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# **The Iraq War and Its Lessons for Developing Local Forces**

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The level of success the US and its Coalition allies will achieve in developing Iraqi forces is still in doubt. Iraq has, however, already taught many important lessons that policymakers and military planners need to consider in future stability, nation building, and peacemaking operations. These lessons about the development of effective local operations are a critical aspect of military operations and need to be treated as such.

### ***War Planning Means Planning for Stability Operations and Nation Building***

No lesson of the Iraqi force development effort is more important -- and applies to more areas of strategy, tactics, planning and operations -- than the need to accurately assess the full nature of the grand strategic situation in going to war, and to act decisively and comprehensively in every dimension of war that its essential to victory. Any strategic or military doctrine that focuses purely on the military dimension of war, particularly in conventional warfighting terms, is mindless to the point of being a recipe for self-defeat.

Much has been made of the intelligence failures in assessing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. These failures pale to insignificance, however, in comparison with the failure of US policy and military planners to accurately assess the overall situation in Iraq before engaging in war, and for the risk of insurgency if the US did not carry out an effective mix of nation building and stability operations. This failure cannot be made the responsibility of the intelligence community.

Making the right strategic assessments in going to war is a policy level responsibility. In the case of Iraq, it was the responsibility of the President, the Vice President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. All had the responsibility to bring together policymakers, military planners, intelligence experts, and area experts to provide as accurate a picture of Iraq and the consequences of an invasion as possible. Each failed to exercise that responsibility. The nation's leading policymakers chose to act on a limited and highly ideological view of Iraq that planned for one extremely optimistic definition of success, but not for risk or failure. No civilian policymaker or senior military officer can ever be excused for focusing on warfighting and ignoring the political dimension of war. This is especially when a war does not affect national survival and is optional. Defeat of the enemy is always a means to an end. It also has meaning if it can be translated into a lasting political success and grand strategic outcome.

The President, the National Security Council, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and other senior policymakers and military officers failed to meet this responsibility at a fundamental level. There was no real planning for stability operations. Key policymakers did not want to engage in nation building and chose to believe that removing Saddam Hussein from power would leave the Iraqi government functioning and intact. Plans were made on the basis that significant

elements of the Iraqi armed forces would turn to the Coalitions' side, remain passive, or put up only token resistance.

No real effort was made to ensure continuity of government or stability and security in Iraq's major cities and throughout the countryside. Decades of serious sectarian and ethnic tension were downplayed or ignored. Actions by Saddam Hussein's regime that had crippled Iraq's economic development since the early years of the Iran-Iraq War – at time when Iraq had only 17-18 million people were ignored. Iraq was assumed to be an oil wealthy country whose economy could quickly recover if the oil fields were not burned, and transform itself into a modern capitalist structure in the process.

The nation's most senior military commanders compounded these problems by planning for the conventional defeat of the enemy and an early exit from Iraq, by making a deliberate effort to avoid "Phase IV" and stability operations. The fact they did so to minimize the strain on the US force posture, and the "waste" of US troops on "low priority" missions played a major role in creating the conditions under which insurgency could develop and flourish.

The intelligence community and civilian and military area experts may not have predicted the exact nature of the insurgency that followed. Analysis is not prophecy. They did, however, provide ample warning that this was a risk that Iraqi exiles were often failing to provide a balanced or accurate picture, and nation building would be both necessary and extremely difficult. The nation's top policymakers choose to both ignore and discourage such warnings as "negative" and "exaggerated," and to plan for success. They did so having seen the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the sectarian and ethnic problems of Afghanistan.

### ***Planning for Failure and Not Just for Success***

Iraq reiterates a lesson that has been consistent since the US army's first military engagements, and dramatic defeats in its initial battles with Native Americans. To succeed, the US must plan for failure as well as success. It must see the development or escalation of insurgency as a serious risk in any contingency were it is possible, and take preventive and ongoing steps to prevent or limit it.

