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14. ABSTRACT

The Combatant Commander can leverage the power of religion to effectively reduce insurgencies in Iraq by accessing and engaging the culture through religious leadership. The framework of religion's control of resources, interpersonal relationships, communications, and expertise in a given cultural milieu can be assets in the post-conflict and stability operations planning; the end state being a durable peace in Iraq.

This paper makes the following recommendations: 1. Develop relationships with indigenous religious leaders and institutions in Iraq society to win their trust and confidence; 2. Develop and add to planning doctrine a thorough understanding of the role of religion in a society and the way to foster trust with religious leadership; 3. Add to operational planning doctrine assessment criteria of dominant religions, religion's role in the political process, and religious tolerance; 4. Integrate religiously-oriented NGOs and other faith-based peace-building entities and their resources into planning considerations; 5. Establish (by DOD) a civilian special subject matter expert on the COCOM staff, the Religious Advisor (RELAD), following the model of the Political Advisor (POLAD). 6. Foster relationships with religious leaders, by RELAD, through official conferences sponsored, facilitated, and led by international peace building organizations, and workshops facilitating peace.

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RELIGION: A FACTOR FOR PEACE AND STABILITY IN IRAQ

by

Mark J. Logid

Commander, Chaplain Corps, United States Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

16 May 2006

Abstract

The Combatant Commander can leverage the power of religion to effectively reduce insurgencies in Iraq by accessing and engaging the culture through religious leadership. The framework of religion's control of resources, interpersonal relationships, communications, and expertise in a given cultural milieu can be assets in the post-conflict and stability operations planning; the end state being a durable peace in Iraq.

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RELIGION: A FACTOR FOR PEACE AND STABILTY IN IRAQ

"Religion is central to identity and gives meaning to people's lives. It also is central to much of the strife taking place in the world today. Almost anywhere one turns. . . one finds a religious dimension to hostilities."

Douglas M. Johnston
We Neglect Religion to Our Peril, US Naval Institute, Proceedings
January, 2002

INTRODUCTION

Religion and politics in most countries of the world are not separated as they are in the United States. The co-mingling of religion and politics makes religion either a powerful negative force to be dealt with or one that can be leveraged to save lives, time, and money. In order to actively engage the hearts and minds of religious leadership and of the adherents of a religious creed to be a force for a durable peace in a region or nation it is critical to understand the role of religion in their culture's life, history, meaning, self-understanding, language, politics, and social structure. The Iraq experience in winning the war and securing the peace has provided the crucible for military experts and religious scholars to gain a new perspective on the dominant role religion can play in peace and stability operations. Religion is a major factor in complex conflicts in many regions, however, it has elements within to support and perpetuate peace, stability, and prosperity through facilitating justice and reconciliation. The Combatant Commander can leverage the power of religion to effectively reduce insurgencies in Iraq by accessing and engaging the culture through religious leadership. The framework of religion's control of resources, interpersonal relationships, communications, and expertise in a given cultural milieu can be assets in the post-conflict and stability operations planning for the end state of a durable peace.

CAPTURING THE POWER OF RELIGION

The power of religious faith is manifested globally and must be factored in when planning operations and actions especially in preparation of the battle-space and post conflict transition and reconstruction operations. Since the September 11, 2001 attacks the role of religion in violence has become all too apparent with self-appointed religious freedom fighters stirring the pot of despotism and hatred, justified by a view of reality that assesses globalization and Western values as evil. Religion can be at the core of the political problem as it appears to be in Iraq, or it can be competing religious claims for the same piece of ground, as it is in the perpetual Palestine-Israel conflict, or it can be the psychological and emotional motivation for ethnic passions as in Kosovo.

The American experience of an open and free society where people practice their faith in a pluralistic society without fear of retribution is not the common experience of humanity in many places of the world today. Religious faith is used by many leaders to justify political violence. When this occurs, faith is shifted from its transcendent role of giving security, meaning, and purpose to life, with a view to the afterlife, to the imminent role of gaining political advantage and economic tyranny.

