

# Counterinsurgency: An Emergent Strategy

A Monograph

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## Abstract

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Why did the military shift its strategy to counterinsurgency (COIN) in Iraq in 2006 and again in Afghanistan in 2009? The emergent strategy of COIN appeared to serve best the political aim as the military responded to the policymaker's perceptions of political and military failures in both Iraq and Afghanistan. This monograph explores this shift in strategies using a case study methodology. Two criteria allow the evaluation of the evidence. First was the point in time where popular perceptions of failure raised the political and policy risk to the policymaker. The second criterion was the subsequent shift in military aims and strategy to address the risks identified by the policymaker. The change in strategy to COIN solves two problems. COIN allowed the policymaker to reduce risk by resetting the political time horizon for achieving military success, providing time, and space to find a viable solution. COIN allowed the military to appear as supportive of the political aims and to reduce the risks associated to a long-term deployment of combat forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan, by providing a strategy that extended the political time horizon for the perception of military success.

Both wars were limited wars in the sense defined by Carl von Clausewitz. Limited wars means limited political aims using limited military effort and means. Even though the political aim of regime change in both countries fit the definition of an absolute political aim, the military force used was limited in both effort and time, intending quick victory and quick exit. The failure of the initial regime change to bring overall success fueled the perception of political failure as the wars changed from final victory to a long-term perception of military failure.

The strategy of military choice in COIN provided both the policymaker and the military a powerful response to the public perception of political and military failure. COIN, then became a politically expedient response to perceptions of political risk, and a way for the military to find a path towards a new time horizon that put off the reckoning for final success in support of the policymaker.

## Acronyms

COIN	Counterinsurgency
GWOT	Global War on Terror
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
UNSCOM	United Nations Security Commission
WMD	Weapon of Mass Destruction
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, Chemical
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
JTF	Joint Task Force
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs
3ID	Third Infantry Division
ABCT	Airborne Brigade Combat Team
CPA	Coalition Provision Authority
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
JP	Joint Publication
MNF-I	Multi-National Forces—Iraq
KIA	Killed in Action
WIA	Wounded in Action
AQ	al-Qaeda
TLAM	Tomahawk Land Attack Missile
SOF	Special Operations Forces
ANA	Afghan National Army
LOO/LOE	Line of Operation/Line of Effort
AIA	Afghan Interim Authority
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## Section 1- Introduction

In March 2003, the United States military entered into Iraq intent on destroying the Iraqi Republican Guard and removing Saddam Hussein from power. In less than a month, the military drove through the Iraqi defenses, occupied Baghdad, and put Saddam Hussein on the run from his own capital. By June, Coalition forces and the interim Iraqi government had a weak grasp on the political control and stability of Iraq. Military officials originally believed the campaign would wrap up rather quickly. However, the military struggled in its efforts to raise and support a new Iraqi representative self-government, the clock continued to tick, and the length of the military intervention grew. The ineffective governing authority, the weak Iraqi security forces, and continuous fighting in the streets of Iraq caused perceptions of failure to flare. In response, the political aims shifted focus primarily toward stabilizing the Iraqi government, a task that would take years to accomplish, and the military needed to provide it time and space to do so.<sup>1</sup> Why did the military shift its strategy to counterinsurgency (COIN) in Iraq in 2006 and again in Afghanistan in 2009? The emergent strategy of COIN appeared to serve both the political aims and military aims by responding to the policymaker's perceptions of political failure.

What influences the decisions to enter war with one strategy and then later shift to another? In recent years using the legitimizing narrative of a Global War on Terror (GWOT), US policymakers shifted aims due to the changing characteristics of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that surprised the military and policymakers and fueled popular perceptions of failure. The premise for the shift begins with the United States' fundamental purpose to intervene abroad.

Prussian military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz mentions, "No one starts a war- or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so- without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it."<sup>2</sup> The decision cycle the United States uses to go to war involves a discourse cycle between policymakers and senior military officials that develops and refines why and how

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<sup>1</sup> Conrad C. Crane, "Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq," in *Understanding the US Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, ed. Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman, (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 130.

<sup>2</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 577.

to use the military to intervene with the intent on achieving US political aims. Figure 1 portrays this discourse. First, there exists, a standing foreign policy that sets the basis of justification for why the United States intervenes in another nation’s affairs. This decision process begins with the policymakers assessing political risk and risk to policy, developing a legitimate, justifiable narrative for intervention, building a coalition of support, and determining preferences of elements of national power with which to intervene.<sup>3</sup>

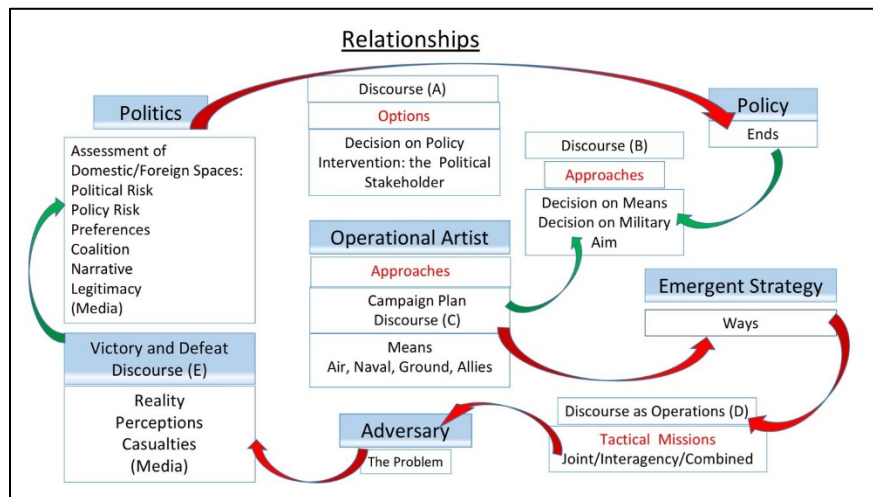


Figure 1: The Process and Resolution of Politically Aware Military Advice. G. Stephen Lauer “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist,” *The Strategy Bridge*, February 20, 2018.

The result of the policymaker’s assessment is a clearly defined political aim. Policymakers then work to gain political and popular support both domestically and internationally, and weigh the risks of imposing US political aims.<sup>4</sup> These risks, according to Alan Lamborn, are both risks to the policy itself, as well as political risks to the policymaker.<sup>5</sup> When the policymaker perceives that certain level of acceptable

<sup>3</sup> G. Stephen Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks: Politics, Policy, and the Military Operational Artist,” *The Strategy Bridge*, February 20, 2018, accessed March 20, 2018, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/2/20/blue-whales-and-tiger-sharks-politics-policy-and-the-military-operational-artist>

<sup>4</sup> Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427.

<sup>5</sup> Trenta Luca, *Risk and Presidential Decision-Making: The Emergence of Foreign Policy Crises* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 42.

political risk exists if they choose to intervene in another nation's affairs through military intervention, the political-military discourse begins.

Through this discourse, policymakers and military officials determine whether the political aims are limited or require a war of final victory.<sup>6</sup> In Book 1 of *On War* Clausewitz states, "...it is one thing if we mean our first operation to be followed by others until all resistance has been broken," in other words, a war of absolute aims. He continues, "...it is quite another if our aim is only to obtain a single victory..." If that is the extent of our aim, we will employ no more strength than is absolutely necessary," in other words, fight a war with limited means to achieve limited aims.<sup>7</sup> Thus, limited war seeks to weaken an opponent so a nation can "impose conditions [on him]."<sup>8</sup>

Destroying the existence of a nation is a theoretical concept. Clausewitz's notion of absolute war wages extremes of violence and an absence of logical "internal" limits on the use of force.<sup>9</sup> Absolute war, often calls for the complete destruction of an opposing nation's army, its people, and its will to defend itself through extreme violence.<sup>10</sup> Here, all victories within the war campaign focus on the clear goal of the operational artist, the final victory, where "all lines converge."<sup>11</sup> Prior to 1945, the US fought major war efforts, such as the Civil War and World War II, to achieve absolute aims and applied whole of government approaches and absolute military means.<sup>12</sup>

Limited war, on the other hand, achieves limited political aims through the application of limited military means. Clausewitz wrote these wars with limited aims "employ no more strength than absolutely necessary."<sup>13</sup> After 1945, the development of nuclear weapons prevented global superpowers from

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<sup>6</sup> Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

<sup>7</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 579-581.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Paret, *The Genesis of On War*, in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 90.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 583.

<sup>12</sup> Lauer, "Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks."

