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Initial Planning and Execution in Afghanistan and Iraq

By Joseph J. Collins

Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on the United States had devastating effects. Not only were nearly 3,000 people killed at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, but also the physical and emotional security of the United States was shattered by a major foreign attack on the homeland for the first time since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Fear of the next attack, the desire to punish the enemy, the pressure of military preparations, the urgent need to improve homeland security, and a "never again" attitude animated the policy of the United States. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for the first time, invoked Article 5 of its charter, which proclaims that "an attack on one is considered an attack on all." France's *Le Monde*, not always an American partisan, proclaimed in an editorial, "*Nous sommes tous Américains.*"[1] The United States crossed the threshold from the post–Cold War era to an era of global conflict that came to be known as the Long War or the war on terror. Afghanistan and Iraq were the two largest campaigns in this war. While the military was the dominant tool, these campaigns involved all of the Nation's intelligence, defense, diplomatic, developmental, informational, and financial instruments of statecraft.

This chapter analyzes the U.S. decision to go to war in Afghanistan in 2001, operations in Afghanistan through 2008, the coercive diplomacy with Iraq, the planning for the Iraq War, and U.S. operations there through 2006. The aim of the chapter is to develop observations or perspectives to help future senior officers and other national security professionals contribute to national security and military strategies.[2] Subsequent chapters complete the analysis,

and the volume is capped off by a discussion of the strategic lessons of the two campaigns.

War in Afghanistan: The First Few Years

Once the Taliban refused to surrender Osama bin Laden and close the terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, there was never a question of whether the United States would use force against al Qaeda and the Taliban; it was only a question of when it would go to war. Congress acted quickly and granted wide authority to use force. In part, the Authorization for Use of Military Force gave President George W. Bush the power "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons."[3]

Afghanistan is a forbidding place to make war. The so-called graveyard of empires is landlocked, mountainous, and fractious. By 2001, it was the victim of two decades of nationwide fighting, followed by 5 years (1996–2001) of disastrous Taliban rule.[4] The Taliban were strongly backed by Pakistan. They were religious zealots who fought well against other Afghan groups but were ineffective and ruthless governors. Aside from being serial violators of human rights, the Taliban adopted bin Laden and his al Qaeda henchmen, allowing their country to play host to the world's most dangerous terrorist organization. Their 5-year rule further impoverished and damaged Afghanistan in many areas, especially health care and education. Only three countries—Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—recognized this highly authoritarian and ineffective government.

A small group of American officials—including Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) George Tenet—understood the al Qaeda threat based in Afghanistan. These officials advocated a strong national policy toward al Qaeda but were unsuccessful in moving the White House to effective action during either the Presidency of William Clinton or President George W. Bush's first 7 months in office. In August 2001, the CIA warned Bush in a general way about an imminent al Qaeda attack on the United States involving aviation. The United States had never effectively retaliated against previous al

Qaeda attacks, and it did not take concrete steps to prepare for an attack after the Agency's August warning. The attacks on 9/11 were in part an intelligence and a homeland security failure, but they were also a failure of the national security bureaucracy to adapt to a new and growing threat.[5] For its part, prior to 9/11, the U.S. Armed Forces were primarily focused on high-tech, conventional warfare. Their long-range vision papers, *Joint Vision 2010* (1996) and *Joint Vision 2020* (2000), barely mentioned counterterrorism or counterinsurgency as major defense requirements. Combating al Qaeda was not a major focus of the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, which was in the final draft stage in the days prior to the attack.[6] On September 11, 2001, America's national security leadership was simply on the wrong page.

It is not clear what Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar or al Qaeda's leaders thought would happen in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks. Perhaps bin Laden thought that the Bush administration would conduct a lengthy investigation, treat this act of terrorism as a law enforcement issue, and be slow to respond. The United States had failed to take significant retaliatory action after other terrorist attacks: the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon, the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, the 1996 Khobar Towers attack in Saudi Arabia, the 1998 Embassy bombings in East Africa, and the 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole* off the coast of Yemen. The Taliban and al Qaeda may have believed the United States would only strike with its airpower and cruise missiles, as it had done frequently in Iraq and once in Afghanistan after the 1998 Embassy bombings. Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar may have believed that the United States might attack on the ground but that it would get bogged down just as the Soviet Union had. After the fact, bin Laden suggested that drawing the United States into Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian wars and thus draining its power was an integral part of the al Qaeda strategy.[7]

With the Pentagon and World Trade Center sites still smoldering, the President met with his advisors at Camp David on September 15. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Hugh Shelton presented three generic options to the President and his advisors: a cruise missile strike, a cruise missile attack with airstrikes, and "boots on the ground" with cruise missile and air attacks. Neither President Bush nor Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was comfortable with the presentation and found the idea of a deliberate buildup of U.S. ground forces to be too slow even to contemplate. Rumsfeld character-

ized the presentation as unimaginative and unoriginal.[8] The President wanted a plan that featured the rapid use of military force and the insertion of troops on the ground as soon as possible.

It should be noted here that some Defense officials believed that the terrorists likely had the help of a state sponsor and that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was the most likely suspect.[9] The issue of simultaneously attacking Iraq was brought up at Camp David by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, but the suggestion had little support among the National Security Council (NSC) principals and was sidelined by the President. The timing was not fortuitous. However, on September 26, President Bush asked Rumsfeld in private to "look at the shape of our plans on Iraq" and asked for "creative" options.[10] In any event, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) planning for a potential war in Iraq would begin in earnest in November 2001 before the conclusion of the initial fighting in Afghanistan.[11]

On September 21, USCENTCOM Commander General Tommy Franks, USA, briefed the President on a plan to destroy al Qaeda in Afghanistan and remove the Taliban government.[12] Despite recent air and missile attacks against al Qaeda in Afghanistan, USCENTCOM had no preexisting plans for conducting ground operations there. The September 21 plan emerged after extensive dialogue, but Secretary Rumsfeld also asked for broader plans that looked beyond Afghanistan.[13] In all of his planning commentary, the Secretary's stated goal was not to seek revenge but to prevent another attack on the U.S. homeland. However, all the participants in the briefing agreed that real-time intelligence about Afghanistan was in short supply.[14] The plan also depended heavily on access to facilities in nearby countries and support by U.S. airlift and sealift.

The basic concept was to put U.S. Army Special Forces and CIA operators with Northern Alliance forces and anti-Taliban forces in the south, exploiting the combination of U.S. airpower, tactical advice, communications, and experienced Afghan resistance forces.[15] The plan also featured making humanitarian food drops and, later, having U.S. and coalition conventional forces mop up and go after the remaining Taliban and al Qaeda elements.[16] In President Bush's hopeful words, "We would [then begin to] stabilize the country and help the Afghan people to build a free society."[17]

The air war and humanitarian food drops, coordinated from the Combined Air Operations Center in Saudi Arabia, began on October 7, but Special

Forces personnel, delayed by helicopter issues and weather, did not arrive in the north until October 19. When they arrived, they joined a small number of CIA paramilitary officers already on the ground. With Special Forces advising Afghan ground commanders and calling in airstrikes, the Taliban defenses unraveled, and Afghanistan's major cities fell quickly. A combined force of Special Forces, Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, Navy and Air Force attack aircraft, and Northern Alliance infantry and horse cavalry under General Abdul Rashid Dostum captured Mazar-e-Sharif on November 9. At the same time, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage gave an ultimatum to Pakistani authorities; as a result, he secured their full cooperation in fighting al Qaeda, access to their critical ground lines of communication, and promises (albeit short-lived ones) to restrain the Afghan Taliban. In short order, Herat in the west, Kabul in the center, and Kandahar in the south fell to the resistance. Army Rangers conducted raids and a Marine brigade seized a base south of Kandahar. Later, in the December battle at Tora Bora, a CIA-advised Afghan ground element eliminated an al Qaeda stronghold where bin Laden may have been present. A CIA officer there requested help from U.S. ground forces, but his request was disapproved by General Franks. Secretary Rumsfeld did not learn of this request until after the battle, but it is far from clear that the insertion of a U.S. battalion or brigade, even if it were available, would have made a difference in that mountainous terrain.[18]

In less than 10 weeks, the United States and its partners were able to accomplish significant military objectives without a large-scale ground invasion and without alienating the Afghan people. While the operation was successful, it was not decisive. The Taliban had been defeated and ousted and al Qaeda's bases and organizational structure in Afghanistan had been destroyed, but the Taliban and al Qaeda leadership, along with many of their senior cadre, escaped, mostly into Pakistan. For its part, Pakistan would be helpful in rounding up foreign radicals and members of al Qaeda, but it generally accommodated the Afghan Taliban, with major pockets of Taliban settling near Quetta in Baluchistan, in Waziristan, in other areas in northwest Pakistan, and, later, in Karachi.

With the help of the Germans and the United Nations (UN), an international conference in Bonn, Germany, established an Afghan Interim Administration with Hamid Karzai as its leader, backed by a multi-ethnic cabinet.[19]

The interim government quickly began to work on organizing a *Loya Jirga*, a nationwide assembly of tribal leaders, and preparing a draft constitution. While the formation of the government looked impressive, the truth was that the Afghan government was invisible in the countryside and had few police officers or army forces under its control. The country had been devastated by 24 years of war. The warlords and narcotics traffickers, who did have thousands of men under arms, often called the shots in the 34 provinces. The legal, health, and educational systems were in shambles, as were many aspects of civil society. (More than a decade later, revisionists argue that the United States could have avoided much pain in Afghanistan by leaving immediately upon forming the new government. That argument ignores the fact that the country was destitute. Taliban and al Qaeda forces would have returned in short order.[20])

The United States and its coalition partners, who formed the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the Kabul region, became a stabilizing presence and a hedge against terrorist attacks and Taliban operatives, but the international community's "light footprint"—5,000 coalition and 10,000 U.S. troops focused on counterterrorism—was inadequate to secure nearly 30 million Afghans in a state as large as Texas. Years later, in his memoirs, President Bush wrote that although he had changed his mind and embraced "nation building" in Afghanistan, "We were all wary of repeating the experience of the Soviets and the British, who ended up looking like occupiers. This [light footprint] strategy worked well at first. But in retrospect, our rapid success with low troop levels created false comfort, and our desire to maintain a light footprint left us short of the resources we needed. It would take several years for these shortcomings to become clear."[21]

Stability Operations

Allied commanders and diplomats who arrived in Afghanistan in January 2002 were astounded by the devastation that nearly two and a half decades of war had wrought. The country also had suffered mightily from 5 years of Taliban mismanagement and authoritarian rule, further complicated by a few years of drought. The country they found was only 30 percent literate, and 80 percent of its schools had been destroyed. The Taliban severely restricted female education and did little for that of males. Twenty-five percent of all

Afghan children died before the age of 5. Only 9 percent of the population had access to health care. The professional and blue collar work forces had virtually disappeared.[22] The former Afghan finance minister, noted scholar, and later president, Ashraf Ghani noted that:

> *Between 1978, when the Communist coup took place, and November 2001, when the Taliban were overthrown, Afghanistan (according to a World Bank Estimate) lost $240 billion in ruined infrastructure and vanished opportunities. While the rest of the world was shrinking in terms of spatial and temporal coordination, the travel time between Kabul and every single province in the country significantly increased. . . . Millions of Afghan children grew up illiterate in refugee camps, where they learned that the gun rather than the ballot was the key instrument for the acquisition of power and influence.*[23]

The government of Afghanistan and its coalition partners had a relatively easy time of it from 2002 to 2004. Although starting from rock bottom in nearly every category, progress was made in security, stabilization activities, and economic reconstruction. Pushed by foreign aid, post-Taliban Afghanistan had nearly a decade of double-digit economic growth per year. From 2003 to 2005, the U.S. leadership team, led by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Lieutenant General Dave Barno, USA, focused on teamwork and elementary organization for counterinsurgency operations, albeit with very small forces. General Barno—who moved his office next door to the Ambassador's office in the Embassy—unified the field commands and divided the country into regional areas of responsibility, where one colonel or general officer would command all maneuver units and Provincial Reconstruction Teams.[24] Secretary Rumsfeld described the Khalilzad-Barno field relationship as a "model of how civilian-military relations should work."[25]

Barno was a self-taught expert in counterinsurgency. Although he initially had only a small force of 14,000 soldiers to work with, he concentrated on the Afghan people, not the Taliban, and worked along five lines of effort: defeating terrorism and denying sanctuary, enabling the Afghan security structure, sustaining area ownership, enabling reconstruction and good governance, and engaging regional states, especially Pakistan. Underpinning these efforts

was an emphasis on information operations, which Barno saw as a Taliban strength and a coalition weakness.[26]

Pursuant to U.S. initiative and a series of NATO decisions, the ISAF mandate was increasingly enlarged until it took over all the regions of Afghanistan. The drive behind NATO expansion was designed to energize the alliance and relieve the United States of the two-war burden.[27] Initially in control of only the 200 square miles around Kabul, in the fall of 2004, ISAF took charge of the regional command in the north. In the spring of 2006, it took over in the west. In the summer of 2006, ISAF control moved into the south, parts of which, especially in Helmand Province, were Taliban strongholds with little government presence and influence. In the fall of that year, ISAF took over fighting and stability operations in the east, marking its command over coalition forces in the entire country. By 2006, most U.S. combat forces were put under the enlarged and empowered ISAF. In November 2009, the coalition stood up ISAF Joint Command to supervise combat operations, a task that had become too much for ISAF, which spent most of its time on policy, planning, and politico-military affairs.

While NATO action brought the Alliance on line in Afghanistan, it also magnified the caveats issued by countries to limit the activities of their forces. Many NATO nations did not allow their forces to engage in offensive combat operations. The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, and a few others did most of the fighting and combat advising.[28] Still, the international coalition in Afghanistan was a powerful force in both operations and training. When Barack Obama was elected in 2008, NATO nations and other coalition partners provided 30,000 of the 68,000 conventional forces in country.

The advent of ISAF and NATO in Afghanistan created a complex relationship between the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and the USCENTCOM commander. While the latter remained in command of U.S. forces there, the former became responsible for supervising the strategic guidance, which came through NATO's Joint Forces Command in Brunsuum, the Netherlands. At the same time, after 2007, the ISAF commander was an American general responsible both to his NATO superiors and to USCENTCOM. Complicating matters, it took ISAF and NATO a few years to take over the training of the Afghan army and police from the United States. The NATO-ISAF regime also

did not see Pakistan as part of its area of influence, magnifying the all too powerful tendency to look at Afghanistan and Pakistan as separate issues.[29]

General John P. Abizaid, USA, who commanded USCENTCOM for nearly 4 years, admired the strength of the coalition, but he noted in an interview in 2007 that the command arrangements in Afghanistan violated the principle of unity of command; he would have preferred that "unity of regional efforts stay within CENTCOM's purview."[30] In a similar vein, the seams between conventional and special operations forces (SOF) were a problem, but one that improved over time.

From 2003 to 2005, the relationship between Ambassador Khalilzad, born in northern Afghanistan to Pashtun parents, and President Karzai was close and productive. The government of Afghanistan, with much help from the international community, conducted nationwide Loya Jirgas in 2002 and 2003, passed a modern constitution modeled on the 1964 Afghanistan constitution, and held fair presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2005, respectively.[31] The new constitution was highly centralized and gave the president much of the power that the king held in the constitutional monarchy from 1964 to 1973. While the Kabul government was weak in capability and nationwide coverage, it was responsible for national and local policy, as well as all significant personnel appointments, to include provincial and district governors. Warlords still played major roles in Afghanistan, but with Japanese funding and UN leadership, the central government confiscated and cantoned all heavy weapons. This process was called disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. By 2004, major fighting between contending warlords that featured the use of heavy weapons ceased to be an important issue. The UN mission, with the support of the government of Japan, performed yeoman's service on this major project.

