The Inability of the U.S. to Replicate the Al Anbar Awakening in Afghanistan

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

After nearly a decade in Afghanistan, eight years in Iraq, and trillions of tax dollars invested in the region, national polls clearly show that the American public wants these quagmires to end (Gallap 2011). The fruits of the 2007 surge into Baghdad and Al Anbar province in Iraq were a needed strategic respite for the U.S. military, and acted as a political catalyst that enabled the U.S. to begin reducing its combat operations. The Obama administration, in its initial policy review for Afghanistan, sought to replicate a version of the surge strategy. In his December 2009 West Point speech, the president said that,

It is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan . . . building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan . . .We must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future . . .We will support efforts by the Afghan government to open the door to those Taiban who abandon violence (Obama 2009).

However, the US desire for "tribal engagement" in Afghanistan, and a replication of the surge strategy, was based on an erroneous understanding of tribal dynamics in Afghanistan. Thus, the surge in Afghanistan could not hope to mimic the Iraqi surge (United States Army 2009). These engagements do not mirror each other; they differ in their geo-politics, culture, and the nature of the conflicts. In Iraq, the 'success' of the surge was based on underlining conditions not of the making of the United States. The political dynamic that was key for surge success in Iraq was the divide between al-Qaeda vs. Sunni tribes. In Afghanistan no such division exists that will undermine the Taliban sufficiently to blunt their influence. Indeed, traditional counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy will ultimately fail in Afghanistan because it lacks the very structures (nationalism, external threat, Sunni Awakening, and sufficient troops) that enabled it in Iraq. Consequently, to succeed in Afghanistan, the US must negotiate with the Taliban since it cannot hope to defeat it militarily. The US must also better determine the scope of its mission: if the goal is to defeat al Qaeda, then much of its goal in Afghanistan has been achieved.

Misguided Perspectives

Sweeping generalizations, stereotypes and myths created misguided American perspectives, which led policy makers to initially fail in distinguishing the achievements of the surge in Iraq and the underlying pre-conditions that allowed it to have some measure of success. In 2008 General Petraeus, then commander at USCENTCOM noted that, "Afghan tribes are needed as crucial battlefield allies against the Taliban and other extremists in the same way local militias rose up to oppose insurgents in Iraq" (*Associated Press* 2008). While in Iraq this was true, in Afghanistan the US has neither sufficient troops levels nor adequate knowledge of local dynamics to make COIN succeed. While the success of the surge in Iraq is not conclusive, and certainly is not solidified, it did indeed succeed in its objective to buy critically needed time for the fledging Iraqi government. Ambassador Crocker stated in his address to Congress in April 2008 that, post-surge, "Iraq's parliament has formulated, debated vigorously, and in many cases passed legislation dealing with vital issues of reconciliation and nation building" (*Washington Post*

2008).

The surge and the "Sunni Awakening," may suggest the way ahead in Afghanistan, but the distinctions between the two countries vastly outweigh any similarities. By examining the Sunni Awakening and the surge subsequent to it, and then comparing similar dynamics in Afghanistan, it becomes clear that while Iraq and Afghanistan were strategically planned with the same *terminology*, what this meant on the ground in each country was *immensely* different. The key parties in the Iraq conflict are *not* comparable to, and do not provide instruction for dealing with, the Taliban in Afghanistan because they are structurally and culturally divergent. Acknowledging this, I will argue what unique traits in Iraq allowed the surge to succeed, and that there are no analogues to the 'Sunni Awakening' in Afghanistan.

The paramount of COIN's keywords, 'insurgency' and 'tribal,' are inherently different depending on the host nation (H.N.). It cannot be assumed that Iraqi tribal structures work similarly to Afghan tribal structures, and that the Iraqi insurgency and the Afghan insurgency are comparable. While there are general fundamental comparisons, these countries are very different. Understanding the sources and nature of an insurgency in tribal societies is difficult for American policy makers to understand, but a successful COIN strategy must fundamentally rest on adequate knowledge of local circumstances, politics, and society. To demonstrate the complex differences between the two states, I will break down what an 'insurgency' and a 'tribe' fundamentally *are*. Then, each country's respective "insurgency" and "tribal influence" will be built around this core definition to demonstrate their stark differences.

