a dual role of rallying public support for the government and to encourage their active support for counterinsurgency measures and also at the same time weakening the will of insurgents and encouraging their surrender.<sup>23</sup>

One aspect of psychological warfare is active propaganda campaign in support of incumbent government and efforts to separate the insurgents from their network of

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23. Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam, (London, 1967), p.90.



internal and external sanctuaries and from their external support and the need of insurgents to maintain material, political and diplomatic support. When successful, these efforts provide a force multiplier.

#### POLITICAL DIMENSION

Most of the theoreticians agree that low intensity conflict is political in nature. So in formulating strategy, the nature of regime, political institutions, its perception of the nature of the threat and cohesiveness in political structure becomes necessary.

The experience of the Vietnam war showed that it was fought on two fronts: one bloody and indecisive in the forests and mountains of Indo-China and the other, the more decisiveness within the polity and social institutions of the United States. The nature of relationship between these two types of conflict is critical in the understanding of the outcome of the war.

Clauswitz noted that war only approximates to its pure form when a grand and powerful purpose is at stake.<sup>24</sup> Only

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24. Andrew Mack, n.15, p.131.

then full mobilisation of national resources become a possibility. In low intensity conflict, since the external power is not threatened with occupation it does not create cohesiveness in the domestic political structure as the insurgents succeed in doing. Also the prosecution of war does not take automatic primacy over other goals. If the war is terminated quickly such differences generally do not come to the fore.<sup>25</sup>

As Henry Kissinger has noted in the context of the Vietnam war "we fought a military war, our opponents fought a political one. We sought physical attrition, our opponents aimed for psychological exhaustion. In the process we lost sight of one of the cardinal maxims of guerrilla warfare. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose."<sup>26</sup> This misperception of low intensity conflict was reflected by Congressmen and groups of citizens visiting El Salvador when they repeatedly asked "when will the war end?"

The important aspect of low intensity conflict is that it is essentially a fight between a state and a non-state

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25. Ibid., p.133.

26. Henry A. Kissinger, "The Vietnam Negotiations", Foreign Affairs, XLVII, January 1969, p.214.

actor. While the state functions under certain limitation, the only limitation to insurgents is not to lose their popular support. The war is generally fought on agenda set by the latter. Edmund Ions notes, "whilst the freedom to demonstrate even for defeats in foreign policy is clearly one of the strengths of a free society, it is also one of its weaknesses as far as power politics is concerned."<sup>27</sup> Totalitarian societies will not be troubled by domestic constraints.

#### Development of Doctrine

The US Department of Defence defines doctrine as the fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives.<sup>28</sup> Put another way, doctrine represents the basic precepts that determine how US forces are armed, trained, and organised for conduct of military operations. Doctrine thus constitutes something of a middle ground between 'grand strategy' - the enduring geo-political objec-

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27. Edmund Ions, "Dissent in America: The Constraints on Foreign Policy", Conflict Studies, No.18, London, 1971.

28. Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluh (eds.), Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency and Anti Terrorism in 1980s, (New York, 1988), p.51.

tives of a nation (for example containment of the Soviet Union and tactics the basic principles of war that govern day-to-day combat operations by discrete military formations.

Since doctrine often determines the orientation and structure of military forces, it can have a significant impact on the allocation of institutional and budgetary resources. Because in peacetime the various branches of military are in perpetual competition over disposition of basic resources, a major shift in doctrine can result in a significant realignment of power and authority within the military service.

The US Army, which has to compete with the US Navy and the Air Force for allocation of high-tech capabilities, has also at the same time been the central force in fighting third world insurgencies.<sup>29</sup> The interservice rivalry and problems of budgetary allocation have at times a major say in shaping the military doctrine.

A major problem is the elasticity and related ambiguity

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29. Swarn Singh, Limited War in the Nuclear Age: America's Warfighting Doctrine and its Military Involvement in Vietnam, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to JNU, 1993, p.267.

in the definition of LIC. Moreover, there is the argument that existing programmes and capabilities can easily be adapted for low intensity challenges. Can an army trained and equipped for conventional war and nuclear deterrence fight low intensity challenges? Another argument is related to non-military dimension of LIC. There needs to be a blend of diplomatic, intelligence and international measures with military means. Therefore, the State Department, the Agency for International Development (AID), the CIA, and the US Information Agency (USIA) have important roles to play in LIC policy. However, for organisational and recent historical reasons, several of these agencies eschewed involvement and sought to avoid developing programmes capabilities during the 1980s.<sup>30</sup>

#### PERIOD UPTO KENNEDY

Despite the long and on the whole successful record of irregular warfare in the Indian wars and the Philippines insurrection. The US Army before the World War II regarded counter guerrilla operations as a subsidiary branch warfare to be handled by "aggressive small unit activities". The

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30. Richard H. Shultz, Jr., "Low Intensity Conflict Future Challenges and Lessons from Reagan Years", Survival, July 1989, p.360.

only US Army counter guerrilla doctrine to appear before 1961 'Field Marshal 31-20' Operations Against Guerrilla Forces (1951) was based on Soviet and Yugoslav partisan activities in World War II.<sup>31</sup> It was designed for US troop operations alone assured the existence of US control of local political structure. In short US did not have a comprehensive counterinsurgency doctrine, i.e., a politico military strategy for overcoming an ideologically driven revolutionay struggle.

During, the 1950s a systematic strategy of counterinsurgency was developed. Partly it was inspired by the success of US counterinsurgency capabilities in Greece and Philippines. Commenting on its impact, Blaufarb writes, "it was overlooking of favourable circumstances in Greece and Philippines that explained the confidence that a modicum of advice of technical assistance and of economic and military assistance and of economic and military aid could suffice to put a threatened nation back to its feet and the way to success is counterinsurgency".<sup>32</sup>

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31. Klare, n.32, p.26.

32. Douglas Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era: US Doctrine and Performances, (New York, 1977), p.40.