Afghanistan attracted a fair amount of international aid, but far less than the Balkan nations did after their conflicts in the 1990s. U.S. security and economic assistance from 2002 to 2004 was a modest $4.4 billion, but nearly two-thirds of that sum went to economic assistance, with only slightly more than one-third to security assistance. Afghanistan ranked poorly when compared to other nation-building efforts. RAND Corporation experts noted that in the first two postconflict years, the international community provided

$1,400 per capita for Bosnia and over $800 for Kosovo but less than $100 for Afghanistan.[32]

The Bush administration had hoped that the UN and international financial institutions such as the World Bank would lead reconstruction and stabilization. It learned that the international actors would follow only in areas where the United States led. Initiatives by so-called lead nations—Germany for the police, Great Britain for counternarcotics, and Italy for law and justice—were often disappointing. Similarly, the U.S. buildup of the Afghan National Army lagged, and police development in the first few years was slow and unproductive. By 2008, 70 percent of U.S. assistance funds was assigned to security or counternarcotics.[33] In the first 2 years after the expulsion of the Taliban, fighting was infrequent and at a low level. In 2004, nationwide, the worst weeks had about 100 security incidents. By 2009, after 4 years of Taliban offensives, the worst weeks topped 900 incidents.[34]

From 2002 to 2003, under the guidance of finance minister Ashraf Ghani, the Afghan government swapped out the several currencies in use across the country, established a single stable currency, negotiated international contracts for a nationwide cellular phone service, and began to work on economic reconstruction. With the help of the international community, there was rapid reconstruction in health care and education. The United States and international financial institutions rebuilt most of the ring road around the country, improving travel and commerce. Access to medical care was extended from 9 percent of the population under the Taliban to more than 60 percent of the population by 2010.[35] Spurred by foreign aid, rapid licit economic growth began and has continued, but it exists alongside a booming illegal economy marked by bribery, smuggling, and narcotics trafficking.

To make up for inherent weakness in the Afghan government, various countries followed the U.S. lead and set up Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which had varying names when led by coalition partners. The generic purposes of the PRTs were to further security, promote reconstruction, facilitate cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations in the field, and help the local authorities in governance and other issues. These small interagency elements were initially established in a third of the provinces but rapidly went nationwide. At their height, these

26 teams—half led by U.S. allies—played a key role in reconstruction and development.

PRTs consisted of a headquarters, a security element, civil affairs teams, diplomats, aid and assistance experts, and, where possible, agricultural teams. Many U.S. PRTs were commanded by Navy and Air Force officers. Without a nationwide peacekeeping force, these teams were often the only way that diplomats and government aid professionals could get out to the countryside. From 2002 to 2009, the U.S.-hosted PRTs were instrumental in helping to disburse nearly $2.7 billion of Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) money and other PRT-designated funds.[36]

The PRTs were, on balance, a positive development. They did, however, exacerbate interagency tensions within the U.S. Government. In 2002, providing diplomats and development experts to each of the eight initial PRTs consumed many hours of meetings at the deputies' committee level.[37] The PRTs remained a recurring problem with NGOs, which were reluctant to have military forces in the "humanitarian space." Some donors found the PRTs a convenient excuse for ignoring the need to build Afghan government capacity. As the years passed, the Afghan government tried to grow in budgetary capacity, a key to improving management. It complained that the money going directly to NGOs and PRTs kept aid funds outside of the Afghan budget and prevented the government from managing business through its own budgetary control mechanisms. It became a vicious cycle: the government of Afghanistan's corruption and lack of management capacity became an excuse for bypassing it, which in turn ensured that it would not develop capacity. Toward the end of his presidency, Karzai, initially a fan, had become a critic of PRTs in general.

While many observers objected to the military flavor of these teams, the need for large-scale security elements dictated that condition. Regional commanders after 2004 controlled maneuver forces and PRTs in their region.[38] By 2009, "the U.S. Ambassador put civilian leadership at the brigade and Regional Command levels, creating a civilian hierarchical structure that mirrored the military [chain of command]."[39] Later, the U.S. Government in Afghanistan also used District Support Teams, with representatives from the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and Department of Agriculture, to go with deployed military units or other security to

hotspots to work directly with Afghan government representatives. There were 19 of these teams in Regional Command–East alone. In a similar vein, the U.S. National Guard fielded nine Agribusiness Development Teams with military and state university agronomists to help Afghan agriculture and animal husbandry enter the 21st century.

In terms of reconstruction and development, the coalition, reinforced by the UN and international financial institutions, did outstanding work and markedly improved Afghanistan's lot. Through the end of fiscal year 2009, nearly $40 billion of U.S. foreign and security assistance was pledged or delivered to Afghanistan. Other nations or international financial institutions delivered at least $14 billion of economic assistance through fiscal year 2008.[40] Although there are no reliable figures for its allies' expenditures, the United States devoted more than half its total aid to security assistance.

Progress in education, health care, road-building, and some areas of agriculture was good. A RAND study, citing NATO statistics, noted the military and development wings of allied nations had built or repaired thousands of kilometers of roads.[41] While it is fair to note that the areas under the most Taliban pressure received the least amount of aid, there were significant accomplishments. Five million refugees returned, and school enrollment increased six-fold from Taliban days, with 35 percent of the student body being female. (For its part, the Taliban burned or bombed over 1,000 schools from 2007 to 2009.) USAID alone, through the end of 2008, spent over $7 billion helping the Afghan people.[42] Among its accomplishments were 715 kilometers of major highways built, 670 health clinics built or refurbished, 10,600 health workers trained, over 600 schools constructed, more than 60 million school textbooks purchased, and 65,000 teachers trained in various courses. From time to time, these projects caused local frictions, but in significant ways they also transformed life for many Afghans.

In all, from 2001 to 2005, the coalition did well, but it did not do enough. Despite significant economic progress, poverty remained widespread, and the insurgents did their best to interfere with aid workers and disrupt their efforts at progress. Neither Afghan government capacity nor anticorruption efforts improved to an appreciable level. Some areas, especially in southern Afghanistan, had little coalition or Afghan government presence. Poppy cultivation and drug production increased despite coalition efforts. Warlords, even those

co-opted by President Karzai, remained independent and often toxic power brokers. The level of international aid was not enough to stem the tide of an insurgency designed in part to render such aid ineffective. In many areas, but particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the country, the Taliban, from its sanctuaries in Pakistan, covertly began to restore its infrastructure, unimpeded by absentee or ineffective government structures.

The Situation Deteriorates, 2005–2009

From 2002 to 2005, the Taliban rebuilt its cadres with drug money, donations from the Gulf states, extortion, and help from al Qaeda.[43] Their sanctuaries in Pakistan enabled them to rearm and retrain. By 2005, the Quetta Shura Taliban (led by Mullah Omar), the Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), and the Haqqani Network (led initially by Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son, Sirajuddin) were all working together to subvert the Karzai regime and wear down the coalition. All three of these groups continue to swear at least nominal allegiance to Mullah Omar and to coordinate major plans, but they are distinct operational entities with their own territories of interest in Afghanistan and independent fundraising mechanisms. Mullah Omar is also revered by the Pakistani Taliban, who have opposed Pakistan's government since 2006.[44] In 2005, the Afghan government's lack of capacity and the allies' light footprint scheme allowed many districts and a few provinces to fall under the "shadow" control of the Taliban. Some provinces, such as poppy-rich Helmand, had little government or coalition presence before 2006.

In 2005, encouraged by the U.S. attention to its troubled war in Iraq, the Taliban began a nationwide offensive to regain its influence. From 2004 to 2009, there was a nine-fold increase in security incidents nationwide and a forty-fold increase in suicide bombing, a technique imported from Iraq. Conflict spread to most of the 34 provinces, but 71 percent of the security incidents in 2010 still took place in only 10 percent of the more than 400 districts nationwide.[45] The war in Afghanistan remains primarily a war over control of Pashtun areas in the eastern and southern portion of the country, but Taliban subversion and terrorism also became important factors in many other provinces. Efforts to combat narcotics growth and production generally failed or met with only temporary success. As corruption inside Afghanistan increased, Taliban revenue increased accordingly.

With lessons learned from al Qaeda in Iraq, the flow of components from Pakistan, and some later support from Iran, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) became the Taliban tactic of choice.[46] IED strikes rose from 300 in 2004 to more than 4,000 in 2009. In later years, more than half of all U.S. fatalities in Afghanistan resulted from IEDs.[47] Suicide bombers, almost unknown before 2004, became commonplace. By 2009, there were Taliban shadow governments of varied strength in nearly all provinces. Even in areas dominated by the government or government-friendly tribes, Taliban subversion or terror tactics became potent facts of life.

Beginning in 2005, the Taliban added more sophisticated information operations and local subversion to their standard terrorist tactics. "Night letters," a Soviet–Afghan war–era method of warning or intimidating the population, made a comeback, in some places as early as 2003. Letters were aimed at students, teachers, those who worked for Americans, and even children who fraternized with Americans.[48] In addition to subversion, terror tactics remained standard for the Taliban. In October 2008, for example, "the Taliban stopped a bus in the town of Maiwand in the western part of Kandahar Province, forcibly removed 50 passengers, and beheaded 30 of them."[49]

A UN study noted that in 2010, civilian casualties had increased by 10 percent from the previous year. The UN also noted that three-quarters of the civilian casualties were caused by "anti-government enemies," a marked increase of 53 percent from 2009.[50] While the population appreciated coalition restraint, the terror tactics of the Taliban kept many Afghans, especially in Pashtun areas, on the fence. Civilian casualties drove a wedge between the United States and the Karzai government, which began to harshly criticize the coalition while often ignoring the Taliban's reckless, inhumane behavior.

How did the war effort in Afghanistan deteriorate? First, in the early years, there was little progress in building Afghan capacity for governance, security, or economic development. There was little Afghan government and administrative capacity, and much economic and security assistance from the coalition bypassed the Afghan government. Nations and international organizations found it more convenient to work through NGOs and contractors. Over the years, these habits continued, and corruption among Afghan government officials increased. Key ministers, such as Ashraf Ghani (Finance), Abdullah Abdullah (Foreign Affairs), and Ali Jalali (Interior), resigned over time. After

the departure of Ambassador Khalilzad in 2005, Karzai lost his closest confidant on the American side. Subsequent Ambassadors—Ronald Neumann, William Wood, and Karl Eikenberry—did fine work but did not have the close relationship with Karzai that Khalilzad had. At the same time, Karzai lost faith in his American allies, who were often driven to distraction by Karzai's unfair and one-sided tirades. The leaking of sensitive cables in the WikiLeaks scandal undoubtedly contributed to the breakdown in trust between Karzai and the U.S. Government and its representatives.

Second, there was also substantial government corruption in Afghanistan, often tied to police operations or the drug trade. Karzai took the lead in dealing with the so-called warlords, the regional strongmen. Many of them ended up in the government, which was both a blessing and a curse. Others continued their viral existence in the provinces, often using their local power and cunning to take money from reconstruction projects or even from U.S. security contracts. Money-laundering through Kabul International Airport became well developed. Later, as assistance increased, journalists discovered that pallets of convertible currencies were being moved to the United Arab Emirates by individuals, corporations, and even Afghan government officials.[51] President Karzai's brothers and some of his immediate subordinates also became the subject of corruption investigations, especially after the Kabul Bank fell apart in 2010.

The drug trade fueled corruption and funded part of the Taliban operation. The United Kingdom, the United States, and the United Nations focused on various strategies to block the narcotics traffic but to no avail. Various attempts at crop eradication were particularly dysfunctional. Brookings Institution analyst Vanda Felbab-Brown offered this bleak assessment: "The counternarcotics policies pressed on the post-Taliban government prior to 2009 had serious counterproductive effects not only on the Afghan economy but also on the counterinsurgency, stabilization, anticorruption, and rule of law efforts being pursued in Afghanistan by the United States and its allies."[52]

Third, U.S. intelligence was a problem in the beginning and throughout the war. Human intelligence in particular was difficult to gather. While national and local intelligence learned more about the enemy's forces, the military leadership had inadequate information about the population that U.S. forces were protecting, a central focus of the campaign. The necessary rotation of

units compounded this situation. In 2010, Major General Michael T. Flynn, USA, the senior intelligence official in theater, wrote:

> *Eight years into the war in Afghanistan, the U.S. intelligence commu-*
> *nity is only marginally relevant to the overall strategy. Having focused*
> *the overwhelming majority of its collection efforts and analytical brain-*
> *power on insurgent groups, the vast intelligence apparatus is unable to*
> *answer fundamental questions about the environment in which U.S.*
> *and allied forces operate and the people they seek to persuade. Ignorant*
> *of local economics and landowners, hazy about who the powerbrokers*
> *are and how they might be influenced, incurious about the correlations*
> *between various development projects and the level of cooperation*
> *among villagers, and disengaged from people in the best position to find*
> *answers—whether aid workers or Afghan soldiers—U.S. intelligence*
> *officers and analysts can do little but shrug in response to high level*
> *decision-makers seeking the knowledge, analysis, and information they*
> *need to wage a successful counterinsurgency.*[53]

Combat units were slow to develop cultural awareness, and Human Terrain Teams and other specialists who tried to make up for this defect were often unable to bridge the information gap in their areas of concern. Units frequently knew the enemy situation, but not the people whom they were supposed to protect.[54] Compounding these factors, the senior-most U.S. commanders in Afghanistan had an average tenure of less than 13 months, nearly matching that of their combat soldiers.[55] In Afghanistan, neither generals nor sergeants had much time for on-the-job learning and even less for reflection.

The lack of information on local people and conditions hampered counterinsurgency efforts, which were further complicated by troop rotations. Years later, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, USA, a veteran of the fighting in Operation *Desert Storm* as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan, summed up the effects of not knowing the human terrain:

> *In Afghanistan, coalition forces struggled to understand local drivers*
> *of conflict and instability. Coalition forces sometimes unintentional-*
> *ly empowered predatory and criminal actors, fostered exclusionary*

political and economic orders, and alienated thereby key elements of the population. The Taliban, regenerating in safe houses in Pakistan, portrayed themselves as patrons and protectors of aggrieved parties in Afghanistan.[56]

Fourth, coalition arms, aid, trainers, and advisors ended up being insufficient in number, speed, and efficiency. The U.S. light footprint strategy, reinforced by a few years of low-level fighting, proved in retrospect to be inadequate to the task and the capacity of the threat. U.S. and allied combat troops fared well militarily, but the coalition was unsuccessful in building the capacity of the Afghan security forces, especially the police. Responsibility for police training bounced from Germany to the State Department to the Department of Defense (DOD) to a combined NATO-U.S. lead under Lieutenant General William Caldwell, USA, who finally stabilized police training.

The Afghan police remained an especially weak link in the security chain, and the Taliban made attacking them a priority. From 2007 to 2009, Afghan security forces killed in action (3,046) outnumbered U.S. and allied dead in those 3 years (nearly 800) by more than three to one. More than two out of every three Afghan servicemembers killed were policemen.

The coalition operations in Afghanistan also became an exemplar of "contractorization," with more Western-sponsored contractors, many of them armed, than soldiers in country. This in part reflected the limitations of a relatively small volunteer force and the ravages of protracted conflict. In the end, reliance on contractors proved both boon and burden. Contractors extended the force's capabilities but at great cost to the nation. The legal regime that controlled contractors was also problematic.

In all, from 2004 to 2008, there were insufficient coalition forces or Afghan national security forces to conduct what became known as a strategy to clear, hold, build, and then transfer responsibility to Afghan forces. The Taliban had a wide pool of unemployed tribesmen and former militia fighters to recruit from, as well as greater latitude in picking targets. Over time, the coalition also became increasingly unsuccessful in gaining Pakistani cooperation to control the Taliban and the permeable Pakistan-Afghanistan border. By 2009, the insurgency spread from its home base in the Pashtun areas in the south and east to the entire nation. Ironically, the war spread geographically in

part because of the greater presence and more vigorous activities of coalition forces in the south and east after 2009.

Taliban penetration of many areas deepened over time. In areas with scant Pashtun population, the Taliban also used motorcycle squads and IEDs to make headway in controlling the population. In areas under their control, Taliban judges administered sharia-based (and ethnically and tribally compatible) judgments, trumping Karzai's broken and corrupt civil courts. The Afghan people had little love for the Taliban, but insecurity and government ineptitude made the general population hesitant to act against them.