There is a growing body of literature that has shifted the focus from the negative power of religion's role in violence, to the positive force religion can be to ameliorate human suffering, establish justice, and right wrongs of the past and move into a more peaceful future through ongoing efforts to facilitate reconciliation. There has been an increase in constructive endeavors at utilizing religion in the peace-making and peace-

building processes. Faith-based diplomacy has shown promise in areas of the world that culture, religion, and politics are inexorably intertwined.[1]

Religious leaders are a source of power (cultural, psychological, spiritual, interpersonal, etc.) to help rebuild Iraq's society and to assist the Iraqi people sort out their desire for self-determination without resorting to violence and bloodshed. Mere military might, in the conventional sense of the American way of war of overwhelming combat lethality, will not solve societal problems, set right issues of justice, and bring about needed reconciliation. Meeting violence with violence will only create ideal spawning grounds for a variety of insurgencies that do not have the military might to win against conventional combat power, but who have the will and determination, motivated by religious zeal, to shape the future of Iraq.

Religion is a "force-multiplier" because of its cultural power.[2] Religion has the inherent capability to influence thought, will, emotions, and action toward war or toward peace. American leaders suffer from a worldview myopia that either dismisses or diminishes religion's power in conflicts and its power in conflict resolution. Too often it is assumed that all is needed is a democratic society, free and open elections, and a pluralistic tolerance of a variety of religious beliefs and political ideals. Transitioning from thirty years of Saddam's dictatorship and centuries of authoritarian regimes to democracy will take time, effort and dedication by the people of Iraq. The type of government designed and utilized by the people will be a uniquely Iraqi-styled

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[1] David R. Smock, ed. , *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War* (Washington, D.C.: USIP, Peaceworks, No. 55, 2006). The editor emphasizes the importance of not exaggerating the importance of religion in the causes of conflict or in the resolution of conflict.

[2] Pauletta Otis, "Religion and War in the Twenty-first Century" in *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations,* ed. by Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Lanham: Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 20-21.

democracy. Religion will play a different role as compared to the American version of democracy, but it can be a positive role. American separation of spiritual/religious life and public politics will not be the standard. Iraq is in a different place in its history and culture than America at the time of our Revolutionary War.

The December 2005 elections in Iraq demonstrated the influence religious leadership exerts over the point of view and behavior of Iraqis. In Sunni areas, city streets were abandoned until the religious leadership proclaimed a message of encouragement to vote from the mosque's minarets. The streets then became busy and active as Iraqi men and women walked to polling stations.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS AWARENESS

General Anthony Zinni (USMC Ret.) expresses the desire of all military people, that we don't want to waste blood and effort without understanding what victory in an area will look like. He says:

> These are now culture wars that we're involved in. We don't understand that culture. I've spent the last 15 years of my life in this part of the world. And I'll tell you, every time I hear somebody talk about this, or one of the dilettantes back here speak about his region of the world-they don't have a clue. They don't understand what makes them tick. They don't understand where they are in their own history. They don't understand what our role is in moving this away from a disaster for the entire world, and for us and our interests.[3]

Military leaders should cultivate a deep and thorough understanding of the culture and religion of Iraq to be effective and efficient in the application of resources to shape the environment. There is no doubt that conflicts generated by religious, ethnic, economic, and political disputes will continue. In order to apply the principles of war,

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[3] Anthony Zinni, General USMC (Retired), Address at the Naval Institute Forum 2003. <http://www.mca-usaiforum2003.org/forum03zinni.htm>

economy of force, and the principles of ROMO,[4] especially restraint and legitimacy, an appreciation of the complexity of factors involved in a conflict need to be analyzed. Religion is just one of those factors, but a very important one that can assist in avoiding violent conflict or in its aftermath, help people recover and move constructively into their futures.

The meta-narrative of a culture, which contains its sense of values and interpretative grid of the world, builds on metaphors of meaning that flow from transcendent symbols, myths, rituals, story, dogmas and creeds. Sacred texts and oral traditions are passed from one generation to another in a culture, giving people a sense of identity, meaning, and purpose in life. Effective communication within a culture springs from a culture's worldview. Enculturation is difficult; it takes experience and effort to enter a culture and gain an appreciation of their norms and values.