This is critical because a decade of 'War on Terror' has left the media and American officials unable to distinguish enemies of the United States. Repeating Cold War understandings (which frequently caused U.S. policy makers to believe all Communist nations were allied) in current conflicts, there has been a 'them' against 'us' mentality; divergent threats have been clumped together as "terrorists" as the Bush Administration lumped al-Qaeda and the Taliban together. It was the most obvious application of Bush's famous declaration that, "we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them." (Bush 2001a) Fortunately, in the face of changing domestic political constraints the Obama administration has finally diverged from this path. "There is clearly a difference between" the Taliban and al-Qaeda, press secretary Robert Gibbs said recently" (Beinart 2009). The Obama administration must act on this realization that the Taliban are separable from al-Qaeda. A solution to the conflict will almost certainly require the incorporation of the Taliban into a stable political structure in Afghanistan.

The Core of Insurgency

The Department of Defense defines an insurgency as, "An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict." (US Department of Defense 2009) This definition is limited in its scope. "More important than the violence of insurgency are its political, economic, and social components." (Moore 2009, 3) Thus,

An insurgency is a protracted violent conflict in which one or more groups seek to overthrow or fundamentally change the political or social order in a state or region through the use of sustained violence, subversion, social disruption, and political action. (Moore)

Since insurgencies can employ a variety military or paramilitary, social, political, and economic means in an attempt to achieve their goals, it is difficult to characterize them. Nonetheless, most insurgencies have common features. Primarily, they are internal conflicts conducted for a change in the social, economic, or political status quo.

R. Scott Moore argues that insurgencies are orchestrated around a web of "actions, structures and beliefs" (Moore 2009, 13). Actions' are any activities that act as a show of force, both military and political, for the organization. Typically this is seen as violence between the insurgency and the government. It also includes political infiltration, economic sabotage, and subversion. "Structures" represent the institutions the insurgency is attempting to destroy, manipulate, or create. An example would be Islamic fundamentalists trying to reinstitute the caliphate while preventing Western humanitarian efforts in a region. Finally "beliefs" is the composition of ideologies, identities, and perceptions that constitute the insurgency's core doctrine.

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The human components of the insurgency can be broken down into a hierarchy of three parts as well: the leaders, the vengeful, and the needy. At the top of this hierarchy are "the leaders" who control the insurgency. There are hundreds of reasons why people would engage in insurgency, including acting on political to religious ideologies. Typically they believe they are acting against an injustice, in which they represent the only 'truth' or righteous ideology, and will take any actions to fulfill their goals. Ayman Al Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden filled these tiers, but so does Taliban Commander Mullah Omar and the various Iraqi Sheiks who were fighting against what they believed to be illegitimate threatening governments in Kabul and Baghdad. Collectively though, all insurgencies depend upon the populace and thus can be undermined by counterinsurgency efforts to convert the bottom two tiers, the vengeful and the needy.

The vengeful are those who have distrust, frustration, fear, or hatred in their current environment. They may not initially agree with the insurgency's agenda but they eventually see it as a way to vent and express their anger and dissatisfaction. Targets of this anger include, for example, the corrupt illegitimate Karzai regime, Shia dominated government in post-Saddam Iraq, and the U.S. for its actions (Abu Ghraib, disbanding of the Iraqi Army, and Iraqi civilian deaths from U.S. military actions) that were deemed dishonorable by the Iraqis.

David Kilcullen's, *Accidental Guerilla* complements the analysis of how the vengeful turn toward insurgencies. He theorizes that "accidental guerillas" emerge in a four-part process: infection, contagion, intervention, and rejection (Kilcullen 2009a). Infection occurs when, "Al – Qaeda or an associated movement establishes a presence within a remote, ungoverned, or conflict-affected area" (Kilcullen, 35). It does this by exploiting, "existing breakdowns in the rule of law, poor governance, or pre-existing conditions. Terrorist infection is thus part of a social pathology of broader societal breakdown, state weakness, and humanitarian crisis" (Kilcullen, 35). The initial insurgency, although perhaps small in numbers, has such an effective impact due to the next stage: contagion. Here, the group's influence begins to spread, "enabled by the tools of globalization" (Kilcullen, 35). This leads to "bleed-out of violence to interconnected areas" (Kilcullen, 37).