This is an essential aspect of war planning and no Secretary of Defense, service secretary, senior civilian policy official, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, service chief, or unified and specified commander can be excused for failing to plan and act in this area. Responsibility begins directly at the top, and failures at any other level pale to insignificance by comparison. The fact that failure can always be explained is irrelevant at this level of policymaking and command, it can never be excused.

This is even truer in Iraq because top-level policymakers failed to recognize or admit the scale of the problem as it developed. Their failures were as much failures of reaction as prediction or contingency planning, and failures to accurately assess and react to ongoing events are far less excusable. There were no mysteries involving the scale of the collapse of the Iraqi government and security forces within days of the fall of Saddam Hussein. The reaction was slow, inadequate, and shaped by denial of the seriousness of the problem.

This situation did not improve until more than a year after the fall Saddam's regimes, and at least six months after it became apparent that a serious insurgency was developing. Major resources did not flow into the creation of effective Iraqi forces until the fall of 2004. The US aid effort behaved for nearly a year and a half as if insurgency was truly a small group of diehards or "terrorists." Even in late 2005, top US civilian policymakers split hairs over semantics to try to even avoid the word insurgency, fail to perceive that many Sunni Arab Iraqis see such an insurgency has legitimate causes, and choose to largely publicly ignore the risks of civil conflict and the developing problems in Shi'ite forces and political structures.

The US denied risks and realities of the Vietnam War. European powers initially denied the realities that forced them to end their colonial role. Israel denied the risks and realities of striking deep into Lebanon and seeking to create a Christian-dominated allied state. Russia denied the risks and realities of Chechnya in spite of all the brutal lessons of having denied the risk and realities of Afghanistan.

The failure to learn the need for accurate characterization of the nation and region where counterinsurgency may -- or does -- exist seems to be a constant lesson of why nations go to and stay at war. The failure to plan for risk and failure as well as success is equally significant. Ruthless objectivity is the cheapest solution to be preventing and limiting insurgency, and planning and deploying for the full range of stability operations and nation building is an essential precaution wherever the stakes are high and the risk is significant.

### ***Partnership versus Changing the Nation and the Culture***

Iraq -- like Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia -- is a warning that even the best planning for stability and nation-building will not be enough unless they take place in the right context. The US must plan from the start to treat host countries as partners and not as clients or "experiments." This means avoiding the kind of procounselor operation the US established in the CPA, making the creation of effective local governance and authority a key grand strategic priority, and giving the same priority to the creation of local military, security, and police forces. It should be clear before the US fires the first weapon that it will treat the nation that emerges from a war as a partner, not a people to be occupied. It should be equally clear that the US will not seek to establish bases or a lasting presence, and will transfer all forms of authority as soon as possible.

At the same time, the US cannot afford to have illusions about restructuring cultures and nations in its own image. Force development efforts do not occur in a vacuum. They must be part of a much broader effort to deal with a foreign population -- with different religions, ideologies, goals and cultural values -- on terms that population wants. "Relativism" is inevitable and must be tailored to the political, ethnic, and sectarian divisions within a given nation. Under most conditions, the US will be perceived by a significant percentage of the people as an invader, occupier, neo-colonial power, "crusader," or simply as selfishly serving its own strategic interests. Language alone presents serious problems, and American public diplomacy is too ethnocentric to be effective.

The US can encourage political, economic, and social reform, but cannot demand implement it. Like Iraqis, people must find their own leaders, political structures, and

methods of governance. The US must also recognize that it lacks basic competence in the economics of nation building in societies whose economic structures, ability to execute reforms and projects, and perceived values differ significantly from the US. Different cultures, human rights practices, legal methods, and religious practices can be influenced to evolve in ways the US sees as positive, but there are no universal values, and the US cannot shape a different nation, culture, or religion.

