National-Level Coordination and Implementation: How System Attributes Trumped Leadership

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This chapter explains and evaluates how well the national-level decisionmaking process guided the war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. President George W. Bush explained operations in Afghanistan and outlined the administration's response to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, when he addressed a joint session of Congress on September 20.[1] The President announced two great objectives: first, shutting down terrorist camps that existed in more than a dozen countries, disrupting the terrorists' plans, and bringing them to justice; and second, preventing terrorists and regimes that seek weapons of mass destruction from threatening the United States and the world. The President stated that to achieve these objectives, the United States would have to wage a lengthy war "unlike any other we have ever seen."[2] His strategy would use "every resource at our command—every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war—to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network." This unprecedented effort to integrate every tool available would entail a broad geographic scope in which "every nation, in every region" would be forced to decide whether it supported efforts to defeat "every terrorist group of global reach."

President Bush's speech was widely acclaimed, and over the next decade and a half his intent has been achieved in some respects. The United States has prevented another strategic attack by al Qaeda, greatly reduced the effectiveness of that terrorist organization, and orchestrated many lesser operational

successes. Even so, it became clear in the years following the President's speech that the United States could not wage the war he described or achieve the goals he set. Instead, as explained in previous chapters, the United States ended up with extended campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq that squandered resources, diminished public support for the war, and arguably generated as many terrorists as they eliminated.[3] The United States has disengaged from its campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, but the threat of catastrophic terrorism identified by President Bush is still present.

In this chapter, we pose and answer fundamental questions. We ask how senior leaders identified the problem confronting the Nation and how they intended to solve it. We also address whether senior leader decisions constituted a strategy and whether they were able to coordinate and implement their decisions well. In the concluding section, we offer an overarching explanation for why it was not possible for the President to execute the war effort he originally described and why the U.S. performance in Afghanistan and Iraq has been so problematic.

Our decisionmaking analysis was senior leader–centric. Our primary sources were 23 senior leader descriptions of the decision process.[4] We concentrate on issues that senior decisionmakers deemed critical and their explanations for how they managed disagreements about how to proceed in the wars. We adopt a choice-based approach to analyze senior leader decisionmaking, consistent with their accounts that depict the decision process as a purposeful activity designed to solve problems.[5] Our approach has several important implications that, from the reviews we have received to date, are not obvious and need to be stated. Our purpose is not to criticize or defend specific decisions that senior leaders made. Instead, we examine whether these decisions met minimum requirements for good strategy, and if not, whether this shortcoming compromised the ability to achieve desired goals. We do not argue that a different understanding or approach would have been better. Instead, we consider whether leaders were able to execute their preferred approach as envisioned and adjust it in light of changing circumstances, and, if not, why not. Similarly, we do not speculate about senior leader motives or probe their psychological profiles. We take at face value their assertions that they wanted a strategy to defeat terrorism and acted with that intent.[6] Thus, we do not consider, as many have, whether the President or members of his

Cabinet were driven by a psychological need or other motives to address un-finished business with Saddam Hussein left over from the first Gulf War.[7] In sum, we examine factors that limited the ability of senior leaders to generate and implement coherent national strategy rather than argue in favor of alter-native policies and strategies.

We concentrate on the first decade of war from 2001 through 2010 for several reasons. The most consequential decisions were made fairly early on. In addition, our primary sources deal mostly with decisions made during this period. More to the point, important decisions made later in the decade about how to wind down the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are taken up in other chapters. Decisions to surge U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are taken up in the previous chapter, and decisions on how to transition the lead to host-na-tion forces are reviewed in a following chapter. We do not ignore decisions that led to successes. On the contrary, we make a point of noting successes in each decision area we investigate. However, in keeping with a lessons learned effort, we focus on explaining problems rather than successes.

Our findings are organized into four categories that are interrelated but examined sequentially: concepts, command, capabilities, and constraints. By *concepts*, we mean the national strategy and concepts of operation that ex-plain what the United States hoped to achieve in Afghanistan and Iraq and how. *Command* denotes the collective attempts to orchestrate unified support for implementing senior leader strategy and plans. *Capabilities* are the tools (or "means") needed to execute strategy and plans. The final category—*con-straints*—covers additional factors that senior leaders believe complicated the war effort. The constraints include strategy conundrums and other social and political factors that leaders believe limited the efficacy of the decisionmaking process and outcomes.

The analysis reveals some significant limitations in national decisionmak-ing that endured across the Bush and Barack Obama administrations. Two are especially important. Many senior leaders admit we have not agreed on the nature and scope of the terrorism threat or how to defeat it. They also are in near-complete agreement that the United States was not able to act with unified purpose and effort to achieve set objectives. We discuss the absence of unified effort primarily in the section on command, but we also demonstrate its impact in the section on capabilities. We also found a persistent inability to

generate the full range of capabilities required for success, or in some cases, to do so in a timely fashion. Overall, we conclude that critical strategy handicaps, insufficient unity of effort, and, to a lesser extent, missing or late-to-need capabilities for irregular warfighting offer a compelling explanation for why the United States was not able to fully achieve its goals in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Concepts

Following 9/11, President Bush and his senior advisors were preoccupied with formulating a response to safeguard the Nation from more attacks. The desired output from senior leader decisionmaking was an effective national security strategy for protecting the country and defeating terrorism. Evaluating their decisionmaking therefore requires identifying criteria for what constitutes good strategy. We used the three basic elements of strategy that Richard Rumelt advocates: a penetrating diagnosis of the key problem to be solved, a corresponding guiding approach to solve the problem, and a set of coherent supporting actions for implementing the approach.[8] The analysis needs to identify the root cause of the problem that must be dealt with to obtain success. The preferred approach must overcome the problem based on an advantage or asymmetry and be discriminating enough to direct and constrain action. The supporting actions must be clear, prioritized, and feasible given scarce resources. Rumelt offers convincing explanations for how and why many leaders and organizations ignore or otherwise fail to meet these elementary requirements.

In evaluating the strategy decisions that guided the war on terror, we looked primarily at major decisions rather than official strategy documents. As some senior leaders have confessed, despite all the energy that goes into producing official strategy documents, they are generally ignored.[9] They are consensus products intended to serve bureaucratic and public policy purposes.[10] They tend to enumerate expansive and unrealistic strategic objectives.[11] Real strategy—to the extent it exists—resides in the minds of the key decisionmakers. As General George W. Casey, Jr., USA (Ret.), advises, "The decisionmaking process at the national level is idiosyncratic at best," and not as rigorous as the process military officers use. General Casey's experience with policy and strategy in Washington taught him "not to expect written direction from civilian leaders."[12] He referred to a few key policy documents but developed his initial campaign plan based upon verbal discussions with the President and

Secretary of Defense. Because real strategy is not codified, it sometimes can be difficult to identify. Fortunately, senior leaders have shared a great deal of their thinking on their strategy to combat terrorism.

Identifying the Root Problem

Senior decisionmakers viewed the U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq as extensions of the war on terror. Their assessment of the terror attacks on 9/11 resolved a longstanding dispute about terrorism. For decades, pundits argued over whether terrorists were capable of and inclined to launch mass-casualty attacks. Some analysts believed most terrorists would not do so because it would elicit a massive response and undermine political support for their cause, thus proving counterproductive. Terrorists groups that wanted mass casualty attacks were believed to be technically incapable of executing them. Others experts were more pessimistic. They thought the proliferation of knowledge in the information age was enabling "catastrophic terror" and observed that some groups with technical competence such as al Qaeda were advocating it.

The 9/11 attacks seemed to resolve this debate in favor of the pessimists. Senior leaders in the Bush administration settled on the urgent need to prevent another attack, particularly one involving the use of weapons of mass destruction. In President Bush's 2002 State of the Union address, he noted American forces in Afghanistan had found "detailed instructions for making chemical weapons, surveillance maps of American cities, and thorough descriptions of landmarks in America and throughout the world." These findings confirmed the war against terror would not end in Afghanistan and in fact was "only beginning." They also reinforced the President's conviction that we had to destroy terrorist organizations and prevent "terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world."[13]

These objectives served well as a summary agenda, but they did not pinpoint the nature and scope of the problem. Did the United States need to eliminate terrorism and its state sponsors everywhere, or just all terrorist groups? Only terrorist groups with the capability to use weapons of mass destruction, the intent to do so, or both? Or just the strain of Islamic extremist groups that had perpetrated the 9/11 attacks—or, more specifically, the organization

that executed the attacks, namely, al Qaeda? The answers to these questions carried major implications for the type of effort the United States would have to mount and the resources required. Answers to these questions would determine whether an extended war in Afghanistan and intervention in Iraq were necessary, and whether state sponsors of terrorism such as Iran, or states such as North Korea with weapons of mass destruction that carried out terror attacks, had to be defeated or otherwise engaged. The more broadly the problem was defined, the greater the effort required to solve it.

In the short period between the 9/11 attacks and President Bush's speech to Congress on September 20,[14] the administration settled on an expansive and somewhat artful phrase to depict the scope of the security threat. President Bush declared, "Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of *global reach* has been found, stopped and defeated [emphasis added]." Conjoining terrorists and state sponsors broadened the scope of the war well past al Qaeda. Moreover, in this same speech, and often thereafter, the President cast the struggle in terms of freedom and tyranny, between those "who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom" and those who do not. The President's definition of the problem and the enemies to overcome was broad but limited by two clarifications. The expression "axis of evil" defined the short list of noteworthy state sponsors of terrorism as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea.[15] The other limitation was the expression "global reach." This description indicated that only terrorist groups capable of attacking the United States had to be destroyed, rather than all terrorist groups, many of which had narrower agendas that did not directly threaten the Nation.

A key predicate of President Bush's approach was the belief that successful terrorist attacks with weapons of mass destruction would be calamitous. One senior administration official later explained that the President's strategy was broadly preventive and not narrowly punitive because senior leaders assumed they were at war with a global network, that the terrorists were bent on mass destruction rather than just political theater, and finally that sustaining a series of 9/11-type attacks "could change the nature of our country."[16] The dire consequences of such an attack required the United States to take the offensive, including preemptive military action and other extraordinary measures even

if the probability of a successful mass casualty terrorist attack was low. This assumption was widely debated as "the one percent doctrine."

After taking office, the Obama administration made a point of narrowing the definition of the problem and thus the scope of the necessary response. President Obama identified the need "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan" and "prevent their return to either country in the future," thus limiting the war geographically and redefining the list of enemies the United States had to defeat. As Hillary Clinton puts it, "By refocusing so specifically on al Qaeda, as opposed to the Taliban insurgents . . . the President was linking the war back to its source: the 9/11 attacks."[17] In this regard, the scope of the war effort precipitated by the attacks on 9/11 was curtailed under the Obama administration.

It is not clear from strategy pronouncements or tactics employed, however, that President Obama envisions the *nature* of the threat differently. Some hoped the Obama administration would redefine the threat as a political problem whereby the enemy tried to get the United States to overreact in ways that alienated support from other nations and thus restricted U.S. freedom of maneuver and ability to marshal resources. The proper countervailing strategy would be to maintain widespread support and isolate the terrorists within the community of Islam (*umma*).[18] In this vein, some argued for abandoning controversial policies that alienated domestic and international opinion. Administration officials believe they put more emphasis on international cooperation and strategic communication,[19] but the major change in strategy did not materialize.[20] Perhaps the administration believed it had to first extricate the United States from large-scale operations in Iraq and then Afghanistan. If so, this has taken longer than anticipated and been set back by the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

What is clear in retrospect is that lack of agreement on the nature and scope of the threat compromised strategy from the beginning. Members of the Bush administration, for instance, disagreed about the scope of the threat.[21] Some argued the threat was broad and transnational and required an equally broad response. Some others, who initially agreed with that view, came to believe the threat was so broadly defined that it undermined international cooperation. They consider the term "axis of evil" regrettable because it made negotiating with those powers difficult and/or expanded the

scope of the war on terror beyond what could be sustained politically at home and abroad.[22] Others believe lack of clarity about the nature and scope of the catastrophic terrorist threat inclined leaders to focus on tactical operations but left the main threat unaddressed, if not stronger.[23] The contentious early debate over whether the United States needed to eliminate the regime in Iraq was a strong indication that the U.S. definition of the *strategic threat* was contentious at best.

Looking back, several senior leaders acknowledge the United States still has not identified its strategic problem well,[24] and in particular its religious origins. Some note the most threatening terror groups are found in deviant strains of Islam, while others depict the problem as "a clash within Islamic civilization between Sunni moderates and Sunni extremists."[25] Either way, the United States has not recognized the religious connection. Islamic allies object to the expression "Islamic terror" for the same reason Christians would object to the expression "Christian terror"; they consider it an oxymoron and a grossly counterproductive one that offends those whose support we seek and that could be misconstrued to extend legitimacy to terrorists. It also is common to acknowledge that non-Muslim voices are not credible in a debate over the meaning, direction, and permissible behaviors within Islam.

In any case, this tension between frank acknowledgment that terror has some popular appeal in Islamic communities and the political and strategic communication advantages of ignoring that connection continues to complicate U.S. strategy. General Martin Dempsey, who notes he has been accused of being both anti-Islamic and pro-Islamic, observes, "We as a Nation just haven't been able to have a conversation about . . . the threat of violent extremist organizations that also happen to be radical Islamic organizations."[26] Furthermore, he argues that until we understand the threat "in its totality" and find the right vocabulary to describe it, we cannot defeat the threat—at best, we can only contain it.[27]

Choosing an Approach to Victory

The second key element of any effective strategy is agreement on how to solve the root problem based on an advantage or asymmetry. When the root problem is poorly defined, the approach to solving it is equally problematic. This proved true for overall strategy in the war on terror, and by extension, for the

U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Senior leaders wanted to stop state support for terrorism and thought that deposing some regimes that supported terrorism would contribute to that objective. However, they disagreed on how important it was to ensure that good governance followed the deposed regimes. Was good governance in Afghanistan and Iraq an essential element of the war on terror, or a distraction that wasted resources? This question—never answered—reveals confusion about the nature and origins of the catastrophic terrorism threat and how it should be defeated.

The United States tried to create a comprehensive strategy for combatting terror that would address such questions but never succeeded. The official public strategy defined the problem too broadly with too many dimensions. It lumped the assassin of President William McKinley in with al Qaeda and cited underlying conditions of terror as diverse as "poverty, corruption, religious conflict and ethnic strife."[28] The National Counterterrorism Center tried to create a classified strategy, but failed.[29] Departments and agencies could not agree on a discriminating approach to defeating such a broad threat. Instead, they agreed to a long list of objectives that left them free to pursue their own priorities as they understood them. The failure to cohere around a common understanding of the terror problem and its solution complicated the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In Afghanistan, the strategy was never clear. The President and his advisors were cheered by news of terrorist leaders captured or killed,[30] but otherwise they had difficulty establishing objectives for the war effort. One early telltale sign of this confusion was the disagreement about whether to welcome or resist a rapid Northern Alliance seizure of Kabul. Some thought that if the Northern Alliance was too successful it would precipitate "intertribal fighting and score-settling" with the possibility that "chaos would reign."[31] Others were happy to see a quick collapse of the Taliban, which they thought would facilitate efforts to eliminate al Qaeda in Afghanistan. This difference of opinion revealed uncertainty about what we were trying to accomplish. A friendly, stable, effective Afghan government was preferable, but was it possible and essential for success in the war on terror? Without an answer to this question, it was difficult to answer a related question: how much priority should be given to eliminating the Taliban? Too much concern with the Taliban would take the focus off al Qaeda and might allow it to reemerge stronger elsewhere.[32] The

opposite concern was that failure to destroy the Taliban would give al Qaeda an extended sanctuary and a new lease on life.[33] The debate boiled down to differences over the nature of the threat. Were the Taliban and al Qaeda allies of convenience, or cohorts in a global campaign that was threatening the United States? If they were allies of convenience, we could afford to bypass the Taliban and concentrate on al Qaeda; if the Taliban were an intrinsic part of the global terrorist network, they needed to be defeated.

During this initial period, senior military leaders understood their tactical objectives—attacking Taliban forces and capturing or killing terrorists—but they were uncertain about U.S. strategy for the war on terror.[34] Over time, the U.S. commitment to effective governance in Afghanistan increased, but not because strategy was clarified. Instead, it resulted from ad hoc decision-making in response to the reconstitution of the Taliban as an effective insurgent force. An ineffectual Afghan government left the Taliban and their terrorist allies free to operate, which was not deemed acceptable. Even though President Obama in his 2009 West Point speech narrowed the U.S. goal in Afghanistan to "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda," he specified three subordinate objectives that tied al Qaeda to the fortunes of the Taliban and Afghan government. He stated that we would deny al Qaeda a safe haven, reverse the Taliban's momentum and prevent the overthrow of the government, and strengthen Afghan capacity to take lead responsibility for the country's future. The three objectives were progressively less clear cut and more subject to debate as to whether they had been achieved. "Deny al Qaeda a safe haven" is easier to assess than the sufficiency of a "strengthened" Afghan government and its security forces. More to the point, even a strong case for good progress in all three objectives leaves open the question of whether the United States was committed to a friendly, stable, and effective Afghan government or instead wanted political latitude for an "expeditious exit."[35] As General Stanley A. McChrystal, USA (Ret.), notes, the United States never had a "clear strategic aim" in Afghanistan.[36] Instead, it backed into counterinsurgency to prevent tactical reversals to its counterterrorism agenda. It provided ever-increasing amounts of support to Kabul, but the purpose and importance of the extended Afghan campaign remained poorly understood, controversial, and not clearly connected to the broader U.S. counterterrorism strategy.

Lack of agreement on the nature and scope of the terror problem was even more deleterious in the case of Iraq. The limited commitment of U.S. leaders to a democratic government in Baghdad was telegraphed in the official list of U.S. goals, which stated the desired endstate was an Iraq that "encourages" the building of democratic institutions.[37] Over time, it became increasingly less clear whether the United States was intervening in Iraq to punish a state sponsor of terrorism, eliminate a potential source of weapons of mass destruction for terrorists, or promote democracy and stimulate cultural changes throughout the region to diminish the appeal of terrorism. The confusion led to divergent levels of commitment to postwar reconstruction and governance,[38] undermined public support, and confused military commanders in Iraq about what they were trying to accomplish. General Casey, the commander with the longest tenure, admits that he did not understand the strategic goals of the intervention.[39]

Initially the Department of Defense (DOD) put all of its energy into developing plans to defeat Saddam Hussein's military forces but resisted preparing for a long, large American occupation to ensure good governance. During informal conversations in the Pentagon, senior civilian leaders made it clear that DOD needed to withdraw forces from Iraq so it could be prepared for possible next moves in the war on terror.[40] This made sense given the broad scope of the war depicted by the President. However, Department of State leaders, as well as the special envoy for Iraq and some military leaders, were convinced that preventing chaos in Iraq was necessary and would require a substantial U.S. commitment.

These unreconciled differences led to bitter infighting between the two departments, especially about postwar planning.[41] The two departments also disagreed about using expatriate Iraqi leaders, disbanding (or not reconstituting[42]) the Iraqi army, and the extent of de-Ba'athification. Divergent views on the need for "nation-building" also fueled much of the controversy over appropriate operational concepts for the interventions in both Afghanistan and Iraq. That debate polarized around two questions: whether the United States should concentrate on counterterrorism or counterinsurgency—and if the latter, which approach?

Some argued counterterrorism—that is, killing and capturing terrorists and key supporters—was more important and practical than defeating insurgents. The United States developed a refined counterterrorist capability that

has proved adept at identifying, targeting, and eliminating key terrorists.[43] The most controversial aspects of the counterterrorism operational concept are the means used to acquire intelligence and the procedures for deciding which individuals to kill. The great attraction of counterterrorism is that it directly engages the enemy, manifests unambiguous results, and is less expensive in lives and materiel than counterinsurgency.

No one objected to robust counterterrorism, although specific tactics and operations were contested. The debate was about whether killing and capturing individual terrorists were sufficient for solving the problem of catastrophic terrorism. The Bush administration believed the answer was no and wanted to force states to stop supporting terrorists. After the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq led to insurgency and civil war, and especially after the failure to find substantial weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the Bush administration broadened the agenda by placing greater emphasis on promoting democracy. It was the first task identified in the 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism.[44] The counterreaction from some in the Obama administration was to argue the United States should retreat from nation-building and concentrate on counterterrorism. Other Obama officials argued this made sense in Iraq, but that counterterrorism in Afghanistan was insufficient for reasons nicely summarized by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton:

> *The problem with this argument was that if the Taliban continued to seize more of the country, it would be that much harder to conduct effective counterterrorism operations. We wouldn't have the same intelligence networks necessary to locate the terrorists or the bases from which to launch strikes inside or outside Afghanistan. Al Qaeda already had safe havens in Pakistan. If we abandoned large parts of Afghanistan to the Taliban, they would have safe havens there as well.*[45]

Some argued that ignoring the insurgency in Iraq would be a mistake for similar reasons. Chaos in Iraq would open the country as a staging base for future terrorist plots and destabilize the Middle East, leading to more conflict that terrorists could exploit.[46]

Those arguing that counterinsurgency was a necessary component of the war on terror debated the most effective operational concept. Historically

there are two. One is to brutalize the population into abandoning support for insurgents and informing the government on their identity and whereabouts. If the population will not cooperate, it is isolated and punished. Economic warfare, concentration camps, massacres, and wholesale slaughter have all been used for this purpose. This approach is not politically sustainable in the United States today or in most other countries, so the second approach was adopted.

The U.S. counterinsurgency approach was to provide security for the population so they are free from fear of reprisals, construct an elaborate intelligence apparatus to reveal and penetrate the insurgent organization, use enough discriminate force to keep insurgents on the defensive without creating collateral damage that alienates the population, and make enough of an effort to counter popular grievances to reinforce the legitimacy of the host government and diminish the appeal of the insurgency. This approach requires multiple elements of power working in harmony, deep sociocultural knowledge of the target population, perseverance, and other subsidiary, situation-specific capabilities.

This type of counterinsurgency is much harder for an outside power such as the United States intervening in another country such as Afghanistan or Iraq. It is best to push the host-nation security forces to the front of the effort because they know the country, culture, language, and insurgents better than the United States ever could. The United States had to sell the second counterinsurgency agenda to the host nation and transfer capabilities to execute it, and do so well enough to generate enough progress to retain political support at home and abroad.

A "lite" version of counterinsurgency puts less emphasis on the need to protect and convince the population. Instead, the emphasis is on decapitating the leadership of the insurgency. The hope is that if the insurgent or terrorist organization is built around charismatic leaders, eliminating the leadership will lead to the collapse of the organization. Scholarship on this issue is inconclusive,[47] but this approach has not worked well in the ongoing war on terror. When U.S. special operations forces (SOF) became adept at exploiting all-source intelligence to target enemy leaders, some hoped that their proficiency would collapse enemy organizations. High-volume special operations

did degrade the terrorist and insurgent organizations but never rendered them ineffective, as leaders in the SOF community came to understand.[48]

Rumelt argues that a strategic approach to solving a problem should be based on an advantage or asymmetry. In part, the debate over counterterrorism versus counterinsurgency addressed this issue. Those supporting counterterrorism believed it played to U.S. strengths, whereas counterinsurgency played into the hands of the enemy. The rebuttal was that the scope of the problem and the role played by state sponsors of terrorism left the United States with no choice but to fight insurgents who supported terrorists and would do so even more boldly if they controlled nation-states. The point to make here is that neither the Bush nor the Obama administration resolved the debate, and based their strategies on asymmetric U.S. advantages.

Supporting Actions to Implement the Chosen Approach

The third requirement for effective strategy is a set of prioritized actions that are clear and feasible given scarce resources. Many discrete actions taken by departments and agencies to advance the war effort were successful. The Central Intelligence Agency executed the front end of Operation *Enduring Freedom* well with SOF assistance. DOD managed the first phases of Operation *Iraqi Freedom* with historic success. The Department of Treasury, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and later the Department of Homeland Security embraced new missions and changed their organizational cultures to execute those missions. SOF and the Intelligence Community tracked down individual terrorist and insurgent leaders with increasing success. Other pockets of productivity included seizing terrorist financial assets and strong cooperative agreements with foreign governments.

As laudable as these high-performance supporting actions were, they did not add up to strategic success because they were not orchestrated, replicated, and reinforced in support of a good guiding strategy. Disagreement or confusion about the threat and how it is to be addressed generates corresponding disarray in the action agenda. Absent agreement on the root problem and approach to resolving it, decisionmaking proceeds ad hoc. This proved the case in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Subordinates could not act upon Presidential intent if the strategy for success was not clear. They had to wait to see what the President would decide next. If circumstances would not permit delay, they

had to do what they thought best, which occasionally encouraged not only innovation but also inconsistency and friction.

For example, in the first National Security Council (NSC) meeting on operations in Afghanistan, policy positions were established on freeing women from oppression and on humanitarian assistance. Women's rights were necessary because "we felt an obligation to leave [the Afghans] better off" than before. President Bush also asked whether U.S. forces could drop food before bombs because he wanted to show the Afghan people that the U.S. intervention was different from the earlier one by the Soviet Union.[49] These policy preferences could have been part of a broader strategy to safeguard international political support for U.S. counterterrorism, or an element of counterinsurgency strategy designed to secure enough Afghan popular support to operate against terrorists in Afghanistan, or just personal preferences promoted by individual senior leaders. Absent a clear overarching strategy, subordinates could not make reasoned judgments about supporting actions and their relative priority.

