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# **The Long War: The United States as a Self-Inflicted Wound**

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*Small boys throw stones at frogs in jest.  
But, the frogs do not die in jest. The  
frogs die in earnest.*

*Pliny the Elder*

# Key Self-Inflicted Wounds

- **Fight long wars with short term, partial and inadequate solutions.**
- **Underestimate risks, benefits, options like diplomacy, containment, deterrence.**
- **Fight the war we want, rather than the war we face: No real strategy for conflict termination and grand strategy/**
- **Deny the scale and nature of civil tensions and conflict: Sectarian, ethnic, tribal, economic, and governance.**
- **Confuse counterinsurgency with stability operations and nation building.**
- **Ethnocentricity: “Democracy” versus governance and local culture, and values.**
- **Underestimate the resources required and under-react as crisis or conflict develops.**
- **Deny the seriousness of the situation as it develops to Congress, American people, and ourselves.**

# Recognizing the True Nature of the “Long War”

- Not a war on terrorism, but ideological religious struggle that varies sharply by movement and country.
- Not a “clash between civilizations,” but struggle within Islam and Arab world that spill over into the West.
- Also driven by failed governance, sectarian and ethnic differences, demographics, globalization, hyperurbanization, poorly distributed income, host of other factors.
- Still one billion dire poor by 2050.
- World in which US status as “superpower” or “unipolar world” never existed, and in which alliances, friends, correct relations as critical as ever.
- Cannot stop multipolar world from emerging: Arguably, China, EU already geoeconomic “poles.”
- *War of ideologies, national development, and alliances -- not a US war on terrorism.*

# Different Fights, Different Responses

- Reinforce success with aid, encouragement of reform, counterterrorism support, and military assistance.
- Build up allies to prevent spread of threats.
- Use diplomacy, incentives/disincentives, with states that are more neutral or merely friendly.
- *Create strong country teams to create effective national responses in most cases; one size will not fit all.*
- *Counterinsurgency advisory efforts linked to overall nation-building strategy.*
- Contain and isolate states that do not present true strategic threats; rely on collective diplomacy and regional allies.
- Attack non-state actors according to the importance and nature of the threat.
- Engage “failed” or “broken” states when must.

# The Normal (Desirable Case) Fight

- Work with global and regional allies; strengthen local partner in counterterrorism capability.
- *This is the real world case in some 60 countries where Islamist extremists operate.*
- *Can reinforce local success or develop local capability at limited cost and risk.*
- Threats are largely non-state actors extreme enough to gain only limited local support. Ideological, religious, political, and cultural aspects of struggle largely managed by local allies/friends
- Do not need to engage with large-scale US deployments: Provide aid, advisors, intelligence, weapons and technology.
- Need for local reform limited. Burden of aiding governance, economy, human rights, rule of law and other reforms is limited, and can work with local governments and reformers at pace acceptable to them
- Can contain transnational flow of infiltrators, arms & explosives, money to reasonable levels.
- Limited or no resistance to US aid and support at local, regional, and international level.

# The Key Test: “Failed” or “Broken” States

- **Worst cases: Key issue is whether to engage at all.**
- **If do engage, governance, economics, ideology, internal factions, will always be as important as security and counterinsurgency.**
- **Preventing, limiting, or ending civil conflict will normally be more important than counterinsurgency.**
- *No point in “winning” if cannot “hold” and “build.”*
- *Security goes far beyond counterinsurgency: Civil conflict, crime, personal security, economic hope.*
- **Winning requires an effective US civil-military team, adequate resources, adequate time, and the ability to at least create an adequate national partner.**
- **High risk even if do it right; must never engage unless must.**
- **If do engage, must engage fully.**

# Key “Failed”/“Broken” State Cases to Date

- Vietnam
- Lebanon
- Haiti
- Somalia
- Bosnia & Kosovo
- Afghanistan (and Pakistan)
- **Iraq**
- And over the next two decades?