In many cases, the sheer scale of the problem will be a major factor. Force development is difficult enough and it must be tied to political, economic, and social goals that the host country wants and the US can credibly achieve as a "partner" and not an occupier. Demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems can take a generation or more to fully solve. Decades of economic failure, neglect, and discrimination can take a decade or more to fix. A lack of rule of law, working human rights, pragmatic and experienced leaders and political parties cannot be fixed by a few years of outside aid and education.

This does not mean that the US cannot exert tremendous influence, or that the US should not seek reform and change. But, the swamp will almost always be undrainable unless a host government and power-set of local political movements drives the process. Religious, cultural, and ideological reform must come largely from within. The local populace must see the reason for economic reform, and believe in it enough to act. Governance and security must be largely local to be perceived as legitimate. Equally important, if the swamp can be drained, the process will generally take so long that a US counterinsurgency campaign will be lost or won long before the process is completed.

### ***Force Development Must be Tied to As Broad a Structure of Alliances as Possible***

Iraq, like so many other serious Post-WWII insurgencies, shows that successful counterinsurgency means having or creating a local partner that can take over from US forces and that can govern. Both Vietnam and Iraq show the US cannot win an important counterinsurgency campaign alone. The US will always be dependent on the people in the host country, and usually on local and regional allies. And to some extent, will be dependent on the quality of its operations in the UN, in dealing with traditional allies and in diplomacy. If the US can't figure out a way to have or create such an ally, and fight under these conditions, a counterinsurgency conflict may well not be worth fighting.

This means the US must do far more than creating effective allied forces. In most cases, it find a ways to help its partners reshape their process of politics and governance so that the development of security forces is matched by the steady development of governance, and a matching civil presence and the provision of effective government services.

### ***Economics and Counterinsurgency: Dollars Must Be Used as Effectively as Bullets***

Force development must take place under conditions where the US is prepared to use aid and civic action dollars as well as bullets, and the US military has done far better in this area in Iraq than it has in the past. Unfortunately, the history of the insurgency shows that the same cannot be said for USAID in Washington, or for any aspect of the economic planning effort under the CPA. The US ignored the economic and related political and

cultural realities of nation building going into Iraq and ignores the economic realities now.

Every independent assessment of the US aid effort warns just how bad the US performance has been in these areas -- even in critical areas like the oil industry. The US has now spent or committed its way through nearly \$20 billion, and has virtually no self-sustained structural economic change to show for it. Most aid projects spend more money on overhead, contractors, and security than gets to Iraqis in the field. It can't protect most of its aid projects; for too much of post-March 2003 Iraqi economic "growth" has been illusory and comes from US waste and wartime profiteering.

Iraq is also a warning that self-congratulatory measures of achievement are mindless regardless of whether they report on force development or the other US actions necessary to achieve a grand strategic outcome. The way in which the US lied to itself during the early phases of the Iraqi force development effort -- and focuses on the number of units created, the total number of men in service, and total forces deployed -- showed such numbers are meaningless unless they are tied to clear measures of success and effectiveness.

Similarly school buildings completed is irrelevant unless there are books, teachers, furniture, students and security, and the buildings go to troubled areas as well as secure ones. Bad or empty buildings leave a legacy of hostility, not success. Empty or low capacity clinics don't win hearts and minds. Increasing peak power capacity is meaningless unless the right people actually get it.

### ***Warfighting, Stability Operations, and Nation-Building Lessons***

Finally, this analysis of the Iraqi force development effort raises lessons about the way in which forces should be developed from a military perspective.

- **First, warfighters must focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not simply the battle or overall military situation.** The development or improvement of allied forces and counterinsurgency or counterterrorism forces should be part of a broad set of political and grand strategic goals for the war. This may not be direct responsibility of war fighters or military advisors, but shaping such efforts at the command level must ask is whether the US is actually moving toward a strategic outcome that serves the ultimate interests of the US? If warfighters don't know, they should not spend the lives of American men and women in the first place.