Assumptions, Options, and Adjustments

The preceding argument is that the failure to identify the origins of the threat and related failure to clarify the importance of ensuring good governance after deposing regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq were key errors in strategy. Our findings challenge other explanations for poor performance in Afghanistan and Iraq, including the belief that senior leaders based their decisions on optimistic assumptions, made them without examining a sufficient range of options, or failed to adjust their decisions as circumstances changed. Planners extol the virtue of clarifying critical assumptions, analyzing alternative courses of action, formulating options in case assumptions prove wrong and in anticipation of subsequent developments (that is, answering the "what if" and "what next" questions),[50] and adjusting as the situation evolves. Military researchers in particular are quick to observe when these prerequisites for good decisionmaking are ignored or poorly conducted. Sometimes they are *too* quick, assuming rather than demonstrating senior leader assumptions.[51]

Assumptions, options, and adjustments are linked because assumptions can drive options that then become courses of action to be adjusted as circumstances unfold. Space limitations preclude in-depth examination of all the decisionmaking mistakes attributed to senior leaders in these areas, but we

can assess some of the most prominent ones. One frequently cited example of a flawed assumption was the expectation that Iraqis were hungry for democracy, would greet American forces as liberators, and would remain calm and law abiding while their future was decided; that invading Iraq would be like liberating France in 1944.[52] General John Abizaid, USA (Ret.), refers to this expectation as a "heroic" assumption that compromised operations in Iraq.[53] This thesis is made credible by senior leaders who downplayed the costs and difficulties associated with occupying Iraq and emphasized they were unknowable.[54]

Where optimistic assessments were made, they appear to have been communication strategies designed to dampen opposition to the war. Senior leaders believed the ultimate costs of the war could not be predicted, and they wanted to downplay them in testimony to Congress and the public because they thought the war made strategic sense.[55] Worrying about the potential for civic unrest and general lawlessness is a routine concern of U.S. leaders planning foreign interventions, but American foreign interventions since World War II reveal how difficult it is to predict the level of popular resistance to U.S. forces.[56] Organized insurgencies in response to intervention would be worst-case scenarios at one end of the spectrum, whereas civil unrest and looting are commonplace. In the case of Iraq, senior leaders were well warned about and cognizant of the potential for lawlessness but not for organized insurgent resistance.

In any case, leaders were not guilty of rosy expectations of Iraqi gratitude and goodwill. They thought the majority Shiite population would welcome Saddam's ouster but the Sunnis much less so, and that in any case whatever welcome U.S. forces received would not last. Intelligence on Iraq predicted a "short honeymoon period" after deposing Saddam, and other national security organizations expected the same. Decisionmakers in Defense, State, and the White House worried about an extended American occupation precisely because they thought it would be costly and irritate the local population. This is why many senior leaders preferred a "light footprint" approach in both Afghanistan and Iraq.[57] As many commentators have noted, there were multiple planning efforts prior to the war by State, Defense, and other national security institutions that underscored how difficult the occupation might be.[58] These insights found a ready audience in the Bush administration, which came to

office disdaining extended nation-building missions and warning that the U.S. military was "most certainly not designed to build a civilian society."[59]

Yet there were deep disagreements among senior leaders about how best and how fast to pass authority to the Iraqis while reducing U.S. presence. The DOD solution was a short transition period for military forces with a quick turnover of authority to Iraqi expatriates.[60] Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld supported diverse efforts to anticipate nightmare scenarios that might derail the war effort, so he was not averse to considering ways plans could go awry.[61] He knew extended occupations could be costly, complicated, and counterproductive.[62] His way of avoiding the problem was to transfer it to the host nation to manage with assistance from other parties. He was well known for his bicycle analogy,[63] arguing that in teaching someone to ride a bicycle you have to take your hand off the bicycle seat. Secretary Rumsfeld argues the United States has a habit of trying to do too much for too long for other countries, exhausting itself and irritating and corrupting the host nation:

> *I understood that there were times when the United States would not be able to escape some national-building responsibilities, particularly in countries where we had been engaged militarily. It would take many years to rebuild societies shattered by war and tyranny. Though we would do what we could to assist, we ultimately couldn't do it for them. My view was that the Iraqis and Afghans would have to govern themselves in ways that worked for them. I believed that political institutions should grow naturally out of local soil; not every successful principle or mechanism from one country could be transplanted in another.[64]*

In other words, Rumsfeld thought those who believed the United States could export democracy and prosperity were the ones making rosy assumptions.[65] He favored an early handoff to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan, which he got.[66] In Iraq he wanted U.S. commanders "to accept as much risk getting out of Iraq as they had taken getting in." When commanders asked what that meant, they were told to "accelerate the withdrawal of forces."[67] Rumsfeld's staff warned him about postwar lawlessness,[68] but he believed it was best managed by parties other than the U.S. military, preferably other countries or international organizations recruited

by the State Department, and eventually the Iraqis themselves.[69] In his memoirs, Rumsfeld argues that he wanted State to take more responsibility for the postwar effort (even though it was clear that the department could not effectively do so) and notes he had recommended for months that Ambassador L. Paul Bremer—the President's special envoy to Iraq—report to the President through State and not Defense.[70] He practiced what he preached, discouraging preparations for postwar lawlessness, a four-star headquarters to organize and oversee the occupation, and the flow of additional ground forces to theater once victory over the Iraqi military was assured.[71] In short, Rumsfeld was skeptical about the ability of the United States to engineer a stable and prosperous Iraq regardless of effort, and he wanted someone else in charge of that mission.

The Department of State, including Secretary Colin Powell and Ambassador Bremer, did not want an extended occupation of Iraq, either; in fact, Bremer notes it "was certain to be a short occupation."[72] However, these leaders believed that it would difficult to find others willing to take responsibility for the future of Iraq and that the United States would have to do so since it had engineered the war. After the acrimonious international debate over deposing Saddam, it was important to stop the hemorrhaging of political support for the war on terror, something a chaotic Iraq would accelerate and a stable Iraq would help reduce. Thus, State wanted the speed and scale of U.S. postwar activities commensurate with the U.S. interests at stake. It thought the quickest way out of Iraq was to make the maximum effort to stabilize it following the termination of large-scale fighting, which meant a large ground force for security, plenty of development assistance, and as much international support as could be mustered. Secretary Powell was well known for his approach to overseas interventions, which postulated that a large force and effort early on make them more manageable. He had no illusions about the possibility of postwar disorder; he warned the President on just this point. Secretary Powell and Ambassador Bremer repeatedly emphasized the importance of security and lamented not only the unwillingness of DOD to provide more troops but also State's inability to provide the number, quality, and duration of civil administrators needed to put Iraq back on its feet.[73]

In short, neither State nor DOD based their approaches to postwar Iraq on wishful thinking. On the contrary, they worried about how difficult an occu-

pation could be. The fact that postwar governance and stability could be tough and costly informed White House thinking on the extent to which the United States should commit itself to a stable, prosperous, and democratic Iraq:

> *"So, if we get rid of Saddam, what is our obligation to* [the] *Iraqi people? Is it Saddamism without Saddam, or, putting it another way, a strong military leader within the existing system that simply agrees that he will not support terror, and will not develop* [weapons of mass destruction], *will not invade his neighbors, and will be not quite as brutal to his own people as Saddam was. Is that okay?" There was a conversation, and the President's view was we would get rid of Saddam Hussein for national security reasons, not because we were promoting democracy out of the barrel of a gun. We were going to have to remove him for hard national security reasons, but then what was our obligation to the Iraqi people? And the President said: "We stand for freedom and democracy. We ought to give the Iraqi people a chance, a chance with our help, to build a democratic system." And that's how the democracy piece got in, not that it had to be a Jeffersonian democracy, not that it had to be in our image, not that we wouldn't leave until the job is done, but we would give them a chance. And once we got into it, we realized that there had to be a democratic outcome because that was the only way you would keep the country together.*[74]

Thus, the President was committed to a good-faith but not an open-ended effort.[75] This limited commitment was understandable if good postwar governance was a desirable but not vital interest of the United States. The value of good postwar governance was then relative to its cost, which was unknowable in advance.[76]

Trying to assess the importance of a single planning assumption like how difficult postwar governance would be quickly leads to debate about other corollary assumptions. It soon becomes clear that senior leaders disagree about which assumptions were most important. While former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and General Abizaid underscore the assumption of short, relatively easy occupations, former Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen J. Hadley and Ambassador Bremer underscore the importance of the assump-

tion that Iraqi units would hold together well enough to help with postwar security.[77] Former Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary Rumsfeld, and former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith call attention to the assumption that U.S. forces would alienate local populations (something both the Bush and Obama administrations debated).[78] A RAND study notes that there were two key assumptions, one of which was that senior military commanders believed civilian authorities would be responsible for the postwar period.[79] Still others questioned the assumption that democracy could be imposed on foreign countries and cultures. Academics disagree on this issue but generally assert that "it depends" on the country in question and the level of commitment of the occupying power.[80]

The President's decision to give Iraqis a chance at democracy because it was the right thing to do but not a vital interest meant State and DOD could not ignore the postwar mission. However, it also left plenty of wiggle room for disagreements about how the mission should be conducted. The two departments obliged. They disagreed over the importance of ensuring good governance in Afghanistan and Iraq, over the appropriate level of U.S. commitment to this mission, over how it should be carried out, and over which department would do what to execute postwar tasks. These disagreements should not have been a surprise; they had been a longstanding bone of contention between the two departments. Consistent with previous experience,[81] President Bush did not resolve the differences.

The President gave the lead for postwar planning to DOD to preserve "unified effort." But he also promised Ambassador Bremer that he would have the authority and time he needed to stabilize Iraq (that is, take the Department of State approach). As the situation deteriorated, State was increasingly adamant about security and DOD was increasingly adamant about early departure for U.S. forces.[82] State increased its appeals for more troops, while Rumsfeld's generals told him irregular warfare was an intelligence-dependent mission and that more troops would be counterproductive. President Bush reiterated his promise to support more time and resources for Iraq when Bremer worried that DOD was setting him up to take responsibility for failure by pushing an accelerated schedule for turning over authority to the Iraqis.[83] The NSC staff refereed the debates between State and DOD, looking for ways to effect compromises. The views of the two departments were not reconciled

and the success of the postwar mission was compromised—not because of optimistic assumptions about Iraqi sentiments but because differences between strong departments were not managed well, a topic we examine in great detail in the next section of the chapter.

Another common complaint is that senior leaders fail to consider a wide range of options. Academic research has long noted the deleterious tendency to lock in on one option rather than considering a wide range of possibilities before choosing a course of action.[84] In general, senior leaders were sensible to this danger.[85] General Dempsey notes that friction and disagreement among senior leaders are good because they ensure that a wide range of perspectives is considered, and this certainly seems to describe decisionmaking in both the Bush and Obama administrations. With a couple of exceptions, it is clear that both administrations went to great lengths to make sure a range of options was considered before making key decisions.

Criticism about a restricted range of options converges on two key decisions. First, it is often asserted the Bush administration erred in not considering options for managing security better in Iraq after the end of large-scale fighting with the Iraqi army. But as we have just argued, senior leaders did not ignore an obvious problem area; they were just unable to resolve differences over what to do about it.[86] The postwar lawlessness was widely anticipated even if the rapid rise of the Sunni insurgency was not, and the failure to prepare for postwar civil unrest helped kick-start the insurgency. In turn, the failure to prepare well for lawlessness was in part a result of the failure to reconcile the two alternative approaches to managing the problem preferred by the Department of State and the Department of Defense.

The second major complaint concerns bureaucracies deciding on a preferred course and then engineering White House approval without a fair hearing of alternatives. This occurred in both the Bush and Obama administrations and most notably when discussing whether to surge U.S. forces to quell the insurgencies. These decisions are covered at length in the previous chapter. However, to recapitulate, the charge is that "the military produced too few and too narrow of options."[87] When President Bush "raised the idea of more troops going to Iraq . . . all of the chiefs unloaded on him, not only questioning the value of additional forces but expressing concern about the impact on the military if asked to send thousands more troops."[88] Similarly, Pentagon war plan-

ners resisted President Obama's request for "every option and contingency" and instead, "like characters in the Goldilocks story," provided three options with the first and last grossly flawed so that only their preferred course of action—the middle one—made any sense at all.[89]

Interestingly, it can be argued that the Pentagon's premature closure on its preferred options for the Surge relates to key assumptions. A major assumption among uniformed and civilian defense leaders was that the mere presence of U.S. forces alienated the population. General Abizaid made this point,[90] and Secretary Rumsfeld agreed. He cites approvingly the analysis by Douglas Feith—that the broader impression of an overbearing U.S. presence was more to blame for unrest in Iraq than de-Ba'athification or the disbanding of the Iraqi army. Senior military leaders in Iraq—even those who took counterinsurgency seriously—also believed the U.S. presence was an irritant, which inclined them to focus on the goal of transferring capacity and responsibility for counterinsurgency to host-nation forces. If "our exit strategy ran through the Iraqi security forces," it was logical to argue, "we needed to double down on the Iraqis and not on our own forces."[91] Using American forces would signal to Iraqis that the United States would always underwrite their poor decisions.

Those supporting the Surge questioned the veracity of this assumption,[92] and when it was deemed a success in Iraq, defense leaders embraced the opposite assumption, arguing a larger U.S. presence could have a calming effect by demonstrating resolve (not unlike the original military argument for going in with a large force).[93] Uniformed leaders with this viewpoint were promoted, and new civilian leadership argued for a Surge in Afghanistan. Beyond the Pentagon, however, many new civilian leaders in the Obama administration thought the previous assumption about the irritating nature of a U.S. force presence was more realistic. They argued that "[m]ore troops and more fighting would alienate Afghan civilians and undermine any goodwill achieved by expanded economic development and improved governance."[94]

Some participants in the Surge decisions believe the White House misinterpreted the unanimity of opinion among defense leaders on the value of a Surge as a "'military bloc' determined to force the commander in chief's hand."[95] Some also argue there was a time lag that made the Pentagon resistance seem worse than it was to the White House.[96] There is room for debate on these issues. The notable point is that the simple act of internally coordi-

nating a major department's position on a key issue for Presidential decision can be or appear to be an attempt to limit the President's options. The perception that the military bureaucracy was cooking options was a major point of friction between military and civilian authorities. However, it did not prevent the White House from hearing alternative views.[97] Therefore, in our view, the major problem in decisionmaking was not generating options and alternative views but the failure to reconcile those competing views productively. This was true for postwar planning, and it proves true for most other key decisions we review elsewhere in this chapter.

The last prerequisite for good decisionmaking we review—adjusting decisions in light of changing circumstances—seems to have been a much greater challenge. One reason for this is that it was difficult to come up with good indicators of success or failure. Before adjusting previous decisions, leaders had to agree on how things were changing and why. This was difficult. The same evidence—for example, levels of violence—could be used to support arguments that we were winning or losing. The positive assessment was that the opposition was making a pitched fight and would lose; the negative assessment was that the opposition was mobilized and growing and could fill its ranks no matter how many were killed. To make such complicated assessments of progress required an in-depth knowledge of Afghan and Iraqi politics and culture that the United States lacked (a point we return to later).[98]

Difficulties finding clear-cut metrics for progress notwithstanding, it does appear there were occasions when leaders resisted new evidence that challenged their existing convictions (cognitive dissonance). Secretary Rumsfeld, for example, was slow to recognize the emergence of an insurgency[99] in Iraq even though he later applauded General Abizaid for bringing the changed circumstances to his attention.[100] In addition, Hadley notes the White House was slow to reassess options when the Iraqi army melted away.[101] On the other hand, in response to changed circumstances, the White House was willing to pull in experts to learn about the demands of counterinsurgency. Commanders who applied time-tested counterinsurgency methods and enjoyed field success as a result might find themselves briefing the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, or other senior military and civilian leaders.[102]

Some leaders such as Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rumsfeld, and other defense leaders complain the NSC process made it difficult to adjust

policies in light of new developments.[103] They argue National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice imposed compromises that obscured a clear articulation of options on how to manage the war in Iraq. As we discuss, Dr. Rice denies this. It is interesting that in the Obama administration, Cabinet officials sometimes complained about the opposite tendency. Secretaries Clinton and Gates, for instance, suggest the Obama administration looked at options in Afghanistan "from every conceivable angle" and perhaps past the point of marginal additional benefit.[104]

We believe the record on senior leader adaptation to evolving circumstances is mixed. The innovative dimension of the Surge decisions is discussed in the previous chapter, and we review other notable successes and failures to innovate in the rest of this chapter. In summary, however, it seems clear that the willingness to consider alternative options and courses of action in response to evolving local conditions varied by leader, issue, and strength of the organizational culture resisting change.

In sum, there is room for improvement on adaptability, something General Dempsey and General McChrystal believe is quite important. They observe that in dynamic irregular warfare challenges, the key to success is not prognosticating well at the outset but adapting and innovating faster than the adversary.[105] The U.S. national security bureaucracy was not nimble in this respect. The lack of a clear strategy and bureaucratic conflict contributed to sluggish performance in Afghanistan and Iraq in several ways. For example, the lack of coherent strategy was a major factor undermining the U.S. ability to command and control the war effort for greatest effect. We examine this topic in the next section.

Command

Unified effort is important because working at cross-purposes is inefficient and often ineffective as well. The assumption that unified effort is useful reflects a decisionmaking bias in favor of coherence "based on the principles of rationality, causality, and intentionality."[106] This bias inclines "reformers" to "advocate more systematic attempts to define objectives, establish knowledge about the world, coordinate among different aspects of a decision, and exercise control in the name of some central vision."[107] The reformer perspective that favors unified effort is consistent with our assumption that senior leader

decisionmaking was "choice based" and an instrumental activity designed to defeat terrorism. It also is consistent with the purpose of this current volume: identifying lessons from experience.

The conceptual failures reviewed in the previous section were a major impediment to unified effort, but not the only one. Other organizational limitations also diminished the ability of senior leaders to generate unified effort, which was a multidimensional challenge. International cooperation required diplomacy; partnership among the executive, judicial, and legislative branches required political action; collaboration between executive branch departments and agencies required Presidential intervention; coherent efforts within departments and agencies required good leadership from Cabinet officials; and so on. Here our focus is on unified effort within the executive branch, where there were successes and failures.

To be clear, we are not talking about disagreements per se, but rather the persistence of unresolved differences that lead to conflicting behaviors. Good decisionmaking requires a range of views, but once a decision has been made the entire organization needs to implement the decision with unified effort. Sometimes this happened.[108] However, senior leaders in both the Bush and Obama administrations often cite friction between national leaders and organizations as the Achilles' heel of the U.S. war effort. Few other topics generate so much piercing commentary from senior leaders as problems with the chain of command and interagency coordination, which we refer to as vertical and horizontal unity of effort issues.[109] Beginning with vertical unity of effort, we consider impediments to unified effort at three levels—decisionmaking at the national level (meaning between the White House staff and organizations constituting the National Security Council); within departments and agencies, particularly the Pentagon; and in the field (that is, Afghanistan and Iraq).

Vertical Unity of Effort

Vertical unity of effort refers to the lines of authority from the President down through the departments and agencies of the national security system. Our concern is with the way the President's guidance and instructions are communicated by senior leaders and implemented by subordinates in the executive branch. The necessity and challenge of delegating authority in the national security system have been well recognized for decades.[110] The President can

involve himself in a miniscule portion of the decisions made throughout the national security system. Like all leaders commanding large organizations, he must issue broad guidance and count on subordinates to implement the guidance consistent with his intent and extant circumstances.

To make delegated authority work, there must be unity of command, which the U.S. military considers a principle of war. The Constitution provides for unity of command by making the President commander in chief of the Armed Forces and chief executive of the executive branch of government. Nevertheless, multiple forces limit the President's ability to generate unified effort. Problems arise when there is confusion about who is in charge of what; when the President's guidance is neglected or reinterpreted; and when the President is not able to review and issue clarifying instructions in a timely manner as circumstances evolve. These types of complications to vertical unity of effort were evident in the war on terror at multiple levels.

Confusion about who was in charge of various efforts arose early and continued throughout the war. President Bush was frustrated when he discovered DOD and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) each thought the other had the lead for operations in Afghanistan.[111] The mixup was due in part to the nature of the nontraditional threat, which required responses from multiple departments and agencies and raised doubts about which organization would lead the effort. President Bush and President Obama tried to eliminate such uncertainty by assigning "czars" in Washington or special envoys overseas to lead interagency missions. Some argue this practice led to bureaucratic conflict in Washington and confusion abroad about who spoke for the President.[112] In Afghanistan and Iraq, senior leader accounts suggest the performance of czars and special envoys was mixed and changed over time.[113] L. Paul Bremer was the most controversial such figure. Bremer's appointment did not simplify the President's job. Instead, it accentuated disagreements among State, Defense, and White House staffs about who was in the chain of command between the President and Bremer. The origins of Bremer's substantive policy preferences were disputable.[114] However, what seemed clear was that Bremer "was convinced that he worked for the President," even though his terms of reference stated he worked for the Secretary of Defense.[115] Senior DOD leaders insist the confusion about Bremer's reporting chain sidetracked the entire mission in Iraq.[116] President Obama's special envoy to Afghanistan and Paki-

stan caused similar consternation when, "reporting to [Secretary Clinton] but working closely with the White House," White House officials "saw his [Richard Holbrooke's] efforts to coordinate among various government agencies as encroaching on their turf."[117]

Senior officials also offer examples of Presidential guidance being ignored, exceeded, resisted, or misinterpreted to the detriment of coherence as it passed through the bureaucracy.[118] President Bush believed the Secretary of State "wasn't fully on board with [his] philosophy and policies,"[119] and the Vice President notes that on occasion both the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense exceeded Presidential guidance.[120] George Tenet asserts the President's guidance on cutting funding to certain Iraqi exile groups was ignored.[121] Secretary Clinton argues that some of her initiatives were held up by White House officials who "wanted to be sure that State wasn't trying to usurp the White House's role as the primary coordinator of activity across the various agencies, especially when it came to communications." Clinton states these officials were out of step with the President, who had been asking for "this kind of plan for more than a year."[122] The President and White House officials in both the Bush and Obama administrations believed Pentagon leaders sometimes were not supportive of the President's agenda. Cheney points to "ongoing resistance inside the Pentagon and at [U.S.] Central Command to the surge strategy,"[123] and both secretaries of State and Defense acknowledge the Obama White House felt "boxed in" by Pentagon demands for more troops in Afghanistan.[124]

The trouble Presidents have ensuring unified effort down the chain of command is replicated at the level of Cabinet officials. Multiple sources, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, indicate the commander of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) would not take postwar planning seriously as directed by himself and the Secretary of Defense.[125] "Big organizations are just difficult to manage," states Secretary Rice in her memoirs. "As Secretary of Defense Bob Gates and I used to say to each other, only half-jokingly, 'You never know what your building is doing until it's too late.'"[126] Unified effort was also an issue among deployed military forces, which may surprise those who thought Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 reforms solved "the age-old" military command problem "of too many high-ranking generals with a hand on the tiller."[127] Secretary Gates is forthright in acknowledging command relationships in Afghanistan were a "jerry-rigged

arrangement [that] violated every principle of the unity of command." Some U.S. forces reported to the commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul, others "to a separate U.S. three-star general, who in turn reported to the four-star commander of Central Command," and still others to the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

The lack of joint command and control contributed to the inability of the Army and Air Force, and to some extent the Marine Corps, to adequately cooperate on the battlefield.[128] Overlapping and ad hoc command arrangements in Afghanistan also are a major reason SOF worked at cross-purposes with larger campaign objectives. Kill/capture operations took precedence over the indirect approach to counterinsurgency, even though there was broad agreement among the U.S. national security and USSOCOM leadership that the opposite was necessary.[129] In 2008, a 6-week interagency review found that in Kandahar Province alone there were 10 separate chains of command managing 10 separate warfighting efforts.

Similarly, before General McChrystal assumed command in Afghanistan in 2009, he reviewed an incident where Afghan civilians were inadvertently killed. He found:

> *There was an Afghan force that had a Marine Special Operations Command . . . element working with it, which didn't own the battlespace, but was out there doing its own thing. There was a Special Forces regional taskforce, which was also operating in the area, but was different from the battlespace owner. And then there were the forces that dropped the bomb which killed the civilians. He found that there were at least five players in the proximity of the incident, but nobody was in charge. The different entities didn't even have the requirement to keep each other informed of what they were doing.*[130]

This kind of disunity of command persisted until Secretary Gates ordered it rectified in the summer of 2010, nearly 9 years after the war started.[131] Gates considered getting "all American forces (including both special operations and the Marines) under the U.S. theater commander [and] at last establishing unity of command," an accomplishment akin to securing the Holy Grail.

Strong subordinate organizations resisted unified command, and their cultures also undermined unified effort in other ways. General Casey was concerned about the willingness of U.S. ground forces to embrace counterinsurgency principles. He thought Army and Marine Corps organizational cultures would "hamper our ability to accomplish the mission" because they were focused on the use of force. He knew he was "attempting to change deeply embedded Service culture and that [he] would have to change the mindset of the force," but "underestimated how long this would take."[132] Service cultures also complicated coordination of air-ground operations. General Richard Myers, USAF (Ret.), believes the lack of jointness in this area was a command failure that cost brave Americans their lives. He told General Tommy Franks, USA, then commander of USCENTCOM, that it was "absolutely unacceptable," and believes Franks took immediate action to fix the problem.[133]

As important as it is to pursue the senior leader's intent, subordinate units also need the latitude to achieve objectives consistent with extant circumstances. While many brigade commanders never comprehended or supported counterinsurgency doctrine, others improved on the preferred approach to counterinsurgency.[134] Then-Colonel Julian Alford, USMC, is a case in point. His unexpected success in pacifying al-Qaim near the Syrian border in 2005 drew the attention of General Casey, who visited Alford repeatedly and asked him to help educate other commanders on counterinsurgency methods.[135] Other notable Marine commanders emulated Alford with success, including Lieutenant Colonel William M. Jurney in Ramadi in 2006 and Lieutenant Colonel William Mullen III in Fallujah in 2007.[136] Similarly, a series of Army field commanders achieved unexpected counterinsurgency success by reaching out to local authorities and indigenous forces to partner on securing the local populations. Captain Jim Calvert in Qaim, Colonel Robert Brown in Mosul, Colonel H.R. McMaster in Tal Afar, and Colonel Sean MacFarland in Ramadi are all notable in this respect. In essence they were challenging policy and strategy established by superiors in their chain of command:

> *Instead of communicating an intention to leave Iraq to Iraqis, Mac-Farland expressed commitment to their cause. He explained that if the Iraqis stood up for themselves, he and his forces would stay until they were "secure from al Qaeda and the Persians* [Iranians]." *He promised*

*to create a Sunni police militia that would become part of the Iraqi gov-
ernment but stay in Ramadi to protect their homes and families. To
do so, MacFarland required "non-standard funding sources" available
through interagency contacts. . . . In what MacFarland would later de-
scribe as "the game changer," Ramadi's police force increased from 150
to 4,000 in a matter of months. Consequently, intelligence and counter-
insurgency capabilities improved and eventually responsibility for secu-
rity operations began transitioning to the Iraqis.*[137]

Simply put, MacFarland reversed existing policy, which was to tell the
Iraqis, "You stand up, and we'll stand down."[138] Instead, he promised, "if you
stand up, we'll stand by you." The other successful field commanders did the
same.

