As is perhaps fitting for a "capitalist" society, Americans tend to address national security issues in monetary terms. In the early 1950s, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles counseled that "the Soviet Communists are planning what they call 'an entire historical era,' and we should do the same. They seek, through many types of maneuvers, gradually to divide and weaken the free nations by overextending them in efforts which, as Lenin put it, are 'beyond their strength, so that they come to practical bankruptcy.' " In the face of this strategy, "we want a maximum deterrent at a bearable cost." At that time the solution appeared to be an almost total reliance on what was then our overwhelming superiority in strategic nuclear weapons, the so-called "strategy of massive retaliation."

Though it seemed that we had found a way to "provide for the common defense" at minimum cost (witness the Soviet retreat during the Cuban missile crisis), we forgot Carl von Clausewitz's century-and-a-half-old observation that "in war, the will is directed at an animate object that reacts." The long-term reaction was the Soviet effort to achieve nuclear parity with the United States, a goal that would not be achieved until the late 1970s. The short-term reaction was Communist support for what they called "wars of national liberation."

In the early 1960s the U.S. began a massive effort to counter what President Kennedy saw as Soviet efforts to "turn in their favor through guerrillas, insurgents or subversion" the course of events in "the new and poorer nations." The "doctrine of countermultisecurity" that evolved dominated American military and political thinking for the next decade and was at the root of our involvement in the Vietnam war. One assumption of this doctrine was that large infusions of American aid, both in terms of money and manpower, would guarantee ultimate victory. In many ways this was the international version of our domestic "Great Society" programs, which held that massive financial aid to the poor and dispossessed would ultimately build independent and self-reliant citizens. Here at home, however, many of these programs unwittingly built dependency rather than independence, while abroad they fostered what Stanley Karnow has called "puppets who pulled their own strings." As a result, the United States became hostage to those it was attempting to assist.

The Communists, on the other hand, knew that money was not the whole answer. Chinese Marshal Lin Biao's 1965 article "Long Live the Victory of People's War"—thought at the time to be the Mein Kampf of the guerrilla movement—clearly stated the dangers of overreliance on foreign aid. Warning about the importance of adhering "to the policy of self-reliance," Lin Biao noted that "during the War of Resistance Against Japan, [the Chinese Communist party]...firmly opposed the Kuomintang [i.e., the Chinese Nationalist party]...policy of exclusive reliance on foreign aid: In the eyes of the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek, China's industry and agriculture were no good, her weapons and equipment were no good, nothing in China was any good, so that if she wanted to defeat Japan, she had to depend on other countries, and particularly on the U.S.-British imperialists." He contrasted this policy with that of Mao Zedong, who had stated categorically that "China has to rely mainly on her own efforts in the War of Resistance," and added: "We hope for foreign aid but cannot be dependent on it; we depend on our own efforts, on the creative power of the whole army and the entire people." Lin Biao concluded his analysis with the dictum: "It is imperative to adhere to the policy of self-reliance....If one does not operate by one's own efforts...but leans wholly on foreign aid...no victory can be won, or be consolidated even if it is won."

In a most perceptive article in the Wall Street Journal on February 14 ("Salvador, Vietnam and Other Ventures"), Professor John Mueller of the University of Rochester reached a similar conclusion about the fatal dependency that can be created by foreign aid: "If the outside aid becomes fairly generous, the aided combatants may well come to believe (rightly or wrongly) that their efforts depend on it. At that point, they become increasingly vulnerable: if it appears that the aid will eventually be cut off or significantly reduced, this perception can have a devastating impact on morale....In almost all cases in which communist insurgents have come to power in the post-war era, their accession to power has been accompanied by an American decision to reduce support, or to refuse requests for more extensive support, for the incumbent regime." This is precisely what happened in Vietnam. In Hanoi on a negotiating mission less than a week before the fall of Saigon, I met with a North Vietnamese Army major who sought to allay my obvious discomfort by saying over
and over again: "You should not feel bad. You have done more than enough! More than enough!" And more than enough was exactly what we had done. Our aid levels had been so high and our support so overwhelming that we had undercut rather than strengthened South Vietnamese self-reliance to the point where subsequent reductions in our level of aid destroyed their will and resolve.

