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Convergence: The Changing Missions of Police and the Military

Robert J. Bunker

For decades, both professionals and lay individuals alike have recognized that the missions of the police and the military have been changing. In an idealized world, the mission of the police is to maintain law and order within a healthy and functioning nation-state. Crime is committed only by a small percent of the citizenry and is perpetrated by criminals acting alone or, at best, in small groups. While organized crime may exist, it embraces a symbiotic relationship with the state, much as a small parasite lives off of a larger host, and wants neither to draw attention to itself nor to threaten the survival of the state. When unorganized and organized criminal activity reaches unaccepted levels, it is targeted by reactive police forces that rely upon criminal intelligence models. This reactive nature of policing results in short-term societal resource conservation because expenditures do not have to be made until after an incident has taken place. Further, the lack of a sentient opposing force (enemy) for police to contend with has resulted in the lack of an operational art developing. Consequently, police primarily function at either the tactical (individual patrol) level, focusing on person-to-person interactions, citations, and arrests, or the strategic (police chief) level, focusing on political considerations and budgets. Policing itself closely follows an industrial model based on a hierarchical form of organization. However, with over 18,000 individual public policing entities in the United States, the vast majority of departments are extremely small in size.

On the other hand, again from the perspective of an idealized world, the mission of the military is to win our nation's wars against belligerent nation-states. Such wars are best fought overseas. The First and Second World Wars represent the archetypal examples of how and where these wars should be conducted. Peace between nations is viewed as the natural condition of an international system dominated by the West, and wars have distinct beginnings and ends defined by international law and the rules of war. The military services also operate under an industrial model based on a hierarchical form of organization; however, because only a handful of services exist, they are extremely large in size. Intelligence follows a military model that focuses on enemy intent and capabilities and is forward looking and proactive in contrast to policing intelligence models.

Defined as it was by the decades-long Cold War, the world that most of us grew up in is no more, yet it largely established our modern policing and military missions and expectations. That world was far more idealized than the one we currently find ourselves living in today. Within its constructs, policing and military missions were for the most part separate, although it is recognized that more than a few overlaps did exist. The Vietnam conflict was a "police action" and did not play out like the World Wars with mass industrial forces waging battles of annihilation and attrition. On the home front, large-scale rioting took place in urban centers during the Vietnam conflict, overwhelming policing capabilities and requiring military-like intervention to restore civil order. From time to time, natural disasters have also required direct National Guard and military participation to ease suffering, provide humanitarian aid, and help with reconstruction. Even with these noted overlaps, policing and

military missions were still considered distinct activities. The Vietnam conflict and resultant outbreak of domestic urban rioting were considered anomalies of limited duration and consequence, at variance with the more historically representative idealized views of that era.

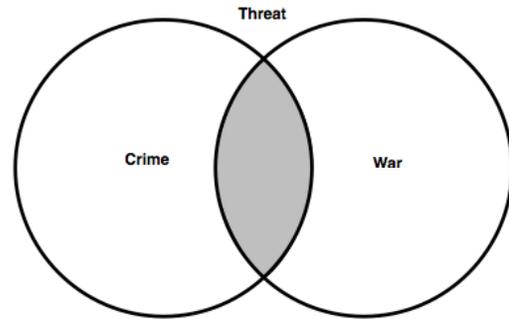
This has all changed now. With the end of the Cold War, rise in societal conflict, and subsequent 9/11 attacks, dominant perceptions have changed. The continued convergence of policing and military missions represents the new world in which we increasingly find ourselves. The need for such convergence can be explained at both the operational and strategic levels of analysis. This document will use four conceptual figures to aid understanding of the convergence.

Operational Trends

The overlaps between policing and military missions can be viewed in Figure 1, Threat Environment. These overlaps represent what is known as the “blurring of crime and war” or the “gray area” operational environment. This operational environment readily exists in failed states and failed communities. It is also the environment within which non-state or criminal soldiers exist. Heavily armed and armored (bulletproof vest wearing) drug gangs, drug cartel enforcers, terrorists, and insurgents all exist within this gray area between traditional policing and military missions. Rather than fleeing pursuing police forces, these criminal combatants, such as suicide bombers and terrorist assault teams, will actively close in and engage police officers much as military forces do. Over the course of the last three to four decades, this environment has increased in size and scope, and the

capability gap that it represents has become more of a challenge to the security of nation-states.