The national security system's ability to learn and adapt to emerging con-
ditions is reviewed in the previous chapter. Here we note there were some ex-
amples of learning in the field that should be encouraged. Field commanders
were given the latitude to apply guidance as they thought local circumstances
demanded, and some did so in innovative and successful ways. The Chair-
man's white paper on "mission command" philosophy, derived from warfight-
ing experience over the past decade, explicitly argues the point that in complex
and dynamic environments, subordinates should be encouraged to innovate
more and given the latitude to do so.[139]

Innovation is risky when commander's intent is not well understood or
commanders are not inclined to give subordinates much latitude. It could be
misinterpreted as disloyalty to the chain of command and their preferred ap-
proaches. Concerning the decision to surge forces, General Casey concludes:

*In retrospect, I believe that I should have directly offered the President
a broader range of options for achieving our objectives in Iraq. I had
discussed different options for improving the security situation with the
Secretary of Defense and Chairman. . . . In the end, I only presented the
President the course of action we selected—accelerated transition—and
I believe that I should have offered him a wider range of options to meet
his policy needs.*[140]

General Casey knew that his DOD superiors and all the Service chiefs did not support the Surge and preferred greater efforts to hand off the security mission to Iraqi forces. Providing realistic alternatives to their preferred approach for the President's consideration would require ignoring his superiors' policy preferences and could have been interpreted as jumping the chain of command.

Alford, McMaster, MacFarland, and other successful field commanders faced the same dilemma working under Casey.[141] Yet they realized local Iraqi leaders could not afford to support American forces and the new government if the forces were trying to leave and the government looked like it would collapse. Success required convincing locals that the United States was "in it to win it," defined as not walking away until the government could manage its own security. Thus, these commanders had to turn the prevailing counterinsurgency approach on its head. As noted previously, instead of stating U.S. forces would stand down as the Iraqis took responsibility for security, they assured local Iraqis that if they stood up to defend themselves, U.S. forces would stand by them until the enemy was defeated. Some general officers such as General McChrystal also innovated well in trying circumstances.[142]

Innovation needs to be recognized, rewarded, and quickly replicated. In most cases the successes were recognized; they were so glaring they could hardly be ignored. Lessons from successful commanders also were shared both formally and informally (for example, Jurney learned directly from Alford, and MacFarland from McMaster). However, the record on rewarding and replicating these tactical successes was spotty. Some, but hardly all, successful field commanders were promoted by their parent organizations, and sometimes only begrudgingly.

The replication of these successful examples was even more limited. General Casey was right to be concerned about U.S. ground forces accepting counterinsurgency principles that ran against their organizational cultures. At best, the U.S. military adopted proven counterinsurgency techniques slowly and unevenly.[143] More importantly, however, tactical successes were not replicated because the methods they relied upon challenged prevailing policy and strategy. Tactical partnering with local forces could fuel sectarian sentiments and undermine formal Iraqi governmental structures that the United States was committed to supporting. It also often involved working with local leaders

with checkered pasts or who were judged by U.S. leaders or intelligence to be marginal players, and it ran counter to the policy of transferring responsibility for security to Iraqi military forces as fast as possible, which was based on the assumption that the mere presence of U.S. forces was an irritant to be minimized as a matter of priority.[144] For all these reasons, the tactical successes of Marine and Army field commanders in late 2004 and 2005 failed to prompt a rapid reassessment of policy and strategy assumptions.

If mission command is going to take root and become a useful element of U.S. military culture, we need to consider the broader organizational implications of the concept. We need to better understand why some officers are inclined to innovate and learn from others; what it would take to make their examples more common if not the norm; and especially how to assess and replicate more rapidly successful innovation from the bottom up when it challenges existing senior leader assumptions.

It also needs to be acknowledged that innovation can backfire, especially where the commander's intent is not clear. Ambassador Bremer secured wide discretionary authority from the President without clear guidance on the purpose of occupying Iraq. His most controversial decisions—handling expatriate Iraqi leaders, disbanding (or not reconstituting) the Iraqi army, and de-Ba'athification—were so contentious because it was not clear whether they were consistent with Presidential intent.[145] Indeed, some argue Bremer was chosen because he was a take-charge kind of person who could operate without guidance: "In Bremer, the administration saw a hands-on and assertive administrator: a veritable proconsul who would grab hold of the turmoil that was Iraq and get the Bush administration's program there back on track."[146]

Some historical accounts lionize special envoys, "czars," and other national security officials for working around the limitations of the current system to generate good outcomes.[147] Recent studies of the national security system, however, warn that policy entrepreneurs constitute a "roll of the dice." They often have limited access to all available resources, rely upon questionable legal authorities, pursue policies based on faulty but unchallenged assumptions, and make poor use of subject matter experts and other institutional expertise.[148] Considered in the context of broader system attributes, turning over decisionmaking to an assertive, high-profile special envoy is more akin to mission roulette than mission command. Policy entrepreneurs such as Am-

bassador Bremer or Ambassador Richard Holbrooke are neither heroes nor villains. They are courageous, experienced leaders forced by circumstances and assignment to gamble the Nation's welfare and their reputations without a clear understanding of national objectives or much control over the combined forces the United States can bring to bear upon the problems they are assigned to resolve. When they succeed they are lionized; when they fail they are denigrated, and often their careers are destroyed.[149] Forced to work with uncertain authority, control, and situational awareness, the odds are not stacked in favor of their success.

More oversight to ensure accountability is the usual fix for subordinates generating poor outcomes, but in the current system, that tends to generate charges of micromanagement. Everyone is in favor of good oversight in principle, which requires leaders to take responsibility for what happens under their authority and fix problems rather than assign blame when things go awry. At the same time, everyone loathes micromanagers far removed from the problem who tell their subordinates not only what to do but also how to do it. In fact, it is more common for Washington insiders to rail about micromanagement than lack of oversight. For example, a group of senior leaders with much experience in both the Bush and Obama administrations has argued the United States has no hope of success in countering the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant unless it overcomes the crippling problem of "tight Washington tactical control of decisions in the field of the sort so beloved by bureaucratic Washington departments and power centers."[150]

Getting the balance right between helpful oversight and unhelpful micromanagement is difficult in the current system for multiple reasons.[151] For one thing, a clear difference between the two is often discernable only in retrospect as the consequences of leader interventions (or lack thereof) emerge. The White House's orchestration of the Surge in Iraq and Secretary Gates's insistence on producing Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles are cases in point. Most people consider these interventions helpful oversight in retrospect because they appeared to work. On the other hand, most people now believe the CIA's Rendition, Detention, and Interrogation program did not receive sufficient oversight even though it was approved by the President, Vice President, National Security Advisor, and U.S. Attorney General, and reviewed by the chairmen and ranking Members of the Senate and House

intelligence committees. Since no attack comparable to 9/11 has materialized, the unpopular program is now often described as ineffectual and unnecessary.

It may be difficult to distinguish between good oversight and micromanagement before outcomes are evident, but some general observations are possible. First, there is an interesting consistency in how senior leaders describe the difference between helpful oversight and unhelpful micromanagement; they appreciate the value of giving guidance more than receiving it. In times past, disarmament experts used to quip that a weapon is offensive or defensive depending upon which end of the barrel a person stands at. Similarly, we can jest that leader interventions are oversight or micromanagement, depending upon which end of the guidance pipeline a person stands at. This witticism has an empirical basis; senior leaders complain about guidance from superiors but see their own guidance to subordinates as helpful. They also demonstrate great sensitivity to higher authority requesting information from their subordinates but themselves seek unfiltered information from lower echelons of their organizations.

For example, Dr. Rice complained that Secretary Rumsfeld was hypersensitive when her staff went to sources in the field and the Pentagon for "routine" information, but she also threatened to resign when she thought DOD bypassed her to get Presidential approval on military commissions to try detainees.[152] Secretary Rumsfeld advocated delegated authority, but he also handpicked senior general officers for positions in the Pentagon, objected to the latitude Ambassador Bremer was given as the President's representative in Iraq, tried to bypass the Ambassador in Poland,[153] and subjected his own subordinates—including his Deputy Secretary of Defense—to such close scrutiny that they were afraid to speak up without his permission. "Fed up with the National Security Council staff's micromanagement," Secretary Gates cut off their contact with his forces in the field, but when he visited Afghanistan and Iraq, he liked to meet with unsupervised lower ranking officers to get ground truth.[154] Gates also was frustrated that President Obama would not accept the unanimous decision by his senior uniformed advisors on troop levels in Afghanistan, but at the same time was dismayed that the entire uniformed leadership of the Pentagon did not support his position on the urgent need to acquire better armored vehicles and other material.[155] Secretary Clinton's memoir suggests that she needed direct communication with the President to overcome White House staff interference with her plans, but she also fought to

ensure Ambassador Christopher Hill's weekly message to the President went through her.[156] General Franks threatened to resign over unwarranted interference from the Secretary of Defense and bristled over critiques of his war plans by Service chiefs, but he had a reputation for insisting on being well informed on his subordinates' activities and demanding stringent compliance.[157]

Another insight is that the higher one goes in the national security system, the more pronounced the ostensible aversion to micromanagement, so much so that the sentiment constrains good oversight. There is common agreement that the White House (that is, NSC staff) should make policy but not get involved in the details of managing national security issues. In noting his job was to make sure plans were comprehensive and consistent with his strategic vision, but not to manage logistics or tactical decisions, President Bush stated he remembered how deleterious it was for President Lyndon Johnson to pick bombing targets in Vietnam.[158] Another historical example that White House officials cite as a caution against micromanagement is the Iran-Contra Affair. A Presidential Special Review Board headed by Senator John Tower investigated the incident during the Reagan administration and recommended several corrective measures, including an injunction against NSC staff implementing policy or conducting operations. In the same way that President Johnson's picking bombing targets is invoked as shorthand for civilian meddling in military matters,[159] Iran-Contra is routinely offered up as substantiated proof that the NSC staff should never delve into operational matters but instead leave those details to Cabinet officials.[160]

Experience in the war on terror suggests that we have "overlearned" the lessons of Iran-Contra, but senior leaders are slow to embrace this insight for fear of being labeled micromanagers. Condoleezza Rice and Stephen Hadley are cases in point. Dr. Rice explains in her memoir how Iran-Contra informed her views and those of her deputy, Hadley, who had served as counsel to the Tower Commission. Together they resolved to carry out the President's agenda through and not around Cabinet secretaries.[161] Thus, President Bush and his national security staff began their tenure determined to make policy but delegate well and let the system worry about implementation details. This same commitment to empowering subordinates also inclined President Bush to grant maximum flexibility to his man on the ground in Iraq, Ambassador Bremer.[162]

Yet when failure loomed, the President, Rice, and Hadley developed a keen appreciation for the value of detailed oversight even though it meant being accused of micromanagement. Rice saw the White House needed "better connectivity" with Bremer and his staff in Baghdad, and to get it she created the Iraq Stabilization Group headed by a "black belt in bureaucratic politics." This led to intense friction with the Secretary of Defense, the accusation that she was interfering in the chain of command, and also a short-lived reprimand from the President. President Bush objected to Dr. Rice summoning Ambassador Bremer to Washington to explain next steps in Iraq because he knew there would be fallout from bypassing Secretary Rumsfeld, who was sensitive to "what he thought to be White House interference in the chain of command." Rice told the President she could cancel Bremer's trip, but added, "Don't be surprised when the United States has a new plan for Iraq's political transition that you haven't seen." The President relented and asked when Bremer was coming.[163] Rice remained sensitive to the charge of micromanagement, however, admitting she was "far deeper into operational matters than [she thought] wise." Yet she ended up being glad she intervened.[164]

Similarly, Hadley remains convinced that the Tower Commission's injunction against NSC staff getting involved in operations remains "absolutely true." At the same time, he admits that the Iraq strategy could not succeed "if we gave it to the bureaucracy to be executed in the ordinary course [of business] because it would not get done in time." So he concludes, "the one thing we've learned since the Tower Commission report" is that "the NSC has the responsibility to ensure that policy decisions . . . are actually implemented and executed effectively." Hadley considers effective oversight of decision implementation (that is, operations) a "new frontier for the interagency process," and he experimented with alternative means of providing it. First he created an Afghan Operations Group—an interagency team with offices in the Department of State—and later he appointed a czar (Lieutenant General Douglas Lute, USA) with "a direct line to the President."[165] Insider accounts of decisionmaking indicate he later took a much more hands-on personal role in engineering the White House intervention that led to the Surge.[166]

There will always be an "eye of the beholder" dimension to distinguishing helpful oversight from unhelpful micromanagement. However, several insights may assist future leaders on this difficult topic. First, experienced leaders make

a distinction between gathering information and intervening to direct subordinate behaviors. Since authority can be delegated, but not responsibility,[167] it is incumbent upon leaders to stay well informed about progress toward objectives, identifying anything or anybody that is impeding success. All leaders, from the President to the local commander and Ambassador in the field, must understand well whether the collective endeavor they supervise is succeeding or failing. In arguing the Secretary of Defense has to master details and understand issues, Secretary Gates distinguishes between "micro-knowledge" and micromanagement. A poorly informed Secretary of Defense is a "kept" man at the Pentagon, enjoying the trappings of power but "without the knowledge or influence to effectively lead."[168] In essence this was the same point Dr. Rice made to President Bush when he bristled at her bringing Ambassador Bremer to Washington; the White House had to know what Bremer was planning to do next. Getting such information from the bureaucracy can be difficult. Hadley notes that during the Obama administration, trying to get inside information from DOD on options for a Surge cost two senior leaders their careers.[169]

When leaders do move beyond information collection to intervene with amplifying guidance—especially over the objections of subordinates—they need to make sure they do so for the right reasons. They should override subordinate concerns when they are convinced their broader field of vision gives them insights that those further down the chain of command lack; that with their privileged perspective they can see that the larger enterprise is at risk if some particular actions are not taken. Micromanagement occurs when leaders tell a subordinate what to do based on personal past experience or some other prejudice rather than their broader field of vision. Good oversight is based on contextual insights from a higher level, whereas micromanagement second-guesses a subordinate without the detailed knowledge of immediate circumstances that are known to the subordinate. The assumption here is that requirements for success visible from the higher level drive and thus trump the importance of outcomes at a lower level. If this assumption does not hold, as is sometimes the case when tactical results enable strategic outcomes, leaders must be especially averse to overriding subordinates with better knowledge of local conditions.

Finally, many senior leaders believe a good decisionmaking process can make helpful oversight more common and hurtful micromanagement less

likely. For example, a common prescription for good teamwork is to promote vibrant debate and information-sharing before the senior leader decision is made, and unified effort to achieve the leader's intent and objective after he or she makes the decision.[170] Since information can be used to further the interests of subordinates rather than leaders (often referred to as the principal-agent problem), mutual trust is essential to make this general approach work—a point emphasized in the Chairman's white paper on mission command.[171] This is true of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Delegated authority worked best where trust was most prominent (for example, within some Ambassador–joint force commander pairings, some interagency field teams hunting high-value targets, and within the U.S. military chain of command that allowed field commanders to apply general guidance in specific circumstances as they saw fit).

Trust relationships across organizational boundaries take time and often prove fragile if not reinforced through relationships, process, and common cultures. As SOF like to say, "You can't surge trust." Yet properly nurtured, what once was perceived as unhelpful micromanagement may eventually be seen as helpful collaboration. General Franks's opinion of Secretary Rumsfeld's supervision of his war plans evolved in this manner.[172] Trust relationships also can deteriorate. Trust levels between CIA Director George Tenet and the Bush White House fell so far that cooperation between the two was impossible, and President Obama's confidence in DOD and uniformed leadership also deteriorated over the course of his first administration. Similarly, some interagency task forces chasing high-value targets collapsed when trust relationships were broken.[173] Overall, mistrust was a significant problem at multiple levels of the national security system and especially during planning and execution of Iraq operations.[174]

As we have seen, vertical unity of effort was a problem even though the U.S. national security system benefits from legal structures that ensure unity of command and from common organizational norms—especially but not exclusively in DOD—that support unified command and effort. Generating horizontal unity of effort across diverse departments and agencies with divergent missions and cultures was even more difficult and more consequential as well.

Horizontal Unity of Effort

Stated broadly, *horizontal unity of effort* refers to the way discrete organizations cooperate for common purposes when they are not accountable to the

same authority, or when they are too far removed from a common authority to receive effective oversight. More narrowly, horizontal unity of effort in national security discourse refers to how well departments and agencies in the executive branch collaborate to accomplish national objectives or, in common parlance, interagency cooperation. The legal structures, authority relationships, and organizational norms in the national security system are much better established for vertical than for horizontal unity of effort, so it is not surprising the latter was more problematic. Poor horizontal collaboration was a major performance impediment because so many of the subsidiary objectives and tasks in the war on terror—such as attacking terrorist leaders, countering their narrative and promoting ours (that is, strategic communications), and interrupting terrorist financing—depended upon interagency cooperation. Conversely, some of the greatest successes in the war on terror were the result of collaboration across departmental lines.

DOD-CIA cooperation is most often cited as an example of interagency success, both the operational collaboration at the beginning of operations in Afghanistan and then the later and more general fusion of all-source intelligence with special operations to hunt enemy leaders. Another important area marked by notable interagency cooperation was some of the Department of State and DOD partnerships forged between Ambassadors and theater commanders. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Lieutenant General David Barno, USA, in Afghanistan (2003) and Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus, USA, in Iraq (2007) made strenuous efforts to collaborate,[175] which contributed to their making progress against the insurgencies during their tenures.[176] There were other interagency successes in countering terrorist financing and securing international cooperation.[177]

Unfortunately, these types of success were as sporadic as they were critical. According to senior leader accounts—and many "lessons learned" efforts as well[178]—interagency conflicts handicapped U.S. national security performance. President Bush deplored interagency squabbling, argued it hurt his administration's credibility, and noted he was unable to end it.[179] His Cabinet-level officials also attributed poor outcomes to the lack of cooperation between departments and agencies. Conflict between DOD and State was particularly severe, but there was substantial friction between the National Security Advisor and Cabinet officials. In the Bush administration, Secretary Gates was able

to work well with Dr. Rice,[180] and in the Obama administration, Gates worked well with Secretary Clinton. However, even when those relationships were relatively harmonious there was substantial conflict between other national security components, including enduring tension between the White House and Cabinet officials, between senior intelligence officials vying for control of intelligence assets, and between Ambassadors and military commanders in the field.

Successful interagency cooperation efforts took time to develop, had to be nurtured, and were fragile and prone to deterioration. DOD-CIA cooperation is a case in point. The idea to embed SOF with the Northern Alliance came from the CIA and worked well. However, as DOD flowed conventional military units to theater, the ad hoc cooperation between the CIA and SOF subsided, which contributed to command and control problems in Operation *Anaconda*.[181] Interagency cooperation in hunting important enemy leaders has been maintained with great effort, but it too is subject to interruption.[182] General McChrystal observes no interagency alliance was "as infuriating or as productive" as his relationship with the CIA, and that "more than once" he had to be stopped "in moments of utter frustration, from severing all ties" with the agency.[183] There is always a price to be paid for being slow to generate interagency cooperation when missions demand it, and sometimes the price is quite high. Many argue, for example, that the postwar administration of Iraq was fatally flawed by interagency strife.[184]

Postwar planning was led by DOD. Putting one department or agency in the lead is the typical U.S. Government means of managing interagency missions. Even if a good ad hoc working relationship has been forged on the fly, leaders prefer designating a "lead agency" as soon as possible. The President insisted on knowing whether DOD or the CIA had the lead for operations in Afghanistan. DOD acknowledged the CIA's initial lead but demanded that it transition to DOD as forces flowed to theater.[185] The lead agency approach can work when there is a consensus that one department or agency has the preponderance of expertise needed to manage a mission. For example, other departments recognized the Treasury Department as the right lead for the interagency effort to counter terrorism financing. However, the traditional lead agency approach does not work well for nontraditional missions such as counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, which by their very nature require

intense ongoing interdepartmental cooperation and have no obvious organizational lead. In such circumstances, lead departments and agencies may restrict participation by others to minimize their ability to interfere, and those not in the lead may restrict their support to save resources or avoid responsibility for outcomes they cannot control. Thus, in the words of one seasoned NSC staff person, "lead agency" almost always devolves into "sole agency"[186] as centrifugal organizational forces—desire for autonomy, different mandates and cultures, personality conflicts—militate against interagency cooperation.

Both postwar planning and the reconstruction effort led by the State Department are good examples.[187] DOD excluded State subject matter experts from its postwar planning team fearing they would not support its "light footprint" approach that assumed a quick turnover to Iraqi authorities.[188] Most sources agree that State-DOD relations reached their nadir as a result. Ironically, State and Defense positions on the need for State Department expertise on postwar reconstruction reversed over time but the interagency friction remained. After State regained the lead for reconstruction in Iraq, Ambassador Hill concluded the large number of Foreign Service personnel assigned to the task was unnecessary and only done "because the military wanted it that way." DOD demanded that State "step up" and join the war effort by providing ever greater numbers of personnel even though, in the Ambassador's view, "finding meaningful work for them was a challenge." The Ambassador wanted to reduce U.S. presence and let the Iraqis work out their own future (the initial DOD position), but most of all to diminish the overbearing role of DOD and return the lead for bilateral relations to State.[189]

The importance and difficulty of generating interagency cooperation were well recognized by senior leaders. It is doubtful any topic generates a greater degree of senior leader consensus than the assertion that irregular warfare requires effective orchestration of all elements of power, unless it is the related observation that the United States failed to meet this requirement well. Senior leaders in both the Bush and Obama administrations recognized the importance of interagency cooperation and offer examples of how the war effort was compromised by inadequate unity of effort. Some commentators opine that interagency conflict is a significant problem only in Washington, where big egos and budgets are in play, or only in the field, where coordinated actions count. In reality it was a liability at all levels of the national security system

and among numerous departments and agencies, although some relationships were more fraught with friction than others.

At the national level, conflict between the Department of State and DOD was most remarked upon. There is a long history of such tension. Secretary Gates noted that for most of his career, "the Secretaries of State and Defense weren't speaking to one another."[190] Dr. Rice, who served both as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, considers infighting between the two departments almost endemic. In an extended discussion, Rice explains the quarreling as a result of the huge disparity in resources that requires State to rely on DOD assets and the tendency of Defense to meddle in foreign policy. Rice discounts cultural differences, but other observers believe they also play a role. She also notes that during the first Bush term, State-DOD tensions were exacerbated by personal distrust between Secretaries Rumsfeld and Powell.[191] During the Obama administration the relationship was less contentious, but tension between the White House and DOD was more so. In both administrations, there were interagency cooperation problems between other departments and agencies besides State and Defense.

Poor relations among the White House, DOD, and Intelligence Community (IC) are another longstanding problem area at the national level. Many observers note the tendency for the IC and DOD to disagree about intelligence priorities as well as the frequency of conflicts between the IC and White House. The White House is concerned that the IC is trying to influence policy with the way it shades its products or even playing politics with intelligence assessments to the disadvantage of the White House. The IC (mainly CIA) in turn worries that the White House wants to skew intelligence assessments to support policy or, if things go poorly, blame the IC for poor assessments that failed to predict critical factors. These types of allegations ignore the inherent difficulties involved in predicting the future and divining the intentions and capabilities that are the closely guarded secrets of other countries. When leaders bandied these accusations about, they destroyed relationships, diminished cooperation, and contributed to a poisoning of public discourse about U.S. strategic options and progress in the war.[192]

Interagency collaboration is a significant problem in Washington where the only person with the authority to resolve such disputes is the President. Hence, it is not surprising to find interagency coordination is more of a prob-

lem the further the participants are removed from direct Presidential supervision. At the regional level, the struggle between State and DOD again stands out.[193] Secretary Rice complains that regional combatant commanders "sometimes act quite independently, developing their own relationships with foreign leaders and bringing their influence to bear on issues that at best cross and at worst shatter the lines between diplomacy and security policy." The huge disparity in resources that combatant commanders can marshal compared to Ambassadors comes up in this context. Ambassador Hill recounts how a joint task force commander and his staff shook their heads in disbelief when he explained State would have a hard time coming up with $12 million for the police training program, and then went ahead and funded the effort themselves.[194]

The resource disparity between State and DOD may contribute to what many fear is the "militarization" of foreign policy, but differences in organizational cultures also play a role. Combatant commanders are mission-focused in a way that can incline them to run roughshod over what they consider minor problems. A passage from the deputy commander of USCENTCOM is instructive in this regard:

> *When it came to slow, bureaucratic foreign diplomacy we couldn't waste any time. We had immediate requests to make, and we couldn't afford to go through a million proper foreign channels and wait for a response. We were going to talk to who we wanted to, when we wanted to, and get answers immediately.* For most of our ambassadors overseas, this was a culture shock. *I would call and say we needed to talk to a certain foreign minister, president, emir, or appropriate head of state. I'd tell them to go directly to that president and tell him that in two hours he would be talking to Vice President Cheney or Secretary Powell, and to be prepared to discuss issues such as runways, overflight rights, access to ports and transportation systems, fuel at airports, security at airports and seaports, and help with air defense. We talked to who we needed to, got the answers we needed, and got the job done (emphasis added).*[195]

State acquiesced to this way of doing business in the aftermath of 9/11 when a consensus in favor of forceful action helped smooth over historic interdepartmental differences. State also agreed to a set of strategic communication

themes for Operation *Enduring Freedom* even though they originated in DOD. However, after a few weeks, State had second thoughts about the themes and fought to revise them.[196] By the time the United States was preparing for Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, interagency differences of opinion on communication themes were so sharp that none could be agreed upon. The United States went to war with each department putting out its own storyline. Similarly, as time passed State insisted that bilateral discussions with foreign governments revert to well-established practices managed by State.

