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14. ABSTRACT

The United States military is notorious for fighting the last war. In this case, military planners are looking at the successes in Iraq and wanting to use the same template for Afghanistan. Many of the operational planners in Afghanistan today were on the planning staffs in Iraq and feel that the lessons learned from that operation can simply be overlaid onto the Afghan map with similar results. This is oversimplified in the truest sense because the problem in Afghanistan is not only geographically different, but socially, economically, and politically as well. The increase in forces in Afghanistan will play a vital role in the success or failure of the mission, but the space and time factors are much different. Additionally, where the operational center of gravity in Iraq was focused around the security of the people, the security of the people in Afghanistan is only one of the many operational objectives to a very nebulous or even undefined center of gravity. This paper will highlight how some similarities exist, but turning the tide relies heavily on creating similar conditions that were already established in Iraq and creating others that are unique to the Afghan theater.

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<u>Taking a closer look at the SURGE in CounterinSURGEncy:</u>
<u>Just because it worked in Iraq does not mean it will work in Afghanistan…or does it?</u>

by

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Major, United States Army

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.

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Abstract

Taking a closer look at the SURGE in CounterinSURGEncy: Just because it worked in Iraq does not mean it will work in Afghanistan…or does it?

The United States military is notorious for fighting the last war. In this case, military planners are looking at the successes in Iraq and wanting to use the same template for Afghanistan. Many of the operational planners in Afghanistan today were on the planning staffs in Iraq and feel that the lessons learned from that operation can simply be overlaid onto the Afghan map with similar results. This is oversimplified in the truest sense because the problem in Afghanistan is not only geographically different, but socially, economically, and politically as well. The increase in forces in Afghanistan will play a vital role in the success or failure of the mission, but the space and time factors are much different. Additionally, where the operational center of gravity in Iraq was focused around the security of the people, the security of the people in Afghanistan is only one of the many operational objectives to a very nebulous or even undefined center of gravity. This paper will highlight how some similarities exist, but turning the tide relies heavily on creating similar conditions that were already established in Iraq and creating others that are unique to the Afghan theater.

INTRODUCTION

In March of 2007 Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates announced what has affectionately become known as the "Iraq Surge." The plan, in very simple terms, was to stamp out the insurgency in Iraq by "flooding the zone." Coalition forces were going to increase their presence from just over 100,000 service men and women to close to 140,000. This meant that some units were going to stay longer than their original 12 month tours (15 months was the new standard) and some units' timelines were accelerated to facilitate the increase in boots on the ground.[1] This decision was not one that was made lightly and although it was announced at the national strategic level, it was a something that was asked for by the operational commanders in the field. Now, more than two years later, most view the "surge" as a success and believe that the influx of troops was the catalyst that allowed the Iraqi and coalition forces to finally attack the insurgency in Iraq. Although this is partially true, there were many conditions that were already set in Iraq that facilitated the success of this increase in forces to be successful.[2] It is the lack of similar pre-existing conditions that might end up being problematic for operational planners in Afghanistan today.

On December 1st, 2009, President Obama stood in front of 4000 cadets at West Point and announced to the entire nation that he was authorizing an additional 30,000 troops to deploy to Afghanistan, which was 10,000 troops less than what the Operational Commander, GEN Stanley A. McChrystal, had requested.[3] This increase in coalition forces in Afghanistan is now being referred to as the "Afghanistan Surge" or some have called it

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[1] Brian Friel, "The Troop Surge." (Abbreviated footnotes will be used in this paper. Full bibliography is available starting on page 22.)
[2] Freir, Leed, and Nelson, "Iraq versus Afghanistan: A Surge Is Not a Surge Is Not a Surge | Center for Strategic and International Studies."
[3] Roy, "Obama agenda in Afghanistan: Don't forget about Pakistan."

"Obama's Surge." the name is not the only similarity to the Iraqi Surge, but there are far more differences than likenesses.

