

**UNDERSTANDING IRREGULAR WAR:  
THE INFLUENCE OF PLANNING AND PERCEPTIONS  
ON OPERATIONAL OUTCOMES**

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**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

With its powerful fighting force and rich history of experience, the U.S. should be poised for success in irregular war. As the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq prove, however, the U.S. struggles to win these asymmetric fights. This dissertation examines the disconnect between apparent ability and ultimate success by examining three research questions, regarding the rationale for war, recognition of irregular war as a significant military operation, and conduct of an effective operations. These questions led to three major findings. First, I argue that U.S. policymakers often commit military troops to irregular wars without fully developing an understanding of the long term national security goals they wish to achieve. Absent a clear statement of the rationale for intervention as tied to long-term objectives, operational effectiveness inherently suffers. Second, the military's partial repudiation of small war combined with a lack of doctrinal guidance for soldiers in the field has consistently manifested itself in an awkward transition from combat to stabilization, which often preordains long-term strategic failure. As military forces transition from the kinetic to stabilization phase, soldiers on the ground often misstep as they are untrained and ill-prepared for these missions. Finally, the United States' lack of effective planning for irregular war derives from policymakers' failure to promulgate a timely and effective national policy, which addresses the unique challenges presented by irregular war. To succeed in irregular wars, I argue that U.S. policy makers must 1) ensure all involved agencies must adopt a "unity of effort" approach, 2) recognize the operation as a political-military effort, 3) achieve legitimacy with the indigenous peoples, and 4) effectively utilize strategic intelligence. Through these changes in approach and understanding, the United States will be better equipped to win the irregular wars of the future.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *“The Struggle to Succeed: An Introduction”*

The United States military is the most powerful armed force in the world. Due to its **technological pre-eminence, highly skilled personnel, and rigorous training procedures**, American fighting forces present a superior array of warfighting capability in conventional combat. Yet, this traditional approach to war, epitomized by two major armies clashing on a battlefield is waning as the predominant method of fighting. Increasingly, today’s military forces are fighting irregular wars<sup>1</sup> and rebuilding post-conflict regions.<sup>2</sup> This dissertation asks whether the U.S. military is properly prepared to accomplish these increasingly common and difficult assignments. Historically, as the American experience in Vietnam proved, irregular wars<sup>3</sup> have represented a significant challenge for a force accustomed to major combat. Furthermore, the establishment of long-term stability in post-conflict regions has emerged as a

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<sup>1</sup> The Marine Corps’ Small Wars Manual defines small wars as “operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as determined by the policy of our nation.” Other types of related actions include counterinsurgency and peace keeping operations. Other terms used to describe “small war” have been low-intensity conflict, stabilization, security and transition operations, (SSTR), guerilla war and irregular war. In this dissertation, I will discuss counterinsurgency as a type of small war. For further clarification and definitions, see Frank G. Hoffman, “Small Wars Revisited: The United States and Nontraditional Wars,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28, no. 6 (December 2005). The U.S. Marine Corps’ *1940 Small Wars Manual* available from <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/swm/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> I primarily address modern reconstruction efforts or “third generation reconstruction.” In this work, I rely on Robert Orr’s classification scheme, which separates reconstructions into three eras: First Generation Operations, as post-WWII era; Second Generation, as 1990’s Humanitarian intervention; and Third Generation, as Post 9/11 operations. Robert C. Orr, *Winning the Peace: An American Strategy for Post-Conflict Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2004), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Irregular wars have been assigned many monikers in the last century. Traditionally described as small wars, others labels have also been used including: operations other than war, low intensity conflict, asymmetric conflict, unconventional war, and hybrid war. The terms low-intensity conflict and Operations Other than War came into use in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Operations Other than War, abbreviated OOTW, are defined in Joint Pub 3-07 where they are described an extension of the U.S. Army’s basic war-fighting principles, which seek to “deter war and promote peace.” Currently, the U.S. Army uses the term stabilization operation. Asymmetric conflict and unconventional war have often been used by military strategists to describe a kind of conflict which differs from traditional combat. For purposes of continuity and clarity, I will use the phrase “irregular war” to describe these conflicts. *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other than War*, Joint Pub3-07, 15 June 1995, (accessed December 2, 2010); available from <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/jp3-07.pdf>

particularly demanding job for U.S forces working with nascent governments, recreating infrastructure and establishing legitimacy.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars and practitioners have suggested that one of the major reasons that the United States has struggled to succeed in irregular war is that American soldiers strongly prefer major combat to other types of military operations. Russell Weigley introduced a concept underpinning this explanation in his acclaimed 1973 thesis that the U.S. has a distinct “American way of war.” In the shadow of Vietnam, Weigley argued that the United States’ dominant approach to warfare is based on an enduring, collective American history, culture and strategic outlook.<sup>5</sup> Other scholars dispute Weigley’s thesis asserting that America’s approach to war is malleable and responsive to the existing security and strategic environment.<sup>6</sup> This dissertation does not fully accept either of these explanations for the following reasons. If Weigley’s American way of war thesis accurately describes the U.S. approach, then the United States would not only eschew irregular war, but would also be nearly incapable of success. History has proven the opposite; in cases from the Philippines to Panama, the United States has enjoyed some measure of success in non-major combat operations. On the other hand, if America

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<sup>4</sup> Although scholars vary in their precise definitions of post-conflict operations, they generally agree on the major rebuilding tasks: creation of a workable settlement, establishment of security, formation of a working government, development of a functioning economy, and consideration of the many legal issues raised as part of post-conflict justice. I acknowledge the considerable and weighty problems associated with the establishment of justice during the stability phase, but will not directly address this issue in the dissertation, due to space constraints. For definitions of post-conflict operations, see Roy Licklider, “Obstacles to Peace Settlement,” in *Turbulent Peace*, ed. Chester Crocker, Pamela Aall, and Fen Osler Hampson (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), 701-713. See also Michael Doyle, “Strategy and Transitional Authority” in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, ed. S.J Stedman (Boulder, CO: Lynne-Rienner Publishers, 2002), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Numerous authors have written monographs on the military’s preference for major combat. See Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1977); Thomas P. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Son’s, 2004); Colin Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future War* (London: Phoenix Press, 2007). Additional scholars have contributed to the literature with essays and articles, including Antulio Echevarria, II. “Principles of War or Principles of Battle?” in *Rethinking Principles of War*, ed. Anthony McIvor, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005); and Michael Melillo, “Outfitting a Big-War Military with Small-War Capabilities” *Parameters* 36, no. 3, (Autumn, 2006.)

<sup>6</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, “Kosovo and the New American Way of War,” in *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, ed. Andrew J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 48. See also Max Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002.)

capably devised military responses to a constantly changing strategic environment, U.S. forces should enjoy success in irregular war with greater frequency and more durable results. This dissertation explores this apparent conundrum and the explanatory value of the American Way of War approach.

This long standing academic debate between proponents of an American way of war thesis and those who disagree presents an interesting puzzle for policy-makers academics and military strategists. In addition, it raises important related questions regarding irregular war. Bluntly put, I ask whether the military's alleged predilection for major combat has influenced its effectiveness in irregular war scenarios. Although many military authors and some major writers in the security studies field have written on the American way of war, I have uncovered limited scholarly work that asks how a preference for major combat has directly affected American success in stabilization operations. In other words, this dissertation seeks to fill a gap in the literature, which examines the challenges confronted by a military engaged in irregular war: I ask how preparation and training for stabilization influences the operation's effectiveness.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine if and how preferences for a major combat influences pre-operational planning, troop performance, and long-term success in irregular war and stabilization operations.<sup>7</sup> I explore this puzzle with a view toward developing recommendations to ensure an effectively planned operation yields a successful outcome. This premise gives rise to the following main research questions:

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<sup>7</sup> The U.S. Army typically refers to stabilization as a "Phase IV Operation." The phases include: I. Deter, II. Seize the Initiative, III. Decisive Operations, and IV. Transition. *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, Joint-Pub 3-0, Washington, D.C.: Sept 10, 2001, CH III-19 (accessed December 2, 2010); available from [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_0.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf)

Q.1 What is the rationale for military intervention?

Q.2 Why has the United States experienced such varied levels of effectiveness in combat and stability operations?

Q.3. How should the United States engage in irregular war operations to ensure successful outcomes in the longterm?

Q.1 Rationale for Intervention

When considering intervention, one of the most difficult challenges policy makers confront precedes any military action: policy makers must decide *whether to intervene*. To address this crucial issue, I examine several corollary questions. What is the state's purpose in intervening? Are policy makers primarily influenced by a Clausewitzian *raison d'etat*? To what extent do policy makers include Kantian democratization as a stated goal? And finally, how does the state's reason for intervention influence its commitment to stabilization? In exploring the state's underlying motivation for action, I aim to develop analytical tools for policy makers confronted with the difficult question of whether to intervene.

Q.2 Varying Levels of Effectiveness: Phase III versus Phase IV

In a preponderance of cases, the U.S. military is fabulously successful in combat, as soldiers fight organized armies, topple unstable regimes and ward off imminent humanitarian emergencies. These same U.S. forces, however, often struggle to achieve similar effectiveness in stabilization operations.<sup>8</sup> This dissertation asks what causes the disparity in relative success

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<sup>8</sup> Although a major part of this dissertation will assess and analyze the work of U.S. forces in stability operations, I also examine the role *other* U.S. agencies have played in reconstruction efforts. In other words, I will ask who should engage in post-conflict reconstruction operations. David P. Cavaleri, "Easier Said than Done: Making the Transition between Combat Operations and Stability Operations," *Global War on Terrorism, Occasional Paper #7* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2005), 31.

between combat and stabilization. Several ancillary questions emerge—To what extent does Russell Weigley’s notion of fighting an “American way of war” influence success in stabilization? Are U.S. forces properly trained and prepared to perform stability operations? How has existing doctrine assisted or detracted from U.S. forces as they prepared for and conducted small war?

*Q.3 Effective Counterinsurgency and Successful Stabilization*

For the last sixty years, modern armies have engaged in irregular wars<sup>9</sup> and have struggled to succeed against non-state actor enemies on ill-defined battlefields. In the final section of this dissertation, I ask why. Why do military forces, from developed states with superior technology and resources, often flounder in conflicts against decidedly less competent adversaries? How do policy-makers’ strategic visions of a wartime end state and definitional understanding of war influence operational success? Should policy makers redefine their perception of irregular war to be more inclusive—in terms both of goals and actors?

*Hypothesis*

My first hypothesis addresses question 1:

H.1 U.S. policymakers often commit military troops in irregular wars without fully developing an understanding of the long term national security goals they wish to achieve.

My second and third hypotheses are related and respond to questions 2 and 3.

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<sup>9</sup> Max Boot argues that the first modern small war occurs with the French experience in Indochina. Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace*, 287.

H.2 The military's partial repudiation of small war combined with a lack of doctrinal guidance for soldiers in the field has consistently manifested itself in an awkward transition from combat to stabilization, which often preordains operational failure.

H.3 The United States' lack of effective planning for irregular war derives from policymakers' failure to promulgate a timely and effective national policy, which addresses the unique challenges presented by irregular war and ensures cooperation, coordination and funding for all agencies with a stake in the outcomes associated with an effective stabilization.

I argue that as the state prepares for an irregular war, policy makers must clearly outline the long term national policy goals that the operation is meant to achieve. In this way, the war plan will necessarily include a robust effort to develop a workable arrangement for the forthcoming stabilization operation. This plan, consistent with national policy goals, would emanate from leaders of all interested agencies and ensure consistency with national level policy guidance on stabilization. In other words, if senior level policy makers develop a national plan for stabilization operations and ensure all agency stakeholders accept responsibility and cooperate in confronting the challenges of irregular war, then the United States' military, along with its civilian partners, will enjoy greater success in future stabilization efforts. In the words of Brent Skowcroft and Warren Berger, “[stabilization] straddles an uncomfortable perch between conventional war fighting, the purview of the military—and traditional economic development assistance—traditionally a civilian responsibility.” The dissertation seeks a prescriptive process for dismounting the perch and moving forward.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Three major bodies of literature inform my work: the theoretical basis behind the decision to go to war, the American approach to war, and the effective conduct of irregular war. First, international relations theory lays the foundation for understanding why states choose to engage in irregular wars. The question of whether states should intervene is best considered within the bounds of this theoretical literature. Specifically, in this section, I examine the long-standing debate between neo-realism, which couples intervention with a state's *raison d'etat*,<sup>10</sup> and neo-liberalism, which perceives that states, motivated by a desire for international stability, should promote democracy as a guarantor for peace.<sup>11</sup> I close my theoretical examination with the proposal of a third approach, neo-classical realism, which seeks to combine the practical elements of neo-realism with the more idealistic views associated with neo-liberalism.

The second body of literature essential for this study of irregular war engages the debate over the American “way of war” thesis and offers key insights into why the U.S. military has achieved varied levels of effectiveness in irregular war operations. Drawing on Russell Weigley’s notion that war has traditionally meant “major combat,”<sup>12</sup> I argue that America has often perceived irregular war as less important. Therefore, policy makers have neglected to develop comprehensive doctrinal guidance, which would enable military commanders to properly prepare their troops for irregular war. As a result, soldiers retreated into standard practices for which they are well-trained; they fought irregular wars in the way they would have approached major combat. I explore the feasibility of promulgating an effective plan for

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<sup>10</sup> Waltz’s systems theory is based on several underlying assumptions. First, states exist in perpetual anarchy, without an overarching body to constrain state action. Therefore, states survive only by helping themselves in a disorderly system. Thus, the established international structure drives state behavior. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1979), 38-59.

<sup>11</sup> The Democratic peace theory is the notion that democracies will not engage in war against one another. Michael Doyle is recognized as one the major scholars of this theory as he used empirical evidence based on democratic to prove the theory. Many liberal theorists use the democratic peace theory as justification for democratization, arguing that a greater of number of democracies translates into a more peaceful international community.

<sup>12</sup>Weigley, xviii.

irregular war—not just a war plan for combat, but a plan that would include long-term strategies for a successful stabilization.

Finally, irregular war literature is critical for this study, as I explore the definition of a successful stabilization effort. I argue that stabilization efforts must be properly understood as inclusive of both political and military elements and therefore must be performed in a unified way by several key agencies. These disparate groups must work together to share intelligence, information and strategies in pursuit of a joint goal. In addition, the interveners must work to understand the history, culture and relationships among the indigenous peoples. In this way, the interveners not only improve the effectiveness of their operation, but also advance their standing in the eyes of indigenous peoples, where they are seen as assisting locals in carrying out their own internal goals. This final section is a crucial part of this study as it incorporates my two initial questions regarding the decision for intervention and perceptions of war, with a fundamental question of this work—how should an irregular war be fought? By focusing on the relevant literature in these three conceptual areas of 1) the decision to intervene, 2) perception of war, and 3) effective irregular war operations, I examine how past efforts can serve as a model for future success.

### THE DECISION TO INTERVENE: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

Classical realists theorize that states naturally seek power. They do so because states operate in a perpetually competitive environment, in which other states seek to maximize their power.<sup>13</sup> Due to the nature of the inherently contentious international system, states compete with other states.

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<sup>13</sup> The theoretical foundations of realism draw from early thinkers. In 400 B.C., Thucydides focused on power and competition as the defining feature of inter-state relationships. In the sixteenth century, Machiavelli advised the Prince that his main responsibility was preservation of the state at any cost. In other words, the Prince was

Neorealists draw from these classical realist precepts and share similar notions regarding the innate anarchy of the international system. In his seminal work, *The Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth Waltz presents his theory, termed structural realism,<sup>14</sup> which designates the international structure as the primary influence on international politics and the instigator of state behavior.<sup>15</sup> Neorealists contend that states, driven by the international structure, must engage and even initiate conflict to avoid aggressive action by *other* states.<sup>16</sup>

In the modern context, neorealists use the term “self-help exercise”<sup>17</sup> to describe this type of preventative action, which takes the form of intervention and post-combat stabilization operations. According to Waltz, states only intervene when it is consistent with their national security interests, in this case, to forestall the threats caused by unstable states. Therefore, the tenets of neorealism are particularly relevant to this study of stabilization, which I conceive as a form of self-help.<sup>18</sup>

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permitted any action provided it was in the state’s best interest. Thomas Hobbes argued that politics was critical to avoiding the “war of all against all.” See Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by George Bull (New York: Penguin Books, 1981) 119. Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian Wars*, translated by Rex Warner (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975) 55-57, 148-150, and 401-402. Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988) Chapter XIII.

<sup>14</sup> Waltz’s original taxonomy organizes the international system into three levels: 1) individual; 2) unit; and, 3) structural capabilities. To prove his thesis, Waltz offers “levels of analysis” labeled as images. The first image, or behavioral approach, relates to human nature. The second image, or the state’s internal construct, affects the national policy maker’s decision for war. The third image, or international system’s structure, drives state behavior and influences the occurrence of war. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1979) 88-99. See also Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 6-14.

<sup>15</sup> Waltz’s critics charge that structural realism fails as theory because its rigid state-centric view neglects modern changes like technological advance and world-wide economic inter-connectedness. David Singers’ classic critique of Waltz’s perceives the theory as limited in its utility because it omits a discussion of the state’s influence on the international system. J. David Singer, “The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations,” *World Politics* 14, no.1. (October 1961). See also Barry Buzan, Charles Jones and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For Waltz’s response, see Kenneth Waltz, “Neorealism: Confusions and Criticisms,” *Journal of Politics and Society* 15 (Spring 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Waltz formally introduced neorealist theory during the Cold War to explain why weaker states choose to join with or bandwagon against their more powerful adversaries. The concept of bandwagoning remains a useful concept in the post 9/11 world as nations join together against rogue states and terrorist groups.

<sup>17</sup> Self-help exercises include territorial expansion, market development and *nation-building*: Robert Pfaltzgraff and James E. Dougherty, *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, ed 4 (New York: Longman, 1997) 83.

<sup>18</sup> A second, related aspect of realist theory, important to this study, proceeds from Offense-Defense Theory, which argues states have varying capabilities and proclivities for offense and defense. Offensive realists, like John

The second theoretical approach I examine in this work is neo-liberalism, which emanates from the basic notion that states naturally prefer to cooperate to achieve systemic stability.<sup>19</sup> One of the major strains of neo-liberalist theory, Kantian-inspired Democratic Peace Theory is particularly important for this work.<sup>20</sup> The Democratic Peace Theory argues that democratic dyads do not fight one another.<sup>21</sup> Democratic states eschew war because they perceive the value in working with other states to achieve peace and stability. In this way, democracies have a pacifying influence on the international system. Some democratic peace theorists further pursue the application of this argument to say that those desiring peace should pursue democratization work—as greater numbers of democratic states make for a more peaceful international environment.<sup>22</sup> Employing this logic, many neo-liberalists argue that the spread of democracy reduces the occurrence of war.<sup>23</sup>

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Mearsheimer and Fareed Zakaria, argue that a militarily superior state should engage in warfare to protect itself whenever necessary. In contrast, defensive realists, like Richard Jervis and Steven van Evera claim that states should not be so eager for war, because victory is uncertain when the adversary can easily defend against attack. This debate closely pertains to my study because modern, developing states have access to inexpensive but deadly weapons, making defense much easier. See John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no.2, (1978), 174. See also Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “Offense Defense Theory and its Critics,” *Security Studies* 4, no.4, (Summer, 1995.)

<sup>19</sup> Liberalism is based on the notion that states prefer cooperation over competition in their international dealings. The theory finds its origins in Immanuel Kant’s *To Perpetual Peace*, where he argues that that a harmony of interest in peace will spread democracy. Kant’s three basic tenets for state government include: 1) Adoption of a republican constitution, 2) Use of international organizations, and 3) Adherence to international law. President Woodrow Wilson promoted this idea at the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in his bid to make the world “safe for democracy.” Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace* (Indianapolis: Library of Liberal Arts, 1957.)

<sup>20</sup>D.V. Babst, “A Force for Peace,” *Industrial Research* 14, (1972.) M. Small and J.D. Singer, “War Proneness of Democratic Regimes,” *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1, (1976.)

<sup>21</sup> Liberal scholar, Michael Doyle undertook a comprehensive study of the effects of democracy on frequency of war. Based on empirical evidence, Doyle found that the likelihood of war between democracies is significantly lower than for non-democratic or democratic/non-democratic pairs. Doyle first classified states as democratic or non-democratic based on state electoral processes, constraints on the state executive, and existence of a working justice system. He then determined the frequency of war between democratic dyads. Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no.4 (December 1986,) 1151-1169.

<sup>22</sup> For further development of this theory, see Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.)

<sup>23</sup> Realist critics, like Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield, find practical and philosophical weaknesses in the Democratic Peace Theory. They assert the democratizing states are unstable, which may incite hostile internal groups. This, in turn can lead to conflict with neighboring states and disruption of the region. Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.) See also Barry Posen, “Military Responses to Refugee Disasters” in *Use of Force Military Power and International*

Finally, I close my theoretical examination by applying a neo-classical realist approach to the intervention decision. This third interpretation serves as a bridge between a strict neo-realist and neo-liberalist approach and offers great promise as a helpful method of understanding why states choose to intervene. Neoclassical realism rigidly adheres to the underlying realist notion regarding the preservation of state self-interest. It adds, however, a recognition that self-interest must be understood broadly and can in fact include the intervention in another state's affairs.<sup>24</sup> In this dissertation, I test neo-classical realism as way of understanding why states have chosen to engage in the past and forecasting when states should choose to engage in the future.

In sum, international relations theory literature provides the fundamental framework for my examination of the state's rationale for intervention. Through determination of the state's national interest and examination of its fundamental belief in the process of democratization, I seek to offer guidance to state policy makers on when and in which instances the state should and will choose intervention for the larger purpose of international stability.

### AMERICAN WAY OF WAR

In this section, I examine the link between the military's struggle with stabilization operations and the reality that America prefers, plans, and prepares for major combat. I argue that stabilization operations are often neglected as secondary part of the military's perceived cardinal purpose, fighting and winning this nation's wars. I argue that this pervasive belief yields a lack of doctrinal guidance for leaders preparing their troops to stabilize, transform and

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*Politics*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed, Robert Art and Kenneth Waltz (New York: University Press of America, 2004,) 421. For additional critiques of the Democratic Peace Theory and the related theory of liberal institutionalism, see Robert Keohane, "Realist Theory and the Institutional Challenge at the End of Cold War" in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: the Contemporary Debate* ed. David Baldwin, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.)

<sup>24</sup>Gideon Rose, "Neo-classical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51 no. 1 (October 1998.)

rebuild post-conflict states and the related problem of improper training for soldiers engaged in stabilization exercises.

I begin by asking why America prefers major combat and how this leads to improper preparedness. The military's predilection for "big-war" is outlined in Russell Weigley's thesis regarding the "American way of war." In his seminal work, Weigley asserts that the United States has adopted a successful method of warfare, which relies on a massive military force, striving to defeat the enemy through attrition.<sup>25</sup> Several recent scholars<sup>26</sup> and military strategists dispute Weigley, arguing that the era of major combat has ended. Max Boot calls for a "new American way of war," which capitalizes on an agile military force that adeptly uses speed, intelligence, and technology. According to Boot, irregular wars will be the United States' most difficult modern challenge,<sup>27</sup> as today's armed forces increasingly fight an imprecise enemy on an ill-defined battlefield.<sup>28</sup> To successfully fight this new "American way of war," troops must properly train and prepare,<sup>29</sup> and make it their primary responsibility.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Weigley argues that Americans typically prefer and excel at conventional-style warfare due to a common political culture paradoxically based on expansionism and isolationism, and a historical military experience based on a desire for hemispheric domination and quick military victory. Weigley. xviii.

<sup>26</sup> Brian Linn offers one of the most important critiques of Weigley's work, where he argues that annihilation and attrition are not the predominant method of warfare. He takes exception to Weigley's neglect of deterrence as a long-standing national policy and the ability of American policy makers and military strategists to develop utilitarian strategies that respond to the current environment. Brian Linn, "American Way of War, Revisited," *Journal of Military History* 66, no. 2 (2002.)

<sup>27</sup> Jonathon Rauch enters this rich debate offering that characterization of the American way of war as "new or old" is less important than the identification of the type of war American forces will typically confront in the future. Rauch points out that the United States has fought many "small wars" including the 1915 invasion of Haiti, the occupations of Samoa, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Panama, the rebuilding of post-war Germany and Japan and the modern operation in Afghanistan. Jonathan Rauch, "Fight small! It's the true American Way of War," *National Journal* 34 (June 15, 2002.)

<sup>28</sup> Max Boot, "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July/August, 2003.)

<sup>29</sup> Israeli scholar, Martin Van Creveld has long argued this point. In his most recent work, *The Changing Face of War*, points out that western armies have historically struggled to win against a guerilla insurgent. The reason for this difficulty is that western troops were improperly training to fight an insurgency. Martin Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War* (New York: Presidio Press, 2006), 194.

<sup>30</sup> As Secretary of Defense from 2002-2006, Donald Rumsfeld called for a "transformation" of the military, but the changes he implemented related to technological advancement and force superiority, rather than a true shift in military culture. See Donald Rumsfeld. "Transforming the Military," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no.3 (May/June 2002.) See also Christopher Kolenda, "Transforming how we Fight: A Conceptual Approach," *Naval War College Review* 56 (Spring 2003,) 102. For a criticism of Rumsfeld's transformation, see Max Boot, "The Struggle to Transform

Related to the problem of preparedness and training is convincing military forces of their vital role in irregular war. Antoine-Henri Jomini, writing in 1804 validates the traditional view that professional militaries prefer to fight other professional militaries.<sup>31</sup> According to Jomini, wars involving non-professional combatants are “dangerous and deplorable,” and professional militaries should seek chivalrous confrontations with their peers as a method for resolving inter-state differences.

This traditional mindset presents a difficult challenge for any policy maker seeking to convince today’s soldiers of the need to train and prepare for irregular war.<sup>32</sup> Many modern military strategists observe a strategic culture in the armed forces, which demonstrate “big-war preferences” and perceive small wars as less important. Consistent with this view is the notion that the job of “nation-building” belongs to civilian agencies.<sup>33</sup> I address this perception and evaluate how it has influenced troop effectiveness and operational outcomes.

The second major issue regarding the U.S. military’s effectiveness in conducting irregular war is the sufficiency of doctrinal guidance.<sup>34</sup> By the interwar period in the late 1930’s,

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the Military,” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no.2, (March/April 2005.) Boot argues that the military’s needed “transformation” does not require heavy spending or even improved battlefield capability; instead it requires a change in culture to incorporate greater numbers of civil affairs units, and cultural and linguist experts into the military ranks.

<sup>31</sup> Antoine-Henri Jomini, *Treatise on Grand Military Operations*, trans. S.B. Holabird, (New York: D. van Nostrand, 1865) 450-451.

<sup>32</sup> Jeffrey Record expands and modernizes this debate of the American Way of War to include the American people. Record claims that small wars and counter insurgency operations have been traditionally unsuccessful, drained the American economy and frustrated U.S. citizens. He advises against small wars, because according to his analysis they are inconsistent with U.S. national security goals. Jeffrey Record, “American Way of Battle: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency,” *Policy Analysis* 577, (September 2006.)

<sup>33</sup> For a short discussion on military culture and major-war preferences, see Robert M. Cassidy, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya: Military Strategic Culture and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Conflict*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute Press, 2003.)

<sup>34</sup> According to Chapter One of the “1940 Small Wars Manual,” the Marine Corps defined a small war “as a vague name for a variety of military operations. As applied to the United States, small wars are undertaken under executive authority wherein military force is combined with military pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests are determined by the foreign policy of our nation.” Small Wars Manual (accessed December 2, 2010); available from <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/swm/index.htm>

the U.S. Marine Corps had engaged in thirty-six irregular wars,<sup>35</sup> and did so without any manuals or plans to direct their efforts. Veterans of these wars, noting the lack of guidance, urged the Marine Corps to develop the 1940 “Small Wars Manual.” Although written almost seventy years ago, the operational guidance and underlying analysis is surprisingly prescient. Section IV of the manual specifically deals with the critical issue of training for irregular war and observes that:

Particular attention must be paid to initiative, adaptability, leadership, teamwork, and tactical efficiency of those individuals comprising the units. These qualities, while in no small degree important in major warfare, are exceedingly important in small war operations.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, the manual cautions that training and operation must be particularized for the region, as a one-size fits-all approach neglects the critical differences which gave rise to original unrest.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the 1940 Small Wars manual is both applicable and significant.

Until 2007, however, this manual was the single publication guiding the military’s efforts in stabilization operations. Little had been done to capture lessons learned in Vietnam, Panama and other “small war” operations of the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s. No further doctrine direct these efforts had been released. Although the 2007 release of the Counterinsurgency Manual<sup>38</sup> represented an important advance in the military’s ability to organize and prepare for stabilization operations, the 70 year gap separating the release of the Small Wars Manual and the Counterinsurgency Manual is indicative of the importance placed on military operations not involving major combat. I examine the effects of that this strategic void placed on the conduct,

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<sup>35</sup> Although beginning with the Philippines, most of the later operations occurred in Latin America.

<sup>36</sup> *Small Wars Manual*.

<sup>37</sup> Specifically the manual states that the “application of military force by itself may not restore peace and orderly government, because the fundamental causes of the unrest may be political, economic, and social.” See also Ronald Schaffer, “The 1940 Small Wars Manual and the Lessons of History,” *Military Affairs* 36 (April 1972.)

<sup>38</sup> *Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM 3-24*, Washington, D.C. 2007 (accessed 13 July 2010); available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fmi3-07-22.pdf>

planning and performance of irregular wars and how decision makers proceeded in light of the doctrinal gap.

### WAGING AN IRREGULAR WAR-- EFFECTIVELY<sup>39</sup>

Using the literature of irregular war as a foundation, the third section of this dissertation confronts the disconnect between the generally acknowledged view that irregular wars must be fought differently with the apparent reality that policy makers and military strategists have not always fulfilled this mandate. Part of the reason for this disconnect was the lack of doctrinal guidance, which complicated the ability of military strategists to construct an operational plan that achieved long-term policy goals.

The problem was eased somewhat in 2007, when the U.S. Army released the Counterinsurgency Manual (COIN)—which highlighted four major elements of any successful plan. First, irregular war operations must include military and political elements in their plan. Next, the operation itself must be perceived as legitimate by the indigenous peoples. Third, those engaged in the operation must move forward with a unity of effort. And, finally, operational planners must capitalize on strategic intelligence to ensure mission success.

While the COIN Manual offered a critically important first step toward proper definition and planning design, it did not offer a comprehensive solution in that several key questions remain, including: 1) how policy makers should construct a plan to include the “political element?” 2) Who should be involved in the unified effort? 3) How can the legitimacy of the

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<sup>39</sup> Maxwell Manwaring offers an interpretation of the concept of unity of effort, which is particularly useful for this work, as he refers to the bureaucratic struggle that occurs amongst agencies competing for dominance in the planning realm. Manwaring argues that successful cooperation among bureaucratic actors directly influences the opportunity for successful resolution of the conflict. Maxwell Manwaring and Edwin Corr, “Defense and Offense in Peace and Stability Operations” in *Beyond Declaring Victory and Coming Home: Challenges of Peace and Stability Operations*, ed. Maxwell Manwaring and Anthony James Joes (Westport: Praeger, 2000,) 21.

operation be assured? 4) How should strategic intelligence be best utilized to ensure mission success? In this dissertation, I apply these questions of cooperation and coordination to past irregular war operations, and offer guidance on they might be best applied in the future.<sup>40</sup>

To effectively fight irregular wars, the United States must design a political/military operation, which acknowledges that the enemy in an irregular war is a non-traditional enemy-- most commonly a non-state actor, terrorist or local militia group. This premise undergirds one of the most challenging aspects of this study, as I examine how U.S. military forces confront these new enemies and bring optimal balance to a necessarily political/military operation. Writing in the early 1960's, French scholar Roger Trinquier's main purpose<sup>41</sup> was to guide major armies battling against less capable foes.<sup>42</sup> In his critical exegesis of counterinsurgency warfare, he argues success is only possible through a comprehensive political/military operation, which focuses on disruption of the enemy's organization.<sup>43</sup>

In their recently published work, Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew refine this thesis by arguing the key to an effective counterinsurgency is understanding the enemy and exploiting his weakness.<sup>44</sup> The authors further contend that policy makers and military strategists cannot adopt a one-size fits all approach to counterinsurgency operations; they must individually fashion plans for each operation, which employs reliable intelligence and reflects an appreciation for regional culture. This dissertation argues that irregular wars are complex operations against amorphous

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<sup>40</sup> My purpose in asking the question, *who should fight small war*, is that I may address strategies for partnership with other U.S. agencies, multi-national actors and states, and NGO's.

<sup>41</sup> Roger Trinquier writes his reflective critiques largely as a result of the French experience in Indochina and his personal role in a counterinsurgency effort. Roger Trinquier, *A French View of Counterinsurgency*, Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Press.

<sup>42</sup> Along with Roger Trinquier, David Galula is also credited as a groundbreaker in field of counterinsurgency. Galula discusses the critical role of the native population, without whose support, the intervening forces cannot succeed. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice* (Praeger Security Institute Press, 1964.)

<sup>43</sup> Trinquier offers three basic principles to succeed in guerilla warfare: "cut the guerilla off from the populations that sustains him; to render the guerrilla zones untenable; and to coordinate these actions over a wide area." He warns the reader that winning a counterinsurgency takes unrelenting patience. Trinquier, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorist and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006,) 261.

enemies, and the key to success is having a well-developed and reasonably flexible plan for stabilization before combat concludes.

Another fundamental issue related to the need for the development of an effective stabilization operation is the importance of the intervening force being viewed as legitimate by the indigenous peoples. In other words, inhabitants of the state must endorse and engage in the stabilization operation. Native peoples must take an active designing their government, rebuilding infrastructure, disbursing justice, and revitalizing the economy; the intervening force must assist in these efforts—but cannot subsume them. Perceptions of legitimacy are crucial, because distrust by the indigenous people often contributes to operational failure. Local inhabitants must be assured that the intervening force has made a long-term commitment to their land and its rebuilding. Without this assurance, local supporters or other neutral parties can easily won over by the insurgent elements typically present in irregular war scenarios. In this way, perceptions of illegitimacy could lead to a strengthened enemy.

One of the major goals of this dissertation is to explore why policy makers and military leaders, who notionally accept the importance of stabilization, regularly conduct irregular wars with a preference for combat and disregard the criticality of the non-combat piece. Writing in 2004, Francis Fukuyama validates the notion that counterinsurgency operations are a two-part process, establishing security and nation-building.<sup>45</sup> I argue that this linear approach is too limiting<sup>46</sup> and exacerbates the problem of effective planning for irregular war by creating

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<sup>45</sup> [Francis Fukuyama](#) argues that reconstruction should be conceived as a two-part linear construct, including both security establishment and nation building. In phase one, military forces stabilize the region and establish security. At the same time, non-military personnel restore basic services, rebuild societal infrastructure, and offer humanitarian assistance. The second phase, “nation-building,” begins when military forces have established a secure environment. At this point, indigenous peoples, attended by the intervening state and international community, develop independent political and economic systems capable of supporting the rejuvenated society. Francis Fukuyama, “State of the Union: Nation-Building 101,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (January/February 2004,) 161.

<sup>46</sup> Kimberly C. Field and Robert M. Perito, “Creating a Force for Peace Operations: Ensuring Stability with Justice” *Parameters* 32, (Winter 2002.)

artificial boundaries for the individual agencies responsible for reconstruction.<sup>47</sup> The phases of war are inextricably intertwined and cannot be separated to satisfy the urge of modern practitioners who wish to distinguish functions by phase in order to assign these functions to different agencies.

This assessment leads me to the third major issue regarding the effectiveness of stabilization operations and that is—unity of effort. A coordinated and effective response is particularly difficult in stabilization, because of the range of actions needed and the myriad actors required to perform them. Stabilization is a complex process, which includes efforts to enforce no-fly zones, build schools and engage with hostile elements. A single U.S. governmental entity is unequipped to handle this range of action—which necessarily means that a successful stabilization requires a coordinated effort by all governmental agencies with responsibility for a successful outcome.

The problem has been that the United States has lacked a cohesive plan to coordinate and oversee stabilization operations. While past Presidents have experimented with coordinated stabilization operations, no attempt has provided a sustainable solution.<sup>48</sup> This dissertation argues that stability operations do not and cannot comfortably reside in any standing U.S.

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<sup>47</sup> Andrew Rathmell, “Planning Post-conflict Reconstruction in Iraq: What can we Learn?” *International Affairs* 81, (May 2005.) 1030-1033.

<sup>48</sup> While past Presidents have experimented with coordinated reconstruction operations, no attempt has provided a sustainable solution. In 1997, President Clinton released Presidential Decision Directive 56, (PDD-56) to improve interagency coordination in achieving the political, military, humanitarian, and economic goals in complex emergencies. In 2004, President Bush instituted the Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction at the State Department (OCRS) to “improve coordination, planning, and implementation for reconstruction and stabilization assistance...to states...in transition from conflict or civil strife.” While Bush assigned the State Department lead responsibility, in cases “when the U.S. military is involved” the Secretary of State must “ensure harmonization with any planned or ongoing military operations.” Neither Clinton nor Bush created a workable construct to successfully manage post-conflict reconstruction operations. “Policy on Managing Complex Contingency Operations,” Presidential Decision Directive 56, May 1997 (accessed December 2, 2010); available from <http://clinton2.nara.gov/WH/EOP/NSC/html/documents/NSCDoc2.html> See also “Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization,” (accessed December 2, 2010); available at <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/>

agency.<sup>49</sup> I argue for the creation of policy at a national level to coordinate these operations—which will in turn offer greater unity of effort among U.S. agencies with a stake in reconstruction.<sup>50</sup>

## METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

This dissertation is arranged in six chapters. This first chapter is introductory in nature and lays out the three major questions of the work, regarding rationale for intervention, the reasons for varying levels of effectiveness in past operations; and the design of a successful irregular war plan. The second chapter analyzes those three major questions in extensive depth. It explores existing literature, traditional answers to the issues, and proposals for how to think comprehensively about effective operation design. The third fourth and fifth chapters are case study chapters on Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. In these chapters, I take the questions drawn from Chapter Two and use them as an analytical basis for past operations. I close the dissertation in a sixth chapter where I synthesize my findings from the case study chapters and examine the validity of my hypotheses.

My overarching methodology for this dissertation is based on framework using Stephen Van Evera's case study approach.<sup>51</sup> I examine three case studies of irregular war in Bosnia,

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<sup>49</sup> Following the attacks of 9/11, the commission report identified a need for a centralized intelligence gathering operation. Like the creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, I envision a new office responsible for command and control of stabilization operations.

<sup>50</sup>One solution is the proposal of an “interagency Goldwater-Nichols Act” to achieve better alignment of self-interested tendencies of bureaucratic actors and encourage them to better appreciate the capabilities of their peer organizations. Efforts are underway, one spearheaded by Ambassador James Locher, III, to ease cross-agency tension and force stakeholders to coordinate their efforts. In November of 2002, the Center for Strategic and International Studies launched “Beyond Goldwater Nichols (BG-N): Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era,” a critical study aimed at addressing coordination problems between military and civilian agencies responsible for post-conflict reconstruction. “Beyond Goldwater Nichols Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era,” Phase 2 Report, July 2005 (accessed December 2, 2010); available at [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/bgn\\_ph2\\_report.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/bgn_ph2_report.pdf) For a critique of the final report, see Clark A. Murdock and Richard W. Weitz, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: New Proposals for Defense Reform,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (July 2005.)

<sup>51</sup> Van Evera describes his case study method as one of the two basic ways to test theories; his approach is entitled “observation.” According to Van Evera, the major strength of case study work, is that it allows for researchers to

Afghanistan and Iraq where the United States was challenged to conduct an inclusive counterinsurgency operation that defeated the fighting troops at the outset and assisted in the stabilization of the state. Through Van Evera's process of "observation," I examine these irregular war operations to test my hypothesis that a carefully crafted plan and a conscientious commitment to the operation are critical to longterm success.

According to Van Evera, researchers must carefully choose their cases to fulfill the purpose of the inquiry and maximize the strength of the researcher's tests.<sup>52</sup> I have chosen Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq for three main reasons. First, each operation occurred in a territory with rampant long-standing civil unrest, with battles occurring in urban and rural areas. Second, each case was a U.S.-led military intervention, which was followed by a cross-agency stabilization effort. Third, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq began as counterinsurgency operations and developed into three different stabilization exercises in terms of troops composition, external factors and longterm success. Using an inductive approach, I aim to compare the similar antecedent conditions across cases and determine the influence they had on the outcome in stability operations.

Another main reason for my case selection is that each operation occurred under a set of unique international conditions and during periods of reactionary U.S. foreign policy. I chose Bosnia because the operation occurred in the immediate post- Cold War era against the backdrop of the humanitarian concerns of the 1990's. In a sense it was the first substantive post-Cold War expansive stabilization effort—and the U.S. chose to engage despite arguments over the

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ask *why* questions. Van Evera's framework is particularly useful for me, as I ask *why the United States has succeeded in some small wars and why we have failed in others?* Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Student of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997,) 50-55.

<sup>52</sup> Van Evera urges researchers to choose cases with similar antecedent conditions and extreme highs or lows of the study variable (i.e. cases in which very high or very low levels of planning occurred.) Predicated on John Stuart Mill's Method of Difference, I adopt Van Evera's "congruence procedure" as the basis for case selection where variation in the study variable will allow me to offer more useful and unique predications. Ibid. 55.

immediacy of the threat. The United States, however, was troubled by unrest in the Balkans due to its implications for European political and economic stability, refugee movements and economic disruptions. Furthermore, the United States felt obligated to respond as NATO's ability to contend with the conflict proved unreliable.

Afghanistan is my second case study because it represents a U.S. counterinsurgency operation in a separate and distinct era of the post 9/11 world, where national security rationale in response to an emerging terrorist threat was evident, but clearly defined success has been elusive. The United States' struggle to maintain alliances and construct an effective operation has laid bare the challenges presented by small war, wherein regular military forces must confront the challenges posed by asymmetric threats.

I selected Iraq as my last case study because it in some way both bridges gaps and outlines differences between Bosnia and Afghanistan. While the U.S. launched Operation Iraqi freedom during the same post-9/11 era as Afghanistan, Iraq, like Bosnia, posed a much more vague national security threat. Similar to Afghanistan, the combat effort was exclusively American-run, but unlike Afghanistan, where other states partnered in the stabilization effort, the rebuilding remained a U.S. responsibility. Although fairly similar in antecedent conditions, these cases have occurred in different eras, posed contrasting threats, and resulted in varying outcomes. These differences afford me the ability to examine circumstances and changes in approach—and the learning that occurred after each operation.

## **EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS**

My exploration of the applicability of neo-classical realist theory raises important questions about how policy makers interpret the national interest and whether these considerations are broadly or narrowly conceived. My study adds to the debate on the role that

national security interest plays in decision-making and its influence on long-term commitments to stabilization operations. The second major theoretical contribution this work provides is to the rich dialogue regarding the “American way of war.” American military forces, strongly preferring major combat, are committed to counterinsurgency operations by American policy makers, who see lesser value in the importance stabilization. I explore whether the reluctance to fully commit to irregular war, in general, and stabilization, in particular has influenced operational outcomes. Through my examination of these two critical theoretical questions, this work analyzes the effect of these approaches on effective planning and the criticality of proper execution.

Finally, my study also contributes to the growing literature on irregular war. This dissertation provides practical recommendations on how to carry out the key elements of an irregular war operation, as outlined in the Counterinsurgency Manual. Through an examination of past and present operations, I highlight the pitfalls and recommend changes that maximize the effectiveness of future stabilization operations. I turn now to the second chapter where I lay out the three major questions this dissertation seeks to answer: 1) why do states choose to engage in the affairs of another state? 2) Why has the U.S. achieved varying levels of effectiveness in irregular war operations? And 3) How should the U.S approach irregular war to ensure success in the future?

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Engagement in Irregular War:*

#### *A Theoretical Approach*

For the last hundred years, beginning with the Philippines conflict at the turn of the twentieth century, the American military has engaged in modern irregular war. Despite the frequency of its encounters and its indisputable superiority in terms of military might, conventional U.S. forces have struggled to succeed against non-state actor enemies on ill-defined battlefields. In this second chapter, I explore in greater depth the theoretical underpinnings of the following conundrum: why do military forces from developed states with superior technology and resources often flounder in battle against decidedly less well-equipped and well-trained adversaries?

I argue that the answer emanates from three important theoretical discussions occurring in the field of international relations. First, an examination of debates involving both policy makers and military leaders about the rationale and purpose for undertaking irregular war yields useful insights. While some argue that the U.S. should limit its actions to those necessary for preserving its national security against immediate threats, others reason that America must understand national security threats in a much broader fashion. The second theoretical discussion important to my analysis regards perceptions of stabilization operations as less important than major combat. In cases where these perceptions bear out, I examine the perception's impact on mission effectiveness. The third major theoretical debate, and last section of this chapter, deals with how American policy makers wrestle with the proper

administration of irregular war and some of the major challenges associated with the effort. Indeed, the most effective stabilization operations depend upon a proper understanding of the nature of the war, the circumstances on the ground and those engaged in the conflict. I have undertaken this three-pronged theoretical analysis, combined with three major case studies included as later chapters in this dissertation,<sup>53</sup> to inform more effective planning by policy makers confronting the challenges of irregular war and to divine practical changes that will improve troop performance in future operations.

## **RATIONALE FOR WAR**

*It must be understood, however, that a prince... cannot observe all of those virtues for which men are reputed good, because it is often necessary to act against mercy, against faith, against humanity, against frankness, against religion in order to preserve the state...As I have already said, he must stick to the good so long as he can, but being compelled by necessity, he must be ready to take the way of evil...*

*Niccolo Machiavelli*<sup>54</sup>

Machiavelli's timeless advice to the Prince is as relevant today as it was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; the statesman's primary responsibility is to protect his state. It may be that the Prince must use deception in his dealings with other states or in some cases employ harsh tactics against his own people. These unscrupulous approaches are justified due to the Prince's fundamental and enduring responsibility to preserve the integrity of his state. According to Machiavelli, pursuit of the national interest must presage all else. In this paper, I analyze this concept of *raison d'état* and ask whether, in cases of small war, it represents the defining motivation for states. That is to say, do states engage in irregular war only in pursuit of its national interest?

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<sup>53</sup> The case studies I examine in later chapters include Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

<sup>54</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981,) CH XVIII.

Necessarily, I will also examine the counter-thesis that intervening states primarily take action in pursuit of humanitarian aims. Finally, this section concludes with an exploration of the notion that national interest and humanitarian goals can intersect in a version of neo-classical realist theory<sup>55</sup> that eases the inherent tension between these two major approaches in international relations theory.

*A NEOREALIST APPROACH: IRREGULAR WAR AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST*

*There are number of reasons why [pursuit of] democracy makes a poor lodestar for [today's]U.S. foreign policy, beginning with the fact that many of the prerequisites for democratization are not present in the Middle East.” Richard Haass<sup>56</sup>*

From a classical realist perspective,<sup>57</sup> the state, like man, seeks to maximize its own interest and dominate other states. This desire flows from the state's natural inclination to ensure its survival in a competitive international system.<sup>58</sup> According to Hans Morgenthau, the state's

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<sup>55</sup> For information on neo-classical-realism see Jeffrey Taliaferro “State-building for Future Wars: Neo-Classical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State,” *Security Studies* 15 no. 3 (Sept-Oct 2006.) Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Realist Environment, Liberal Process, Domestic-level Variables” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1997.)

<sup>56</sup> James Kitfield, “The Decline Begins: Is the American Era over?” *National Journal* 24 (May 19, 2007.)

<sup>57</sup> The theoretical foundations of realism draw from early thinkers. In 400 B.C., Thucydides focused on power and competition as the defining feature of inter-state relationships. In the sixteenth century, Machiavelli advised the Prince that his main responsibility was preservation of the state at any cost. In other words, the Prince was permitted any action provided it was in the state's best interest. Thomas Hobbes argued that politics was critical to avoiding the “war of all against all.” See Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian Wars*, trans by Rex Warner, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975.) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans by George Bull, (New York: Penguin Books, 1981.) Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982,) Part II.

<sup>58</sup> Hans Morgenthau codified these fundamental ideas in his six principles of realism, which include: 1) States are unitary, rational actors, 2) Interests are defined as power, 3) Survival is the state's ultimate objective, 4) Political morality does not equal individual morality, 5) Political actions can only be judged by political criteria, and 6) Political sphere must be autonomous. Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1978,) 4-15.

appetite for power unavoidably leads to conflict. Neorealism flows from this classic realist perspective and shares the notion that states operate as unitary actors in an anarchic system.<sup>59</sup>

Neorealists, however, perceive that the international system's disorder is not due to human nature, but emanates from a lack of central international authority. With no overarching enforcement mechanism, states adopt a self-help approach to limit aggressive and destabilizing action by other states.<sup>60</sup> Neorealists argue that states weighing the decision for irregular war must embark on a critical calculus; what does the state risk in *not* intervening? In most cases where the U.S. has intervened,<sup>61</sup> it did so because a vital national security interest was at stake.<sup>62</sup> Neorealists perceive any concurrent humanitarian relief as helpful and welcomed, but nonetheless, peripheral to the primary goal for its state security. Therefore, neorealists accept that positive humanitarian results may spawn from an intervention—but should never from the

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<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Waltz uses a levels of analysis approach in this original taxonomy in the *Theory of International Politics* to support his thesis that the international structure drives state behavior. Waltz's system theory is based on several assumptions. First, states exist in perpetual anarchy. Second, states survive by helping themselves in a disorderly system. He theorizes that states acting in their own best interest unintentionally influence the initial formation of the international structure. Lastly, the established international structure then imposes goals and constraints on the member states; thus driving their behavior. Waltz rejects the notion that individual state actions influence the international structure, although he agrees that the state-driven, unit level approach is helpful in explaining state behavior in the domestic context, i.e. the formation of national foreign policy making. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1979.)

<sup>60</sup> Kenneth Waltz formally introduced the theory of neorealism during the Cold War to explain the bipolar era's relative stability. Instead of classic "bandwagoning" demonstrated in a multipolar era, weaker states helped themselves by "balancing" against their more powerful adversaries, by joining with other like states or by launching an internal military build-up.

<sup>61</sup> I use the term "intervention" in this part of the paper to make a critical distinction with regular warfare, which is usually understood as including complex alliance structures and regular armies moving on a battlefield. In cases of irregular war, the more powerful state is not automatically drawn into battle through an alliance or direct attack on the homeland. In these cases, the state is choosing to intervene in the sovereign affairs of another state for other political or economic reasons. Intervention includes a variety of techniques: economic sanctions, coercive diplomacy, and military action. Usually intervention occurs as an episodic action, which may or may not have the consent of the parties involved. For the specific classification of intervention, see the UN Charter, CH VI and VII, Articles 41-43. James G. Roche and George F. Pickett, Jr., "Organizing the Government to Provide the Tools for Interventions," in *U.S. Intervention Policy for the Post-Cold War World: New Challenges and New Responses*, ed. Arnold Kantor and Linton Brooks (New York, Norton and Company, 1994,) 186.

<sup>62</sup> Examples of vital national security issues include: regional instability, challenge by dangerous trans-state actors, massive refugee flows, institution of corrupt governments.

major reason for the intervention. According to neorealists, intervention should only occur when it is in the national security interest of the intervening state.<sup>63</sup>

An equally important question related to why states choose to engage is the issue of desired end state. What does the intervening state hope to accomplish through its military action? This critical answer is related to the state's definition of national interest, which can be conceived in two converse ways. Often, a state narrowly perceives its national interest to include achievement of immediate goals like cessation of violence or disruption of terrorist strongholds. Alternatively, the state can understand protection of its national interest more broadly, including reconstruction and establishment of effective governance in the post-combat region. Many neorealists adopt the first approach arguing that vital national interests are secure once the undesirable regime has been toppled and the killing has stopped. At this point, the intervening state can proclaim victory, withdraw its troops, and terminate the operation.

This inclination for quick withdrawal, based on a narrow conception of the national interest, emanates largely from the painful U.S. experience in Vietnam, where U.S troops were stationed abroad for over a decade to fulfill a complex and ever-changing mission. Military strategists in the post-Vietnam era developed strong preference for a well-defined mission, accompanied by a quick and explicit exit strategy. General Colin Powell memorialized this approach to war in the Powell Doctrine,<sup>64</sup> which perceives war as a last resort. If pursued, however, war should be undertaken with overwhelming force and a clearly understood end-state.

One of the key goals of the Powell Doctrine was to avoid Vietnam-like "mission creep,"

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<sup>63</sup> Neo-realist theory does not address, however, why states insufficiently plan for stabilization operations. This link between the rationale for intervention and preparedness will be explored later in this chapter.

