



"Parallax", according to the Cambridge Dictionary, refers to "the effect by which the position of an object seems to change when it is looked at from different positions."

It is the
"fact of seeing wrongly."

In counter terrorism, the nature of an insurgency, the position of an object, is understood differently by the military, politicians, and government contractors. The object seems to change as each looks at the insurgency from different positions. The military through war, politicians through aid, and contractors through profits. This leads to fraud, waste and corruption, making it difficult, if not impossible, to defeat an insurgency, writes Joseph E Fallon.

The 2016 RAND Corporation report ,*"Counterinsurgency Scorecard Update: Afghanistan in Early 2015 Relative to Insurgencies Since World War II"*, examined 59 insurgencies. Thirty-eight ended in a victory for the insurgents, 13 ended in a mixed outcome with the insurgency still viable, leaving 8 insurgencies ending in a government victory.

In his 1989 book, *Logic of Failure*, Dietrich Dörner wrote: "Failure does not strike like a bolt from the blue; it develops gradually according to its own logic. As we watch individuals attempt to solve problems, we will see that complicated situations seem to elicit habits of thought that set failure in motion from the beginning. From that point, the continuing complexity of the task and the growing apprehension of failure encourage methods of decision making that make failure even more likely and then inevitable.

With 9/11, U.S. military and political leaders believed a war could be won quickly through a display of "shock and awe" in which the jihadi leadership is assassinated, referred to as "cutting off the head of the snake", resulting in the terrorist group withering away.

On September 10, 2011, President Obama stated in his weekly address: "Over the past two and a half years, more senior al Qaeda leaders have been eliminated than at any time since 9/11."

Ten years later, Al-Qaeda continues to operate, and the threat posed by affiliates, in the Islamic Maghreb, in the Arabian Peninsula, and al-Shabab in Somalia, grows.

On September 10, 2020, The Wilson Center published "Jihadism: A Generation after 911." It presented a short list of recent assassinations of terrorist leaders.

â€¢ Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, caliph of ISIS core, killed by U.S. Special Operations Forces in Syria during a raid on October 26, 2019.

â€¢ Qassim al Rimi, founder and emir of al Qaeda's Yemen affiliate, killed by a U.S. airstrike in Yemen in January 2020.

â€¢ Abdullah Orakzai (nom de guerre Aslam Farooqi), founding member and emir of ISIS in Afghanistan, arrested by Afghan intelligence officials on April 4, 2020.

â€¢ Abdelmalek Droukdal, emir of al Qaeda's North African affiliate, killed by French Special Forces in Mali on June 3, 2020.

â€¢ Khalid al Aruri, deputy emir and de facto leader of al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, killed by a U.S. drone strike in Syria on June 14, 2020.

Such assassinations were military successes but political failures. The terrorist organization was not defeated, disbanded, or destroyed. It did not surrender. It did not wither away. At best, it was only weakened temporarily.

Killing Osama bin Laden did not destroy al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda does not function as a central command; it was, and remains, a network of cells, affiliates, and lone wolves.

ISIS lost its caliphate in March 2019 but did not disappear. In August 2020, "the UN's counter-terrorism chief, Vladimir Voronkov, has disclosed, there are more than 10,000 Islamic State fighters actively operating in Iraq and Syria. Moreover, Voronkov noted, thousands more have migrated to join the group's various regional affiliates now scattered around the world â€" including the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), which now boasts some 3,500 men under arms."

In view of the twenty-year experience in a War on Terrorism, perhaps the better analogy of a jihadi organization is not of a snake, but of a hydra. Cut off its head and two grow in its place.

As the war in Afghanistan now enters its twentieth year, the Taliban remains undefeated. When U.S. forces invaded the country in 2001, the Taliban simply abandoned being the government and returned to being an insurgency. They employ guerilla tactics refusing direct confrontation with a superior force. According to the Council on Foreign Relations as of March 15, 2021, the Taliban "is stronger now than at any point since 2001. With up to eighty-five thousand full-time

fighters, it controls one-fifth of the country and continues to launch attacks."

From South Vietnam to Afghanistan, the military's emphasis on the latest technology, from Agent Orange to drones, to defeat an insurgency has been unsuccessful. An example of Maslow's maxim, "it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail."

Militaries have forgotten the dictum of Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz, the famous military theorist of the 19th Century -- "War is merely the continuation of politics with other means".

Forgetfulness of this fact could lead governments fighting jihadi insurgencies, including Paris and Washington, to repeat the counter-insurgency mistakes made in Algeria and South Vietnam.

In fighting the Algerian insurgency, 1954-1962, the French military concentrated on a military solution. The borders with Morocco and Tunisia were sealed. The external insurgent leadership was abducted in mid-air aboard a civilian airliner. In the "Battle of Algiers" (1956-1957), the French military systematically destroyed insurgent cells and assassinated cell leaders.

Countering terrorism with terrorism, the French military "won" the war -- and "lost" everything.

With the Evian Accords in 1962, a referendum on Algerian independence was held. In Algeria, it passed with over 99 percent of the vote. In France, whose population had initially supported the military and the war against the insurgency, the referendum was approved by over 91 percent of the vote.

Within five years, all that was left for the French military after their "victory" against the Algerian insurgency was political defeat and demoralization. Thirteen years later, the U.S. would suffer defeat and demoralization in Indochina.

The American experience in South Vietnam was best summed up in a conversation in 1974 in Hanoi between US Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr., chief of the Negotiations Division of the Four Party Joint Military Team, and his North Vietnamese counterpart Colonel Tu. "When Harry told him, 'You know, you never beat us on the battlefield,' Colonel Tu responded, 'That may be so, but it is also irrelevant.'"

