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# **The War in Iraq: An Interim Assessment**

by

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Several external powers, fearing the consequences of American success, while also sensing American weakness, have maneuvered to gain advantage in the current conflict and hedge against a potential lack of US resolve. A number of Sunni Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Syria, have provided support, directly or indirectly, to the Sunni insurgent movement and the jihadists. They are concerned that fellow Sunni Arabs in Iraq may reap the whirlwind they have sewn over decades through their persecution of the Shiites and Kurds. The Saudis also fear that American fecklessness will lead to a premature withdrawal of US troops, leaving Iraq in a state of civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. Neither Syria nor Saudi Arabia wants to see an Iranian-dominated Iraq emerge from such a conflict. They also fear US success, which might lead to a democratic Iraq whose gains might lead other Arabs/Muslims to challenge their own despotic regimes. Thus the frontline Sunni Arab states are hedging against the possibility that the Iran-Iraq war may be refought, only this time in within Iraq as opposed to along its borders.

Iran's efforts are concentrated on aiding certain Shiite groups and, in some cases, the jihadists. Like the Sunni Arab states and Turkey, Iran wants to be well positioned to advance its interests if this war devolves into a conflict along sectarian lines. Unlike Turkey, Iran fears US success, not failure. A democratic Iraq could lead to instability within Iran, given the general dissatisfaction of its people with the mullahs that have ruled the country for over a quarter century.

Turkey is concerned that the United States may fail to achieve its war objective of a unified, democratic Iraq. Ankara has made it clear that it will not tolerate an independent Kurdish state on its border. Turkey fears this could exacerbate longstanding difficulties with its internal Kurdish population.

In short, in a part of the world where strength and resolve are respected and weakness and vacillation exploited, the perception of US fecklessness has a compounding negative effect. It both discourages America's potential allies in this war, and encourages its enemies. This works to further undermine the US public's resolve and may, over time, deplete the US military's morale.

It appears the American people do not appreciate how high the stakes are in this conflict. Iraq may have begun as a "war of choice;" however, it has become a war of necessity. The costs of failure in Iraq are likely to be high—much higher than was incurred following the US withdrawal from Haiti, Somalia, Lebanon or even Vietnam.

## **THE CENTERS OF GRAVITY**

There are three centers of gravity in this war—the Iraqi people, the American people, and the American soldier.

The Iraqi people are ultimately the critical center of gravity in this war. Do the country's various factions want the country to remain whole? Are they willing to support the idea of a unified, democratic Iraq? Do they believe that these goals are not only desirable, but realistic? The United States plays a key role in determining whether these questions are answered in the affirmative. The Iraqi people have repeatedly stated their highest concerns are for security and some measure of economic prosperity—not radical Islamism or a Sunni restoration. However,

the country's principal groups—Arab Sunni and Shiites, and the Kurds, suffer from a deep distrust of each other. This is the product of decades of repression by the minority Sunnis against the Shiites, which comprise a majority of the country's population, and the Kurds.

Having overthrown Saddam Hussein, the United States brought to the surface not only the hopes of Iraqis, but their fears and mutual suspicions as well. The United States' objective must be to fashion a successful coalition by supporting a "grand bargain" among those Iraqis who see greater benefit in a unified, democratic Iraq than in its breakup, or in attempts to create a successor despotic regime to that of Saddam Hussein. Sustaining the hope of a new and democratic Iraq, while allaying the fears of Iraqis will require a major and enduring effort on the part of the Americans. This is especially true given the ongoing insurgency plaguing the country, the maneuvering of various groups and factions to undermine progress toward democracy, and the efforts of foreign powers to influence the outcome in ways contrary to US interests.

While victory will ultimately depend on the Iraqi people, in the case where an external power, such as the United States, has deposed the existing regime, there is a rare opportunity to shape the country's future course in ways that benefit both the victors and the vanquished. The prime examples of success here are post-World War II Germany and Japan. There is a danger as well, in that a failure to eliminate the conditions that gave rise to a hostile regime in the first place could find Iraq and the United States once again at war. Thus the American people are a center of gravity in this war. Do they believe in creating a "third way" alternative in Iraq? Do they believe it is not only desirable, but possible? Are they willing to pay the price in blood and treasure to achieve this end? Finally, do they believe an acceptable rate of progress is being made toward victory?

The trends in this key center of gravity indicates significant erosion is taking place. The American people are increasingly pessimistic concerning the progress being made in defeating the insurgency and in achieving the United States' war objectives. The erosion is further reflected in declining public support for the war, and in the public's confidence in the Bush Administration's competence.

### **The American Soldier**

The Army and Marine Corps are bearing the overwhelming burden within the US military for waging counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. Moreover, the United States has a volunteer military. Unlike a conscript military, where replacements are drafted to fill out depleted ranks, a volunteer military must induce citizens to join the armed forces and to re-enlist in numbers sufficient to achieve the nation's war objectives. Consequently, the American soldier (and marine) are a center of gravity. Do soldiers and marines believe in the cause for which they are called upon to sacrifice so much? Do they believe they are being competently led? That the war can be won? That it will be won? That they have the support of the American people? If the answer to any of these questions is negative, there could well be an erosion in morale, threatening the Army's and the Marine Corps' ability to maintain sufficient forces to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion.



This concern is particularly acute in the Army's case. Soldiers have re-enlisted in numbers that exceed the Army's goals, for most (but not all) ranks. When combined with the Army's recruiting shortfalls, it may indicate this center of gravity, like American public support, is threatened.

As long as the American public views the war as one of choice, rather than one of necessity, the Army and Marines will find themselves in a race against time—attempting to create an effective Iraqi internal security force and corresponding civil structure before the patience of the US centers of gravity—the American People and American Soldier—are exhausted. As in most wars, time is an important, and perhaps a critical factor in assessing the balance between the warring parties.

### **Asymmetries in the Centers of Gravity**

Not only is the United States suffering erosion in at least two of the war's three centers of gravity, but it also faces key negative asymmetries with respect to the competition. Specifically, the United States must secure all three centers of gravity to defeat the insurgency. The insurgents, on the other hand, must secure only one center of gravity.

Complicating matters further, US efforts to secure one center of gravity may undermine attempts to secure the others. For example, increasing US force levels in Iraq to enhance population security may undermine popular support for the war among Americans (who wonder why Iraqi security forces are not assuming a greater share of the burden for fighting the war) and lead to recruitment and retention problems among US soldiers, who may grow weary of the frequent deployments they have to endure.

Thus any effective US strategy for defeating the insurgency must achieve a balance among the three centers of gravity. The balance must be such that the effort to make progress in securing one of the three never risks losing either of the other two.

## **THE WAR OF IDEAS**

While maintaining popular support for the war effort has always been important, in the case of this war it is especially salient. This is because there is no question of Coalition forces being defeated on the battlefield. The insurgent groups seek to prevail by convincing the United States to withdraw its forces, creating a chaotic situation the insurgents might exploit to achieve their aims. Achieving this necessarily involves depleting the will of the Iraqi people, and the American people and their soldiers to persist. Thus the perceptions of the Iraqi people, US public, and American soldier are critical to the success of the war effort.

To date, the insurgents have been more successful than the Iraqi Government and the Coalition in presenting the image of the war they desire the public to accept. The insurgents want to depict an Iraq in a constant state of violence and upheaval, one in which it is the Coalition and government forces that commit acts of cruelty against Iraqis, and where insurgent violence is justified in the name of the Islamic faith. While the western media have attempted to maintain a neutral stance on the conflict in line with their journalistic traditions, the Arab World media in

general, and *al-Jazeera* in particular, have been cited as propaganda arms of the various insurgent movements.

## **A WAR OF INTELLIGENCE**

This war is not only a war of ideas, but also one of intelligence. The insurgents will be defeated if government/Coalition forces know who the insurgents are and where they are. This intelligence will come primarily from the Iraqi people, and the Iraqi people will provide it only if they share the Coalition's objectives, believe the Coalition will win, and that the Coalition can protect them from insurgent acts of retribution. Simply stated, key intelligence is more likely to be forthcoming if the government and the Coalition have won the "hearts and minds" of the Iraqi people. Thus there is a link between military operations, security operations, reconstruction, progress in developing a democracy in which all Iraqis stand to benefit, and intelligence. Consequently, there is a premium on the coordination of various government elements. Simply stated, just as conventional military operations are enhanced by a military capable of conducting combined arms operations, defeating an insurgency requires combined interagency operations.

## **ON STRATEGY**

What kind of strategy might best incorporate these elements? There are no shortage of candidates. Governments have been challenged by insurgent movements since antiquity. The Romans, for example, were noted for ruthlessly attacking both the insurgents and the populations from which they sprung. The British, who could also be brutal at times, also resorted to a strategy of "divide and conquer" on occasion, especially when they could pit one local group against another in a way that would minimize the risks to the empire without overextending their military. Given America's goals in Iraq, neither approach recommends itself. Yet another alternative is a strategy of attrition, in which the counterinsurgent forces focus on outlasting the insurgents and gradually grinding them down. A version of this strategy was pursued by the US military and its South Vietnamese allies for much of the 1960s. This milder form of the Roman strategy of annihilation failed in Vietnam, and its emphasis on generating enemy casualties as a means of eroding his strength risks alienating the Iraqi population the Coalition is trying to win over.

Finally, there is what might be termed the "oil spot" strategy, which relies on "classical" counterinsurgency methods that center on progressively securing the population as the best means to win the intelligence war and to attrit—albeit indirectly—the insurgent forces. This strategy emphasizes "offensive" operations that accord priority to providing security to the Iraqi people as a central element in winning their "hearts and minds," thereby denying support to the insurgents. It is the strategy most likely to yield success, given US objectives in Iraq and its self-imposed constraints on the application of military power.

Given that there are insufficient forces to secure all of Iraq simultaneously, the country must be secured sequentially. Priority in providing security and reconstruction should go to the 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces that are fairly secure. Second priority should be accorded to those areas targeted for oil spot offensives. Baghdad and Mosul are particularly attractive areas for which to begin these offensives.

To alleviate some of the strain on US public opinion and the Army and Marine Corps, US force levels should be reduced significantly. This can be accomplished, while maintaining overall US force effectiveness, through three changes in the military's approach to the war. First, sweep operations similar to the search and destroy operations of the Vietnam War era must be dramatically curtailed. This will free up some troops for higher priority operations. Second, the US Army's embedding of soldiers in newly formed Iraqi security force units can be expanded. This will enable the Iraqi units to progress more rapidly in their training, and accelerate their assuming a greater responsibility for the war effort. Third, exceptional US field commanders should remain in Iraq, and not be rotated out of the theater. History clearly shows that exceptional commanders are "force multipliers"—they greatly enhance the effectiveness of their forces. If executed in its entirety, the strategy could enable a substantial near-term reduction in US force levels without seriously diminishing overall military effectiveness.

In cases where one is trying to create a democracy, there must be a political strategy as well. In Iraq, the political strategy centers around creating the conditions for the "Grand Bargain"—a broad-based coalition among the Iraqi people that will enable the formation and sustainment of Iraqi civil and security forces committed to the defeat of the insurgency and the goal of creating a unified, democratic Iraq. To achieve this, the Grand Bargain must cut across key Iraqi religious, ethnic and tribal groups. This requires that the Sunni insurgency be defeated and the Sunnis join the political process.

What might motivate Iraq's principal groups to join together? As a point of departure, it can be argued that the Kurds want the insurgency defeated and a long-term US military presence to protect them against internal and external threats (e.g., Iran, Turkey). A significant Sunni element desires that the insurgency be defeated, and may be willing to accept a much-reduced, long-term US presence to hedge against both Shiite domination and Iranian dominance of a Shiite-led government. Finally, a significant Shiite element wants the insurgency defeated and may accept a long-term US presence to guard against Iranian domination, and to avoid a civil war that would threaten the Shiite's majority advantage in an Iraqi democracy. If these assumptions prove out, the basis for a grand bargain exists. To be sure, the Grand Bargain will not be easy to achieve; it will require inspired diplomacy over a protracted period of time.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF METRICS**

Metrics must be established that both guide the translation of the oil spot strategy and the associated Grand Bargain into practice, and that enable the Coalition to gauge progress—and to demonstrate it to the public. While a detailed discussion of metrics is beyond the scope of this assessment, a preliminary analysis finds that the public is often focused on the wrong metrics for gauging progress in the war. This is largely a consequence of the US Government's propensity to use metrics, such as the number of enemy killed in action ("body count"), the number of Iraqi security forces trained, and the dollar value of reconstruction projects, that do not convey a clear picture of how the war is progressing. One consequence of this is the string of statements by senior US officials and military leaders citing progress in defeating the insurgency that have not been substantiated over time.

A different set of metrics needs to be emphasized. Those metrics must link military and political operations to the war's centers of gravity. Those metrics associated with military operations should provide some indication as to how the Iraqi government and the Coalition are progressing in winning the intelligence war, which will be crucial in determining the war's outcome. An evaluation of the data associated with these metrics indicates that, overall, some progress is being made toward defeating the insurgency. However, as befits the character of insurgency warfare, this progress is being made at a slow pace. Thus it is not clear whether sufficient progress will be made in time to forestall the gradual loss of any one of the three centers of gravity. The strategy presented in this assessment is an attempt to accelerate the insurgents' defeat, while at the same time shoring up the three centers of gravity the United States must secure in order to achieve its war objectives.



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# I. THE NATURE OF INSURGENCY WARFARE

*This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him . . . . It requires in those situations where we must counter it . . . . a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.*

John F. Kennedy

These words were spoken by President Kennedy as he addressed the graduating class at West Point in June 1962. On that occasion the president referred to insurgent movements in places like Colombia, Laos and Vietnam. Today, over forty years later, they also sum up the challenge facing the United States and its allies in Iraq.

This paper is an interim assessment of the current war between United States, Coalition and indigenous Iraqi forces loyal to the fledgling Baghdad regime, and insurgent forces dominated by Sunni Arab remnants of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime and radical Islamists. The following issues are addressed:

- What is the character of the conflict? What kind of war is the United States fighting?
- What are the United States' objectives? The enemy's?
- Where is the center of gravity in this war?
- What is the balance of capabilities between the United States and its allies, and those of the enemy?
- What strategy is the enemy pursuing?
- What strategy might the US pursue?
- How should success be measured?
- How is success being measured?

## INSURGENCY WARFARE

Since the Cold War's end, the US military has emerged as by far the world's most capable fighting force. So profound is its dominance that those seeking to describe it find themselves

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1967), p. 414.

going back two millennia, to the Roman legions. As the Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003 demonstrated, and as was reinforced in the Balkan War of 1999 and the Afghan War of 2001, the US military is so dominant in conventional forms of warfare that America's adversaries are, at present, seeking shelter at the extreme ends of the conflict spectrum. At the high end, states like Iran and North Korea are actively pursuing nuclear arsenals. At the lower end, hostile groups such as al Qaeda, the Taliban, remnants of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime and similar groups engage in terrorism and insurgency warfare, albeit in their modern forms.

The Second Gulf War did not begin as an insurgency. Its initial phase was primarily conventional in nature. However, with the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad, the enemy adopted insurgency warfare in an attempt to continue the war and eventually win it. In addition, radical Islamists, already at war with the United States, established several organizations within Iraq, the most notorious of which is al Qaeda in Iraq. These organizations have attracted significant numbers of radical Islamists from abroad and are waging their own campaign to seize power and impose a Taliban-like regime on Iraq.

Relative to conventional war, in an insurgency far greater weight is accorded to political, social and economic factors than to military factors. As Michael Howard observed, the social dimension of strategy assumes great importance, since it is the "attitude of the people upon whose commitment and readiness for self-denial" that enables the mobilization of military capability to continue the conflict.<sup>3</sup> As will be discussed presently, the character of insurgency warfare and the strong role played by the social dimension of strategy are important factors in identifying the conflict's centers of gravity.

## **INSURGENCY WARFARE**

An insurgency is a protracted, multi-phased struggle, whose objective is to overthrow the existing order. Insurgencies traditionally comprise three phases: first, insurgent agitation and proselytization among the mass populace—the phase of contention; second, overt violence, guerrilla operations, and the establishment of sanctuaries—the equilibrium phase; and third, open warfare between insurgent and government forces designed to topple the existing regime—the counteroffensive phase.

Specifically, Phase I revolves around founding a political movement and creating cadres by recruiting elements of the population. In Iraq, these movements were ready-made, the product of the US-led military operation to depose Saddam Hussein and his Ba'athist Party. Remnants of that party, which is dominated by Sunni Muslim Arabs, form one insurgent group. Another

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1979, p. 977. As Howard notes, in suppressing the United States' own insurrection during its civil war, "the logistical potential of the North would have been of negligible value without the [population's] determination to use it." He goes on to say that during the Vietnam War era, "We appear to be depending on the technological dimension of strategy to the detriment of its operational requirements, while we ignore its societal implications altogether—something which our potential adversaries, very wisely, show no indication of doing." True in the wake of the Vietnam War, these words resonate today as well following the US Government's problems in planning and executing so-called "Phase 4" or post-conflict operations in Iraq.

group is comprised primarily of radical Islamists, or jihadists, most of whom have infiltrated Iraq from abroad. Phase I operations are characterized by efforts to expand the cadres and by acts of terror, such as murder, assassination and sabotage against the regime in power.

In Phase II operations, the insurgents expand their base of support through attacks on government facilities and leaders, and the nation's infrastructure. Hit-and-run guerrilla assaults against vulnerable regime forces (e.g., convoys) become common. Efforts are made to gain control over certain elements of the population, such as in remote areas (e.g., mountains, jungles) where the regime's power is weak or in areas where the regime's forces find it difficult to operate (e.g., urban ghettos). Guerrilla units are formed from this expanding base of support. As in Phase I, the link between the population and the insurgents in Phase II is critical. Unless they maintain their access to the population and gain its support (either voluntarily or through coercion), the insurgents cannot extend their control. Success in Phases I and II results in a dramatic expansion of insurgent support, enabling Phase III operations.

In Phase III the regime finds itself confronting main-force insurgent formations that are able to take on the government's forces in open warfare. However, activities consistent with Phase I and II operations continue as well. The insurgent's goal at this point is to create the impression of irresistible momentum that will eviscerate the morale of the regime's forces and trigger a massive popular uprising, leading to regime collapse.

In Iraq, US and other Coalition forces, along with indigenous Iraqi forces, are fighting against insurgents whose operations are characteristic of Phase I and lower Phase II operations. While the insurgents are engaged in operations characteristic of both Phase I and Phase II, they rarely appear in significant numbers.

While time, access to the population, and irregular warfare tactics are important components of any insurgent movement, the insurgency itself is enabled by two essential elements: a popular cause and an ineffective government domestic security apparatus. The former provides the insurgent leadership with the means to attract a cadre of followers and, ideally, mass support.<sup>4</sup> It is helpful if the insurgents can advocate or embody a cause that the government cannot espouse without risking loss of power (e.g., nationalism; a new social or economic order). Absence of local law enforcement allows the insurgents to progress through Phase I, when they are at their weakest. This latter condition clearly existed in Iraq following the end of major US combat operations in May 2003.

The ability of insurgents to obtain sanctuary, to have the support of an external power, and to exploit favorable geographic conditions can be critical to their prospects for success or failure. For example, during the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese Communists were able to utilize the

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<sup>4</sup> In Iraq the popular cause of nationalism and evicting the "infidels" is supplemented by a long tradition of violent struggles for power. Thus an insurgent group's accumulation of military capability goes beyond defeating Coalition forces. It also serves to provide the means to successfully defeat rival groups and seize power if and when the current regime is toppled. In Iraq, Sunni insurgents are motivated by other factors as well, to include resentment over the loss of their dominant role in Iraq; the prospect of losing access to oil revenues, the country's principal source of wealth; and a sense that Iran is trying to subvert the new government.



sanctuaries of North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to rest and refit their forces, while exploiting the country's long borders and rugged terrain to facilitate infiltration. They also obtained much of their equipment and munitions from external powers, particularly the Soviet Union and China. The Greek Communists' loss of a geographic sanctuary was a significant factor in their defeat after World War II, while the communist Huk rebellion in the Philippines was isolated owing to that nation's archipelago geography, which limited the insurgent's freedom of movement and facilitated government efforts to isolate them. The insurgent movements in Iraq enjoy sanctuary in (and support from) Syria and Iran, and quite likely other Arab states as well (e.g., Saudi Arabia).<sup>5</sup>

## COMPETITORS AND THEIR OBJECTIVES

*We have declared a fierce war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology.*<sup>6</sup>

Abu Musab Zarqawi

The insurgency plaguing Iraq has three sources. One is the lack of effective US planning for the period following the end of major combat operations in Iraq, typically referred to as "Phase Four" operations.<sup>7</sup> The security vacuum that ensued gave hostile elements that clearly opposed the Coalition's goals the opportunity to organize. The poorly designed reconstruction plan, implemented at a glacial pace, provided the insurgents with a large pool of unemployed Iraqis from which to recruit. The second source is Iraq's tradition of rule by those best able to seize power through violent struggle. The United States' often unclear signals, oscillating between President Bush's "staying-the-course" declarations and calls by some political leaders (and increasing numbers of Americans) to quickly turn security over to an infant Iraqi government, offer the enemy the prospect that American troops may depart prematurely,<sup>8</sup> creating the

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<sup>5</sup> Joel Brinkley, "American Envoy Says Syria Assists Training of Terrorists," *New York Times*, September 13, 2005; and Michael Ware, "Inside Iran's Secret War for Iraq," *Time*, August 22, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Jackie Spinner, "Militant Declares War on Iraqi Vote," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "The Strategy to Secure Did Not Foresee a 2<sup>nd</sup> War," *New York Times*, October 19, 2004; Warren P. Strobel and John Walcott, "Post War Planning Non-Existent," *Knight-Ridder Newspapers*, October 17, 2004; Michael R. Gordon, "Poor Intelligence Mised Troops About Risk of Drawn-Out War," *New York Times*, October 20, 2004; Walter Pincus, "Memo: US Lacked Full Postwar Iraq Plan," *Washington Post*, June 12, 2005; and Bradley Graham, "Prewar Memo Warned of Gaps in Iraq Plans," *Washington Post*, August 18, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in his speech on June 28, 2005, President Bush stated

Some contend that we should set a deadline for withdrawing U.S. forces. Let me explain why that would be a serious mistake. Setting an artificial timetable would send the wrong message to the Iraqis, who need to know that America will not leave before the job is done. It would send the wrong message to our troops, who need to know that we are serious about completing the mission they are risking their lives to achieve. And it would send the wrong message to the enemy, who would know that all they have to do is to wait us out. We will stay in Iraq as long as we are needed, and not a day longer.

opportunity for an Iraqi power scrum.<sup>9</sup> Finally, jihadists have made Iraq a major theater in their war against the United States. The absence of security in Iraq and the presence of some 160,000 US troops have attracted a small, but ruthless group of radical Islamists to this “target-rich” environment.<sup>10</sup>

Two groups dominate the insurgency: Sunni Arab Ba’athists and foreign jihadists.<sup>11</sup> While precise estimates of insurgent strength are difficult to establish, the former group is clearly greater in size, numbering perhaps 20,000, while jihadist numbers are estimated to be less than 1,000.<sup>12</sup> The Ba’athists—former members of Saddam Hussein’s ruling elite—hope to restore

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See George W. Bush, Presidential Address to the Nation, June 28, 2005, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/06/print/20050628-7.html>. Yet the president’s commander in the field, General George Casey, predicted in March 2005 that there could be a significant reduction in US troops by early 2006. While one can argue that neither the president nor the general contradicted one another, it is also possible to argue that the general’s remarks may create false hopes among Americans and US troops, and unwarranted anxiety among Iraqis. Indeed, General Casey’s statement and other reports of Coalition force drawdowns have been repudiated by the White House. General Casey later elaborated on his statement, declaring that any US withdrawal would have to be “condition-based,” i.e., subject to a range of factors, principal among them achieving sufficient progress in standing up capable Iraqi Security Forces. See “Two Years in Iraq: Colation Requires Work, Commitment,” *US Fed News*, March 23, 2005; and Bradley Graham, “Little Change in Troop Levels Expected Soon,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 2005, p. A16. While the administration may have sent confusing signals, it is American public opinion that conveys a mixed message to friend and foe alike. Recent public opinion polls show a substantial number of Americans want US troops withdrawn from Iraq, and an even greater number approves of at least some reduction in troop strength. According to an NBC News—Wall Street Journal poll on Iraq in October 2005, roughly 58% of respondents thought the US should reduce troop levels once elections have been held.

<sup>9</sup> This is also why the Shiia Arabs and the Kurds, while generally supporting the new government, have refused to disband their own militias.

<sup>10</sup> According to Bernard Lewis, radical Muslims, particularly in the Middle East, are animated in large measure from their painful awareness “of how badly things have gone wrong, . . . [of] how far they were falling behind not only the advanced West, but also the advancing East . . . and practically everywhere else in terms of standard of living, achievement, and, more generally, human and cultural development. Even more painful than these differences are the disparities between groups of people in the Middle East itself.” The radical Islamists see democracy as “part of the greater evil emanating from the West, . . . an alien and infidel intrusion, part of the larger and more pernicious influence of the Great Satan and his cohorts.” Bernard Lewis, “Freedom and Justice in the Modern Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2005, pp. 47-48.

<sup>11</sup> These two groups can be further divided into subgroups, as befits the character of this insurgency, which has no clear command structure. The Sunni groups are three. The Iraqi National Islamic Resistance emerged in July 2003. It operates primarily west of Baghdad. Its target is primarily US forces. Its goals are to terminate US presence and create an Iraqi state based on Islamic principles. The National Front for the Liberation of Iraq also was formed shortly after the end of major combat operations, and is an umbrella group of sorts for about 10 small resistance groups. The Iraqi Resistance Islamic Front appeared in May 2004. Other small factions that may have been absorbed by other insurgent elements include the Hamzah Faction, the Iraq Liberation Army, Awakening and Holy War, the White Banners, and the al-Haq Army. There are two insurgent groups that seek a Ba’athist restoration. The al-Awdah is concentrated in the area around Takrit, and is comprised of former regime intelligence operatives, and Saddam’s Fedayeen, which was formed before the March 2003 invasion. It may have been disbanded, with many members joining radical Islamist insurgent groups. Two Shiite groups that have resisted the new Iraqi government and the Coalition on occasion are the Al-Sadr group and the Imami Ali Bin-Abi Talib Jihadi Brigades. The former center on the al-Mahdi Army, estimated at 10-15,000 youths, although US estimates place its size at less than half that number. The latter group emerged in October 2003 to resist the foreign occupation of Iraq. Finally, there is the group of radical Islamist factions, about a half dozen or so, of which most share the goals espoused by al Qaeda. See Pamela Hess, “Iraqi Newspaper Identifies Insurgent Groups,” *United Press International*, September 24, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Background Briefing by a Senior US Military Officer, The Combined Press Information Center, June 2, 2005. The US command in Iraq asserts that, despite their small numbers, the radical Islamists now present “the greatest threat to Iraq.” This reinforces the conclusion that the insurgents’ objective is to create a condition of chaos, which will

themselves to power. The jihadists want to inflict a defeat on the United States, deal a blow to its influence in the region, and establish a radical Islamist state in Iraq on the way toward their ultimate goal of re-establishing an Islamic caliphate.

Both insurgent groups know they cannot defeat the US-led Coalition militarily. Their best chance of success is through a coup, in which a small, well-disciplined group with foreign backing seizes power from a weak, demoralized regime in the wake of a premature US withdrawal. Their model is not that of Mao Zedong or Ho Chi Minh, who came to power on a wave of mass popular support. Rather, their approach is more along the lines of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin, who with a small but highly disciplined and utterly ruthless group, seized power in the midst of the chaos that engulfed Russia in the autumn of 1917.<sup>13</sup> Toward this end, the insurgents are fighting to prevent the establishment of a legitimate, democratic government in Baghdad and to extend and deepen the pervasive absence of security in many parts of the country. By creating an atmosphere of intimidation, insecurity and despair, the insurgents hope to undermine support for the government and erode US popular support for the war effort to defeat them.<sup>14</sup> Brazen attacks on government leaders and police send a chilling message to the Iraqi people: if the government cannot even protect its own, how can it protect you?<sup>15</sup> Sabotage of Iraq's national infrastructure underscores the government's failure to provide basic services such as water and electricity and to sustain the oil production upon which Iraq's economic welfare depends. By inflicting casualties on US forces, the insurgents seek to hasten a US withdrawal by raising the cost of continued American involvement and weakening support for the war back home. Indeed, the one objective that Iraq's insurgent groups can agree upon is their desire to force the United States out of Iraq.

The insurgents have proved themselves resilient and resourceful, but they have also shown serious weaknesses. For example, compared to the United States' opponents in Vietnam, they are a relatively small and isolated group numbering no more than a few tens of thousands, whereas

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give them the greatest opportunity to seize power. To facilitate this, the radical Islamists are seeking to foster a civil war between Sunni and Shiite Arabs, hoping that this will convince the United States to withdraw its forces. Thus Zarqawi is seen to be pursuing an "anti-US, anti-Shiite campaign" which commands the loyalty of an increasing number of Sunni insurgents. Bradley Graham, "Zarqawi 'Hijacked' Insurgency," *Washington Post*, September 28, 2005. This indicates a shift in the US position. Contrast this with the statement, made less than an year ago by General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He stated "The elements of the former Ba'athists, the Republican Guard and the Iraqi intelligence are the real threat." "Batthists Main Threat," *Bahrain Tribune*, December 16, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> This approach recalls Napoleon's comment that "I found the crown of France lying in the gutter, and I picked it up with my sword." See [http://uk.encyarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761566988/Napoleon\\_I.html](http://uk.encyarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761566988/Napoleon_I.html).

<sup>14</sup> According to the US Intelligence Community, the Iraqi insurgents have three main goals: to cripple the Iraqi government by demonstrating its failure to protect its citizens and its officials (including police officers); fomenting Sunni-Shiite violence; and to undermine public and political support for the war in the United States. Warren P. Strobel, Jonathan S. Landay and John Walcott, "Intelligence Reports Say Outlook is Grim in Iraq," *Miami Herald*, January 18, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the jihadists have targeted many innocent Iraqis, even those with no history of collaborating with the government or the Coalition. According to the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, "The killing of infidels by any method including martyrdom [suicide] operations has been sanctified by many Islamic scholars even if it means killing innocent Muslims." Cited in Jeffrey Fleishman, "Zarqawi Reportedly Calls for Shift in Strategy," *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 2005.

the Vietnamese Communists counted roughly ten times that number. Iraqi insurgents rarely fight in groups as large as 100; in Vietnam, US forces often encountered well-coordinated enemy formations of far greater size. The Vietnamese Communists, veterans of over two decades of nearly continuous war against the Japanese, French, and South Vietnamese, were also far better trained and led than their Iraqi counterparts and enjoyed external backing from China and the Soviet Union. Support provided to Iraqi insurgents by Iran, Syria, and radical Islamists pales in comparison.<sup>16</sup>

Having said this, it is clear that several external powers, fearing the consequences of American success, while also sensing American weakness, have maneuvered to gain advantage in the current conflict and hedge against a potential lack of US resolve. A number of Sunni Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Syria, have provided support, directly or indirectly, to the Sunni insurgent movement and the jihadists.<sup>17</sup> They are concerned that fellow Sunni Arabs may reap the whirlwind they have sewn over decades through their persecution of the Shiites and Kurds. The Saudis also fear that American fecklessness will lead to a premature withdrawal of US troops, leaving Iraq in a state of civil war between Sunnis and Shiites.<sup>18</sup> Neither Syria nor Saudi Arabia wants to see an Iranian-dominated Iraq emerge from such a conflict. They also fear US success, which might lead to a democratic Iraq whose gains might lead other Arabs/Muslims to challenge their own despotic regimes. Thus the frontline Sunni Arab states are hedging against the possibility that the Iran-Iraq war may be refought, only this time in within Iraq as opposed to along its borders.

Similar support has been provided by Iran, only its efforts are concentrated on aiding certain Shiite groups and, in some cases, the jihadists.<sup>19</sup> Like the Sunni Arab states and Turkey, Iran

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<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between the ongoing insurgency in Iraq and the Vietnamese Communist insurgency of the 1960s and 70s, see Appendix A: Iraq and Vietnam.

<sup>17</sup> Syria is aiding and abetting the Sunni insurgents, and also serving as a way station for radical Islamists on their way to Iraq. There are reports of insurgent training camps in Syria, probably financed by money spirited out of Iraq by the Ba'athists before Saddam Hussein was deposed. The Syrian foreign minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, has stated that "Syria's interest is to see the invaders defeated in Iraq. The resistance of the Iraqis is extremely important. It is a heroic resistance to the US-British occupation of their country." "Serious About Syria?" *The Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2004, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> As Prince Saud al-Faisal put it in referring to Iraq, "There is no dynamic pulling the nation together. All the dynamics are pulling the country apart." He cited Iraq's collapse into a civil war as "the main worry of all [Iraq's] neighbors." Joel Brinkley, "Saudi Warns US Iraq May Face Disintegration," *New York Times*, September 23, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Iran has been extremely active in Iraq. The Iranian intelligence service has been funneling millions of dollars and many operatives into Iraq to promote Shiite groups and candidates with close ties to Teheran. According to several Iraqi officials, Iran has recruited assassination squads to eliminate potential rivals in Iraq. There are reports that Iraq has established training camps to train suicide bombers. According to other reports, Iran's closest ally in Iraq is the insurgent leader, Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani, who controls a group of several hundred. There is also cause to believe that the Iranians are paying the salaries of over 10,000 members of the Badr Shiite militia, the armed wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the leading political party in Iraq's ruling alliance. Jordanian intelligence, which may be suspect, estimates that as many as a million Iranians have infiltrated into southern Iraq. Among the other anti-US groups in Iraq receiving support from Iran are Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, which received arms and volunteers from Iran during its battles with US and British troops in 2004. Finally, Iran has been accused of supplying insurgents with more powerful and sophisticated high explosives. See Edward T. Pound, "The Iran Connection," *US News & World Report*, November 22, 2004; David Ignatius, "How Iran is Winning Iraq," *Washington Post*, December 17, 2004; Thomas Friedman, "A Political Arabesque," *New York Times*, December 19, 2004; Oliver Poole, "Shias 'Infiltrated by Iran' to Control Iraqi Police Force," *London Daily*

wants to be well-positioned if the war devolves into a conflict along sectarian lines. Unlike Turkey, Iran fears US success, not failure. A democratic Iraq could lead to instability within Iran, given the general dissatisfaction of its people with the mullahs that have ruled the country for over a quarter century.<sup>20</sup>

Turkey is concerned that the United States may fail to achieve its war objective of a unified, democratic Iraq. Ankara has made it clear that it will not tolerate an independent Kurdish state on its border.<sup>21</sup> Turkey fears this could exacerbate longstanding difficulties with its own Kurdish population.

In short, in a part of the world where strength and resolve are respected and weakness and vacillation exploited, the perception of US fecklessness has a compounding negative effect. It both discourages America's potential allies in this war, and encourages its enemies. This works to further undermine the US public's resolve and may, over time, deplete the US military's morale.

The Iraqi insurgents also are relatively isolated from the Iraqi people. Sunni Arab Muslims, which comprise the overwhelming majority of insurgent forces, account for roughly 20 percent of Iraq's population, and the jihadists are mostly foreigners.<sup>22</sup> Neither of these movements has any chance of stimulating a broad-based uprising involving Arab Shiites and Kurds. Indeed, despite the hardships endured by the Iraqi people, there has been nothing even approaching a mass revolt against the US-led forces or the fledgling Iraqi government. Most important, the insurgents have no positive message to inspire voluntary support from many Iraqis. A Ba'athist restoration offers only a return to the misery of Saddam's rule. The jihadists promise to do for Iraq what radical Islamists have done for Afghanistan and Iran: introduce their own reign of terror and repression.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, the insurgent's success depends on continued disorder to forestall the creation of a stable, democratic Iraq and to erode the Coalition's willingness to persist and prevail. The insurgents are betting that the United States lacks sufficient staying power to prevail. As evidence they cite the US withdrawal from Somalia after the "Black Hawk Down" engagement

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*Telegraph*, April 29, 2005; Nicholas Birch, "Iran Suspected of Backing New Suicide Attacks," *Washington Times*, July 12, 2005, p. 13; "Iran Shipping Iraqi Rebels Powerful Bombs, NBC Says," *Washington Times*, August 5, 2005, p. 12; Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Iran's Strategy," *Washington Times*, August 18, 2005, p. 14; F. Michael Maloof, "Eerie Historical Parallels," *Washington Times*, August 28, 2005; and Richard Beeston, "Two Years On, Iran is the Only Clear Winner of War on Saddam," *London Times*, September 23, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, "Freedom and Justice in the Modern Middle East," p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Joel Brinkley, "Saudi Warns US Iraq May Face Disintegration," *New York Times*, September 23, 2005. Prime Minister Erdogan declared that "Turkey is adamant about maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity . . ." Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "Turkey is Committed to the New Iraq," *Wall Street Journal*, August 30, 2005, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of Iraq's demographics, see Appendix B, Demography.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi, October 11, 2005, available at [http://www.dni.gov/release\\_letter\\_101105.html](http://www.dni.gov/release_letter_101105.html).

in Mogadishu.<sup>24</sup> If they succeed in outlasting the Americans, the Ba'athist insurgents hope that support from Syria and other Arab states will enable them to topple the infant Baghdad regime. This would likely trigger a civil war with Shiite Arab Iraqis supported by Iran. Radical Islamists would have perhaps their best chance of seizing power under these chaotic conditions.

Even those groups whose disposition toward the US goals is relatively positive, such as the Kurds, are strongly motivated to maintain armed forces. The reason is that, should the United States fail to establish a stable regime in Iraq, the road to power will almost certainly be determined by force of arms. Put another way, if the United States fails to realize its objectives, the major national groups will almost certainly engage in a civil war to determine Iraq's future. They will likely be joined by other elements as well, both those internal to Iraq (e.g., the jihadists) and foreign powers, such as Iran, many Sunni Arab states (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria), and Turkey, which adamantly opposes the creation of an autonomous Kurdish state.

As for the United States, its objectives were outlined by President Bush in his May 2004 speech at the Army War College, when he called for an Iraq in which “. . . a free, representative government that serves its people and fights on their behalf.”<sup>25</sup>

Generally speaking, the United States' war objectives are as follows:

- Helping Iraqis create a stable democracy that can offer the Arab world a “third way” alternative of government beyond the despotism of dictators and monarchs, and the repression of radical Islamism.
- Dealing radical Islamists a major setback in Iraq, which has emerged as the central front in their war with America.
- Dissuading Iraq from developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The administration's “third way” objective is a bold attempt to challenge the radical Islamist monopoly as the only alternative for Muslims, and Arabs in particular, who are increasingly frustrated by despotic strongmen or monarchs (many of whom are friendly to the United States) whose regimes have failed to advance their people's welfare.<sup>26</sup> Put simply, this war is being

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<sup>24</sup> Frontline interview with Osama bin Laden, May 1998, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binlader/who/interview.html>.

<sup>25</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President on Iraq and the War on Terror,” delivered on May 24, 2004, at the United States Army War College, Carlisle, PA, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040524-10.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Following the publication of the first UN Arab Human Development Report in 2002, Charles Krauthammer wrote, “Underlying most of the grievances is a sense that Islam has lost its rightful place of dominance, the place it enjoyed half a millennium ago . . . . This feeling of a civilization in decline—and the adoption of terror and intimidation as the road to restoration—is echoed in a recent United Nations report that spoke frankly of the abject Arab failure to modernize.” Charles Krauthammer, “Violence and Islam,” *Washington Post*, December 6, 2002.

fought for much higher stakes than Iraq alone, by both the United States and the radical Islamists.<sup>27</sup>

The US-led Coalition comprises military forces from a wide range of allied states. Among the major and middle-class powers providing troops are the Australians, British, Dutch, Italians, Japanese, South Koreans and Ukrainians. Of these, the British force is by far the largest and most capable. Owing to their comparatively low numbers—Coalition forces number roughly 23,000 troops—and the limited prospects for any increase in their size, the principal growth in Coalition combat capability is almost certainly going to have to come from creating indigenous Iraqi forces who support the nascent regime in Baghdad.<sup>28</sup>

## DEFEATING AN INSURGENCY

While the United States does not confront a unified, coherent enemy in Iraq, the insurgent elements are pursuing traditional insurgent strategies and tactics. The insurgents are clearly too weak to challenge Coalition forces openly, and consequently are targeting both the Iraqi population and public opinion in the Coalition states.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the counterinsurgent forces suffer from a discrimination problem—they cannot easily distinguish insurgents from the general population. Defeating them requires time, both to provide counterinsurgent forces with an understanding of the environment in which the insurgent forces are operating, and to win the hearts and minds of the population, which will produce the intelligence needed to distinguish the enemy from noncombatants.

Put another way, Coalition forces in Iraq have overwhelming advantages in most measures of military capability, such as firepower, mobility, etc. If they know *who* the insurgents are, and *where* they are, the insurgency will collapse. Thus counterinsurgency operations are typically dominated by the battle for intelligence. The key source of intelligence on the insurgents is the population. The people know best who among them are insurgents or are collaborating with the insurgency.