<sup>64</sup> The Powell Doctrine is an outgrowth of the ideas of Secretary of State Caspar Weinberger. The decision for war should be based on the following questions: Is a vital national security interest threatened? Do we have a clear attainable objective? Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analyzed? Have all other non-violent policy means been fully exhausted? Is there a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement? Have the consequences of our action been fully considered? Is the action supported by the American people? Do we have genuine broad international support? Colin Powell, "U.S. Forces: The Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 5, (Winter 1992.)

understood by military strategists as the transformation of a combat operation into a more expansive democratization mission.<sup>65</sup> In cases of small war, neorealists argue that secondary goals related to governance and economic structures depart from a strict adherence to the *raison d'état* and an unwavering pursuit of the vital national interest. Therefore, they should be largely avoided.

A second aspect of realist theory related to decisions of when and how to engage in irregular war spawns from Offense-Defense Theory. This theory suggests that states have varying capabilities and proclivities for offense and defense and contends that militarily strong states choose war because they are assured of easy victory.<sup>66</sup> John Mearsheimer, a self-described offensive realist, applies this notion to the question of engagement in irregular war. He argues that because each state is singularly responsible for its own security, its citizens often become ardent nationalists in defense of their state. As such, these citizens eschew any intervention by another state. A nationalist spirit blossoms in response to foreign encroachment, and the citizenry resists foreign armies as invaders. According to Mearsheimer, inherent nationalism is typically the ruination of imposed democracy.<sup>67</sup> In this way, irregular wars, where goals of democratization are often integral to the operation or emerge after its start, are often destined for failure.

Thus, many neorealists arrive at the conclusion that irregular war, due to its potential for “mission creep” and unlikely chances for long-term success, are often not in the best interest of the state. In addition, irregular wars are not justified because unrest in developing states has little

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<sup>65</sup>Edward Luttwak has observed that a ‘Don’t do it’ culture has emerged among senior Pentagon officials, who are wary of civilian policy maker’s tendency to morph a combat operation into nation-building. Edward N. Luttwak, “A Post-Heroic Military Policy: The New Season of Bellicosity,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4, (July/August 1996.)

<sup>66</sup>In contrast, defensive realists, like Richard Jervis and Steven van Evera claim that states are less likely to go to war when their adversaries have equivalent military might; in this situation, defense is easier and less risky; thus the international environment is more secure. Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978), 172.

<sup>67</sup>John Mearsheimer, “Realism is Right,” *The National Interest* 81 (Fall 2005.)

real effect on the national security of the developed world. In other words, dictatorial regimes, economic hardship, and human rights abuses, while tragic and upsetting, simply do not meet the threshold for intervention. When a neorealist-inspired state decides to intervene, however, it must minimally define its operational goals. This limited aim is often the toppling of a brutal dictator or removal of a failed government. Once achieved, the intervening state's obligation ends. Troops are withdrawn and the operation terminates.

The problem with this limited approach is twofold. First, a quick withdrawal is often premature. In other words, the early disengagement of foreign troops from a post-combat area can be catastrophic, as these societies often lack functioning governments and working economies.<sup>68</sup> These weak post-combat states cannot contribute to a robust global economy, and can potentially become a seedbed for terrorism and corruption. If the intervening state allows the state to unravel following its withdrawal, it forfeits a valuable opportunity—to gain a promising fruitful trading partner or simply avoid a possibly disastrous international influence.

Second, as a growing body of legal scholars has argued, the intervening state also has an ethical responsibility for reconstruction. Falling under the rubric of *jus post bellum* and related to the Just War tradition, states must operate with the “right intention.”<sup>69</sup> Modern day interveners must remember that “the ultimate object of war is a just and lasting peace.”<sup>70</sup> By rebuilding a post-conflict state, the intervener not only fulfills its Augustinian responsibility in

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<sup>68</sup> In some cases, the intervenors dismantled a corrupt government; in others, the governance structures were faltering or had failed.

<sup>69</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas proselytizes that war is sinful and only lawful in limited circumstances, which fulfill three requirements. A just war must be conducted 1) under legitimate authority, 2) for just cause, and 3) with rightful intention. In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas argues that “it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil.”... He quotes Augustine saying “True religion looks upon as peaceful those wars that are waged not for motives of aggrandizement, or cruelty, but with the object of securing peace, of punishing evil-doers, and of uplifting the good.” St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (New York: Washington Square Books, 1960,) Part II, Q 40.

<sup>70</sup> See St Augustine, *City of God* (New York: Random House, 1950.) For a thorough discussion on modern applications, see William O'Brien, *The Conduct of Just and Limited War*, (New York: Praeger, 1981,) Chs 2-3. See also Gregozy H. Fox, “International Law and the Entitlement to Democracy after War,” *Global Governance* 9. (April-June 2003,) 84.

war time, it also ensures the establishment of peace. Moreover, as peace leads to stability, the intervening state is effectively addressing its own ultimate war aim, the achievement of an orderly international system. Thus, intervening states choosing a quick withdrawal undermine their own long-term war objectives. This widening of the operation into a democratization mission is not only the ethical choice, but also the decision most likely to guarantee mission success.

*A NEOLIBERALIST APPROACH: IRREGULAR WAR AND HUMANITARIAN AIMS*

*The only constitution [on] which ... all juridical legislation of a people must be based, is republican... The republican constitution, besides the purity of its origin also gives a favorable prospect for the desired consequence, i.e., perpetual peace. The reason is this: if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared, nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war<sup>71</sup>*

—Immanuel Kant

In contrast to realism, liberal theorists proceed from the fundamental notion that states prefer to cooperate with one another to achieve joint goals.<sup>72</sup> Like realists, liberalists divide themselves into different strains. One brand of liberalism, important to this study, is based on the Democratic Peace Theory; that is, democracies do not wage war against one another. Writing in 1795, Kant argued that war is the natural state of the international system, but argued that war can be overcome through the institutionalization of several major premises. In his first

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<sup>71</sup> Immanuel Kant. *To Perpetual Peace*. “First Definitive Article for a Perpetual Peace,” (accessed December 2, 2010); available at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kant/kant1.htm>

<sup>72</sup> Liberalism is based on the notion that states prefer cooperation over competition in their international dealings. The theory finds its origins in Immanuel Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*, where he argues that that a harmony of interest in peace will spread democracy. Kant’s three basic tenets for state government include: 1) Adoption of a republican constitution, 2) Use of international organizations, and 3) Adherence to international law. In modern times, President Woodrow Wilson promoted this idea at the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in his bid to make the world “safe for democracy.”

Definitive Article, Kant argues that one of the critical requirements for the attainment of peace is that states must form republican governments.<sup>73</sup> Citizens, active in their own governance, will ultimately reject war, as the byproducts and consequences of war are unacceptable. Thus, an international system populated by republican states will remain peaceful, as demanded by its citizenry.

Michael Doyle, a modern liberal scholar, set out to empirically prove a relationship between regime-type and engagement in inter-state war. He created a codification system to classify states as democratic or non-democratic, based on their electoral processes, constraints on the state executive, and existence of a working justice system.<sup>74</sup> While controlling for other variables, Doyle provided statistical evidence that war between democracies is significantly less likely for non-democratic or democratic/non-democratic dyads. Bruce Russett offers an application of the Democratic Peace Theory, relevant to this study of irregular war. If democracy has a pacifying effect on the international environment, it follows that the spread democracy will reduce the occurrence of war.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, Democratic Peace theorists argue that powerful states interested in long-term peace should intervene in non-democratic states for the purpose of democratization. This type of intervention holds the promise of a peaceful international system, where war becomes a relic of the past.<sup>76</sup>

Despite powerful arguments made by neo-liberals, the notion of democratization for the express purpose of seeking a peaceful and stable international environment has several

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<sup>73</sup> According to Kant the other two requirements for perpetual peace are a federation of states and belief in global citizenship.

<sup>74</sup> Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1986), 1159.

<sup>75</sup> Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.)

<sup>76</sup> Democratic Peace theory is a particularized strain of neoliberalist theory, which argues that states, as principal, rational actors, define their interest more broadly than their realist counterparts. Human rights, open markets and free trade, as guided by international institutions, are critical to state security and the maintenance of a stable international environment. Robert Keohane, "Realist Theory and the Institutional Challenge at the End of Cold War" in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: the Contemporary Debate*, ed. David Baldwin, (New York; Columbia University Press, 1993.)

significant shortcomings. First, vigorous democracies considering intervention are not unlimited in their capacity, and as such they must determine how often and in which cases they will choose to intervene. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Fareed Zakaria offered a prescient caution that the United States should remain actively involved in the world, but should not over-commit itself in humanitarian ventures. Like many before him,<sup>77</sup> he compares the present-day United States to Britain in the 1880's, warning that "the case against substantial intervention in areas, conflicts, and crises that are peripheral to America's long-term strategic interests is that, like Britain, by focusing on the periphery, America will lose the core."<sup>78</sup> By dedicating itself to interventions in other parts of the world, the United States may lose its economic, political and military superiority through a gradual decline of resources and power. Through over-commitment, the U.S. could eventually forfeit its position as the world's sole super power.

A second problem associated with the notion of activist democratization is related to the "Do No Harm" principle. States interested in relieving human suffering often send foreign armies; in tautological fashion, these foreign armies can prolong war—and prolong suffering. Edward Luttwak references this idea in a *Foreign Affairs* article entitled "Give War a Chance," where he urges states to carefully consider their decision to intervene. Foreign armies, according to Luttwak, can ultimately lengthen the conflict. New resources, in the form of soldiers or material, reinvigorate the weaker side, thus extending the resistance—and ultimately the war.<sup>79</sup> Wartime violence and suffering serves an ugly but necessary evil: it hastens the war's end. Simply put, battle-induced fatigue renders the weaker side incapable of fighting, and they

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<sup>77</sup> Paul Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, (New York: Random House, 1987.)

<sup>78</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "A Framework for Intervention," in *U.S. Intervention Policy for the Post-Cold War World: New Challenges and New Responses*, eds. Arnold Kantor and Linton Brooks, (New York: Norton and Company, 1994,) 186.

<sup>79</sup> Edward Luttwak, "Give War a Chance," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 4 (July/August 1999.)

surrender. Thus, state's inspired by humanitarian urges should carefully consider whether relief of suffering is probable—or even possible.

Another practical weakness of the Democratic Peace Theory is that states are more prone to war while in the midst of a democratic transition. Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield argue that states considering intervention must heavily weigh their decision against the risks of the inevitable post-combat disorder and instability.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, democratization can also increase the likelihood of war between a democratizing state and its neighbors.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the prospect of continued strife and potential regional upset might give pause to those considering a democratization mission for the purpose of stability and a more peaceful international system.

In sum, states deciding whether to intervene must weigh the risks and benefits of democratization mission—and be realistic about whether it will succeed. Proponents of the Democratic Peace Theory urge states considering intervention to broadly understand this purpose as inclusive of post-combat democratization for two main reasons. First, the notion of democratization is consistent with the humanitarian ideals of developed western states. Second, if the intervening state is successful in the establishment of democracy in a post-combat region, the new state is less likely to go to war in the future. By increasing the number of democracies, the international system enjoys increased stability—and arguably fortifies its own national security. In this way, democratization, as a form of a stabilization mission becomes a critical component of overall operational success, because it is a smart foreign policy choice for any self-interested state; I explain this rationale through the lens of neo-classical realist theory in the following section.

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<sup>80</sup> Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.)

<sup>81</sup> Barry Posen argues that the breakup of multiethnic states places ethnic groups in a rival setting, where they feel threatened and might attempt to improve their relative positions through attack. Barry Posen, "Military Responses to Refugee Disasters," in *Use of Force Military Power and International Politics*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Robert Art and Kenneth Waltz, (New York: University Press of America, 2004.)

NEO-CLASSICAL REALISM- THE INTERSECTION OF RAISON D'ETAT AND HUMANITARIANISM

*Let us now begin a major effort to secure the best -- a crusade for freedom that will engage the faith and fortitude of the next generation. For the sake of peace and justice, let us move toward a world in which all people are at last free to determine their own destiny.*<sup>82</sup> --Ronald Reagan

In the historic speech from which the above quote was drawn, President Reagan intended to inspire America and her allies to assist states in democratization. He argued that it is in all states' best interest to do so. A glimpse of neo-classical realism<sup>83</sup> emerges in Reagan's rhetoric, which acknowledges the need for states to act in their own best interest. In the 1980's Reagan unequivocally argued that the stabilization of fledgling democracies was in America's best interest—and therefore had to be a key American goal.<sup>84</sup>

Although Reagan's call for democratization in the 1980's predated the emergence of the neoclassical realist approach, the ideas were re-circulated and revamped for 1990's as the Cold War came to a close. Indeed, it was precisely due to the seismic change in the international system that the neo-classical realist approach gained strength. After defeating its Cold War

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<sup>82</sup> Ronald Reagan, Presidential Speech before British Parliament, 1982 (accessed December 2, 2010); available <http://www.hbci.com/~tgort/crusade.htm>

<sup>83</sup> Scholars traditionally define this view as neo-classical realism, while policy makers have used various terms to title these approaches in terms of U.S. foreign policy. In an article appearing in the department of States Bulletin, Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. John Whitehead used "principled realism" as a way to describe the U.S. spread of democracy as a "a good thing for the United States" in terms of its stabilizing influence and impact on economic prosperity. John Whitehead, "Principled Realism: a Foundation for U.S. Foreign Policy," U.S. Department of State Bulletin, June 1988, (accessed January 29, 2010); available from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1079/is\\_n2135\\_v88/ai\\_6495618/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1079/is_n2135_v88/ai_6495618/)

<sup>84</sup> The notion that democratization is a driving force in stabilization of the international environment is also related to Woodrow Willson's liberal internationalist approach—later known as Wilsonianism. Evident in the Versailles Treaty, through the establishment of a League of Nations and focus on self-determination, Wilson dedicated himself and the later years of his presidency to achieving an orderly, secure international system. For a thorough discussion of Wilsonianism and its modern applications see Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge, 2002,) 132-170. For a critique of Wilsonianism, highlighting its failings particularly as they relate to imposed democracy see, David Fromkin, "What is Wilsonianism?" *World Policy Journal* 11 (Spring 1994.) See also William Anthony Hay, "Democratization, Order, and American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, April 2006 (accessed December 10, 2010); available at <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200604.americawar.hay.democratizationorderforeignpolicy.html>

enemy, a relatively powerful U.S. was primed with both the capacity and latitude to act assertively in the international realm. Consistent with a neo-classical realist approach, America's post-Cold War "extractive and mobilization capacity"<sup>85</sup> urged the U.S. toward activism in the international realm. Before applying neo-classical realism to the American experience I first offer a definition of the theory.

Neo-classical realism includes two major components.<sup>86</sup> First, international anarchy drives state foreign policy decision-making. Or, states act based on their position within the international system. This fundamental premise firmly situates the theory within the realist realm. Neo-classical realists make a second observation that departs slightly from a stringent neorealist view; they observe that internal state power<sup>87</sup> varies, and this variance causes states to respond differently to external challenges. In other words, states encompass different internal constructs, where influential elites, parliamentary structures, and the citizenry can influence state action.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, neo-classical realists argue that developed western states often feature societal leaders, who leverage state power and ultimately influence outcomes.<sup>89</sup> In sum,

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<sup>85</sup>America's "extractive and mobilization capacity" is the second major factor in determining U.S. activism in the 1990's. In other words, the U.S. not only understood stabilization of the international realm as key to its own security, but also had the capacity and ability to apply resources to the problem. This notion of "extractive capacity" is a critical definitional component of neo-classical realism and will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter. G. John Ikenberry, *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002.)

<sup>86</sup> Gideon Rose. "Neo-classical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *World Politics* 51. no 1. (October 1998.)

<sup>87</sup> This interpretation varies from Waltz's "unit level" theory that states can be understood as billiard balls all responding identically when played upon by an outside force.

<sup>88</sup>These elements of state politics are termed *Innenpolitik* or "domestic politics." The term is useful in challenging the realist conception that systemic factors are the chief explanatory reasons for war. *Innenpolitik* considers whether any correlation exists between domestic factors and state foreign policy making. See Avraham Sela, "Innenpolitik and War: Domestic Politics in the Arab-Israeli Wars (1948-1967)" Paper presented at the 50<sup>th</sup> annual International Studies Association Conference, New York, NY, (accessed February 2, 2010); available from [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p310335\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p310335_index.html)

<sup>89</sup>[Steven E. Lobell](#), [Norrin M. Ripsman](#), and [Jeffrey W. Taliaferro](#). *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.)

according to neo-classical realists, both the anarchic nature of the international system and internal state construct<sup>90</sup> determine state action.<sup>91</sup>

Based on this definitional understanding, I argue that the theory of neo-classical realism provides a compelling framework to address this study of irregular war. It helps generally explain the state's rationale for intervention,<sup>92</sup> and more specifically provides a framework to understand the American rationale for intervention in the cases of Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

I will apply neo-classical realist theory in each of my three case studies and ask two major questions. First, did the U.S. perceive the stabilization of Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq as tied to its own security? And, second, did the U.S. have the requisite power and capacity to take effective action? These two questions critically undergird the next section of this chapter where I examine the military's perceptions of these non-traditional missions—and whether operational success and even U.S. national security was linked to a winning outcome.

## **AN AMERICAN WAY OF WAR**

In the second part of this chapter, I address American's varying levels of effectiveness in combat and stabilization. Is the military's struggle with stabilization operations associated with

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<sup>90</sup>Neoclassical realists include *Innenpolitik* or Waltz's first and second variables such as domestic politics, leader preferences and biases and state power in their conception of influences on state action. Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998,) 199.

<sup>91</sup> Some modern realist scholars argue that the notion of undue influence of domestic politics on state action runs counter to basic realist assumptions regarding the primacy of influence by the international system. Fareed Zakaria argues that domestic political structure has indeed some influence in state action, but the true driver of state action is the quest for an improvement in relative power. It is this underlying premise which situates neo-classical realism firmly in the realist approach. See Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). See also Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics," *International Security*. 17. no. 1. (Summer 1992.)

<sup>92</sup>Detractors from my argument would point out the neoclassical realism lacks rigor due to its "open-minded eclecticism." Stephen Walt argues that "neorealism sacrifices precision in order to gain generality and parsimony, [but] neoclassical realism had given up generality in order to gain descriptive accuracy and policy relevance." Although his critique has merit in its bid to ensure theory's general relevance, the major contribution of neo-classical realism is its usefulness in constructing policy. See Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic Pressure and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation." *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 1, (January 2010.) See also Stephen Walt. *Revolution and War*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996,) 4.

the reality that officers and soldiers prefer, plan, and prepare for major combat? Therefore, soldiers perceive other operations, like counterinsurgency, stabilization and peacekeeping missions, as a collateral duty to their cardinal purpose, fighting big wars. I also consider the lack of doctrinal guidance for irregular war as a corollary problem. Without doctrine, strategists experience difficulty in crafting war plans, and soldiers are unprepared for the challenges they face. These critical factors influence the troops' performance in irregular wars,<sup>93</sup> often making victory elusive.

#### THE PREFERENCE FOR MAJOR COMBAT- THE U.S. LIKES TO "FIGHT BIG"

*Your mission remains fixed, determined, and inviolable- it is to win our wars. Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication.*<sup>94</sup>

*General Douglas MacArthur*

*1962 Address to West Point cadets*

American soldiers prefer major combat. Consistent with glorified memories of World War II and romanticized notions of the Napoleonic era, U.S. troops have traditionally prepared and trained to fight conventional armies on regular battlefields. Other operations, like counterinsurgency and stabilization missions have consequently been relegated to secondary

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<sup>93</sup>Irregular war has taken on many labels. This version of warfare has been called low intensity conflict, unconventional war, operations other than war (OOTW), asymmetric conflict, insurgency, small war, and most recently, fourth generation warfare, and non-trinitarian conflict and war amongst the people. Colonel Callwell of the British army used the historic term "small war" to denote any instance where non-regular forces confronted a standing army. Low intensity conflict was a term favored by DoD beginning in the 1980's. Asymmetric conflict denotes a clash between a group who is relatively weaker than its adversary. Insurgency usually refers to a violent uprising seeking to change the political structure. Martin van Creveld uses the term "non-trinitarian" conflict in reference to Clausewitz's trinity: the people the army and the government. Rupert Smith favored the term "war amongst the people" as way to distinguish from industrial war of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to highlight the importance of the population in these types of conflicts. I will use the term irregular war as it is inclusive of older references and reflective of new realities. C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1906.) Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.) Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991,) 49.

<sup>94</sup>General Douglas McArthur. "Farewell Speech." U.S. Military Academy. West Point, NY May 12, 1962, (accessed December 2, 2010); available at [http://www.west-point.org/real/macarthur\\_address.html](http://www.west-point.org/real/macarthur_address.html)

status. The renowned American military scholar, Russell Weigley, offered an influential explanation of this phenomenon in 1973. Weigley argued that the U.S. military adheres to an “American Way of War,” in which overwhelming force is used to vanquish the enemy. In other words, the U.S. fights wars in a typically American fashion; it deploys a highly skilled military force to defeat its rival army in conventional combat through swift and decisive strikes. Writing in the height of the bipolar struggle of the Cold War, Weigley asserted that United States only enters these major contests to protect a vital national security interest.<sup>95</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union tested the legacy and present applicability of Weigley’s thesis, as today’s enemies are unclear, battlefields are ill-defined, and vital national interests are subject to great debate. Those who refer to the American War of War thesis as outmoded argue that major combat is unlikely in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Due to the monumental changes in the post-Cold War international system, it is unlikely that two great powers will face off on a battlefield. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the enemy is often not an opposing state’s army. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the enemy may not even be directly associated with a state.

Some military strategists, however, continue to emphatically defend the relevance of Weigley’s idea.<sup>96</sup> They claim that the tenets of the traditional “American Way of War” should be applied in any battle the U.S. fights—small or large. This rationale is based on the notion that small wars of the past have often been lost precisely because the U.S. has taken a gradual

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<sup>95</sup> Weigley argues that Americans typically prefer and excel at conventional-style warfare due to a common political culture paradoxically based expansionism and isolationism, and a historical military experience based on a desire for hemispheric domination and quick military victory. Russell Weigley, *American Way of War: A History of U.S. Military Strategy and Policy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973,) xvii-xiii.

<sup>96</sup> Ralph Peters offers a sound example in his analysis of the Battle for Falluja from March-November of 2004. In the first battle during the spring, approximately 2000 U.S. Marines moved slowly and deliberately, taking special care to limit civilian casualties. He contrasts the difficulties of this first battle with the November operation in which fifteen thousand soldiers and marines overwhelmed the Iraqi resistance with massive firepower in a swift and decisive operation. Ralph Peters, “Speed the Kill: Updating the American Way of War,” *Rethinking the Principles of War*, ed. Anthony McIvor, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005,) 98.

approach or been excessively concerned with the moral aspects of the operation.<sup>97</sup> If the U.S. fights small wars in the same decisive and swift manner that it prosecutes larger ones, Weigley's proponents argue that the U.S. will enjoy greater success in its future military contests.

Colin Gray expands on the notion that the American Way of War thesis holds "important merit," but asserts that Weigley's thesis must be adapted to the post-9/11 era. America, argues Gray, will always and necessarily pursue an American Way of War because Weigley's timeless thesis is based on an enduring American culture—and, "culture is inescapable."<sup>98</sup> Gray quotes Samuel Huntington to further explain his idea:

American strategy and the process by which it is made must reflect the nature of American society. Earlier I criticized those who urged us to adopt a strategy that was at variance with the inherent character of American society. ... The U.S. military establishment is a product of and reflects American geography, culture, society, economy and history... one should not be swept off ones' feet by the romantic illusion that Americans can be taught to fight wars the way Germans, Israelis and even the British do. That would be both ahistorical and unscientific.<sup>99</sup>

Gray posits that this indisputable "American-ness" in wartime conduct should not be an indictment on U.S. capabilities or use of power, but instead should be accepted as an innate part of American policy-making and war-planning. By first understanding this culture and the inherent preference to "fight big," the United States can more effectively craft its future irregular war operations, by capitalizing on its inherent strengths and addressing its weaknesses.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Harry Summers famously argues that overreach by civilian policy makers caused the U.S. to lose in Vietnam. If left alone, the U.S. military could have handily won against the less powerful and organized North Vietnamese forces. Harry Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Navato: Presidio Press, 1982) 98.

<sup>98</sup> Americans share a history, geography and foundational experience, which is like that of no other nation. This legacy creates a distinctly "American" tradition in warfare, which Gray identifies as having the following twelve major characteristics: Apolitical, Astrategic, Ahistorical, Optimistic, Culturally ignorant, Technologically dependent, Firepower focused, Large-scale, Profoundly regular, Impatient, Logistically excellent, and Sensitive to casualties. Colin Gray, "The American Way of War: Critique and Implications." *Rethinking the Principles of War*. Ed. Anthony McIvor, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005,) 24.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>100</sup> Gray argues that the major weakness of past small war operations, cultural ignorance, is an integral part of soldiers' enduring preference for major combat. Americans prefer to engage according to its own rules and fight its battles in an American way. When faced with guerilla warfare and confused by an amorphous enemy, the regular army tends to forget Sun Tzu's most famous piece of advice to "know your enemy." SunTzu, *The Art of War*, trans Thomas Cleary, (Boston: Shambhala Publishers, 1991,) CH III.

The American Way of War is omnipresent. It emerges from a uniquely American shared history, economy, and culture and it is deeply embedded in all facets of American society. I argue that it is nearly impossible and unadvisable to completely abandon the pervasive American preference to strike quickly and mightily against its enemies. I do, however, assert that Weigley's thesis must be retooled to account for a changing international landscape, which lacks clearly defined enemies and regular armies marching on traditional battlefields. Where the *sine qua non* of effective battle is often a massive assault carried out in a timely fashion, it is equally important for policy makers and military strategists to devise war plans to reflect an understanding new enemies that might aim to prevent the larger, more powerful force from enjoying an opportunity for a decisive battlefield victory. By leveraging the elements of Weigley's thesis that remain relevant today, the United States can prepare for the small wars of the future, as "fighting small" is undoubtedly America's most likely endeavor of tomorrow.<sup>101</sup>

#### THE MALLEABLE MILITARY- AMERICAN FORCES CAN FIGHT SMALL

In 2002, Council on Foreign Relations national security expert Maxwell Boot, wrote *Savage Wars of Peace*. He suggests, therein, that the United States needs to develop a new "American Way of War" to effectively fight the small wars of the future. Boot argues that this new approach must rely on an agile military force that adeptly uses speed, intelligence, and technology.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, Boot points out that, despite an entrenched American fascination with major wars like World War II and the Civil War, the United States has an equally long

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<sup>101</sup>Speaking at an annual convention of the United States Army, Defense Secretary Robert Gates informed the troops that small war operations "remain the mainstay of the contemporary battlefield for some time." David Cloud, "Gates Says Military Faces More Unconventional Wars" *New York Times*, October 11, 2007.

<sup>102</sup> Maxwell Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002,) xv.

history in fighting small wars. Americans should capitalize on this past experience as irregular war is increasingly common in the post-Cold War era.<sup>103</sup>

The problem, according to Boot, is that today's armed forces are not ready to engage in asymmetric warfare against an amorphous enemy.<sup>104</sup> Today's troops are unprepared to fight small wars for two main reasons. First, American soldiers remain unconvinced that small wars are their primary responsibility. Second, the U.S. military has long neglected a proper training regimen for troops deploying to asymmetric conflicts.<sup>105</sup> These two major flaws have significantly contributed to a superior American military struggling to win against a decidedly less well-equipped and well-trained foe.

Throughout the Cold War and through the 1990's, the military developed a general aversion to the "the lesser included," a label Thomas Barnett used to describe irregular wars, which includes small war, low intensity conflict, operations other than war, asymmetric conflict, unconventional war, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism.<sup>106</sup> The military perceived its role as defending the nation against other attacks by other states and preparing itself for major combat operations. Engagement in the irregular war operations, often derogatorily labeled "nation-building" was neither the military's responsibility nor expertise. As such the military did not

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<sup>103</sup> Jonathon Rauch supports Boot by arguing that characterization of the American Way of War as "new or old" is less important than the identification of the type of war American forces will typically confront in the future. Rauch points out that the United States has fought many "small wars" including the 1915 invasion of Haiti, the occupations of Samoa, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Panama, and the rebuilding of post-war Germany and Japan. The modern operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are examples of the most common form of warfare in the future. Jonathan Rauch, "Fight small! It's the true American Way of War," *National Journal* 34, (June 15, 2002.)

<sup>104</sup> Boot further develops his argument in a *Foreign Affairs* piece, following his book's release. Max Boot, "The New American Way of War." *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July/August, 2003.)

<sup>105</sup> As noted earlier in this paper, Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called for a "transformation" of the military in 2002, which seemed to acknowledge the need to train and prepare troops differently. This transformation, however, largely related to technological advancement and force superiority, rather than a true preparation for asymmetric warfare and shift in military culture. See Donald Rumsfeld. "Transforming the Military." *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 3 (May/June 2002. )

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Putnam, 2004) 68.

train and prepare for these operations. This perception was intensified with the instatement of the Bush Administration who largely shared this view.<sup>107</sup>

The second major issue regarding the U.S. military's effectiveness in conducting irregular war is the sufficiency of doctrinal guidance for small war.<sup>108</sup> In 1940, the U.S. Marine Corps released the Small Wars Manual, as a way to capture lessons learned and offer guidance on the conduct these operations other than major warfare. When this manual emerged in the wake of the Latin American "Banana Wars" during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was groundbreaking in its focus on both on security maintenance and the importance of re-establishing workable political and economic structures that were consistent with U.S. interests. It reinforces this idea in its description of small war as a military operation "to protect... American interests, life and property abroad, and [are] different than major warfare. Diplomacy has not ceased to function and the State Department exercises a constant and controlling influence over military operations."<sup>109</sup> The problem is that for 60 years following its release the U.S. military promulgated virtually no other doctrine<sup>110</sup> directing these operations.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Robert M. Cassidy, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya: Military Strategic Culture and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Conflict*. (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute Press, 2003.) See also Michael Melillo, "Outfitting a Big-War with Small-war Capabilities." *Parameters* 36, (Autumn 2006.)

<sup>108</sup> According to Chapter One of the "1940 Small Wars Manual," the Marine Corps defined a small war "as a vague name for a variety of military operations. As applied to the United States, small wars are undertaken under executive authority wherein military force is combined with military pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests are determined by the foreign policy of our nation." 1940 Small Wars Manual, (accessed July 14, 2010); available from <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/swm/index.htm>

<sup>109</sup>The Small Wars Manual.

<sup>110</sup> In the years following its post-WWII creation, the United States Air Force made mention of "special operations" in their inaugural pub, *United States Air Force Basic Doctrine* AFM 1-2. The guidance was limited however, as it mainly addressed dropping soldiers and propaganda behind enemy lines. It wasn't until the 1955 version of AFM 1-2 that the USAF referenced "limited war" as a distinct form of warfare. *U.S. Air Force Basic Doctrine*, AFM 1-2 (Washington, D. C.: Department of the Air Force, 1953.)

<sup>111</sup> In 2007, the U.S Army responded with the release of the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM 3-24*, chiefly authored by General David Petraeus. The Manual describes strategies and tactics for forces engaged in counterinsurgency. Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew critique FM 3-24 as offering an important short course of the history of counterinsurgency, but argue that it lacks thoroughness. FM 3-24 neglects the important task of identifying the enemy in a meaningful war and fails to provide actionable items to counter the new threat. Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, "Counterinsurgency by the Book," *New York Times* (August 7, 2006.) Counterinsurgency

Small wars are, by their nature, unique; and the U.S. military must be ready to fight them differently. The enduring legacy of the American Way of war thesis complicates the task of properly preparing the troops. Until very recently, with the release of the 2007 Counterinsurgency Manual,<sup>112</sup> no substantive policy guidance existed for troops deploying to asymmetric conflicts. Policy makers and military strategists must continue to work diligently to offer a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to an age-old problem. Additionally, American troops have long eschewed irregular war in favor of major combat. Military leaders and policy makers must dismantle this traditional perception through training and lead America's fighting forces to success in irregular war.<sup>113</sup>

#### WINNING THE BATTLE—AND, WINNING THE WAR

The American Way of War thesis is useful in explaining how the U.S. military has traditionally fought in combat. The New American Way of War elaborates on the original theory by predicting that most future military operations will be unconventional; therefore U.S. forces must train and prepare differently to meet this challenge. Despite the significance of Weigley's thesis and the criticality of its new applications, I argue that both approaches neglect a critical maxim in international security studies; that is "war is a continuation of policy by other means."<sup>114</sup> As Clausewitz warned, the state should not separate the political goal from its

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Field Manual, Washington, D.C. 2007, (accessed July 14, 2010); available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fmi3-07-22.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> Later in this chapter, I analyze the 2007 COIN Manual, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. I also discuss how its emergence influences both the Afghan and Iraq operations already in progress.

<sup>113</sup> I explore later in this paper, whether other actors in other U.S. agencies share the burden with American troops in effectively fighting small war.

<sup>114</sup> Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976,) CH 1, Part 24.

military plans.<sup>115</sup> His message remains clear: the purpose of war is to achieve a political objective.<sup>116</sup>

Using this Clausewitzian notion as a foundation, Antulio Echevarria argues that Americans, in approaching irregular wars of today, have adopted a “way of battle,” not a way of war. New or old, both “American Ways of War” focus on militarily defeating an opponent in combat. This conception is too narrow. A military victory alone does not often signal success in irregular war. As I argue in section three of this chapter, irregular wars inextricably connect the military and political outcomes, therefore, the war has to be fought with both in mind.

The United States must definitively connect its military action to its long-term policy goals, which, as Echevarria argues, are “normally [creating] a better peace.”<sup>117</sup> If the ultimate goal is post-conflict stability, then policy makers and military strategists must perceive post-combat operations as integral part of the larger wartime operation and conduct mission planning to this end. In other words, to effectively fight today’s asymmetric conflicts, the United States must adopt a holistic perception of war, which ties military action to the political goal it attempts to achieve.

When asked how victory should be defined, Commander of U.S. Central Command General Tommy Franks said:

Victory means the accomplishment of objectives and goals that we had in mind when we initially became involved in a particular conflict... in almost every case we became involved to gain security, either for ourselves or for our friends; and

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<sup>115</sup> Nearly one hundred years after Clausewitz, B.H. Liddell Hart addresses similar issues by arguing that the “art of distributing and applying military means is to fulfill the ends of policy.” Hart agrees that a prudent military strategy is important, and argues that a sound grand strategy is vital. B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Meridian, 1991,) 46.

<sup>116</sup> Clausewitz, CH 1, Part 11.

<sup>117</sup> Antulio Echevarria, II. “Toward an American Way of War.” *Strategic Studies Institute*, March, 1 2004, (accessed July 14, 2010); available from <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=374>

that at the end of the conflict as a result of treaty pact or alliance, security was guaranteed.<sup>118</sup>

General Franks points out the link between operational success and security. I argue that we need to push this notion one step further and examine the tie between establishment of security, ability to maintain security and achievement of long-term political outcomes. The next section of this paper undertakes an analysis of irregular war and offers guidance on how to fight one effectively—that is for the maintenance of long-term security and enduring stability.

## **THE ART OF “OTHER” WAR**

In the first two sections of this chapter I have examined why states choose to intervene and whether soldiers accept irregular war as a vital part of their military duties. These two fundamental questions spawn a third critical question: how should the United States organize to effectively engage in irregular war? In other words, how do developed states properly employ their vast resources to achieve their political objectives and defeat an irregular enemy? In this third section, I attempt to answer this larger question by addressing four of its subparts: 1) the nature of irregular war, 2) definition of irregular war, 3) actors in irregular war, and 4) practice of irregular war. First, I examine the popular notion that the nature of war is changing.<sup>119</sup> I assert that major war<sup>120</sup> is largely a Cold War relic, while irregular war, and the use of unconventional

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<sup>118</sup> Tommy Franks, Stephen Biddle, Peter Charles Choharis, John M. Owens, Daniel Pipes, Gary Rosen and Dov Zakheim, “Is this Victory? *The National Interest*, November 10, 2006, (accessed July 14, 2010); available at <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=12988>

<sup>119</sup> Martin Van Creveld is recognized as one of the first modern scholars to draw attention to the changing nature of war, first in his 1991 work *The Transformation of War*, followed by *The Art of War: War and Military Thought* in the year 2000. For a post 9/11 interpretation of the changing nature of war see Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. ) Martin Van Creveld, *The Art of War: War and Military Thought*, (London: Cassell Publishing, 2000.)

<sup>120</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the term “major war” to mean conventional, regular or traditional combat. In other words, major war is defined as two conventional armies clashing on a battlefield in a World War II-style.

tactics, is increasingly common in today's security landscape. Next, I use the definition offered in the Joint Operating Concept to more fully explain the characteristics of irregular war. Third, I analyze the actors in irregular war in an effort to determine who fights and what motivates them. Finally, I close with an exploration of how to effectively fight an irregular war. The purpose of this section is to study doctrine, identify gaps, and make recommendations on the way forward.

#### WHAT KIND OF A WAR ARE WE FIGHTING ANYWAY?

*Fourth Generation warfare, the experts said, is a new type of war in which fighting will be mostly scattered. The battle will not be limited to destroying military targets and regular forces, but will include societies, and will [seek to] destroy popular support for the fighters within the enemy's society... in fourth generation war... 'the distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point.'*<sup>121</sup>

*Ubeid al-Qurashi*

By the late 1980's, after 40 years of no major war, it seemed that a World War III-like cataclysm was a near impossibility, because developed states increasingly perceived major war as an irrational choice. As John Mueller wrote on the precipice of the Berlin Wall's collapse, major war's complete destructive capacity made it the last choice for states with thriving economies and established governance structures. Resort to major war defies rationality because it fractures states, decimates infrastructure, and destroys economies.<sup>122</sup> It takes years, indeed decades, for states to fully recover from a world-war type conflagration. By the end of the

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<sup>121</sup> Quoted in T.X. Hammes "Armed groups: Changing the Rules," *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency*, ed. Jeffrey H. Norwitz, (Newport: U.S. Naval War College Press, 2008,) 447.

<sup>122</sup> Although nuclear weapons played a role in the superpowers' aversion to major war, Mueller argues that the United States and Soviet Union were struck with the utter destruction wrought by World War II. It was not a mistake the superpowers would make again. John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War*, (New York: Basic Books, 1989.)

twentieth century, the likelihood of major war had declined rapidly; in a sense, it has become obsolete.

In 1991, Israeli military historian and strategist Martin Van Creveld addressed this issue by noting that while the occasion of major war was unlikely, war had not gone away. War's fundamental nature, however, had changed. Capitalizing on Mueller's thesis, he argued that conventional war was not only irrational, but also impossible. Great powers avoided challenging one another lest they commit simultaneous state suicide, and lesser powers would not conventionally challenge a regional powerhouse because they simply would not win.<sup>123</sup> Due to tremendous technological inferiority, lesser powers understood that they simply could not compete—at least in a conventional sense. The inability to win a conventional contest, however, did not deter lesser powers from engaging in war; instead lesser powers transformed their approach. They adopted unconventional tactics—and continued to fight. War, which had typically been characterized by two modern armies clashing on a battlefield, had fundamentally changed.

Although many scholars of military strategy and war agree that war's nature is changing,<sup>124</sup> some dispute the argument. Colin Gray argues that wars of today are not inherently different. Today's irregular wars use both conventional and unconventional tactics. According to Gray, combatants, regardless of the type of conflict, have always and will always use whatever means necessary to defeat the enemy.<sup>125</sup> Gray arrives at the conclusion that war's fundamental

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<sup>123</sup>U.S. tactics and performance in the First Persian Gulf war solidified this idea for any would-be challenger to a developed western state. Iraq, its neighbors and other like states, learned from Operation Desert Storm that they could not win a conventional war against a major power.

<sup>124</sup> See Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press. 1991.) See also Stephen Biddle, "Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle," (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.) Eliot Cohen, "Change and Transformation in Military Affairs," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 3 (Spring 2004.)

<sup>125</sup> Colin Gray. "Irregular War: One Nature, Many Characters" *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2007.)

nature is its unpredictability—and that has not changed.<sup>126</sup> I agree, but interpret war's unpredictability as its quintessential substance, that is war's existence in an ontological sense. While war's quintessential substance has not changed, its nature has. Today's wars are fought differently. Due to advancements in technology, vast resourcing differences between the developed and developing world, and the absence of major powers with competing ideologies, war is increasingly asymmetric in its conduct.<sup>127</sup>

The bottom line is that the less powerful still fight, but they have changed their operational approach.<sup>128</sup> Armies no longer march toward one another with fixed bayonets preparing for the ensuing battle. Today's battlefields are jungles, urban settings, and remote mountains. The problem is that regular armies have not traditionally prepared for this different kind of battle. Clearly, it is the critical responsibility of policy makers to recognize that war is being fought in an irregular fashion—and regular armies must be ready to respond appropriately. In order to respond, however, irregular war must be understood. To understand it, we must define it. It is to this definition of irregular warfare that I now turn.

## DEFINING IRREGULAR WAR

*[Irregular war is defined]...as a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations. IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will.*<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Mary Kaldor subscribes to a like notion, wherein she argues that we might term post-1990 “new war” but there is really nothing novel about conflict. Mary Kaldor, *New and Old wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.)

<sup>127</sup> Between 1997 and 2007, armed groups have participated in 75 different conflicts. International Institute for Strategic Studies Armed Conflict (accessed July 16, 2010); available from <http://www.iiss.org>

<sup>128</sup> Steven Metz, “Small Wars: From Low Intensity Conflict to Irregular Challenges,” *Rethinking the Principles of War*, ed. Anthony D. McIvor (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006,) 280.

<sup>129</sup> Irregular Warfare, Joint Operating Concept, Department of Defense, July 2007, (accessed July 16, 2010) available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/iw-joc.pdf>

*-Definition of Irregular War as  
included in the Joint Operating  
Concept*

The Department of Defense offers a definition of irregular war in the Joint Operating Concept (JOC). The definition includes two critical components of irregular war:<sup>130</sup> 1) the use of specialized warfare tactics, and 2) the development of a distinctive relationship with the population. The first part of the definition refers to the notion that irregular wars are fought differently than regular war. At a tactical level, the enemy relies heavily on indirect methods of attack, such as subversion, terrorism, and insurgency<sup>131</sup> and often combines these techniques with those employed in conventional war.<sup>132</sup> The second part of the JOC definition focuses on irregular war at a strategic level. In this context it is relevant to ask, what are the combatants working to achieve? For whom, or over whom, are they fighting? Unlike conventional combat, where two states battle for military dominance and clash over styles of governance, the battle in many irregular wars is neither between states nor a struggle for military victory. Rather, the conflict is over winning the support of the people. Simply put, victory is ultimately claimed by those who achieve the greatest credibility with and power over the population.

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<sup>130</sup> The formal use of the term “irregular war” is also singularly important as it represents an important cultural shift at DoD, which now seeks to properly characterize these types of operations without diminishing their significance. Through the 1980’s, non-major combat military operations were termed “low-intensity conflict” (LIC) or “military operations other than war” (MOOTW). Use of this original terminology revealed widely held DoD perceptions of LIC’s or MOOTW’s as less significant than regular war. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated terms. Joint Publication 1-02, 30 May 2008 (accessed July 16, 2010); available from [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> Austin Long, *On “Other War”: Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2006.)

<sup>132</sup> An excellent practical example of a war combining both conventional and unconventional tactics was Israel’s Campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006. While it is true that Hezbollah fighters use unconventional tactics (sniper attacks, roadside bombs, hit and run ambushes and attacks against civilians) they also responded as a conventional army would, defending territory and maneuvering conventional forces. See Stephen Biddle, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2008,) 17.

The first aspect of the JOC definition explains that irregular wars are fought differently than conventional combat.<sup>133</sup> Instead of conventional battles, combatants favor suicide bombings. Rather than encounters between regular forces, militias fight. Improvised explosive devices blast military convoys; terrorists attack domestic and international targets. In many irregular wars, an insurgency spawns or strengthens within the state. In short, combatants in irregular war must maintain conventional readiness, but must also prepare for a new type of fight. This “new fight” requires new tactics, like counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense and a heavy reliance on the use of intelligence.

The primary reason for the use of unconventional tactics in irregular war is due to the power asymmetry that exists between the warring sides. One combatant has well-appointed and heavily armed regular forces, while the other combatant lacks advanced technology and organized regular forces. Superficial analysis might suggest that the heavily armed regular forces would easily prevail in a clash with a less well-resourced foe. This thesis, of course, has been resoundingly disproved by history. As evidenced by the Soviet’s takeover bid in Afghanistan in the early 80’s and America’s nearly twenty year war in Vietnam, it is apparent that traditional military might often means little when predicting success in irregular war. Gordon McCormick and Frank Giordan elucidate this idea when they argue that asymmetry cannot be understood solely as difference in military power. Rather, asymmetry in irregular war must be understood as the difference in power *and* information. McCormick and Giordan term the opponents: the “force in being” and the “force in development.”

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<sup>133</sup> I have largely drawn these observations from the work of Colin Gray, Frank Hoffman, and Rupert Smith. See Colin Gray, “Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2007.) Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Rise of Hybrid War* (Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007.) Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.)

McCormick and Giordan differentiate between combatants by referencing how they leverage their advantage. First, the “force in development” has a military power shortfall but information dominance.”<sup>134</sup> In other words, the militarily weaker side has tremendous strength in *what and who* they know. Moreover, these militarily weak forces jealously guard and capitalize on their information superiority. In contrast, the “force in being” has a clear military advantage but has little knowledge of culture, preferences, and societal motivations. Thus, the militarily powerful side has vast resources to employ, but often lacks the insight on how best to apply them.<sup>135</sup>

In irregular war, the “force in development” has a two-fold advantage in 1) their ability to fight a long war and 2) information dominance. First, the lesser military power does not have to win quickly or gloriously; they simply have to outlast the enemy.<sup>136</sup> Armed with an acute understanding that war is unpalatable in resource-rich societies, the force in development withstands attacks, suffers, retreats, regroups and returns to fight again.<sup>137</sup> The less militarily powerful side is willing to endure a persistent irregular war, particularly because it is in these circumstances which it is most likely to win.

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<sup>134</sup> Gordon H. McCormick and Frank R. Giordan, “Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerrilla Mobilization,” *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2, (2007.)

<sup>135</sup> In cases of conventional war, where militarily powerful armed forces have traditionally operated, combat prowess and technological advantage were sufficient to secure a battlefield win. Victory was achieved through a quick, decisive blow, but in irregular war the militarily powerful are denied the luxury of fighting their war.

<sup>136</sup> This argument referencing the duration of irregular war is tied to the complex notion of the offense/defense balance in warfare. When defense is dominant, wars endure. Scholars have noted a link between geographic distance and defense dominance—as is often the case in irregular war. See Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, No. 2 (January 1978.) See also Jack S. Levy, “The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis,” *International Studies Quarterly* 28, No. 2, (June 1984); and Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of World War I” *World Politics* 38, No. 1, (October 1985) For more recent scholarship on the subject see Charles Glaser and Chaim Kaufman, “What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?” *International Security* 22, No. 4, (Spring 1998.)

<sup>137</sup> The American experience in Vietnam is instructive here, as the war was lost over a period of over 15 long years. A much weaker North Vietnamese army never subscribed to contests over body count and refused to fight an American-style war. Because North Vietnam did not lose; they won.

The second advantage enjoyed by the lesser military power is its ability to understand and gain support from the local people. In many developing societies where the local population suffers poverty, social injustice, and political underrepresentation, the people often feel disenfranchised from government.<sup>138</sup> These circumstances provide a fertile climate for a non-state actor challenging the existing government.<sup>139</sup> They can market their new approach to the distressed population, by promising political change and improvement of daily living conditions in return for people's loyalty and support.<sup>140</sup> When existing feelings of discontent are coupled with an emergent group's proffered solution, the armed group is often quite successful in winning the support of the people.

To win, the "force in being" must disrupt this relationship between the disenfranchised people and emergent group. Its first step must be to win local support, which I discuss in greater depth in the last part of this section. The second step critical to success in irregular war is that the "force in being" must understand its enemy—a complex task, due to the enemy's amorphous nature and complicated composition of forces. The next section of this paper identifies these complexities and offers guidance on how to "understand the enemy" in irregular war.

### KNOWING THE ENEMY, AND UNDERSTANDING HIM

*Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy, but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril.*

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<sup>138</sup> This idea stems from the "theory of relative deprivation," which posits that people feel discontent when they become aware of relatively greater wealth or opportunity held by others. As a result, they become more dissatisfied with their socioeconomic situation. Popularized in International Relations literature by Ted Gurr, it seeks to explain why people and societies of little means are prone to violence. Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.)

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Marks' notion of grievance is helpful in explaining the tie between the non-state actor and the people. Thomas A. Marks, "Ideology of Insurgency: New Ethnic Focus or Old Cold War Distortions?" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 15, No. 1 (Spring, 2004.)

<sup>140</sup> Often relying on ideology or religion as a framework, the lesser military power can generate widespread appeal and foment support for its cause.

*Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

As Sun Tzu declared in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., the army that misunderstands its enemy dooms itself to failure. To successfully fight its foe, an army must understand the enemy's history, composition, method of fighting—and weakness. Thus, gaining knowledge of the enemy should be the first step in undertaking any war. This simple rule, however, has proven difficult to follow, particularly in irregular war. The goals of an unconventional force are often incomprehensible to its conventional opponent. Indeed, the enemy himself can be hard to identify. Despite these difficulties, understanding the foe in irregular war remains possible. That premise is this subpart's fundamental purpose. First, I analyze armed groups,<sup>141</sup> and then ask the following questions: In what types of environments do armed groups form? What are their characteristics, and, how should we understand their motivations?

I begin my analysis by exploring environments that are ripe for the formation of armed groups. In their recent work, Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew address this urgent problem by addressing the notion that culture matters. Their work highlights the idea that societies form differently; non-western peoples often structure according to patrilineal descent.<sup>142</sup> These groups, called tribes or clans, serve as the primary authority and organizing structure common in many middle-eastern and Asian cultures. Tribes enforce their own customs and laws using tribal

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<sup>141</sup> In this dissertation, I favor the generic use of the term “armed group” to refer to those who fight against states with conventional armies. I apply the term broadly to include insurgents, militias, warlords, terrorists, and criminal gangs. It is important to note that the literature supports a lively debate on the terminology associated with these groups. Some favor use of term “non-state actor” as an umbrella phrase encompassing all types of combatants. The limitation of this term is also its strength in that non-state actors could also aptly describe an international NGO like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Some definitions also describe irregular combatants as aiming to achieve a political goal. Organized transnational criminal networks, like the Revolutionary armed forces of Columbia, (FARC), defy this definition. See Pablo Policzer, “Neither Terrorists nor Freedom Fighters” Paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, 3-5 March 2005. See also T.X. Hammes, “Armed Groups: Changing the Rules,” *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency*, ed. Jeffrey Norwitz, (Newport: U.S. Naval War College Press, 2008,) 447.

<sup>142</sup>Shultz and Dew argue that approach to warfare differs by culture; they quote Adda Bozeman as stating that “conflict and violence may well be accepted in most areas outside the Occidental world as normal incidents of life, legitimate tools.” Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, *Insurgents Terrorists and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006,) 27.

forms of coercion. Based on the notion of kinship, individual membership in a tribe relies on patriarchy. Staunch loyalty to the tribe is unequivocally demanded. Fierce allegiance develops in these societies, where a single slight against an individual can foment a full-scale conflict between tribes.

As a result, many tribally-based societies experience a faint but consistent undergirding of civil unrest, where tribes frequently clash in battle as a method for resolving differences between groups.<sup>143</sup> In cases where westerners act in these societies to impose order after military action, they are befuddled when an attempt to create a central state government fails. The difficulties, however, are quite predictable because many tribal societies accept violence as a way to reconcile difference and generally lack feelings of strong nationalist allegiance.<sup>144</sup> Thus, the formation of armed groups is common in tribally-based societies. Armed groups initially emerge in response to attacks by neighboring tribes and then strengthen when external powers attempt to impose a central government.

A second common environment ripe for the existence of armed groups is in failed or failing states.<sup>145</sup> Armed groups emerge in these environments because incompetent governments cannot adequately project power within their national borders.<sup>146</sup> Weak governments often lack sufficient law enforcement personnel maintain order. In other cases, weak governments simply

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<sup>143</sup> Montgomery McFate argues that a natural discomfort can exist between tribes and states, wherein each seeks to destroy the other, as they represent alternate ways to organize peoples. Montgomery McFate, "The 'Memory of war:' Tribes and the Legitimate Use of Force in Iraq" *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency* Ed. Jeffrey Norwitz (Newport; U.S. Naval War College Press, 2008,) 293.

<sup>144</sup> Tribes often view attempts to create a strong state authority with deep suspicion, as centralization often usurps their own power.