<sup>13</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 579-581.

pursuing absolute aims. In wars like Korea, Vietnam, and Panama, the political aims did not include the “extermination of the opponent, or destruction of his political existence.”<sup>14</sup>

The policymakers determine these limited political aims and the military operational artist develops military aims that organize time, space, purpose, and resources to achieve them. Clausewitz wrote, “The Original means of strategy is victory—that is, tactical success.”<sup>15</sup> The outcome of these tactical engagements develops a popular perception of either success or failure of the military intervention. Was the military victorious? Did the intervention achieve the political aims? Therefore, tactical actions, feed back into the policymaker, causing them to reassess the risk, narrative, legitimacy, and preferences as the war goes on.<sup>16</sup> Lamborn describes this phenomenon when he states that the higher the political risk, the “probability that policymakers will, in an effort to reduce those political risks, be willing to adopt policy alternatives that have higher policy risks.”<sup>17</sup> Policymakers respond by shifting the political aims, which are often “sub-optimal” and are riskier internationally.<sup>18</sup> In turn, the military then shifts its own military aims. The new military aims require a new, emergent strategy; one which responds to the perceptions that ongoing military efforts abroad failed and will continue to fail if the military does not change.

As former Under Secretary of State George Ball testified in a 1985 Congressional hearing, having a legitimate political structure was necessary for success in intervention, demanding such to “be sure that there is a well-defined country to defend, a national will to defend it, and a political structure through which that will is expressed... We must be certain there is a solid political base strong enough to support the weight of our support.”<sup>19</sup> As the presidential advisor during the Vietnam War, Arthur Schlesinger Jr.,

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<sup>14</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>16</sup> Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks.”

<sup>17</sup> Alan Lamborn, “Risk and Foreign Policy Choice,” *International Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1985): 387.

<sup>18</sup> Luca, 42.

<sup>19</sup> US House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, “The Lessons of Vietnam, 99<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., April 29, 1985” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986), 26.

testified to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, “all problems in the world are not military problems.”<sup>20</sup>

The issue with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that the political aims grew closer and closer to being absolute in nature. Following major combat operations in Afghanistan, President Bush announced the plan to “build an Afghanistan that is free from evil and a better place to live.”<sup>21</sup> In 2003, President Bush announced the plan to “build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free.”<sup>22</sup> Building nations and legitimate governing bodies cannot be done through military actions alone, and require significantly more resources to achieve.

The US attempted to achieve a “well-defined nation” with limited means through the initial application of decisive, combined arms maneuver in Afghanistan and Iraq. These tactical actions on the ground did not translate into the building of a nation in either Afghanistan or Iraq; and, without such popular perceptions of military failure to achieve the political aims arose. This included the failure to achieve success in a timely manner and the emergence of insurgent enemy forces intent on influencing the political structure of both Afghanistan and Iraq, which lead to prolonged combat operations with the attendant perceptions of failure and heightened political risk. Policymakers reacted by refocusing the political aims and allocated more resources towards the development of legitimate governing authorities. In an effort to provide time and space for policymakers to solve the problem and reduce political risk, the military resorted to the new, emergent strategy of COIN. This military strategy was well suited toward achieving the military aim of providing time and space to mitigate political risk, and enhanced the political aim of establishing an acceptable governing authority by pushing the time horizon for the end to an acceptable political time horizon.

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<sup>20</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Causes, Origins, and Lessons of the Vietnam War, May 9-11, 1972* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973), 79.

<sup>21</sup> “The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2018,” Council of Foreign Relations Timeline, n.d., accessed March 17, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>

<sup>22</sup> “President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours,” George W. Bush, accessed March 17, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html>

Central to COIN as a strategy is its cost and time needed for success. According to the 2009 *US Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, “[COIN] is an extremely difficult undertaking, is often highly controversial politically, involves a series of ambiguous events that are extremely difficult to interpret, and often requires vastly more resources and time than initially anticipated. In particular, governments that embark upon COIN campaigns often severely underestimate the requirement for a very long-duration, relatively high-cost commitment.”<sup>23</sup> Despite these issues, COIN still appeared as the US military’s best and most politically acceptable response to perceptions of political failure in Afghanistan and Iraq. The hypothesis here is that political perceptions of failure led to the emergence of COIN as a military strategy to resolve the perceived risk to the political aim and policy.

The methodology for this monograph compares two case studies (Afghanistan and Iraq) that each demonstrate the emergence of COIN to resolve the political perceptions of military failure in the resolution of the political aim. This monograph uses two criteria to evaluate the evidence. First is the identification of the political decision point at which the perception of political failure reached a level that was unacceptable to the policymaker and forced a change in political aim. The second is the identification of the military’s response to these perceptions, leading to the emergent strategy of COIN to provide the policymaker time, space, and a reduction in political risk.

This monograph utilizes a variety of primary and secondary sources to highlight both the political-military discourse, and the risks associated with policymaker decisions. To highlight the nature of the political discourse that underlies the political aims and perceptions of military action, this monograph relies upon Clausewitz’s *On War* (specifically Books I and VIII), Trenta Luca’s *Risk and Presidential Decision Making*, and Alan Lamborn’s *Risk and Foreign Policy Choice*.<sup>24</sup> The wars fought prior to September 11, in an attempt to achieve limited aims, describe the need to “apply no more strength

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<sup>23</sup> US Department of the State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, *US Government Guide to Counterinsurgency*, US Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 2009), 12.

<sup>24</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*; Luca, *Risk and Presidential Decision-Making*; Lamborn, "Risk and Foreign Policy Choice."

than is absolutely necessary.”<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the US intervened in Iraq and Afghanistan through limited means, as per the previous 65 years, but the political aims required the resourcing of war with absolute aims.

A remarkably detailed primary source titled *A Different Kind of War: The US Army in Operation Enduring Freedom October 2001- September 2003* by Donald P. Wright, et al., provided an excellent source of information used to build the justification and development of the political and military aims for entering the war in Afghanistan following 9/11.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Beth Bailey and Richard Immerman’s *Understanding the US Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* provided a collective of various secondary source writings that detail the events leading up to the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>27</sup>

For both case studies, Robert Gates’ book titled *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* is of significant value as it outlines the results of two separate Presidential Administrations’ responses to perceptions of political failure in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> His memoirs detail the Bush Administration’s adjustment to perceptions of failure, as he became the new Secretary of Defense following Secretary Rumsfeld’s resignation. They also detail the rise in political risk within the Obama Administration, which led to the replacement of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commanding general.

The following briefly outlines the political-military discourse that precedes the decisions to use military strength to intervene in international affairs. The two case studies cover the unique nature of this discourse following 9/11 and the resultant outcomes of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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<sup>25</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 579-581.

<sup>26</sup> Donald P. Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War: The United States Army in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM October 2001-September 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006)

<sup>27</sup> Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman, *Understanding the US Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014).

## Section 2- Case Study: Iraq

### Background

The United States' involvement in Iraq began in 1991 when Iraq invaded Kuwait and secured the oil fields.<sup>29</sup> This led to the first US incursion into Iraq in 1991 during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm where the United States ousted Iraq from Kuwait, but left Saddam in control of the nation.<sup>30</sup> The destruction of the Iraqi Republican Guard by February 1991 opened a window of opportunity for many of the Shia and Kurdish groups to rebel against the Ba'athist government. In response to these uprisings, the Iraqi military conducted a number of brutal military actions resulting in a significant number of civilian casualties. On 3 April 1991, the United Nations developed a Special Commission (UNSCOM) and passed Resolution 687, demanding the disarming of all Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and destruction of all means of production.<sup>31</sup> Between April 1991 and June 1997, UNSCOM passed two resolutions (Resolution 715, October 1991 and Resolution 1115, June 1997) demanding compliance with Resolution 687. During this period, Iraq refused access to key inspection sites and interfered with multiple inspections.<sup>32</sup> Due to lack of compliance by December 1998, a combined United States and British effort named Operation Desert Fox sought to destroy all of Iraq's Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological (NBC) capabilities and disrupt Iraq's air defense network. This campaign had minimal success leaving many to believe there was a residual number of WMDs still in the Iraqi military possession.<sup>33</sup>

After the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration feared another non-state terrorist group with global reach might gain access to an Iraqi WMD. President Bush

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<sup>29</sup> BBC News, *Iraq Profile- Timeline* (London, England: BBC News, October 26, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Richard Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Bryan Wright and Douglas Hopper, *Iraq WMD Timeline: How the Mystery Unraveled*, accessed November 15, 2005, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4996218>

<sup>32</sup> Wright and Hopper, *Iraq WMD Timeline*.