More broadly, the US military, and any military force that may be engaged in counterinsurgency warfare and armed peacemaking, should be taught at every level that stability operations and conflict termination are the responsibility of every field-grade officer. (And, for that matter, every civilian.) Warfighters need to act on the principle that every tactical operation must have a political context and set of goals. The US needs to tie its overall campaign plan to a detailed plan for the use of economic aid at every level, from simple bribery to actually seeking major changes in the economy of a given country.

- **Second, US military planning and operations in major counterinsurgency and counter terrorist campaigns should be based on the principle that the best "force multiplier" will be effective allies, and interoperability with a true local partner, are both a means and precondition to serious counterinsurgency warfare.** Even when US forces can dominate the battlefield in conventional or asymmetric warfare, this can only shape the broader political and strategic struggle.

The US can only win most counterinsurgency campaigns if it creates strong allies, and the US must act decisively on this principle. US tactical victories will often only be a means to this end.

The real victories will come when the US has allied troops that can operate against insurgents in the field, and a friendly government to carry out nation building and civil action activities at the same time. Furthermore, creating a real partnership with allies means giving respect and treating them as true partners; it does not mean using allied force to create proxies or tools

- **Third, stability operations, counterinsurgency, armed peacemaking, and many aspects of nation building must focus on creating effective local military, security, and police forces as a primary objective from the initial planning for military operations to their completion.** The creation of effective host country forces must be given the same priority as effective operations by the invading or occupying force. Providing the proper resources in terms of training teams, equipment, facilities, and money is an essential aspect of planning and operations, and officers and officials who do not act on this principle should be removed from command.

The time in which occupying forces could act independently is over, particularly in countries and areas with different religions, ideologies, cultures, political systems, and values. Political legitimacy and stability will almost inevitably depend on the level of success in creating effective national forces. So will political and operation acceptance and support by the people in the country where operations take place. To ignore this reality, is to breed insurgency and resistance, and cede a fundamental advantage to opponents in asymmetric warfare or efforts to go from peace enforcement to internal stability.

- **Fourth, creating effective forces means creating effective security/paramilitary forces and police forces, not simply local military forces.** The US must recognize that creating the conditions for effective governance and police are as important as the military. Military forces can defeat insurgents, but security forces and specially trained police are the key to securing "liberated" or "pacified" areas, providing day-to-day local security, and establish local legitimacy for the government the US is seeking to aid.

If the creation of effective police forces is neglected, or treated as somehow separate from the need for the kind of police and security forces that can operate and survive in areas that remain under terrorist or insurgent threat, military forces will have to perform security duties that will overstretch military forces, and bring the military into constant contact with civilians in ways they are not trained or structured to deal with. The alternatives are to deploy police that cannot perform their mission and survive, or to leave a void where insurgents can return or local militias and forces attempt to perform the security role without being linked to the central government or overall nation building and stability program.

Like Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, Iraq shows that that the effort to create effective police and security forces *should* take place simultaneously with the creation of local military forces, and must be given the same priority. Planning and strategy must similarly see the deployment of police and paramilitary security functions as an essential part of military operations, "pacification," and winning hearts and minds. Advisory efforts and funding must be shaped accordingly.

- **Fifth, success requires effective political structures and governance that can operate in the field as well as at the national level.** Military and security success require matching success in the military, political, economic, and governance dimension. They also require the creation of effective civil ministries to take over local military, security, and police forces.

Success in both counterinsurgency operations, and the development of effective local forces, can only come in a broader political and economic context. Victory cannot be imposed on a people by either US or local forces. Moreover, national politics will generally be less important than establishing effective governance at the national, regional, and local level. Government must be present and provide effective services at the local level for the same reasons that effective local police forces are critical to perceptions of legitimacy and winning hearts and minds.

President Bush has summarized the US counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq as "clear, hold, build." The White House report on the US strategy in Iraq issued in November 2005 described "clear, hold, build" as follows: "We are helping the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi government take territory out of enemy control (clear); keep and consolidate the influence of the Iraqi government

afterwards (hold); and establish new local institutions that advance civil society and the rule of law in areas formerly under enemy influence and control (build).”