## KENNEDY PERIOD

As a Senator, Kennedy said in 1959, "So in practice our nuclear retaliation power is not enough. It cannot deter communist aggression which is too limited to justify atomic war. It cannot protect uncommitted nations from armed minorities or by outside power".<sup>33</sup>

Thus Kennedy came into office acknowledging the importance of unconventional terms of conflict and committed to reorienting the strategic focus. He was responding in large part to a statement issued by world communist leaders in a meeting of November 1960 and to premier Khrushchev's address of 6 January 1961 which clearly expressed communist and Soviet support for wars of national liberation.<sup>34</sup> That statement came in the wake of revolutionary wars in South Vietnam, Cuba and Algeria.

The Kennedy Doctrine as espoused by Walt Rostow, Roger Hisman, U. Alexis Johnson with Maxwell Taylor monitoring the ongoing counterinsurgency efforts. The doctrine came in the

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33. John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of Cold War, (New York, 1972), pp.346-52.

34. Robert E. Osgood, Limited War Revisited, (Boulder, 1979), p.27.

form of National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 124 of January 1962. NSAM 131 March 1962, and NSAM-182 August 1962. It noted "The Sino-Soviet bloc had conspired to exploit the political and economic dissatisfaction and the indigenous nationalist ambitions of peoples who seized by the revolution of rising expectation were determined to modernise their country and free them from foreign domination. For this "the United States would have to adopt a strategy integrating economic and political development along democratic lines with counterinsurgency efforts in order to enable threatened government to eliminate the roots of popular discontent".<sup>35</sup> This required the United States to strengthen affected governments, even to reform them, by giving them economic, administrative and internal security assistance. However, it was not expected that Americans themselves would get involved militarily in counterinsurgency operations. Kennedy's intent was to establish a bureaucratic mechanism that could establish "broad lines of counterinsurgency policy - ensuring a coordinated and unified approach to regional and country programmes".<sup>36</sup>

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35. Ibid.

36. Edwin Carr, n.15, p.22.



The Johnson period witnessed increasing reliance on conventional forces, and the momentum for counterinsurgency stopped. Under Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations, counterinsurgency received scant attention.

The traumatic aftershock of Vietnam served to curb US commitment to interventionism. Counterinsurgency disappeared from the military lexicon and special forces cut back to were shadows of their Vietnam-era strength.<sup>37</sup> In 1980s the United States stepped up its military intervention in the third world. In place of counterinsurgency it introduced the concept of low intensity conflict.

**FROM COUNTERINSURGENCY TO LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT:  
THE REAGAN DOCTRINE**

During his presidential election Reagan pledged to the electorate to upgrade and revitalise American capabilities concerning low intensity conflict and special operations. And it was this promise of building a stronger America that was to a great extent responsible for sweeping him into

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37. Richard J. Barnet, "US Intervention: Low Intensity Thinking", Bulletin of Atomic Scientist, May 1990, p.35.

power.<sup>38</sup>

The Reagan period's growing adherence to LIC stemmed from two interrelated factors. The first was the consensus among policy makers and military planners that the United States has been preparing for an unlikely war in Europe while the real threat from third world had gone unattended. The surge of revolution, the escalation of terrorist incidents, it was argued, was not a nationalist effort to redress socio-economic problem but an effort by the Soviet Union to nibble away at US interests on the periphery while avoiding the nuclear confrontation in Europe. Some of these nations were strategically and economically important to the US, Weinberger informed the Congress in 1984.<sup>39</sup>

The second factor was pointed out to the former head of the Defence Intelligence Agency Samuel Wilson. According to him there was "little likelihood of a strategic nuclear confrontation with the Soviets. It is almost as unlikely that Soviet-Warsaw Pact forces will come tearing through the 'Fulda gap' in a conventional thrust. We live today with a

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38. Swaran Singh, n.29, p.88.

39. Michael T. Klare, n.28, p.8.

conflict of different sort.<sup>40</sup>

Reagan's coming to power created a great upsurge in preparations for LICs. Two new elements were introduced by the Reagan administration. The first known as 'Reagan Doctrine' first articulated in Reagan's address to the Nation on May 9, 1984. It promised covert but highly publicised support to insurgents against communist governments.<sup>41</sup> Given the secrecy and covert activity in Reagan Doctrine, formal LIC literature has scant discussion on this topic except for one section on unconventional warfare in FC 100-20 where the Army has been called upon to engage in or support "a broad spectrum of military and para military operations conducted in enemy held, enemy controlled or politically sensitive territory".<sup>42</sup> While George Shultz called it a democratic revolution sweeping the world, Prof. Robert W. Tucker wrote in 1986 that "That Reagan Doctrine conveys to the Russians that they have few of indeed any legitimate interest in the third world and they must recon-

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40. Neil C. Livingstone, "Mastering the Low Frontier of Conflict", Defence and Foreign Affairs, January 1985, p.18.

41. Richard J. Barnet, n.36, p.36.

42. Klare, n.28, p.65.

cile themselves in giving up their recently acquired position". Thus support was extended to anti-communist forces in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola and Nicaragua, whereas in Afghanistan and Angola, this strategy was successful partly due to the ability of the resistance movement to organise themselves properly and claim legitimacy. In Nicaragua, one of the major tests of the Reagan Doctrine, the resistance forces were unable to establish a permanent political military infrastructure and remained, in the words of Gen Paul Gorman, "a largely cross border raiding party".<sup>43</sup> With no corps of expert knowledge about resistance movements who also understood the Nicaraguan cultural and physical environment, the US focussed its efforts primarily on providing military assistance. Additionally there was disagreement over whether the Department of Defence or the CIA had responsibility for resistance movements.

The second Reagan innovation was public diplomacy-mobilising domestic support for foreign intervention by using sophisticated propaganda techniques. For example, US public opinion consistently opposed a military operation of the size and duration needed to overthrow the government of

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43. Quoted in James Adams, Secret Armies, (New York, 1987, p.350.

Nicaragua, but Americans acquiesced to a large scale war of harassment that continued upto the eve of national elections in 1990.<sup>44</sup>

As regards measures for fighting insurgency, they were classified by the Army as "internal defence and development" (IDAD). Borrowing heavily from Kennedy period's counterinsurgency programme it was assumed that "winning the hearts and minds of he populace is as essential as defeating the insurgency on the battlefield".<sup>45</sup> The limitation of the counterinsurgency doctrine was exposed due to a central paradox inherent in it. As Professor William M. LeoGrande of the American University pointed out, "It is designed to stabilise politically as well as militarily societies in crisis that are most often dominated by a wealthy minority ruling at the expense of the rest of the population. The inequalities in such societies is the cause of their crisis and so long as the basic structure remains the same, they are inherently unstable." As a result of this experience, the US strategy believed in early installation of reformist governments by helping ascendancy of Napoleon Duarte in El

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44. Richard J. Barnet, n.36, p.36.