<sup>33</sup> Micah Zenko, "Is Operation Desert Fox a Useful Comparison to Bombing Iran?" Council on Foreign Relations, April 15, 2015, accessed November 15, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/operation-desert-fox-useful-comparison-bombing-iran>

noted in November 2001 that all nations producing WMDs as well as those who harbored or supported terrorists were to be “held accountable.”<sup>34</sup> During his State of the Union Address on January 28, 2002, he identified Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as three unaligned nations within an “Axis of Evil.” All three nations in this Axis of Evil had access to WMDs and were willing to sponsor terrorists with influences the global power structure.<sup>35</sup> On February 3, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice all defended President Bush’s identification of the Axis of Evil and made direct links between al-Qaeda fighters receiving support from Iran during the US invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> By September 25, 2002, after over a year of investigation, there was no substantial, publicly released, proof of links between al-Qaeda (AQ) and Iraq. However, Secretary Rumsfeld reported documented links between the two. He claimed there were “increasing contacts” between Iraqi officials and AQ members that included training on the use and employment of chemical and biological weapons.<sup>37</sup>

In a diplomatic effort to cease these ties between Iraq and AQ, the United States and the United Nations (UN) sought to verify the number of WMDs by sending in UN weapons inspectors. By November 8, 2002, the UNSCOM passed Resolution 1441 giving Iraq a final opportunity to comply with UN Weapons Inspectors or face “serious consequences.”<sup>38</sup> Two weeks later, inspections began. By February 2003, the UN weapons inspectors conducted over 400 inspections, but found only a few inert chemical Weapons of Mass Destruction.<sup>39</sup> The Bush Administration continued to raise alarms over the

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<sup>34</sup> “The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003,” US Department of State, n.d., accessed January 20, 2009, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/5889.htm>, November 26, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

information presented by Colin Powell that included satellite imagery of uninspected weapons facilities, terrorist training camps, intercepted communications, and reports of obstructions to UN inspections.<sup>40</sup>

## Political-Military Discourse

On October 16, 2002, US Congress passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243) authorizing President Bush to the use of the Armed Forces to enforce the UNSCOM resolutions (687 and 715) regarding Iraq.<sup>41</sup> On March 17, 2003, in an address to the nation, President Bush announced the political aim of the United States in Iraq was to, “tear down the apparatus of terror and [the United States] will help [Iraq] build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free.”<sup>42</sup>

The planning of the invasion into Iraq was over a year in the making. In February 2002, the invasion plan included securing oil fields and isolating Baghdad. The Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, initially reported at that time, that an invasion and post-war reconstruction would take “several hundred thousand Soldiers.”<sup>43</sup> Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, stated that Shinseki was “wildly off the mark” as they believed many senior military officials could not understand anything except the concept of large, heavy military formations.<sup>44</sup> During the final few months leading up to the March 20, 2003 invasion, the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) developed a new Joint Task Force—4 (JTF-4) for the invasion, Operation Cobra II. Comprised of close to 150,000 Troops, JTF-4 included the Army’s V Corps, the First Marine Expeditionary Force, and the British First Armored Division.<sup>45</sup> The end state for Operation Iraqi Freedom echoed President Bush’s aim for a “prosperous and

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<sup>40</sup> US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>41</sup> 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002, *Public Law 107-243* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 16, 2002), section 3, paragraph a, line 2.

<sup>42</sup> “President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours,” George W. Bush, accessed March 17, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html>

<sup>43</sup> Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq,” 130.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>45</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story on the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2006), 182-183.

free Iraq.”<sup>46</sup> It sought “a stable Iraq, with its territorial integrity intact and a broad-based government that renounces WMD development and use and no longer supports terrorism or threatens its neighbors.”<sup>47</sup> The plan outlined a number of military objectives. First, destabilize, isolate, and overthrow the Iraqi regime and provide support to a new, broad-based government. Second, destroy Iraqi WMD capability and infrastructure. Third, protect allies and supporters from Iraqi threats and attacks. Fourth, destroy terrorist networks in Iraq. Fifth, gather intelligence on global terrorism. Sixth, detain terrorists and war criminals, and free individuals unjustly detained under the Iraqi regime. Finally, support international efforts to set conditions for long-term stability in Iraq and the region.<sup>48</sup> Five of these seven military aims center around achieving offensive and defensive military tasks, but set conditions for post-war civil-military efforts to “build an Iraq that is prosperous and free.”<sup>49</sup> In January 2003, President Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive 24, granting Secretary Rumsfeld decision authority for post-war reconstruction.<sup>50</sup> A Strategic Studies Institute review of Iraq outlined potential post-war reconstruction issues. It listed 135 separate tasks that the United States needed to achieve in order to be successful, which included “interagency planning, a multi-year military commitment, and a national commitment to nation-building.”<sup>51</sup> Considering this, Secretary Rumsfeld established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs (ORHA), responsible for the development of the new Iraqi regime after military victory.<sup>52</sup> However, the disconnect between the political aim of “rebuilding” a government and the military aim of “supporting” it and “setting conditions for long-term stability” was apparent.

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<sup>46</sup> George W. Bush, “President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours.”

<sup>47</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress* (Congressional Review, Washington, DC: US Congress, 2008), 9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>49</sup> George W. Bush, “President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours.”

<sup>50</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 149-150.

<sup>51</sup> Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq,” 130.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

## The Military Execution

The original plan, approved in January 2003 and deemed “Operation 5-11-16-125,” was a two-prong attack from the south and north, focusing on Baghdad as the final objective.<sup>53</sup> However, the Turkish parliament denied the use of Turkish territory to use for an invasion of Iraq a month prior to the invasion. The resulting plan was a seizure of Basra by the British division, a strong northward thrust into Baghdad by the Third Infantry Division (3ID) and First Marine Division moving abreast, and the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) along with the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group jumping into northern Iraq in order to obfuscate the Iraqi forces.<sup>54</sup> On March 20, the United States and British Forces launched Operation Iraqi Freedom and crossed the Kuwaiti border into Iraq.<sup>55</sup> On March 26, 173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT jumped outside of Kirkuk.<sup>56</sup> By April 7, 3ID secured Baghdad and put Saddam Hussein and his administration on the run. Within six weeks, the Coalition won the conventional battle against Iraqi Armed Forces. However, on 13 April General Tommy Franks, commanding general of CENTCOM, reported the remaining search for WMDs would take several years due to the 3000+ sites the assaulting forces bypassed on the way to Baghdad.<sup>57</sup>

Work to achieve the political aims for the non-military personnel began immediately upon the completion of major combat operations. By 15 April, retired General Jay Garner organized the ORHA and held its first meeting with the Iraqi notables in Nasiriyah to discuss the post-war government structure.<sup>58</sup> The ORHA assumed that Iraq functioned before the war, so the plan did not center on fixing the government, rather it focused on fixing simply what the United States broke.<sup>59</sup> Garner later mentioned

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<sup>53</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress* (Congressional Review, Washington, DC: US Congress, 2008), 12-13.

<sup>54</sup> Eric Hamilton, *Iraq Report* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2008), 4-5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>57</sup> US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 150.

in an interview, “My preference was to put the Iraqis in charge as soon as we could, and do it with some form of elections.”<sup>60</sup> The plan involved the use of the Iraqi Army to help with security. It also included paying the salaries of the Iraqi government employees and the army in order to maintain operations. The plans were temporary until another governing body came in to replace them.<sup>61</sup> However, the plans did not include forcibly removing all of the Hussein-era Ba’athists from the government, rather it held a pragmatic approach to remove only those loyal to the Ba’ath party.<sup>62</sup>

On the first week of May 2003, the British Ambassador to Egypt, John Sawers, developed a report on the civil-military developments in Iraq. The report stated, “Garner’s outfit, ORHA, is an unbelievable mess. No leadership, no strategy, no coordination, no structure, and inaccessible to ordinary Iraqis.”<sup>63</sup> With meager reconstruction plans, limited communication with the Iraqi people, and very little funding, the public support for the ORHA waned.<sup>64</sup> In response, on May 11, the Bush administration disbanded the ORHA, removed Jay Garner, and replaced him with Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. Bremer and the new Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) held a much different concept as to how to proceed with civil-military efforts in Iraq. He opted for the complete disbandment of the Iraqi Army and the ousting of all Ba’ath representatives in the Iraqi government that had ties back to Saddam.<sup>65</sup>

Paul Bremer’s efforts set the conditions for a power vacuum within the government of Iraq with little ability to control the actions of any particular group. Bremer disbanded the Iraqi Army, the only force with the ability and legitimacy to secure the population. Meanwhile, the Ba’ath party, which had direct ties to much of the majority Sunni population, had no representation within the newly established government. Over ninety insurgent groups, both Sunni and Shia, sought control or representation within

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<sup>60</sup> Jay Garner, interviewed by Greg Palast, BBC News (March 22, 2004).