Such a strategy can be effective in many ways. It also, however, can become little more than an empty slogan and a tautological hope. Focusing on military force building and assuming that the political, economic, and ideological conditions exist to make a “clear, hold, build” strategy work is not a real-world plan for success.

History has shown that it is generally far easier to “clear” than to “hold.” Insurgents can be defeated and/or dispersed, but they can easily return unless the people want them to be defeated, unless an effective security force or local militia is present, and unless the government can establish an effective and popular presence and ability to govern. Similarly, in case after case, the effort to build – to “establish new local institutions that advance civil society and the rule of law” - - fails because the civil authorities cannot perform their part of the mission and/or there is too little popular support and security for them to do so. The reality is that even when “clear” and “hold” succeed, “build” is so difficult that it can take years of occupation by a counterinsurgency or peacemaking force to create conditions that really lead to “build” -- if ever.

In Iraq, as in many other cases, “clear, hold, build” is almost certain to fail unless the national political process is successful, and backed by local governance and physical and economy strategy. In practice, it is more a useful tactic than a strategy, and can be a remarkably demanding approach to actually winning a large-scale counterinsurgency unless the political and economic conditions exist to support it.

- **Sixth, creating effective local forces also requires the creation of effective ministries to command, manage, and fund them.** Iraq shows all too clearly that both creating effective local forces and creating political legitimacy requires effective civil control at the level of the ministry of defense and ministry of the interior, and effective fiscal management by the ministry of finance.

The exact names and functions of such ministries may differ by war, but local forces cannot be developed in isolation from civil authority and political control, and all of the key ministries must be functional if all forces are to achieve balanced effectiveness, by subject to reasonable levels of fiscal control and honesty, and create a transition to full local sovereignty.

One key aspect of this activity is to create a ministry of justice that can coordinate the effort to put effective courts and judicial offices in the field as areas are secured, and to act as a control upon military, security, and police forces. Like virtually every similar case, Iraq shows that military, security, and police forces will become corrupt, serve special interest, use excessive force, and/or ignore human rights unless a concerted effort is made to deploy courts and civil law to provide an effective set of checks and balances. It also shows that improvised local courts and legal proceedings, or ones that lack national supervision, often become another source of abuses and corruption. The rule of law is only an empty slogan unless there is both an effective national effort and a functioning court and legal system in the field.

- **Seventh, in practice, this means the US must carry out an integrated advisory effort under the Department of Defense with a unified command in the field.** The US cannot afford to rely on interagency coordination in shaping allied forces in serious counterinsurgency, or attempt to manage such efforts from Washington versus the field. It cannot afford to attempt to split the force development effort between a Department of Defense-led effort to shape military forces and a Department of State-led effort to shape police and security forces.

The overall structure of the US effort at counterinsurgency, stability operations, and nation-building should be directed and coordinated by an ambassador heading a strong country team that directly integrated civil and military command. However, as long as there is the reality or a major risk of insurgency or large-scale terrorism, the Department of Defense and the military command and advisory team should shape the overall force development effort as part of an integrated effort to create and deploy the necessary mix of military, security, and police forces. The time may come in which creating a civil police force will have priority and require a different approach, but this is only after the defeat of the insurgency or terrorism.



- **Eighth, the advisory and force development effort must focus from the start on creating forces that will unite the country, and avoid become part of ethnic, sectarian, and other divisions. It must create a force trained to see human rights and the rule of law as an essential part of counterinsurgency and counter terrorism.** Insurgency and terrorism are often bred by national ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and racial differences. Insurgents and terrorists may not be legitimate but the causes that create or encourage them often are. Defeating them requires forces that will unite the country, have a balance that does not make them the tool of divisive interests, and which will respect the rights of ordinary citizens and understand the need for restraint and winning hearts and minds.

