Lock Away the Thunderbolts

An essay by August Dombrow

May 6, 2009

A long, honor-bound tradition of warfare has led to an oft-polarizing conceptualization of modern military strategies, reflected in the language of U.S. counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the context of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The mutually exclusive nature of much military lexicon illustrates the relationship between the insurgent and the counterinsurgent, terminology accompanied by positive/negative connotations: conventional and nonconventional, kinetic and nonkinetic, symmetric and asymmetric, and (perhaps most significantly) just and unjust warfare.

This dichotomous representation of contemporary warfare frequently translates into counter-productive strategies, such as the "shock and awe," "hearts and minds," and even "the surge" campaigns. New counterinsurgency doctrine was intended to rectify the mistakes of the past but instead perpetuates the logic that undermines success, framing the contest in terms of counterinsurgency/insurgency and adhering to the same antiquated notions of what constitutes success/failure. Statistics ranging from body counts to votes all measure the currency of physical security that militaries deal in rather than reflect the true economy of insurgencies. While the new doctrine addresses a few mistakes of the recent past, it reinforces many of the same fallacies, representing "insurgency" as a negation of "conventional" warfare and establishing the "counterinsurgency" as its "opposite."

I. Making Men: A Division of Labor

"Wars, after all, have been fought, in almost all cases, by men, and sometimes for the stated purpose of 'making' them men." (Ehrenreich, 3)

In the introduction to her 1997 work *Blood Rites*, prolific author and noted feminist Barbara Ehrenreich addresses the anachronistic role of gender on the battlefield. While by no means the first to do so, she approaches the question with her background in biology, examining it from a biological and anthropological perspective. Using this framework, Ehrenreich identifies several important themes that recur throughout the history of warfare, which offer some potential insights into the modern battlefield.

At the root of her argument lies the relationship between the prey and the predator and how the role of primitive human beings as the former has informed our transition to the latter. She suggests that the predatory beasts that dominated the earth at the time would have plagued early man and that such an environment would have encouraged these early peoples to band together into "defensive communities" for survival, establishing the foundations for society. As time passed, so too did humanity's role from prey to predator, giving rise to an elite (and distinctly male) warrior class that also endures to this day. The trouble, she argues, is reconciling our predilection to avoid violence (and a history teeming with examples of men going to extreme lengths to avoid compulsory military service and violence) with our paradoxical blood-thirst (and a history teeming with war) (Ehrenreich, 10-12).

This theory suggests that man is a walking paradox and must identify simultaneously with both the victim and the perpetrator, locked in a constant state of cognitive dissonance. This relationship would become increasingly complex as early exercises in sacrifice and ritual bloodletting progressed from

animals to man, and humans actually played the role of both the hunter and the hunted. Considered within the context of the Greek tragedies read for this course as well as U.S. conduct in the GWOT, her arguments merit additional examination.

Sacrifice and Ritualized Violence

If we follow Ehrenreich's argument to the dawn of man, these early human communities would have been uniquely egalitarian – a society where everyone, both male and female, shared the status of potential prey/death. Before the social and cultural constructs of gender concepts, the woman's reproductive capacity, a bloody and painful process, would have set her apart from her male counterparts. Alternative rites developed as a consequence; first, in the capacity of prey, men would have made similar "bloody sacrifices" in the defense of their communities and later, as predators, providing for the community as hunters. As the threat from predators dwindled so did the need for "human sacrifice", giving rise to "animal sacrifice" (in hunting and ceremonial capacities, both are their own kind of ritual). The skills developed during this epoch would provide the foundation for war later on. At the risk of oversimplifying her theory, warfare provides men with a "bloodletting ritual" of their own:

> "…war-making is not simply another occupation that men have monopolized. It is an activity that has often served to define manhood itself…to give the adult male something uniquely 'manly' to do." (Ehrenreich, 127)

The Greeks, of course, were no strangers to the rites of sacrifice, and interestingly, it is Artemis, a female god, that demands Agamemnon's child as "medicine"[1] to abate her anger in the first play of the *Oresteia*. In order to go to war, Agamemnon sacrifices Iphegeneia "for the ships' sake" (*Agem*. 226) – a display of

---

[1] from line 200 in Lattimore's translation of *Agememnon* collected in *Aeschylus I: Oresteia*; henceforth referenced as *Agem.* followed by the line number(s)

ritualized violence to maintain his authority and manliness. And Ehrenreich goes on to suggest that, while society has developed alternative hierarchies for men to maintain power, the War Hero represents the male archetype:

> "War is not the only way of establishing a division of labor, or even a hierarchy of power, between men and women. There have been societies or subgroups within societies where men grow up, not to fight, but to take on a distinctive role of herders of animals, plowers of soil, or salary-earning office workers. But even in these settings, the warrior usually still holds pride of place as a masculine ideal – the hero of epic tales and, in our own time, the star of Hollywood action movies." (Ehrenreich, 130)

I would argue that these other professions are not mere placeholders between conflicts where men idly pass the time while waiting for their opportunity to prove their valor on the battlefield; instead, the task of supporting the family actually perpetuates that romanticized concept of a warrior ethos, what I will call the Warrior Fantasy: enduring, self-sacrificing, independent. In times of relative peace, these other roles provide alternatives to the literal Warrior. As the primary "bread-winner" (language that suggests a contest and competition), the Warrior (or "man") sacrifices (his time) in order to provide (financial) security for his family. When the next opportunity for "real" battle arises, a new generation of men – through an enduring process of socialization and tradition – are prepared to trade in their business suits and graduation gowns for combat fatigues as an affirmation of their masculinity. Regardless of the era, according to this mindset, the man is cast as the Reluctant Hero, always *defending* a way of life (be it from the ravages of a bloodthirsty Enemy or poverty). Even the language of "cut-throat" business practices and the "battlefield" rhetoric of high school football coaches (another strictly male endeavor) alludes to the war-like nature inherent to our peaceful activities. The propagandistic effect of those "Hollywood action movies" is simply one facet of the problem – a symptom rather than the disease itself. But are these Warrior Fantasies innate to man or imposed by nature?

The Beast as the Enemy as the Other

Battle is meaningless without a worthy opponent, and Ehrenreich posits that at some point in our Mesolithic history the practice of animal sacrifice translated into human sacrifice – man and beast became interchangeable with one another. Also around this time, the status of women changed as these societies began to restructure themselves around the emergence of the Hunter. The vagina, formerly seen as a "bloody mouth" like that of a predator, became a "wound" as men conquered the Beast.

But the female does not shed her predatory past, not entirely. She retains those beastlike qualities that make her foreign and alien. In *The Eumenides* Orestes flees from the Furies, that

> "startling company of women…Or not women…they are black and utterly repulsive, and they snore with breath that drives one back. From their eyes drips the foul ooze, and their dress is such as is not right to wear in the presence of the gods' statues, nor even into any human house."[2]

Apollo cautions against "the repulsive maidens" (*Eum*. 68), and the ghost of Clytaemestra invokes images of "the hound whose thought of hunting has no lapse" (*Eum*. 131). By their own admission, the Furies are "like hounds after a bleeding fawn," and they "trail [their] quarry by the splash and drip of blood" (*Eum*. 247-48). In the play's conclusion, however, these beastly women are incorporated into the *polis*, much like domesticated animals. So, as males have "transformed" from prey to predator, females have undergone a transgression from the (imagined) predator to that of the (weak and vulnerable) prey, in need of defending and no longer a threat, impotent:

---

[2] from lines 46-56 in Lattimore's translation of *The Eumenides* collected in *Aeschylus I: Oresteia*; henceforth referenced as *Eum.* followed by the line number(s)

> "Gender, in other words, is an idea that conveniently obliterates our common past as prey and states that the predator status is innate and 'natural' – at least to men (Ehrenreich, 114)."

Certain archaic practices, such as enslaving enemy women during wartime (a triumphant Agamemnon returns with Cassandra), reinforce and simulate this process of domestication, taming the barbaric Enemy/Beast/Other. When Clytaemestra addresses Cassandra, Aeschylus repeatedly employs imagery of animals (the enslaved girl) and sacrifice (her impending demise): "At the central altarstone the **flocks** are standing, ready for the **sacrifice** we make to this glad day we never hoped to see" (*Agem*. 1056). The chorus then derides Cassandra for her unresponsiveness: "this **stranger** girl needs some interpreter who understands. She is like some captive **animal**" (*Agem*. 1063). When Cassandra does finally speak, her failed prophecies only reaffirm her status: "the block is there to reek with **sacrificial blood**, my own" (*Agem*. 1277), before she walks to her doom, "serene…like a **driven ox**" (*Agem*. 1298). In this way the Woman becomes the Other, our primordial Enemy, the Beast. The three become interchangeable and, later on, nearly indiscernible as Enemies seek to emasculate each Other on the battlefield.