Thus the key to defeating an insurgency is to attack it at the source of its strength: the population. If the counterinsurgent forces can deny the insurgents access to the people, they become like fish out of water, lacking sources of manpower and information.<sup>30</sup> The insurgents' problem is further compounded if the people feel secure enough from retribution to provide counterinsurgent forces

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<sup>27</sup> The Iranians have ambitious goals as well. They include dealing the United States a major defeat, and engineering the rise of a friendly, Shiite-dominated regime in Baghdad.

<sup>28</sup> Coalition forces totals are from [Globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_coalition.htm), available at [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq\\_orbat\\_coalition.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_coalition.htm).

<sup>29</sup> Although the linkage between the perpetrators and insurgent forces is far from clear, Spain was coerced into withdrawing its forces from Iraq as a consequence of a terrorist train bombing in Madrid. Spanish troops were not evicted from Iraq by insurgent forces; rather, they were withdrawn because the Spanish electorate, in the wake of the Madrid bombings, voted in a government committed to ending Spain's participation in the conflict.

<sup>30</sup> The manpower problem would not likely apply to Zarqawi's radical Islamist insurgent movement, al Qaeda in Iraq, as most of these insurgents are foreigners.

with intelligence on insurgent movements and the identities of cadre members. The prospects for gaining such intelligence are further advanced if the counterinsurgent forces have won the people's "hearts," by offering them the prospect of a better way of life if the insurgents are defeated, in addition to having won their "minds" by providing personal security.

Should counterinsurgent forces instead focus their principal efforts on destroying insurgent forces, as is more typical of conventional warfare, and accord population security a lower priority, they will play into the insurgents' hands. Insurgent casualties suffered under these circumstances will rarely prove decisive, for several reasons. First, so long as the insurgents maintain access to the population, they can rarely be compelled to fight. Thus they can meter their casualties to keep them at tolerable levels, and replenish their losses. It is only when the insurgents become truly isolated from the population that the real attrition of their forces takes place.

In establishing security for the population, priority in intelligence efforts should focus first and foremost on the insurgent infrastructure, not insurgent forces. By rooting out the insurgent cadres that live among the people, insurgent forces lose their eyes and ears, and coercing the population becomes much more difficult. Moreover, the local inhabitants are likely to feel more secure if the principal threat to their security lies outside their town than if it exists among them. At present, the Iraqi insurgents are principally operating inside urban areas. Getting them out and keeping them out will require a persistent, protracted intelligence effort supported by a comparable security and reconstruction campaign. In this respect, the arrangements reached in the spring of 2004 with Sunni insurgents in Fallujah that allowed insurgent forces to operate in that city, as opposed to government security forces, was a clear setback for the Coalition's counterinsurgency campaign.

It bears repeating that security for the people is the *sine qua non* for winning their hearts and minds. Once a sufficient level of security is established, civic action, public works and other forms of reconstruction and intelligence operations against the local insurgent infrastructure can proceed within acceptable levels of risk.<sup>31</sup> Local elections can be held, and those who assume office need not fear for their lives. Local security forces can be established to protect their community's stake in a future that promises economic gain and access to the political power.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the political, economic and social elements of the counterinsurgency campaign must be

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<sup>31</sup> Actions of this type are designed to pre-empt the insurgents' cause by demonstrating to the people that their lives will be better if the counterinsurgents prevail, and that the people will ultimately decide their own fate, first through local elections, and then, as more areas of the country become secure, regional and national elections. This takes considerable time to bring about, and are one reason why defeating an insurgent movement tend to be a protracted enterprise. The approach taken in Iraq was the opposite; that is, elections were first held at the national level.

<sup>32</sup> These paramilitary forces should be drawn from the inhabitants of the area, and trained in counterinsurgency operations such as small-unit patrolling, night operations, and ambush. As with progress in various forms of civic action, this training process takes considerable time, far more than the time allotted for by Coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the United States has understandably tried to replace US troops with Iraqi security forces, the fact is that training indigenous security forces is not accomplished overnight. Hence Washington's dilemma: it needs to reduce its troop strength to alleviate the strain on its forces and to provide security with an "Iraqi Face"; yet that security can only be provided by well-trained forces, the creation of which will take considerable time to accomplish.



well integrated with the military dimension. There must be a unity of effort and a unity of command. For example, civic action, or reconstruction, in the absence of security merely increases the potential resources available to insurgent forces, or provides easy targets for insurgent acts of sabotage.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the government must set as a priority developing a secure environment in which reconstruction can take place. But this takes time. The reason is that the population's support is conditional on the government's ability to demonstrate convincingly that it has both the means and the will to persevere. As noted above, this critical factor has been lacking in the war against the insurgents, or at the least US resolve is in doubt.

## ON WHOSE SIDE IS TIME?

*The war is very long, and always think of this as the beginning. And always make the enemy think that yesterday was better than today.*<sup>34</sup>

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

*Zarqawi is on the ropes.*<sup>35</sup>

Major General Rick Lynch

Deputy Chief of Staff, Multinational Force, Iraq, September, 2005

Time is typically seen as an ally of the insurgents. The longer they persist, it is argued, the greater their chances for success, as the population begins to question the government's competence and doubt its ability to control the situation, and as foreign powers become weary of waging a seemingly endless war. Thus it is often said that insurgents win simply by not losing—i.e., by remaining a viable threat to the regime. Persistence is especially valuable in the case where the regime relies on the support of external powers to remain viable, as is the case in Iraq. Under these circumstances, the insurgents can make a powerful argument to the population, the essence of which is that while foreign troops will some day depart, the insurgents will remain, and therefore must be accommodated.<sup>36</sup> In these cases the insurgents, for all their weakness, take

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<sup>33</sup> Note that this does not imply the need for perfect security. A town or village can weather an occasional insurgent attack, even if some loss of life is involved, far better than it can endure a string of targeted assassinations that demonstrate the insurgents are living among them. The former implies a relatively high degree of security, while in the latter case security is effectively non-existent. Put another way, people can withstand acts of random violence (e.g., a car bomb in the town square) far better than targeted violence (e.g., the killing of those citizens who provide intelligence to the local police on insurgent activities).

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Eward Wong and James Glanz, "Rebels Attack in Central Iraq and the North," *New York Times*, November 16, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, "US Claims Success in Iraq Despite Onslaught," *Washington Post*, September 19, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Of course, the insurgents can also use the presence of foreign forces to appeal to the nationalism of the indigenous population. This can serve as a powerful legitimizing force.

solace in the belief that foreign counterinsurgent forces will eventually abandon the field and return home. The United States' track record in departing Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Lebanon, Haiti and Somalia after failing to stabilize these countries and defeat hostile insurgent movements or establish effective democratic institutions offers encouragement to Iraq's insurgent leaders to persist through difficult times. By contrast, the Sunni Arab insurgents have no place to go. They are in their native country, which they have dominated for generations. Owing to these circumstances, they are betting that time is very much on their side. Their goal is not to defeat the American military, but rather to exhaust the patience of the American people, precipitating a withdrawal of US forces. This is an objective they share with radical Islamist insurgents.<sup>37</sup> Plainly put, the current military stalemate between insurgents and the Iraqi government and Coalition forces favors the insurgents.

This situation contrasts sharply with the case in which indigenous counterinsurgent forces predominate. In that case, symmetry exists between the insurgents and the government, in the sense that the counterinsurgent forces are fighting for their own country's future. Moreover, unlike the Americans, indigenous forces cannot simply retire to a distant homeland sanctuary if the going gets tough. They realize that they will be subjected to insurgent acts of retribution should they lose the war. Consequently, a key factor in the war is the Coalition's ability to field effective Iraqi Security Forces whose loyalty is to a democratically elected government in Baghdad, and not to their own tribal or ethnic group.

Thus in the current war the counterinsurgent forces suffer from two serious disadvantages. First, the most proficient counterinsurgent forces by far are those of the United States military. Yet these forces are not likely to remain in that country at their present strength indefinitely. For victory to be assured, however, they cannot draw down dramatically until indigenous government forces establish that they can perform on a large enough scale, and with acceptable effectiveness, to contain and reduce the insurgency. If the population believes that US forces will "stay the course," it can be a powerful tool against the insurgents. It is thus important that Coalition members—the United States, in particular—take strong measures to convince both the insurgents and the Iraqi people of their determination to remain in country for however long it takes to win. However, it appears that neither the Iraqi people nor the American public desire a protracted deployment of US troops in Iraq, even though both the American people and a majority of Iraqis want the insurgency to be defeated. This presents an obvious dilemma for the Iraqi government and the Coalition. Again, the solution is seen in fielding capable Iraqi Security Forces loyal to the regime.

Indigenous Iraqi counterinsurgent forces, in theory, have far more at stake in the conflict than US and Coalition forces. Typically, insurgent movements are formed in opposition to an *existing* regime within the country. In the case of Iraq, however, the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein was deposed, leaving a vacuum in which US-led Coalition occupation forces took charge. Despite the formation of an interim Iraqi government, the ongoing insurgency is partly in reaction to this foreign occupation of Iraq, and partly in opposition to US-led efforts to form a

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<sup>37</sup> Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi, October 11, 2005, available at [http://www.dni.gov/release\\_letter\\_101105.html](http://www.dni.gov/release_letter_101105.html).

democratic regime, which, as it gains legitimacy, will likely make it more difficult for the insurgents to claim they are waging war against foreign occupiers. Yet it is not yet clear what kind of Iraq the country's various factions have in mind. Nor does any particular vision dominate. In short, the forces that must ultimately secure the victory against insurgent forces, and which must risk their lives in the process, as yet have no clear idea of what they are fighting to create. Until they do, their loyalties are likely to remain with their own tribe or ethnic group, rather than to any national government.

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## II. COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND WEAKNESS

Insurgencies fail far more often than they succeed, and for good reason.<sup>38</sup> Insurgent movements typically suffer from a severe lack of military capability compared to counterinsurgent forces. Moreover, even where they succeed, insurgent movements must undergo all sorts of privations, suffer innumerable setbacks, and persist—sometimes for decades—before achieving victory. This is often true even in cases where the insurgents enjoy favorable geography and substantial foreign support (e.g., the Vietnam War). The insurgent’s prospects are even more daunting when one considers that the geography of Iraq is not particularly favorable for an insurgent movement, nor are the insurgents receiving large-scale support from a major external power. Consider also that, in the United States and its Coalition partners, the Iraqi government has formidable allies. In short, history would seem to present some long odds for Iraq’s insurgent forces.

However, insurgents also can exploit several areas of US competitive disadvantage. These are serious enough to provide encouragement to both the insurgents, and to the third parties that want them to succeed.

### US ADVANTAGES

The United States enjoys a number of advantages in its war against Iraqi insurgents. Among the most important sources of competitive advantage are the following:

**Scale of Effort:** The material resources available to the United States and its allies dwarf those of the insurgents. The key issues for the United States, of course, are: “Can enough of these resources be mobilized?” and “Can the effort be sustained over what is likely to be a protracted conflict?” The answer lies in the Bush Administration’s ability to sustain the support of two key centers of gravity: the American public and the American soldier. This issue will be elaborated upon presently.

**Technology:** The United States has far and away the world’s most technically advanced military. To be sure, insurgency warfare devalues many technological advantages (e.g., having a stealth aircraft is of little advantage against an enemy that has no radar; being able to scout the movement of armored troop formations is of little use against an enemy that possesses no heavy equipment, does not wear uniforms, remains generally indistinguishable from noncombatants, and rarely concentrates for battle). However, clearly some US military technical capabilities (e.g., wide-area surveillance; command and control networks; advanced armor protection; advanced body armor) confer some advantages in insurgency warfare.

**Allies:** The United States has fighting along side it a significant number of allies that both lend political legitimacy to its efforts and provide a source, albeit modest, of combat power. Indeed,

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<sup>38</sup> Jeffery Record and W. Andrew Terrill, *Iraq and Vietnam: Differences, Similarities, and Insights* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, May 2004), p. 14; and Eliot Cohen, “A Hawk Questions Himself as His Son Goes to War,” *Washington Post*, July 10, 2005.

despite popular perceptions, the level of allied support for US operations in Iraq, proportionately speaking, does not vary greatly from other US-dominated Coalitions over the last half century in the Korean, Vietnam and First Gulf Wars. Recently, however, a number of major Coalition partners, to include the Dutch, Italians, Poles and Ukrainians have announced plans to reduce significantly their force levels, or withdraw their forces entirely.<sup>39</sup> What has been especially lacking until recently is the contribution of indigenous forces.

## INSURGENT ADVANTAGES

*Al Jazeera kicked our butts.*<sup>40</sup>

Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, USMC  
Following the US Withdrawal from Fallujah

Sources of insurgent competitive advantage correspond well to areas of US competitive weakness. Among these advantages are the following:

**The “War of Ideas.”** The insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan can be viewed as part of a larger civil war within the Arab World, and even more broadly, within the religion of Islam itself. Insurgencies are given life by two factors: an inability of the regime in question to impose order, and a cause or rallying issue around which the insurgents can generate popular support.<sup>41</sup> It is this latter factor—often referred to as the “War of Ideas”—that represents a potent source of support for both nationalist and radical Islamic insurgents.

The United States is viewed by most Iraqis as an occupying power rather than as a liberator. Moreover, in the broader Arab and Islamic worlds the United States is generally viewed as an imperialist power whose motives in liberating Iraq are suspect. The United States also is seen by many as supporting repressive regimes led by tyrants or despotic monarchs, who work with the West (and the United States in particular) in plundering the region’s oil wealth, with the local population deriving little, if any, benefit.<sup>42</sup> Many Arabs and Muslims also subscribe to the belief

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<sup>39</sup> In early 2005, Italy announced it would start bringing home its troops in August, the Polish contingent are set to be withdrawn by the end of 2005, and the Ukraine is scheduled to complete its withdrawal by October 2005. Peter Alford, “Threat to Withdraw Japanese From Iraq,” *The Australian*, August 17, 2005; “Italian Opposition Chief Lambasts Berlusconi in Rome Rally,” *Agence France Presse*, October 9, 2005; “Change in Course: The Polish Election Moves the Country to the Right,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 28, 2005; and Steve Pennells, “Inside Iraq,” *West Australian*, August 20, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> Bing West, *No True Glory* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005), p. 322.

<sup>41</sup> Both conditions must obtain for an insurgent movement to flourish. For example, the Communists’ expertise in creating police states in the Soviet Union’s East European empire during the Cold War enabled Moscow to stifle any insurgent movement, despite popular opposition to Soviet domination. The absence of effective internal security provides the insurgents’ with the opportunity to proselytize the population and organize for action against the government.

<sup>42</sup> Bin Laden wrote in his 1996 fatwa, “People are fully concerned about their every day livings; every body talks about the deterioration of the economy, inflation, ever increasing debts . . . . People wonder whether we are the

that the cause of their civilization's decline is not due to its intrinsic defects, but rather stems from external causes—with foreign exploitation being the principal culprit, and the United States the chief perpetrator. Since pre-empting the insurgents' popular cause by which they rally support is a key factor in defeating an insurgency, it is hardly an exaggeration to say the United States and its local allies are operating from a position of substantial disadvantage in the War of Ideas.

**US Political and Social Culture.** The US political and social culture confers considerable advantages upon the insurgents. Characterized by an open society that respects the rule of law and the right of free expression, the United States has tried to apply these principles as much as possible in the way it has prosecuted the war in Iraq. This has enabled far less scrupulous societies and actors with far less noble motives to undermine the US war effort. A prime example is *al-Jazeera*, a news organization hostile toward the United States and driven more by its anti-American agenda than a desire to report the facts.<sup>43</sup> The result is a stream of anti-American propaganda broadcast throughout the Arab world, and beyond.<sup>44</sup>

The American respect for the rule of law has provided the insurgents and allies like *al-Jazeera* with more ammunition in the War of Ideas. The US investigation of prisoner abuse at Abu Graib prison—an investigation that would never have happened under any current Arab regime—revealed violations of US policies that, by regional standards, were mild indeed. However, the publicity accorded the scandal by an open press and the democratic process (which included a series of Congressional hearings) caused significant damage in the US effort to win the War of Ideas.

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largest oil exporting country?! They even believe that this situation is a curse put on them by Allah for not objecting to the oppressive and illegitimate behaviour and measures of the ruling regime: Ignoring the divine Shari'ah law; depriving people of their legitimate rights; allowing the American to occupy the land of the two Holy Places; imprisonment, unjustly, of the sincere scholars." Osama bin Laden, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," August 1996, available at [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1996.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html).

<sup>43</sup> An example of this occurred during the first Battle of Fallujah in April 2004. Insurgents permitted only an *al-Jazeera* film crew into the city, where it set up at the hospital. "Hour after hour, day after day in the first week of April, the airwaves were filled with pictures of the dead, the bleeding, and the maimed." The impression created was one of US military brutality. In fact, US reporters embedded with the marines assaulting the city did not substantiate these allegations of widespread brutality by US forces. Nevertheless, the images at the hospital were shown widely by news media around the world, and influenced the decision not to complete the retaking of the city. (Fallujah would have to be taken again seven months later.) Correspondingly, US efforts to counter the media offensive in the "War of Ideas" were generally disorganized and ineffective. West, *No True Glory*, pp. 91-93, 177, 185.

<sup>44</sup> It was only after the interim Allawi government took office in June 2004 that *al-Jazeera's* subversive activities, and those of another Arab network, *al-Arabiya*, were curtailed. This occurred after it was revealed they had been tipped off by insurgents on the time and location of planned attacks on Coalition convoys in order to facilitate their being filmed. Neither network took any steps to warn authorities. West, *No True Glory*, p. 91, 250. When approval came for US forces to retake Fallujah in November 2004, the Allawi government closed *al-Jazeera's* bureau in Iraq, eliminating a strategic weapon of the insurgents in the War of Ideas. "Iraq Tells Media to Toe the Line," *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 2004. In the second assault on Fallujah, *al-Jazeera* reported—inaccurately—that roughly half of the cities Mosques had been destroyed by US tanks and air strikes. The Marine Corps commander, Major General Richard F. Natonski, stated that US forces "respect the law of the war, unlike the other side, who uses mosques. In almost every single mosque in Fallujah, we've found an arms cache. We've found IED factories . . . We've also seen the use of schools for the storage of weapons." Jackie Spinner, Karl Vick and Omar Fekiki, "US Tries to Corner Fallujah Insurgents," *Washington Post*, November 12, 2004, p.1.

At the same time, US culture is generally self-referential. Americans have not exhibited much interest in Arab or Islamic culture; nor has the US Government developed much expertise in these cultures.<sup>45</sup> Hence the United States' ability to develop effective strategies for communicating with the Iraqi people and, more broadly, Arab and Islamic populations is clearly deficient when compared to the relatively insightful and sophisticated strategies pursued by the enemy and hostile media groups that are comprised of Arabs and Muslims.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, the United States, politically and culturally, appears uncomfortable describing the conflict in Iraq for what it is: part of a larger conflict throughout the Islamic world that is, at its roots, primarily theological in nature. While the United States has a long history of confronting hostile political regimes and ideologies (e.g., King George III's monarchy, Hitler's fascist regime, Soviet communism), it has little experience in waging war against a hostile religious sect—which is the basis for much of the opposition to US presence and influence in the Arab/Muslim worlds. Instead, a misnomer is used: the “Global War on Terrorism.”

In summary, this inability to see the enemy and the character of the conflict for what they are could seriously impede the United States' ability to develop and execute an effective strategy in Iraq.<sup>47</sup>

**Manpower.** Insurgency warfare is manpower intensive. One rule of thumb has it that counterinsurgent forces must outnumber insurgent forces by a ratio of 10-15:1 in order to win.<sup>48</sup> The United States, on the other hand, has the world's most capital-intensive military. It is a military that relies heavily on technology and on highly skilled individuals to apply it. Moreover, over thirty years ago the United States abandoned the draft in favor of an all-volunteer military. In the absence of conscription, young men and women must be induced to join the military, and to stay (i.e., re-enlist). Thus not only is US military manpower relatively expensive (soldiers are

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<sup>45</sup> See Defense Science Board, *2004 Summer Study on Transition to and From Hostilities*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, December 2004); and Defense Science Board, *2004 Summer Study on Transition to and From Hostilities—Supporting Papers*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, January 2005).

<sup>46</sup> In this respect the challenge confronted by the United States is even more formidable than that posed by communist propaganda during the Cold War. Then the propaganda war was fought over third-party groups in places like Western Europe or the Third World. Both the United States and the Soviet Union had to win over people from different nationalities, religions and cultures. The problem the United States confronts in the Arab/Muslim worlds today is more akin to that it encountered in its war with the Vietnamese Communists, who were of the region and the culture of the people whose “hearts and minds” were central to the conflict.

<sup>47</sup> As Clausewitz observed, “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that the kind of war on which they are embarked; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.” Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. and ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 88-89.

<sup>48</sup> This ratio, like the more famous “3:1” conventional warfare ratio, is subject to so many qualifications as to make it of little utility in gauging a military balance. However, the three- to fivefold difference in the two ratios does serve to make the point that, all other things being equal, the force ratios required to wage effective counterinsurgent operations substantially exceed those needed for conventional operations. For information on the 3:1 ratio, see Douglas Holtz-Eakin, “The Ability of the U.S. Military to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq,” Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, November 5, 2003, pp. 34-39.

not drafted; rather, they must be induced to enlist), it may be difficult to sustain or replace. Indeed, this is exactly what appears to be happening, as the Army is experiencing both recruitment and retention problems.<sup>49</sup>

**Training.** The US manpower problem is further exacerbated by the erosion in its long-standing advantage in high-fidelity training. Insurgent forces in Iraq do not rotate in and out of the theater of operations, as US units do. They may rest and refit themselves from time to time, but they are always in the theater of operations. In insurgency warfare, there is no “rear area.” This enables the insurgent force to accumulate skills in the best possible training environment: actual operations against counterinsurgent forces. Conversely, US Army and Marine units deploy to Iraq for a relatively brief period, typically for a year. Then they rotate home. When they do, their skills begin to atrophy. Moreover, as time passes operations and tactics change as US and enemy forces try to adapt in order to gain an advantage. Thus not only do skills decline, they may become progressively less relevant. A “training gap” thus emerges between American troops and their adversaries, in favor of the latter.

**Casualty Aversion.** As Mao Zedong famously put it, “The guerrillas are fish that swim in the sea of the people.”<sup>50</sup> His point was that controlling the population, the center of gravity in an insurgency, requires insurgents to operate in and among the population from which they draw sustenance (i.e., recruits, information, food, etc.). Doing so risks casualties, as does challenging the counterinsurgent forces which, at least in the early phases of an insurgency, often possess a clear advantage in size, equipment and firepower. The counterinsurgent forces must also risk casualties in the process of securing the population and denying the insurgents access to the support it provides. An inability to provide security and stability puts the counterinsurgent forces at a severe disadvantage against the insurgents.

At present, it appears the insurgents are far less casualty averse than are the forces of the United States, its Coalition partners, or the indigenous Iraqi government. The extreme examples, of course, are insurgent suicide bombers, whose very mission assumes their death, and the local police who fail to show up for duty and run at the first sight of trouble.

While US forces have shown great skill and courage in the conduct of military operations in Iraq, they are generally casualty averse, for several reasons that are unlikely to change. One is that they come from a political culture that accords high value to the individual. Thus casualties risk eroding support for the war on America’s Home Front. Another is that the US military has long attempted to substitute firepower or technical means for manpower (e.g., the use of precision fires to clear an enemy occupied building; the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance). These attempts at substituting “capital” for “labor” are far more successful in conventional warfare than they are in counterinsurgency operations.

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<sup>49</sup> Jay Bookman, “Ominously, Army Recruiting Tumbles,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 9, 2005; and Dave Moniz, “Army Recruiting Up for June but Still Down for Year,” *USA Today*, June 29, 2005. The Army’s Reserve Component is experiencing problems with recruitment and retention. The Service’s Active Component’s problems are, for the most part, limited to recruiting shortfalls.

<sup>50</sup> Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong), *Aspects of China’s Anti-Japanese Struggle* (Bombay, India: n.p., 1948.), p. 48.



Perhaps the strongest incentive to minimize US casualties is the high cost incurred, in the form of training replacements and the potential impact on recruiting and retention. Comparatively speaking, the Iraqi insurgents can draw upon a large pool of unemployed (some estimates run as high as 60 percent), relatively low training standards and requirements, and a culture that, at least in the minds of many, sees death as offering the certainty of rewards that far exceed those of this world.<sup>51</sup>

**Force Ratios.** Further compounding the US problem is that counterinsurgency warfare places greater demands on the government's manpower than on that of the insurgents. The counterinsurgent forces must secure the population and the nation's critical political and economic infrastructure. The insurgent, on the other hand, has nothing to defend except his access to the population. As noted above, an oft-cited (though suspect) military "rule of thumb" holds that the counterinsurgent force must outnumber the insurgent forces by a ratio of 10-15:1 in order to be successful. Although it has been argued that applying advanced technologies in innovative ways (e.g., US air cavalry units in the Vietnam War) can reduce this ratio, perhaps dramatically, it has yet to be demonstrated convincingly. The absence of sizable, capable, indigenous Iraqi security forces, the relative paucity of allied forces, and limits on the number of US troops that can be deployed for a protracted period are clear disadvantages in a conflict environment that is both protracted and manpower intensive.

For example, current estimates of insurgent force strength place it at roughly 20,000.<sup>52</sup> Employing the ratio of 10-15 counterinsurgent forces for every insurgent would require Coalition force levels in the range of 200-300,000. Current Coalition forces number roughly 180,000. Yet Coalition governments will almost certainly *reduce*, not augment, their forces in Iraq over the next year. Moreover, although the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) now number over 200,000, it is not clear when indigenous Iraqi forces will be available in large numbers. Thirty months after the end of major combat operations, only one Iraqi Security Force battalion is capable of conducting independent operations (i.e., at Level 1 readiness). However, some 36 battalions are at Level 2 readiness (i.e., able to conduct independent operations).<sup>53</sup> Thus the trends appear positive. Reducing US troop strength in Iraq to below 100,000 by the end of 2006 may be possible. However, two key questions remain: Will ISF units be able to reduce the need for US forces before US public support for the war declines to unacceptably low levels and/or Army recruiting/retention difficulties reach crisis proportions? And Will ISF units prove themselves loyal to the new government in Baghdad?

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<sup>51</sup> "Iraqis Hope Funds Speed Rebuilding," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 19, 2005; Michael O'Hanlon and James Steinberg, "Time to Announce a Timetable," *Washington Post*, February 2, 2005; and Steven Stalinsky, "Al Qaeda's Ramadan Greetings: 'This is Your Festive Season'," *New York Sun*, October 12, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> "Background Briefing by a Senior U.S. Military Intelligence Officer," The Combined Press Information Center, June 2, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, US Military Strategy and Operations in Iraq, September 24, 2005. General George Casey described Level 1 battalions as those "... capable of going out and conducting operations without any other support." Level 2 battalions are capable of taking the lead in combined operations with US forces.

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### III. THE CENTERS OF GRAVITY

*I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the government to win popular support that the war can be won out there. In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it . . . .*<sup>54</sup>

President John Kennedy  
September 1963

In war, the center (or centers) of gravity can be defined as the asset, or set of assets, the loss of which will destroy an enemy's ability or will to continue his resistance, or to prevail in the conflict.<sup>55</sup> In conventional warfare, the enemy's military forces, his capital, or his industrial base are often seen as his center of gravity.<sup>56</sup> This is not the case in insurgency warfare, where the population is the center of gravity. In the current war in Iraq, there are three centers of gravity, which are described below.

#### THE IRAQI PEOPLE

To eventually control the country, the insurgent must control the people. As Mao Tse-tung noted, "The people are like water and the army is like fish."<sup>57</sup> Popular support can be achieved without the people supporting the insurgents' goals. Such support can be coerced if the insurgents' can *control* the population. Thus cooperation can be effected as a result of insurgent threats, and acts of terror and intimidation. In short, to win, the insurgents need only win the "minds" of the people, not their "hearts."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> John F. Kennedy, interview with Walter Cronkite, CBS News, September 2, 1963, available at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kentv.htm>.

<sup>55</sup> Clausewitz described the center of gravity as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends." Antulio Echevarria II notes that a literal translation of Clausewitz's views reveals the author focuses his discussion on tracing "the full weight of the enemy's force to as few centers of gravity as possible, when feasible, to one; and, at the same time, to reduce the blow against these centers to as few major actions as possible, when feasible, to one . . . . Reducing the enemy's force to once center of gravity depends, first, upon the [enemy's] political connectivity [or unity] itself . . . and, second, upon the situation in the theater of war itself, and which of the various enemy armies appears there." Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 485-486, 595-596; Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 19<sup>th</sup> ed. (Regensburg, Germany: Pustet, 1991), pp. 1009-10. Cited in Antulio Echevarria II, *Center of Gravity: Recommendations for Joint Doctrine*, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 35, pp. 13-14.

<sup>56</sup> Thus, for example, strategic aerial bombardment campaigns dating back to World War II have often had as a major objective the destruction of the enemy's industrial base. In the Second Gulf War US military forces focused the bulk of their efforts on seizing Baghdad and destroying Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard.

<sup>57</sup> Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong), *Aspects of China's Anti-Japanese Struggle*, p. 48.

<sup>58</sup> Of course, the insurgents' cause is greatly aided if they gain the voluntary support of the population by advancing a positive message.

Access to and, if possible, control over the population enables insurgents to deny critical intelligence to counterinsurgent forces. This is key, since if the counterinsurgent forces know who and where the insurgents are during the early phases of the insurgency, they have more than enough military capability to engage and defeat them. The insurgents can also gain critical intelligence concerning the plans and whereabouts of counterinsurgent forces. This information can be obtained willingly if the population supports the insurgents, or unwillingly, through terror and intimidation, if it does not. The insurgents' access to the population also enables them to recruit new members to their cause, as well as to obtain (or expropriate) food, medicine and other supplies.

Correspondingly, the Baghdad government's inability to exercise control over its population dilutes its strength, denying it replacements for the armed forces, enabling acts of sabotage (e.g., against the country's oil infrastructure), making taxes difficult or impossible to collect, and drying up sources of badly needed intelligence. Thus if the insurgents can gain control over the population through fear, popular appeal, or a mixture of both, they stand a good chance of winning, although it may take a protracted period of time before the correlation of forces shifts decisively in their favor.

It is important to note that, owing to the absence of personal security, the vast majority of the population typically remains uncommitted, providing support only when coerced, or when a clear winner emerges. As T. E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") noted, "rebellions can be made by two percent active in a striking force, and 98 percent passively sympathetic."<sup>59</sup> The reason for this passivity among the population is that, so long as their security is at risk, individuals that take sides in an insurgency expose themselves to retribution, either from the government or the insurgents. In Iraq, this is particularly true for those who oppose the insurgency. The inability of Coalition and indigenous Iraqi security forces to provide security for the population makes any Iraqi's effort to provide active support to the Iraqi government or Coalition forces a highly risky proposition.

Insurgent access to the population explains why an insurgent movement can expand as a whole even while it sustains heavy casualties. The insurgents simply continue to draw upon the manpower pool to replenish their losses. Moreover, unlike the government, the insurgents have no need to secure the nation's infrastructure or provide security to the population. Hence the insurgents are often able to meter their casualties to fit the circumstances of the moment. Consequently, the population's security should be the top priority of the Coalition forces, thereby denying access to the "sea" which Mao's insurgent "fish" need to survive.

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<sup>59</sup> T.E. Lawrence, "Guerrilla Warfare," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1950 ed.

## THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

*Culturally speaking, our patience quotient is not high. Culturally speaking, the patience quotient of our enemies is very high.*<sup>60</sup>

General John P. Abizaid  
Commander, US Central Command, January 2004

There is an important distinction to be made between insurgent movements that are being countered principally by indigenous government forces and those where stability operations are dominated by the forces of an external power. The latter, of course, is the situation in Iraq. In the latter circumstance, it becomes possible for the insurgents to win in a different way—by draining the will of the foreign power to the point where it abandons an infant regime before it is capable of standing on its own and defending itself. In a democracy such as the United States, this translates to eroding popular support for the war.

The insurgents cannot hope to defeat US military forces in open battle (i.e., by moving to Phase III of the insurgency), or to drive them physically out of Iraq. Thus the insurgents are pursuing an indirect approach. Even though they are far weaker than the forces opposing them, the insurgents are relying on the active cooperation or passive acceptance of a significant element of the indigenous population to sustain them in a protracted struggle. By so doing, the insurgents hope to convince the American public and its leaders that the war is not worth the cost in blood and treasure. Thus the Bush Administration must win the hearts and minds of the American people, persuading them that its war objectives are worth the sacrifices involved, and that sufficient progress is being made toward achieving these objectives. Recent polling data indicate that popular support for the administration's conduct of the war is waning.<sup>61</sup>

## THE AMERICAN SOLDIER

Finally, there is the American soldier (or marine).<sup>62</sup> These men and women must believe that the war is worth their sacrifices, that they are being competently led, and that progress is being made

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<sup>60</sup> Thom Shanker, "U.S. Commander Surveys Challenges in Iraq Region," *New York Times*, January 30, 2004.

<sup>61</sup> During the period prior to the April 2004 uprisings over 50 percent of those asked stated that they believed the war was worth fighting. Since then the number has gradually declined into the low 40s. By the summer of 2005 over 60 percent of Americans felt the United States was "bogged down" in Iraq, as opposed to "making progress." Dana Milbank and Claudia Deane, "Poll Finds Dimmer View of Iraq War," *Washington Post*, June 8, 2005, p. A01. As the referendum on Iraq's new constitution approached in October 2005, Americans disapproved of the job President Bush was doing by a margin of 66-31 percent, while 63 percent of Americans believe some or all US troops should be withdrawn from Iraq. Susan Page, "President Sinking in Ratings," *USA Today*, September 30, 2005, p. 1. Correspondingly, in June 2005 51 percent of those surveyed wanted a timetable set for the withdrawal of US troops, regardless of the situation there. By a margin of 61-37 percent, those surveyed believed the president did not have a clear plan for achieving US objectives in Iraq. Susan Page, "Poll Points to Increasing Doubts on War's Progress, Bush's Reasons," *USA Today*, June 28, 2005, p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> The Army and Marine Corps are shouldering by far the greatest burden in fighting this war. Of the two, the Army is providing the overwhelming majority of troops. Hence the use of the term "soldier."

toward victory. Unlike in Vietnam, the United States is waging this war with an all-volunteer military, which gives the American soldier a “vote” in the conflict. With over 170,000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, soldiers must frequently rotate back into those war zones. If confidence in the war effort wanes, these veterans can simply vote with their feet by refusing to reenlist, while prospective new recruits avoid enlisting altogether. At present, Army and Marine Corps reenlistment rates are strong. Army recruiting, however, is down substantially, while the Army National Guard and Reserve are suffering from both recruitment and retention problems, indicating that US troop levels in Iraq may need to be reduced substantially.<sup>63</sup>

### **A Key Asymmetry and a Dilemma**

The insurgents have a clear advantage when it comes to this fight: they only need to win one of the centers of gravity to succeed, whereas the United States must secure all three.

Making matters even more complicated for the Coalition, there is a “Catch-22” in combating the insurgency: efforts designed to secure one center of gravity may undermine the prospects of securing the others. For example, the roughly 160,000 US troops deployed in Iraq are helping to improve security for the Iraqi people, and train Iraqi security forces. However, the protracted deployment of a force this large also appears to be eroding support for the war among the US public. As noted above, frequent rotations of soldiers to Iraq (some are now on their third tour)<sup>64</sup> have led to problems with enlistment and retention rates in both the Active and Reserve Components.

## **BALANCING THE CENTERS**

The key to securing the centers of gravity in the current war is to recognize that US forces have overwhelming advantages in terms of combat power and mobility, but a key disadvantage in terms of intelligence. If they know *who* the insurgents are and *where* they are, they can quickly suppress the insurgency. The Iraqi people are the best source of this intelligence. But this knowledge can only be gained by winning their hearts and minds—that is, by convincing them that the insurgents’ defeat is in their interest, and that they can share intelligence about those among them who are participating or collaborating with the insurgency without fear of insurgent reprisals.

In short, any strategy for defeating the insurgency must effect a balance among the three centers of gravity in such a way as to enable the intelligence war to be won. Given the absence of security and major progress on establishing basic services in Iraq (e.g., electricity, sanitation, schools), declining American support for the war effort, and the Army’s recruitment and retention problems, tough choices will have to be made. These choices will be elaborated upon presently in the discussion of strategy.

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<sup>63</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, “Recruiting Shortfall Delay’s Army’s Expansion Plans,” *Washington Post*, October 4, 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew LaVallee, “‘Big Pig,’ Everybody’s Hero,” *Washington Post*, July 4, 2005.

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## IV. COALITION FORCES

### THE THIN GREEN LINE

*Nobody in America is asked to sacrifice, except us.*<sup>65</sup>

Army Officer Returning from Iraq

*My terminology for it is 'Patriotism lite,' and that's what we're experiencing now in both political parties. The political leaders are afraid to ask the public for any real sacrifice, which doesn't speak too highly of the citizenry.*<sup>66</sup>

Charles Moskos, Professor Emeritus,  
Northwestern University

### BEYOND "STRATEGIC IRRELEVANCE"

Just prior to the 9/11 attacks on the United States by al Qaeda, the Army found its "strategic relevance" being questioned. To be sure, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Army had deployed units on a range of commitments around the globe to places like Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti, and Somalia. Yet the Service's well-publicized difficulties in deploying forces to Albania during Operation Allied Force, and the absence of Army units from the battlefield during that conflict, which was prosecuted almost entirely by air power, left some questioning its future utility.

In response, in the fall of 1999 the Army undertook a process known as transformation. In responding to criticism concerning its strategic relevance, the Army argued that, while ground forces might need to deploy more rapidly to a threatened area in the future, there would always be a need for "boots on the ground" to secure the victory.

Following 9/11, the Army's assertion that the United States must ultimately put "boots on the ground" was sustained during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and especially in the Second Gulf War (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and in subsequent post-conflict stability operations

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<sup>65</sup> Thom Shanker, "All Quiet on the Home Front, And Some Soldiers Are Asking Why," *New York Times*, July 24, 2005.

<sup>66</sup> Shanker, "All Quiet on the Home Front, And Some Soldiers Are Asking Why."

## **FROM SPRINTS TO MARATHONS**

During these conflicts, the small contingent of Army Special Operations Forces (SOF) committed to Afghanistan performed remarkably well, as did the multi-division Army force that was central to toppling Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in the spring of 2003. Both these operations, however, were brief in duration. Faced with the requirement to sustain a large ground force presence in Afghanistan and Iraq to conduct stability operations, the Army again found itself challenged. This time, concerns stemmed not over its relevance, but its stamina, or ability to sustain a large force in the field over a protracted period of time. Put another way, the Army, which had prepared itself to compete as a world-class sprinter, was now being asked to run a marathon.

## **THE VIETNAM SYNDROME**

The Army that went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq was designed, almost exclusively, with an eye toward waging conventional warfare. This orientation was not novel. Indeed, it was consistent with the Army's emphasis over the past century. Moreover, the Army had enjoyed great success in this form of warfare and, from an institutional perspective, was very comfortable with this approach. This institutional preference was further reinforced by the United States' traumatic experience in the Vietnam War, in which the Army played the central role and suffered the most, in both a human and institutional sense. Thus in addition to a cultural preference for conventional war, the Army became positively neuralgic over the thought of waging a protracted war against irregular forces.

In its desire to avoid such conflicts, the Army found willing partners in the form of the American people and their political leaders. "No More Vietnams" became a slogan, not just for Americans in general, but for the US military—and especially the Army—in particular. Thus the 1980s saw the introduction of the Weinberger Doctrine, and its stepchild, the Powell Doctrine, which sought to avoid future "Vietnams" by carefully choosing America's battlefields, applying overwhelming force when troops were committed, and looking for an early way out of the conflict. When it looked like US forces might be tied down in an irregular conflict, or incur substantial casualties, as occurred, for example, in Lebanon in the fall of 1983, US forces were withdrawn before the mission could be accomplished.

This theme continued in the 1990s, under the rubric of "Exit Strategies." Planned deployments of US forces to places like Bosnia, Haiti and Rwanda were debated as much over their withdrawal date as to how the military planned to accomplish the mission. When US forces dipped their toe in the waters of stability operations, as in Somalia, they were withdrawn quickly when casualties were incurred.

In the wake of the Soviet Union's demise, defense reviews conducted by both the Bush and Clinton administrations focused primarily on orienting the US military for conflicts similar to the First Gulf War. It was not until the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that the term "small-scale contingencies" (SSCs) was introduced, in reference to peacekeeping operations. Even then, it produced no significant change in the Army's force posture or modernization program. In the 2001 defense review, a "1-4-2-1" formula was introduced to guide US force

sizing and posture. As in previous reviews, the formula discounted the possibility of protracted ground force stability operations.<sup>67</sup>

Not surprisingly, in Army circles, phrases like “We don’t do windows, jungles, cities or guerrillas” were heard, reflecting not only the Service’s institutional preference, but clearly those of the American people as well.