45. Ibid.

Salvador and Corazon Aquino in Philippines. This did not, however, eliminate the major source of discontent and did not persuade the revolutionary opposition to abandon its struggle against the central government.<sup>46</sup>

Another limitation of IDAD doctrine was the inadequacy of support for fighting insurgency. They often provided standard US military equipment which is too complex, too expensive and often inappropriate for conducting counterinsurgency. Security assistance also includes advisory groups and Military Training Teams that often trained third world armed forces facing insurgency to conduct an American style conventional war. The standard example is El Salvador.<sup>47</sup>

Another aspect of low intensity conflict doctrine during Reagan years was counteraction against terrorism. In response to both the failure of the 1980 Iranian rescue operation and increasing terrorist incidents, the Reagan administration in 1981 created a joint special operation's command. Terrorist counteraction was broken into two basic

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46. Richard H. Shultz, Jr., n.p., p.365.

47. Bahsen, "The Role of Technology: The United States" in Richard Shultz, ed., Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency: US-Soviet Policy in Third World, (Lexington, 1989), p.204.

functions - anti-terrorism, or defensive actions taken to deter terrorist attacks, and counterterrorism which includes punitive actions against terrorist groups. The Pentagon saw terrorism as a 'modern tool of warfare' adopted by Cuba, Iran, Libya and the Soviet Union against the US and its allies."<sup>48</sup>

The National Security Decision Directive No.138 (NSDD 138) authorised the use of military force to conduct both pre-emptive and retaliatory strikes against terrorists. Nevertheless, several problems persisted, like poor intelligence collection on terrorist organisation, command and control and airlift problems. While the US successfully intercepted an Egyptian plane carrying terrorists, the Achille Lauro and TWA 847 incidents pointed to serious deficiencies in US counterterrorist capabilities.

Amongst the major initiatives of the Reagan administration was consolidation of Special Operation Forces under First Special Operation Command at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. In 1983, Air Force special operations and search and rescue units were combined in the new 23rd Air Force

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48. Michael T. Klare, n.28, p.65.

command, which subsequently established the First Special Operations wing at Hurlburst Field, Florida. Also a high level special operations Advisory Group of retired generals was created at the Pentagon to provide Secretary of Defence with expert advice on special operations. In 1984 a joint special operations Agency was created by the Joint Chief of Staff to coordinate interservice preparations in the special operations area. In 1985, a Joint Low Intensity Conflict Project was established which produced a comprehensive *Final Report* on concepts, strategy, guidelines and applications of low intensity warfighting in the third world countries.

In 1987 came Joint Chief of Staff United States Military Posture, major suggestions of which included:

- (a) to create a unified command which would have jurisdiction over all army, navy and air force special operations units;
- (b) to appoint an Assistant Secretary of Defence for Special Operation forces and Low Intensity Conflict (SOFLIC) within the offices of Secretary of Defence to supervise all Pentagon programmes and policies relevant to SOFLIC;



- (c) to establish a major force programme category within the five year defence plan to provide SOFLIC greater visibility in the budget processes;
- (d) to create a Board for Low Intensity Conflicts within the National Security Council to coordinate all the activities of cabinet departments and agencies relevant to SOFLIC;
- (e) It requested the President to appoint a Deputy Assistant for Low Intensity conflicts within the White House establishment to advise him on such policy and programmes.<sup>49</sup>

In keeping with the suggestions, the US Department of Defence activated the US Special Operation's Command at Mc Dill Air Force Base Florida, thereby replacing the earlier Readiness Command. Reagan nominated Kenneth P. Bergquist as his Assistant Secretary of Defence (SOFLIC). The Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth Kansas and the Army, Air Force Centre for Low Intensity Conflict, Langley Air Force base, Virginia were pressed into service to produce a detailed doctrine on LIC strategy and the result was

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49. Quoted from Swaran Singh, n.29, p.294.

FM100-20/AF Pams 3-20 which has generally been regarded as the most comprehensive military document written on the subject.<sup>50</sup>

However, towards the end of the Reagan regime the missionary zeal for low intensity conflicts started fading away. The cause was Gorbachev's peace initiative and improving US-USSR relationship. With this development the threat of communist-sponsored insurgency reduced considerably.

### George Bush

By the time George Bush came to power the world was changing too fast. The disintegration of the Soviet Union did not eliminate threats to US interests, according to Bush. He declared in 1990: "Notwithstanding the alteration in the Soviet threat, the world remains a dangerous place with serious threats to US interests wholly unrelated to the earlier pattern of US-Soviet relationship..." He articulated a policy of peacetime engagement every bit as constant and committed to the defences of our interests and ideas in

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50. Lt. Colonel John B. Hunt, "Emerging Doctrine for LIC", Military Review, June 1991, p.56.

today's world as in the time of conflict and cold war."<sup>51</sup>

However, actual military involvement during Bush administration obscured and consequently lessened the concern of policy makers, the public and the armed forces about the need to have the capabilities to engage in low intensity conflict. In Panama the conflict was essentially an invasion by an overwhelming conventional force in a very short conflict. The Gulf conflict went one step beyond. It involved the maximum use of conventional forces and high technology weapons. "As a result although there may have been an end of the 'Vietnam syndrome' on questions associated with the ability of the United States to wage war, the victory in the gulf reinforced. The U.S. penchant to emphasise conventional responses to aggressive action".<sup>52</sup> Euphoria over military victory further obscured the importance of learning how to identify the complexities of low intensity conflict. As Edwin Carr says, "the 'Vietnam syndrome' has been replaced by the Gulf syndrome which reinforce the notion to rely on conventional responses in a rapidly chang-

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51. George Bush, Remarks of President Bush, at the 40th anniversary of the Aspen Institute, The White House, p.6.