Religion is a matter of the heart, but it has civic and social implications that are often not fully appreciated by those from a secular Western legal and political mindset. Religion is the codification of values in a given society.[5] A person's faith expresses personal and community values deeply held. It is the means to interpret life in this world, to set up a system of behaviors and taboos, to determine the morality of actions or inaction, and to govern institutions that support the group and fosters prosperity socially and economically. Children, the greatest heritage of any social group, are acculturated in the home informally by parents and formally by religious leaders through education and training. This becomes important in a prolonged conflict of ideology, where values will directly influence activities and operations for years to come. Cultural norms and

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[4] Range of Military Operations.
[5] Pauletta Otis, "The Nature of Religious Terrorism" *Defense Intelligence Journal* 11:1 (2002), 31.

systems of authority flow from the worldview that is informed and conditioned by religion. Religious leaders are welcome at the high points and low points of life as trusted advisors, provide verbal interpretation of the meaning of life events, and serve as spokespersons to people outside the group.

BUILDING ON COMMON GROUND: RESOURCES FOR PEACE

Religious impulses expressed in the social fabric of Iraq share the core values of the three great world religions with common ancestry in Abraham. It is in these shared values that bridges to cooperation and peace can be erected. In the Abrahamic faith traditions we have common ground to discuss what is to be respected and cherished in one another's traditions without sacrificing spiritual and theological integrity. In Abraham, God revealed himself to humankind and established a covenant of special blessing. This blessing is life and salvation from the consequences of evil and sin in human temporal experience and forms the basis for hope of salvation in the future. Relationship with God then is the basis for relationship with each other, the ground of hope for the future and the source and motivation for reconciliation. Theology can have positive consequences across the spectrum of operations.

However, history also shows that the embrace of humanity by God in the Abrahamic traditions is replete with the "human proclivity to exclude 'the other' in ways that lead to horrific violence."[6] Brauch makes the insightful point: "Lasting peace and security in our present context [post-9/11 world] of religiously motivated terrorism and 'civilization conflict' will only be achieved by choosing reconciliation—a choice that is only sustainable when embrace is seen as theologically and spiritually legitimate to all

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[6] Manfred T. Brauch, "Choosing Exclusion or Embrace: An Abrahamic Theological Perspective" in *Religion & Security: The New Nexus in International Relations* ed. by Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Lanham: Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 61.

parties."[7] Later we will look at the tensions in Iraq between religiously-oriented parties

with political aspirations.

The COCOM cannot make parties reconcile, but he can facilitate opportunities for

conflict resolution and reconciliation by engaging the religious leaders. In order to

credibly engage the religious leadership within Iraq a deep appreciation and sensitivity

toward Iraqi religion and culture is critical. The religious and cultural traditions there

have a long history showing the proclivity that is common to humanity, to use violence to

solve problems. The three Abrahamic faith traditions, and divisions within each, present

in Iraq have doctrines, examples, and sacred texts that support peace building and

reconciliation. Spiritual resources are present in the leadership and institutions in Iraq to

support and facilitate a peaceful and just society. Religion can make a positive

contribution by drawing on faith-based spiritual resources to deal with real issues

effecting the emotions and psychology of the people hurt and harmed by offending

parties.

Judaism, with the smallest presence in Iraq of the three major faiths, traces its

genealogical and theological heritage to Abraham as descendants through Isaac.[8] All the

nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's descendant.   Rabbi Marc

Gopin asserts that the concept of forgiveness that is rooted in the Biblical teaching of the

imatatio Dei (imitation of God). Each human being is created in the image of God and is

to emulate God in his forgiveness and in his compassion. As bearers of the image of

God, each person has intrinsic value. God is creator and the principle source of

forgiveness in Judaism. Gopin writes:

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[7] Ibid., 62.
[8] Book of Genesis. Patriarchal narratives.

The standard emphasis of rabbinic Judaism rests squarely on forgiveness as embedded in a process of change that is initiated by the person who did something wrong. In this sense, crime, change, and forgiveness are embedded in the much larger practice and metaphysical reality of *teshuva,* which could be translated as repentance, returning, transformation, or restoration. Teshuva, the capacity to transform oneself or a community, is considered to be one of the most sublime elements of faith in a good, forgiving God.[9]

Within Judaism there are a number of sacred text insights related to peacemaking. Elements to ameliorate continued suffering and conflict include forgiveness, forbearance, patience, mercy, humility, friendship toward one's enemy, and individual (or community oriented) accountability. Each of these leads to sincere self-examination and ownership of each party's contribution to the conflict.[10]