Figure 1 Threat Environment¹



Source: Courtesy of Counter-OPFOR Corporation ©

To contend with the new operational environment, the convergence of policing and military missions has taken place (see Figure 2 New Security (Response) Environment). From the public safety side, this capability gap has resulted in the development of specialized skills and units that promote missions that are more military-like in nature. An early example of this trend is evidenced in the formation of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams that first emerged in the late 1960s in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) SWAT team was created as a reaction to the capability gap apparent when it had to contend with urban guerrillas, such as the Black Panthers and Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), lone wolf snipers, and mass urban rioting. SWAT teams based on the Los Angeles model have since been replicated throughout the United States with well in excess of 500 teams now in

¹This figure was first published in Robert J. Bunker and Matt Begert, “Overview: Defending against enemies of the state.” Robert J. Bunker, ed. Special double issue on “Criminal-States and Criminal-Soldiers.” *Global Crime*, 7 (3-4),. August-November 2006. p. 311.

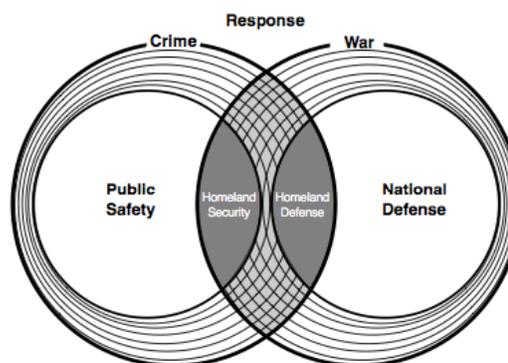
existence. At a much greater level of organization, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) emerged after 9/11 due to the organizational capability gap recognized following the Al Qaeda attacks. Interestingly, the 9/11 attacks can be simultaneously viewed as both criminal and warlike acts.

From the military perspective, the rise in the use of non-lethal weapons (NLW) by military forces is just one portent of the need for more police-like capabilities. Rather than the previously clear cut mission of killing an enemy in wartime, military forces are increasingly being deployed to failed and failing states to conduct peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and stability, security, transition, and reconstruction (SSTR). In those unstable environments, it is also imperative to have a rheostatic ability that includes NLW capabilities. The increasing importance placed on military police, PSYOP (psychological operations), and public affairs units—in addition to the growth and importance of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)—is additional evidence of the need for police-like capabilities in the military. Focusing on the domestic side, the rise of Homeland Defense as a component of our U.S. National Defense posture is quite noticeable. Fielding specialized National Guard Teams with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) response capabilities and creating U.S. Northern Command, with its responsibility for homeland defense and civil support to the U.S., provide another two examples of the attempts to close the gray area gap between police and military activities.

It should be noted that the previous lines between police and military intelligence requirements have also blurred with growing police interest in military intelligence and growing military interest in criminal intelligence. The more

successful policing counter-terrorism intelligence entities that now exist, such as the Terrorism Early Warning (TEW) group model, utilize both forms of intelligence in their fusion processes. Outside of the U.S., Holland has already blended military-police mission and organization with the creation of the Dienst Speciale Interventies (DSI), a joint police and military anti-terror squad that targets both terrorists and organized crime.²

Figure 2 New Security (Response) Environments³



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Strategic Trends

If the threat and response environments previously discussed were solely operational-level issues, the expectation exists that the capability gap would be fully closed as police and military converge missions. This has been far from the case, however. In fact, the capability gap appears to be growing with more nations of the world failing and more “no go” policing areas emerging in urban centers—especially in the massive

² “Police and Army form joint anti-terror squad.” EXPATICA. 2 January 2006.

http://www.expatica.com/actual/article.asp?subchannel_id=1&story_id=26470

³ See note 1.

slums found in much of the developing world.