## What We Must Do to Win

- Fully commit to stability operations and nation-building or to accepting the consequences.
- Plan and resource for long, uncertain, complex, and high resource struggles from the start.
- Accept time frames of 5-15 years and plan and resource accordingly.
- Give governance, economics, ideology, internal factions, and broad security equal priority to counterinsurgency.
- Accept the reality that democracy, “instant change” and efforts to institutionalize US values will generally fail and be self-defeating.
- Do not fall in love with the mission, counterinsurgency.
- Do not lie to ourselves, the Congress. American people.
- Develop meaningful metrics of success; make transparent.
- Never promise success; prepare for failure from the start and accept it if it occurs.

# The War Plan is Only a Prelude to the Peace Plan

- Do not fight on the basis of ideological concepts, advice of exiles, and triumph of hope over experience.
- Prepare, staff, and deploy aid efforts in governance, economics, ideology, internal factions, and broad security to accompany advance or counterinsurgency.
- Create operational concepts and plans for 5, 10, and 15 years of engagement. Be willing to fully fund or do not start.
- Focus on preserving or creating immediate stability; go to mid and long term development only when ready
- Making it “our war” is generally a prelude to defeat:
  - *Let local population set goals, define “victory” and “success.”*
  - *Minimize US role in every possible way; let local leaders, voices, actors play maximum role from start.*

# Counterinsurgency/Counterterrorism are Only One Element of Success

- The US effort must look far beyond warfighting against insurgents:
  - *Only national forces can “win” and “hold” on lasting basis.*
  - *Police, paramilitary forces, and/or local security forces will be as critical from the start as local military forces.*
  - *Effective courts, crime fighting, and anti-corruption campaigns are also critical.*
  - *The local government, US aid workers, or both must offer key services and economic aid and opportunity.*
- US must offer embeds, partner units, local security, and aid workers. Training will never be enough.
- Preventing or ending civil conflict will often be equally or more critical than counterinsurgency.
- Proper treatment of coalition allies as partners is critical.
- Regional actors must be negotiated with; treated as critical element, even if critical or hostile.

# The “Whack a Mole” Syndrome

*“Win, Hold, Build”*

*Equals*

*“Attrit, Disperse, Leave”*

# Wars for Control of Political, Ideological, and Economic Space

- Win the battle, lose the war.
- Conflict is only one element of a much broader struggle for power.
- Fight is for factional and ideological dominance and control of region.
- As in Vietnam, tactical victory can easily become irrelevant.
- Compounded by fact that long wars are wars of attrition, and those who live there do not leave.
- “Victory” will always be relative:
  - *Nothing is “won” or secure where cannot go unarmed or at night.*
  - *Suppressing and dispersing serve no purpose unless followed by security, stability, popular support.*
  - *Violent factional and ideological elements may survive for years if not indefinitely.*
  - *“Broken” and “failed “ states take 10-15 years to fix.*
  - *50% recidivist result even in UN peacekeeping missions after 5 years.*
- The metric is who controls population in terms of politics, governance, ideology, economy, day-to-day security, in given amounts of space -- not tactical situation.

# Governance is Critical: “Democracy” is Just a Four Letter Word

- Legitimacy is the quality of governance perceived by local factions and individuals, not how governments are chosen.
  - *Can take years to create effective leaders, political parties, rule of law, checks and balances.*
  - *Voting by sect, ethnicity, tribe, or faction normally makes thing worse, not better.*
  - *People will accept weak or failed politics, not failed governance. Keep competence in office.*
- Creating effective central, regional, and local government is key, and local government may be easiest and most important.
- Security, services, fairness, and equity are **all** critical.
- All key factions must be given hope and opportunity as soon as possible.
  - *“Ordinary men do not live in the dawn of tomorrow, they live in the noon of today.”*