52. Edwin Carr and Stephen Solan, n.15, p.9.

ing and uncertain unconventional security environment.

### CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

There are many challenges to the United State with regard to its position as global hegemonic power, its declining position as superpower, emergence of new powers and problems facing its economy. So military involvement in low intensity conflict was not on the top of agenda under Clinton.

Clinton in his 1993 Presidential inaugural address said that "the new world is more free and less stable".<sup>53</sup> In the same year the Director of CIA, James Woosley noted that "we have slain a large dragon, but we live now in a jungle filled with bewildering variety of poisonous snakes.... The events in the last two years have led to a far more unstable, turbulent, unpredictable and violent world."<sup>54</sup>

The United States national strategy for defining and addressing those challenges is marked with a dilemma, while it is apprehensive about its role as a global policeman, it

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53. John Mueller, "The Catastrophe Quota: Trouble After the Cold War", Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol.38, No.3, September 1994, p.357.

54. Ibid.

still wants to exercise global leadership. Also the regions where it would intervene further shrank. Even in these areas it has not been able to conceptualise the reasons of intervention properly and rationalise it to the satisfaction of both domestic and international circles.

The document entitled "National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement" 1994, spells out Clinton administration's perception about possible threats and its possible engagements through military and non-military means. It lays stress on preventive diplomacy in order to resolve problems, reduce tensions and defuse conflicts before they develop into crisis through support of democracy, economic assistance, overseas military presence, and involvement in multilateral negotiations.<sup>55</sup> It further calls for selective engagement threatening American interests which has been defined in terms of security requirements both physical defence and economic well being environmental securities and values achieved through expansion of community of democratic nations.<sup>56</sup>

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55. A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, July 1994, p.6.

56. Ibid.

### CHAPTER III

#### LOW INTENSITY CONFLICTS IN THE THIRD WORLD

Since World War II, the developing world has been a vast theatre of warfare. The belief that states in the developing world are more war prone stems from their recent history. From 1945 to early 1990s there have been over 100 wars in which 20 million people have lost their lives. Of this over 19 million people died as a result of wars in the developing world.<sup>1</sup> Also trends suggest that most of the conflicts have been internal with or without external support. Developing world where 75% of world's population reside and it has been estimated that by 2010 world's population will have grown from 4.9 billion in the mid 1980s to 7 billion, 80% of whom will be citizens of the Third World.<sup>2</sup>

The post-cold war world also presents a stark picture. While the developed world has entered a post-clauswitzian era where war is not considered a rational instrument of

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1. Albert Legault, The End of Military Century, (Ottawa, 1992), p.59. Also Steven R. David, "Why the Third World Still Matters", International Security, Winter 92-93, p.128.
  2. Rod Paschall, LIC 2010: Special Operations and Unconventional warfare in the Next Century, (New York, 1990), p.33.

state policy, most of the developing countries are potential arena of conflict.<sup>3</sup> This is an alarming condition which merits attention particularly when in low intensity conflict the military factor is only secondary.

An attempt has been made in this chapter to understand the vulnerability of the developing world both in terms of internal dynamics of state, political institution, political process and external influences, both military and non military.

### Internal Factors

Most of the developing countries at the time of independence inherited state and state structure from their colonial rulers. Hence they had problems in forging strong states suited to their conditions. While it took three to four centuries to forge suitable state structures in the developed world, the developing countries had three to four decade to accomplish the same task. It is not, therefore, surprising that most developing countries lack cohesion and stability compared to their European counterpart.

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3. Ken Booth, *New Thinking about Strategy and International Security*, (London, 1991), p.356.

Another important factor giving rise to conflict is the political process. After getting independence many developing states imported institutions of democracy based on mass political participation. It created euphoria that democracy will solve every problem. Lack of awareness among people and inadequate participation in political process created frustration and discontent. And in many states effective institutions to channelise mass participation, and grievance redressal mechanism are absent: This creates situation ripe for low intensity conflict.

The transformation of developing world is characterised by two often contradictory forces. On the one hand, the so-called forces of modernisation that broke down the many divisions in society, brought about social change and created a section of population with international outlook. But this did not necessarily lead to democratisation in many states because in the first place its nature was uneven and secondly it was imposed from above. Perhaps the most vexing element of modernisation and democratisation was the reluctant realisation that in an expanded technological universe, it was primordial loyalties that not only survived but also grew largely as a reaction to modernity and supposed on-



slaught of the secular state.<sup>4</sup> The assertion of primordial loyalties by different groups and vitality of other old and deeply rooted beliefs underscore the fact that traditional forces are alive in many societies. Such values will be intensified and fueled by current events in many parts of the globe as nationalities and ethnic groups assert their independence.<sup>5</sup> Contention of power has been the principal issue in conflict among these groups, both continuing and new ethnopolitical conflict.

Samuel Huntington contends that "in coming years the fundamental source of division among human kind and dominating source of conflict will be culture".<sup>6</sup> The eight civilisations he lists as basic civilisations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion.... "They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideology and political regimes".<sup>7</sup> He also suggests why civilisational differ-

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4. Ralph R. Premdas, S.W.R. De A. Samarsinghe and Alan B. Anderson (ed.), *Secessionist Movements in Comparative Perspective*, (London, 1990), p.15.

5. Ibid.

6. Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993, p.22.

7. Ibid., p.25.

ences are becoming more salient. The relevant factors include increasing interactions among people of different civilisations, growing resistance to western powers and cultures by elites in other civilisation, the restructuring of economic development along regional lines and a worldwide revival of religions beliefs to replace the weakening local and state levels of identity. He mentions macro conflicts likely among civilisations and micro conflicts (including low intensity conflict). But he anticipates that conflicts between groups of different civilisations will be more frequent, more sustained and more violent than conflicts between groups of the same civilisation.

One may not agree with Huntington's analysis fully because at times other factors such as nature and stability of regimes, attitude of middle class, perpetuation of liberal secular ideology and economic factors dominate over civilisational factors. But he certainly captures the trend in conflict-prone areas where conflict thought to be over with the end of the cold war.