<sup>145</sup> It is important to note that U.S. policy makers are increasingly convinced of the threat posed by weak states. Condoleezza Rice makes this point by asserting that "...today... the greatest threat to our security are defined more by the dynamics within weak and failing states than by the borders between strong and aggressive ones." Condoleezza Rice, "The Promise of Democratic Peace" *The Washington Post*. (December 11, 2005.)

<sup>146</sup> Alice Hills asserts that "warlords and militias only exist in states... in which structure, authority, power, law, and civil order have fragmented. Such processes are usually characterized by conflict." Alice Hills, "Warlords, Militia and Conflict in Contemporary Africa: A Re-examination of Terms," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 8 No. 1, (Spring 1997.)

lack appropriate laws and a mature justice system to maintain order. In addition, weak and failing states often include areas of ungoverned territory, which provides a rich environment for armed groups to flourish. Ungoverned spaces provide sufficient space to set up training camps and recruiting stations, and these regions far afield from any central authority often provide a plethora of new recruits. In other words, the power vacuum inherent in weak and failing states creates a circumstance where armed groups can emerge unrestricted. In large part this occurs because the government has lost control of internal security.<sup>147</sup>

Theoretically, governments of failed and failing states have neglected their duty as mandated by the social contract. When citizens choose to surrender personal freedoms in exchange for governmental protection, they expect security in their daily living. When the government fails in its duty to protect, the people have a right revolt. The people wrest their trust from the government and offer it to any group who can provide the security function. Armed groups often step into this security void, by appealing to the citizens' most basic need—security. Thus, armed groups gain considerable traction in regions where the central authority lacks an ability to govern—or is simply non-existent.

This resultant power vacuum produces armed groups with two major commonalities.

The United Nations Office of Humanitarian Affairs offers a helpful definition:

Armed groups have the potential to employ arms in the use of force to achieve political, ideological or economic objectives; are not within the formal military structures of States, State-alliances or intergovernmental organizations; and are not under the control of the State(s) in which they operate.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> For discussions on the tie between failed and failing states and armed groups, see Robert Dorff, "Failed states after 9/11: What did we Know and What have we Learned?" *International Studies Perspectives*, 6, No. 1, (January 2005); Robert Rotberg, "The New Nature of Nation-state Failure" *The Washington Quarterly* 25, No. 3. (Summer, 2002.) James Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing states promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52, No. 3, (September 2008.)

<sup>148</sup>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (accessed July 16, 2010); available from <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitariannegotiations/index.htm>

First, these groups typically have political aspirations. They play on the vulnerabilities of a disenfranchised and suffering populace, by promising a change in governance and improvement of daily living conditions. A second similarity among armed groups is that they form as an extra-state organization. As such, they have little or no access to state-funded resource and rely heavily on external monies which often emanate from by lucrative international, and often illegal, trade. I address these two definitional components in turn.

The first similarity common among many armed groups is a fundamental desire for political change. Bard O'Neill identifies this condition as one in which the armed group is in "violent discord" with the existing structure and seeks to "destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics."<sup>149</sup> In other words, armed groups often make a bid for major societal change through governmental restructuring. Armed groups often succeed because they present the new governance model to the population—a population that has suffered material, historical, and economic inequities. In this way, the armed group offers an alternative form of governance to a disenfranchised people.<sup>150</sup>

One of the major reasons why armed groups succeed in their bid for political change is that they successfully co-opt the support of the population. Indigenous people who have suffered poverty, political exclusion, and economic trouble are often won over by an emergent group offering an escape plan from societal problems. They may propose changes that allow for improved representation and economic opportunity, and/or villainization and revenge against ruling group. Plans like these often succeed because the armed group appeals to the loyalty of a segment of the population. In tribally-based societies, where staunch kinship are a societal norm

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<sup>149</sup> Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 1990,) 14.

<sup>150</sup> Paul Jackson, "Warlords as Alternative forms of Governance," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 14, No. 2 (Summer 2003.)

and divisions between groups are the norm, armed groups often sell their plan easily.<sup>151</sup> By coalescing support from the population, armed groups strengthen their cause and give them an improved chance for success in overthrowing, or at least changing, the existing government.

Pablo Policzer confirms this notion when he describes armed groups as “challengers to the coercive monopoly of the state.” He argues that armed groups emerge when states are unable to maintain control of state functions. Related to the idea that armed groups emerge in response to a failed social contract, armed groups can be understood as a form of ‘would-be states.’<sup>152</sup> They exhibit some degree of organizational hierarchy, use force to achieve political goals, are separate from state control, and often claim dominance over some territory.<sup>153</sup> In this way, armed groups are indeed a response to a state’s failure to construct viable political control and governance.

The second similarity common to armed groups is that their non-state status means that they have no standardized internal funding mechanism. As a result, many of these groups engage in illicit activities to support their efforts.<sup>154</sup> Because they are highly lucrative, drug sales and human trafficking often become a major source of income for armed groups.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Vinci argues that armed groups can solve the problem of mobilization by motivating people to fighting four major ways: appealing to their sense of loyalty, encouraging a dedication to self-help, providing economic incentives, and in some cases coercing them into battles. Anthony Vinci, “The ‘Problems of Mobilization’ and the Analysis of Armed Groups,” *Parameters* 36 (Spring 2006,) 54.

<sup>152</sup> Hezbollah is a good example of an armed group, on the U.S. State Department’s list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, which provides basic services to predominantly Shiites peoples living in Southern Lebanon. These social services include hospitals, education and construction services. Foreign Terrorist Organization, U.S. State Department, (accessed July 17, 2010) from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm>

<sup>153</sup> These four characteristics represent Pablo Policzer’s interpretation of an armed group as a ‘would-be state.’ He does acknowledge, however, that exceptions exist to his definitional framework, most notably, the requirement for a political agenda. For example, the FARC presents as an anomaly in which the group’s aims have little relation to governance, instead are based on purely economic incentives. Pablo Policzer. “Neither Terrorists or Freedom fighters.”

<sup>154</sup> For more on the role of external actors in irregular war, see Andrea Dew, “The Erosion of Constraints in Armed Group Warfare: Bloody Tactics and Vulnerable Targets,” *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency*, Ed. Jeffrey Norwitz, (Newport; U.S. Naval War College Press, 2008,) 261.

<sup>155</sup> Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs recently noted that Afghanistan leads the world in opium production. This situation is of particular concern because of “the

Armed groups cannot obtain funding through normal financial networks and lack state resources. As such, profitable, illegal activities are often the funding source of choice.

An economic problem associated with armed groups is the emergence of a thriving underground economy. Robert Looney argues that “shadow economies” often flourish in weak states and are an indicator of insurgency strength. Participants in shadow economies offer goods and services which are typically lawful, but the methods for the production are not. Economic producers who operate in the “shadow,” evade taxes, ignore labor regulations, and disregard social security requirements. A shadow economy often blossoms because the state government lacks the strength to enforce existing laws and halt producers who violate them.<sup>156</sup> Insurgencies can flourish in these environments as lawlessness is endemic, the government is weak, and the underground economy can provide otherwise unattainable goods.

#### SUCCESSFULLY FIGHTING AN IRREGULAR WAR<sup>157</sup>

*The most powerful modern armed forces are largely irrelevant to modern war—indeed ...their relevance stands in inverse proportion to their modernity.<sup>158</sup>*  
--Martin van Creveld

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the American soldier’s traditional preference for major combat over irregular war has confounded the United States’ ability to succeed in the common wars of today. America prefers short, decisive combat, where technological superiority and massive firepower guarantees a win. Simply put, America wants to fight its war—not the

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Taliban's involvement in the drug trade. Drug profits now support elements of the Taliban and fund attacks on U.S. and NATO forces.” States statistics on leading drug producing states can be found in the “International Strategy Control Narcotics report,” U.S. Department of State (accessed July 17, 2010); available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/102583.pdf>

<sup>156</sup>Robert Looney, “The Business of Insurgency: The Expansion of Iraq’s Shadow Economy”

*National Interest*, Fall 2005 (accessed December 2, 2010); available from <http://nationalinterest.org/issue/fall-2005>

<sup>157</sup>Anthony Cordesman, *Shaping the Future of Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005, (accessed December 2, 2010) available from [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/051121\\_counterinsurgency.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/051121_counterinsurgency.pdf)

<sup>158</sup> Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, 32.

war waged by the enemy. As its senior leaders are painfully learning, however, America is often denied luxury of fighting in times, places and methods of its own choosing. To win, America *must* instead fight the enemy's war. Key to successfully fighting unconventional combat is understanding its essence. To that end, the last section of this chapter analyzes how to fight. In other words, I address now one of the signal questions of this work: how should America fight an irregular war?

America's difficulty with success in irregular war is due, in part, to a labeling problem. The three case studies analyzed in later chapters of this dissertation are illustrative. For instance, as will be outlined in Chapter Three of this dissertation, America referred to its military operation in Bosnia as "peacekeeping," yet in the 1990's, America had not resolved what "peacekeeping" actually entailed. American soldiers in Bosnia clashed with JNA forces, uncovered mass graves, guarded safe areas, detained war criminals, monitored elections and resettled refugees—and this list steadily grew as the war persisted.

U.S. troops became increasingly frustrated with the mission as responsibilities mounted but guidance on specific tasks, in terms of whether and how to do them was limited.<sup>159</sup> In other words, American troops in the 1990's, who had typically trained and prepared for major combat were thrust into a peacekeeping mission, unfamiliar territory for both soldier and policy maker. Both floundered a bit, as strategists worked to understand the nature. Ultimately, as this

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<sup>159</sup> U.S. forces in Bosnia acted under the guidance provided in Presidential Decision Directive 25 which stated that "under this approach, the Department of Defense will take lead management and funding responsibility for those UN operations that involve U.S. combat units and those that are likely to involve combat, whether or not U.S. troops are involved. This approach will ensure that military expertise is brought to bear on those operations that have a *significant military component*. The State Department will retain lead management and funding responsibility for traditional peacekeeping operations that do not involve U.S. combat units. In all cases, the State Department remains responsible for the conduct of diplomacy and instructions to embassies and our UN Mission in New York." (Italics added by the author.) Of particular concern, is the vagueness of the term "significant military component," which left soldiers unclear of their role in comparison to their state department counterparts. This issue is addressed in greater depth in chapter III of this work, where I analyze the U.S. military's participation in quelling the Bosnian conflict in 1996. "United States: Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations," May 1994, Presidential Decision Directive 25, (accessed 17July 2010); available from <http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/courses/admin-perritt/pdd-25.html>

dissertation shows the “peacekeeping” of the 1990’s is a form of what we understand today as irregular war.

A second type of labeling problem emerged in the post-9/11 conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, when President Bush initially described Afghanistan’s Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom as battles in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). On September 20, 2001, President Bush declared,

Our *War on Terror* begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated....[America] will direct every resource at our command -- every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war -- to the disruption and to the *defeat of the global terror network*.<sup>160</sup>

As the Bush administration launched the GWOT at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they referred to the enemy as “terrorists.” As I will demonstrate in Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation, although terrorists were certainly among the enemy America faced—the enemy also significantly included insurgents, militia groups, warlords and criminal group. To refer to and understand the enemy as terrorists gravely miscalculates their motives and underestimates the potential power. I turn now to a examination of the concept of terrorism, as a springboard into the last section of this chapter, which answers—who is the enemy and how should we fight him?

To address this labeling question, I must first deal with the definition of terrorism, a notoriously difficult task. Noted terrorism scholar, Bruce Hoffman argues that the term’s innate imprecision emanates from its gross overuse, applying it to subway attacks, military assassinations of civilian leaders, and tainted lettuce on supermarket shelves. In addition, the modern term is decidedly unhelpful partially because of its historic derivation. In 18<sup>th</sup> century Jacobian France, the government responded brutally to any and all who opposed the regime, thus

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<sup>160</sup> Italics added by author. President George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American people,” September, 20, 2001, (accessed July 17, 2010); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

earning itself the moniker the “Reign of Terror.”<sup>161</sup> In this case, the government terrorized its own citizens. Since that time terrorism has evolved through many stages but an underlying commonality is that terrorism retains its “revolutionary” character. In other words, terrorists, disenfranchised with an existing political system seek change.

Terrorism, as we understand it today, almost always has a political goal; terrorists themselves have political aspirations. According to Hoffman, terrorism can be fundamentally understood as the “pursuit of power, the acquisition of power, and the use of power to achieve political change.”<sup>162</sup> Violence is the means to achieve that political aim. In other words, terrorists resort to violent acts in response to real or perceived injustices perpetrated by the existing political organization.

One of the major debates in the present literature asks whether modern terrorism is a “new form” of its traditional variant. Martha Crenshaw offers an answer in her examination of today’s terrorists’ goals, means and organization. Crenshaw argues that modern terrorist groups often have religious undertones which dictate their political aims. These terrorists are unrestrained in their use of methods, often seeking to kill as many people as possible. Finally, 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorist networks typically have a limited central organization, opting instead for loosely tied cells of individuals working for similar outcomes. Despite these changes, she argues, terrorism is not fundamentally different, because terrorists are generally seeking political

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<sup>161</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998,) 14.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

change—as was the case in 18<sup>th</sup> century France.<sup>163</sup> Terrorism has not changed “in kind, but in degree.”<sup>164</sup>

Based on these historic and modern usages of the term “terrorism,” this paper asks whether the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq can be properly understood as battles in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Although Al Qaeda leaders certainly employ the use of violence to achieve a political objective, terrorism incompletely describes the range of response by those fighting against American interveners. Terrorism is only one tactic of the many employed. The Bush administration recognized the limits of the term in mid-2006 and assigned new terminology to define the fight, updating the operation’s title to “The Long War.”<sup>165</sup>

While the Bush administration identified and attempted to correct its mistake in using the limited GWOT label, this initial misdirection harmed the overall success of the operation. American forces misunderstood the aspirations and breadth of the enemy. America’s enemy was likely emboldened by this lack of U.S. understanding of its ultimate goal, which is the use of a widespread counterinsurgency campaign to establish Islamic dominance and a global caliphate. Director of the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, Colonel Daniel Roper elaborates on this idea:

The ‘war on terror’ conflates a single tactic into the overall characteristic of a diverse number of enemy organizations, who exercise terrorism as just one tool. Continuing to frame the conflict as a war against terrorism alone serves to mischaracterize the enemy, obscures an understanding of the techniques they

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<sup>163</sup>For additional examinations of “today’s” terrorists, see Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorist Decision-Making,” *Annual Review Political Science* 9 (June 2006. ) See also Boaz Ganor, “Defining Terrorism: Is one Man’s Terrorist another Man’s Freedom Fighter?” International Institute for Counterterrorism, (accessed July 17, 2010); available from <http://www.ict.org.il/ResearchPublications/tabid/64/Articlsid/432/Default.aspx>

<sup>164</sup>Martha Crenshaw, “Terrorism, Strategies and Grand Strategies,” *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, eds Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes (Washington, D.C, Georgetown University Press, 2004.)

<sup>165</sup>James Carafano of the Heritage Foundation and General John Abazaïd, Commander of U.S. Central Command, used the term “Long War” in 2005. President Bush first used the term in his 2006 State of the Union Address where he declared that “our own generation is in a long war against a determined enemy.” George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, Washington DC., January 31, 2006, (accessed July 17, 2010); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/>

employ, distorts the challenges posed, and impeded the development and implementation of a strategy for countering their impact.<sup>166</sup>

Use of the term “war on terror” prompts the notion that the enemy is a terrorist, and while that may be true, it is also likely insufficient as a descriptive term. The bottom line is that many terrorists are insurgents, but certainly not all insurgents are terrorists. The Global War on Terror is simply too narrow a phrase to aptly describe America’s enemy and the types of operation America must conduct to win.

Another problem with the term, “war on terror,” is that terrorism should be more properly understood as a tactic of irregular war. The U.S. Army’s recently released Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24) includes terrorism as one of the many “time-tested tools”<sup>167</sup> used by insurgents. To counteract the modern enemy, FM 3-24 demands a “global strategic response,” which confronts all tactics, including terrorism. Robert Cassidy suggests that America completely abandon the monikers “Global War on Terror,” the “Long War” and “Persistent Conflict” and understand today’s war for what it truly is. He argues that an appropriate title of today’s U.S. efforts abroad would be “Global Counterinsurgency.”<sup>168</sup>

General David Barno, Commanding Officer of Combined Forces Afghanistan from 2003-2005, also favors use of the term Global Counterinsurgency to describe today’s operations. He is concerned that “we as a military are at risk of failing to understand the nature of the war we are fighting,” and argues that the U.S. military is currently engaged in “fourth generation warfare” (4GN)<sup>169</sup> where the enemy’s objective is the *not* the destruction of the opponent’s

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<sup>166</sup> Daniel Roper. “Global Counterinsurgency: Strategic Clarity for the Long War.” *Parameters*. Vol. 38. No. 3. Autumn 2008. For more on the misuse of the term “Global War on Terror,” see also Jeffrey Record. *Bounding the Global War on Terror*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003.

<sup>167</sup> Other “time tested” insurgent tools include subversion, suicide attack, propaganda and open warfare. *The U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, No. 3-24. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, 8.

<sup>168</sup> Robert Cassidy, “Terrorism and Insurgency” *Parameters* 38, No. 3, (Autumn 2008.)

<sup>169</sup> In his article, General Barno lays out each warfare “generation. The first generation of warfare focuses on the offensive and was characterized by military formations and large armies advancing on a battlefield. Second

armed forces; today's enemy targets the American political establishment.<sup>170</sup> The enemy leverages technology and the media, to protract the war and ultimately convince the American people that its strategic goals are too costly—or simply unattainable. The first step for any policy maker or military strategist is to correctly interpret the enemy's strategy and targeting, and then devise a plan to confront the adversary head-on.

The U.S. Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual offers substantive, critical guidance to strategists and policy makers taking on a counterinsurgency effort. The manual largely focuses on four key concepts: Legitimacy, Tie to Politics, Unity of Effort, and Use of Intelligence.<sup>171</sup> Addressed in different ways throughout the manual, with some concepts having devoted chapters and others infused throughout, clearly the drafters of the manual perceive these four issues as crucial to the success of any counterinsurgency campaign. I examine each one in turn.

Foremost in any successful counterinsurgency is the issue of legitimate government. Whether imposed externally, established cooperatively from within, or coercively created from a dominant internal group, the indigenous people eventually accept one group as having authority over them.<sup>172</sup> Because Westerners generally highly value liberal government and democratically organized elections, they often mistakenly assume that democracy will be the natural choice and

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generation warfare emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as armies developed the ability to move faster and communicate more accurately. The increasing deadliness of massive firepower culminated in the "trench warfare" in World War One. General Barno describes Third Generation warfare as the age of highly advanced technology, mechanized war and lightning fast strikes. Operation Desert Storm is a particularly good example of Third Generation Warfare. David Barno, "Challenges in Fighting a Global Counterinsurgency," *Parameters* 36, No. 2, (Summer 2006,) 16.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>171</sup> *The U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.) For important work on the issues to be considered during a counterinsurgency campaign, see Max Manwaring, "Toward an Understanding of Insurgency Wars: The Paradigm." *Uncomfortable Wars: Toward a New Paradigm on Low Intensity Conflict* Ed. Max Manwaring (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); Austin Long. *On Other War: Lessons from Five decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research* accessed July 17, 2010); available from [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND\\_MG482.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG482.pdf) RAND: National Defense Research Institute, 2006. John Nagl, *Learning to eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.) Robert Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global war on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006.)

<sup>172</sup> Conrad C. Crane, "Minting COIN: Principles and Imperatives for Combating Insurgency," *Air and Space Power Journal* 21, No. 4, (Winter 2007.)

outcome for any people, when given the option and proper tools. This deduction, however, neglects the fact that government is a combination of coercion and consent, and depending on the intensity of coercion and socioeconomic experience of the people, other forms of authority, such as armed groups, can emerge as legitimate in the eyes of the people.

One of the primary examples in which armed groups gain traction is when stark horizontal inequalities exist among a population. As grievance literature shows,<sup>173</sup> violence is more prevalent in societies where deprived citizens live alongside others with significantly greater wealth and opportunity. Discontented and deprived, citizens often blame the government and its elites for their poor circumstances. In many cases, these citizens are willing to take up arms against the existing power. Armed groups become enormously attractive to an aggrieved population, because they offer an outlet for frustration while promising inclusion to the politically excluded, recognition to the religiously marginalized, and prosperity to the economically disadvantaged. Thus, armed groups often achieve legitimacy in regions home to the very poor.

Those waging a counterinsurgency campaign must carefully assess the society and its culture in order to counteract an armed groups' ability to co-opt the people's support. In regions where the people are dissatisfied with their social, political and economic standing, a successful counterinsurgency campaign must attempt to address the horizontal inequalities. It means that the counterinsurgency campaign should consider a robust program to jumpstart the economy, re-engineering of the social structure, and re-establishment of good governance. In this way, the intervening force can thwart attempts by the armed group to gain the people's loyalty and ultimately be perceived as a legitimate authority.

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<sup>173</sup>For discussions of the role of grievance in fomenting violence, see Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.) See also Edward Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases* (Brookfield: Gower Publishing, 1990.)

A second factor integral to the success of any counterinsurgency operation is recognition of the military campaign's crucial connection to politics. Noted scholar Rupert Smith argues in the *Utility of Force* that "I do advocate a revolution in our thinking, within the framework of war amongst the people: that our confrontations and conflicts must be understood as intertwined political military events, and only in this way can they be resolved." In other words, the "utility of force" is only realized when it is fruitfully employed to achieve a political objective. Smith further argues that:

Military force when employed has only two immediate effects: kills people and destroys things. Whether or not death and destruction serve to achieve the overarching or political purpose the force was intended to achieve depend on the choice of targets or objectives... that is the true measure of its utility.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, policy makers and senior military leaders must carefully design the employment of force to achieve the policy objective. Without it, force simply loses its utility.

In irregular war, soldiers absolutely cannot detach from the political objective, as separation from politics means almost certain operational failure. David Galula, a French Colonel serving in the 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the French Army during the Algerian War, famously argued that "military action is secondary to the political one, its primary purpose being to afford the political power enough freedom to work safely with the population."<sup>175</sup> In other words, a successful counterinsurgency campaign focuses attention on non-military activities designed to stabilize the political situation and win support of the people. General David Barno, Commander of Combined Forces Afghanistan from 2003-2005 highlights and defends the "80/20 rule,"

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<sup>174</sup>Smith argues developed states are accustomed and prefer to fight industrial war, where the enemy is the other side's military forces. The challenge is to employ massive military force to defeat the enemy. Smith, however, argues that "industrial wars" are representative of a bygone era; World War II-like clashes are unlikely to occur in the future. Instead, developed states will be challenged to win in wars amongst the people, like the French in Algeria in 1954, the British in Malaya in the 1950's, and America in Vietnam in the 1960's. Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in Modern World* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2007,) 8.

<sup>175</sup> David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1963.)

meaning that a successful counterinsurgency is 80% a political solution, while 20% of the operation's success is due to effective kinetic action.<sup>176</sup>

The third facet of a successful counterinsurgency campaign is to ensure unified effort.

The Counterinsurgency Field manual states:

Although military efforts are necessary and important, they are only effective if integrated into a comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power. A successful counterinsurgency (COIN) meets the contested population's needs while protecting it from the insurgents.... The integration of civilian and military efforts is crucial in COIN and must be focused on supporting the local population and the Host Nation (HN) government.<sup>177</sup>

Critical to the success of any counterinsurgency campaign is the ability for military and civilian elements of the U.S. government to coordinate efforts and establish an interagency solution.

David Kilcullen, a Chief Strategist in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department focuses on the need for interagency cooperation by arguing that modern counterinsurgency operations must be understood as occurring in a conflict ecosystem.<sup>178</sup> In other words, today's complex environment means that modern counterinsurgency must account for issues of globalization and develop responses which meet the threat. Insurgent forces, linked by technological advances and instant communications, have created global networks which are unaffected by collapse of a single cell. For instance, Al Qaeda's influence is hardly limited to Afghanistan; indeed Al Qaeda reaches every corner of globe, with noted activity in Sudan, Malaya, Chechnya and Yemen. As a result, destroying Al Qaeda in Afghanistan would diminish the group's power but would not abolish its global influence.

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<sup>176</sup>General Barno draws this famous breakdown from David Galula's conception of how to prosecute a successful counterinsurgency. General David Barno, Commander of Combined Forces Afghanistan 2003-2005, Interview with the author, February 15, 2008.

<sup>177</sup> Counterinsurgency Field Manual, FM 3-24. Department of the Army, Dec 2007, (accessed July 17, 2010); available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24fd.pdf>

<sup>178</sup>Kilcullen contrasts modern counterinsurgency theory with "classic" counterinsurgency theory, which perceives the clash as binary, a single insurgent fighting a counterinsurgent force. David Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency Redux" *Survival* 48, No. 4, (December 2006.)

Therefore, the U.S. must construct a counterinsurgency operation capable of meeting this complex challenge. Sarah Sewall, author of the forward to the Counterinsurgency Manual argues that:

The military alone cannot provide the economic reconstruction, political reform and social assistance on the scale or for the duration that most COIN requires. Non-military actors to include other USG agencies, contractor, international and regional organizations, host nation agencies and NGO's must be able to operate safely and effectively on the ground.<sup>179</sup>

Simply put, COIN is not solely a military operation. It requires interagency, inter-organizational and multination cooperation for success.<sup>180</sup>

One of the major factors impeding complex organizational cooperation is that developing the proper “political-military sensibility,”<sup>181</sup> and ability to work and understand both military and civilian aspects of COIN operations. U.S. armed forces, through on-the-job training and regular military training, have become increasingly more comfortable in civilian-oriented tasks. Introduced in the mid 1990's with General Krulak's notion of a “three-block war,”<sup>182</sup> American troops for the last fifteen years have necessarily become more proficient in engaging in military fire fights in one instant and, an hour later, assisting a displaced family. Recent evidence suggests that DoD leadership increasingly recognizes the need to train American soldiers differently and understand counterinsurgency as an operation distinct from conventional war. The challenge now in DoD is applying consistent pressure regarding the importance of COIN and refining future operations based on continued learning.

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<sup>179</sup> Sarah Sewall, “Modern U.S. Counterinsurgency Practice: Rethinking Risk and Developing a National Strategy,” *Military Review* (September/October 2006.)

<sup>180</sup> Sarah Sewall, Interview with the author, March 24, 2008.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* 107

<sup>182</sup> General Charles Krulak, Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps from 1995-1999 adopted the phrase “three block war” to explain the challenges faced by post Cold War marines. He argued that today's marines must be prepared to engage in full-scale military action, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions—all within a three block radius in the same day.

The adoption of a political-military sensibility on the part of civilian agencies has remained a continued struggle, as many from diplomatic and NGO communities are uncomfortable with the military piece of what they perceive as a humanitarian action.<sup>183</sup> Indeed, many even dislike the term counterinsurgency. Communications between military and civilian actors is spotty, not only in a practical sense, but often the two groups do not even speak the same bureaucratic language. Senior military leaders must do more to incorporate their civilian partners in operational planning and execution, while civilians must continue learning about military culture, language and approaches to achieve optimal benefit.

The fourth major piece of any successful counterinsurgency campaign is the effective use of strategic intelligence. A common lament from intelligence professionals on the heels of the 9/11 attacks was we “failed to connect the dots.” Those who study 9/11 as a failure of intelligence typically ask questions pertaining to “warning events” like the 1992 attack on the World Trade Center or seek to understand the pre-9/11 ties among terrorist groups. William Nolte suggests that, while interesting and important, they are not the right questions.<sup>184</sup> Instead, the attacks of 9/11 should be explored as a failure of the imagination. In other words, our existing intelligence structure failed to conceive that an attack like 9/11 was possible. A major reason for this failure is lack of effective coordination among various U.S. intelligence organizations.

A sweeping reform of the national intelligence system was initiated in 2004 with the Intelligence and Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act.<sup>185</sup> Ultimately the act resulted in establishment of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), whose purpose is to centralize

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<sup>183</sup>For a recent assessment on the importance of military-civilian partnership in COIN, see Ian Hope, *Unity of Command in Afghanistan: A Forsaken Principle of War*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008.)

<sup>184</sup> William Nolte, “Rethinking War and Intelligence” *Rethinking the Principles of War* ed. Anthony D. McIvor, (Annapolis; Naval Institute Press, 2005,) 425.

<sup>185</sup>The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act,” Washington, DC, 2004, (accessed July 17, 2010); available from <http://intelligence.senate.gov/laws/pl108-458.pdf>

intelligence and improve dissemination so that it is easier to connect the sometimes nebulous dots. While the integration of national intelligence was an important first step, some scholars say that a full-scale Revolution in Intelligence Affairs (RIA) is necessary to address the gaps in an effective national intelligence apparatus.<sup>186</sup>

The difficulty in establishing an effective intelligence system is that the major forms of intelligence: national technical means<sup>187</sup> (NTM) and human intelligence (HUMINT) continues to adjust for the new post-9/11 environment. First, NTM struggles to keep pace with commercial technological advances. Although counterintelligence technology exists to counteract these advances, it remains difficult to quickly purchase these systems through the cumbersome General Services Administration (GSA) process.<sup>188</sup> As such, U.S. counterintelligence often finds itself one step behind in the SIGINT collection. One of the most effective ways to circumvent the lengthy GSA purchase and approval process is through the use of unit funds—the only drawback is ensuring unit funds are in sufficient quantity to meet the need.

The human intelligence collection process must also transform in the face of post-9/11 realities. Clearly, the intelligence community must develop intelligence professionals with sufficient cultural and language expertise to operate in new environments. While cultural immersion programs are helpful, the national intelligence community must work to identify individuals with long-standing knowledge of Arab cultures, or fluency in Pashtu or Farsi. One of the ways the intelligence community can address this issue is by capitalizing on the numbers of existing “collectors” in the increasingly globalized world. Commercial workers, international businessmen, INGO representatives work and live in nearly every community—including those

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<sup>186</sup>See Thomas Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2004) and Deborah Barger, “Beyond Intelligence Reform: The Case for a Revolution in Intelligence reform” *Rethinking the Principles of War*, Ed. Anthony D. McIvor (Annapolis; Naval Institute Press, 2005,) 425.

<sup>187</sup> The Intelligence increasingly refers to signals intelligence (or SIGINT) as National Technical Means

<sup>188</sup> Matthew Reilly, “Transforming SIGINT to Fight Irregular Threats,” *American Intelligence Journal* (Winter 2007/2008. )

where insurgency occurs. The national intelligence community should capitalize on their knowledge and connections to gain as much information about the societies and motivations for unrest.

The next step after improvement of collection capabilities, the United States must improve its intelligence dissemination to properly technically exploit the information received. To that end, Secretary Gates and others argue that a more fully integrated/joint intelligence system is a strategic imperative for effective COIN operations.<sup>189</sup> Similar to the changes wrought by Goldwater Nichols in integrating DoD in the 1980's, centralizing intelligence under a single authority would provide a "decision advantage" for the U.S. and would better serve as a model for COIN operations. Although significant reforms and overhauls have occurred in the intelligence community since 9/11,<sup>190</sup> the United States must continue to work on information sharing in safe and secure ways. The Revolution in Intelligence Affairs is underway and policy makers must ensure that the process improvement continues.

The fundamental purpose of this final section of the paper is to examine irregular war, in terms of its nature, actors, and responses. First, irregular war is different than traditional combat common in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. America's extensive military power, based on resources and technological advancements, have made would-be challengers unwilling to engage with the United States in conventional battle. This phenomena is unlikely change as few other powers have the population and economic strength to rival the U.S. in the near future. As such, these enemies have adopted unconventional methods to challenge American power. The moniker

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<sup>189</sup> Secretary Robert Gates, Distinguished Lecture Series, National Defense University, September 29, 2008, (accessed July 22, 2010); available from <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4295> See also Emma Ashburn, "Intelligent Reform?" *SAIS Review* 21, No. 7 (Winter/Spring 2008.)

<sup>190</sup>The creation of a Director of National Intelligence (DNI), Centers of Excellence in Counter Terrorism (NCTC) and National Counter and Non-Proliferation Center serve as rich examples of improvements to integrate intelligence collection and dissemination efforts. These efforts also resulted in a redefinition of "national intelligence" to mean "all intelligence regardless of source from which it is derived."

widely adopted for this new method of fighting is “irregular war.” Because America’s opponents do not have access to massive firepower or technological advancements, terrorism, insurgency, indirect attack, and subversion are the mark of its attack method. These lesser powers are often ill-organized and under-resourced. Despite these disadvantages, America’s enemies still have the ability to challenge U.S. power and wound the nation.

As such, America must learn how to fight its new enemies and the first step is heeding the immortal words of Sun Tzu—know your enemy. The key to winning against a less well-resourced foe comes in two parts. First, accurately assess the opponent’s strength and second, do not misunderstand your own state’s power. Most importantly, America must develop appropriate strategies for counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and foreign internal defense which focus on the establishment of legitimate governance, reinforce connection of the military effort to political goals, and capitalize on civil/military partnerships and effectively use intelligence. In other words, the United States must develop a particularized strategy to confront the new opponent in a new kind of war.

## **CONCLUSION**

In sum, before proceeding to the case study analyses of this dissertation, I present this study within the larger context of U.S. military strategy and U.S. national security policy and repeat the two major observations made at the outset of this study. First, the United States armed forces are unequalled by any other military in the world. Its superior technology and training make it the most capable in the world. Second, the United States military has enjoyed a less than perfect record in winning irregular wars. These two seemingly incongruent realities are explained by three important debates in international security studies today. First, the U.S. has struggled to define its rationale for engaging in irregular war. Although I do not support a

monolithic or generalized approach for making the decision to intervene, I do argue that the U.S. must carefully pre-determine mission objectives for each case, which must be communicated to the troops. In irregular wars of the past, policy makers either did not initially identify or later changed operational goals, without effective communication to the forces in the field, leaving the troops uninformed and unprepared, which fostered a breach of trust between civilian policy makers and the U.S. military.

The second debate yielding insights regarding America's struggle to succeed in irregular war is associated with the inculcated notion of an "American Way of War." American soldiers typically perceive irregular war as a less important collateral duty to their primary job of major combat. This pervasive belief regarding war has given rise to generations of soldiers who resistance full acceptance of the responsibility for irregular war. Although this perception of the limited importance of irregular war has abated since U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, military leaders and policy makers must fully embrace irregular war as one of its most important duties.

Third, America remains mired in the discussion of how to succeed in COIN operations. In part, this is due to an honest search for knowledge and thorough examination of past experience. Another reason for the difficulty with COIN is the necessity for a culture shift in the whole of the American government. Gradually, the U.S. military is accepting the central importance of COIN, creating training regimens to meet the need, and developing doctrine which provides guidance on its construct. The next major step is adaptation of the COIN effort to the interagency, which requires inclusiveness of civilian agencies and partnership with them in the planning process. Because COIN is "80% political and 20% military," an interagency solution is crucial to success.

The bottom line is that all agencies involved in COIN must accept the value and importance of understanding the otherness of others. America is fighting a new kind of war against a new kind of enemy. No single template will address every situation. Policy makers and senior leaders must become comfortable in the adoption of a broad doctrine, like the Counterinsurgency Manual, but willing to study the culture and societal construct of potential enemies to learn how to fight them effectively. And, to win.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Bosnian Intervention:*

#### *Recalcitrance, Rationale and Remonstrance*

*[Bosnians, Serbs and Croats] have asked for America's help as they implement the [Dayton] peace agreement. America has a responsibility to answer that request, to help to turn this moment of hope into an enduring reality. To do that, troops from our country and around the world would go into Bosnia to give them the confidence and support they need to implement their peace plan. I refuse to send American troops to fight a war in Bosnia, but I believe we must help to secure the Bosnian peace.<sup>191</sup>*

- *President Clinton on the eve of the November 1995 troop deployment to Bosnia*

*Securing peace in Bosnia will also help to build a free and stable Europe. Bosnia lies at the very heart of Europe, next door to many of its fragile new democracies and some of our closest allies. Generations of Americans have understood that Europe's freedom and Europe's stability is vital to our own national security. That's why we fought two wars in Europe; that's why we launched the Marshall Plan to restore Europe; that's why we created NATO and waged the Cold War, and that's why we must help the nations of Europe to end their worst nightmare since World War II now.<sup>192</sup>*

-*President Clinton*

On August 28, 1995, a mortar round exploded in a market place in Sarajevo. The blast killed 37 civilians, most of whom were Bosnian Muslims. The Clinton Administration interpreted this as a hostile Serbian action<sup>193</sup> that explicitly challenged America's emergent

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<sup>191</sup> President William Clinton, Weekly Radio Address, Washington, D.C. November 27, 1995, (accessed July 23, 2010); available from at [http://www.cnn.com/US/9511/bosnia\\_speech/speech.html](http://www.cnn.com/US/9511/bosnia_speech/speech.html)

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Although the United States assigned the Serbs responsibility for the attack, the ordnance could have been placed by Muslims wishing to achieve effect for the cause. Robert Bauman, George, Gawrych and Walter Kretchik, *Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004,) 29.

Bosnia policy. In response, America began its direct support to NATO's Operation Deliberate Force. Two days later, 13 Tomahawk cruise missiles destroyed several major Serbian command posts and placed increased pressure on Serbian air defenses.<sup>194</sup> The total air campaign lasted 3 weeks and involved eight countries.<sup>195</sup> Significantly, the heretofore uninvolved<sup>196</sup> United States supplied two-thirds of the flights. These events in the summer of 1995 marked the first significant American military response—almost three years after Serb forces entered neighboring Bosnia.

Using the three major questions laid out in chapter two of this dissertation, this chapter examines why and how the U.S. engagement in Bosnia occurs. I argue that three main factors influence both the U.S. decision to intervene and its operational effectiveness once involved. First, the United States simply did not perceive the crisis as having any real and immediate effect on U.S. national security. Two years prior to the U.S. intervention, in March of 1993, Secretary of State Warren Christopher appeared on *Face the Nation* and described the situation in the Balkans; "It's really a tragic problem. The hatred between all three groups—the Bosnians and the Serbs and the Croatians—is almost unbelievable. It's almost terrifying, and it's centuries old. That really is a problem from hell."<sup>197</sup> Despite the Clinton Administration's concern, they perceived the situation in the Balkans as a horrific civil war, but a situation that had limited effect on U.S. national security. As a result, when the Europeans enthusiastically stepped forward to take responsibility for the devolving situation in Bosnia, the U.S. was satisfied to let Europe take the lead.

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<sup>194</sup>Thierry Domin, "History of Bosnia and Herzegovina: From the origins to 1992," *SFOR Informer* #117, (accessed 19 August 2010); available from <http://www.nato.int/SFOR/indexinf/117/p03a/chapter1.ht>

<sup>195</sup>The eight countries included France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.

<sup>196</sup> Until this point in the summer of 1995, the U.S. was inconsistently involved from a military perspective, although it had flown several sorties in support of the NATO-defended and UN imposed no fly zones in 1994.

<sup>197</sup> Warren Christopher, *Face the Nation*, Interview with Bob Schieffer, October 22, 1995, (accessed July 23, 2010); available from <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/briefing/dossec/1995/9510/951022dossec>.

Second, as Americans in the early 1990's reveled in the victory over communism and success in Iraq, major military efforts were deemed as having vital importance, while "nation-building" efforts were relegated to secondary importance.<sup>198</sup> Piecing together a Bosnian society racked by internecine warfare was labeled a "nation-building" exercise—and one that was not only less important but also held little promise for success. Therefore, in the early years of the unfolding Bosnian crisis, the U.S undertook limited planning for the operation that it would take on in 1996. Furthermore, when the combat portion of Operation Deliberate Force ended, U.S. forces had little guidance on the stabilization effort that followed.

Third, the Bosnian stabilization effort lacked a solid and thoughtful design to address the common problems occurring in a post-combat society. One of the major problems with the stabilization operation was that it failed to consider Bosnian history and anticipate some of the likely problems arising from the region's tumultuous past. American policy makers were unfamiliar with the long history of ethnic relationships in the region. The history most familiar to Americans was the ethnic cleansing of the World War II period, which led many Americans and some U.S. policy makers<sup>199</sup> to conclude that peace in the Bosnia would not come easily—and might never come at all. This limited knowledge of Bosnian history not only delayed American engagement, but also led to the entrenched American pessimism regarding the

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<sup>198</sup> It is important to note that the United States had launched Operation Restore Hope, which originated as a humanitarian mission to deliver food to starving Somalis. The operation morphed into a "nation-building" exercise, where U.S. soldiers were challenged to re-establish a political order in Mogadishu and eventually culminated in the infamous downing of a Blackhawk helicopter and dragging of U.S. soldier's body down city streets. U.S. administrations and the American people lost their appetite for these and other similar operations. For a more detailed discussion of the use of the term "nation-building" and the disinclination toward it, see chapter two of this dissertation.

<sup>199</sup> Craig Nation, a Professor of Strategy at the U.S. Army War College argues that President Clinton had read and was deeply influenced by Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*—a political travel book focusing on age-old ethnic hatred and deep political divide, which he argued had existed in the region for centuries. Arguably some of the initial reticence of the Clinton Administration was a belief that a military intervention would not change the outcome of these entrenched—and already mobilized rivalries. Craig Nation, *War in the Balkans, 1991-2002* (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2003,) 171. Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993,) 23.

stabilization of Bosnia. Indeed, the region did present a “problem from hell,” but the U.S. also failed to understand its people—and therefore how to effectively lead the indigenous peoples to improving the security of their own Bosnian state.

In short, the United States operation struggled to assist in the stabilization of Bosnia due to a failure to interpret Bosnian instability as a challenge to U.S. national security, unpreparedness of U.S. forces, and the absence of an effective stabilization plan. The west, and in particular, the United States failed to understand the relationship among the warring groups and underestimated the impact of regional destabilization. Yet by 1995, as the shocking news of the Srebrenica massacre spread, the U.S. was compelled to action<sup>200</sup>—with a limited plan and insufficient knowledge of the people or their history. The next section of this paper explores the history of Balkans to demonstrate the varied experiences of a larger *Jugoslav* people, who were at times bitterly divided—and at other times living in relative peace. I note that a thoughtful understanding of these history lessons would have been vitally important as the U.S. prepared to engage in Bosnia in 1996.

## **BOSNIA’S ANCIENT EXPERIENCE: ITS PEOPLES, INVADERS, AND RELIGIONS**

*[Bosnian tribesmen are] a throng of motley soldiers most savage in appearance, most terrifying in speech, and most boorish in conversation.*

*-Roman Emperor Septimus Severus on his rationale for replacing the revered Praetorian Guard with Illyrian troops.*<sup>201</sup>

Bosnia lies at the heart of Eastern Europe. The Germanic influences of Western Europe pull it north. Christian orthodoxy draws it eastward, while Turkish influences press upon Bosnia from the south. Due to its geographic location and powerful surrounding influences, Bosnia

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<sup>200</sup>Robert F. Baumann, George W. Gawrych and Walter E. Kretchik, “Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia,” (Fort Leavenworth Kansas, 2004), 36.

<sup>201</sup> Cited in Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994,) 3.

enjoys great cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Indeed, homogeneity—in any form, has never existed in Bosnia. Rather Bosnia has served as host to Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Roman Catholics and a wide array of ethnicities, including Slavs, Germans, Turks and Russians.

This mix of religions and ethnicities has been the hallmark of Bosnian society since the first settlers arrived in the region in the sixth century.<sup>202</sup> The most significant of these groups were the Slavs.<sup>203</sup> Although they intermingled and intermarried with the land's other settlers, the Slavs quickly became the dominant cultural and ethnic group. In the seventh century, additional Slavic peoples arrived in the Balkans. Although drawing from the same tribal base as the Bosnian Slavs, these later peoples defined themselves as Serbs and Croats and settled in regionally distinct areas to the east and north of the Bosnian Slavs. This original settlement pattern is important because it is the basis by which Slavic peoples distinguish among themselves.<sup>204</sup> In other words, since the early Middle Ages, Slavic peoples have held a more precise identity—as Serbs, Croats or Bosnians. Beginning with the Germans in the nineteenth century, Westerners never fully understood this difference; instead seeing Slavic peoples as one. This misconception carried forward into the Bosnian crisis of the early 1990's.

Another major influence on Bosnia during its early history was the split of the Roman Empire at the turn of the fifth century.<sup>205</sup> Both the newly created eastern (or Byzantine Empire)

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<sup>202</sup> Although scholars generally agree that the Illyrians form the core of people spread across the region in ancient times, Celts formed a small group of the region's first inhabitants. *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>203</sup> Scholars debate the origin of the Slavic peoples—who they were and why they came. Although unclear, two answers are commonly offered. First, it is possible that Slavic peoples hailed originally from northern Europe and are a combination of Finnic, Germanic and Russian peoples. On the other hand, linguists argue that Slavs are descendants of Persian peoples, citing tribal names and nomenclature. Robert J. Donia and John A. Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994,) 14.

<sup>204</sup> In the early Middle Ages, Gothic invaders came down from the north. Although they enjoyed some military successes and settled in pockets throughout the region, long-term influences of the Goths are dubious. Nonetheless, the legend of the Gothic influence remains a pervasive presence in Bosnian society. A tangible example of the longevity of Gothic claims manifested itself in November of 1942. At the height of World War II, a group of Bosnian autonomists wished to distance themselves from their Slavic neighbors. They sent a memorandum to Hitler noting their Gothic ancestry, which they argued made them Aryan brothers. Malcolm. 5.

<sup>205</sup> The schism between east and west was formalized in 1054 with the recognition of two capitol in Rome and Constantinople. "The Slovenes and Croats became Roman Catholics and adopted the Roman alphabet, while the

and the remainder of the western Holy Roman Empire<sup>206</sup> made claims on Bosnia. Perpetually, Bosnia found itself uncomfortably positioned on the dividing line between east and west. Unlike Serbia which consistently found itself drawn eastward and Croatia which leaned westward,<sup>207</sup> Bosnia vacillated—alternating allegiances between the two major empires of the era. Thus, Bosnia’s difficulty in defining itself as “eastern” or “western” is traced to the Middle Ages, when the ailing Roman empire attempted to divide the globe into areas of influence.

In addition to these changes wrought by the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages also witnessed the first decisive evidence of Slavs dominating other Slavs. In a period of just over two centuries, Bosnia was ruled by many of its neighbors: Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia and Hungary.<sup>208</sup> As this two century period of confused and alternating rule drew to a close, Bosnia faced its first ever opportunity to expel foreign governance. In 1180, Bosnia achieved its independence.

The period of 1180-1463 is often termed the golden era of Bosnian history as it experienced relative quiet among its three major ethnic groupings, economic prosperity and territorial expansion. Ban Kulin, the leader of the Bosnian independence movement, is often credited for many of the accomplishments of the period. First, Ban Kulin inspired a sense of Bosnian nationalism during his period of rule, which ultimately subdued differences among the ethnic groupings. Ban Kulin established policies during his kingship that equalized tax and

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Serbs became Eastern Orthodox Christians and adopted the Cyrillic alphabet to represent the same language.” Thierry Domin, “History of Bosnia and Herzegovina: From the origins to 1992,” *SFOR Informer* #117, (accessed August 19, 2010); available from <http://www.nato.int/SFOR/indexinf/117/p03a/chapter1.htm>

<sup>206</sup> Roman emperor Diocletian split the empire in two, believing that the vastness of the empire made single administration from Rome impossible. Throughout the second and third empires, various emperors split and unified the empire, but in 395 AD the Roman empire was divided for the last time and remained so until Constantinople fell in 1453. For an excellent history of the ancient world, see Chester G. Starr, *A History of the Ancient World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974,) 47.

<sup>207</sup> Croatia was conquered by Charlemagne’s Franks in the late eighth century and remained under French rule in 870. Croats were also the first Slavs to be widely Christianized. Malcolm, 8.

<sup>208</sup> For an excellent discussion of the specific names of rulers and dates of rule by Croatia, Serbia and later Hungary, see Noel Malcolm’s *Bosnia: A Short History*. Along with the particular details, Malcolm offers a clear sense of the competing influences in the region and Bosnia increasing desire to separate from outside influence. Malcolm, 9-10.

settlement policies, regardless of ethnicity. He encouraged all Bosnians to intermarry and live among one another. In addition, Ban Kulin made Bosnian prosperity a major priority of his kingship, by establishing trade associations and improving relationships with Serbia and Hum.<sup>209</sup> The revenue won through these initiatives were enjoyed by all Bosnians.<sup>210</sup> In short, Ban Kulin's greatest accomplishment was his ability to persuade all people within Bosnia's borders to forego their differences and instead focus on a stronger, greater Bosnia. Although Ban Kulin set this example over a thousand years ago, the lesson would have been instructive to the world community of the 1990's. By ignoring Bosnian history and focusing on the legacy of regional conflict in the Balkans, the U.S. missed valuable insights into the balance achieved by Ban Kulin in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries might assist stabilization efforts on the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Another great achievement during the era of Bosnian independence was territorial growth. It occurred under the reign of two different rulers: Ban Kotromanic and Ban Tvrtko. Ban Kotromanic is credited as the first ruler to fully annex Hercegovina as part of Bosnia. Although Hercegovina was populated mainly by Orthodox Christians, Kotromanic's claim to the territory met with little resistance by Serbia, then jointly challenged by the recent death of its king and its own territorial ambitions in Macedonia, Albania and Greece.<sup>211</sup> In 1353, Kotromanic died leaving his 14 year old nephew Tvrtko the throne. Despite Ban Tvrtko's initial challenges with Hungary and obvious youthful inexperience due to age, Tvrtko ultimately emerged as one of Bosnia's most widely revered and celebrated rulers. Under Tvrtko, Bosnia annexed nearly the entire Dalmatian coast, formerly belonging to Croatia—and laid claim to the

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<sup>209</sup> The ancient kingdom of Hum is roughly that of modern-day Hercegovina.

<sup>210</sup> Malcolm, 15.

<sup>211</sup> King Milutin of Serbia died in 1321 leaving massive disorder in Serbia largely over issues of succession. Donia and Fine, 17.

whole of Serbia.<sup>212</sup> Tvrtko's success was largely due to his focus on a strong Bosnian state and indifference to tribal and religious differences—except when they could be used for his benefit.<sup>213</sup>

In sum, this early period of Bosnian history spanning over 1000 years was marked by several major factors. First, the era was witness to a continuous stream of invaders and settlers to the region. Although they became accustomed to outside invaders in their lands, for centuries they were denied the right of self-governance, often making them skeptical of the foreigners' interests in Bosnia. This age-old wariness complicated the western intervention of the 1990's. Second, the early period of Bosnian history also demonstrates an ability among Bosnians to live together peacefully despite ethnic differences. During the period of Bosnian independence, the Croats, Serbs and Bosnians enjoyed prosperity and stability for roughly 300 hundred years. Finally, this historical era is important because it sets the stage for the 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. intervention from a religious context. Because Bosnia is uncomfortably perched between west and east, it also finds itself torn by tensions between major religions. In its early history, this tension existed primarily as a struggle between Roman Catholicism and Christian Orthodoxy, but as the Ottoman Turks rose to power in 14<sup>th</sup> century, the introduction of Islam became a significant factor.

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<sup>212</sup> Tvrtko took advantage of the chaos internal to Serbia, and as the nobles battled over power and titles, Tvrtko quietly inserted himself into the fray and strategically allied himself with one of the strongest nobles and then enjoyed the spoils of his efforts. Famously in 1377, Tvrtko declared himself King of Bosnia and Serbia too—the first time that the term “king” is used in Bosnia. In actuality, Tvrtko never attempted to assert his authority over Serbia; the position as king was in name only. In a similar series of events, Tvrtko allied himself with some of the most powerful tribes in Croatia, which enabled him to take control of the Dalmatian coastline and key trading cities. Donia and Fine 26-29.

<sup>213</sup> During this period of Bosnian independence, Bosnia rejected religious authorities in both Rome and Constantinople. Instead, it created a Bosnian church that was loosely modeled after Roman Catholicism but never fully removed pagan influences from its own brand of Christianity. Some scholars claim that the creation of the Bosnian church was a form of Bogomilism, the social religious movement to counter Byzantine misuse of religious authority. More likely, is that the Church of Bosnia arose partially due to Bosnia's newfound independence and remoteness from either major authority center. See Malcolm, 27-42.

## COMING MODERNITY: DEEPENING DIVISIONS

*It is true that there had always been concealed enmities and jealousies and religious intolerance, coarseness and cruelty, but there had also been courage and fellowship and a feeling for measure and order, which restrained all these instincts within the limits of the supportable and, in the end, calmed them down and submitted them to the general interest of life in common.*

*Ivo Andric in the Bridge on the Drina<sup>214</sup>*

Ottoman armies marched through Bosnia in the summer of 1463, and conquest came easily.<sup>215</sup> During the four centuries of Ottoman rule, Bosnia enjoyed some of the benefits associated with a thriving and prosperous empire. As will be true of the Ottomans later in Iraq,<sup>216</sup> their influence strengthened the system of law and order in Bosnia, while still allowing considerable de-centralization of authority and religious freedom. Ottoman sultans encouraged economic development and permitted Jews and Christians to practice their religion. The Ottomans, however, strongly favored those Bosnians who converted to Islam. As we will see again in chapter five of this dissertation, this favoritism ultimately serves as one of the driving factors in the Ottomans' inability to control Bosnia, and perhaps more importantly for this study of irregular war sets the stage for an increasing sense of religion as a dividing factor in Bosnian society.

Beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a massive change occurred in Bosnia; it was "Islamicized." That is not to say that conversion to Islam occurred either *en masse* or under duress. Instead, the change occurred gradually over a period of 150 years. While it is true that some Catholics fled Bosnia for Croatia and some non-Bosnian Muslims did re-settle in Bosnia, the majority of

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<sup>214</sup> Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.)

<sup>215</sup> Although some parts of Hercegovina defended against the invading Turkish armies throughout the 1470's, most of Bosnia fell easily and the whole of Bosnia fell squarely under Ottoman influence by 1481. Bauman, 5.

<sup>216</sup> A thorough discussion of the Ottoman administration of Iraq will follow in a later chapter, but many ties can be drawn between the two state's experiences with Turkish rule. For instance the creation of the ottoman janissary corps was largely a result of the seizure of Slavic boys who were converted to Islam, given military training then sent off to Iraq or another Ottoman holding to administer the territory. As in Iraq, when Ottoman power dwindled in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the robust system of training, education and economic benefits supplied by the Ottomans also faded.

change occurred among those living in Bosnia; many Bosnians converted to Islam—and to Orthodox Christianity. The next section of this paper considers these conversions and analyzes how the new construct of Bosnian society broken down by religions sets the stage for rising tensions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—and the eventual coming of Tito.

The Ottomans placed great significance on delineation of peoples by religion. Each household had a religious designation, which dictated the educational and income-producing activities available for that family. Bosnia's three major groupings: Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics began to organize into *millets*—self-governing religious communities. For the first time, Bosnia began to reorganize demographically by religious group and many Bosnians felt driven to clearly designate themselves as adhering to one religious faith.<sup>217</sup>

Naturally the dominant religion in Ottoman-controlled Bosnia was Islam. Muslims received the best tax arrangements, were favored in legal decisions, and were generally held in greater esteem by government officials. For members of the Bosnian Church, who held no great allegiance to Christianity or any organized religion, conversion to Islam was often an easy choice, as it promised many political and economic benefits.<sup>218</sup> In short, the major impact of the Ottomans is that by 1509, for every Christian household, at least two Muslim households existed.<sup>219</sup> While no major clash occurred between Muslims and Christians during the period of Ottoman rule, these four hundred years of favoritism to Bosniacs, or Bosnian Muslims, produced a schism in Bosnian society—and the Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics retained a historical memory of these injustices.

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<sup>217</sup> Until this point, many Bosnians were satisfied by a general association with the Bosnian Church, which as mentioned earlier in this chapter was neither fully Christian nor pagan, but a mix of the two. The religious flexibility which existed during the era of Bosnian independence was perceptibly waning. Donia and Fine, 64.

<sup>218</sup> Donia and Fine, 37.

<sup>219</sup> Robert Donia and John Fine offer a helpful empirical analysis which compares the increase in the numbers of Christian versus Muslim households over a period of 150 years in Bosnia. In 1468 in the town of Lepenica, 270 Christian households existed, where no Islamic households were reported. By 1509, the number of Christian households had been reduced to 160, and the Islamic households had risen to 393. See Robert J. Donia and John A. Fine. *Bosnia and Hercegovina*. New York; Columbia University Press, 1994, Table 3.1, 42.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Bosnia felt the influence of another foreign invader. On August 18, 1878, the Austrian Army marched into Sarajevo. Although the invading army was met with sniper fire “from every house, from every window, from every doorway... even women were taking part,”<sup>220</sup> Austria-Hungary quickly established control over the region. Unlike the British in Afghanistan, however, the invasion by the Austro-Hungarians did not increase a sense of loyalty to a centralized government in Sarajevo. Rather, this Austro-Hungarian invasion inspired infighting, turmoil and division among the Bosnian religious groups.

The Austro-Hungarian presence intensified feelings of division among the three major peoples living in Bosnia—and created an acute spillover effect within Bosnia proper and the entire Balkans region. Bosnian Catholics learned to refer to themselves as Croats, while Orthodox Christians preferred the term “Serb.” Bosnian Muslims felt no palpable pull to any of the region’s other states, but adopted their own title—Bosniacs.<sup>221</sup> This nineteenth century example of the impact of foreign presence had great potential as an important lesson for westerners considering intervention in Bosnia in the 1990’s, as Austria-Hungary only served to aggravate existing ethnic division and violence.

This entrenched sense of difference, power and elitism among the Slavic peoples was codified by the Europeans in the Versailles Treaty. Because Bosnia fought alongside Austro-Hungarians and Germans in World War One, while the Serbs sided with the Triple Entente,

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<sup>220</sup> It is important to note that Bosnian fighters were well-equipped to repel the Austro-Hungarian invasion, because the empire sent a cable announcing the arrival of their forces. The Hapsburgs assumed that the Bosnians would welcome them into their city and country. Although the miscalculation did not harm their immediate military takeover, the sentiment should as served as an important warning about the reluctance of Bosnians to accept another imperial power. Malcolm, 134.

<sup>221</sup> Bauman, et al, 8-9.

France and Britain naturally favored the Serbs as the spoils of war were divided.<sup>222</sup> The allies created a Greater Serbia, which included: prewar Serbia, Slovenia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Bosnia and Montenegro.<sup>223</sup> Serbia became one nation with three peoples. Serbs held a disproportionate number of political positions and retained the bulk of power.<sup>224</sup> As differences among ethnic groups deepened, Hitler began his quest to conquer Europe. As westerners, more than a century later considered the prospect of their coming involvement, these crucial lessons of history—and reaction to outside interference, would have been quite instructive.

*World War II: Occupation, Atrocities and Aftermath*

*The Yugoslavs form a single nation, alike by their identity of language, by the unanswerable laws of geography, and by their national consciousness.*

*Jugoslav Manifesto to the British Nation,  
May 15, 1915<sup>225</sup>*

World War II had staggering impacts on Yugoslavia. It endured occupation and division by the Axis powers, and most notably, over one million Yugoslavs died in the period from 1941-1945. Despite the notorious brutality of the Nazi regime and the four-year Axis occupation, however, most Yugoslav deaths were not attributable to the foreign occupiers. The majority of Yugoslavs died at the hands of fellow Yugoslavs. The next section of the paper explores these

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<sup>222</sup> Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia fought as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the Serbs aligned themselves with Russia, Britain and France. R. Craig Nation, *War in the Balkans 1991-2002* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute. 2003,) 44.

<sup>223</sup> The Allied decision to unify the southern Slavs at first under Serbia and then later again at the conclusion of World War II has been widely castigated by pundits and casual watchers of the 1990's Balkans crisis as one of the major reasons for the humanitarian crisis. The argument is that by unnaturally combining these peoples the west helped cause the crisis. As evidenced in previous sections of this chapter, it is true that Bosnia, and indeed the region uncomfortably hosted many different ethnicities; in some cases the results were disastrous. However, the Allied idea to create a unified Slavic state was not—is not without merit. The fact remains that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century over 20 different ethnic groupings inhabited what was to become Yugoslavia; it was simply unrealistic to create an equivalent number of states. In addition, the Allies were logically concerned that numerous, small, weak states would be easy prey for European powers eyeing continental domination. Nation, 46.

<sup>224</sup> Bauman, et al 13.

<sup>225</sup> Cited in Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977,) 124.

events, offers rationale as to why they occurred, and demonstrates how they set the stage for the Balkans conflict of the 1990's that U.S. forces would engage in.

The Nazi Blitzkrieg forces of April 1941 defeated the Yugoslav army in a mere 11 days.<sup>226</sup> Soon after the military defeat, the Axis powers carved up the Balkans into nine different areas, parsing out territories to Germany,<sup>227</sup> Hungary, Bulgaria, and Italy. During this period of territorial division, the Nazis also created “The Independent State of Croatia”<sup>228</sup> or NDH,<sup>229</sup> which incorporated most of the former Bosnian and Croatian regions of “Greater Serbia.” Although the initial Blitzkrieg was fierce and the occupation of the Balkans was total and unforgiving, actual soldier casualties in those initial days represented only one-third of the total Yugoslav lives lost in the war.<sup>230</sup> The most brutal onslaught in Yugoslavia was yet to come—as Yugoslavs killed fellow Yugoslavs.

Noel Malcolm argues that this 700,000 killing spree by Yugoslavs of their fellow countrymen is best understood as a civil war that was spawned by the wider ongoing world war. In other words, World War II in Yugoslavia was a composite war; in fact, it was really three wars occurring simultaneously. Malcolm explains his rationale as follows:

The history of the second world war in Yugoslavia is the story of many wars piled on top of one another. First, ... there was the initial war conducted by Germany and Italy against Yugoslavia... And then there were at least two civil wars. One was a war conducted by Croatian extremists against the Serb population of Croatia and Bosnia, a war of aggression on one side and sometimes indiscriminate retaliation on the other. And, finally there was a war between the two main

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<sup>226</sup>Unlike the German invasion of the Balkans in World War I where the Yugoslav army achieved some minor victories prior to surrendering to German troops, the Yugoslav army fell rapidly as it was attacked on three fronts by the German war machine. Bauman, et al, 12.

<sup>227</sup> Germany's first major territorial move was to establish a puppet government in Belgrade, which fell under its strict military and administrative control.

<sup>228</sup> The fact is, however, that the Independent State of Croatia was neither independent nor Croatian. NDH didn't function autonomously. Axis powers dictated all major policy decisions. And, NDH wasn't truly Croatian, as it served as host to Croats, Serbs, Bosniacs and Jews. Croats only comprised about 40% of the total population. Malcolm, 175.

<sup>229</sup> NDH is the acronym for *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, the Croatian translation of “Independent State of Croatia”

<sup>230</sup> John Schindler, *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qa'ida and the Rise of Global Jihad* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2007,) 34.

resistance organizations in which the Serbs from those areas enlisted: the Chetniks and Communist partisans.<sup>231</sup>

The invasion by Nazi forces and Axis occupation was only the first of three wars occurring in the Balkans in the early 1940's. The remainder of the deaths in Yugoslavia occurred not at the hands of the Nazis but as a result of two other "civil wars."

When the Germans dismantled Yugoslavia and established the NDH, the situation became ripe for Malcolm's two "other" wars to occur. The NDH emerged as an exclusionary and elitist regime that favored Croats and punished nearly all others. Hitler and Mussolini jointly appointed Ante Pavelic<sup>232</sup> a Croatian fascist and racist as head of the NDH. Almost immediately upon taking power, Pavelic appealed to fellow Croats to seek revenge for old wounds inflicted by the Serbs. Within months of assuming rule, he undertook one of the most vicious ethnic cleansing campaigns of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>233</sup> This civil war, in which Croatian extremists attacked the Serb populations living in Croatia and Bosnia, was the second of three wars that took place in Yugoslavia during World War II.

To carry out his plan for ethnic cleansing, Pavelic founded a political party—the *Utashe* which systematically began dispensing with all non-Croat minorities through execution, deportation or conversion. Those sentenced to death met with particularly gruesome ends; about one-third of the minorities, many Orthodox males, were led to platforms in town centers to have their throats slit—as their families looked on. So excessive were Pavelic's policies against the Serbs that "the Germans found *Utashe* violence, which was visited heavily on the young, old, and unarmed, to be counterproductive and distasteful—[the *Utashe*] relied less on the mechanized genocide of Himmler's SS, and more on old-fashioned barbarism. NDH excesses

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<sup>231</sup> Malcolm, 174.

<sup>232</sup> Some scholars suggest that the ruthlessness of Pavelic is best demonstrated in his mastermind of the 1934 assassination of King Alexander, ruler of Yugoslavia from 1921-1934.

<sup>233</sup> Bauman, et al, 14-15.

against Serb civilians generated protest even from senior German military and police officials.”<sup>234</sup> Those who were not executed were either deported to concentration camps or forced to convert to Roman Catholicism.<sup>235</sup>

Pavelic is often understood as an extremist fanatic empowered and energized by a corrupt outside regime; in that sense, he was an anomaly. While this interpretation has merit in that absent German influence *Utashe* excesses would not have occurred, it is essential to remember that *Utashe* actions were also reflective of centuries-old experiences between ethnic groups. The internal response to the *Utashe* clearly demonstrated the strong sectarianism and willingness to fight that existed in Yugoslavia at the time. These lessons of history should be instructive for all those taking action in the region—and certainly a key part of the historic “memory” for interveners in the 1990’s.

The third of the wars in Yugoslavia during the World War II period occurred between the resistance movements that developed initially to fight against *Utashe* and Nazi brutality. By the end of the war, however, these two major resistance movements, the *Chetniks* and the Partisans virtually ignored their *Utashe* and German enemies—choosing instead to battle fiercely against one another.<sup>236</sup> The *Chetniks*, under the direction of Draza Mihailovic, fought in the name of the Yugoslav monarchy and for Serbian nationalism.<sup>237</sup> The second resistance movement, the Partisans, formed under the guidance of Josip Broz—who later adopted the name, Tito.<sup>238</sup> The Partisan movement was based on a Communist ideology, which advocated for

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<sup>234</sup> Schindler, 36.

<sup>235</sup> Interestingly, Bosniacs were generally spared as the *Utashe* considered them “Croats of the Muslim faith.” Aside from understanding this as an interesting historical note, it is also important because claims of long-standing religious differences belie this claim. Nation, 54.

<sup>236</sup> Although both the Chetniks and Partisans formed to fight against the German occupation and the *Utashe*, as the war dragged on and the fighting between the Chetniks and partisans intensified, the Chetniks eventually aligned with the Germans against the Partisans and their growing Communist tendencies. Donia and Fine, 141.

<sup>237</sup> Malcolm, 176.

<sup>238</sup> Tito was born of a Croatian father and a Slovene mother. He served in the Austro Hungarian Army and later fought for the Germans on the Russian front in World War II, where he was captured by Russian soldiers. Sent

social reform and a secular society. Unlike the Chetniks who sought the return of the Serbian monarchy in a unified Yugoslavia, Tito aimed for a statewide social revolution. As such the Partisans appealed to a wider range of Yugoslavs, with Serbs, Bosniacs and even Croats joining the group.<sup>239</sup>

These two resistance movements, the *Chetniks* and the Partisans, although they initially formed to counter Nazi and *Ustashe* brutality, ended up fighting one another. Part of the reason for this clash was due to foreign presence. In the early months of the war, the Allies backed the *Chetniks* because they appeared to be most capable in fighting against the Germans.<sup>240</sup> Allied support, however, began to shift in 1943 as the Partisans grew in strength and number. British forces, fighting alongside the Partisan warriors in the Battle of Sutjeska in 1943,<sup>241</sup> were impressed with their military prowess and ability to successfully engage the Nazi regular forces.<sup>242</sup> Naturally, Allied support meant increased supplies and weaponry which gave the newly favored Partisans a clear strategic advantage over the Chetniks. In response, by mid-war the Chetniks began siding with the Axis powers as a way to counter their internal enemy, the Partisans.<sup>243</sup> Both the Chetniks and the Partisans prepared for the moment when the war ended, the foreigners had departed, and their group could implement its post-war vision for Yugoslavia.

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initially to a work camp, he escaped then later joined the Bolshevik party. He returned to Yugoslavia, with his Russian wife in September of 1920. Upon his return to Yugoslavia, he joined the Yugoslav Communist party and eventually moved to Belgrade, where he served as the key founder of the Partisan movement during World War II. Bauman, et al, 15.

<sup>239</sup> The view that history should be understood as a progression from one period to another is grounded in Karl Marx's historical dialectic, in which he argues that class struggle based on economic inequities are the engine of history. As such the world, according to Marx will eventually progress through all periods, ancient, feudal, capitalist to the end of history—or true communism. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* 1948, (accessed July 23, 2010); available from <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>

<sup>240</sup> Early in the war, support for the Chetniks as the major resistance movement against the Nazis was widespread. In 1942, *Time* magazine saluted Colonel Mihailovic as the "sole defender of freedom in Nazi-occupied Europe" and nominated him for Time man of the year. "Mihailovich: Yugoslavia's Unconquered," *Time* (May 25, 1942.)

<sup>241</sup> The Battle of Sutjeska was fought at Mount Durminton in 1943, when the Germans and Italians pursued Tito's partisans through the mountains, but the Partisans evaded capture.

<sup>242</sup> Winston Churchill, *Closing the Ring: The Second World War, Vol. 5* (Chicago: Houghton Mifflin, 1986,) 413.

<sup>243</sup> Some scholars argued that the Chetniks turned toward the Germans due to an intense fear of reprisal. In a horrific event in the October of 1941, Nazi forces rounded up school children and innocent civilians in the Serbian towns of

The experience of World War II offers several critical lessons for this study of irregular war. First, neither the Allies nor the Axis fully understood the differences among the budding resistance groups in Yugoslavia. Both Germany and the Allies partnered with whichever group served their immediate purpose—for the Germans, the success of a pure NDH state; for the Allies, a wartime victory over the Axis. That the Allies did not fully perceive the dangerous growth of a Communist Russia in the late war years and ignored signs of the coming Cold War is no secret. The disposition of Yugoslavia was just one piece of this puzzle.

Another major lesson growing out of the World War II period is that neither the Allies nor the Axis understood their Yugoslav enemy. The origin and aims of the groups were confounding and the understanding the complicated historical relationships among Muslims, Croats and Serbs was beyond the comprehension of the WWII wartime planning groups focused on a wider theater. The Allied and Axis powers focused on one another as the enemy—and outcomes in Yugoslavia paled in comparison to a takeover of western Europe or major defeat in the Pacific. What the victorious Allies neglected to consider was the role that the new Yugoslavia, under Tito, would play in the Cold War years and beyond.

*Tito, the Collapse of Communism and the Coming Crisis*

*In a short period after the war, [Tito] established a kind of harmony among communities emerging from the bloodiest imaginable civil conflict. He instilled pride in a small country that, even for European standards, had suffered inordinately during the first half of the century. And for the first time in the region's history, a majority of the population enjoyed economic prosperity under his rule.*

*Misha Glenny*<sup>244</sup>

*Brotherhood and Unity!*

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of Kragujevac and Kraljevo and slaughtered them in retaliation for guerilla attacks against Germans. Colonel Draza Mihailovic, leader of the Chetnik forces, was gravely concerned about continued brutality from its German occupiers and gradually turned the Chetnik forces toward partnership with the Nazis to stave off future attacks. Donia and Fine, 153.

<sup>244</sup> Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Viking, 1999,) 591.

At the close of World War II, Marshall Tito assumed control over a Yugoslavia that had survived one of the most vicious ethnic cleansing campaigns of the 20th century—Croats killing Serbs and Muslims, Serbs murdering Croats, and Muslims retaliating against both. His 35-year rule, however, was marked with a surprising degree of cooperation among the formerly warring groups. The next section of this chapter examines how Tito managed to achieve this basic level of stability—and at least momentarily, halt the communal clash.

Unlike many of the foreign occupiers, Tito sought to unify Yugoslavia into a single entity. He achieved his goal through a strong dictatorship, which crushed any opposition. Immediately after taking control, Tito launched a campaign to arrest and execute any remaining members of the *Ustashe* forces. After killing nearly 50,000 people, Tito felt secure in his own political power and gradually loosened his non-negotiable policy on strict allegiance to his regime.<sup>246</sup> As promised during the war, Tito created six republics as part of his Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Although Serbs dominated positions of power in each of the republics, Tito established them as autonomous units with the ability to administer themselves. Throughout the period of his 35 year reign, Tito took an increasingly de-centralized approach, retaining for himself final arbitration authority.

Tito achieved a remarkable feat in moving a society racked by civil war to a state that boasted reasonable levels of economic prosperity, freedom of travel, and considerable levels of inter-marriage among groups. Tito accomplished this level of unification and civility because he rewarded integration—and punished separation. Tito provided political and economic incentives

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<sup>245</sup> John Borneman, *Death of the Father: An Anthropology of the End of Political Authority* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004,) 171.

<sup>246</sup> Bauman, et al, 17.

for displays of brotherhood and unity. Those choosing an inter-ethnic marriage, like his own to his second wife of Croatian descent, received a small stipend from the government. In addition, he supported the widespread use of the Serbo-Croatian language and established a robust public education system that taught the value of national unity.<sup>247</sup> National unity, relative prosperity, and interethnic cooperation epitomized Tito's nearly 40-year reign over Yugoslavia.

Almost immediately after his death, however, Yugoslavia's cohesion and economic well-being started to decline. In response to the oil shocks of the 1970's and declining power of communist ideology, ripples of unrest occurred. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991,<sup>248</sup> Yugoslav republics were among the first to declare their independence. At first the Yugoslav army attempted to block the 1991 Slovene independence bid, but Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic ordered his troops to stand fast, as Slovenia's small Serb population made it strategically insignificant.

Milosevic took a decidedly different view of the Croatian bid for independence, due to the large numbers of Serbs living there. From July to December of 1991, over 10,000 civilians and soldiers were killed in the initial clash between Croat resistance forces and the Yugoslav army.<sup>249</sup> In January of 1991, the United Nations created the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to facilitate a cease-fire agreement between Zagreb and Belgrade. Hostilities intensified throughout the year, as mass slayings occurred and cities were bombarded. The UN Secretary General appointed former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance as his personal envoy

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<sup>247</sup> Bert, 24-25.

<sup>248</sup> On November 11, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. As the Soviet Union imploded, a wave of revolution spread over Eastern Europe. It began in Poland, then spread to East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania.

<sup>249</sup> Schindler, 66.

for Yugoslavia.<sup>250</sup> On January 2, 1992, Serbia and Croatia concluded a fragile peace. Fifteen thousand UN peacekeepers from 26 states remained in Croatia to enforce the peace agreement.

The yearlong bloody conflict in Croatia spilled over into Bosnia causing military and political ramifications. First, Serbian forces from the Krajina region of neighboring Croatia stationed supplies and troops in the cross-border regions in Bosnia. Indeed, the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) populated by Serbian soldiers launched most of their cross-border incursions from Bosnia. Unsurprisingly, this propelled Croatia to send forces into Bosnia to stave off future attacks.<sup>251</sup> In a classic demonstration of the security dilemma, these Croatian actions were perceived by the Serbs as a direct threat, which warranted further military action and an increase in troops, which were later poised for the war in Bosnia.

Second, the war in Croatia created an intensely charged political environment in Bosnia. Alija Izetbegovic took charge of the Muslim-dominated Party of Democratic Action (SDA) in Bosnia and immediately made application to the European Community to be recognized as an independent state. In response, Radovan Karadzic, head of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) made a similar bid for independence of the Republic of Srpska located inside traditional Bosnian territory.<sup>252</sup> In November of 1990, Muslim, Croatian, and Serbian political leaders made a feeble attempt at compromise. They appealed for Bosnian sovereignty. While all three groups initially supported the bid, the Bosnian Serbs, influenced by Belgrade, never fully accepted the compromise and ultimately boycotted the multi-party elections held that fall. On December 21,

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<sup>250</sup> Donia and Fine, 227.

<sup>251</sup> In April of 1991, Serbs declared an area on the Croatian border to be the "Municipal Community of Bosnian Krajina" which would be defended by Serbian militia men. When Croatia troops retaliated against the Serbian wartime preparation exercises, Milan Martić the Interior Minister of Serbian Krajina declared the formal dissolution of the Croatian/Bosnian border—thereby indicating that the pretense of protection via state sovereignty was non-existent. Ibid, 228.

<sup>252</sup> Bauman et al, 24.

1991, Bosnian Serbs declared their independence and the creation of the Republic of Sprska—setting the stage for the bloodshed to follow.<sup>253</sup>

A careful review of Bosnian history conducted in early 1991 could have projected the coming crisis and predicted the fierceness of the fight—but neither the United States, nor its European allies took on such a study.<sup>254</sup> As a result, Westerners severely underestimated the impacts on regional security, the need for solid direction for foreign troops, and requirement for an effective plan to stabilize the Balkans. It is to an analysis of these factors that I now turn.

### **A RAGING WAR, RETICENT EUROPE, & A RELUCTANT PARTNER**

*The United States should take the lead in seeking United Nations Security Council authorization for air strikes against those who are attacking the relief effort. The United States should be prepared to lend appropriate military support to that operation... we should make clear that the economic blockade against Serbia will be tightened, not only on weapons but also on oil and other supplies that sustain the renegade regime of Slobodan Milosevic. [The United Nations should take action to charge the guilty] with crimes against humanity under international law—as we should have done long ago in the case of Iraq.*

*Governor Bill Clinton  
On the presidential campaign trail,  
July 26, 1991<sup>255</sup>*

*[The declaration] represents the Road to Hell... in which the Muslim nation may disappear altogether.*

*Co-founder of the Serbian Democratic Party  
Radovan Karadzic's response to the  
October 1991 Declaration of Bosnian  
sovereignty as supported by Bosniacs and  
Bosnian Croats<sup>256</sup>*

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<sup>253</sup> Donia and Fine, 229.

<sup>254</sup> Unlike the independence declarations in other former communist states with homogenous populations, Bosnia is a multi-ethnic state with no clear majority by a single ethnic group. A 1991 census in Bosnia showed the following population breakdown: Muslims, 44%; Serbs, 31%; Croats, 17% and Other 5%. *Bosnian Institute*, (accessed July 23, 2010); available from <http://www.bosnia.org.uk/bosnia/viewMetatype.cfm?metatypeID=25>

<sup>255</sup> Quoted in David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995,) 13.

<sup>256</sup> Quoted in Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of Nation* (London: TV Books, 1996,) 215.

This section of the chapter lays out the three main arguments presented in chapter two of this dissertation and analyzes them in light of the Bosnia case. First, westerners did not perceive the Bosnia conflict as influencing regional or international security. Indeed, the conflict was fierce and terrifying—but at least initially, the crisis was understood as having little impact outside the borders of Bosnia. Second, because westerners understood the conflict in Bosnia to be a civil war, the intervention was deemed a peacekeeping operation. The soldiers sent to do the job were called “peacekeepers.” The problem was that there was little guidance for these soldiers on how to do the job—and little desire on the part of the soldiers to be there. Finally, neither Europe nor the United States developed a well-orchestrated plan for stabilization, which extended the violence and impeded longterm operational effectiveness. This next section examines these factors and offers insights into their impact on the operational outcomes in Bosnia.

*Inaction, Delays, and Questions: Impacts on Regional and National Security*

*The Hour of Europe has dawned!*

*Luxemburg Foreign Minister  
Jacques Poos, 1991*

Jacques Poos uttered this now famous phrase as he disembarked his plane on the way to negotiate the Slovene secession from the former Soviet Union in early 1991. While the statement may have sounded a bit lofty at the time, it was not entirely unbelievable. The Soviet Union had dissolved. The need for an American defense umbrella no longer seemed necessary to preserve European security. Indeed, many questioned the need for NATO—or any version of an Atlantic partnership. The Europeans deemed the crisis in the Balkans “a European problem”

and declared their leadership role in stabilization of the region. The United States, perceiving no direct threat to its own national security, was comfortable with Europe taking charge. The problem was that neither the Europeans nor the United States viewed the Bosnia conflict as having the potential to create larger security challenges—that mindset resulted in the European adoption of an ineffective neutral approach to diplomatically solve the conflict and nearly virtual disengagement by the United States.

In the early days of the crisis and prior to U.S. involvement, the Europeans perceived the conflict in Bosnia too narrowly. As the breakaway republics declared their independence, the Europeans underestimated the massive destabilization caused by the Bosnian crisis and gravely miscalculated the international security threat that a fractured southeast Europe presented. As a result, Europe severely underestimated the significance of its role in the crisis and the need for a forceful intervention. When Europe declared its impartiality—the Bosnians, suffering at the hands of Serbs, interpreted this declaration as European favoritism for their sworn enemy.<sup>257</sup> This position set the wrong tone for the conflict and degraded Europe's ability to assist in the stabilization of Bosnia.

In a particularly rankling example to the Bosnians, Europe inconsistently recognized the breakaway republics. In most cases Europe validated these independence bids, but in the case of Bosnia, it withheld this same recognition. When Slovenia declared its independence in June of 1991, the European Community encouraged the action and immediately promised their support. Croatia soon followed Slovenia's lead and declared its independence. German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher publicly stated his concern for Serbian atrocities in Croatia. While there had been some discussion among the Europeans that the breakaway republics should outline

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<sup>257</sup>Timothy L. Thomas, "United Nations Crisis Management in Bosnia: Problems and Recommendations," Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, 1995, (accessed online July 7, 2010); available from <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/unbos.htm>

their plan for inclusion of ethnic minorities in their new state, Genscher shot down the proposal and argued that the Croatians should not be forced to publicly validate their fair treatment of the Serb minority. The EC bowed to Genscher's wishes and offered leniency in Croatia's immediate bid for independence.<sup>258</sup>

Bosnia, however, was not afforded the same luxury; instead the EC forced Bosnia to hold a public referendum proving a majority desire for independence and it required a promise for Serb minority protections. Bosnians viewed these EC decisions, as a demonstration of unabashed and illegitimate favoritism.<sup>259</sup> This perceived nepotism reminded Bosniacs of their unfair treatment during Austro-Hungarian rule and centuries of maltreatment at the hands of the Serbs. In the very early days of the crisis, Europe failed to recognize that the region desperately needed its strong and consistent leadership—without it the region began a quick downward spiral. Furthermore, the Europeans failed to recognize that their inconsistency in support of independence bids would further destabilize the region as the ethnic groups gained an additional reason to fight one another.

As the Balkans unraveled and the Europeans scrambled to identify the appropriate action, the United States debated whether and how it should become involved. Foremost in U.S. policy-makers' minds was the question of engagement. Most notably, the U.S. sought to understand how Bosnian instability affected U.S. national security. Many in the Clinton administration including U.S. Ambassador Warren Zimmerman argued that Balkan instability would not influence the U.S.—based on reasons specific to Bosnia and other related to outside U.S. commitments.

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<sup>258</sup> Bauman, et al, 25.

<sup>259</sup> Genscher's rationale and EC willingness to adopt the German position has been hotly contested. Some argue that German leniency can be traced back to the close historical relationship between Croatia and Germany, dating from the time of the Hapsburg influence through the establishment of the NDH by the Nazis during World War II. Woodward, 189-198.

One of the key questions among policy-makers in the 1990's was whether a Bosnian intervention was in the American national security interest. In the early 1990's—as late as the first months of 1995, it seemed that the answer was no. Compared with the important U.S. commitments elsewhere in the world, the crisis in Bosnia seemed to have limited significance. America had just fought a fabulously successful military campaign in the Persian Gulf. In the aftermath of the war, the U.S. concerned itself with the disposition of the post-war Iraqi government and Iraq's adherence to UN no-fly zones and weapons inspections. Stability in the Middle East was the focus; the crisis in Bosnia was comparatively much less important.

In addition, the United States had suffered a public and stinging retreat from Somalia in the early 1990's. As the U.S. military and the newly elected Clinton Administration struggled to identify what went wrong in Somalia, taking on another “humanitarian emergency” seemed unwise for America—particularly because conflict in the Balkans seemed to play little role in U.S. national security. Furthermore, popular wisdom of the day, growing out of the World War II experience, suggested that fighting was endemic in the region. Although the situation was “tragic, dangerous, full of violence, and confusing,” it was perceived that little could be done by outsiders to resolve the conflict.<sup>260</sup>

Although these arguments held great sway among U.S. foreign policy decision makers at the time, as the conflict persisted, discussions of U.S. involvement grew in frequency and seriousness. David Owen, EU Co-chairman for the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, argued that the wars in the Balkans surrounded “a fuse line which runs from Sarajevo to Sandzak

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<sup>260</sup> This argument is closely associated with the strongly-held notion by Europeans that the situation in the Balkans was best characterized as “civil unrest” and a candidate for humanitarian assistance. Peace operations were neither applicable nor workable in the region. Nation, 171

Muslims to the Albanians in Kosovo, to the Albanians in Macedonia to Albania itself and then Greece and Turkey. This powder keg could have ignited in 1991 and then again in 1992 after the appalling rapidity with which the Serb ethnic cleansing campaign developed...<sup>261</sup> In other words a war in Bosnia, could have served as a catalyst for the entire region to devolve into war. In 1994, Secretary of State Warren Christopher presented the “wider war thesis,” in which he argued that a massive collapse of southern Europe threatened economic viability and political stability for the whole of Europe.<sup>262</sup> By 1995, policy makers concluded that instability in Europe threatened U.S. security.<sup>263</sup> The next challenge was what to do about it.

*Sending the Troops: Problems with Readiness and Guidance*

*The use of force [in Bosnia] is simply too big a step to consider.*

*Warren Zimmerman  
U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia, 1992<sup>264</sup>*

The second major challenge in stabilizing Bosnia was that neither the Europeans nor the United States had a clear understanding of the role their troops should play. In the case of the Europeans, the problem was related to their underdeveloped notion of impartiality. For the United States, the problem was providing clear guidance to U.S. on how to conduct the mission.

In response to the mounting hostilities in the Balkans, in 1991, the UN Security Council voted to establish UNPROFOR. In February of 1992, the UN Secretary General requested that UNPROFOR be expanded to include Bosnia. The overarching mission goal was to quell the

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<sup>261</sup> Owen, 11.

<sup>262</sup> Warren Christopher, “Statement at the Opening of the Balkan Peace talks,” in *The Stream of History: Shaping U.S. Foreign Policy for a New Era*, (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1998,) 360.

<sup>263</sup> Although some scholars debated the veracity of the “wider war thesis” claiming that small conflict always have the capacity to morph into larger ones, even these detractors recognized the criticality to quell uprisings in the interest of wider stability. Ted Galen Carpenter, “The Domino Theory Reborn: Clinton's Bosnia Intervention and the “Wider War” Thesis,” CATO Foreign Policy Briefing, No. 42, August, 1996, (accessed July 7, 2010); available from <http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefs/fpb-042.html>

<sup>264</sup> Warren Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and its Destroyers—America’s Last Ambassador tells What Happened and Why* (New York, Random House, 1996,) 158

violence—while acting in an impartial manner to both sides. Specifically, the UNPROFOR mandate was:

To ensure the security and functioning of the airport at Sarajevo, and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to that city and its environs.... to support efforts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to deliver humanitarian relief throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to protect convoys of released civilian detainees if the International Committee of the Red Cross so requested.... to monitor... the "no-fly" zone, banning all military flights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and [to protect] the United Nations "safe areas" established by the Security Council around five Bosnian towns and the city of Sarajevo.<sup>265</sup>

In its bid to appear impartial, the mandate did not include specific language giving UNPROFOR soldiers the ability to stop Serbian aggression.<sup>266</sup> While the responsibility was broad and unconstrained, UNPROFOR's ability to act was severely limited.

Because the Europeans firmly believed the conflict in Bosnia to be a civil war, they refused to side with one group over another. Karen Von Hippel argues that “[UNPROFOR] troops were sporadically and thinly dispersed, were lightly armed, had an unclear and evolving mandate, lacked unity of command, often arrived months after ordered by the Security Council, and were unwilling to become partial; even in the face of massive infringement of human beings.”<sup>267</sup> In other words, the Europeans understood the Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats as having claims of grievance against the others and rejected support for one group over another. Their unwillingness to act, however, became increasingly dubious as the Serbian attacks on the

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<sup>265</sup>“The United Nations Protection Force Mission Description” *Department of Public Information, United Nations*. 31 August 1996, (accessed July 10 2009); available from [http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co\\_mission/unprof\\_p.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unprof_p.htm)

<sup>266</sup> In 1993, an international team composed of French, Hungarian, Polish, Pakistani, and Venezuelan peace monitors visited Bosnia to monitor progress. On the way to Srebrenica, their helicopter was forced to land for a Serbian inspection and held against its will for an hour before being allowed to take off again. Prior to their stop in Sarajevo, they were held at gunpoint for 90 minutes by a Serbian tank gun. Unarmed, they were simply unable to react. Even their status as Security Council Mission peace monitors had not deterrent effect on the Serbian troops. Ian Williams, “UN report: As Europeans stall Bosnia Action; UN Mission harassed by Serbs,” *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 12, no. (July 1993.)

<sup>267</sup> Karen Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force: U.S. Military Intervention in a Post-Cold War World* (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 2000,) 137.

Bosniacs grew in intensity, frequency and brutality. The Bosnian conflict was not a civil war; by 1995, it was an attempt by the Serbs to eradicate the Bosniacs and Croats from the entire region.

On May 8, 1995, a vicious attack on a Sarajevo market place<sup>268</sup> propelled Lieutenant General Rupert Smith, the NATO military commander to request air support for civilian protection against Bosnian Serb attacks. In his steadfast devotion to impartiality, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for UNPROFOR Yasushi Akashi denied his request. General Smith, recognizing the impending seriousness of the situation, presented the Bosnian Serbs with an ultimatum; he ordered them to cease the use of heavy weapons. Ignoring the ultimatum, Bosnian Serbs littered Sarajevo with attacks two days later.<sup>269</sup> In July, Bosnian Serbs launched a military operation to cleanse Srebrenica of its Croat and Muslim inhabitants. When the west learned of what later became known as the “Srebrenica Massacre,” it was clear that they needed to act.

Shortly thereafter, the U.S. lent direct military support to NATO’s Operation Deliberate Force. These U.S. forces were assigned a dual responsibility. First, U.S. soldiers were to “provide a continued military presence in order to deter renewed hostilities, stabilize and consolidate the peace, contribute to a secure environment and maintain broad support for civilian implementation plans.”<sup>270</sup> U.S. military forces were well-trained and prepared to perform these traditional tasks associated with combat—and as a result were superbly effective in maintaining a deterrent military presence, ensuring compliance with the no-fly zones, engaging in force protection, and preventing major hostilities.

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<sup>268</sup> Sarajevo had been previously designated as a safe area; the import of which will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>269</sup> Von Hippel, 148.

<sup>270</sup> Stephen Bowman, “Bosnia: U.S. Military Operations,” Congressional Research Service, July 8, 2003, (accessed July 8, 2010); available from <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/ib93056.pdf>

The challenge for U.S. forces was that they were also assigned the task of creating “a secure environment for civilian organizations to carry out their responsibilities.”<sup>271</sup> In the mid-1990’s U.S. forces had little recent experience in understanding that mandate—and had little doctrinal guidance to direct them how to do so. The bottom line is that U.S. troops were sent to Bosnia as peacekeepers—and the problem was that soldiers did not understand how to do the job. Moreover, little guidance existed for soldiers, which set limits regarding their responsibility or authority.

This lack of understanding among U.S. soldiers can be attributed to the fact that peacekeeping, although not entirely new, was not a typical task assigned to the military during the Cold War. As such, soldiers had little understanding of its practice. Moreover, policy makers struggled to devise effective policies to address these contemporary challenges. One of the first attempts at devising such a policy was Presidential Decision Directive 25, U.S. Policy on Multilateral Peacekeeping Operations.

PDD-25 was one of the first post-Cold War attempts to provide direction on the conduct of peacekeeping missions. It addressed situations in which the U.S. would support UN peacekeeping missions, reiterated U.S. command and control over its troops, and recognized the unique demands presented by peacekeeping operations—most critically the relationship between military and civilian components of the operation.<sup>272</sup> PDD-25 stated that the U.S. government is adopting a new way to manage peacekeeping operations through a “shared responsibility” approach, and gave the Department of Defense:

Lead management and funding responsibility for those UN operations that involve U.S. combat units and those that are likely to involve combat, whether or not U.S. troops are involved. This approach will ensure that military expertise is brought to bear on those operations that have a significant military component. The State

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid

<sup>272</sup>“U.S. Policy on Multilateral Peacekeeping Operations,” Presidential Decision Directive 25, Washington, D.C. May 6, 1994, (accessed July 8, 2010); available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm>

Department will retain lead management and funding responsibility for traditional peacekeeping operations that do not involve U.S. combat units. In all cases, the State Department remains responsible for the conduct of diplomacy and instructions to embassies and our UN Mission in New York.

While this construct for peacekeeping operations demonstrated a visionary approach to how these operations should be run—the problems in Bosnia persisted due to a lack of practical guidance on the ground.

PDD 25 incompletely addressed the issues of interagency cooperation and misunderstood the complexities in designing, what was then termed a peace-keeping<sup>273</sup> operation. In a peacekeeping operation, it is difficult to assign responsibility to U.S. agencies for each task—as most tasks are riddled with elements drawing from both the civilian and military realms. For instance, the return of displaced people in Bosnia was a responsibility for both civilian aid workers and the military forces, as refugees needed both resettlement help and protection as refugees came back to homes that had left months or years ago.<sup>274</sup> There was no clear guidance for soldiers in the field or USAID or State Department personnel on how to work through commonalities or differences in their approach.

As a result, U.S. soldiers in Bosnia never completely understood their performance of duties. While they easily accepted and effectively performed their traditional combat roles—force protection, prevention of major hostilities, and enforcement of no-fly zones, U.S. forces in Bosnia never fully understood how to act in support of the peacekeeping mission. The reason they struggled to understand the non-traditional missions usually associated with civilian

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<sup>273</sup> It is useful to note here that part of the U.S. difficulty in the stabilization of Bosnia is that it belatedly understood that the conflict in Bosnia required a peace enforcement mission, rather than the peace-keeping mission it employed. The difference as laid out in Joint Pub 3-07.3 describes peacekeeping missions as those operations which monitor or supervise cease-fire agreements, while peace enforcement mission is one in which an outside military force (or group of military forces) intervenes between warring parties to restore the peace. The problem in Bosnia was that the operation was labeled and conducted as a peacekeeping mission, when peace enforcement—or direct intervention was needed. Joint Publication 3-07.3, Peacekeeping Operations, October 2007, (accessed September 1, 2010); available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3-07-3.pdf>

<sup>274</sup> Frederick Fleitz, *Peacekeeping Fiascoes of the 1990: Causes Solutions and U.S. Interests*, (New York: Praeger Publishing, 2002,) 112.

agencies was that little guidance existed which outlined their role. This confusion among the role for U.S. soldiers compromised the effectiveness of U.S. soldiers in stabilizing Bosnia.

Another major reason for the difficulty was associated with the plan itself—which I address in the final part of this section.

### Stabilizing Bosnia: Challenges and Opportunities

*The decision to keep U.S. troops in Bosnia beyond June 1998 is critical to ensuring the success of the Dayton Accords. It also lies squarely in the national self-interest of the United States. The stability of southeastern Europe depends on the ability of the Bosnians, working with the international community, to create a self-sustaining, peaceful, democratic system in the country.*

*Senator Joe Biden  
July 1998<sup>275</sup>*

*[Karadzic and Mladic] were headstrong, given to grandiose statements and theatre, but they were essentially bullies. Only force, or its credible threat, worked with them.*

*Richard Holbrooke on the use of coercion at the  
Dayton Peace Accords<sup>276</sup>*

The stabilization of Bosnia was a difficult challenge in that neither the Europeans nor the Americans fully understood the enemy they faced—and therefore adopted approaches and plans that incompletely addressed the region’s challenges. First, the Europeans misunderstood the conflict and misunderstood their enemy. They adopted an impartial approach—which allowed atrocities to continue unabated for three years. The European’s misinterpretation of the situation, initial ineffectiveness and unintentional reinforcement of age-old hatreds destroyed their legitimacy in the eyes of the Bosnian people. The United States, on the other hand, acted effectively to stop the violence, but overestimated the capacity and power of a negotiated settlement in resolving the region’s long-term problems. The problem was that the resulting

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<sup>275</sup> Joseph R. Biden, “Bosnia: Why the United States should finish the Job,” *SAIS Review* 18, no.2 (Summer 1998.)

<sup>276</sup> Quoted in Von Hippel, 150.

operational plan was inextricably linked to the negotiated solution at Dayton—which ultimately served as both a help and a hindrance in its effective execution.

The Europeans misunderstood the conflict in Bosnia—and the wider Balkans region as a civil conflict.<sup>277</sup> They perceived the conflict as a proportionate clash between three ethnic groups—all of whom were acting with violence toward the others. While this assessment had some validity at least at the outset, as the conflict persisted, the Serbs emerged as the best armed and most powerful of all groups. The Europeans failed to perceive this shift—and continued to defend their impartial approach. By the mid 1990's, however, the Serbs had the advantage. Their prisoners of war were placed in horrific concentration camps and they began ransacking entire villages, murdering and raping the inhabitants. When the Europeans attempted to moderate the impact of Serb brutality through the establishment of safe areas,<sup>278</sup> Serb forces blatantly ignored the UN mandates and directly attacked those in the safe havens. As the conflict wore on the Croats and Bosniacs grew to distrust the Europeans and doubt their ability to protect them against the increasingly powerful Serb forces.

As outlined in chapter two of this dissertation, one of the key aspects of any stabilization effort is that the indigenous peoples view the interveners as legitimate. In other words, for the Europeans to have been successful, they needed the trust of all groups that the conflict would be resolved quickly and fairly—in return for conduct from all three groups that met a common standard. The Europeans, however, accepted the nationalist claims of all groups and refused to act forcibly to quell Serbian abuse of the Croats and Bosniacs, when it was clear that the Serbs

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<sup>277</sup> Woodward argues that westerners had unknowingly been “internal players” to the conflict from its beginning. By virtue of its attempts to mediate among all parties beginning in May of 1991, they de facto accepted the nationalists’ definition of the conflict—instead of viewing them as wars of Serbian aggression. Woodward, 147.

<sup>278</sup> In June of 1993, the UN ordered the establishment of “safe areas” to include the cities of Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Gorazde, Tuzla, Zepa and Bihac. Originally designed as a mechanism to protect Muslims from Serb attack, history has shown that they failed in protecting Muslims and alleviating contact and problems between Serbs and Muslims. Those people living within the safe areas essentially became “sitting ducks” for Serb attacks because UN forces had insufficient ability to protect their charges. As a result, Muslims soon began using the safe areas as enclaves to prepare and launch attacks the Serbs. Nation, 173.

had an upper hand and were completely disregarding international norms. In effect, the Europeans inadvertently gave legitimacy and strength to extremists, while simultaneously undercutting moderate voices. This key argument poignantly identifies the most significant problem the Europeans faced, but continues to underplay one vital notion—and that is the Europeans failed to understand their enemy.

The war in Bosnia was different than European wars of the past because of the enemy it faced. Their enemies were irregular forces—or what would be termed “armed groups”<sup>279</sup> today. We understand armed groups as an alternative to centralized authority. Often armed groups emerge and strengthen when the group perceives that it is the victim of injustices perpetrated by the state. In addition, armed groups gain their power—when the coercive monopoly of the state has dissipated.<sup>280</sup> In the case of Bosnia, the army of the Republic of Sprska (VRS), and to some extent, the Bosnian Croat forces (HVO) can both be understood as armed groups who rose to challenge the power of the Bosnian central government.

The Europeans, however, in the early days of the war, failed to recognize the growing power and tremendous appeal of these groups. As such, they neither dealt with nor fought against them appropriately. As Ambassador O’Brien from New Zealand returned from a UN Security Council mission to Bosnia, he explained the futility of UNPROFOR soldier efforts, “Imagine what it is like for professional soldiers in UNPROFOR to be stopped by a gang of louts

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<sup>279</sup> The term armed groups is an increasingly common phrase used to describe irregular or non-traditional enemies. The Counterinsurgency Manual has used the term, as have several recent books on related topics. See the Counterinsurgency Manual. *The U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, No. 3-24. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, 8. See also Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.)

<sup>280</sup> For a thorough discussion of the origins, character and motivations of armed groups, see chapter two of this dissertation. Major ideas are drawn from Bard O’Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*. 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 1990.) Paul Jackson, “Warlords as Alternative forms of Governance,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 14, No. 2 (Summer 2003.) Anthony Vinci, “The ‘Problems of Mobilization’ and the Analysis of Armed Groups,” *Parameters* 36 (Spring, 2006.) Pablo Policzer. “Neither Terrorists or Freedom fighters,” Paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, 3-5 March, 2005.

in combat fatigues who would probably run away very quickly if there were real fighting.”<sup>281</sup> In short, the Europeans chose the diplomatic approach, almost to a fault because they never clearly understood their enemy or accepted what kind of war they confronted.<sup>282</sup>

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, from 1992-1995 claimed over 100,000 lives and caused the displacement of over one million people. Bosnia was the site of numerous massacres,<sup>283</sup> ethnic cleansing campaigns,<sup>284</sup> mass rapes, and an enormous refugee problem. It was one of the most brutal conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet it took years for westerners to take affirmative steps to quell the violence. In the early days of the war, the Europeans should have taken greater care in learning about the enemy and adopting a plan of action for the confrontation. That Serb forces would adopt brutal tactics should have been unstartling to any keen observer of Southeast European history. Based on brutal civil war that raged in the Balkans during World War II, it was logical that the 1990’s intervention by outside forces would deepen divisions amongst religious groups and cause the same reaction. The Europeans, however, failed to understand the depth of the conflict that the independence bids of the early 90’s would cause—and underestimated the impact their “impartial” presence would have on the continuation of

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<sup>281</sup> Williams, 1.

<sup>282</sup>In addition, the Europeans struggled to identify an enemy because, for much of the early part of the war, alliances changed. For example, the Croats and Bosniacs joined forces against the Bosnian Serbs and the VRS. In 1993, however, the Croat-Muslim alliance unexpectedly collapsed, opening a new series of battles between the former alliance partners. A particularly gruesome incident occurred in April of that year when Bosnian Croat forces (HVO) attacked the Muslim village of Ahmici in western Bosnia. Prior to the attack, HVO soldiers surrounded the city to ensure that no one could escape. The HVO decimated the village and killed most of its inhabitants. Later that year, Bosniac forces (ABH) reorganized and retaliated against the HVO, achieving moderate gains. Nation, 166.

<sup>283</sup> Some of the most widely reported massacres of the war were attributed to Serbs, such as the Banja Luka massacre occurring in the spring of 1992, as the Serbs attempted to establish control over Krajina (meaning border or frontier region) along Bosnia’s northwestern border with Croatia. Serbian militias aided by the regular Yugoslav army (JNA) entered towns in the area, murdering, terrorizing, raping and expelling Muslim and Croat populations. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the JNA forcibly took Banja Luka region and made it the Serb dominated center of western Bosnia. These early Serbian actions were some of the earliest reports of atrocities known to the west. It is important to note that not all atrocities were committed by Serbs; the Croats ruthlessly sacked Mostar; Muslim militias engaged violently with the Croatian HVO forces in the north. Nation, 160-161.

<sup>284</sup>For example, in July of 1995, the Army of the Republic of Srpska (VRS), supported by regular Serbian army launched an ethnic cleansing campaign in Srebrenica. The massacre killed over 8000 people, most Bosniacs. What has come to be known simply as the Srebrenica massacre was single largest ethnic cleansing campaign in Europe since World War II. Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*. (Washington, D.C. The Brookings Institution, 199,) 365.

hostilities. By the time the United States became involved in 1995, the conflict in Bosnia had spiraled into a massive humanitarian disaster. The daunting challenge for the U.S. was how to stabilize this troubled region.

In late 1995, the Clinton Administration committed U.S forces to the stabilization of Bosnia. The depth and breadth of the atrocities committed by Bosnian Serbs were horrifically offensive—and the “do-something” effect burgeoned throughout the American public. Furthermore, the wider war thesis—the notion that a destabilized central Europe could affect U.S. national security became an increasingly convincing argument among policy makers. By staving off collapse and corruption in Bosnia, the U.S. could support its European allies—and save itself. Instability in Bosnia had introduced the notion that failed and failing states are dangerous. As this dissertation will demonstrate in the forthcoming chapters on Afghanistan and Iraq, a Bosnia run by the warlord, Slobodan Milosevic, could have become a ripe breeding ground for the growing terrorist threat.<sup>285</sup>

After committing U.S. assistance to the stabilization effort, the Clinton administration had to decide how to act. Interestingly, the U.S. never established a formal stabilization plan, rather the work of stabilizing Bosnia was detailed in the Dayton Peace Accords<sup>286</sup>—a international agreement which ended the fighting, discussed the causes of war, and outlined the war forward. While the agreement was tremendous triumph in its foremost goal of ending the violence, in many ways the Dayton Peace Accords neglected the long-term stabilization of Bosnia in that it dealt incompletely with the underlying causal factors which jumpstarted the war.

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<sup>285</sup> A related argument often made in support of U.S. action in Serbia is related to humanitarian responsibility. Based on the massive human cost of the war, in terms of deaths, rapes, and displacements, outside action to halt the killing was warranted and some would argue required. By allowing a threshold of terror and brutality to be breached in Bosnia, it paves the way for further action. As a democratic state devoted to the sanctity of human life, the United States’ international reputation can be marred by its inaction. Stephen Blank, *Yugoslavia’s Wars* (Carlisle: The U.S. Army War College, 1995,) 125.