<sup>61</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 150-154.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 153 and 476.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 471-472.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen Biddle and Peter D. Feaver, “Assessing Strategic Choices in the War on Terror,” in *Understanding the US Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, ed. Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 123.

the government, and made it increasingly difficult for the CPA to establish a strong, legitimate, local governing body in Iraq.<sup>66</sup> By June 18, 2003, less than three months after entering into Iraq, the United States found itself fighting a guerilla war, but many in Washington were confident that the Coalition forces could win.<sup>67</sup>

## Failure and Perceptions of Failure

Due to the new local insurgent threats and the lack of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) following the disbandment, Bremer needed the army to be “bigger and faster” in order to establish security and enable local governance to build. By June 2003, ground forces in Iraq reorganized into Combined Joint Task Force—7, commanded by Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez.<sup>68</sup> Despite a number of successful operations such as the capture of Saddam Hussein and the killing of his sons, Uday and Qusay, the Task Force began to falter in connection to the CPA’s de-Ba’athification plans.<sup>69</sup> The CPA’s mistrust over much of the Sunni population, made it increasingly difficult for the Task Force to gain traction with the local populace and establish security.<sup>70</sup> Further difficulties arose when the Associated Press published an article in November 2003, detailing significant detainee abuses occurring at a US-run prison in Abu Ghraib.<sup>71</sup> Graphic pictures and detailed accounts of torture detracted from the original narrative of the US Army helping prevent atrocities from the former dictator. The Task Force continued to fight insurgent forces, but due to the deteriorating security situation, CENTCOM realigned it as a more robust four-star

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<sup>66</sup> Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq,” 123.

<sup>67</sup> US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>68</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 487-488.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 490-491.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 491.

<sup>71</sup> Charles J. Hanley, “Former Iraqi Detainees Tell Of Riots, Punishment In The Sun, Good Americans and Pitiless Ones,” Associated Press, November 1, 2003, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://legacy.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/world/iraq/20031101-0936-iraq-thecamps.html>

headquarters, renamed the Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I).<sup>72</sup> On July 1, 2004, General George Casey took command of MNF-I.<sup>73</sup>

Over the course of General Casey's three years in command, he made it clear of his intentions to achieve the conditions laid out by President Bush during a speech at the US Army War College in which he sought "Iraqi people in charge of Iraq for the first time in generations."<sup>74</sup> The plan to do this was to first hand over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government, second, help establish stability and security, third, continue rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, fourth, encourage further international support, and finally, hold free, national elections.<sup>75</sup> To achieve these goals, it required Iraqis taking more control as time progressed. By June 28, 2004, before General Casey took command, the US Embassy set conditions for the Iraqi government, though very inexperienced, to obtain full sovereignty and control of the government.<sup>76</sup>

The MNF-I attempted to legitimize the Iraqi leadership, while continuing to eliminate AQ influences.<sup>77</sup> In an effort to build civil-military relations, General Casey sought to face all civil-military issues together with Ambassador John Negroponte.<sup>78</sup> Their combined mission statement was, "To help the Iraqi people build a new Iraq, at peace with its neighbors, with a constitutional, representative government that respects human rights and possesses security forces sufficient to maintain domestic order, and deny Iraq as a safe haven for terrorists."<sup>79</sup> This new partnership assumed responsibility of an June 8, 2004 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546, which set an 18-month timeline for the development of a new, stable Iraqi government with an elected leader and permanent constitution by

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<sup>72</sup> George W. Casey, *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004 – February 2007*. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

December 31, 2005.<sup>80</sup> This also helped further Casey's plans as it intended to force consensus throughout the Iraqi leadership.<sup>81</sup> In addition to a stable governing body, General Casey also focused on the development of the ISF and planning for the reduction of sectarian violence. Coalition forces planned to recruit and raise the numbers of ISF by over 100,000 throughout 15 different cities in an effort to regain and retain security.<sup>82</sup> Once the forces were large enough to provide enough support, General Casey and the commanders on the ground developed a model of securing large areas with ISF in the lead and subsequently inputting government assistance to rebuild the infrastructure. Casey states this was the basis of the later named, "Clear-Hold-Build" methodology, and was a means for the Coalition and ISF to secure cities and set conditions for safe elections in January 2005.<sup>83</sup> By the end of 2004, General Casey believed he made significant progress. He mentions in a note to his boss, General John Abizaid, Commander of USCENTCOM:

We believe that we are broadly on track. We have rolled back insurgent gains and eliminated insurgent and terrorist safe havens in Iraq, suppressed the Shia insurgency, quintupled reconstruction activity, kept ISF development roughly on track, made progress in local control in 14 of 18 provinces, and saw the growth of Iraqi governmental capacity. Election preparations are proceeding in all but Ninewa and Al Anbar provinces.<sup>84</sup>

Although General Casey thought he was successful, much of the situation in Iraq proved otherwise as violence and divisiveness rose. From July 1, 2004 to November 2004, the number of troops Killed in Action (KIA) rose from 668 to 913, averaging 61 per month.<sup>85</sup> The number of troops Wounded in Action (WIA) also rose from 4337 to 7015, averaging 670 per month.<sup>86</sup> On November 7, 2004, a

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<sup>80</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1511* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 9-10.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-50.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>85</sup> "Iraq Index," Brookings Institute, Ian. S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, July 26, 2013, accessed March 17, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/iraq-index/>. Note: all casualty numbers taken from the monthly report compiled from government sources by the Brookings Institute and published in the Brookings Iraq Index. The figures include all casualties including hostile, non-hostile, and accidental incidents.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

combined, multinational force conducted Operation Phantom Fury in a second attempt to physically remove AQ from the city of Fallujah. After seventy KIA and over 600 wounded the coalition did not have a significant number of troops to continue to secure the city and withdrew. Due to this, upon Coalition withdrawal, AQ fighters reoccupied Fallujah, making Operation Phantom Fury a significant event in the development of political perceptions of failure.<sup>87</sup>

Also in November 2004, the divisiveness among the Iraqi people grew. On November 9, the Association of Muslim Scholars, a group of Sunni clerics, called for the boycott of the legitimacy of the elections due to sectarian violence and threats in the western part of Iraq.<sup>88</sup> In January 2005, Iraq held its first election. Though this seems like progress in the development of a legitimate government, the outcomes heavily favored Shia Iraqis. Thus, with the election of the interim president, Nouri al Maliki, the continued lack of representation in government of the Sunni Iraqis continued to solidify the divide throughout the country.<sup>89</sup> Newly appointed Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, stated in June 2005 that the elections had a “polarizing effect” on the populace leading to what eventually became a spike in sectarian violence.<sup>90</sup>

The political and military reaction to the sectarian violence was the development of the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* in November 2005 that emphasized Economic, Political, and Security efforts in synch with each other. Militarily, the new strategy focused on the “Clear-Hold-Build” methodology that had minimal success earlier in the year.<sup>91</sup> Violence spiked on February 22, 2006 when a bomb detonated in a Shia holy site, the al-Askari Mosque, in the Sunni city of Samarra.<sup>92</sup> The violent aftermath brought the division of cultures throughout Iraq to the forefront. The political and economic powers

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<sup>87</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 45-46.

<sup>88</sup> “Timeline: Iraqi Elections,” Al Jazeera, March 3, 2010, accessed March 14, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/focus/iraqelection2010/2009/01/200912981139534809.html>

<sup>89</sup> Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq,” 135.

<sup>90</sup> Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 82.

<sup>91</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 49.

<sup>92</sup> Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 89-90.

throughout the nation split four ways between Sunni and Shia Extremists, External Iranian Influences (mainly Shia), and External Sunni Resistance (from various nations in the Middle East).<sup>93</sup> General Casey answered this division with another failed operation named Operation Together Forward in June 2006. Like Phantom Fury, Together Forward was predicated upon a Clear-Hold-Build methodology, which despite having over 50,000 coalition and partner troops, MNF-I did not have enough forces on the ground to maintain control of Baghdad after the initial clearance.<sup>94</sup> By October 2006, representatives in MNF-I stated that Operation Together Forward did not achieved the reduction of violence they expected.<sup>95</sup>

These faults in Iraq continued to develop the perceptions of failure. The political decision point arose in November 2006, when Secretary Rumsfeld, fed up with the “old thinking” of the military and the deteriorating situation in Iraq, resigned.<sup>96</sup> A January 2007 report mentions, “The situation in Baghdad has not improved despite tactical adjustments” noting nationwide trends of violence, failed promises from the Iraqi government, limited operations that hinder the security plan, and inadequate force levels.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, during the 2006 US mid-term elections, the Republican Party lost control of Congress.<sup>98</sup> Policymakers needed change in order to buy time and space for them to find a viable solution to the situation in Iraq and to reduce political and policy risk.

Secretary Robert Gates, the new Secretary of Defense, quickly established himself in Washington, making success in Iraq one of his first priorities.<sup>99</sup> President Bush and Secretary Gates identified the dire situation in Iraq through four points: first, sectarianism was on the rise, second, political and economic progress was unlikely without a basic level of security, third, Iraqi leaders focused

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<sup>93</sup> Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 93.

<sup>94</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 50-51.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>96</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 4.

<sup>97</sup> National Security Council, *Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 6.