It is not literally true that initial U.S. operations in Iraq in 2003 stripped Afghanistan of what it needed to fight the Taliban. Indeed, 2004 was the last "good" year for Afghan security. While some intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets and Special Forces units were removed from Afghanistan, most of the assets needed to continue what appeared to be a low-risk operation there in the short term were wisely "fenced" by Pentagon and US-CENTCOM planners before the invasion of Iraq.[57]

It is fair to say, however, as the situation in Afghanistan began to decline after 2005, the greater scope and intensity of problems in Iraq worked against sending reinforcements or adequate funds to Afghanistan. National decision-makers knew that there were problems in Afghanistan, but the problems in Iraq were so much greater and of a higher priority that they deferred the problems in Afghanistan until after the success in 2008 of the Surge in Iraq. Another policy fault plagued U.S. war efforts: while U.S. fortunes declined in two wars, DOD leadership refused until 2006 to expand the end strength of the Armed Forces. For a short time, hoping against experience, the Pentagon even slightly reduced U.S. troops in Afghanistan when NATO took over command and control of the mission there in 2006.

Funding for the war did grow, usually matching modest increases in troop strength. In the first 3 years of the U.S. commitment (2001–2003), expenditures averaged $12 billion per year; in the next 3 years, $18 billion per year; and for 2007–2009, $48 billion per year.[58] Even as the funding picture for development assistance improved, it was not always done effectively and efficiently. At times, the military, with its CERP funds and stability operations mindset, was out of sync with the longer term view of USAID officials in Kabul or in the PRTs. Years later, both civil and military elements were criticized by the Office of the Spe-

cial Inspector General for Afghanistan, who criticized USAID in Afghanistan in particular for creating projects that were not Afghan-supportable.[59] In the end, the logic of stability operations and peacetime development assistance often will remain at odds. Both war and simultaneous reconstruction are inherently wasteful. *Armed nation-building*—a term popularized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Anthony Cordesman—is for neither the faint of heart nor the impatient.

Also complicating the war was the fact that the regional powers—Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia, and China—did little to help the situation. Each had its own interests and timetables. Iran and Pakistan were actually part of the problem, and the other four were unable to further a solution.

Pakistan was wary of American staying power and hedged its bets, allowing the Afghan Taliban to operate from its territory with minimal interference. Its objectives were to restore some sort of strategic depth in Afghanistan and block the spread of Indian influence, which grew daily with billions of dollars in Indian aid and commercial contracts. India worked hard to earn contracts in Afghanistan and forged a logistical alliance with Iran to work around Pakistan's geographic advantages. In a vicious circle, Indian success fueled Pakistani insecurity and tended to increase its attachment to the Afghan Taliban. In turn, the more Pakistan did for the Afghan Taliban, the more Pakistan alienated the people and the government of Afghanistan. Ironically, the more Pakistan supported the Afghan Taliban, the easier it was for India to expand its influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan, in its defense, would remind its interlocutors (and correctly so) that Pakistan has lost more soldiers and civilians in the war on terror than any other nation on Earth.[60]

Iran was no friend of the Taliban, and it worked (often with bags of cash) with authorities in Kabul and Herat in the western part of Afghanistan both to spread its influence and to improve trade and border control. Iran cooperated well during the Bonn Process but was alienated early in 2002 when President Bush declared the country to be a part of the "axis of evil." Tehran has also erratically aided the Taliban to ensure serious American problems, if not outright defeat.

China, for its part, seemed interested only in exploiting Afghanistan's strategic minerals and played a minimal role before 2010. Now that China has major financial interests, Afghan officials hope that it will work harder for peace and stability, exerting a more positive influence on Pakistan, its close

ally. China is poised today to help Afghanistan develop its mineral deposits but to date has little taste for security cooperation there.

Saudi Arabia tried hard to use its good offices to end the war but was frustrated by the Afghan Taliban's refusal to break relations with al Qaeda, a sworn enemy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Russia and China exploited commercial contracts, and Russia began slowly to improve counternarcotics cooperation with the coalition. In later years, Russia participated with other nations in the region in forming a northern logistics route.

In all, by 2009 the regional powers were not the primary cause of the war in Afghanistan, but their policies had not worked toward a solution. Pakistan is particularly noteworthy here. While the U.S. policy has been one of patient engagement to wean Islamabad from its dysfunctional ways, analysts from other countries could be openly bitter. One Canadian military historian who served in Afghanistan wrote that Pakistan was behind the external support to the insurgents in southern Afghanistan and that it was "a country with a 50-year history of exporting low-intensity warfare as a strategy."[61]

American officials tended to be more circumspect in public, but even Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, who devoted tremendous effort to working with the Pakistani military leaders, unleashed a broadside right before he retired in 2011, "The Haqqani Network—which has long enjoyed the support and protection of the Pakistani government and is, in many ways, a strategic arm of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency—is responsible for the September 13th [2011] attacks against the U.S. Embassy in Kabul." He went on to detail Haqqani attacks on Afghan and American targets and concluded that it is difficult to defeat an insurgency with a secure sanctuary in a neighboring country.[62]

By the end of the Bush administration, security in Afghanistan was down, as was Afghan optimism about the future. From 2005, Karzai's popularity had declined at home by a third. His standing in the West also fell after widespread fraud occurred in the 2010 presidential elections. His habit of criticizing the coalition and the United States was galling. Bad feelings were multiplied by his reluctance to criticize the Taliban and his habit of referring to them as "our brothers." In 2008, polls showed Afghan confidence in the United States and its allies had been halved. Many Afghans believed that the Taliban had grown

stronger every year since 2005, and incentives for fence-sitting increased, along with fear and disgust at government corruption.[63]

In the Bush years, the lack of progress came at a price: 630 U.S. Service-members died, and the United States spent $29 billion in Afghanistan on security assistance, counternarcotics, economic development, and humanitarian assistance. With the Iraq effort finally back on a more solid footing, President Bush's deputy national security advisor, Lieutenant General Douglas Lute, USA, conducted an assessment of the campaign in Afghanistan. He concluded that more troops and resources were needed, but in the final days of the administration, the President decided quietly to pass the Lute assessment on to the Obama administration. He decided that "the new strategy would have a better chance of success if we gave the new team an opportunity to revise it as they saw fit and then adopt it as their own."[64]

In early 2009, Ambassador Eikenberry returned to Kabul and noticed the changes in Afghanistan since his departure as the military commander there in 2007. He opined that the security situation deteriorated, especially in the south; training of the army and police lagged; the challenge of the Pakistani sanctuary had increased; and the level of mistrust between President Karzai and the United States was peaking, as was Afghan government corruption, complicated by a glut of foreign aid and assistance. Ambassador Eikenberry found the Taliban "enjoying increasing amounts of political support inside of Afghanistan."[65]

We now turn to the conflict in Iraq, beginning with a short comparison of the two campaigns.

Comparing the Two Campaigns

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq had significant commonalities and differences.[66] Both began as conventional conflicts with the aim of regime change. Both turned into protracted insurgencies compounded by nation-building activities. In Afghanistan, U.S. Army Special Forces on horseback calling in close air support might seem highly unconventional, but when considering the whole picture—Afghan infantry and cavalry facing entrenched Taliban fighters along well-established frontlines, air support, coalition activity, and so forth—the initial campaign that culminated by December 2001 with the capture of Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Jalalabad was, on

balance, a conventional force-on-force fight.[67] The Iraq invasion was clearly a modern, conventional assault. Both conflict zones featured powerful regional actors on their borders who were often more a part of the problem than the solution. Sectarian violence was a real threat in both countries but especially so in Shia-majority Iraq, which had long been under the boot of the largely Sunni Ba'athists.

There were also many differences between the two conflicts. The retaliatory war in Afghanistan was a come-as-you-are, hot-blooded affair, while the deliberate, preventive war in Iraq was the result of a decade-long crisis and was actively planned for more than a year. Although smaller and slightly less populous than Afghanistan, Iraq's location, oil wealth, and potential for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation made it a vastly more important nation than Afghanistan in the U.S. strategic calculus. Afghanistan was impoverished and had been at war for over two decades before the U.S. invasion. Iraq had the potential to be rich but was stifled by the regime of Saddam Hussein. It was more a damaged state than it was an underdeveloped one. It still possessed great oil wealth, an educated population, and relatively modern infrastructure in its urban areas. Afghanistan had none of that, and still does not. The embryonic Afghan civil elite, middle class, and governmental bureaucracy had ceased to exist after a decade of war with the Soviet Union, followed by a civil war that continued up to the U.S. invasion. In 2009, USCENTCOM Commander General David Petraeus, USA, stated, "Given the fact that you have police who can't read the law that they are enforcing, local government officials who can't read the directives that have been sent to them . . . that does create a few handicaps and challenges that certainly weren't present to the same extent in Iraq, to put it mildly."[68]

Iraq's conflictual relationship with the United States began in the first Gulf War and continued, albeit at a lower level, right up to the U.S. invasion in 2003, a 13-year struggle. The United States was not distracted from Afghanistan and lured into Iraq. Indeed, the quick march to war in Afghanistan took a few weeks, but the movement to war for a second time with Iraq was more than a decade in the making.

One final difference is the character of the two wars. The retaliatory war against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan was a classical just war. It attracted a large and willing coalition of U.S. allies and partners. It had more en-

during popularity with the American people than the conflict in Iraq. The war in Iraq was a preventive war, unpopular abroad, and, in short order, unpopular at home as well. It temporarily hurt U.S. standing around the world, and it drove a wedge between the United States and two of its closest allies, France and Germany. The issue of legitimacy retarded the development of the coalition force in Iraq, but over time, it grew to be a large and effective field force, with nearly three dozen partners and two-fifths of the division headquarters commanded and dominated by allied nations. To understand the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it is necessary to begin with the first Gulf War.

Context of the War in Iraq

After favoring Saddam in his war with Iran, the United States was shocked when the unpredictable dictator invaded Kuwait, a state that he owed billions of dollars to for its support in the Iraqi struggle with Iran. In August 1990, the United States organized a vast international coalition and in the following year forced Saddam from Kuwait. Down but not out, Saddam managed to put down subsequent rebellions in the south (among the Shia) and the north (among the Kurds) of Iraq. Today, the coalition's failure to "finish the job" in Iraq in 1991 is often seen as a huge mistake. Critics have argued that Saddam was on the ropes and that he was ripe for not just a knockdown, but for a knockout blow. In 1991, however, President George H.W. Bush and his National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, saw it differently. Years later, they wrote:

> *While we hoped that a popular revolt or coup would topple Saddam, neither the United States nor the countries of the region wished to see the breakup of the Iraqi state. We were concerned about the long-term balance of power at the head of the Gulf. Breaking up the Iraqi state would pose its own destabilizing problems. . . . Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq, would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in midstream, engaging in "mission creep," and would have incurred incalculable human and political costs. . . . We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad, and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed. . . . Had we gone the invasion route* [in 1991]*, the United States could conceivably still* [in 1998] *be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land.*[69]

From 1991 to 2003, Saddam continued to rule Iraq, brutally putting down sporadic revolts and turning the Iraqi state into a money-making enterprise for himself and his cronies. Public and private infrastructure decayed. The regular Iraqi army and air force remained formidable by regional standards but much less potent than in 1990. Following a doctrine of dual containment for Iran and Iraq, the United States and coalition partners kept Saddam's regime constrained by using their air forces to enforce UN-supported (but not explicitly authorized) no-fly zones in the northern and southern thirds of the country. This required complex and continuous air operations run out of the Gulf states—especially Saudi Arabia—and Turkey. On a daily basis, enforcing the two no-fly zones required up to 200 aircraft and 7,500 airmen. In all, 300,000 sorties were flown. In 2002 alone, Iraq attacked coalition aircraft on 500 occasions, 90 of which resulted in coalition airstrikes, some of which were calculated to be helpful in a potential future conflict.[70] For the U.S. Air Force, there was precious little rest in the decade between the first and second gulf wars.

Saddam's regime was also subject to strict economic sanctions, and the UN later came to provide food and medicine for the Iraqi people in return for regulated oil exports in the oil-for-food program. Over the years, Saddam found a way to profit from the sanctions, stockpiling cash and building palaces as the Iraqi economy withered. After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, UN investigators exposed many people (including some foreign government and UN officials) who had taken bribes of one sort or another for cooperating with Saddam. As the 20th century came to an end, however, Saddam had convinced many in the West that the UN-approved sanctions were hurting the people and especially the children of Iraq.[71] The sanctions regime was on thin ice. Indeed, the steady unraveling (and outflanking) of international sanctions became a subsidiary factor in the litany of reasons to go to war with Saddam.

After Operation *Desert Storm* in 1991, UN inspectors hunting WMD played a long cat-and-mouse game with Saddam's military and intelligence bureaucracies. In 1998, Saddam unilaterally ended the inspections, raising suspicion in the West and at the UN that he was accelerating his WMD programs. President Clinton later conducted punitive strikes on Iraq with the tacit support of many nations in the UN Security Council. Prodded by Congress, he later declared regime change in Iraq to be U.S. policy.

The George W. Bush administration was composed of many veterans of the first Gulf War—including Vice President Richard Cheney and his chief of staff, Lewis "Scooter" Libby; National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and her deputy Stephen Hadley; Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz; and NSC staff member Zalmay Khalilzad—all of whom saw Saddam as an ugly piece of unfinished business from their collective past.[72] In retrospect, the shock of 9/11 and anxiety about future strikes encouraged the U.S. Government to take counsel of its fears about Iraq, which had roots in terrorism, Saddam's reputation as a regional aggressor who had used chemical weapons, and, most importantly, his apparent WMD possession and research programs.

Despite the suspicions of some in the Pentagon, Saddam never had an operational relationship with al Qaeda. Iraq had neither supervised al Qaeda assets nor conducted joint terrorist operations. At the same time, his active relationship with terrorists of all stripes was a concern and was never in doubt.[73] He was among the most active supporters of Palestinian terrorism. The Mujahideen-e-Khalq, a leftist, anti-Iranian terrorist/military force, was resident in Iraq, conducted operations against Iran, and cooperated with Saddam's paramilitary and armed forces. Also, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who became al Qaeda's leader in Iraq, was resident for a time in a remote Kurdish-controlled section of northern Iraq with his small terrorist group before the U.S. invasion. He had visited Baghdad and received medical treatment there.[74]

Zarqawi did not have an operational relationship with Saddam's intelligence force, but they clearly had communications and a symbiotic coexistence. Initially, Zarqawi was independent and not yet a subordinate of Osama bin Laden. However, the similarities between Zarqawi's and bin Laden's organizations attracted the attention of U.S. friends in Kurdistan, who made U.S. planners aware of it. In the run-up to the war, the radical Zarqawi was cooperating with both the Ba'athist regime and al Qaeda. After establishing his reputation as the most energetic Salafist terrorist leader in Iraq, he later merged his group with al Qaeda and became its emir in Iraq.[75] (After the invasion, the CIA examined the files of Saddam's intelligence apparatus. Michael Morrell, former Deputy Director of the Agency, noted that "the United States never found anything in the files of the Iraqi intelligence service, or any other Iraqi ministry, indicating that there was ever any kind of relationship between the Iraqis and al Qa'ida."[76])

Despite the obvious decay in his regime, "what to do about Saddam" was an important issue for the new Bush administration. In all, it was not just WMD either. The Iraq threat also included Saddam's past regional violence, his multi-faceted relationships with terrorists, and his outlandish tyranny. The complete Iraq threat was, in the words of Under Secretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith, "WMD and the 3 Ts," which stood for terrorism, threats to neighbors, and tyranny. Saddam was a threat not only inside Iraq but also abroad due to the absence of all restraints on his aggressive tendencies.[77]

After the 9/11 attacks, Saddam's regime took on a more ominous appearance. Early on, some Bush administration officials believed it was likely that Saddam was involved with 9/11, and they saw new reason to be concerned about him and his WMD programs. When terrorists can strike the U.S. homeland and cause mass casualties, terrorism ceases to be only a law enforcement issue. In the introduction to the 2002 National Security Strategy, Bush stated, "The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed."[78]

Because of the new threat from al Qaeda and the dangers of WMD proliferation, the President embraced the so-called doctrine of preemption—which experts saw as a doctrine of preventive war—and declared Iraq (along with North Korea and Iran) a member of the "axis of evil."

Preparation for War

Planning for a potential war against Iraq was largely sidelined during the first 2 months of fighting in Afghanistan. In November 2001, however, on the edge of achieving initial military success in Afghanistan, President Bush again asked Secretary Rumsfeld to begin planning in secret for potential military operations against Iraq. That mission was passed quickly to USCENTCOM, now headed by General Franks.[79] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers and Vice Chairman General Peter Pace played a supporting role, with the activist Secretary of Defense exercising his legal authority to be the direct supervisor of the combatant commanders. While most Defense secretaries in recent memory chose to work war-planning issues with the combatant commanders through the Chairman, Secretary Rumsfeld played a

hands-on role in the development of the details of the battle plan and the flow of the invasion force.