Christianity also contains elements for reconciliation. It traces its roots to the Jewish people of the Old Testament and is viewed by its adherents as the fulfillment of God's revelation of his covenant love to Abraham. The Gospel of Matthew opens the account of the life and ministry of Jesus by connecting him directly to God's promise to bless all the people of the earth through the Messiah. Matthew says: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."[11] Christianity's founder is also called the Prince of Peace.[12] In him people are brought together who were formerly separate and the church is made up of God's people, who are to be facilitators of peace.[13] Jesus addressed how a person of faith is to demonstrate that he has a

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[9] Marc Gopin. "Judaism and Peacebuilding in the Context of Middle Eastern Conflict" in *Trumping Realpolitik: Faith-Based Diplomacy,* ed. by Douglas Johnston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 108.

[10] Ibid., 120.

[11] English Standard Version of the Bible (ESV).

[12] Isaiah 9:6. Messianic prophecy identifying Jesus Christ.

[13] Ephesians 2:17, 19. ESV.

relationship with God.[14] Christian teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation is traced

back to a person's relationship with God, as in Judaism.

The final and largest major religion in Iraq is Islam. Muhammad, the Prophet,

(570-632 C.E.) saw himself as a religious reformer, calling the people back to

faithfulness to the one true God. He did not view himself as a progenitor of a new

religion, but as God's spokesman calling his contemporaries back to the one, true God.

The call was to worship Allah in accordance with the first monotheist, Abraham.[15] The

recitations of the Prophet contained in the Qur'an repeatedly refer to Abraham as the first

true believer and prototypical Muslim (who is one who submits to God). Muhammad

taught that God revealed himself to Abraham's son, Ishmael, through whom Islam traces

its covenant ancestry. Muslims confess and believe that submission to God is a central

tenet of faith and practice. The common ground with other Abrahamic faith traditions is

the conception of God as "the all compassionate, merciful, and forgiving" One.

Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl, the Omar and Asmeralda Alfi Distinguished Fellow in

Islamic Law at the UCLA School of Law, contends that conflict resolution (with Muslims

and non-Muslims) is a normative value in Islamic Law. Islamic Law jurists debate about

the assignment of fault in resolving disputes, however, they do ascribe to the desirability

of conflict resolution and peaceful settlements regardless of who is right or wrong.[16] The

Qur'an contains verses that present the possibility of peaceful reconciliation and it is at

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[14] Matthew 22:37-39. Jesus cites Deuteronomy 6:5. "All of the commandments of God can be summed up in "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all of your mind, and with all your soul, and all your strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

[15] Brauch, 65.

[16] Khaled Abou El Fadl, "Conflict Resolution as a Normative Value in Islamic Law: Handling Disputes with Non-Muslims" in *Trumping Realpolitik: Faith-Based Diplomacy,* ed. by Douglas Johnston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 202, note 10.

times conciliatory. However, there are also verses that appear to be aggressive and condemnatory toward non-Muslims. For example:

> Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His messenger nor acknowledge the religion of truth, from among the People of the Book until they pay the poll tax (*jizyah*) with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.[17]

However, the Qur'an does express clearly the hope for reconciliation between Muslims and non-Muslims.

> It may be that God will grant love and friendship between you and those whom you now hold as enemies, for God has power over all things; and God is most forgiving, most merciful. God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for your faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them, for God loves those who are just. God only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for your faith and drive you out of your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them for friendship.[18]

Many Islamic scholars believe that Islamic tradition is dynamic and rich enough to accommodate a number of different approaches to the issues of justice and reconciliation. The challenge is to integrate the concept of *Shar'ia* (Islamic law) with respect and tolerance for other religious expressions and secularism. Islam must wrestle with the issues of toleration, justice, and identity under pressure from globalization in the context of its own traditions.