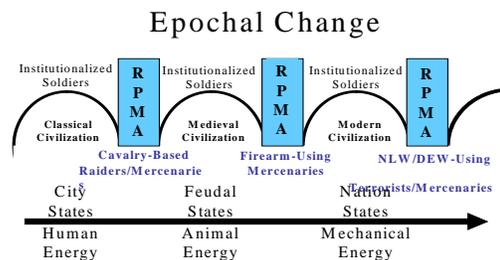
It may be that the United States, indeed the global community, is facing a deeper change than at first glance. Fourth Epoch War research conducted over the last two decades theorizes that the United States is facing a historic era of change, equivalent to that during the transition from the Classical to the Medieval era and the Medieval to the Modern era (See Figure 3 Epochal Change). Prior periods of epochal change also manifested the blurring lines between crime and war along with the rise of non-state or criminal-soldier forces that challenged the dominant state-form type. These eras of change were characterized by policing and military mission convergence and, ultimately, the deinstitutionalization of defensive state functions to private armies and security groups. Present operations in Iraq and the extensive fielding of such private military companies (PMCs) as Blackwater Worldwide have direct historical parallels to the Roman fielding of Germanic and Hunnish mercenaries and Medieval contracts let to the infamous Black Company and other mercenary groups.

Epochal change functions at all levels of human social and political organization and is ultimately facilitated by a qualitative change in the energy foundations of civilization. Another term for epochal change is a “Revolution in Political and Military Affairs” (RPMA). The following attributes of epochal change have been identified with notes on probable post-Modern characteristics in *italics*:

- Advanced energy foundation (*post-mechanical*)
- Advanced economy (*informational*)

- Social class reorganization (*middle-class culling*)
- Advanced technology and weaponry (*advanced less lethal & directed energy*)
- Emergence of the non-state or criminal soldier (*global proliferation*)
- Advanced battlespace (*5th dimensional*)
- Advanced warfighting concepts (*network disruption & bond-relationship targeting*)
- Advanced force structure (*network based*)
- Blurring of crime and war (*9/11 as criminal act and act of war*)
- Convergence of policing and military missions (*police SWAT, military NLW*)
- Privatization of the police (corrections) and the military (*e.g., Blackwater, Wackenhut*)
- Failed states (*e.g. Lebanon, Somalia, Iraq*)
- New emerging state forms & nation-state challengers (*e.g. European Union, Al Qaeda*)
- New sciences (*string theory, dark matter, nanotechnology, biotechnology*)

Figure 3 Epochal Change⁴

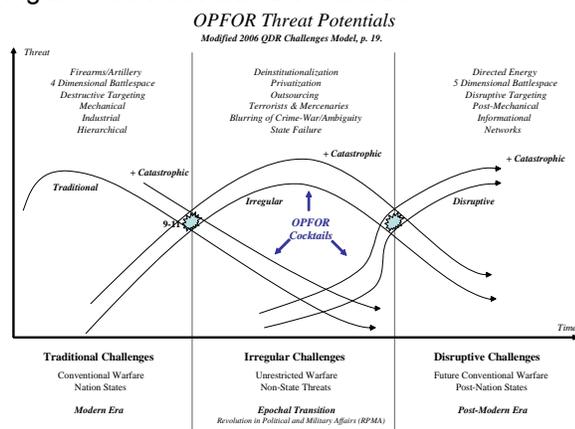


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⁴ The Epochal Change model was developed in the late 1980s. This model is a component of Fourth Epoch War theory initially developed by Robert J. Bunker and Lindsay Moore. This theory was created for applied use by U.S. military and, later, U.S. law enforcement agencies.

Figure 4 (OPFOR Threat Potentials) analyzes threat potentials over time, expressing the intensity of military challenges to the United States. This analysis is based on an elaboration of the *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) Challenges model (p. 19) based on the four quadrants of traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive challenges.