Interagency relationships in the field were also slow to develop, fragile, and subject to great variance. We noted that the chemistry between our teams of Ambassadors and joint force commanders was in some cases productively catalytic but more frequently corrosive and sometimes explosive.[197] The point to make here is that interagency success and failure were not just a function of personal relationships; even Ambassadors and joint force commanders intent on working well together found it a challenge because their departments assessed the situation differently and had different priorities and different cultures. General Casey underscores this point. He notes Presidential guidance emphasized that helping Iraq through the transition to democracy would take "the full commitment of all agencies," and that "in all activities, the Chief of Mission and Commander, USCENTCOM shall ensure the closest cooperation and mutual support."[198] Nevertheless, Casey asserts the guidance:

> did not create the unity of command necessary for the effective integration of civil-military efforts in successful counterinsurgency operations. The Ambassador and I would have to create the unity of effort required for success. This would prove a constant struggle as the two supporting bureaucracies—State and Defense—often had differing views. Things would get more complex as we increasingly brought the new Iraqi government into the effort. The political and economic effects, so necessary to sustaining our military success, would be outside of my direct control.[199]

The "often differing views" of State and Defense ensured the large array of small interagency groups assembled in Afghanistan and Iraq struggled to be productive. Interagency high-value target teams were hit and miss but improved over time. The same is true of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, al-

though they never reached high levels of effectiveness. Ambassadors objected to State personnel reporting to military officers, but the teams were mostly staffed by DOD personnel in any case.

Ambassador Ronald Neumann, former U.S. Pacific Command Commander and Director of National Intelligence Admiral Dennis Blair, and former USSOCOM Commander Admiral Eric Olson agree with General Casey's contention that interagency unity of effort was a difficult proposition even when senior leaders wanted to get along:

> [We] *know personally most of those involved in leading the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are to a person—whether military officers or civilian officials—diligent and dedicated patriots. They have often worked across departmental lines to integrate security, governance and economic-assistance programs to achieve real successes. However, when officials and officers in the field did not get along, the deficiencies of the system allowed their disputes to bring in-country progress to a halt. What is needed is an overall system that will make cooperation and integration the norm, not the exception.*[200]

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction agrees that the inability to forge unified effort in the field remains a critical shortcoming even after 15 years of war. He lamented the gap:

> *between high-level strategic documents and the various projects and programs being implemented. This lack of "implementation/operational planning"—making sure that U.S. activities in Afghanistan actually contribute to overall national goals there—threatens to cause agencies and projects to work at counter purposes, spend money on frivolous endeavors, or fail to coordinate efforts to maximize impact.*[201]

General McChrystal agrees, arguing that the United States cannot do something as difficult as Afghanistan "without one person in charge"—something "the U.S. still doesn't have right."[202] McChrystal's insistence that the problem demands a structural fix is noteworthy. He is lauded as an example of how good leadership alone can overcome interagency conflicts because of

his virtuoso performance in forging informal unified effort in the hunt for senior terrorist and insurgent leaders. Yet one of his major strategic lessons from years of war is that we cannot have unified effort without formal unity of command. Neumann, Blair, and Olson concur, arguing this lesson has yet to be learned and applied:

> *Despite thirteen years of experience—and innumerable opportunities to learn lessons from both successes and mistakes—there have been few significant changes in our cumbersome, inefficient and ineffective approach to interagency operations in the field.* [Our] *current decision making framework is an ineffective, stove piped diplomatic, military and intelligence chain of command relying on complex Washington decision making procedures that operate by committee. It often produces confusion, mixed signals and slow reactions.*[203]

No remedial action has been taken to fix our deficiency in horizontal unity of effort because the consensus that it is a major problem has not been matched by agreement on what to do about it. The literature cites numerous factors as sources of interagency conflict, inter alia, policy differences,[204] personality clashes,[205] organizational turf battles,[206] resource disparities,[207] and differences in organizational mandates and cultures.[208] Many senior leaders believe enlightened leadership is sufficient to solve the problem. Senior leaders underscore the importance of personal relationships and, by extension, the importance of picking the right subordinates to lead important missions that require interagency collaboration (that is, people who respect one another and are inclined to work well together).[209] Senior leaders also often state their conviction that if they ensure good relations with a counterpart from another department or agency, the resultant cooperation will trickle down to their subordinates.

This was Secretary Gates's view, and it is a common one. Elaborating on his observation that Secretaries of State and DOD tend not to get along, Gates argues, "When it comes to government, whether it works or not often depends on personal relationships." He thought repairing interagency relationships would be easy in part because he had "a unique set of personal relationships stretching back decades." He also knew that if he got along with Secretary

Clinton, "it would radiate throughout our departments and the rest of the government."[210] Secretary Rumsfeld states similar things in explaining how early tensions were resolved over whether DOD or CIA would lead operations in Afghanistan:

> *There had always been deep-seated anxieties at the CIA about the much larger Defense Department. Though I know Tenet did not feel this way, some at the CIA did not want to be seen as subordinate to the Department of Defense. Tenet and I were conscious of the challenge that all presidents have in getting the various agencies of the government to work jointly. But we both felt that close, visible personal cooperation between the two of us at the top could ease them and encourage a joint approach for those down the chain of command.*[211]

Also discussing the DOD-CIA relationship, Lieutenant General Michael DeLong, USMC (Ret.), who served as General Franks's deputy until he retired in 2003, agrees with Secretary Rumsfeld on the importance of the senior leader relationships following 9/11. He asserts close personal relationships between USCENTCOM's uniformed leaders and the top civilians in the CIA and DOD ensured "the relationship between the CIA and the military was the best it had ever been."[212] Some strong personal relationships existed from the beginning, and others were built over time. Secretary Clinton relates how some key staff personalities supporting the President grew from a "team of rivals" into "an unrivaled team."[213] Either way, as Secretary Rice notes, "it helps enormously to have Cabinet secretaries who work well together."[214] Some senior leaders even assert "relationships matter most of all," and "if you can't develop a relationship of trust and credibility you won't be successful in making a contribution to national security."[215]

Good senior leader relations are desirable, and when they are problematic, interdepartmental cooperation can be abysmal. However, as General Casey argued, good relationships are far from a sufficient condition for interagency success. An obvious problem with asserting that interagency collaboration is only a function of good personal relationships is the way many strong personal relationships degenerated when relied upon for interagency collaboration. Many of the relationships touted in the preceding references deteriorated and

became quite antagonistic. President Bush's national security team was considered a "dream team"[216] because they knew and respected each other. However, some relationships became problematic and others, such as Tenet's relationship with the White House staff, deteriorated beyond repair.[217] Similarly, many assumed that Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and General McChrystal would work well together since they shared a common military background, but they did not. In fact, the record suggests it is difficult to predict whether any given Ambassador–joint task force commander relationship will work.

Asserting that good interagency collaboration is a function of personal relationships levies a heavy—perhaps impossible—burden on leaders. It implies the converse is also true—that if there is poor interagency coordination, it must be a leadership problem. Dr. Rice makes just this point, stating, "the distrust between [Rumsfeld] and [Powell] . . . made the levels below the secretaries largely incapable of taking decisions." Senior leaders try to avoid ad hominem attacks,[218] but if they argue collaboration is just a function of relationships, the failure to collaborate must be explained by reference to leader relations. Someone must be responsible for the poor relationships that torpedo interagency cooperation, and the people writing their memoirs tend to believe they are not the source of the problem.

One way to sidestep the issue of personalizing interagency conflicts is to blame the "process" for creating friction. Indeed, a poorly run national security coordination process is the second most common explanation for poor interagency collaboration in senior leader accounts. Secretary Gates was advised by an experienced Pentagon leader that decisionmaking in the Pentagon "is like the old Roman arena—gladiators come before the emperor to battle and you decide who is the winner. Someone needs to make sure the process within the arena is fair, transparent, and objective," which many believe it was not.[219] If we add "and definitive," this assessment would summarize the complaints the Vice President, Secretary of Defense, and his subordinates had about the way the interagency decisionmaking process was run in the Bush administration.[220]

These leaders assert Dr. Rice made a point of seeking compromises instead of elevating unresolved differences of opinion to the President for resolution.[221] They believe the resultant compromises produced more than just ambiguity or confusion. If one department was allowed to win the argument over strategy and another the argument over tactics, the inevitable result was incoherence.

Under Secretary Douglas Feith, for example, laments the "interagency discord of the kind that confounded the President's Iraq policy from the outset of the Administration," and argues tension between State and DOD "became worse over time, in part because basic differences . . . were papered over again and again and never actually resolved."[222] These senior leaders also complain the Secretary of State facilitated the tension by not disagreeing in meetings but then making his case out of court with either the President or the press.[223]

The argument against consensus decisionmaking in interagency bodies has been made many times, as has the assertion that some departments do not "play fair" by trying to circumvent formal decisionmaking bodies.[224] In fact, Dr. Rice levies the same charge against DOD. She observes that Rumsfeld and Powell "did not confront each other face-to-face, let alone in front of the President." Instead, she states:

> *Don* [Rumsfeld] *would send memos (snowflakes, we called them) that implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—criticized what State or the NSC was doing. Often those memos reflected discussions that had already taken place, but they left the impression that it was Don imparting new wisdom or making an important recommendation. In meetings, he would ask Socratic questions rather than take a position. This led to tensions with and frustrations for Colin* [Powell].

In reality, it is common for Cabinet officials to press important issues for resolution by the President when they believe the President's inclinations favor their positions, and to delay or otherwise end-run the process when they fear a quick decision would go against them.

But as Dr. Rice insists, this tendency to accelerate, retard, or work around the formal decisionmaking process was not the real problem. There is a more fundamental "supply/demand" issue when it comes to Presidential adjudication. As Rice notes, the departments were generating more disputes than the President could hope to resolve:

> *The NSC should intervene when there is a policy disagreement among the departments or when they cannot coordinate among themselves. But the NSC cannot do so on every single issue every day, or the system*

> *would grind to a halt, wallowing in inefficiency. Most of the time the Department of Defense and the State Department need to find a way to work together—at all levels.*[225]

Dr. Rice states that Defense officials did not appreciate this imbalance in demand for Presidential decisions and the supply of Presidential time available to adjudicate differences. According to Rice, DOD officials also did not appreciate the political downside of numerous Presidential interventions. Secretary Rumsfeld accused her of inserting herself in the chain of command, mistakenly "assum[ing] that I was substituting my own preferences for the views of the principals . . . that I kept seeking consensus when the President should have been given a decision memo—so that he could just decide." In reality, she explains, the President was informed on the debates and either asked her to "try one more time to find common ground," or "told me what he wanted to do." For political reasons, including the way a Presidential resolution of a fight between Cabinet officials would be portrayed in the press, it was often preferable to have the National Security Advisor deliver the decision rather than the President.

Although most of the discussion about horizontal unity of effort in Afghanistan and Iraq involves interagency coordination, there was a horizontal unity of effort issue within DOD involving war plans that features prominently in senior leader accounts. It was a horizontal rather than vertical unity of effort issue because the law assigns multiple senior leaders in DOD a role in war plans. General Franks emphasizes the fact that the chain of command for executing a plan runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commander. He recognized the law gives the Chairman responsibilities for reviewing combatant commander war plans and preparing joint logistic and mobility plans in support of them, but he resented commentary on his plan from the chiefs of staff of the military Services and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.[226]

Yet both the law and practical politics give the chiefs and Under Secretary a role in war plans. By law the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy prepares written policy guidance for contingency plans and reviews them for consistency. Congress instituted this requirement after surveying much historical evidence supporting the contention that military plans and operations often are not in sync with larger national policy and strategy objectives. USCENTCOM's

treatment of postwar planning justifies congressional concerns about the need for a tight linkage between national strategy and military plans. Franks's lack of interest in postwar planning was an irritant not only to the Chairman but also to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, who tasked his own staff with postwar planning and attempted to coordinate it with USCENTCOM. The command was not interested, and either Feith or his superiors (the Deputy Secretary of Defense or Secretary of Defense) chose not to press the issue with Franks. In retrospect, the Under Secretary acknowledged he should have contested the issue more forcefully.[227]

Similarly, the law mandates that the Chairman will present the views of the Service chiefs concurrently to the President, National Security Council, Homeland Security Council, or Secretary of Defense, as the case requires. The law also requires the Chairman to "communicate, as appropriate, the requirements of the combatant commands to other elements of the Department of Defense." For these and other reasons, including the political imperative for the President to check with all the chiefs before launching a war, General Myers argues:

> *The Joint Chiefs had to be fully informed on the CENTCOM plan. We all had a legal obligation to provide military advice to the President and National Security Council, and this advice had to be based in part on the details of the operational plan. No President or Secretary of Defense would approve a war plan without getting the Joint Chiefs' opinion.*[228]

As Vice President Cheney notes, reforms in the Goldwater-Nichols law ensure a clear division of labor between the military chiefs who prepare forces for the future and the combatant commanders who employ them in current operations.[229] Judicious tradeoffs in resource allocation must be made between prevailing in current fighting and preparing well for future operations. Thus, the Secretary of Defense and the President needed to hear both sets of opinions.

Franks and his deputy believed the chiefs were offering parochial rather than constructive criticism of his war plan for Iraq: "The Air Force representative insisted that the Air Force, not the Navy, should provide the main bombing support. The Navy insisted that more carriers were needed. The Army insisted we needed more ground troops."[230] Franks interpreted the comments from the chiefs as narrow, partisan efforts to push their Services to the front

of the fight so they could "advance their share of the budget at the expense of the mission." He worried that complaints from the chiefs would slow his plan or force revisions that did not make sense from a joint perspective. He later told Secretary Rumsfeld, "No operation that is totally satisfying to any one service is truly a *joint* operation." He insisted the issue at stake was "unity of command."[231] It was his onerous job to make tradeoffs between the many functional capabilities that the Services offered and integrate them into a plan that would best accomplish the joint mission. Franks needed broader strategic perspective from the chiefs, not a reiteration of Service preferences.

These bitter differences about the development of the Afghan and Iraq war plans highlight a key problem for horizontal unity of effort. Well organized and led, cross-functional teams can be productive. Yet there is always the danger that those representing the different functional areas of expertise will give priority to protecting their parent organizations' equities rather than assisting in the process of making the necessary tradeoffs to produce an integrated and coherent approach to solving the problem. Attention to two prerequisites for success can help avoid this problem. First, it needs to be evident to all members that the team leader is focused on team rather than personal or parent organizational goals. Second, the functional representatives must transfer their loyalty from protecting their parent organizations' equities to successfully accomplishing the mission at hand. The two prerequisites are related. If it appears that a leader is acting in a self-serving manner, members are more apt to give priority to protecting their organizational equities, reasoning that doing so is in the larger interest.

In the case of General Franks and his three-star subordinate Service component commanders responsible for executing his plan, these prerequisites were met and the team worked well. The President asked each subordinate commander on the eve of the invasion of Iraq if he fully supported the joint plan, and each responded he did. General DeLong asserts that Franks succeeded because he made it clear he would not favor his own Service:

> *He was one of the most joint-oriented commanders I had ever met; he never once favored his Army background. . . .* [W]*e achieved another victory that few people realize, one that will have long-lasting repercussions on our military for time to come: true joint operations. . . . The*

> *Afghan and Iraq wars exhibited the best examples of joint operations*
> *I had ever seen. We broke the parochialism . . . due in large part to the*
> *mood that Franks set.*[232]

However, the cross-functional group one level up from Franks that was responsible for reviewing USCENTCOM plans did not work so well. There was insufficient trust between team members and the Secretary of Defense. Franks and DeLong insist the Service chiefs were not offering "objective, balanced" feedback. The chiefs objected to the plan for Afghanistan and again to the plan for Iraq for the wrong reasons, according to USCENTCOM leaders. They were "there to look out for [their] own service—to raise money for supplies and weapons, and to recruit and train [their] forces."[233] Over time, the tension between Franks and the chiefs subsided as General Myers intervened to improve the relationships. Myers believed "one of [his] most important jobs would be to keep Tom Franks and the Joint Chiefs talking to each other and pulling together."[234] Although the process was tortuous and took time, he seems to have succeeded insofar as USCENTCOM received support it needed from the Services. Even USCENTCOM came to believe that a better plan emerged from all the give and take. According to DeLong:

> *This was a collaborative effort. As Franks said: "This was not a Tommy*
> *Franks plan. This was not a Don Rumsfeld plan. There was not friction*
> *between Franks and Rumsfeld on this plan. This was a national plan. It*
> *involved the service chiefs; it involved the service secretaries; it involved*
> *the president himself; it involved Don Rumsfeld; it involved me; it in-*
> *volved all of our staffs. I think we benefited from the fact that we had a*
> *long planning cycle, an opportunity to get ready.*[235]

In the case of the tension between Franks and the Under Secretary for Policy Feith, it increased over time, as Secretary Rumsfeld failed to manage this critical relationship. General Franks was offended by the mere presence of the Under Secretary when he first briefed the Secretary of Defense on his concept for the USCENTCOM war plan. Franks states that he "generally ignored" Feith and that he was thankful that Rumsfeld "never allowed Feith to interfere in my business."[236] Thus, with the Secretary's acquiescence, USCENTCOM

made a point of excluding key elements of Rumsfeld's staff from the planning process. One consequence is that the chances for reconciling differences over postwar planning were diminished.

Capabilities

The President's September 20, 2001, speech promising a "lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen" implied that nontraditional capabilities would be required to defeat a nontraditional enemy. The President even cited examples. He mentioned law enforcement would need additional tools, and intelligence capabilities to expose enemy plans would have to be improved. Over the next decade, many new or augmented capabilities were used in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere with great success. Some capabilities were resident in the system but had to be pulled forward, proliferated, and employed better. This was the case with SOF, which senior leaders extol as making a critical contribution in the war on terror.[237] Other capability sets were altogether new. Some were or still are exceedingly controversial, such as enhanced interrogation techniques. Others, such as the armed drone program managed by DOD, were so successful that some decisionmakers wanted to alter strategy to take advantage of them.[238] And in some cases, such as Provincial Reconstruction Teams, performance problems were ameliorated but too slowly.

Although increasing capabilities or developing new ones took resources, in general this was not a major impediment. Congress generously made funds available. As one Senator complained to the Secretary of Defense in 2005 about the slow development of a key capability:

> *Over the last two years, Congress has provided more than $200 billion in supplemental appropriations for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan . . . in addition to the more than $400 billion we spend each year on defense. . . . It is unbelievable, and quite frankly unacceptable, that American personnel face shortages of anything at this point.*[239]

The United States faced some technical challenges with new capabilities but in general these were not insurmountable obstacles either. The far more significant problem was that decisionmakers were unable to agree on the capabilities needed, or else the departments and agencies resisted providing them.

Departments and agencies often did not want to invest the time, effort, and resources necessary for new or enhanced counterterrorist and counterinsurgency capabilities.

For example, following the attacks on 9/11, the Department of the Treasury took its historical position of advising against attacking terrorist finances. Treasury worried that doing so would invite retaliation on U.S. financial institutions. The President overrode that concern and insisted that Treasury lead an effort to attack terrorist financing.[240] To its credit, Treasury soon mounted what is considered one of our most effective interagency counterterrorist efforts. In other cases, the results were insufficient or downright unsatisfactory.

Failing to produce capabilities required for success is a matter of grave importance. Senior leaders must ensure the means for executing their strategy are available and consistent with the ways they choose to defeat the enemy. It is not possible to catalogue and extract lessons from every capability that decisionmakers had to manage in the war on terror. Here we concern ourselves with capabilities that senior leaders stated were essential for success but were unable to generate due to limitations in decisionmaking processes. There are five such capability areas mentioned often by senior leaders as inadequate to need, all of which are controversial to some extent: special intelligence, sociocultural knowledge, strategic communications, specialized equipment, and civil-military administrative capacity.

Special Intelligence

Senior leaders described U.S. operations in the war on terror, Afghanistan, and Iraq as "intel-dependent" or "intel-centric." The urgent requirement for good intelligence was evident at several levels. First, superior, fine-grained, and timely intelligence—the kind that special operations require—was needed to target terrorists and insurgents. Second, the enemy's decisionmaking process had to be penetrated well enough to anticipate plans and programs and foil them, particularly given the enemy's intent to launch mass casualty attacks and use weapons of mass destruction. Finally, and at a deeper level, sophisticated cultural, social, and political intelligence was needed to inform U.S. leaders on what to target and when and how. The first-, second-, and third-order effects of removing any given person from the battlefield as opposed to monitoring his activities and plans had to be understood. Without this kind of intelligence, we

would not be able to operate in a manner that would achieve success over the longer term by reducing the popular support that sustains the enemy's cause, organizations, and agendas.

Concerning the first level of intelligence required, the United States was able to produce a quantum leap forward in all-source intelligence integration with ongoing operations. A major effort was mounted to develop new types of intelligence and share more intelligence—that is, to move from the "need-to-know" principle to a "need-to-share" approach. Over time, the fusion of timely all-source intelligence and operations became a great success. When mistakes were made—and many were—it was generally due to poor command decisions about whether the available intelligence justified a decision to launch an operation or, in the midst of an operation, which targets to engage. Despite some notable and all-too-public failures during raids on enemy leadership cadres, the fusion of timely all-source intelligence and operations allowed U.S. forces to keep enemy organizations on the defensive and gave the United States tremendous leverage.

How well we penetrated enemy plans and programs is shrouded in secrecy for obvious reasons, but some general observations are possible. Best intelligence indicated that 9/11 was just the first of a series of attacks against the United States that al Qaeda wanted to execute. So in general, the dearth of successful follow-on strikes against the U.S. homeland suggests the United States did a good job of disrupting or anticipating enemy plans. The same can be said for the U.S. ability to overcome organized resistance in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, there are major exceptions. One was the failure to anticipate the switch to guerrilla tactics following the defeat of the adversary's organized military forces. CIA Director Tenet testified to Congress in March 2002 that we were entering a second, more difficult phase of operations in Afghanistan "with smaller units that intend to operate against [us] in a classic insurgency format."[241] However, DOD did not act upon this insight.

Similarly, DOD was slow to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to the rise of an insurgency in Iraq. Numerous experts warned of the potential for large-scale civil unrest following the occupation of Iraq, including Secretary Rumsfeld's own staff.[242] Secretary Rumsfeld argues DOD had to prepare for many possible calamities in Iraq, and that the first mention of possible "protracted guerrilla war" was an op-ed by someone "removed from the intelligence community."[243] CIA

Director Tenet argues the IC was prescient and predicted "Iraqi patience with an extended U.S. presence after an overwhelming victory would be short."[244] Yet the issue was not "how right" intelligence predictions of an uncertain future were, but whether intelligence foresaw the possibility of large-scale civil unrest and whether DOD prepared accordingly. If DOD had taken the postwar planning mission seriously along with the warnings of potential civil unrest, it would have been much better prepared to prevent or control the emergence of the insurgency. Among other things, it could have prevented the widespread looting and lawlessness that the CIA believed encouraged the insurgency[245] and done more to secure the weapons and arms depots abandoned by the defeated Iraqi army, which also contributed to the virulence of the insurgency.

The other major exceptions were the failure to uncover plans for the original attacks on 9/11 and then later, in 2003, to accurately surmise Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs prior to invading the country. The common sense understanding is that the failure to anticipate a major attack on the United States, or to get the principal casus belli for war with Iraq wrong, is ipso facto a strategic intelligence failure. Such events are certain to generate conspiracy theories, second-guessing, and numerous retrospective technical insights on how the IC could have performed better.[246] It is also common to consider far less momentous intelligence issues in retrospect and declare the intelligence was either "right" or "wrong" rather than more or less likely at the time. For example, in recounting how U.S. planes missed an early attempt to eliminate Saddam Hussein with bombs, President Bush states the intelligence was wrong and "a harbinger of things to come."[247]

The natural penchant for evaluating intelligence after the fact as right or wrong is understandable. After the fact it is manifest that al Qaeda posed a threat to the homeland, that an insurgency arose, and that Saddam was not where we thought he might be at a particular point in time. Yet this natural tendency to grade intelligence "predictions" has unfortunate side effects. It can have a caustic effort on relations between senior intelligence officials and policymakers, encourage the blame game, and poison the decisionmaking environment. In the worst cases, both sides end up parsing the written documents and recounting what they said in meetings to justify their records. Logic is thrown out the window as senior leaders struggle to score debating points. Certainly this happened in the Bush administration.[248]

The third respect in which Afghanistan and Iraq were "intel-dependent" national security missions touches upon the first two. Locating terrorists and insurgents and penetrating the enemy's decisionmaking process require yet another capability area that bedevils the U.S. national security system: sociocultural knowledge. The United States lacked sufficient quantities of this kind of expertise not only in the IC, but elsewhere as well. Moreover, it was difficult to tap or generate sociocultural knowledge quickly, so throwing money at the problem was a poor remedy. Because this shortfall went well beyond requirements for good intelligence, we treat it as a separate capability shortfall in the next section.

Sociocultural Knowledge

Most senior leaders do not mention shortfalls in knowledge about the social and cultural dimensions of Afghanistan and Iraq in their memoirs. DOD is an exception. Both civilian and uniformed senior leaders came to regret how little we knew about Afghanistan and Iraq, their populations, and current conditions before invading those countries.[249] Secretary Gates offers a representative assessment:

> *Nearly always, we begin military engagements—wars—profoundly ignorant about our adversaries. . . . We did not grasp that after eight years of war with Iran, the Gulf War with us, and twelve years of harsh sanctions, the Iraqi economy, society, and infrastructure were shattered. The facade of Saddam's regime misled us with regard to what we were letting ourselves in for, just as his facade with respect to possessing weapons of mass destruction misled us. We had no idea of the complexity of Afghanistan—tribes, ethnic groups, power brokers, village and provincial rivalries. So our prospects in both countries were grimmer than perceived, and our initial objectives were unrealistic. And we didn't know that either. Our knowledge and our intelligence were woefully inadequate. We entered both countries oblivious to how little we knew.*[250]

Even after we had been in country for some time, we found it difficult to fathom the motives of host-nation officials or discern reliable indictors of popular behaviors.[251] As one flag officer notes, we can find where a person is but

"not have a clue where that person derived his strong feelings against the United States from."[252] The sampling of influential scholarly literature we consulted also tends to stress lack of cross-cultural knowledge as a major shortcoming explaining poor results in Afghanistan and Iraq.[253]

What DOD leaders came to understand over time was that social, political, and cultural knowledge was just as important, if not more so, than information on military, economic, infrastructure, and institutional issues. Such country-specific expertise became a scarce commodity after Afghanistan and Iraq were invaded and occupied. What is often called "regional expertise" was suddenly needed in large quantities by the diplomatic, intelligence, and military communities. Unlike some colonial powers dealing with insurgencies in decades past, the United States did not have a ready-to-hand group of loyal administrators savvy in the ways of the foreign populations. In fact, the United States had few regional experts who could speak local languages and knew the current social and political scenes well.