FOCUSING ON ISLAM IN IRAQ

The religious landscape (Christian/ Jewish/other 3%, Muslim 97 %, with 60-65% Shi'a and 32-37%), ethnic groups (Arab 75-80%; Kurdish 15-20%; Turkoman, Assyrian or other 5%), and history of Iraq (numerous tribes/clans) are crucial to understanding the culture and the aspirations of the people.[19] Iraq has three distinctive expressions of Islam

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[17] Qur'an 9:29, quoted by Khaled Abou El Fadl, 181.
[18] Qur'an 60:7-9, Ibid.
[19] *CIA World Fact Book.* <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook.html>

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in three geographic locations. The Kurds (who are a subgroup of both Shi'i and Sufi Muslims) are concentrated in the north, the Sunnis in the central region including Baghdad, and the majority population of Shi'i Muslims in the south. Shi'i and Sunni Islam differ mostly in areas such as succession of the Prophet, the nature of the religious leaders in the Imamate, and the Twelfth Imam (the roots of the State religion in Iran). However, the impression in the West of a huge theological disparity between these groups is false. "There is no disagreement between the two in the matter of the station and centrality of the Prophet Muhammad in the religion, nor on most of the historical details of his life. There are no major differences in the ritual observances of daily life, and on many doctrinal and theological matters there is also a broad consensus."[20] Islam is a religion of 1.2 billion people spread over 27 different countries from Morocco to Indonesia, each one with their cultural specifics. Islam is not monolithic and does not have an organized hierarchy like the Roman Catholic Church.

Islam is challenged by the ideology of extremist groups that claim divine authority to purify the moderates and oppose the immoral West. Not all Muslims agree with Osama Bin Laden's attempt to hijack Islam to rally embittered Muslims in the global jihad. The reduction of religion to an ideology to serve political aims forces the religious leader—priest, monk, rabbi, or imam—into a political role which undermines his conflict resolution role. The power of the religious leader lies in his public office of ministry. His authority and credibility flow from being a leader of prayer and public ritual, nonpartisan interpreter of scripture or religious law, and an agent of hospitality,

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[20] Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xiii-xiv.

forgiveness, and reconciliation. Thus, he has political influence and political power because of his moral authority.

Under the rubric of diplomacy, religion can be a great source of knowledge about the important issues of a culture. Religious tenets can serve as the basis for nonviolent resolution of political, economic, and social issues, and it can serve to establish and perpetuate a stable peace. This "faith-based diplomacy" can be a powerful tool in conflicts that have religion as the motivating factor, or supporting factor, if religion is also a way of life, an intellectual heritage, and a social tradition.[21] The key to success in this approach to diplomacy is finding the indigenous religious leadership in Iraq who are informed and motivated to work toward mediation of issues and who desire peacefully to facilitate conflict resolution. The religious leader is a natural point of entry into a culture and can enlist religion as an asset in war cessation and security, utilizing its control of resources, interpersonal relationships, communications, and expertise.[22]

ASESSING THE POSITIVE POWER OF RELIGION

Iraq is rife with examples of the violence that is produced with competing political and religious claims of Sunni and Shi'ite factions. The February 22, 2006 bombing of the Askariya Shrine, a Shi'ite holy site in the Sunni city of Samara, followed by attacks on Sunni mosques, thought to be masterminded and motivated by cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, only illustrates the power struggle going on in Iraqi culture. Sadr still maintains his militia and is trying to transform it into a service organization to work

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[21] Douglas Johnston. "Retrieving the Missing Dimension of Statecraft: Religious Faith in the Service of Peacebuilding" in *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 239.

[22]Pauletta Otis. "Religion and War in the Twenty-first Century" in *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations,* ed. by Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Lanham: Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 20-21.

toward broadening his political base beyond Baghdad. Militias, according to U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, are a greater threat than the Sunni insurgency.[23]

However, there are religious leaders, such as the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Husaini Sistani, who promote a peaceful political process. He studied under Grand Ayatollah Abul-Qassim Khoei in the holy city of Najaf. Sistani stayed in Najaf, raised a family, and became an integral member of that city's community. He was certified as a mujtahid (one of great piety and learning) by Khoei in the 1960s. The influence of Khoei on Sistani is well-known. Among other things, Sistani follows Khoei's belief of separating the clergy from politics, and subsequently of keeping out of great political involvement.[24] His involvement is indirect, yet Western mainstream media universally call him the most politically influential figure in post-invasion Iraq.

The Combatant Commander needs to be able to assess the effectiveness of efforts to stabilize and maintain peace. Religious leaders are a major avenue of access to the culture because they often have control over resources, power in interpersonal relationships (especially significant in a tribally organized society such as Iraq), communications, and expertise.