## **THE “POTTERY BARN RULE”<sup>68</sup>**

This all changed with the attacks of 9/11. Following the successful major combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States realized that it could not depart at a time of its own choosing, lest it run the risk that the unstable conditions in these states might produce regimes every bit as hostile to the United States as those that were displaced.

As in Afghanistan, following the end of major combat operations in Iraq, the Army was the Service principally confronted with the mission of providing stability until a new government could be elected and indigenous security forces could be trained. This would have been demanding under conditions of relative tranquility, as can be seen in the NATO mission in the Balkans. It is made far more difficult in Iraq, where there are active insurgent forces trying to foment instability and frustrate the democratic process and reconstruction

Thus for the first time since the Vietnam War the Army was faced with the challenge of maintaining a large deployed force in the field for a protracted period of time. This presented problems, even for the world’s best military.

## **RUNNING A MARATHON**

The ground forces required to provide the necessary level of stability and security to Afghanistan and Iraq clearly exceed those available for the mission. To be sure, in the final analysis, the Afghans and Iraqis must shoulder the main burden for providing their own security. But the conditions must be created for this to happen. That means having sufficient Coalition forces available to provide a shield behind which it becomes possible to establish a stable government and create indigenous security forces. Part of the problem stems from a lack of proper planning

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<sup>67</sup> The “1-4-2-1” metric sizes and structures the US military to defend the homeland (“1”), maintain presence in four key areas overseas (“4”), fight two major regional conflicts (“2”), and effect regime change in one of those two conflicts (“1”). This metric replaced the two major regional conflict/war metric employed by the Clinton Administration as a force sizing mechanism. The Bush Administration has adopted an additional metric, known as “10-30-30.” It calls for US forces to be capable of initiating operations against a major regional adversary within ten days, of defeating that adversary within 30 days, and of “resetting” itself to conduct additional operations 30 days after that. Obviously, this metric has no relevance against an enemy waging a protracted irregular warfare campaign.

<sup>68</sup> The “Pottery Barn Rule” has been attributed to Richard Armitage, the Deputy Secretary of State. The rule is “If you break it, you own it,” and it refers to the consequences incurred by the United States when it engages in regime change operations. The argument is that the United States bears a responsibility following the overthrow of the existing regime to insure stability until a new regime can be formed and provide for its own security.



as to how so-called Phase IV, or post-conflict stability operations were to be conducted.<sup>69</sup> The forces called for proved insufficient to execute effectively stability operations of the type envisioned by the US military. A clear sign of this was the willingness of the US command in Iraq to cede responsibilities for stability operations in several key cities to forces hostile to the interim government.<sup>70</sup> The Army's difficulty in meeting the demands for forces, in the form of combat brigades and their supporting elements, is driven by two simple factors: its inadequate size and the ending, over 30 years ago, of conscription.

The volunteer Army—a euphemism for a professional Army—is based on the presumption of career service for a substantial percentage of its soldiers. The United States instituted an all-volunteer force in 1973, at the end of its direct involvement in the Vietnam War. The volunteer force differs from the conscription era force, which drafted young men into the force for several years, after which most returned to civilian life. Thus during the protracted Army deployment during the Vietnam War, many of its troops were draftees that were given training, rotated into the combat theater, and then returned home and left the Service, to be succeeded by another wave of draftees.<sup>71</sup>

A professional force, on the other hand, faces a very different situation. It hopes to retain most of its soldiers for a full career in the Army. In many respects, today's professional Army is superior to the draft era force. For example, in protracted conflicts such as the ones now confronting the Army in Afghanistan and Iraq, draftees might serve once in the combat theater before departing the military. Long-term volunteers, however, might serve a number of tours, as is the case at present. It seems reasonable to assume that a soldier serving his or her second or third tour would be more effective than a soldier experiencing the conflict for the first time.

Yet, if it rotates its troops too frequently into combat, the Army risks having many of its soldiers decide that a military career is too arduous or too risky an occupation for them and their families to pursue. This leads to the question: How often can a soldier be put in harm's way and still desire to remain in the Army?<sup>72</sup> The answer is different for every soldier, but the deployment ratio range seems to be somewhere in between 3:1 and 5:1. That is, for every brigade that is forward deployed in combat operations or in a "hardship" tour, there must exist between three

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<sup>69</sup> See Thomas E. Ricks, "Army Historian Cites Lack of Postwar Plan," *Washington Post*, December 24, 2004, p. A01; Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Iraq Without A Plan," *Policy Review*, December 2004, available at <http://policyreview.org/dec04/ohanlon.html>; and James Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad," *Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2004.

<sup>70</sup> The problems associated with this approach are discussed in detail in West, *No True Glory*.

<sup>71</sup> The reader should note that this is not an argument for the return of conscription. It is merely to point out that, under a conscription system, the Defense Department can increase the size of its monthly draft calls to match anticipated force requirements, as occurred, for example, during the Korean and Vietnam wars.

<sup>72</sup> Other factors in addition to the rotation base come into play as well. For example, if soldiers perceive that they are being poorly led, or engaged in executing a failed strategy, their willingness to persevere may decline, perhaps dramatically. During the Vietnam War, once it became clear the United States was looking for a way out of the conflict rather than attempting to win it, there was a heightened degree of cynicism, and a corresponding decline in the willingness of soldiers to sacrifice in order to accomplish the mission. The phrase "Why die for a tie?" is emblematic of this attitude.

and five brigades to sustain the rotation. Thus a 3:1 rotation base would find soldiers deployed on such missions one-third of the time; a 5:1 rotation would see them deployed one-fifth of their service time.

For the purposes of this assessment, a 4:1 deployment ratio is assumed.<sup>73</sup> Thus a soldier under these circumstances could expect to be on deployment six months out of every two years. The Army currently has 37 active brigades. Using a 4:1 ratio, this means it could deploy forward roughly 9 brigades at any one time.

Not surprisingly, the deployment ratio for National Guard brigades in the Reserve Component of the Army is not as favorable. The simple reason is that National Guard soldiers are civilians who have joined the Reserves in the expectation that their civilian livelihood and lifestyle will not be subjected to numerous interruptions. Moreover, because National Guard units do not train anywhere near as frequently as units in the Army's Active Component, once they are called up to active service they require a period of intensive training, typically several months, before they are ready for deployment. According to senior Army officials, a more reasonable deployment ratio for National Guard brigades, then, would be 6:1.<sup>74</sup> But owing to the need for pre-deployment training, the true ratio of deployed brigades to existing brigades is probably closer to 8:1.<sup>75</sup> The Army National Guard currently maintains 15 enhanced separate brigades, 19 divisional brigades, one scout group and one separate brigade, for a total of 36 brigades. Assuming an 8:1 deployment ratio, a maximum of 4 ½ brigades could be deployed forward at any given time. Thus the total number of Active and Reserve Component brigades that can currently be sustained is roughly 13 ½ brigades.

One only has to contrast this figure with actual Army deployments to see how thin the Green Line is stretched.

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<sup>73</sup> This assumption is based on the author's discussions with senior Army leaders. It also conforms to the rotation base ratio used by the Marine Corps. John Hendren, "Rumsfeld Asks Army to Consider Shorter Rotations," *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 2004, p. 10. A study by the Congressional Budget Office concluded that "rotation ratios of between 3.2:1 and 4:1 span the range expected to be feasible over the long term for active-component units." Holtz-Eakin, "The Ability of the U.S. Military to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq," p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> As with the Army's Active Component, this ratio is based on the author's discussions with senior Army leaders. This also conforms to the conclusion reached by the CBO. See Holtz-Eakin, "The Ability of the U.S. Military to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq," p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> It is important to note that while there exist some data with respect to Active Component deployment patterns, the data regarding acceptable Reserve Component rotation rates is sketchy.

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Table 1: Army Deployed/"Hardship Tour" Brigades<sup>76</sup>

	Active Army	National Guard
<b>Afghanistan</b>	1	0
<b>Balkans</b>	0	0
<b>Iraq</b>	10	7
<b>South Korea</b>	1	0
<b>Total</b>	12	7

As Figure 1 indicates, the Army has some 19 brigades deployed in contingency operations and in "hardship" tours.<sup>77</sup> Making matters worse, unless the Army is willing to stress its rotation base further, it effectively has no strategic reserve.

The demands for Army ground force deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq are not likely to decline substantially any time soon, although the Army may be able to drawdown some of its forces in Iraq in 2006. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld summed up the views of most informed observers when he concluded that Iraq represented a "long, hard slog" for the United States military.<sup>78</sup>

## A RECRUITING AND RETENTION CRISIS?

Problems have emerged in recruiting, both in the Army's Active Component and the Reserve Component. At the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2005, the Army had failed to meet its recruiting target for the first time since 1999. The shortfall—about 6,700 recruits—is the largest since 1979. Making matters worse, to alleviate the shortfall the Army accelerated the induction of enlistees. This means it will begin the new fiscal year with a smaller-than-usual reservoir of enlistees. Normally the pool represents around 25 percent of the recruiting target for the coming year. For FY 2006, however, the pool is sufficient to cover roughly 5-10 percent of the recruiting target.<sup>79</sup> The shortfall has occurred despite the Army's strenuous efforts to avoid it. These efforts include a 33 percent increase in the number of recruiters, a \$130 million boost in the Service's advertising budget, a doubling of the maximum enlistment bonus from \$20,000 to \$40,000,

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<sup>76</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/global-deployments.htm>.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Memo, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to Gen. Dick Myers, Paul Wolfowitz, Gen. Peter Pace, and Doug Feith, "Global War on Terrorism," October 16, 2003, available at <http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm>.

<sup>79</sup> Tyson, "Recruiting Shortfall Delays Army's Expansion Plans," p. 7; and "Army Faces Worst Recruiting Slump in Years," *New York Times on the Web*, September 30, 2005.

accepting a larger number of high school dropouts, increasing the age at which people can enlist from 35 to 42, and doubling the number of Category IV recruits accepted into the Service.<sup>80</sup>

Serious retention problems have yet to materialize for the Active Component, but there are storm clouds on the horizon. For one, Army divorce rates are up sharply, an indication that repeated deployments are placing severe strains on military families.<sup>81</sup> There are also worrisome pockets within the force structure that are suffering from retention problems, chief among them Army captains, who are leaving at a rate that is roughly a third higher than that of the 1990s.<sup>82</sup> Of even greater concern, perhaps, are retention rates for special forces soldiers.<sup>83</sup>

Unfortunately for the Army, recruitment and retention figures for the National Guard and Reserve are even more discouraging.<sup>84</sup> Compounding the Army's problem, it will likely soon lose the option to deploy many of its Reserve Component forces, as more and more troops reach their 24-month call-up limit set by the Bush Administration.<sup>85</sup> The result will be a *de facto* decline in the number of National Guard brigades and reservists that can be deployed to Iraq, putting further stress on the Army's Active Component. Thus while the administration has declared that any drawdown in US forces must be "conditions-based," it appears that these conditions include not only progress in defeating the insurgency, but also the need to reduce the strain on the center of gravity that is the American soldier.

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<sup>80</sup> Category IV recruits are those that score between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> percentile in the aptitude tests given prospective recruits. Less than 1 percent of the 2003 and 2005 recruiting classes were Category IV. The new limit is 4 percent. Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey has announced that the Army would ease its requirement that at least 67 percent of every recruiting class comprise recruits who scored in the top half of the Service's aptitude tests. Dave Moniz, "Military Offering More, and Bigger, Bonuses," *USA Today*, February 21, 2005, p. 2; Eric Schmitt, "Army Recruiting More High School Dropouts to Meet Goals," *New York Times*, June 11, 2005; Damien Cave, "Pentagon Proposes Rise in Age Limit for Recruits," *New York Times*, July 22, 2005; and Mark Mazzetti, "Army to Lower Bar for Recruits," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 2005.

<sup>81</sup> Gregg Zoroya, "Soldier's Divorce Rates Up Sharply," *USA Today*, June 8, 2005; p. 1. Officer divorce rates were up by 78 percent in 2004, over 2003, and over 350 percent from 2000. The rates for enlisted soldiers are 28 percent and 53, percent respectively.

<sup>82</sup> Tom Bowman, "Army Aims to Slow Exodus of Captains," *Baltimore Sun*, August 28, 2005, p. 1. The attrition rate for captains in 2004 was 13.6 percent, versus the 10.7 percent rate that characterized the mid-1990s. When lieutenants are added to the mix, the loss rate is 8.5 percent for the past year, against an average loss rate of 7.3 percent between 1996 and 2004.

<sup>83</sup> The Pentagon is offering bonuses of up to \$150,000 to retain key special forces troops. The sliding scale runs from \$18,000 for a two-year commitment up to \$150,000 for a six-year commitment. The military is facing stiff competition from private contractors, who hire former special forces troops and then sell their services to the US Government at a profit. "Bonuses Offered to Elite Troops," *Baltimore Sun*, January 23, 2005; Richard Mullen, "Special Ops Retention a Problem, Witnesses Say," *Defense Today*, July 21, 2004, p. 4; and Dave Moniz, "Military Offering More, and Bigger, Bonuses," *USA Today*, February 21, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> "Army Faces Worst Recruiting Slump in Years," *New York Times*, September 30, 2005.

<sup>85</sup> Eric Schmitt and David S. Cloud, "Part-Time Forces on Active Duty Decline Steeply," *New York Times*, July 11, 2005, p. 1; and Mark Mazzetti, "Pentagon Won't Extend Reservists' Deployment," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2005. President Bush established this policy following the 9/11 attacks, declaring that no reservist would be required to serve more than two years on active duty in any five-year period. Jack Kelly, "Reserve and Guard Dependency," *Washington Times*, December 16, 2004, p. 20.

## NEAR-TERM OPTIONS

There are several immediate options open for addressing the problem of an overextended Army, while more permanent, long-term solutions are developed and implemented. One option that is already being exercised involves violating rotation base ratios. Soldiers and brigades are being deployed more frequently, and for longer periods, than what the Army believes is appropriate in order to attract and retain the number of soldiers necessary to maintain the size and quality of the force. It is not clear, even to Army leaders, how long this practice can be sustained without inducing recruitment and retention problems. Again, the recent announcement of a planned substantial drawdown in US ground force deployments to Iraq may indicate that sustaining forces at their current levels risks “breaking” the Army.

Another option exercised by the Army is known as “stop loss” and “stop movement”. Stop loss refers to requiring soldiers to remain in their deployed units beyond the time in which their term of service is completed. Under stop loss, soldiers are typically required to stay on active duty until 90 days after their unit has returned from its deployment. Stop movement refers to soldiers whose reassignment to other duties is held up until their unit returns from its deployment. The Army also tapped into the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) to call up an additional 6,500 soldiers.<sup>86</sup>

While these actions have enabled the Army to meet its troop deployment requirements, they are short-term fixes at best. Applied over an extended period of time, these remedies risk “breaking the force” as recruitment and retention problems mount.

Another possible partial solution is to deploy US Marine ground forces into Iraq. There are currently two Marine brigade equivalents deployed in Iraq, which is the limit the Marines can sustain over a protracted period.<sup>87</sup> In short, the Marine option is already being exercised.

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<sup>86</sup> After more than 3,000 of these soldiers requested exemptions or delays and some 400 simply didn’t report, the Army decided to suspend the program. Ann Scott Tyson, “Army to Halt Call-Ups of Inactive Soldiers,” *Washington Post*, November 18, 2005, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> Marine combat organizations are significantly different from those employed by the Army. There are 24 infantry battalions in three Marine divisions, and nine more in the Marine Corps Reserve. At present there are two Marine regiments in Iraq, along with 2 Marine Expeditionary Units. Roughly speaking, they form the equivalent of two or three Army brigades.

## INDIGENOUS FORCES

*[The ISF] are the eyes, ears and hands of the occupiers, through which he sees, hears and delivers violent blows. God willing, we are determined to target them strongly in the coming period before the situation is consolidated . . .*<sup>88</sup>

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi  
c. July 2004

*I'll tell you, one ISF who is loyal and effective is worth five marines. They know exactly who these people running the insurgency are.*<sup>89</sup>

Col. Ron Johnson  
Commander, 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit

The Coalition's ultimate goal, of course, is to rely on indigenous Iraqi forces to provide security for their own country. The premise here is that ultimately Iraqis themselves must be willing to fight to defend their new-found freedom. There is also a sense that the Iraqi people will respond more positively to efforts by their own countrymen to provide for their security, as opposed to foreign troops.

Properly trained and equipped Iraqi forces who are well-led would also seem to be better able to obtain badly needed intelligence on the insurgents from their fellow Iraqis. The reasons for this are several. First, indigenous Iraqi troops represent an enduring security presence to Iraqis, not the ephemeral security offered by Coalition troops that will someday leave. Second, Iraqi troops have a superior understanding of local cultures and customs, enhancing their ability to win over the local population while minimizing the risk of unintentionally alienating them. Of course, Iraqi security forces' superior language skills are a great asset in this regard. Finally, Iraqis may be able to apply techniques that, while unacceptable to Americans, may nevertheless prove effective in combating the insurgency.<sup>90</sup>

Aside from their potential to help secure the support of the Iraqi people, Iraqi security forces can also play an important role in securing the war's other two centers of gravity: the American people and the American soldier. As growing numbers of effective Iraqi security forces move to

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<sup>88</sup> David R. Sands, "Zarqawi Wants Sunnis in Control," *Washington Times*, July 21, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> John F. Burns, "After Falluja, U.S. Troops Fight a New Battle Just as Important, and Just as Tough," *New York Times*, November 8, 2004.

<sup>90</sup> For example, during a recent combined operation involving US and Iraqi troops, several Iraqis were detained, including one who refused to reveal his brother's whereabouts—until an Iraqi soldier smacked him in the face. The soldier told his American counterpart, "I know respectable soldiers aren't supposed to do that. But when I asked him nicely he said: 'I don't know where my brother is. I think he's in Baghdad.' But after I hit him, he said, 'O.K., my brother is in the backyard.' So which way is better?" Juliet Macur, "From Team Players in War to Competitors in Games," *New York Times*, October 2, 2005.

the field, US troop levels can be lowered. This will alleviate some of the burden on America's overstretched Army. It will also reassure the American people that the country's involvement in the war is being reduced as a consequence of success in the field, not failure.

In the year following the end of major combat operations, progress in training the ISF was slow. Initial efforts to field large numbers of ISF, in the form of police, a civil defense corps, and the beginning of a reconstituted Iraqi Army achieved mixed results, at best. These units proved generally unreliable during the Spring 2004 uprisings in the Sunni and Shi'ia parts of the country. Some security forces even went over to the insurgents' side.<sup>91</sup>

Several reasons are given for the Iraqi Security Forces' initial substandard performance. One is the lack of an Iraqi government to command the loyalty of these forces, and inspire them to perform effectively. These forces were also generally poorly equipped. The training they received has been, in some cases, wholly inadequate for the tasks they had been asked to perform. Many of these units were deployed without adequate backup support (e.g., quick-reaction forces) to provide aid in the event they were overmatched by the insurgents. Finally, cases of corruption among the leadership of these units have been identified.<sup>92</sup>

What seems clear is that training large numbers of Iraqis to the levels of proficiency required will take a considerable amount of time, as will providing them with the kinds of equipment they will need to perform their missions. Following the spring 2004 uprisings, the Defense Department increased its priority in this area, assigning LTG David Petraeus to oversee the training effort. After leading that effort for over 15 months, General Petraeus was succeeded by LTG Martin Dempsey.<sup>93</sup>

Two major challenges must be confronted in building up the ISF: properly organizing, training, manning, and equipping the force, and ensuring its loyalty to the new Iraq. The results thus far, while mixed, offer some encouragement. In terms of sheer numbers, over 200,000 Iraqi security forces of various types have been trained to varying degrees of readiness. This includes over 100 battalions, of which some 36 are capable of taking the lead in combined operations with US forces. This is referred to as Level 2 readiness.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> One concern that must be addressed is the extent to which the presence of US and other Coalition security forces induces a "free rider" effect on the Iraqis. That is to say, so long as external forces are providing security in Iraq, there may be less incentive for Iraqis to take on the task themselves. Given the state of Iraqi forces at present, and the recent return of sovereignty to Iraq, this is not an immediate concern. However, over time, as Iraqi forces become more proficient, this could become an issue. During the Vietnam War senior US officials were acutely aware of the prospect that a greater effort on the Americans' part could produce a corresponding lack of effort on the part of South Vietnamese forces.

<sup>92</sup> Amer Madhani, "In Race to Train Iraq Security Force, GIs Find Trust is Biggest Obstacle," *Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 2004.

<sup>93</sup> LTG Petraeus achieved some notable success in northern Iraq as commander of the Army's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) in stability operations immediately following the initial phase of the war.

<sup>94</sup> The number of Iraqi Army battalions capable of independent operations stands at one. (This is Level 1 Readiness.) There are a total of 116 Army and special police battalions. Josh White and Bradley Graham, "Decline in Iraqi

The ISF have begun to take on some responsibilities for their country's security. For example, the number of combined US-Iraqi and independent Iraqi operations at the company level or above increased from about 100 in May 2005 to over 1,300 by October. The latter figure represents roughly 80 percent of the total of such operations.<sup>95</sup> In February, the Iraqi Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 6<sup>th</sup> Division, assumed responsibility for a major part of Baghdad, including the notorious Haifa Street area. The unit has thus far performed well.<sup>96</sup> Other Iraqi units have followed to assume responsibilities in other parts of the country, like Najaf.<sup>97</sup>

While progress is clearly being made, obstacles remain. One major problem area involves providing sufficient logistical support to ISF units. Even the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade in Baghdad has suffered from serious shortfalls ranging from equipment and ammunition to repairs to damaged facilities.<sup>98</sup>

There are problems regarding insurgent infiltration into ISF units, especially the police forces, as well as corruption in the senior ranks.<sup>99</sup> Better vetting of recruits and leaders, as well as procedures being put into place to reduce corruption, are crucial to addressing this critical problem. Yet another concern that must be addressed is the loyalty most Iraqis feel to their sub-national group—Shiia and Sunni Arabs, and Kurds—as opposed to the state of Iraq. Given the enmity that exists between the Sunni Arabs, who ruled Iraq since the Ottoman Empire, and the Kurds and Shiite Arabs, who were the targets of Sunni Arab repression, it is not surprising that militias like the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Shiite Mahdi Army and Badr Brigade have refused to disband.<sup>100</sup> (Indeed, there is evidence that some elements of these militias have joined the ISF, leading to fears that the Coalition may be arming Iraqi factions for a civil war.<sup>101</sup>) Given these

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Troops' Readiness Cited," *Washington Post*, September 30, 2005, p. 12; and Bradley Graham, "Rumsfeld Defends Iraqi Forces," *Washington Post*, October 1, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> Graham, "Rumsfeld Defends Iraqi Forces."

<sup>96</sup> Rick Jervis, "Iraq's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade: Begging for Basics," *USA Today*, August 9, 2005, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> In one of the most encouraging examples of ISF improvement, Iraqi police in Mosul fought off three attacks on their headquarters in June 2005, a little over half a year after police had fled their posts under attacks by insurgents in November 2004. Rowan Scarborough, "General: Iraqi Police Stood Against Attackers in Mosul," *Washington Times*, July 2, 2005.

<sup>98</sup> Jervis, "Iraq's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade: Begging for Basics;" and Ashraf Khalil, "Tough Times for 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Iraq's Army," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2005.

<sup>99</sup> Patrick J. McDonnell and Solomon Moore, "Iraq to Purge Corrupt Officers," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 2005, p. 1; Anthony Shadid and Steve Fainaru, "Building Iraq's Army: Mission Impossible," *Washington Post*, June 10, 2005, p. 1; and John J. Lumpkin, "Poor Recruiting Plagues Police," *Washington Times*, July 26, 2005, p. 19.

<sup>100</sup> Both Shiite and Kurdish militias, often operating as elements of the ISF, have engaged in acts of intimidation and retribution (e.g., assassinations, kidnappings) in an effort to establish control over parts of Iraq where their group predominates. As one Iraqi Defense Ministry official stated, "They're taking money from the state, they're taking clothes from the state, they're taking vehicles from the state, but their loyalty is to the parties." Anthony Shadid and Steve Fainaru, "Militias on the Rise Across Iraq," *Washington Post*, August 21, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> For example, Iraqi Army forces in Mosul are dominated by four battalions made up of Kurdish troops. Complaints have been received from residents of Mosul alleging that hundreds of Sunni Arabs and Turkmen have been abducted by these troops and transferred to secret prisons in Kurd-controlled northern Iraq. A similar phenomenon is reported in southern Iraq where, by some accounts, the police force is now dominated by Shiite



circumstances, it seems likely that it will take years, and perhaps generations, before ISF members feel greater loyalty to “Iraq” than they do to their own group. This should come as no surprise to Americans, who will recall that 72 years after the ratification of their constitution in 1789, men such as Robert E. Lee still felt a greater loyalty to Virginia than to the United States.<sup>102</sup> For this reason alone an extended Coalition force presence—albeit in greatly reduced (but not unsubstantial) numbers—will be needed as a “moderating” influence on the various factions within the ISF, even after the insurgency is brought under control.

It is not clear whether this renewed emphasis in training will overcome the problems noted above. In any event, if large, competent Iraqi security forces are to be fielded, it will likely take several years, not months, to achieve.<sup>103</sup> Thus this option also represents a possible long-term solution, not an immediate fix for the Army’s deployment woes.

## **PRIVATE CONTRACTORS: “UGLY AMERICANS?”**

*These guys run loose in this country and do stupid stuff. There’s no authority over them, so you can’t come down on them hard when they escalate force. They shoot people, and someone else has to deal with the aftermath. It happens all over the place.*<sup>104</sup>

Brigadier General Karl R. Horst  
Deputy Commanding General, 3<sup>rd</sup> US Infantry Division

The US Government might obtain some relief for its overstretched forces through outsourcing some security activities to private contractors. As in the case of the Marine Corps and the allies, however, this option is already being exercised, by some accounts to the tune of roughly 20,000 personnel—or approximately the number of allied Coalition forces in Iraq.<sup>105</sup> Contractor personnel from “private security companies” hail from a variety of nations. To be sure, there are

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militia loyal to the Badr Organization (formerly the Badr Brigade), the military arm of the region’s most powerful religious party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Shadid and Fainaru, “Milicias on the Rise Across Iraq,” *Washington Post*, August 21, 2005, p. 1; and Tom Lasserer, “Militia Backed by Iraqi Leaders Accused in Attacks,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 10, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> Lee was offered command of the Union Army at the onset of the US Civil War, but instead resigned his commission to fight for the Confederate States of America against the United States.

<sup>103</sup> When asked to provide a timetable under which some 200,000 Iraqi police, civil defense forces, border and facility protection guards and soldiers would be trained, LTG Petraeus replied, “I don’t think you can put a timetable on this.” Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Needs More Time to Train and Equip Iraqis,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2004. The ISF reached a strength of 200,000 in October 2005. However, it remains unclear how well these numbers translate into military capability and operation effectiveness.

<sup>104</sup> Jonathan Finer, “Security Contractors in Iraq Under Scrutiny After Shootings,” *Washington Post*, September 10, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> Edward Cody, “Contractor Immunity A Divisive Issue,” *Washington Post*, June 14, 2004, p. 1; “The Other US Military,” *Business Week*, May 31, 2004; and “US Use of Civilian Contractors in War Zones at Record,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 2004.

substantial numbers of American and British. But the ranks of private security companies also comprise significant numbers of Australians, Chileans, Fijis, Romanians, and Ukrainians, to name but a few of the nationalities involved.<sup>106</sup>

It is far from clear, however, whether the use of contract personnel represents a positive step for the war effort. Consider that:

- There are clear differences in pay between soldiers and contract workers, with the latter typically receiving significantly greater compensation than the former.
- Contractors are not under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, or UCMJ, and hence do not operate under the standards that, the military has long argued, are key to good order and discipline. There has been no central oversight of the private security companies that provide security contractors, and no uniform rules of engagement.<sup>107</sup>
- Contract workers generally also enjoy a better quality of life than their military counterparts, staying in better quarters and being provided with more amenities.<sup>108</sup>
- Contractors enjoy a huge benefit in terms of the personal freedom they enjoy. For example, they are free to quit their job at any time; soldiers are not. Indeed, both the government and the security companies concede that contract security workers have the right to abandon their post if they deem the situation is too dangerous.<sup>109</sup>

Contract security workers also present a potential military problem. They are not integrated into the overall US military chain of command, and thus function apart from the overall counterinsurgency campaign being conducted in Iraq.

One challenge counterinsurgent forces have in dealing with insurgents is differentiating between them and noncombatants. In a combat situation, oftentimes the safest thing to do from an individual soldier's perspective is to shoot first and ask questions later. This, however, risks incurring noncombatant casualties and alienating the population. It is for that reason that US forces operate under strict rules of engagement (ROE). The contractor security forces, however, do not function under the ROE imposed on US and Coalition forces. It is not clear whether the

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<sup>106</sup> Daniel Bergner, "The Other Army," *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2005.

<sup>107</sup> David Barstow, "Security Companies: Shadow Soldiers in Iraq," *New York Times*, April 19, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> Ironically, private security contractors, who are intended to save the military money, appear to be exacerbating the Army's recruiting and retention difficulties, especially among the special forces. Nathan Hodge, "National Guard Chief: Private Military Contractors Stymie Recruitment," *Defense Daily*, July 13, 2005. One reason why bonuses for special forces re-enlistments have climbed to as high as \$150,000 is the lure of private contractor money. This, of course, is driven by the military's demand for (and willingness to pay for) private contractor services. In essence, the military is bidding against itself. For experienced special forces troops, even bonuses on this scale are often inadequate to induce them to re-enlist. See Barstow, "Security Companies: Shadow Soldiers in Iraq."

<sup>109</sup> David Barstow, "Security Companies: Shadow Soldiers in Iraq," *New York Times*, April 19, 2004, p. 1.

contract forces even have standing rules of engagement. This has the potential to undermine US efforts at winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.<sup>110</sup>

Another issue concerns the degree of responsibility incurred by US forces to protect US nationals operating as security forces. For example, are Army quick reaction forces established to come to the aid of US and Coalition forces under attack also obligated to respond to requests from security contractors? Doing so not only puts US forces directly at risk, but also increases the risk to other Coalition units who may call upon US rapid reaction forces, only to find that they are committed to defend security contractors.

Yet another worrisome issue involves the obligation, if any, of US forces to share intelligence with security contractors to enable them to perform their job more effectively. The problem here, of course, is whether the intelligence will remain a secret, or whether the likelihood of security being breached will be substantially greater by those who are not subject to military order and discipline.<sup>111</sup>

In short, it is not clear that this form of outsourcing manpower requirements makes good sense, much less whether it should be expanded in an effort to solve the challenge confronted by the Thin Green Line. Recently, the Iraqi government has taken steps to impose rules requiring all security firms to be registered and limiting the possession of weapons only to those who have been licensed.<sup>112</sup>

## **LONG-TERM OPTIONS**

No near-term option, or combination of options, aside from a dramatic decline in the insurgent threat, is likely to provide the kind of relief required to bring Army force commitments in line with its force structure and rotation base. This leads to a consideration of long-term solutions which, either singly or in combination, might offer a remedy. Of course, these longer-term options put the Army in a race against time, in which its ability to execute long-term initiatives

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<sup>110</sup> There are indications that security contractors have alienated both US troops and Iraqis. As one US intelligence officer stated, "Those Blackwater [security contractor] guys, they drive around wearing Oakley sunglasses and pointing their guns out of car windows. They have pointed their guns at me, and it pissed me off. Imagine what a guy in Fallujah thinks." [Fallujah is where four US security contractors were killed and their bodies mutilated by Iraqis, setting off a confrontation between US and insurgent forces that led to two major battles.] Michael Duffy, "When Private Armies Take to the Front Lines," *Time*, April 12, 2004. A year after the initial Fallujah battle, 16 American security contractors were arrested by marines after they allegedly twice fired on a Marine position in Fallujah. Iraqi officials stated that, on average, security contractors kill a dozen civilians a week without probable cause. This has the potential to create enormous problems for Coalition forces in a society where the killing of a family member or tribal member is likely to trigger a "blood feud." Yet security contractors are under no obligation to exercise restraint in the use of deadly force. The Marines later cited the group in a letter that read, in part, "Your convoy was speeding through Fallujah and firing shots indiscriminately, some of which impacted positions manned by US Marines. Your actions endangered the lives of innocent Iraqis and US service members in the area." Adrain Blomfield, "Shootings May Lead to Security Guard Curb," *London Daily Telegraph*, June 11, 2005, p. 1; and T. Christian Miller, "Contractors Say Marines Behaved Abusively," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Security contractors are generally cut off from access to US military intelligence. Duffy, "When Private Armies Take to the Front Lines."

<sup>112</sup> Oliver Poole, "Iraq to Bring Private Armies Under Control," *London Daily Telegraph*, September 9, 2005, p. 1.

competes with the demands for the Army to reduce its forward deployments or risk “breaking” the force in the form of a catastrophic decline in recruitment and retention. At present, the following options are under consideration for relieving the stress on the Thin Green Line.

### **Option 1: Grow the Army**

This option, which has substantial support among some members of Congress, would add an additional six brigades to the active Army force structure over the next two years. The Army has already requested and received approval to increase its size by some 30-40,000 troops as a temporary measure to facilitate other options. This option, however, would make the increase in troop strength permanent and orient it on filling out new brigades.<sup>113</sup> Assuming a rotation base of 4:1, this would increase the Army’s forward deployed forces by 1½ brigades.

### **Option 2: Redeploy the Army**

The Army has redeployed one of its two brigades from South Korea to Iraq. The brigade will relocate to the United States upon completion of its tour in Iraq, and the Army will be relieved of maintaining one brigade that is currently a hardship tour for those soldiers assigned to it.<sup>114</sup>

There has been some discussion of the Army reducing its force posture in Germany in favor of periodic rotations to austere East European “lily pad” bases.<sup>115</sup> Whatever its strategic merits, this initiative would actually *increase* the strain on Army deployments by creating a rotation base requirement for the lily pad bases where there is not one at present. Until the Army’s rotation base problem is resolved, this initiative would best be deferred.

The result of these initiatives would be a net decrease in demand for one Active Army brigade from contingency/hardship requirements.

### **Option 3: Restructure the Army**

The Army structure today is very much a close representation of the Army that came out of the Cold War, with its primary focus on waging large-scale conventional war against a similarly equipped and structured enemy (i.e., the Soviet Army). Consequently, there is potentially much to be gained by “rebalancing” the Army, shifting the primary emphasis from conventional, open battle to accord greater priority on stability operations.

The Army is taking steps to do just that. For example, it is reducing its emphasis on firepower (field artillery) and on air threats (air defense) by converting soldiers in many of these units to

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<sup>113</sup> It may also require an additional 20-30,000 soldiers be added to the force to provide the necessary combat support and combat service support.

<sup>114</sup> Ray Dubois and General Richard Cody, “Defense Department Special Briefing on Announcement of New Locations for The Active Duty Army’s Modular Brigade Combat Teams,” July 27, 2005, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050727-3521.html>.

<sup>115</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, “New US Strategy: ‘Lily Pad’ Bases,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 10, 2004.

positions that are more relevant for a new era in warfare, such as intelligence, special forces, civil affairs, and military police. These steps, in combination with Army efforts to leverage the capabilities of its sister Services (e.g., the Air Force for fire support and air defense), and the exploitation of technology to substitute for manpower in certain instances, could realize a substantial increase in the number of Army and National Guard brigades.<sup>116</sup>

If these and related initiatives are successful, the Army anticipates an increase in the number of its Active brigades from 34 to 43-48, or an additional 9-15 brigades.<sup>117</sup> This would yield roughly an additional 2 to 4 brigades for forward deployment.

## **SUMMARY OF OPTIONS**

The Army's long-term initiatives for addressing the challenge of establishing a rotation base that can sustain indefinitely its current deployment level and maintaining a strategic reserve, if executed as planned, would provide much-needed relief to the forces current comprising the Thin Green Line.

Taken as a whole, these initiatives would increase the Army's active brigade combat teams from the 33 that existed at the time of the Second Gulf War to between 43 and 48. Given a 4:1 active force rotation base, this represents roughly an additional 2 to 4 brigades available for forward deployment at any one time. The Army National Guard would undergo a similar conversion that extends to 34 of its brigades. The total number of brigades available for forward deployment would increase from around 13 to between 15 and 17.

Other Army initiatives would reduce current forward deployment requirements by three brigades, two from the National Guard (from the Balkans) and one from the Active Component (from South Korea). This would leave a requirement for 16 brigades to be forward deployed in contingency operations or hardship tours. Since between 15 and 17 brigades would be available for deployment at any given time, this would establish a sustainable rotation base. However, it would likely take the rest of this decade to accomplish. Furthermore, it would not provide any extra brigades to form a strategic reserve.

If it is determined that the Army should also increase the number of brigades in its force structure through a 30-40,000 augmentation of its end strength, this would add an additional six brigades to the Active Component, boosting the rotation base level by an additional 1½ brigades, to between 16 and 17½. Alternatively, in conjunction with the Army's other initiatives, this would create a modest strategic reserve. Of course, the required number of forward deployed brigades could be reduced significantly, if and when indigenous forces in Afghanistan and Iraq

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<sup>116</sup> Government Accountability Office (GAO), "Force Structure: Preliminary Observations on Army Plans to Implement and Fund Modular Forces," GAO-05-443T, Testimony before Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, House Armed Services Committee, March 16, 2005.

<sup>117</sup> The Army's restructuring effort will create formations called Units of Action, or UAs, that roughly approximate today's brigade combat team formations in terms of their size and capabilities.

become capable of providing for their country's stability, enabling the formation of a more robust strategic reserve.

## Risks

In theory, the Army's approach to addressing the problems associated with an inadequate rotation base will work. However, there are significant, unavoidable risks associated with the Army's approach.

To succeed, the Army must make it through this transition period without "breaking" the force—i.e., without stressing the Active and Reserve Components so severely that recruiting and retention problems emerge that threaten the forces' effectiveness. This is the central, and as yet unanswerable, question the Army must confront.

Success also implies training indigenous Iraqi and Afghan forces to take on a greater share of the burden for stabilizing their own countries. To the extent this occurs, it could provide significant near- to mid-term relief for forward deployed Army units. Over the longer term, it would enable the Army to increase the size of its strategic reserve available for major regional conflicts and other contingency missions, and perhaps also enable the Army to reduce its force structure so as to facilitate its modernization.

As difficult as it will be under the current circumstances for the Army to pass through this danger zone on the path toward its restructuring (and perhaps expansion as well), there are plausible contingencies that would place immediate and substantial deployment demands on the Army's overstretched force structure. Among these are the following:

- *Major Regional War.* The situation with respect to North Korean and Iranian nuclear ambitions remains tense. If an argument can be made that intervention in Iraq was necessary to preclude the possibility that a hostile Third World regime would acquire weapons of mass destruction, then one cannot discount the prospect of a conflict with either or both of these states. Either contingency would likely place significant, immediate demands on the Active Army, with the National Guard feeling the ripple effects shortly thereafter.
- *Homeland Defense.* According to the Department of Homeland Security, there is a significant risk of a major terrorist attack on the United States this year or next. Should such an attack occur, the demand for National Guard forces to provide security at key facilities could compromise both near-term deployments and the Guard's longer term restructuring. Here the indirect effects would be felt by the Active Component in terms of reduced Guard participation in overseas deployments.
- *Horizontal Escalation.* Islamic insurgents are trying to destabilize Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other Muslim states. Of particular concern are threats to Persian Gulf oil production and the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. For example, if radical Muslims destabilize Saudi Arabia, the demand for ground forces to secure vital oil production facilities could be great. While one might assume that there would be substantial support

from the international community for such a mission, it is not clear whether it would take the form of political cheerleading or military commitment. As noted above, the supply of well-trained ground forces among America's traditional allies is quite limited.

- *Ally Defections.* The United States' Coalition allies may not prove willing or able to sustain their current force commitments for the duration of the "long, hard slog" in Iraq envisioned (accurately, in this author's estimation) by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. If not, the Army would be hard-pressed to make up for significant defections, such as would occur if the Australians, British, Italians, Poles or South Koreans withdrew their forces.

## **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?**

If the ISF training effort proves successful, and Iraqi forces assume security responsibilities commensurate with their numbers, it may be possible to reduce US ground forces in Iraq from the current level of 160,000 thousand, to perhaps 100,000 by the end of 2006.

Vigorous efforts should be made to enable a substantial drawdown in US force levels. The Army simply cannot sustain the force levels desired to sustain the momentum needed to break the back of the insurgent movement.

Army and Marine force reductions are needed to reduce the stress on two of the war's centers of gravity: the American soldier and the American people (who haven't been conditioned to equate success with the drawdown of US troop levels). However, merely substituting ISF units for US forces does not address how momentum in counterinsurgency operations can be maintained. Accomplishing this will require a significant shift in US strategy and organization. This matter will be addressed presently.