Over the next 14 months, Franks and Rumsfeld remained in frequent contact. Not only were there dozens of briefings and face-to-face conversations, usually with the Chairman or Vice Chairman in attendance, there also was a steady stream of memos (known as "snowflakes") from the energetic Secretary who posed probing questions for the Pentagon and USCENTCOM staffs. Rumsfeld wanted to conduct a quick, lightning-like operation in Iraq, followed by a swift handover of power to the Iraqis, as was done in Afghanistan in 2001. He did not want a large-scale, ponderous operation such as *Desert Storm*, which he saw as wasteful and outmoded. In his memoir and frequently in conversations, the Secretary criticized the wastefulness of *Desert Storm* by pointing out that "more than 80 percent [of the ammunition shipped to theater] was returned to the United States untouched."[80]

Secretary Rumsfeld also did not want U.S. troops unnecessarily bogged down in a long, costly, manpower-intensive peace operation. He was vitally interested in force modernization and "transformation," which further predisposed him against prolonged military operations.[81] In some ways, the war in Afghanistan—with a small U.S. force on the ground ably assisted by CIA paramilitary forces, mated to superb communications, high-tech air assets, precision-guided munitions, and timely intelligence—was a conceptual model for what Rumsfeld wanted to see in the new Iraq war plan. In February 2003, a few weeks before the invasion, he stated in New York:

> *If the United States were to lead an international coalition in Iraq . . . it would be guided by two commitments. Stay as long as necessary, and to leave as soon as possible. . . . We would work with our partners as we are doing in Afghanistan to help the Iraqi people establish a new government that would govern a single country, that would not have weapons of mass destruction, that would not be a threat to its neighbors. . . . The goal would not be to impose an American style template on Iraq, but rather to create conditions where Iraqis can form a government in their own unique way just as the Afghans did with the Loya Jirga. . . . This is not to underestimate the challenge that the coalition would face. . . . General Franks in an interagency process has been working hard on this for many months.*[82]

Throughout their dialogue and into the deployment of the force, Rumsfeld urged a small force and a lightning-fast operation. Later, he shut down the military's automated deployment system, questioning, delaying, or deleting units on some of the numerous deployment orders that came across his desk.[83]

Franks may have briefed the President on his war plan as many as 10 times. He started using a modified version of the old 1003V war plan but then developed three new varieties: a generated start plan, a running start plan, and a hybrid plan. In the end, the last version, Cobra II, was strongly influenced by edits from the field.[84] It called for an initial combat force of about 140,000 troops—one-third the size of the force in the plan that was on the shelf when the administration came to power. In the end, General Franks insisted that the plan was a USCENTCOM plan and not the concoction of anyone in Washington:

> *The sessions in the White House, the sessions with Rumsfeld were initiated by me and my staff and then critiqued and questioned by the White House or by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). But there was not a leadership role wherein we would walk in and the President or Rumsfeld would say, "Now here is how I would like to do this and here is what I'm thinking." That never happened. That never occurred. . . . They were there to listen, and we would spend hour upon hour with me doing what I am doing right now, talking. . . . So it was asking questions, receiving answers, and . . . these sessions . . . went on repetitively over the course of 14 months.*[85]

The main strike elements of the plan were a few thousand special operators and three ground divisions (one U.S. Army mechanized division, one Marine division, and one British armored division), along with elements of three other Army divisions and an Army parachute infantry brigade that was later inserted into the fray. Given the effects of previous air operations and the need to be unpredictable, the notion of a long, preliminary air operation was discarded, aiding the element of surprise on the ground. A high level of allied hesitancy no doubt encouraged an already reluctant Turkish government—faced with strong public opinion against the war—to disallow the use of its territory to launch a northern front in Iraq with the U.S. 4th Infantry Division, which the Iraqis saw as a potent threat. Consequently, much of the division's

assets loitered at sea, which had the salutary effect of forcing the Iraqis to hold a significant portion of their army in the north.

Unlike in Afghanistan, the CIA lacked an extensive set of relationships with movements in Iraq.[86] Much critical intelligence about Iraq was not verifiable against sources on the ground. The United States had excellent technical intelligence but apparently lacked a network of agents in the country. There were grave limits on the U.S. ability to confirm judgments that it believed were true. Faulty intelligence estimates on the status of WMD were compounded by numerous mis-estimates that complicated the postconflict phases of the operation.

For their part, the Joint Chiefs of Staff—statutory military advisors to the Secretary of Defense, President, and National Security Council—also met with the President twice on the war plan, the second time in January 2003. Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki commented in the second meeting that the on-scene force was small and that "it would be important to keep reinforcements flowing," but all of the chiefs supported the basic plan.[87] None of them brought up specific misgivings about Phase IV, postcombat stability operations, but that issue would be raised by Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) a month later in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

The administration's key congressional effort, however, had already taken place. In October 2002, President Bush sought congressional approval for a prospective military operation against Iraq. Propelled by a post-9/11 threat perception, the resolution passed both houses handily. More than half of the Senate Democrats and 81 House Democrats voted along with Republicans to authorize military force.[88] The Congressmen and Senators no doubt remembered the political penalty assigned to those legislators, mostly Democrats, who had voted against the first Gulf War, Operation *Desert Storm*, which passed the Senate by only five votes.[89]

International Support and WMD

On the international front, Secretary of State Colin Powell, with the strong backing of the United Kingdom and other U.S. allies, convinced the President in August 2002 to exhaust diplomatic efforts before going to war. Late in 2002, with strong U.S. support, weapons inspections restarted, and Saddam's regime again interfered with them. After 400 inspections, however, the UN personnel

came to no firm conclusions. Their cautious on-scene report was drowned out by many other briefings about Iraqi WMD, including one by Secretary Powell. In all, the existence of a large stockpile of chemical weapons and missiles and, perhaps more importantly, active missile, biological, and nuclear research programs became the overriding reason for invading Iraq and the reason that brought together many different U.S factions and international partners in their desire to forcibly oust Saddam and his regime.

On the eve of the 2003 war, despite the many disputes on such details as the purpose of aluminum tubes in grainy imagery and reports of the potential transfer of uranium oxide ("yellowcake"), most international intelligence agencies believed, as did former President Clinton, that Saddam still possessed a major chemical weapons stockpile, a significant missile force, and active research and development programs for biological and nuclear weapons. There is nothing in credible sources to support the notion that the WMD threat was concocted by U.S. Government officials and then sold to a gullible public, nor is it clear that a small number of Iraqi sources tricked the U.S. Government into its beliefs.[90] No special offices within the Office of the Secretary of Defense or secret advisors created the dominant perception of the danger of Iraqi WMD. There were many holes in the knowledge base, but senior officials and analysts were almost universally united in their core beliefs. As the lead key judgment in the Intelligence Community's October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on WMD in Iraq stated, "We judge that Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade."[91]

This perception was aided and abetted by Saddam himself, who wanted the great powers and his hostile neighbor, Iran, to believe that he had WMD programs and stockpiles. His use of chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds, who were Iraqi citizens, also gave weight to the danger of Iraqi WMD programs. Saddam's destruction of his stockpiles and the suspension of much of his research and development work fooled the West, as well as his own generals.[92] In his eyes, this deception was critical to Iraqi security. According to the U.S. Joint Forces Command–Institute for Defense Analyses (USJFCOM-IDA) project on Iraqi perspectives, "Saddam walked a tightrope

with WMD because, as he often reminded his close advisors, they lived in a very dangerous global neighborhood where even the perception of weakness drew wolves. For him, there were real dividends to be gained by letting his enemies believe he possessed WMD, whether it was true or not."[93]

Saddam also had many reasons to convince the great powers that he had destroyed these weapons and that the UN should end the sanctions. Inside his regime, a tangled web of lies and secrecy confused even his own generals. According to the USJFCOM-IDA study, "The idea that in a compartmentalized and secretive regime other military units or organizations might have WMD was plausible to . . . [the Iraqi generals]."[94] Saddam's record of deception was a key factor in why intelligence analysts continued to believe in Iraqi WMD. His own duplicity and the U.S. inability to penetrate it were factors in his undoing. Former National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, years after the mistake, stated, "Thinking back, I now wonder if our mistakes may have been in not considering whether the reason that Saddam Hussein was so secretive about his weapons of mass destruction capabilities was not because he had the weapons and wanted to conceal them, but because he did not have them and wanted to hide that."[95]

While Secretary Powell was successful in restarting weapons inspections in Iraq, he was never able to build a consensus for decisive action in the UN Security Council. In mid-January 2003, with CIA Director Tenet at his side, Powell gave a highly publicized briefing on Iraqi WMD programs to the Security Council. He was later embarrassed to discover that some details that he highlighted were incorrect.

When in the following month UN inspections came to naught, the die was cast for war without the blessing of many key U.S. allies or the UN Security Council. Iraq was declared to be in material breach of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1441, which demanded that Iraq give a detailed accounting of its WMD programs. With urging from its closest ally, Great Britain, the United States decided to try for yet another resolution, one that might explicitly authorize the use of force. The attempt broke down for lack of allied, Russian, and Chinese support. The failure of this risky diplomatic move cast doubt on the legitimacy of the preventive war that the United States and Great Britain were planning. Adding to the sting of rejection was the fact that France and Germany led the way in trying to block the resolution. Later, U.S. failure

to find either WMD stockpiles or active research and development programs compounded the damage to U.S. credibility, further retarding efforts to gain international support.

Of the nations in the Middle East, only Israel, Kuwait, and Qatar were openly behind the coalition effort; many other regional states, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, privately supported it. Of major U.S. allies, only the United Kingdom was ready to provide a significant military formation for combat operations.[96]

Military and Interagency Postwar Plans

In many of his war-plan briefings to the President, General Franks mentioned Phase IV, the transition period after the end of major combat operations. Indeed, he did not underestimate the work that might have to be done. On two occasions, Franks's memoir indicates that he told first the Secretary of Defense and then the President and National Security Council that Phase IV might require up to 250,000 troops, over 100,000 more combatants than were in the initial invasion force. He also noted that this phase might last for years, although he did believe that it might be done more quickly with a smaller force under the right circumstances.[97] Despite these estimates, USCENTCOM was not adequately prepared for the post–major combat difficulties that it faced in Iraq.

It was ironic that DOD civilian leadership severely criticized General Shinseki when he mentioned a similar level of effort ("several hundred thousand") in response to questions about postcombat troop requirements in a February 2003 Senate hearing. These estimates were consistent with the outside estimates of USCENTCOM's land component headquarters and its Phase IV planners. While it has never been confirmed, Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz may have been worried about not alarming Congress on the eve of the war. It is clear that they expected a relatively quick, easy, and inexpensive occupation. They were also conscious of inflated cost and casualty estimates in previous conflicts such as Operation *Desert Storm*.

Franks's many briefings to the President did not cover critical postwar issues that were not ordinarily in the military's sphere of competence: governance, constitutions, sectarian relations, and so forth. He emphasized tasks that the military had to do in the short run: security and humanitarian assistance.

Some analysts have criticized Franks for not being interested in postwar Iraq, an area where many in uniform believed that civilians should dominate decisionmaking. Most war planning was handled by Franks and his staff, but most military postwar planning efforts were left to USCENTCOM's land component. Franks announced his retirement soon after the fighting, and this act negatively affected perceptions concerning his enthusiasm for post–major conflict stability operations.[98] Years later, Franks explained his focus on the combat phase of the operation:

> *The key that unlocked the door in Iraq was the removal of the regime and so the force level initially was planned to remove the regime. So we said, depending on whether we see the left end of the continuum, peace breaking out, or the right end, tending toward chaos, we will continue to modify both the structure and the number of troops involved in Iraq until we "win," that is, that the Iraqis are able to take charge of their own destiny. That was the plan from the beginning to the end and that is the way that we looked at Phase IV in every iteration. . . . You don't know what you are actually going to find.[99]*

While USCENTCOM and its land component had Phase IV plans, some of the divisions making up the force—including the 3rd Infantry Division, the main attack division—did not have them. Division planners wrote in their after action review that the division had not been fully and completely briefed on the highly detailed postwar plan of its higher headquarters, the land component command.[100] The Marine headquarters, I Marine Expeditionary Force, and its divisional element under Major General James Mattis did formulate plans and standard operating procedures. After the seizure of Baghdad, however, they were redeployed to the south, a less contested area in the immediate postcombat phase.[101]

The Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) plan did not generate supporting division plans, and this represented a shortcoming. In all, while the military did begin to plan for this issue before civilians did, the USCENTCOM and CFLCC Phase IV planning efforts were not an effective guide for immediate post–conventional combat military policy, were not shared fully with implementing units, and did not make adequate allowances

for supporting civilian entities in the reconstruction and stabilization business. In CFLCC's defense, however, it is important to note that it was never able to supervise Phase IV operations. It was sent home early, an unusual decision (discussed below).[102]

While war planning was in high gear from November 2001 until March 2003, civilian planners in the interagency community were not included in the close-hold war-plan briefings. Civilian planners, for the most part, did not begin to make meaningful independent contributions until the summer of 2002. By then General Franks had briefed the President six times on the battle plan. Thus, instead of a military plan being built to line up with a national plan, the interagency work on Iraq generally followed in the wake of the war plan. Postwar issues were broken up and handled by different groups that sometimes worked in isolation from one another for security reasons or for bureaucratic advantage.

The NSC-led Executive Steering Group did valuable work to attempt to break down agency barriers and pull together the strands of a postwar plan, concentrating on humanitarian and economic issues. They began their work in the summer of 2002, following up on a Pentagon-run interagency effort. The planning efforts of the Pentagon were so powerful and the nature of war so uncertain that the President—with the concurrence of Secretary Powell, first in October and then in December 2002—put the Pentagon in charge of initial postwar operations, a fairly typical pattern in U.S. military history.

Although the outline of the postwar plan was approved in October 2002, the President did not formally approve the organization that would carry out initial stabilization and reconstruction activities, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), until December 2002. It was not brought into existence until January 2003. This office was subordinated to the Secretary of Defense, who put it under USCENTCOM.

Policy queuing was a natural and unavoidable problem. Not all planning efforts can be seamlessly started or terminated with optimal timing. One reason for the slow start in postwar planning had to do with diplomacy. The tentative scheme to manage postwar Iraq was approved in October 2002, but little could be done as diplomats attempted in vain to solve the problem without recourse to arms. One can plan war in secret, but to do postwar planning and programming, diplomacy must be winding down and war must be nearly

inevitable. In a recent interview, Stephen Hadley, who served President Bush first as deputy and then, in the second term, as National Security Advisor, lamented the fact that diplomatic efforts retarded postwar planning:

> *The dilemma was the following: the President wanted coercive diplomacy; he wanted to prepare a war plan, and to be seen preparing forces in order to give strength to the diplomacy. But he was hopeful that Iraq could be resolved diplomatically, and that Saddam could be convinced either to change his policies or to leave. There were a lot of people who, of course, didn't believe that. They thought that Bush came in with the settled intention to go to war, and that diplomacy was just a cover. . . . But the dilemma was, if we started, and it became known publicly that we were planning for a post-conflict, post-Saddam Iraq, everybody would say: "See, we told you, the diplomatic effort is not real, they're already preparing for war." And we would undermine our own diplomacy. So we had a dilemma, you had to delay the post-war planning as much as you could because you didn't want to jeopardize the diplomacy, but you still want enough time to develop the postwar plan.*[103]

According to Hadley, another problem with postwar planning was implementation. Summarizing a study that he had commissioned, he reflected on a basic problem with civil planning:

> *But what you didn't understand was that while military plans were being developed by CENTCOM, there was a system for translating those military plans into operational orders all the way down to the squadron level. There wasn't an established way of taking that postwar planning and putting it into the process, and implementing orders all the way down to the squadron level. So, you did all the planning, but it had no legs.*[104]

According to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, the President's designation of the Pentagon as the lead on postwar issues appeared to streamline the chain of command, but it also dampened interagency cooperation.[105] It also caused intense friction between State and Defense over who would be

assigned to ORHA. The disruptive tension between clear lines of command and interagency cooperation continued when ORHA was replaced by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) led by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. The head of the CPA emphasized his status as the Presidential envoy and did not report consistently to or through either the Secretary of Defense or National Security Advisor.[106]

The President received several major civilian briefings that were relevant to postwar issues, all of which were arranged by the NSC-driven Executive Steering Group. In January, based on interagency deliberations, Elliot Abrams of the NSC and Robin Cleveland of the Office of Management and Budget briefed the President on potential humanitarian issues during and right after the war. The work of this interagency group focused mainly on humanitarian assistance and the handling of refugees and internally displaced persons. The group's initial estimate of reconstruction costs was only a few billion dollars.[107] In early February, the NSC staff briefed the President on postwar relationships in Iraq, and on February 24, 2003, the President was briefed on the status of the Iraqi oil industry and the oil-for-food program.[108]

On February 28, 2003, Lieutenant General Jay Garner, USA (Ret.), briefed the President and his advisors on the initial estimates of his interagency ORHA team, which reported to Franks and the Secretary of Defense and was to be the lead office in postwar operations.[109] Because Garner had only been hired in January, his briefing was not detailed. Indeed, Garner's team was only partially formed when it deployed. In all, his staff officers did not have time to develop relationships with their peers in OSD Policy or on the Joint Staff.