#### **ECONOMICS OF CONFLICT**

Material gap between the North and the South, rich and poor, is well known. It is also acute within states undergo-

ing rapid modernisation. While Huntington holds the view that economic issues will not be a primary source of future conflict, evidences, however, suggest otherwise.<sup>8</sup> At the macro level poverty may have an indirect effect on the sites and intensity of LIC. The reason why poor countries can be expected to have more frequent and intense conflicts can be seen in the structure of international economic system since the Second World War and how the economic development of developing states is linked with that of developed states. As early as 1960s the dependency theory was propounded by Das Santos, Furtado, Cardoso and Falleto A.G. Gunder Frank etc. The kernel of their argument is that economic dependence caused political subservience in the form of colonialism and imperialism. Internally this led to economic exploitation and perpetuation of distorted economic structures. Politically this led to establishment of repressive political systems as was evident in Latin America. This led to socio-economic inequalities and discontent among different classes.

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8. S.D. Muni, "Dependency Theory and Development Dilemma of the Third World" in Iqbal Narain, (ed.), Development Politics and Social Theory (New Delhi: 1989), p.83..

## EXTERNAL DIMENSION

If any particular state is conflict prone, the situation may be aggravated due to external dimension of low intensity conflict. External help comes mainly in two ways, either supporting insurgent groups against the regime or supporting the state in counter insurgency operations. The rationale behind external support, types of support, East West competition and resultant American involvement have been discussed in earlier chapters. Here the emphasis is on how the external help perpetuates and sometimes creates a situation for LIC.

Even when substantial popular support for the insurgent is forthcoming the ability to effectively combat government military forces usually requires various kinds of external help because the governments are themselves beneficiaries of external assistance which in some cases compensates for their lack of popularity. The example is Nicaragua where the Nicaragua Democratic Force, only a quarter of its 14,000 troops had adequate ammunition for combat.<sup>9</sup> Similarly the viability of El Salvador government would have been very

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9. Bard E, O'Neill, Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare, (Washington, 1991), p.123.

dubious if it were not for external assistance from the United States which enabled it to carry out reasonably sustained counterinsurgency military operations.

External support becomes more crucial if insurgents do not enjoy popular support. In order to fight against superior forces they turn to sympathetic nations, other insurgent movements, private institutions in other states and international organisations.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately for them, several facets of contemporary international system create favourable opportunities.

While governments of foreign powers are the most important source of external support, the help from private, non-governmental groups and organisations as well as other insurgent movements are not less important, for in many instances they provide not only political and moral support but also money and tangible assistance. The Afghan guerrillas, for example, received aid from non-governmental groups in France and the USA.<sup>11</sup> In the post-cold war world where a communist block is not there and the US is reluctant to

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10. Ibid.

11. Claude Malhuret, "Report from Afghanistan", Foreign Affairs, Winter 1983-84, p.426.

intervene in many areas, such helps becomes much more crucial. Also the phenomenal progress in communications has facilitated provision of moral, political and material support.<sup>12</sup> Through mass communication, the outside supporters are able to mount extensive propaganda campaigns and to reach for wider audiences. And through communication equipments, the external forces have been able not only to upgrade the command and control of insurgent forces in the field, but also to facilitate political and organisational task. Many terrorist and insurgent organisations are linked with the help of these modern devices. The link of PLO, LTTE, IRA with other organisations are well known.

Another external factor which has added and abetted low intensity conflict is the tendency of regional states to undermine rival neighbours by providing assistance to dissidence because it appears to be less risky and costly way to pursue national objectives than conventional warfare. Many states in Africa, Asia and South East Asia are known for such rivalries.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Edwin G. Carr and Stephen Solan (ed.), Low Intensity conflict, Old threats in a New World, (Oxford, 1992), p.17.

13. Bard E. O'Neill, n.9, p.113.

Neighbouring countries also provide bases which may be used for training, arm stockpiling, operational planning and providing safe havens for leaders and facilities for rest and recuperation.<sup>14</sup> Such bases are important for two reasons first when the insurgents decide to escalate hostilities and secondly when they are denied permanent bases. Examples include use of Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam by Vieturg, Pakistan by Afghan guerrilla and Lebanon by Palestinians prior to 1982 and Angola by Swapo. The government providing bases may not declare it openly for fear of international denunciation. And this creates multiple problems for counterinsurgency operations. The loss of contiguous sanctuaries can lead to reescalation of military activity.<sup>15</sup>

#### EASY ACCESS TO WEAPONS

The unprecedented production of military and equipment in today's world has also made the acquisition of external support easier and has profound impact on low intensity conflicts. There is a massive proliferation of conventional

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14. Mark Osanka (ed.), Modern Guerrilla Warfare, (New York, 1962), pp.31-32.

15. Edward E. Rice, Wars of the Third Kind, (Berkeley, 1988), pp.79-80.

weapons and small arms in developing countries. John Keagan has noted that "a low level warfare of an insurrectionary, sectarian trivial on secessionist nature may nevertheless be judged to have become endemic all over the formerly colonial worlds as likely to persist as long as - armed industries lacked its wares into pools of discontent".<sup>16</sup> The proliferation of small weapons in any discontented society may boost low intensity conflict. These small but lethal weapons are most visible common ingredient in the armed conflicts in all states and regions where turmoil, instability and civil wars prevail. Such weapons have become the most useful and staple weapon for low intensity conflicts. The classical hit and run technique with great mobility is only possible with small arms.<sup>17</sup> This aspect is assuming alarming proportions but inviting little attention.

#### **The Precariousness of External Support**

While external help has important role in LIC, it is not always uniform. It is influenced by several factors and any change either in perspective of donor state or in the

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16. Quoted in Prashant Dikshit, "The Changed Nature of Warfare and the Small Arm Dimension", Strategic Analysis, vol.XVIII, no.2, May 1995, p.151.

17. Ibid., p.153.



nature of relationship between it and the client state may have important bearing on the nature of ongoing conflict. Few external states engage in open ended assistance programme for altruistic reasons. They render support because it serves their interest at a specific point of time. Also the definition of "interest" has been subject to change<sup>18</sup> and modification over a period of time. In the early years of the cold war, the United States was prepared to compete almost anywhere. As decades passed it began to limit the regions and states where it would risk such involvement. After the Vietnam war, it reduced its security commitments in some regions. On the other hand, the importance of the Gulf region enhanced for the US after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. President Carter declared that the US would repel foreign military invasion from the region.<sup>19</sup> The Gorbachev era indicated strong signs of Soviet retrenching, drawing back from involvement in the third world. Reagan's "Rolling Back" Doctrine had a profound impact on continuing low intensity conflicts in many parts of the world.