For politicians, their perspective of jihadi insurgencies has led them to add to the military's "shock and awe" with one of their own. They have authorized billions of dollars for pacification, reconstruction, and development projects in hope throwing money at a problem will make it go

away. But these projects lack transparency or oversight. The result is rampant fraud, waste, and corruption. In Afghanistan, the US government "spent close to half a billion dollars on 20 Italian-made cargo planes that it eventually scrapped and sold for just \$32,000."

As US Marine Corps, Major General Smedley Darlington Butler wrote after World War 1, War is a racket...It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.

In South Vietnam, the U.S. emphasis was on a military solution. A political strategy of "winning hearts and minds" of the local population was never consistently applied. And both policies were defeated by the inevitable corruption in war.

From William Allison's 2003 article, "War For Sale: The Black Market, Currency Manipulation and Corruption in the American War in Vietnam".

"As American troops began pouring into South Vietnam in 1965, they brought with them a deluge of material, aid and money, all of which fed a growing black market and fomented an atmosphere of corruption...Even though the black market in Vietnam predated the French Indo-china war, it now flourished with renewed energy. American goods dominated storefronts and street vendors' stands in Saigon, Hue, Da Nang...American soldiers and civilians, and the United States government had money to spend. Vietnamese and international alike in Saigon and other cities quickly realized the potential wealth of the American presence. American servicemen, civilian personnel, contractors and other Americans in Vietnam realized with equal

cleverness that there was money to be made. In a 'bonanza atmosphere', crime, corruption and greed undermined the American effort to stabilize the South Vietnam government and economy against the North Vietnamese-supported communist insurgency."

The most important lesson from the American experience in South Vietnam is that no government confronting an insurgency, not South Vietnam, not Afghanistan, not Nigeria, can be stabilized with outside support if that outside support is, itself, fostering corruption along the supply chain of its various aid programs.

War is a "business", which opens the floodgates of corruption defined as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain." Corruption includes bribes, kickbacks, double billing, influence peddling, nepotism, graft, embezzlement, fraud, waste, and the misappropriation of arms and supplies. In "Countering Corruption Through U.S. Foreign Assistance", May 27, 2020, the Congressional Research Service wrote: "Corruption is associated with human rights violations, the undermining of equitable economic growth, and the facilitation of the conditions for terrorism and transnational crime..."

In September 2018 the Security Assistance Monitor released a report, "Corruption in the Defense Sector: Identifying Key Risks to U.S. Counterterrorism Aid", "According to the report, corruption is the predominant reason why U.S. counterterrorism efforts are often critically ineffective and even counterproductive."

Corruption is a business. It involves government officials at all levels, among donor and recipient countries, among contractors, civilian and military, foreign and domestic, up and down the supply chains. And as a business, it seeks to perpetuate itself for as long as possible, which means an insurgency is allowed to continue. The insurgency is to be contained, not defeated so foreign funds for pacification and reconstruction projects continue to flow into the country to be misappropriated by various parties foreign and local. This helps to explain the ongoing insurgencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia.

Since 2002, the U.S. government has appropriated more than \$143 billion for Afghanistan relief and reconstruction projects. In "Consumed by Corruption", December 9, 2019, The Washington Post printed: "the U.S. government failed to confront a more distressing reality â€” that it was responsible for fueling the corruption, by doling out vast sums of money with limited foresight or regard for the consequences."

A promising solution to addressing corruption arising from lack of transparency and oversight with U.S. operations in Afghanistan came in 2008 with Public Law 110-181, which created the office of Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).

"SIGAR conducts audits and investigations to: 1) promote efficiency and effectiveness of reconstruction programs and 2) detect and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse...through criminal prosecutions, civil actions, forfeitures, monetary recoveries, and suspensions and debarments."

"SIGAR is a primary member of the International Contract Corruption Task Force (ICCTF), the principal organization coordinating contract fraud and corruption cases involving U.S. government spending in Afghanistan." Most importantly, SIGAR is the "only member of the ICCTF with cross-agency jurisdiction and a single focus on the expenditure of U.S. reconstruction funds."

By June 2019, SIGAR had "identified more than \$1 billion in potential savings to U.S. taxpayers and made more than 900 recommendations to improve government operations. The over 1,000 criminal and civil investigations SIGAR's law enforcement agents have conducted have produced \$1.5 billion in criminal fines, restitutions, forfeitures, civil settlements, and U.S. Government cost savings and recoveries. SIGAR has also secured more than 130 convictions of individuals who have committed crimes against the taxpayer."

By applying U.S. laws to investigate how U.S. funds are used in Afghanistan and to prosecute U.S. citizens for misappropriation of those funds, not local officials, SIGAR successfully addresses the problem of corruption without serious accusations of neo-colonialism being able to be raised to stop its work.

Congress should replicate SIGAR establishing inspector-generalships to "detect and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse" in U.S. funded projects in other countries, such as in Chad, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen.

SIGAR is an example, not a template, for the U.K., E.U., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to adapt to their foreign aid programs to prevent fraud, waste, and corruption. They apply their laws to audit and investigate their funds and to prosecute their nationals for any misappropriations.

You defeat insurgencies by first draining the swamp of corruption fostered by your own personnel.

To correct a parallax effect – the differing views of insurgencies by the military, politicians, and contractors due to their different focus -- "orientation of eyes should be in a straight line." Follow the money.

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