The United States military is notorious for fighting the last war. In this case, military planners are looking at the successes in Iraq and wanting to use the same template for Afghanistan. Many of the operational planners in Afghanistan today were on the planning staffs in Iraq and feel that the lessons learned from that operation can simply be overlaid onto the Afghan map with similar results.[4] This is oversimplified in the truest sense because the problem in Afghanistan is not only geographically different, but socially, economically, and politically as well. The increase in forces in Afghanistan will play a vital role in the success or failure of the mission, but the space and time factors are much different. Additionally, where the operational center of gravity in Iraq was focused around the security of the people, the security of the people in Afghanistan is only one of the many operational objectives to a very nebulous or even undefined center of gravity. This paper will highlight how some similarities exist, but turning the tide relies heavily on creating similar conditions that were already established in Iraq and creating others that are unique to the Afghan theater.

Thesis: The troop surge in Afghanistan can be successful. Although the influx in personnel is an important factor, it is the operational planner's ability to conduct an effective space, time, and force comparison; address the critical requirements of fighting a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan versus Iraq; and develop a plan to attack the insurgent's center of gravity through his critical vulnerabilities, which will finally set the conditions for a secure and thriving Afghanistan.

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[4] Hiatt, "Fred Hiatt on parallels between the Iraq, Afghanistan troop surges."

BACKGROUND

In December of 2006 the United States Army issued a new Field Manual, FM 3-24, titled Counterinsurgency. Three months later this "new" way of fighting was put to the test in Iraq. "The Counterinsurgency Manual", as it is affectionately called in most operational planning circles, serves as a template to use all elements of national power to defeat an insurgency. FM 3-24 states that "[e]ach insurgency is unique, although there are often similarities among them. In all cases, insurgents aim to force political change; any military action is secondary and subordinate, a means to an end. Few insurgencies fit neatly into any rigid classification."[5] The simple fact that all insurgencies are different should be a red flag for any operational planner. FM 3-24 goes on to identify what considerations staffs should use to combat each individual circumstance. For a staff to effectively define the problem they must first: find the root cause of the insurgency; determine how much the insurgency has in internal and external support; understand how the insurgents are targeting the population; determine their motivation; identify possible weapons and tactics; and define the operational environment that the insurgents wish to initiate to further their campaign or strategy.[6] This paper will identify the above elements that existed in Iraq and how some of them will transfer neatly into Afghanistan but others will be more complex requiring a thorough space, force and time comparison. Additionally this paper will identify the critical requirements for conducting a counterinsurgency, how it continues to work in Iraq and how operational planners can meet those requirements through attacking the critical vulnerabilities that exist in Afghanistan to influence the enemy's center of gravity.

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[5] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24," 1-24.
[6] Ibid., 1-24.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

SPACE, FORCE ,AND TIME COMPARISON

Space: The first and maybe most glaring difference is the space involved. Iraq is a comparatively flat country. The western half is merciless desert and the east is only slightly better. The dominating terrain features in the area are the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers which come together at the nation's capital, Baghdad.

The population lives mostly in urban terrain and Baghdad, with 7 million Iraqis, accounts for almost one quarter of the population. This means that the cultural hub of Iraq is centered in and around Baghdad.[7] The ability to keep the population in this area safe and under control is paramount. Major General (Retired) Eric Olson makes the comparison to New York state, "both feature mostly urban populations with dominant capitals. Pacify the Big Apple[8] and you pacify the whole state; pacify Baghdad and you pacify Iraq."[9] This is extremely simplistic but relevant none the less. Additionally, Iraq's population is more western. There are 3 dominant groups to temper in Iraq; the Sunni Arab, Shi'a Arab and the Kurds.

There are vast road networks in Iraq which can be an advantage and disadvantage at the same time. The people are not foreign to the idea of education and on virtually every house there is a satellite antenna piping in the latest news from around the world. Maybe the most important space consideration is Iraq's natural resources.

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[7] Olson, "Rethink the Afghanistan surge: A US general explains why the Iraq model doesn't apply."
[8] Albany is the capital of New York, but New York City is used as the parallel in this case because of its cultural impact on the state.
[9] Olson, "Rethink the Afghanistan surge: A US general explains why the Iraq model doesn't apply."

Over 13 percent of the world's oil is located inside Iraq's borders. With increased security, Iraq could easily become one of the top 4 oil producing countries in the world.[10] Although the pipelines and refineries are a high payoff target for an insurgent, having this kind of natural resource capability is an unparalleled advantage for the operational planner in Iraq.