The need for sociocultural knowledge is a staple in literature on irregular warfare, including counterterrorism. Assessing the 9/11 attacks, it was evident terrorists were able to exploit both the conveniences of modern infrastructure and their access to restricted social and political lines of communication that the United States could not tap or even monitor well. Terrorists used the *hawala* money transfer system and a global network of mosques to share resources and information. They also recruited from family, ethnic, and religious communities that were not easily penetrated by Western intelligence. Whereas U.S. leaders tend to think of strategic communication as a national-level enterprise, the terrorists promulgated their most effectual propaganda largely at the level of the individual *imam* or tribal elder where American credibility and influence are quite limited. Thus, in "security, recruiting, and communicating, traditional social networks provide our enemies with significant advantages."[254]

These same types of advantages were exploited by insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq. As General Myers noted, it was "nearly impossible for a Westerner to penetrate the convoluted webs of tribal and clan loyalty that made up Iraqi society,"[255] and thus to know how best to influence key decisionmakers and local populations. Calls for sociocultural expertise grew more urgent as it became clear there would be no early exits from Afghanistan or Iraq.

Field commanders taking casualties from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) wanted to find the bombmakers and the bombs. Identifying the network of contacts that supported bombmaking and better understanding what inclined people to make or fail to report bombs required in-depth social, political, and cultural intelligence. Moreover, as new brigades rotated in and replaced those completing their tour of duty, they often had to reacquire sociocultural knowledge the hard way, amounting to 12 one-year campaigns rather than one 12-year campaign for U.S. forces.[256] Soon brigade commanders were requesting means to secure, retain, and transfer better sociocultural knowledge among units. As General Peter Chiarelli, USA (Ret.), would later note, "I asked my Brigade Commanders what was the number one thing they would like to have had more of, and they all said cultural knowledge."[257]

As field commanders such as General Chiarelli and General Petraeus were promoted and added their voices to the chorus of irregular warfare experts arguing for improved sociocultural knowledge, numerous programs were initiated to meet the demand, ranging from electronic devices that facilitated entry and storage of sociocultural knowledge to Human Terrain Teams, which were small groups of social scientists trained to deploy with brigades and advise commanders on behaviors that would help them isolate insurgents from popular support. These efforts were even better funded after the U.S. forces adopted population-centric counterinsurgency concepts that required them to understand popular sentiments well enough to interact with the indigenous people in ways that inclined the populace to support rather than resist U.S. objectives. However, as the report *A Decade of War* argues, our ability to operate in this domain was limited:

> *Because the traditional intelligence effort tended to focus on enemy groups and actions, it neglected "white" information about the population that was necessary for success in a population-centric campaign. Local commanders needed to know information about ethnic and tribal identities, religion, culture, politics, and economics. Intelligence products provided information about enemy actions but were insufficient for other information needed at the local level.*[258]

As an influential article further explains, in a counterinsurgency, small units must supply key intelligence to higher commands rather than the other way around. In large force-on-force conventional combat:

> *Satellites, spy planes, and more arcane assets controlled by people far from the battlefield inform ground units about the strength, location, and activity of the enemy before the ground unit even arrives. Information flows largely from the top down. In a counterinsurgency, the flow is (or should be) reversed. The soldier or development worker on the ground is usually the person best informed about the environment and the enemy.*[259]

Thus, all soldiers must collect intelligence for higher level analysts who create "comprehensive narratives" for each area that "describe changes in the economy, atmospherics, development, corruption, governance, and enemy activity" to inform higher levels in the chain of command.[260]

The critical importance of what came to be called "human terrain" or "the human domain" was evident not only at the small-unit level but also in the way U.S. leaders interacted with their host-nation counterparts. Prior to the war, U.S. officials debated and disagreed about which Iraqi expatriates to support, but in reality they were guessing about which ones might prove acceptable to the Iraqi people.[261] Once U.S. forces occupied Iraq, they had to appoint local officials without understanding the political consequences.[262] U.S. leaders were split over whether to select a governing group for Iraq by fiat, via regional caucuses, or through national elections. It was assumed that elected leaders would be more legitimate,[263] but elected leaders also might be more sectarian and desire a future for Iraq different from what the United States preferred. Indeed, the longer we stayed in Iraq, the more we realized our objectives were not identical with those of host-nation leaders. Having U.S. interests prevail to the extent possible meant we had to make our relationship with host-nation leaders "transactional and conditional,"[264] something that requires an adroit mix of leadership, unified effort among all U.S. elements of power, and sociocultural savvy.

Defeating the insurgents, partnering with host-nation officials, and winning popular support all were impossible tasks without a profound under-

standing of local social and political relationships at all levels. The need for cultural understanding has been cited as one of the "top 5" lessons learned from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq,[265] a view echoed by many senior leaders.[266] During his confirmation hearing before taking command of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan in June 2010, General Petraeus told Congress that the decisive terrain in counterinsurgency was "the human terrain."[267] General Raymond Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, stated the main lesson he learned in Iraq was that the best-equipped army in the world can still lose a war if it does not understand the people it is fighting.[268] General Robert Cone, Commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, argues, "The human domain must be the centerpiece of our future efforts,"[269] and the Army has committed to making that so.[270] In May 2013, the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the USSOCOM commander signed a white paper that underscores the importance of "human domains" and the need for "better integrating human factors into the planning and execution of military operations."[271]

Despite all the high-level attention this capability area has received, there are two reasons to be concerned that U.S. forces will not have superior sociocultural knowledge available in the future. First, sociocultural knowledge cannot be surged. The language skills and knowledge of local social networks take time to develop. Some experts insist no worthwhile sociocultural knowledge can be generated quickly, while others believe there are different types and levels of sociocultural knowledge that take different amounts of time and effort to produce. Either way, no one recommends waiting until the conflict begins and then trying to produce such knowledge on the fly. Figuring out how to sustain and surge sociocultural knowledge at reasonable costs is a formidable organizational challenge in the best of circumstances.

Second, the U.S. military's traditional pattern of behavior on sociocultural knowledge is reasserting itself. The military often develops sociocultural expertise at great cost and too late to ensure success. Leaders then abandon the hard-won capability as part of postconflict budget reductions or out of deference to prevailing American strategic culture, which emphasizes readiness for major force-on-force conflicts. From American colonists to American revolutionaries to irregular operations during the Civil War to the Army's conflicts with Native Americans to American interventions in the Philippines and Cen-

tral America to Cold War "brush-fire" conflicts to post–Cold War contingencies during the 1990s and our recent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, this has been the costly pattern the United States has followed. And it is now being repeated.

Much of the organizational architecture developed to provide sociocultural knowledge to U.S. forces is being dismantled. The Army's Irregular Warfare Center was closed in 2014, and the Human Terrain Team program is being phased out. Those officers participating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program are not being promoted at rates comparable to the rest of the Army. The organizational and cultural reasons why DOD is turning its back on sociocultural knowledge are complex but can be explained by the institution's singular focus on conventional warfare. We return to this issue in discussing material shortfalls, but the summary explanation is that American strategic culture in general (to include Congress and public opinion) undervalues the importance of irregular warfare skills such as sociocultural knowledge in favor of concentrating on other factors such as technology, small-unit combat skills, and large-scale military maneuver training.[272] The unfortunate prognosis is that the United States will remain "deaf, dumb, and stupid" as it engages the world.[273]

Strategic Communications

Strategic communications is another capability area important for irregular warfare. The reason is simple: without some element of popular support, it is difficult for terrorists to survive and impossible for insurgents to do so. Hence, every effort must be made to convince the population that any support—even passive support—is not in its interests. While this line of reasoning seems straightforward and is supported by experts on irregular warfare, it was not a proposition embraced by senior leaders. Many acknowledge the disastrous implications of negative propaganda and perceptions—for example, often citing the consequences of Abu Ghraib or rhetorical missteps such as the expression "axis of evil"[274]—but only a handful give the importance of U.S. strategic communications serious attention in their writings: Secretaries Rice, Rumsfeld, and Clinton and Under Secretary Feith. There are several reasons for this.

Americans are prone to believe that actions speak louder than words and that success generates goodwill while failure does the opposite. Generals be-

lieve that defeating the enemy will encourage friends and that failure to do so emboldens enemies and inclines fence-sitters to lean toward the enemy. The diplomat's equivalent of this is to argue that policies generate support or resistance and no amount of packaging or "spin" will fool our foreign counterparts.[275] Beyond these generalizations, there are other objections to putting too much stock in managing communications. U.S. foreign policy elites tend to believe public opinion at best complicates a steady hand on the strategy tiller. In turn, the public distrusts any U.S. Government management of information for fear that it will be twisted and used in attempts to control the body politic. Overall U.S. culture is not comfortable with managed information at all, preferring a "free market place of ideas" without interference from governmental institutions.

Moreover, there is a wide consensus that strategic communications is not an American strength. Some question whether it is even possible to have a strategic communication strategy without a larger overarching strategy for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Others believe we do not have the sociocultural knowledge needed to assess our target audiences and message effects and that we are too self-absorbed to focus on foreign audiences (suggesting, for example, that the White House tends to confuse strategic communications with the President's public affairs effort). Some also argue that American moralism and unilateralism incline us to discount the value of strategic communications. Americans tend to believe they and their government are different and better and that our motives are transparent and thus easily discerned from our actions. Furthermore, many believe foreign cultures embrace double standards that make it impossible for the United States to compete in strategic communications. Utter lack of restraint on the part of terrorists is seen as justifiable frustration or evidence of U.S. weakness, whereas a rare case of excess force on the part of American forces is seen as typical and evidence of massive arrogance and evil intent. In other words, some suggest foreign attitudes are so entrenched that attempts at persuasion are hopeless.

For all these reasons, we tend not to do strategic communications well—something more than 15 major reports are in unanimous agreement about. Virtually all those reports conclude the U.S. Government does not have a strategic communications strategy worthy of the name, lacks the expertise to execute a strategy, has no dedicated organization for doing so, and expends far

too little resources to mount a serious strategic communications effort. Constant dollar spending on public diplomacy has declined since 1994 despite the bump in spending following 9/11. By 2007, the United States was spending about what France did on public diplomacy. DOD spent far more on television and newspapers for U.S. forces than it spent on military information support operations (formerly psychological operations). On top of all that, the three primary strategic communication disciplines in the U.S. Government—public affairs, public diplomacy, and military information support operations—feuded with one another to a dysfunctional extent. Senior public affairs leaders torpedoed the Office of Strategic Influence in the early days of the war on terror.[276] After that, most of the effort was contracted out and earned a reputation for spotty, if not deplorable, performance.

Even so, as victory proved elusive in Afghanistan and Iraq, DOD increasingly emphasized the importance of strategic communications. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review emphasized that "[v]ictory in the long war ultimately depends on strategic communication by the United States and its international partners." DOD, and according to some accounts the CIA as well,[277] spent years trying to encourage the Department of State to take the lead and mount a better strategic communications effort. By 2009, however, the lack of progress had disillusioned some DOD leaders. For example, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was fed up with the "cottage industry" that had grown up around the strategic communications mission. Admiral Mike Mullen published an article that argued the United States should just communicate its strategic intent through its actions and normal coordination processes. Mullen stated that if the United States made good policies and ensured its actions were consistent with those policies, it would not need a special effort to sell its image aboard. He cited the Great White Fleet's voyage around the world and the Marshall Plan as examples. Americans could simply show up and do the right thing because it is, "well, the right thing."[278] Admiral Mullen's approach was quite consistent with historic American norms and no doubt resonated with many Americans who believe actions speak louder than words and do not require a strategic communications bureaucracy for their interpretation.

Those who study irregular war and strategic communications argued the contrary case. As one response to the admiral's article noted, "However benign our behavior seems to us, it helps to explain it to others." The Great White

Fleet's mission was so open to misinterpretation that it created "a first-class war scare" in Japan and the United States that had to be defused by careful diplomacy. The Marshall Plan similarly was open to interpretation, with some arguing it constituted "a declaration of war by the United States for control of Europe."[279] Research indicating that many, if not most, Afghans do not know about the events of 9/11 or relate them to the presence of American forces in their country suggests that even in the information age, American interventions are still subject to gross misinterpretation.[280] Admiral Mullen's "frustration over poorly coordinated and poorly performing organizations currently trying to do strategic communications" was understandable. Yet many have argued that abandoning a strong and specialized strategic communications effort would be a mistake:

> *Because terrorists . . . can further their agenda in part by offering a hostile narrative about the United States, we need to emphasize strategic communications more rather than less. It is true that the American example is a great one and that the world is often indebted to the United States for its expenditures of blood and treasure. But it is also true that our actions and intentions, even when strategically and morally sound, will not always be easily recognized as such by foreign audiences, which is why the image of a great nation needs its custodians, and those custodians need a good organization to support them.*[281]

Secretary Gates and CIA Director Leon Panetta finally found a willing partner in Secretary Clinton, who made strategic communications an area of emphasis. She argued the ideological battle is slow and incremental but important. It drove her crazy, she stated, that "we were losing the communications battle to extremists living in caves." She had her staff develop a strategy and a new Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications. Despite some initial resistance from White House staff, President Obama was supportive, and Secretary Clinton got the center and her strategy off the ground.[282] While Clinton's initiatives represented progress, the body of expert opinion argues the United States still has a long way to go to improve performance in strategic communications. Many argue that the independent U.S. Information Agency that existed during the Cold War needs to be resurrected.[283]

Specialized Equipment

Other departments and agencies developed or purchased new equipment for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, but equipment shortfalls were a larger concern for DOD and the hundreds of thousands of personnel it deployed in those contingencies. DOD has a "mission first" culture, and superb efforts were mounted to push new equipment forward to those fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. Army and Marine ground forces at the small unit level received the kinds of equipment previously only available to SOF: body armor, latest generation night vision goggles, intra-squad communications gear, tactical satellite radios, tactical unmanned aerial vehicles, and so forth. For example, we went from having 8 unmanned aerial vehicles in Iraq in 2003 to 1,700 by 2008.[284] To get these kinds of capabilities to the troops quickly, the Pentagon created new organizations and streamlined procedures. Congress encouraged these efforts by making copious amounts of funding available.

Nevertheless, in the course of adjudicating requests from commanders in the field and figuring out the best way to respond, differences of opinion emerged on what kinds of additional capabilities made the most sense and how affordable they were. There were also complaints from Congress about the speed with which the Pentagon fielded equipment to the troops. The issue exploded like a flash bang grenade in the public consciousness when a young Soldier complained to Secretary Rumsfeld that vehicles did not have sufficient armor to deal with enemy ambushes. Rumsfeld was pilloried for his response that you "go to war with the Army you have." The comment was accurate but begged the question of whether U.S. forces should have been better prepared for irregular war, and worse, seemed to indicate nothing could be done to improve the situation, which infuriated Congress and the public.

As it turned out, the real issue was not going to war with the Army we had, but going to war with the bureaucracy we had. Both Secretary Rumsfeld and Secretary Gates had to overcome entrenched resistance inside the Pentagon to provide better armor for troops in the field.[285] Gates in particular ended up agreeing with General Franks's complaint that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were so focused on future requirements that it skewed their ability to offer good advice on fighting the war at hand. Given the law's clear division of labor between the military chiefs who prepare their Services for the future and the combatant commanders who employ them in current operations, it is not

surprising that there is tension between the parties. The tension can be healthy if both sides have an adequate voice in resource allocation decisions and if the process enables Pentagon leaders to make judicious tradeoffs between the two sets of priorities. Favoring one or the other too much puts American security at risk, sooner or later. Secretary Gates argued that it was sooner. He waged a sustained and public battle against the tendency to favor investments in future military capabilities at the expense of doing what was necessary to win current wars, a malady he labeled "next-war-itis."[286]

Secretary Gates reached this conclusion after wrestling with the Pentagon bureaucracy over a number of equipment issues, but especially tactical intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance (ISR) assets and MRAP vehicles.[287] In the case of theater ISR, Gates contended with the Air Force. He created Task Force ODIN (Observe, Detect, Identify, and Neutralize) to press for more ISR delivered to theater with greater urgency. In the case of MRAPs, Gates confronted the Army and Marines, and also his own staff. Both equipment issues preoccupied him, but due to space limitations, we summarize only the MRAP saga.[288] These large, heavy vehicles were up to 10 times more expensive than adding armor to Humvees and up to 3 times more expensive than up-armored Humvees, but they were 400 percent more effective at preventing casualties if hit by an IED. Commanders in the field wanted them, but senior civilian and military leaders in the Pentagon did not. As one well-respected flag officer argued, "It is the wrong vehicle, too late, to fit a threat we were actually managing."[289]

In reality, U.S. casualties from IEDs increased substantially in absolute numbers from the time requests for MRAPs from commanders in the field arrived at the Pentagon in mid-2004 until Secretary Gates intervened in May 2007. Gates heard multiple arguments against MRAPs, the most "significant [being] that no one at a senior level wanted to spend the money to buy them." He overrode their objections and made MRAPs the Pentagon's number-one acquisition priority.[290] After that, the acquisition system was able to field large numbers of MRAPs within 18 months—an accomplishment often described as an industrial feat not seen since World War II. The costs were staggering—$25 billion for the Iraq deployments—but MRAPs quickly made an impact. When they began to flow to Iraq in November 2007, almost 60 percent of U.S. casualties were attributed to IEDs. Just a little over a year later with 10,000 MRAPs

in country, only about 5 percent of casualties were attributable to IEDs, despite the fact that insurgents were making a point of targeting MRAPs with IEDs for symbolic reasons. Insurgents tried to defeat MRAPs by liberal use of their most advanced IEDs, the use of which jumped 40 percent between February and March 2008 as MRAPs entered Iraq in large numbers. Yet deaths from those advanced IEDs dropped 17 percent during the same period. In short, testimony by flag officers to Congress in March 2007 that MRAPs could cut casualties by perhaps as much as two-thirds was well founded.[291]

The decision to deploy MRAPs has been applauded as a case of stellar oversight and an example of egregious micromanagement. The Secretary and Congress sided with field commanders and irregular warfare experts inside the Pentagon who thought the vehicles were a bargain. Service chiefs and their subordinates responsible for assessing requirements and building future military capability thought MRAPs were a boondoggle. The case against MRAPs was that they met a transitory requirement. They were not needed given the plan to pull U.S. forces back and push Iraqis to the front of the fight. They were not an elegant solution to IEDs, which required stopping those making and emplacing the bombs. Besides, the enemy could just build bigger bombs, it was argued. The expensive MRAPs also would threaten the future of the joint light tactical vehicle, which was important for future forces.

The counterarguments were that MRAPs met the immediate need to reduce casualties. U.S. public support had plunged with rising casualties that seemed disproportionate to the progress and stakes in Iraq. The argument that the enemy would just build a bigger bomb makes no sense. By that logic, no military anywhere would ever use armor for anything. Armor has value not because it is invulnerable but because it makes the enemy's job harder and our job easier, which is what MRAPs did. Finally, replacing the crew of a Humvee cost two to three times more than buying an MRAP ($2.5–$3 million versus $1 million), so they were cost effective. Furthermore, Congress was eager to fund the MRAPs and it was not self-evident they would decrement other programs to do so.

It is impossible to definitely resolve the question of whether MRAPs were "worth it," but several conclusions do seem clear. MRAPs were never a silver bullet for defeating IEDs or the only element of force protection important in irregular warfare. Yet they were a valid requirement, saved lives, and made

a difference even as insurgent violence was winding down. They would have made a bigger contribution if deployed earlier. Secretary Gates was right to cite the MRAP experience as prima facie evidence of the Pentagon's inability to balance conventional and irregular warfare capabilities, which he attributes to the inertia inherent in large hierarchical organizations that militates against adaptation. Like all large bureaucracies, military organizations:

> *force their members to apply numerous fixed techniques and procedures in the erroneous belief that this would enhance effectiveness. Yet it has just the opposite effect because the rank-and-file relies on a fixed routine instead of using judgment and experience. The mission of the institution is increasingly forgotten or ignored. The chiefs of various departments or sections create veritable fiefdoms of power and influence and try to devise ways to protect and expand their authority and power. They are also often resistant to any change because change is considered a threat rather than an opportunity.*[292]

In the case of MRAPs, the Pentagon's bureaucratic culture reinforced the tendency to channel decisionmaking into enclaves where special interests prevailed over broader strategic considerations. The only leaders in a position to override these Pentagon organizational proclivities and intervene with cross-cutting, integrative oversight over the diverse Pentagon functional areas were the Secretary and his Deputy and the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. Their divergent views on MRAPs were notable.

Secretary Gates (and the congressional armed services committees) could see the need for the MRAPs, but the Chairman and Vice Chairman could not. Most senior military officers writing about the war ignore the MRAP controversy,[293] yet it is a major feature in Secretary Gates's memoir. This difference between the top civilian and military leaders on MRAPs is best explained by the U.S. military's aversion to irregular warfare. Secretary Gates, confronted with this attitude, resolved to change it:

> *Beginning in the spring of 2007, I resolved to make senior civilian and military leaders in the Pentagon lower their eyes from future potential wars and turn aside from day-to-day politics and bureaucratic routine*

to focus on the wars right in front of them, in Iraq and Afghanistan. Effectively waging war on our enemies on those battlefields would also require successfully waging war on the Pentagon itself.[294]

Gates wanted the Pentagon to embrace preparedness for irregular warfare and institutionalize niche capabilities for the same.[295] It has yet to do so, and in that regard, the MRAP case is a "tell-tale" event. It sends a clear warning signal about the Pentagon's capacity for adaptation and fielding equipment in response to nimble adversaries, particularly in nontraditional mission areas such as irregular warfare.

Civil-Military Administrative Capacity

Another critical capability recognized as necessary for success in Afghanistan and Iraq was the wide range of civil administrative skills necessary for improving governance.[296] These skill sets ranged from overseeing development projects to training police forces to advising local politicians on how to run fair elections. As Stephen Hadley notes, in the decades following Vietnam, the United States reformed its military forces until they were the best in the world, but it "did not make a similar effort to develop the capabilities we need to do post-conflict operations." The military's small civil affairs force is mostly in the Reserves, and it is insufficient to need. So these "largely civilian capabilities" must be tapped elsewhere in the U.S. Government and private sector. However, "we have not developed a systematic way to identify, train, exercise, deploy, do lessons learned, and improve" these capabilities. "We just haven't done it. And so every time we have one of these, whether it's Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, or the 2011 Arab Awakening," we start from scratch.[297]

DOD, operating with a downsized and professionalized post-Vietnam military, does not want to take on these responsibilities. At the same time, it recognizes the importance, so it wants others to do them. When it became clear that other countries, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations were unwilling or incapable of providing the requisite capabilities for civil-military administration, a huge effort was mounted to have the Department of State provide them. When it became clear State could not do so, or at least not quickly and in sufficient quantity and quality, DOD argued it should assume responsibility for some mission-critical civil-military duties.

Police training is one such example. Disputes over who should control the police training effort generated much friction between DOD and State. Development projects were another area of contention, with differences of opinion on whether projects should serve short-term military or political objectives or longer term development goals. New organizations such as the interagency Provincial Reconstruction Teams did not work well; there was squabbling over which department should lead the teams and difficulty manning them. Often the teams were de facto DOD constructs because only it had the manpower to populate them.

In the past, such requirements led to the creation of new organizations and mandates, but in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, we tried to meet the need by obtaining more flexible authorities for DOD and State. These authorities helped but did not solve the problem. The misadventures of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq and other ad hoc civilian assistance efforts have been laid bare in inspector general reports that are hair-raising for the amount of waste they document, but more so for the consequences of the mismanagement.[298] Over time, greater civilian capacity was generated and coordination problems were ameliorated, but we never were able to produce sufficient quantity or quality of personnel to meet the need.[299]

The failure to tackle this capacity shortfall is hard to explain. Senior leaders characterized the issue as critical—indeed, a national imperative. Much was written about it, but little was done. Pondering this inertia, Secretary Gates and others made reference to Ambassador Robert Komer's insights in his classic study on Vietnam. Against great bureaucratic opposition, Komer built and led a unique, large, hybrid civil-military administrative structure in Vietnam (that is, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, or CORDS) and used it to great effect, albeit too late to make a decisive difference in the war. Komer is not cited as a model for emulation so much as for his explanation as to why too little was done too late to make a difference. Like Gates, he blamed the failure on "institutional inertia," but also cited a "shocking lack of institutional memory" and the "notable dearth of systematic analysis of performance."[300]

Views differ on how best to overcome institutional inertia in this area. Some leaders advocate an effective civilian reserve force that can be called up in times of need.[301] Others have argued we need standing capacity to launch

the effort and build upon, and that we had an appropriate start in the Department of State but not sufficient funding. For example, James Stephenson, a senior U.S. Agency for International Development official in Iraq, argued:

> *We still need to create the standing capacity to aid failing and failed states, even those at war. . . . The State Department Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) is supposed to lead this effort, but Congress has repeatedly refused to provide adequate funding for S/CRS to perform its mission. . . . Establishing such an organization is not difficult; it requires only national will and funding from Congress. An available field force of experienced, committed civilian practitioners is already contemplated and within reach. S/CRS has planned for civilian advance teams that would deploy both with the military and in circumstances where there is no military presence, but it has no funding to adequately implement the concept. Without a standing capacity, our civilian response will continue to be ad hoc and, too often, inadequate.*[302]

Stephenson criticized Congress for not providing funding, but others question whether State was ever committed to the mission.[303] The lack of congressional action could reflect the fragile political support for the wars, skepticism about the value of building new bureaucracy to deal with hopefully transitory problems, the view that over time Provincial Reconstruction Teams would prove capable of doing the job,[304] or resistance from existing departments and agencies that wanted the mission. What is certain is that when it comes to providing civil-military administrative capacity for irregular warfare, we have retrogressed from the time Komer ran CORDS in Vietnam and seem incapable of correcting the problem.