"Symmetry Between Enemies"

> "War, then, is not simply a clash of Others, made possible by an ignorant horror of difference. The warrior looks out at the enemy and sees men who are, in crucial respects, recognizably like himself. They are warriors, too, and whatever differences they may have, whatever by-standing reasons for hatred, they share the basic tenets of warriordom: a respect for courage, a willingness to stand by one's comrades no matter what, a bold indifference to death. Even when divided by race and vast cultural differences, enemies may admire each other for their conduct as warriors." (Ehrenreich, 141)

I'm not sure this part of Ehrenreich's theory extends any farther than the boundaries of the football field where adversaries settle disputes with a coin-toss

and a handshake. While some quaint notions of chivalry may exist within and even between different eras and cultures, Enemies are relentless in their efforts to intentionally emasculate and discredit, utilizing ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic barriers to de-humanize one Another. "Terrorists", for example, are guilty of employing "cowardly" tactics, which victimize innocent civilians to achieve political goals. By extension, "insurgents" (a term used almost interchangeably with "terrorist" on the post-9/11 battlefield) engage in a similar "cowardice", implementing remotely detonated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other "hit-and-run" style tactics before "blending in" with civilian populations to avoid detection. This brand of warfare is labeled "unconventional", stigmatizing language that denies the Enemy the "honorable" connotation of "conventional" warfare (which, conveniently and ironically, ignores our own Revolutionary past, glamorized in high school text books). These "terrorists" are chided for their refusal "stand up and fight like a man" while U.S. troops fire missiles from unmanned aerial drones operated from a base in Arizona.

Although a romanticized notion of battle does exist, it is an extension of the Warrior Fantasy where disputes are settled by "fellow" warriors according to an established code of conduct and winners and losers are determined by skill – not luck or technological advantages. The closest thing to approximate this in reality occurs between the sidelines and ceases to exist once the clock reaches zero. There is no equality on the battlefield; in fact, armies do everything possible to ensure the odds favor them. There can be no symmetry between the masculine Warrior and his (invariably) feminine Foe, which gives rise to the asymmetric warrior.

II. Clytaemestra & Antigone: the Early Insurgents (or Asymmetric Warfare)

So, if there can be no symmetry, then the next generation of combatant will necessarily exploit the stronger opponent's weaknesses rather than face complete eradication in a "fair" fight. Over the semester, we observed several figures from Greek literature who challenged established authority. While their motives varied widely (and remain up for debate), one thing they shared was their common "biological" femininity. From Gaia's mutinous manipulation to Antigone's outright defiance, all were attempts to subvert the existing, and explicitly male, systems in place. I juxtapose two of these figures here, and their different brands of rebellion: Clytaemestra and Antigone.

Clytaemestra's Femininity

One aspect of Clytaemestra's dilemma is her femininity. At no point during her drama is she ever granted Ehrenreich's "symmetry between enemies" because of the very fact that she is female. Because of her gender, she can never be considered a "fellow" warrior engaged in that "rough male sport". In fact, her femininity further aggravates the insult committed against Agamemnon – not only did she dare kill him, but she dared to be female about it as well. And because of this "handicap", she must rely on deceit to accomplish what would have been unlikely in a "fair" fight. The text surrounding the murder revels in the imagery of "nets" and "webs", culminating in the Chorus' denunciation of her deed: "Caught in this spider's **web** you [Agamemnon] lie, your life gasped out in **indecent death**, struck prone to this **shameful bed** by your **lady's hand of treachery**" (*Agem*. 1492-95).

As they condemn Clytaemestra's actions, they unequivocally associate the feminine with a brand of dishonor, and that Agamemnon should die by her hand

is a grave injustice. Electra and Orestes echo this sentiment during their reunion in *The Libation Bearers*, "If only at Illium, father, and by some Lycian's hands you had gone down at the spear's stroke, you would have left high fame in you house" (345-48). Death in battle, by the Warrior's spear, would have been preferable to Clytaemestra's insubordination. These assessments value the foreign Enemy soldier above that of the domestic female, even in the moment of her supposed empowerment.

Ultimately, she does rely on force to complete the coup, and installs a man, the deceased's cousin, Aegisthus, as the new leader (regardless of whether she remains the de facto leader, the presence of the man is still necessary for the appearance of legitimacy). It is worth noting that, in order to seek revenge (or "justice"), Orestes later adopts his mother's tactics in *The Libation Bearers*: he uses deceit, by disguising himself to gain access to the palace; by overthrowing the head of the state, although the question of their legitimacy is never adequately resolved; and by claiming the lives of his mother and her complicit lover, reflecting Clytaemestra's own dual murders of Agamemnon and Cassandra. Both are guided by a sense of justice, but only Orestes is vindicated in the end. Clytaemestra's crisis is similar to that of the modern insurgent: by fighting back using the means at their disposal (assumed to be inadequate to the task at hand), they do not measure up to the Warrior Fantasy. They are like women.