Immediately before the war began, the NSC staff briefed the President in two sittings on the postwar reconstruction, governance, and security plans that had been cleared by the deputies and principals. The essence of the plan briefed to President Bush was essentially to turn over power quickly to an Iraqi entity, administer the country through the Iraqi ministries, use the existing police and military to help run the country, and pay for most reconstruction by using Iraqi funds, mainly from the sale of oil. This briefing was entirely in keeping with Garner's plans, as well as the DOD approach. In a few weeks, however, it would be completely overcome by events and scrapped without further interagency discussions.

One final briefing deserves highlighting. On March 4, 2003, the President and NSC reviewed for a final time the U.S. and coalition objectives in Iraq. This was one of the last major briefs before the war began, and in retrospect, it was an important symbol of how high U.S. hopes were for postwar Iraq.[110] The formal goals for the Iraq policy had been laid out in October 2002 and were frequently mentioned in planning guidance to USCENTCOM. The desired endstate was an Iraq that:

- does not threaten its neighbors
- renounces support for, and sponsorship of, international terrorism
- continues to be a single, unitary state
- is free of WMD, their means of delivery, and associated programs
- no longer oppresses or tyrannizes its people
- respects the basic rights of all Iraqis, including women and minorities
- adheres to the rule of law and respects fundamental human rights, including freedom of speech and worship
- encourages the building of democratic institutions.[111]

The major combat operations, which began on March 23, 2003, went well. The Iraqis never significantly challenged the invading force's vulnerable supply lines. The overwhelming power of U.S. and British forces quickly accomplished tactical objectives, and the major conventional fight was over by mid-April, months ahead of schedule. The only real surprise during the fighting—and a bad omen for the future—was the sporadic but vigorous resistance put up by paramilitary irregulars, such as the Fedayeen Saddam. The much-anticipated bloody battle for Baghdad and the use of WMD did not happen, and the predicted flood of refugees never took place due to the speed of the operation and the attacking forces' avoidance of many cities and towns.

On May 1, 2003, after landing on the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln*, President Bush stood in front of a banner that proclaimed "Mission Accomplished" and stated, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed."[112] He then told

the allies and the UN that their help was now needed and could be provided in safety. Although Franks had talked of the possible need for a long occupation, and many others warned of the complexity of postcombat events, some officials in OSD at the urging of the Secretary of Defense were soon speaking of a rapid turnover and withdrawal, with the invasion force possibly being reduced to 25,000 to 30,000 by August 2003.[113]

In May, war A was ending, but war B was about to begin. The United States had a complex, flexible plan for war A but no such plan for war B. War A was a rapid, high-tech, conventional battle—war, American style. War B would become a protracted conflict, an insurgency with high levels of criminality and sustained sectarian violence; it was just the sort of ambiguous, irregular conflict that the American public finds hard to understand and even harder to endure. The military was not initially prepared for insurgency and took more than a year to adjust well in the field. In 2006, the drastic increase in sectarian violence—in some eyes, a Sunni-Shia civil war—compounded the insurgency and cast a pall over coalition military efforts until the Surge began early in 2007. Political development and progress in reconstruction both continued to lag behind military efforts.

Pitfalls in Decisionmaking and Initial Execution

Underlying nearly all of these mistakes was a series of faulty assumptions.[114] These initial assumptions were a thread that ran through many missteps, and thus it is important to ask where assumptions come from. In every case, assumptions are affected by wishful thinking, stress, predispositions of the key actors, uncertainty, and the process used to arrive at decisions. In complex national security operations, intelligence estimates also play a vital role. In the case of Iraq, intelligence was faulty on WMD, the state of Iraqi infrastructure, and the usefulness of Iraqi police and military. Later, other shortfalls came in the provision of information about Iraqi tribal structures, as well as in the interests and intentions of neighboring states. Secretary Rumsfeld and Under Secretary Feith also complained that while intelligence did include the possibility of civil disturbances, it never predicted the possibility of an insurgency.[115] Incorrect, incomplete, or dated intelligence contributed in large measure to the assumptions that infected what became a "best case" war plan.

The core assumption held by many leaders in the national security establishment—and nearly all of the civilian leadership in the Pentagon—was that war in Iraq would be difficult, the peace relatively easy, and the occupation short and inexpensive.[116] This assumption—as implicit as it was powerful—was reflected in many leadership statements, actions, and planning priorities. Right up to the start of operations, the amount of time and effort spent on the major combat operation war plan was impressive; the amount of time and effort placed on postwar planning was relatively slight in comparison. Battle plans had branches and sequels, and combat troops were prepared for eventualities. The postwar plans had little such flexibility built into them.

The supporting assumptions were five in number. First, the war was expected to include tough fighting and end in a climactic battle. Most senior national security officials expected (and realistically so) that *Iraqi Freedom* would be a fight that could include the use of chemical or biological weapons. The battle for Baghdad in particular was seen as the logical bloody end to months of combat. Every DOD, State Department, and CIA expert expected battle-related refugees and internally displaced people or populations to be a major complicating factor in the war and its aftermath. These judgments were prudent, plausible, and consistent with previous conflicts. But none of them came to pass.

Second, leaders were repeatedly told by exiles that U.S. soldiers would be seen as liberators, welcomed with "sweets and flowers," as renowned scholar Kanan Makiya told President Bush.[117] General Abizaid called this the "Heroic Assumption." He criticized it because he believed that the liberation theme was connected in the minds of many decisionmakers with the liberation of Europe in World War II. Abizaid rightly believed that Iraq was not France.[118] In the minds of many, the fact of liberation would also facilitate early withdrawal. Our most senior leaders apparently believed this and frequently said so. General George W. Casey, Jr., USA, later stated, "CENTCOM bought into it. Franks bought into it. It was down to the tactical level. . . . Rumsfeld pushed that. . . . It was in everyone's mind that we were getting out of there."[119] No one was able to estimate the time that it would take for humiliation and impatience to turn appreciative welcomes into hatred for occupiers. It proved to be a painfully short interval.

While wiser heads had predicted a short honeymoon,[120] many officials such as Abizaid, Feith, Khalilzad, and Garner wanted a quick turnover of governmental authority to Iraqis. Indeed, this was the plan approved by President Bush just days before the invasion. It did not come to pass. There were significant situational difficulties. There was no Iraqi equivalent of a Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan. An international conference to legitimize an appointed government, as the UN-sponsored Bonn Conference did with Afghanistan, proved difficult to organize in the prevailing international climate. Many Iraqis were wary of a rapid turnover becoming Ba'athism without Saddam. Others worried about Shia domination. The Kurds worried about both of these scenarios and also kept one eye on Turkey.[121] Throughout it all, the rivalry between Iraqi "externals," such as Ahmed Chalabi, and "internals" was also a factor. In a similar vein, the few hundred Iraqi National Congress exiles led by Chalabi were not well or widely employed and accomplished little when they were brought into theater to help put an Iraqi face on coalition efforts. To complicate matters, there was another group of externals that had sought shelter in Iran during Saddam's regime. By mid-May 2003, any sense that Western-based Iraqi exiles or other externals—strongly distrusted in any event by the CIA and Department of State—might come to lead Iraq had evaporated in the spring heat.

The rapid turnover of power to Iraqis was key to the U.S. postwar plan, but it could not be arranged in advance or imposed by fiat. Khalilzad and Garner wanted to begin by holding a nationwide meeting of notables on May 15, 2003, a follow-up to three previous conferences in February and April 2003. Bremer, who had supplanted both of these officials, thought that such a meeting would be risky and canceled it; he also doubted the move to turn over elements of governmental authority rapidly to some sort of interim Iraqi body. In addition, he asked the President to end Khalilzad's status as a Presidential envoy under the premise that having two envoys would be confusing. However, removing Khalilzad took away the administration's de facto representative to all elements of Iraqi society. Khalilzad's popularity in Iraq and his status as an empathetic American of Muslim background were impossible to duplicate. Powell and Khalilzad were both surprised by this personnel shift, which was proposed by Bremer and approved by the President without benefit of interagency deliberation.[122]

Pursuant to UNSCR 1483, from May 2003 to June 2004 the United States and its coalition partners became the legal occupiers of Iraq, a fact that became more intolerable to many Iraqis as time passed and the dreams of reconstruction failed to come true. As Bremer settled into the headquarters—quickly canceling the nationwide meeting to prepare for an interim government, instituting de-Ba'athification, and disbanding the old Iraqi army—every major element of the plan briefed to President Bush right before the invasion had been abandoned because of changes on the ground without comprehensive reconsideration by the NSC principals.

In his back-brief to Rumsfeld (but not to President Bush), Garner—who had complained to Bremer in Baghdad about these three policy initiatives—referred to them as the "three tragic decisions."[123] In place of a quick turnover to Iraqis, a staple of prewar planning, the United States now had a full-scale occupation of Iraq without the requisite increase in resources to carry it off. Deprived of the assistance of over 100,000 Iraqi soldiers, the imbalance between aspirations and on-hand assets would continue up to the Surge.[124] The President approved these changes to postwar policy—the three tragic decisions—and he bears direct responsibility for not calling in all hands to create a new, well-balanced policy toward Iraq.

A third supporting assumption was that the Iraqi people hungered for democracy and human rights and that this hunger would suppress the urge to settle scores or to think in narrow tribal or sectarian terms. This presupposition undoubtedly was also enhanced by Iraqi exiles, many of whom had not been home in decades. This assumption had some validity, but it lived alongside the widely held perception that the United States and its partners were foreign occupiers and that democratic forms of government were a Western, Christian imposition on Islamic Iraq.

In the end, few Iraqis understood that democracy, in addition to majority rule, meant tolerance of and respect for minority rights. Ba'athists and al Qaeda–affiliated terrorists were able to create, magnify, and exploit sectarian tensions faster than the local government was able to imbue Iraqis with the spirit of democracy and unity. After the failure to find WMD, the White House—against Pentagon advice—pounded the democracy drum so loudly that in the minds of many, creating a democracy in Iraq, rather than bolstering national security, had become the centerpiece of U.S. policy.[125]

A fourth assumption was that Iraq without Saddam could manage and fund its own reconstruction. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq had not been devastated by over 20 years of war, and its middle-class, educated population was mostly intact. If there were damages from the war, oil could pay for its modest reconstruction, a process that would be made easier by a small invading force and a highly successful effort to avoid collateral damage. In truth, unknown to policy planners and U.S. intelligence agencies, the country's prewar infrastructure was in disastrous shape. It was further devastated by the conventional battle that took place from March to May 2003 and by the looting and insurgency that followed the end of combat operations. Billions of dollars for reconstruction were required and later provided by the coalition or the international community, but any progress made was marred by a lack of security, inadequate capacity, and the ill effects of the insurgency. Compounding all of this, neither ORHA nor CPA had the right people or assets to make their presence felt throughout the country. Despite great personal sacrifices on the parts of hundreds of Americans and their allies, both organizations were often ineffective.[126] Few among them had any detailed knowledge of the Iraqi milieu.

Finally, based on the best available U.S. intelligence, as DOD and NSC officials had briefed the President, U.S. officials assumed that they would receive great help from the Iraqi police, the army, and the ministries, all of which were seen by many experts as salvageable, malleable, and professional. None of those things turned out to be true. The police were corrupt, ill trained (by Western standards), and not at all concerned with the rule of law. The virtual evaporation of the army during the war and its formal disbanding by Bremer (which surprised many outside the Pentagon), and even the de-Ba'athification that was ordered (and then expanded by Iraqis on the ground) did nothing to replace a system in which all national leadership had flowed from the Ba'ath party.[127] The Sunni minority—dominant in the army and the party—was alienated and became fodder for the insurgency. The ministries, deserted by cadres and looted repeatedly, did not continue to function effectively as had been hoped. It did nothing for their effectiveness when the coalition asked most ministries to report not to Iraqi authorities, but to the CPA. On top of all this, the urge for sectarian score-settling that was encouraged by al Qaeda in Iraq was strong. Later, the Shia-dominated Iraqi government did little to dampen

sectarian violence and often encouraged it by Shiite militias, sometimes from within Iraqi security forces and ministries.

Sadly, much of the post-invasion state of affairs had been predicted. Many government and civilian experts had spoken well and loudly about the dangers of postwar Iraq, but their warnings were not heeded. For example, in September 2002, 33 of the most renowned U.S. international relations scholars, many of them normally considered right-wing realists, signed an open letter declaring the "war with Iraq is not in America's national interest."[128] Many analysts believed that the war and the subsequent peace would both be difficult. Planners and senior decisionmakers could have made better use of the report by the Department of State Future of Iraq Project, the 2002 National Defense University workshop "Iraq: Looking Beyond Saddam's Rule,"[129] or the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute report titled *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario*, all of which were U.S. Government–sponsored efforts.

The Army study, previewed at a conference in December 2002, concluded that "Iraq presents far from ideal conditions for achieving strategic goals. . . . Rebuilding Iraq will require a considerable commitment of American resources, but the longer U.S. presence is maintained, the more likely violent resistance will develop."[130] The study went on to recommend that the U.S. military prepare in detail for 135 postwar tasks. Senior NSC staff officials tried but failed to get the Army study briefed to interagency partners.[131]

Planners in OSD Policy, led by Deputy Assistant Secretary Christopher J. Lamb, also did a study on the significant potential for widespread lawlessness in postwar Iraq.[132] The OSD Policy leadership passed this study to the Pentagon's uniformed leadership and asked them to send it to USCENTCOM. The command did not respond to the analysis and likely did not have enough troops on hand to solve the security problems that arose after the completion of conventional operations.

The declassified January 2003 Intelligence Community Assessment—a document of lesser stature than a full National Intelligence Estimate—on postwar Iraq also concluded that building "an Iraqi democracy would be a long, difficult, and probably turbulent process, with potential for backsliding into Iraq's tradition of authoritarianism." It went on to highlight postwar Iraq as an environment offering opportunity to al Qaeda and to note the high probability of

sectarian violence, "score settling," and Iranian meddling.[133] Warnings on various aspects of the plan were also made by Representative Ike Skelton (D-MO), former USCENTCOM Commander General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.), as well as Secretary Powell, Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE), former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, and others.