Intervention and rejection are the next steps, and pertain to the vengeful. Trying to deal with a rising threat, Western powers intervene. This action, though, disrupts regional dynamics. The presence of intervening outsiders, "causes local groups to coalesce in a fusion response, closing ranks against the external threat," (Kilcullen 2009a, 37). The insurgents then, "can paint themselves as defenders of local people against external influence" (Kilcullen, 37). Additionally, an intervention created "grievances, alienation, and a desire for revenge when local people are killed or are dishonored by the intervening outsiders' presence" (Kilcullen, 38). This inevitably leads to the rejection of the Western forces as, "local people with tribal societies will always tend to side with closer against more distant relatives, with local against external actors." (Kilcullen, 209).

At the bottom of the hierarchy are "the needy," who join or support more on a need basis (a need for security, well being, resources, power, or similar category) than because of support for the insurgents' motivations or ideology. Ambassador Nicholas Burns has stated, "There is a confrontation between ideology and need" (Burns 2009). The majority of people in Afghanistan do not support the Taliban, but there is a human need that drives them to support the insurgency. Most notably is the need for money. As a result, the Taliban can regularly *hire* people day to day to carry out attacks on U.S. forces, as well as pay the locals to grow the financially rich crop of opium. Money isn't the only 'human need' though, power is wanted as well (Moyar 2009). Thus, warlords and tribal leaders also fit into this category. Although they might not care about the ambitions of a terrorist organization, they do want to ensure their own continued dominance in the region. Consequently, insurgent organizations recruit these leaders through bribes, threats, or fears that they might lose their power.

Should the U.S., then, logically be able to simply buy off insurgents? While the surge in Iraq was largely regarded as a success because of its ability to do this, this largely ignores the hidden cultural component as well as security concerns for those who abandon the insurgency. As stated before, there is a sense of cooperation with one's countrymen against foreign foes, which is known as 'primary group cohesion.' As Anthropologist G. Whitney Azoy stated about Afghanistan, "Rhetoric to the contrary, they were fighting and dying less for their country than for their own lands and families and co-ethnics" (Azoy 2010) . A report by Al-Jabouri and Jensen (2010) echoes this assertion that "It was not only a religious taboo to support the occupier, but also a cultural duty to fight the occupier."

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It is socially easier for those who are 'needy' to work within the local population than with the foreigner, who is perceived as a threat. Just as prevalent though is the fear of the insurgency, which is always looming over the local population. As noted in the Afghan documentary *Restrepo*, when asked to assist U.S. forces, a local Afghan quickly injects, "If we let you know about the Taliban then we will get killed." (Hetherington and Junger 2010). While local populations may be willing to confront insurgencies, they are not suicidal. Without providing adequate security, those who wish for the demise of an insurgency cannot possibly expect it to happen. Of course, without adequate state capacity and "good government" in Kabul, expectations of support for the US cause will be found wanting.

The Core of COIN

The success then of COIN ultimately depends upon the respective country's government's ability to legitimately and capably govern. In both Iraq, where competing tribal parties jockey for power, and in Afghanistan, where the corrupt government barely secures its own capital, this proves to be wishful thinking. Regardless, it is important to understand the COIN strategy that is being administered by the U.S. The F 3-24 Field Manual for Counter Insurgency (Petraeus and Amos 2006), the writing of which was overseen by General Petraeus, categorizes COIN strategy into three stages: Stop the Bleeding, Inpatient Care, and Outpatient Care (Petreaus and Amos, 5-4). The first stage is characterized by halting the insurgents' initiative and momentum. Additionally, preliminary information "needed to complete the common operational picture is collected and initial running estimates are developed. Counterinsurgents also begin shaping the information environment, including the expectations of the local populace" (Petreaus and Amos, 5-4). The second stage consists of stability by building the capability of the Host Nation's (HN) government and security forces. Finally, the third stage is moving the HN towards self-sufficiency with the eventual goal of transitioning all COIN operations to the HN. Respectively, these stages can be viewed as offensive, then defensive and finally stability objectives. Through a process of protecting the population, civil security, HN security force expansion, and the eventually transition of COIN operations to the respective HN, it states that it is possible to mitigate the threat of the insurgency. The manual (Petraeus and Amos, 76) also argues that five logical lines of operations (LLOs) are necessary: Combat Operations/ Civil Security Operations, HN Security Forces, Essential Services, Governance, and Economic Development. Successful COIN requires all LLOs working collectively as no single LLO can fully accomplish COIN objectives.