<sup>286</sup> A number of peace plans: the Carrington Agreement, the Vance-Owens plan, the U.S Lift and Strike plan were all forerunners of the Dayton agreement. Von Hippel, 144.

The stabilization plan housed in the Dayton Peace Accords failed possibly for reasons related to the limits of what was realistic in that negotiation, to achieve a true political-military solution—which is integral to long-term success.

The Dayton Peace Accords which were signed on December 14, 1995 was a settlement, among Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic. It formally re-established the unified state of Bosnia-Herzegovina but de facto created a 51:49 division between the Bosnian/Croat federation and Republic of Srpska. Bosnian Serbs retained their hold on captured territories taken during the war and Bosnian Muslims were bestowed the land around Sarajevo, capitol of Bosnia- Herzegovina.<sup>287</sup> While Dayton served as a seemingly reasonable administrative solution, stopped the violence, and undoubtedly saved countless future lives,<sup>288</sup> it was a settlement plan. It was not a stabilization plan. It ended the hostilities but it did not achieve the critical outcomes— in the way that effective stabilization plans should.

As a stabilization plan, the Dayton Peace Accords have several major several weaknesses. It struggled to address the difficulties associated with longterm security, management of the internal civil administration, and reconstruction of the state. These are significant weaknesses, indicative of a stabilization plan that failed to address issues vital to long-term success: construction of a political-military solution, effective use of intelligence and historical understanding, and achievement of a unified effort.

First, stabilization of Bosnia was largely a military solution that portioned the groups into ethnic enclaves. When the war ended the militias of the three ethnic groupings remained in place and peoples of each ethnicity returned to living with one another. The “soft partition” agreement

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<sup>287</sup> “Dayton Peace Accords,” Wright Patterson Air Force Base, November 21, 1995, (accessed July 10, 2010); available from <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/bosnia/bosagree.html>

<sup>288</sup> Despite the force of the July bombing campaign, the Serbs did persist in their siege of Sarajevo throughout the month August, finally giving way and agreeing to the talks. *Ibid*, 149.

allowed for the existence of divided ethnic communities. The republic of Sprpska and the Bosnian/Croat federation appointed their own presidents and created independent legislatures. As Craig Nation argues “the creation of ethnically pure enclaves had been a major war aim of all belligerents, and progress toward reversing the consequences of years of ethnic cleansing was negligible.”<sup>289</sup> The stabilization plan did not address the original impetus for war—the identity of the Bosnian state. It was not a political solution in that it accomplished little in resolving problems among those who were fighting.

In addition, the Bosniac and Croat forces retained much of their equipment and soldiers after the fighting had ended. Although Serb forces and weaponry had been greatly diminished during the large-scale fighting in late 1995, all groups retained some capability.<sup>290</sup> Because the stabilization did not achieve a political solution and relied on a military-enforced ethnic division, the region remains at risk for renewed violence at the present.

Finally, the stabilization of Bosnia was difficult because it failed to satisfactorily address the reconstruction and development of post-war Bosnia. After three years of fighting, Bosnia’s GDP had been reduced to a third of pre-war levels. Industrial plants had closed, a majority of workers had lost their jobs. The countryside was devastated, making agricultural recovery just as difficult as return to industrial productivity. “Two-thirds of homes, one half of schools and one third of hospitals were damaged or destroyed”<sup>291</sup> While the Dayton Peace Accords physically separated those who were fighting and used the military to enforce the cessation of hostilities—the stabilization plan should have included a unified effort to bring the expertise of both military and civilians to solve the endemic problems of a troubled inter-ethnic society.

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<sup>289</sup> Nation 202.

<sup>290</sup> James Dobbins, *America’s Role in Nation-building from Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2003,) 90.

<sup>291</sup> Dobbins, 92.

The main problems in stabilizing Bosnia in the 1990's were related to the three major issues examined in this dissertation. First, neither the Europeans nor the U.S. properly understood Bosnia as a threat to regional or national authority. As such, the response was delayed and insufficient, giving all sides an ability to arm, fight and deepen the conflict. Second, the UNPROFOR troops were given an impossible mandate to act impartially in the face of serious attacks by one side against the others. The United States military effectively quelled the violence, but had little guidance on what to do next. Finally, the long-term stabilization of Bosnia struggled because the plan did not offer a political-military solution nor did it demonstrate a unified effort to assist Bosnia in its recovery.

#### **LESSONS LEARNED—FOR BOSNIA, AND BEYOND**

This examination of the intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina serves as an important case study in understanding the circumstances under which the United States should take action, how its troops should be deployed, and how to develop an effective stabilization plan. Many of the problems in the stabilization of Bosnia were directly related to the indecision of the West in its initial response, the ambiguity of the soldier's role, and the effectiveness of the stabilization plan. The final section of this chapter assesses each of these issues in turn, and examines their applicability in future stabilization operations.

First, the United States, when initially faced with the conflict in the Balkans was unsure how to respond. Indeed, in the 1990's, Americans observed a public debate emerge amongst the Clinton administration, members of Congress and other key policy makers regarding the purpose

and value of U.S. troop presence in Central Bosnia.<sup>292</sup> The debate became even more heated once the IFOR mission ended and the UN formally reconstituted the mission into a stabilization operation, which was to accomplish the reconstruction of the civilian society. Those who disagreed with sustained U.S. presence in Bosnia pointedly questioned the mission's purpose—and doubted the effect that an unstable Bosnia could have on U.S. national security.

At the outset, the Clinton administration argued that the need for U.S. troops in Bosnia was fueled by humanitarian aims and consistent with national security goals. In an address to the American people, President Clinton argued that:

In fulfilling this mission, we will have the chance to help stop the killing of innocent civilians, especially children, and at the same time, to bring stability to central Europe, a region of the world that is vital to our national interests. It is the right thing to do.<sup>293</sup>

His point was that stoppage of the violence in Bosnia would assist in avoiding a larger European War.<sup>294</sup> While the movement of refugees and challenge to economic stability were typically offered as items of major concern, I argue that the real risk was the de-evolution into a severely weakened state—because failed and failing states are dangerous. Warlords rise, terrorist groups can operate, and underground economies can develop. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these threats to U.S. national security are some of the most complex and challenging.

The second lesson to be learned from the Bosnian conflict is that a determination of the soldier's tasking and the limits of their responsibility must be clear prior to entry. In Bosnia, the role for UNPROFOR and U.S. soldiers were never clearly defined. The UNPROFOR soldiers

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<sup>292</sup> A very public discussion emerged congressional leaders regarding the decision to send troops. While some questioned their safety, efficacy and interest, others pointed out that the U.S. had already committed through Operation Deliberate Force and support for the Commander-in-chief was their responsibility. Stanley Meisler, "GOP Leaders Support Sending Troops to Bosnia," *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1995.

<sup>293</sup> William Clinton, "Address to the American People," November 27, 1995, (accessed July 12, 2010); available from [http://www.cnn.com/US/9511/bosnia\\_speech/speech.html](http://www.cnn.com/US/9511/bosnia_speech/speech.html)

<sup>294</sup> Warren Christopher, "Send Troops to Bosnia," *USA Today*, October 18, 1995.

were constrained in their ability act due to the overriding commitment to impartiality—despite the situation on the ground. For the U.S. soldiers, the role was incompletely defined and changed as the mission progressed. This lack of clarity was due to the complexity of the operation in support of the NATO Deliberate Force mission, the UN peacekeeping operation Joint Endeavor, and the disagreements about the relationship between and duties of civilian and military entities.

The issue of impartiality is a difficult one in dealing with cases in inter-ethnic violence—in that interveners typically should not presuppose outcomes or force a mandated solution on other peoples. The problem, in the case of Bosnia, was the conflict had taken a troubling turn in that one warring group had grown increasingly powerful—and did nothing to self-police its wartime actions. In this case, Karadzic and Milosevic had become warlords exacting brutal tactics to win the war. When the Europeans misperceived the transformation of the fighting, they failed to understand, not only their enemy, but also correctly understand the kind of war they were fighting. In effect, they rendered their troops useless, through their imposition of absolute impartiality, as the UNPROFOR soldiers were not permitted to fight effectively.

The U.S. soldiers experienced a different sort of problem in that they were assigned responsibility for tasks that they neither fully understood nor were trained to do. When the UN created the Implementation Force (IFOR), they were assigned responsibility for security in post-combat Bosnia. IFOR, initially composed of 54,000 NATO soldiers,<sup>295</sup> focused on the military elements of the stabilization plan outlined in Dayton: enforcement of the cease-fire, demobilization of the remaining militia forces, and security protection for Bosnian civilians. By 1996, the UN had also assigned to IFOR forces the traditionally “civilian tasks” of stabilization:

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<sup>295</sup> 13,000 of IFOR forces were American soldiers. Steven Bowman, “Bosnia: U.S. Military Operations.” Congressional Research Service, July 8, 2003, (accessed July 8, 2009); available from <http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/crl2.pdf>

the conduct of elections, return of displaced persons and support for the International Criminal Tribunal. The mission was renamed SFOR, or Stabilization Force. At the same time, the UN created the Office of the High Representative (OHR) for Bosnia Herzegovina, whose formal responsibility was the resolution of any difficulties arising in connection with civilian implementation.<sup>296</sup>

The main problem was that neither group fully understood or appreciated the work of the other. Military forces grew resentful of their civilian counterparts, because the civilian effort lagged behind the forward leaning military pieces of the operation.<sup>297</sup> The OHR office was largely ineffectual due to understaffing and underfunding. As such, many traditionally “civilian” tasks fell to the military, as these forces were present in greatest number and had the broadest capacity for action. In addition, no formal guidance existed for the coordination between SFOR and OHR. While some ad hoc relationships developed between SFOR commanders and OHR personnel, the stabilization of Bosnia moved forward with limited influence by civilians.<sup>298</sup>

Therefore, U.S. soldiers gradually assumed responsibility for many of the traditionally civilians tasks. They did so with little guidance from national directives like PDD-25 or from joint documents detailing SFOR responsibilities. As a result, the U.S. soldier’s role in Bosnia lacked clarity. This critical problem is one of the significant oversights of the stabilization plan and leads to my final evaluation and that is of the plan’s overall design.

The de facto stabilization plan for Bosnia was the Dayton Peace Accords—but Dayton was a negotiated settlement to stop the violence with all of the usual shortcomings of a

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<sup>296</sup> “The Mandate of the OHR,” UN Office of the High Representative to Bosnia Herzegovina, (accessed July 8, 2010); available from [http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/gen-info/default.asp?content\\_id=38612](http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/gen-info/default.asp?content_id=38612)

<sup>297</sup> For example, OHR civilians became frustrated with the military forces who perceived investigations and the securing of mass gravesites as a military responsibility, while soldiers argued that those operations were outside its IFOR tasking arrangement. Dobbins 101.

<sup>298</sup> George A. Joulwan and Christopher C. Shoemaker, *Civilian-Military Cooperation in the Prevention of Deadly Conflict: Implementing Agreements in Bosnia and Beyond*, (New York: Carnegie Commission, 1998.)

diplomatic solution. It was not a long-term for stabilization of Bosnia. Dayton stopped the fighting but failed to reconstitute Bosnia's multi-ethnic society, and in so doing neglected essential political element of any stabilization plan. Although the region has maintained a basic level of civic order and has eschewed the resort to war, its political structures are unstable, with weak civic organizations and politicians prone to the pursuit of pure self-interest.<sup>299</sup> As a result, Bosnia's economy has recovered slowly and with unsteady progress. The major reason for these persistent political and economic problems is that a peace accord cannot be substituted for an operational stabilization plan with a sound joint political-military approach.

Despite the problems with the implementation of the stabilization plan in Bosnia, Dayton was fabulously successful in a single, significant way—it stopped Milosevic and Bosnia's de-evolution into disorder. In the 1990's Milosevic emerged as a leader of an armed group and quickly adopted many "war-lord" characteristics in terms of the tactics he used and the power he wielded over one of the societal groups. Had Milosevic been allowed to proceed unchecked, the disorder and instability had catastrophic potential. The bottom line is that the U.S. took proper action in its troop deployment to Bosnia in 1995. It stopped the emergence of budding warlord and suspended Bosnia's collapse.

The U.S. also learned a valuable lesson in Bosnia in that it presented a new national security challenge—one in which armed groups and warlords were extremely dangerous and weakened states threatened U.S. stability. In this way, the conflict in Bosnia situated the U.S. on the precipice of a reconceptualization of vital national security interests. Indeed, Bosnia forced us to think differently about how we understood warring groups and the danger they can cause. It also began, even if very slowly, some reflection in military and diplomatic circles about how

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<sup>299</sup> Robert Benjamin, "Regional Politics: Political Transition and Institution Building," *Transforming the Balkans: Security, Political Stability and Economic Development*, National Democratic Institute, May 10, 2010, (accessed July 13, 2010); available from [http://www.ndi.org/files/Transforming\\_the\\_Balkans\\_051010.pdf](http://www.ndi.org/files/Transforming_the_Balkans_051010.pdf)

forces should be trained to function successfully in these ambiguous environments. These lessons offered pre 9/11, foreshadowed the intense challenge that the U.S. would face in Afghanistan fifteen years later. In the next chapter on Operation Enduring Freedom, I further develop this notion of the challenges posed by a new national security threats.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Operation Enduring Freedom:*

#### *A Case Study Assessing U.S. Performance in Irregular War*

Nine days after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, in an address to the American Congress, U.S. President George Bush demanded that Afghanistan's Taliban government close all terrorist-based training camps and turn over all al-Qaeda leaders within its borders. President Bush also called for U.S. access to all existing al-Qaeda bases. On that same day, President Bush declared a "war on terror."<sup>300</sup> Convinced of the direct link between Mullah Omar's Taliban government and the September 11th attacks, President Bush ordered the first "battle" of the American-declared war on terror by attacking Afghanistan's ruling Taliban.

Since the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States had suffered no direct attack on its homeland—until September 11, 2001. But, unlike the attacks by Japanese warships in World War II, the enemy behind the 9/11 attacks was amorphous, hard to pinpoint, and, more difficult to understand. The U.S. military, well-practiced and comfortable at drafting war plans to face conventional forces, confronted an indistinct enemy on an ill-defined battlefield. Arguably, war plans for asymmetric conflict should have presented no challenge the United States, because the U.S. has a long history of experience in irregular war and its military

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<sup>300</sup>President George Bush, "Address to Joint Session of Congress," September 20, 2001, (accessed July 28, 2010); available from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2001/09/mil-010920-usia01.htm>

forces are unrivaled in terms of technological capability, size and quality. Despite these advantages and its considerable experience in “military operations other than war” in the 1990’s, the U.S. struggled to succeed in the stabilization of Afghanistan. This chapter asks why.

I seek to answer to the question regarding the struggle for success by testing for the three main propositions laid out in chapter two of this dissertation. First, I ask whether U.S. policy makers designed and launched the operation in Afghanistan to ensure consistency with national policy goals. The short time period between the 9/11 attacks and the actual launch in the beginning of October severely limited the time that strategists had to plan. When planning began in earnest, one of the driving factors for military engagement was seeking vengeance for the 9/11 attacks. As I will explore later in this chapter, the truncated planning time and compelling desire to punish the Taliban overshadowed nearly all other American goals. From the outset, the responsibility for stabilization after combat seemed superfluous to the immediate objective the U.S. wished to achieve.

The second major hypothesis addresses the varied levels of effectiveness in the combat and stabilization stages of the operation. At the outset of the war, overwhelmingly, the goal was to defeat Al Qaeda and unseat the Taliban. U.S. forces were well-prepared to achieve this goal. This chapter compares the relative level of success in combat with the less well-orchestrated stabilization. Moreover, this chapter examines troop preparedness for both tasks in terms of training and doctrinal guidance. Because Operation Enduring Freedom long pre-dated the release of the 2007 Counterinsurgency Manual and little other guidance existed, U.S. soldiers operated without much concrete direction.

Finally, I seek to assess U.S. effectiveness in fighting the irregular war<sup>301</sup> in Afghanistan from October 2001-2009. Due to the limited time between Al Qaeda's attack and America's retaliatory response, planning was necessarily rushed. This constrained lead time vastly reduced U.S strategists' ability to construct an effective stabilization effort tailored for the special challenges the U.S. faced in Afghanistan. Moreover, military strategists and policy-makers spent little time learning the region and Afghan history—and as such did little to understand the enemy they would soon confront. The first portion of this chapter addresses the criticality of “knowing the enemy” and assesses American attention paid to this crucial factor. In the second part of the chapter, I apply my three research questions to Afghan, and I close by using these findings to identify what might have been done differently in Afghanistan—and what lessons can be applied to future irregular war operations.

## **KNOW YOUR ENEMY; KNOW YOUR HISTORY**

In the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, U.S. policy makers had a tough job. They were compelled to launch a military operation to destroy Al Qaeda and publicly punish the direct perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. Their first task, however, was to determine what kind of war they needed to fight. Obviously, this conflict would be different than those fought in both World Wars and distinct from combat a decade prior in the Persian Gulf. Before its late October

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<sup>301</sup> Although scholars disagree on terminology, for the purposes of this paper I will use the phrase “irregular warfare” to describe the operation in Afghanistan. For a timely and informed discussion of the definitional challenges associated with the term “irregular warfare” see the DoD Special Study on Irregular Warfare conducted by U.S. Joint Forces Command. Researchers canvassed a variety of military publications and documents including the *National Military Strategy*, *National Defense Strategy*, *National Security Strategy*; and North Atlantic Treaty Documents. They conclude that most definitions of irregular warfare include one or more of the following activities: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, Terrorism and Counter terrorism, Unconventional warfare, Psychological Operations, Information operations, Foreign Internal Defense; Security, Stabilization, Transition and Reconstruction and Civil Military Operations. Department of Defense Special Study on Irregular War, U.S. Joint Forces Command, (accessed March 10, 2008); available from <http://www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil/search/Papers/Irreg%20Warfare%20Special%20Study.pdf>

launch, U.S. policy makers had several weeks to determine what kind of war it would fight and who the enemy would be.

Although time was compressed, America had an advantage in that two world powers, Britain and the Soviet Union had war-fighting experience in the rugged, craggy terrain of Afghanistan. The U.S military had some indirect experience of its own from supporting the Afghan Mujahedeen against the Soviets in the 1980. As the geography had not changed, America could clearly use these experiences to better understand their enemy and assist in their war planning efforts. To a great degree, American soldiers found that the enemy was startlingly similar to what the British and Soviets faced as well. An analysis of this history and the degree to which U.S. civilian and military leaders incorporated learning from those experiences into decisions made in 2001 is important to this analysis.

### The Anglo-Afghan Wars of the Nineteenth Century

*I have been struck with the magnitude of your resources, your ships, your arsenals, but what I cannot understand is why the rulers of so vast and flourishing an empire should go across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country.*

---Dost Mohammad<sup>302</sup>

The nineteenth century was truly the era of British ascendancy. British naval fleets were unrivaled, finances secure, and empire unmatched. Through this extensive empire, Britain developed a lucrative trading economy and maintained a foothold in all corners of the globe. Britain's major source of strength in Southwest Asia was its control over the Indian subcontinent extending as far south as modern Burma and north into present-day Pakistan. In the early 1800's, however, Britain experienced its first warning signs that the intrigue and competition of

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<sup>302</sup> Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002,) 70.

Europe's "Great Game" would be experienced in Southwest Asia. Increasingly, the French gained interest in Persia and threatened a joint Franco-Russian invasion into Southwest Asia to thwart the expanding British empire.<sup>303</sup> The invasion never came, but Britain remained concerned that other European powers would counter their domination, potentially disrupt the business endeavors of British East India Company and challenge their claim to hegemony.

To thwart growing Russian interest in southwest Asia and bids for power by other European states, in 1838, the British sought to fortify their position in the region. To that end, Britain pursued a "Treaty of Friendship" with Shah Shuja.<sup>304</sup> Despite Shah Shuja's recent ouster and limited legitimacy among the indigenous peoples of Afghanistan, the British were heartened by the nascent relationship with the local leader,<sup>305</sup> whom they believed would give them credibility in warding off other European contenders for influence in the region.<sup>306</sup> The treaty or "Simla Manifesto" promised Shah Shuja the throne and guaranteed the British a loyal puppet in Kabul. Although the British claimed that Shah Shuja was adored by his tribesman, his coronation was thinly attended and met with little fanfare. Historian, Nafatula Khalfin described the ceremony:

On his left were British officers in red and gold full dress coats and on his right barely, half a dozen bedraggled, partly clothed Afghan followers. Not more than a hundred Afghans had arrived to see Shah Shuja's entry into the city... even among these one could hear grumbling against the infidel invaders. After his coronation, the puppet signed an agreement... on the permanent presence of British troops in Afghanistan and the establishment of British control over its foreign relations.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>304</sup> Shah Shuja was an ousted former ruler of Afghanistan, who had once served as provincial governor of Herat and Peshawar battled his brother for the throne before declaring himself "King of Afghanistan." Throughout the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, he lived in exile in India prior to his reinstatement by the British in 1838. Shah Shuja never achieved full legitimacy with the Afghan people.

<sup>305</sup> Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan: A Firsthand Account* (New York: Verso, 1988,) 9.

<sup>306</sup> What the British missed is that evaluations of credibility were important among players in the "Great Game," the real determinant of actual power rested in the hands of the local people.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. 10.

The local people's cold reception of Shah Shuja ominously foreshadowed the similarly chilly rejection of his British puppetmaster.

The underlying purpose of the coronation of Shah Shuja was to lay the groundwork for the coming British invasion. In December of 1838, the British "Army of the Indus" set out westward marching through Quetta and Kandahar, meeting little opposition along the way. When the British army reached a heavily defended Ghazni, they found themselves paralyzed, as they had inexplicably left their siege artillery in Kandahar. The British, however, navigated around the oversight as a deserter from the Ghazni militias revealed that although all of the cities gates were double-reinforced, the great Kabul gate, and main passage through the walled garrison, was unprotected. The British blew the gate and stormed the city.<sup>308</sup> As discussed later in this chapter with regard to the more recent American experience, the British would have done well to internalize this key lesson learned in Ghazni; that is, the value of local relationships and reliable intelligence is critical to success.

By August of 1839, Shah Shuja was enthroned in Kabul and was encountering little organized resistance. Observing the ease with which the British seemingly took over the cities of Afghanistan, the British Resident in Baluchistan remarked to the Khan of Kalat, "The British army has entered Kabul without firing a bullet." The Khan of Kalat hesitated then replied, "Yes... you people have entered this country, but now how will you get out?"<sup>309</sup> The British grossly misinterpreted their relatively bloodless and facile march through Afghanistan as an indicator that their domination would go unchallenged. What the British failed to recognize was that taking over two or three towns did not translate into domination of the state of Afghanistan. In the eyes of Afghan tribesmen, losing temporary control over a town meant virtually nothing.

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<sup>308</sup> Ewans, 64.

<sup>309</sup> Anwar, 11.

This experience represents another key lesson in that a military takeover of a particular town does not represent success if the local inhabitants reject the legitimacy of the intervening force. Again, this lesson regarding the perception of legitimacy will be critical in the American intervention two centuries hence.

After arriving in Kabul and at the request of Shah Shuja, the British established their cantonment on an exposed hillside, which made their position difficult to defend and vulnerable to attack. What followed were three years of constant raids and attacks by Afghan tribesmen who rejected both Shah Shuja and the British infidel invader. To exacerbate this situation, British conduct in Kabul worsened an already deteriorating relationship with the local peoples. First, the situation allowed the Kabul garrison to transform into a brothel, where local women worked and alcohol flowed freely. Second, the British eventually neglected their payoffs to the local tribesmen, when London pressured the garrison to stem mounting costs.<sup>310</sup> By November 1841, it became clear that a long-standing settlement in Afghanistan would not endure. The garrison was attacked by thousands of local fighters and the British began searching for a way out of their own protective perimeter.

In early January, after a treaty had been concluded guaranteeing safe passage out of Afghanistan, 4500 British troops and 12,000 camp followers departed the garrison in Kabul for Jalalabad. Within days, more than half died from exposure to the cold. Others died, when, despite the treaty, tribesmen attacked the convoy as it moved through the Pass at Khurd Kabul. Only one survivor immediately emerged from the carnage. On January 13, 1842, Doctor Brydon, badly wounded, arrived in Jalalabad on a dying horse to relay the experience British experience in retreating from Kabul.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006,) 162.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid*, 163.

Afghan tribesmen used an effective and age-old tactic at Khurd-Kabul Pass. They stalled the convoys by attacking and disabling the first and last positions. When the convoy was forced to stop, Afghan tribesmen descended from the mountains and attacked the whole convoy, forcing all those in the convoy to abandon the relative protection of the military formation. As British soldiers and camp followers fled, Afghan warriors easily killed those escaping by foot. As the history of Afghanistan's resistance against invaders unfolds, this tactic against convoys in mountain passes is employed successfully again and again.

Dissatisfied with their hasty and ignominious retreat from Afghanistan, and with the Northwest Territories of their Asian land holdings still unsecured, the British attempted to settle the "Afghan problem" again in 1878. During this Second Afghan War, a British army of 35,000 troops, in desert camouflage, vice red uniforms, marched into Afghanistan determined to finally bring the region under British control. While the British did enjoy some minor territorial gains and military successes, ultimately fifteen years of intense fighting resulted in a negotiated settlement that did little to establish British authority in the region. In 1893, the British forced Emir Abdur Rahman Khan to sign the Durand treaty and recognize an end to the conflict. As part of the agreement, the British created the Durand Line which demarcates an official border between then-British India and Afghanistan.<sup>312</sup>

For the next 40 years Afghanistan enjoyed a period of relative peace and near autonomy. Afghanistan experienced little direct interaction with the British aside from Anglo control over foreign policy decision making. Several major changes disrupted this brief period of stability during the years surrounding World War I. Afghan ruler Amir Abdurrahman died, leaving leadership to Habibullah, who felt little compulsion to remain tied to Britain. He offered

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<sup>312</sup> The Durand Line remains the only recognized border between Pakistan and Afghanistan—despite the fact that Afghanistan has never formally acknowledged or accepted this demarcation. Because the Durand line separates the Pashtu people, the area in southeastern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan (the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, FATA) remains difficult for either state to govern.

allegiance to Russia, the Ottomans or whoever paid the heftiest sum. This issue of allegiance rankled the British, as they believed Afghanistan should have remained true to the Triple Entente in exchange for British “protection.” While Afghanistan formally remained neutral, it did accept Turkish and German military assistance throughout the war years.<sup>313</sup> As World War I came to a close, Habibullah invaded British India sparking a third Anglo Afghan War, which lasted only three months. The eventual British departure in 1919 marks the last Anglo-Afghan interaction in the battles of the Great Game.<sup>314</sup>

While the British won many tactical victories, Afghanistan won the Anglo-Afghan wars because they gained autonomous control over the Afghan people and their land. Additionally, the nearly one hundred-year clash between Britain and Afghanistan significantly influenced Afghanistan’s resolve. It convinced Afghan fighters that they could fend off attacks by technologically superior foreign fighters. Emboldened by this experience, the Afghans were prepared to take on the Soviets a half a century later.

#### The Soviet Afghan War, 1979-1989

In the years between British influence and the Soviet invasion of 1979, Afghanistan moved with fits and starts toward modernization. Several Afghan kings favored compulsory education for all, removal of the veil and a trend toward increased internationalism. Tribal leaders reacted with varying degrees of receptivity toward these changes; many of them rejecting modernization in favor of a traditional way of life. Amidst the turmoil, in 1973, Mohammad Daoud Khan seized control of Kabul in a bloodless coup and immediately set upon a process of

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<sup>313</sup> Ewans, 78.

<sup>314</sup> The Great Game is typically viewed as a late 19<sup>th</sup> contest between Britain and Russia over control of Central Asia. Russia was threatened by Britain’s control of India and wished to stem any further Anglo influence in the region.

active development. Significantly, he drew financial support from the Soviet Union.<sup>315</sup> This fiduciary tie increased the Soviets' interest in the region and less than a decade later, as they began to doubt Daoud's loyalty, they launched into full-scale involvement.

On December 24, 1979, the Soviet 105<sup>th</sup> Guard Airborne Division began to land at Kabul Airport. Within three days, the Soviets had amassed a force strong enough to surround and capture the city. In the face of intense Afghan resistance, the Soviet force stormed the presidential palace, assassinated President Hafizullah Amin and took over most of Kabul.<sup>316</sup> The Soviets installed Babrak Karmal, a former Deputy Prime Minister and member of Khalq faction of the Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan, to lead Afghanistan—and answer directly to Moscow.

In an operation strikingly similar to the British experience 75 years prior, the Soviets began the first phase of their invasion by taking over the major cities of Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul. These attacks, launched by conventional forces moving in tanks, were initially met by Mujahedeen soldiers responding in a conventional fashion. When it soon became clear that lightly armed Afghan tribesman on horseback were no match for the massive might of the Soviet army, the Mujahedeen quickly altered their battle approach. As Afghan fighters had done with the British nearly 100 years prior, the Mujahedeen fighters adopted an “ambush and retreat” strategy, where they would emerge from craggy mountain hideaways, attack tank convoys, disrupt supply lines, and then melt back into the mountain.<sup>317</sup> The mujahedeen successfully employed this tactic due to their extensive knowledge of Afghan topography and its particularly

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<sup>315</sup> For an excellent retelling of the seeds of this relationship and the Soviet-Afghanistan war from the Afghan perspective, see Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester Grau's *Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghanistan War*. This work contains 140 vignette's of Afghan tactics including raids, ambushes, and camp defense, as told by Afghani commanders. Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester Grau, *Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghanistan War*, The United States Marine Corps Studies and Analysis Division, Quantico, VA, 1995.

<sup>316</sup> Arthur Bonner, *Among the Afghans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987,) 45.

<sup>317</sup> Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (New York: De Capo Press, 2002,) 74.

challenging terrain. In the early days of the Soviet experience, these forceful but limited attacks were perceived as minor setbacks, but the Soviets soon understood the need to reassess their strategy.

The Soviets surmised that their difficulty in fighting the Mujahedeen largely stemmed from its continuous ability to rearm and regroup. The Soviets believed that the Mujahedeen's continuous revitalization was due to the Afghan people's support for the local fighters. To discourage further reinforcement given by the people, the Soviets toughened their policies against any local found assisting the Mujahedeen. Soviet soldiers swept through the Afghan countryside killing off herds, mining fields, and bombing villages. All were meant as scare-tactics and methods of thwarting further support to the Mujahedeen.<sup>318</sup>

The Soviets, however, gravely miscalculated the effect of these "scare-tactics." Their mistake was that otherwise neutral local peoples saw Soviet action as sheer brutality, disconnected from the war and the Mujahedeen. Thus, Soviet action, meant to discourage support to the local fighters, had exactly the opposite effect. Afghans began, in large numbers, to support the Mujahedeen in their efforts to fight off the Soviets. To the regular Afghan, the Soviets were infidels—the latest in a long line of foreign invaders.

While careful historical studies reveal that ordinary Afghans *had* offered assistance to the Mujahedeen in the early days of the Soviet-Afghan war, the help given was limited and grossly exaggerated by Soviet strategists. Much like their British predecessors, the Soviets misunderstood and undervalued the significance of gaining the support, confidence and trust of the local peoples. Instead, the invading Russians distanced the local people through their brutal tactics of repression and entrenched themselves in a fierce and enduring war with Afghan

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<sup>318</sup> Lester Grau and Michael Gress, *The Soviet Afghan War; How a Superpower Fought and Lost* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002,) 89.

warriors. As a result, the invading Soviet forces lost all sense of legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people—which, as outlined in chapter two is a key factor in any successful stabilization operation.

The Soviets' major error, which ultimately led to its inglorious retreat, was its poor preparedness for the type of battle it confronted in Afghanistan. The Soviets prepared for conventional battle, as if fighting on the European plains or Chinese steppes. The Soviets failed to plan for or fight an effective counterinsurgency. Although the Red Army was victorious in the cities and in minor clashes, ultimately it accomplished little. As noted Soviet historians Lester Grau and Michael Gress observe “the best executed Soviet operations were the invasion, Operation Magistral (to open Khost) and the withdrawal.”<sup>319</sup> The Soviet-Afghan War illustrated the perils of a conventionally prepared army taking on guerilla forces;<sup>320</sup> although the Red Army won in battle after battle, it decisively lost the war.

Though different in important ways, the Soviet and British experiences in Afghanistan shared several common approaches and missteps. From a tactical perspective, both invading forces assumed that the Afghan's weak resistance to the initial waves of invading forces was a predictor for easy success in Afghanistan. Neither force understood the power and effectiveness of the Afghan “ambush and retreat” strategy; nor did they devise a method to repel or avoid these attacks. Perhaps most crucially, neither force designed a political/military operation that included a post-combat stabilization phase.

From a strategic perspective, the British and the Soviets missed a critical success factor. Neither force carefully considered the perception of legitimacy. Battlefield victories and

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<sup>319</sup> Lester Grau, *The Bear went Over the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*, 1996, (accessed March 10, 2008); available from <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/books/Books%20-%201996/Bear%20Went%20Over%20Mountain%20-%20Aug%2096/BrOrMn.pdf>

<sup>320</sup> Although the Soviets were extremely unprepared for the war in Afghanistan, it is significant to note that U.S support for the Mujahedeen acutely influenced Afghanistan's success against Soviet forces.

takeovers of towns never translated into regional or state control—largely because the Afghan people rejected the authority of the outside invader and became determined to outlast their opponent. Indigenous people never recognized the British or Soviets as holding legitimate control over them. These important lessons, unlearned by the British and Soviets, were available for prudent Americans to internalize on the eve of Operation Enduring Freedom—the issue was whether the Americans would incorporate these historical lessons into their planning and execution of Operation Enduring Freedom.

### **THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN—WHY, WHO AND HOW?**

In this next section of the chapter, I return to the three major research questions of this dissertation and apply them to the Afghan case. First, I examine the rationale for the Afghan operation and specifically ask what the U.S. hoped to achieve through its engagement. In the case of Afghanistan, the mission objective shifted as the operation persisted. I take note of this change and examine both the causes and outcomes of the shift, as they are related to U.S. national security goals. Second, I compare U.S. effectiveness in both the combat and stabilization operations—and examine why troop performance was so unbalanced. I explore the limited planning time between the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. launch as a major contributing factor. Finally, I analyze the construct of stabilization—paying careful attention to each of the four critical elements as laid out in chapter two of this dissertation: legitimacy of the intervening force, focus on both political and military elements, unity of effort, and leverage of strategic intelligence.

*Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats, and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.*<sup>321</sup>

*-President George Bush, September 20, 2001*

Several weeks after President Bush's publicly outlined his demands to the Taliban, he delivered another televised address on October 7, 2002 in which he stated his rationale for war. Because the Taliban had not met his September 20th demands; he aimed to remove them through the use of force.<sup>322</sup> In a manner that Weigley would endorse, the operation, titled "Enduring Freedom,"<sup>323</sup> defined three limited and clear military objectives: to topple the Taliban, destroy Al Qaeda, and capture Osama Bin Laden. The fundamental purpose of the war was to prevent a second Al Qaeda attack on the United States and punish those who had made America suffer.

It is important to note a secondary, underlying reason for the war in Afghanistan—which was to create a post-combat Afghanistan with a fully functioning government. Although not explicitly stated as a goal in the early stages of the war, the need for a functioning government became increasingly apparent as the war persisted.

A strong, central authority in Kabul could effectively administer outlying regions, avoid the perils associated with ungoverned spaces, and bring stability to the weakened state.

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<sup>321</sup> On the evening of September 20, 2001 in a televised session, President George Bush addressed a joint session of Congress, where he made the above outlined demands of the Taliban. President George Bush, "Address to Joint Session of Congress," Washington, D.C. September 20, 2001, (accessed August 11, 2010); available from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/terroristattack/bush\\_speech\\_9-20.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/terroristattack/bush_speech_9-20.html)

<sup>322</sup> Kori Schake and Klaus Becher, "How America should Lead" *Policy Review* 114, August/September 2002, (accessed March 10, 2008); available from <http://www.policyreview.org/aug02/schake.html>

<sup>323</sup> General Tommy Franks, Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command, devised the military plan which combined limited but technologically advanced American military power with Afghani opposition fighters to combat the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Michael E. O'Hanlon, "The Afghani War: A Flawed Masterpiece," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics* (New York, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004,) 270.

Historically, Afghanistan's rural, mountainous, and desert regions were characterized by lawlessness and disorder—the perfect habitat for terrorists and criminal groups.<sup>324</sup> A capable central authority denies these groups the ability to operate. It is these groups who directly challenge U.S. national security, by upsetting international stability, disrupting economic systems and attacking the U.S. homeland.

Although some official statements and public documents made reference to the need for a functioning government in Afghanistan, the weight given to this requirement was underplayed and under-realized in the early part of the war. For instance, in his October 7, 2001 speech, President Bush declared that:

The oppressed people of Afghanistan will know the generosity of America and our allies. As we strike military targets, we will also drop food, medicine and supplies to the starving and suffering men and women and children of Afghanistan. The name of today's military operation is Enduring Freedom. We defend not only our precious freedoms, but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.<sup>325</sup>

In this speech, President Bush linked U.S. goals of Afghan freedom and stability in strictly humanitarian terms, but nowhere in the speech did the President connect long-term Afghan stability as to U.S. national security.

Several months later, the international community illustrated their interpretation of the same issue. The UN-brokered Bonn agreement<sup>326</sup> entrusted the Interim Authority, the central governing body established in Kabul in December of 2001, with:

The day-to-day conduct of the affairs of state, and shall have the right to issue decrees for the peace, order and good government of Afghanistan.... [The interim Authority shall] cooperate with the international community in the fight against

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<sup>324</sup> For an excellent analysis of the problems associated with weak and failing states and risks posed to national security, see Robert Dorff, "Failed States After 9/11: What Did We Know and What Have We Learned?" *International Studies Perspectives* 6, No. 1 (February 2005.) For an interesting perspective of this same issue, as understood by the Human Rights community, see Sima Samar, "A New Way Forward in Afghanistan: A Request for Change in U.S. Foreign Policy" *Human Rights Bulletin*, March 2009, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.wcl.american.edu/hrbrief/16/3samar.pdf?rd=1>

<sup>325</sup> President George Bush. "Address to the American People." October 7, 2001, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/combating/bush\\_10-7.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/combating/bush_10-7.html)

<sup>326</sup> Annex V of the Bonn Agreement contains listing of the provisional Government in Afghanistan with Hamid Karzai listed as Chairman. The Bonn Agreement "Agreement on Provisional Arrangement in Afghanistan pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institution" December 4, 2001, (accessed July 23, 2010); available from <http://www.afghangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm>

terrorism, drugs and organized crime. It shall commit itself to respect international law and maintain peaceful and friendly relations with neighbouring countries and the rest of the international community.

While this UN declaration establishes a closer link between internal Afghan stability and international order, the Bonn agreement misses a key opportunity to clearly emphasize the perils of ungoverned spaces in weak and failing states—that is, ungoverned spaces are a grave threat to the stability of the international system. While the Bonn Agreement focused on rebuilding a more secure Afghanistan, it failed to accentuate the link between Afghan and international stability.<sup>327</sup> The U.S. and the international community missed a key opportunity.

*Operation Enduring Freedom—A Kinetic Success, A Stabilization Struggle*

*I don't think we can be all things to all people in the world. I think we've got to be very careful when we commit our troops. The vice president [Gore] and I have a disagreement about the use of troops. He believes in nation building. I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders. I believe the role of the military is to fight and win war and therefore prevent war from happening in the first place.*

*President George Bush*<sup>328</sup>

Even before President Bush took office in January of 2001, he clearly stated his position on how America's military should be used—to fight America's wars. This conception of a narrowly defined role for the U.S. military flows from the immortal words of General Douglas MacArthur in an address to West Point cadets, wherein he stated, “your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable: it is to win our wars.”<sup>329</sup> In 1973 American military historian and

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<sup>327</sup> In the final chapter of this dissertation, I explore reasons for American reluctance to fully embrace weak and failing states as a significant U.S. national security risk.

<sup>328</sup> “First Gore Bush Presidential Debate,” The Commission on Presidential Debates, Boston, MA, October 3, 2000, (accessed March 12, 2008); available from <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2000a.html>

<sup>329</sup> It should also be noted that “war” as it has been defined in this context refers wholly to combat. Other operations, like stabilization, peace building, and reconstruction, fall outside the definition used by General MacArthur in this speech and by President Bush at the outset of his presidency. “Duty, Honor, Country” General Douglas MacArthur “Sylvanus Thayer Award Acceptance Speech,” West Point, NY, 12 May 1962, (accessed March 12, 2008); available from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/douglasmacarthurthayeraward.html>

strategist Russell Weigley, conducted an academic analysis of this maxim in his famous work, *The American Way of War*, where he described the American military as being most adept and best-suited for major combat. Weigley's primary argument is that America focuses—and should focus on winning total wars. Limited wars, like Vietnam, which aim toward social and ideological outcomes, wrongly blur war's ultimate purpose—military victory.<sup>330</sup>

With this in mind, President Bush stated his wartime objectives in his October 7, 2001 address. The war plan for Operation Enduring Freedom concentrated on land and carrier-based air strikes as the principal method for bringing down the Taliban and disrupting Al Qaeda.<sup>331</sup> Within three weeks of the operation's start, U.S. forces destroyed nearly all Taliban air defenses, which led to the fall of the provincial capital, Mazar-e Sharif. By mid-December, special operations forces, alongside Afghan opposition fighters, quelled the residual insurgencies in the Tora Bora Mountains. On December 22, 2002, Hamid Karzai was installed as leader of the interim government of Afghanistan.<sup>332</sup> In two short months, the U.S. swiftly achieved its military objectives and laid the groundwork for a nascent Afghan state.<sup>333</sup> The problem was that little planning was done for the stabilization operation to follow.

In the weeks between the 9/11 attacks and the United States retaliatory attack against Al Qaeda, planning for the war operation centered on the combat mission and neglected

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<sup>330</sup> Weigley is strongly influenced by the American Vietnam experience. The limited attempt that America makes in annihilating its North Vietnamese enemy fails. Yet, an unlimited attempt to conquer its enemy is unpalatable due to the advent of nuclear weapons. Thus, limited wars present a nearly impossible challenge. Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military, Strategy and Polic.* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1973,) ix-xv. See also Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997,) 321.

<sup>331</sup> "Operation Enduring Freedom." U.S. Central Command, (accessed March 12, 2008); available from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/enduring-freedom.htm>

<sup>332</sup> "Operation Enduring Freedom: October 2001-March 2002," U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2003, 28.

<sup>333</sup> For example, the deployment of Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) enabled U.S. forces to continually survey enemy battlefields and movements, which provided startlingly accurate targeting information.

stabilization. Much of the problem centered on the fact that stabilization was an afterthought.<sup>334</sup> The Bush administration, staunchly backed by American citizens sought revenge on those who had made them suffer—and at the outset thought little about the eventual need for Afghan stabilization. As a result, the planning for OEF was assigned to the Department of Defense. DoD, given the requisite authority, created a military plan for Operation Enduring Freedom, but did so with little input from other governmental agencies. The plan was primarily a military campaign to topple the Taliban and defeat the Taliban fighters.

The problem with the design of OEF as a solely military operation is that, to be effective, combat and stabilization phases must happen concurrently. At the war's outset, immediate goals must center on winning battles, but attention must also be paid to the stabilization piece of the operation—even while bullets are still flying. As was the case in World War II when President Roosevelt met with other allied leaders prior to the war's end to discuss the peace, American policy makers should have entertained more vigorous discussions in the Fall of 2001 on the stabilization of Afghanistan.

Stabilization is often viewed as a “phase IV task” which occurs after “phase III combat.”<sup>335</sup> As such, stabilization operations are often referred to as “post-conflict operations.” This moniker alone complicates the idea that stabilization and combat must occur concurrently—

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<sup>334</sup> It is significant to note that in March of 2002, Congress passed the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act, which authorized funds for the creation of a stable democratic Afghanistan, specifically focusing on “humanitarian, development and counternarcotics assistance.” *Afghanistan Freedom Support Act*, 107<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C. March 26, 2002, (accessed March, 13, 2008); available from <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h107-3994>

<sup>335</sup> These designations, Phase III and Phase IV, are drawn from Joint Publication 3.0, which outlines the campaigns as occurring in phases. The six phases include shape, deter, seize initiative, dominate, stabilize, and enable civil authority. *Joint Publication 3.0.*, Washington D.C., 17 September 2006, (accessed September 1, 2010); available from [http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3\\_0.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_0.pdf)

not sequentially.<sup>336</sup> As the military strategist and former U.S. Army Colonel Joseph Collins observes, a strict demarcation between phases of conflict and jobs to be done is complex in irregular war. He notes “in [Afghanistan], conventional war A was followed immediately by unconventional war B. In turn, war B, was complicated by the need to conduct simultaneous stabilization and reconstruction activities.”<sup>337</sup>

In other words, the United States was challenged by two difficult transitions. The first transition was the shift from regular to irregular combat operations. The second transition was from regular combat operations to a stabilization operation. These transitions marked a nearly insurmountable challenge in that, of the three types of operations, the U.S. military was only well-prepared for one of them—regular combat.

A second problem with the stabilization of Afghanistan was that U.S. forces were not well-prepared to engage in the mission. Pre 9/11, American soldiers primarily trained and prepared for traditional combat. The U.S. military established doctrine and resourced their fleets and regiments to fight another state’s military. As a result the combat portion of Operation Enduring Freedom was deemed a quick and complete success. When faced with stabilization, however, regular U.S. forces were unprepared and, even, slightly uninterested. Reminiscent of Weigley’s argument and the strong preference for major combat, stability operations were primarily understood as an operational phase which commenced after combat—a job to do once security was guaranteed, and a job to be done by some agency other than the U.S. military.

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<sup>336</sup> Conrad Crane suggests that a better term for “the stabilization phase” is the transition phase, because it declines to refer to the phases occurring sequentially. Conrad Crane, “Phase IV operations: where wars are really won” *Military Review*, May/June 2005, (accessed March 13, 2008); available from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0PBZ/is\\_3\\_85/ai\\_n14695885](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0PBZ/is_3_85/ai_n14695885)

<sup>337</sup> Joseph Collins, “The Perils of Planning: Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq,” in *The Interagency and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Roles*, eds Joseph Cerami and Jay Boggs, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006.)

Despite immediate success in the kinetic operation, nearly a decade later, the U.S. still cannot claim a solid victory.<sup>338</sup> The problems in stabilization were due to both planning and perceptions—without a solid plan on how to perform the mission, soldiers struggled to take on this new role. In the next part of this section, I examine what happened and how it could have been improved.

*Stabilization: An Uneasy Transition, A Difficult Operation*

*Peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers, but only a soldier can do it.*<sup>339</sup>

--Dag Hammerskold

In stating the initial goals of the war in Afghanistan in 2001, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld argued that in addition to toppling the Taliban and routing Al Qaeda, U.S. military forces would assist in alleviating the internal Afghan humanitarian crisis and societal disorder.<sup>340</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that despite this declaration,<sup>341</sup> the war plans offered scanty guidance for stabilization.<sup>342</sup> As laid out in chapter two of this dissertation, I argue that four main

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<sup>338</sup> Later addressed in this paper is an explanation of what I mean by legitimate political authority in Afghanistan. I consider a workable relationship with neighboring Pakistan as a key part of the solution.

<sup>339</sup> Dag Hammerskold, quoted in “Peace Operations,” FM 100-23 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 1994,) 1.

<sup>340</sup> In the early days of the Afghan operation, scholars disagreed whether humanitarian assistance and democracy promotion was a driving factor in the Bush Administration’s decision to launch Enduring Freedom. Thomas Carothers argued that humanitarian relief was not a chief concern of the Bush administration, citing evidence that American foreign policy makers cooperate with authoritarian regimes and ignore human rights violations when convenient. Paula Dobriansky, Assistant Secretary of State, disputed Carothers’ claim, referencing the 2002 NSS’s defense of democracy as one of its main goals. Thomas Carothers, “Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror,” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 1, January/February 2003. Paula Dobriansky, “Democracy Promotion: Explaining the Bush Administration’s Position,” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 3, May/June 2003.

<sup>341</sup> At an NSC meeting just days before the war began, Bush asked who would run the country after the Taliban fell. According to Bob Woodward, no one, including National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, had an answer. Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002,) 195.

<sup>342</sup> Although the war plan neglected reconstruction as an integral part of the operation, the State Department did form Political Military Action Teams (PMAT) in DoS’s Bureaus of Political Military Affairs. The PMAT’s responsibility was to act as a 24-hour per day, seven-day per week point of contact for operations related to the Global War On Terrorism...[with] the Department of Defense (including the Joint Chiefs of Staff), the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Combatant Commands on U.S. diplomatic activities in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Although most of the assigned responsibility places PMAT’s and DoS in a supportive role to DoD, they were charged with some humanitarian functions, such as justice and reconciliation, which presage the importance of

factors are integral to any successful stabilization mission; they include: legitimacy of the intervening force, establishment of a political-military operation, unity of effort, utilization of strategic intelligence. In this next section, I examine the stabilization of Afghanistan in light of these four factors.

The United States struggled to be perceived as a legitimate intervening force from nearly the outset of the operation. Much of the problem with legitimacy was related to the U.S. decision to closely partner with northern Afghan resistance fighters.<sup>343</sup> Called the Northern Alliance, this Afghan force was mainly composed of ethnic Tajik and Uzbek fighters, who distinguished themselves from the Pashtus living in the south. Because the Pashtus dominating the Taliban government had ill-treated northern Afghans throughout the period of their rule, the northern peoples were eager to play a key in establishment of the new government that would favor their own tribesmen.<sup>344</sup> Furthermore, because Northern Alliance fighters were present in large numbers when Kabul collapsed, they quickly emerged in positions of leadership in the newly recreated Afghan state. Unsurprisingly, many of the continued troubles associated with the President Karzai's legitimacy grew from these perceptions at the outset of the operation.

Another problem complicating the stabilization mission was ensuring unity of effort. Although NATO had offered combat assistance to the U.S. in Operation Enduring Freedom, the United States rejected these NATO offers, preferring to act with complete autonomy in combat, including operational decision-making and intelligence dissemination. Simply put, U.S. policy makers demanded that Washington—not Brussels—lead in combat. As the war progressed and

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the then forthcoming stabilization mission. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political Military Affairs, (accessed 11 March, 2008); available from <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/iso/c7959.htm>

<sup>343</sup> The author acknowledges the U.S. military's need to develop a relationship with the resistance, but because it was predominantly done as a way to limit U.S. exposure it ultimately caused problems in stabilization.

<sup>344</sup> Milan Vaishnav, "Afghanistan: the Chimera of the Light Footprint" in *Winning the Peace: An American Strategy for Post-Conflict*, ed. Robert Orr (Washington D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004,) 249.

kinetic operations drew to a close, however, Washington policy makers gradually shifted their position and ultimately agreed to incorporate NATO into its operation.<sup>345</sup>

In August of 2003, the U.S. agreed to a UN-established and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) “to support the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) in providing and maintaining a secure environment in order to facilitate the re-building of Afghanistan.”<sup>346</sup> The shift in the American position grew largely from a desire to expand resources committed to the operation, and as the U.S. military resources were increasingly being drawn to Iraq, NATO was clearly viewed as a way of enlarging a western footprint in Afghanistan. Despite the need for NATO as a force multiplier and the important contributions it has made, the implementation of an ISAF-led operation was not entirely smooth.

ISAF is led by U.S. Commanders, initially General James Jones and now General David Petraeus, and is responsible for forces from 30 different states. The major challenge for ISAF is the incorporation of varying leadership styles and training programs to ensure smooth functioning across the operation and among all forces.<sup>347</sup> For the first several years, ISAF struggled considerably to achieve operational effectiveness in its bid to stabilize Afghanistan.<sup>348</sup> One of its most important contribution has been the establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT’s).

PRT’s exemplify a new approach to traditional peacekeeping and serve as a “cross between military-led stability operations and civilian led-reconstruction activities,”<sup>349</sup> in that

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<sup>345</sup> Robert Perito, “The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified,” *The United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report No. 15 (October 2005.)

<sup>346</sup>NATO, International security Assistance Force, (accessed March 13, 2008); available from [http://www.afnorth.nato.int/ISAF/mission/mission\\_role.htm](http://www.afnorth.nato.int/ISAF/mission/mission_role.htm)

<sup>347</sup> Ibid

<sup>348</sup> Tomas Valasek, “The Fight against Terrorism: Where's NATO?” *World Policy Journal* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2001.)

<sup>349</sup> Michael McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRT’s a Model or a Muddle?” *Parameters* 35, No. 4 (Winter 2005.)

