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Introduction to the Spring/Summer 2010 Issue

Dr. Sandra R. Leavitt

This issue of *Strategic Insights* explores the complex realm of asymmetric warfare, specifically the role it plays in a variety of weak and developing states. Its articles focus on how states can understand, approach, and defend against the many manifestations and evolving nature of asymmetric warfare in an age where globalization increases the interconnectivity of state and non-state actors alike.

In its simplest form, asymmetric warfare is characterized as two belligerents with differing military capabilities where each side attempts to exploit the weaknesses of the other with conventional and unconventional strategies and tactics. The 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy warns that, “Wars over ideology have given way to wars over religious, ethnic, and tribal identity; nuclear dangers have proliferated; inequality and economic instability have intensified; damage to our environment, food insecurity, and dangers to public health are increasingly shared; and the same tools that empower individuals to build enable them to destroy.”^[1]

Globalization provides solutions to many of the world’s problems, but also enhances many of the difficulties seen in the least developed and most unstable regions of the world. As much as globalization connects through greater and more enhanced forms of technology, it leaves a large majority of the world disconnected to an extent that they fail to ever realize the safety net of “embedded liberalism.”^[2] In many of these areas the sovereignty of the state is in question and a large portion of inhabitants reside in spaces ungoverned by state institutions. A variety of threats can emerge, including famine, disease, internal displacement, illegally-armed groups, and terrorism.

This issue of *Strategic Insights* takes a broad look at recent asymmetric conflicts affecting U.S. and international security:

- Dylan Craig’s article on system drivers and friction points as they relate to military alliances between states and non-states, seeks to develop a causal theory of proxy war.
- Nathan Black’s article looks at environmental security in Darfur and how the supply of arable land may provide conditional insight about the outbreak of conflict.
- Matthew Dearing’s discussion of female suicide bombers in Sri Lanka provides a constructivist interpretation of this phenomenon, which is typically characterized in the literature as a purely instrumental strategy of the weak.

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- Nick Masellis considers the use of special operations forces in Afghanistan as a primary counterinsurgency tactic as opposed to the conventional counterinsurgency operations currently taking place.
- Finally, Kelly Greenhill looks at the use of migration and refugee crises as instruments of persuasion by the state and advances a broader theory about the nature of migration-driven coercion, including how, why, and under what conditions it can prove efficacious.

As well, with our publication of this latest edition of *Strategic Insights*, we are proud to present to you our e-journal's new look. We hope you enjoy our Spring/Summer 2010 issue, and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Dr. Sandra R. Leavitt
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References

1. The White House, *U.S. National Security Strategy* (May 2010), 1.
2. John G. Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," *International Organization* (Spring 1982), 195-231.