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18. John M. Collins, America's Small Wars, Lessons for Future, (Brassey's (US) Inc., 1991), p.34.

19. Bard E. O'Neill, n.9, p.124.

After the end of the cold war, the region of potential American involvement has further shrunk. While it may try to influence the course of conflict in many parts of the world, the areas of its actual military involvement in very limited and there also it does not want to involve in protected warfare. And its reliance on quick military operation has increased, following the success in Gulf War.

Situations in which there is ambiguity with respect to external political support are risky in low intensity conflict. It happens when many states render support not because they endorse political objective of the client but want to expect other concessions. Secondly, in counterinsurgency operations there is rarely a morally splendidly, simply because morally pristine, administratively effective governments do not provide the inspiration or excuse for a guerrilla war.<sup>20</sup> Proinsurgency frequently involves the same factor. Once the Soviets left Afghanistan, Washington became nervous about a Mujahideen victory.

Low intensity conflicts are low priority in donor states which has only a limited amount of energy, resources

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20. Douglas Blanford, "The Counterinsurgency Era", New York, The Free Press, 1977, p.21.

and attention to devote to it and it is often protected so it is difficult to continue active support all through this period and any inconsistency in pattern of help may have adverse impact. The support from other agencies and organizations from outside is also not uniform and consistent. They have to be convinced about legitimacy and objective of the movement. And any step by the client which does not appear to be consistent with its objective often result in decrease or termination of help.<sup>21</sup>

It follows from the above analysis that the same global factors that have accounted for the increased availability of external support for insurgents have had the somewhat paradoxical effect of making such support precarious because in specific situations political calculations can lead to the conclusion that new circumstances and opportunities may make the continuation of support an obstacle to achieving other foreign policy aims. The types of external support rendered, their durability and continuation in terms of motivations of donor states and changes in domestic, regional and international politics, and donor client relationship influence low intensity conflicts.

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21. Edwin G. Carr and Stephen Solan, n.12, p.77.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

In the shadow of relatively few gigantic wars of the past, there have been literally hundreds of small conflict in which fear, death, violence and destruction were sometimes more brutal and ugly. Different forms of such warfare ranging from guerrilla and partisan war, insurgency and counterinsurgency, unconventional war and to protracted conflict have occurred throughout history, their importance being determined by resources, asymmetry in relationship between participants, objectives to be achieved and contemporary international environment. Earlier, such wars were treated merely as an adjunct to conventional warfare.

In the nuclear age such war emerged as the most prevalent form of warfare. Also the cold war witnessed superpower rivalry in the third world, fuelling revolutionary wars in already volatile situations. On the other hand the emergence of cold war reinforced the reliance on conventional military forces and high technology. With US involvement in Indo-China, the Kennedy administration did recognise the importance of developing unconventional capabilities through

its support for special operations and counterinsurgency programmes. But the fall of South Vietnam raised serious questions concerning US involvement in the third world. But the Reagan administration reemphasised the importance of building up US military capabilities to counter Moscow's support to "wars of national liberation", in the resource rich and strategically placed choke points in transitional areas.<sup>1</sup> This assertion of US political and military capabilities was to be tested in what were called "Anti-Marxist insurgencies" in Angola, Mozambique and Afghanistan, Washington's support of Contra guerrillas in Nicaragua and military political assistance programmes to the endangered government in El Salvador.

Low intensity conflict became a phrase in this period, to meet the changing requirement of America's threat perception. Thus the definitions of low intensity conflict incorporated a wide range of threats America was facing with. Various attempts were made to define this term both militarily and non-militarily. Theoretically, however, "there exists only a blurred distinction between theatre and low

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1. James E. Winkates, Low Intensity Warfare, (Alabama, 1984), p.3.

intensity warfare and such distinctions inevitably matter more to the political and military strategists than to the combatants and innocents."<sup>2</sup> Problems also arises when some conflicts embrace features of conventional war, guerrilla war and terrorism simultaneously. In such a situations the role to be played by the armed forces becomes complicated.

Since the concept evolved in the context US involvement in the third world, it fails to take into account different perspectives because what is low intensity conflict may not be of low intensity for other participants. Conceptualisation of this concept provided rationale for intervention in outlying areas in response to a wide range of threats.

US involvement in low intensity conflicts displayed marked similarities despite wide dispersion in time and space. America's paramount counterinsurgency role tended to be a protracted process. At least four of them lingered longer than ten years. They are the insurgencies in El Salvador, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Communists and their sympathisers were among US opponents in counterinsurgency and low intensity conflicts since World War II. Containment

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2. Ibid.

of communist influence and to preserve the balance of power was the main US objectives. It was sought to be achieved through creating or strengthening popular support for friendly foreign governments. "Political, economic, legal, social, technological and military support comprised the core."<sup>3</sup> Sanctions were inapplicable against insurgents but occasionally increased pressure on outside supporters.

Neither the US public nor the American military are attitudinally inclined nor organisationally prepared for low intensity warfare. What is missing is the recognition of the extent to which the military becomes a different kind of armed force, both inwardly and outwardly, if low intensity warfare is adopted as its premier mission. After the Vietnam debacle this issue was widely debated. But the United States does not seem to have learnt any lesson from Vietnam. The defence establishment continued to operate under implicit assumption that low intensity warfare is radically different from "real war".<sup>4</sup> But such real war for which armed forces are technologically trained and highly qualified did

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3. John M. Collins, America's Small Wars: Letters for Future, (Brassey's (USA) Inc., 1991), p.45.

4. Edward N. Luttwak, "Notes on Low Intensity Warfare", Parameters, vol.XIII, No.4, Dec. 1983, p.12.

not occur after the Second World War. It is surprising that the notion of real war is not corrupted by the intrusion of complex and greatly varied realities. Even the doctrine of low intensity conflict and special operation forces which got great attention during the Reagan administration did not seek to alter the basic premises of conventional force structure.<sup>5</sup> And it is not surprising that the more powerful and equipped conventional forces disguised in counterinsurgency force are, the more rapidly the insurgents formulate proper alternative strategy to fight them.