PRT's take responsibility for security, public safety issues, and infrastructure rebuilding. The

PRT Handbook describes PRT's as

...A civil-military institution that is able to penetrate the most unstable and insecure areas because of its military component and is able to stabilize these areas because of the capabilities brought by its diplomacy, defense and development components.<sup>350</sup>

Envisioned as a method for spreading the "ISAF-effect," PRT's found their origin in "Coalition Humanitarian Liaison cells,"<sup>351</sup> which were staffed by U.S. Army civil affairs specialists who specialized in performing traditional peacekeeping functions.<sup>352</sup> Gardez was the site of the first PRT in Afghanistan, followed soon after by PRT's in Bamian, Konduz, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, and Herat. As of June 2009, twenty six PRT's operate in Afghanistan; twelve led by a U.S. commander and 14 under the leadership of a NATO ally.<sup>353</sup>

PRT's have emerged as an important tool in the stability mission, as they ensure that the stabilization operation functions as a political military operation, assisting both ISAF and the government of Afghanistan.<sup>354</sup> "PRT's make a difference... In Khost an aggressive [PRT-sponsored] project-blitz corresponded with fewer attacks and ...real partnership between the

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<sup>350</sup> *International Security Assistance Force Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2007.

<sup>351</sup> In October of 2001, in some of the earliest deployments of Operation Enduring Freedom, Civil Affairs Units were dropped alongside fighting forces to distribute water, food and clothing. They were nicknamed "chiclets." William Durch, *Twenty-first Century Peace Operations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2006,) 495.

<sup>352</sup> U.S. Army originally used the term Joint Regional Teams (JRT) to describe PRT's. President Karzai requested that teams be renamed PRT's to denote their primary reconstruction function. Sean Maloney, "Afghanistan four years on: an Assessment." *Parameters* 35, no.3 (Autumn 2005.)

<sup>353</sup> "Fact Sheet: helping Afghanistan Achieve Sustainable Progress," *PRTs Providing Security, Democratic Governance, Economic And Reconstruction Assistance To Local And Provincial Governments Across Afghanistan*," White House Office of the Press Secretary, March 13, 2008, (accessed March 19, 2008); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/03/20080313-4.html>

<sup>354</sup> American PRT's typically comprise 60-100 personnel from military and civilian communities. Roughly half of the military personnel assigned to PRT's specialize in force protection, while the remaining soldiers are drawn from the civil affairs, engineering, intelligence, and supply communities. The USG civilian personnel assigned to PRT's generally include representatives from Department of State, USAID and USDA. There is usually an Afghan representative from the Ministry of Interior. "USG Provincial Planning and Operations" briefing to PRT Commanders. Fort Bragg, NC. December 9, 2007.

tribes and government... In Ghazni, PRT projects appear to have helped counter rising violence... reduc[ed] corruption and improve[ed] public health capacity through governance. ... no other organization can fill the PRT's shoes."<sup>355</sup> This robust combination of security enforcement with reconstruction achieves legitimacy with local peoples, who gradually begin to view military forces with less skepticism and greater trust. At the same time, local people accumulate an increasing sense of ownership ranging from individual rebuilding projects to good governance. In this way, PRT's support the stabilization mission, as a way of creating a political-military operation—which wins the U.S. more credibility in the eyes of the indigenous Afghan people.

PRT's, however, face several problems that hamper their ability to function effectively—creating challenges for the longterm stabilization of Afghanistan and overall success of the political-military element of the operation. In particular, the interagency nature of the team creates an uneasy relationship between civilian and military members, who come from decidedly different organizational backgrounds. PRT commanders face a constant challenge in the establishing positive relationships between the military and civilian team components. A major problem in the civil-military relationship flows largely from a belief on the part of many in the humanitarian community that the military should not engage in development and relief work. Non-governmental humanitarian agencies (NGHA) cite several reasons for their objection to the military's involvement in such efforts. First, military professionals acting in a relief capacity

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<sup>355</sup>In this study conducted over a four month period in 2007 and 2008, the authors engaged in field research with military and civilian members of PRT's, ISAF personnel and leaders in the Afghan government. Although their findings do not definitively show that PRT's have definitely reduced violence in its surrounding area, areas with PRT's do not exhibit escalating violence. The authors argue that no other organization can "fill PRT's shoes" because they operate in many areas deemed too dangerous by NGO's and they have mechanisms for ensuring fair bidding, contract enforcement and quality control—all difficult to achieve and integral to any successful COIN mission. Carter Malkasian and Gerald Meyerle, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How do we Know they Work?" *The Letort Papers Series* (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, March 2009,) 33.

creates confusion among local populations who perceive all relief workers as subordinate to military authority and responsible for problems in both development and security.<sup>356</sup>

In addition, the humanitarian community is skeptical of the military's motivation for acting in "humanitarian space." Principally, this is an issue of ideology, as the humanitarian community typically perceives itself as altruistic and neutral, and views the military as fundamentally driven by a desire to achieve national security objectives. Aid, according to the humanitarian community, is best provided with "no strings attached,"<sup>357</sup> thus the military should limit its role in humanitarian-oriented tasks. The humanitarian community's deeply embedded concerns about the military acting in a relief capacity presents a significant challenge to the effectiveness of PRT's, as these unnatural partners by fiat have distinctly different views of their own roles and roles of the other.

Civilian agencies designated to assist with PRT's are severely underfunded and under-resourced, which hampers their ability to assign personnel and serve as part of the team. Often the civilian members of the PRT, designated as State, USAID and USDA representatives, arrive in-country with little-to-no training and limited familiarity with military procedures, structure or protocol. Worse, these civilian positions frequently go vacant because the host agency lacks sufficient personnel for proper staffing. In one case recounted by the Department of State (DOS) representative to the PRT in Herat, the USDA representative was never assigned. As a result, the DOS representative wore two hats for the duration of the tour, reducing his effectiveness in

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<sup>356</sup> For example, Médecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) withdrew after 24 years of service in Afghanistan. Although MSF's withdrawal was immediately precipitated by the shooting deaths of 5 of its employees, the relief agency argued that the presence of PRT's unsettled the local population, which drove them to violence. Therefore, according to the MSF, the PRT's existence in Afghanistan was the driving factor in placing their staff at risk. Mark Sedra, *Policy Research Division of Foreign Affairs*, Canada, (accessed March 19, 2008); available from [http://www.asiapacificresearch.ca/caprn/afghan\\_project/m\\_sedra.pdf](http://www.asiapacificresearch.ca/caprn/afghan_project/m_sedra.pdf)

<sup>357</sup> Robert Borders, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: A Model for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development," *Journal of Development and Social Transformation* 1, November 2004, (accessed March 21, 2008); available from <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/moynihan/programs/dev/pdfs/borders1.pdf>

either capacity.<sup>358</sup> Moreover, the unfilled civilian positions create a more military-centric team that risks misunderstanding issues that development and relief experts would more easily solve. One of the major benefits of PRT's is that they support the notion that stabilization must be a political-military operation—therefore the civilian/military balance on the team has larger ramifications than just team understaffing.

The final problem in the stabilization of Afghanistan is the ability to effectively use strategic intelligence—particularly with regard to its neighbor, Pakistan. When the U.S. military achieved its combat victory in December of 2001, the Taliban did not disband. They relocated. Taliban members found sanctuary with sympathizers in living the Federally Administered Territories (FATA) in Pakistan. Those living in this area along the 1500 mile Afghan border are primarily Pashtun, and they support resistance movements against the U.S.-backed Karzai government. In 2006, General James Jones, then-Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that it was "generally accepted" that the Taliban was headquartered in Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's Baluchistan Province.<sup>359</sup> While the U.S. had intelligence to indicate insurgent movements and headquarters, it struggled to act on this information in an effective way.

U.S. difficulties in evaluating Pakistan's role in the Afghan insurgency emanated from an incomplete understanding of the power of sanctuary.<sup>360</sup> A 2001 RAND Study on external

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<sup>358</sup> Carlos Hernandorena, "U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan, 2003-2006: Obstacles to Interagency Cooperation," in *The Interagency and Counterinsurgency warfare: Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Roles*, eds Joseph Cerami and Jay Boggs ( Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006.)

<sup>359</sup> Peter Bergen, "Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs," February, 15, 2007, (accessed March, 20, 2008); available from <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/ber021507.htm>

<sup>360</sup>The authors define a hierarchy of ungoverned territories in terms of the threat these territories present: (1) ungoverned territories that harbor Al-Qaeda and other Jihadist terrorists; (2) areas containing terrorists, insurgents, or criminal organizations; and (3) areas that produce humanitarian crises. After defining the characteristics of ungoverned territories, the authors argue that the likelihood a territory will be exploited by terrorists is shaped by two factors—conduciveness and ungovernability. Angel Rabasa and John E. Peters, "Understanding Lack of Governance" and "Dimensions of Ungovernability" in *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2007,) 1-19.

support for insurgencies identifies safe haven and safe transit as a “critical form of support for insurgencies.” This extra-territorial space—or sanctuary provides a place where insurgents can “rest, relax and recuperate.”<sup>361</sup> The Northwest Frontier Provinces (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are only nominally controlled by Pakistan’s central government in Islamabad. Geographically, the area is distant from the capital and houses a concentration of Pashtu people, many of whom align with Pashtus in neighboring Afghanistan. The de facto authority in the NWFP and FATA is the Pakistan Taliban.<sup>362</sup> They have assumed economic and political control of the region.

According to Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Head of the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism research in Singapore, “FATA has become a sanctuary for research and development in explosives, training and directing global operations... As long as FATA is a sanctuary the incessant attacks against coalition forces in Afghanistan will not stop.”<sup>363</sup> Human Rights Watch reports that as many as thirty trucks cross from Pakistan each day carrying ammunition, fuel, rocket-propelled grenades, and artillery shells.<sup>364</sup> While it is unclear whether Pakistan does not—or simply cannot control Pakistan’s northwest regions, it is clear that support for the Taliban and al-Qaeda is largely Pakistani-financed and supported. As such, the United States must improve its understanding of Pakistan’s role in support of the insurgency and the

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<sup>361</sup>Daniel Byman, Peter, Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau and David Brannon. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica; RAND, 2001.) For a historical account of the effect of powerful states on insurgencies, see Jeffrey Record, “External Assistance: Enabler of Insurgent Success,” *Parameters* 36 (Autumn 2006.)

<sup>362</sup>Graham Allison and John Deutch, “The Real Afghan Issue is Pakistan,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2009.

<sup>363</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, “Al Qaeda: The Sanctuary of the Pakistan Afghan Border,” *The Intel File: Insight and Experience from Special Operations Officers in the Field*, 2008, (accessed March 21, 2008); available from [http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:VBFQRn8I7TMJ:events.fcw.com/events/2008/GLR/downloads/GLR08\\_T1\\_GUNARATNA\\_THE%2520TERRORIST%2520SANCTUARY%2520OF%2520THE%2520AFGHAN-PAKISTAN%2520BORDER.pdf+al+qaedastan+gunaratna+intel+file&hl=en&ct=cInk&cd=1&gl=us](http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:VBFQRn8I7TMJ:events.fcw.com/events/2008/GLR/downloads/GLR08_T1_GUNARATNA_THE%2520TERRORIST%2520SANCTUARY%2520OF%2520THE%2520AFGHAN-PAKISTAN%2520BORDER.pdf+al+qaedastan+gunaratna+intel+file&hl=en&ct=cInk&cd=1&gl=us)

<sup>364</sup>“Afghanistan Crisis of Impunity: The Role of Pakistan, Russia, and Iran in Fueling the Civil War,” *Human Rights Watch* 13, no. 3, July 2001, (accessed March 20, 2008); available from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/afghan2/index.htm#TopOfPage>

control that Islamabad can wield over those living in the FATA region. The effective use of strategic intelligence is a key factor in achievement of this goal.

As laid out in chapter 2 of this dissertation, a stabilization mission's effectiveness is dependent on four key factors; and in the case of Afghanistan, the U.S. struggled in each one. First, stabilization is most likely to succeed when the intervening force is seen as legitimate by the indigenous peoples. American partnership with the northern Alliance during combat and U.S. support of Hamid Karzai whose popularity is waning have both weakened U.S. legitimacy. Second, a stabilization effort must enjoy unity of effort among its contributors. Since ISAF's assumption of leadership, the operation has suffered problems with both coordination and control. Third, stabilization must be designed as political-military operation. While the U.S. and its NATO partners have improved the operation in terms of its PRT component, much remains to be done in this area. Finally, stabilization succeeds when the intervening force effectively uses strategic intelligence. This is especially important in terms of U.S. understanding of Pakistan's role in the region—and has been one of the most difficult components of the operation. The next section of this paper takes each one of these problems in Afghan stabilization and offers guidance on how to move forward productively in each area.

## **THE WAY FORWARD: ACHIEVING SUCCESS**

*Of course, we want to promote human dignity and democracy in the world, to help people raise themselves from poverty, and to transform the inadequate system of global public health. We are pursuing these goals right now... And make no mistake, these are the central goals of American policy in the twenty-first century. We fight terrorism because we must, but we seek a better world because we can -- because it is our desire, and our destiny, to do so. This is why we commit ourselves to democracy, development, global public health, and human rights, as well as to the prerequisite of a solid structure for global peace. These*

*are not high- sounding decorations for our interests. They are our interests, the purposes our power serves.*<sup>365</sup>

– *Secretary of State Colin Powell*

Operation Enduring Freedom was a resounding combat success. The United States achieved its military goals quickly and thoroughly, but success in the stabilization mission remains a tremendous challenge. Insurgent activity persists in Afghanistan, and the Karzai government remains fragile. For the United States to achieve its national security objectives in Afghanistan and ultimately “win the peace,” it must focus on three factors. First, American policy makers must enact policies which recognize the inherent link between Afghan stability and U.S. national security. Second, the U.S. military must fully accept responsibility for the Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR)<sup>366</sup> mission and effectively perform in this mission set. And, finally, the U.S. must develop a tailored plan for the stabilization of Afghanistan, which is realistic in terms of the particular regional challenges and the achievement of long term goals. The final section of this paper will address each of these issues as a catalyst for the way forward in Afghanistan.

First, American policy makers must perceive that the stabilization of Afghanistan is inextricably linked to U.S. national security. A stable Afghanistan has a functioning government and a secure civil society, two factors which serve as key deterrents against terrorist or criminal forces viewing Afghanistan as a base of operations. Without a central government and basic control of Afghanistan’s mountains, deserts and plains, nefarious elements can move illegal goods, train terrorists, and support illicit activity. These same criminal elements, as became

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<sup>365</sup> Colin Powell, “A Strategy of Partnerships” *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 1 (January/February, 2004.)

<sup>366</sup>SSTR are defined “as a core mission that the U.S. Department of Defense should be ready to conduct and support.... [SSTR’s] are conducted to establish order and advance U.S. interests and values. The immediate goal is to provide the local populace with security, restore essential service and meet humanitarian needs.” *Military Support to Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Missions*, Defense Department Directive 3000.05, Washington, D.C. November 28, 2005, (accessed March 21, 2008); available from <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300005p.pdf>

tragically apparent on 9/11, have the ability to challenge U.S. national security and, in the case of Al Qaeda, attack the U.S. homeland. To achieve this goal the U.S. must effectively partner with indigenous peoples to improve their infrastructure, assist Afghanistan in the transition toward self-governance, and disable support for insurgent activity emanating from Pakistan.

The fuel for the Afghan insurgency streams from Pakistan. Despite American efforts to recognize Pakistan as a “major non-NATO ally” and to deliver \$5.4 billion dollars<sup>367</sup> in foreign aid, Pakistan<sup>368</sup> remains unable to control FATA and deny Taliban sanctuary.<sup>369</sup> Across the porous Afghan/Pakistan border flows people, weapons, and money. An inability to gain control of this constant movement ensures the constant resourcing of the Afghan insurgency effort. In this way, U.S. national security remains at risk, as the FATA harbors terrorists, illicit drugs and a powerful criminal element.<sup>370</sup> Failure to stem this flow sustains the Afghan insurgency and allows Al Qaeda to strengthen and grow.<sup>371</sup> To ensure U.S. national security, America must improve its ability manage the problem of Pakistan.

The Obama administration has expended effort in this direction. President Obama’s appointment of Richard Holbrooke as Special Ambassador to Central Asia is an indicator that the administration favors a comprehensive approach to regional problems. Furthermore, due to Holbrooke’s past record in complex conflict, his selection indicates a seriousness about solving

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<sup>367</sup> “Securing Stabilizing and Securing Pakistan’s Government,” *Government Accountability Office*, April 2008, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from [www.gao.gov/new.items/d09](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09)

<sup>368</sup> Of particular note, in the 1990’s, Pakistan was not included on the list of those states receiving aid, supporting the notion that 9/11 caused the U.S. to rethink aid to its newest allies in the War on Terror. Curt Turnoff and Larry Nowles, “U.S. Foreign Aid: An introductory overview of U.S. Programs and Policies.” *CRS Report*, Congressional Research Service. Washington, D.C. 2004, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/31987.pdf>

<sup>369</sup> Important to note here is that some U.S. military officials are skeptical that aid money is being spent appropriately in Pakistan. In other words, the money is intended to assist Islamabad in weakening the Taliban’s hold in its northwestern region, but many are concerned Pakistan has funneled this aid to its fight with India. See David Rohde, Carlotta Gall, Eric Schmitt and David Sanger, “U.S. Officials See Waste in Billions Sent to Pakistan,” *New York Times*, December 24, 2007, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/24/world/asia/24military.html>

<sup>370</sup> Daniel Markey, “A False Choice in Pakistan,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (July/August 2007.)

<sup>371</sup> Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, “From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (November/December 2008.)

problems in Central Asia. These changes offer promise to those who understand that the stabilization of Afghanistan depends upon larger Central Asian regional stability.

The second factor, which is integral to the achievement of U.S. goals, is that U.S. forces must be present in sufficient numbers, effectively stationed throughout Afghanistan and well-prepared to perform the stabilization mission. The additional troops sent by President Obama in early 2009 and then again mid-2010 were a solid first step. Shortly after his inauguration, President Obama announced the deployment of 17,000 troops to Afghanistan. Later that fall, he committed an additional 30,000 troops to the region. President Obama justified his decision in response to General McChrystal's report by arguing that Afghanistan warrants strategic attention and the additional troops will "meet urgent security needs."

On August 30, 2009, General Stanley McChrystal<sup>372</sup> delivering his "Commander's Initial Assessment" report to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, he called for a new strategy in Afghanistan—one that focuses on the link between security and the population. General McChrystal's report states that a successful operation in Afghanistan must be "credible to and sustainable by the Afghans. The new strategy must be properly resourced and executed through an integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency campaign that earns the support of the Afghan people and provides them with a secure environment."<sup>373</sup> He points out that the insurgents do

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<sup>372</sup>General McChrystal's recent resignation as Commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan has undoubtedly interfered with progress in Afghanistan campaign, as it drew unwanted attention to leadership problems in the Afghan operation. Although the Obama administration acted quickly to relieve General McChrystal and replace him with General Petraeus, this misstep complicated the already troubled stabilization mission. General David Petraeus assumed command of the Afghan operation on June 24, 2010. Michael Hastings, "The Runaway General," *Rolling Stone*, June 22, 2010, (accessed June 29, 2010); available from <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/17390/119236>

<sup>373</sup>The *Washington Post* received an early copy of the report excluding some classified enclosures, which was posted online. In his report, General McChrystal references President Obama's initial increase in US troops in Afghanistan as an acknowledgment by the Commander in Chief that more resources are needed. General Stanley McChrystal, "Commander's Initial Assessment," Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 30, 2009, 1-1, (accessed June 30, 2010); available from [http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment\\_Redacted\\_092109.pdf](http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf) See President Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on Afghanistan." February 17, 2009; (accessed June 30, 2010) from [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Statement-by-the-President-on-Afghanistan/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-by-the-President-on-Afghanistan/)

battle year-long—not just in the “fighting season.” Disgruntled Taliban forces continue to wage a sustained campaign of fear and intimidation, making ordinary Afghans worry about supporting a central authority in Kabul and reluctant to side with the United States.

The Afghan people generally oppose the return of the Taliban. They want a central government that protects them. As such, US forces must be present in sufficient numbers to develop a credible national Afghan authority, which staves off challenges by the Taliban and protects the people. The bottom line is that resources will not win the war—but under-resourcing could lose it.<sup>374</sup> U.S. policy makers must not lose sight of this critical goal—the longterm stabilization of the Afghan state.

In addition, these forces must be effectively deployed throughout Afghanistan. As the British learned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Soviets relearned one hundred years later, the stationing of foreign military forces in centralized locales, while neglecting the countryside endangers the stabilization effort. The United States must be careful to avoid the mistakes of their British and Soviet predecessors and rather spread its forces throughout the towns and villages in remote areas of Afghanistan. Proper deployment of these additional forces ensures that Afghans are, at best, aware of the positive contributions made by foreign forces, and at the least, unswayed by the insurgent element.

Finally, these forces must fully accept the relevance on their contribution in the stabilization effort—and be properly trained to effectively perform these operations. The good news is that the U.S. military is keenly aware of the need to accommodate these emergent mission requirements, and has redirected its efforts toward SSTR. Thus, military journals abound with discussions of counterinsurgency operations. The U.S. Army has established a special training division in Fort Bragg, NC to prepare forces for stabilization work. The 2007

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<sup>374</sup> McChrystal, 2-1.

release of the *Counterinsurgency Manual* details revealed the Army's dedication to improving its conduct of COIN.<sup>375</sup>

Despite these important first steps, no amount of writing or training for stabilization will accomplish the job. Indeed, this change in focus requires a "seismic culture shift" by U.S. forces, which is possible, but will likely to be slow as soldiers gradually relinquish their traditional preferences.<sup>376</sup> Those concerned, however, about the American military's willingness to depart from an American Way of War to one that recognizes the need for extended commitments and stabilization work should be heartened by the U.S. experience in the early days of the war in Afghanistan.

Commanding Officer of Combined Forces Afghanistan (CFC-A) from 2003-2005, General David Barno is often heralded as a visionary in the realm of stability operations. When asked why he thought CFC-A experienced such great success in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom, he cited the command's forward-thinking approach. His troops understood that "we own[ed] the whole thing."<sup>377</sup> He meant that CFC-A fully accepted responsibility for security problems, the presidential election, economic initiatives and humanitarian assistance. In other words, he embraced critical nexus between security and stabilization—and absolutely vital realization for troops on the ground.

The final recommendation related to America's progress in Afghanistan is the development of an effective stabilization operation, which addresses its unique challenges. As discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, effective stabilization missions are political

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<sup>375</sup> While the *Counterinsurgency Manual* has been heralded as a great success in policy circles and certainly represents America's first attempt to organize for counterinsurgency, some scholars of irregular war remain concerned that it neglects a focus on "understanding the enemy." Without a solid profile of the enemy armed group, it is difficult to prosecute an effective counterinsurgency. See Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, "Counterinsurgency, by the Book," *New York Times*, August, 7, 2006, (accessed June 30, 2010); available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/07/opinion/07shultz.html>.

<sup>376</sup> John Donnelly, "Small Wars, Big Changes," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, January 28, 2008.

<sup>377</sup> General David Barno, USA (Retired), Commanding Officer, Combined Forces Afghanistan, July 2003- July 2005, Interview with the author, February, 15, 2008.

military operations, wherein the intervening force is perceived as legitimate by the indigenous peoples—and those local people contribute to a larger unified effort toward operational success.

The best way for the U.S. to ensure its legitimacy is to make the stabilization of Afghanistan a joint partnership between U.S. and ANA forces. Creation of this joint partnership has not been an issue of willingness, but an issue of training, that is the proper and effective training of Afghan forces to assist in the security effort.<sup>378</sup> Development of an effective security force has been plagued with difficulty in terms of structure and substance. Due to the heavily factional nature at the Afghan Ministry of Defense, perceptions of favoritism are problematic among the senior ranks in the ANA. This inherent nepotism is exacerbated by the weak coordination among policy makers in Brussels, Washington and Kabul. As a result, the ANA suffers from confusion among its top officials, complicating its ability to make lasting and effective command decisions.

A related problem with the development of an effective security force is the issue of retention and recruitment. The NATO training mission (NTM) in Afghanistan has cited significant problems with trainee incompetence and drug use. Eighty percent of the candidates are illiterate.<sup>379</sup> Compounding these problems is the inherent danger associated with membership in the Afghan security forces—as many local soldiers become prime targets for the Taliban or Al Qaeda.

Efforts to empower and validate Afghan forces are crucial. While the proper training of these forces can be provided by NATO or US forces, their legitimacy is won internally.

President Karzai, with the help of ISAF, must depoliticize the military and ensure that

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<sup>378</sup>“A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army,” *International Crisis Group*, Asia Report # 190, May 12 2010, (accessed June 29, 2010); available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/190-a-force-in-fragments-reconstituting-the-afghan-national-army.aspx>

<sup>379</sup> Anthony Cordesman, “Afghan Security Forces: Shaping Host Country Forces as part of Armed Nation Building,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October, 30, 2009, (accessed online June 29, 2010); available from <http://csis.org/publication/afghan-national-security-forces-0>

factionalism does not lead to favoritism. In addition, President Karzai should institutionalize a national policy establishing proper use and conduct of the security forces.<sup>380</sup> In this way, President Karzai would reinvigorate his own legitimacy by clearly mandating civilian control of the military in Afghanistan. In sum, success in stabilization mission is only possible when the mission itself is perceived as legitimate. By solving problems associated with the preparedness and credibility of the Afghan national forces, the mission creeps forward on the path toward legitimacy.

Another factor in determining operational success is the assurance of a political-military mission. One of the key ways to achieve this goal in Afghanistan is through the effective use of PRT's. Their effectiveness, however, is dependent of sufficient funding. The 2009 Defense Authorization Bill recognized that:

Interagency coordination and cooperation is increasingly important, and the performance of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq has shown the benefits and the difficulties of interagency relationships. To ensure that PRTs are as effective as possible in supporting overall U.S. strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, the bill requires the President to develop and implement a system to measure the performance of U.S.-led PRTs. The bill also requires reports on PRT personnel recruitment and training, planning for future requirements, security for PRTs, and planning for future stability operations.<sup>381</sup>

In other words, senior DoD leadership, along with their partners at DoS must fully embrace the PRTs' purpose as a mechanism for bridging the gap between a clear-cut military operation and a humanitarian, development mission. The U.S. military is undoubtedly best-suited to lead this mission, because guaranteed security is critical to mission success.

Afghanistan cannot and will not recover if security remains in jeopardy. Jason Burke, U.S. Navy Captain and former Commanding Officer of the PRT in Ghazni from 2007-2008 makes the

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<sup>380</sup> "A Force in Fragments."

<sup>381</sup> "Fiscal Year 2009 Defense Authorization Bill," House Armed Services Committee, May 15, 2008, (accessed August 22, 2010); available from [http://armedservices.house.gov/apps/list/press/armedsvc\\_dem/skeltonpr051508.shtml](http://armedservices.house.gov/apps/list/press/armedsvc_dem/skeltonpr051508.shtml)

prescient observation that the “security and stabilization missions are intertwined... and the biggest risk [of failure for the operation] is complacency among our security forces.”<sup>382</sup> In other words, the humanitarian mission cannot succeed without requisite security; therefore the military must accept and be accepted as playing a critical role in the stabilization and reconstruction operation. Overall mission success depends on it.

Fortunately, American policy makers, and a growing number of military professionals, are taking note of the strategic value of PRT’s and have stepped up efforts to improve training and provide the proper resourcing that they deserve. The Bush administration had recognized their work as vital explaining that “the job at hand is to help these folks recover, help the Afghans realize there's a better future for them. And it's hard work, but it's necessary work for the security of our country.”<sup>383</sup>

Finally, an effective unified effort is a key factor in the stabilization of Afghanistan. A valuable example in illuminating this type of successful partnership occurred in Afghanistan between 2003-2005—with the joint leadership of General Barno, Commanding Officer of CFC-A and the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad. These leaders worked together to draft Afghanistan's constitution, run free and fair elections, and organize the first meeting of Afghanistan's parliament, the *Loya Jirga*. It is precisely this relationship, which General Barno nurtured and developed, that inspired trust among the locals and encouraged a solid working partnership among the various agencies of the U.S. government. In short, this solid partnership served as one of the key factors in creating a stable Afghanistan from 2003-2005. Unfortunately, however, the DoD/DoS partnership faded, as leaders changed out, ISAF stood up, and the

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<sup>382</sup>CAPT Jason Burke, United States Navy, Commanding Officer, Provincial Reconstruction Team, Ghazni, Afghanistan, November 2007- November 2008, Interview with the author, December 20, 2007.

<sup>383</sup>President George Bush, “Bush Remarks After Meeting Reconstruction Leaders on Afghanistan,” Washington, D.C. March, 13, 2008, (accessed June 30, 2010); available from <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/March/20080313164731eafas0.3802149.html>

situation on the ground shifted. Ultimately, strong relationships among military and civilian leaders are not guaranteed; rather they are largely based on the personalities of the individuals involved and require thoughtful consideration by the civilian and military decision-makers who assign these personnel.

Because a favorable mix of personalities is not always guaranteed, policy makers must institutionalize relationships between communities. One way to begin is at the highest levels of the government. The construction and implementation of a “Goldwater-Nichols-style,”<sup>384</sup> interagency policy reform, one which mandates a civil-military partnership and incorporates the two communities more effectively than the current ad hoc approach, provides one answer.<sup>385</sup>

The Center for Strategic and International Studies’ multi-year study to examine this issue presciently observed that “achieving greater unity of effort across [the U.S. government] requires institutionalizing standard ways of doing business, particularly in planning and conducting interagency operations.” In other words, the establishment of an institutionalized interagency approach will mandate partnerships between communities.<sup>386</sup> While volitional partnerships would obviously be most fruitful, instituted relationship will ensure consultation, which may

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<sup>384</sup> This moniker makes reference to the 1986 Goldwater Nichols Act which was created in the wake of the Grenada and Iranian Hostage Rescue Operation and meant to quell inter-service rivalry. It specifically mandated a partnership among all military service, creating a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who was responsible for all military forces. When using this term in reference to stabilization operations, it indicates a need for partnership among the interagency, for example a mandated relationship between DoD and DoS.

<sup>385</sup> One example of a successful approach to the melding of two communities is the recent establishment of AFRICOM. Although Department of Defense command, the formation of AFRICOM does not mean that “U.S. military will take a leading role in African security matters, nor will it establish large U.S. troop bases. Rather, AFRICOM is a headquarters staff whose mission [supports] African governments and existing regional organizations... to have greater capacity to provide security and respond in times of need.” AFRICOM includes representation from the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Agriculture and others. Although AFRICOM’s success has yet to be determined, this kind of construct—and example of partnership should serve as a model for a “beyond Goldwater Nichols” initiative and for reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. U.S. Africa Command, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp>

<sup>386</sup> Clark A. Murdock and Michèle A. Flourmoy et al., *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2005, 44, (accessed March 20, 2008); available from [www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn\\_ph2\\_report.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/bgn_ph2_report.pdf)

even develop into mutual respect.<sup>387</sup> The CSIS report's recommendations are encouraging, but most promising is that the CSIS study has generated Congressional-level interest, which has the potential to deliver results in the form of funding.

Ambassador James Locher responded to the CSIS call-for-action by establishing the Project for National security reform, which is meant to refocus policy makers' attention on the creation of an integrated national security strategy. As part of its work, this group has recommended an expanded definition of national security which includes non-traditional challenges, like terrorism and trans-state criminal networks. In addition, the group perceives that to properly address the problems and reconfigure the U.S. vision of national security, a whole of government approach where all affected agencies must play a role in analyzing and solving these issues.<sup>388</sup> Projects like these provide insightful ways of how to think about these new challenges—and how to address them.

In sum, success in Afghanistan rests on three basic factors. First, the United States must perceive the stabilization of Afghanistan as critical and related to U.S. national security. A stable Afghanistan is one that provides protection and promise for its people wards off infiltration across the Pakistan border. Second, U.S. and ISAF forces must be present in sufficient numbers, adequately trained and effectively stationed in Afghanistan to maximize the benefit they provide. And, finally, the stabilization operation must effectively address the unique challenges that Afghanistan presents, based on well-functioning PRT's and an effective joint effort among all participating NATO states.

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<sup>387</sup> Another agency highly active in forging an improved interagency relationship for stabilization operations is the Project on National Security Reform. Executive Director James Locher III recently released a comprehensive report calling for replacement of the 50 year old national security system. In addition, the report identifies overlaps in agency responsibilities and recommends streamlining these roles into an integrated system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "Forging a New Shield," *Project on National Security Reform*, (accessed August 12, 2010); available from <http://www.pnsr.org/data/files/pnsr%20forging%20a%20new%20shield.pdf>

<sup>388</sup> The Project on U.S. National Security Reform, (accessed online August 14, 2010); available from <http://pnsr.org/web/page/881/sectionid/578/pagelevel/2/interior.asp>

## CONCLUSION

Despite the United States' capacity to project power globally, ultimate success in irregular wars has proven elusive—particularly so in Afghanistan. This difficulty fundamentally emanates from three main problems in the U.S. approach. The U.S. must 1) Fundamentally reevaluate the significance of stabilization prior and perceive its value as related to U.S. national security objectives 2) Ensure that U.S forces understand and are prepared for SSTR as one of its key missions, 3) Devise operational plans that address the region's unique challenges.

U.S. policy makers have failed to perceive the U.S. national security threat caused by weak and failing states. If disorder is permitted to reign in Afghanistan and the FATA area remains uncontrolled, the United States risks vulnerability to a resurgent Al Qaeda and future attack. The U.S. military play a key role in quelling the violence, routing out the enemy and ensuring secure environment where terrorists cannot effectively operate.

Policy makers must ensure that U.S forces are properly prepared to take responsibility for this task. Evidence suggests that America is moving in the right direction. The U.S. Army has drafted the first Counterinsurgency Manual in sixty years. DoD uses language which places stabilization as one of its major responsibilities. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has charged General David Petraeus, as chair of the Brigadier General promotion board, to actively seek out U.S Army Colonels with a counterinsurgency specialty to promote to flag rank. Clearly, these are positive developments that indicate a shifting sense of responsibility among U.S. forces.

To ensure success on the ground, the U.S. must ensure the development of effective guidance for soldiers engaged in the fight. Most importantly stabilization plans must be tailored to address the unique challenges presented in the specific operation. To do this, U.S. policy

makers should take heed of Sun Tzu's timeless advice to "understand the otherness of others." By learning its history of Afghanistan and making careful plans to confront the enemy, the U.S. would fabulously improve its success in Afghanistan. By understanding the enemy, the U.S. would perceive the dangers associated with a fractioned and disorderly Afghan state, the problems with untrained soldiers fighting in an irregular context, and the importance of structuring a stabilization effort that works in Afghanistan. I now turn to the last case study chapter which examines the stabilization operation in Iraq in terms of these three factors and evaluates whether performance in the Afghan mission influenced the U.S. approach—as it prepared to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Assessing Operation Iraqi Freedom:*

#### *Fighting Small and Planning Big*

On May 1, 2003, President Bush stood aboard the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN and declared to the ship's crew—and to the world that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed. And now our coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that country.”<sup>389</sup> This famous statement marked the beginning of a now seven year mission to stabilize Iraq—a mission that struggled at the beginning but in the last three years, has achieved some noteworthy successes. The stabilization mission was especially challenged from 2004 to 2006; in those years, failure appeared to be a distinct possibility. In the last several years, however, violence has decreased, democratic governance appears to be taking hold, and Iraqi security forces have grown in number and ability. Based on this distinct shift in mission success that began in 2006, Iraq serves as a vitally important case study for this examination of irregular war—and offers critical lessons in each of the three major categories I address: rationale for war, perceptions of irregular war, and the design of a successful stabilization effort.

I argue that there are three main reasons for America's difficulty in the stabilization of Iraq. First, despite President Bush's clear statement of war goals on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the administration failed to fully define its long-term objectives in Iraq.<sup>390</sup> In early

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<sup>389</sup>George Bush, “Address by the President to the crew of the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN,” (accessed August 4, 2010); available from <http://www.c-span.org/executive/endiraqwar.asp>

<sup>390</sup>For a solid account of the U.S. rationale for war, see Paul R. Pillar, “Intelligence, Policy and the War in Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 1, (March/April 2006.)

2003, Americans were still reeling from the attacks on the World Trade Center. President Bush had promised to “win the war against terror” in his 9/11 speech.<sup>391</sup> The Iraq Survey Group had begun its work and had linked Saddam Hussein to an Al Qaeda network in Iraq.<sup>392</sup> The Bush administration stated that “its mission [was] clear, to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people.”<sup>393</sup> The administration had an effective plan for the military portion of the mission—the removal of WMD and Saddam Hussein—but lacked a clear process for the establishment of democratic governance. This chapter explores whether this oversight of the post-combat portion of the operation was due to a lack of planning or was related more closely to America’s misunderstanding of the region and the complexity in establishing a workable Iraqi democracy.

Second, America finds operations other than major combat to be challenging. Soldiers would rather fight other regular armies. Policy makers, faced with the prospect of war, prefer to fight the army of another state, because it is easier to fight a clearly identifiable enemy and negotiate with other governments. In Iraq, these preferences are demonstrated in the focus that policy makers and military strategists placed on constructing a brilliant plan for the combat operation without an equal level attention to the stabilization phase. As evidenced by the “mission accomplished” sign on ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the effective use of massive firepower to topple the Hussein regime was deemed commensurate with success. I argue that the general indifference toward non-combat operations and lack of existing doctrinal guidance for such

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<sup>391</sup> President Bush, “Address to the Nation,” September 11, 2001, (accessed August 4, 2010); available from <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>

<sup>392</sup>“Iraq Survey Group Final Report,” September 30, 2004, (accessed August 4, 2010); available from [http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/report/2004/isg-final-report/isg-final-report\\_vol1\\_rsi\\_key-findings.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/report/2004/isg-final-report/isg-final-report_vol1_rsi_key-findings.htm)

<sup>393</sup> George Bush, “President discusses the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom,” Washington D.C., March, 22, 2003, (accessed online July 19, 2010); available from <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030322.html>

operations, directly influenced the immediate disorder after the success in combat. This disorder ultimately caused the protracted instability in Iraq from 2003-2007. This chapter evaluates the extent to which the preference for major combat impacted mission performance.

The third causal factor for American difficulty in stabilization relates directly to its lack of understanding for its enemy. Absent this full understanding, the original operational plan for stabilization lacked many of the major components needing to be addressed after combat in a tribally-based society. Finally, in 2006 as Iraq spiraled out of control, the United States committed to changing its approach there. The first step was to create an effective plan for long-term stabilization, which necessarily required a greater understanding of the conflict itself. In other words, the United States had to learn who was fighting and why. As many scholars have noted the conflict in Iraq was not a single war—but in fact a mixture of four different wars. According to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, "one is Shi'a on Shi'a, principally in the south; the second is sectarian conflict, principally in Baghdad, but not solely; third is the insurgency; and fourth is al Qaida, and al Qaida is attacking, at times, all of those targets."<sup>394</sup> The best way to learn about these individual “wars” was to achieve a more thorough understanding of the enemy.

The next section of this chapter explores Iraq history to help illuminate how and why these four wars erupted in the wake of the toppling of Saddam’s government. I then analyze how these history lessons might have been applied in the Iraqi stabilization effort. I close the chapter by offering guidance on how the United States can improve future irregular war operations by understanding better its rationale for intervention, managing perceptions of stabilization

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<sup>394</sup> Secretary Gates’ comments are closely related to the analysis offered by security scholars in the 2006 debate over the long-term outcome for Iraq. For a specific example, see Larry Diamond, James Dobbins, Chaim Kaufman, and Stephen Biddle, “What to Do in Iraq: A Roundtable,” *Foreign Affairs* 85, no.4 (July-August 2006).

operations, and focusing on the construct of workable stabilization plans. I turn now to critical lessons of Iraqi history.

## **KNOWING YOUR ENEMY MEANS KNOWING HOW TO FIGHT**

*Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy, but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril.*

*Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

American policy makers made a major mistake in the Iraq War in their failure to understand the enemy. By ignoring Sun Tzu's timeless advice, the lessons of Iraq's past and its peoples of varied culture, language, and religion were lost. During the combat operation and subsequent removal of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi history did not seem particularly important, but within months of the military victory, the wisdom of Sun Tzu was increasingly evident. The ouster of Saddam Hussein created a newfound sense of liberation among Iraqi citizens and created a ripe environment for contending actors to assert their preferences. The key questions I seek to answer are why these groups chose violence against one another and why U.S. policy makers misunderstood an Iraqi history laden with the potential for inter-ethnic conflict? To illuminate these questions, this section presents a brief three part history of Iraq, which focuses particularly on the origin and strength of the Iraqi tribes—which is the source of tremendous difference among Iraqi peoples. For centuries, these differences have resulted in frequent tribal and religiously-based conflict—and this trajectory extends into the modern era with the current Iraq War.

*From Ancient Mesopotamia to the Birth of Islam- Setting the Stage for Conflict*

Since earliest recorded history, the area known as modern Iraq, has experienced turmoil and division among its settlers, as a mixture of peoples with varying cultures and traditions attempted to find their place in the cradle of civilization. As people gathered in the Fertile Crescent to avail themselves of the rich soil, proximity to the sea, and a landbridge to Northern Africa, they brought with them distinct languages and varying cultures.<sup>395</sup> The inherent differences among peoples of the region set the stage for conflict, as their naturally different approaches to daily subsistence, religion, and authority complicated basic societal issues, such as dispute resolution, trade, and governance.

Geography has also played a role in exacerbating tensions in Iraq. The fertile area in the region is bounded by the Tigris River on the north and Euphrates River in the south. Peoples from neighboring parts of the world were drawn to this forgiving, but small, area in search of arable land. Unlike the 19<sup>th</sup> century American experience of a constantly moving frontier which allowed distinct groups to disburse and settle with like peoples, newcomers to the Fertile Crescent were forced to live in close contact with different others. Thus, the extensive mix of cultures, coupled with geographical and geographical constraints, set the conditions for conflict—conditions that extend to present day.

The Ubaidians, according to archeologists, were the first settlers in Mesopotamia in 6000BC. They used a rudimentary system of ditches and dams to capitalize on the precious river waters to irrigate their crops.<sup>396</sup> The Sumerians were the next to arrive in the fertile crescent in roughly 3000 B.C. Their contributions to the progress of the human condition were vast and included advancements in writing, poetry, agriculture, and mathematics.<sup>397</sup> As Sumerian society

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<sup>395</sup> Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004,) 4.

<sup>396</sup> William Polk, *Understanding Iraq: The Whole Sweep of Iraqi History, from Genghis Khan's Mongols to the Ottoman Turks to the British Mandate to the American Occupation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005,) 21.

<sup>397</sup> Marr, 5.

improved and thrived, the population in the Fertile Crescent swelled. People created settlements and soon began grouping themselves in towns. Naturally, these close quarters among disparate peoples fomented early seeds of unrest and disharmony, as their customs included different approaches to governance and subsistence. Although these glimpses into the ancient civilizations populating Iraq are instructive, it is also true that the long-term impact of these original settlers is unclear.<sup>398</sup> Scholars conclusively point to the sixth century as one of the major seedbeds for Iraqi tribal conflict—with the introduction of Islam.

The Prophet Muhammad is believed to have been born in Mecca around 570 AD, and although details of his early life are scanty, it is known that he was a member of the powerful Quraysh tribe, who were active traders in the region, extending their influence to southern Arabia to northern Syria.<sup>399</sup> In the early years of Muhammad's life, he struggled to attract followers—primarily because the inhabitants of the Fertile Crescent had a deeply entrenched sense of loyalty to their tribe. In the sixth century, borders were essentially nonexistent and people dismissed the importance of centralized authority, preferring instead to associate and obey their kinship groups, clans and tribes.<sup>400</sup> Although Muhammad did eventually attract a fervent following, the observation regarding Muhammad's early struggles to develop a loyal base support is important—and supports the central idea in this work of the need to understand tribal mechanisms.

By 610AD, Muhammad had attracted a small group of followers who served as his primary base of support, but the majority of Mecca's citizens still rejected his teaching, adhering

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<sup>398</sup> Marr argues that although these early influences “are rooted into an Iraqi consciousness” and play some role in the development of modern Iraqi society. *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>399</sup> Albert Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge; The Belknap Press, 1991,) 14.

<sup>400</sup> Clan elders selected a *Shaykh* or chief to whom all allegiance was given. Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995,) 18.

instead to tribal mechanisms and tribal leaders.<sup>401</sup> Disheartened by his lack of acceptance among Mecca's elite, which were dominated by the powerful Quraysh tribe, Muhammad departed Mecca in 619AD for Medina. Medina, like Mecca was racked by clan warfare but, unlike Mecca, it was controlled by no single powerful clan. With no one to oppose him, Muhammad consolidated power, preached his revelations, and built a strong base of support in just over a decade. By the time of his death in 632, the Arabian Peninsula had almost universally adopted the teachings of Islam.<sup>402</sup>

Muhammad's death necessarily raised the question of succession. Muhammad's followers differed over who his successor should be and how the succession should occur. Ultimately, these divergent beliefs split Muslim peoples into two major groups of followers. The first group, later known as the Sunni sect, believed that Muhammad's successor should be selected among his most devout and capable disciples. Their opposition, termed Shia today, were loyalists of Ali and argued that the next leader of the Islamic faith should be a member of the Prophet's family. Although the Sunni "won" the first battle in that Muhammad's immediate successor was not a family member,<sup>403</sup> the dispute between the groups did not fade. On the contrary, the two groups broke into open warfare during the transition to the Fourth Caliphate, when Muhammad's cousin Ali emerged as leader. The Shia appeared to win this contested succession, as one of Muhammad's family emerged as leader of all Islam's faithful people. Sunni peoples, however, rejected the succession, making the Sunni-Shia split irreconcilable.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Muhammad reported to have experienced a series of revelations, which he argued were direct messages from Allah. The first of these revelations designated Muhammad as the Prophet or "Messenger of God" and those that followed formed the basis for the Koran. After several revelations, he announced their content to his tribesmen, who at first, acknowledged them with a limited degree of receptivity. Ibid. 28.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>403</sup> Abu Bakr, a close confidante, neighbor, and early convert to Islam, was appointed as Muhammad's first successor.

<sup>404</sup> On his deathbed, Muhammad proclaimed that "every Muslim is a Muslim's brother, and that the Muslims' are brethren and fighting between them should be avoided." Quite clearly, Muhammad's followers rejected his appeal through their intense dispute over the third caliph's successor. Albert Hourani, 25.

The most significant battles memorializing this split were fought in modern-day Iraq. In the 680AD Battle of Karbala, a Shiite army clashed with a fierce group of Umayyad forces, hailing from the south in modern-day Saudi Arabia. The Shia, loyal to Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, were roundly defeated.<sup>405</sup> Ali's son, Hussein, was killed in that battle. Among the Shiite sect, Karbala is a battle memorial that remains one of their holiest places—and helps preserve the violent legacy of contentious difference between the Sunni and Shiite Muslims. These sixth and seventh century differences among the Sunni and Shia peoples caused fundamental and irreparable chasms between sects which extend into modern day. Significant to this study, this sixth century split between Sunni and Shia represents the beginning of one of the “four wars” referenced by Secretary Gates in 2007. A careful study of Iraqi history by the United States prior to the start of the Iraq war would have highlighted the depth of this long-standing difference and could have served as a reliable predictor of the post-combat Iraqi state.

Following the turmoil of the seventh century, the Sunni Abbasid caliphate emerged dominant. Under its rule, Iraq enjoyed a period of relative calm and economic productivity, and Muslim peoples made tremendous advancements in mathematics, philosophy and science. Despite this marked human progress, Iraq's differences among its peoples persisted in Iraq—and trouble simmered slowly throughout the era. Discord among Iraqis, with varied languages, cultures and religious sects, marred the country's ability to fully capitalize on economic progress,<sup>406</sup> but the real crushing blow to the region came in the form of outside invasion.

When the Abbasid caliphate fell to the Mongol Hordes in 1258, the region collapsed into absolute turmoil. For the next three centuries, Iraq suffered through disorder and poverty. The advances of the ninth and tenth centuries were almost wholly lost. Iraqi irrigation systems, self-

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<sup>405</sup> Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004,) 201.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.* 202.

## Pavilonis- *Fighting Irregular Wars*

governance, and intellectual life were destroyed through Mongol attacks and neglect. With the advent of the sixteenth century, however, Iraq enjoyed resurgence in prosperity with the coming influence of the Ottoman Turks.

### *The Ottoman Conquest and Administration*

The Ottoman conquest of Iraq in 1514 brought renewed order to the unstable region.<sup>407</sup> The Ottomans reconstructed the dilapidated irrigation systems, established governance structures, and returned some of Iraq's former prosperity.<sup>408</sup> The Ottomans were able to extend these benefits to Iraq, because of the tremendous wealth and stability of their extensive empire. Eventually, however, as Ottoman power waned and wealth dwindled,<sup>409</sup> administration of Iraq became unmanageable for two main reasons. First, the Ottomans gravely miscalculated the significance of the underlying Sunni/Shia resentment, and second, they never achieved full legitimacy with the Iraqi people. As the United States will experience centuries later, these two factors played a tremendous role in the Ottomans ability to establish effective longterm governance over Iraq.

The Ottomans actually deepened the existing split between Sunni and Shia, through the policies established by Istanbul. The Ottomans began their reign by dividing the region into three provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, then appointed *Mamluk Pashas* as provincial governors.<sup>410</sup> These *Pashas*, who were neither Turkish nor Iraqi, created military caste systems to hierarchically organize each province. Resisting the influence of tribal affiliations and

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<sup>407</sup> Selim I, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1512-1520 is credited as nearly doubling the size of the Ottoman empire during his short reign. Selim's quest for territorial enlargement was spawned primarily by his concern for the expanding power of the Persian Safavid empire to the southeast, which ultimately led to his conquest of modern day Iraq and Iran. Marr, 6.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>409</sup> The Ottoman empire began its gradual decline as it faced enemies in Europe and abroad. It first lost to Austria in the late seventeenth century and later to Russia in the early eighteenth century. Lapidus, 48.

<sup>410</sup> The Ottoman empire created a military elite corps or *mamluk pashas*, who typically were taken as boys from Christian families in Georgia, inculcated in Ottoman culture, converted to Islam—and sent to rule Iraq. This structure was loosely modeled after the newly established European state system. Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000,) 8.

actively challenging the authority of local chiefs, the *Pashas* sought to centralize authority and diminish the power of Iraqi tribes. In addition, the *Pashas*, who owed allegiance to the Sunni-Ottoman state, favored local Sunnis,<sup>411</sup> giving them preference in government positions and economic benefits. Disgruntled Shias increasingly turned to their tribal chiefs for protection and advice, resisting the authority projected by the *Pashas*. The long-term result of Ottoman rule was a majority Shia population frustrated by the endemic elitism—and resentful of their Sunni countrymen.

Second, the Ottomans failed to establish long-term stable governance in Iraq because they were never perceived as legitimate by many Iraqi people—Shia or Sunni. They failed to do so for both internal and external reasons. While the disenfranchisement of the Shia Iraqis is fairly obvious, it is important to note that although the Ottomans clearly favored Sunni Iraqis, even they did not widely accept Ottoman rule. Indeed, despite their privileged status, the local Sunni never widely perceived the Ottomans as legitimate. Pockets of Sunni loyalists existed in city centers, but large numbers of Sunnis lived in remote areas. They experienced few of the benefits brought by Ottoman rule and therefore felt little, if any, allegiance to Istanbul. As the era of Ottoman rule persisted and empire waned, Istanbul's ability to offer assistance to Sunni Iraqis decreased.<sup>412</sup> Sunni Iraqis turned to their tribal sheikhs in greater numbers—and increasingly rejected Ottoman rule and central authority.

Simply put, the Ottoman Turks failed to maintain their control of Iraq due to their limited understanding of Iraqi society. They exacerbated the Sunni/Shia split by enacting preferential policies toward the Sunni, yet failed to legitimize their central rule because of a focus that was largely in Baghdad. By the time Istanbul understood the depth of disorder in its

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<sup>411</sup>Although Istanbul demanded loyalty from the Pashas, their allegiance varied province to province and governor to governor. Indeed, many offered little loyalty to the Ottomans, instead creating individual fiefdoms in the geographically remote parts of the Ottoman Empire. Ibid. 15.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, 17.

### *Pavilonis- Fighting Irregular Wars*

newly created “Ottoman provinces” and attempted correction, Iraqis were moving independently toward a release from the Ottoman grip. The Ottomans missed two key lessons impacting their effective governance in Iraq: they failed to understand the depth of the Shia/Sunni divide and miscalculated the importance of their own legitimacy as an outside force administering the Iraqi people. They attempted a sixteenth century “stabilization” of Iraq— in much the same way that the Americans did decades later. The Ottomans missed their opportunity to create and execute a political/military operation that recognized internal differences among Iraqi peoples and worked within the bounds of the tribal construct to establish effective governance. Ultimately, they were not perceived as legitimate by the Iraqis—a critically important lesson for the Americans in their 21<sup>st</sup> century bid to develop an effective stabilization plan.