The US and Coalition may have made mistakes in shaping Iraq's forces, but they were correct in recognizing these needs from the start and the need for a "culture" within Iraqi forces focused on national interests, inclusion, and the restrained and focused use of force. Internal political factors made this far more difficult in the case of the Special Security Forces and police than the regular military, but such political problems – and ethnic and sectarian divisions -- are typical of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations, stability operations, and nation building.

A consistent effort to create truly national forces, and to overcome as many internal divisions as soon as possible will be critical to establishing the legitimacy of the local government and forces, creating trust, hearts and minds, and ensuring that operations do not create new opponents as they defeat old ones. Even terrorists often fight with legitimate causes, and insurgents often reflect broad political tensions and fears among give ethnic, sectarian, and tribal populations. Tactical expediency that allows force development that compounds these problems may win short-term victories but make strategic success impossible.

Even from the narrow perspective of operational priorities, the issue is not human rights in any theoretical or ideological sense. It is that unfocused operations that deny the populace security, and the innocent such rights, will often be inherently self-defeating.

- **Ninth, the training and force development effort must become a local and national effort as soon as possible.** Effectiveness, perceived legitimacy and victory are all dependent on having local forces taking over as much of the force development and training effort as soon as possible. This means plans to train the trainers must be a high priority from the start, and that foreign or foreign-led training efforts should become a supplement to local efforts as soon as possible.

This is also a key element of making vetting successful, training forces to be national and not factional, and to assume responsibility, rather than deferring to US or other foreign elements and passing responsibility outwards. In many cases, creating successful national training facilities will also be a key to changing the culture and operational values of local forces. This can only take place if such change is institutionalized in local training facilities at every level.

- **Tenth, the force development effort must focus on giving local forces responsibility and visibility as soon as they can become effective.** Legitimacy is a matter of visibility and perception. Local populations need to see their own forces on the ground; they need to see their own government as establishing control. Moreover, even the most skilled US forces can never have the HUMINT capabilities, language skills, cultural sensitivities, and ability to distinguish friend from foe or neutral, of effective local forces. There are key operational, as well as political, advantages to this lesson.
- **Eleventh, it is not enough to train and equip local forces. They must be assisted in deploying into the field, given increasing responsibility at rates they can accept, have embedded advisory teams until they can assume responsibility for their own battle space, and be paired with US or allied units until they can largely fight on their own.**

This analysis describes these efforts in detail, and they are scarcely new lessons of war. New or reorganized forces need more than basic training and equipped. They need patience, time to transition, support in combat, and the benefit of experience. This is particularly true in countries and cultures where initiative has been discouraged, there is no strong NCO corps, corruption and phantom manpower are common, and far too many officers and officials have led from the rear.

Once again, Iraq also shows that such efforts must deal with security and police forces as well as military forces. It is the quality and conduct of security and police forces that determines whether "pacified," "liberated", or stabilized area. Their conduct will be critical to winning hearts and minds, preventing sectarian and ethnic tensions and conflict, and ensuring that security is seen in terms of a legitimate national government.

- **Twelfth, the US must devote the necessary resources from the start.** Much of the problem in Iraq during the first years of the Iraqi force development effort occurred because the US attempted to "nickel and dime" the resources it provided, and to judge the cost-effectiveness of given plans from the year and without any operational experience. The US has paid a high price in blood, time, and dollars for these mistakes in Iraq, as have many peacemaking and humanitarian efforts. Allied force development must have the proper funds, advisory manpower, and be given the proper priority.

It is also axiomatic that such resources must not only be adequate to create effective local military, security, and police forces, but include parallel efforts to create political stability and economic security. The funds and manpower will never be available to create a perfect world, but funding force development and failing to provide enough funds to develop the other essential elements of stability will often lead to a major extension and/or escalation of a war or crisis, and sometimes to defeat.

- **Thirteenth, interoperability and effectiveness require proper support in terms of equipment and facilities, and the proper level of US aid.** The US was far too slow in recognizing the need for proper equipment and facilities. Even now, US advisors may still be underequipping Iraqi forces in terms of protection and some aspects of firepower, having made a present virtue out of past necessity. The proper equipment must not lag local force training, deployment, and operations.