<sup>98</sup> “Democrats Retake Congress,” Cable News Network, November 08, 2006, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/>

<sup>99</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 18.

primarily on personal and sectarian agendas, and finally, popular support for the war was waning.<sup>100</sup> The need to acknowledge and respond to these perceptions of failure required a shift in political focus toward establishing a stronger governing body.

## Political and Military Response

Secretary Gates and the majority of the Administration considered the idea of surging additional troops into Iraq to achieve and maintain a secure environment.<sup>101</sup> However, a surge was in direct opposition to what Secretary Gates and many in uniform believed to be the correct way ahead. On December 22, 2006, following a visit to Iraq, Secretary Gates reported to President Bush, “Ultimately, [General] Pace, [General] Abizaid, [General] Casey and I believe we probably have enough US forces and Iraqi capability in place...”<sup>102</sup> General Casey believed that bringing additional forces into a sectarian conflict without political support would only raise the level of violence.<sup>103</sup> Secretary Gates mentions, “In making the decision to surge, Bush listened closely to his military commander in the field, *his* boss at Central Command, and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff, giving them ample opportunities to express their views. Then he rejected their advice.”<sup>104</sup> The military strategy was the issue. President Bush and Secretary Gates agreed the military strategy carried out by General Casey did not support the necessary ends for success in Iraq. General Casey later stated, “Washington was looking for something different from what I was recommending to them.”<sup>105</sup>

On January 10, 2007, the Administration announced the “New Way Forward.”<sup>106</sup> This new strategy, like the strategy published in 2005, focused on mutually supporting political, economic, and security efforts. It also added regional efforts and made it explicitly clear that there is a significant need

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<sup>100</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 47-48.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-43.

<sup>103</sup> Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 142-143.

<sup>104</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 48.

<sup>105</sup> Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 143.

<sup>106</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 52.

for security to be in place, before any other efforts are to move forward.<sup>107</sup> This new strategy required sufficient ground forces not only to ‘clear,’ but also to ‘hold’ the terrain. With sufficient security in place, the Administration could focus on “creating breathing space” and enabling the Iraqi government the ability to resolve its own internal issues.<sup>108</sup> In February 2007, Secretary Gates replaced General Casey with General David Petraeus.<sup>109</sup> Coupled with a surge of over 30,000 troops, the new emergent COIN strategy carried forward by General Petraeus was, “A bridge to buy time and space for the Iraqi government to stand up.”<sup>110</sup>

Throughout 2006, the Combined Arms Center commanded by then Lieutenant General Petraeus produced Field Manual 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*. This manual attempted to “fill a doctrinal gap” by outlining fundamental principles for military operations in a counterinsurgency.<sup>111</sup> The manual stresses the need to fight insurgencies as well as lead civil-military action until other agencies arrive and take the helm. It notes limited personnel and resources as well as violence levels that prevent many other agencies from deploying into an occupied country.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, Secretary Gates affirmed the newfound political aims in two primary areas. He stated the goal of withdrawing troops by the end of 2007 dependent upon the conditions on the ground, establishing a review of the success or failure of a surge of troops by September 2007.<sup>113</sup> The new strategy relieved the policymaker’s political risk by providing the American people a new way ahead.

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<sup>107</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 52.

<sup>108</sup> Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq,” 123. Quoted from Peter R. Monsoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 22-25.

<sup>109</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 44-45.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>111</sup> US Department of Defense, Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), foreword and vii.

<sup>112</sup> “...however, the ability of such agencies to deploy to foreign countries in sustainable numbers and with ready access to necessary resources is usually limited. The violence level in the [Area of Operations] also affects civilian agencies’ ability to operate.” FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2006), 2-9.

<sup>113</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 50.

## The Conclusion

Policymakers chose to intervene in Iraq through a limited war with limited aims, while simultaneously seeking the absolute aim of overthrowing the governing regime. The military strategy used decisive, combined arms maneuver to overthrow the regime. However, following the initial military successes, and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, the conditions on the ground prevented the formation of a new legitimate, national political entity, thus making it seem as if the intervention was unsuccessful. The perception of failure to achieve the political aims heightened the political risk to the policymakers. In response to these perceptions, the political aim shifted to finding a whole of government solution to establishing a legitimate governing authority. In response, the military adjusted its aims and resorted to an emergent strategy of COIN. The strategy was COIN because in a war of limited aims, and in the face of limited military means, military strategy shifted to the time-intensive aim of countering violent insurgencies, while focusing on gaining time and space for the development of local legitimacy in governance.

## Section 3- Case Study: Afghanistan

### Background

United States involvement in Afghanistan began in 1979 with their support for anti-Soviet occupation rebels. Between 1979 and 1989, the USSR invaded the Muslim country of Afghanistan, but a firm resistance from a United States-supported group called the mujahedeen ousted the global superpower. A multitude of factions emerged from this victory, the most notable being a small group called the Taliban. The Taliban, which still exists today, is an Islamic Fundamentalist group that gained significant support within the madrassas in Pakistan. The fundamentalist beliefs center on the ideology that there should be one Islamic State and all non-Muslims were simply “enemies of Islam.”<sup>114</sup> By the 1990s, the Taliban allied with another fundamentalist group led by Osama bin Laden, AQ, or “The Base,”

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<sup>114</sup> University of London, England, "What Caused the 9/11 Attacks on the USA?" *What Caused 9/11?* (Cambridge: University of London, Institute of Education, n.d.), 6.

that conducted terrorist attacks to further their message. Both groups were intent on removing all outside influence from Afghanistan and establishing an Islamic government following the fall of the puppet communist government replaced by the withdrawing United Soviet States of Russia (USSR).<sup>115</sup>

In 1990, the United States attacked Iraq in the first Gulf War. Between the economic sanctions that strangled and starved the Iraqi people and the United States alliance with Saudi Arabia (bin Laden's home country), Osama bin Laden sought to retaliate against the United States.<sup>116</sup> The results of a 1983 attack by Hezbollah on peacekeeping forces in Lebanon and the resistance to the USSR's invasion gave bin Laden confidence in the Muslim resolve against global superpowers.<sup>117</sup> He sought the removal of US influences throughout the Middle East, and especially in Saudi Arabia. American presence was "an insult to the Saudi people."<sup>118</sup> He believed coordinated attacks would cause the United States to "leave the Middle East" for good.<sup>119</sup> Basing out of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the first AQ attack occurred on December 19, 1992, targeting US Military troops at a hotel in Yemen who were on their way to Somalia to participate in Operation Restore Hope. The blast did not kill any US citizens and went generally unnoticed.<sup>120</sup> The following year on February 26, the first World Trade Center bombing occurred where a truck bomb killed six people.<sup>121</sup> On November 13, 1995 and June 25, 1996, AQ conducted attacks on two separate US military bases in Saudi Arabia killing a combined twenty-six soldiers.<sup>122</sup> Two of the more

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<sup>115</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 71.

<sup>116</sup> University of London, England, *What Caused 9/11?*, 8.

<sup>117</sup> University of London, England, *What Caused 9/11?*, 7; "Beirut Marine Barracks Bombing Fast Facts," Cable News Network, June 13, 2013, accessed February 19, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/13/world/meast/beirut-marine-barracks-bombing-fast-facts/index.html>

<sup>118</sup> Robert Fisk, "My Audience With the Godfather of Terror," *The Independent*. September 15, 2001, accessed August 25, 2017, <https://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/my-audience-with-the-godfather-of-terror-26074157.html>

<sup>119</sup> University of London, England, *What Caused 9/11?*, 9

<sup>120</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 198.

<sup>121</sup> "Timeline: Key Events Leading Up to Sept. 11" Fox News Network, LLC., September 05, 2002, accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2002/09/05/timeline-key-events-leading-up-to-sept-11.html>

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

notorious events occurred in August of 1998 where bin Laden coordinated the attacks on two US embassies—Kenya and Tanzania. Following these attacks, bin Laden sent out a worldwide call for *jihad* against the United States on August 28, 1998.<sup>123</sup> The United Nations finally charged him with coordinating the attacks on November 4, 1998 and urged the Taliban to turn him in to custody. They refused. The final attack on the United States occurred on October 12, 2000 when suicide bombers from Yemen attacked a US Navy Destroyer, the *USS Cole*. This killed seventeen sailors and eventually led to the economic sanctions on the Taliban in Afghanistan for refusing to extradite bin Laden.<sup>124</sup>

Osama bin Laden mentioned his grievances in a multitude of 1990s interviews, but his message went unnoticed until after the attack on September 11, 2001. By then, Osama bin Laden coordinated attacks in five separate countries (one on US soil) and received very little in the way of retaliatory response from the United States. His next two attacks finally got the attention of the United States that he wanted. On September 9, 2001, two AQ suicide bombers posed as journalists and killed the leader of the US-supported Northern Alliance in Afghanistan—a group in direct opposition to the Taliban. This was an effort by AQ to show the Taliban their continued support for the fight against the United States.<sup>125</sup> Two days later, AQ executed an attack, years in the making, on the United States that involved nineteen terrorists who hijacked four planes in an effort to destroy the World Trade Centers in New York, the Pentagon in Virginia, and a fourth unknown location.<sup>126</sup> The attack killed 2,974 and set in motion a global response to end AQ terror attacks.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Fox News Network, LLC., *Timeline: Key Events Leading Up to Sept. 11*.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Fox News Network, LLC., *Timeline: Key Events Leading Up to Sept. 11*.