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## V. TRAINING FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY

In providing guidance for the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review of the US military's overall posture, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld observed that the armed forces were principally (one might say *excessively*) oriented on traditional, or conventional, warfare. At the same time, the military seemed relatively unprepared for potentially disruptive challenges to US security (e.g., challenges stemming from breakthroughs in technology), catastrophic threats (e.g., covert nuclear or biological attacks on the American homeland) or irregular warfare of the type waged by radical Islamists and insurgents.<sup>118</sup>

Reorienting conventional forces to deal with insurgents is a challenging process, involving as it does not only the restructuring of ground forces to deal with a very different conflict environment, but cultural and doctrinal change as well. Counterinsurgency is a light infantryman's war, yet the bulk today's US Army and Marine Corps forces are hardly light. Making things more difficult still, their doctrine, particularly in the Army's case, accords little emphasis to counterinsurgency, courtesy of the "Vietnam Syndrome" that purged much of this kind of training from the military in the wake of its traumatic experience in Vietnam three decades ago.<sup>119</sup>

Compounding the US military's challenge is its training infrastructure, which although widely considered to be the world's best and a "core competency," has been focused almost entirely on preparing US forces for the conventional warfare in which they excel, but which is generally irrelevant for current conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Jason Sherman, "US Revises Threat Scenarios," *Defense News*, November 22, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> The Army is taking steps to update its counterinsurgency doctrine. See Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, FM3-07.22, October 2005 (draft). Following the United States' experience in fighting communist insurgents in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s, there emerged a strong desire among the American people, their political leaders, and the military itself to avoid involvement in such conflicts in the future. Hence the phrase "No More Vietnams." Even before US involvement in Vietnam ended, President Nixon set forth the Nixon Doctrine, which called for the United States to support friendly regional powers opposing insurgent forces, but not to plan on deploying US combat troops to assist them. With the 1980s came the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines. They essentially advocated applying overwhelming US force to defeat the enemy promptly, and to facilitate rapid US disengagement. War against irregular forces was to be avoided. When the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut was attacked, the US quickly withdrew its forces from Lebanon. Where US advisors were involved in counterinsurgency operations, as in El Salvador, strict limits were placed on their numbers. The pattern persisted through the 1990s. When US troops were dispatched to conduct peacekeeping operations in Haiti, Somalia and the Balkans, there were demands for "exit strategies," lest American forces become bogged down in a Vietnam-like quagmire. Again, following the "Blackhawk Down" engagement in Mogadishu, US forces were soon withdrawn from Somalia.

<sup>120</sup> For a discussion on Army efforts to make NTC training more relevant to counterinsurgency missions, see Richard Whittle, "In the Army's Sandbox, No Playing Nice," *Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 2005; and Tom Gjelton, "Military Planners Scrambling to Prepare for new Counterinsurgency Challenges Being Faced in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," National Public Radio, November 5, 2004.



Issues relating to doctrine and training beg the question of how the US military might be best employed as part of an overall strategy for counterinsurgent threats. It is to this issue that we now turn our attention.

## **TRAINING**

The US military has, for several decades, relied on high-fidelity training centers to provide its service members with an important advantage over its adversaries. Training facilities like the Army's National Training Center (NTC) and the Air Force's Red Flag exercises at Nellis Air Force Base honed the skills of soldiers and airmen. These facilities, however, were optimized for conventional warfare, not the irregular insurgent warfare that characterizes the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Put another way, the requirement to train both individuals and units for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to support training associated with the conversion of force structures to those more relevant for counterinsurgency operations, has challenged a training infrastructure that is optimized to develop soldiers and units for conventional warfare.<sup>121</sup> The Army's NTC, for example, was designed with conventional military operations in mind, not insurgency warfare. Moreover, the Iraqi insurgency is urban in its character. Yet, neither the Army nor the Marine Corps has sufficient urban warfare training facilities to provide training for all those units who require it. Those urban warfare training centers that do exist do not replicate the urban environment in its full form, as they lack the dense concentrations of high-rise buildings, and subterranean features like sewers and subways.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, Army and Marine units cannot receive the kind of high-fidelity training in irregular urban operations that they have come to enjoy in training for conventional warfare. Nor can they train on a scale (i.e., brigade-level) comparable to that conducted at the NTC.

As counterinsurgency warfare is typically protracted in nature, US forces may find themselves engaged in this form of conflict for the better part of this decade, and perhaps a major part of the next. Thus the US military could benefit substantially from creating the necessary infrastructure to support high-fidelity counterinsurgency training.

To be sure, both the Army and Marine Corps are trying to adopt their training to prepare soldiers and marines, and their units, for combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. For example, a remarkable transformation has occurred at the Army's NTC at Fort Irwin, California. Until very recently, the NTC was optimized for training Army brigades in combined arms, mechanized warfare. Now the NTC has taken on the form of warfare that confronts GIs in Iraq. The training

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<sup>121</sup> The Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has directed the military to place increased emphasis on irregular warfare, which he sees as a major challenge to US security. Sherman, "US Revises Threat Scenarios," p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> This is not to say the Army is ignoring the problem. Over the past several years, the Army has improved the urban warfare training at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana. The number of "villages" at the training center has been increased from four to 18, and several hundred Arabic speaking "civilians" populate them. The training time has lengthened, as well, with some units staying up to a month. Ann Scott Tyson, "US Tests New Tactics in Urban Warfare," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 9, 2004, p. 1.

area, which is the size of Rhode Island, has no front lines. Insurgents plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and employ car bombs. Army units must convoy their supplies distances approaching 100-miles, while being subjected to attacks by insurgents. A dozen Iraqi “villages” dot the landscape, populated by Iraqis and Iraqi-Americans who participate in the training. US troops must recruit men from this population for the Iraqi security forces, negotiate with local leaders, defend against an array of roadside bombs, car bombs, suicide bombers, and mortar attacks.<sup>123</sup> The International Red Cross has even been invited to participate in the training involving mock detainee operations.

However, a more coherent, focused, long-term approach is needed to bring the US military’s training infrastructure for irregular wars, like counterinsurgency, up to the standards of its conventional warfare training facilities, and to meet the dramatically increased demand for such training. Training facilities must not only be adapted, they must operate at a higher capacity. This is all the more true given the *de facto* expansion of the active force created by large call-ups of National Guard brigades, and by the rapidly growing requirement to train the forces of partners in irregular warfare (e.g., Iraqi Security Forces; the Afghan National Army; etc.).

Compounding the challenge of shoring up its high-fidelity training competitive advantage, the insurgents in Iraq are the beneficiaries of perhaps the world’s best training center for insurgent warfare. Put another way, the Iraqi insurgents are in the world’s finest high-fidelity “training center”—Iraq itself—24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. And they are being “trained” by the world’s best “OPFOR”<sup>124</sup>—the US military. Since insurgent forces are not rotated in and out of combat, but are constantly in the field, the Army and Marine Corps must find ways to avoid having the combat skills of units rotating back to the United States atrophy.

At some point, these soldiers and marines may rotate back to Afghanistan or Iraq. If they are sent back into the area where they were previously deployed, this training gap may be mitigated. The effectiveness of unit operations might be enhanced, perhaps dramatically, if a major portion of its members remained together over successive deployments. There is some debate as to whether such “unit manning,” as envisioned by the Army, actually produces greater unit cohesion, or that the gains in unit cohesion are worth the costs of creating it.<sup>125</sup> However, there would seem to be significant benefits to be derived from unit manning and rotation if, as part of the Army and Marine Corps rotation sequences, units that had operated in a particular area of Afghanistan or Iraq returned to those same areas in their successive deployments.

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<sup>123</sup> Stephen J. Hedges, “Mock Village Helps GIs See Iraq Reality,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 14, 2004, p. 1; and Richard Whittle, “In the Army’s Sandbox, No Playing Nice,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 9, 2005. In addition to training at the NTC, other training areas have been modified to assist soldiers and marines prepare for deployment to Iraq. At Fort Carson, for example, Colorado, the US Army’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment—which recently conducted operations in Tal Afar—underwent training similar to that found at the NTC. Sarah Baxter Moyock, “Marines Learn How to Fight for Allah,” *London Sunday Times*, December 12, 2004.

<sup>124</sup> “OPFOR” is a term used by the US Army to denote the units stationed at its training centers that serve as the opposing force to the units being trained.

<sup>125</sup> See Pat Towell, *Forging the Sword: Unit-Manning in the US Army* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2004).

For this to happen, retention rates must remain high. For retention rates to remain high, a rotation base must be established that encourages high retention rates. At present, the rotation base for Army (in particular) and Marine Corps forces deployed on hardship/combat tours appears woefully inadequate to sustain high retention rates. This could pose serious problems over time, both for US military effectiveness in Afghanistan and Iraq, and for the US military's training infrastructure. If, in this protracted conflict, the US military is not able to deploy units that contain a significant number of veteran soldiers and marines, the training gap between them and their adversary may widen.<sup>126</sup> During the Vietnam War, when US forces had a high percentage of draftees in their ranks who were discharged after a few years' service, including one year in Vietnam, it was said that the United States military had "one year's worth of experience in Vietnam ten times over," whereas many of the communist guerrillas they confronted had a decade or more of experience. A similar phenomenon could occur in today's volunteer military if retention rates decline.

Should this occur, it will place greater stress on the military's training infrastructure to make up the difference, as the training infrastructure will have to prepare a higher percentage of "green" troops for counterinsurgency warfare. The implications for US military effectiveness could be striking. In the past, training at the Army's NTC, the Air Force's "Red Flag" exercises and the Navy's "Top Gun" training provided US service members with an important competitive edge in combat, especially as they were often matched up against opponents with less experience and inferior training. But, it is far from clear that the "training gap" will favor US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq over time.

## **"SOFT" TRAINING**

Tactics are clearly important in military operations. Soldiers and marines must be proficient in individual and small-unit training on tasks such as detecting and handling IEDs, conducting convoy operations, clearing urban structures, and manning checkpoints. But counterinsurgency training is even more challenging. Soldiers and marines must also be trained in unconventional, or at least traditionally peripheral, tasks that are not central to the "fire and maneuver" or "move, shoot and communicate" that form the core of conventional combat operations. Among these tasks are those that focus on:

- Possessing an appreciation of cultural norms;
- Maintaining fire power restraint;
- Undertaking civic action with local government and civic leaders;
- Operating (and perhaps integrating) with local security forces;
- Providing security and other forms of support to reconstruction efforts; and

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<sup>126</sup> One reason this might *not* happen is if enemy insurgent forces are suffering severe casualties, or experiencing substantial defections. This could increase substantially the percentage of inexperienced insurgents in their ranks.

- Possessing sufficient language skills to enable the actions described here.

It is not clear how well individual soldiers and marines, or small units, can be “trained up” for these tasks prior to their deployment to the combat theater. Training in some skills may be relatively easy. There are, for example, ongoing programs to provide US forces with an appreciation of Afghan and Iraqi customs and cultural norms. Here in America, police training emphasizes restraint in the use of force. These techniques may be applied to train US troops in firepower restraint. On the other hand, US forces operating with local security forces can be critical to an effective counterinsurgency campaign, as demonstrated by the Army’s Special Forces in the Buon Enao program and the Marine Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) initiative in Vietnam.<sup>127</sup> Yet other than personal experience, and relying on well-crafted “lessons learned” reports, it would seem difficult to conduct training in these types of tasks beyond basic military skills (e.g., patrolling). Similarly, building the necessary confidence among local leaders and the population in general, so as to promote civic action, enhance security, and thus win their “hearts and minds” is likely to be, at least in part, a function of US troops’ “people skills.” Yet even for those possessing the necessary cultural awareness, building up a level of confidence and trust with local Iraqi religious and civic leaders can only occur over time. This cannot be “pre-loaded” at a US military training facility.

Finally, the ability to prepare US forces through training also depends on how counterinsurgent forces choose to prosecute the war. For example, a strategy that emphasizes periodic sweeps through an area is far less likely to provide the level of contact that “secure and hold” operations would. Familiarity can breed trust, as well as contempt. If the local population trusts Coalition forces will provide it with security, it becomes easier to obtain the intelligence that is critical to defeating the insurgents. The choice between a strategy that emphasizes periodic sweeps and one that places high priority on sustained presence in an area could have a significant influence on the type of skills most needed in the force, and thus on what might constitute an optimal training program.

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<sup>127</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 70-73, 172-177.



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## VI. STRATEGY OPTIONS

What is the United States' strategy for achieving its war aims? The basic problem is that the United States and its Coalition partners have found it difficult to settle on a strategy for achieving their objectives and defeating the insurgents. On the political front, they have been working to create a democratic Iraq. But that is a goal, not a strategy. On the military front, they have sought to train Iraqi security forces and to turn the war over to them. As President Bush has stated: "Our strategy can be summed up in this way: as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down."<sup>128</sup> But the president is describing a withdrawal plan, not a strategy. Where is the plan of action for defeating the insurgents and achieving America's overall security objectives?

Without a clear strategy in Iraq it is difficult to draft clear metrics for gauging progress. This may be why some senior political and military leaders have made overly optimistic or even contradictory declarations regarding the war's progress. In May of 2004, for example, following the insurgent takeover of Fallujah, General Richard B. Myers stated, "I think we're on the brink of success here."<sup>129</sup> Six months later, before last November's offensive to recapture the city, General John Abizaid, the commander of all US forces in the Persian Gulf, said, "When we win this fight—and we will win—there will be nowhere left for the insurgents to hide."<sup>130</sup> Following the city's recapture, Lieutenant General John Sattler, the Marines' commander, declared that the Coalition had "broken the back of the insurgency."<sup>131</sup> Yet in the subsequent months, insurgent activity remained undiminished. Nevertheless, eight months later Vice President Dick Cheney asserted that the insurgency appeared to be in its "last throes" while Lieutenant General John Vines, commander of the multinational corps in Iraq, conceded, "We don't see the insurgency expanding or contracting right now."<sup>132</sup> Most Americans agree with this less optimistic assessment: nearly two-thirds believed the Coalition was "bogged down."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> George W. Bush, "President Addresses Nation, Discusses Iraq, War on Terror," Fort Bragg, NC, June 28, 2005, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/06/20050628-7.html>.

<sup>129</sup> General Richard Myers, "Operations and Reconstruction Efforts in Iraq," Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, May 21, 2004. Available at [http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/security/has142000.000/has142000\\_0f.htm](http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/security/has142000.000/has142000_0f.htm).

<sup>130</sup> John Valceanu, "Abizaid Visits Fallujah, Calls Battle 'Decisive'," *American Forces Information Network*, November 15, 2004, available at [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2004/n11152004\\_2004111501.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2004/n11152004_2004111501.html).

<sup>131</sup> Lieutenant General John Sattler, USMC, Defense Department Operational Update Briefing, November 18, 2004, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20041118-1606.html>.

<sup>132</sup> Lieutenant General John Vines, Briefing on Security Operations in Iraq, June 21, 2005, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050621-3081.html>.

<sup>133</sup> Dana Milbank and Claudia Deane, "Poll Finds Dimmer View of Iraq War," *Washington Post*, June 8, 2005, p. A01.

Nor has there been a significant national debate on strategy. Many administration critics, for example, have offered as their alternative “strategy” an accelerated withdrawal timetable.<sup>134</sup> They see Iraq as another Vietnam and advocate a similar solution: pulling out US troops, turning the war over to the new Iraqi government, and hoping for the best.<sup>135</sup>

But the costs of such premature disengagement would likely be calamitous. A weak Iraqi national government would likely find it difficult to sustain order, especially since most security forces’ loyalties remain with their ethnic or religious factions. Indeed, the national government would almost certainly find itself in the midst of a bloody civil war. Shia and Sunni Arabs would probably receive significant external support, with the former allied to Iran and the latter receiving support from the Arab world, which is overwhelmingly Sunni. If this were not enough, Turkey has long threatened to invade Iraq’s northern region to prevent the formation of an independent Kurdish state.<sup>136</sup> An Iraqi civil war might play out in parallel with a rapid increase in the size of the radical Islamist movement, whose efforts to destabilize the region would likely increase, perhaps dramatically. All this would occur in close proximity to the global economy’s energy core. Over 40 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves and nearly all of its spare production capacity resides in this area.

If America is determined to prevail in this war, then US and Iraqi forces should concentrate on providing security and opportunity to the Iraqi people, thereby denying insurgents the popular support essential to their success. Since counterinsurgent forces are not able to guarantee security to all of Iraq simultaneously, they should start by devoting manpower and resources to certain key areas and then broadening the effort over time—hence the image of an expanding oil spot. The “oil spot strategy” can succeed, but it will require a protracted commitment of US resources, a willingness to risk more casualties in the short term, and an enduring US presence in Iraq, albeit at far lower force levels than the present. If US policymakers and the American public are unwilling to make such a commitment they should be prepared to scale down their goals in Iraq significantly.

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<sup>134</sup> Senator Edward Kennedy, Speech at Johns Hopkins University SAIS, January 27, 2005; Senator Russ Feingold, Press Release, September 9, 2005; and John Hendren, “War Criticism and Concerns Both Growing,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 2005.

<sup>135</sup> Senator Edward Kennedy, Interviewed by Wolf Blitzer on CNN, June 26, 2005.

<sup>136</sup> Tulin Daloglu, “Turkey’s Neighborly Interest,” *Washington Times*, October 19, 2005; Tulin Daloglu, “Turkish Anti-American Sentiment,” *Washington Times*, August 23, 2005; and “Much Ado, Nothing New on Iraq Front,” *Turkish Daily News*, July 27, 2005.

## STRATEGY OPTIONS

*[I] don't think we will put much energy into trying the old saying, 'win the hearts and minds'. I don't look at it as one of the metrics of success.*<sup>137</sup>

LTG Thomas Metz  
Commanding General, Multi-National Corps Iraq, August 2004

### Empires and Insurrections

Insurgencies are nearly as old as warfare itself, so there is no shortage of past strategies to explore. The Romans suppressed insurrections with such ferocity and ruthlessness that it was said they would “make a desert and call it peace.”<sup>138</sup> The Roman suppression of the Jewish insurrection of 66 AD offers an example. Not only did the Roman Army besiege and destroy Jerusalem, the Romans then pursued the remnants of the city’s defenders to the remote mountain fortress of Masada. There they laid siege to this small remnant of the resistance until it too was destroyed. Faced with limited manpower, Rome sought to make an example of those who challenged its authority.<sup>139</sup>

Although they too could be ruthless at times, the British often maintained order through a divide-and-conquer strategy. This involved supporting one of several factions vying for power. In return for this support the favored group was expected to respect Britain’s interests in that part of the world. For example, in Iraq following World War I the British were confronted with a rebellion. Ultimately, London found it best to support one of Iraq’s competing factions—the Sunni Arabs—in their bid for power. In return, the Sunnis were expected to respect Britain’s interests in the region.<sup>140</sup>

Given US political culture and war objectives, neither of these strategies is attractive. The Roman approach is clearly at odds with American values, and the British strategy leads to a client-sponsor relationship with a nondemocratic regime—hardly what the Bush Administration hopes to foster in Iraq. However, Britain also pursued more classical counterinsurgency strategies, with Malaya being the prime case. This strategy, centered around “oil spot” principles, will be elaborated upon presently.

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<sup>137</sup> Sig Christenson, “Wanted: A Few, Good Soldiers,” *San Antonio Express-News*, August 8, 2004.

<sup>138</sup> Tacitus, *The Agricola*, Chapter 30, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/8aggr10.txt>.

<sup>139</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Imperial Rome’s strategy for dealing with insurrections, see Appendix C: The Romans and Counterinsurgency.

<sup>140</sup> Peter Sluglett, “The British Legacy,” in Michael Eisenstadt, ed., *U.S. Policy in Post-Saddam Iraq: Lessons from the British Experience* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003), pp. 3-14.



## **“Rome Lite”: America’s Vietnam Experience**

*We’re going to go ahead and take the fight to the enemy using everything in our arsenal necessary to go ahead and win this fight. We will use a sledgehammer to crush a walnut.*<sup>141</sup>

MG Charles Swannack  
Commander, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, November 2003

A greatly modified approach to the Roman strategy is an attrition strategy. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the US “search and destroy” strategy in the Vietnam War. The strategy placed priority on killing insurgents at a rate that exceeded their ability to generate replacements. The logic behind this approach is that by relentlessly grinding down the enemy’s forces, the counterinsurgents reduce the size of the insurgent force and ultimately break its back. Winning over the population’s hearts and minds was accorded much lower priority. The strategy ultimately failed, but it evidently continues to exert a strong pull on the US military, as evidenced by statements like that of one senior Army commander in Iraq, who declared, “[I] don’t think we will put much energy into trying the old saying, ‘win the hearts and minds.’ I don’t look at it as one of the metrics of success.”<sup>142</sup> US forces have recently increased offensive operations in western Iraq, which, like the search-and-destroy operations in Vietnam, have produced some insurgent casualties but had a negligible effect on overall security.<sup>143</sup>

## **THE “OIL SPOT” IN IRAQ**

Finally, there is the oil spot strategy. In contrast to a strategy that emphasizes direct attrition of insurgent forces, the oil spot strategy focuses on the indirect destruction of insurgent forces. It does so by establishing security for the population precisely for the sake of winning hearts and minds. In the 1950s, the British used it successfully in Malaya, prior to granting that country its independence.<sup>144</sup> The approach was also effective in the Philippines against the Huk insurgents.<sup>145</sup> Attempts were made to apply this strategy during the Vietnam War, but the execution was generally unsatisfactory. (See Appendix D: Security Operations in Vietnam.) Of the strategies presented here, the oil spot strategy offers the best chance for achieving America’s

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<sup>141</sup> Dave Moniz and Tom Squitieri, “Military’s New Strategy Relies on Old Favorites,” *USA Today*, November 30, 2003, p. 15.

<sup>142</sup> Sig Christenson, “Wanted: A Few Good Leaders,” *San Antonio Express-News*, August 4, 2004.

<sup>143</sup> Patrick J. McDonnell, “U.S., Iraq Launch Assault on Insurgents Near Border with Syria,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 2005.

<sup>144</sup> See John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002), pp. 71-76.

<sup>145</sup> Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History* (New York, NY: William Morrow & Co., (Revised and Updated) 1994), pp. 536-37.

war objectives. The proceeding discussion offers a “first cut” at an oil spot strategy for Iraq adapted to address the unique circumstances of that country.

Given the war’s three centers of gravity and the limits on US forces in Iraq, an oil spot approach in which operations are oriented around securing the population and then gradually but inexorably expanding control over contested areas holds promise. Coalition forces and local militias, such as the Kurdish peshmerga, now provide a high level of security in 14 of Iraq’s 18 provinces.<sup>146</sup> These comprise the country’s true “Green Zone” (the term normally used to describe the heavily fortified part of Baghdad where US headquarters are located). In these areas, most people can lead relatively normal and secure lives. The rest of the country—the “Red Zone”—is made up of the generally unsecured provinces of Anbar, Ninewah, Salah ah Din, and Baghdad, each of which has a sizeable or dominant Sunni Arab population.

The oil spot campaign should start by enhancing security in the Green Zone. Priority for reconstruction efforts should go here, to reward loyalty to the government and to minimize “security premium” expenses on these projects.<sup>147</sup> As progress is being made in these relatively secure areas, efforts can be undertaken to expand the Green Zone by conducting security “offensives” into unsecured regions. This process will likely take considerable time to work through; hence the image of a gradually expanding oil spot.

A key element in any counterinsurgency strategy is to achieve a balance among the war’s centers of gravity. A way must be found to increase the Iraqi people’s security while, at the same time, not overtax either the US military or American popular support. This seemingly presents a dilemma of “doing more with less.” But a superior strategy, well-executed, can do exactly that. The strategy elaborated upon below can achieve progress at substantially lower US force deployments than is currently the case. It does so by employing these forces more effectively than they have been to date. Specifically, it calls for:

- Expanding the embedding of US troops in newly formed ISF, to enable them to take on a greater responsibility for defeating the insurgency, and to do it more quickly;
- Retaining the best US commanders in Iraq, to increase US force’s effectiveness;
- Curtailing the relatively ineffective sweep operations that have characterized many US operations of late; and
- Focusing the overall military effort on providing security to the Iraqi people.

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<sup>146</sup> At this point in the war, local militias are a necessary evil. While they provide security, their loyalty is to their group, not the nation or the government in Baghdad. Eventually, these forces must become loyal to the regime or be replaced by those that are.

<sup>147</sup> The security premium is that portion of a reconstruction project that is spent to provide protection against insurgent threats to reconstruction workers or attempts to sabotage the project.

## EXPANDED EMBEDDING

To stabilize declining popular support at home and relieve stress on the Army, US and Coalition forces must accelerate the fielding of capable Iraqi security forces. First priority must go to creating local security forces. These units are comprised of police forces (both local police and paramilitary forces, to include Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs) and Iraqi national guard units optimized for local security operations). There are three reasons for this. First, local security forces are the enduring “face” of the government to the Iraqi people. If the people have confidence in their local security force, a major victory will have been won against the insurgents. Second, Coalition forces, owing to the way they are structured (primarily for major combat operations) and their relative lack of familiarity with local cultures and customs, are unsuited to take the lead in this important mission.<sup>148</sup>

As for Iraq’s army, to the extent the Iraqi people are more comfortable having Iraqi security forces protecting them than foreign troops, embedding Coalition forces into ISF units may also increase the public’s willingness to cooperate with counterinsurgent forces.

The fielding of the ISF can be accelerated by embedding US soldiers and marines in Iraqi units, and providing US and Iraqi QRF to support the Iraqis, if needed. Some embedding is already taking place. Each Iraqi Army National Guard battalion is provided with a 10-man advisor team, with two Americans for each company.<sup>149</sup>

It is not clear that this level of embedding is optimal, or even acceptable, given the need to alleviate stress on the two centers of gravity represented by US public support for the war, and the American soldier. For example, MG Peter Chiarelli, Commander of the US Army’s 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, achieved remarkable levels of progress in stabilizing parts of Baghdad. A key factor in the division’s success involved training ISF units to assume responsibility for securing parts of the city. General Chiarelli embedded over 540 US Soldiers with seven Iraqi battalions—an average of over 75 Americans per battalion.<sup>150</sup> This would seem to indicate that to achieve the kind of success realized by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, the embedding effort should be far more extensive than called for in current plans. Furthermore, some of the US Army’s best soldiers should be assigned to this initiative.<sup>151</sup> Expanded embedding will enable ISF units being formed

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<sup>148</sup> For example, American forces in Iraq have, on average, only one or two interpreters per company (about 150 troops). Thomas X. Hammes, “Lost in Translation,” *New York Times*, August 25, 2005.

<sup>149</sup> Eric Schmidt, “U.S. May Add Advisors to Iraq’s Military,” *New York Times*, January 4, 2005; and Tony Perry, “The Nation,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 2005.

<sup>150</sup> Special Defense Department Briefing, MG Peter W. Chiarelli, “Security Operations in Baghdad,” January 5, 2005. Other commands have not been willing, or able, to provide anything like the embedding effort undertaken by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. For example, one Iraqi battalion being trained in October 2005 had but 10 Marines. Anthony Castaneda, “Iraqi Forces Thrust into Major Role in Haditha,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, October 27, 2005.

<sup>151</sup> There is some evidence that the US military is struggling to get its better officers and non-commissioned officers to serve with Iraqi units. This should not be surprising. ISF units often live in conditions that would be viewed as intolerable even for enlisted American soldiers. Moreover, service with an Iraqi battalion is not likely to be as career-enhancing as service in a comparable US military unit. Author’s discussion with US Army General Officer, October 12, 2005.

to deploy sooner and perform more effectively than would otherwise be possible. By advising and mentoring Iraqi officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), the development of these leaders—which takes far longer to achieve than the training of recruits—can be enhanced and accelerated. Embedded Americans will be able to effect better liaison with US units, enhancing combined operations between the two forces. Iraqi leaders and soldiers will likely operate with increased confidence, in the knowledge that should they find themselves in a difficult spot, the American military will respond aggressively to support them—and ensure the safety of the embedded American soldiers. Expanded embedding can also facilitate the identification and advancement of capable Iraqi officers, as well as weed out the substandard ones.<sup>152</sup> There is some risk here, since embedded US personnel are likely to suffer more casualties than they would in all-US units.<sup>153</sup>

By concentrating Iraqi forces in generally secure areas and in those few areas selected for security “offensives,” and by closely coordinating the efforts of US and Iraqi army units with those of the national and local police, the oil spot strategy minimizes the risk that newly trained Iraqi units will find themselves in over their heads against insurgent forces without adequate support. The payoff is the accelerated development of capable Iraqi units—which will yield a significant net decrease in US support requirements.

To be sure, success will not come easily. The challenges associated with training Iraqi security forces are well documented.<sup>154</sup> However, as noted above, the potential payoff in terms of securing the war’s three centers of gravity is compelling.

Finally, there is no pressing need to train regular Iraqi Army units organized primarily for conventional warfare so long as US forces are present. Moreover, achieving US war objectives requires maintaining a long-term presence in Iraq, albeit at far lower force levels than exist today. Thus fielding an Iraqi military to defend the country from overt aggression only increases the Iraqi government’s incentives to request the withdrawal of US forces, while at the same time retarding the development of forces optimized to defeat the insurgency.

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<sup>152</sup> But will promising Iraqi leaders be promoted and the incompetent sacked? Arab armies in general, and the Iraqi Army in particular, have long been characterized by an officer corps whose composition is based far more on political reliability than professional competence, while the NCO corps has been effectively non-existent by western military standards. Yet effective Iraqi leadership will be needed. Overcoming the barriers to achieving it is one of the key challenges confronting Coalition forces. See Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness 1948-1991* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

<sup>153</sup> Interestingly, during the Vietnam War, US Marine Combined Action Platoons, which combined a mix of marines and local security forces, generally suffered fewer casualties and provided a more enduring level of security than did all-American military units participating in search-and-destroy operations. See Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 174.

<sup>154</sup> Moreover, one problem that has plagued US units in Iraq, and that no doubt creates problems with the embedding program, is the lack of interpreters. Few Americans speak the languages that predominate in Iraq. Making matters worse, those Iraqis who are willing to serve as translators are high-priority targets for the insurgents. Worse still, civilian contractors working under US government contracts often outbid the military to get the most qualified translators. Hammes, “Lost in Translation.”

## EMPLOYING THE BEST US COMMANDERS

History has shown superior leaders are “force multipliers,” who greatly enhance the effectiveness of the troops under their command. As the examples of Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Douglas A. MacArthur and George S. Patton demonstrate, time and again, when exceptional commanders have emerged in wartime, their talents are exploited to the fullest. They are promoted and given greater responsibilities. And they remain in the combat theater. For this reason, the US military should end the pernicious practice of rotating highly successful senior military and civilian leaders in and out of Iraq as though they are interchangeable parts.<sup>155</sup> General officers and colonels who are successful should be promoted and retained in Iraq for an extended period. Those who prove themselves marginal or unsatisfactory should be rotated back home or replaced. Generals and senior field-grade officers (i.e., colonels) who have demonstrated exceptional competence in dealing with insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq, and who have been recalled to stateside duty, should be returned to the combat zone as soon as possible.<sup>156</sup>

Exceptional commanders can literally do more with less. A classic example familiar to students of the American Civil War is that of Robert E. Lee, whose Army of Northern Virginia typically defeated the larger and better-equipped Army of the Potomac for two years—until Washington found in U.S. Grant a superior general of its own.

Given the American public’s concern over casualties, the value of experienced commanders in regard to this matter is worth noting. During the Vietnam War, for example, those commanders who served longer than six months (the typical command tour) suffered substantially fewer casualties than their less experienced counterparts.<sup>157</sup>

## CURTAILING “WHACK-A-MOLE” OPERATIONS

*You can go through these towns again and again, but you can't get results unless you are here to stay.*<sup>158</sup>

Colonel Stephen Davis  
Commander, Marine Regimental Combat Team 2

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<sup>155</sup> There is evidence that rapid personnel turnover is hindering reconstruction efforts as well. Between July and September of 2005, the six major US agencies for reconstruction lost some or all of their senior staffs. Paul Richter, “Rapid Personnel Shifts Hinder U.S. Efforts to Rebuild Iraq,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> To be sure, even exceptional commanders must be monitored for “combat fatigue” or “burnout.” Some commanders, like Patton, MacArthur and Grant served in the field for extended periods with little or no loss of effectiveness. Others did eventually experience a decline. One of the marks of a great leader is to select the right people, and to know how hard they can be pushed, and for how long.

<sup>157</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 206.

<sup>158</sup> Craig S. Smith, “US and Iraq Set Up Effort to Block Insurgents’ Routes,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2005.

Coalition forces' effectiveness can also be increased by putting them to better use. The greatest opportunity here involves reducing dramatically the number of large-scale sweep operations in Iraq's four generally unsecured provinces. It is tempting to think that the military might deal a serious blow to the insurgents by inflicting casualties on them, or by trying to reduce the infiltration of jihadists from Syria. But there are two problems with this approach. First, counterinsurgent forces are clearly insufficient, either to secure the border against very low numbers of infiltrators, or to maintain an enduring presence in the area.

Second, any forces engaged in these operations are unavailable for the higher priority missions of further securing the true Green Zone and supporting oil spot offensives (to include being involved in the training of, and embedding with, Iraqi security forces). Simply stated, by employing forces more effectively within a superior strategy, greater progress can be made at lower force levels.

There is increasing concern among senior US commanders that the jihadist use of car bombs represents the greatest deterrent to voter turnout for the December 2005 elections. A series of sweep (i.e., "whack-a-mole") operations are intended to reduce this threat by disrupting the flow of jihadists from Syria into Iraq. The geographic focus is along the Syrian-Iraqi border, and in the areas west and northwest of Baghdad. These operations, numbering well over half a dozen in the last six months, have yielded some success in disrupting the supply of foreign jihadists into Iraq.

There are several problems, however, that prevent these operations from accomplishing their mission. First, the jihadists have no need to infiltrate either cars or explosives. Both are widely available within Iraq. Second, the number of jihadists necessary to execute car bomb attacks at an increased level of intensity is not great. This combined with the length of Iraq's border and the severe shortage of adequate border security forces and the insurgent infrastructure in Iraq's western and northwestern provinces makes it unlikely that sweep operations can effectively limit infiltration. Moreover, not all car bombs are be driven by suicide bombers. Some car bombs can be triggered from abandoned vehicles. Others can be driven by unsuspecting drivers, and the bombs detonated remotely.<sup>159</sup>

Perhaps most worrisome, however, is the inability of ISF and Coalition forces to provide an enduring level of security in those areas targeted for sweep operations. Whether it be Operation Spear, Quick Strike, Lightning, Iron Fist, Matador, Scimitar Sayaid or New Market, the results have been predictably the same. Iraqi and US forces enter an area, kill some insurgents, detain suspects, and soon depart. When US and Iraqi forces move on from an area they have occupied,

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<sup>159</sup> See Sabrina Tavernise, "Along the Syria-Iraq Border, Victory is Fleeting in an Effort to Root Out Foreign Fighters," *New York Times*, June 26, 2005; Andy Mosher, "After Striking Rebel Route, Marines and Iraqis Pull Back," *Washington Post*, June 22, 2005; Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer, "Insurgents Assert Control Over Town Near Syrian Border," *Washington Post*, September 6, 2005; Alex Rodriguez, "US Targets Infiltration Routes," *Chicago Tribune*, September 7, 2005; Jim Carroll and Dan Murphy, "Iraqi Insurgents are a Moving Target," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 25, 2005; Bradley Graham, "Forces Bolstered in Western Iraq," *Washington Post*, September 21, 2005; and Jonathan Finer, "US Troops Sweep into Empty Insurgent Haven in Iraq," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2005.

the insurgents quickly move back in to re-establish their network.<sup>160</sup> The effect is similar to sticking one's fist in a bucket of water. The water level is changed—until the fist is withdrawn, whereupon things return to their previous state.<sup>161</sup>

Take Operation Matador as an example. One of the largest operations since the assault on Fallujah in November 2004, it involved over 1,000 marines. Over 100 insurgents were killed and nearly half as many detained for questioning. However, most insurgents had fled the area in advance of the operation. As one Marine major put it, "That was the frustrating piece: coming up here for a fight and not finding anyone."<sup>162</sup>

Operation Quick Strike, conducted in August, again saw the Marine Corps execute an offensive around Haditha, in western Iraq, which had also been a principal objective of Operation New Market the previous May.<sup>163</sup> Once again, the Marines were unable to stay and provide permanent security to the area. One Marine major stated the simple facts:

It's a matter of available forces. It's the truth. We don't have the forces here to leave Marines back in every city. There will be insurgents to flow back into the cities . . . . We're kind of a sideshow.<sup>164</sup>

The operation that has garnered the most attention, however, involved over 5,000 US and Iraqi troops converging on the city of Tal Afar, to the west of Mosul, in September 2005, a year after an earlier offensive was undertaken to oust insurgents from the area. Initially there were claims of as many as 200 insurgents killed, with hundreds more detained.<sup>165</sup> This figure was later

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<sup>160</sup> Tavernise, "Along the Syria-Iraq Border, Victory is Fleeting in an Effort to Rout Out Foreign Fighters." As one Army lieutenant observed, "Every time we do a mass invasion [i.e., sweep], it seems like most of them are gone." Tom Lasseter, "In Fallujah, A Grueling Trial By Fire," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 13, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>161</sup> For a discussion of the frustration felt by US military officers with regard to sweep operations, see Elaine M. Grossman, "Officers in Iraq: War Tactics Offer Little Prospect of Success," *Inside the Pentagon*, September 30, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>162</sup> Another Marine major was more direct: "Where the [expletive] are these guys?" he asked. Solomon Moore, "First the Insurgents, then Marines," *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 2005, p. 1; Ellen Knickmeyer and Caryle Murphy, "US Ends Iraqi Border Offensive," *Washington Post*, May 15, 2005, p. 24; Solomon Moore, "Marines Wrap Up Assault in West Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 2005, p. 1; Ellen Knickmeyer, "Looking for Battle, Marines Find that Foe has Fled," *Washington Post*, May 16, 2005, p. 10; Mark Mazzetti and Solomon Moore, "Insurgents Flourish in Iraq's Wild West," *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 2005.

<sup>163</sup> Antonio Castaneda, "US Offensive Strikes Back at Insurgents in Haditha," *USA Today*, May 26, 2005, p. 6; "About 1,000 US Troops Launch New Anti-Insurgent Offensive in Western Iraq," *Houston Chronicle*, May 25, 2005; and Sabrina Tavernise, "10 Insurgents Are Killed in New Round of Battles in Iraq City," *New York Times*, May 26, 2005.

<sup>164</sup> Kimberly Johnson, "Towns Left Vulnerable After Being Secured," *USA Today*, August 12, 2005, p. 4. The insurgents' *modus operandi* is to leave a small rear guard to fight advancing US forces, while the majority of their men move on to other towns lacking any effective ISF or US military presence. Tom Lasseter, "Few Signs of Enemy Turn Up in Search," *Miami Herald*, August 8, 2005.

<sup>165</sup> The US command declared that 1,534 insurgents had either been killed or detained—a number roughly equal to the insurgents' estimated strength. According to the military's spokesman, Major General Rick Lynch, this is proof that the insurgents did not depart the area in advance of the offensive. Yet only recently some 500 of the 757 suspects detained in ongoing operations around the nearby city of Mosul were released due to a lack of evidence. Thus it appears that many detained Iraqis prove not to be part of the insurgency. Since 2003, roughly 40,000 people

revised down to around 150.<sup>166</sup> Ironically, the insurgents responded with a series of attacks in Baghdad that killed 152 Iraqis, again raising the question of whether US and Iraqi troops might be better employed by placing greater emphasis on improving security through sustained presence.<sup>167</sup>

Indications are that ISF and US forces may not be able to remain in Tal Afar in numbers sufficient to establish lasting security. As Colonel H. R. McMaster, the commander of the US Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, the principal US force involved in the operation noted,

Is there enough force here right now to secure this area permanently? No.  
Are there opportunities for the enemy in other areas within our region?  
Yes.<sup>168</sup>

As in the case of other offensives, the insurgents had mostly departed the area in advance of the operation.<sup>169</sup> Some US troops began to refer to sweep operations as "Easter Egg Hunts."<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, the offensives have continued. In early October the Army and Marine Corps dispatched a force of over 1,000 to the border town of Sadah, southwest of Tal Afar, as part of Operation Iron Fist. Once again, most insurgents appeared to have slipped away in advance of the Americans' arrival. Once again, it appeared that the insurgents would only filter back in to Sadah once US and Iraqi forces departed.<sup>171</sup>

To be sure, these operations do yield some positive results, however ephemeral they may be. Some insurgents are killed, or captured. Some insurgent operations are disrupted. There is also a chance that insurgent leaders might be captured, or killed, and some have.<sup>172</sup> However, the same

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have been detained by Coalition forces—over twice the number of insurgents estimated to be in Iraq. This also raises concerns that some of the "insurgents" killed in the operation may have been noncombatants. Ellen Knickmeyer, "US Claims Success in Iraq Despite Onslaught," *Washington Post*, September 19, 2005, p. 1. See also Melik Kaylan, "Why Haven't We Mined Iraq's Borders?" *Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 2005, p. 14.

<sup>166</sup> Jonathan Finer, "As Offensive in Iraq Continues, Troops Find Unexpected Quiet," *Washington Post*, September 12, 2005, p. 14.

<sup>167</sup> Jill Carroll and Dan Murphy, "Iraqi Insurgents are a Moving Target," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 15, 2005.