Following a classic COIN pattern (however belatedly, since adequate troop numbers were a major issues for the military.[1]) Bush announced in 2007 that the objective of the surge was, "to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security" (Bush 2007). Additionally, as the environment begins to stabilize due to the influx of troops, Bush declared, "Iraqis will gain confidence in their leaders, and the government will have the breathing space it needs to make progress in other critical areas"(Bush). 'Time' for the Iraqi government was the core issue here. The surge attempted to provide time for the new government to govern and acquire legitimacy. As argued in the F 3-24 Manual, 'governance' is a critical LLO for a successful COIN. In fact, in the long-term, a competent government, which alone can finally extinguish the insurgent threat, is the 'end game' of all COIN missions.

While the U.S. attempted COIN in Iraq, the ability to adequately assess local circumstances, politics, and society was found lacking. While a measure of success did occur, and while the U.S. can appreciate this, it should not praise itself for these results, nor consider this a model for future policy in Afghanistan. Instead the U.S. must accept its own follies in analyzing the Iraqi environment, and recognize that it was the pre-conditions in Iraq that allowed a measure of success to occur, not the U.S. surge. This is critical because, while Iraq presented the U.S. with a unique opportunity, Afghanistan does not process the same disposition. Instead, the U.S. needs to reevaluate its policy in Afghanistan. Doing so will unearth the sobering realization that U.S. objective success can only arrive through using the only structured organization in Afghanistan, namely the Taliban.

CHAPTER 2: The Iraq Composition

Iraqi Insurgency Creation

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The Sunni insurgency in Iraq was the result of a power vacuum, created when U.S. forces demolished the Ba'ath Party and Saddam Hussein. While this event in itself would have formed an environment ripe for political discontent, it was made worse by the fact that leading U.S. officials inappropriately responded to the unanticipated events on the ground. As James Fallows remarked back in 2002, "Conquered Iraqis would turn to the U.S. government for emergency relief, civil order, economic reconstruction, and protection of their borders" (Fallows 2002). Military commanders, though, were left without a post-conflict plan to implement after toppling Saddam's regime because, "the details of postwar life didn't matter. With the threat and the tyrant eliminated, the United States could assume that whatever regime emerged would be less dangerous than the one it replaced" (Fallows). Instead of stopping looting, violence and acting as peacekeepers in the anarchy and lawlessness that followed Saddam's fall, they were transformed from 'liberators' to occupiers in the eyes of Iraqis. "Because of the refusal to acknowledge occupier status, commanders did not initially take measures available to occupying powers, such as imposing curfews, directing civilians to return to work, and controlling the local governments and populace. The failure to act after we displaced the regime created a power vacuum, which others immediately tried to fill" (Ricks 2006, 151).

This was coupled with drastic policy mistakes by Paul Bremer, the American diplomat at the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) of Iraq. The first two CPA Orders issued under his direction resulted in the dissolution of the Iraqi armed forces, the staff of the Ministry of the Interior, and the presidential security units. His goal was to remove resentful Ba'ath party members so they wouldn't obstruct the new government. The assumption was that any Ba'ath official *must* be a dedicated supporter of Saddam. This proved to be wrong, and resulted in thousands of influential, nationalistic Iraqis being fired, threatening the Iraqi middle class.

Together, Bremer's two orders threw out more than half a million people and alienated many more dependant on those lost incomes. Just as important, in a country riveted by sectarian and ethnic fault lines – Sunni versus Shiite versus Kurd – and possessing few unifying national institutions, Bremer has done away with two of the most important ones . . . "The CPA decision to cleanse the political system of Hussein sympathizers –notably, the 'de-Baathification' effort–effectively decapitated the IPS [Iraqi Police Service] (Ricks 2006, 492).

Thomas Ricks recorded Iraqi outrage and U.S. shock from these decisions in *Fiasco*. "When they disbanded the military, and announced we were occupiers–that was it. Every moderate, every person that had leaned towards us, was furious. One Iraqi who saved my life in an ambush said to me, 'I can't be your friend anymore,' stated Col. King. Former officer Khairi Jassim soberly stated, "All of us will become suicide bombers" (Ricks, 254).