Afghanistan, on the other hand, has different challenges. It is extremely mountainous and inhospitable in the east and relatively fertile in the west. The major terrain feature is the Hindu Kush mountain range which provides a plethora of places for an insurgent to hide, run, or evade capture as long as they can stay alive in harsh climates.

The population is mostly rural. Where one thinks New York State for Iraq, think Alaska for Afghanistan. The five largest cities are host to only one-tenth of the population and those cities are separated by vast mountains and connected by a single "ring road."[11] The people of Afghanistan are largely tribal and even relations within the tribes are fractious. The majority of the population is uneducated and not connected to the outside world. Biblical is the word that is often used to describe the way of life for most Afghanis. The idea of living with the people in Afghanistan would require countless platoon sized patrol bases in villages that would not be mutually supporting and could not be easily reinforced.

Only 20 percent of the roads in Afghanistan are paved and therefore susceptible to dug in IEDs and mines. Also, because of the high altitudes and frequent bad weather, quick reaction forces are often slow to get to their objectives, if at all.[12]

Afghanistan has almost no natural resources of mention. The one crop that is grown in this region of any note is poppy which is responsible for up to 90 percent of the world's

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[10] Klare, "Iraq, the world's oil pump - Iraq war - Salon.com."
[11] Olson, "Rethink the Afghanistan surge: A US general explains why the Iraq model doesn't apply."
[12] Ibid.

opium trafficking.[13] Eradication of these fields could be problematic at best. If not done properly by finding a substitute crop or different livelihood this could further complicate the very fine line that the operational planner is walking.

Further examination into the differences between Iraq and Afghanistan in relation to space shows even more dissimilarity even though they are separated only by Iran. Although Saddam Hussein was a dictator, he was a central government figure. The idea of a central government ruled by democracy is not completely foreign to the people of Iraq, especially the older generation. The people of Afghanistan on the other hand have never been effectively ruled by central governance. They are used to and comfortable with local leaders and their political ideals are born from the days of warlord control.[14] Although both countries are Islamic states, Iraq is mostly Arab or Kurd and Afghanistan is a smorgasbord of races that range from Chinese to Persian with a small amount of Russian/Eastern European influence as well. Iraq has been a territory of many foreign rulers, whereas Afghanistan has never been conquered. Although it may be hard to find any one thing that all Afghans believe in, the one binding truth is that even Alexander the Great could not take Afghanistan. The space factors, both physical and human, are vastly different and must be accounted for when making operational decisions.

Force: The insurgent forces in Iraq and Afghanistan have very similar dynamics. Again FM 3-24 highlights the force considerations common to most insurgencies: leadership; ideology; environment; external support and sanctuaries.[15] The leadership in both areas of operation has used direction and focused violence to achieve their political objectives. In Iraq, the insurgent leadership was very astute and knew that the best way to further their

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[13] Arnoldy, "How US is tackling opium trade in Afghanistan poppy heartland."
[14] Green, "Saving Afghanistan."
[15] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24," 1-13.

cause was through the disgruntled Sunni Arab population. Under Saddam the Sunnis had been the powerful minority. Once Coalition forces removed Saddam from power, the Shi'a Arab population made a quick rise to power. The Maliki government was a threat to the Sunni population and the insurgents fed upon that fear. The insurgents "poisoned the well" by breeding intolerance and extremism that was focused on the division of the vast wealth of the state.[16] The insurgent leadership in Afghanistan also feeds on a nationalistic sense of pride but instead of it being channeled at each other, it is focused almost solely against Coalition forces. The insurgents in Iraq wanted to create an unstable state where anarchy was the rule. In Afghanistan, the insurgent leadership is attempting to maintain a feudal Islamic system that rejects central authority.