<sup>168</sup> Mark Mazzetti, "US Generals Now See Virtues of a Smaller Troop Presence in Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, October 1, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>169</sup> Jonathan Finer, "US Troops Sweep into Empty Insurgent Haven in Iraq," *Washington Post*, September 11, 2005, p. 28; and Richard A. Opel, "Under Pressure, Rebels Abandon Iraqi Stronghold," *New York Times*, September 12, 2005.

<sup>170</sup> Tom Lasseter, "Officers Say Army Lacks Troops to Protect Gains," *Miami Herald*, June 1, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> Jackie Spinner, "US Troops Target Rebels in Town in Far Western Iraq," *Washington Post*, October 2, 2005, p. 21; Robert F. Worth, "US Force Strike Iraqi Rebel Stronghold Near Syrian Border," *New York Times*, October 2, 2005; Mohammad Barakat, "US Expands Offensive, Killing 28 Insurgents," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 3, 2005; and Smith, "US and Iraq Step Up Effort to Block Insurgents' Routes."

<sup>172</sup> US commanders also assert that 80 percent of al Qaeda's network in northern Iraq has been "devastated." However, it is not clear whether this is true or, if it is, what role sweep operations played in achieving this result.



can also be said of similar operations that proved relatively ineffective in the Vietnam War, and in the early stages of the Malayan and Huk insurgencies of the 1940s and 50s.

## **FORCE EMPLOYMENT**

How should counterinsurgent forces be employed? The answer lies within the concept behind oil spot operations. In an oil-spot strategy, “offensives” consist of efforts to expand the true Green Zone by securing, over time, more and more of the Red Zone. Areas selected for oil spot offensives should be accorded priority in the allocation of security and reconstruction resources. Since forces and resources are limited—and because laying the foundation for enduring security in each currently unsecured area will take considerable time, likely half a year or longer—oil spot offensives are typically protracted in nature.

Each offensive begins with Iraqi army units and their embedded US advisers sweeping through the target area and clearing it of any major insurgent forces. These units then break up into smaller formations and take up positions in towns (or, in the case of cities, sectors) in the cleared area and provide local security. National police then arrive and begin security patrols and the vetting and training of local police and paramilitary security forces. As these efforts get underway, Iraqi army units transition to intensive patrolling along the oil spot’s periphery to deflect insurgent threats to the newly secured area. A QRF made up of US or Iraqi army units deals with any insurgent penetration of the patrol zone.

Iraqi and US intelligence operatives begin the process of infiltrating local insurgent cells and recruiting local Iraqis to support their efforts. While initiatives aimed at infiltrating the insurgents’ infrastructure have, to date, produced spotty results, by committing Coalition forces to providing an *enduring* level of security, the oil spot strategy gives US and Iraqi intelligence forces the time needed to succeed.

To this end, the United States should help the Iraqi government establish an Iraqi Information Service (IIS),<sup>173</sup> whose purpose is to gather intelligence on the insurgents and penetrate their infrastructure. The IIS should divide Iraq into regions, sectors, areas, and local grids to focus their efforts, with prioritization going to those areas that have been secured by, or targeted for, oil spot offensives. Although US and other Coalition forces should monitor and support this effort, the Iraqis themselves, given their superior level of cultural understanding, must lead it. However, given the unsettled state of Iraqi politics, American intelligence agents should embed in Iraqi Information Service units to support and monitor their activities.

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Rowan Scarborough, “2 Army Colonels Optimistic About Progress in Iraq,” *Washington Times*, September 17, 2005.

<sup>173</sup> Iraq currently has three branches to its intelligence services, the National Intelligence Service, and the intelligence services of the Defense and Interior Ministries, which are coordinated through the National Intelligence Coordination Commission, chaired by the Iraq’s National Security Advisor. Consisting mostly of passive surveillance, they have no arrest authorities and have been largely unable to penetrate the insurgency infrastructure in a meaningful way. See Borzou Daragahi, “Baghdad Spies Live on Edge,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2005; and Walter Pincus, “Analysts Say Iraqi Agencies Unlikely to Follow U.S. Rules,” *Washington Post*, May 10, 2004.

## THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE LOCAL POLICE

Local police forces are the most important security forces in addressing Phase I and Phase II insurgencies, such as the one confronted in Iraq. For this reason they merit particular attention. It is impossible to overstate the important role local security forces play in counterinsurgency operations.

### BACKGROUND

The role of local and national police forces in oil spot operations is to provide an enduring security presence, which will prove invaluable to gaining the intelligence needed to defeat the insurgency. Simply stated, in low-level insurgencies, such as the one in Iraq, if the Coalition knows *who* the insurgents are, and *where* they are, the insurgency will be defeated, as the Coalition (i.e., the Iraqi Government, the United States and their allies) has an overwhelming advantage in military capability. The key to gaining that information is winning the intelligence war and the key to winning the intelligence war is human intelligence (HUMINT), which is most likely to come from the Iraqi people. The people will be willing to provide such intelligence if they share the Coalition's objectives, if they believe the Coalition will prevail, and if they feel secure from retribution for acts of collaboration.

The police have played a key role in winning the intelligence war. For example, throughout the Malayan Emergency during the 1950s, it became apparent that soldiers were not the primary means of defeating the insurgency. Rather, it was the police. The government expanded the police program enormously—the police force grew from 9,000 to 45,000. A part-time Home Guard augmented the police effort, and in time it grew to some 50,000 members. Military forces, by comparison with the situation today in Iraq, were small, topping out at 55,000 troops.<sup>174</sup>

A similar pattern occurred in the Philippines following the Spanish-American War, where the United States confronted an insurrection led by Emilio Aguinaldo. William Howard Taft, appointed by President William McKinley as the civilian governor of the Philippines, deemphasized the military's role in suppressing the insurrection. He relied instead on civil government buttressed by a constabulary police force and the growing Philippine Scouts. The Congress authorized General Arthur MacArthur to recruit a body of native troops, not exceeding

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<sup>174</sup> There are currently roughly 160,000 US and 20,000 Coalition troops in Iraq. Iraqi Security Forces number approximately 200,000, of which roughly half are police. (The police include the Iraqi Police Service (IPS), Special Police (SP), Emergency Response Unit (ERU), Border Forces, Highway Patrol, and Dignitary Protection.) Projected police force strength is 195,000, to be achieved by August 2007. At present there are roughly 67,000 IPS, 10,000 SP commandos, 1,200 Mechanized police, 7,000 public order police, 300 ERU members, 17,000 Border Police, 1,300 in the Highway Patrol, and 600 personnel in Dignitary Protection, for a total of 104,400. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, October 2005, pp. 37-43, available at [www.defenselink.mil/pubs/20051013\\_publication\\_OSSRF.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/20051013_publication_OSSRF.pdf). Thus while some two-thirds of the Malayan Counterinsurgent forces were police or paramilitary forces, the percentage of these forces in Iraq today is substantially less. Moreover, some police force elements (e.g., the SP commandos) might, in fact, be structured to operate more like military units than police, or even paramilitary security forces.

12,000, called “Scouts,” to be commanded by American officers. These indigenous forces quickly became central to what became a successful US counterinsurgency effort.<sup>175</sup>

## **THE POLICE**

The local police are the Coalition’s principal and enduring interface with the population. As such, they represent the government’s commitment to providing lasting security for the people, and are an indispensable element of any oil spot strategy. Other forces—the Iraqi Army, Iraqi national guard, national police, and Coalition forces—will spearhead oil spot operations by driving off the main insurgent forces and responding quickly to address any insurgent threats to local security forces. However, it is the local police forces, established under the security umbrella provided by other ISF and Coalition forces, which will do the most to win the confidence and support of individual Iraqis.

Other police units are less concerned with local security matters and more focused on broader operations, to include national intelligence gathering, forming part of the vanguard for oil spot offensives, policing the nation’s transportation network, protecting its oil infrastructure, and insuring the competence of local police forces.

The border police are responsible for monitoring and controlling traffic across Iraq’s borders. Since the vast majority of insurgents are drawn from inside Iraq, the border police are not nearly as critical to counterinsurgency operations as the national and local police.<sup>176</sup>

## **THE POLICE IN OIL SPOT OPERATIONS**

As discussed in the main body of this assessment, top priority in oil spot campaigns is accorded to population security as an indirect means of attriting the insurgents’ strength, and eventually defeating them. Since counterinsurgent forces are not sufficiently strong or numerous to secure the entire country simultaneously, it must be accomplished sequentially. The oil spot strategy accounts for this by establishing enduring security in a relatively small area to enable reconstruction, political reform and training of indigenous security elements, to include local police forces.

Once an oil spot offensive establishes security over an area, national police arrive and begin security patrols and the vetting and training of local police and paramilitary security forces. The national police also begin the process of infiltrating local insurgent cells, while training members of the local police to do the same.

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<sup>175</sup> Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, pp. 130-31.

<sup>176</sup> To be sure, most of the radical Islamist jihadists in Iraq are foreign infiltrators. However, given their small numbers (in the hundreds) and Iraq’s long borders, the resources required to secure Iraq against this trickle of infiltrators exceeds those available to the Coalition. Even if the resources were available, they would be better employed building up the national and local police.

These security operations facilitate reconstruction, offering Iraqis the promise of a better life. As the local police force is recruited, trained, and its loyalty established, it gradually takes on increased responsibility from the national police and other security forces within their jurisdiction. As they do, the local police provide the first enduring “face” of government to the local inhabitants, and offer the promise of enduring security. Over time (depending on the local circumstances, it may take a year or two to stand up capable local police forces in an area), the sustained security provided ensures that the benefits of reconstruction will endure, and not be sabotaged by the insurgents. Finally, enduring security will help convince the local population that the government is serious about protecting them.

Once local police forces are ready to assume principal responsibility for local security, main force units move on to expand the oil spot. However, a QRF must remain in the initial oil spot zone to insure local police forces are never without prompt support. If need be, some small main force elements (e.g., Iraqi national guard companies or platoons; national police cadres) may remain to insure security is maintained, and to evaluate the local police force’s performance. The net effect of this security web built around the local police is to create an irreversible process leading to the progressive isolation and discrediting of the insurgents’ cause and—equally important—their ability to coerce the population.

It is important to understand that the local police force mission is not to eliminate random violence (e.g., car bombs; homicide bombers) entirely. As the radical Islamist attacks in London and their campaign against Israel show, even under relatively favorable circumstances, this is not possible. But these attacks can be made more difficult. More importantly, as the national and local police begin to infiltrate and eliminate the local insurgent infrastructure, the insurgents’ capacity for targeted violence (e.g., attacks on individuals collaborating with the government) will be reduced drastically. This is critical, since it is the threat of *targeted* violence that deters people from actively supporting the regime (e.g., by providing intelligence), not random violence. Indeed, the latter actually encourages people to come forward with information, so long as they believe themselves secure from insurgent acts of retribution.

## **POLICE REQUIREMENTS**

Both Iraq’s national police and the local police will initially be starved for leadership—competent, incorruptible individuals who can organize, plan and motivate, and who support the vision of a unified, democratic Iraq. A process must be established to identify and vet leaders, to evaluate their performance, and to remove those that do not meet established standards. At this stage in the conflict, it is far more important that Iraq’s best leaders are in the national police force than in the army, as the national police are critical to intelligence operations and for enhanced training of the local police, two of the highest priorities in the oil spot strategy.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Coalition members are training Iraqi police forces. However, it is expected that the Iraqi national police will require additional training in areas that are unique to their circumstances (e.g., liaison with the Iraqi Intelligence Service; local population customs and practices, etc.)

Corruption is a major problem in Iraq. Good leadership can help reduce corruption. Corruption might be further limited by offering national and local officers highly competitive pay, and by establishing ways to identify and punish corruption (e.g., embedding trusted national police officers in local police force; by embedding US/Coalition officers in Iraq's police forces; by providing civilians with a "hot line" to report acts of corruption; and by establishing a speedy and effective means for confirming acts of corruption and removing those responsible).

Obviously, the national and local police forces must be well trained; however, it would be a mistake to train them along the lines of US police forces (although the FBI would be a better "fit" for the national police than municipal US police forces would be for the Iraqi local police). The principal challenge confronting Iraqi police is not so much traditional crime or criminal process. Rather, the challenge is more akin to defeating an organized crime family that occasionally confronts the police directly in significant numbers (i.e., in the dozens). Thus local police operations are more similar in nature to undercover operations (e.g., penetration of suspicious groups) and paramilitary or "SWAT" team operations. In any event, the national and local police must be confident that, if they are ever at risk of being overwhelmed by insurgent forces, a QRF will promptly come to their aid. Should the insurgents ever overrun a police station in a secure area or in an area targeted for oil spot operations, the psychological damage to the population will extend far beyond the local community.

It would be worth studying Israeli national and local police operations against what amounts to a Palestinian insurrection employing similar tactics (e.g., homicide bombers) to those encountered in Iraq, to identify tactics and skills that might prove useful to Iraqi police forces. Similarly, the success of the Italian police in eroding the mafia's influence in Italy might be studied to learn from their infiltration tactics and intelligence operations.

The national and local police must work to maintain the confidence and support of the local population. The Iraqi people are a center of gravity in this war, and police tactics that involve the indiscriminate use of force or flagrant violations of individual rights and liberties will only work to the insurgents' advantage. This is particularly true in Iraq, where the historical relationship between the police and the people has been one of exploitation of the latter by the former. In short, the Iraqi police have no historical "line of credit" with the Iraqi people: they will have to earn it, over time, through their performance. Their training must reflect the new circumstances under which they must operate.

As for equipment, national and local police units should be equipped more like SWAT teams than like US municipal police forces. This means not only relatively more firepower but force protection as well. They must also be able to provide intelligence quickly to Iraqi/Coalition security services and have a clear and reliable line of communications to the QRF assigned to come to their relief.

## BORDER POLICE

The border police would logically be accorded far lower priority than either the national or local police. There are two reasons for this. First, the principal threat to Iraq is internal, in the form of some 20,000 predominantly Sunni insurgents.<sup>178</sup> If that element of the insurgency can be defeated, the foreign jihadist threat becomes much more manageable. The converse, however, is not true. Second, it is not currently possible to seal Iraq's borders securely enough to stop the infiltration of foreign fighters at their current numbers. This does not mean that the border police should be ignored, only that they are not, like the national and local police, central to the oil spot strategy's success at this point in time.

## SUMMARY

Although they alone are not sufficient, the national police and local police forces are the most critical Iraqi security forces for defeating the insurgency. They are central to securing the active support of the Iraqi people, the war's center of gravity.

Iraq's national and local police have traditionally repressed the Iraqi people more than they have protected them. This fact, combined with the Coalition's lack of skill in training national and local police in countries threatened by insurgency means that standing up an effective Iraqi police force will prove difficult and time-consuming. The need to identify effective Iraqi leaders to lead the police forces only increases the challenge, while lengthening the time needed to field capable units. Nevertheless, given their central role in the oil spot strategy, the national and local police should receive top priority (along with Iraq's intelligence service) for talent and resources, to include manpower, training, equipment, and Coalition force embedding.

## RECONSTRUCTION

*If you talk to our commanders in the field, they'll tell you we're winning. But they recognize . . . This is not going to be won by the military. The frustration there is that we are finding . . . a bunch of unemployed people. We have not been able to get this reconstruction thing going the way it needs to.*<sup>179</sup>

LTG Lance Smith  
Deputy Commanding General, CENTCOM

Reconstruction or civic action is often a key factor in defeating an insurgent movement. Winning the hearts of the people involves giving them a stake in the future of the existing political system.

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<sup>178</sup> Jonathan Finer, "Among Insurgents in Iraq, Few Foreigners are Found," *Washington Post*, November 17, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>179</sup> "CENTCOM Deputy Says Success in Iraq Demands More Jobs for Iraqis," *Inside the Pentagon*, October 14, 2004, p. 1.

This can be done through political reforms (e.g., giving the people a voice in choosing their own government), social reforms (e.g., increasing the opportunities for social mobility), and economic reforms and progress. It is this latter issue that falls under the rubric of reconstruction. Put another way, reconstruction is a critical element of the offensive campaign to defeat the insurgency. It is central to giving the Iraqi people a sense that the government is both willing and able to improve their lives, and the lives of their children.

The challenge of reconstruction in Iraq is exacerbated by the ongoing violence in that country, by inadequate planning for post-conflict operations, by a shortage of funds, and by the old regime's practice of masking high unemployment by putting as many as half of Iraq's workforce on the state payroll and covering the cost with oil revenues.<sup>180</sup>

The result has been the emergence of a "reconstruction gap"—the difference between the number of reconstruction projects planned, those undertaken, and those completed.<sup>181</sup> The principal cause of this gap involves the funds that have been diverted to cover security costs for these projects, which have turned out to be far higher than originally anticipated. More than 25 percent of reconstruction funding has been spent on security costs related to the insurgency.<sup>182</sup> Thus while 93 percent of the roughly \$30 billion in US funds for reconstruction have been allocated, only 1,887 of the 2,784 projects undertaken have been completed.<sup>183</sup> Making matters worse, the US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction estimates that \$650-750 million will be needed annually to operate and maintain these projects after they are completed.<sup>184</sup> Problems with poor management and graft have also hobbled the reconstruction effort.<sup>185</sup>

More reconstruction funds will be needed; however, the administration has yet to request them from Congress. If and when that happens, Congress will likely demand a plan to reduce security costs and graft. The former, at least, might be reduced by applying the oil spot strategy.

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<sup>180</sup> "Transition to and From Hostilities," Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study, September 2, 2004; Borzou Daragahi, "Iraqis Look at Cuts in Payroll," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2005, p. 1; and Jonathan S. Landay and John Walcott, "Iraq Reconstruction Efforts Overcome by Ongoing Violence," *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, October 16, 2004.

<sup>181</sup> Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Message from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction*, Report to Congress, October 30, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>182</sup> Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Message from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction*, p. 3. According to the Army Corps of Engineers, security costs were originally estimated at nine percent of a project's total projected cost. Rick Jervis, "Iraq Rebuilding Slows as U.S. Money for Projects Dries Up," *USA Today*, October 10, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>183</sup> Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Message from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction*, p. 9; and James Glanz, "Funds Fade, Deaths Rise and Iraq Rebuilding is Spotty," *New York Times*, October 31, 2005.

<sup>184</sup> Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Message from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction*, p. 4.

<sup>185</sup> For example, estimates are that Iraq loses some \$2 billion a year in stolen oil. American officials report that there is almost no oversight of a contractor once he is awarded a job. Craig Smith, "Even in Iraqi City Cited as Model, Rebuilding Efforts are Hobbled," *New York Times*, September 18, 2005, p. 1; and Alex Rodriguez, "Graft Holds Back Economy," *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 2005.

Consistent with the oil spot strategy, the reconstruction campaign should be focused almost exclusively on areas that have been secured by the government or are in the process of being secured (i.e., the focus of oil spot operations).<sup>186</sup> The reconstruction effort is, by necessity, “preferential” in nature. The Iraqi population in the Green Zone or in the areas targeted for offensives (i.e., the oil spots) should be accorded priority in reconstruction projects, owing to several factors. First, they should be rewarded for their loyalty to the effort to create a democratic Iraq. Second, as a practical matter, reconstruction in the Green Zone will result in reduced security premium costs, since the area is relatively secure when compared to the four provinces that comprise the Red Zone.<sup>187</sup> Finally, projects in the Green Zone are more likely to be sustained over time, again thanks to better levels of security.

The reconstruction campaign should place priority on those projects which are most important to the population. But other factors/metrics are important, as well. For example, emphasis should be given to projects that can be completed relatively quickly—to demonstrate the government’s willingness and ability to improve the lives of its citizens. This is especially important in areas that are targeted for oil spot offensives. Projects that employ large numbers of Iraqis—and thus which reduce unemployment—should also be given priority. Iraqis who are earning a living wage while also actively participating in work that will improve their lives are likely to be less prone to seek income by planting IEDs. “Stand alone” projects that do not require the support of a national infrastructure should also be accorded priority, as they are less likely to be victimized by acts of sabotage against the provincial or national infrastructure.<sup>188</sup> Again, this holds true particularly in relatively insecure areas, such as those targeted for oil spot offensives.<sup>189</sup> Finally,

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<sup>186</sup> For an insightful discussion on the role security forces might play in reconstruction efforts, see 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, *Defeating the Iraqi Insurgency* (Baghdad, Iraq: May 2004).

<sup>187</sup> The lack of security in Iraq has seen a progressive increase in the cost of protecting those engaged in reconstruction projects, and the projects themselves. Following the spring 2004 uprisings, for example, the United States shifted \$3.4 billion away from water, electricity and oil infrastructure projects to pay for ISF training and equipment. James Glanz, “Security Vs. Rebuilding: Kurdish Town Loses Out,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2005, p. 1. Overall, roughly \$5 billion of the \$18.4 billion allocated for reconstruction has been allocated to the ISF. T. Christian Miller, “Violence Trumps Rebuilding in Iraq,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 2005, p. 1. Moreover, in some cases contractors were forced to allocate one quarter of a project’s budget for security. Erik Eckholm, “Rethinking Reconstruction: Grand U.S. Plan Fractures Again,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2005. In one case, involving the installation of power generators in Kirkuk, 141 of the 323 workers involved in the project were there to provide security. Caryle Murphy and Bassam Sebt, “Power Grid in Iraq Far From Fixed,” *Washington Post*, May 1, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>188</sup> The Iraqi planning minister, Barham Salih, alluded to this when he stated, “It is now clear that these megaprojects, though essential, have not succeeded in providing quickly enough for Iraqis’ basic needs like electricity, water and sanitation.” James Glanz, “Iraqis Press Donors for Billions More in Reconstruction Aid,” *New York Times*, July 19, 2005. This can present some difficult choices. For example, many Iraqis are angry over the inability to provide reliable electric power. Repairing the existing national infrastructure is proving difficult, especially in the face of insurgent efforts at sabotage. Many enterprising Iraqis have come up with a local solution to the problem: thousands of small generators. One wonders if this “local” strategy might have proven more effective. Murphy and Sebt, “Power Grid in Iraq Far From Fixed,” p. 1.

<sup>189</sup> The problems associated with an emphasis on large projects linked to the national infrastructure and contracted out to major construction firms in lieu of emphasizing local projects that maximize employment and provide near-term benefits (to provide something tangible upon which the people can rest their hopes for a better life) are well-represented by the story of Abdul Mohammed Sabeeh. Mr. Sabeeh, a resident of Baghdad, has become known in his local community as “Minister of the Generator.” “I should be called the minister of electricity,” says Sabeeh, “because I do the job better than the real guy.” What Sabeeh has done in the face of Baghdad’s frequent blackouts is to create his own local electric company. Starting with one generator, Sabeeh sells electricity to local residents. His



owing to its dominant role in the Iraqi economy, the nation's oil infrastructure should remain a priority concern in the reconstruction efforts.<sup>190</sup>

In developing reconstruction metrics, it is not the number of reconstruction projects started—rather, it is the number completed and that endure (i.e., that are not sabotaged by the insurgents) that matter. Few things are as discouraging to the population (or injurious to the government's reputation) than having a major reconstruction project (e.g., school, medical aid station, sewage lines, etc.) completed, only to see it undone by the insurgents in short order. For this reason reconstruction projects must be intimately linked to security operations and intelligence operations.

## **OIL SPOT: INITIAL OPERATIONS**

By playing a key role in establishing enduring security, local police forces will help convince the local population that the government is serious about protecting them. The overall objective, of course, is winning people's active support, to the point where they begin providing the government with intelligence on insurgents who have gone to ground in the secured area. Once the population sees the benefits of security and reconstruction, local elections can be held. Given limited military and financial resources, the targets for oil spot offensives must be carefully chosen. Two important targets are the areas around Baghdad and the northern city of Mosul. Both are key political and economic centers that border relatively secure areas. As Iraq's capital, Baghdad has great symbolic value. Both are also within the operational area of US forces, the Coalition's most capable. Operations analogous to the oil spot approach were undertaken by the US Army's First Cavalry Division in late 2004 and early 2005, in portions of Baghdad.<sup>191</sup> These operations have apparently been continued by the Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, which replaced the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division in April 2005.

American and Iraqi forces might refine their choice by targeting those areas where they can find tribal allies. To facilitate tribal support, the Coalition should design reconstruction efforts to insure that cooperative local sheiks receive "credit" in the eyes of their tribes for the reconstruction project. This will create incentives for the tribe to help ensure that reconstruction

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clients now number over 100. Yochi J. Dreazen, "Running Out of Power and Patience, Iraqis Turn to Mr. Sabeeh," *Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>190</sup> The insurgents have made sabotaging Iraq's creaky oil production and distribution infrastructure a priority, and have been generally successful in their efforts to limit its recovery, especially in northern Iraq. In 2004, there were over 250 acts of sabotage against Iraq's oil infrastructure. James Glanz, "Insurgents Wage Precise Attacks on Baghdad Fuel," *New York Times*, February 21, 2005, p. 1. The problem became so severe that early in 2005 steps were taken to form three dedicated oil security battalions to protect the critical oil production and distribution assets around Kirkuk, which was producing at only two-thirds of its 1.2 million barrel/day capacity. David Axe, "Iraq Establishes Oil Security Force," *Washington Times*, March 24, 2005, p. 16. An absence of security also encourages smuggling. The Iraqi government's policy of heavily subsidizing fuel prices creates a high incentive for corrupt individuals to smuggle the fuel abroad, where it can be sold at market prices to realize high profits. Howard LaFranchi, "Why Iraq Oil Money Hasn't Fueled Rebuilding," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 14, 2005.

<sup>191</sup> Author's correspondence with MG Peter Chiarelli, commanding general, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, August 8, 2005; and MG Peter Chiarelli and Major Patrick Michaelis, "Winning the Peace: The Requirements for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review*, July-August 2005, pp. 4-17.

succeeds, and it may help persuade them to provide intelligence on potential acts of sabotage or even to actively support security operations.

Once local police forces are ready to assume principal responsibility for local security, most Iraqi and US army units, along with the national police, should deploy to expand the oil spot further. However, some quick reaction forces must remain in the initial oil spot area to insure the local police have prompt support if needed.

Although expanding the oil spot, protecting key national infrastructure, and consolidating previously secured areas are the counterinsurgent forces' top priorities, Iraq's four unsecured provinces cannot simply be abandoned to the insurgents. Small, extended patrols of US and Iraqi special operations forces in the Red Zone can provide intelligence and early warning of significant insurgent activities, while denying insurgents sanctuary and limiting their ability to rest, refit, and plan. If the insurgents occupy a major town or city, as was the case with Fallujah, and attempt to establish their rule over the area, US and Iraqi forces should mount a "punitive expedition" to defeat them. Still, such operations must always remain subordinate to the overall oil spot strategy oriented on protecting the population, not pursuing insurgent forces.

Importantly, given growing concerns over Army recruiting problems and declining popular support among Americans, it should be possible to execute the strategy, including the Baghdad and Mosul offensives, with substantially fewer than the 160,000 US troops now in Iraq, for several reasons. First, substantially increasing the number of embedded US advisers in Iraqi units will enable them to become more capable more quickly. Second, curtailing ill-advised sweep operations will enable US forces to be employed more productively. Finally, retaining and assigning capable senior US officers in Iraq for extended periods can dramatically enhance military effectiveness, even at lower force levels.

By enabling a reduction in US force levels, this strategy yields salutary effects for the war's other two centers of gravity. It will allay the American people's concerns that Iraqis are not shouldering their fair share of the war burden. Clearly, it will also reduce the strain on an overextended Army and Marine Corps.

## **THE GRAND BARGAIN**

General Sir Gerald Templer, Britain's high commissioner and director of operations during the Malayan insurgency in the 1950s, observed that the political and military elements of counterinsurgency must be "completely and utterly interrelated."<sup>192</sup> So, too, must they be in Iraq. While the military operations take the form of the oil spot campaign, political efforts should aim to strike a "grand bargain" with the Iraqi people.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 570.

<sup>193</sup> Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has made a version of the "grand bargain" (his term is "national compact") a key part of overall US strategy in Iraq. See Zalmay Khalilzad, "Iraq's Compact with America," *Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2005, p. 10.

As the oil spot gradually expands, it will progressively isolate the insurgents and reduce their ability to coerce the population. But security operations are only one element of an overall strategy to defeat the insurgency. In conjunction with the Baghdad and Mosul security offensives, and follow-on offensives to secure the areas north and west of Baghdad, the United States and its Iraqi allies should attempt to develop a grand bargain among the Iraq people that lays the foundation for the gradual development of the broad base of support needed to sustain an Iraqi democracy.

The grand bargain cuts across key Iraqi religious and ethnic groups and across key family and tribal units. Its underlying assumptions are that there are significant elements of each major ethnic and religious group that are willing to support the vision of a democratic, unified Iraq; that a sufficiently broad coalition can be formed, over time, to achieve this end; and that the United States is willing to undertake a long-term effort to insure the grand bargain's success. The Kurds will likely be the easiest to win over. They want the insurgency defeated and a long-term US presence to protect them against Shiite dominance or a Sunni restoration, as well as against external threats from Iran and Turkey. A small, but significant, Sunni element may also want the insurgency defeated, if it can be assured of a long-term US presence to hedge against both Shiite domination (and retribution) and Iranian domination of a Shiite-led government. Like the Kurds, most Shiites want the insurgency defeated. Some are also wary of Iranian attempts to subvert Iraqi independence. These Shiites may also accept a long-term US presence to guard against Iranian subversion and to minimize the risks of a civil war that would threaten their natural advantage in numbers in an Iraqi democracy.

The grand bargain does not seek to win over any principal Iraqi group entirely, only a substantial element of each on the way to gaining a critical mass in support of the objectives of a unified, democratic Iraq. Since defeating the insurgency is but one step toward achieving these objectives, each group would have an incentive to retain some residual US forces as "guests" beyond the insurgency's defeat. Such a presence would both moderate the danger that the young democracy would fall into civil war, and reduce the risk of external subversion, coercion or aggression. A long-term US military presence also is critical to achieving the United States' broader security objectives, which include offering a "third way" alternative apart from despotic and radical Islamic regimes to people in the region, and to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Stitching this coalition together requires a keen awareness of Kurdish, Arab Shia and Arab Sunni interests, and those factions within each group that might participate in the grand bargain. It also requires a good understanding of Iraqi tribal politics. In many areas of Iraq, the tribe and extended family are the foundation of society. Unlike in most Western societies, they represent an alternative of sorts to the government. To some extent, the Iraqi nation can be viewed as a super tribal structure. The nation does not replace the tribe/clan but emulates it at a higher level of abstraction.<sup>194</sup> Thus the extended family/tribe can function as a key source of regime

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<sup>194</sup> Perhaps the clearest example of this tribal influence is found in Saudi Arabia, where the state is named after a family—the House of Saud. Saddam's Hussein's rule to a great extent represents the dominance of a family/tribe and its tribal allies over other tribes.

legitimization. This can be seen in Saddam's use of his family, extended family and tribal relations to sustain his rule. Saddam helped restore tribal identity in Iraq as a means of using the sheiks to solidify his grip on power outside of his immediate group (which dominated Saddam's security service and Special Republican Guards). Saddam gave allied tribal leaders money and significant autonomy over their areas in exchange for their fealty and help in controlling the countryside. Such alliances may prove important to the coalition today even though tribal/familial ties are far less binding among the urban populations that characterize Iraq. (Over two-thirds of Iraq's population resides in urban areas.)

Indeed, some tribal leaders' authority may be eroding as a consequence of the attraction that radical Islamism holds for many Iraqi youth. Thus, it may be possible to win the support of some sheiks by playing to their fears that the insurgents' success will permanently eclipse their privileged role in Iraqi society.

There are roughly 150 tribes in Iraq of varying size and influence; at least 75 percent of Iraqis are members of these tribes.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, there are roughly 20-30 large tribes or federations—*qabila*—that number more than 100,000 each. The *qabila* are segmented into clans, houses and extended families.<sup>196</sup> At least two tribal coalitions led by Sunnis—The Iraqi National League for Chiefs of Tribes and the Iraqi Tribal National Council—might be the foundation of the Sunni element of a grand bargain.<sup>197</sup>

An effort should be made to exploit divisions among what appear to be homogeneous extended families and tribes, but whose rivalries often go back many generations. How might penetration be achieved? Alliances formed that will support the grand bargain? It requires systematically mapping of the human terrain on which this war is being fought. The primary emphasis is on social data, which involves the mapping of:

- Family, clan and tribal structures to develop an understanding of the principal groups and their location and, if possible, disposition toward the Coalition;
- Fissures within tribes, clans and families, to include "Old Guard" leaders and younger generation "hot heads;"
- Histories of the loyalties and "blood feuds"<sup>198</sup> within and among tribal groups, with particular emphasis on unresolved feuds;

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<sup>195</sup> Stephen J. Glain, "Stronghold Can Backfire: Iraqi Tribes are Key Source of Loyalty, Rebellion," *Wall Street Journal*, May 23, 2000.

<sup>196</sup> Iraqi tribal information available at <http://www.answers.com/topic/arab-tribes-in-iraq>.

<sup>197</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Iraq: The Role of Tribes," *Background Q&A*, November 14, 2003, available at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/7681/iraq.html>.

<sup>198</sup> "As a result of mistakes, American soldiers killed Iraqi people in the tribal areas. Immediately they traded off the tribal value of 'sharaf.' Sharaf means 'honor.' 'If you kill a cousin of mine, I'm honor-bound to kill one of you.' And this introduced a very deadly, vicious circle of blood revenge, which is very, very difficult to resolve." Deborah

- Unresolved feuds with the new Iraqi government or Coalition forces;
- Political inclinations of dominant families/tribes, and their sources of power and legitimacy; and
- Tribal ties to families/tribes in other countries (e.g., Iran, Syria, Turkey) with an eye toward both foreign powers' ability to influence events in Iraq and the Coalition's ability to work with these tribes to bring pressure on Iraq's neighbors.

A key factor in a tribe's disposition may center on the tradition of blood feuds within Iraq's tribal culture and in its society in general. In tribal culture, if a member of one's extended family (*kham*) is killed, the other members of the family are obligated to avenge the death. Thus the killing or injuring of a tribal member by Coalition forces may inadvertently trigger a blood feud with that tribe. A high priority for the Coalition—especially with those tribes it seeks to cultivate as allies—must be to minimize the risks of becoming involved in blood feuds. Where a blood feud exists, steps must be taken to end it, if possible, in accordance with tribal concepts of honor.<sup>199</sup> Thus Iraq's tribal culture reinforces traditional counterinsurgency doctrine that advocates the minimum use of force and maximum reliance on local police forces, who know the local population best, to provide security. Minimizing the number of blood feuds between Iraqi government and US forces and the tribes, while maximizing them between the tribes and the insurgents, may prove an important metric of progress in the war.

The potential benefits of tribal alliances are substantial, with the greatest being the prospect of making progress in winning the intelligence war that is key to defeating the insurgency. Accurate tribal mapping can guide the formation of alliances between the government and certain tribes and families; improve vetting of military recruits and civil servants; and enhance intelligence on the insurgents' organization and infrastructure. It could facilitate the grand bargain by identifying the Kurd, Sunni, and Shiite tribes that are most likely to support a unified, independent, democratic Iraqi state. In return for their support, tribal allies should receive more immediate benefits, such as priority in security and reconstruction operations.

There are risks in making allies of tribal groups. Tribal alliances are often ephemeral, and the Coalition must be prepared to shift allegiance between rival tribes rapidly. There is also the risk of tribes emerging as alternatives to the government, although this concern pales in comparison to the danger posed by existing ethnic militias such as the Kurdish peshmerga, and Shia groups like the Badr Brigade and Mahdi Army. Taking on one tribe as an ally may make enemies out of rival tribes that heretofore were neutral. It will take diligence and expert diplomacy to make this element of the strategy work.

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Amos, "Influential tribal leader of Al Anbar province in Iraq proposes to open talks between US officials and tribal chiefs," National Public Radio, August 2, 2004. See also Amatzia Baram, "Post-Saddam Iraq: What Follows a U.S.-Led Intervention," *Policy Watch*, April 9, 2002; and Richard Engel, "Fractured Iraqi Constitution a Product of its History," *NBC News*, October 14, 2005, available at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9687670/>.

<sup>199</sup> Johan Plesner, *Foreign Power and Arab Culture: What is an "Honor-Shame Culture? How Might it matter to U.S. Foreign Policy?* (Cambridge, MA: Long-Term Strategy Project, 2004).

## A THREE-PHASE APPROACH

As progress is made in crafting the grand bargain and the first oil spot offensives are completed, the strategy would enter its second phase. Phase II would see a significant reduction in US force levels—from 100-120,000 to perhaps as few as 60,000, reflecting the growing strength of the Iraqi government and security forces, and declining insurgent strength. The most capable Iraqi units would see embedded US advisers begin to phase out. Over time, as the insurgent threat shrinks to an insignificant problem, the third phase of the strategy would be implemented. Phase III would see the withdrawal of the US military units and most advisors, save for a residual US military presence, numbering perhaps 15,000-30,000 troops, to deter predators such as Iran and Syria from subverting or coercing the infant Iraqi democracy. This US security umbrella would also eliminate Baghdad's need to pursue costly nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons programs. Importantly, a residual US presence would also discourage internal Iraqi factions from contemplating a civil war or attempting a coup to overthrow the government.

## A MATTER OF TIME

*Rebellions can be made by two percent active in a striking force, and 98 percent passively sympathetic.*<sup>200</sup>

T. E. Lawrence ("of Arabia")

How long will the insurgency in Iraq last? How long will the United States and its Coalition allies need to maintain a sizable troop presence in Iraq? This is a critical question, as it affects the war's three centers of gravity. First, owing to the Bush Administration's equating of success in the war to bringing US troops home, rightly or wrongly reductions in troop strength have become an important measure of success in the minds of the American people. This impression has been solidified by many administration critics, who generally call for an accelerated troop withdrawal, or at least a timetable for pulling American forces out of Iraq. The question, of course, is critical to the Army's institutional health, given its growing recruiting woes. Finally, the Iraqi people are anxious to have foreign troops depart their country (although Washington should hope that a significant residual force is permitted to remain as a "guest" of Iraq).

Unfortunately, no definitive answer can be provided to this important question. As the administration has aptly put it, any troop drawdown must be "conditions-based."<sup>201</sup> Other than saying that insurgencies are typically protracted affairs, there is not much more one can say in terms of how quickly the insurgents can be brought to heel. One might ask why some conventional wars have been long, while others have been short. There are myriad factors that

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<sup>200</sup> T. E. Lawrence, "The Evolution of a Revolt," p. 22, available at <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/download/csipubs/lawrence.pdf>.

<sup>201</sup> The Bush Administration appears to equate troop reductions solely to progress in defeating the insurgency. Again, however, other conditions that may require a drawdown are those associated with maintaining American domestic support for the war effort, and the need to avoid a recruiting crisis in the Army.

are involved in determining the length of a conflict, which are difficult to predict in advance, and even during the conflict itself. In short, the ability to predict the length of a war is not very good. Many thought the war in 1914 would be over “before the leaves fall.” Yet the war dragged on for over four years. Many thought the war on the western front in 1940 would be a long stalemate, yet it was over in six weeks. The Filipino insurrection which at times seemed intractable collapsed when its charismatic leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, was captured. The Greek insurrection, which appeared to have a chance of success, collapsed when its sanctuaries and principal source of aid through Yugoslavia were cut off. The Huk rebellion, which seemed to pose a serious threat to Filipino security, withered when Ramon Magsaysay, a charismatic government leader, took the helm in the Philippines. The tide was turned rather quickly in Malaya when classical counterinsurgency doctrine was adopted.

Many insurgencies last a decade or more once they reach Phase II operations, for two reasons. First, it often requires a major effort for the insurgents to shift from guerrilla warfare to open battle against government forces. Moving from Phase II to Phase III operations thus takes a considerable amount of time to bring about. Alternatively, for the government to re-establish security and restore people’s confidence, it must typically engage in the time-consuming process of rebuilding security throughout the country. Oftentimes, the government must institute reforms that will pre-empt the cause the insurgents are espousing to mobilize support. This process also tends to be time-consuming. For an examination of several insurgencies that had relatively brief durations, see Appendix F: Short Lived Insurgencies.

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## VII. MEASURING SUCCESS

### POPULAR (BUT PROBLEMATIC) METRICS

*A number does not give you capability. It gives you numbers.*<sup>202</sup>

Donald Rumsfeld  
On ISF Force Levels, February 2005

To date, both the Bush Administration and its critics have, at times, focused on problematic metrics for measuring success in the war. Critics, for example, often use insurgent strength to gauge progress, or the lack thereof. However, in the case of Iraq, it does not appear that attempting to count the enemy would be a particularly useful measure of his strength or US progress in the war.<sup>203</sup> This metric runs the risk of encouraging a “body-count” approach to gauging success, as occurred in Vietnam.<sup>204</sup> Traditionally, the surest way to reduce insurgent strength is to win the hearts and minds of the population, and deny the insurgents access to the people by providing them with security. Once insurgent access to the people is denied, the insurgents’ recruiting source dries up—his forces are attrited indirectly. This form of attrition is much more likely to be sustained than the direct approach that puts primary emphasis on killing insurgents.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Mark Mazzetti, “How Will the U.S. Know When to Pass the Baton?” *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2005.