Figure 4 OPFOR Threat Potentials⁵



Source: Counter-OPFOR Corporation ©.
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Little convergence of policing and military missions existed during the modern era in which traditional challenges dominate. It is projected that in the post-modern era, in which disruptive challenges (i.e., what will someday become future conventional warfare) dominate, this will once again

⁵ Modified version derived from diagram found in Robert J. Bunker, "Beijing, Unrestricted Warfare, and Threat Potentials." Hearing on "China's Military Modernization and Its Impact on the United States and the Asia-Pacific", Panel II: Beijing's Doctrine on the Conduct of "Irregular Forms of Warfare" U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission website www.uscc.gov. Posted 29 March, 2007. In Final Report: Hearing before the U.S.-China economic and security review commission, One hundred tenth Congress, First Session, March 29–30, 2007. United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission. www.uscc.gov United States–China economic and security review commission, Washington: May 2007.

be the case. The reason for this is that the dominant state-form of each epochal period has built effectively functioning institutions that draw upon the prevailing energy source of the era. The epochal transition we now find ourselves in, if 9-11 can be considered a firebreak, sees the domination of irregular challenges to the United States. Because the latter are primarily non-state or criminal-soldier based, are targeted against the U.S. globally (i.e., OCONUS and CONUS), and blur the crime and war operational environments, they result in policing and military mission convergence. During this period of epochal change, legacy challenges and still emergent disruptive challenges will also exist. Catastrophic challenges derived from weapons of mass destruction (WMD) can be applied to all of these forms. The addition of catastrophic to irregular challenges, such as when combined into WMD terrorism, offers an especially threatening potential for domestic policing and responder assets to contend with.⁶

From a Fourth Epoch War perspective, the epochal change we are now undergoing will likely last into the late 21st century, if not into the early-to-mid 22nd century. For this reason, policing and military mission convergence will most likely become far more pronounced before it begins to subside. With this heightened convergence and the need to respond to the crime and war capability gap, issues of police and military privatization need, at the very least, to be touched upon.⁷

⁶ OPFOR Cocktails are a blending of traditional, catastrophic, and disruptive challenges with the potential for the addition of catastrophic challenges.

⁷ While these proceedings of the Futures Working Group (FWG) focused on Police and the Military, the significance and impact that private police and private military corporations will have on those institutions of the nation-state cannot be ignored.

Privatization of the Police and the Military

While the crime and war operational environment is the non-state or criminal soldiers' playground, it is also the natural environment in which private security and private military corporations conduct their missions. This is in sharp contrast to institutionalized policing agencies and the military services except, of course, for specialized units, such as traditional SWAT teams; the integrated SWAT, bomb squad, and airborne law enforcement bureaus, which are emerging; and military special operations units that were specifically created with this capability gap in mind.

The potential for contemporary private military companies (PMCs) to function effectively in today's gray area environment was first witnessed by the achievements of the South African mercenary firm Executive Outcomes (EO) in Angola and Sierra Leone, primarily in the early 1990s. EO feats were even more impressive given earlier failures by United Nations peacekeepers. The latter were unable to bring about any form of peace to troubled Sierra Leone prior to EO being brought in to route the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and stabilize the country enough that mining operations could continue. PMC potentials were magnified by the U.S. Army's doctrinal usage of the term "Operations Other Than War" (OOTW) in the early 1990s to characterize missions outside of conventional war as not being true warfare and, hence, not worthy of professional soldiers. While the U.S. Army later reversed this doctrinal position and the U.S. Marines Corps became increasingly interested in Fourth Generation Warfare thinking focused on non-state threats, PMCs quietly emerged to support U.S. deployments overseas.

Some of the largest and best known are the Vinnell Corporation, Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), and Blackwater Worldwide. Additionally, given the downsizing of U.S. standing forces, strict troop limits set on foreign operations, and the extent of operations expanding, PMCs have become an indispensable component to the projection of American power abroad.

On the domestic side, a trend towards increased private policing along with the privatization of prisons is evident. However, unlike in the military realm, private security personnel and guards have outnumbered sworn law enforcement officers for many generations now. Thoughts also exist that, while a backlash against privatization of prisons may be occurring in the U.S., on a global scale, prison privatization may just be picking up momentum.