In addition to a complex set of sensitive, inaccurate assumptions, another problem—in part related to the sensitive assumptions, but at the same time a separate issue—was the inability of the coalition and the United States to put enough security forces—U.S., allied, or Iraqi—on the ground to control a country the size of California and create the security needed for governance and reconstruction. The small initial USCENTCOM combat force accepted significant risk in its rear area, but it accomplished its mission. The forces adequate to win the war, however, were not sufficient for providing local security, enabling reconstruction, defeating the insurgents, or protecting the population. General Abizaid, then USCENTCOM deputy commander, stated in a recent interview, "I went to Baghdad right after it had been captured, and I was shocked at how little control there was in Baghdad. I went to the [3rd] Division Commander, and then I went to Lieutenant General McKiernan [Land Component Commander Lieutenant General David McKiernan, USA] and I said, hey you have got to get control of what's going on in Baghdad. You may think the war is over, but the war isn't over yet."[134]

Sadly, while looters were demonstrating the inadequacy of the force on hand and implicitly encouraging insurgents, General Franks, responding to an inquiry by the Secretary of Defense, changed his mind and "off ramped" the nearly 20,000 Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division, ending its land, air, and sea movement toward Iraq and leaving the in-country troops without reinforcements.[135] The guidance from Washington to its forces was to "take as much risk getting out of the country as you took getting into the country."[136] General Abizaid concluded, "For all intents and purposes, we were still fighting in Iraq, and everyone else was saying how glad they were that [the war] was over with. We were going to turn it into Bosnia, except it wasn't Bosnia, it was Iraq."[137]

DOD civilian leadership did not want to admit—perhaps for public relations or legal reasons—that by mid-summer 2003, there was an insurgency going on. General Abizaid, the new USCENTCOM commander, publicly and clearly stated that there was an emerging guerrilla war there.[138] The August

2003 bombing by insurgents of the Jordanian embassy, the destruction of the UN headquarters, the attempted assassination of Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz in Baghdad, and the assassination of Shiite faction leader Ayatollah Moham-mad Baqir al-Hakim left little doubt that a new type of war was beginning. Indeed, as one senior officer joked, the varieties of insurgents later became as numerous as the flavors of Baskin-Robbins ice cream.[139]

The Campaign, 2003–2006

The campaign for Iraq from the summer of 2003 to the beginning of the 2007 Surge is a well-told tale. From the summer of 2003 to the summer of 2004, the President appointed Ambassador Bremer and the CPA as the civil leader-ship. As already noted, on orders from or with the concurrence of Washington, Bremer launched a de-Ba'athification initiative, disestablished the Iraqi army (which had melted away during the fighting), and ended the movement by Garner and Khalilzad to quickly form an interim Iraqi government. The Unit-ed States formally occupied Iraq, a fact legitimized in UN Security Council resolutions after May 2003.

On the military side, the large and general officer–filled CFLCC, built around 3rd Army headquarters, was the principal planner for Phase IV and was to take charge after the shooting stopped. It appears that this headquarters was too big for the desired strength of U.S. occupation forces. The USCENT-COM chief of staff told Army historians that "Franks and others were inter-ested in lowering the size of the military footprint in Iraq in line with prewar planning for a very brief period of military operations after toppling Saddam Hussein."[140] General Franks ordered CFLCC replaced with a smaller combined joint task force, built around the arriving V Corps staff. This move confound-ed Army Vice Chief of Staff General Jack Keane, who had filled CFLCC with the best and brightest of the Army's senior officers to maximize their service in both Phase III and Phase IV of the operation.[141] A Baghdad division com-mander noted that V Corps was not suited to the mission and observed that the forces in the capital were "a bit adrift," engaged in what was "a bit of almost discovery learning" as they transitioned from maneuver elements in a grand fight to governing a fractious capital city.[142]

The U.S. force, commanded by Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, USA, and his small headquarters, Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF 7), tried to

bring order to a complex insurgency in a large country beset by disgruntled Ba'athists, Shiite militias, restless Sunni tribes, and al Qaeda cadres, all vying for power and chafing under the coalition's presence. To become capable, Sanchez's organic corps headquarters built up from a strength of 280 to a strength of 1,000 over a year's time.[143] General officer strength went from 3 to nearly 20 on hand in roughly the same period. To compound command issues, Bremer and Sanchez did not work smoothly together.

There were a few positive developments on the ground during Sanchez's command. Saddam was captured in December 2003. Another highlight was the movement of a brigade of the 1st Armored Division to the south of Baghdad to secure the lines of communication. General Abizaid stated that "the best division fight of the war is the way that [then–Major General Martin] Dempsey handled his division in that period of combat. I don't think he has ever gotten enough credit for that. He sent a brigade down to Najaf and Karbala," and they severely damaged Muqtada al-Sadr's militia, thus securing "the lines of communication to the south."[144]

Despite such isolated bright spots, the insurgency spread and the ruthless pursuit of insurgents was often counterproductive. Years later, H.R. McMaster noted, "in Iraq, an inadequate understanding of tribal, ethnic, and religious drivers of conflict at the local level led to military operations (such as raids against suspected enemy networks) that exacerbated fears or offended the sense of honor of populations in ways that strengthened the insurgency."[145]

Thousands of Iraqis were incarcerated during this period, and the explosion in the prison population led indirectly to overcrowding and problems at Abu Ghraib prison. This overcrowding was a contributing factor in the national disgrace that emerged in the spring of 2004 with the publication of hundreds of pictures of a small group of U.S. Soldiers subjecting detainees to cruel and degrading abuse. Scooter Libby, the Vice President's chief of staff, summed up the devastating effect the photos would have on strategic communications: "This just goes against every message we are trying to send." The war grew increasingly unpopular at home and abroad.[146]

Around the same time, in response to the murders and mutilations of U.S. contractors, CJTF 7, with approval from higher authorities and over the initial objections of local Marines, began a comprehensive offensive in Fallujah, a Sunni insurgent stronghold not far from Baghdad. Partway through the

bloody operation, with the concurrence of a reluctant USCENTCOM, Ambassador Bremer stopped the battle to prevent the carnage from destroying the cohesion of the Iraqi Governing Council.[147]

Some elements of the situation improved with time: the CPA gave way to an interim government in the summer of 2004, and then three sets of elections were held in 2005 for an elected Iraqi government. Bremer was replaced in the summer of 2004 by Ambassador John Negroponte, and the undermanned headquarters of Lieutenant General Sanchez was replaced by a four-star headquarters under General George Casey, ably mentored by General Abizaid, a former Middle East foreign area officer who had been USCENTCOM deputy commander or commander for over 18 months. Casey's headquarters now also had a subordinate, separate corps headquarters, Multi-National Corps–Iraq, to supervise the fight.

Casey commanded for 30 months through the tenures of 3 Ambassadors and 3 Iraqi governments. He had a succession of warfighting corps commanders under him—Lieutenant Generals Thomas Metz, John Vines, Peter Chiarelli, and Raymond Odierno—as well as two commanders for police and army training, Lieutenant Generals David Petraeus and Martin Dempsey. Sanchez and Casey were ably assisted by counterterrorist forces of the JSOC under Lieutenant General Stanley A. McChrystal, USA. Multi-National Force–Iraq (MNF-I) was established in the spring of 2004. Casey's description shows the complexity of the coalition force: "At the time [of his assumption of command] MNF-I consisted of around 162,000 coalition forces from 33 countries, organized into five Multi-National Division and one Multi-National Brigade area[s] of operation in northwest Iraq." Two of these five divisions were commanded by coalition members and contained most of the non-U.S. forces. The United States was responsible for three multinational division areas, the Marine sector in the west, and a brigade area of operations in the northwest.[148]

General Casey quickly published a full campaign plan, which was out in August 2004. His initial priorities were setting the conditions for the election and building Iraqi security forces and institutions, while respecting Iraqi sovereignty in all things.[149] The command also went to work on terrorist and militia strongholds in Samarra and Sadr City.

The problem of Fallujah did not go away. Working closely with the new interim government under Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, General Casey turned his attention to the destruction of the insurgent base there. In November 2004, with the support of the Allawi government, Marines and Army forces reattacked the reinforced stronghold. It was one of the costliest battles of the war. Between the two offensives in Fallujah, U.S. forces lost nearly 150 killed and 1,000 wounded. This time, the Iraqi government stood up under the strain of a major battle.[150]

In other areas, while still awaiting the new counterinsurgency doctrine, many units—for example, the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul in 2003, the Marines in Anbar, the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Tal Afar, and various battalions inside fractious Baghdad—began the practice of counterinsurgency operations, despite being short of supporting resources. From 2005 on, coalition forces improved their operations against the insurgents and laid the security groundwork for successful nationwide elections and the further development of Iraqi security forces. While repetitive tours stressed the ground forces, learning and experience counted when they returned to Iraq. Throughout this period, the command worked closely with the Embassy and the emerging Iraqi government. The training of police and army units improved, as did partnering between U.S. and Iraqi units.

Nationwide, however, violence continued to grow from around 500 violent incidents per month in July 2003 to 2,500 in January 2005, the month of the first successful Iraqi election. In February 2006, Iraq exploded in sectarian violence after the bombing of the Shiite al-Askari mosque (also called the Golden Mosque) in Samarra; total security incidents grew to over 1,400 per week in the worst periods.[151] Shiite militias went on the warpath after the bombing, and al Qaeda exploited the alienation of the Sunni from the Shia-dominated Iraqi government under Nouri al-Maliki. The government could not control the fighting. Iraqi soldiers and policemen were too few in number and inadequate in capacity to get the job done.[152] In June 2006, al Qaeda chief Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed in an airstrike. Unfortunately, his demise did not lessen al Qaeda–inspired violence. By the end of 2006, more than 50 Iraqi civilians were being killed in the fighting every day.[153]

It was increasingly clear that there were insufficient troops on the ground to clear, hold, and build, while simultaneously standing up the Iraqi security

forces.[154] The coalition could no longer wait for the maturation or growth of Iraqi security forces to "fix" the growing violence. Any number of close observers, civilian and former military, opined that the coalition needed more troops. According to his memoir, Bremer also told President Bush or his key deputies on a few occasions, including during his predeployment orientation, that security was poor and more troops were needed. Bremer concluded that the United States had become the worst of all things: an ineffective occupier. Near the time of his departure in the spring of 2004, he asked Rumsfeld for one or two more divisions; he did not receive a reply, most likely because neither Sanchez nor Abizaid had asked the Secretary to add more troops.[155] In 2006, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace, an inter-Service team of colonels, as well as an unusual combination of scholars, retired officers, Active-duty generals, and National Security Council staffers—with the encouragement of the President—began to look for the way out. Their story is in the next chapter.

The self-imposed cap on troops no doubt had much to do with the small size of U.S. ground forces. Neither the regional commander nor the theater commander, however, asked for more troops, favoring limiting the size of the U.S. forces in country. In any case, the United States did not have the ground troops in its base force to support the kind of troop rotations and in-country force levels necessary in both Afghanistan and Iraq to create the appropriate level of security and move toward success. Even when the President surged forces and civilians to Iraq, the question was not how many, but how many more the United States could afford to send. The protracted nature of the Iraq and Afghanistan commitments made Soldiers, Marines, and special operators endure an excessive number of rotations. For example, in the fall of 2007, 4 years before the war ended in Iraq, General Casey told the Senate:

> *Over 1.4 million American troops have served in Iraq or Afghanistan; more than 420,000 troops have deployed more than once. The* [Active] *Army has a total of 44 combat brigades and all of them except one . . .* [based in South Korea] *have served at least one tour of duty . . . and the majority of these 43 brigades have done multiple tours: 17 brigades have had two tours . . . 13 brigades have had three tours . . . and 5 brigades have had four tours in Iraq or Afghanistan.*[156]

By 2014, of the 72 Active and Army Reserve Component Brigade Combat Teams, 2 had deployed once, 24 had deployed twice, and 44 had deployed 3 or more times. Of that last category, 26 brigades had deployed 4 or 5 times.[157] The Army and Marine Corps later tried to ameliorate this multiple deployment problem after 2006 with a rapid buildup of the Active-duty personnel. Unfortunately, the enlistment of too many substandard recruits who required legal or moral waivers later became a source of its own set of problems for the Army.[158]

From 2003 to 2007, reconstruction and stabilization activities in Iraq, a partner to the military side of counterinsurgency, made slow progress. The condition of Iraq's infrastructure, including its oil industry, represented another prewar intelligence failure. Iraq needed much more reconstruction than anticipated, and in the early years there was precious little oil revenue to pay for it. Reconstruction was a struggle, compounded by the rapidly expanding demands of a liberated Iraqi population. Indeed, after the expenditure of many billions of dollars, electricity and oil production in 2007 still only matched prewar levels.[159] Toward the end of the U.S. presence, the bulk of reconstruction and construction financing came from the Iraqi government, which coalition advisors pushed to spend their growing surpluses on the needs of their own country.

In the early years, Iraqi capacity even to accept, operate, and maintain completed projects was wanting. According to a 2007 U.S. Government report, after the United States spent nearly $6 billion and completed nearly 3,000 reconstruction projects, the new government of Iraq had agreed to take possession of just 435 of them, worth only half a billion dollars. The rest remained idle or had been turned over to weak local governments.[160] In his final report, Stewart Bowen, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, highlighted the key role of security in enabling reconstruction and concluded that the lessons of the various periods of reconstruction from 2003 to 2009 "taken collectively . . . underscore the need for the U.S. Government to reform its approach to contingency relief and reconstruction operations and to develop greater capacity to execute them."[161]

In all, U.S. forces in Iraq in 2007 and in Afghanistan in 2008 were at an impasse. In both cases, there was a significant gap between the host country's objectives and preferences and those of the United States. In Iraq, after the destruction of the Golden Mosque in 2006, the addition of open sectarian warfare and the growing strength of al Qaeda made the slow buildup of

Iraqi forces inadequate by itself to bring stability to Iraq. The elections that were pursued with great diligence also created a highly sectarian government that expressed majority views but did nothing to protect minority rights. It served neither U.S. interests nor the long-term welfare of the Iraqi people. In Afghanistan, by the end of the Bush administration, years of insufficient funding and increasing Taliban momentum left the coalition unable to clear, hold, and build. More forces were needed quickly to provide a space to build up the Afghan police and army forces needed for the United States to begin to withdraw from the Hindu Kush. First in Iraq and later in Afghanistan, the addition of more coalition forces would be necessary before the endgame could be reached in either country.

Observations and Lessons

Lessons involving decisionmaking, intelligence and knowledge of the operational area, and the character and conduct of war itself were encountered in these conflicts.

Decisionmaking

Military participation in national decisionmaking is both necessary and problematic. Part of the difficulty comes from normal civil-military tension, but many instances in the war on terror also show unnecessary misunderstandings. Civilian national security decisionmakers need a better understanding of the complexity of military strategy and the military's need for planning guidance. Senior military officers for their part require a deep understanding of the interagency decisionmaking process, an appreciation for the perspectives and frames of reference of civilian counterparts, and a willingness to embrace and not resist the complexities and challenges inherent in the system of civilian control.[162]

In a similar vein, inside the Pentagon, future senior officers also need to study cases in wartime decisionmaking. The case of Iraq is particularly instructive. In the run-up to Iraq, the Secretary of Defense, as is his legal prerogative, inserted himself into the military-technical aspects of war planning to a high, perhaps unprecedented, degree. History will judge the wisdom of this managerial technique, but it serves as a reminder to future senior officers

that the civil-military relationship, in Eliot Cohen's term, is characterized by an unequal dialogue.[163]

The U.S. Government also needs a better system for managing the implementation of interagency decisions and then exporting interagency efforts and unity of effort to the field. Good interagency policy decisions are often made, but execution is usually done by stovepiped departments and agencies.[164] Senior officers need to be able to participate in and assist with managing implementation of interagency systems.

Unity of command and effort in Iraq and Afghanistan were often lacking. Indeed, General Petraeus noted that we did not get the strategy and command and control architecture right until 2010.[165] In both Kabul and Baghdad, the arrangements have not always worked as well as they did with Lieutenant General Barno and Ambassador Khalilzad in Kabul or with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in Baghdad and Kabul. Other, better arrangements may be possible. In a similar vein, the interagency community and command in Afghanistan were slow to see the importance of Pakistan to the solution of problems in Afghanistan. NATO nations (and headquarters) were sometimes reluctant to deal with Pakistan, which was outside of their mandate.[166]

Intelligence and the Operational Environment

Neither national nor military intelligence in Iraq and Afghanistan was a success in supporting decisionmakers. Intelligence on Afghanistan itself was scant and initially not actionable. In Iraq, prewar intelligence was wrong in a number of areas.

The biggest advances in intelligence came in improved support for the warfighter at the tactical level and the intimate relationship that developed between SOF and all-source intelligence. General Dempsey has stated that a captain at a remote site in Afghanistan in 2008 had more access to national technical means and high-level intelligence than he had as a division commander in 2003.[167]

Neither national-level figures nor operational commanders fully understood the operational environment, including the human aspects of military operations and the importance of Pakistan's milieu to the solution of Afghanistan's problems. To fight, in Rupert Smith's term, "war among the people," understanding them is a primary task.[168] The United States was not intellectually

prepared for the unique aspects of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Efforts to solve this problem—the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program, for example—were insufficient and came too late to have a profound effect. Moreover, these efforts were inorganic adaptations, something apart from the normal unit activities. This devalued their potential contributions.[169] The intelligence system was of little help here. The need for information aggregation stands as an equal to classical all-source intelligence. This problem calls for a whole array of fixes, from improving language training, predeployment training, and area expertise to reforming the intelligence/information apparatuses.