<sup>203</sup> While the administration has shied away from focusing on insurgent force levels, it does appear to have placed emphasis on metrics that gauge the infiltration rates of foreign jihadists into Iraq, and those that are killed. The rationale for adopting these metrics seems to stem from the conviction that the foreign jihadists are primarily responsible for the more spectacular attacks that generate media attention—and the misperceptions as to the true level of security in Iraq. The data indicate “progress” in that the number of foreign fighters entering Iraq has declined, along with the number of suicide attacks. However, more than twice as many foreign jihadists appear to have infiltrated over the last six months as have been killed or captured. It is not clear how accurate the data are regarding infiltration, as Coalition forces do not have the capability to secure the country’s borders. Thus it is unclear whether these metrics are all that useful in gauging progress toward securing the war’s centers of gravity. Bradley Graham, “Zarqawi ‘Hijacked’ Insurgency,” *Washington Post*, September 28, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>204</sup> There are concerns that recent US sweep operations in insecure provinces like Anbar and Ninewah are being evaluated “using body counts as a benchmark.” Ellen Knickmeyer, “US Claims Success in Iraq Despite Onslaught,” *Washington Post*, September 19, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>205</sup> The sweep operations (as opposed to emphasis on oil spot operations) that often characterize US operations in the insecure provinces have proven ineffective in helping the Coalition win the critical intelligence war against the enemy. One survey found that over 400,000 US patrols had generated only 6,000 intelligence reports at the brigade level, according to an Army intelligence director. Yet in one month, August 2005, over 3,000 tips were provided by Iraqi citizens on insurgent operations. This would seem to indicate that sweeps and patrols are not particularly effective in securing badly needed intelligence. It also indicates that the Iraqi people are willing to provide tips, provided they feel secure enough to do so. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 19; and “US Faces Gap in ‘Intelligence War’ in Iraq,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 5, 2004.



Historically, it has often been exceedingly difficult to obtain an accurate assessment of insurgent force levels. Unlike the counterinsurgent forces, many insurgents are not “full-time” participants in the conflict. Some “insurgents” engage in hostile activities not because they are “true believers” (e.g., are devoted to the Ba’athist, radical Islamist, etc. cause), but because they are coerced into participating (e.g., owing to the absence of security), or co-opted (e.g., unemployed Iraqis who will plant an IED for a fee).

It is also tempting to measure the number of combat incidents as a sign of insurgent strength, and the lack thereof as a sign of their weakness. This must be done with care, however, as a lack of insurgent activity does not necessarily mean success for the counterinsurgent forces. For example, the combat incidents around Fallujah in the summer of 2004 were quite low. Yet this was hardly a measure of the counterinsurgent forces’ success. Rather, it was a clear signal of their impotence, as the insurgents had occupied the city and the Coalition proved unwilling to challenge them.

Conversely, a large number of insurgent attacks may reflect their weakness, and not their strength. A rash of attacks might result from insurgents’ fears that they are losing the war and must do something dramatic to reverse their fortunes. Consider, for example, the spike in insurgent activity around the time of the January 2005 elections. These attacks were motivated out of insurgent fear of a successful election, not their growing strength. This was borne out by the decline in insurgent activity following the elections, which showed that the surge in attacks was a spike in activity, and not a function of increase insurgent strength.

Nevertheless, it is worth tracking the intensity of insurgent activity, not necessarily to get a sense of whether progress is being made in defeating them, but rather in attempting to understand their priorities and the trends in their behavior. For example, combat incident trends could provide insights on the pattern of enemy attacks. Are the insurgent’s increasingly operating in larger groups (possibly indicating a shift to a higher phase of insurgent operations)? Or are the insurgents breaking down into smaller units (indicating, perhaps, that their efforts to put greater pressure on the government are failing)? What are the insurgent’s targeting? Are they emphasizing attacks on US forces (hence directing their focus on the non-Iraqi centers of gravity)? On the national infrastructure (to demonstrate the Baghdad regime’s impotence)? On the Iraqi people themselves (indicative, perhaps, of the insurgents’ determination to block cooperation with the government)?

Insurgent incidents might be examined in terms of their effects over time. For example, do insurgent sabotage attacks significantly retard reconstruction efforts? Do attacks on Iraqi government officials enjoy a growing rate of success? Or are trends pointing in a different direction?

These data may also be examined to determine the oil spot strategy’s success. For example, if the insurgents are moving away from attacks on government officials, or if these attacks are experiencing a far lower success rate, then efforts to protect key government officials may be paying off.

To the extent that US casualties erode support for the war among American soldiers in particular and the American public in general, they are an important metric in gauging progress. However, given the current casualty rate, which is well below that suffered in Vietnam, it is not clear that this is the case. Remarkably, the support of those most in danger—American soldiers and marines—remains strong. Both the Army and the Marine Corps are exceeding their reenlistment rates.<sup>206</sup> Ironically, it is the Army's recruitment efforts that are experiencing difficulties, an indication that Americans in general are increasingly reluctant to serve.

As for the American public, it is not clear that its support is linked to the casualty rate. Unlike in the Vietnam era, no US citizen risks becoming a casualty in Iraq unless they volunteer for military service. To be sure, the American public might, at some point, become horrified by the level of US casualties. Still, this might just as easily lead to a redoubling of the American people's determination to see the war through to a victorious conclusion, as to stimulate demands for a troop withdrawal.

Arguably, two other factors weight more heavily in the minds of Americans than the current casualty rate. One is the "free rider problem." As the insurgency progresses through its third year, it seems likely that an increasing number of Americans will be expecting Iraqi citizens to demonstrate their willingness to fight the insurgency in defense of the government they have chosen. Similarly, if US soldiers and marines believe that the Iraqis do not want to fight for their own freedom against undemocratic insurgent movements, they may become increasingly reluctant to make sacrifices on behalf of what are perceived to be ungrateful beneficiaries. This reinforces the importance of fielding capable Iraqi police and military units.

Until recently, the United States has been attempting to measure its effectiveness in standing up the ISF almost entirely in terms of inputs—that is, the number of Iraqis trained and equipped, as opposed to focusing on outputs—how these newly formed units are performing in the field. Pentagon briefings have habitually cited the size of the ISF which, as this chapter's introductory quote from Secretary Rumsfeld indicates, does not necessarily translate into combat effectiveness.<sup>207</sup>

Second, more broadly, the American people (as well as the American Soldier and the Iraqi people) must believe that progress is being made toward bringing the insurgency under control and defeating it. Put another way, are American lives and treasure being sacrificed to bring the United States closer to achieving its objectives? Are the Iraqi people shouldering their fair share

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<sup>206</sup> "The Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines are all on track to meet or exceed their reenlistment goals for the year." George W. Bush, "President's Weekly Radio Address," August 13, 2005.

<sup>207</sup> The recent Defense Department report to Congress on the subject of measuring the effectiveness of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq depicts progress in standing up the ISF primarily in terms of the numbers of Iraqis trained and equipped. Recently, however, the metrics have been expanded to include assessing the readiness of Iraqi battalions for operations, to include operations independent of US/Coalition forces or those in which the Iraqis take the lead. Another metric looks at how many Iraqi forces are taking on their own area of responsibility from US/Coalition forces. These expanded metrics are a step in the right direction. However, as will be discussed below, they do not provide the kind of tight linkage desired between ISF capabilities and securing the war's centers of gravity. See Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, pp. 27-32.

of the burden? One way of measuring such support is through public opinion polls. These polls have generally shown a decline in public support for US troop deployments to Iraq, and a growing skepticism in the Bush Administration's competence to bring the war to a successful conclusion.

## **TOWARD BETTER METRICS**

There are other, less problematic, metrics that could prove useful in measuring the war's progress and taking the pulse of the war's centers of gravity. One concerns the Coalition's ability to destroy the insurgent command structure. To be sure, the Iraqi insurgents are hardly a unified group; however, as evidenced by Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, the insurgency has leaders nonetheless. If the insurgents cannot protect their own leadership from being killed or captured, they are likely losing the intelligence war that is key to defeating the insurgency.<sup>208</sup> This will probably discourage recruitment, as prospective recruits will infer that an insurgent movement that cannot shield the identity and location of its leaders can hardly be expected to protect its footsoldiers.

The "leadership" metric cuts both ways. The Iraqi government must minimize the assassinations of government officials and religious leaders. From the population's perspective, if the government cannot even protect its own, it is difficult to see how it can protect individual citizens from insurgent coercion and retribution.<sup>209</sup>

Another useful metric involves insurgent defections. If insurgents are defecting in increasing numbers, or (better still) as a growing percentage of the overall insurgent force, this would likely indicate that the government is winning over the "true believers;" i.e., that hard-core insurgents are coming to believe that their cause is no longer worth fighting for. Success here also indicates that the counterinsurgent forces are winning the intelligence battle. Since winning that battle will very likely mean that individual citizens are stepping forward to provide information, it also means that the "hearts and minds" of the Iraqi people are being won over—and that a critical center of gravity is being secured. Similarly, a true measure of a defector's status in the insurgent movement is the quality and quantity of "actionable intelligence" he provides to government forces.

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<sup>208</sup> The US command keeps data on the number of senior jihadist leaders killed or captured. Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "Terror Command in Fallujah is Half Destroyed, US Says," *New York Times*, October 12, 2004. However, this data was not highlighted in the Defense Department's recent assessment to Congress. Rather, emphasis was placed on the political process. The Sunni Arab community's higher voter registration rolls are seen as a great success in the political dimension of the conflict. However, it is far from clear that Sunni registration represents anything more than an effort on their part to supplement the insurgency with participation in the political process as a means to achieve their objective of a return to dominance in Iraq. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>209</sup> Of course, as with many metrics, one must be careful in interpreting them. If, for example, the government were so thoroughly infiltrated by insurgents, it may no longer be necessary for the insurgents to target government officials. Or, if the insurgents believe US popular support for the war is weakening, they may intentionally shift their focus away from targeting government officials and toward those targets (e.g., US troops) that are most likely to influence US domestic support for the war.

Another useful metric that links counterinsurgency operations to the intelligence war and the centers of gravity involves combat incidents between insurgent and counterinsurgent forces. The focus here is *not* on the number of offensive operations that Coalition forces launch relative to the insurgents; rather, it is the number of contacts that are *initiated* by Coalition forces relative to those initiated by the enemy. This metric is *not* intended to measure combat outcomes in the traditional (conventional) sense; that is, the goal here is not to measure insurgent force attrition. Rather, it is a surrogate for determining progress in the intelligence war, which itself is a surrogate for getting a handle on the population's disposition. A positive trend in this metric indicates that the population is providing "actionable" intelligence on the identity and location of insurgents. If the trends favor the Coalition, it would be an indication that the initiative is passing from the insurgents to the counterinsurgent forces.

A subset of this metric, the percentage of contacts with the enemy initiated by Iraqi forces, is far superior to counting Iraqi troops in determining the Iraqi security forces' effectiveness. If the percentage of contacts with the enemy that are initiated by Iraqi forces is increasing, and if their share relative to that of other Coalition forces is also growing, it would indicate that Iraqi forces are truly assuming more of the burden for Iraq's security and also winning the people's support. Positive trends in this metric could also encourage greater US popular support, since it would also enable reductions in US troop deployments, thereby alleviating concerns about Iraqis acting as "free riders."

Still another useful measure is the percentage of "actionable" intelligence tips received from the population relative to those gained through military surveillance (reconnaissance aircraft or security forces patrols, for example) and government intelligence operatives. A positive trend would indicate that the people share the Coalition's objectives and feel secure enough to volunteer information on the insurgents (i.e., that the "hearts and minds" of the people are increasingly on the counterinsurgent's side).

Another useful surrogate for measuring whether or not the government and its Coalition allies are making progress in winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people involves IEDs, or improvised explosive devices. A useful metric would be the ratio of IEDs detected versus those detonated. To capture this trend, IED intercept figures would have to be broken down by type. For example, the percentage of IEDs intercepted could be a function of government/military surveillance, tips from the civilian population, shoddy emplacement by the insurgents, improved counterinsurgent methods of detecting IEDs, a reduction in unemployment (leaving fewer Iraqis who are willing to plant an IED for a fee), changes on the conduct of operations,<sup>210</sup> or myriad other factors. While improvements in IED detection may stem, to some extent, from Coalition technical countermeasures (e.g., Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) surveillance), the key here is

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<sup>210</sup> For example, sweep or "whack-a-mole" operations involving Coalition forces deploying into areas with which they are generally unfamiliar, and which lack security, offer rich opportunities for insurgents to emplace large numbers of IEDs with little risk of being caught. On the other hand, operations whose goal is establishing an enduring level of security will, over time, make emplacing an IED a progressively more difficult and dangerous proposition. Insurgents confronted with oil spot vice sweep operations must contend with local police and intelligence forces, and a population that has both a stake in the future (thanks to sustained reconstruction) and a sufficient sense of security to report cases where IED emplacement occurs.

to track the level and effectiveness of civilian involvement in dealing with this form of insurgent attack, so as to gauge how effectively the counterinsurgent forces are securing the Iraqi people's confidence and support. Again the metric is linked back to one of the war's centers of gravity: the Iraqi people.

The Coalition might also employ "market metrics" to assess progress. For example, the insurgents have exploited both the unemployed and the criminal element for support. They often pay Iraqis to plant IEDs and declare bounties for the killing of Iraqi government officials.<sup>211</sup> This indicates that the insurgency may be struggling to expand its ranks and must buy support. Given these circumstances, it would be helpful to keep track of the "market" in this aspect of the conflict. What are the insurgents offering to pay those who will plant an IED?<sup>212</sup> What kind of bounty are they placing on the lives of their enemies, and how does that price change over time? The assumption behind these "market" metrics is that the higher the insurgents' price, the fewer people there are willing to support them. This reduction in support could indicate the Coalition's success in improving security, in reducing unemployment, and in strengthening the popular commitment to the new regime, all of which would leave fewer people vulnerable to persuasion or coercion by the insurgents.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Insurgent leaders reportedly have developed a pay scale depending on the target: \$1,000 for a Shiite, \$2,000 for a member of the Iraqi National Guard and \$3,000 for an American, which is an enticing amount money in a country with an average household income of \$164 per month. "Bounties offered on Americans in Iraq," *Associated Press*, November 19, 2004, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=265389>; and Gary Langer, "Poll: Iraqis Report Better Postwar Life," *ABC News*, March 15, 2004, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=79272&page=1>.

<sup>212</sup> There is some evidence that it is possible to track the IED market, and that the US command is doing so. According to one source, the cost to the insurgents to involve themselves in attacks on US forces increased in 2004. Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "In Northern Iraq, the Insurgency has Two Faces, Secular and Jihad, But a Common Goal," *New York Times*, December 19, 2004. The potential to reduce the ranks of "casual" insurgents by lowering unemployment and improving security would seem to be significant. As one Army lieutenant colonel explained, "I have met two guys now who say, 'I don't love you and I don't hate you. But somebody's offered me \$200 to set up a mortar or a [roadside bomb], and there's a bonus if we kill you.'" The problem, as one US general noted, are the large numbers of men who "are young, unemployed, [and] without hope." Doug Struck, "US Using Cash as a Defensive Weapon," *Washington Post*, July 26, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>213</sup> A rise on the price paid to those individuals planting and detonating IEDs may be indicators of US success in meeting important objectives, such as economic growth (which, by reducing unemployment, may reduce the number of individuals willing to "work" for the insurgents), a greater sense of security (making it more difficult for insurgents to gain access to people for the purpose of "employing" them to attack the counterinsurgent forces), or a stronger sense of popular commitment to the new Iraq regime (leaving fewer people vulnerable to being co-opted by the insurgents to perform these tasks).

Of course, the price could drop at the same time the number of IED attacks is increasing. This would be far more worrisome. Here it seems likely the price would drop because Iraqis are attracted to the insurgent movement in ever-increasing numbers. Should that become the case, the increased supply of "true believers"—those who act out of conviction—would reduce the need to hire individuals to conduct these attacks for money. In economic terms, the demand would be reduced relative to the supply of individuals available and, hence, the price would drop. The market does not appear to work with respect to car bombs, whose drivers are often on a suicide mission. The payment in this case is not monetary, and it must be assumed that these killers are acting out of some sense of conviction or purpose, no matter how depraved they appear to be. This points out the importance of winning the war of ideas occurring within the Islamic World.

Given its importance to the overall success of the strategy advocated earlier in this report, some “reconstruction metrics” must be developed to measure whether the Coalition’s efforts to provide the Iraqi people with a better life are succeeding. Some popular metrics, such as those that measure the number of reconstruction projects started, or the money spent on such projects, gauge intent more than results. Indeed, they may more accurately measure *failure* if the projects’ benefits are rolled back by insurgent sabotage. In this case, the Iraqi people will be the victims of their false hopes.

Several other reconstruction metrics suggest themselves as more relevant. One metric is the number of projects that have been completed *and sustained* beyond their completion. This more accurately reflects the benefits that reconstruction is intended to provide to the Iraqi people. One might refine this metric to include projects that are quickly completed, especially in those areas targeted for oil spot offensives. Here the idea is to show the people an *immediate* improvement in their lives—and one that is not ephemeral, but that will be sustained.

Two other useful reconstruction metrics that the number of Iraqis employed by the projects, and the percentage of “stand alone” projects relative to the whole. Taking the latter metric first, it seems likely that reconstruction efforts that are not linked to the national infrastructure have a greater likelihood of being sustained over time, since they are dependent upon local security conditions, rather than nationwide security. The population is also likely to have a greater stake in a local project than one that depends upon events outside of their immediate area—and far beyond their ability to control.<sup>214</sup>

The number of Iraqis employed is useful as a surrogate for gauging the struggle for Iraqi “hearts and minds” (and, hence, the intelligence war at the center of this conflict). Employed people generally have a more optimistic outlook on life, have a greater stake in the success of the existing order, and have a source of income that reduces the temptation to “work” for the insurgency (for example, by planting an IED.)

To sum up, the metrics chosen to gauge progress in the war must be chosen carefully, lest a false picture of the conflict emerge. These metrics must be linked to the war’s centers of gravity and provide some indication of how well the strategy chosen is enabling the Coalition to secure them. The metrics should be scrutinized to determine if progress toward achieving them might induce important second-order effects, both positive and negative. They must also be revisited periodically to determine whether they remain relevant to the ongoing conflict.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> For example, it may initially prove more effective to provide oil spot offensive targets with electricity from portable generators rather than trying to link the area to the national electric grid. Such an approach might be expected to provide electricity more quickly, while employing local Iraqi labor. The neighborhoods relying on these generators for power would likely be more protective of them than they would of the elements of a national grid (e.g., power lines, transformers, etc.), since the generators would be their “stand-alone” source of power. This distributed form of power generation might also better withstand insurgent efforts to disrupt it. Consider also, that destroying a major transformer in the national electrical grid can leave thousands without power, while destroying a single local generator would put perhaps a few hundred in the dark.

<sup>215</sup> For a discussion of the selection and use of metric, see James G. Roche and Barry D. Watts, “Choosing Analytic Measures,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 1991, pp. 165-209.

Unfortunately, based on the recent Defense Department report to the Congress on the matter of metrics, the US effort in Iraq seems weighted more towards problematic metrics than those that are likely to provide the best sense of progress (or lack of same) in the war. There is no discussion, for example, of employment as a key metric, or of those metrics that link security operations with winning the intelligence war. There is little discussion in the report on how the metrics employed are linked to the war's centers of gravity. Given this, it is not surprising that senior spokesmen in the Bush Administration, the military, Congressional leaders and the media have a difficult time evaluating America's progress in the war.

## **ARE WE WINNING?**

*War is a series of catastrophes that results in a victory.*

Georges Clemenceau

How are the United States, the new government of Iraq, and their coalition partners faring in their war against the insurgents? A recent Defense Department report to Congress provides some insights.<sup>216</sup> The report "reflects measures and indicators currently in use" for the purpose of "assessing progress toward achieving objective in Iraq."<sup>217</sup> These objectives include creating an Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors and serving as an ally in the war on radical Islamism; and which maintains security forces capable of preserving internal stability and a government that is representative of the people and respectful of human rights.

In assessing progress toward these goals, the report examines political, economic and security trends. The Defense Department employs some metrics that are viewed as suspect or incomplete in the preceding analysis on choosing metrics. It also uses metrics that are quite sensible from this assessment's perspective. Finally, some key metrics cited above are not employed. For example, there are no metrics to address two of the war's three centers of gravity—the American people and the American soldier. The focus is entirely on the situation in Iraq. Given that maintaining a balance among the three centers of gravity is crucial to winning the war, this represents a fundamental—and potential fatal flaw in DoD's efforts to gauge progress. This section elaborates on these matters, and comes to some tentative conclusions regarding progress in the war.

## **POLITICAL STABILITY**

The Defense Department tends to take a rather short-term view of the process needed to create a stable democracy. While it rightly cites the process involved in standing up an Iraqi government as important, and cites progress toward that end as an indicator of success, the fact remains that

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<sup>216</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*.

<sup>217</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 2.

building a democracy involves much more than holding an election and standing up a government. It requires building institutions that, over time, are seen as the repositories of regime legitimacy. It also requires the peaceful transfer of power between competing groups through actions taken at the ballot box, not by force of arms. Given the length of time it took to create a stable democracy in the United States—some argue it did not occur until after the American Civil War—and the long history of hostility and mistrust between Iraq’s principal ethnic and religious factions, it appears the time line for success here must be measured, not in months, or even years, but decades.<sup>218</sup>

Another metric employed to gauge progress is the level of participation in the political process. Again, the results are generally encouraging, especially when viewed from a short-term perspective. The DoD notes that most Sunni Arabs believe it was a mistake to boycott the January 2005 elections, and argues that their growing intent to participate in the political process is a change for the better. This may be true; however, this may also reflect a Sunni desire to “talk and fight,” to exercise some leverage in the political process by voting, while also exercising leverage through the use of violence. In short, Sunni participation may be seen by that community *not* as an alternative to violence, but as a useful adjunct to it.<sup>219</sup>

Similarly, the Defense Department also cites the growth in mass media outlets within Iraq as a positive development.<sup>220</sup> Certainly, an independent and robust press is characteristic of a democracy. However, the press also needs to be examined in terms of whether it is advancing or retarding the effort to win the “war of ideas” against the insurgents.

## **ECONOMIC INDICATORS**

According to DoD’s metrics, Iraq’s economy “is showing signs of continued recovery,” although growth remains “substantially dependent on the performance of the oil sector, as it accounts for over two-thirds of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).”<sup>221</sup> The recovery has also been aided by the rapid increase in the price of oil. However, metrics associated with the continued repair of Iraq’s decrepit oil infrastructure, the security of its pipelines and related production and distribution network, and the progress toward reducing graft and corruption in the oil sector are not provided.

Crude oil production and exports have remained flat in recent months, which may indicate that the oil sector security situation has not improved appreciably. Given its central role in the nation’s economy, this can not be viewed as an encouraging trend.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, pp. 4-5

<sup>219</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>220</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 8.

<sup>221</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 10.

<sup>222</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, pp. 14-15.



Electrical generation remains a “good news, bad news” story. While demand has increased to roughly 200 percent of its prewar level, indicating economic recovery, generation continues to lag well behind.<sup>223</sup> As with the oil sector, the electricity infrastructure is a prime target for sabotage by the insurgents. As with the overall economy, the situation is improving, but gradually. What needs to be assessed is whether progress in these key areas is occurring fast enough. That is, will economic recovery proceed rapidly enough to win the Iraqi people’s support for the new government, or will they view the lack of progress as an indicator that the government is incapable of providing for its people? Related to this is the question of whether the American people see the progress as being sufficient to merit their continued support for US involvement in the enterprise.

A striking omission in the report is the absence of data on the country’s employment rate. The insurgents are willing to pay substantial sums (by Iraqi standards) to people to engage in a range of actions whose intent is to subvert the country’s new government and undermine the US centers of gravity. It would seem that the more Iraqis who are going home tired, with money in their pockets after a hard day’s work, the fewer the Iraqis that would be susceptible to being lured by insurgent offers to hire them for nefarious purposes.<sup>224</sup>

## **SECURITY INDICATORS**

This section comprises the majority of the Defense Department’s report, as well it should. Without security, progress on the political and economic fronts becomes exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. Not surprisingly, when the Iraqi people are polled, security is at the top of their priority list.

The report rightly cites the ISF’s importance in securing the three centers of gravity (although it does not discuss the ISF in this light). The metrics employed to gauge ISF progress center on the size, number and readiness of the ISF and its units, and their ability to assume more responsibility for defeating the insurgency. The DoD notes that nearly 200,000 ISF troops were trained in October 2005, out of a projected requirement of 325,000.<sup>225</sup> “A key measure of progress is the growth in the number of operational units and in the percentage of these units capable of taking the lead in combat operations.”<sup>226</sup> That number has grown from 5 battalions in August 2004 to 88 in September 2005.<sup>227</sup> According to DoD figures, progress has been made here as well. One Iraqi battalion is fully operational, and some three dozen are capable of taking the lead in combined operations with US forces.<sup>228</sup> The ISF, which did not exist in any

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<sup>223</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 15.

<sup>224</sup> Of course, security plays a crucial role here as well. The greater the security in a given area, the greater the risk an individual runs in hiring himself out to the insurgents.

<sup>225</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 28.

<sup>226</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 28.

<sup>227</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 31.

<sup>228</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 30.

significant effective form in the spring of 2004, has assumed an increasing level of responsibility for providing security to the Iraqi people. The ISF now has the lead for planning and executing counterinsurgency operations in an area the size of New Jersey, and is responsible for security in an area covering 87 square miles in Baghdad, and 450 square miles in other parts of Iraq.<sup>229</sup>

These data are encouraging. However, they do not link ISF efforts with the intelligence war—the key to defeating the insurgency and securing the support of the Iraqi people. For example, there are no data provided as to how many contacts with insurgents that are initiated by Iraqi forces as opposed to by the insurgents (although data on attacks and casualties are provided).<sup>230</sup> The data provided show that ISF casualties are increasing, while Coalition force casualties have decreased on an average daily basis over the past 18 months. This would seem to sustain the argument that the ISF are assuming greater responsibility for conducting counterinsurgency operations, but other factors may explain the trend as well.<sup>231</sup>

There is one metric that does fit this definition: the number of intelligence tips received from the Iraqi people. This number increased dramatically from March of 2005 through June of 2005 (from 483 tips to 2,519). By August the number had grown to 3,341. Yet there are some issues with respect to this data that need to be resolved before it can be relied upon with a high degree of confidence.<sup>232</sup>

The same can be said with respect to polling data that explores how secure Iraqis feel in their neighborhoods. The survey indicates that Iraqis feel “very safe” in most parts of the country; i.e., the 14 provinces that are generally secure. Unfortunately, the data provide only a “snapshot” of Iraqi public opinion. They do not tell us what the trends are; i.e., whether Iraqis feel more secure now than they did six months ago, or a year ago. Thus it is not possible to say that the trends are positive or negative. Of concern, only 26 percent of Iraqis residing in Baghdad felt “very safe” (as opposed to “not very safe” or “not safe at all”). The situation in Mosul is even worse; nearly three times as many Iraqis in Mosul felt “not safe at all” as opposed to “very safe.”<sup>233</sup> Thus the

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<sup>229</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 17.

<sup>230</sup> Multinational Corps-Iraq. Data cited in Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, pp. 22-24.

<sup>231</sup> It may indicate other things as well. For example, the trend could also reflect a change in insurgent targeting priorities, away from Coalition forces and toward ISF forces. Or these trends might reflect improved Coalition doctrine and capabilities—and perhaps a widening gap between insurgent performance and the ISF’s competence. This highlights the importance of employing a range of metrics that can accurately gauge progress. It also points to the importance of exploring for indirect, or second-order effects.

<sup>232</sup> Multinational Corps-Iraq. Data cited in Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 19. The data includes tips reported to multiple sources, leading to the possibility of double-counting. It is unclear just how pervasive the double-counting is, or how it affects the overall positive trend. The data level off between July and August (from 3,303 to 3,341). This may indicate that the number of ways in which an Iraqi citizen could provide tips had increased, leading to an increase in double-counting. Finally, the data do not state the quality of these tips. Did they provide solid leads? Or were they useless? Or did they offer the insurgents a means of conducting a disinformation campaign? The data are silent on these questions.

<sup>233</sup> Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, p. 20.

two areas that might serve as the prime targets for oil spot offensives are seen, by their own citizens, as generally unsecured.

## **SUMMARY**

The Defense Department's provision of metrics to measure stability and security in Iraq can be seen as an important element in securing the center of gravity represented by the American people—the Home Front. Based on the data provided, and the discussion of metrics in the previous section, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions regarding progress in defeating the insurgency and achieving the United States' overall war objectives. The reasons for this are several:

- There is no data provided on two of the war's three centers of gravity—the American people and the American soldier. To be fair, provision of these metrics lies outside the parameters of the Defense Department's report. However, that does not lessen the importance of these two centers of gravity.
- There often is no clear linkage between the metric employed and the war's centers of gravity. Nor is there a sense of the interrelationship between the metrics; i.e., how progress in securing one center of gravity may compromise efforts to secure the two other centers of gravity.
- The metrics chosen to gauge progress are, in a number of instances, problematic, as noted in the previous section's discussion. Moreover, some metrics that might be useful are not exploited.
- One does not get a good feeling for how well the counterinsurgent forces are winning the war of ideas—whether the Iraqi people share either US war objectives or those of the fledgling Iraqi government.
- The absence of employment data is a major omission in the analysis on Iraq's reconstruction.
- Very little insight is provided on how the Intelligence War is proceeding, other than data on hotline tips, which is hardly definitive and somewhat ambiguous.
- While data are provided on the progress made in training ISF units, there are no data on trends relating to providing security for the Iraqi people—the benefit they seem to desire the most. Are more Iraqis secure today than six months ago? A year ago? What is the overall trend in the country? Are more provinces secure? More cities? Is the true "Green Zone" expanding? Contracting? And, if so, how quickly?

Clearly the Defense Department believes significant progress is being made in the war. It is important that this progress be communicated in a convincing manner. Equally important, given the importance of metrics in guiding strategy and in demonstrating progress to the war's three centers of gravity, more effort needs to be given to choosing metrics and to their linkage to the

overall war effort. Finally, an effort must be made to ascertain whether gains in one area (e.g., winning over the Iraqi people) are being made at a sufficient rate so as to avoid erosion in other key areas (e.g., the erosion of US public support).

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## VIII. CONCLUSION

*We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.*<sup>234</sup>

John F. Kennedy  
Address at Rice University on the Space Effort  
September 12, 1962

This assessment of the war in Iraq has focused on four main issues: the character of the war and the competitors and their main objectives; the war's centers of gravity; options for improving the effectiveness of the United States' war effort; and metrics for gauging progress, or the lack thereof.

The United States, its Coalition partners, and the Iraqi people are confronted by an insurgency, primarily from Sunni Arabs and radical Islamists. In hindsight, it appears that Iraq was not a central front in the war on terrorism after the attacks of 9/11. However, as jihadists have streamed into Iraq following the end of major combat operations in the spring of 2003, that country has become not just a central front, but arguably *the* central front in the war with radical Muslims.

Wars have a dynamic of their own, and often take the belligerents down unanticipated paths. What began, arguably, as a "war of choice" on the part of the United States and its Coalition partners, has become a "war of necessity." The war is being waged for high stakes on both sides. Looking at the ever-growing instability and lack of hope that characterizes much of the Arab World (which dominates the ranks of the radical Islamists), the United States seeks to create a "Third Way" between the despotic regimes that have failed to address their people's aspirations and the dark agenda espoused by radical Muslim movements, which are outlined, *Mein Kampf* style, in Zawahiri's recent letter to Zarqawi.

The Iraqi people are broken into factions; many Arab Sunnis and Shiites are for one Iraq—so long as it is controlled by them, while the Kurds seek a level of autonomy that, to some, seems to border on independence. The Sunni insurrection is driven by a fear that US efforts to promote democracy will legitimize majority Shiite rule and lead to acts of repression against the minority group that has dominated Iraq almost since its inception. Like the radical Muslim insurgents, the Sunni insurgents seek first to drive the United States out of Iraq, and to do so before democracy takes root. The common goal of these two groups is to create conditions of chaos out of which they might seize power.

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<sup>234</sup> Transcript available at <http://www.rice.edu/fondren/woodson/speech.html>.

The insurgents are rather weak. They number perhaps 20-30,000 while US, Coalition and Iraqi forces are some 360,000 strong. Making matters worse, owing to their minority (or foreign) status, the insurgents have no hope of winning over a majority of Iraqis. Nor do they have a positive message to offer. Thus they must seize power not in the manner of Mao Zedong or Ho Chi Minh, but rather along the lines of Lenin and his small, but highly disciplined and thoroughly ruthless group of Bolsheviks.

The war has three centers of gravity: the Iraqi people, the American people, and the American soldier. The challenge for the counterinsurgent forces—which at present are heavily dependent upon the United States—is to secure these three centers while pursuing an effective counterinsurgency strategy. Here one finds a key asymmetry. The insurgents need only secure one of the three centers of gravity to win the war, while the United States must secure all three. Moreover, steps taken by the United States to secure one center of gravity may undermine efforts to secure the others. Again, any strategy for defeating the insurgents must take this into account.

The most promising strategy from the Coalition's perspective comprises two main elements: oil spot security and reconstruction operations and the creation of a Grand Bargain (or what US Ambassador Khalilzad calls a National Compact), which seeks to create a coalition of Sunni and Shiite Arabs and Kurds that have an interest in a unified, democratic Iraq that is not dominated by external powers, and which has arrived at an equitable sharing of power and the country's key resource, its oil.

The oil spot approach is founded on the belief that if the Coalition knows who the insurgents are, and where they are, its enormous advantage in military capabilities will assure victory. This requires intelligence which comes principally from the Iraqi people, but it must be earned. This is accomplished by winning the population's hearts and minds—providing them with a stake in the new regime and the security that will enable them to cooperate without fear of insurgent retribution. This requires that Coalition forces enter an unsecured area with the determination to provide an enduring level of security, which will facilitate reconstruction and intelligence gathering, and the training of local security forces. Since the Coalition has insufficient forces to provide security to the entire country simultaneously, it must be done progressively—one area at a time; hence the image of an expanding oil spot.

At the same time the Iraqi center of gravity is being secured, steps must be taken to stem the erosion of US popular support for the war, and to relieve stress on America's overextended Army. This can be accomplished by a reduction in US troop levels (which is why standing up a capable ISF is critical) and by demonstrating progress toward winning the war. But how to make (or sustain) progress while effecting substantial reductions in US forces? The answer lies in a number of initiatives, which include adopting a more effective strategy, ensuring that the US military's most capable senior commanders and staff officers are in the theater of war, and expanding the embedding of US troops in ISF units.

Is the United States winning? The metrics employed by the Defense Department to measure progress, and which have been made available to the public, offer no definitive answer. This is especially unfortunate, given that popular support for the war is predicated, in large measure, on some sense that progress is being made toward victory. A sense of progress is also needed to

reassure those Americans who are making the greatest sacrifices in Iraq, that their efforts are not in vain.

To be sure, achieving America's war objectives will not be easy. Nor are there any guarantees that an extended effort will produce success. This assessment concludes that success, if it comes, will exact a price substantially above what the United States has already paid in blood and treasure.

But waging a war of necessity, and for high stakes as well, is typically hard, costly, and often protracted as well. Secretary Rumsfeld put it bluntly when he declared the United States was in for a "long, hard slog." As this chapter's introductory quote notes, confronting the greatest challenges, the ones that demand the most of America as a nation, are not easy—especially the ones "which we intend to win."

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## APPENDIX A: IRAQ AND VIETNAM

The Vietnam War left deep scars on America's national psyche, its political leaders, and, most of all, its military. In the three decades since the end of US military involvement in that war, no conflict has been referred to more often than Vietnam, either in the United States or by its enemies. Americans and their military fear being tied down in another quagmire, where victory is elusive and the light at the end of the tunnel appears distant, if not receding. America's enemies see "another Vietnam" as their best hope of defeating the juggernaut that is the US military.

Fears of "another Vietnam" were on display during the US involvement in counterinsurgency warfare in El Salvador during the 1980s, and animated demands for an "exit strategy" when US troops were sent to conduct irregular warfare operations in places like Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia in the 1990s. Now concerns are expressed as to whether ongoing US stability operations in Iraq—by far the largest since Vietnam—risk trapping American forces in another protracted conflict where victory is elusive, if not impossible.

Is Iraq "another Vietnam?" If the similarities are high, a strong case might be made that the United States should cut its losses in Iraq, and seek some form of "peace with honor." However, if the case is mixed, or if the similarities between the conflicts are low, then perhaps such comparisons are more a reflection of nagging, old wounds than new dangers—a willingness to give counsel to old fears, rather than confront new realities. At the outset, however, it is also important to note that a thorough analysis of the prospects for success, or failure, in Iraq would need to look far beyond a simple comparison of the two conflicts. Thus the following discussion is an attempt to *inform* the debate over US policies in Iraq, rather than resolve it.

The conflicts in Iraq and the Vietnam War have several important similarities:

- *In both cases the United States confronted an enemy intent in pursuing a protracted conflict with an eye toward seizing power after the American military's departure.*
- *Early US public support for the US military involvement began to wane as Americans perceived that progress was not being made toward achieving the country's war objectives.*
- *Several of America's closest allies were unwilling to support US military intervention, and US standing in the international community declined.*
- *Although in both cases many close US allies did not actively support the intervention, several states did provide significant military forces in support of the United States' efforts.*

Overall, however, the dissimilarities between Iraq and Vietnam at the same period following US intervention are far more pronounced than their common characteristics:



- *The demographic and geographic differences between the two countries are striking.*
- *The US intervention in Vietnam was undertaken at the request of a recognized government; US forces in Iraq were initially deployed as part of an invasion and occupation force.*
- *The Vietnamese Communists pursued a rural-based insurgency, whereas the Iraqi insurgency is centered primarily in urban areas.*
- *US ground combat forces were introduced in Vietnam when the insurgency had achieved sufficient strength to threaten the existence of the Saigon regime. The Iraqi insurgent movement is still in the early stages of insurgency warfare (i.e., low-end Phase II operations).*
- *The enemy forces confronted in Vietnam were an order of magnitude greater than those found in Iraq today. Moreover, the Vietnamese Communists were far superior to the Iraqi insurgents in training, organization and experience.*
- *In Vietnam, indigenous South Vietnamese military strength (as measured by the number of security forces) actually exceeded those of the United States, while in Iraq indigenous forces are only now—some 30 months after Saddam Hussein's overthrow—taking on significant responsibilities for defeating the insurgency.*
- *The US Troop strength in Iraq nearly three years after their initial deployment is less than one-third of that which the United States had in Vietnam at a comparable period.*
- *The US military that fought in Vietnam relied on conscription to fill its ranks, whereas in Iraq it relies wholly on volunteers.*
- *The external support provided the Vietnamese Communists by the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China was far greater than any such support being rendered to the Iraqi insurgents.*
- *The cost in human terms, in the form of casualties, was far greater in the Vietnam War than at a comparable period in the current conflict in Iraq.*
- *The cost in material terms was substantially greater in the Vietnam War than at a comparable period in the current conflict in Iraq.*
- *The stakes in Iraq, both for the United States and its enemies, are arguably far greater than they were in Vietnam.*

**Character of the Conflict:** Both the Vietnam War and the current conflict in Iraq can best be defined as insurgencies, with US and allied forces working with indigenous forces to wage counterinsurgency. Both the Vietnamese Communists (Viet Cong) and their ally (i.e., North Vietnam), as well as the Iraqi and foreign opposition groups are conducting operations

characteristic of insurgent movements, to include the use of intimidation and violence—terror, assassination, hit-and-run-attacks, ambushes, and attacks on key infrastructure.<sup>235</sup>

However, the two insurgencies are different in some significant respects. The Vietnamese Communist insurgency was rural based, whereas the Iraqi insurgent movements are urban based. The Iraqi insurgency is fragmented. There does not appear to be a significant level of coordination between Shi'ite insurgent groups and radical Islamist elements.<sup>236</sup> The Vietnamese Communists, on the other hand, exhibited a high degree of unity and coordination.

**Geography:** Countries with rugged, complex natural terrain and long borders often work to the advantage of the insurgents. They seek refuge in inhospitable areas that are difficult for counterinsurgent forces to access, such as jungles and mountains. The insurgents' ability to slip across nearby borders and find sanctuary in neighboring states can also prove extremely useful. In this respect, South Vietnam, whose terrain included significant mountainous regions and rain forests, played to the insurgents' advantage. Moreover, South Vietnam's long narrow shape meant that insurgents could slip, with relative ease, across the border into Cambodia, Laos or North Vietnam to seek sanctuary. Indeed, South Vietnam's strategic depth rarely exceeded 150 miles from its nearest neighbor.

Iraq, on the other hand, poses far greater challenges for an insurgent movement. It is a country dominated by desert, which offers little in the way of shelter or sanctuary for insurgents. Its strategic depth is significantly better than South Vietnam's, making it more difficult for insurgents to operate in large numbers.