Antigone's Masculinity

Antigone's conflict with Kreon provides another literary parallel for the insurgent: the paradox of being caught in an ideological struggle with the State but adopting the means of the State to overthrow it. But where Clytaemestra shunned the conventions of manliness, Antigone embraced their militant system, motivated by the same concepts of honor and integrity, much like the insurgent who engages the State in armed struggle. The insurgent does not fear death; it is

the "ignoble death" to be avoided. In *Antigone* she responds to Kreon's edict with a proclamation of her own: "Let me…suffer this awful fate; what I suffer will be far less dire than dying an ignoble death."[3] In doing so she joins her deceased brother Polyneices, Kreon, and a long line of tragic figures, literary and historical, ready to die for their cause. Both Antigone and Clytaemestra demonstrate in their different ways that, while the insurgent and counterinsurgent may oppose each Other ideologically, they frequently engage in similar rationales to justify their conflict.

III. Just War Tradition

"The American story of the Gulf War was not simply of American manliness, but of (masculine) America's ability to save (feminine) Kuwait – the strong, powerful (manly) state(s) defend(s) the powerless, defenseless, and innocent (feminine) state form the aggression of the mean (hypermasculine) state which has attacked it." (Sjoberg, 135)

To this day, we continue to rationalize our reasons for going to war, now attaching Theory to grant legitimacy in an era that supposedly favors rational thought to the mysticism of our predecessors. Just War Theory attempts to answer the questions of when it is morally right to wage war (*jus ad bellum*) and what constitutes appropriate conduct once war has been waged (*jus in bello*). In her book *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq*, Laura Sjoberg argues "that the just war tradition is a morality of male heroism" and applies a feminist lens to raise the question of whether Just War is possible and, if so, what it would look like. She describes current theory as "curiously blind to the gendered implications" (Sjoberg, 8). Given the inherent masculine/feminine connotations of the counterinsurgent/insurgent relationship, her discussion attempts to illuminate the influence of gender in post-Cold War conflicts.

---

[3] lines 95-97 in Blondell's translation of *Antigone* collected in *Sophocles: The Theban Plays*; henceforth references as *Ant.* followed by the line(s)

Negative and Positive Peace

The short answer is yes, Just War Theory is not only possible but also requisite for peace. As attractive as pacifism may be, "a theory of politics that eschews violence would be incomplete without a theory of justice in and of war" (Sjoberg, 9) which acknowledges a crucial truth: that peace and conflict are not necessarily mutually exclusive concepts. She elaborates on the concept:

> "In the negative sense, peace is the absence of armed conflict; in the positive sense, peace is the affirmative fulfillment of security and justice in politics. Negative peace is when there is no shooting; positive peace is when there is no conflict." (Sjoberg, 10)

It is important to note that Sjoberg does not utilize negative/positive in a polarizing "good"/"bad" sense; negative suggests an "absence", and positive an "affirmation". Both are desirable, and each can facilitate the other. Positive peace promotes sustainable stability while a negative peace can provide the initial stable atmosphere for a long-term solution.

The "Cycle of Violence"

Ehrenreich discusses "fearful symmetries" on page 138 of *Blood Rites*, an escalation of force born of fear of the Enemy: "war, once chosen by some, quickly became the 'unchosen direction' imposed on all." Once we have identified the Enemy, with its implicit association with the Beast, it then becomes the Reluctant Hero's "undesirable" task to protect his family/state from predation at the hands of this foul creature. She continues by stating that "revenge has a pedagogical purpose…It teaches the intruder to stay away. Conversely, the creature that does not fight back marks itself prey." One would be right to label such justification as tautological, logic that inevitably degenerates into a "cycle of violence" in which combatants are alternatively prey and predator. In the latter half of the twentieth

century, we labeled this as “strategy” and called it an Arms Race, or “Mutually Assured Destruction”. By contrast, when our enemies engage in similar behavior, we consider it “irrational”, such as the “sectarian violence” in Iraq, an ongoing battle, waged over centuries, between two sects of a religion we can barely distinguish apart.