WAR AND WILL
Within the military, this Vietnam experience has caused a reexamination of the philosophical and theoretical foundations of counterinsurgency warfare. There are two, and fundamentally different, approaches to war, both of which grew out of the Napoleonic campaigns of the early nineteenth century. The first, based on the writings of Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini, holds that war is a science that can best be understood in terms of physical properties and mathematical formulas. It was this approach that dominated our Vietnam war thinking, with its emphasis on monies and matériel. By such quantifiable measurements, our success in Vietnam ought to have been assured. To our sorrow, however, we found that money alone cannot buy victory.

The other approach to war is typified by the writings of Clausewitz. The Clausewitzian approach lacks the fixed rules and mathematical formulas of Jomini theory and, instead, promotes a series of questions—now labeled military planning interrogatories—that will provide a frame of reference for what one is attempting to accomplish. The first strategic question of all, he said, is to establish exactly the kind of war upon which one is embarking. The basic flaw in our Vietnam-era counterinsurgency doctrine was that we did not ask the primary question, "Whose counterinsurgency is it?" Our doctrine, which emphasized civic actions, nation-building, and what has been called "winning the hearts and minds" of the local population, would have made a great deal of sense if we were attempting to combat an insurgency within our own nation. When applied by the U.S. in Vietnam, they proved counterproductive.

A sociologist at Pennsylvania State University recently commented on precisely this problem. While visiting an American Marine Civic Action Platoon in Vietnam in the late '60s, he was at first struck by what appeared to be the enormous success of its efforts: By providing security and promoting good will, they had won the confidence of the local villagers. Only later did he realize that what he had witnessed was not success but failure: By winning the affections of these villages, the Marines had further alienated the people from their own government in Saigon.

In retrospect it is obvious that the problem facing the United States was not (and is not) counterinsurgency but the much more difficult problem of coalition warfare in a counterinsurgency environment.

In warfare, including coalition warfare, Clausewitz emphasized that the important questions are not quantifiable physical factors but intangible moral factors. He pointed out that, at its most fundamental level, war is an exercise of will. With this approach the focus is not so much on money or matériel but, rather, on how to strengthen and reinforce will and determination; on how to bolster what Lin Biao called "the policy of self-reliance." The question then becomes: How do we strengthen and reinforce the will of our ally without undermining him by too little aid or overwhelming him by too much outside assistance? In order to strike this delicate balance, we must understand, as Clausewitz emphasized, that will is a product of what he called the "remarkable trinity" of the people and their government and army. The existence of an insurgency is prima facie evidence of a break in this linkage and of a weakening or destruction of the ties between the people and their government and people. Likewise, military aid, including training assistance, can help strengthen the ties between army and people and can counterbalance the aid and assistance that insurgent forces are receiving from their outside supporters. The objective is to help the ally to help himself.

This objective is directly related to the question of whether U.S. ground forces should be committed in aid of an ally faced with an insurgency. In his Autopsy on People's War (1973), Professor Chalmers Johnson of Berkeley concluded that, in Vietnam, U.S. efforts should have been "directed against the 'export' of revolution, not the suppression of genuine revolution." His findings were based on practical rather than moral considerations, in the realization that there are limits to the degree of outside power that may be applied successfully. Commitment of massive numbers of "foreign" troops undermines the legitimacy of the friendly government and weakens rather than strengthens the people-government-army trinity. Such forces also create the impression that the war is primarily the responsibility of the outside power and, in so doing, saps local initiative and self-reliance. This is not to say that such forces cannot play a useful part. As Professor Johnson has indicated, allied forces can ensure that no other outside power interferes with the internal struggle, in effect providing a shield behind which the threatened nation can work out its own solutions.

Finally, Clausewitzian theory emphasizes that, ultimately, the only form such a solution can take is political. It correctly argues that military force is only one of several means that may be used to achieve the desired political end and that it must be used in concert with diplomatic, economic, and psychological means. Too often do critics of U.S. assistance argue about whether we are trying to seek a "military" or a "political" solution, but the vacuity of such arguments is revealed by examining the problem from the other side. The very nature of "revolutionary war" entails the insurgents' use of military and paramilitary means to achieve a political goal: that of establishing their own government in power.

Today, as we vigorously debate our Central American involvement in primarily monetary terms, we would do well to return to the lessons of Clausewitz.