**Demographics:** South Vietnam was primarily an agrarian economy, while Iraq's barren terrain features have led to a far greater concentration of people in urban areas. Not surprisingly, Iraq's insurgency is centered on its cities, while the communist insurgency in South Vietnam was rural based. Rural insurgencies have been, on average, more successful than urban-based insurgent movements.<sup>237</sup>

South Vietnam's population was relatively homogenous compared to Iraq's. Over 80 percent of South Vietnam's people were Vietnamese. The remainder of the population was dominated by Montagnard tribes, whose members had an intense dislike for the Vietnamese, somewhat similar to the relationship the Kurds "enjoy" with their Sunni Arab countrymen. In Iraq, the Shi'ia Arab population forms a majority, comprising about 60 percent of the country's population, with the

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<sup>235</sup> For an overview of insurgency warfare, see Andrew F. Krepinevich, "The War in Iraq: The Nature of Insurgency Warfare," *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, June 2, 2004.

<sup>236</sup> This foreign element, comprising members of radical Islamic movements, may also be attempting to promote discord between Iraq's Sunni and Shiia Arab communities and the Kurds as well, as a means of laying the groundwork for the emergence of a radical Islamic regime. Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi, October 11, 2005, available at [http://www.dni.gov/release\\_letter\\_101105.html](http://www.dni.gov/release_letter_101105.html).

<sup>237</sup> Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Indochina, Indonesia, Laos, Nicaragua, Vietnam, are among the states that have seen relatively recent rural-based insurgencies succeed. A mixed rural-urban insurgent movement succeeded in Algeria.

Kurds and Sunni Arabs representing significant minorities. During the Vietnam War, the conflict was dominated by ethnic Vietnamese.

The situation in Iraq is more fractionated. Foreign infiltration has been microscopic compared with what occurred in the Vietnam War.<sup>238</sup> Moreover, most foreign insurgents are of different ethnic backgrounds from many indigenous Iraqis. In summary, one might generally characterize the Vietnamese insurgency as rural and homogenous, while the Iraqi insurgency is urban and heterogeneous.

**Objectives/Stakes:** The Vietnamese Communists were fighting a total war with the ultimate aim of uniting both North and South Vietnam under Hanoi's rule and evicting all foreign forces. The Iraqi insurgent groups also seem to be fighting a total war in that they seek to dominate the country following the departure of foreign forces. Unlike the Vietnamese Communists, however, the Iraqi insurgent movements likely envision the departure of US forces as a prelude to an internal struggle for power. Iraqi insurgent success could pave the way for civil war.

The Vietnamese Communists viewed the Saigon regime as illegitimate, a creation of the United States. In fact, the South Vietnamese regime claimed the support of a substantial number of its citizens, as was demonstrated in the Communists' failure to trigger a popular uprising during their Tet Offensive in 1968.

The situation in Iraq is more complex. In the wake of the Second Gulf War, which ended Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, the Iraqi people are attempting to create a government that can command the loyalty of the Iraqi people.

As for the counterinsurgents, in Vietnam the United States was playing for high stakes, but not nearly as high as in Iraq. The US objective in Vietnam was to arrest the expansion of communism as part of an overall strategy of containment. It also hoped to demonstrate that wars of national liberation (as insurgencies were often called) would not succeed just as communist attempts at overt aggression (i.e., the Korean War) had not succeeded. The United States had suffered some setbacks in its efforts to block communist insurgents from seizing power (e.g. China, Cuba), and some successes (e.g., Greece, the Philippines). However, the success or failure of the containment policy did not rest upon US success in Vietnam the way that the Bush Administration's ambition for a democratic Middle East is linked to American success in Iraq.

In Iraq, the United States has extremely ambitious objectives that will likely be realized, if at all, only over the course of a generation. They include winning a major victory against radical Islam by assisting in the creation of a state that offers an alternative to the oppressive Islamic fundamentalist regimes—advocated by al Qaeda and similar groups and as practiced in Iran, Sudan, and (until recently) Afghanistan—and repressive authoritarian regimes, as represented in countries like Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Syria, and even Egypt.<sup>239</sup> By supporting efforts to

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<sup>238</sup> Nearly all the infiltration into South Vietnam was by ethnic Vietnamese from North Vietnam.

<sup>239</sup> President Bush has declared that "America's task in Iraq is not only to defeat an enemy, it is to give strength to a friend—a free, representative government that serves its people and fights on their behalf." Speech, President

create prosperous, democratic states, the administration hopes to reduce the root causes that have led to the growth of radical Islamist elements.

**The Enemy:** Although figures vary, it is clear that the combined Iraqi/foreign insurgent movements are miniscule compared to the communist forces confronted by the United States and its allies in Vietnam. There are no indications that the current insurgent force in Iraq exceeds more than a few tens of thousands, perhaps 30,000 or so.<sup>240</sup> Comparatively speaking, two years after the introduction of US ground combat forces to South Vietnam, enemy strength was estimated at over *ten times* that number.<sup>241</sup>

In Iraq, the enemy has shown the ability to stand and fight. Although the insurgents apparently lack a unified command at the level practiced by the Vietnamese Communists, they have, on occasion operated in groups of 20-40 fighters.<sup>242</sup> This figure is small by comparison to Vietnamese communist forces, which at times in 1967 operated in formations that numbered in the hundreds and even thousands. Uprisings in cities like Fallujah and Najaf in 2004 witnessed insurgent groups massing in substantially larger numbers, although at this point their command element's ability to coordinate large force groupings was clearly inferior to that of the communist insurgents during the Vietnam War. On average, the Vietnamese communist forces were not only far larger, but they were also far better trained and better-led than their Iraqi counterparts as well. They also were capable of conducting operations on a far greater scale and level of sophistication. By 1967 the Vietnamese Communists were veterans of two decades of nearly constant war against the Japanese, French and American militaries. As one American officer put it, "Haji ain't Charlie."<sup>243</sup>

Having said that, it should be noted that the tactics employed by the various Iraqi insurgent movements with which Coalition forces must contend are, in most cases, not dramatically different from what the US military experienced in Vietnam—again, acknowledging that the Iraqi insurgency is primarily in its early stages. Suicide bombers are hardly novel; nor are car

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George W. Bush, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, May 24, 2004, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040524-10.html>.

<sup>240</sup> Lee Keath, "Saudi Fighters in Iraq Bring Money and Draw Recruits to Insurgency," *Associated Press*, September 30, 2005.

<sup>241</sup> Thomas C. Thayer, *War Without Fronts* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), p. 32.

<sup>242</sup> Deborah Horan, "Insurgents Take Hostages, Dig in Across Iraq," *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 2004; and "After Fallujah, Other Iraqi Rebel Havens Remain," *Agence France Presse*, November 15, 2004.

<sup>243</sup> "Haji" is a generic term used by some US troops to describe Iraqi insurgents. However, some argue that the term has acquired a highly derisive connotation, more similar to the US troops' reference of all Vietnamese as "gooks" during the Vietnam War. Others assert that this is not the case, noting that the word "haji" in both Iraq and Afghanistan, at least among Marines and Special Forces, is more often used as an endearment than a slur. To wit, "let's drink tea and hang out with the hajis" and "haji food is so much better than what they feed us." See Bob Hebert, "From 'Gooks' to 'Hajis,'" *The New York Times*, May 21, 2004; and Robert Kaplan, "The Real Story of Fallujah," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 2004. "Charlie" was a widely used term in describing the Viet Cong (the "VC," or "Victor Charlie" in the US military's phonetic alphabet). In Vietnam, the US military developed a grudging respect for "Charlie," derived from the enemy's competence and courage on the battlefield.

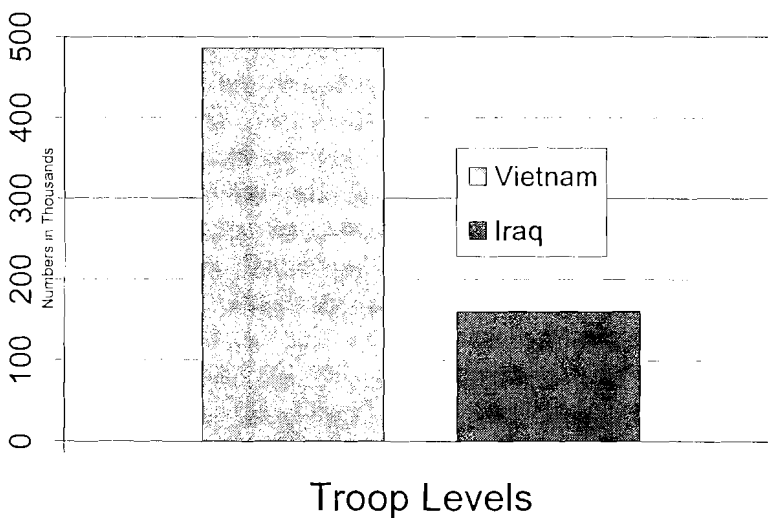
and truck bombs a recent phenomenon.<sup>244</sup> Attacks on convoys in Iraq, which are increasing, again reflect nothing new in insurgency warfare.

As for improvised explosive devices (IEDs), American forces have seen them before as well. For example, owing to the US military's emphasis on firepower, in Vietnam in 1966, over 27,000 tons of unexploded ordnance (artillery shells that were fired or bombs dropped by aircraft), or "duds" were generated. The Viet Cong proved expert at converting these duds into mines and booby traps—their version of IEDs. Over 1,000 US soldiers died that year from these weapons. During the first six months of 1967 the problem worsened, as 17 percent of all US casualties (539 killed and 5,532 wounded) were caused by these devices.<sup>245</sup>

Insurgents in Iraq have demonstrated a willingness to target noncombatants, including their own people. Again, this is nothing new. Indeed, when in doubt as to their ability to win the "hearts" of the people, the Viet Cong often used intimidation and terror to win their "minds," and thereby gain their unwilling cooperation, or passivity.

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**Figure 1: Total Troop Commitment Two Years Following Ground Combat Force Intervention**



**US Forces:** The United States currently has roughly 160,000 troops in Iraq two-and-a-half years after their initial deployment. This is less than one-third of the 486,000 troops the United States

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<sup>244</sup> Consider, for example, the truck-bomb attack on the US Marine Corps barracks in Beirut over two decades ago, and a similar attack on the Khobar Towers housing US forces, in 1996.

<sup>245</sup> Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 201.

had in Vietnam at a comparable period after the deployment of ground combat forces in the fall of 1967.<sup>246</sup> The US military strength in Vietnam peaked in 1968 at 536,000.<sup>247</sup>

One huge difference between the US military of the Vietnam era and today occurred in 1973, when conscription ended and an all-volunteer force was created. The shift has had both positive and negative affects. The draft era military not only saw troops rotated in and out of Vietnam, but in and out of the military as well, as most draftees departed after having served their period of obligation. This enabled the United States to raise fresh forces for Vietnam by increasing the draft calls, greatly diminishing the need to establish a rotation base. However, a force composed primarily of draftees suffered from a lack of combat experience, giving birth to the statement that “the US Army did not have ten years’ of experience in Vietnam, but one year of experience ten times over.”<sup>248</sup>

Another major difference in the two wars concerns the participation of National Guard and Reserve soldiers, which is far greater in both absolute and relative terms in Iraq than in Vietnam. For example, no major Army National Guard combat units were called up to serve in Vietnam. Today in Iraq, the National Guard provides over 40 percent of the deployed Army ground combat forces.<sup>249</sup>

The all-volunteer force deployed to Iraq has a much higher level of experience, on average, than the draft era force. Moreover, assuming the US military sustains relatively small casualties and maintains recent troop retention rates, should forces be rotated in and out of Iraq for a protracted period, it seems likely that over time the US forces depth of experience (and, hopefully, effectiveness) will substantially surpass that of the draft era force. The risk, of course, is that troop retention rates will suffer given the high level of deployments the Army is now experiencing. This posits the need to establish a rotation base that limits how often soldiers are deployed into combat zones. This places either a *de facto* cap on the forces available to meet requirements in Iraq and elsewhere, or demands an expansion of the Army, and perhaps the Marine Corps as well, or a rapid improvement in the Iraqi Security Forces’ ability to shoulder more of the war’s burden.

Finally, there was a major air and naval component to US military operations during the Vietnam War. In Iraq, however, these forces have a relatively minor role, in terms of forces committed, operations undertaken, and support provided to American ground forces. In short, the Vietnam War saw a far greater balance among US air, ground and naval forces. The current war in Iraq is dominated by the Army, with a significant contribution by the Marines.

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<sup>246</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 37.

<sup>247</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 37.

<sup>248</sup> This refers to the fact that the tour of duty in Vietnam was for one year.

<sup>249</sup> Of the 17 Army brigades currently in Iraq, seven are National Guard brigades. Globalsecurity.org, “Where are the Legions? Global Deployment of US Forces,” available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/global-deployments.htm>.

**The Counterinsurgent Coalition:** As in Vietnam, the United States military in Iraq represents by far the most powerful counterinsurgent force. As in Vietnam, the United States enjoys significant support from allies. During Vietnam, Free World Military Forces (as they were called), principally drawn from South Korea (by far the greatest contributor), Australia, New Zealand and Thailand, peaked at over 68,000 troops.

In Iraq, US Coalition partners have contributed over 22,000 troops. While allied contributions in Iraq are not as great as those in Vietnam in raw numbers, they actually represent a *greater percentage* of the overall Coalition force than during of the Vietnam era. Aside from the United States, no NATO country forces were deployed to South Vietnam. In Iraq, however, several NATO nations have made significant force contribution, especially the British, Dutch, Italians and Poles.<sup>250</sup>

There is a major difference, at least thus far, between the indigenous counterinsurgent forces provided in these two conflicts. In the Vietnam War, the United States worked with the South Vietnamese Army and paramilitary forces (the Regional Forces and Popular Forces), whose numbers exceeded those of the external allied powers by almost 100,000. Two-and-a-half years after US ground combat forces deployed to South Vietnam, Saigon fielded a force of over 643,000 troops.<sup>251</sup> The infant regime in Baghdad has nothing remotely comparable to the forces fielded by the Saigon regime.<sup>252</sup> Thus US and allied forces are bearing an overwhelming burden for counterinsurgency operations. This may enhance the insurgents' appeal to Iraqi nationalism, in that they can claim the Coalition is acting on its own behalf and not with the support of the Iraqi people.

**Enemy External Support:** External support can be crucial in determining the success or failure of an insurgent movement. During the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong benefited enormously from their ability to draw upon external sources of support. North Vietnam provided substantial military forces, and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) battalions in the field actually outnumbered Viet Cong battalions as early as 1968, less than three years after the deployment of US ground combat forces.<sup>253</sup> By 1972 the ratio was over six NVA battalions for every VC battalion. That year over 400 battalions of NVA troops were engaged in the war. External support for Iraqi insurgents is microscopic by comparison. Some jihadists are operating in Iraq, but their numbers are small, and likely range from 1-3,000.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Currently, the British have 8,500 troops deployed, the Dutch 4, the Italians 2,700, and the Poles 1,500, for a total of 12,704 NATO member forces in addition to those of the United States. See [Globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_coalition.htm), "Iraqi Coalition: Non-US Forces in Iraq," available at [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq\\_orbat\\_coalition.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_coalition.htm).

<sup>251</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 34.

<sup>252</sup> The South Vietnamese Government in 1967 had been in existence for thirteen years.

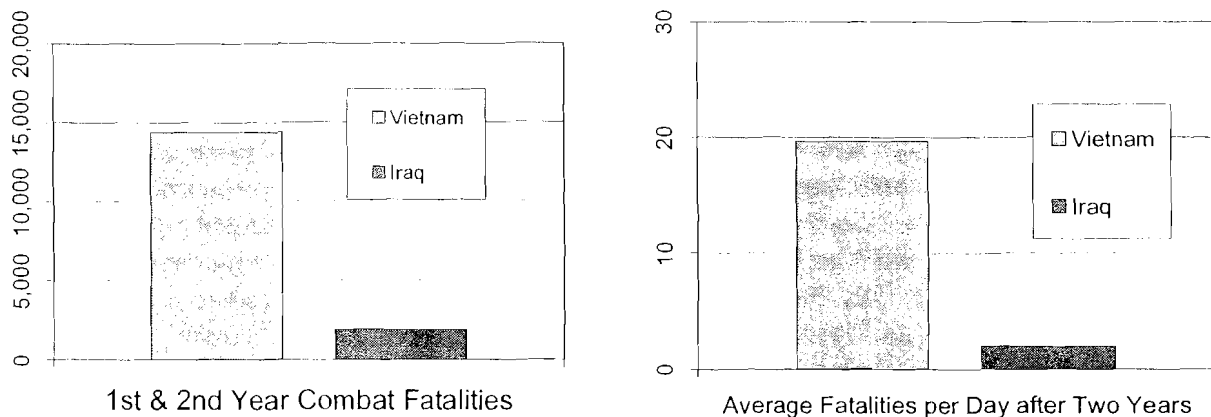
<sup>253</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 33.

<sup>254</sup> Nawaf Obaid and Anthony Cordesman, "Saudi Militants in Iraq," Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 19, 2005, available at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050919\\_saudimilitantsiraq.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050919_saudimilitantsiraq.pdf).

With very few exceptions, communist forces were afforded sanctuary from allied ground attack in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.<sup>255</sup> Comparable sanctuaries do not exist for Iraqi insurgents.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, the North Vietnamese (directly) and Viet Cong (indirectly) received substantial aid from two major powers, the Soviet Union and China, particularly in the form of equipment and munitions. For example, during the period 1967-69 aid to North Vietnam was roughly \$8 billion in current dollars, or just shy of \$40 billion in today's dollars, of which roughly half was directly associated with the war effort.<sup>257</sup> External material aid for Iraqi insurgents is, again, miniscule by comparison, although they do receive support through Iran and Syria.

**Casualties:** The human cost of the war in Iraq is small in comparison with that incurred during the Vietnam War, or even during the initial period of direct US involvement in ground combat operations. Through 1967, the second full year of US ground operations in South Vietnam, 14,386 troops had died in combat, for an average of 599 per month, or 19.7 per day.<sup>258</sup> (American combat deaths would increase to nearly 15,000 a year beginning in 1968.) South Vietnamese forces suffered roughly 24,669 deaths, while allied force combat deaths exceeded 1,671.<sup>259</sup>

**Figures 2 & 3: US Combat Fatalities and Combat Fatalities per Day Two Years After Ground Combat Force Intervention**



<sup>255</sup> Allied forces briefly raided communist sanctuaries in Cambodia in 1970 and in Laos in 1971 (Operation Lam Song 719).

<sup>256</sup> There is evidence that both Iran and Syria are providing sanctuary to some insurgent elements. Again, however, the scale of support is quite small when compared to that enjoyed by the Communists during the Vietnam War.

<sup>257</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 87.

<sup>258</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 105.

<sup>259</sup> Southeast Asia Statistical Summary, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), April 11, 1973, pp. 1-9. Cited in Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 105.



As of early November 2005, US military fatalities in Iraq from all sources since the beginning of major combat operations stood at 2,052, with 1,604 combat casualties. If one discounts the period of conventional military operations, US military fatalities stand at 1,913, or an average of 66 per month, or 2.02 per day.<sup>260</sup>

Put another way, US forces in Vietnam during this period suffered battle deaths at a rate over nine times greater than that being experienced thus far in Iraq. At this rate, *it would take over 18 years for US casualties in Iraq to exceed those suffered in South Vietnam just through 1967.*<sup>261</sup> And combat losses through 1967 were mild in comparison of what was to come. It is worth noting that the casualty rate in Vietnam would nearly double in 1968. Indeed, at the current combat death sustainment rates, *it would take over 73 years for US forces to incur the level of combat deaths suffered in the Vietnam War.*

The dramatically lower rate of US casualties being suffered in Iraq is remarkable given the absence, to date, of any substantial indigenous Iraqi security forces to shoulder a major portion of the security responsibility, as there were in South Vietnam. In 1967 alone, for example, South Vietnamese forces suffered some 12,716 killed in action, a rate roughly 13 times that of US forces over the last year.<sup>262</sup>

According to one source, Iraqi civilian casualties since the end of major combat operations are estimated at 28,600.<sup>263</sup> Civilian casualties during the Vietnam War are more difficult to discern. However, in 1967 alone, over 48,000 South Vietnamese civilians died in hospitals as a result of wounds suffered as a result of the war.

But actual civilian casualties in Vietnam were likely much higher, perhaps by a factor of two.<sup>264</sup> Many civilian casualties were never admitted to hospitals. Many hospitals did not record all admissions. There were a significant number of other hospitals whose admissions records were not accessed (e.g., Catholic hospitals). A significant number of injured civilians likely sought help from local physicians or from doctors practicing traditional Chinese medicine. The most

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<sup>260</sup> See DoD, OIF/OEF Daily Casualty Update, November 10, 2005, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>.

<sup>261</sup> This would exceed the period of major US combat operations in South Vietnam, which ran from the spring of 1965 to 1971.

<sup>262</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, p. 105, and "Military Coalition Casualties per Month," available at <http://icasualties.org/oif/>.

<sup>263</sup> See [www.iraqbodycount.net](http://www.iraqbodycount.net). This site is maintained by a group of academics and peace activists. Given the polemics associated with the site (e.g., "Civilian Deaths in 'Noble' Iraq Mission Pass 10,000"), it seems reasonable to conclude the data probably provides an upper limit on civilian casualties. The site does not differentiate between civilian casualties as caused by insurgent or Coalition forces. It estimates total civilian casualties since the onset of hostilities in March 2003 as somewhere between 26,931 and 30,318.

<sup>264</sup> Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, pp. 125, 127-29.

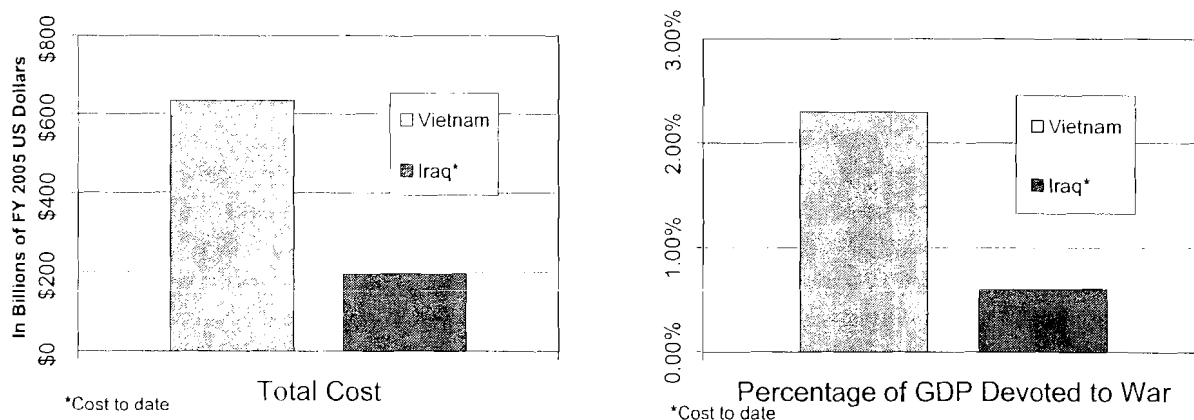
obvious omission concerns those civilians who were killed outright, and thus had no need of medical treatment. This has led to widely varying estimates of civilian casualties.<sup>265</sup>

If we take the midpoint between estimates, then South Vietnamese civilian casualties in 1967 would have been roughly 72,000 and those in Iraq around 28,600. Thus civilian casualties suffered in Iraq are occurring at a rate that is 2 1/2 times lower than that experienced in Vietnam. If one measures casualties on a per capita basis, taking into account that Iraq's population is roughly 50 percent greater than that of South Vietnam in 1967, then *the Iraqi civilian casualty rate is less than 20 percent of that suffered in Vietnam* in second full year of US ground combat operations.<sup>266</sup>

It is important to note that in both Vietnam and Iraq, the casualty figures do not differentiate between the source; i.e., whether US/allied forces inflicted the casualties, or the enemy. In both wars the enemy consciously sought to inflict casualties on civilians.

**Cost.** In budgetary terms, the war in Iraq has, to date, cost substantially less than the war in Vietnam. Congress has appropriated about \$197 billion to cover the cost of military operations in Iraq through the end of fiscal year 2005 (which ended on September 30<sup>th</sup>). By comparison, the Vietnam War cost about \$636 billion (in today's dollars). Depending on how long US forces remain engaged in counterinsurgency operations in the country the cost of the war in Iraq would, of course, grow. However, at the current rate of expenditure—roughly \$79 billion annually—US forces would have to remain in Iraq in their present numbers for another five years for costs to reach the level of the Vietnam War.

**Figures 4 & 5: Economic Costs of the War**



<sup>265</sup> Civilian casualty estimates in South Vietnam for the period 1965-1972 range from just under 200,000 to over 400,000. Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> South Vietnam's population in 1967 was slightly over 16 million; Iraq's population is slightly over 27 million. Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 301.

In evaluating the cost of the war in Iraq relative to Vietnam, it must also be recognized that the United States is a far richer country today than it was during the Vietnam War. The US economy is now more than two-and-one half times larger than it was in 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War. In 1968, the United States spent the equivalent of about 2.3 percent of its GDP on the Vietnam War. By comparison, this year the cost of military operations in Iraq is projected to amount to some 0.6 percent of GDP.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the dissimilarities between the Vietnam and Iraq conflicts far outweigh their similarities.

This is not to say that the Vietnam War has no relevance to the ongoing conflict in Iraq. Nor does this imply the United States' goals can be easily accomplished in Iraq. What can be concluded is that, to date, the insurgency in Iraq is far less formidable than the one confronted in Vietnam. It also suggests that, due to today's much larger economy, the economic burden imposed on the United States by the conflict in Iraq is also likely to be much less than that imposed by the Vietnam War, even if the conflict lasts many more years.

As in the Vietnam War, the key to US perseverance will rest on the American peoples' calculation of whether, even at a reduced cost, the effort in Iraq is worth the sacrifice. The Bush Administration's challenge is to convince the US public not only that it is possible to defeat the present insurgency, but that such a victory is also represents a major step toward the creation of a free and democratic Iraq.

It is important to note that, unlike during the Vietnam War, the US military now relies exclusively on volunteers to fill its ranks. Thus public support for the war extends beyond public opinion polls and contributions to the treasury. A sufficient number of volunteers must be willing to commit to serve their country as members of the armed forces to sustain the war effort.

In the final analysis, much depends on how Washington chooses to employ its resources and the time frame over which it is able to sustain its efforts—in short, the strategy pursued. No matter how less challenging the Iraq insurgency appears when measured against America's Vietnam experience, or how low the relative costs, they will not offset a flawed strategy.

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## APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHY

Demography typically plays an important role in military competitions, and the war in Iraq is no exception. Iraq's current population is approximately 27 million people. Well over half of Iraq's population is concentrated in its ten most populous cities. This reinforces the point that, unlike many past insurgencies, Iraq's is principally urban in nature, and that oil spot security operations will necessarily involve pacifying urban areas.

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**Table 2: Iraq's Major Cities**<sup>267</sup>

City	Governate	Population (2002)
Baghdad	Baghdad	5,605,000
Mosul	Nineveh / Ninawa	1,739,000
Basrah	Basrah	1,337,000
Irbil	Arbil	839,000
Kirkuk	At-Ta'mim	728,000
Sulaymaniyah	As-Sulaymaniyah	643,000
Najaf	An-Najaf	563,000
Karbala	Karbala	549,000
Nasriye	Dhi-Qar	535,000
Hilla	Babylon (Babil)	524,000
Ramadiyah [Ar Ramadi]	Al-Anbar	423,000
Diwaniyeh	Al-Qadisiyah	421,000
Kut	Wasit	381,000
Amarah	Maysan	340,000
Ba'qubah	Diyala	280,000
Fallujah	Al-Anbar	256,000
Samarra'	Salah ad-Din	201,000

The difference in population density is quite dramatic from region to region. According to the map (see Figure 6), the area west of the Euphrates River (the Syrian Desert) is nearly barren. Of particular note, given its great size and high level of insurgent activity, Al-Anbar province, comprising only about 5 percent of the country's population and home to much of the insurgent violence, has a very concentrated demographic profile. Over 70 percent of its 1,230,000 residents live in the provinces' two major cities, Ramadi and Fallouja. These two cities (neither of which is among the country's ten most populous) are the two major demographic "islands" in the western approaches to Baghdad. Securing these cities (perhaps as part of a second phase of oil-spot operations following the securing of Baghdad and Mosul) would likely prove important, if not decisive, in reducing the Sunni insurgent element.

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<sup>267</sup> Source: Iraq-Major Cities, available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/city.htm>.

The southern corner of Iraq is home to the relatively narrow area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. It boasts a number of major population centers including Basra, Najaf, Karbala, Hillah and Nasiriyah. From the southern tip of Iraq north to Baghdad, major city centers are separated by approximately 50-100 miles along the two rivers. This is the country's most populous region, and is generally secure (although not necessarily by Iraqi Security Forces) until one reaches the areas around Baghdad and Karbala provinces.

Northeastern Iraq, dominated by the country's Kurdish minority, is quite mountainous with wooded and forested areas. It is the only part of the country that supports a major population center not located on either the Tigris or Euphrates Rivers (Kirkuk, Arbil and Al Sulaymaniyah are all to the east of the Tigris). Mosul, Iraq's second city is located on the Tigris and comprises a potentially volatile mix of Kurds and Sunni Arabs.

## ISLANDS IN THE SAND

Iraq's demography favors the counterinsurgents in one important way: counterinsurgent forces can secure the vast majority of the population by physically occupying only a small part of the country. This, however, offers no guarantee of victory. During the insurgency in South Vietnam from 1946-1975, 90 percent of that country's population lived either along the narrow coastal plain or the Mekong Delta. This favorable demographic condition did not prevent the Vietnamese Communists from overthrowing the Saigon government.

Figure 6: Iraqi Population Density

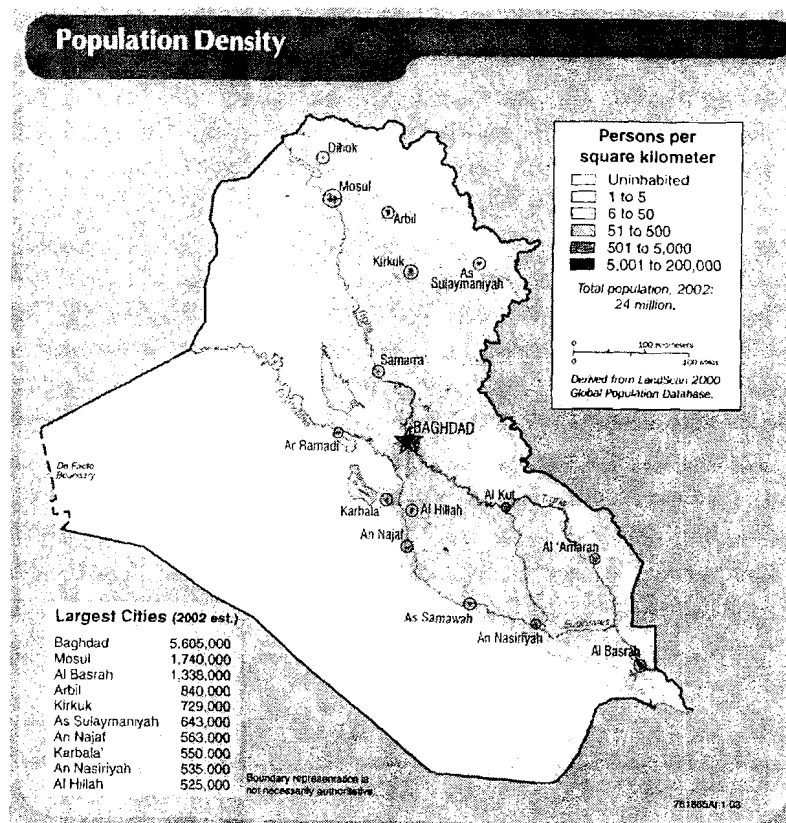
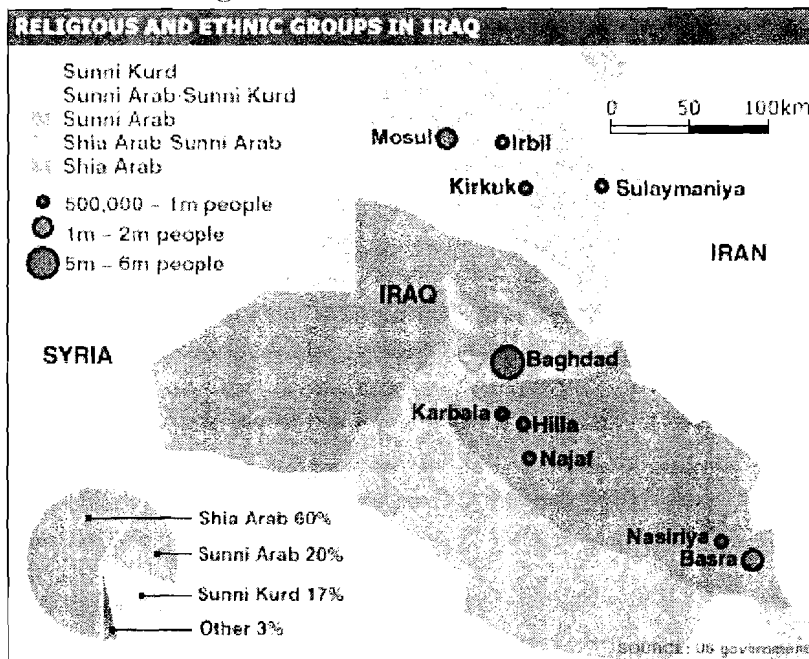


Figure 7: Iraqi Topography



Figure 8: Iraqi Ethnic and Religious Divisions<sup>268</sup>



<sup>268</sup> Map available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in\\_depth/post\\_saddam\\_iraq/html/1.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/post_saddam_iraq/html/1.stm).

Iraq is characterized by cities surrounded by desert. This raises the question of how this rather unusual combination of geography and demography might influence our approach to defeating the insurgency through oil spot campaigns.

One way of thinking about the problem is to view the desert as similar to the ocean. Like the oceans, deserts can be used for the purposes of transit, but they not really habitable. Cities in the desert can be seen as islands. Like islands, cities in deserts do have communication and movement between one another, but this can be restricted relatively easily.

This can make life difficult for the insurgents since, to use Mao's phrase, the insurgents are like fish and the people are the sea in which they swim. In archipelagos (like the Philippines, where geography severely penalized Aquinaldo and the Huks) or in Iraq ("island" cities in an ocean of sand) the insurgents' freedom of movement is hampered by the geography.

How does this help the counterinsurgent forces? For one, it makes it easier to isolate population centers, since the population is more geographically concentrated. Think of how difficult it would be to isolate Washington from its surrounding area relative to, say, doing the same around Mosul.<sup>269</sup>

There is another similarity between counterinsurgency in Iraq and war at sea. Instead of islands, think of Iraqi cities as "ships" participating in a convoy of indefinite duration (which is not far-fetched, as the World War II convoys across the Atlantic were essentially a continuous conveyor belt of transport ships). The allies discovered that when they tried to hunt German submarines, these efforts typically ended in failure, while the U-boats had a field day sinking transport ships. Eventually, these operations were abandoned and convoy operations initiated. Allied warships stayed with the transport ships. This forced the U-boats to attack the convoys if they wanted to sink the transports. Thus the warships did not have to find or interdict the U-boats—the German submarines were forced to come to them.<sup>270</sup>

What's the link here? Think of Coalition security forces as warships. They can go out hunting for the insurgents—like the Army and Marines in sweep operations. Or they can stay with the population—the "transport ships," and eventually force the insurgents to come to them. Thus oil spot operations are like convoys. Counterinsurgent forces stay with the population, which is "clumped" in towns and cities. Over time, the Coalition and the Iraqis can build forces specifically designed (e.g., local police) to protect the population—just as the US and Royal navies build destroyer escorts for convoys. The key point here is that killing insurgents is

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<sup>269</sup> The Coalition forces have been able to construct a sand berm around the entire city for the purpose of reduced the threat of attack with car bombs. The result has been a dramatic reduction in such attacks. It is difficult to see how this could have been accomplished, or accomplished easily, in an area where the population was far more distributed, rather than highly concentrated.

<sup>270</sup> For example, see Clay Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War: The Hunted, 1942-1945* (New York, NY: Random House, 1998), pp 176-200; and Peter Padfield, *War Beneath the Sea: Submarine Conflict During World War II* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1995), pp. 198-219.

*irrelevant* to the operation—just as sinking submarines was irrelevant to insuring that supplies reached England from the United States.

Another positive factor is the country's relatively high level of urbanization. There are areas (e.g., around Mosul) where the cities truly are demographic "islands" in a sea of relatively unpopulated countryside. This advantage is offset somewhat since securing these areas will require forces expert in urban control and security operations, which are not a strong suit of the US military, or (as of yet) their Iraqi Security Force protégés.

Viewed from a purely demographic perspective, a Mosul oil spot security offensive appears far more attractive than a Baghdad offensive, where there is a sizeable population density surrounding the city itself. Still, the US Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division appears to have had significant success in pacifying a substantial part of the city. An offensive lasting several years in the city and surrounding areas between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers could produce the war's turning point, at least in a military/security sense.

Finally, given the country's dependence upon its two major rivers, and the relatively high population density along and between them, especially in the southern part of Iraq, they might be viewed as major national transportation routes. If so, deploying "brown water" Iraqi navy units to control (or at least monitor) movement along these waterways could prove an important factor in providing security to the population, as the rivers may serve as a significant means of insurgent movement and infiltration into relatively secure areas.



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## APPENDIX C: THE ROMANS AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

While the United States has no empire, it does share several characteristics with imperial powers such as Rome during the *Pax Romanum* and Great Britain during the age of the *Pax Britannica*. Like the United States, Rome and Great Britain were the dominant, or hegemonic powers of their time. They also had interests that were global in nature.<sup>271</sup> The period of Rome's dominance spans centuries. Polybius suggests it began in 241 BC, following Rome's victory in the First Punic War, while Adrian Goldsworthy focuses much of his attention on the period 100 BC to 200 AD.<sup>272</sup> Regardless of how the era of Roman dominance is defined, it clearly extends over a protracted time, and was shaped by many different political and military leaders and a changing culture. Therefore, it is difficult to suggest that there was a particular and enduring Roman *modus operandi* for quelling insurrections during its long imperial era. Having said this, there are several interesting patterns that emerge in the way imperial Rome dealt with insurrections.

One is that the typical reaction of Rome at the first signs of an insurrection was to attack immediately, even if the local Roman forces they were severely outnumbered.<sup>273</sup> To mobilize a large army capable of conducting full-scale warfare would take time and provide the rebels with an opportunity to increase their ranks. Therefore, the Romans responded as quickly as possible to suppress the insurrection before it gained momentum. The Romans, in some cases, also hoped that if they responded quickly with a show of force, the rebels would be awed and would surrender without any substantial resistance. This, of course, is the opposite of US troops' behavior in the late spring and summer of 2003, when the insurrection began to form in Iraq.

The second pattern of Roman behavior in dealing with insurgents was the use of brutal violence in the extreme to suppress them. Burning, looting, pillaging, and selling people into slavery in rebellious territories were the common practices of the Roman Army. This was necessitated by the limitations on Rome's manpower. In a passage that eerily describes the US Army's current dilemma in Iraq, one finds that

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<sup>271</sup> To be sure, Rome's interests were not global in the strict sense of the term. However, Rome's influence did cover much of the then-civilized world. Given the absence of communications and speed of transport available to 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, it can be argued that Rome's span of control was every bit as ambitious as that of Victorian Britain and the United States today.

<sup>272</sup> Adrian Keith Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War: 100 BC-AD 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 79-95; and Polybius, *The Histories*, Book III, Sections 1-3, available at [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/3\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/3*.html).

<sup>273</sup> Goldsworthy states that

When an uprising did occur, the Roman reaction was always the same. All the troops which could be mustered at short notice were formed into a column and sent immediately to confront the perceived centre of the rebellion . . . . This often meant that numerically small and poorly supplied Roman columns launched an immediate offensive against the rebels.

Adrian Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare* (London: Cassell & Co., 2000), p. 144.

[N]one could resist the relentless advance of Roman invasion columns, but neither could the Romans apply their strength effectively against the widely dispersed rural base of warrior nations whose life and whose strength did not depend on the survival of a city-based economic and social structure. Consequently, if the insurgents persisted in their efforts, the Roman's only real alternative was to attack the population base itself, in a war of extermination. In the absence of a settled pattern of life that the army could control and reorganize under Roman rule, peace required that first a desert be made. Thus at the conclusion of Domitian's campaign against the Nasamones of North Africa, he reported to the Senate that the war had been won, and that the Nasamones had ceased to exist.<sup>274</sup>

## THE JEWISH INSURRECTION

In a more notable case, Cestius Gallus marshaled an army in 66 AD to respond to an uprising of Jewish rebels who had massacred the Roman garrisons in Jerusalem. Gallus formed an army comprising different legions and garrison forces as well as personnel provided by nearby allied kingdoms, creating a Roman-dominated coalition of sorts. Gallus wanted to crush the rebellion before it grew and spread throughout the region. Initially Gallus and his 14,000-man army were successful. They met no organized resistance as they burned, looted, and pillaged the various cities on their way to Jerusalem. There they launched a concerted attack against the rebels, which failed. The Romans suffered many casualties, over 5,700 by one estimate. The Jewish victory demonstrated that the Romans were not invincible, which swelled the ranks of Jewish insurgents.