At the same time, the US military needs to tailor its equipment, netcentric warfare capabilities, intelligence and battle management efforts, and training and doctrine, to working with local forces at the level of interoperability they can actually achieve. It is not the responsibility of local forces to catch up. It is the responsibility of the US military to ensure that no matter how advanced its warfighting capabilities may become, they can always adapt to allied needs -- even at relatively unsophisticated levels.

- **Fourteenth, the force development effort must move as quickly as possible towards a balanced and self-sustaining force with the capability to transition out of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism to peacetime operations. There must be a long-term plan.** Any force development effort will require constant change and priority must be given to immediate operational needs. But, far too much of the effort in Iraq focused initially on total manpower, and then on rushing combat battalions into the field without the necessary headquarters, combat and service support, maintenance and logistics to operate as balanced and independent forces. This situation is being corrected, but it should not be repeated.

There also needs to be a clear plan that convince local forces and political leaders that the US and its allies plan to leave, prepares them to change the role and mission of their forces as internal stability is established, ensures that military forces will transition to securing the nation against foreign enemies, and the police will become regular police. The force development effort must define the meaning of victory in practical force planning terms, and set goals that can end in successful conflict termination.

- **Fifteenth, US military forces must have the proper training and skills to perform the mission.** The US military has a long history of relearning the need for area expertise, language skills, cultural sensitivity, and force development efforts the hard way. It does not play easily with others, particularly if they do not have the same degree of professionalism and effectiveness, and cannot operate at technological levels close to US forces.

The US cannot focus solely on asymmetric warfare, counterinsurgency and counterterrorist operations, nation-building, and stability operations. It cannot afford, however, not to retain and expand the skills it has learned from Iraq and Afghanistan and institutionalize them as a key

element and career path within US forces. Improvisation should not be a necessity; its cost is measured in body bags.

- **Sixteenth, the US needs to have a functional interagency process, and partner its military with effective civilian counterparts.** Iraq has shown that political leaders and senior military cannot afford to bypass the system, or to lack support from the civilian agencies that must do their part from the outset. The US needs to begin by deciding on the team it needs to go to war, and then make that team work. It is one of the oddities historically that Robert McNamara got his largest increase in US troops deployed to Vietnam by bypassing the interagency process. The Bush Administration began by going through an interagency process before the war, but largely chose to ignore it after January of 2003.

This is the wrong approach. Counterinsurgency wars are as much political and economic as military. They require political action, aid in governance, economic development and attention to the ideological and political dimension. The US can only succeed here if the interagency process can work.

At another level, the US needs civilian risk-takers. It needs a counterpart to the military in the field. There is no point in supporting the staffing of more interagency coordination bodies in Washington unless their primary function is to put serious resources into the field. The US is not going to win anything by having better interagency coordination, and more meetings, unless the end result is to put the right mix of people and resources out in the countryside where the fighting takes place.

The US needs to put a firm end to the kind of mentality that overstaffs the State Department and intelligence community in Washington, and doesn't require career civilians to take risks in the field. Foreign Service officers should not be promoted, in fact should be selected out, unless they are willing to take risks. The US can get all of the risk takers we want. There already is a flood of applications from qualified people. It can also ensure continuity and expertise by drawing on the brave group of people already in Iraq and Afghanistan -- a remarkable number of whom are already contract employees -- and giving them career status.

In the process, the US also needs to "civilianize" some aspects of its military. It needs to improve both their area and language skills, create the added specialized forces it needs for stability and nation building operations, and rethink tour length for military who work in critical positions and with allied forces. Personal relationships are absolutely critical in the countries where the US is most likely to fight counterinsurgency wars. So is area expertise and continuity in intelligence.