Sjoberg refers to such behavior as “negative justice”, an interpretation “concerned with retribution, the justice given to one who breaks the laws.” Conversely, “positive interpretations of justice are concerned with fairness” (Sjoberg, 27). Once again, “negative” is not a pejorative meant to dismiss the effectiveness of punishment as a deterrent; it only acknowledges that, in order to protect the freedom and equality of all, we must restrict, or take away, a certain degree of freedom from those who would abuse it otherwise. Simply put, negative and positive justice represents two sides of the same coin, and one would not exist without the other. Too far in either direction, however, and we risk a collapse of the system as the mutually destructive ends of Kreon and Antigone illustrate.

Unfortunately, the con to any Just War Theory is that it will be inherently ambiguous, as any ethical debate is, and this lack of conceptual clarity leaves it vulnerable to manipulation. Additionally, military action, undertaken under the auspices of Just War rhetoric, gains an air of legitimacy. This becomes especially problematic when applied to what constitutes “last resort” or “imminent threat”. And what exactly is a “Preventative War”?

IV. U.S. COIN Doctrine: Repeating the Mistakes of the Past?

"Victory was always glorious, but the religion of a defeated people, originally hostile to war made it glorious even to die in defeat. Those who fell in battle could be seen as martyrs analogous to Jesus…highlighting the ancient symmetry between sacrificer and sacrifice, which in turn recalls the dual human experience as both predator and prey." (Ehrenreich, 170)

In times of national crisis, societies of individuals consolidate under a common cause, the danger of falling "prey" to hostile Outsiders a crucial factor in this newfound solidarity. As the dust settled on downtown Manhattan in late 2001, a nation of victims looked outward for the source of their grievances; the still-smoking, gaping wound of Ground Zero provided the backdrop as America again took up the mantle of the Reluctant Hero. Six years after the initial invasion of the sovereign state of Iraq, academics, soldiers, and even civilians continue to debate America's future, present, and past there: How are we going to get out? What is the most effective strategy? And, perhaps the most hotly debated, why are we there to begin with?

Peace versus Justice

The U.S. military is a product of conventional warfare, intended to win battles of attrition by simply outlasting an opponent in direct engagement with an emphasis on overwhelming combat power. Success was directly correlated with body counts and similarly easy to measure metrics. It was this logic that drove strategy in the early days of the war, and it persists in the language of the new COIN Field Manual (Army FM 3-24): "Counterinsurgency favors peace over justice", peace being a prerequisite for stability (Sewall, xxxix). In the war room, peace is easier to measure than justice, a compilation of statistics arranged into bar graphs and pie charts relative over time. Have IED attacks decreased in the past six months? Are extra-judicial killings (i.e. sectarian motivated executions)

trending downward? Such facts and figures define "progress" in military lexicon. Such statistics are certainly important and provide relevant information, but they fail to acknowledge (and possibly obscure) the question of Justice (arguably the central question for the Just Warrior). Numbers do not answer the questions of why IED attacks have decreased (perhaps sophistication and lethality have increased) or sectarian violence has gone down (the opposing sides have consolidated into geographically segregated areas, contributing to decreased access to potential victims). In this strategy, the military trades negative peace for Sjoberg's positive peace, and as discussed above, pursuing one at the expense of the other threatens the prospect of a sustainable peace. Like Kreon's rigid inflexibility, the military's hierarchal nature can actually be counterproductive in the COIN environment. This is not to suggest that it should change, but perhaps the military is not the ideal agency to lead a counterinsurgency.

The Terrorist Beast

Patriotism quickly became a rallying cry in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Patriotism, a unique brand of nationalism, necessarily excludes by creating an inside/outside dichotomy, so by definition, Patriotism is the process of constructing the Other as nationalist bonds are typically arbitrary and imaginary by their very nature. American Patriotism is unique in that it even manages to ostracize Other brands of nationalism: "Nationalism, in contemporary usage, is un-American and prone to irrational and bloody excess, while patriotism, which is quintessentially American, is clearheaded and virtuous" (Ehrenreich, 217). As mentioned previously, the Other's culture provides a source of unfamiliarity, which translates into inequality (i.e. less than human) and justifies the sacrifice of "them" in order to guarantee the security of "us". In this case, a foreign culture is depicted as intolerant, incompatible, and even hostile to the American brand of Freedom, and of course, America does not tolerate intolerance. Take, for example, the "Shock and Awe" campaign that

defined the early days of the Iraq War; such a strategy presumes to cower foes into defeat with a display of superior military might. The very premise suggests inequality at the outset, maximizing military efficiency – it favors more Enemy casualties in order to minimize Friendly casualties.