### *The British Mandate and its Effects*

On the eve of World War I, the British, challenged by the Ottoman consolidation with the Central Powers, landed its Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces near Basra in 1914. By early 1918, all three of the former Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul had fallen to British forces. Later that same year, the Ottomans sued for peace in the November 1918 Armistice Agreement. The British established control over Iraq through indirect administration. They appointed Arabs to key leadership position, which afforded them the ability to dominate Iraqi foreign and economic policy while avoiding the hassle of daily management. Similar to the experience under the Ottomans, the indigenous peoples quickly came to perceive the British as interested only in Iraq’s oil revenue and at once, British legitimacy was in peril.

The initial resistance to British control culminated in the June 1920 revolt,<sup>413</sup> when local peoples publicly and forcefully aired their disagreement.<sup>414</sup> While the revolt's immediate consequences were unremarkable, the event is significant in that Iraq's Shia and Sunni came together to fight off the British. In other words, Iraqis were willing to set aside sectarianism to break free of foreign occupiers. This event is also significant because it highlights the difficulty in planning a stabilization operation—and predicting the response by indigenous peoples. In the case of the British intervention in the 1920's, the Iraqis joined together to expel them. In contrast, against the United States in 2003, Iraq society divided along sectarian lines and instead of a nationalized effort, Iraq became embroiled in four different wars under the backdrop of a larger war against a foreign invader.

Although the British denied any impact of the June 1920 revolt, historians dispute the claim. The uprising was costly in both blood and treasure and caused the British to reconsider their objectives in Iraq. Similar to the American experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the British were deeply concerned about regional stability, causing them to make several substantial administrative changes—most of which would endure the decade. Most importantly, the British made a wise choice in the appointment of King Faisal as the Iraqi monarch—as it served the interests of both Iraqis who were concerned with autonomy and the British who were focused on regional stability and their own prosperity. King Faisal was a brilliant choice because his selection boosted British legitimacy by ensuring a credible “Arab face” on state leadership.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> A farmer's refusal to pay a tax owed to London is often cited as the trigger event for the June 1920 revolt. While true, the seeds of discontent were widespread and not limited to this particular circumstance. The revolt was also fueled by two major events of the era. First, the Versailles Treaty with its idealistic nods toward “self-determination” served as a catalyst for Iraqi desires to be free of British rule. Second, the outcomes of the April 1920 San Remo conference institutionalized a British mandate over Iraq, which formally permitted the British to set up a ruling Council of State, giving primacy to the British for Iraqi affairs. Tripp, 41.

<sup>414</sup> Marr, 23.

<sup>415</sup> King Faisal is perhaps one of the most storied and famous of 20<sup>th</sup> century Arab leaders. A key figure in T.E. Lawrence's battle against the Ottomans, he garnered the trust of British leaders. For his part, King Faisal was a clever politician in that he balanced British desires against the trust of his own countrymen. In fact, King Faisal,

In addition to boosting its own legitimacy with the appointment of King Faisal, the British government made an insightful choice in enacting its Mandate as outlined in Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant.<sup>416</sup> The British Mandate entrusted the Iraqi state to its care using international law as the basis of indirect British rule. It required the Iraqi King's deference to the British on all matters influencing the fiscal policy, until Iraq's war debt was repaid.<sup>417</sup> The treaty, however, did not directly address the role of the tribal sheikh within this new governance structure, and as a result the British High Commissioners of the different provinces allowed tribal leaders varying levels of power and authority. As a result, Iraqis did not violently reject the British mandate, instead using the period as a time to reconnect with their tribesmen and fortify a sense of Iraqi consciousness. By the 1950's, this loose British control culminated in a bid for Iraqi independence.

The period of British mandate offers instructive lessons for any foreign stabilization presence in Iraq and directly addresses several of the main questions this dissertation explores. From the outset, the British were unclear of their long-term expectations for Iraq. They introduced military forces at Basra to fight off the Ottomans and create a buffer for British India. In combat, British forces performed well, but when faced with curious post-war problem of the disposition of the post-combat state, the British were challenged by not only how to rule, but also over whom and to what end.

As a result, the British adopted an indirect imperial approach for the administration of Iraq. Unlike the Ottomans who attempted to banish tribal affiliations and dissolve allegiance to

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despite his reported comfort among both tribesmen and townspeople, was never fully accepted. In some sense, King Faisal represented a compromise that was not overly offensive to those concerned. Tripp, 25.

<sup>416</sup>The League Covenant stated that "communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory." In other words, the professed intention was to return Iraq to a self-governing status as soon as it was capable. League of Nations Covenant, (accessed August 4, 2010); available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/leagcov.htm#art22>

<sup>417</sup> Marr, 26.

local sheikhs, the British chose to capitalize on the existing tribal relationships. Through the combination of King Faisal and tribal structures, the British aimed to “keep the monarchy [of King Faisal] stronger than any one tribe, but weaker than a coalition of tribes.”<sup>418</sup> In other words, the British perceived tribal authority figures and kinship ties as a way to both limit a consolidation of power at the national level and extend good order and discipline throughout the outlying regions. Due to this approach, the British achieved a moderate level of legitimacy with the Iraqi people—largely because their administration had an “Iraqi face.” In this way, the British “stabilization” of Iraq was a success.

What the British failed to understand, however, was the depth of Iraqi kinship arrangements and the tribal chief’s ability to muster control over their populace. As the tribal chiefs grew increasingly frustrated with British rule, they had tremendous influence over their tribal members and spurred a sense of nationalism among the Iraqi people.<sup>419</sup> As a result, it was the British failure to understand Iraqi tribalism that essentially led to its loss of control. Indeed, the inherent tension within Iraq between tribal loyalty and nationalist sentiment was a main factor in Iraq’s instability in the early years of its statehood. Despite this erratic beginning, Iraq was admitted as a member of the League of Nations in 1932.

One of Iraq’s earliest challenges as a new state was the July 14th Revolution of 1958, which foreshadowed some of the difficulties experienced in the American stabilization effort fifty years later. The Revolution’s organizers, Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdasalaam Arif were Iraqi army officers and members of the Free Officer’s Society.<sup>420</sup> They titled the event a “social revolution” to transform Iraq into a modern state. In actuality, the “revolution” was a military

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<sup>418</sup> Montgomery McFate, “The ‘Memory of War’: Tribes and the Legitimate use of Force in Iraq” in *Armed Groups; Studies in National Security, Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency* ed. Jeffrey Norwitz, (Newport; Naval War College Press, 2008,) 297.

<sup>419</sup> Toby Dodge, “The British Mandate in Iraq: 1914-1932,” *The Middle East*, Series 2, (accessed August 9, 2010); available from [http://www.gale.cengage.com/DigitalCollections/whitepapers/GML41507\\_TheBritishMandate.pdf](http://www.gale.cengage.com/DigitalCollections/whitepapers/GML41507_TheBritishMandate.pdf)

<sup>420</sup> The Free Officer’s Society was a resistance group who opposed the British presence and legacy in Iraq.

coup to depose the royal family, take charge of Iraq, and drive the existing government from power. The military forces encountered very little resistance from the King's Royal Guards as they entered Rihab palace. They executed the royal family, ending the reign of the Hashemite dynasty.<sup>421</sup> Qasim and Arif established themselves as rulers of Iraq, but almost immediately upon their takeover, dissent bubbled between the two men.

Two major factors dominated the struggle between Arif and Qasim; these issues which represented the endemic problems of 1960's Iraqi society—and are still recognizable today. They disagreed on both the construct of the Iraqi government and Iraq's relationship with other nations. Arif favored a Sunni-dominated government, which staunchly adhered to a military-style governance and barred dissent of any kind. In contrast, Qasim, born of a Sunni father and Shia mother, preferred a more representative government that tolerated the multi-facted Iraqi public. Qasim also believed in the social foundation to the July 14 Revolution, advocating changes to the standing of women, land ownership and oil rights.<sup>422</sup> Arif, in contrast favored strict adherence to traditional Islamic law and a government structure which housed authority in the hands of a powerful elite. These fundamental differences in approach regarding internal governance directly influenced the two leader's perceptions of Iraqi foreign relations.

The second major difficulty plaguing the newly established independent state of Iraq was its relationship with regional and world powers. Arif, a devoted Nasserite, was deeply dedicated to a sense Pan-Arabism, which inextricably bound Iraq to Egypt and a larger Arabic community.<sup>423</sup> Qasim, on the other hand, subscribed to a specialized brand of Iraqi nationalism,

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<sup>421</sup>The trigger event for the coup was a Lebanese revolt against the existing pro-Western regime. The Free Officers Society agitated for action, arguing the unrest could spread to Baghdad. John C. Campbell, "Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship," *Foreign Affairs*, 70, No.3 (Summer 1991.)

<sup>422</sup> Marr, 84.

<sup>423</sup> It is important to note here that there were two strands of pan-Arabism in 1958. The first, as noted above, was linked to the movement to establish a United Arabic Republic, which existed from 1958-1961, and included Egypt and Syria. Arif proposed Iraqi inclusion as the third member. The other Pan-Arab movement in Iraq was a group of

which advocated a united state free of sectarian boundaries and guaranteed equality for all.

Qasim's brand of liberalism agitated for liberal democratic institutions and major social reform.

His voice and those of his followers, however, were drowned out by the newly emergent Iraqi

Communist Party, which drew guidance and support from the Soviet Union.<sup>424</sup>

The two widely different responses to the July 14<sup>th</sup> Revolution are representative of the enduring problems in Iraqi society—and the difficulty faced by any foreign state attempting to stabilize Iraq. As outlined in chapter two of this dissertation, one of the key factors in constituting an effective stabilization is constructing a political-military effort that is reflective of the wider will of the indigenous people. Constructing such an operation in Iraq is difficult because the Iraqi people themselves share no single vision of an Iraqi state. As was evident during the British Mandate period and again during Iraq's move toward modernity in the 1960's, an inherent tension exists between tribal loyalty and nationalist dedication—which perennially exacerbates any attempt to construct an effective national government.

This tension is particularly illuminated during the revolutionary period in the 1960's, when Arif was devoted to Pan-Arabism, while Qasim saw Iraq as drawing strength from within Iraq's borders. Arif's followers were dedicated to the notion of territorial kinship and actively sought relationships with regional powers and the Soviet Union. Qasim, on the other hand, perceived Iraq's most encouraging future as emanating from within the state. In other words, Qasim believed that Iraq's future prosperity and stability hinged on its ability to achieve internal cohesion. Although Qasim's reign was short-lived, his ideas linking stability to the abolition of sectarian divide remains powerful today. It was this powerful notion of an Iraqi nationalism that

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devoted Sunnis who capitalized on the Pan-Arab sentiments to strengthen Sunni power within Iraq. This newly formed party found its origins in Syria and called themselves the Ba'athists. This group, of course later became the base of party support for Saddam Hussein's rise to power. Jankowski, James, "Egypt and Early Arab Nationalism" in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* Ed. Rashid Khalidi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990,) 244-45.

<sup>424</sup> Tripp, 158.

the United States found compelling and used as the basis for its stabilization effort—but the U.S. did not have a full sense of the degree to which it was shared among the Iraqi people.

### *The Rise of Saddam Hussein*

Saddam Hussein's reign in Iraq was marked by three major events: his takeover of the presidency, the war with Iran, and the First Persian Gulf war. His action and motivations in each one of these events offered clues as to how the United States should have prepared for the 2003 Iraq War, in terms of its rationale for intervention, need for post-combat stabilization, and the effective structuring of the operation. The United States learned some, but not all of the lessons this history offered.

Motivated by a strong sense of secular Pan-Arabism, Saddam Hussein<sup>425</sup> joined the Ba'athist party in 1958.<sup>426</sup> Three years later, Saddam joined the coup to overthrow Qasim and took over as Ba'athist party secretary—a position he held until 1968. Saddam participated in the 1968 bloodless coup, which resulted in Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr being named president and Saddam becoming his deputy. During this formative period, the development of Iraqi nationalism became Saddam's primary goal.

Despite his strong devotion to the notion of a unified Iraqi state and a distinctive Iraqi nationalism, Saddam never relinquished his own Tikriti ties. Quite to the contrary, Saddam's elite Republican Guard and all members of his inner circle were his Tikriti tribesmen. By the

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<sup>425</sup> Saddam Hussein was born in 1937 near Tikrit to a family of shepherders. At an early age, he went to live his uncle and future father-in-law who was a devout Sunni Muslim and veteran of the 1941 Anglo-Iraqi war. His uncle greatly influenced Saddam's perspectives on foreign intervention, nationalism and religion. Sandra MacKey, *The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 2003,) 207-209.

<sup>426</sup> The spirit of Ba'athism, and Arabic word meaning renaissance or rebirth, emerged in the 1940's in Syria. The Ba'ath party established in branches in Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan. In 1955, the Iraqi Ba'athist party officially split from the Damascus-based Syrian Ba'ath party due to differences in the intensity of devotion to stringent Pan-Arabism. A deep antagonism between the groups exists until present day. The Ba'athist Party consolidated power in Iraq in 1963. Saddam Hussein emerged as party strong man in 1968. Choueiri Youseff, *Arab Nationalism: A History: Nation and State in the Arab World* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000,) 167.

early 1980's, Tikriti dominance of government institutions became somewhat of an embarrassment to Saddam. To solve this problem, he mandated that everyone in Iraq drop their surname, which indicates birthplace.<sup>427</sup> Yet, Saddam's outward devotion to a unified Iraq is belied by his own personal distrust of anyone outside his Tikriti tribe. It is this contradiction that confounds the American effort to construct an effective stabilization operation. At the outset of the 2003 war, America assumed that the ouster of Saddam Hussein would naturally and eventually result in a unified democratic government in Baghdad—but the Americans failed to know their history and know their enemy at a sufficient level of depth. As this last section of this chapter has shown, the unification of Iraq could never be simple or easy.

By the time Saddam Hussein became president in 1979, the Ba'ath Party had achieved many of its nationalist goals. It had quelled Shia unrest in the south, quieted a mid-1970's Kurdish insurrection in the north, and exploited advantages resulting from Iraq's oil wealth. In short, as the decade closed, a stable Iraq under strict control by the Ba'ath Party and Saddam Hussein's Iraq emerged as a regional powerhouse—challenged only by Iran.

In late 1979, border skirmishes developed in the areas separating Iran and Iraq. Although Saddam publicly interpreted these clashes as direct attacks by Tehran, in actuality they were likely the manifestation of tribal groups along the border working through their differences. Nonetheless, Saddam used these incidents to justify a full scale invasion of Iran, which he reasoned would be won easily by the Iraqi National Guard. Saddam's troops were reputed to be the best trained and some of the fiercest fighters in the Middle East. In addition, Saddam

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<sup>427</sup>James Sluggett a member of the British-based Committee against Repression and for Democratic rights (CARDRI) in Iraq argues that Saddam was both embarrassed of his provincial origins and determined to be perceived as the embodiment of Iraqi unity. He argues that "Western journalists say that Saddam Hussein is a Tikriti. I say to them with pity: Saddam Hussein was born in a village in the southern part of Tikrit province; Tikrit province is part of the the Muhafaza of Salah al-Din but he is an Iraqi....he is a son of the province of Arbil, of Sulaimania,... of Anbar, of the Tigris and Euprates, and of Jordan, the Nile, and of Damascus, Amman Cairo and Casablanca, and a son of the Iraqi people, of the Iraqi soil and of the Iraqi air and of the Arab homeland and of the Arab nation." Efraim Karsh and Inari Tautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991,) 183.

calculated that Iran's internal revolution had rendered it incapable of fighting. Perhaps, most importantly, Saddam understood that the break in U.S.-Iranian relations cut off a vital supply line for its enemy.<sup>428</sup>

Despite a massive drain on its resources, Iraq emerged the nominal winner of its conflict with Iran. In addition, Iraq perceived a budding relationship with the United States, who had assisted them throughout the war. Presidential Decision Directive 26 entitled "U.S. Policy toward the Persian Gulf" and issued in 1989 stated that:

Access to Persian Gulf oil and the security of key friendly states in the area are vital to U.S. national security. The United States remains committed to defend its vital interest in the region if necessary and appropriate through the use of U.S. military force, against the Soviet Union or any other regional powerhouse with interests inimical to our own. The United States also remains committed to support the individual and collective self-defense of friendly countries in the area to enable them to play a more active role in their own defense and thereby reduce the necessity for unilateral U.S. military intervention. ... Normal relations between the U.S. and Iraq would serve our long-term interests and promote stability in both the Gulf and the Middle East. The U.S. government should propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior and increase our influence with Iraq.... We should pursue and seek to facilitate opportunities for U.S. firms to participate in the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy...<sup>429</sup>

PDD 26 reveals the U.S. perception of Iraq as a foil to Iran—and Iraq interpreted this U.S. position as a degree of freedom to cement its position as the regional hegemon.<sup>430</sup> In the twenty years preceding the start of the 2003 Iraq War, the United States had already revealed some of its indecisiveness and vacillation in dealing with an increasingly powerful Iraqi state.

In August of 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait—in part because it had to fund its decade-long war with Iran, but also because it had no real expectation of a military reaction by the United States. Iraq publicly justified its invasion arguing that Kuwait was originally part of the

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid. 233.

<sup>429</sup> Presidential Decision Directive 26, "The U.S. Policy toward the Persian Gulf," 1989, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd26.pdf>

<sup>430</sup> Richard Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009,) 47.

Ottoman *vilayet* of Basra, and as such remained part of the Iraqi state. In addition, Saddam claimed that Kuwait caused economic deprivation to Iraq through resources stolen from the Rumaila oil fields and its refusal to pay off war debts from the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>431</sup> Two days after Iraqi commandos entered Kuwait city and took over their airbases, Kuwaiti forces surrendered.<sup>432</sup>

Within hours a U.S. delegation appealed to the UN Security Council proposing a resolution to force Iraqi withdrawal. Throughout the fall of 1990, the UN passed a series of resolutions and President George H. W. Bush built a coalition of state supporters. Iraq ignored the UN mandate. The United States, along with its coalition partners launched a full-scale ground and air campaign against Iraq in January of 1991. By April, Saddam's forces had been destroyed, and President Bush declared Kuwait to be liberated.<sup>433</sup> When U.S. forces departed, the Iraqi military had been defeated and Saddam's power had suffered a serious blow.

Throughout the 1990's, Iraq attempted to rebuild and the United States and United Nations actively monitored its reconstruction, in an effort to compel Iraq's adherence to international norms.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Geoff Simons, *Iraq From Sumer to Saddam* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1994,) 22.

<sup>432</sup> Maxwell Orme Johnson "The Role of U.S. Military force in the Persian Gulf War" *The Persian Gulf War: Lessons for Strategy, Law, and Diplomacy*, Ed. Christopher Joyner (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992,) 128.

<sup>433</sup> U.S. rationale for the proposed UNSCR 661 cited Iraq's aggressive action toward Kuwait, holdings of chemical and biological weapons, and suppression of the Kurdish minority in the north. Clearly, the U.S. was also interested in preserving the territorial integrity of neighboring Saudi Arabia, whose massive oil fields were of great economic interest to the United States. Richard Haass, 62. See also UN Security Council Resolution 661, August, 2 1990, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from

<http://daccessddsny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/10/IMG/NR057510.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>434</sup> In UNSCR 687 enacted at the close of the Gulf War, the UN established an inspection regime entitled the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM). Its mandate was to ensure that Iraqi compliance with the destruction of its weapons facilities. In 1992, UNSCOM uncovered an Iraqi program to develop biological and nuclear weapons—and at that same time, Iraq became less forthcoming with information. Eventually, Iraq, in violation of UNSCR 687, restricted the weapons inspectors' access. The situation grew increasingly tense in the late 1990's, culminating in accusations by the Iraqis that UN weapons inspectors were spying on Iraqi security mechanism and reporting this intelligence to the U.S. UN sanctions endured throughout the period; some critics argue that the major impact of the sanctions was felt largely by the Iraqi people. UN Security Council Resolution, 687, April 3, 1991, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/unscom.htm>

The United States' experience with Iraq in the 1990's sets the stage for the long-term U.S./Iraq relationship and serves as an instructive event in this study of irregular war in terms of the U.S. rationale and approach to the intervention, the action of U.S soldiers, and the perceived need for a stabilization operation. First, the United States had sent some strong indicators to Iraq regarding its position on Iraqi affairs. In a meeting between U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie and Saddam Hussein in September of 1990, Glaspie is reported to have said:

But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait. I was in the American Embassy in Kuwait during the late '60s. The instruction we had during this period was that we should express no opinion on this issue and that the issue is not associated with America. James Baker has directed our official spokesmen to emphasize this instruction. We hope you can solve this problem using any suitable methods via Klibi [Secretary General of the Arab League] or via President Mubarak. All that we hope is that these issues are solved quickly.<sup>435</sup>

These comments, coupled with the official U.S. position aiming toward friendship with Iraq as outlined in PDD 26, appear to have persuaded Iraq that its invasion of Kuwait would be met with verbal reprimands at most. Had the U.S. been clearer about stating its national security position, Iraq may have made a different decision about its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. This misstep in communicating its national security objectives in 1990 foreshadows the difficulty that the U.S. will experience 13 years later in Iraq in stating its long-term goals for the region.

The U.S. launched its military forces within months of the Iraqi invasion. Three months later, the Iraqis had withdrawn from Kuwait and the U.S. claimed an overwhelming military victory. While this combat victory was compelling and complete, it also reinforced the credibility of the American Way of war thesis. Soldiers like to "fight big" and win. In 1991 in Iraq, they did both. I argue that the United States learned the wrong lesson from the first Persian

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<sup>435</sup>“Excerpts from an Iraqi Document on Meeting with U.S. Envoy,” *New York Times*, September 23, 1990, (accessed online August 10, 2010); available from <http://chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/glaspie.html>

Gulf war. The defeat of Iraqi military and forced withdrawal from Kuwait did not achieve long-term U.S. national security objectives. Saddam retained power, and the Ba'ath party still dominated the government. This shortcoming was starkly revealed in the second U.S. invasion thirteen years later.

A final lesson to be learned from the first Persian Gulf War is that the U.S. should have thought more carefully about what it wanted to achieve in Iraq—and then fully conceptualized the possible impediments to its execution. The U.S. had an important lesson to learn from Saddam himself. As his twenty year presidency revealed, Saddam had a deep understanding of the power of Iraqi tribalism—and employed a dictatorial governance-style to contain it. He attempted to mask his own devotion to the Tikriti tribe, while forcibly imposing political unity on Iraq. Saddam compelled this kind of cohesion in recognition of Iraq's tendency for sectarianism. To accomplish his goals, Saddam brutally suppressed Kurdish separatists and executed Shia resisters. He offered instead a new picture of Iraqi citizenship that was based on a martial spirit, sense of nationalism, contempt for foreign incursions, and unwavering devotion to historical rulers of Iraq in its glory days- like the Abbasid caliphate.<sup>436</sup> Saddam believed that his effectiveness as a ruler was grounded in his ability to unify the state around a central authority figure—which he personified.

Despite Saddam's efforts to ban tribalism and sectarianism from Iraq, groups existed, formed and reconfigured themselves. With Saddam's ouster in 2003, these formerly suppressed groups reappeared with vigor. For America, these groups presented a major challenge, as each group was armed and ready to fight. Indeed, the groups long-stifled by Saddam's dictatorial regime emerged as the warriors referenced in Secretary Gates' observation that four wars occurred simultaneously in Iraq during the early years of 2003 Iraq war.

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<sup>436</sup> Johnson, 225.

First, the Kurdish *Peshmerga* grew into a fierce fighting force in response to Saddam's Hussein's ruthless treatment of Kurdish people. The *Peshmerga*, a well-trained and highly organized resistance force, were strong supporters of the American coalition. These warriors engaged in the sectarian conflict identified by Secretary Gates. The second group of fighters developed among the Shiite Arabs; the strongest of these was Moqtada al-Sadr's *Mahdi Army*. Although this group fought against domination by a Sunni minority, Shia tribes in the south also fought among themselves in the south in a bid to control Iraq's majority Shia population. The third militia group encountered by Americans were the Ba'athists, now militarized and dedicated to avenging the fall of Saddam Hussein. This group is typically labeled the core of the insurgency effort. In an attempt to reassert their authority in Iraq, they took up arms against the Americans and the other militia groups.<sup>437</sup> The final warrior group is Al-Qaeda in Iraq which fights largely against all others in attempt to achieve its overarching aims.

The development of these various warring factions should not have been surprising to the United States, as the seedbed for their development appeared in the earliest annals of Iraqi history with the settlement of the area by the Ubaidians and Sumerians and the sixth century Sunni/Shia split. These deep divisions continued into the modern period. A deeper examination of Iraqi history could have easily predicted that, as was the case in Bosnia, the creation of power vacuum would cause centuries of dissent to re-emerge, first, as a growing distrust and, eventually, as an eruption into violence.

U.S. presence in the post-combat society fueled the fires of discord, as the Sunni and Shia were deeply suspicious of not only one another, but also wary of the other's relationship with the U.S. forces stationed in Iraqi countryside. In particular, the Sunni population was deeply fearful that the Shia had aligned with the United States and planned to assert its power in Baghdad.

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<sup>437</sup> Thomas Mowle, "Iraq's Militia Problem," *Survival* 48, No. 3, (Autmun, 2006.)

Based on the perennial division between the Sunni and Shia populations in Iraq, U.S. policy-makers should have more diligently managed the perceptions and quelled the concerns of Iraqi Sunnis. A recognition of this deep and long-standing distrust amongst groups should have manifested itself in better control of the post-combat situation in the Iraqi countryside. A better understanding of Iraqi history would have led to better planning and an improved stabilization operation.

### **FIGHTING THE AMERICAN WAR: FIGHTING THE WRONG WAR**

The final section of this chapter applies each one of these three major research questions to the 2003-2010 American experience in Iraq. First, I examine the U.S. rationale for its engagement in the 2003 war in Iraq. While combat goals were clearly outlined and quickly achieved, goals for stabilization were nebulous. As a result, the United States struggled to develop a plan that addressed these ambiguous goals. Second, American forces were, at the outset, unprepared to respond to the insurgency. While some of this unpreparedness was related to the overarching preference for major combat, problems are also attributable to a lack of doctrinal guidance prior to 2007. Finally, the initial stabilization effort in Iraq failed to address several of the major themes needed in an effective operation. The United States miscalculated the importance of achieving a political-military solution that would effectively address the problems presented in an already fractured Iraqi society. As the above review of Iraqi history suggested, the construction of an effective operation is largely based on knowing the enemy—and at the outset the entrenched sense of Iraqi tribalism was deeply under-appreciated.

*The Decision to Fight; the Failure to Plan; and the Struggle to Win.*

*I can't really judge the quality of Phase 4 planning because I never really saw any.*<sup>438</sup>

*Anthony Cordesman,*

*Arleigh Burke Chair for  
Strategy, Center for Strategic  
and International Studies*

In November 2003, one of the most popular policy discussions surrounded the advisability of the recent Iraq intervention. Anthony Cordesman addressed the issue as such:

Removing Saddam was certainly the right thing to do. What was the wrong thing to do was to assume, as was really done by the Bush Administration for ideological reasons, that you didn't require a massive security effort, that you didn't need to guard against the risk of guerilla warfare, that you didn't need to plan for a massive grant aid program and you didn't really need to be ready for developing the political leadership and structure of a country. I think one of the great tragedies here is that the Bush Administration, which was superbly prepared to defeat Saddam's conventional forces, was almost totally unprepared to deal with the aftermath.<sup>439</sup>

Cordesman argued that the Bush administration perceived its operation in Iraq too narrowly. It intended on toppling Saddam, ridding Iraq of its WMD program and routing out Al-Qaeda; it did not, however accurately define its vision of post-combat Iraq—or what the U.S. had to do to achieve it.<sup>440</sup> Moreover, the United States gravely miscalculated the criticality of Iraqi

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<sup>438</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *Iraq: Too uncertain to Call* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003,) 2.

<sup>439</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons* (Westport: Praegar, 2003,) 149.

<sup>440</sup> As I will argue later in this section, a key factor in the lack of planning for stabilization is related to the administration's view of operations other than major combat as less significant than the kinetic portion of the operation. Donald Rumsfeld was quoted as stating on the News hour with Jim Lehrer that "Indeed, the Posse Comitatus law has kept the Department of Defense away from law enforcement and policing-type activities. We don't do the borders. We don't do the coast lines, we have other organizations of government...[for this type of work.]" Interview with Jim Lehrer, March 24, 2004, (accessed online September 17, 2009); available from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white\\_house/jan-june04/rumsfeld\\_3-25.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white_house/jan-june04/rumsfeld_3-25.html)

stabilization—and the threat that an unstable Iraq would place on America’s long-term national security.<sup>441</sup> Because the United States underestimated the significance of the stabilization effort, the U.S. did not plan for it.

Many scholars, practitioners, retired military officers, and journalists have written on the lack of planning for Iraq’s stability in 2003. Larry Diamond, Head of the Constitutional Provisional Authority for Iraq in 2003 argued that the U.S. entered Iraq without a stabilization plan largely due to arrogance and naïveté. He argues that a combination of America’s unwavering belief in the rightness of democracy, combined with elements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century notion of the “white man’s burden” created the circumstance in which the U.S. engaged in Iraq without a long-term plan.<sup>442</sup> In a related argument, *Washington Post* military correspondent, Thomas Ricks maintained that policy makers were so focused on the military planning effort that they neglected grand strategy for post-invasion rule.<sup>443</sup> Whether this oversight was the result of inattention, arrogance, or devotion to democratic ideals, these

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<sup>441</sup> A related problem associated with the stabilization of Iraq in 2003 was that it was misunderstood as a primarily military operation. Part of the reason for this misguided perception was that it came on the heels of an extraordinarily successful and swift combat success. On April 9, 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared that “Tomorrow will mark three weeks since Operation Iraqi Freedom began and the progress of the men and women in uniform who make up the coalition forces has been nothing short of spectacular.” Rumsfeld points out that American forces reached Baghdad in “record time” disrupted terrorist networks, toppled an unsavory dictator and freed oppressed peoples. The U.S., in a decidedly celebratory mood, took on the reconstruction mission, assuming that success would come easily. Donald Rumsfeld, Department of Defense News briefing, Washington, D.C. April 9, 2003, (accessed September, 19 2009); available from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2003/iraq-030409-dod01.htm>

<sup>442</sup> Another major point of Diamond’s work is his observation that the United States made several chief mistakes in Iraq during the stand-up of the CPA. First, the failure to seal Iraqi borders allowed a massive influx of foreign fighters to join forces against the U.S. Second, the de-Baathification project ensured that scores of young men, who had been previously fighting for Saddam were now disenfranchised, out of work and eventually joined with the insurgents. Finally, Diamond argues that U.S. post-war presence was tantamount to an “occupation,” which doomed the operation to failure. Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), 27. For additional arguments that the U.S. invaded Iraq without a stabilization plan, see also George Packer, *The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.)

<sup>443</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006.)

missteps in early days had serious immediate and long-term costs,<sup>444</sup> which eventually challenged U.S. national security later in the decade.

In March of 2003, the State Department released the Future of Iraq (FOI) project, which it undertook as a way to envisage the potential post-combat challenges in Iraq—and carve a way forward. In a self-described statement of purpose, the Future of Iraq project:

... [O]rganiz[ed] over 200 Iraqi engineers, lawyers, businesspeople, doctors and other experts... to strategize on topics including... public health and humanitarian needs, transparency and anti-corruption, oil and energy, defense policy and institutions, transitional justice, democratic principles and procedures, local government, civil society capacity building, education, free media, water, agriculture and environment and economy and infrastructure.<sup>445</sup>

Indeed, the FOI Report was replete with prescient observations about post-combat Iraq and particularly focused on future governance and the rule of law. The problem was that the FOI Report neglected a workable plan to achieve these goals—and other officials within the administration were unconvinced of the report's findings and assertions.

Many within the Bush team's inner policy circle later argued that the real reason that stabilization planning gained little traction was related to the stance taken by the Secretary of Defense. Overall, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had little interest in stabilization

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<sup>444</sup> Peter Galbraith contends that: "Much of the Iraq fiasco can be directly attributed to Bush's shortcomings as a leader. Having decided to invade Iraq, he failed to make sure there was adequate planning for the postwar period. He never settled bitter policy disputes among his principal aides over how postwar Iraq would be governed; and he allowed competing elements of his administration to pursue diametrically opposed policies at nearly the same time." W. Galbraith, "The Mess," *New York Review of Books* 53, No. 4, March 9, 2006.

<sup>445</sup>"The Future of Iraq Project." National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, No. 198, (accessed September 19, 2010); available from

planning and particularly opposed the State Department taking a leading role in Iraq.<sup>446</sup> While Ryan Crocker, Head of the FOI Project, argued that the project was never intended as a bid by the State Department to take over the operation,<sup>447</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld was uncomfortable with a substantial DoS presence. Rather, Secretary Rumsfeld had released his plan to for “defense transformation”—arguing that success in 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare depended on technological preeminence. U.S. military forces would win in Iraq, according to Rumsfeld, based on technological advancements, swiftness, and inherent might. Despite Secretary Rumsfeld’s strong predilection on how to fight and definition of success, the Bush Administration recognized some need for stabilization and established a new “office,” under the authority of DoD, to address post-combat needs.

In January of 2003—just two months before the war began, the Bush Administration charged General Jay Garner with the responsibility for the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) as part of the DoD effort in Iraq. It was described as:

An expeditionary interagency office with officials from all departments and agencies in charge of detailed planning and implementation [of the stabilization effort]. Jay Garner created ORHA from scratch, staffed from over a dozen offices of the U.S. government, our coalition partners and from the private sector. ORHA managed the distribution of humanitarian assistance and began the process of building the new Iraq both physically and politically.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>446</sup>David Herspring argues that Rumsfeld’s intense interest in defense transformation and reliance on superior technology dwarfed his ability to accept the profound political and social elements of the war’s outcome. Frederick Kagan capitalizes on Herspring’s argument but is reluctant to lay blame entirely with Rumsfeld; instead arguing that the U.S. military was convinced that an Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) had occurred in the 1990’s, which forever transformed the face of warfare. Frederick W. Kagan, *Finding The Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006.) David Herspring, *Rumsfeld’s Wars: The Arrogance of Power* (Kansas City: University of Kansas Press, 2008.)

<sup>447</sup>David Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Post War Reconstruction Fiasco* (Westview: Westview Press, 2005.) 129.

<sup>448</sup>“Pre-War Planning for Post war Iraq,” Unclassified Department of Defense Document, (accessed August 12, 2010); available from [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/postwar\\_iraq.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/postwar_iraq.htm)

But, there was no real commitment to ORHA—among DoD, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and senior administration officials. The reason for the lacking commitment to ORHA was grounded in a lack of commitment to the need for post-combat reconstruction. As history has proven, U.S. policy makers in the Bush administration severely miscalculated the extent, nature, and complexity of the reconstruction task. The office prepared for a massive humanitarian emergency which never materialized, but neglected a plan for post-combat insurgency and sectarian violence.<sup>449</sup>

The Bush Administration's fundamental mistake was that it failed to know its enemy and inadequately prepared for the security challenges associated with a rising insurgency.<sup>450</sup> With insufficient numbers of American forces and undertrained Iraqi national forces, the post-combat scenario quickly spiraled out of control. Lacking a basic level of security, looting became widespread and the insurgency blossomed.<sup>451</sup> Finally, President Bush and his team of advisors wrongly anticipated Iraqi receptivity to American forces. While regular Iraqi citizens were genuinely thrilled with the collapse of the Ba'athist regime, as the security situation spiraled

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<sup>449</sup> Ali Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007,) 101.

<sup>450</sup> A related problem to the difficulties in the stabilization effort is that soldiers were assigned—and needed to perform the security function. But, they were also called upon to provide humanitarian aid, revitalize the failed infrastructure and establish a functioning government, tasks in which they had received little training. Even the Coalition Provisional Authority, a civilian institution, received its main oversight from the Department of Defense. Walter Boyne, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: What went Right, What went Wrong and Why* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2003,) 158.

<sup>451</sup> In Baghdad, immediately after the ouster of Saddam Hussein, looters rampaged the city, stealing computers, smashing windows, and snatching building supplies. Petty banditry morphed into a sophisticated system of major thievery and black markets. Iraqi citizens did not feel safe. For instance in late summer 2003, insurgents launched major attacks against international civilian targets including the Jordanian embassy, the UN Headquarters, the ICRC and various mosques around the city. Soon, Iraqis attributed their vulnerability to U.S. troops who failed to protect them. Concurrent with the loss of support, the insurgency gained in strength and began more threatening and bolder attacks. In a few short months, wild feelings of elation on the American side were replaced a stark realization that America was losing the public relations campaign. Bathsheba Crocker, "Iraq; Going it Alone, Gone Wrong." In *Winning the Peace: An American Strategy for Post-conflict Reconstruction*, ed. Robert Orr, (Washington D.C.: The Center for Strategic Studies Press, 2002,) 269.

downward, many of those same Iraqi citizens facing greater insecurity, began to perceive American “liberators” as “occupiers.”<sup>452</sup>

In sum, it is clear that, at the outset, the Bush administration was unconvinced of the need for a comprehensive post-combat plan, miscalculated the potential for an insurgency, and underestimated the impact that Iraqi unrest would have on U.S. national security. These misinterpretations were largely due the U.S.’s failure to carefully consider its rationale for engagement in Iraq—and ultimately what it hoped to achieve in intervening. Scholars and practitioners have offered many reasons for this lack of vision. Some argue that it was American arrogance or indifference. Others believe that it was a true belief in the power of democracy. Still others reason that the absence of a long-term plan is linked to the individual personalities involved in the war effort. Indeed, each of these explanations has merit, but undergirding all of these rationales is the pervasive presence of an American Way of War mentality and a fundamental indifference for stability operations. I turn now to an examination of this notion.

### *The Soldiers’ Fight: A Different Kind of War*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. military has the most technologically advanced weapons systems and best trained forces in the world. On the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the United States had 1000 aircraft in theater and used 1663 fixed wing aircraft in the combat operation.<sup>453</sup> U.S and coalition forces totaled 115,000 at the start of the war. In total, the coalition had roughly 1000 tanks, armored infantry vehicles, self-propelled and light guns, and attack helicopters. In

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid. 267.

<sup>453</sup> The troop strength of coalition forces included the U.S. Army 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry Division, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, V-Corps, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, British, Kuwait, Australian and Canadian forces. Cordesman, *The Iraq War*, 24.

contrast, the Iraqis had roughly 350,000 active forces, over 2000 tanks, roughly 300 aircraft and 2400 other major artillery weapons.<sup>454</sup> On balance, the U.S. was less well-armed than Iraq—yet the U.S. military defeated the Iraqi army in little over 2 months. The reason for the resounding American win was due to its superior combat training, and superb tactical and strategic battlefield preparation.

While these comparisons are impressive and it is unlikely that any other military force can rival the U.S. in conventional combat, these advantages did not secure a strategic victory for the United States. As outlined in chapter two of this dissertation, the value of military superiority in conventional combat is increasingly questionable, due to the uncertain future likelihood of regular combat.<sup>455</sup> While the happenstance of regular combat may be on the decline, the occasion of its non-conventional variant is on the rise. For the purposes of this dissertation, I refer to it as irregular war. In the case of Iraq, the U.S. began fighting a conventional war, but its enemy quickly transitioned into fighting in an irregular fashion. In the early days of the conflict, U.S. forces did not identify this shift in the enemy's approach.

Unlike the identifiable American troop indifference to stabilization in Bosnia and strong preference for combat in Afghanistan, the American military had achieved some learning regarding the importance of stabilization by the time it engaged in the Iraqi operation. I argue that the early struggles in the stabilization of Iraq were less attributable to preference major combat and more strongly related to an inability to quickly understand the changing situation and adapt accordingly. In other words, the stabilization mission struggled to succeed from 2003-2006—not because soldiers did not want to perform the mission—but because U.S. forces were

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid, 37-40.

<sup>455</sup> The future of warfare, its types and frequency, are included in chapter two of this dissertation. I argue that conventional combat is less likely to occur now than any time in history. States dependent on regional stability and global economic systems recognize a world war-type cataclysm as at best gravely debilitating—at worst non-recoverable.

under-trained for the mission and incompletely understood the tribal differences among the enemy they faced.

In early 2003, the First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) deployed to Anbar as part of Operation Iraqi freedom. A longtime Sunni stronghold, Anbar proved immediately difficult for U.S forces to secure and hold. But the situation saw a gradual change in 2005 as local tribes became increasingly concerned about Al Qaeda in Iraq's (AQI) growing power. These Anbarri tribes turned to the MEF in Anbar for financial and military support. By 2006, many of the Sunni tribes in Anbar had effectively partnered with U.S. forces to fight against the intimidation and brutality of AQI. Commanding Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Multi-National Force West, General James Mattis points to this learning that occurred among Marines in 2006. He argued that:

The enemy [insurgents] want you to hate all Iraqis. Don't allow that victory. We put it in terms that Marines understood [about] how the enemy was going to try to manipulate them. It was not difficult, although the excitement of that combat for young Marines, you always want to bring everything to bear. We just had to keep stressing to them, "Be careful; don't allow a single innocent person to be injured. We're the good guys."<sup>456</sup>

General Mattis' point was that by 2007, the operation had long ago changed from combat to stabilization—and both the military leadership and marines on the ground had achieved a nuanced understanding of how to undertake the stabilization operation in Iraq. This same sort of learning came later to the army—and in 2007, the U.S. witnessed the release of the 2007 Counterinsurgency manual.

The groundbreaking release of this document prominently indicated that the U.S. was involved in a different kind of battle. Therefore, U.S. soldiers had to readjust their understanding

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<sup>456</sup> Timothy McWilliams and Kurtis Wheeler, *Al-Anbar Awakening: U.S. Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq 2004-2009* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2009,) 26.

of how to engage. For many soldiers, the most difficult part was understanding that the enemy of one year ago might now be an ally. Certainly in the days following the 2006 Battle of Fallujah, one of the fiercest clashes of the war, in 2007, these former insurgents were now fighting alongside U.S. soldiers to rid Iraq of Al-Qaeda's influence.

In addition, U.S. soldiers had to reorient their approach to include the tribal element in its engagement with Iraqis. Brigadier General Robert Neller of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force stated that “the thing that we really didn't understand or appreciate to the extent that we do now is the importance of tribal engagement—engaging the different tribes, tribal support for the people joining the army and joining the police.”<sup>457</sup> His prescient observation is related to one of the key arguments in this dissertation and that is the importance of understanding the other and constructing an effective operation that recognizes the importance of internal Iraqi relationships, differences, and culture. The final part of this section addresses the last major research question of this dissertation—how do we construct an effective operation?

*Understanding the Enemy—or Enemies: Terrorists, Insurgents and Militias*

*In many respects, the war in Iraq in 2006 isn't the same as the one that was being fought in 2003-04, when the insurgency was emerging and taking U.S. commanders by surprise.*<sup>458</sup>

*--Thomas Ricks*

*Though greatly softened in recent years by the growth of cities and the spread of education to the countryside, the legacy of tribalism is subtle but pervasive in Iraq.*<sup>459</sup>

*--Phebe Marr*

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>458</sup> Thomas Ricks, “Troops Honed in '03 Fighting a Different War in Iraq,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2006.

<sup>459</sup> Marr, 18.

*One war at a time...*<sup>460</sup>

*--President Abraham Lincoln to Secretary of State William Seward as he pressed for war with the British*

Knowing the enemy has been no easy task for the U.S. in Iraq—and this difficulty has directly contributed to the U.S. struggle in constructing an effective stabilization effort. I argue that there are several reasons for this difficulty. Since its start in 2003, the war has moved through several evolutions, concentrations of fighting, and areas of effort. As was referenced earlier in this chapter, the U.S. is fighting four distinct enemies—and this complexity was muddled by the fact that it took U.S. policy makers several years to identify the four-part war it faced. In addition, America has struggled to “know its enemy” because the U.S. never fully comprehended the significance of Iraqi tribal affiliations. Finally, as Secretary Gates and others have pointed out, there were several enemies to know and understand. The next part of this chapter draws out this analysis.

By 2006, many security scholars were referencing the “several wars” being fought in Iraq. The first war was a Sunni Arab insurgency against the fledgling Iraqi government and American presence in the state. The second war was sectarian, where Sunni Muslims fought Kurds and those of the Shia sect. The third war was between Iraqis who fought against the emergence of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). As outlined earlier in this chapter, I argue that a fourth emerged in the south, which was Shia on Shia violence.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Secretary of State William Seward pressed for war with the British during the Civil War, believing that war against an external foe would force the confederacy to rejoin the union. President Lincoln reportedly made this comment in response to Seward’s idea. Dean Mahin, *One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Dulles: Brassey’s Press, 2000.)

<sup>461</sup>For several scholars interpretations of the wars being fought, see Larry Diamond, James, Dobbins, Chaim Kaufman, and Stephen Biddle, “What to Do in Iraq: A Roundtable.” *Foreign Affairs*. 85, no.4 (July-August 2006); and Henry Kenny, “Strengthening an Embattled Nation: A Strategy for Contending with the Three wars in Iraq.” *Center for Naval Analysis*, December 2006, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from [http://www.cna.org/documents/embattled\\_nation.pdf](http://www.cna.org/documents/embattled_nation.pdf); and Juan Cole, “Iraq’s Three Civil Wars,” MIT Center for

The difficulty for the United States is that the wars are all intertwined with separate actors and modes of violence. The strategy for fighting one enemy may or may not work against another. The greatest challenge and risk in fighting these four wars simultaneously is that success may be achieved for one or two but not all. In that dreary scenario, the overall outcome of the Iraq war would still be inconclusive at best.

Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew address this problem in their work *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat*. The authors argue that crucial importance of identifying and understanding the enemy in order to craft a workable strategy for confrontation.<sup>462</sup> This means that for military operations to succeed against non-state armed groups from tribally based societies policy-makers must ask “how [each] group solves the same problems as other groups. Responses can then be suggested based on similar solutions to specific problems.”<sup>463</sup> In the case of Iraq, we must ask: what types of problems do the insurgents in Anbar face and how do they solve them? Do they approach their problems differently than the Shia militia groups in the south? And, for the Sunni and Shia who fight each other today and have been fighting for centuries, how do they understand their problem and how do they attempt to solve them? To begin to answer these questions, I turn now to an examination of tribes and the role they play in the violence in Iraq during the stabilization effort of the last seven years.

Phebe Marr observed that the historical importance of tribes<sup>464</sup> in Iraq can scarcely be exaggerated. In Iraq, tribes are formally based on direct lineage, but also on kinship

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International Studies, February 2008, (accessed online August 10, 2010); available from [http://web.mit.edu/cis/editorspick\\_cole08\\_audit.html](http://web.mit.edu/cis/editorspick_cole08_audit.html)

<sup>462</sup>The authors eschew a “Military Capabilities” approach in favor of examining tribes and tribal warfare based on several factors: command and control, methods of warfare, constraints and limitations, and the role of external actors. Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew, 17-38.

<sup>463</sup> Anthony Vinci, “The Problems of Mobilization and the Analysis of Armed Groups,” *Parameter* 36. No. 1, (Spring 2006.)

<sup>464</sup> Kenneth Brown offers a helpful definition of tribes, wherein he describes them as “autonomous, genealogically structured group[s] in which rights of individuals are largely determined by their membership in corporate decent groups such as lineages.” Kenneth Brown, “A Few Reflections on ‘tribe’ and ‘state’ in Twentieth Century Morocco”

associations among peoples. Since the time of ancient Iraqi civilization, tribes have dominated Iraq's political economic and social life. Although urbanization, education and technological advance have somewhat mitigated their effect in modern times, tribal affiliations persist as Iraqi citizens' primary loyalty. As Marr argues, the twentieth century has in some ways solidified the effect of tribes as the "emergence of nationalist...ideologies have [forced] greater interaction and cooperation among communities."<sup>465</sup> In other words, modernization has played a large role in forcing interplay among groups in Iraq, which in turn has highlighted the differences and power dynamics among tribal groups.

Those who have attempted to rule Iraq have astutely noted the power of tribes in Iraq. During the period of the British Mandate, London recognized the difficulties of ruling Iraq remotely, which were further exacerbated by the staunch independence of Iraqi tribesmen and the deep loyalty to kinship groups. Instead of imposing rule from the outside, the British capitalized on these tribal relationships and attempted to work through tribal sheikhs to accomplish their goals. Saddam Hussein also took note of the capacity for leadership offered by tribal leaders—and they protection that they could personally offer him. Despite Saddam's outward devotion to a nationalist Iraqi state, he was deeply concerned about loyalty; his reliance on tribal members as key advisors revealed his true thinking.<sup>466</sup>

Some scholars have suggested that Saddam's move to incorporate the tribes into his party system was due to the advent of the Iran-Iraq war. By incorporating tribal leadership into the central power, he attempted to create a nationalist sentiment among the people. Saddam believed

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in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, ed. Faleh Jabar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2001.)

<sup>465</sup> Marr, 19.

<sup>466</sup> Particularly interesting in this examination of tribes was Saddam Hussein's willingness to leverage their power to bolster the Ba'athist, as it was relentlessly secular, officially rejecting "racism, sectarianism and tribalism." For Saddam, however, the power of Iraqi tribalism was too deep to overcome. Austin Long, "The Anbar Awakening" *Survival* 50, No. 2, April 2008.

that Iraqis are willing to depart from strong tribal affiliations when challenged by an external threat.<sup>467</sup> Although historical evidence has corroborated this theory from time to time,<sup>468</sup> Iraqis almost always revert to tribalism as their primary loyalty.<sup>469</sup> It is exactly this phenomenon—the return to tribalism that helped edge the U.S. toward success in Iraq in 2006, with the Al-Anbar Awakening.

This key transition marks a significant but difficult shift in the operational approach. Prior to the Anbar Awakening and the release of the COIN Manual a year later, U.S. policy did not provide for marines and soldiers to work within and through the tribal structure. Thus, the advances that were made, largely by the Marines in 2005/2006, grew from their ability to survey the operational environment, devise a plan—and put it into action. It was exactly this willingness to adapt and learn that markedly changed failing Iraqi operation toward a positive trajectory.

By late 2005, American began receiving reports that Sunni Arabs were increasingly dissatisfied with the direction of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).<sup>470</sup> Sunni tribal leaders suffered intimidation and murder at the hands of AQI and Sunni tribesmen were being forced to declare allegiance to AQI leaders. As a result, many Iraqis withdrew their support for AQI and soon joined with the U.S. forces fighting the terrorist presence. Al Qaeda had never experienced this kind of resistance from a Muslim people.<sup>471</sup> Their failure to understand Iraqi history, like many before them, led to their group's loss of influence in Iraq. As AQI began to fail, the American stabilization effort began to succeed. During this process, the United States leveraged the power

<sup>467</sup> Robert Dreyfuss, "Nationalists Stirring in Iraq," *The Nation*, January 16, 2008.

<sup>468</sup> Nationalist sentiment was present as Iraqis attempted to fight off the Ottoman Turks and expel the British. The recent Sunni insurgency against American forces also supports this claim.

<sup>469</sup> For another interpretation on Iraqis' compelling loyalty to their tribes, see Abbas Kelidar, "States without Foundations: The Political Evolution of State and Society in the Arab East," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, No. 2, April 1993.

<sup>470</sup> Neil Munro, "Cracks in the Sunni side of the Street," *National Journal* 38, No. 43, October 2006.

<sup>471</sup> Greg Bruno, "Profile: Al-Qaeda in Iraq (a.k.a. al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia)" *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 2007, (accessed July 22, 2009); available from <http://www.cfr.org/publication/14811/d>

of tribes and tribalism to revitalize their stabilization mission. By 2006, the stabilization of Iraq started to succeed.

In sum, American policy makers failed to properly understand their own goals in Iraq—and ensure their alignment with U.S. national security objectives plan and prepare for the reconstruction mission. As a result, the United States never developed a comprehensive vision on the “way forward in Iraq.” It was difficult to do, when long-term goals remained nebulous. Second, by 2007, U.S. forces largely accepted the stabilization mission in Iraq; they understood what needed to happen, but remained challenged by how to do it. Slowly, as the decade drew to a close, increasing numbers of U.S. soldiers were better trained for and had experience in stabilization—and they learned how to leverage tribal affiliations to benefit mission objectives. Finally, the reason for the early difficulties in stabilizing Iraq are largely due to the U.S.’ slow learning of Iraqi history. As the learning increased, however, the stabilization mission grew in its efficacy and influence. Mission planners institutionalized a political/military operation that focused on the maintenance of U.S. legitimacy among the Iraqi people. By 2008, the influence of these shifts materialized in an increasingly effective stabilization operation.