<sup>126</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 29.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew Wander, “A History of Terror: al-Qaeda from 1988-2008,” *The Guardian*, July 12, 2008, accessed November 2, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/13/history.alqaida>

## Political-Military Discourse

Policymakers needed little more justification in response to the attacks. Domestically, there was unanimous bipartisan support in Congress to retaliate and by September 13 then President George W. Bush had the “full resources of the Government” at his disposal.<sup>128</sup> The international base of support developed as more and more facts and evidence arose through intelligence reports. Citizens from eighty nations died because of the attack. Pakistan, Russia, the Central Asian nations, the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia), Japan, and Turkey all expressed their support of the United States following the attacks.<sup>129</sup> By October 2, evidence pointing in the direction of Osama bin Laden accumulated and provided the “clear and compelling evidence” that many Middle Eastern nations wanted before offering their support to the United States.<sup>130</sup> On October 4, nineteen NATO countries unanimously supported the invocation of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty, which considered the attack on the United States an attack on all member nations.<sup>131</sup>

On September 18, 2001, the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress passed Public Law 107-40 authorizing “the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States.”<sup>132</sup> On September 20, President Bush addressed the nation and a joint session of Congress and stated, “Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every

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<sup>128</sup> Eric V. Larson and Bogdan Savych, *American Public Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad, Research* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), 92; US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>132</sup> 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Authorization for Use of United States Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 18, 2001).

terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.”<sup>133</sup> In a direct note to the Taliban during this address, President Bush stated:

“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.”

Broad political aims developed: bring Osama bin Laden to justice, degrade the AQ network, and degrade every terrorist group with global reach.<sup>134</sup> The United States attempted to achieve the first of these aims through diplomatic outreach with the Taliban government. On four separate occasions (September 17 and 19, and October 2 and 6), the Bush Administration tried to coerce the Taliban to stop protecting bin Laden and hand him over to the United States.<sup>135</sup> The United States also continued to uphold the economic sanctions and trade restrictions on the Taliban from January for the same reason—extradition of bin Laden.<sup>136</sup> On September 25, 2001, the United States also extended the economic sanction efforts to individuals who support or conduct terrorist activities through Executive Order 13224-“Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions with Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism.”<sup>137</sup> Also on September 25, Saudi Arabia attempted to coerce the Taliban to comply with US demands by breaking all diplomatic ties with them in the hope that the actions of another Muslim-majority nation would resonate within Kabul.<sup>138</sup> None of these actions changed the minds of the Taliban leadership, and the United States resorted to a military solution.

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<sup>133</sup> “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” George W. Bush, September 20, 2001, accessed March 17, 2018, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

<sup>134</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 30.

<sup>135</sup> US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>136</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 47.

<sup>137</sup> George W. Bush, "Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, or Support Terrorism." Executive Order 13224 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 25, 2001)

<sup>138</sup> US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

The military response against the Taliban required entering Afghanistan by force, searching for bin Laden somewhere within a complex cave system, and degrading terrorist groups that collectively had global reach spanning over sixty nations.<sup>139</sup> General Tommy Franks, commander of the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) and his planning team developed three separate courses of action to achieve four military ends. The military plan: first, destroy the AQ network in Afghanistan; second, remove the Taliban from rule; third, kill, or capture Osama bin Laden; and finally, provide humanitarian aid.<sup>140</sup> Due to the terrain and lack of adequate basing, there was minimal access for a large ground force to enter Afghanistan.<sup>141</sup> This minimized the options to initiate the war to air and missile strikes and a small ground force. The first course of action was a Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) strike from naval ships in the Persian Gulf. The second was a TLAM attack followed by air strikes from US Air Force long-range conventional strike aircraft targeting AQ camps and Taliban bases with precise Joint Direct Action Munitions. The third course of action, and most preferable to the USCENTCOM staff, was to send US Army Special Operating Forces (SOF) and US Air Force combat air controllers in to tie in with local warlords and remnants of the Northern Alliance, located AQ bases, and attacked them with air strikes.<sup>142</sup> Before bringing it to Secretary Rumsfeld, General Franks added a sequel to the third course of action that involved the additional flow of up to 12,000 conventional US forces following the success of the SOF.<sup>143</sup> President Bush approved the campaign plan on September 21 and detailed planning began.<sup>144</sup>

The plan for the conventional forces was to topple the Taliban regime, destroy any remaining AQ, provide security assets, train an Afghan National Army (ANA), and conduct humanitarian relief efforts.<sup>145</sup> The overall plan included nine lines of effort/lines of operation (LOE/LOO). Only three LOEs

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<sup>139</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 40.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-45.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

did not pertain to offensive operations: Humanitarian Aid provided to the Afghan people in lieu of government subsidization, Information Operations to gather information from terrorist networks and distribute information to the Afghan people, and developing a Political-Military relationship with a newly established Afghan government.<sup>146</sup>

Russia attempted to input humanitarian aid following their military attack on Afghanistan in 1979. It installed a new government, and then supplied funding for Afghan infrastructure of hospitals, schools, public health, and agriculture. The Afghans continued to resist despite the outpouring of resources.<sup>147</sup> For the Coalition forces in 2001, the plan only extended to a maximum of five years, but it did not incorporate fostering a new government or any type of nation building.<sup>148</sup> The political-military coordination LOE was in place simply to secure basing and stage support for allied nations.<sup>149</sup> In fact, there was an underlying assumption from the planning teams that other government agencies were going to arrive and help guide the new Afghan government to carry forward US Political Aims into the future.<sup>150</sup>

## The Military Execution

By October 7, 2001, the Bush Administration coordinated with Afghanistan's neighbors to set conditions for the entry of US forces into Afghanistan. SOF began operations in Afghanistan by entering in from the north and directly coordinating with remnants of the Northern Alliance that were near Bagram. Northern Alliance fighters, combining with a number of SOF teams and close air support capabilities, destroyed Taliban defenses through the Shomali Plains and seized control of the capital on November 14.<sup>151</sup> This achieved the military end state to remove the Taliban as a ruling power in the

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<sup>146</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 46-47.

<sup>147</sup> Bailey and Immerman, *Understanding the US Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, 26.

<sup>148</sup> Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, Inc., 2004), 272.

<sup>149</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 47.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

capital and set conditions for a new Afghan government to take its place. Following SOF and Northern Alliance success, conventional forces deployed into Afghanistan to mass in multiple decisive operations.<sup>152</sup>

While conventional forces continued the campaign, government agencies from around the world sought to stand up an Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) in order to provide governance. On December 5, 2001 in Bonn, Germany, an agreement from the international community stood up the AIA, selected Hamid Karzai (who at the time was a General in the lead of the fight in Northern Kandahar) as the interim president, and organized a security force separate from the Coalition that would help secure Kabul and the surrounding area.<sup>153</sup> However, this agreement was only temporary, as a *Loya Jirga*, where a counsel chooses to nominate a legitimate leader and the people vote through free and fair elections, was the legitimate and traditional Afghan method to nominate a new leader.<sup>154</sup> Until that election, US and NATO efforts aimed at “fostering the legitimacy and authority of the AIA.”<sup>155</sup> The separate Coalition nations split efforts throughout Afghanistan in an effort to support specific elements of the new government. The United States trained the Afghan National Army, Germany trained the Afghan National Police, Italy worked with the Afghan Justice Department, the United Kingdom focused on counter-narcotics, and Japan led the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration program.<sup>156</sup>

On December 20, 2001, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1386 and authorized under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter the establishment of ISAF led by the United Kingdom.<sup>157</sup> This security force was to secure Kabul and its surrounding area in order to enable the AIA

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<sup>152</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 46-47.

<sup>153</sup> US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>154</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 182.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 199. “The DDR program worked on regrouping all regional militias under a united Afghan Army or Police Force.”

