
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**How to Win the 'Long, Hard Slog'**

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Gen. David Petraeus, chief of Central Command, has said that Taliban extremists are threatening "the very existence of the Pakistani state." And now that Pakistani, U.S. and coalition forces are fighting the Taliban in Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan, the military dimension of the challenge is front and center. But more than combat is required to prevent Islamist extremists from taking over those countries and acquiring Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.

Greater civilian efforts to counter Taliban influence are being urged by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Michael Mullen. They pointedly note that our local partners need help stopping the extremists from winning popular support in the first place. This makes sense.

In fact, it recalls a famous remark by Donald Rumsfeld. In his widely publicized "long, hard slog" memo back in October 2003, the former Secretary of Defense asked if the U.S. is "capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas [religious schools] and the radical clerics are recruiting, training, and deploying against us?" The National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism of March 2005, issued by Gen. Mullen's predecessor, Gen. Richard Myers, likewise highlighted the importance of civilian activities to counter ideological support for terrorism.

Yet the U.S. government is not well-organized for civilian national-security operations abroad. Dean Acheson even complained about the problem when he was at the State Department dealing with post-World War II fiascos in the Truman administration. U.S. laws make it much harder than it should be for our military commanders to use cash instead of bullets in their theaters of operation. And the president does not have the capabilities he needs for rapid overseas deployment of civilians with specialized skills to assist our armed forces in stabilization and reconstruction.

This last problem may be on the way to being solved. In 2004, at the Pentagon's urging, President George Bush created a new State Department office for civilian stabilization and reconstruction missions. He directed that office to create a Civilian Response Corps (CRC) so the president can mobilize trained civilian volunteers the way he already can mobilize volunteers for the military reserve. President Barack Obama is supporting this effort, and the Corps will receive \$323 million if Congress approves the budget Mr. Obama submitted last week.

The purpose here is to line up civilians with expertise in water systems, police training, road-building, judicial administration, and other relevant fields and prepare them for deployment abroad. When their services are needed, they could partner with our military forces.

Historically, when civilians have not been available for such work, it has fallen to U.S. military personnel. In Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, American soldiers and Marines have had to organize municipal governing councils, arrange for basic services (such as electricity), and manage hospitals. These tasks divert the military from its core combat-related missions and could be better done by skilled civilians.

Once it's up and running, the Civilian Response Corps will likely be useful in the fight against terrorism. It will also give our government tools for countering the various problems that arise from territories not under effective sovereign control. These problems include piracy, drug trafficking and attacks against friendly governments.

While the Civilian Response Corps has received bipartisan support in Congress, legislators have raised some serious questions: Should the Corps be restricted to security-related missions, lest its resources get consumed in humanitarian projects for which there is infinite demand? Who should decide when and how to deploy it? A key, threshold query: Is the State Department's bureaucracy capable of taking on large-scale operational responsibilities of the kind envisioned by the Civilian Response Corps?

The answer to that last question may be for Congress to direct the Pentagon to lend State a number of planners, especially some with experience in managing the military reserve. This could increase State's capabilities and help ensure that the Corps' operational plans are in sync with those of our military commanders.

The administration's promotion of the Civilian Response Corps is of a piece with the appointment of Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal as military commander in Afghanistan. Defense Secretary Gates evidently wants to emphasize that U.S. forces in theater should transcend conventional thinking and design operations on the basis of military, political, economic and cultural considerations. All of this reinforces an important lesson of recent years: The president's national security team is responsible for defining and achieving strategic victory, which is a far broader concept than military victory.

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