Notes from February 4th
Principles of War Seminar
Two Enemies: Non-State Actors and Change in the Muslim World

The speaker began by referring to a small green 1929 book entitled *Napoleon’s Maxims of War* which he described as a succinct formulation of the Principles of War as understood at the time. These Principles can be considered basic truths or law or assumptions. These were the reality of war for both Napoleon and Clausewitz. They were almost rituals, carved in stone within social activity. We need to understand them to understand the current day’s problems.

Transformation today is a now a ritualized function with code words such as effects-based operations. Since 2001 the military has been engaged in something that we have a problem describing.

We are now in a new reality zone, involving the Ummah – the community of Muslims. The Principles of War we brought to this zone might not work here. One major issue to understand is that the US is a bringer of change to the Muslim world.

- We must detach selves form the drama of the aftermath of 9/11 to see what we didn’t see before then.
- The Muslims want two things for the Mid-East in particular:
  - Deliverance from apostasy and tyranny
  - Restoration to the rightly guided path of Islam

Since the 19th Century we see Islam as a civilization degraded by its contact with the West and many Muslims see themselves that way, too.

- They tried adopting Western secularism and socialism and did gain a sense of a new way but this collapsed in the 1967 War and the Iranian Revolution.
- Arab world felt betrayed again so now there are over 30 years of pent up desire for change
  - Syria crushed a revolt in 1982 where 40,000 were killed
  - Algeria denied change to an Islamic government that had been elected
  - The Shi’a revolution in Iran was not in the end exported to the Sunni Arab world
- Concerns about tyrannical rules in the Mid-East have been linked to US power
  - The Great Satan is seen to be shoring up tyrants
  - Even the aftermath of 9/11 fizzled out in Afghanistan when there was no great Muslim rising as was called for
- Then when the US went into Iraq, it caused things to happen
  - The US was not just shoring up tyrants anymore
  - In the past:
    - Egypt was given $60B that went not to the people but to the government of corrupt generals with estates farmed by soldiers
    - US went into Iraq promising freedom as though it represented the perfect stainless hero of a Star Wars movie
• But instead the authority of the change we bring is more like that — to Muslims — of Darth Vader
  ▪ US arrival announces that historic change is at hand
• World War I was like this – the US as a bringer of change to Europe but still sustained some tyrannies.
• US is unwitting bringer of change to the Mid-East

Now the US has two enemies in the Muslim world that need to be understood as separate entities.

First is the *Wilderness Ghazi*:
  ▪ All 19 attackers on 9/11 can be considered Wilderness Ghazi
  ▪ The original Wilderness Ghazi were swept up in the apocalyptic spirit of the time of Islam's origins (7th/8th Century)
  ▪ Their story is rooted in the sacred canon
  ▪ They are warrior poets of mythic proportions
  ▪ In their own minds they will uplift Islam to their vision of a renewed and purified Islam
  ▪ They bring a literary, mythic approach to reality with them

The other strain is the *Civil Militia*
  ▪ They grow out of the early historic period – 9th/10th Century through the Crusades
  ▪ This is a well-developed historical tradition built on well-established community relationships
  ▪ Civil Militia come out of regulated, dense, intricate relationships of family and loyalty

Wilderness Ghazi come from outside the community with that underlying literary tradition.
  ▪ The US has helped incubate them
  ▪ We could call them jihadist terrorists but Wilderness Ghazi is a better term
  ▪ US started incubating the Civil Militia during the time of sanctions in Iraq
    ▪ Communities were working more autonomously because of the problems of the central government
    ▪ The US unwittingly created the chaos space where the Civil Militia could flourish
      ▪ But Wilderness Ghazi did also
    ▪ Civil Militia actually sprung up from community needs to become a new political development

The US has difficulty understanding the situation
  ▪ The US lives in a world of nation-states and sees that for the future of the Mid-East
    ▪ Mubarak is sustained by the US
The US shores up the rule of 5000 Saudi princes

- But the Muslims see themselves as having many simultaneous identities
  - They are rooted more in their communities than in their nations
  - Less feeling for their nation-states
  - Sultans may have had authority to tax and handle foreign relations
    - But the Ulama were responsible for law, social welfare, and education for society
    - This is generally administrated more locally
  - In Egypt, the national government does nothing for the social welfare of its people
    - Local groups handle those chores and build up a background and organization from such arrangements
- In Iraq the US wiped away the old superstructure that existed from colonial times
  - This allows trade and change to flourish
  - Really now permits more community identity and community self-rule

We cannot predict how it will unfold

- We should not see the election as ratification of what we want to see
- Really it is through the armed struggle that the Shi’a have been engaged

A well-defined narrative is unfolding

- In Saudi Arabia we can see it happening at embryonic stage
  - Villages and towns already have governing structures with own armed militias
  - Hard to assess them but must learn how to do that

There is tension between two traditions

- Wilderness Ghazi were going nowhere until they started sacrificing themselves
  - Now this is a way to bring these diverse groups together

How do we deal with such a revolutionary process?