Counterinsurgency needs a core of military and civilians who will accept 18 month to 24-month tours in key slots. The problem today is often that the selection system does not focus on the best person but rather on external personnel and career planning considerations. Moreover, it fails to recognize that those who take such additional risks should be paid for it in full, and be given different leave policies and promotion incentives. Today, a soldier who is only a battalion commander is *only* a battalion commander. The key officers are those with area and counterinsurgency skills that go beyond the combat unit level. Those officers need to have more diverse skills, and deal adequately with the broader dimension of war, and stay long enough to be fully effective.

- **Seventeenth, information operations must make local force building a key focus:** Iraq is yet another example of the importance of information operations focused on local values and perceptions. No matter how well the US and its allies attempt to justify and explain their behavior, some form of local resentment, fear, and conspiracy theories are inevitable. US forces operating in nations with different religions, cultures, ideologies, and values are likely to be seen as "occupiers," or as supporting rival factions. Defeating these perceptions must be a major goal of US information operations in maintaining local support, dealing with neutral or undecided local nationals, and winning over hostile nationals.

The key to success will often be to convince the local populace that the US is making the best effort possible to develop local forces, and these forces will be national and inclusive in character, rather than serve US or factional interests. This will do much to establish the legitimacy of the

national political structure the US is seeking to create, to convince local nationals and others the US plans to leave and do so as soon as this is feasible, and reduce the hostilities and fears that feed insurgency. Like many aspects of information operations and public diplomacy, the key to success will not be “selling” US values and goals, but convincing the local populace, the region, and outside world that the US is seeking to achieve local values and goals and will not be an occupier or seek bases and strategic influence that does not represent the legitimate desire of the nation involved.

- **Eighteenth, local force development takes as long as it takes.** Iraq is a clear warning that there is no present way the US can predict how long it will take to create effective local forces, or set deadlines and calendar dates for such efforts. In many cases, the initial effort may take years of continuing advisory support, and US forces may have to provide air support, transportation, intelligence aid, and emergency combat support for years after local forces take over most responsibilities. US political and military leaders need to accept this reality as the price of engagement and going to war.

### ***The Basic Lesson for Future Conflicts***

The subtext of all of these points is that the US must adopt a fundamentally different approach to counterinsurgency and large-scale counterterrorist operations than the one it used in going to war with Iraq. The goal of such battles is not to win US military victories, but rather to shape nations that can begin to win such battles on their own and emerge as reasonably stable and function entities that serve the broad interests of their peoples.

This means that building capable local forces is not a luxury or afterthought, or a means of aid US forces, but a key grand strategic goal. It must be an integral aspect of plans and operations from the start, and the feasibility of such efforts must be a key consideration in deciding whether to commit US forces. In the case of Coalition operations, this means they must also be a key part of Coalition planning and operations from the outset.

This requires a top down change in priorities and attitudes from the President to the battalion commander in the field. It requires a commitment at the level of the National Security Advisor, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense to make such efforts real and effective, and to accepting their cost as a price of US operations. It inevitably requires interagency coordination, but this is a hollow goal unless it leads to effective interagency action in the field. The purpose of such interagency efforts is to support operations, not micromanage or discuss them.

A basic change is needed in US military thinking, attitudes, and operations. This change may already be underway. A combination of the US experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has taught the need for specialized forces with area and language skills and the fact that nation-building and stability operations are now aspects of the military profession that no competent officer can ignore. The new Department of Defense directive on stability operations issued in the fall of 2005 is a vital step in making such efforts part of US doctrine. US military training is adapting both to counterinsurgency operations and the need to work with allied forces.

Much will depend, however, on just how far the US military can learn to look beyond war fighting to grand strategic outcomes, and become effective in both creating allied forces and seeing the political dimension of victory. It is fair to say that many previous

failures to deal with conflict termination and stability operations began at the highest policy levels.

The uniformed military are, however, the professionals and policymakers come and go, with very different levels of practical experience. At a minimum, military officers have the responsibility to plan and advise for every element of victory, to be capable of every necessary element of operations, and to see "jointness" in grand strategic terms. The officer who cannot see this necessity, and act upon it with full professional competence, is unfit to serve.