

On “Fifth Generation” Warfare?

By Bryce Lane

Through our history till relatively recently, it took power in the form of troops and industry, money or political influence for any group under a man, ideology, religion etc. to create a large social impact by any means other than accident. While one man or a small group could create some disorder, it would generally be both local and controllable. However now this is becoming less and less the case. Whatever happens now, thanks to various media, doesn't just happen in one place but literally happens all over the world if covered. The personal, political and psychological is not longer mediated by the geographic. The world is composed of a psychological terrain that has less and less to do with topography or national boundaries.

The elements of what seems more and more to be arriving are these:

- 1.) Technology, (not always high-tech either) gives to ever smaller groups down even to individuals, ever larger potential for creating physical, political and mass-psychological disturbances far out of proportion to their numbers. Contemporary terrorism is just a crude prototype of this. At least the latest batch have a material goal.
- 2.) While populations are increasing, cultures are failing in the socializing functions they have served for thousands of years. The drive for narcissistic individuals, isolated ideologies and pathological groups to see themselves and their identities writ large across the fabric of humanity and history itself is taking up where many cultures have left off.
- 3.) The targeted population or organization is used as the weapon itself, not simply a target. Changes in ideology, religion, social or government structure are not the goal. The goal is to create mass reactions gratifying to the inside psychology of the initiating group, to “play a script”. The primary weapon is the initiating attack, the larger secondary weapon-the reaction. This reaction is where the potential for greater trouble lies. The event is simply a “blasting cap”; the real explosion is the reaction and what spins from it.
- 4.) Whoever joins in after the initiating act (even seemingly on your side) may be much more of a danger than the original initiator. In fact it may be the case where if not contained or directed, many actors may “feed off” of each other and lead to an out of control situation where a state or any other “island of order” may simply be another antagonistic faction in a much bigger mess. There are parties that will seek to benefit financially, ideologically or organizationally by trouble even if they did not initiate it. They must be either channeled into something useful, or sidelined.

Some goals to mitigate this, somewhat:

- 1.) Civil skills-In this type of conflict is it of the most importance to first identify, isolate and remove the initiators while most importantly keeping other parties who wish to

“feed” from the situation sidelined or redirected. Since the initiators and secondaries will use the media as a magnifier it is important to control “stampedes” both inside and outside targeted populations who don't realize that they are the weapon. This has to be done with other options than “mass lethal”, or technological solutions that only benefit those proposing them. Channeling and deescalating that reaction is the only “51%” solution available. There is no “win” only the preservation of some type of order. Keeping order *is* “politics” and even though the word has a bad name, the situation requires people who are very good at it.

- 2.) The individuals that become initiators in this are likely not “poor peasants” but come from the upper-middle to upper classes where they have access to the support and communications necessary to accomplish very significant social impacts yet remain at large. These people are not often invisible, or even easy to ignore all their lives and often give plenty of warning if we are on watch. The more people, contacts and cooperation we have in any environment or society, the more likely we are likely to know who is having trouble in-house with who and keep a watch on it before it moves to anyone else's house.
- 3.) Remove the easier and deadlier weapons that are simply “out-there” to use. Focus on removing opportunities, not just people. For example improvement of rail rather than so many short-hop commuter flights. If there are fewer “fuel-air bombs” in the air, the situation becomes easier to control. The fact that there still are full flights between destinations less than 500 miles away is a continuing sign of failure. Look for possibilities of attacks that might have mass impact and take steps to make them physically much less likely without crippling society itself. You can't remove all the possibilities but you can make it much harder to do anything of significance.

Much of this surely sounds like what has come before; The same old terrorism? Not exactly. There is a point where criminality, pathology and technology will meet in a way that makes geography and politics irrelevant. Now it has to have been shown that bigger things than a shot, a bomb, or hijackings are possible, much bigger things magnified by the attentions of the “great public eye” and an ever more frightened public mind.

The difference lies in the goals. A classic insurgent, guerrilla or fourth generation enemy has a material-political-social goal in mind. The new problems may be initiated by people who are little more than stalkers, fire starters, narcissists and misfits who wish to see themselves writ larger than life across the psycho-social landscape of the earth and now have been shown that they certainly have the means available of doing so. The difference between a traditional mass enemy and a dangerous individual has the possibility of rapidly disappearing.

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