Another dilemma in American policy circle after Vietnam war involved issues like demanding a guarantee of public support before engaging in limited armed conflict and to intervene only when "vital interests" are at stake. This coupled with the prevailing assumption that the United States as a global power cannot have the luxury of fighting only when vital interests are at stake, created much confusion.

Few the US, involvement in low intensity conflicts resulted in qualified success. Because success depended not

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5. Ibid.



only on the efficiency of armed forces but on the nature of the regime getting support, its intentions and degree of reforms introduced its ability to claim legitimacy, and proper coordination between the US and the host country. In many cases US assistance was insufficient in the first instance and frequently inappropriate in others.

The US experience in counterinsurgency and low intensity conflict furnishes three potentially useful lessons:

- a) The United States can help friends most effectively only when principles and practices are in consonance and assistance suits the situation;
- b) Assistance to countries unwilling to reform may prove fruitless because desired results almost always are delayed and may be unobtainable;
- c) Patience is the one prerequisite for success since such operations invariably are lengthy.

Low intensity conflicts are more prevalent in developing countries where increasing societal complexities and problems of development creates instability within the system, making it vulnerable to be exploited effectively by organised groups and external sources. Ideology such as communism and nationalism, and sometimes a combination of

both acted as a binding force.<sup>6</sup> As each society has its peculiarities, the causes, outcome, consequences and duration were not the same in all the societies. So each type of LIC demanded tailor made objectives, doctrines, task organisation, implements and training to cope with a particular threat in a specialised circumstances.

### Future Trend

In an environment of general aversion to war, low intensity conflict is emerging as a favourable instrument of nation-states because there are no open hostilities and wars.

The complexity of LIC is increasing with the disappearance of the communist threat. There is no underlying pattern in contemporary LICs and many apparently unrelated issues are emerging. The issue of ethnicity, transnational terrorism, drug trafficking sometimes complicated the problem.

The proliferation of high technology weapon among insurgents, terrorists and subnational groups and better training facilities has given low intensity conflict a

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6. John M. Collins, n.2, p.67.

dangerous proportion. Today low intensity threat is not necessarily a low technology threat.

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# Spectrum of Conflict

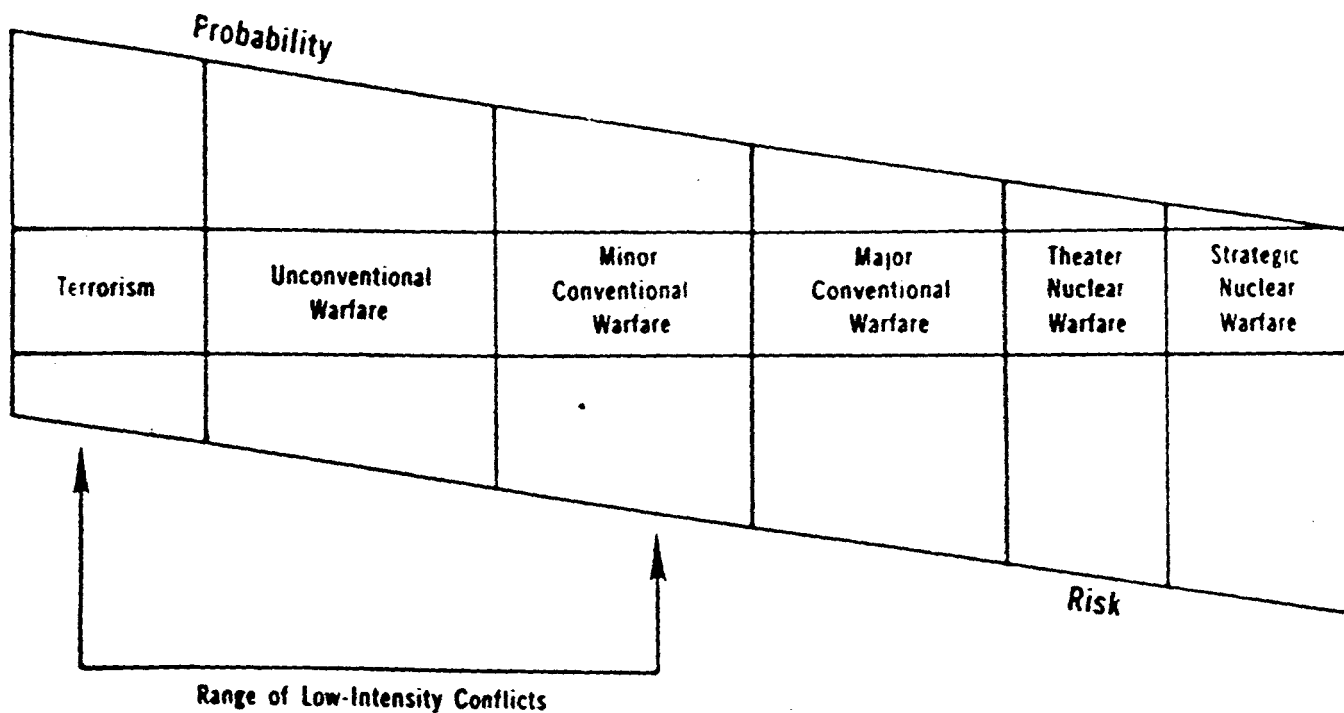
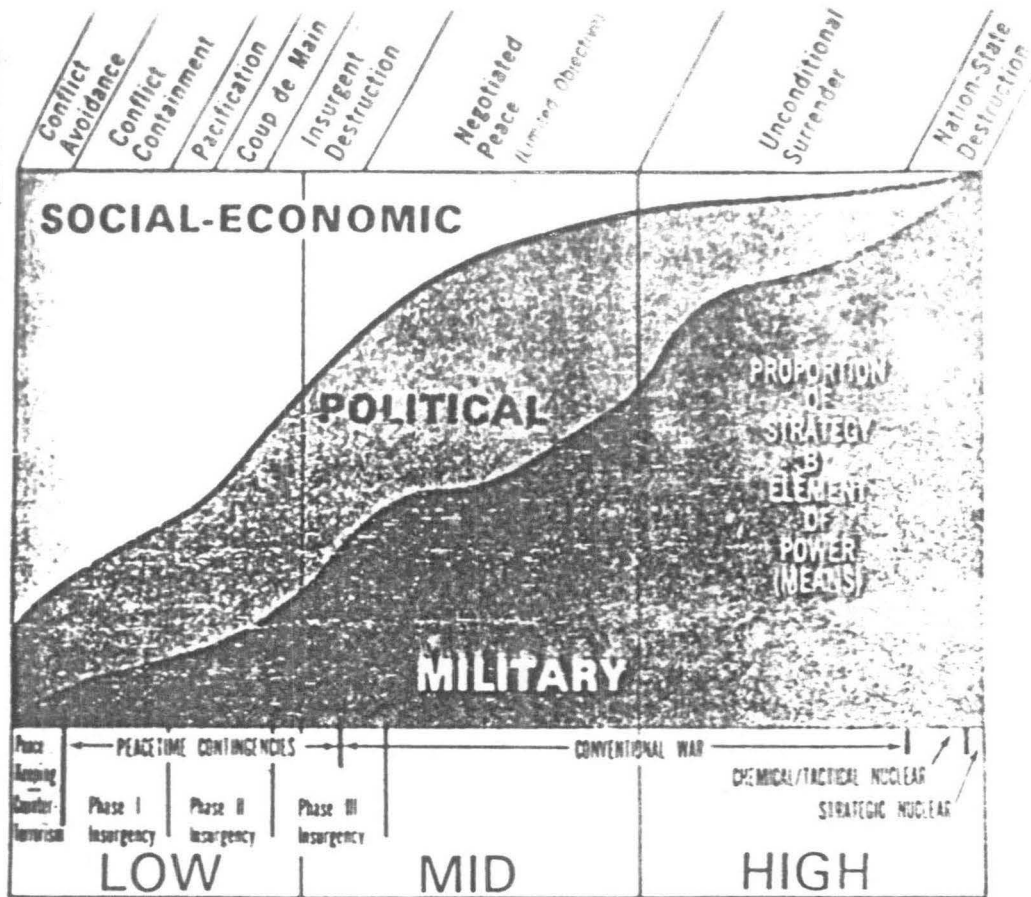