# Key Real World Priorities for Reform in the Long War

- Accept the near-term primacy of the need to counter religious extremism; defeat hard core violent movements.
- *Only Arabs ultimately can win against Arabs;*
- *Only Islam can defeat Islamic extremism.*
- Do act to strengthen security, government services, basic economic status at the local level, particularly in high threat areas.
  - *Focus on governance, and government presence and services, at local level.*
  - *Use aid to minimize support for extremist and insurgents, and differences by sect, ethnicity, tribe, or faction.*
  - *Make maximum use of local officials, contractors, leaders; Do not impose US standards or values.*
- Work for longer term aid and development with strong US Embassy country teams that tailor program to country; work at pace local governments and local reformers can absorb and support.
- Do not give primacy to politics and democracy; treat human rights, economic development, governance, rule of law as equal priorities and pursue longer term reforms on the basis of local priorities and values.

# Only Local Allies Can Win Hearts and Minds, Achieve Information Dominance

- The US can do much to justify its own position and actions, but cannot win at a broader level.
- The host country and regional actors will dominate the information battle and war of perceptions:
  - *The US will never be a Muslim state or be able to deal with underlying religious issues.*
  - *The nations in the Long War have their own cultural, social, and political values and they are not American.*
  - *US forces and spokesman will always be seen as outsiders, if not imperialists, outsiders, and occupiers.*
  - *The credibility of what local governments and security forces say, not Americans, is critical to popular support.*
  - *Local conciliation and compromise are the key to sectarian, ethnic, and other factional issues.*



# Unavoidable Weapons in Self-Inflicted Information Wounds

- Impossible demands and expectations.
- Unkept promises. Exaggerated reports of progress.
- Lack of local government follow-up.
- Tactical operations that alienate the population; Bull in the China Shop
- Disregard/lack of language and culture experience.
- “Christian” and “secular” force.
- Detainments.
- Collateral damage.
- Civilian casualties.
- Worst case incidents dominate; strategic corporal.
- Conspiracy theories. Desire to export the blame.
- Primacy of local and regional media.
- PAO=Pangloss
- Ties to Israel.
- *Life is not fair, but it is real.*

# Fix a Flawed National Security Structure

- Unified civil-military leadership in Washington and field with key lines of authority.
- US military must adapt to stability operations and nation building:
  - *Area specialists and language skills.*
  - *Civil military elements and military police.*
  - *Trainers, embeds, partner units.*
  - *Security for US civilians and aid efforts.*
- Civilian departments and agencies must accept full role as part of team. Create reserves and pools of experts.
- Long tours for key military and civilians.
- Minimize reliance on US and outside contractors; maximize use of locals at national, regional, and local levels.

## US Resources Must Be Adequate

- Realistic, long-term manpower and funding plans, not early force cuts and phony FYDPs with improvised supplementals.
- Adequate active and reserve end strength to provide years of effort with reasonable rotations.
- Aid in governance, security forces, and economic aid must be adequate, prompt, and responsive. *Dollars must match bullets.*
- Congress must be fully prepared and informed, American people made aware of risks and asked to make sacrifices.
- Civilian departments and agencies must be funded and staffed, not cannibalized or asked to self-cannibalize.
- Unrealistic dependence on allied or outside military and economic aid is pointless.
- Commit necessary resources to build regional support.

# Honest, Transparent Metrics of Success or Failure

- No denial, cheerleading, counterproductive spin.
- Actual allied force capabilities, not “trained and equipped” or “in the lead.”
- Effective national, local, and regional governance, not voting.
- Aid in terms of meeting actual requirements, providing employment and opportunity.
- Security is actual security by region, town, and neighborhood; not battles won or number of killings.
- Report real world progress in conciliation; state of sectarian, ethnic, and factional tension.
- Use polls honestly to measure local and regional attitudes.

# **US Leadership Must be Realistic and Credible**

**Bush = Johnson**

**Rumsfeld = McNamara**

**Cheney & Wolfowitz = Bundy and Rostows**

**Feith = McNaughton**

**Franks & Sanchez = Westmorland**

**Neoconservatives = Neoliberals**

# **Honor, Duty, Country:**

## ***The Marine, the Mall, Public Opinion Surveys, and Walter Reed***