Constraints

National security decisionmaking often requires balancing one objective against others. Senior leader accounts underscore the extent to which efforts to achieve one goal were constrained by efforts to achieve another. Managing such strategic tensions was a major challenge. For example, several senior leaders note the difficulty of convincing people in Iraq that this time the United States was serious about removing Saddam by force if necessary when the

Nation also was compelled to pursue the normal diplomatic posturing that suggested a lack of resoluteness.[305] Similarly, Vice President Cheney argues that waffling about U.S. commitment to prevail in Iraq shored up domestic political support in some places, but it also made the job of our military leaders in the field more difficult.[306] Secretary Gates observes that in order to support General Petraeus on the Surge of military forces in Iraq, he had to suggest ending it in Washington so it would not look like an open-ended commitment to increased force levels.[307] George Tenet notes the tradeoff between a postwar Iraq leadership that had legitimacy and leaders we thought we could control.[308] Under Secretary Feith relates concerns that advance work on postwar planning for Iraq might have undermined the public perception that we were giving the United Nations and diplomacy a real chance to succeed.[309]

General Myers also notes the way strategic objectives militate against one another, generating paradoxes that "require artful execution of strategy." He believes it is impossible to eliminate such tensions but feels they can be "balanced and mitigated in the policymaking process,"[310] assuming a superior decisionmaking process is in place. Unfortunately, as General Myers notes, several other constraints complicated the decisionmaking process in Afghanistan and Iraq. Poor civil-military relations are a case in point. Several senior military leaders note the uncanny ability of military and civilian leaders to talk past one another, with the military demanding clear objectives and civilian leaders wanting a range of options and associated costs before deciding what could and should be accomplished.[311] Misunderstandings fueled by these political and cultural differences undermine trust, teamwork, and thus decisionmaking.[312]

Another such factor raised by senior leaders is the broader political environment prevailing in Washington.[313] In ways not true following Pearl Harbor or other national catastrophes, the public discourse over the war on terror was damaged and has not recovered despite multiple national investigations designed to clear the air with copious fact-finding.[314] General Myers argues the quality of the national strategy debate has been degraded:

> *Unfortunately, in my view, as a nation we haven't been able to engage in this public discourse since the summer before the 2004 national elections when the efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan became much more polit-*

icized, much more partisan. The strident and often vitriolic language on both sides of the debate made such discourse difficult, if not impossible. The media were just an amplifier for this partisan discourse. . . . Our national security debate has to be elevated.[315]

Perhaps worse than the partisan politics is the tendency of senior leaders to position themselves to be able to blame others for poor outcomes. The early fault-finding over intelligence warnings of 9/11 was eclipsed by an even more fractious debate over intelligence used to justify the invasion of Iraq. Taken as a whole, finger-pointing is corrosive. Instead of a serious public debate about national security issues of great consequence, there is a lot of posturing to advance or undermine reputations that trivializes the issues at stake. Feith argues the country was unable to have the strategy debate it needed following 9/11, but even worse, the decision process was so flawed that it was impossible to have a good strategy debate even within the administration.[316] Hadley, Myers, and others believe this remains the case: "We have not really had a no-kidding, depoliticized conversation about what it takes to keep this country safe, consistent with our laws and consistent with who we are as the American people."[317]

If social mores have changed to allow unabashed criticism of colleagues in memoirs, so too has the willingness to leak information—classified or not—to the press, a trend that some note is an international habit as well.[318] Leaders who lament leaks often try to counteract their effect by leaking countervailing information themselves. Some journalists and academics justify leaks as a contribution to transparency, but this argument is suspect. The accuracy of the leaked information has to be questioned, but it also is clear that leaks can drive senior leaders into smaller decisionmaking groups with no note-takers or notes taken, thus diminishing longer term historical transparency.[319] In any case, it is hard to find a single senior leader account that does not lament leaks for the damage they do to the decisionmaking process. Leaks embittered senior leaders toward one another, hurt careers, endangered operations and operators, encouraged some senior officials to resign, undermined the U.S. reputation overseas, and hurt national security.[320] Tenet calls leaks the "IEDs of inside the Beltway warfare."[321] Leaks help fuel the supercharged, ad hominem political environment that trivializes matters of supreme importance. That,

combined with the press penchant for racing to expose malfeasance before all the facts are in, contributes to the tendency to regard any unfortunate event as prima facie evidence of incompetence.

For example, Secretary Clinton notes the December 30, 2009, suicide bombing that killed seven CIA officers produced quick criticism of "poor tradecraft," forcing a quick defense of the agency by its director. General Franks makes a similar point about intense criticism of Operation *Anaconda*, which gave rise to complaints about "breakdowns and blunders" that cost lives. To put the eight troops who lost their lives during the combat operation in perspective, he notes the hundreds of Americans killed in egregious World War II accidents and asks, given the high stakes and the reality that war with a determined enemy is unpredictable, whether we need a better sense of perspective about the costs of war.[322] We must sympathize with senior leaders in this regard. While it is important to confront calamities with transparency and openness to assess how they can be prevented in the future, the immediate cries of ineptitude can encourage the opposite: a rush to justify and move past the episode. General Franks made a point of noting no matter how much he disagreed with other leaders on occasion, he never doubted their "loyalty or motivations." That is probably a good starting point for analysis of any unfortunate turn of events in the national security realm.

Conclusions

The analysis in this chapter challenges some popular explanations for what went wrong in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some argue victory was impossible because host-nation officials we partnered with were flawed. However, the senior leaders we consulted do not believe this was a critical factor. As General Petraeus notes, "You go to war with the Host Nation you have, not just the one you'd like."[323] We also argue that flawed intelligence about the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the dilapidated state of Iraqi public services, and other intelligence shortcomings were not the main reason the United States found it difficult to achieve its objectives. We certainly needed better and different kinds of intelligence, but no one faulty intelligence prediction explains poor performance in Afghanistan and Iraq. Perhaps the most common explanations for failure that we challenge relate to individual decisionmakers and their decisions.

When things go wrong it is natural to blame leaders, reasoning that things would have gone better if they had made better decisions. This is especially true when senior leader decisions are controversial, as was the case with Iraq. As commentators often note, Iraq was a war of choice that should not have been initiated without being prepared for all likely developments, especially postwar lawlessness. It also is understandable that poor outcomes are often linked to common decisionmaking errors such as erroneous assumptions, improper analogies, tunnel vision, and cognitive dissonance. Almost by definition when things go badly, these types of limitations are in play to some extent.

For example, at some level, it is true that senior leaders did not anticipate how hard it would be to achieve what they set out to do. Shocked by 9/11, they settled on the reasonable conclusion that in the information age it was increasingly likely that terrorists operating with the avowed intention of attacking the United States with weapons of mass destruction could do so. They wanted to reduce that threat with an international campaign against terror that included attacking not only the terrorists but also states inclined to support them, and Iraq was a better target in that regard than Iran or North Korea. Full of conviction in the aftermath of 9/11,[324] the widespread attitude was "as much as it takes for as long as it takes."[325] What earnest, dedicated senior leaders discovered was that much more than firm convictions and overwhelming resources was required to pursue this agenda successfully.

It is clear from assessing and comparing diverse senior leader accounts that U.S. leadership was not able to formulate a real strategy for victory, implement it with unified effort, or provide the capabilities necessary. It is stunning to realize that after 15 years of war, senior leaders note that we still do not have a strategy for defeating the enemy and in fact do not agree on who or what the enemy is; that within weeks of 9/11, the President knew the U.S. response would require an unprecedented integration of all elements of national power, which he was unable to provide; that after immense amounts of spending, the United States still could not field the capabilities experts argue are required for success in irregular war; and worse, that so much magnificent effort and so many resources were wasted for these reasons.

These limitations provide a better explanation for poor performance in Afghanistan and Iraq than the assertion that any one decision, no matter how

important, was flawed due to unrealistic assumptions, tunnel vision, or cognitive dissonance. The collective explanatory weight of the three limitations we identify is commensurate with the magnitude of the performance puzzle posed by the history of the wars. The United States expended prodigious amounts of blood and treasure, swept enemy forces from the field, and targeted terrorists and insurgent leaders on an industrial scale, but exercised little influence over outcomes. This reality is comprehensible when one realizes we had no guiding strategy, worked at cross-purposes, and did not furnish the capabilities necessary for irregular warfare. Many leaders were frustrated by such impediments and, on occasion, they were able to mitigate or temporarily overcome them. But in the main, these problems persisted through 15 years of war.

The first handicap—lack of an adequate strategy—may elicit yawns. The cognoscenti often decry the lack of strategy but are ignored by senior leaders who promulgate lists of goals and work toward them purposefully, believing that should suffice. Yet as we have shown—and as a significant number of senior leaders now relate in their memoirs—the United States needs a strategy, beginning with a precise definition of the problem posed by 9/11. Preventing terrorists from obtaining and using weapons of mass destruction is a workable ersatz definition, but it has lost support over time and never was sufficient for guiding operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.[326] The United States backed into counterinsurgency to prevent tactical reversals to its counterterrorism agenda. Senior leaders never agreed on whether or why stabilizing those countries was a vital interest. The failure to identify the problem we were trying to solve condemned the United States to incremental decisions and half-hearted commitment, and retarded unified effort and fielding capabilities needed to win the wars.

Sociopolitical constraints help explain the absence of strategy. Senior leaders do not put real strategy in official strategy documents because doing so alienates important constituencies and opens them to criticism that they have misdiagnosed the problem or chosen too narrow a means for solving it. The political risks of real strategy are so onerous that it is now common to confuse strategy with goal-setting and "assume strategy is a big-picture overall direction divorced from any specific action."[327] Leaking information about senior leader deliberations, civil-military tensions, and poisonous partisan politics all reinforce this trend, driving clear thinking further underground. Leaders want

deep discussions on problems and solutions, but promulgating discriminating choices increases their political vulnerability.[328]

Another reason strategy is difficult to generate is that Presidents are successful politicians but not necessarily good strategists, and they are more attuned to the need to preserve political support than the importance of strategy. This last point is critical because the U.S. national security system is President-centric. The President is the chief executive and commander in chief, and only he can resolve contentious strategy issues among Cabinet officials. But, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the President is also a "commander in brief" who has limited time to devote to managing even the most important security issues. Those close to President Bush note his effectiveness increased during his second term as he devoted more time to managing Iraq,[329] and that effective war management fell off when a new President first underestimated the importance of his personal involvement.[330]

The second handicap—insufficient unified command and effort—is also a shopworn shibboleth, but again, one with profound consequences. Our greatest, most persistent, most deleterious implementation problem was our inability to integrate the vast capabilities resident in the national system for best effect. Indeed, we were not even able to achieve unified command of all *military* forces in Afghanistan until 10 years of war had passed. This resultant disunity of effort was a persistent source of trouble and wasted effort. From the National Security Council to Ambassadors and field commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq, we failed to productively resolve competing perspectives, priorities, and practices. Thus, we often achieved less than possible or even worked at cross-purposes, as was true in the case of postwar planning for Iraq. In the past, we have sometimes overcome the costs of doing business this way and managed to "win ugly" by attacking problems with astounding amounts of resources. In Afghanistan and Iraq, this inefficient approach was unsustainable, particularly because no one was sure how important success in those endeavors was or how to measure it.[331]

The third handicap—failure to provide the capabilities demanded by irregular warfare—is more controversial but no less consequential. Special intelligence, sociocultural knowledge, strategic communications, specialized equipment, and civil-military administrative capacity were essential but not sufficient for success. Given the absence of a strategy and unified effort, a bet-

ter effort to provide these capabilities would not have pacified Afghanistan or Iraq. Even so, fielding these capabilities would have contributed to progress and reduced the costs borne by those fighting the wars. Some senior leaders mounted herculean efforts to squeeze better capabilities out of a reluctant bureaucracy. We tried to highlight where they succeeded, but clearly the United States still has shortcomings in these areas that will handicap any future irregular warfare operations it undertakes.

Senior leaders ultimately are responsible for these limitations, but it is also important to acknowledge that leaders are not in complete control of outcomes and that they are constrained to make their decisions within an organizational and political system with behaviors they do not fully control. For these reasons, good outcomes are not always the result of great decisionmaking, and bad outcomes are not always the result of flawed decisionmaking. It also is important to note that the criteria and standards for judging senior leader decisionmaking are biased toward high-profile failure and tend to shift depending on whether commentators are looking forward or backward.[332] In retrospect, when it is clear actual developments were not well prepared for and handled, critics often reverse-engineer senior leader decisions and conclude they must have relied on biased assumptions and wishful thinking, and overlooked obvious problems for which they should have better prepared. However, when advising on future courses of action, pundits are more likely to sympathize with the difficulty of predicting developments and assert that leaders have to adjust quickly because some assumptions always prove wrong and unexpected developments always arise.

Recognizing these biases, we examined the decisionmaking process as senior leaders experienced and described it, and we assessed their national-level decisionmaking with more enduring criteria. We asked whether they had a strategy, implemented it with unified effort, and provided the means for its execution. We believe it would have been much easier for the United States to make the right decisions or recover from poor ones if these criteria were met. From the decisionmakers' own accounts, we know that these criteria were not met and that performance in Afghanistan and Iraq suffered as a result.

These national-level coordination and implementation handicaps are so serious that many senior leaders conclude the U.S. national security system needs major reform.[333] Fixing unified command problems is a case in point.

Many leaders have called for reforms to correct the absence of any "effective, consistent mechanism that brings a whole interagency team to focus on a particular foreign policy issue."[334] General Myers states the case clearly:

> *The issue to date, and certainly through my tenure in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is that below the President there is no one person, head of a department, or head of an agency who has been tasked with or is responsible for the strategic direction and integration of all elements of national power, so the United States can properly execute a strategy for Iraq, Afghanistan, or a global counterinsurgency. And while there are people who are tasked to do parts of this job, nobody brings it all together. In particular, nobody has the authority and influence needed across the whole U.S. government to be responsible, and held accountable, for strategic planning and execution. We need some new constructs and some new matrixed organizations.*[335]

General McChrystal makes the same point. For complex problems such as Afghanistan and Iraq, he warns, "If you don't get a unity of command, you are going to fail." He considers the confused military commands in Afghanistan "lunacy" but notes they were fixed after 10 years of war, something that cannot be said for confused interagency command, which persists to this day. Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Gates, Ambassador Neumann, Admiral Blair, Admiral Olson, and others agree and propose reforms to fix the problem.[336]

However, the national security system may not be reformed any time soon. Thus, as many argue, it is imperative for rising senior leaders to understand the system we have, work within its limits, and attempt to mitigate its shortcomings.[337] On this score, a word of warning against complacency or despair is in order. Complacency is the greater temptation. Many seem to believe the United States is too large or powerful to fail, or hope the kinds of problems identified here could be corrected with a simple change of leadership. It also seems true that many practitioners have become inured to the system's shortcomings and are not aware of their impact. As one expert notes, we have a pronouncement-practice gap; we promulgate strategy documents that postulate unified effort as an essential precondition for success, even though "as a government we have proven incapable of 'whole of government operations.'"[338]

General Casey experienced this firsthand. He received Presidential guidance emphasizing the need for "the closest cooperation and mutual support"[339] among departments and agencies working in the field, but he was not given the means to generate it. Similarly, we intone the virtues of jointness but do not require it in the planning and execution of military operations.

Pessimism about these performance limitations is not helpful, either. We have to hope they can be managed better if they are well understood by a new generation of national security leaders. In this vein, it is worthwhile enumerating some key insights from the analysis in this chapter that can assist future leaders in managing complex national security problems.

- General Casey correctly notes national-level decisionmaking was not as rigorous as the process military officers used, but that does not mean it is incomprehensible. Senior leaders need to study the national security system, its processes, and its strengths and weaknesses so they can better participate in the process.[340]
- The U.S. national security system has many strengths. Over the past 15 years of war, U.S. successes were usually a function of departments and agencies conducting their core missions well, or leaders finding ways to generate new levels of interdepartmental cooperation on nontraditional missions. This suggests that departments have deep capacities to execute their core missions, but that we must recognize when a mission demands interagency collaboration and make special provisions for it.
- Real strategy is hard. We pay so much lip service to strategy, and so readily embrace public policy documents as a substitute for strategy, that many senior leaders do not recognize its absence. Real strategy is not the result of compromise, even though its execution can involve compromise. Real strategy requires exacting depictions of the essential problem and a clear choice among competing solutions to guide means developed and employed.
- The first step in real strategy is distilling the problem to its essential elements, which is hard for both substantive and political reasons. Not agreeing on the nature of the terrorist threat we are

trying to defeat cripples our performance. The U.S. shortfall in sociocultural knowledge exacerbates this strategy limitation but is not the sole reason for it. Instead, political and organizational proclivities make this a common strategy failing.

■ America's well-diagnosed penchant for incrementalism and "gut" calls is not a substitute for strategy. Real strategy in the current system must emerge from the minds of senior leaders who agree on its essential elements. The President and his national security staff have no greater responsibility than ensuring this happens, but busy and inexperienced Presidents and National Security Advisors overwhelmed with managing day-to-day activities often fail to perform this task.

■ Trust is a prerequisite for good national security and military strategy because it is a critical prerequisite for good teams. Trust must be cultivated among senior leaders because the decision-making environment in Washington and organizational cultures throughout the national security system militate against it. Trust takes time to build and is fragile. Providing a real range of viable options to senior leaders increases trust; leaking information destroys trust.

■ "No strategy for dealing with current or emerging threats, however good, is likely to be fully successful" without the ability to generate better unified effort.[341] Yet senior leaders should not expect the formal national security staff process to resolve all important interagency differences. Presidents do not have the time to referee all such disputes and are disinclined to accept the political baggage that goes along with doing so. Working around the system to engineer a direct relationship with the President can produce a backlash from bypassed parties that leads to mission failure. The key is to identify the most critical issues and ensure they are resolved, and then be prepared to forge a new unified effort in response to changed circumstances.

■ Insufficient unity of effort is not just a "civilian" or interagency problem. It also is a challenge for the Pentagon and military operations. DOD was not able to generate enough of a team ef-

fort across its various fiefdoms for war planning, postwar planning, war resourcing, or command and control of military forces in the field. These limitations compromised the effectiveness of U.S. military operations and wasted resources. In this respect, the Pentagon has a "strategy formulation and execution problem" of its own that requires attention.

■ Managing interagency operations well is a critical senior leader skill. Complex security problems are now more common, and complex problems are interdisciplinary and thus interagency problems. Some of the greatest successes in the war were the result of collaboration across departmental lines. Interagency collaboration did not occur when leaders followed the traditional lead agency approach or selected ostensibly compatible personalities. Managing across organizational boundaries is a complex skill that requires, among other things, working hard to build relationships with counterparts, comprehending the decisionmaking styles of superiors, and developing trust within top leadership circles.[342] It also behooves senior leaders to study those cases where predecessors have forged a high degree of interagency cooperation.

■ As we try to demonstrate by referring to a variety of successes and failures, including interagency high-value target teams, postwar planning, and the MRAP experience, leaders who want to manage complex, cross-functional (to include interagency) problems well must curb organizational tendencies to maximize autonomy. They must be prepared to take initiative and innovate, not only within their functional areas of specialization but also across Service and departmental boundaries.

■ As we discussed when contrasting good oversight with poor micromanagement, too many leaders advocate empowering subordinates while restricting information flow and retaining approval authority for problem-solving. To forge vertical unity of effort and execute an effective mission command approach, leaders must distinguish oversight from micromanagement:

▪ Good oversight requires leaders to stay well informed about progress and identify any critical impediments. Leaders need to worry less about controlling information flow and more about identifying impediments to progress that jeopardize their mission. When they move to eliminate obstacles, leaders need to make sure they override subordinate concerns only when their broader perspective gives them insights their subordinates lack.

▪ Deleterious micromanagement occurs when leaders overrule a subordinate based on personal past experience or some other prejudice rather than their broader field of vision. In such cases the leader fails to exploit his broader contextual understanding and also squanders the subordinate's greater knowledge of immediate tasks and circumstances.

▪ Senior leaders need to better appreciate the limits of the current system's ability to understand foreign social and political structures—and the fact that this kind of knowledge cannot be generated quickly or organized well on the fly. Leaders must act in advance to institutionalize an effective and expandable sociocultural knowledge base. New organizations to provide sociocultural knowledge seem expensive until the alternative is considered, something the past 15 years of war should have made painfully clear.

▪ More generally, senior leaders charged with managing irregular war must be prepared to fight for capabilities they will need to be successful. The U.S. national security system is not well organized to conduct extended irregular warfare missions. The departments and agencies dislike irregular warfare and resist creating organizations and programs to provide capabilities tailored to its demands.

Some people hope we will just avoid irregular foes or complex contingencies such as Afghanistan and Iraq because the system is not optimized for performance in those circumstances. However, the senior leaders we consulted agree that the need to manage such problems cannot be ruled out and may

well be unavoidable. Others hope the system will be reformed to allow leaders to employ its vast capabilities with greater success against such problems, but emerging leaders most likely will go to war again with the system we have rather than one we might prefer. Still others are counting on new leaders to make the system work better, but that may depend on how well we educate our rising leaders on the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of our national security system.

Greater emphasis on senior leader education is justified given the nature of the serious system handicaps identified in this chapter. The need for real strategy, unified implementation of the same, and the ability to provide the means required by one's strategy are so much a matter of common sense that they may strike the reader as superficial bromides. It all seems so obvious. Yet grasping and acting upon the obvious have exceeded our reach. Ambassador Komer made this point about insights he offered on our performance in Vietnam: "If these rather generalized lessons seem like restating the obvious, one need only recall how little we actually practiced them."[343] Indeed. That is the thing about learning; it cannot be said to have taken root until it is applied. Unless we act upon these often-repeated insights, we will endure and endure again these same performance liabilities to the detriment of those we send into harm's way. If we fail to act upon these well-documented insights about our performance, we are inviting, if not condemning, future leaders to relive and relearn what so many brave men and women sacrificed to illuminate.

Notes

[1] George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," Washington, DC, September 20, 2001.

[2] Ibid.

[3] As noted in chapter six of the current volume, between 2004 and 2014, Islamic terrorist groups increased from 21 in 18 countries to 41 in 24 countries. In retrospect, General David Petraeus observes that a top lesson from the experience in the war is that one must "ask if what you are doing will take more bad guys off the street than it creates." David Petraeus, interview by Joseph J. Collins and Nathan White, March 27, 2015.

[4] The memoirs and interviews from senior leaders include George W. Bush, *Decision*

Points (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010); Dick Cheney with Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011); Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011); Thomas J. Ridge and Larry Bloom, *The Test of Our Times: America Under Siege and How We Can Be Safe Again* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009); Hillary R. Clinton, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014); Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011); George C. Tenet with Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007); Leon E. Panetta with Jim Newton, *Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace* (New York: Penguin, 2014); Henry H. Shelton with Ronald Levinson and Malcolm McConnell, *Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010); Richard B. Myers with Malcolm McConnell, *Eyes on the Horizon: Serving on the Front Lines of National Security* (New York: Threshold, 2009); Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Regan Books, 2004); Michael DeLong with Noah Lukeman, *A General Speaks Out: The Truth about the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007); George W. Casey, *Strategic Reflections: Operation* Iraqi Freedom*, July 2004–February 2007* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2012); Stanley A. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2013); Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: Harper, 2008); L. Paul Bremer with Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006); and Christopher R. Hill, *Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014). We also benefited from the project's personal interviews: Stephen J. Hadley, interview by Joseph J. Collins and Nicholas Rostow, October 7, 2014; Martin E. Dempsey, interview by Richard D. Hooker, Jr., and Joseph J. Collins, January 21, 2014; John Abizaid, interview by Joel Rayburn, September 19, 2014; Stanley A. McChrystal, interview by Joseph J. Collins and Frank G. Hoffman, April 2, 2015; and Douglas Lute, interview by Richard D. Hooker, Jr., and Joseph J. Collins, March 10, 2015.

[5]   A statement of method and a list of sources are available upon request. In short, we relied on James G. March's observation that most decisionmaking theory typically assumes decisions are either "choice-based or rule-based." We adopted a choice-based decisionmaking that pursues a "logic of consequences" whereby leaders attempt to select courses of action that will improve their circumstances based on expected results. We thought this was appropriate given that the 9/11 terror attacks were unprecedented in kind and effect, and that neither President George W. Bush nor President Barack Obama was an experienced foreign policy practitioner, factors that we presume made basic decisions about the war on terror less subject to rule- and identity-based decisionmaking. See James G. March and Chip Heath, *A Primer on Decisionmaking: How Decisions Happen* (New York: Free Press, 1994), viii–vix.

[6]   This does not mean we accepted all senior leader assertions at face value. They use "communication strategies" on occasion and make weak arguments on others. For example, while in office Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith told James Fallows

that media reports of interagency friction among senior leaders was exaggerated: "In our interview Douglas Feith played this down—maintaining that press reports had exaggerated the degree of quarreling and division inside the Administration." But in his memoir, Feith acknowledges the opposite. See James Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad," *The Atlantic*, January 1, 2004; and Feith, 53ff.

7   We acknowledge the abundant evidence that some senior leaders immediately focused on Iraq after 9/11, but accept their explanations for why they did so. General Myers, General Franks, and General DeLong do the same and also say they agree that Iraq was an appropriate target given the U.S. strategy in the war on terror.

8   Richard P. Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Business, 2011).

9   Gates, 14, 446; Rice, 152–153.

10   Christopher J. Lamb, "Pentagon Strategies," in *Challenges in U.S. National Security Policy: A Festschrift Volume Honoring Edward L. (Ted) Warner*, ed. David Ochmanek and Michael Sulmeyer (Arlington, VA: RAND, 2014).