The resources religion influences are both tangible and intangible. Religious leaders and their institutions influence the flow of tangible goods and services and they exert control over intangible elements in the social order such political agendas and the ability to mobilize people to participate in the political process. Religious leaders help determine and guide the political motivations and goals of groups in a society.

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[23] Nancy A. Youssef, "Cleric Tries to Keep His Militia." *Miami Herald* (May 2, 2006).
[24] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Ayatollah_Ali_al-Sistani>

Interpersonal relationships are the legal tender of religious leaders. Religious

leaders exert great power because of their reputation, moral integrity and moral courage.

Each culture has its proper way of showing respect, conducting business socially,

economically, and politically. Religious leadership can lend legitimacy to political

leadership or de-legitimatize it. As leaders of the religious social order they are

perceived to have special insight from God, who guides and governs all relationships.

As experts in communication, religious leaders often are the best educated in the

written and spoken form of their language, and have access to knowledge and education

that gives them great power to convince the mind and will of their followers.   At the

grass roots level the religious leaders and institutions have established credibility because

they are involved in the education, medical support, and pastoral care of individuals.

They are the first line of defense in crisis, and are trusted because they have discretion

and maintain confidentiality.

Religious leaders have expertise about the people, places, institutions, and

economic resources in an area because people seek them out for personal assistance.

Because of their access to the personal lives and history of segments of society, they have

insight into the key issues. The religious leaders in a community know what is going on

with their people. They can give real time feedback to the COCOM by which to assess

the impact and effectiveness of the COCOM's policies on the hearts and minds of the

people. Religious leaders know what their people need and how best to deliver resources,

provide security, respond to emergent and long-term needs. As a relationship of mutual

trust and confidence is developed they also can be critical nodes for information

dissemination to the public. However, they should not be manipulated to get intelligence

on insurgent activities for targeting, or their spiritual leadership and integrity will be compromised, rendering them ineffectual for their traditional role in society.[25]

Conflict has neither simple explanations nor easy solutions. Complex factors need to be understood such as power and control politically, competition for resources, ethnic issues, differences among classes, competing meaning systems and view of the world, psychological conditions, fears of subjugation, desire for vengeance, and basic human desire for security and safety to be able to meet basic needs. Religion has an impact on every level of communal existence, and is a powerful factor in private lives and public interaction. The COCOM must use every source of national power; diplomatic, informational, military, and economic to set the conditions to transition to civilian control and normality. Faith-based intervention is a subgroup of the "diplomatic" tool and is effective, according to Douglas Johnston,[26] when the following conditions exist (as a starting point):

- Religion is a significant factor in the identity of one or both parts of the conflict;
- Religious leaders on both sides of the dispute can be mobilized to facilitate peace;
- Protracted struggles between two major religious traditions transcend national borders;
- Forces of realpolitik (the traditional secular approach to diplomacy using the "rational actor" model) have led to an extended paralysis of action.[27]

RECAPTURING FRAMEWORKS

The United States Institute for peace indicates that the British Foreign Office and the U.S. Department of State (along with DOD) ignored religion and religious peacemaking in postwar planning in Iraq, even though Iraq's diversity (ethnic, tribal, and religious) was common knowledge. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) decided

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[25] Ibid.
[26] President, *International Center on Religion and Diplomacy*.
[27] Smock, 2.

not to reestablish the *Aw Qaf,* Ministry of Religious Affairs, in the reconstruction phase

of stabilizing Iraq. Religious leaders were cut off from access to the CPA. These are the

very people with access to the indigenous population and have historical and current

knowledge of the issues on the ground. It became obvious early on that religious and

tribal issue were standing in the way of resuming public water and electric services.

Prior relationships of trust and confidence with the religious leaders helped these

situations to be resolved. On February 23, 2004 a document, the *Baghdad Religious*

Accord, for religious reconciliation was signed after tribal and religious leaders debated

how to thwart Iraq from falling prey to sectarian divisions. The *Iraq Institute for Peace*

(IIP) was established to provide a forum to debate life and death issues such as the fears

of Sunnis that "de-Baathification" process targeted Sunni leadership. IIP helped to

convince Sunnis to participate in elections and convened a conference to discuss the

issues that spawned violence in Sadr City; as a result, ideas were developed that helped to

stop the violence. However, Muqtada el-Sadr has not renounced violence, even though

he has turned to the political process to gain and consolidate power.