As noted by (Ricks 2006, 260) "Every insurgency faces three basic challenges as it begins: arming, financing and recruiting." Ricks makes it clear that US policy clearly, though unintentionally, aided the Iraqi insurgency. Arming was all too easy in a state littered with ammo dumps the size of small cities. Chasing after WMD, and not even anticipating insurgent action, the U.S. simply did not have the time or resources to secure or dispose of these caches. If the Iraqi military had not been disbanded it could have been used to safeguard these dumps, and ex-military personnel would have been less tempted to help themselves to the munitions. Not controlling Iraq's open borders was a U.S. blunder, which the insurgency financially benefited from. After the invasion, U.S. surveillance spotted vehicles crossing into Syria. They were believed to be carrying technical manuals for WMDs. In reality, it appears they were transporting top Ba'athists' families, as well as their valuables, which they would later use to finance the growing insurgency. Regardless, it is obvious that the U.S. was unprepared to protect the borders and, "about a year would pass before the U.S. military would launch a serious effort to gain control of Iraq's borders – a step that is a prerequisite to mounting an effective counterinsurgency campaign" (Ricks, 261). Finally, the U.S. was the insurgency's biggest contributor to recruitment by creating a humiliated class which sought vengeance against the occupying force. "The de-Baathification order created a class of disenfranchised, threatened leaders. But those leaders still needed rank–and–file members. The dissolution of the army gave them a manpower pool of tens of thousands of angry, unemployed soldiers. 'When we disbanded the Iraqi army, we created a significant part of the Iraqi insurgency,' said Col. Paul Hughes, who worked for Bremer on strategy issues" (Ricks, 263).

Iraq Insurgency Motivations

The insurgency is motivated by more than just a missed paycheck. "Portraying the Iraqi insurgency as a 'monolith'

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composed solely of Saddam Hussein's 'ex-loyalists'," said Ahmed S. Hashim, professor of strategic studies at the U.S. Naval War College "misses a myriad of groups and ideologies arrayed against U.S. occupation" (Hashim 2006). The Sunni's tolerance of the United States bottomed out when "the announcement of the Interim Governing Council in July 2003, 5 months after the invasion, confirmed Sunni suspicions that the United States intended to de-Sunnify Iraq" (Al-Jabouri and Jensen 2010). This, "along with U.S. violation of Iraqi customs, incidents of mistreating civilians, and not securing the civil areas of Iraq being overrun by criminal activity, fueled the Sunni insurgency" (Al-Jabouri and Jensen). This was coupled with the intrusion of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which was, "working within the lower class outside the influence of the tribal or military elite," (Al-Jabouri and Jensen) and encouraged the ensuing violence.

This suggests that the Sunni insurgency can be divided into three groups, with different motivations: regime loyalists, nationalists and Islamists. The regime loyalists and the nationalists were actors in the Iraqi sectarian conflict after U.S. sacked Baghdad. This created conditions for an al-Qaeda 'infection' that had not been found previously in Iraq. The return of Ba'athist rule was at the forefront of regime loyalists. Kenneth Katzman, senior Middle East analyst for the Congressional Research Service (CRS), theorized in 2005 that some former Ba'athists joining the Iraqi security forces were waiting until the political process failed and Iraq became further destabilized. "They will then emerge — perhaps violently — and present themselves as the only solution to the nation's security problem. 'Their goal is simple: The return of Ba'athist rule through a military coup,' wrote Hiwa Osman, training director of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting in Iraq . . . 'To do that, they are willing to make common cause with people who do not share their secular outlook.'" (cited in Beehner 2005)

Then there are the nationalists. Beehner (2005) remarks how nationalism became a motivator for the insurgency,

'It's the strongest force [in insurgencies],' said Leslie H. Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, in a May 14 interview on the Charlie Rose Show, citing the success of the North Vietnamese and other insurgent movements. Nationalism is also what motivates many of Iraq's insurgents, many experts say. These include Iraqis who, after Saddam Hussein's regime fell, were fired from their military or other government jobs but do not favor a return to Saddam Hussein's secular form of Arab socialism. Most of them are Sunnis who fear a Shiite-led government, support a strong state run by Sunnis, and want U.S. forces out of Iraq quickly.