Figure 1

Source, Military Review, September 1988



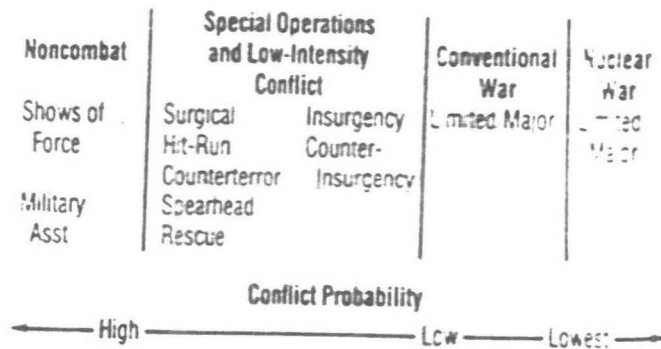


The Spectrum of Conflict and United National Strategy

Source: Military Review, April 1988

### CONFLICT SPECTRUM

Author's Perspective

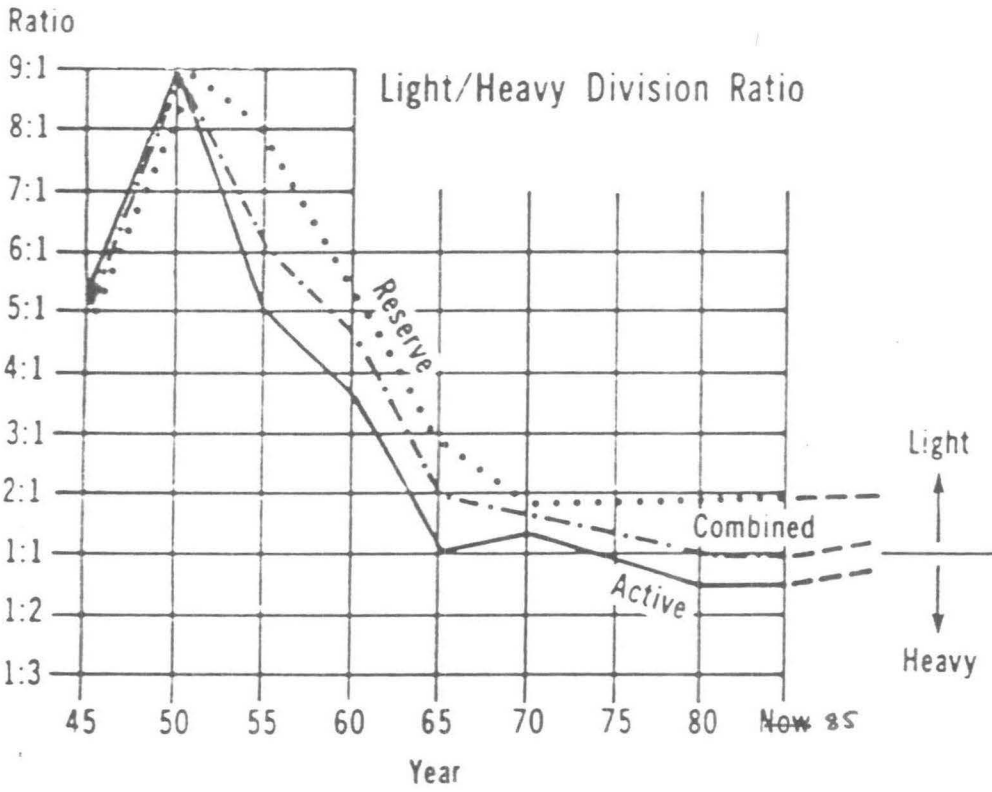


The relative space given to each category shows the various types of conflicts. The heavy delineations between SO LIC and other conflicts shows how some attempt to isolate these from "mainstream" conflicts

Figure 3

Source: Military Review, September 1988

# US Army Force Structure Trend



Source: Military Review, January 1985