The Romans then raised another army consisting of some 60,000 professional, well-trained soldiers. This army began operating first in the northern area of Galilee and systematically recaptured rebel territory. The Roman approach was brutal, and emphasized winning the local population's "mind," not its heart. The Romans systematically burned, looted, and pillaged every village, city and town they came upon. Those who were not killed were sold into slavery. The campaign culminated with the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, whereupon the remnants of the Jewish resistance retreated to their remote mountain fortress at Masada. Not content to merely crush the insurgent movement, the Romans sent their Tenth Legion, one of their best, to Masada, where it conducted a siege lasting over two years for the purpose of destroying the last tiny vestige of resistance.<sup>275</sup>

The message was clear: those who opposed Rome's rule could not hope to survive.

[A]t a time when the entire Roman army had a total of only twenty-nine legions to garrison the entire empire, one legion was deployed to besiege Masada, there to reduce the fortress by great works of engineering, including a vast ramp reaching the full height of the mountain. This was

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<sup>274</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century AD to the Third* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 46.

<sup>275</sup> During that time, in order to fight the last handful of Jewish resistance members, the Romans built an assault embankment up the side of the mountain, measuring 675 feet long and 275 feet in height, surmounted by a stone platform some 75 feet in height. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, p. 117.

a vast and seemingly irrational commitment of scarce military manpower—or was it? The entire three-year operation, and the very insignificance of its objective, must have made an ominous impression on all those in the East who might otherwise have been tempted to contemplate revolt: the lesson of Masada was that the Romans would pursue rebellion even to mountain tops in remote deserts to destroy its last vestiges, regardless of the cost. As if to ensure that the message was duly heard, and duly remembered, Josephus was installed in Rome, where he wrote a detailed account of the siege . . . .<sup>276</sup>

## REVOLT OF THE BELGIC TRIBES

A similar Roman response characterized Gaius Julius Caesar's operations against the Belgic tribes that revolted in 54 BC, roughly one hundred years *before* the Judaea uprising. After the campaigning season in 54 BC the Roman Army was scattered throughout Gaul and preparing to camp for the winter. The Eburones, a Gallic/Belgic tribe, rebelled and attacked a handful of Roman garrisons. Some garrisons surrendered but the one under the leadership of Cicero held out and was besieged. Upon learning of Cicero's plight, Caesar took his two small legions and some 400 cavalry (a total of about 7,000 men) and marched immediately to break the siege. Caesar ordered his men not to take any heavy baggage so that they could move as quickly as possible. The Eburones began to retreat upon hearing of Roman's arrival and Caesar conducted a swift action to rout their armies.

Meanwhile, other tribes had conducted operations against other legions in the area. Caesar and his army undertook a series lightning operations and surprise attacks against them. Against the Nervii, for instance, the Roman operations were conducted so rapidly that the Nervii were unable to raise an army. Again, this campaign was marked by quick operations by Roman forces on the scene. The Romans were successful, however, and did not require a larger army, as they would a hundred years later in Judaea. The suppression of the Gallic revolts again highlights the Roman practice of moving quickly and of brutal destruction of the enemy. The Romans systematically pillaged the tribal areas. Those tribes that surrendered to the Romans were given some leniency. However, the Eburones were exterminated and ceased to exist as a people.

These two examples of Roman counterinsurgency operations show that the Roman response to insurrection was not proportional to the damage incurred, but highly disproportionate, a kind of "massive retaliation." While costly in its execution, both in time and resources, this strategy's purpose was to *minimize the long-term costs* of empire by so intimidating other groups that might be tempted to challenge Rome that the empire could be policed with a relatively small garrison force.

It is worth noting that, in deploying forces to Afghanistan, the United States has also shown a willingness to "pursue rebellion even unto mountaintops in remote deserts." Its army has yet, however, to demonstrate either the staying power of the Roman legions or the ruthlessness they exhibited.

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<sup>276</sup> Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, p. 4.

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## APPENDIX D: SECURITY OPERATIONS: VIETNAM

The Iraq insurgency is urban in nature, while the insurgency in Vietnam was rural in character. However, some of the basic principles of counterinsurgency warfare remain the same, particularly the importance of securing the population and obtaining intelligence. With that in mind, the following description of US efforts toward this end during the Vietnam War may prove instructive.

In 1954, the last year of French rule in Vietnam, the government of South Vietnam controlled only the cities and large towns. Upon assuming power in 1955, South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem realized that he needed to extend his rule to the villages where most of the Vietnamese population resided. Diem ordered his minister of defense to oversee the activities of the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN), police forces, and public administrators in reaching out to the rural population and bringing them under the government's control. Officially known as "national security," the operation was more familiarly known as pacification, borrowing from the French use of the term. Major General Edward Lansdale, who was also an advisor to the CIA, served as the American adviser to Diem for this effort. Lansdale had been reassigned from the Philippines, where he had advised Ramon Magsaysay on the pacification effort that proved key in putting down the Huk insurgency.

In the late 1950s, the small American Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Saigon, which had the primary responsibility of training South Vietnam's armed forces, concentrated on the threat posed by North Vietnam's regular forces. Thus, they trained the South Vietnamese in conventional warfare operations, emphasizing large tactical military formations organized to stop a large-scale conventional invasion, similar to the one the United States had confronted in Korea. This focus on conventional invasion slighted the threat of insurgency, leaving the South Vietnamese forces ill-equipped to handle the challenge posed by the communist guerrillas operating in the countryside. Moreover, the US effort to train South Vietnamese military forces gave short shrift to the local security forces (e.g., Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps) that were responsible for protecting and working with the villages. These organizations fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior and therefore were not beneficiaries of the American Military Assistance Program (MAP). Even when Diem requested assistance for the security forces working the countryside, American officials refused on the grounds that such efforts drained resources from the main task of pursuing South Vietnam's conventional military training.

The South Vietnamese made a number of unsuccessful attempts at pacification and strengthening ties with the rural population. For example, Diem initiated the "agrovilles" program in 1959. It was a relocation program that sought to move the peasant population into strong rural settlements, called agrovilles that contained schools, medical facilities, electricity, and other social services. In these villages, the peasantry would be protected from the insurgents and receive services from the government. The agrovilles project failed, however, as many peasants were forced to perform hard labor to build them, and many agrovilles were not large enough to accommodate the number of peasants that required protection. The peasants were also forced to give up many short-term benefits such as harvesting crops and taking care of their animals, for

an uncertain long-term benefit. This was a risk that many peasants did not want to take, or did so reluctantly.

Yet another pacification effort, the strategic hamlets program, was implemented by Diem in 1961, this time with US participation. This program sought to protect peasantry from the communist insurgency by fortifying the villages with a trained and armed security apparatus. The government tried to tie the people of these fortified hamlets into a communications network that could alert local defense forces to ward off guerrilla raids. This attempt also failed, for many of the same reasons of the agrovilles program. For instance, many peasants were uprooted and moved to fortified areas. Security proved less than adequate. This was because, to demonstrate progress, creating strategic hamlets became an end in itself.

The American efforts in assisting South Vietnam's pacification in the late 1950s and early 1960s were disorganized, unfocused, and often competed with military goals. In 1965, the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) unified the function of the civilian agencies, including AID and the CIA, the two largest contributors to US civil operations in Vietnam. But OCO suffered from understaffing and a lack of funds as well as authority to carry out ambitious projects to build ties with the peasantry. Although OCO consolidated the civilian pacification efforts, it could not really address the pivotal security questions of facing the insurgency in the countryside and overcoming the political indifference that most peasants had to the Saigon regime.

Many members of the Johnson Administration realized that the problems of OCO could not be overcome unless it was fully integrated with the military effort. The military controlled the bulk of US resources in Southeast Asia, making it the logical organization to undertake any sort of massive pacification effort. Moreover, the administration understood that if the military aspect of protecting the peasants was not integrated with the civilian effort to build stronger ties between Saigon and the countryside, any attempt at pacification was doomed to failure. Therefore, in early 1967, the United States created the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) organization, which was integrated in the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). CORDS was a hybrid civil-military structure with General Westmoreland as the commanding officer, and Robert Komer as his civilian deputy. Of the military component, the Army contributed more than 90 percent of the advisors.

CORDS pulled together a range of pacification efforts, previously managed by AID, CIA, and MACV. CORDS wielded authority over nearly all pacification programs including refugee resettlements, the development of police forces, and the Chieu Hoi program—the “open arms” program that offered clemency to insurgents that laid down their arms. It also brought under its control the CIA training program for the Revolutionary Development Cadres teams, which inculcated young Vietnamese with anti-communist ideology and sent them into the villages to conduct an array of tasks from restoring local elected government, providing medical treatment, assisting in development projects, and aiding farmers in getting credit. CORDS also was responsible for oversight of the Regional Forces and Popular Forces (RF/PF), local security units that had long been neglected by the South Vietnamese and their US advisors. Regional Forces were provincial level units, and the Popular Forces were a part-time village militias comprised of poor farmers and laborers, many of whom who joined the PF to escape the draft. Komer believed

that these units were key to achieving the twin goals of providing villages with security against communist insurgents and developing stronger ties between the peasants and Saigon.

Initially, CORDS faced several obstacles, principally in getting military and civilian American officers working as a team and breaking down institutional loyalties and bureaucratic practices of the various agencies. Komer sought immediately to overcome these hurdles by implementing "Project Takeoff," a plan to quickly review and consolidate all pacification efforts, increase the power of American advisors over South Vietnam, obtain a more vigorous South Vietnamese effort, and induce local officials to conduct government programs more efficiently. As part of this initial effort, Komer outlined eight action programs that would be the central component of CORDS. These were:

- Accelerate the Chieu Hoi program (the "open arms" program);
- Mount attacks on VC infrastructure;
- Expand and improve ARVN support to pacification;
- Expand and supplement the RD cadre team effort;
- Increase capability to handle refugees;
- Revamp police forces; and
- Advance land reform.

With the exception of the attacks on VC infrastructure, all the elements of Komer's plan were to enhance efforts already underway. The targeting of VC infrastructure soon became a central component of pacification, and resulted in the creation of a new, coordinated anti-infrastructure effort known as the Phoenix program. Komer's efforts to outline the programs that CORDS coordinated met some success; however, it did more to bring to the surface many of the problems that pacification faced. The main challenges centered on the South Vietnamese government's inability to carry out the tasks necessary to pacify the countryside. The United States, in its advisory role, could only ameliorate the problems by managing the programs and allocating resources.

In May 1967, Westmoreland gave CORDS the additional responsibility for developing territorial security forces to deal with the insurgency. Komer seized the opportunity to revamp the underutilized RF/PF forces, and requested a dramatic increase in the number of advisors for South Vietnamese. To train the South Vietnamese local security forces quickly, CORDS experimented with the use of mobile assistance teams (MATs) that would travel from village to village instructing local forces in small-unit tactics and weapons training, including night operations, ambushes and patrols as well as fortifications and indirect fire support. The MATs were comprised of five US Army personnel (usually 2 officers and 3 NCOs) along with two South Vietnamese. The teams moved from one RF/PF unit to the next. Komer and others saw the MATs as an improvement over the Marine Corps' Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) which

were 13 man units that lived in villages. The CAP teams lived with the local villages and by night provided security by conducting raids and ambushes along with members of the local South Vietnamese security forces. The CAPs suffered mostly because the South Vietnamese were content to “sit back” and let the Marines take the lead. Although the CAPs continued, the MAT teams sought to correct this participation problem by constantly relocating, so as to prevent the local security forces from becoming dependent on them.

CORDS made strides in different areas, particularly in increasing the number of US advisors for local security forces. However, CORDS faced the monumental challenge of trying to persuade the South Vietnamese to reform long-standing methods, attitudes, and practices. The South Vietnamese failed to promote and put in place qualified managers—a rare commodity in any case—into key positions in the pacification program, since loyalty to the South Vietnamese regime was rewarded above skill and demonstrated competence. Furthermore, the South Vietnamese lacked a central organization (like CORDS) that coordinated their national pacification efforts. Komer was instrumental in making some of these changes, including pressuring the South Vietnamese to make some reforms and form the Central Revolutionary Defense Council, which comprised all South Vietnamese cabinet officials involved in pacification. With reforms beginning to occur in South Vietnam (including the election which promised greater stability) and a massive influx of funds, personnel, and equipment, CORDS could claim some success at the end of 1967. Indeed, security forces had forced the VC to resort to unpopular measures. Captured enemy documents revealed that at the end of 1967, the population controlled by the VC had declined.

The long-term prospects for pacification looked promising and Komer, accordingly, sought to emphasize several key areas for 1968. These included: improving further the RF/PF, pressing the attack on the infrastructure, helping provide better refugee care, and fostering the economic revival of South Vietnam. The Tet Offensive of January 31, 1968, however, set back the pacification effort. Nearly 10 percent of the RF/PF outposts were overrun, and the South Vietnamese government moved many RF/PF units as well as ARVN and police units out of rural villages to defend cities. Moreover, training suffered, and records, supplies, and equipment were lost as a result of Tet. The withdrawal of soldiers, cadres, and police resulted in a decrease in territorial security. The psychological effects were also great, as the VC were now appearing in formerly secure villages. Tet also disrupted the nascent Phoenix program.

After Tet, CORDS faced two major challenges. First, it had to help the South Vietnamese recover from the attacks, an effort that drained resources from the pacification program. CORDS and the South Vietnamese government also had to determine how the pacification effort would proceed. The summer after Tet witnessed significant improvements in the relationship between CORDS and the South Vietnamese government. Despite the Tet setbacks, the RF/PF had grown in size, and they were now better armed, with the provision of US M-16 rifles. South Vietnam also instituted the People’s Self-Defense Force (PSDF), a part-time militia that involved inhabitants of villages and hamlets—an initiative supported by CORDS. With the Viet Cong reeling after its losses in the Tet attacks, this was probably the most encouraging period for pacification during the war. The Phoenix program (Phung Hoang in South Vietnamese) also began to take shape as a means for rooting out the Viet Cong infrastructure. In 1968, for the first

time, South Vietnam was fully committed to target and eliminate the communist insurgent's infrastructure.

By the fall of 1968, Komer and General Abrams, who had replaced General Westmoreland as the head of MACV, began to push the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC), an offensive pacification plan that sought to win over a large percentage of the countryside. (The South Vietnamese referred to it as the Special Pacification Plan). The APC called for maintaining security in the hamlets already under control and going on the offensive to restore it in contested areas. The APC called for the use of RD cadres and RF and PF forces, along with the PSDF and other local militias to secure hamlets and push the VC back. The RF and ARVN forces were to carry out search and destroy missions in enemy controlled areas while the other forces buttressed local security. An expanded Phoenix program neutralized two to three thousand members of the communist apparatus per month.

In less than three months, the APC achieved significant gains. It surpassed its goal of securing 1,000 contested hamlets and the Chieu Hoi program was successful in getting many VC to surrender. Moreover, it recruited more members to the RF/PF and the PSDF. The VC on the whole, launched fewer attacks against the South, suggesting a decrease in their military capabilities since Tet. However, Operation Phoenix failed to achieve its goals, and local communist infrastructures remained key obstacles to consolidating victories in the pacification effort. Indeed, while the VC remained relatively inactive militarily, they picked up the pace politically. Even in those hamlets and villages deemed secure militarily, the VC maintained a political infrastructure that continued to establish "liberation committees" that propounded revolutionary communist ideology and resistance to US and South Vietnamese efforts. Between September 1969 and January 1970, the number of hamlets with liberation committees jumped from 397 to 3,367, with a majority of these springing up in those hamlets considered secure. This order of magnitude increase in communist "liberation committees" augmented the VC, giving them political legitimacy and extending their control over the population at the expense of the South Vietnamese. The decline in military activity and increase in political activity proved a decisive shift in the North Vietnamese strategy.

As it turned out, 1969 marked the peak year for CORDS. It would soon dwindle in size and resources as the US military began to withdrawal from Vietnam. From June 1970 to June 1971, for example, CORDS suffered a 24 percent drop in the number of advisers, mostly because of the draw-down of US troops. However, CORDS achieved some successes during this period. Between 1969 and 1972, the Americans and South Vietnamese continued the APC strategy of moving territorial forces into contested areas and enemy-controlled hamlets and further expanded Saigon's control over the countryside. Weakened by heavy losses in 1968, the Viet Cong switched its strategy to preventing the further spread of the pacification program. They did this mainly through an increased number of small unit operations and sustained political campaigns in the villages. For example, the enemy significantly reduced its large attacks (battalion size or larger) from 126 in 1968 to 2 in 1971. In contrast their small unit actions rose steadily from 1,374 in 1968 to over 2,400 in 1972. The VC was mainly trying to hinder pacification efforts, recruit members, and wait until the Americans were gone before seeking victory again.



In sum, CORDS and the pacification effort proved to be somewhat of a mixed bag. Those involved in the program deemed it a success, even though the war was lost. In retrospect, the corruption and incompetence of the South Vietnamese appeared to be the biggest challenge to the success of the program. Without CORDS, however, these flaws would have never surfaced. Furthermore, some have suggested that the success of pacification forced the North Vietnamese to launch the Easter Offensive in 1972 to prove that the American claims of Vietnamization and pacification were failures. The North launched its offensive in April 1972 and it was repulsed by South Vietnamese ground forces and US air strikes. Nonetheless, there were too few US ground forces present to prevent the Communists from making incursions on pacification.

What the Easter Offensive illuminated, however, was serious cracks in the South Vietnamese government's own infrastructure. Corruption and the ability to carry out major segments of the pacification plagued the South Vietnamese government. Furthermore, the performance of the RF/PF units, a cornerstone of the pacification program, was very uneven. Massive desertions eroded some RF/PF units. Deserters complained of low pay, lack of benefits, time away from family, and dislike of military service as their reasons for leaving the ranks. Even when pay was raised, desertions continued at near previous levels. Furthermore, these forces might have sufficed for protecting against small-unit guerrilla raids but they were no match for large conventional forces such as the regular NVA.

Moreover, pacification suffered a number of political setbacks in the waning years of the American effort. Although the South Vietnamese government granted land reform in 1970, it proved too late. Yet land reform still made some progress. The Thieu administration redistributed 2.5 million acres of land. This had a tremendous social and political impact, including the creation of a middle class with some interest in the regime's success. A key component of Saigon's efforts involved local elections in hamlets and villages. Some 98 percent of villages and hamlets formed local elected governments between 1970 and 1972. However, Thieu suspended the constitution for six months after the 1972 Easter Offensive, alienating much of the population.

The Phoenix program also warrants some reflection. Statistically Phoenix was rather successful. However, the VC infrastructure, for the most part, remained intact. Estimated enemy strength declined by only 20 percent because communists compensated for losses by recruiting new members from the South and bringing in new cadres from the North. Phoenix also suffered from a lack of intelligence on specific members of the VC. Many villagers refused to give up information on VC infrastructure for fear of communist reprisals. Nonetheless, even if Phoenix was not successful in targeting the VC infrastructure, it combined with military operations and the Chieu Hoi program to reduce the size of the communist infrastructure from 84,000 in January 1968 to just over 56,000 in February 1972. Of those infrastructure elements killed, captured, or rallied, Phoenix accounted for only about 20 percent, whereas military operations were responsible for 50 percent and the Chieu Hoi program about 30 percent.

CORDS officially ended in January 1973 when the Paris accords went into effect. According to one historian, "CORDS was a singular organization, unique in structure, unique in goals." Compared to earlier pacification efforts, CORDS was quite successful. Yet it was plagued throughout its existence with problems of bureaucratic infighting and getting the proper

personnel into place. For example, organizations like USAID were reluctant to give up top personnel and bureaucratic control to the program. Yet the largest problem remained the South Vietnamese themselves. The Thieu regime proved to be corrupt, reluctant to reform, and unable to carry out many of the tasks needed to achieve success.

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## APPENDIX E: OUTSOURCING TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

*We need more defense spending.*<sup>277</sup>

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer  
Secretary General, NATO

While the ultimate security of Iraq rests in the hands of the indigenous population, time must be bought, and stability maintained and enhanced, until the Iraqi Security Forces are capable of providing it. This requires a sizable military presence, which currently amounts to roughly 180,000 US and allied Coalition forces. Given that the US Army and Marine Corps forces are currently stretched thin, both the Bush Administration and (especially) many of its critics have sought to bridge the gap between an overstretched US military and the development of capable Iraqi security forces, by seeking international community assistance, particularly in the form of troop support. This effort has manifested itself primarily through requests made to the United Nations and NATO.

### THE UNITED NATIONS

While attractive in principle as a source of support, the United Nations is unlikely to provide it at the levels required to make a significant difference in the war. Save for those occasions when the United Nations has authorized the use of force in operations led by the United States (e.g., during the Korean War and the First Gulf War), the international body has not, in its history, been able to field large forces in support of either combat or peacekeeping operations. In short, when the United Nations has authorized actions in which large numbers of troops have been deployed (i.e., 50,000 troops or more), it has been the United States which provided the bulk of them.<sup>278</sup> Yet this is exactly what the United States needs to stabilize in Iraq to stabilize its Army and Marine Corps rotation base—well-trained troops in large numbers.

Typically, UN peacekeeping operations are small in size. Even when the UN force dispatched is relatively large (e.g., in excess of 10,000 troops), it tends to comprise relatively small numbers of troops from a rather large number of contributor nations.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Ann Roosevelt, "NATO Defense Ministers See Rise in Defense Spending, Capability Shortfalls," *Defense Daily*, June 10, 2005.

<sup>278</sup> During the Korean War, the United States eventually deployed over 300,000 troops to Korea. The next highest foreign contingent was provided by Great Britain, with less than 15,000 troops. The most significant non-NATO contribution came from Australia, which deployed roughly 2,200 troops. <http://korean-war.com/unitednations.html>.

<sup>279</sup> For example, the United Nations Protection Force comprised some 38,600 personnel from 37 countries. The largest contributions came from France (4,493), the United Kingdom (3,405), Jordan (3,367), and Pakistan (3,017). See [http://www.gmu.edu/departments/t-po/resource-bk/unprofor\\_un.html](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/t-po/resource-bk/unprofor_un.html).

The United Nations has conducted 56 peacekeeping operations in its history, not including authorized interventions such as First Gulf War. Eighteen peacekeeping operations were undertaken during the Cold War period from 1948-1989. In the sixteen years since then, 38 more have been pursued, with 35 occurring in the 1990s alone. The vast majority of these missions were conducted in benign environments, and involved monitoring or enforcing a ceasefire, or cessation of hostilities, and not active combat against armed insurgents.<sup>280</sup>

Indeed, in recent years, the United Nations has found it difficult to take military action in cases where a benign environment did not exist. For example, Operation Allied Force, undertaken to address human rights violations by Slobodan Milosevic's Yugoslavia, was led by NATO. American forces were finally dispatched to Rwanda in 1994 after the UN proved incapable of acting to avert humanitarian disaster. Recent UN troubles in the Congo lend support to this view.<sup>281</sup> Even now, in Sudan's western Darfur region, the site of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the UN Security Council proved incapable of acting decisively, just as it temporized during the genocide in Rwanda a decade ago.<sup>282</sup>

In summary, historically speaking, in addition to monitoring cease fires in relatively pacific environments, the United Nations has served more as a provider of political cover for those states desiring to take military action in a hostile threat environment, than as a provider of substantial military capability capable of functioning at a high level of effectiveness in such environments. Indeed, the United Nations has found it difficult to secure commitments for troops to provide security for its own mission in Iraq.<sup>283</sup> Given this track record, the United Nations is unlikely to be a provider of significant military capability in Iraq, either in the immediate present or over the longer term. This could change, however, if the conflict environment were to become much more benign than it is at present. In that case, of course, the demand for US ground forces would have diminished substantially.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> See [http://worldiq.com/definition/Timeline\\_of\\_UN-peacekeeping\\_missions](http://worldiq.com/definition/Timeline_of_UN-peacekeeping_missions).

<sup>281</sup> See Laura Neack, "Peacekeeping, Bloody Peacekeeping," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, July/August 2004, pp. 40-47. The French-led European Union peace enforcement mission, Operation Artemis, was followed by a UN peacekeeping operation, the UN Organization Mission. Neack's conclusion is that the Congo has been "an immense and failing peacekeeping effort," and notes the EU is "unlikely to return."

<sup>282</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, "Dare We Call it Genocide?" *New York Times*, June 16, 2004; and Mike DeWine and John McCain, "It's Happening Again," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2004.

<sup>283</sup> UN Secretary Kofi Annan declared that "We haven't had much success attracting governments to sign up for the dedicated force to protect the U.N. personnel in Iraq and our property. For practical measures, we have no other choice but to rely on the multinational force, and this is the way we are going." Colum Lynch, "U.N. Says Iraq Force Is Stalled," *Washington Post*, August 5, 2004, p. 14; and Paul Richter, "Too Many Blue Helmets Still Unfilled," *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2004.

<sup>284</sup> Saudi Arabia advanced an initiative calling for an all-Muslim security force to be sent to Iraq. The Iraqis, however, indicated they do not want troops from neighboring states deployed to Iraq, for obvious reasons. Christopher Marquis, "Saudi Plan for Muslim Force in Iraq gains in U.S.," *New York Times*, July 30, 2004.

## NATO: THE “HOLLOW” ALLIANCE?

As it became clear US forces would be required in sizeable numbers the United States has tried, unsuccessfully to date, to increase NATO's involvement in stability operations in Iraq. Both for reasons of policy and lack of capability, America's NATO allies have provided only a small fraction of the Coalition's overall force. Nor is this situation likely to change. For while the political opposition to deploying forces to Iraq among several leading NATO states, notably France and Germany, is well known, what is less appreciated is NATO's lack of capability to augment its efforts.

Several key members of the alliance, notably Britain and Italy, have forces in Iraq, as does Poland, the largest of the former Soviet satellite states that have become members of the alliance. Thirteen other NATO nations have individually deployed forces to Iraq. These NATO allies have little in the way of surplus forces to provide for the Iraq mission.<sup>285</sup>

Revealingly, other NATO nations also are struggling to maintain the relatively small forces they have deployed to these and to other contingencies last year. France, for example, deployed a total of 15,000 troops to Haiti, Africa, the Balkans and Afghanistan. Some 4,000 of these troops were in the small African nation of Ivory Coast.<sup>286</sup> As one senior French military official recently commented to the author, “We are experiencing difficulties maintaining these forces overseas, even absent a commitment to Iraq.”<sup>287</sup>

Similarly, Germany, with a military of some 270,000, declared that its deployment of 7,500 troops abroad to Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, has left it overstretched.<sup>288</sup> Indeed, the United States' NATO allies, which boast over 2 million troops under arms, experienced difficulty in making good on a pledge to increase their troop strength of 6,500 in Afghanistan by 5,000.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> For example, the British government announced that significant reductions will be made in both equipment and force structure, which cannot be sustained with the relatively small increases planned in their defense budget estimates. These increases average 1.4 percent through 2007-08. Andrew Chutter and Pierre Tran, “France, U.K. Plan Spending Hikes,” *Defense News*, July 19, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>286</sup> “What Alliance?” *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2004, p. 10.

<sup>287</sup> Author's discussion with senior French military official, April 2004.

<sup>288</sup> “What Alliance?” *Wall Street Journal*, p. 10. Germany's inability to deploy more than a small fraction of its military overseas is, in part, a function of both its long-declining defense budget and its reliance on the draft. With respect to the latter factor, Germans conscripted for military service serve short enlistments, and require most of this time to learn fundamental military skills. Aside from the practical difficulties encountered in deploying such forces, a number of America's European allies have laws prohibiting the deployment of draftees overseas. See also Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Expanding Global Military Capability for Humanitarian Intervention* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2003), pp. 55, 58.

<sup>289</sup> Of course, the largest military in NATO Europe belongs to Turkey, with a standing land force of some 402,000, including some 325,000 conscripts. Turkey, however, has proven itself reluctant to become involved in Iraq, both during the period of major combat operations and in the stability operations that followed. Nor are the Iraqis particularly fond of their neighbor to the north. With its large ethnic Kurdish minority, which it has often repressed, Turkey is viewed with a certain measure of fear by the large Iraqi Kurdish minority.

This condition exists despite NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's statement that this contingency is the alliance's "number one priority."<sup>290</sup>

By contrast, the United States has nearly 20,000 troops in Afghanistan alone, most engaged in conducting operations in the areas of greatest danger. "Why is it that we cannot translate political commitments into having the necessary resources?" NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer lamented.<sup>291</sup> The response, provided by Burkhard Schmitt, of the European Union Center for Security Studies, is that "NATO cannot give more than a political signal because there are no troops to be deployed."<sup>292</sup>

Finally, many of the Coalition forces deployed to Iraq seem to be of limited military utility. For example, during the uprisings in southern Iraq in April 2004, the Bulgarian battalion in Karbala, the Ukrainian battalion in Kut, and the Spanish troops in Najaf either refused to confront the insurgents or quickly abandoned the streets. Thus, with some notable exceptions (e.g., the British), even those allies who were willing to deploy forces seemed unprepared for anything more demanding than a benign peacekeeping environment.<sup>293</sup>

In summary, given the current standing of its militaries, and projected trends in terms of NATO's European members' defense investments,<sup>294</sup> the allies do not appear capable of making a significant contribution beyond their current level of effort, either at present or in the foreseeable future.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> "NATO is Failing Afghanistan," *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 2004.

<sup>291</sup> Philip Shishkin and Frederick Kempe, "NATO May Take Iraq Training Role," *Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2004, p. 6.

<sup>292</sup> Peter Ford, "NATO Struggles as Global Cop," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 28, 2004.

<sup>293</sup> West, *No True Glory*, p. 61.

<sup>294</sup> Remarkably, even as the United States contemplates increasing the size of its Army, even staunch allies like Britain are now preparing to reduce theirs. See Michael Evans, "Hoon to Temper Army Cuts with More Stability," *London Times*, July 21, 2004.

<sup>295</sup> To be sure, there are other individual potential Coalition members apart from NATO. South Korea, for example, is increasing its troop commitment from 600 to 3,300, in addition to the 3,600-troop US brigade redeployed from that country. India, a prospective US ally, maintains a large military. However, its frictions with Muslim Pakistan bring into question whether an Indian contingent would pose more difficulties than provide solutions. Indeed, the current geopolitical configuration with respect to the challenges confronting the United States in its war with radical Islam suggests a fundamental reordering of US alliance relationships.

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## APPENDIX F: SHORT-LIVED INSURGENCIES

In examining the major insurgencies since 1900, and that reached Phase II, such as the Iraq insurgency, one finds the list of those lasting less than five years is really quite small (see chart). Among these were several that ended when an occupying power (i.e., Germany leaving France and Yugoslavia at the end of World War II) was forced out by another power. What follows are some selected examples that offer some insights on the temporal factors associated with counterinsurgency operations.

### Second Boer War

The Second Boer War lasted from 1899-1902. After the British Army defeated the rebels on the battlefield, Boer guerrillas began to attack the British Army's lines of communication (e.g., railroads and telegraph wires). Lord Horatio Kitchener, the British Army's new commander, constructed blockhouses—small stone buildings surrounded with barbed wire—to restrict the movement of the guerrillas into a small area where they could be defeated. Over 8,000 of these blockhouses were constructed, and each was manned by seven or eight British soldiers.<sup>296</sup>

This system effectively limited guerrilla movement, provided a relatively secure rear area, and allowed Kitchener to form new regiments of irregular light cavalry who ranged across Boer-controlled territory, hunting down and destroying Boer commando groups.<sup>297</sup> Perhaps most important, in 1901 Kitchener adopted a scorched earth policy, stripping the countryside of anything which could be useful to the Boer guerillas: seizing livestock, poisoning wells, burning crops and farms, and forcibly moving the families that lived on them into concentration camps (indeed, this is where the term originated).<sup>298</sup> Eventually, these harsh tactics broke the insurgents. By December 1901, many of the concentration camps' male internees joined two new regiments, the Transvaal National Scouts and the Orange River Volunteers fighting alongside the British. The war was brought to an end on May 31, 1902.

**Keys:** Ruthlessness; separating the population from the insurgents.

### Applicability to Current Situation in Iraq: Low

- The United States is highly unlikely to conduct a Roman campaign of “making a desert and calling it peace.”

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<sup>296</sup> Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 147.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

## **Iraq, 1920**

In 1917, the British troops marched into Baghdad after defeating the Ottomans. According to Niall Ferguson, “[t]he British presence in Iraq was legitimized by international law (it was designated a League of Nations mandate) and by a modicum of democracy (a referendum was held among local sheiks to confirm the creation of a British-style constitutional monarchy).”<sup>299</sup> However, by 1920, this situation had degenerated into an insurgency.

Ferguson argues that this insurgency was defeated because of three key factors. First, the British had approximately one soldier (many of whom were Indian) for every 23 Iraqis. (Today it is around one US soldier for every 171 Iraqis.) Second, the British were ruthless. They employed air raids and punitive expeditions to strike villages that supported the insurgents.<sup>300</sup> And third, the British were willing to practice a strategy of “divide and conquer” with respect to the major Iraqi religious and ethnic groups, promoting and supporting one over the others in return for an understanding regarding British interests in the area.<sup>301</sup> This is somewhat similar to the client relationship that exists between the United States and many Arab nations, but which the Bush Administration has rejected in favor of creating a “third way” choice for Arab peoples instead of despotic rulers and radical Islamism.

**Keys:** Ruthlessness; high level of effort (and “allied” support); willingness to support despotic regime.

### **Applicability to Current Situation in Iraq: Low**

- The United States, on principle, would not engage in indiscriminate punishment of Iraqis;
- In relative terms, US deployments are barely a tenth of those employed by the British, and Washington is highly unlikely to deploy additional forces; and
- The Bush Administration’s goal is to help create a democratic Iraq, not impose a US-selected despot.

## **Greek Civil War**

In the aftermath of the German withdrawal toward the end of World War II, the Greeks fought several rounds of insurgent warfare over a five-year period. When communist forces initially attacked and melted back into the mountains, the Greek army failed to employ sufficient troops to cordon the area, allowing captured guerrillas to escape. More important, the army failed to

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<sup>299</sup> Niall Ferguson, “Cowboys and Indians,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2005.

<sup>300</sup> Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 279.

<sup>301</sup> Ferguson, “Cowboys and Indians.”



establish enduring security in the areas threatened by the insurgency, and set unrealistically ambitious timetables for their operations.<sup>302</sup>

Encouraged by their initial successes, in 1947 the communist guerrillas attempted to shift to Phase III operations, characterized by more conventional forms of warfare.<sup>303</sup> The decision proved premature; however, the Greek government was still not organized to wage an effective counterinsurgency campaign.<sup>304</sup>

By 1949, the Greek army's top leaders had been replaced. Greece began receiving US support, and its forces had learned to employ adequate levels of troops for the search and clearing operations, and to work closely with the local police, who proved crucial in detaining suspected communist sympathizers and supporters.<sup>305</sup> Finally, the Communists made a critical error. When Stalin broke off relations with Tito, the communist party in Greece chose to side with Stalin. In response, Tito closed the Yugoslavian border to the guerrillas in July 1949, and disbanded their camps inside Yugoslavia. The combination of these actions soon crippled the insurgent movement.<sup>306</sup>

**Keys:** Traditional counterinsurgency focus on intelligence and local police work; military supports police (not the other way around); insurgent loss of critical external support; putting the best military leaders in charge.

**Applicability to Current Situation in Iraq:** Significant

- As in most insurgencies operating at Phase I or Phase II levels, intelligence and security are key—and go hand-in-hand;
- Local police are crucial in rooting out insurgent infrastructure;
- External support in the form of closing off border areas used by insurgents for sanctuaries or to infiltrate forces can be important; and
- The Greek government put its best military leaders in charge.

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<sup>302</sup> Jeffrey C. Kitora, "The Greek Civil War," April 26, 1985, available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1985/KJC.htm>.

<sup>303</sup> Kitora, "The Greek Civil War."

<sup>304</sup> Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 520-21.

<sup>305</sup> Kitora, "The Greek Civil War;" and Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 523.

<sup>306</sup> Greek Civil War, available at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenic\\_Civil\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenic_Civil_War); and Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 523.

## Kenya Emergency

The British were “especially conscious of the grievances that had led to the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya and instituted rural public works, agricultural development and resettlement or ‘villagisation’ schemes” to alleviate tensions.<sup>307</sup> However, it was ultimately British intelligence improvements that defeated this insurgency. On January 15, 1954, the British captured Waruhiu Itote (General China), a senior Mau Mau guerrilla leader. China was interrogated for 68 hours by the Special Branch of the Kenya Police. He revealed detailed information about the Mau Mau command structure, which proved very useful to the British.<sup>308</sup>

During a three month lull in fighting for peace talks, British intelligence units gathered extensive intelligence about the Mau Mau. This enabled them, immediately following the breakdown of talks, to arrest more than a thousand terrorists and their supporters. Beginning in the cities and working outwards district by district, the British pushed the insurgents back into the forests, clearing out the Mau Mau forces and sending suspects into detention camps in a campaign analogous to the oil spot approach outlined in this paper. The combination of civic works, effective intelligence and a well-crafted counterinsurgency campaign led to a collapse of moral and political and domestic support for the Mau Mau.<sup>309</sup> By the end of the Emergency over 11,500 Mau Mau had been killed. Reflecting the ruthless side of British counterinsurgency warfare, the brutal Kikuyu Home Guard accounted for 42 percent of those killed and was “clearly guilty of many excesses in the process.”<sup>310</sup>

**Keys:** Traditional counterinsurgency focus on intelligence and local police work; ruthlessness

### Applicability to Current Situation in Iraq: Mixed

- The importance of intelligence in defeating Phase I and II insurgent movements is again highlighted, as is the role of the local police; however,
- The willingness to be ruthless toward those who support the insurgents is not relevant to US counterinsurgency operations.

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<sup>307</sup> Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 125; and Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 636.

<sup>308</sup> British Military Strategy in Kenya, available at: <http://www.britains-smallwars.com/kenya/Strategy.html>; and Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 633.

<sup>309</sup> British Military Strategy in Kenya, available at: <http://www.britains-smallwars.com/kenya/Strategy.html>.

<sup>310</sup> Beckett, p. 128.

**Table 3: Selected 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Brief Counterinsurgencies<sup>311</sup>**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Years</b>
<b>Second Anglo-Boer War</b>	United Kingdom [U.K.] vs. Boer separatists	1899-1902
<b>Philippine Insurrection</b>	United States [U.S.] vs. Filipino nationalists	1899-1902 [1916]
<b>Arab Revolt</b>	Ottoman Turkey vs. Arab rebels	1916-1918
<b>Iraq</b>	U.K. vs. Iraqi rebels	1920
<b>Greek Civil War</b>	U.K., then U.S. and Government of Greece [GoG], vs. National Liberation Army [ELAS]	1944-1949
<b>Indonesian Revolt</b>	Netherlands vs. Indonesian rebels	1945-1949
<b>Palestine</b>	U.K. vs. Jewish separatists	1945-1948
<b>Kenyan Emergency</b>	U.K. vs. Mau Mau	1952-1956
<b>Cyprus</b>	U.K. vs. Ethniki Organosis Kyprios Agoniston [EOKA] (a Greek terrorist organization)	1954-1959
<b>Cuban Revolution</b>	Cuba's Batista regime vs. Castro	1956-1959
<b>France</b>	France vs. Secret Army Organization [OAS]	1958-1962
<b>Venezuela</b>	Venezuela vs. urban-based Armed Forces for National Liberation [FALN]	1958-1963
<b>Oman</b>	U.K. and Oman vs. Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf [PFLOAG]	1969-1976
<b>Rhodesia</b>	Rhodesia vs. Zimbabwe African People's Union [ZAPU] and Zimbabwe African National Union [ZANU]	1974-1980
<b>Somalia Humanitarian Relief Mission</b>	U.S. and UN vs. armed factions	1992-1994

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<sup>311</sup> Kalev I. Sepp, Best Practices in Counterinsurgency, *Military Review*, May – June 2005, available at: <http://www.leavenworth.army.mil/milrev/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>.

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## APPENDIX G: GLOSSARY

APC	Accelerated Pacification Campaign
ARVN	South Vietnamese Army
CAP	Combined Action Platoon
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CENTCOM	Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
DoD	Department of Defense
DSB	Defense Science Board
ERU	Emergency Response Unit
FBI	Federal Bureau of investigation
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IG	Interim Government
IIS	Iraqi Information Service
IPS	Iraqi Police Service
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
ISF	Iraqi Security Force
LTG	Lieutenant General
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MAT	Mobile Assistance Team
MG	Major General
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NTC	National Training Center
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OCO	Office of Civil Operations
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPFOR	Opposing Force
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PF	Popular Forces
PSDF	People's Self-Defense Force
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
RF	Regular Forces
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SP	Special Police

SSC	Small-Scale Contingency
SWAT	Special Weapons & Tactics
UA	Unit of Action
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USMC	United States Marine Corps
VC	Vietnamese Communists, “Viet Cong”
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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