- We must create relationships with emerging Civil Militias without helping Wilderness Ghazi into better positions to rule
- If Civil Militia come into power, we can live with that
- We can’t get on with Wilderness Ghazi -- really only literary in formation

When the Shah fell in Iran we had no connections with any of the group that took over but we need that kind of relationship now

If there is to be change (and it is inevitable) we need to develop relationships with Muslims. To do so we must:

- Rework what is acceptable
- Move away from the patron-client relations we have had across the region such as what we have with the Kurds
- Identify simple militia movements in Saudi Arabia which will begin to replace the current government structure
- Track down and eliminate the Wilderness Ghazi
  - No one really likes the Wilderness Ghazi so should get some support from the community

Ummah is coming to express its sense of the future through the resistance potential of Civil Militia
- Similar to the experience of the American Revolution, the connection between armed resistance and political leadership will remain strong for decades

We could keep barreling ahead with confrontations and continue to believe that things will come out all right. But that is a dangerous position.

As for the Principles of War, the US planned and executed a “splendid little war” in Iraq in the spring of 2003
- The war lasted only a few days – the way the US likes it.
- Now we are struggling to find ways to make our lexicon fit the current non-war situation
  - It won’t be a state-based concept
  - Instead we must deal with multiple groups with complex relationships
  - The current phase does not conform to the nation-state ideas we are use to

Perhaps the world today begins to suggest patterns of political relationships that more resemble medieval times than the last two centuries dominated by the classic nation-state. Charlemagne’s empire was built on a very complex set of local and state negotiations. Although the relations would not be at all like what we will find today in the Mid-East, an understanding of the complexity could help explain how such arrangements work. In any case, the relations are fundamentally different from what we are use to.

We need to look at situations like Najaf where we blew the city apart, only to have to go back and begin to work with different elements to rebuild both the city and our relationships with the community.

**DISCUSSION SESSION**

For centuries the complex relationship in Islam have proven to be too weak to get things done for centuries
- The could not pump out their oil without outside help
- Therefore tyrannies developed

There is always a desire to centralize power but there are currently on-going tumultuous reinterpretations that require greater understanding of underlying factors
- Islam is not just a religion but a way of life
- Some radical ideas such as those the Wilderness Ghazi have developed present interesting challenges to Western ideas
Some of the best ideas come from the process of evolution
  - Communities develop and then get together with others to develop mutually useful institutions
  - Such things are likely to happen in the Shi’a regions, too

There is a paradox in the relationships with the Wilderness Ghazi
  - Wilderness Ghazi help make the case for the need for a new caliphate
    - Although caliphates only worked for a few years anyway
    - It does show the urgent need to mobilize Muslim identity against the US
  - Smaller communities need to aggregate
    - In Iraq there will be federations with existing Muslim superstructures – if the process is successful
    - Jordan has no real aggregation of its peoples
    - Saudi Arabia may wind becoming only a group of small states like those along the Gulf

What we are facing today is much like the Indian Wars in the western US
  - We need to recognize the Tammany Hall mentality that got things done in New York and could get things done in Iraq
  - We couldn’t do it in the Sunni areas but we are learning to in the Shi’a areas
  - The US needs relations with each group

Churchill said that the US will continue to stumble into victory or into doing the right thing
  - WWII gave us the dramatic background to carryout other international affairs
  - It helped that the Soviets operated in a predictable nation-state ways
  - We now need to get more sophisticated in our views

Chances for a Greater Kurdistan
  - Turkey must already be terrified of the prospect of what is happening along its borders
  - If Iraq winds up in a civil war, there will be pressure from others in the region to keep US troops there
  - Kirkuk could become the next Sarajevo
  - There are questions about what Iraq as a failed state would look like

Considering Islam compared to the Protestant Reformation/Revolution, there are differences.
  - No institutional entity equal to the Catholic Church of that time exists in the Islamic world
  - Islam is actually democratic by nature
    - Everyone has the right to speak his mind on subjects of religion, etc.
  - So Islam may be more networked but still fragmented and not hierarchical
  - There is a new predominance of piety pushing events along
    - A resurgence of piety in is very powerful in Islam
    - It is hard to defuse or defeat it
Both Wilderness Ghazi and Civil Militia are simplistic constructs
- The Shi’a have a more hierarchical basis
- Unique models of structures will appear

Iran is on a different tempo than Iraq – had its revolution 25 years ago
- The Administration even had some expectation that democratic reform was developing
- Iran has its own powerful identity to contend with separate from Islam

Hatred of Wilderness Ghazi toward Shi’a is greater than that found among Civil Militia for Shi’a
- There is an emerging Shi’a block that may be a minority in all of Iraq
- Shi’as will still be majority in important areas such as the oil fields

Europe has found ways to go beyond nation-state relationships such as the EU and other organizations to govern itself
- US has not come to terms with concept of super-states
- The nation-state concept is probably strongest in the US

There needs to be change in military training and military identity to be able to understand the current situation
- Now there is talk of training more foreign area officers but need a different type of person
  - Need people who can “go native” to really understand the culture
  - Like a T.E. Lawrence who had a different world view than contemporaries
  - There were other 19th Century Brits who were romantic Orientalists that had great empathy with other cultures
    - That sort of person would be unlikely in the US
    - US may be engaged in the world but we are nationalists first
- Special Forces operatives could provide a point of departure for the type of person and training need
- US needs to go beyond the type of soldiers operating during the Indian Wars
  - Need people with more than just language and culture briefings
  - Growing more and better Special Forces will take a long time
  - Special Forces also require the ability to be autonomous for long periods

The Wilderness Ghazi have been enshrined as the enemy which makes them seem more than what they are really worth
- The US must not help make them seem as though they can offer a future
- We need to focus on their core, common beliefs to fight back.