11   Lute, interview.

12   Casey, 165, 169–170.

13   See Feith, 51; and Rice, 150, where she notes, "In October 2001 we'd seen credible reporting that terrorists would again attack the United States, perhaps with a radiological or nuclear weapon. The President sought in the 2002 State of the Union to place all of this into context and to make clear that the United States could defend itself only by taking on the proliferation challenge."

14   Bush, "Address."

15   Four months later a senior administration official gave a speech that could be interpreted as expanding the list to include Cuba, Libya, and Syria. Then–Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton asserted there were "three other state sponsors of terrorism that are pursuing or that have the potential to pursue weapons of mass destruction or have the capability to do so in violation of their treaty obligations." See John R. Bolton, "Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction," May 6, 2002, available at <www.heritage.org/research/lecture/beyond-the-axis-of-evil>.

16   Feith, 507.

17   Clinton, 132–133.

18   Myers's strategic arguments could be interpreted in this manner. Myers, 292–298.

19   Clinton, 189, 199–200.

20   Jack L. Goldsmith, *Power and Constraint: The Accountable Presidency after 9/11* (New York: Norton, 2012).

21   For example, see Shelton, 437ff, 441–442, 444–445.

[22] Rice, 151.

[23] Myers, 212–214, 291, 298.

[24] Rumsfeld, 723; Myers, 291. Myers sees the terrorist threat as the equivalent of a global insurgency.

[25] Abizaid, interview.

[26] Dempsey, interview.

[27] Ibid.

[28] *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2003), 5–6.

[29] Christopher Lamb and Erin Staine-Pyne, *9/11, Counterterrorism, and the Senior Interagency Strategy Team: Interagency Small Group Performance in Strategy Formulation and Implementation*, IAS-003 (Washington, DC: The Simons Center for Interagency Cooperation, April 2014).

[30] Bush, *Decision Points*, 365; Rumsfeld, 528, 631; Cheney, 435–436.

[31] Tenet, 217–218; also Cheney, 340–341.

[32] Myers, 212, 214.

[33] Rumsfeld notes that General David Barno and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad made this case when recommending the shift from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency operations. See Rumsfeld, 686. See also Hy S. Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006).

[34] Myers, 213.

[35] See Joseph J. Collins, "After the Afghan Surge: Rapid Exit or Better Peace?" *Small Wars Journal*, July 15, 2014.

[36] McChrystal, interview. The deleterious impact of the absence of a clear strategic aim is his number one strategic lesson from 15 years of war.

[37] See the discussion in chapter one and below where we note, "the President committed the United States to make a good-faith but not open-ended effort" in Iraq.

[38] The confusion about commitment led to some artful wordsmithing, with some emphasizing "that we will be here as long as it takes to do the job, and not a day longer," and others emphasizing, "At the same time, we should make sure we don't leave a day earlier." See Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 209.

[39] Casey, 154.

[40] Conversations between the author and senior leaders in the Pentagon where he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Resources and Plans during the first George W. Bush administration.

[41] Nora Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruc-

tion?" *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (June 2006), 453–473.

[42] Bremer thought reconstituting "Saddam's army would have set off a civil war." Bremer, 224.

[43] Christopher J. Lamb and Evan Munsing, *Secret Weapon: High-value Target Teams as an Organizational Innovation*, INSS Strategic Perspectives 4 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, March 2011).

[44] *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, DC: The White House, September 2006).

[45] Clinton, 138.

[46] For example, see *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2006), 12.

[47] A noteworthy skeptic is Jenna Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation," *Security Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009), 719–755; and "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes," *International Security* 38, no. 4 (Spring 2014), 7–38.

[48] McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 161–162.

[49] Rice, 91.

[50] Planning for such possibilities is called "branches and sequels" in military planning parlance. See *Military Decision Making Process–Multinational Planning Handbook*, Version 2.4–Handbook, Supports MNF SOP Version 2.4 (Honolulu, HI: Multinational Planning Augmentation Team Secretariat/U.S. Pacific Command, January 2009); see also Field Manual 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, May 1997). Assumptions for campaign planning "should be reasonable" but are "assumed to be true in the absence of proof." Arguably, planning assumptions, which are often derived from strategic assumptions, are less speculative (for example, whether an ally will allow U.S. forces to operate from its territory). Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, August 11, 2011), IV-7.

[51] For example, otherwise excellent studies by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and RAND overemphasize flawed assumptions in the authors' view. See Anthony H. Cordesman, *American Strategic, Tactical, and Other Mistakes in Iraq: A Litany of Errors* (Washington, DC: CSIS, April 19, 2006), available at <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/060419_iraqlitany.pdf>; and Nora Bensahel et al., *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008). See discussion in previous notes.

[52] Abizaid, interview. President Bush in his memoir notes the difficult but positive histories of postwar Germany, Japan, and South Korea. He explains that he understood Iraq was different, but states, "With time and steadfast American support, I had confidence that democracy in Iraq would succeed." Bush, *Decision Points*, 357.

[53] Gates, 115; Abizaid, interview.

[54] Vice President Cheney and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz are most frequently cited in this respect, but some sources (for example, Fallows) refer vaguely to "OSD officials," presumably meaning Feith or his special plans office. General Abizaid, for example, specifically mentions Feith's optimism that Iraqis would welcome U.S. forces. See Abizaid, interview. Yet RAND asserts that "senior policymakers throughout the government held to a set of fairly optimistic assumptions about the conditions that would emerge after major combat and what would be required thereafter." RAND only cites Cheney and Wolfowitz, however, and somewhat incongruously elsewhere underscores all the pessimistic studies conducted by diverse elements of the bureaucracy. Bensahel et al., *After Saddam*.

[55] The author's office produced a short analytic piece for Wolfowitz prior to the war that reviewed past predictions of casualties and war costs prior to U.S. interventions. The memorandum demonstrated there was significant variance between predictions and actual costs, and it received a compliment from the Deputy Secretary.

[56] RAND, for example, somewhat inexplicably asserts senior leaders held rosy assumptions about how easy the postwar security challenges would be and yet notes, "it should be clear from U.S. interventions not just in Iraq, but in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia, that wars do not end when major conflict ends." Indeed, which is why it is suspect to assume seasoned leaders were unaware of it. Similarly, it notes that wrong assumptions were "not unreasonable" but "were never seriously challenged . . . despite a predilection for questioning virtually all operational military assumptions from several directions, and despite the existence of alternative analyses within the government." Ultimately, RAND concludes, "The problem, therefore, was not that the U.S. government failed to plan for the postwar period. Instead, it was the failure to effectively coordinate and integrate these various planning efforts." Bensahel et al., *After Saddam*, 236–237, 243.

[57] Hadley, interview.

[58] See Fallows.

[59] Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000. See also Feith, *War and Decision,* 101.

[60] Rumsfeld, 482–483; Franks, 393. Feith reviews the expatriate issue at length. He argues:

It is remarkable that key U.S. officials believed that the Iraqi externals were the chief danger the United States had to guard against in post-Saddam Iraq. Yet the main idea behind the transitional civil authority was precisely to guard against the externals dominating the post-Saddam political scene in Iraq. Why should that have been a goal of U.S. policy at all? When challenged on this point, top [Department of] *State and CIA* [Central Intelligence Agency] *officials responded that the leaders of the external groups were not skilled enough and, moreover, lacked legitimacy. Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and I considered State's view presumptuous and dangerous. We did not see what right or interest the United States had in serving as Iraq's occupier for an extended period just because some U.S. officials labeled the*

external leaders illegitimate.

He also argues that the Department of Defense (DOD) was proved right insomuch as five key expatriate Iraqis were later appointed and elected in Iraq and proved influential. See Feith, 279, 281.

[61] General Abizaid notes, as do many others, that Rumsfeld held meetings where everyone was asked to identify their top 10 concerns about how the war effort might go awry. Abizaid, interview.

[62] Rumsfeld notes a sophisticated argument from his staff on this point and an early warning that the Department of State disagreed with it. Rumsfeld, 484. At the time, there was discussion in Pentagon hallways that Rumsfeld also wanted U.S. forces out of Iraq quickly so they could reconstitute and be prepared for whatever next steps in the war on terror the President might direct.

[63] Rumsfeld's staff frequently heard him use this analogy, and Hadley states he heard it at least 10 times until "finally on the 11th time the President said: 'Yeah, Don, but we cannot afford to have the bicycle fall over.'" Still, Hadley notes the President understood Rumsfeld's point, stating, "Casey and Rumsfeld are right. Ultimately, the Iraqis have to win this and take over, but we can't get from here to there, given where we are; we need a bridge to get the violence down and to allow people then to start the political process again." Hadley goes on to note that that was "what the Surge in Iraq was; it was a bridge." Hadley, interview.

[64] Rumsfeld notes he learned this lesson from the failed intervention in Lebanon in the early 1980s. Rumsfeld, 483.

[65] Feith also argues State was guilty of unrealistic assumptions for believing the United States could run Iraq for years until a "credible" Iraqi leadership emerged. Feith, 277, 370, 468. Some retired generals also have argued the United States should have deposed Saddam and then just left irrespective of conditions. General Dempsey disagrees. Like President Bush, he argues such a course of action would not be consistent with "who we are as a nation." "Out of a sense of both obligation, responsibility to protect although that is not really doctrine, but also compassion—we will assist those who have been defeated to reestablish themselves in a more moderate and inclusive, responsible way." Dempsey, interview.

[66] Rumsfeld pleads guilty to not having "a plan for full-fledged nation building" and insists that such a plan and effort would have been "unwise, well beyond our capability, and unworthy of our troops' sacrifice." Rumsfeld, 683.

[67] Dempsey, interview; Abizaid, interview.

[68] Rumsfeld believed in the value of second-guessing assumptions. Rumsfeld, 665ff; Feith, 48.

[69] Feith notes DOD argued early on for international forces in both Afghanistan (97, 101) and Iraq, where as early as February 2003, DOD was arguing that "the sooner we get international police in Iraq the better." But Feith concludes, "U.S. diplomacy on Iraq lacked

consistency, conviction, energy, or creativity" (249, 365).

[70] Rumsfeld, 526ff. Rumsfeld states it is a canard that he cut State out of postwar planning and explains that he wanted State more involved in the execution of the occupation. He does not acknowledge that planning and execution are two different activities.

[71] Rumsfeld's staff even refused initially to accept the designation of U.S. forces as occupiers—which conferred legal authorities as well as obligations—and instead insisted U.S. forces were liberators, not because they made optimistic assumptions but because they did not want U.S. forces obligated to the postwar security and development missions. General Franks agreed with Rumsfeld on these points. Dempsey, interview; Abizaid, interview. Rumsfeld's preferences were rigorously consistent in this regard, as every source we consulted emphasizes. Hadley, interview; Dempsey, interview; Abizaid, interview; Lute, interview; Fallows.

[72] Bremer, 125; see also 117.

[73] Ibid., 125, 226.

[74] Hadley, interview. Hadley goes on to note that as the United States got deeper into Iraq its motives moved from altruism to opportunity. The idea that Iraq could become a model for the Middle East began to take hold: "because in the Middle East it was either Sunnis oppress Shia, or Shia oppress Sunnis, and both of them beat up the Kurds. We wanted to show that Sunni, Shia, and Kurds could work together in a democratic [framework], develop a common future, where the majority ruled but the minority participated and had protections."

[75] This led to qualified statements of support for postwar governance. For example, Feith, in his testimony to Congress, outlined five specific objectives for the postwar period, two of which were war on terror objectives (eliminating weapons of mass destruction and terrorists' infrastructure), another two which were to reassure Iraqis we would neither partition their country nor "occupy or control them or their economic resources," and the last which was to "*begin* the process of economic and political reconstruction, *working to put Iraq on a path* to become a prosperous and free country" (author's emphasis). Having made it clear that the commitment to postwar governance was limited, Feith stated that the United States would need a "commitment to stay as long as required to achieve the objectives," but also "a commitment to leave as soon as possible, for Iraq belongs to the Iraqi people." See Bensahel et al., *After Saddam*, 43.

[76] This is why General Dempsey notes senior military leaders must accept that in protracted campaigns assumptions and objectives will change and they have to "adapt the campaign accordingly." "Sometimes changing objectives is portrayed as mission failure, when in fact in a protracted campaign the likelihood of renegotiating objectives is 100 percent." Dempsey, interview.

[77] Hadley, interview; Bremer, 27. Secretary Gates agrees, stating that the "fundamental erroneous assumption was that both wars would be short."

[78] In the Bush administration, a major conceptual roadblock for the Surge was the

widespread perception that the mere presence of U.S. forces alienated the population. This thinking prevailed among senior civilian leaders in DOD. Secretary Rumsfeld, for example, cites approvingly the analysis by Feith that concludes it was not de-Ba'athification or the disbanding of the Iraqi army that gave rise to an insurgency but rather the broader impression of an overbearing U.S. presence. Senior military leaders in Iraq—even those who were taking counterinsurgency seriously—also believed the U.S. presence was an irritant, which inclined them to focus on the goal of transferring capacity and responsibility for counterinsurgency to host nation forces. Some leaders in the Obama administration believed the same way about a Surge of forces in Afghanistan, believing "more troops and more fighting would alienate Afghan civilians and undermine any goodwill achieved by expanded economic development and improved governance." Rumsfeld, 514; Clinton, 140.

[79] Bensahel et al., *After Saddam*, xviii.

[80] Both Andrew J. Enterline and Alexander B. Downes note a range of opinions on the topic. Enterline's analysis concludes, "The survival of imposed democracy is by no means assured. Instead, the survival of democracy is strongly conditioned by the process by which the regime is imposed and the social and economic conditions present in the state hosting the imposed polity." Downes's more recent research published in 2013 is more pessimistic, arguing that "interveners will meet with little success unless conditions in the target state—in the form of high levels of economic development and societal homogeneity, and previous experience with representative governance—are favorable to democracy." See Andrew J. Enterline and J. Michael Greig, "The History of Imposed Democracy and the Future of Iraq and Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4, no. 4 (October 2008), 321–347; and Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, "Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013), 90–131.

[81] DOD routinely argues that it will take care of organized resistance and that the State Department ought to provide for civil order after major operations are completed. The typical pattern is that the issue is not resolved prior to the intervention, and when civil unrest recorded by media embarrasses the White House, the President orders DOD to step in and provide security. Often during the interregnum much damage is done to host-nation infrastructure and U.S. reputation. This problem was recognized after the fact in Panama, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and many other U.S. military interventions.

[82] See Bremer, 106, 157, 188, 205–209.

[83] Ibid., 209.

[84] Irving Janis and Alexander George have conducted classic scholarship in this area.

[85] Virtually all senior leaders in memoirs emphasize their appreciation for and insistence on a wide range of options being considered before making key decisions. See, for example, Gates, 222; Casey, 22, 29, 143; DeLong, 22 (where he notes that the United States even sought advice from the Russians about Afghanistan); Franks, 373, 389, 394.

[86] As Fallows argues, the problems that arose in Iraq "were precisely the ones its own expert agencies warned against," so "the Administration will be condemned for what it did with what was known" and not for what it failed to anticipate.

[87] Lute, interview.

[88] Gates, 39.

[89] Clinton, 133.

[90] Abizaid, interview.

[91] Dempsey, interview.

[92] For example, Cheney, 439.

[93] General McChrystal makes this point in his interview, arguing the Surges should never have been necessary. The Iraq Surge sent an important signal of resolve that was backed up by the senior leaders; Afghanistan was much more problematic in that respect. Although McChrystal thought it was essential to avoid losing Afghanistan, he believed that it was not backed up by the same type of resolve, and people could feel it: "Afghans could feel it, the Taliban could feel it, and the allies could feel it." McChrystal, interview.

[94] Clinton, 140.

[95] Gates, 365.

[96] Petraeus notes that senior military leaders were acting on and publicly supporting previous Presidential decisions unaware that the President was actually reconsidering his options, which made it seem as if they were making their case publicly so as to limit the President's options, which was not the case. Petraeus, interview.

[97] Bush demanded new options as the situation continued to deteriorate (or fail to improve, according to some). As Hadley and Lute argue, if the Pentagon does not give real options to the President, he will get them elsewhere. Bush, *Decision Points*, 364; Hadley, interview; Lute, interview.

[98] Joel Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2014).

[99] Fallows recounts Rumsfeld's answer on April 11, 2003, when asked why U.S. soldiers were not stopping the looting: "Freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that's what's going to happen here." Fallows believes the Secretary's embrace of uncertainty became a "reckless evasion of responsibility. He had only disdain for 'predictions,' yes, and no one could have forecast every circumstance of postwar Baghdad. But virtually everyone who had thought about the issue had warned about the risk of looting. U.S. soldiers could have prevented it—and would have, if so instructed."

[100] Abizaid notes he reported on the insurgency and need to get control and maintain presence to the point where "I thought I was going to get fired early." He also observes that the Army, as well as Secretary Rumsfeld, wanted the war to be over. Abizaid, interview.

[101] Hadley, interview. Others also note the poor communications between the Pentagon and the field at this juncture.

[102] Bush, *Decision Points*, 365; Cheney, 430; Rumsfeld, 364.

[103] Cheney, 440–441, 449; see also discussion and notes below.

[104] Gates observes that the decisionmaking process can be too stark and uncompromising, and that some consensus is necessary. Gates, 384–385; Clinton, 130, 133.

[105] Dempsey, interview; McChrystal, interview. General McChrystal stated that "strategically, his thinking evolved away from the direct use of military power to a focus on what was in people's minds. The winner, he thought, would be the person who understood the problem the quickest and adapted to it—those who learned fastest."

[106] The quotations and discussion in this paragraph draw upon March and Heath, 205–206, where they discuss the "Garbage Can Model" of decisionmaking. This model is more valuable for its descriptive than its explanatory power, in the opinion of the author.

[107] There are different approaches to decisionmaking that do not value unified effort so much. Some practitioners (or "pragmatists") argue leaders could and should exploit impediments to unified effort to further their agendas. Still others believe advantages can be found in the "flexible implementation, uncoordinated actions, and cognitive confusion" that characterize lack of unified effort.

[108] For example, there were noteworthy pockets of interagency success. The Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University has published a set of such studies, arguing they point the way forward for better interagency collaboration.

[109] For example, see Bush, *Decision Points*, 88, where the President relates his frustration with interagency "squabbling" and how despite his efforts to eliminate it, "nothing worked"; Rice, 16, 22, where she tied interagency friction to poor relations between Powell and Rumsfeld and their mutual "distrust," which led to dysfunction and nearly brought things "to the breaking point"; Clinton, 24, where she notes, "the traditional infighting between State and Defense . . . in many previous administrations had come to resemble the Sharks and the Jets from *West Side Story*"; Rumsfeld, 525, 527–528, where he blames failures in Iraq on Rice's inability to manage the interagency process correctly, explains his repeated recommendations "that they institute chances to improve the President's most important national security body" but states that "there [was] little or no improvement" and that the dysfunction continued to "undermine our nation's policies"; Gates, 92, 341, where he acknowledges "lack of institutional cohesion at the top of the government" and relates that upon arriving he and his staff found "interagency planning, coordination and resourcing are, by far, the weakest link" for U.S. operations in Afghanistan; Myers, 301–305, where he asserts that the United States cannot deal effectively with 21st-century threats, that good integration in operations is the exception and not the rule, and that no strategy is "likely to be fully successful" without better interagency coordination; Franks, 375–376, where he notes, "insufficient trust between the departments" of State and Defense, "deep and inflexible commitment to their own ideas [that] was disruptive and

divisive," and a Washington bureaucracy that "fought like cats in a sack"; and McChrystal, 116, 118, where he admits that "Early on, counterproductive infighting among the CIA, State Department, Department of Defense, and others back in Washington" threatened the Afghan campaign, and that "more than once, my most trusted subordinates had to stop me, in moments of utter frustration, from severing all ties with our 'Agency Brothers.'"

[110] Henry M. Jackson, *The Secretary of State and the Ambassador: Jackson Subcommittee Papers on the Conduct of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 7–8.

[111] Rice, 92.

[112] Gates, 295.

[113] For example, Gates supported the idea of a war czar initially. Later, he concluded the person selected for the role was a disappointment. He believed the czar began second-guessing commanders in the field, contributing to Presidential mistrust of the uniformed military leadership, and leaking to the press (67, 338, 364, 430, 482, 500). However, he did not like special envoys (295), while Secretary Clinton did (29). Hadley believed the war czar worked well and only declined in effectiveness under the Obama administration because the czar's access to the President was curtailed. Hadley, interview.

[114] For example, Abizaid believes Bremer thought the Iraqi army was anti-democratic and that he had a decided preference for smaller Iraqi forces and in particular weak or no Sunni forces. Thus, he clashed with General Petraeus when Petraeus was trying to build up such forces in Mosul. He speculates that Bremer believed a continuance of organized military power loyal to Sunni leaders would doom representative government in Iraq. Abizaid, interview.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Rumsfeld, 510, 522–523, 527, 532; Feith, 496ff.

[117] Clinton, 29, 140–141.

[118] The ability of the President to get his policies implemented by the bureaucracy has been identified as a key issue for many decades. See Jackson, 3–36. In the case of Iraq and Afghanistan, both President Bush and President Obama believed the Pentagon resisted their desire for alternative options for troop increases. Also, many senior Bush administration leaders argue that Bremer exceeded the authority granted him by the President. See, for example, Rice, 242; and Feith, 496–497. Cheney (380–381) asserts that Secretary Powell exceeded the President's guidance on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and that (478–479) Secretary Gates did the same, "speaking for himself and not reflecting U.S. policy," when he "informed the king [of Saudi Arabia] that the president would be impeached if he took military action against Iran." Cheney notes the President had not yet decided about next steps on Iran, and Gates in effect was curtailing the President's options by suggesting to a key ally that military operations were impossible. According to General Myers (225), General Franks ignored guidance to prepare postwar planning. Finally, according to Cheney (454), General Casey would not support the President's Surge.

[119] Bush, *Decision Points*, 90.

[120] Cheney, 380, 478.

[121] Tenet, 446.

[122] Clinton, 190.

[123] Cheney, 457.

[124] Gates, 364–365, 367; Clinton, 133.

[125] Myers, 425.

[126] Rice, 20.

[127] Unless otherwise noted, citations in this paragraph are from Gates, 206, 478. For discussion of the consequences of disunity of effort flowing from confused command arrangements, see Christopher J. Lamb and Martin Cinnamond, *Unity of Effort: Key to Success in Afghanistan*, Strategic Forum No. 248 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, October 2009).

[128] Abizaid, interview. Petraeus agrees the lines of authority were confused in Afghanistan. Petraeus, interview.

[129] McChrystal, interview. McChrystal observed that special mission units sometimes "would go in and hit a target, maybe there would be a firefight, but the impact on stability of that area might be negative." For some data on this, see Lamb and Cinnamond, 7.

[130] McChrystal, interview.

[131] Lute, interview.

[132] Casey, 62. Casey at least recognized the issue. Others, such as Gates, were altogether surprised that the U.S. Army had forgotten after Vietnam how to do counterinsurgency. Gates, 28.

[133] Myers, 212.

[134] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 420–424; Peter Baker, *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House* (New York: Anchor, 2013), 489–490; Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History 2006–2008* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 36–38; Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 240–246.

[135] Gordon and Trainor, 172–173.

[136] Frank G. Hoffman, "Learning While Under Fire: Military Change in Wartime" (Ph.D. diss., King's College London, 2015).

[137] Lamb and Munsing, 31.

[138] This policy was recognized and articulated by the President. Bush, *Decision Points*, 356.

[139] Martin E. Dempsey, "Mission Command," April 3, 2012.

[140] Casey, 144.

[141] Lieutenant Colonel William F. McCollough, USMC, is an example from Afghanistan of a field commander who proved able to innovate and excel at counterinsurgency. See Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010), 13ff.

[142] McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*; and other citations.

[143] See Scott R. Mitchell's revealing article, "Observations of a Strategic Corporal," *Military Review*, July/August 2012. The issue of whether commanders embraced counterinsurgency doctrine is reviewed at greater length in Christopher J. Lamb, James Douglas Orton, Michael Davies, and Ted Pikulsky, *Human Terrain Teams: An Organizational Innovation for Sociocultural Knowledge in Irregular Warfare* (Washington, DC: Institute for World Politics Press, July 2013).

[144] Gordon and Trainor, 172–173. This is how Gordon and Trainor explain Casey's failure to support Colonel Blake Crowe, who wanted to replicate Alford's success. Other histories, however, dispute the extent to which the chain of command supported, ignored, or resisted the successful field commanders. For example, Ricks agrees with Gordon and Trainor, but Major General John R. Allen, USMC, asserts the Marine Expeditionary Force supported Colonel MacFarland's efforts. See Timothy S. McWilliams and Kurtis P. Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume I, American Perspectives: U.S. Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004–2009* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009), 229; and Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006–2008* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 60–63.

[145] After the fact, in his memoir, President Bush notes he was not comfortable with the option of quickly turning over political control to Iraqi expatriates rather than holding elections, but he seems ambivalent about the other two decisions. Bush, *Decision Points*, 249, 259.

[146] Also, "Rumsfeld had sought to block some of Jay Garner's picks because they were State Department Arabists who might be less than ardent supporters of Bush's bold plan to remake Iraq. With Bremer, he would not have that problem." Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006), 546.

[147] See an account of Anthony Lake as a heroic policy entrepreneur in Ivo H. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 167ff. Daalder cites John Kingdon on policy entrepreneurs who seize windows of opportunity. See John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984).

[148] *Forging a New Shield* (Arlington, VA: Project on National Security Reform, 2008), 126, 146.

[149] Hadley notes that he asked quite a few people to take the war czar job, and they all turned it down understanding the risks involved: "Douglas Lute was willing to do it. He is a hero in my view." Hadley, interview.

[150] Ronald E. Neumann, Dennis Blair, and Eric Olson, "A New Plan: Make U.S. Foreign Policy Swifter, Stronger and More Agile," *Defense One,* September 20, 2014; and Dennis Blair, Ronald E. Neumann, and Eric Olson, "Fixing Fragile States," *National Interest*, August 27, 2014.

[151] Feith notes, "No mathematical formula can tell the Secretary of Defense and the President precisely where strategic supervision ends and improper micromanagement of military operations begins." Rumsfeld seems to agree, arguing it is a process and that the National Security Advisor must "oversee the implementation of the president's decisions, ensuring that they are carried out effectively," which "requires careful balance to avoid the extremes of disengagement and micromanagement." Feith, 109; Rumsfeld, 324, 720.