<sup>157</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1386* (New York: United Nations Security Council, December 20, 2001).

to develop. Over the course of 2002, ISAF forces from eighteen nations entered Kabul under the command of UK General John McColl.<sup>158</sup> In March 2002, Coalition Forces conducted Operation Anaconda, which struck a significant blow to Taliban and AQ forces, and marking an end to major resistance to US efforts.<sup>159</sup> Coalition forces began the transition from offensive to stability operations, but needed a fully secure and generally safe state in order to begin the transition. Security became a “rolling series of operations” designed specifically to keep the Taliban and AQ fighters, who were fighting an insurgent war by this time, off balance. Fighting against this insurgent force was difficult as Coalition forces were not equipped, nor were they closely tied in to the local populace.<sup>160</sup> This hindered progress and the United States moved further away from turning security operations over to the Afghan National Army or Police. A new organization that oversaw all Coalition operations called the Combined Forces Command—Afghanistan emerged with Lieutenant General David Barno in command. He recognized that the enemy of the Coalition was no longer a conventional force; rather, it was an insurgent force capable of moving freely throughout the mountains of Afghanistan and influencing large numbers of the Afghan people. Thus, the reintegration of counterinsurgency doctrine began to emerge from the US military at this time, but only as a tactical measure.<sup>161</sup>

On 17 April 2002, President Bush spoke at the Virginia Military Institute and stated that it was time to begin to “build an Afghanistan that is free from evil and a better place to live.”<sup>162</sup> As Secretary Rumsfeld later stated, major combat efforts in Afghanistan were over, and US and ISAF forces could begin fostering the Afghan government.<sup>163</sup> In June 2002, the emergency *Loya Jirga* of over 1500 Afghans from 364 provinces elected Hamid Karzai to lead the transitional government of Afghanistan.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 182.

<sup>159</sup> Council of Foreign Relations, “The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2018.”

<sup>160</sup> Wright et al., *A Different Kind of War*, 211.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 237-241.

<sup>162</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2018.”

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

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

In 2003, Coalition forces continued efforts to find Osama bin Laden and degrade the AQ network, but focus began to shift toward Iraq.<sup>165</sup> The United States suffered only seventy-four total casualties. On August 7, 2003, NATO took control of ISAF, expanded its focus to include the entire nation, and deployed an additional 60,000 troops into Afghanistan.<sup>166</sup> This allowed the policymakers the ability to shift both political and military focus almost exclusively to a new war in Iraq. During this period from 2003 to 2008, the Taliban regained strength. Mullah Mohammad Omar, the leader of the Taliban, vowed that they would return in a November 13, 2004 statement to a Pakistani news agency, “America and its puppets should know that we are determined to free and regain the sovereignty of our country.”<sup>167</sup> Large numbers of Taliban fighters emerged from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATAs) in Pakistan, regained control over much of the southern portion of the nation, and presented a significant threat to the political stability in Afghanistan.<sup>168</sup> In 2005, there was a six-fold increase in suicide attacks, a three-fold increase in direct fire engagements, and both mortar and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks doubled compared to 2004.<sup>169</sup>

## Failure and Perceptions of Failure

Focus remained on Iraq. It was not until President Barack Obama took office in 2009 that the war in Afghanistan came back into the limelight. Due to a number of promises made on the campaign trail, President Obama inherited the political risks of continuing the fight.<sup>170</sup> He often referred to the war in Iraq as an “ill-considered and costly ‘War of Choice’” and made promises to withdraw troops from Iraq within

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<sup>165</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2018.”

<sup>166</sup> “Coalition Military Fatalities by year,” iCasualties.org, n.d., accessed March 3, 2018, <http://icasualties.org/oef/>; Council on Foreign Relations, “*The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2018*.”

<sup>167</sup> “Asia: Afghanistan: Taliban Leader Vows Return,” Carlotta Gall, November 13, 2004, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F05E5DB173FF930A25752C1A9629C8B63>

<sup>168</sup> Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq,” 138.

<sup>169</sup> Antonio Guistozi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 6.

<sup>170</sup> Jack Martinez, “How Many Promises has Obama Kept,” Newsweek, October 16, 2015, accessed March 3, 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/obama-afghanistan-troop-levels-promises-383931>

16 months and remove all troops by December 2011.<sup>171</sup> He also promised to focus his attention on the War in Afghanistan, which he believed was a “War of Necessity,” and later vowed to remove troops by the end of 2014.<sup>172</sup> Efforts in Afghanistan now far surpassed the original three to five year expected duration of occupation.<sup>173</sup>

## Political and Military Response

Obama kept Secretary Gates on as the Secretary of Defense in order to maintain continuity during the transition, but went outside of his cabinet in search of a review of the situation in Afghanistan. He requested Bruce Riedel, a Middle East expert who advised the campaign, to conduct a sixty-day review.<sup>174</sup> In the midst of Riedel’s assessment, in February 2009, the Commander of NATO’s ISAF, General David McKiernan submitted a request for an additional 30,000 Soldiers, nearly doubling the 38,000 already deployed in support of the Afghanistan Campaign. By mid-March Riedel’s assessment returned stating, “A fully-resourced counterinsurgency campaign will enable us to regain the initiative and defend our vital interests.”<sup>175</sup> This assessment led President Obama approved a small surge of 17,000 more troops and 4,000 advisors as he considered further options on how to achieve success in Afghanistan.<sup>176</sup> He also outlined a new political strategy on March 27, 2009: ‘AfPak’. He stated in a televised speech that they designed this new strategy “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future.”<sup>177</sup> This effort also surged civilian advisors, including agricultural specialists, educators, engineers, and lawyers, which

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<sup>171</sup> Robert Grenier, “Obama Defends His ‘Good War’,” Al Jazeera, August 29, 2010, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2010/08/201084101153407348.html>

<sup>172</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 323 and 327.

<sup>173</sup> Robert Grenier, “Obama Defends His ‘Good War’”; Franks, *American Soldier*, 272.

<sup>174</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 270 and 338.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>176</sup> “Afghanistan Commander Welcomes Additional Troops,” Michael J. Carden, February 19, 2009, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/News-Article-View/Article/883788/afghanistan-commander-welcomes-additional-troops/>

<sup>177</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 343.

enabled the Afghan government to “serve its people and develop an economy,” a key component in the ongoing fight against Taliban political influences.<sup>178</sup>

By June 2009, the Administration lacked confidence that the ongoing military strategy would adjust to the new political strategy. The political decision point for President Obama and Secretary Gates was the realization of General McKiernan’s inability to be flexible enough to understand the complexities of the situation in Afghanistan. In June 2008, Secretary Gates recommended the removal of General McKiernan. He removed General McKiernan from command of ISAF and replaced him with General Stanley McChrystal, the former Special Operations Forces commander in Iraq when General Petraeus implemented COIN and surged forces into Iraq in 2007.<sup>179</sup>

Upon taking command after a June 10, 2009 Senate approval, General McChrystal conducted another sixty-day assessment per Secretary Gates’ request. It was Secretary Gates’ intentions to provide President Obama the assessment and requests for troop increases separately, in order to detail the security situation as much as possible.<sup>180</sup> This assessment determined the military campaign needed to shift from “seizing terrain or destroying insurgent forces” to “protecting the population.”<sup>181</sup> General McChrystal stated a fear that “failure to gain the initiative and reverse insurgent momentum in the near-term (next 12 months) -- while Afghan security capacity matures -- risks an outcome where defeating the insurgency is no longer possible.”<sup>182</sup> At the time, the counterterrorist operations were effective at disrupting terrorists, but not defeating them. In order to defeat the terrorist organizations, McChrystal stated that, “host nation capacity must grow to ensure a sustainable level of security and without close-in access, fix-and-find methods become nearly impossible.”<sup>183</sup> The assessment, did, however state that with the right resources,

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<sup>178</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 343.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>182</sup> “McChrystal: More Troops or Mission Failure,” Bob Woodward, September 21, 2009, accessed March 18, 2018, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/20/AR2009092002920.html>

<sup>183</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 364.

the situation in Afghanistan could be in a different place within one year and the Afghan forces able to secure all key population centers within three years.<sup>184</sup> The resources McChrystal needed: COIN and 40,000 additional troops.<sup>185</sup>

The President had an issue with the assessment, as he knew there would “be no political support for a troop increase” and wanted “robust options” that were not simply the “troop-intensive counterinsurgency.”<sup>186</sup> Nevertheless, President Obama grew more frustrated when both the commander of USCENTCOM, General David Petraeus, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, continued to urge the need for more troops in Afghanistan in order to succeed. On September 3, 2009, *The Washington Post* quoted General Petraeus stating that success “won’t work out if we don’t” send more troops.<sup>187</sup> In a meeting with the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Mullen “forcefully argued for more troops in Afghanistan.”<sup>188</sup>

There were a number of different options brought up by Secretary Gates, Vice President Joe Biden, General McChrystal, and Admiral Mullen. Though Secretary Gates knew they were all “doomed to fail, or already have.”<sup>189</sup> The first recommendation, based on Counterterrorism, focused solely on AQ and not supporting the government. The second recommendation, which was “remote-control” counterterrorism by using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and drone strikes, did not historically work for the United States. Finally, the plan of “Counterterrorism Plus” or “Counterinsurgency minus,” which was the ongoing military strategy, continued to fail.<sup>190</sup> By November 2009, after three months of deliberation following General McChrystal’s assessment, three options emerged on the way ahead: first, Vice President Biden’s option was a 20,000-troop increase for Counterterrorism and Afghan Trainers.