The ideology behind the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan are similar with regards to al-Qaida. This transnational insurgency uses anti-Western anger to give its fighters a purpose, a sense of community and an identity. It often provides a sense of worth, both fiscally and socially, to young fighting males who feel wronged and it uses its ideologies as a means to right those ills.[17] In Iraq, the fighters were fed a set of ethnic based aspirations and a call for justice. In Afghanistan the insurgents use a strong national pride and goal of liberation as their ideology of choice. In Iraq it was that strong sense of ethnic base that finally jump-started the turn around. The "Anbar Awakening" or the "Son's of Iraq" uprising occurred when key constituencies of the large Sunni insurgency changed sides and agreed to police themselves. All they wanted in return was some support, reasonable

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[16] Freir, Leed, and Nelson, "Iraq versus Afghanistan: A Surge Is Not a Surge Is Not a Surge | Center for Strategic and International Studies."
[17] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24," 1-14.

political guarantees and the possibility of employment.[18] The coalition essentially made it worth more to be with them. Such conditions do not exist in Afghanistan but there is potential. A recent study conducted for the British Department for International Development (DFID) made note that the unemployed men of Afghanistan do in fact join the Taliban but often it is for monetary gain or status rather than radical Islamic ideals. The majority of them join for status or to provide for themselves and families. It is not until later that they become radicalized through teachings. One young man was quoted "[i]f we join the ANA, no-one will offer their funeral prayers but if we join the Taliban we will be called martyrs."[19] In many areas of Afghanistan, the Taliban is not always viewed in a negative context. Some Afghans see the Taliban as much more of a broad movement which does not follow the high militant command that is often publicized by media outlets. In this case, the DFID study identified that many regions of Afghanistan separate the Taliban into two very distinct groups referred to as "good" and "bad." The good Taliban are mostly very trustworthy religious men. They may attack foreigners but never a fellow Afghan. When it was needed they deliver swift and fair justice. In many cases they even support the education of girls.[20] The bad Taliban comes in several forms. The word "bad" is often used synonymously with government, Pakistan and American in many cases. Additionally, if the group was associated with criminal activities they were also considered bad Taliban. The bad groups are seen as such because the people believe they are continuing the insurgency for their own financial, strategic or regional interests. The bad Taliban does not have the

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[18] Freir, Leed, and Nelson, "Iraq versus Afghanistan: A Surge Is Not a Surge Is Not a Surge | Center for Strategic and International Studies."
[19] Ladbury and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), Kabul, *Testing Hypothoses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami? How much do local communities support them?*
[20] Ibid., 14.

people of Afghanistan as their central concern and is seen as the major cause for insecurity in Afghanistan, not al-Qaida.[21]

According to FM 3-24, "[a]ccess to external resources and sanctuaries has always influenced the effectiveness of insurgencies. External support can provide political, psychological, and material resources that might otherwise be limited or unavailable."[22] Such resources for the insurgent in Iraq are extensive. The insurgents in Iraq are well funded and sophisticated. A majority of the resources are external and brought into the country on a very reliable and well trained network. The insurgent network was able to communicate on multiple levels from cell phone, satellite phone and propagate their message via internet and satellite TV. From 2004-2007 this network enjoyed a certain amount of freedom of movement in and around the population centers of Iraq. The borders of Iran and Syria were porous and the typical insurgent could not be identified against any other Iraqi citizen. Those that sought refuge and sanctuary had very little issue in finding it through coercion, money, or admiration.[23] The inability of coalition forces to be in all places at once allowed insurgents to move at will and simply reoccupy an area that was cleared the day before. The additional lack of any Iraqi civil control or authority compounded the problem exponentially. Although there have been some indications of increased outside influence, the Afghanistan insurgency is not so sophisticated.[24]

Al-Qaida and the Taliban no doubt receive external support but it comes in the form of forces and money. The Afghan/Pakistan border region is extremely porous. Groups of fighters move at will across the border as does a vast majority of the populace. These

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[21] Ibid., 21.
[22] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24," 1-16.
[23] Duquette, "Myths and troop surges; The merging lane of two presidencies."
[24] Fareed Zakaria, "David Petraeus; The general whose surge turned the tide in Iraq-and who aims to do the same in Afghanistan-may hold the fate of Obama's presidency in his hands.."