Another collateral trend is the increase of gated and walled communities in the U.S., and many other parts of the world, especially in developing regions dominated by social structures based on the haves (the rich) and the have-nots (the poor). These communities have removed themselves from free public access, with the wealthier ones typically hiring their own security to man the gates and patrol the protected areas behind the walls. Of note is the more recent trend seen with Blackwater Worldwide's deployment of armed guards to protect the wealthy neighbourhoods of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Interestingly, no convergence of policing and military missions needed discussion or debate in this instance. To a corporation, such as Blackwater Worldwide, a contract is a contract with little distinction between foreign or domestic deployments--they define gray area environments as pretty much all the same. The lack of such nuances should

be more than a little troubling to the poor in New Orleans.

The short-term benefits of utilizing PMCs and private police are many and include quick-surge ability, fielding trained and qualified personnel, mission focus with few bureaucratic restrictions, and, in the case of overseas deployments, little public outcry over private security contractor deaths as opposed to U.S. troops. The political advantages of outsourcing are readily obvious domestically, with the “Bring the Troops Home” signs and demonstrations. We have never once seen “Bring the Mercenaries Home” signs; however, the present firestorm in Congress over PMCs in Iraq has created political heat for the current presidential administration.

The long-term benefits to such outsourcing are unknown, but if we consult historical lessons learned, we quickly see that the old mercenary motto *Point d'argent, point de Suisse* (French) or *Kein Geld, kein Schweizer* (German)—which translates into “No Money, No Swiss”—still haunts us. Currently, the large U.S. PMCs draw their employees principally from former U.S. law enforcement officers and service personnel and, in the case of Blackwater Worldwide, require an oath of allegiance to the United States. In the future, there is a real possibility that these groups will either train recruits from within, breaking the current bond the present recruits have to the state, or they may undertake a wholesale reliance upon foreign recruits as individual sub-contractors. The latter trend is already occurring in Iraq because of the cost effectiveness of relying upon foreign nationals whose contracts are cheaper than those of U.S. personnel. Concern that, in the future, these large PMCs may merge with or be acquired by foreign-

aligned multinational corporations is also not unwarranted.

The primary issue concerning the privatization of the police and the military will be its interrelationship with the convergence of policing and military missions. This is not only an operational issue but ultimately a strategic issue. The nation-state form is undergoing a period of increasing outsourcing and privatization. The historical antecedents of today's private security corporations became ascendant on the new battlefield. The nation-state form is very much caught up in a cyclical process of civilization advancement. Thus, the question we must ask ourselves is whether it can survive the transition to the post-Modern era intact or if we will witness the rise of a nation-state successor form. While these broad historical events play out, our key concerns are to protect the liberties inscribed by our Constitution, our government, and its people. To succeed in this endeavor, the proper mixture and usage of police, military, and private security forces, based on some extremely well-informed choices, will be required.

Summary and Conclusion

Policing and military missions are witnessing an increasing convergence due to operational and strategic trends. At the operational level, the capability gap posed by the crime and war operational environment is readily apparent. To contend with this gap, the missions of the police and the military are moving toward each other. This convergence will likely continue for many decades to come. At the strategic level, the most pertinent issue will be whether the nation-state can survive the epochal transition into the post-Modern era or if it will be forced to evolve into a new form of social and

political organization (i.e., state form). During this period of deinstitutionalization and privatization of state functions, the ascendant role of private policing and private military organizations must also be factored in. Their increasing use will pose many implications for U.S. policing and military institutions. Corporate police and warriors ultimately have the potential to be either the most trusted allies or the most feared enemies of the nation-state form. At some point in the future, most likely in the late 21st century or early-to-mid 22nd century, current operational and strategic issues will likely be solved, and state-based police and military forces will once again dominate. At that point, we can expect them again to have separate and distinct missions just as they did prior to the era of epochal, though cyclical, change we are now undergoing.

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