Character and Conduct of War

When conventional warfare or logistical skills were called for, the U.S. Armed Forces usually achieved excellent results, but the military was insensitive to the needs of the postconflict environment and not well prepared for insurgency in either country. Military gains were not connected to political objectives. The lack of preparation for dealing with irregular conflicts was a result of failing to learn and internalize post-Vietnam lessons. Military performance improved over time. Indeed, field-level innovation on counterinsurgency showed an admirable capacity for learning and innovation. Later on, the development of Army and Marine Corps doctrine on counterinsurgency and its inculcation of the doctrine in the force were excellent examples of systemic adaptation under fire. In a similar manner, with great fits and starts and lots of managerial attention, the DOD acquisition system was able to create, field, and deploy the equipment needed to turn the military that existed into the military that was needed to fight these wars. The focus on preparation for future wars can retard warfighting adaptations in the near term. Even with bureaucratic resistance, however, the speed of battlefield learning and technological innovation in these wars was admirable.[170]

A prudent great power should avoid becoming a third-party expeditionary force in a large-scale counterinsurgency. Large-scale foreign expeditionary forces in another country's insurgency have almost always failed, except when the foreign power was the de facto government and the local insurgents had no sanctuaries.[171] At the same time, it should also be remembered that the U.S. participation in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not begin as insurgencies but evolved in that direction. It is not possible for a superpower to disregard

completely the possibility of future large-scale counterinsurgency or stability operations.

Another salient issue in irregular conflicts is the question of sanctuary. In Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. enemies exploited base areas in adjacent countries. Some world-class experts believe that such sanctuaries make success nearly impossible for the counterinsurgents.[172] This situation presents the United States with a dilemma: Does it violate international understandings about the sanctity of borders, or should it respect borders and allow the enemy to rest, recover, and reattack at will?

Wars that involve regime change are likely to be protracted conflicts. They will require a substantial, patient, and prudent international effort to bring stability and foster reconstruction, especially in the wake of weak, corrupt, or failed states. These exercises in nation-building are complex, uncertain, and, with the passing of time, increasingly unpopular at home. In the words of General Petraeus, progress in such conflicts will always be "fragile and reversible." Nevertheless, regime changes and long-duration stability operations will sometimes be necessary. The alternative may be kinetic "victory" followed by political chaos. This author does not believe that coalition forces could have or should have left Afghanistan or Iraq right after the conclusion of major combat operations.

In a counterinsurgency, success will depend in part on the political development of the host government, whose weakness, corruption, and ineffectiveness are, ironically, an important factor in the development of an insurgency. There are few assets in the State Department or USAID inventory to mentor and assist a host government in political development. In collateral areas, such as humanitarian assistance, development, rule of law, and reconstruction, State and USAID have more assets, but still far fewer than these contingencies required. Ideally, the United States should have a civilian response corps, but the urge to develop whole-of-government capabilities is waning.

Getting better at teaching others how to handle an insurgency is likely to be one of the most important ways for the United States to participate in irregular conflict. Outside of SOF, the Armed Forces are not well organized to accomplish the training mission.

Notes

[1] *Le Monde* editorial, September 13, 2001.

[2] This chapter draws heavily on two of the author's previous works: *Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath*, Institute for National Strategic Studies Occasional Paper 5 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, April 2008); and *Understanding War in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2011).

[3] For the full text of Public Law 107-40, "To authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States," September 18, 2001, see <www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ40/html/PLAW-107publ40.htm>.

[4] On Afghanistan as the graveyard of empires, see Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: Current Affairs–Norton, 2009); and David Isby, *Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires—A New History of the Borderland* (New York: Pegasus-Norton, 2010). The common expression is an exaggeration, but it is indicative of the fact that the Hindu Kush is a crossroads of history and that Afghanistan is a difficult place in which to fight.

[5] For background on the U.S. Government and imminent al Qaeda threats, see *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), 254–277. For her appreciation of the August warning, see Condoleezza Rice, *No Greater Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011), 63–70. For a mention of the difficulty of target-relevant intelligence in Afghanistan, see Chief of Staff of the Army's (CSA's) Operation *Iraqi Freedom* (OIF) Study Group, interview of General John Abizaid, September 19, 2014.

[6] The two joint vision documents that outlined the long-range vision of the Joint Chiefs and the Quadrennial Defense Review 2001 document can be found at <www.dtic.mil/jv2010/jv2010.pdf>; <www.fs.fed.us/fire/doctrine/genesis_and_evolution/source_materials/joint_vision_2020.pdf>; and <www.defense.gov/pubs/qdr2001.pdf>.

[7] A complete strategy of al Qaeda is laid out in Bruce Reidel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 121–133. Reidel believes that al Qaeda sought as a first strategic step to entice the United States to engage in "bleeding wars" in Afghanistan and Iraq.

[8] Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 358–359.

[9] This perceptual bias toward Iraqi involvement in the 9/11 attack can be seen in the Camp David intervention by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, but it was also mentioned by Under Secretary Douglas Feith to then–Lieutenant General John Abizaid, who were together overseas on September 11, 2001. Abizaid noted this in his interview with the OIF Study Group.

[10] Rumsfeld, 425; Rice, 86–87. President Bush does not mention the September 26 conversation in his memoir. He dates his request to Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to review Iraq war plans to "two months after 9/11." See George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown, 2010), 234.

[11] General Tommy Franks clearly thinks that his work on Iraq began in November. His first major meeting with the President came in December 2001. See Pete Connors, "Interview with General (Ret.) Tommy Franks," Fort Leavenworth, KS, June 23, 2006.

[12] Tommy Franks with Malcolm McConnell, *American Soldier* (New York: Regan Books–HarperCollins, 2004), 252.

[13] The best guide to the Pentagon planning can be found in Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 63–78. Rumsfeld and Feith credit Wolfowitz with raising the profile of special operations forces working with Afghans in the initial plan.

[14] Franks, 211.

[15] Rumsfeld, 358–372.

[16] Franks, 268–272.

[17] Bush, 194.

[18] Gary Berntsen with Ralph Pezzulo, *Jawbreaker: The Attack on Bin Laden and al Qaeda* (New York: Three Rivers–Random House, 2005), 278–288; Rumsfeld, 403.

[19] For a full account of the Bonn process by the U.S. lead negotiator, see James F. Dobbins, *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008), 1–116.

[20] The notion of the value of a quick exit from Afghanistan is developed in Daniel Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), especially xiii–xvii, 416–426. For a critique of his thesis, see Joseph J. Collins, "The Long War: Four Views," *Small Wars Journal*, January 5, 2015, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-long-war-four-views>.

[21] Bush, 207.

[22] On comparative development, see the *UN Development Program's Human Development Index* and report, available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>. This report includes economics, education, health, security, and many other factors. Afghanistan has consistently been in the bottom 10 countries in the world. Along with the CIA's *World Factbook*, there are many statistics on Afghanistan on assistance and aid on the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Web site at <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/index.aspx>.

[23] Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 75.

[24] On his strategy for counterinsurgency, see David W. Barno, "Fighting 'the Other War': Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan," *Military Review* (September–October 2007).

[25] Ibid. See also Rumsfeld, 684. The conventional wisdom that David Barno and Zalmay Khalilzad's successors did not get along well is disputed by the individuals in question. See, for example, Peter Connors, "Interview with Ambassador Ronald E. Neuman," Fort Leavenworth, KS, August 24, 2009.

[26] Donald Wright, *A Different Kind of War: The United States Army in Operation Enduring Freedom, October 2001–September 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, May 2010), 245–247.

[27] For the Secretary of Defense perspective, see Rumsfeld, 689–690.

[28] For studies on the evolution of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commitment to Afghanistan, see Andrew Hoehn and Sarah Harting, *Risking NATO: Testing the Limits of the Alliance in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), 25–40. For an excellent analysis of NATO in Afghanistan, see David Auerswald and Stephen Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[29] Despite the formal prohibition for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), General Stanley A. McChrystal as commander of U.S. Forces kept in close contact with the Pakistani military leadership. Stanley A. McChrystal, interview by Joseph J. Collins and Frank G. Hoffman, April 2, 2015.

[30] James Embrey and Thomas Riley, "Exit Interview with General John P. Abizaid," Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 2007, 5.

[31] The current constitution of Afghanistan, Year 1382, can be found in English at <www.afghan-web.com/politics/current_constitution.html> and its 1964 predecessor at <www.afghan-web.com/history/const/const1964.html>.

[32] James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 146, 157–158.

[33] U.S. Embassy–compiled statistics, 2009, provided by former Ambassador William Wood.

[34] ISAF briefing material, "Security Incidents," Afghanistan JOIIS NATO SIGACTS, 2004 to September 2009, unclassified.

[35] USAID statistics available at <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/index.aspx>. Also see presentation by General David Petraeus, Royal United Services Institute, London, October 15, 2010, available at <www.rusi.org/events/past/ref:E4CB843C349F2E>.

[36] Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, RL30588 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 17, 2010), 88–90, available at <http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL30588_20100817.pdf>.

[37] The author participated in at least five sessions of the deputies committee where the recruitment and provision of agreed-on State Department and USAID personnel was an issue akin to pulling teeth. The problem was few personnel and the inflexibility of the State and USAID personnel systems. The posting of State and USAID employees to

combat zones, especially for duty outside the Embassy, remained an issue throughout the war. By the end of the Afghan Surge, over 500 diplomats and U.S. Government specialists were in the field, and over 1,500 civilians were under Chief of Mission authority in Afghanistan.

[38] Prior to 2004, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams had a chain of command separate from troop units. This was ended by Lieutenant General Barno, in part to create more unity of command and in part to free up civil affairs assets.

[39] Written comments of an anonymous Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe staff officer to the author, November 18, 2010.

[40] U.S. figures to 2009 come from Katzman, table 21, 91. Foreign data are adapted from Ian Livingston et al., *Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, October 4, 2010), table 3.15, available at <www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>.

[41] Hoehn and Harting, 33.

[42] USAID Web site, available at <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/index.aspx>.

[43] Most observers believe that narcotics and criminal activity are the Taliban's best source of financing—up to $500 billion per year by the highest estimates. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the first Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, often mentioned in public that he believed that donations from wealthy people in the Gulf were the Taliban's biggest source of revenue. One instance where Holbrooke mentioned this assessment was the Washington, DC, New Ideas Forum, October 1, 2010, author's notes.

[44] For a superb analysis of the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban, see Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

[45] Data from U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), various briefings.

[46] On Iran, see Lara Setrakian, "Petraeus Accuses Iran of Aiding Afghan Taliban," ABC News, December 15, 2009, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Afghanistan/gen-petraeus-iran-backing-iraq-militias-afghan-taliban/story?id=9346173>.

[47] For data on casualties and causes of death, see Livingston et al., tables 1.21, 1.22, available at <www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index.pdf>.

[48] Examples of night letters can be found in USCENTCOM release, available at <http://centcom.dodlive.mil/2010/08/29/taliban-aims-to-hinder-development-by-threatening-civilian/>.

[49] Testimony of former Under Secretary of State James K. Glassman before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 10, 2010. The original report of the 2008 beheadings can be found in Carlotta Gall and Taimoor Shah, "Taliban Behead 30 Men from Bus," *New York Times*, October 19, 2008, available at <www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19iht-19afghan.17083733.html>.

[50] United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *Afghanistan: Mid Year Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2010* (Kabul: UNAMA, August 2010), 1, available at <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Publication/August102010_MID-YEAR%20REPORT%202010_Protection%20of%20Civilians%20in%20Armed%20Conflict.pdf>; and Livingston et al., figure 1.29.

[51] Greg Miller and Josh Partlow, "U.S., Afghanistan Plan to Screen Cash at Kabul Airport to Prevent Corruption," *Washington Post*, August 20, 2010, available at <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/20/AR2010082004049.html>.

[52] Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence: Strategies and Realities of Counterinsurgency and State Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 161. The standard work on the ways in which narcotics funded the Taliban and al Qaeda is Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Thomas Dunne Books, 2009).

[53] Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010), 7.

[54] For a thoughtful critique of human terrain teams, see Ben Connable, "All Our Eggs in a Broken Basket: How the Human Terrain System Is Undermining Sustainable Military Cultural Competence," *Military Review* (March–April 2009), 57–64.

[55] The author thanks Major Claude Lambert, USA, for this insight, April 2015.

[56] H.R. McMaster, "Continuity and Change: The Army Operating Concept and Clear Thinking about Future Warfare," *Military Review* (March–April 2015), 7–9.

[57] Conversations with various Active and retired senior officers from USCENTCOM and U.S. Forces–Afghanistan, 2008.

[58] Adapted from Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*, RL33110 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 2011), 1–6.

[59] Statement of John F. Sopko, "Lessons Learned from Oversight of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Efforts in Afghanistan," testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, April 2014, available at <http://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Mr.-John-F.-Sopko-Testimony-Bio.pdf>.

[60] Pakistani officials—who tend to speak from the same talking points—are proud of their post-2006 operations against the Pakistani Taliban, but they are apparently blind to the connection between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, as well as the ill effects of their support of the Afghan Taliban or their standing in Kabul and their competition with India there. As the years passed, India's stock rose and Pakistan's fell in Kabul.

[61] Sean Maloney, "Afghanistan: Not the War It Was," *Policy Options* (November 2010), 44.

[62] Statement of Admiral Michael Mullen on Afghanistan and Iraq before the Senate

Armed Services Committee, September 20, 2011, available at <www.armed-services. senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mullen%2009-22-11.pdf>.

[63] Various ABC-BBC and Asia Foundation Polls, 2005–2009. For January 2010 ABC-BBC polls, see <http://abcnews.go.com/images/PollingUnit/1099a1Afghanistan-WhereThings-Stand.pdf>; and for October 2009 Asia Foundation polls, see <http://asiafoundation.org/ resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2009.pdf>.

[64] Bush, 228.

[65] Don Wright, "Interview with Karl Eikenberry," Fort Leavenworth, KS, April 30, 2012.

[66] Two books that treated both conflicts equally well were Dan Caldwell, *Vortex of Conflict: U.S. Policy Toward Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); and John Ballard, David Lamm, and John Wood, *From Kabul to Baghdad and Back: The U.S. at War in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012).

[67] For an interesting dissection of the initial Afghanistan campaign, see Stephen D. Biddle, "Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare," *Foreign Affairs* (March–April 2003), available at <www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58811/stephen-biddle/afghanistan-and-the-future-of-warfare>.

[68] Pete Connors, "Interview with General David Petraeus," Fort Leavenworth, KS, May 2009.

[69] George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 489.

[70] Suzanne Chapman, "The War before the War," *Air Force Magazine* (February 2004), available at <www.afa.org/magazine/Feb2004/0204war.asp>.

[71] For one such report on how sanctions hurt children, see M. Ali and Iqbal Shah, "Sanctions and Childhood Mortality in Iraq," *The Lancet* 355, Issue 9218 (May 27, 2000), 1851–1857.

[72] A number of these officials were behind a movement for regime change as U.S. policy, and some had even publicly opined about military options against Iraq. For example, see the series of articles in the *Weekly Standard* of December 1, 1997, that were bannered on the cover page as "Saddam Must Go: A How-to Guide," with individual pieces by Wolfowitz, Peter Rodman, and Khalilzad, all of whom served as senior Bush administration officials in the run-up to the 2003 war.

[73] On the Saddam–al Qaeda connection, see Stephen Hayes, *The Connection: How al Qaeda's Collaboration with Saddam Hussein Has Endangered America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004).

[74] In his memoir *At the Center of the Storm*, George Tenet confirms the activities of Zarqawi in Iraq and his relationship with Saddam's regime. See the extensive excerpts from the memoir in William Kristol, "Inadvertent Truths: George Tenet's Revealing Memoir," *Weekly Standard*, May 14, 2007, available at <www.weeklystandard.com/content/

public/articles/000/000/013/615cglnt.asp>. On terrorist affiliations with Saddam, see also Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 295–296.

75 An Arab expert's account of the inner workings of Zarqawi and al Qaeda can be found in Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 179–206.