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fighter's capabilities span all along the spectrum of expertise. Some have been trained in camps in Pakistan and some were given a rifle and told to do their best. Sometimes they are well organized and often times they are a hodge podge of young idealists moving to the sound of the guns. Often times they know the area well and quickly move undetected. They can be flexible enough to attack as soon as the time is right and discreet enough to disappear into the village after doing so. To make things even more difficult, the Afghan culture is known for its hospitality and therefore sanctuary is even more prevalent in this region. Although many Afghans do not like the bad Taliban they will not turn them over to coalition forces because it is against their culture to betray another Afghan. In many areas the loyalties lie within the tribe, country, then religion, in that order. Coalition forces are a very distant fourth on that totem pole.[25] In many places in Afghanistan , ISAF are considered the insurgents.

Time: Milan Vego states that "time lost can never be recovered."[26] In this regard Afghanistan and Iraq are very different. The insurgency in Iraq is fairly young. Most would agree that the counterinsurgency did not begin until after major conflict operations ended. Some would argue that Coalition forces should have seen this coming and been properly trained, equipped and manned but that is a discussion for another paper on national strategy. Conversely, the conflict in Afghanistan has always been a counterinsurgency vice traditional combat. The people of Afghanistan have been fighting his type of conflict since 1977 and earlier. Many of the leaders of the Afghanistan Forces were trained by the United States during the cold war era. They have the endurance to persevere unless there is some significant shift. Additionally, because of ISAF's limited ability to strike across the border

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[25] Ladbury and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), Kabul, *Testing Hypothoses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami? How much do local communities support them?*
[26] Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice*, III-19.

into Pakistan, the insurgents there can train for as long as they need with very little regard for a timeline. The most significant aspect of time in Afghanistan comes with the seasons. There is a finite amount of time for effective kinetic operations against insurgent combat forces based upon weather cycles. During the winter months from November to March, the mountains are virtually impassable and most insurgents will "go to ground." This also means that for five months the insurgents have time to plan, train, equip and recruit virtually unhindered.   The recommendations portion of this paper will discuss how a savvy operational planner can also use this time to seize the initiative.

CRITICAL REQUIREMENTS

As a guideline for how to combat an insurgency, FM 3-24 identifies critical requirements that must be addressed for successful counterinsurgency operations. First, the coalition forces as well as the host nation must come up with a plan to attack the insurgent's center of gravity and it must focus on the collective effort to increase or bring back a legitimate government structure.[27] In Iraq, the insurgent's center of gravity was the Sunni and Shi'a militias. Each had an agenda and both were creating an unstable environment. Once the Maliki Government agreed to let Coalition forces, in conjunction with Iraqi forces, have full freedom of action against both militias, the seeds of change began to grow. This action raised U.S. credibility with many skeptical Iraqis and permitted them to often act in the role of unbiased arbiter.[28] The Iraqi security forces, working with the increased presence of coalition forces, also gained credibility which in turn showed the beginnings of a legitimate government for Iraq.

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[27] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24," 5-1.
[28] Freir, Leed, and Nelson, "Iraq versus Afghanistan: A Surge Is Not a Surge Is Not a Surge | Center for Strategic and International Studies."

For Afghanistan, the insurgent's center of gravity is the ability to undermine local governments and provide a semblance of local control and security that is counter to the national authority. These small but effective pockets of resistance prevent Afghanistan Security Forces from gaining legitimacy and perpetuate the idea of an ineffective national government.

The second critical requirement is that host nation forces establish control and are able to secure the people continuously. With the surge in Iraq, the main focus was and remains training of Iraqi security forces. It is imperative that the people of Iraq see their own people in charge and securing the populace. Initially this posed a problem in Iraq because the coalition did not think the Iraqi troops were up to the task. What quickly made the difference was the realization that sometimes the host nation forces securing locals tolerably is better than the coalition doing it well.[29] Afghanistan has many challenges when it comes to host nation security. For many Afghans the Taliban provides the requisite sense of security. The Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) are falling short of a high level of proficiency and have a difficult road ahead of them.