Religious leaders and institutions have unique attributes that can be marshaled to

promote peace and reconciliation. Among these are:

- Credibility as trusted institutions;
- Respected set of values;
- Moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments;
- Unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, including an ability to re-humanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict;
- Capability to mobilize community, nation, and international support for the peace process;
- Ability to follow through locally in the wake of political settlement;

- Sense of calling (commitment, personal investment) that often inspires perseverance in the face of major, otherwise debilitating obstacles.[28]
- Ability to provide real time feedback on the COCOM's policies and efforts.
- Ability to identify and apply resources to resolve problems (economic, social. . .)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The COCOM has the responsibility to foster peace and stability in Iraq and to set the conditions for the earliest possible withdrawal of coalition forces. Of all the assets available to help stabilize the civilian control and social functioning of Iraq, religion is one that can be leveraged to address social, political, economic and security issues. The following are recommendations to help in the process:

- Develop relationships with indigenous religious leaders and institutions in Iraq society to win their trust and confidence.
- Develop a thorough understanding of the role of religion in a society and the way to foster trust with religious leadership needs to be added to planning doctrine.
- Add to operational planning doctrine assessment criteria of dominant religions, religion's role in the political process, level of religious tolerance, impact of fundamentalism/conservatism religiously, and impact of possible courses of action in shaping the operational space before (short-circuiting conflict) or in post conflict peace and stability operations.
- Integrate religiously oriented NGOs and other faith-based peace-building entities and their resources into planning considerations of the operational commander early in the preparation of the battle space. This requirement will only increase in the future because conflicts that have a religious component show indications of increasing (Nigeria, Sudan, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, etc).
- Establish (by DOD) a special subject matter expert on the COCOM staff, the Religious Advisor (RELAD), following the model of the Political Advisor (POLAD). This advisor must have a proven track record, experience and education to provide current, sensitive, and insightful information to assist in planning ways and means to access positive indigenous religious leadership and institutional resources for peace and stability. This will place a civilian face on the efforts to reach out to the religious leadership, who may be uncertain about the intentions and motivations of uniformed personnel (including chaplains assign to military units).
- Foster relationships, by RELAD, through official conferences sponsored, facilitated, and led by international peace building organizations, workshops facilitating peace and reconciliation, and through educational opportunities. For example, USIP provides Inter-ethnic, Inter-communal, and Inter-religious

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[28] Ibid.

Violence Prevention Grants to develop educational materials and training programs that advance ethnic and religious understanding and tolerance.[29] The Religious Advisor will be a spiritually sensitive person who is actively engaged in his/her own faith group to establish credibility and authenticity in building relationships with spiritual leaders.

CONCLUSION

The Combatant Commander must factor in and harness the power of religion when confronting core issues in Iraqi society with the desired end state being a stable and durable peace. Religious leaders are a major source of power (though not without difficulty) to help rebuild Iraq's society and to assist the Iraqi people sort out their desire for self-determination. Mere military might will not solve social problems, set right issues of justice, and bring about needed reconciliation, thus taking away the impetus of insurgency. Meeting violence with violence will only create ideal spawning grounds for a variety of disgruntled and alienated individuals who have the will and determination, motivated by religious zeal, to shape the future of Iraq.

The positive power of religion expressed in ritual, in worship, and in devotional life, and by word and example in the religious leadership can facilitate reconciliation in Iraq. Religion can be leveraged to save lives and resources, with the goal of establishing a peaceful and just Iraq where its people can prosper, raise their children, and live in security.   The key to leveraging the positive power of religion lies in the leadership.

> Religion supports the beautiful and idealistic of world views. Yet can be used to inflict maximum human suffering. The principles of faith, hope, and love can be denigrated by cynicism, despair, and hate. That which should support life, can support death; that which supports peace can be used to perpetuate war.[30]

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[29] *Iraq Programs.* USIP. <http://www.usip.org/iraq/programs/index.html>
[30] Pauletta Otis, "The Nature of Religious Terrorism," 27.

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