## **IRAQ: THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, PRESIDENT OBAMA AND BEYOND**

*It is clear that we need to change our strategy in Iraq... The most urgent priority for success in Iraq is security, especially in Baghdad. Eighty percent of Iraq's sectarian violence occurs within 30 miles of the capital. This violence is splitting Baghdad into sectarian enclaves, and shaking the confidence of all Iraqis... Our past efforts to secure Baghdad failed for two principal reasons: There were not enough Iraqi and American troops to secure neighborhoods that had been cleared of terrorists and insurgents. And there were too many restrictions on the troops we did have.*<sup>472</sup>

*-President George W. Bush,  
January 10th, 2007*

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<sup>472</sup> George Bush, “President’s Address to the Nation,” January 10, 2007, Washington, D.C., (accessed July 22, 2009); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>

*By August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end and Iraqi Security Forces will have full responsibility for major combat missions. After August 31, 2010, the mission of United States forces in Iraq will fundamentally change. Our forces will have three tasks: train, equip, and advise the Iraqi Security Forces; conduct targeted counterterrorism operations; and provide force protection for military and civilian personnel. The President intends to keep our commitment under the Status of Forces Agreement to remove all of our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011.*<sup>473</sup>

*-President Barack Obama, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009*

On January 10, 2007, President Bush, in a televised speech to the nation, explained his “New Way Forward” in Iraq. He explained that sectarian violence plagued Iraq and forces there were too few to quell the unrest. The solution, according to President Bush was a “surge”—the insertion of additional U.S. troops and a reinvigorated effort to train Iraqi police forces for their eventual assumption of the security function. The mandate for these additional 24,000 troops was to:

...Help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs.<sup>474</sup>

Within months of the troop surge, many Bush administration officials and several scholars celebrated its success and the renewed security brought about by the additional forces.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Barack Obama, “Plan to Responsibly end the War in Iraq,” (accessed August 10, 2010); available from [http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign\\_policy/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign_policy/)

<sup>474</sup> Bush, January 10, 2007.

Others were more careful, preferring to give predominant credit to a changed internal situation in Iraq, specifically the Anbar Awakening, a movement among former Sunni insurgents to fight off AQI.<sup>476</sup> The U.S. capitalized on growing Sunni distrust for AQI, as the terrorists seized profits from the lucrative markets along the Euphrates River. When local Sunnis formed groups to resist AQI thuggery, brutal reprisals ensued. As a result, many Sunnis who were former insurgents fighting alongside Al Qaeda against the Americans shifted loyalties. By 2006, the Awakening Councils led by tribal sheiks began requesting help from the American's to fight off AQI.<sup>477</sup> Adherents to this idea argue that the surge's effect was minimal; stability came to Iraq due to an internal push by tribal elements.

In truth, neither position is fully accurate. The surge did have an impact—and the internal shift within Iraq played a key role in the newly found Iraqi stability. General Odierno,<sup>478</sup> in a March 2008 speech at the Heritage Foundation declared that:

I think it's safe to say that the surge of Coalition forces--and how we employed those forces--have broken the cycle of sectarian violence in Iraq. We are in the process of

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<sup>475</sup>On January 14, 2007, President Bush appeared on 60 Minutes where he discussed his rationale for the surge and predicted that it would turn the tide of the war in Iraq. Daniel Schorn, "Bush Going For Broke With Troop Surge" *60 Minutes*, January 14, 2007, (accessed July 22, 2010); available from [http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/01/13/60minutes/main2358754\\_page2.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/01/13/60minutes/main2358754_page2.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody) Several months later he defended the surge on News Hour with Jim Lehrer arguing that "it made the difference in Iraq." "As Violence Peaks and Dips, Debate Over 'Surge' Persists," *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, March 11, 2008, (accessed July 22, 2010); available from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle\\_east/jan-june08/surge\\_03-11.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june08/surge_03-11.html). One of the best scholarly accounts attributing change in Iraq to the surge is Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics and the Endgame in Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2008.)

<sup>476</sup> A number of articles have been written on the impact of the Anbar Awakening. Two especially good ones are: Austin Long, "The Anbar Awakening" *Survival* 50, No. 2, April 2008; and John Lindsay, "Does the Surge Explain Iraq's Improved Internal security?" *MIT Center for International Studies*, September 2008, (accessed July 22, 2009); available from <http://mit.academia.edu/JonLindsay/Papers/10574/Does-the-%E2%80%9CSurge%E2%80%9D-Explain-Iraq%E2%80%99s-Improved-Security->

<sup>477</sup> Bill Roggio, "Anbar Rising," *The Long War Journal*, May 2007, (accessed July 22, 2009); available from [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/anbar\\_rising.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/anbar_rising.php)

<sup>478</sup> General Odierno's comments regarding the importance of both the Awakening and the surge achieve even greater force in light of his background as Commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division from 2001-2004—where his forces were responsible for securing Tikrit and Mosul, and eventually led the operation to take Saddam Hussein. Odierno was criticized for his initial resistance in adopting a "hearts and minds approach," while others defended him due to the challenging theater of operations in which he led. Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006, 153.)

exploiting that success. Explaining the reduction in violence and its strategic significance has been the subject of much debate. It's tempting for those of us personally connected to the events to exaggerate the effects of the surge. By the same token, it's a gross oversimplification to say, as some commentators have, that the positive trends we're observing have come about because we paid off the Sunni insurgents or because Muqtada al-Sadr simply decided to announce a ceasefire. These assertions ignore the key variable in the equation--the Coalition's change in strategy and our employment of the surge forces.<sup>479</sup>

A combination of elements served to make the difference in Iraq, including errors made by AQI, growth of Iraqi Security Forces' capability, reduction of Shia support for Jesh al Mahdi (JAM)<sup>480</sup>—and the impact of the additional forces in Iraq.<sup>481</sup>

As this chapter has argued, a crucial element in any war is understanding the enemy you face, by studying its history, and diagnosing changes as they occur. In the case of Iraq, the surge was well-timed as it followed directly on the heels of an internal transformation. This is one of the key lessons emerging from the Iraqi case and one of the major findings of this dissertation. To win, the intervening force must know what outcome it desires, properly prepare its troops to engage, and devise a workable operational plan tailored to the region, its people, and changing internal circumstances.

While the Bush Administration received praise for its role in the remarkable transformation of Operation Iraqi Freedom, it is important to note that the fierce battles of

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<sup>479</sup> Lt. Gen. Raymond T Odierno, "The Surge in Iraq: One Year Later," *Heritage Lecture #1068*, March 13, 2008, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/hl1068.cfm>

<sup>480</sup> JAM is the Shiite cleric Moqtada al Sadr's militia forces. They are often referred to as the Mahdi army. For a solid account of their strength in 2008, see Bing West, "A Report from Iraq: What ever happened to Mahdi Army?" *The Atlantic*, September 2008, (accessed July 24, 2010); available from <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200801u/iraq-update/3>

<sup>481</sup> Stephen Biddle, Michael O' Hanlon, and Kenneth Pollack, "How to Leave a Stable Iraq: Building on Progress." *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 5 (September 2008.) See also Jonathon Schroden, "What went right in Iraq," *Center for Naval Analysis*, 2009, (accessed July 24, 2010); available from <http://www.cna.org/news/releases/WebFeature-090424.aspx>. (Paper originally released as classified document and later restructured to be available at unclassified level.)

2006/2007 occurred precisely because U.S. policy-makers at the time were not fully committed to the stabilization of the Iraqi state. It was not until Iraqi unrest caused the U.S. to question its own national security that policy makers took action. I attribute the delayed reaction to the worsening situation in Iraq as the U.S.'s inability to see a direct link between U.S. national security and Iraqi stability. By the time President Bush launched the surge in January of 2007, he perceived the link, arguing that the price of failure in Iraq was too high.

The consequences of failure are clear: Radical Islamic extremists would grow in strength and gain new recruits. They would be in a better position to topple moderate governments, create chaos in the region, and use oil revenues to fund their ambitions. Iran would be emboldened in its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Our enemies would have a safe haven from which to plan and launch attacks on the American people. On September the 11th, 2001, we saw what a refuge for extremists on the other side of the world could bring to the streets of our own cities. For the safety of our people, America must succeed in Iraq.<sup>482</sup>

Undoubtedly, the U.S. cause for action in Iraq was complex, deriving from many factors,<sup>483</sup> but President Bush clearly defended the surge as a necessity—a necessity for the preservation of U.S. national security.

After four years of intense struggle in Iraq, in 2007, American decision-makers finally achieved a keen moment of illumination. American policy makers realized that success in the post-combat phase was not easy—but vital to long-term success. After all, as the Bush administration had famously noted five years prior, weak states are dangerous, as they are a breeding ground for terrorists, drug cartels, human traffickers and extremist groups. Thus, when military planners design a military operation to preserve traditional U.S. national security concerns, like development of weapons for use against the homeland, they must be mindful that

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<sup>482</sup> George Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," January 10, 2007, Washington, D.C., (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html>

<sup>483</sup> Among many, other factors included a push by military flag officers for more troops. Sectarian violence in Iraq was spiraling out of-control. And, the American populace was becoming increasingly frustrated with the war.

the operation cannot inadvertently cause a secondary security concern, like creation of a weak state. Savvy policy makers and military planners are beginning to recognize this potential nexus and making plans to avoid it. When Barack Obama became President in January of 2009, he made reference to this link, while still moving forward with his drawdown schedule.

On February 27, 2009, President Obama formally announced his plan to responsibly end the war in Iraq and remove American troops by December 2011.<sup>484</sup> On August 2, 2010 in a speech to the Disabled American Veterans Association, President Obama cited the key transition for American military personnel in Iraq—the U.S. is experiencing a transition from military confrontation to diplomacy; the effort’s new operational title is “New Dawn.”<sup>485</sup> As the American military effort draws to a close, the remaining American soldiers, have been designated “training forces” there to provide a continued American presence in Iraq. Their purpose is to train and support Iraqi forces, protect minorities, and guard against potential Iranian aggression.<sup>486</sup> To date, the prognosis in Iraq is good. Iraqi security forces are increasing in both quality and quantity. In January of 2009, Iraq held successful elections, resulting in widespread voter turnout with no significant boycotts or allegations of fraud.<sup>487</sup> In the aftermath of the election, Iraq has seen a reduction in violence. There is a sense that democracy is taking hold.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>484</sup>“Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq,” November 17, 2008, (accessed July 22, 2009); available from [http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/SE\\_SOFA.pdf](http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/SE_SOFA.pdf)

<sup>485</sup> In August of 2010, in addition to the force draw down, the U.S. turned over 27 military bases to Iraqi control and shipped out roughly 1 million pieces of military equipment.

<sup>486</sup> A perpetual challenge for Iraqi stability is Iran. Richard Haass has argued that the Obama administration should think broadly about Iraq. Much like the appointment of Richard Holbrooke as Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the U.S. should expand its vision of Iraqi stability to a regional approach. Richard Haass, “Beyond Iraq” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1, January/February, 2009, (accessed July 24, 2009); available from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/63718/richard-n-haass-and-martin-indyk/beyond-iraq>

<sup>487</sup> “Iraqi denies setback in Regional Vote,” *New York Times*, February, 2, 2009, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/02/world/africa/02iht-iraq.4.19877103.html>

<sup>488</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, “The Obama withdrawal from Iraq; How Fast?” *Rand Corporation*, December 16, 2008, (accessed August 10, 2010); available from <http://www.rand.org/commentary/2008/12/16/NJ.html>

In closing, this Iraq case study is a particularly important case study for this examination of irregular war, because unlike Bosnia and Afghanistan, the U. S. witnessed a dramatic change in operational effectiveness partway through the effort—which prompts the question, when irregular war operations are failing what can we learn from the Iraqi experience which might turn the tide if future efforts. I offer three key observations. First, policy makers and military strategists must understand the purpose of the operation and properly perceive its success as linked to national security goals. In Iraq, policy maker's achievement of operational clarity was linked to the 2006 transition toward success. Second, military forces must be ready to fight effectively through a transition from major combat to stabilization operations. In the early years of Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. soldiers struggled to understand how they should fight. Once they discerned their role, they accepted the charge and implemented needed action. Finally, effective stabilization exercises must be tailored to the region—and the best way to ensure effectiveness is to understand the region's history and work alongside indigenous peoples to affect the change. David Galula, a French military officer who gained his expertise in the Algeria campaign, famously argued that a successful counterinsurgency campaign is 80% political and 20 % military—meaning the intervening force must be perceived as part of the solution. The most effective way to gain the people's support is by understanding the enemy and planning well—crucial policy lessons for the Obama administration and beyond.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Where Do We Go from Here?*

#### *The Future of Stabilization Operations*

This dissertation has examined the United States' difficulty in irregular wars. In the cases of Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. struggled to understand and achieve its national security goals, properly prepare its troops, and design operations that successfully stabilized these post-combat states. In this concluding chapter, I begin by briefly revisiting the three major research questions—and corresponding hypotheses of this work. Next, I apply these questions to each of the three case studies to illustrate the validity of my hypotheses and the commonalities that can be observed among the case studies. Finally, I make recommendations for U.S. policy makers as they prepare for stabilization operations in the future.

#### **THREE CRUCIAL QUESTIONS: LONG-TERM GOALS, PREPAREDNESS, & PLANS**

The results of my study indicate that the United States' recurring difficulties in irregular war emanate from three major sources and are related to the three major hypotheses of this work. The first major hypothesis was that U.S. experienced difficulty with irregular wars because U.S. policy makers often committed troops without fully identifying the long-term U.S. national security goals they wished to achieve. My three case studies revealed that American policy makers, in each case, clearly stated their rationale for intervention at the outset—but they struggled to recognize that their goals either changed or crystallized as the operation persisted. In other words, the problem was less that policy-makers failed to initially declare their desired

outcome, but that they failed to recognize that their long-term goals had to change as the operations endured.

The second major hypothesis of this work was that U.S. military forces perceived irregular wars as less important as major combat, and were therefore disinclined to accept the criticality of the stabilization mission. I analyzed whether this preference impacted troop performance in stabilization missions. I found that, indeed, in the 1990's U.S. military forces were less inclined to accept stabilization as a core mission, but I also found that the indifference toward stability operations gradually waned as the 21<sup>st</sup> century dawned. In fact, a new but related problem emerged; the troops in the field accepted mission criticality but were not well-trained for the mission they were assigned. As a result, U.S. forces were challenged in the field due to their limited preparedness for this "new" mission set.

The third major hypothesis of this study was that the U.S. struggled to succeed in stabilization missions because they were not well-coordinated and often failed to address the specific challenges of each particular region and mission. In large part, the case studies proved the validity of this hypothesis. In each case, the stabilization plan was under-planned; therefore it failed both to fully address the challenges presented by each region and apply the best combination of U.S. resources, military and otherwise, for responding to those challenges. This next section draws related conclusions that emerge from the Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq case studies with the goal of developing a comprehensive way of thinking about stabilization—and to inform the planning of future operations.

## **BOSNIA, AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ: SIMILARITIES AND SHARED LEARNING**

In this section, I evaluate each one of my three major hypotheses in light of the case studies and determine whether commonalities exist across the three cases. I asked the following three major questions as a rubric for study:

- 1) How does the rationale for intervention influence the operation's outcome?
- 2) To what extent did the U.S. military's traditional preference for major combat over irregular wars influence operational success?
- 3) What strategy should the U.S. adopt to ensure success in irregular war operations?

These questions have proved fruitful in each one of the case studies.

### *RETHINKING 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY INTERVENTION AND ITS LINK TO U.S. SECURITY*

*Grand strategic victories are the most transcendent historically unique and empirically unusual form of victory in war. Victory on this scale follows from transforming the ideological governmental and societal foundations of the enemy state replacing its political, economic, and military sources of power and legitimacy and preventing the defeated state from threatening regional or global stability.*

*William Martel*<sup>489</sup>

The first hypothesis I examined was that the United States did not clearly understand its purpose for intervention prior to involvement in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. In large part, I found the contrary to be true. In fact, U.S. policy-makers in every case were fairly clear in identifying its national policy goals before engaging in the region. The striking failure was that the goals were never redefined as the operation endured. In other words, as the U.S. interventions in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq began, the national policy goals were defined in a fairly limited way and in each case, the critical redefinition of long-term goals simply took too long. By the time the U.S. understood that a reshaping of goals was needed, the operations had

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<sup>489</sup>William Martel, "Formulating Victory and Implications for Policy," *Orbis* 52, no.4, 2008.

already begun to fail. Significantly, the problem was not that U.S. policy maker failed to define the goals—it was that they failed to *redefine* the goals. With this benefit of hindsight, this is not surprising given the irregular nature of conflict. The fact that redefinition did not take place highlights the political-military challenge in a democracy of redefining the goals and adjusting accordingly in the field.

The 1990's were inherently unstable. While the U.S. retained its strength, the Soviet Union had collapsed, leaving in its wake a glut of fledging states seeking to build autonomy and strength. As the decade progressed, it became increasingly obvious that in many of these regions formerly under the influence of the Soviet Union had developed corrupt regimes had developed and many states were rife with internal conflict. Although U.S. policy makers did not fully comprehend the wide range of challenges these weak states posed, they felt increasing pressure, both internally and externally to respond to the humanitarian emergencies that developed. When U.S. policy makers made the decision to “intervene” in Bosnia, they launched a targeted military campaign to quell the immediate violence, topple the regime, and remove Milosevic. The U.S.—at least initially, did not respond in Bosnia because it fully comprehended the threat that a weakened state in the heart of Europe would pose.

This inability to completely foresee the danger posed by weak states also informed operational design. In other words, the operations dealt swiftly and effectively with the urgent humanitarian crisis and the pressing problem of nefarious dictators, but notably failed to address the long-term problems that existed after the corrupt government had been toppled. After the military operation unseated the regime, an erroneous sense of that the mission was complete arose among policy makers and the military. The strong urge was to withdraw troops. This absence of internal governance and external state building efforts resulted in the emergence or in some cases reformation of warring groups. Ultimately, this narrow understanding of what a

military operation could and should achieve led to a failure of long-term U.S. national security objectives.<sup>490</sup> The U.S. stopped the killing and removed brutal dictators from power, but left an inherently unstable government that remained vulnerable to the recurrence of a similar set of problems. Indeed, this exact problem played out in Bosnia—and then later in Afghanistan and Iraq.

When violence erupted in Bosnia in 1992, the United States, although concerned with mounting casualties, did not rush to action. The Europeans declared their intention to take the lead, and the United States quietly stepped aside. Although newly-elected President Clinton called for more "urgent international action...to include UN-sanctioned air strikes" and even suggested that the United States "should be prepared to lend appropriate military support to that operation,"<sup>491</sup> his positions were exceedingly unpopular with the outgoing Bush administration, and the American people. Even the then-Democratic Congress opposed direct U.S. involvement in Bosnia. This bi-partisan reluctance grew from a staunch belief that intervention in Europe did little to improve U.S. national security and the United States was not in a position to waste precious national resources—in the form of money and troops, to stave off what was perceived as a European civil war. It was a small war in a failing state; at least initially, the Bosnian conflict seemed to be of little consequence to U.S. national security.

In July of 1995, Serb forces attacked Bosnians living in Srebrenica with brutal ferocity. Over a weeklong period, Serb forces slayed over 8000 Bosniaks living in the UN Safe area. The Dutch forces in the region were not only insufficient in number but also lacked clear direction regarding an appropriate and authorized response. As hundreds of thousands of Bosnian refugees streamed into Germany, the prospect of a massive refugee crisis impacting continental

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> Paul F. Horvitz, "Clinton Stresses More Active U.S. Role in Bosnia," *New York Times*, November 17, 1992.

Europe loomed. On July 22, 1995, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher declared that Bosnian Serb leaders would "pay an extremely heavy price" for the massacre and the "pinprick attacks"<sup>492</sup> of the early 1990's would be replaced with vigorous military action—supported by U.S. forces. At that point, the U.S. sent forces to Bosnia to halt the Serb forces and end the hostilities. Within days of the U.S. military's arrival, Serb violence stopped, but the role for U.S. after cessation of hostilities was not clear.

Much of the reason for this obscurity was related to the U.S. perception of its original reason for non-involvement and the eventual motivation to engage. The bottom line was that the U.S. did not engage in Bosnia in the early 1990's because it perceived the conflict as a civil war with little ability to impact U.S. national security. The U.S. rationale for engagement in 1995 was largely in response to realized horror of the Srebrenica massacre and the inefficacy of European action. Although Secretary Christopher did push for intervention in Bosnia due to a concern for "wider European war" which would threaten U.S. stability, the U.S. primarily intervened in Bosnia to stop the killing and respond to a humanitarian crisis. At that point in the 1990's, the U.S. remained focused on its short-term military objectives and incompletely considered the link between a weak state's ability to foment greater regional instability.

In less than a decade, the U.S. was embroiled in a similar conundrum in Afghanistan and Iraq. In both operations, the U.S. clearly constructed its national security goals in terms of the military goals it sought to achieve—but in each case, failed to define post-combat objectives after the immediate goals had been won. In less than one month after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, President Bush announced that U.S. forces would engage in Afghanistan, "to topple the Taliban, destroy Al Qaeda, and capture Osama Bin

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<sup>492</sup> Ray Moseley, "U.S., Allies Threaten To Bomb Serbs: Airstrikes Promised If Enclaves Are Attacked," *Chicago Tribune*, July 22, 1995, (accessed September 14, 2010); available from [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-07-22/news/9507220109\\_1\\_bosnian-serbs-bosnian-government-peacekeepers-hostage](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-07-22/news/9507220109_1_bosnian-serbs-bosnian-government-peacekeepers-hostage)

Laden.” Less than two years later in early 2003, President Bush declared the purpose of the Iraqi intervention, “to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people.” These goals are surprisingly similar in that both refer to dismantling a regime and ending terrorism—but in neither case did they make reference to how these goals would or could be achieved in the long-term.

The stated objectives in both the Afghan and Iraqi missions lacked clarity and specificity as to how the U.S. would limit terrorism's rebirth in these states—or how the U.S. would bring freedom to the Iraqi people. The way to achieve these goals was through the development of a stable nation-state in place of failing ones. The problem was that in both cases U.S. policy-makers toppled the internal governance structures—without a proactive, comprehensive post-conflict plan to ensure stability. As a result, in both cases, these weak states became embroiled in conflict, as the indigenous people fought with one another or against the foreign influence—the United States.

As history has proven, the disintegration of governments in Kabul and Baghdad gave way to power vacuums and gravely worsening internal conditions. In both cases, Afghanistan and Iraq lacked a functioning state government and became breeding grounds for insurgency, terrorism, and narcotics and human trafficking—exactly the problems the U.S. had aimed to stop in its original decision to become involved. Especially in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. perceived its national security goals too narrowly, mistaking the attainment of military goals as the achievement of long-term national security objectives. After both wars entered their third and fourth years, U.S. policy makers understood that they had to reconstruct U.S. operational goals. The rethinking of goals was tremendously difficult because it also required a reconceptualization of national security—and an understanding that U.S. national security is inextricably tied to the stability of states in other regions of the world.

TROOP PREPAREDNESS AND PERCEPTIONS

*We need an educated and adaptable officer corps—not one married to any single preclusive view of war.*<sup>493</sup>

*--General James Mattis, USMC in an address at the Center for a New American Strategy*

One of the major questions I asked in this dissertation was whether soldier perceptions of irregular war influenced performance on the ground. I found that soldiers engaged in the Bosnian operation did indeed perceive peacekeeping work as less important than traditional combat—but I also noted a gradual shift in this perception during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This next section offers an explanation of both the perception and the reason why it changed.

On the eve of the Bosnian conflict, soldiers perceived major combat as its primary responsibility. The U.S. had just launched Operation Desert Storm—one of its most successful combat operations since World War II. The U.S. utilized over 500,000 ground troops, the newly minted Patriot missile, and a strong alliance of partners in an effort that culminated in the application of overwhelming force—and a sound defeat of its Iraqi enemy. While questions persisted over the decision to allow Saddam Hussein to retain power at the operation's end and his continued access to chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, U.S. troops and indeed the American people were generally pleased with the war's outcome<sup>494</sup> and relatively little loss of life.<sup>495</sup> This American experience at the end of the Cold War era only served to strengthen the notion that major combat, exemplified by the use of overwhelming firepower for a limited time

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<sup>493</sup>James Mattis, Keynote Address at “Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America’s Military,” *The Center for a New American Century*, February 22, 2010, (accessed November 2, 2010) available from <http://www.cnas.org/node/4132>

<sup>494</sup>Cecil Crabb and Kevin Mulcahy, “George Bush’s Management Style and Operations Desert Storm,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, No. 2, (Spring 1995.)

<sup>495</sup>Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus, *Whirlwind War: The United States Army in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm*, U.S. Army Center of Military History, (accessed March, 10, 2010); available from <http://www.history.army.mil/books/www/Wwindx.htm>

in-theater, was indeed the preferred “American Way of War”<sup>496</sup>—and remained so as the Balkans unraveled in the early part of the decade.

The predominance of the “American Way of War” approach was one of the major reasons for the U.S. delay in sending troops to Bosnia in the early 90’s. Neither U.S. policy makers nor the American people wanted involvement in a peacekeeping operation to quell civil conflict. General MacArthur’s words to the West Point graduating class of 1962 held great power; he reminded the newly commissioned officers that the soldiers’ responsibility is “fixed, determined and inviolable. It is to win this nation’s wars. Everything else... is corollary to this vital dedication.” Peacekeeping among Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs failed to meet the threshold of a critical operation, because the troubles in the Balkans were understood as a civil war having little impact on U.S. national security.

When the Serbs carried out the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, however, it became clear that the U.S. had to engage. The U.S. sent in aircraft and troops in support of NATO Operation Joint Endeavor, and swiftly halted the Serbs attacks. After the violence ended, however, U.S. troops were challenged to understand and identify their next action. U.S. forces had not been trained in peacekeeping efforts and understood little about their role as enforcers of the shaky peace established by the Dayton Accords. In addition to the issue of what job the soldiers should be undertaking, a lingering sense of questionable purpose and responsibility remained. Even as peace was finally achieved in the Balkans, U.S. forces still hesitated over the criticality and legitimacy of their role in what was then termed—a peacekeeping mission.

Many of these questions raised by the Bosnian conflict remained unsolved as the 1990’s drew to a close—and for a brief historical moment, as George W. Bush assumed the presidency

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<sup>496</sup> The use of the phrase “American Way of War” is credited to Russell Weigley and his encapsulation of this idea in his 1973 book. Russell Weigley, *American Way of War: A History of U.S. Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973,) vvii-xiii.

in the year 2000, issues of nation building seemed peripheral to and distracting from primary national security goals. When Al Qaeda terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon, state reconstruction seemed insignificant and borderline absurd to those administration officials responsible for dealing with the Al Qaeda threat.

President Bush selected Donald Rumsfeld as his Secretary of Defense and charged him with devising the military response to the Al Qaeda threat. Secretary Rumsfeld observed that in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the security environment had irreversibly changed—and argued that that Defense Department “transformation” was the best way to address, manage and contain the threat. While the new Secretary of Defense was absolutely accurate in the need to respond to a changing security environment, he struggled with the execution.

Recognizing that U.S. enemies would no longer likely be traditional armies backed by states, Secretary Rumsfeld argued that we had to “fashion our forces to deter and defeat a new threat.” Secretary Rumsfeld understood that the U.S. had to prepare its forces to face irregular enemies and argued that for a “transformed U.S. military that was leaner and more technologically advanced.” In this way, Rumsfeld argued, the United States could simultaneously increase the efficacy of its force and reduce the overall numbers of troops. His plan relied on vast American technological superiority—particularly in the form of air power, which, he argued, concurrently allowed for a reduction in the number of ground troops.<sup>497</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld argued for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, “21st Century Transformation of U.S. Armed Forces,” Remarks given at the National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., Thursday, January 31, 2002, (accessed March 10, 2010); available from <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=183>

<sup>498</sup> A Revolution in Military Affairs occurs when a technological advancement radically improves combat effectiveness. In recent years the definition has broadened, now including changes in military doctrine and organizational construct. See Steven Metz and James Kievet, “Strategy and the Revolution in Military Affairs,” Strategic Studies Institute (Carlisle; U.S. Army War College Press, 1995,) 3. See also Colin Gray, *Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History* (London: Frank Cass, 2004.)

The problem with Secretary Rumsfeld's plan for Defense Transformation through an RMA was that it envisioned America's technologically superior forces defeating a less capable enemy military force on a battlefield.<sup>499</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld's conceptualization almost wholly neglected post-combat work and the absolute necessity for an effective stabilization operation that continues after the kinetic portion of the operation had ended. While Rumsfeld got "transformation half-right"<sup>500</sup> in his use of lethal weapons at a quick rate of advance, he failed to understand the comprehensive nature of today's military operations—and that stabilization is a critical component of effectively fighting an irregular war.

Based on these "American Way of War" inclinations, the Bush administration designed both the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq as primarily military missions that neglected the stabilization component that would be crucial to overall success after major combat operations ended. In other words, both operations focused on a decisive combat victory—and underplayed the criticality of the stabilization portion of the operation. As the second hypothesis of this study suggested, perceptions of stabilization undoubtedly influenced operational effectiveness. Significantly, however, the preference for combat over stabilization was found not only in the military forces engaged in these operations, but was also widely accepted by the strategists who designed the missions.

In sum, the greatest commonality among the three operations, in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq was the similar question surrounding the importance of creating post-combat peace. This preference occurred within the military and civilian communities—and among policy makers at the highest levels. It was this doubt regarding the importance of stabilization that led to the

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<sup>499</sup> The infamous 2006 "Revolt of the Generals" was a tangible example of concern for military transformation, in which several military flag officers published opinion editorials and interviewed with major news outlets to outline their concerns. Perry Bacon, "The Revolt of the Generals," *Time*, April 16, 2006. See also Frederick Kagan, *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006.)

<sup>500</sup> Richard Shultz as cited by Robert Kaplan, "What Rumsfeld Got Right: How Donald Rumsfeld remade the U.S. Military for a More Uncertain World," *The Atlantic*, (July/August 2008.)

many challenges in constructing an effective operation—and it is to this evaluation that I now turn.

### STABILIZATION OPERATIONS OF THE PAST

*This internal conflict [in Iraq] has become primarily communal in nature...it is a fight about group survival. It pits Sunnis against Shiites, in particular, but also Kurds against Sunnis and, more generally, group against group, with smaller minorities coming under attack on multiple fronts.*<sup>501</sup>

*Stephen Biddle*

The third major hypothesis of this work was that the stabilization operations in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq were faultily designed, largely because they failed to address the particular challenges that each individual operation presented. In large part, this hypothesis has been proven accurate, as the United States struggled in each case to devise an operation which created a stable post-combat environment. The single most important finding was that in none of the three cases did the United States fully understand the enemy it faced. This flaw critically detracted from the United States' ability to construct an effective operation.

In Bosnia, the United States was reluctant to become involved for both internal and external reasons. As examined earlier in this chapter and dissertation, the United States was disinclined to engage in Bosnia because of its failure in Somalia and resultant distaste for peacekeeping. It also preferred non-involvement due to a perception about Bosnia itself—which regarded the entire region as endemically prone to conflict and of little consequence to U.S. national security. While these American preferences were deeply entrenched, the Srebrenica massacre caused a comprehensive re-evaluation of the conflict not only in terms of concern for

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<sup>501</sup> Larry Diamond, James Dobbins, Chaim Kaufmann, Leslie H. Gelb, and Stephen Biddle, “What to do in Iraq; A Roundtable.” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 July/August 2006.

humanitarian tragedy but also for the security impact caused by massive regional upset and sustained, persistent conflict.

Similarly, the endemic nature of rampant unrest and violence characterized the U.S. perception of Afghanistan. Due to a limited understanding of Afghan history and experience with foreign invaders, the U.S. considered the impact of its military only in the context of the Afghan people's immediate reaction to the removal of the Taliban. The United States did not consider as carefully how regular Afghans would react to a sustained presence by U.S. forces.

Like the cases of Bosnia and Afghanistan, the internal situation in Iraq was incompletely examined prior to launching Operation Iraq Freedom. The Bush administration was hopeful that a removal of Saddam Hussein would elicit positive reaction from ordinary Iraqis and pave the way for a democratic form of government to emerge in Baghdad. While Iraqis had some experience with stable governance and the benefits that central government could bring, the U.S. misunderstood the challenges of creating a non-autocratic centralized authority in Baghdad. In each of these three cases, the problem was that the United States failed to know its enemy.

In Afghanistan, the failure was significant in that United States under-realized the nature and influence of the Afghan tribal organization. For a variety of reasons—geography, religion, and ethnicity, Afghanistan has never had an effective centralized government. When the British, Soviets and lastly the United States entered Afghanistan with the ultimate aim of creating a centralized government, these foreigners neglected a full understanding of Afghan history and tradition. Afghans resisted an imposed organization based on foreign influence. In an attempt to rid Afghanistan from foreign influence, many tribes joined together to expel the invaders using traditional tactics that westerners perceived as examples typical of terrorists, guerillas and insurgents. With a complete understanding of Afghan history, however, this response should have been fairly predictable.

Interestingly, problems with stabilization were very similar in Bosnia and Iraq. In each state indigenous peoples fractured into their tribal groups and fought amongst themselves—while simultaneously fighting U.S. forces. While this circumstance was obvious in Bosnia—and existed prior to U.S. entry, the in-fighting amongst internal groups was not so immediately obvious in Iraq. Rather, U.S. forces fought in Iraq for two to three years before fully understanding that the U.S. was engaged in a “composite war”—meaning that more than one war was happening concurrently. As was the case in Bosnia, these internal Iraqi groups fought one another while engaging with U.S. forces. In the case of Iraq, by 2006, the U.S. eventually understood the circumstance presented by the concurrent wars and capitalized on it—first in the Sunni region of Anbar. By adopting a COIN strategy and leveraging the strong tribalism existing in the region, U.S. forces allied with tribal sheikhs, local militias and some former Ba’athists and other Iraqis who were in favor of ousting Al Qaeda in Iraq and rebuilding a functioning central government. The inherent Iraqi tribalism presented an opportunity for the U.S. to turn the tide of the war on the heels of what became known as the Anbar Awakening. The United States was able to seize on this opportunity in 2006 because it had achieved a greater understanding of Iraqi people, history and tribes. By 2007, this COIN approach in conjunction with the surge had turned the tide not only in Anbar but in other parts of Iraq as well.

In each of the three conflicts, in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States failed to fully plan for the stabilization operation that was needed following its kinetic success. The reason for the lack of planning for stabilization was directly related the limited American understanding of each region. In large part, the U.S. began each operation knowing just a bit of the region’s history—just enough history to draw conclusions about the severity of the conflict and the necessity of comprehensive American involvement. Once involved in the stabilization,

the U.S. struggled to succeed because each one of the three plans neglected a full understanding of each region's history and its people.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY STRATEGY FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CONFLICT**

This final section offers recommendations for the future. These proposals emanate from my analysis of the three case studies as illuminated by the three major research questions. I offer three major recommendations. First, U.S. policy makers must take serious note of the potential danger caused by failed and failing states—and integrate responses to these threats in national security planning efforts. Second, U.S. policy makers must ensure the development of a cadre of military officers who are capably trained in the art of irregular war. Finally, the United States must develop an effective approach for irregular war, which capitalizes on the special skill sets of the U.S. military. I turn now to an analysis of each of the foregoing recommendations.

### **DANGER OF FAILED AND FAILING STATES**

*Only by blending development, education and efforts to strengthen weak actors through security assistance will the U.S. and other democracies mitigate threats caused by instability in nearly half the globe.*

*Richard Shultz and Roy Godson*<sup>502</sup>

The first major recommendation of this work is that policy makers must effectively respond to the danger posed by weak states. The key challenge to effective response is determining where to act. In the last decade, policy makers, academics and strategists have repeatedly called for greater attention to weak states. Francis Fukuyama argued that “weak and failing states have become the single-most important problem facing the international order,”<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Roy Godson, Richard Shultz, Querine Hanlon, and Samantha Ravich, “Adapting America’s National Security Paradigm and Security Agenda,” National Strategy Information Center, (accessed September 3, 2010); available from [http://www.strategycenter.org/files/adapting\\_the\\_paradigm.pdf](http://www.strategycenter.org/files/adapting_the_paradigm.pdf)

<sup>503</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *State Building: Governance and World Order in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004,) 92.

and Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice argued that “the danger [failed states] pose is now unparalleled. Absent responsible state authority, threats that would and should be contained within a country’s borders can now melt into the world and wreak untold havoc.”<sup>504</sup> These calls to action linked the numerous dangers presented by failed states to the preservation of U.S. national security.

Indeed, weak states present an array of challenges. They have been tied to WMD proliferation, humanitarian catastrophes, regional upset, refugee migrations, terrorist networks, organized crime, health pandemics and environmental degradation. Weak states frequently feature unsound economies and widespread lawlessness within their borders, while still providing minimal essential services—not enough to serve the needs of the people but just enough to allow terrorists, profiteers, warlords, and criminal networks to thrive.<sup>505</sup> In other words, weak states typically lack effective law enforcement, robust economies and health services, but they do offer basic infrastructure like roads and ungoverned spaces. This destructive combination offers a perfect environment in which nefarious elements can proliferate. Clearly, weak states deserve the attention of policy makers and strategists.

The problem is that in the last two decades the number of weak states is on the rise<sup>506</sup>—and U.S. capacity and political will is not unlimited. *Foreign Policy* magazine’s failed states index places 18 states in “critical status, while the World Bank classifies 26 states as low-income

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<sup>504</sup> Condoleeza Rice, “The Promise of Democratic Peace: Why Promoting Peace is the only Realistic Path to Security,” *Washington Post*, Dec 11, 2005, (accessed October 27, 2010); available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/09/AR2005120901711.html>

<sup>505</sup> Most of Al Qaeda’s training cells are located in Pakistan, while the failing states of Colombia, Guatemala, and Nigeria harbor much of the world’s international organized crime. Stephan Mair, “A New Approach: The Need to Focus on Failing States,” *Harvard International Review* 29, No. 4 (Winter 2008.)

<sup>506</sup> In 2007, eleven states were deemed in “critical” status; by 2010 the number of critical states has risen to 18. “The Failed States Index 2010,” *Foreign Policy* and the *Fund for Peace* (accessed October 27, 2010); available from [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010\\_failed\\_states\\_index\\_interactive\\_map\\_and\\_rankings](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings)

countries under stress.<sup>507</sup> Obviously, the U.S. cannot respond everywhere. Therefore, a critical job for policy makers is to determine which weak states pose the greatest threat and, therefore, demand U.S. attention.

The first step in undertaking this determination is a recognition that weak states differ tremendously in their capacity, ability to reform, and geostrategic position. Some low income states, like many in central Africa, are exceedingly weak, but due to nearly non-existent infrastructure and geographic positioning, pose a lesser security concern to the U.S. Failing central African states have little ability to influence global markets, support terrorist networks, and cause wide ranging regional disruptions.

On the other hand, states that demonstrate some capacity, possess a lucrative natural resource, and are positioned strategically in the world deserve U.S. attention. These weak states threaten U.S. national security because their natural resources create a money-making capacity; their critical geo-strategic position provides a way to bring the goods to market, and their marginal but existent infrastructure establishes a basis from which terrorists, traffickers, and organized crime can work. Afghanistan in 2001 presents the ideal example with its borderline failed government, limited capacity through its access to opium, and central location at crossroads of east and west. The bottom line is that the U.S. must carefully examine the panoply of weak states to determine which ones have a strategic geographic location with access to resources and markets. Those weak states warrant immediate U.S. attention.

A final and related factor to be considered by U.S. policy makers in determining which weak states pose the greatest danger is the potential for spillover. When weak states are surrounded by weak neighbors, conflict, terrorism and trafficking are not only more difficult to

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<sup>507</sup> “Engaging with Fragile States: An IEG Review of World Bank Support to Low-Income Countries Under Stress,” *The World Bank*, September 2006, Washington, D.C., (accessed October 27 2010); available from <http://www.worldbank.org/ieg>.

address, but ultimately can expand uncontrolled. One of the single greatest security concerns associated with the Bosnia conflict was the potential impact that an intrastate conflict would spread unabated throughout the Balkans.

In sum, weak states are dangerous—but some of them are more dangerous than others. In this way, U.S. policy makers must carefully examine failed states to better understand their capacity, the significance of their geographic placement, and potential for spillover. Through serious comprehensive analysis, policy makers could better predict and therefore anticipate the origins of the next major trouble spots. After determining which areas present the greatest threats, wise policy makers will also realize that the commitment to addressing the challenges of weak states must include an effective post-conflict stabilization effort. The next step is preparing a military capable of taking on this new challenge.

*(RE)EDUCATING THE MILITARY*

*It takes 20,000 casualties to train a Major General.*  
*-A French Maxim, quoted by Colin Gray<sup>508</sup>*

*Good tactics will never overcome bad strategy.*

*General Anthony Zinni<sup>509</sup>*

The second major recommendation flowing from this dissertation is that the U.S. must better train its military forces to conduct stabilization operations. A key component of this training is better preparing future officer to think and plan strategically for irregular war operations. While regular battle experience remains a key component for the training of any successful officer, educating strategic thinkers who understand the threat posed by armed groups—is equally important.

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<sup>508</sup> Colin Gray, “Schools for Strategy: Teaching Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conflict,” Strategic Studies Institute (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College Press, 2009.)

<sup>509</sup> General Anthony Zinni, April 12, 2009, Interview with the author.

Strategy, according to Clausewitz has been traditionally understood as "the employment of battles to gain the end of war."<sup>510</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart describes strategy as the "art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy."<sup>511</sup> The combination of these two definitions forms the foundation for the modern understanding of strategy—as the governor of tactics ordained by national policy. In other words, strategy serves as the bridge between tactical operators and grand planners.

In the case of irregular war, these strategists must identify tools and tactics to effectively fight today's new warriors, while ensuring that the military operation is consistent with national security goals. Enemy annihilation, the approach often chosen in the Cold War Era, is ineffective. First, attempts to defeat the enemy through eradication will not work because the enemy is exceedingly difficult to identify. In traditional wars, militaries fought other militaries; the enemy was clear. That is not so in today's wars, where the enemy is not only difficult to identify but constantly changing. Second, operations designed for wholesale destruction of the other side will backfire, as the indigenous peoples witnessing the operation will lose trust, become disenfranchised, and eventually turn on the intervener. Operations designed as "search and destroy" missions or "strategies of attrition and annihilation" will flounder against today's enemies. Military operations for irregular wars must be fought differently—and the military forces must be prepared differently.

One of my key recommendations from this study is that the U.S. needs to ensure the development of military officers who study strategy as it relates to irregular war, learn about their new enemies, and understand how to design an effective stabilization operation. The first step is ensuring a continued exposure to the classics, Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, and Thucydides—as

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<sup>510</sup> Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.)

<sup>511</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (New York: Meridian, 1991.)

they encourage broad thinking about war and strategy that crosses historical epochs. Notions as fundamental as “knowing your enemy” and “war is an extension of politics” are easier to internalize when they are introduced first in a classroom setting. If the soldier’s first familiarization with these component ideas of strategy are in the midst of heated battle, the soldier is likely less willing to thoughtfully consider the deeper meaning of the principle. By developing ideas about strategy, as separated from the contemporary conflict of the day, a strategist is more likely to reach a rational and thoughtful conclusion.<sup>512</sup>

Despite the importance of the classics, their study alone will be somewhat insufficient in that U.S. War Colleges and Military Academies have long taught these concepts—but today’s soldiers have struggled to apply these lessons to today’s wars. An important addition to the military education curricula is exposure to the literature of irregular war and armed groups. In these “new conflicts,” the officers on the ground engaged in and directly responsible for the military operations are senior and mid-grade officers. Many of these officers have graduated from professional military education (PME’s) institutes, such as the Army War College, Naval War College, and Air War College. Typically, officers chosen for these programs have accomplished operational backgrounds and show promise for future promotion. These masters programs are also well-timed in an officer’s career, as PME students are often just returning from theater operations or transferring out upon completion of their education. PME is constructed to focus on the nexus between war and strategy.<sup>513</sup> For example, the Naval War College has

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<sup>512</sup> Colin Gray, “Schools for Strategy: Teaching Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conflict” (Carlisle:Strategic Studies Institute, 2009,) 29.

<sup>513</sup>One of the threefold objectives of the Naval War College Masters program is “to teach students to think strategically and to prepare for positions of strategic leadership. Strategy is the relationship between war’s purpose, objective, and means. The aim ... is to sharpen the student’s ability to assess how alternative strategic courses of action best serve to achieve overall national objectives.” U.S. Naval War College, “Mission,” (accessed March 11, 2010); available from <https://www.usnwc.edu/Departments---Colleges/Strategy-and-Policy.aspx>

recently created the Center for the Study of Armed Groups and Irregular War (CIWAG),<sup>514</sup> an academic center with a primary focus on effectively fighting America's future wars.<sup>515</sup> These curricular updates can help better prepare America's officer to become keener strategists, skilled planners, and stronger leaders.

A final area of focus for increased focus on the study of irregular war is at our nation's military academies. While these future officers will not immediately serve as leaders of military operations or designers of strategy, they are the fundamental building blocks of the future military. As undergraduates, they begin to develop their understanding of war and strategy and their role as a future officer. Due to the highly conscripted nature of military academy curriculum,<sup>516</sup> changes to the course of study are notoriously difficult. There is room for optimism, however, in that the study of irregular war has gained traction as an important part of all military academy curriculums.<sup>517</sup> These initiatives are in part the result of the workshops conducted by NSIC and later CIWAG to combine the communities, communicate the relevance of the study, offer ideas regarding curriculum development, and suggest practical changes for course structures. By introducing the study of strategy, especially the development of strategy for irregular war operations, early in an officer's career, the military boosts preparedness at the

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<sup>514</sup> The development of the NWC's CIWAG grew from a project originally sponsored by the National Strategy Information's Center's Consortium for the Study of Intelligence, as conceived by Dr. Roy Godson and Dr. Richard Shultz.

<sup>515</sup> The U.S. Marine Corps has created the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning at the Marine Corps training and Education Command. Its purpose is "to ensure ... a force of Marines-globally prepared, regionally focused- fully capable of effectively navigating the cultural complexities of the 21st century operating environments in support of assigned missions and requirements." The U.S. Army War College hosts a Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute that studies questions related to the transition from combat to stabilization and reconstruction. Peacekeeping and Stability operations Institute, U.S. Army War College, (accessed November 5, 2010); available from <http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/caocl/> and <http://pksoi.army.mil/>

<sup>516</sup> Cadets and midshipmen at military academies are required to take 40 courses over a period of exactly four years. Because all academy graduates earn a Bachelor of Science degree, the curriculum is heavily weighted toward math, sciences and engineering. Roughly ¼ of all required courses are of a technical nature. At the Coast Guard Academy, cadets must also take an additional five courses in the nautical sciences and maritime fields.

<sup>517</sup> Notably, West Point has incorporated the Center for Combating Terrorism into the cadet learning experience. The U.S. Naval Academy launched the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies which examines issues of irregular war and religious conflict. The U.S Coast Guard Academy has established the Center for Maritime Policy Security and Strategy as a way to examine specific maritime issues such as piracy and transnational threats.

individual and corps level and paves the way for a long-term interest at the strategic level of planning for irregular war.

Through the interworking at all levels of the U.S. military educational network, the study of irregular war has become increasingly important. The key is to continue facilitated discussions amongst the professors and students to ensure that communication continues and grows. Through education of U.S. military officers in the art of strategy and understanding the enemy, the odds improve for the construct of winning operations.

### RECONFIGURING THE APPROACH

*The legitimacy of the mission is as sensitive to perceptions as it is dependent upon the support and participation of the local populace in the processes that comprise the mission...The credible manner in which intervening forces conduct themselves and their operations builds as the operation progresses. Highly profession forces are well-disciplined, trained and culturally aware.*

*U.S. Army Field Manual 3-07*<sup>518</sup>

The final recommendation emerging from this study is that the U.S. must reconfigure its approach for dealing with today's national security threats. During the Cold War, the U.S. military had traditionally used overwhelming force to achieve a clearly outlined national security objective. This approach declared that forces were only to be sent when the goal was clearly outlined—and reasonably attainable. In the post 9/11 era, it is logical to question the continuing applicability of this approach. I argue that the tenets of the Powell Doctrine are still valid, but must be re-fashioned to address 21<sup>st</sup> century security landscape.

The U.S. must ensure that its armed forces have the ability to overwhelm the enemy—not through force but through overwhelming legitimacy. As this dissertation has argued and the case studies have shown, today's military forces must perform a complex role in stabilization operations; they must engage in regular combat, establish security, and assist host country forces

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<sup>518</sup> Field Manual, 3-07, Department of the U.S. Army, October 2008, (accessed September 28, 2010); available from <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-07.pdf>

in stabilization of their state. The achievement of this triple responsibility requires solid dedication by U.S. policy makers and military forces to the long-term national security objective. The U.S. Army has encouraged its forces to become both “sensors and shooters”—and slowly transformed the traditional warrior ethos into a complex interpretation of the correct action based on circumstance.<sup>519</sup>

This dissertation has challenged the logic of Secretary Rumsfeld’s “defense transformation” as a holistic approach to succeeding in irregular war, but accepts the need for sustained U.S. dominance in air power and technology. The problem is that technology alone will not win an irregular war. The forces on the ground must partner with host nation forces to recreate the post-combat society; it is through this partnership that legitimacy is won. As this dissertation demonstrated in the case of Iraq, early missteps and under-emphasis on the need for legitimacy led to a gross miscalculation by Washington policy-makers of Iraq civil society. As such, Sunni perceptions in the immediate post-war days were mismanaged—and this building distrust directly contributed to the several years of violence mid-decade.<sup>520</sup> The bottom line is that stabilization forces must work toward creation of an overwhelming sense of legitimacy—the intervening forces must be trusted and the host nation forces must be incorporated into the solution.

## CONCLUSION

### *Working by, with and through...*

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<sup>519</sup> The Air Force and the Marines, as traditional partners to the U.S. army, are also a key part of this discussion. The U.S. Air Force must focus on technological improvement specific to the needs in an asymmetric context. The Marines are roundly praised as the first fighting force to understand today’s challenges as a “three-block war.” Its expeditionary mindset is the Corps’ great strength and continued focus on education and development of its incoming marines is its future. Frank Hoffman, “Complex Irregular Wars,” *Orbis*, Summer 2006, (accessed September 10, 2010); available from <http://www.fpri.org/orbis/5003/hoffman.complexirregularwarfare.pdf>

<sup>520</sup> James T. Quinlivan, “Burden of Victory: The Painful Arithmetic of Stability Operations,” *RAND Review*, Summer 2003, (accessed March 21, 2010); available from <http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/summer2003/burden.html>

*U.S. Special Operation forces' mandate for stabilization operations*<sup>521</sup>

This dissertation has found that the U.S. struggled in irregular war for three major reasons. First, the U.S. has had a difficult time defining and effectively pursuing its long-term national security objectives. Moreover, when the operational goal was too narrowly perceived at the outset, U.S. policy-makers were slow to redefine its interests as the conflict persisted. Second, U.S. forces were under-prepared for the challenge they faced. In Bosnia, the problem was limited commitment to the operation, while in Afghanistan and Iraq, the soldiers struggled to understand the full-range of their responsibilities and how to perform them. Finally, in none of the three cases did the United States truly understand its enemy—and as such struggled to construct an effective operation. This oversight proved acutely damaging to operational success.

The good news is, however, that the United States has improved its learning regarding irregular war. As the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century begins and the country remembers the nearly 10 years that have passed since the attacks of 9/11, the United States has gradually accepted that irregular war is overtaking major combat as the most common method of fighting—largely because no major challengers to U.S. hegemony remain. Thus, today's wars are fought against decidedly less powerful enemies. As such, the United States must ensure that it is taking on this new fight in an effective way.

The U.S. must ensure that in making the decision to engage in irregular war that it carefully considers what it hopes to achieve through the intervention—and remains willing to rethink and restructure its operational goals as situation on the ground changes and greater learning occurs. In addition, policy makers must ensure that U.S. military forces are effectively prepared to face the challenges presented by irregular combat and the follow-on stabilization

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<sup>521</sup> Sebastian Gorka, "How to Win in Afghanistan," *On Defending Democracy*, Institute for Democracy and International Security, September 2009, (accessed November 2, 2010); available from <http://www.hudsonny.org/2009/09/how-to-win-in-afghanistan.php>

operation. And, finally the U.S. must devise effective stabilization operations that credibly deal with the particular challenges of each region. By learning the region's history and its people, the stabilization effort can more effectively anticipate post-combat problems and perhaps devise a plan to counteract their effects.

In closing, like all wars, the U.S. fights irregular wars to “attain a better peace.” And, the single most effective way to achieve this peace—and ensure the long-term stability of the international system is to devise and perform an effective stabilization operations once combat has ended. U.S military forces often quip that “the insurgency starts where the blacktop ends.” I argue that the reverse is also true. The insurgency ends where stability and rebuilding start.

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