The third critical requirement is that operations must be initiated to recover areas under insurgent control. The host nation must retain or regain control of major population centers to ensure stability, a strong government support base and a sense of government legitimacy.[30] In Iraq much of the surge was focused on what is affectionately referred to as the Sunni Triangle. This region was a heavily populated area to the northwest of Baghdad that was made up of mostly Sunni Arabs and the strongest of the insurgent base. The cities of Baqubah, Ramadi, and Tikrit made up the three points and inside the triangle were also the

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[29] Fick and Nagl, "Counterinsurgency Field Manual."
[30] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24," 5-1.

cities of Baghdad, Samarra and Fallujah. Gaining control of this region was paramount to the counterinsurgency and without it the Iraqi government would never be considered legitimate. The majority of the combat outposts (COPs) that littered Iraq in the days of the surge were in this area and platoon sized elements were working with Iraqi security forces to gain and hold these very important population centers.

In Afghanistan, the population centers do not hold quite the same weight as they do in Iraq. As mentioned earlier, only one tenth of the Afghan population lives in the cities and many would argue that it is the cities that are the most secure areas in Afghanistan because of the established infrastructure.

The fourth requirement is to expand government operations to support the population. If insurgents control a region, the host nation must destroy the militant arm and eliminate the politico-administrative mechanism that is dominant in the local government.[31] This is still an ongoing struggle in Iraq. Although great milestones are being met there are still strong pockets of resistance being fed from bordering countries. Afghanistan will be no different, although developing strong local governments may have much more of an impact than they do in Iraq.

The fifth and final requirement as outlined in the Counterinsurgency Manual is that forces must aggressively use Information Operations (IO) to increase positive perceptions of host nation capabilities and legitimacy, obtain support for COIN operations at all levels from local to international, publicize insurgent violence, and discredit the insurgents while providing a better alternative to the insurgent rhetoric.[32] The DFID study found strong evidence to support the hypothesis that many of the political roadblocks in Afghanistan are

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 5-2.

due to the perception of the people that the government and coalition can do little to provide security and justice. Additionally, the people interviewed felt that the security forces were predatory and oppressive. Both of these perceptions feed movement towards insurgent activity.[33] In the eyes of many Afghans, the government, the Taliban, Pakistan, the Afghan National Police, Coalition forces, private security companies etc…are all seen as responsible for the insecurity. Most Afghans are not sure why Coalition forces are even in Afghanistan but many believe that fighting the Taliban is only an excuse for a much larger regional objective. Although the Taliban is seen as part of the problem, they are at least viewed as consistent. The judicial and local government corruption has allowed for the Taliban to be viewed as a fair, just and swift alternative and they have gained more legitimacy in some outlying areas.[34]

CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES

As outlined above, the operational considerations for Iraq and Afghanistan are significantly different. What is not different is that each plan requires the exploitation of the vulnerabilities of the insurgency. What may be more vulnerable in Iraq may not be in Afghanistan, but every insurgency has weaknesses which a skilled planner can find and attack. Increased troop strength will serve a vital role in Afghanistan and will allow the operational commander to "get after" the enemy in a way that to this point has been unachievable, because of the sheer amount of work that needs to be done.

Critical Vulnerability 1—Base of Operations

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[33] Ladbury and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), Kabul, *Testing Hypothoses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami? How much do local communities support them?*, 21.
[34] Ibid., 24.

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The insurgents in Afghanistan must have multiple bases of operation. These bases must be close to the action or they fail to be effective. With increased coalition forces comes increased assets to find where those bases are and the subsequent ability to isolate them from the populace.[35] If those bases are across the border in Pakistan then it is up to the operational commander to leverage higher commands to work with international partners.[36] Those bases that are in the area of operations can and should be eliminated or at a minimum disrupted. These are delicate tactical operations that must be done with minimum disruption to the locals and should minimize collateral damage. This is a fine line to walk but the coalition must be careful to not send a 2000lb bomb to do the job of a 5.56mm rifle round.

Critical Vulnerability 2—External Support

The insurgency in Afghanistan has long been reliant on the porous borders between Afghanistan and Pakistan.[37] It is likely that even with 300,000 additional troops the coalition could not seal the border. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that through further development of the intelligence picture, operational planners could come up with the most likely avenues of approach and put more forces in and around those areas.[38] However, just putting in a combat outpost is not enough. These elements will need to be mutually reinforcing, well supplied and in and around the people.[39] The outposts must also be mutually supported by and co-located with Afghan security forces of some kind. This will prevent or at a minimum disrupt external support coming from within Pakistan and the operational bases there and probably more importantly legitimize the Afghan government as one that can control its own borders.