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<sup>184</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 357.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 349 and 357.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

Second, General McChrystal recommended 40,000 more troops and a shift to COIN. Finally, Secretary Gates' option was for 30,000 more troops, a COIN focus, and an urge to allied forces to support sending 5-7,000 more.<sup>191</sup> President Obama felt "boxed in" by the military when his only options included troop increases.<sup>192</sup>

In mid-November 2009, President Obama agreed to Secretary Gates' option. He agreed to 30,000 more troops with the flexibility to adjust up to 10% and it did not include any additional enablers.<sup>193</sup> He also stipulated this agreement with the promise to begin withdrawing troops from Afghanistan by July 2011.<sup>194</sup> The Administration understood the need to rely on other elements of national power in order to be "population-centric" in their approach that limited the presence of armed military forces, but rather relied heavily on Afghan National Police and US civilian advisors.<sup>195</sup> With the surge came a new political focus that "shelved trying to develop a strong, effective central government" but developed ministries to build capacity around the central government.<sup>196</sup> In essence, the ministries could then provide Hamid Karzai "a modicum of legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people."<sup>197</sup> The mission statement, understood by public and policymaker alike, was to "Deny the Taliban momentum and control, facilitate reintegration, build government capacity selectively, grow the Afghan security forces, transfer security responsibilities, and defeat AQ." General McChrystal changed the military strategy in Afghanistan to a COIN-centric approach, aimed at achieving the new political directions established by the Administration. General McChrystal mentioned in his counterinsurgency guidance, "We must turn perceptions of fear and

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<sup>191</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 378-379.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 382

<sup>194</sup> Crane, "Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq," 141.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>196</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 374.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

uncertainty to trust and confidence.”<sup>198</sup> By early December, Secretary Gates signed a deployment order sending the first 17,000 troops of the 30,000 approved into theater.<sup>199</sup> This shift in strategy and surge of troops reset the time horizon the Administration had to act and work towards success.

## The Conclusion

Despite being provided the “full resources of the government” and support from nineteen NATO nations, the United States entered Afghanistan with limited means to achieve limited aims.<sup>200</sup> The political aims were impossible to achieve solely through direct military action. After almost seven years following the fall of the Taliban from control and the Bonn Conference, the Afghanistan government still floundered. Security operations had minimal success and the Coalition lacked any comprehensive doctrine for countering an insurgency. The Obama Administration took the task of ending the war in Afghanistan head-on and changed both political and military strategies.<sup>201</sup> The emergent military strategy of COIN and political strategies of ‘AfPak’ and ministry development intended to create time and space for policymakers and the military to support the Afghan government to gain full control of the nation. The COIN strategy intended to create sufficient security for the Administration to keep its promise to start withdrawing combat troops out of Afghanistan by July of 2011.<sup>202</sup> Together, the shifts were an extension to the time horizon in which the policymakers and the military professionals could provide tangible,

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<sup>198</sup> Aaron B. O’Connell, “The Lessons and Legacies of the War in Afghanistan,” in *Understanding the US Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan*, ed. Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 311.

<sup>199</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 386.

<sup>200</sup> Larson and Savych, *American Public Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad*, 92; US Department of State, *The United States and the Global Coalition Against Terrorism, September 2001-December 2003*.

<sup>201</sup> Gates, *Duty*, 40.

<sup>202</sup> Crane, “Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq,” 141.

substantiated results of the new strategies. As of this writing, the combat mission in Afghanistan is over, but there is still a significant troop presence 16 years later.<sup>203</sup>

## Section 4- Conclusion

Resort to war is not only a last resort for a free society, but it is also an act which cannot definitively end the fundamental conflict in the realm of ideas.

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The initial political-military discourse needs to tease out the true aims of the policymakers while senior military officers need to provide honest feedback on the feasibility to attain them with the resources provided. Between 1945 and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the means resourced for various military incursions were, for the most part, sufficient to achieve the desired political and military ends. Wars during this period had limited aims- prevent the spread of communism, provide humanitarian assistance, replace dictators with others that the people of the nation elected. The political aims of the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan began like many before, by identifying limited aims that policymakers believed they could achieve through direct, combined arms maneuver followed by normal stability operations. What was not readily apparent until the campaigns began was that the true political aims were nearly absolute in nature. They called for not only the destruction of the armies and removal of the governing regimes, but campaigns that required breaking the will of the people who were recalcitrant toward accepting the imposed US policies. When the United States removed regimes, the additional war efforts neared closer to being absolute in nature as they evolved into a fight over the existence of the state. These wars also required the United States to attain final peace not only through military action, but also through societal, industrial, and political influences as well.<sup>204</sup>

The failure to develop comprehensive and achievable political aims prior to entering into armed conflict leads to the initial use of the conventional military forces and ends in a protracted war with COIN

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<sup>203</sup> “President Gives Mattis Authority to Set US Troop Strength in Afghanistan” Defense Media Activity, Jim Garamone, June 14, 2017, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1214576/president-gives-mattis-authority-to-set-us-troop-strength-in-afghanistan/>

<sup>204</sup> Lauer, “Blue Whales and Tiger Sharks.”

as an entirely different, emergent strategy. The narrative upon entering war is to destroy the military, secure and occupy lands, and topple regimes. These military objectives set conditions for the realized and unrealized political aims necessary to carry the US foreign policy forward. The result is the popular perceptions of failure on behalf of both the policymakers and the military to truly accomplish their respective aims and achieve final victory. The response is a shifting of political aims to focus on a whole of government approach and an emergent military strategy of COIN. This resets the time horizon where policymakers and the military need to provide feedback on the successes or failures of the new strategy.

Examples of this cycle occurred during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration spread a narrative of collusion between al-Qaida and Iraq, a country that had and was willing to use weapons of mass destruction on its own people. When the US believed that Saddam Hussein failed to obey UN regulations and supported multiple terrorist training camps, the response was a conventional battle. Within weeks, the United States defeated the Iraqi army, secured the oil fields, and toppled the Hussein regime. Following the fall of Saddam, the US government failed to execute a whole of government approach to rebuilding a legitimate governing body. This resulted in the influx of insurgent forces all vying for political control. Perceptions of political failure continued to rise and time wore on. The Republican Party lost the control of Congress and Secretary Rumsfeld, frustrated with the mindset of the military and pressured to end the war, resigned his position. The Bush Administration needed an answer to the deteriorating situation. The response was General Petraeus and a new military strategy of COIN. This provided policymakers throughout Washington time and space to create a viable solution to the failing Iraqi government.

In Afghanistan, the United States faced pressure to react to the attacks on September 11. It organized a coalition and built a narrative around defeating global terrorism. The strategy on how to do so began with a conventional military action on nations that harbored and supported terrorist activity. Thus, the United States sent the military into Afghanistan, a nation run by the Taliban who protected Osama bin Laden. The conventional military response toppled the Taliban and input an illegitimate governing body that represented only a portion of the Afghan populace. Within six months, coalition forces were no

longer fighting the Taliban's conventional force; rather, they found themselves fighting militant insurgent forces. This battle waged for eight years, until newly inaugurated, President Obama assumed the political risk through campaign promises to end the war in Afghanistan. The perceptions of political failure boiled over, forcing him to remove the commander of ISAF. Further responses included a drastically increased number of troops and new political aims focused on developing the Afghan governmental body. The military, under command of General McCrystal, used an emergent strategy of COIN. All of which reset the time horizon in which the Obama Administration could focus on ending the war.

## Appendix

### Defined Terms

**Conventional Forces/Warfare-** 1) Those forces capable of conducting operations using nonnuclear weapons. 2) Those forces other than designated special operations forces.<sup>205</sup>

**Unconventional Warfare-** Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.<sup>206</sup>

**Limited Aims/Limited War-** Actions taken if the circumstances rule out the possibility of a military from achieving the essential aim of military activity- the defeat of the enemy.<sup>207</sup>

**Insurgency-** An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict<sup>208</sup>

**Counterinsurgency Operations-** Comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.<sup>209</sup>

**Deliberate Strategy-** A plan and pattern where the intended objectives are fully realized.<sup>210</sup>

**Emergent Strategy-** A realized pattern that was not expressly intended, but one-by-one actions converged in time in some sort of consistency or pattern.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 50.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>207</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 601.

<sup>208</sup> US Joint Staff, JP 1-02, 113.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>210</sup> Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 24.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 24-25

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