The new doctrine claims to redress past policy failures, and it does make some progress in this regard, acknowledging the inherent complexity of insurgencies and the adaptive role the opposing force must assume if it is to be effective. In fact, the new manual goes so far as to include a section of "Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency Operations" (Chapter 1, paragraphs 148-157). The list includes several catchy and seemingly counterintuitive phrases, such as "Sometimes, the more you protect your force, the less secure you may be" and "Sometimes doing nothing is the best reaction." The ambiguity of these guidelines reflects the "unconventional" nature of the Enemy and represents a massive step forward for an organization so thoroughly steeped in hierarchy and resistant to change.

Unfortunately, while the manual addresses the cultures of "host nations", it fails to address the military's own culture, a hypermasculine environment of intentionally polarizing language. In the introduction to the University of Chicago Press edition, Sarah Sewall admires the manual for "shattering" paradigms, but she relies on the same Manichaean notions of honor and justice:

> "If we reject the manual and take the nihilistic military route, we will become the enemy we fight. If the United States wants both decency and success in counterinsurgency, in must recon with the consequences." (Sewall, xxxix)

Insurgents are without decency, honor, and justice, which are all inextricably and implicitly linked to success. And if the insurgent fosters lawlessness and violence (we'll just ignore the fact that they may have legitimate political grievances or

that they operate under a different concept of Justice), then the counterinsurgent, by default, represents stability and peace.

"A Logical Outcome"

Armed with this rationale, it becomes easy to blind ourselves to injustices perpetrated in the name of security and peace. When we fail to see the Enemy as fellow humans but as sacrifices in the name of Freedom, we should not be surprised to see the photographs from Abu Ghraib, where emasculation was, in a quite literal sense, implemented as a weapon against the Other, who we might have otherwise recognized as actual people:

> "…the race relationship between American soldiers and the Iraqis whom they kept at Abu Ghraib was gendered. That is not to say that Americans are biological "men" and Iraqis biological "women" but to say that masculine and feminine images became transposed on relationships that are not necessarily between men and women" (Sjoberg, 143).

When we deny the Enemy the basic image of humanity, it facilitates combat, but it also makes possible the opportunity for additional levels of degradation. "Detainees" from Iraq and Afghan are denied the "honorific" title of "enemy combatant" (which implies a degree of equality between "fellow" combatants) and, in the process, are denied the basic protections granted under the Geneva Conventions. Only now are we beginning to understand the full extent of this. Even with headlines revealing 'Waterboarding Used 266 Times on 2 Suspects' (NY Times, 19 April 2009), "experts" continue to debate the semantics of torture and whether "they" qualify for basic human rights when American lives *might* be at risk. Again, second- and third-order consequences are disregarded for the promise of short-term gains. As the debate boils back to the forefront of national media, it is being phrased in terms of the "net gain" to

national security: does torture make Americans safer, and if so, does that justify it?

> "In the name of safety, the Bush administration has created a national security strategy in which torture is a logical outcome." (Greenberg, 41)

Conclusion

While the new COIN field manual offers profound insight on how to more effectively conduct military operations in a COIN environment, it also reveals the limitations of military progress and, consequently, of the military's efficacy in such applications. These shortcomings are not the product of any doctrine or strategy, but of a long history of intertwining biological and cultural circumstances. That is not to say that the military is inherently flawed, just that it is ill suited for the today's "battlefields" – politics, economics, and diplomacy. The State Department and many political leaders are advocating for the greater implementation of "smart power", what Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton described as "the full range of tools at our disposal – diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural – picking the right tool, or combination of tools, for each situation."[4] If the military and its leaders attempt to over exert their influence, they risk the fate of Kreon who foreshadowed his own downfall: "Know full well that over-rigid purposes most often fall" (*Ant*. 473). And, for better or for worse, there may come a time when we need the destructive capacity of the U.S. military to circumvent some greater injustice. But for now, it's time to lock the thunderbolts back in the closet.

---

[4] taken from the "American Smart Power Fact Sheet available on the State Department web site: http://www.state.gov

Additional Works Cited

Blondell, Ruby, trans. *Sophocles: The Theban Plays*. Newburyport: Focus Classical Library, 2004.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*. New York: Holt, 1997.

Lattimore, Richmond, trans. *Aeschylus I: Oresteia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

Sewall, Sarah. *Introduction to The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, by United States Dept. of the Army. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Sjoberg, Laura. *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq: a Feminist Reformulation of Just War Theory*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006.