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[35] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24."
[36] Olson, "Rethink the Afghanistan surge: A US general explains why the Iraq model doesn't apply."
[37] Tavernise and Gall, "Afghans and Pakistanis Concerned Over U.S. Plan."
[38] Fick and Nagl, "Counterinsurgency Field Manual."
[39] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24."

Critical Vulnerability 3—Financial Weakness

For years the poppy trade has been the target of the coalition.[40] Every year or so some working group or targeting cell comes up with the idea to eradicate the poppies and thereby eliminate the money that drugs provide to the Taliban. Without fail this tactic has second and third order consequences that end up strengthening the Taliban vice weakening them. When poppy fields are burned or destroyed, the ones who feel the brunt of that action are the farmers. The smugglers go elsewhere, the price of poppy increases and profit margins actually increase. By not forcing eradication, poppy prices stay low. Consequently, less people grow it. The high labor costs associated with harvesting poppy coupled with the falling prices means that other crops, such as wheat, become more profitable. This is not as easy as it sounds. Pound for pound poppy will still earn more, but increased troops also means increased security, job opportunities, crop potential and the freedom to travel to other markets to sell their wares. [41]

Critical Vulnerability 4—Internal Divisions

The Taliban in Afghanistan is subject to divisions in their "cause." The political and military leaders of the Taliban have been isolated from the people for many years and this fact has not gone unnoticed. Lower level leaders are starting to emerge and many of them are not as fundamental or extreme. As mentioned in the DFID study, some Taliban leaders have accepted the idea of girls going to school.[42] This is a large shift in their traditional values. These types of divisions can be exploited to show disunity in the message. Such divisions can diminish the sense of legitimacy that the Taliban holds. Increased troops to

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[40] Arnoldy, "How US is tackling opium trade in Afghanistan poppy heartland."
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ladbury and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), Kabul, *Testing Hypothoses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami? How much do local communities support them?*

assist ANA and ANP forces carrying the message through a thoughtful IO campaign is another beneficial use of the surge.

Critical Vulnerability 5—Mobilization and Message of the Insurgency

The reason that many young men join the Taliban is for money and status. Although they are Muslim, most of them are not extremists who are out to destroy the West.[43] They become jihadists once they are already mobilized and in training through the perverted teachings and misguided interpretations of extremist Mullahs. This mobilization effort can be used to the benefit of the counterinsurgency if properly focused. Again, the increase in forces must come with heavy IO emphasis.[44] Through proper training of the HN forces, both ANA and ANP, the defense of the nation or service to the government can be seen as both honorable and profitable. The current perception of these forces is that they are corrupt, abusive and untrained.[45] With an increased coalition presence, more oversight is possible and combined operations will build the legitimacy of the Afghan forces. Additionally, increased troops will improve the flexibility of the HN forces as they will have more areas available for recruiting and increased security.

One important factor that cannot be overlooked is the ability of the Coalition to train these forces in the image of the insurgent.[46] This does not mean that they are taught to live in anarchy or be brutal or irregular. It means that they must learn how to capitalize on the effective habits of the insurgent and thereby supplant them as a legitimate security force. An effective Afghan security force must be seen as one of the people not one of the coalition.

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[43] Ibid.
[44] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24."
[45] Ladbury and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), Kabul, *Testing Hypothoses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-i Islami? How much do local communities support them?*
[46] "Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24."

Many scholars, former military commanders, and students of Operation Enduring Freedom are skeptical that a surge in Afghanistan will work. The main concern is that the template for a one size fits all counterinsurgency is not suitable and that operational planners will simply try and overlay what worked in Iraq onto Afghanistan. Major General (Retired) Olson believes that a surge into the heart of Taliban country without dealing with Pakistan is futile. He is also concerned that current proposals involve large military campaigns, premature programs of economic development, and bargains struck between warring factions.[47] Although this is valid, the methodical and precise use of the troops coupled with a well planned economic reconstruction plan can make a huge difference to create jobs, economic independence and local security from which to grow. However, planners must be careful to be frugal and not throw money at the problem. To use a popular saying; "do not give a man a fish so that he can eat for a day but to teach him to fish so that he can eat for a lifetime."