76 Michael Morell with Bill Harlow, *The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight Against Terrorism from Al Qa'ida to ISIS* (New York: Twelve-Hachette Book Group, 2015), 88–89.

77 Feith, 283.

78 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002).

79 For a complete examination of planning, see Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006), 75–117.

80 Rumsfeld, 428.

81 One of the most developed arguments about how transformation ideas affected the war plan can be found in James Kitfield, *War and Destiny: How the Bush Revolution in Foreign and Military Affairs Redefined American Power* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005).

82 Secretary Rumsfeld's clearest presentation on his postwar strategic concept—light footprint, quick occupation, a preference for a short-term presence—can be found in his "Beyond Nation Building" speech at the *Intrepid* Museum, New York City, February 14, 2003, less than a month before the war began. This speech is available at <www.defense. gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=337>.

83 For an example of Army shortages connected to interrupted or curtailed deployments, see Kitfield, 146.

84 1003V was the existing pre-9/11 war plan. The only book to cover the critical inputs to the plan made by Lieutenant General McKiernan and his staff at the land component command is Gordon and Trainor, 75–117.

85 Pete Connors, "Interview with General (Ret.) Tommy Franks," Fort Leavenworth, KS, June 2006.

86 Feith's memoir is highly critical of intelligence. See, in particular, 222–224, 517–518.

87 Gordon and Trainor, 101.

88 Vote count in Feith, 358–359.

89 In a case of historical irony, many mainstream Democrats in the 2008 election were penalized politically for their vote to authorize and support the second Gulf War, just as their predecessors were penalized for not supporting the first Gulf War.

90 *U.S. Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons*

of Mass Destruction (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 2005). This group, the so-called Silberman-Robb Commission, concluded in its transmittal letter that there was "no indication that the Intelligence Community distorted the evidence regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. What the intelligence professionals told you [President Bush] about Saddam Hussein's programs was what they believed. They were simply wrong." For a brief restatement, see Laurence H. Silberman, "The Dangerous Lie that Bush Lied," *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2015.

[91] The declassified key judgments of the 90-page National Intelligence Estimate can be found at <http://fas.org/irp/cia/product/iraq-wmd.html>. It should be noted that the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the State Department objected to the timing and criticality of the Intelligence Community's judgment about Iraq's nuclear program. While this author maintains that we went to war on agreed-upon intelligence, some at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) believed that analysts there had been pressured or overlooked. See, for example, Paul Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* (March–April 2006).

[92] For a readily available summary of the U.S. Joint Forces Command–Institute for Defense Analyses study referred to in the text, see Kevin Woods, James Lacey, and Williamson Murray, "Saddam's Delusions: The View From the Inside," *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2006), 2–26. Ironically, during the U.S. troop presence in Iraq, the CIA and Army technical experts collected thousands of abandoned yet lethal munitions from all around Iraq. See C.J. Chivers and Eric Schmitt, "CIA Is Said to Have Bought and Destroyed Iraqi Chemical Weapons," *New York Times*, February 15, 2015, available at <www.nytimes. com/2015/02/16/world/cia-is-said-to-have-bought-and-destroyed-iraqi-chemical-weapons.html?_r=0>.

[93] Woods, Lacey, and Murray, 91.

[94] Ibid., 92.

[95] David Rothkopf, "Can Obama's Foreign Policy Be Saved," *Foreign Policy* (September–October 2014), 50.

[96] A former senior National Security Council (NSC) official told the author in October 2007 that he believed the Pentagon was not eager initially to have combat forces from allies other than Australia and the United Kingdom but wanted maximum allied participation in Phase IV operations in Iraq.

[97] Franks, 366, 393.

[98] This was the opinion of senior generals in the Pentagon, as reported to the author in the fall of 2014 by a former White House official.

[99] Connors, interview with Franks, 8.

[100] The 3rd Infantry Division after action review is available at <www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/3id-aar-jul03.pdf>.

[101] For a precis of the Marine Phase IV planning effort, see Nicholas Reynolds, *Basrah,*

Baghdad, and Beyond: The U.S. Marine Corps in the Second Iraq War (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 42–46, 145–156.

[102] The most complete account of postwar planning is in Nora Bensahel et al., *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008). The author was a reader and commentator on this study. A shorter version can be found in Nora Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (June 2006), 453–473.

[103] Stephen J. Hadley, interview by Joseph J. Collins and Nicholas Rostow, October 7, 2014.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Rice, 192.

[106] Conversations and correspondence with a senior Joint Staff planner and a former senior NSC official, September 2007. Secretary Rumsfeld was frustrated by Bremer's reporting and finally told the President and all concerned that Bremer no longer reported to him. See Rumsfeld, 527.

[107] Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 276–277. The author was the Defense Department representative on that group.

[108] Correspondence with a former senior NSC official in September 2007; on the oil briefing, Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 322–323.

[109] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 131–133.

[110] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 328–329.

[111] NSC Memorandum, signed by Condoleezza Rice, APNSA, SUBJECT: Principals Committee Review of Iraq Policy Paper, October 29, 2002, as reproduced in Feith, 541–543.

[112] For transcription of the speech, see "Bush makes historic speech aboard warship," *CNN.com*, May 1, 2003, available at <www.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/>.

[113] On plans for rapid drawdown, see Gordon and Trainor, 98, 103, 464; Woodward, *State of Denial*, 162. Many in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) continued to argue for a rapid turnover well into the Coalition Provisional Authroity period. See L. Paul Bremer with Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 168–170, 188, 205–206.

[114] On assumptions, see also, Caldwell, 111–126; and chapter six in this volume. There are major interpretive differences between this chapter and the more granulated analysis in chapter three of this volume. The readers are invited to compare both approaches and make up their own minds.

[115] On the CIA's failure to predict insurgency, see Rumsfeld, 463–464, 520–521; and Feith, 517–518.

[116] These assumptions were reflected in numerous statements by Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld,

and Wolfowitz. They were also reflected by actions taken by various members of the national security team. For example, reaction by civilian leaders to the accurate judgments by General Shinseki (and USCENTCOM planners) as to the need for a large postwar force, the rush to begin postcombat withdrawal planning in the midst of looting, and the insistence that the Iraqis could pay for much of their own reconstruction all suggest that many leaders expected the peace to be easy relative to the war and that reconstruction would not be expensive. For many other officials, these assumptions remained unspoken but no less powerful. The sources of these assumptions included poor intelligence, the opinions of Iraqi exiles, and the policy predispositions of the members of the national security team. The dominant effect of assumptions was noted in David Petraeus, interview by Joseph J. Collins and Nathan White, March 27, 2015.

[117] Accounts of Kanan Makiya's meeting with the President and the Vice President's subsequent public declaration that we would be met as liberators can be found in George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 97–98. An Iraqi émigré who lived in the United States for many years, Makiya wrote *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, updated edition, 1998), a guide to the horrors of Saddam's regime.

[118] OIF Study Group interview with General Abizaid.

[119] Interview of General George W. Casey, Jr., May 19, 2014, filed in General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army Archives, 9.

[120] In the author's personal conversations with him in 2003 and thereafter, General Abizaid has been a continuing supporter of a rapid turnover to Iraqi control and broadening international participation. See also Gordon and Trainor, 163, 314. Khalilzad, Wolfowitz, Feith, and Garner were all dedicated proponents of rapid turnover. Many in the Department of State, as well as Ambassador Bremer, saw that up to 2 years of occupation would be a necessary phase in the operation. State had even floated a paper to that effect in the months before the war. However, a rapid turnover of power to some sort of Iraqi authority had been approved by the NSC and the President in the days before the war but was abandoned in the aftermath of the fighting and the difficulty in finding Iraqi partners.

[121] On the issue of why rapid turnover to an unelected Iraqi government was problematic, see Bremer, 162–167. There remained adherents of rapid turnover to Iraqis in the Pentagon and NSC well into the year of occupation.

[122] On this surprise decision, see Roger Cohen, "The MacArthur Lunch," *New York Times*, August 27, 2007, 17. This article recounts Khalilzad and Powell's surprise that the quick turnover concept had been abandoned and that Khalilzad had been ousted as a Presidential envoy to Iraq, not at an NSC meeting, but at a luncheon discussion between the President and Bremer. Bremer clearly envisioned a long occupation; see Feith, 496–497.

[123] Woodward, *State of Denial*, 219.

[124] In his interview for this volume, Hadley highlighted the problems of not having the

assistance of 100,000 or more Iraqi soldiers to assist the coalition in the postcombat environment.

[125] Feith, 475–477.

[126] For a precis on organizational and personnel problems, see Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished," 460–466; and Bensahel et al., *After Saddam*, 115–119.

[127] Ironically, some psychological operations and counter–command and control activities encouraged the Iraqi army to dissolve and for the soldiers to desert, while other plans were relying on Iraqi army units to remain intact to be used for reconstruction. See, for example, Gordon and Trainor, 145–146; and interview, former NSC official, August 15, 2007. The poor staffing and consequent bureaucratic surprise generated by the orders on de-Ba'athification and disbanding the Iraqi army were associated with a lull in NSC staff activism in managing day-to-day activities in Iraq. Sadly, Bremer was unfairly blamed for these decisions, which he had brought with him from Washington.

[128] Published as an advertisement on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, September 26, 2002, emphasis in the original. The author thanks Christoff Luehrs for reminding him of this important statement.

[129] The National Defense University report of its November 2002 workshop "Iraq: Looking Beyond Saddam's Rule" highlighted the complexities of the postwar era and recommended a strong emphasis on postwar security. Copies of this report were provided directly to selected offices of OSD and Joint Staff leadership by memorandum on December 16, 2002. The author participated in the conference; his office funded it and helped to design it.

[130] Conrad C. Crane and W. Andrew Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, February 2003), v–vi.

[131] Discussions with a former senior NSC staff official in September and October, 2007.

[132] Feith, 362–364.

[133] *Intelligence Community Assessment: Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq*, January 2003, as summarized in an unpublished document of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and in the *Washington Post*, May 20, 2007, A6.

[134] In the OIF Study Group interview.

[135] Gordon and Trainor, 462. In a postwar interview with the Combat Studies Institute, General Franks admitted that he made a mistake in off-ramping the 1st Cavalry Division, an action that previously had been suggested by Rumsfeld. See Connors, interview with Franks, 9.

[136] OIF Study Group interview with General Abizaid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] See, for example, the transcript of Secretary Rumsfeld's July 13, 2003, appearance on

ABC's *This Week*, available at <www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2842>. Compare that to the transcript of General Abizaid's remarks at the Pentagon on July 16, soon after he assumed command, on the nature of the guerrilla war, available at <www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2845>. In his memoir, Rumsfeld salutes Abizaid's forthrightness on this subject and acknowledges post facto that the general's position made sense. Rumsfeld complained about faulty intelligence in regard to the prospect for insurgency in Iraq. See Rumsfeld, 521–522.

[139] A comment on an earlier draft by an anonymous major general with multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, February 2015.

[140] Donald Wright and Timothy Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2008), 145.

[141] Ibid., 146.

[142] Martin E. Dempsey, interview by Richard D. Hooker, Jr., and Joseph J. Collins, January 7, 2015.

[143] Ibid.

[144] OIF Study Group interview with General Abizaid.

[145] McMaster, 8.

[146] On Abu Ghraib, see Tom Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 197–200, 238–240, 258–261, 296–297. The Libby quotation is in Hadley, interview.

[147] The USCENTCOM perspective on the first battle in Fallujah can be found in Embrey and Reilly, "Exit Interview with General John P. Abizaid," 27–29.

[148] George W. Casey Jr., *Strategic Reflections: Operation* Iraqi Freedom, *July 2004–February 2007* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, October 2012), 20–24.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Among the best coverage of the battle in Fallujah was a series of articles by Dexter Filkins of the *New York Times*. A summary of some of his best coverage can be found in Dexter Filkins, "My Long War," *New York Times Magazine*, August 22, 2008. In it he surveys the material covered in his book *The Forever War* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

[151] See the command's statistics in Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 101; and Ricks, photo collection.

[152] Joseph J. Collins, "The Surge Revisited," *Small Wars Journal*, November 4, 2013, 1, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-surge-revisited>. One of the best books on the Surge, written from the command post perspective, was Pete Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

[153] This figure was cited by Petraeus, interview. By the end of the Surge, levels of violence had been reduced by 90 percent.

[154] In a rare tiff between the theater commander and a Secretary of State, George Casey told the Secretary of State that she was out of line prescribing a strategy of clear, hold, and build, the first two of which were military tasks. The Secretary stood her ground. See Rice, 373.

[155] According to Bremer, his complaints to Cabinet officers or the President on poor security and/or the lack of troops started before he entered the theater and continued throughout his tenure. See Bremer, 12, 14, 71, 106, 170, 221, 228. The report of Bremer's 2004 memorandum requesting more troops can be found on 357–358.

[156] Army figures cited by Senator Ted Kennedy in the *Congressional Record–Senate*, vol. 153, pt. 18, September 19, 2007, 24,846. The effect on units was greater than the effect on individual soldiers who leave Active duty, and if they stay often do not remain in a unit beyond 2 to 3 years. By 2012, over half of the members of the Active Army and Reserve Components had more than one deployment. The effects of wounds, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, and deaths are discussed in *HQDA, Army 2020: Generating Health and Discipline in the Force Ahead of the Strategic Reset* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), annex B.

[157] Official U.S. Army statistics provided to the author by Dr. Robert Rush, an Army historian.

[158] *HQDA, Army 2020*, 148–156. These pages show the behavioral and criminal problems associated with low-quality recruits.

[159] The monthly U.S. Government statistics are promulgated in a comprehensive Power-Point briefing. See, for example, *The Iraq Weekly Status Report*, compiled from various sources by the Department of State, Bureau of Near East Affairs, October 17, 2007.

[160] For a mid-2007 report, see Dana Hedgpeth, "Report Says Iraq Lags on Rebuilding: Special Inspector Derides Iraqi Government's Lack of Responsibility," *Washington Post*, July 29, 2007, A19.

[161] Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (Washington, DC: SIGIR, 2009), 324.

[162] On the problems of civil-military interaction in national security decisionmaking, see Martin E. Dempsey, interview by Richard D. Hooker, Jr., and Joseph J. Collins, January 7, 2015. For a collateral discussion of civilian and military decisionmakers talking past each other, see Janine Davidson, "Civil-Military Friction and Presidential Decision-Making," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 2013).

[163] Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 208–224.

[164] General McChrystal, for one, believes that in all cases, there should be one person, military or civilian, in charge. McChrystal, interview.

[165] Petraeus, interview.

[166] For example, in Afghanistan in 2006, Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan passed control of the ground fight to ISAF, and operations became fragmented between the commander, U.S. Central Command, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and commander,

U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). As former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates notes in his memoir, "efforts in Afghanistan during 2007 were being hampered not only by muddled and overambitious objectives but also by confusion in the military command structure." Furthermore, Gates adds that command relationships in Afghanistan were a "jerry-rigged arrangement [that] violated every principle of the unity of command." Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 205–206, 478. The problem persisted even after Gates ordered it rectified in the summer of 2010, nearly 9 years after the war started. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the often raw relationships between conventional forces, who were battlespace owners, and various types of special operations forces (theater, USSOCOM-subordinated, non-U.S., and so forth) were common complaints. This problem improved over time but is still an issue. Efforts to bridge the gap between conventional and special operations forces must continue. The authors would like to thank Major Claude Lambert, USA, for this observation.

[167] Dempsey, interview. General Lloyd Austin noted that intelligence support to the warfighter was "light years ahead of where it was in 2003." Lloyd Austin, interview by Richard D. Hooker, Jr., April 7, 2015.

[168] General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

[169] This salient observation was contributed by Nathan White of the Center for Complex Operations, based on his own field research.

[170] The problems in developing and fielding the equipment that matched current warfighting requirements are discussed in Gates, 115–148. General Austin, in his interview for this book, lauded in particular rapid equipment fielding efforts, the Joint IED Defeat Organization, and advances in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

[171] In the past, among the great failures in third-party expeditionary force participation in insurgencies are the French in Indochina and Algeria and the United States in Vietnam. One can find many successes against insurgents that used unconscionable tactics. The two great successes among great power efforts were the United States in the Philippines (1899–1902) and the United Kingdom in the Malaya. There have been many cases in which the United States achieved positive outcomes when it did not have to use a major expeditionary force.

[172] Steve Metz of the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute made this observation in an email to the author, January 6, 2015.