[152] Rice, 18. Feith claims Franklin Miller of Rice's staff "often reached directly into civilian and military offices at the Pentagon rather than going through channels—asking questions, and giving what some took to be orders, in a way that flouted the chain of command and therefore irritated Rumsfeld." Feith, 276. Stephenson agrees: "Frank Miller continued to hammer away at me. Bill Taylor helped us in every way he could, but I was under a lot of pressure. We received a call from Sarah Lenti, an aide to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. Ms. Lenti wanted a status report every other day on each of the [U.S. Agency for International Development] electricity generation projects including daily movements (or not) of the V94. She also wanted a weekly telephone call. We were told that Dr. Rice required briefings every other day. I thought it overkill, but we did it. It was just one more example of what we referred to as the 'eight-thousand-mile screwdriver.'" Stephenson, 116–117.

[153] Hill, 198.

[154] Gates, 482.

[155] Gates also resented the National Security Advisor giving the President advice on matters of mutual interest to the CIA and Defense without informing him. Gates, 352.

[156] Clinton, 190; Hill, 357.

[157] Rice, 18, 106, 245; Rumsfeld, 299–300, 512, 523; Rice, 20, 242–243; Delong, 20, 45; Franks, 300, 545; Gates, 120, 122, 133, 361–362, 364–367, 578, 585–586; Franks, 262, 300–301, 440ff, 461–462. See also Ricks, 33, where one disgruntled staff officer describes U.S. Central Command as "two thousand indentured servants whose life is consumed by the whims of Tommy Franks"; and Myers, 220, where he states that after one session with the Secretary, "Franks stormed into my office and threw his cap across the room. . . . He said, 'Chairman, if these sessions continue like this, I'll quit. I don't need the hassle.'" For issues involving Secretary Clinton and reporting from the field to the National Security Council staff, see Gates, 482; and Hill, 357. For yet another example of this phenomenon, see Steve Coll's assertion that Admiral William J. Fallon was "uneasy" about video meetings between President Bush and General Petraeus because "the Admiral was Petraeus's superior, and the videoconferences did not conform to a normal chain of command." Coll, "The General's Dilemma: David Petraeus, the Pressures of Politics, and the Road out of Iraq," *The New Yorker*, September 8, 2008. There are exceptions to the penchant to

safeguard information from subordinates. General Casey actually wanted his subordinates to have direct contact with the National Security Advisor when she visited. Casey, 137.

[158] Bush, *Decision Points*, 194–195.

[159] This sensitive issue—criteria for picking targets—came up in a discussion between Secretary Rumsfeld and General Franks, and inclined Franks and his deputy to consider Rumsfeld a micromanager. DeLong, 20.

[160] There are many references to Iran-Contra in senior leader accounts from the past decade. For several, see Rice, 14; Bremer, 245; and Gates, 352, where he asserts, "no one in the White House had any business going to the president with such a recommendation without going through the established interagency process. This was part and parcel of an increasingly operational National Security Staff in the White House and micromanagement of military matters—a combination that had proven disastrous in the past."

[161] Rice, 14–15.

[162] Ibid., 211–212.

[163] Ibid., 245; Rumsfeld, 242–243.

[164] Rice, 243–245; Rumsfeld, 526; Feith, 470.

[165] Hadley also asked the CIA to prepare an integrated plan for how all elements of U.S. power could be harnessed to arrest the decline of Iraq. Hadley, interview; Tenet, 435.

[166] See the previous chapter's description of decisionmaking on the Surge.

[167] Edgar F. Puryear, *American Generalship: Character Is Everything: The Art of Command* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 2000), 280–281.

[168] Gates, 578. Others have made this distinction as well. See Gail Harris and Pam McLaughlin, *A Woman's War: The Professional and Personal Journey of the Navy's First African American Female Intelligence Officer* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 126.

[169] He was referring to General Lute and Gen. James E. Cartwright, USMC. Hadley, interview. Lute notes that the position he was in made it impossible to stay on the right side of the Chairman. Lute, interview.

[170] Feith makes this point, for example. Feith, 272.

[171] The Chairman's white paper notes that delegated authority within broad commander's intent works best within teams that share a high degree of trust. Dempsey, "Mission Command."

[172] Franks, 309, 341, 362, 384, 546; DeLong, 88.

[173] Lamb and Munsing, 45.

[174] Rice makes the point emphatically that the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense did not trust one another (16), but the same was true of Pentagon leaders and Bremer, and Bremer and many of his subordinates in the Coalition Provisional Authority (see, for example, Stephenson, 34–36).

175 General Casey also emphasized that he viewed his relationship with Ambassador John Negroponte "as my most important relationship, and we spent quite a bit of time together." Casey, 10–11, 67.

176 Bush, for example, attributes the success of the surge to superb coordination between our civilian and military efforts. Bush, *Decision Points*, 393.

177 Myers, 270.

178 For example, see Christopher S. Chivvis et al., *Initial Thoughts on the Impact of the Iraq War on U.S. National Security Structures* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014); Elizabeth Young, "Decade of War: Enduring Lessons from a Decade of Operations," *PRISM* 4, no. 2 (March 2013); Matthew R. Hover, "The Occupation of Iraq: A Military Perspective on Lessons Learned," *International Review of the Red Cross* 94, no. 885 (Spring 2012), 339–346; Todd Greentree, "Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: U.S. Performance and the Institutional Dimension of Strategy in Afghanistan," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 3 (March 2013), 325–356; David Mitchell and Tansa George Massoud, "Anatomy of Failure: Bush's Decisionmaking Process and the Iraq War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5, no. 3 (July 2009), 265–286.

179 Bush, *Decision Points,* 88.

180 Hadley, interview.

181 Rothstein, 176ff. Sean Naylor's account of the operation records the breakdown in interagency information-sharing, but other accounts attribute problems to lack of jointness (or vertical unity of effort). See Sean Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005); and Mark G. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare" (Master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2004).

182 See Lamb and Munsing.

183 McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 118.

184 This is the thesis of Stephenson in *Losing the Golden Hour*.

185 Myers, 170–171; Franks, 280; Rumsfeld, 375–376.

186 *Forging a New Shield*, 160; cited in Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference*, INSS Strategic Perspectives 11 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2012), 114.

187 Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), comp., *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (Washington, DC: U.S. Independent Agencies and Commissions, 2009); SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013).

188 There is general agreement that the nadir of Defense-State relations occurred when the Secretary of Defense rejected State experts willing to serve on its postwar planning team. Rice, 210; Feith, 386–389.

[189] Hill, 295–296, 334–336, 348.

[190] Cited in Clinton, 24.

[191] Rice, 15–22.

[192] Tenet, 358, 364–367; Rice, 198; Cheney, 367–368, 404–405.

[193] Differences between the Departments of State and Defense at the regional level have been the subject of some notable books by journalists who believe the tensions between the departments and their disparities in resources have led to an increasingly militarized American foreign policy. See Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military* (New York: Norton, 2003); and Stephen Glain, *State vs. Defense: The Battle to Define America's Empire* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011).

[194] Hill, 354.

[195] DeLong, 28.

[196] The author was assigned the lead within DOD for coordinating information operations until the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy could find someone to do the job full-time and stand up what came to be called the Office of Strategic Influence.

[197] Rumsfeld states that Bremer and LTG Ricardo Sanchez, USA, were barely on speaking terms and that LTG Karl Eikenberry, USA, "moved his military headquarters out of the U.S. embassy in Kabul [during Ambassador Neumann's tenure], reversing the close civil-military linkage that Barno and Khalilzad had forged" (510, 689). Bremer also notes that he and General Sanchez were not in sync. It should be noted that Ambassador Neumann indicates he worked well with Eikenberry. Bremer, 186; Ronald E. Neumann, *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2009).

[198] National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD), "United States Government Operations in Iraq," May 11, 2004, available at <www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd051104.pdf>.

[199] Casey, 7–8.

[200] Blair, Neumann, and Olson.

[201] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "High-Risk List," December 2014, available at <www.sigar.mil/pdf/spotlight/High-Risk_List.pdf>.

[202] McChrystal, interview.

[203] Blair, Neumann, and Olson concentrate on failures in Afghanistan and Iraq, but they make the point that operations elsewhere were suffering from the same disunity of effort. For example, concerning Yemen, Congressman Ted Deutch (D–FL) noted, "U.S. assistance to Yemen totaled $256 million for Fiscal Year 2013, but these funds come from 17 different accounts, all with very different objectives." He asked a fundamental question that went unanswered: "What exactly is our long-term strategy for Yemen?" (12–13).

[204] General Abizaid, for example, notes the tendency of the press to put undue emphasis on personality clashes between himself and Bremer or between Bremer and General Sanchez when in reality the conflicts were about policy issues. Abizaid, interview.

205 See Rice's discussion of the personal differences between Rumsfeld and Powell (5–22).

206 For example, Franks argues tension between State and Defense arose from overlapping missions (375), and Rice makes the same point (15–16). For another example, Rumsfeld argues State would not relinquish the police training mission to DOD even though it did not have the "attention, resources, and focus" to do the mission successfully. In contrast, Secretary Clinton quotes Secretary Gates as explaining their good relationship as the result of his "being willing to acknowledge that the Secretary of State is the principal spokesperson for United States foreign policy" (25).

207 This is a common thesis from Department of State leaders; see Rice and Hill.

208 Rice states endemic conflict between secretaries of State and Defense is "not, as some might think, because State is from Venus and Defense from Mars," referring to a popular article that explained the organizational cultural differences between those two departments. Her evidence for the assertion was that often the "secretary of state is more willing to use force than the Pentagon." However, most observers do not consider willingness to use military force a good indicator of cultural differences between State and Defense (15).

209 For example, Secretary Gates believes the wrong choice for Deputy Secretary of State complicated unity of effort in the Obama administration (289). Many other senior leader accounts similarly underscore the importance of choosing the right people to generated unified effort (for example, Bush, *Decision Points*, 89–90; Rice, 15; Rumsfeld, 299–300, 687; McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 168).

210 Gates, 92.

211 Rumsfeld, 375–376.

212 DeLong, 74.

213 Clinton, 28.

214 Rice, 15.

215 Dempsey, interview. General Dempsey also notes that developing trust requires understanding a superior's or colleague's leadership and decisionmaking style. He notes the three Secretaries of Defense he has worked with are significantly different in this regard. Hadley makes a similar observation, noting the difference between Rumsfeld and Gates, both of whom were strong secretaries but with different styles. Gates was willing to be more of a team player, "and there was a level of trust between Gates, Condi and me." Hadley, interview.

216 "The Bush All-Stars," *New York Times*, January 22, 2001. The *Times* noted that from the Republican viewpoint, "President George W. Bush has assembled a national security dream team, featuring Dick Cheney as vice president, Colin Powell as secretary of state, Donald Rumsfeld as secretary of defense and Condoleezza Rice as national security adviser."

217 Tenet, 358, 364–365. See also Cheney, 404–405, 416.

218 Even General Franks, known for being straightforward, made a point of saying he "never doubted the loyalty or the motivation" of other leaders and that he did not want to apportion blame for any perceived misdeeds (544–545).

[219] Gates, 21. See also Tenet, 447. Tenet asserts, "We did not have . . . an integrated and open process in Washington. . . . Quite simply, the NSC [National Security Council] did not do its job."

[220] Cheney, 449, 462–463; Rumsfeld, 325–329; Feith, 245, 250, 283, 385, 527. Rumsfeld depicts several specific process limitations that he believed undermined unity of effort, including an NSC penchant for "avoiding detailed records" to assuming agreement if no objections to an NSC summary of conclusions were made explicit.

[221] Bremer also noted Rice sought compromise over the two options for transfer of political authority to Iraqis (205–207).

[222] Feith, 385.

[223] Rumsfeld, 324; Feith, 62.

[224] A classic argument to this effect is offered by Senator Henry Jackson: *Organizing for National Security: Inquiry of the Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Senator Henry M. Jackson, Chairman, for the Committee on Government Operations, United States Senate,* 3 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961); and Henry M. Jackson, ed., *The National Security Council: Jackson Subcommittee Papers on Policy Making at the Presidential Level* (New York: Praeger, 1965).

[225] Rice, 15.

[226] Franks, 274–277, 330.

[227] The author raised the need to prepare for postwar disorder in a staff meeting with Under Secretary Feith because of lessons learned in a study on Operation *Just Cause* conducted by Fletcher School Professor Richard H. Shultz, Jr., for his office years earlier. The study was later published as *In the Aftermath of War: U.S. Support for Reconstruction and Nation-Building in Panama Following* Just Cause (Montgomery, AL: Air University Press, 1993). Feith mentions the resulting postwar planning effort in his memoir (362–366).

[228] Myers, 175.

[229] Cheney, 452.

[230] DeLong, 26.

[231] Franks, 277–278.

[232] DeLong, 27, 135–136.

[233] Ibid., 26, 89.

[234] Myers, 175.

[235] DeLong, 88. See also Myers, 220.

[236] Franks, 330. Feith notes that U.S. Central Command had advisors from State and CIA but none from his office in the Pentagon, which he believes is one reason the schism opened between USCENTCOM and Policy (371).

[237] From the President down, many senior leaders single out special operations forces for praise and recognize their special importance in irregular war. Some also acknowledge their overwhelmingly disproportionate casualty rates. Gates, for example, notes some special mission unit casualty rates reached 50 percent. See Bush, *Decision Points*, 92; Cheney, 334; Shelton, 441; Gates, 267; Feith, 96, 112.

[238] Secretary Clinton did not take this position, but see her discussion of drones (183–184).

[239] Senator John Kerry, cited in Christopher J. Lamb, Matthew J. Schmidt, and Berit G. Fitzsimmons, *MRAPs, Irregular Warfare, and Pentagon Reform*, Occasional Paper 6 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, June 2009), 6.

[240] Shelton, 440–441.

[241] Rothstein, 97.

[242] See discussion on postwar planning for large-scale civil unrest in Iraq in previous notes.

[243] Rumsfeld, 521. Feith also asserts a major intelligence failure in not predicting the insurgency, and enumerates a list of CIA intelligence failures in Iraq (276, 517).

[244] Tenet, 425.

[245] Ibid., 433.

[246] For example, the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction made 74 recommendations on how to improve intelligence, 69 of which were accepted and acted upon by the Bush administration.

[247] Bush, *Decision Points*, 254.

[248] See Tenet's discussion of his debate with policy officials over whether Iraq and al Qaeda had an operational relationship (350–364, 371–372, 480).

[249] For example, Myers, 253; Franks, 354.

[250] Gates, 589.

[251] General Abizaid notes, for example, that we were slow to realize Iraqi leaders were undermining our efforts to build a truly national army, observing that they wanted sectarian forces "and we weren't smart enough to see it." It also has been observed that well after the fact we realized school attendance was a good indicator of local violence. Locals kept children home from school when they expected trouble.

[252] McChrystal, interview.

[253] For example, William Rosenau, "Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan," *Harvard International Review* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2009); Young; John A. Nagl, *Knife Fights: A Memoir of Modern War in Theory and Practice* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014); and Greentree.

[254] David Tucker makes this case well, as have many others. See David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *Restructuring Special Operations Forces for Emerging Threats*, Strategic Forum No. 219 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, January 2006).

[255] Myers, 253.

[256] Dempsey, interview.

[257] General Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli, Commanding General, Multi-National Corps–Iraq, *Mapping the Human Terrain (MAP-HT)* J/ACTD, FY 07 J/ACTD Candidate, PowerPoint, undated.

[258] *Decade of War, Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations* (Suffolk, VA: Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, June 15, 2012).

[259] Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor.

[260] Ibid.

[261] Feith argues this was a principal source of interagency discord (389–401).

[262] See DeLong's discussion of the Chalabi controversy (90) and Bremer on appointment of local Iraqi officials (27).

[263] Bremer describes this debate (224–226).

[264] Dempsey, interview.

[265] Colonel Robert Forrester, deputy director of the Center for Army Lessons Learned, cited in Drew Brooks, "Lessons Learned in Iraq War Will Apply in Future Conflicts," *The Fayetteville Observer* (North Carolina), January 1, 2012.

[266] General Petraeus, for example, still lists understanding local culture, leadership, social issues, politics, and human terrain as a primary requirement for future success in military operations. In fact, he insists that it is necessary "to really understand the country that you are going to invade in a very granular and nuanced way." Lute makes the same point. Petraeus, interview; Lute, interview.

[267] Leo Shane III and Kevin Baron, "Petraeus Confirmation Hearing, Live," *Stars and Stripes*, June 29, 2010.

[268] Doyle McManus, "McManus: A smaller, smarter military: The best-equipped army in the world can still lose a war if it doesn't understand the people it's fighting," *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 2012.

[269] David Vergun, "Leaders Look at Army of 2020 and Beyond," Army News Service, September 14, 2002.

[270] See also Dan Cox, "An Enhanced Plan for Regionally Aligning Brigades Using Human Terrain Systems," *Small Wars Journal*, June 14, 2012; and Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., "Army Makes Case for Funding Culture Skills beyond Coin," *AOL Defense*, July 2, 2012.

[271] Raymond T. Odierno, James F. Amos, and William H. McRaven, *Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2013).

[272] Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, March 1, 2006), 34.

[273] McChrystal, interview.

[274] Bush, *Decision Points*, 89; Rice, 196–197.

[275] Ambassador Christopher Hill demonstrates the classic Foreign Service Officer attitude while acknowledging the need to do better: "greater public diplomacy became the cure for why the popularity of the United States had fallen so precipitously during the time after the Iraq invasion. Even though it was the policy that needed improvement, there was no question that our diplomats needed to do a better job of explaining and reaching out to nontraditional audiences" (189–190).

[276] Feith, 171ff.

[277] Clinton, 188–189.

[278] Mike Mullen, "Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," *Joint Force Quarterly* 55 (4th Quarter 2009).

[279] Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 324.

[280] The author is indebted to Norine McDonald for this observation. See Yaroslav Trofimov, "Many Afghans Shrug at 'This Event Foreigners Call 9/11,'" *Wall Street Journal*, September 8, 2011.

[281] Schoen and Lamb, 118–120.

[282] Clinton, 190, 200–201.

[283] Feith makes this recommendation (511ff).

[284] Gates, 266. Elsewhere in this volume we note General Dempsey's assertion that an Army captain had more access to national intelligence in 2008 than he did as a division commander in 2003.

[285] Rumsfeld considered the armored vehicle issue an acquisition problem (645, 648), but Gates understood the problem was much larger and involved Pentagon decisionmaking more generally. For a review of both see Lamb, Schmidt, and Fitzsimmons.

[286] Thomas P. Barnett, "Pentagon Malady: 'Next-War-Itis,'" *Time*, March 6, 2013.

[287] The data in the following discussion come from Lamb, Schmidt, and Fitzsimmons.

[288] On MRAPs, see especially Gates, 119–126; for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, see Gates, 126–135.

[289] Lamb, Schmidt, and Fitzsimmons.

[290] Gates, 118–119.

[291] Lamb, Schmidt, and Fitzsimmons.

[292] Milan Vego, "On Military Creativity," *Joint Force Quarterly* 70 (3rd Quarter 2013), 84.

[293] Petraeus might be considered an exception of sorts since he went on record supporting field commander requests for MRAPs. Kris Osborn, "Petraeus Praises MRAPs," *Defense News*, April 14, 2008, 4.

[294] Gates, end of chapter 3.

[295] Ibid., 448.

[296] Bush, *Decision Points*, 381; Clinton, 149; Myers, 253, Bremer, 114, 125.

[297] Hadley, interview.

[298] SIGIR, *Hard Lessons*.

[299] On quality, see Stephenson, 16.

[300] Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1972).

[301] Feith, 519.

[302] Stephenson, 150–151.

[303] Hill's memoir provides insights about the way career personnel in the State Department think of this mission area. He resented the persistent calls for a civilian surge, believing Iraq should be left to the Iraqis to run. He thought it was hard to find meaningful work for all the civilian staff shoved into Iraq (335–337).

[304] Senior leaders argue the Provincial Reconstruction Teams eventually got the job done (for example, Rumsfeld, 687), and they did improve and made a contribution. However, close examinations of their performance identify numerous problems and unsatisfactory performance. One of the better such studies is a 2008 House Armed Service Committee effort: U.S. House of Representatives, the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Agency Stovepipes vs. Strategic Agility: Lessons We Need to Learn from Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan*, April 2008.

[305] Hadley, Bremer, and Feith, with Feith noting the concern originated with President Bush. Hadley, interview; Bremer, 26; Feith, 317. This concern is overemphasized by these leaders. General Franks told the President that regional leaders understood the United States was conducting contingency planning but that the President had not yet made a decision on whether to go to war (388). Similarly, even outside observers note other countries knew the United States was planning military operations. Rather than detracting from diplomatic efforts, this type of planning made U.S. threats credible and gave added incentives for diplomats to reach agreements. There is no reason that would not hold every bit as true for postwar planning as for the large-scale invasion and war planning. See Fallows.

[306] Cheney, 371, 457–458, 460.

[307] Gates, 50.

[308] Tenet, 419.

[309] Feith, 317; Hadley, interview.

[310] Myers, 297.

[311] Dempsey, interview; Petraeus, interview.

[312] McChrystal underscored the lack of team trust among senior leader echelons in particular. McChrystal, interview.

[313] See Bremer, 209, 235–236; Feith, 273, 514; Tenet, 364–365, 443; Clinton, 188.

[314] Laurence H. Silberman makes the argument, for example: "The Dangerous Lie That 'Bush Lied,'" *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2015, A13.

[315] Myers, 297–298.

[316] Feith, 527.

[317] Hadley, interview.

[318] Clinton notes foreign leaks undermined diplomacy (165); Myers notes the same (182).

[319] Hadley states that once or twice a week he would invite the Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman, CIA Director, and Director of National Intelligence to his office for candid discussions of tough issues with "no note-takers" and "no leaks." Other senior leaders also comment on the value of such small, restricted groups. Cheney, for example, cites Hadley's small group meetings and observes the best decisionmaking was done with no aides present to minimize the chance of leaks. Hadley, interview; Cheney, 468.

[320] For example, Cheney argues a State leak caused major problems (407) and that leaks hurt careers (409); Bremer and the President note leaks are a persistent problem (Bremer, 227); Tenet's resignation was fueled in part by what he believed were White House leaks (481); Hadley argues leaks expose operational details that incur risks to the operations and those executing them (Hadley, interview); Franks notes Rumsfeld insisted on working in small groups because of leakers (344) and that leaks about Iraq war planning were incredibly injurious (385) and complicated his relationship with senior civilians (441); DeLong states leaks about Yemen hurt us (74); Gates notes leaks were a big problem, particularly in the Obama administration (152, 370), which infuriated the President (298, 328), and that in advance of the Osama bin Laden raid, everyone was terrified there would be a leak that would spoil the operation (542).

[321] Tenet, 434.

[322] Franks, 382–383.

[323] David Petraeus, interview by Frank G. Hoffman, December 31, 2014.

[324] Hadley mentioned the determination among national leaders immediately following 9/11 to defend the country, stating they were "strong willed" about it and, in retrospect, "should have listened a lot more carefully to our regional friends and allies seeking the counsel of other countries." Hadley, interview.

[325] Lute, interview; Franks, commenting on President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld (374).

[326] Preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is still a critical objective but one that has lost its place of central importance. In discussing the future

security environment and risks, the Chairman has noted that the consequences of a terrorist attack "are relatively insignificant in terms of national survival." Martin E. Dempsey, "Risky Business," *Joint Force Quarterly* 69 (2nd Quarter 2013), 3.

[327] Rumelt, 6.

[328] This issue was briefly discussed in the opening of the chapter.

[329] Hadley, interview.

[330] Lute, interview; Petraeus, interview.

[331] Rayburn.

[332] Another indication that the impact of critical assumptions is often exaggerated is the tendency to focus on just those ostensibly responsible for untoward developments. For example, much greater attention has been paid to the assertion that naïve optimism explains the invasion of Iraq than to the assumption that a successful terrorist attack against the United States with weapons of mass destruction would change the American way of life. Yet the latter is a far more consequential assumption for the Bush administration's entire approach to the war on terror, a critical difference between the Bush and Obama administrations, and a more foundational issue for future counterterror strategy.

[333] The author concurs, but notes the methodology used in this chapter is biased toward reform. The decisionmaking methodology we used was "choice-based" and assumes decisionmaking is an instrumental activity. The corollary assumption is that unified effort is useful, which reflects a bias in favor of coherence and in turn inclines us to sympathize with "reformers" who "advocate more systematic attempts to define objectives, establish knowledge about the world, coordinate among different aspects of a decision, and exercise control in the name of some central vision." This bias is probably appropriate for a "lessons learned" effort but needs to be acknowledged. For a discussion of the bias, see March and Heath, 205–206.

[334] Cited in Lamb and Munsing, 7.

[335] Myers, 302.

[336] McChrystal, interview. For Rumsfeld, see National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States Including the Executive Summary* (New York: Norton, 2004); Neumann, Blair, and Olson; Secretary Gates noted in 2007 "that if we are to meet the myriad challenges around the world in the coming decades, this country must strengthen other important elements of national power both institutionally and financially, and create the capability to integrate and apply all of the elements of national power to problems and challenges abroad" (emphasis added). Robert Gates, "Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates," Manhattan, KS, November 26, 2007.

[337] Dempsey notes one such insight is that most changes are effected through budget adjustments and thus in conjunction with budget cycles rather than events in the field. Dempsey, interview.

[338] Kori Schake, "QDR 2010: What Exactly Was the Point?" in *Economics and Security: Resourcing National Priorities*, ed. Richmond M. Lloyd (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2010); and Kori Schake, "Security and Solvency," *Orbis* 58, no. 3 (Spring 2014), 310–325.

[339] NSPD.

[340] There are several good sources on national security system behaviors. See *Forging a New Shield*.

[341] Myers, 305.

[342] Dempsey, interview.

[343] Komer's modern-day counterpart, Todd Greentree, makes the same point: "There is nothing revolutionary in the practical fixes suggested below. Most of the lessons were learned in Vietnam and are being relearned today." See Greentree.