Other opponents to the surge in Afghanistan have made such comments as, "the only thing Iraq and Afghanistan have in common is a lot of sand."[48] The biggest fear for many opponents of the surge is that Afghanistan has been the way it is for many years and is not likely to change now. The insurgents in Iraq were actually foreigners trying to exploit anarchy whereas in Afghanistan the extremists, the Taliban, are for the most part natives. The Anbar Awakening was effective because Iraqis were turning on those that were taking advantage of their situation. The Sons of Iraq were effective because they eventually answered to a central government and stood down when asked. The Afghan militias that

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[47] Olson, "Rethink the Afghanistan surge: A US general explains why the Iraq model doesn't apply."
[48] Sanger, "Similarities to Iraq Surge Plan Mask Risks in Afghanistan."

have taken up arms against the Taliban are a positive sign but they are nothing on the scale of the Iraqi movement and many answer to warlords who have no interest in being governed by Kabul.[49] The bright side is that the people of Afghanistan are not foolish. They would prefer security over what they have now. Just because the population is uneducated and underdeveloped does not mean that they want to stay that way.

Finally, there is much concern over the ability of Afghanistan to have a standing military. Although the Iraqi military forces were in a disastrous state after the toppling of Saddam, they at least were a country with a tradition of military history and order. Afghanistan has not had a standing military in the traditional sense in recent history. The best military minds were often warlords trained by foreigners to further their cause. They were tacticians trained in guerilla warfare to fight a war of attrition. There are few if any strategists or operational thinkers capable of running any coherent military order. Building that kind of capability will take time and with a target draw down date of July 2011, critics state that there is not enough time.[50] Time is definitely a factor, but the July 2011 date is a goal for the beginning of the draw down. The success or failure of Afghanistan will not be written for many more years. The surge will provide the necessary time and security to recruit, train and deploy Afghan forces. It is much easier to turn over a pacified population to host nation forces than one that is still fighting daily for security.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The operational planner in Afghanistan will assuredly want to take a close look at the Iraq area of operations. Many tools that were or are being used there today will be highly useful in developing a successful plan in Afghanistan. It will be the ability to recognize the

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[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

differences and exploit the following somewhat unique vulnerabilities in Afghanistan that will make the difference.

1. Use the increased forces from the surge to isolate the insurgent's base of operations from the population. This can be done by increased peaceful presence in an area or through combat operations. Planners must know what is prudent in each case. If the base of operations is embedded in the local populace then extreme prejudice must be employed when removing the threat. One ill placed bullet could mean months of setback.

2. Develop an intelligence picture that will identify most likely avenues for external support. Once identified, use the additional forces to disrupt those movements. If outposts are used, they must be mutually supporting or have enough combat power to withstand attack. Additionally, it is imperative that ANA and ANP live and work with coalition forces and are a part of these efforts to further legitimize the national government.

3. Facilitate the development of other financial means or cash crops. Develop a plan to interdict the buyers of poppy and make it less valuable to grow poppy than another cash crops. Increased forces in the vicinity of farmers markets can assist in this endeavor.

4. Highlight and exploit the internal divisions in the Taliban. Embrace the ideals of the good Taliban that will further the cause of the Afghan National Government. Show how the leaders of the Taliban are out of touch with the Afghan people. Use the increased force to touch more outlying areas and highlight that the political and military leaders of the Taliban have long been absent from the people. Again, having ANA and ANP forces presenting these ideas is paramount.

5. Additional forces mean more ability to concentrate on the ANA and ANP. With the troop increase it will be possible to further the message that the ANA and ANP are good and noble

professions. The same young men that are being mobilized to join the Taliban can become trusted agents of the government of Afghanistan and further legitimize a strong national government.

The Afghanistan Surge can be successful. Although the surge in this case is most likely a necessity to achieve the operational objectives, it is not a foregone conclusion that every counterinsurgency will require an increase in troops. Meeting the critical requirements to effectively combat an insurgency and successfully identifying critical vulnerabilities and ways to attack them should be the principal consideration in a planner's decision cycle. After which the proper forces with the requisite capabilities can be deployed and put into action to achieve the operational objectives and desired end state in the most efficient manner.

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