Finally, Islamists have infiltrated from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Jordan and other Arab nations. "By sowing chaos, Islamist militants hope to force U.S. forces out of Iraq and create a fertile recruiting ground, not unlike Afghanistan in the 1990s, from which to train and recruit jihadis. Their ultimate purpose is to restore an Islamic caliphate, a theocracy based on Islamic law that for 12 centuries spanned the Muslim world" (Beehner 2005). They are of utmost concern because, "Once in Iraq, foreign fighters join the terror network of . . . al Qaeda in Iraq" (Beehner).

Here lies a key distinction in what motivates the Iraqi insurgency compared to Al-Qaeda. While nationalists and the Ba'ath party may diverge upon their fundamental interests, they still have national state objectives; al-Qaeda does not. Al-Qaeda is fighting more for an idea, not provincial politics. They have an agenda that rejects the current status quo in the Middle East (Blanchard 2007). This manifests itself in operational terms; for example in who the insurgency targets. When speaking of nationalist oriented combatants, "Experts say these fighters are less likely to target Iraqi civilians or engage in suicide bombings" (Beehner 2005). Conversely al-Qaeda, "continues to use indiscriminate targeting against civilians" (Caldwell 2007). The *Washington Post* stated that, "The majority of suicide attacks in Iraq are orchestrated by foreigners, specifically Saudis" (Glasser 2005). The Pentagon confirms this: "Officials say foreign jihadis, though comprising only 10 percent of the insurgency, carry out nearly all of the suicide bombings targeting Iraqi civilians" (Beehner 2005). Most insurgents want their country back. They are, "Nationalist and patriotic individuals and insurgent groups who resent the U.S. presence and are angered by U.S. failure to restore law and order, and by U.S. operational methods perceived as deliberately humiliating to Iraqis and their honor" (Hashim 2003). Recognizing the dissimilarity between Iraqi and foreign insurgency groups was critical because it highlighted where a potential wedge could be created in the political landscape and how al-Qaeda could be ousted from Iraq. Bush (2007) stated in his 2007 address to the nation announcing the surge, "Recently, local tribal leaders [in Anbar] have begun to show their willingness to take on Al Qaeda. And as a result, our commanders

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believe we have an opportunity to deal a serious blow to the terrorists." Whatever the reason for going to war, by the time the surge was implemented al-Qaeda clearly had a stronghold in Iraq. If, when the illusions of WMDs and the connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam were revealed (Milbank 2004), the United States had questioned why the Sunnis were shooting at them (instead of identifying them simply as anti-Iraqi forces), the conclusion that al-Qaeda and the Iraq Sunnis had diverging motivations and objectives may have been observed much sooner.

Influence of Tribal Sheiks

The influence of Sheiks over Iraqi tribes is one that cannot be ignored or overestimated. In large part, "Iraqi culture builds to a very large extent on tribal traditions. From a cultural point of view, you cannot understand Iraq without understanding the importance of tribalism" (Otterman 2003). Historically, in the absence of a strong centralized government, sheiks, and their tribes, have administered authority. "We follow the central government . . . But of course, if communications are cut between us and the center, authority will revert to our sheik" (Liu 2003, 31). Additionally sheiks can have massive human and financial resources. "For instance, Sheikh Talal, who was one of the strongest tribal leaders and claims to have about 100,000 armed men all over Iraq, was allotted a 116-kilometer (72-mile) section of highway in southern Iraq to protect at night" (Hassan 2007, 3).

It can be hard to distinguish, though, just how influential a sheikh may be. "Because there are so many sheiks, finding one with a significant degree of authority can be a challenge for U.S. occupiers. Another problem: Saddam subverted the traditional tribal hierarchy and elevated many sheiks in return for their cooperation" (Otterman 2003). A single man could potentially be the sheik for his hammulah (neighborhood), or for his fakhdh (village) *and* qabila (town/region), which greatly determines his potential influence over the tribe. Additionally, Saddam's elevation of certain Sheikhs meant that their title might not reflect their actual influence. Still, Sheikhs clearly have financial, political, and moral power. After the invasion of Iraq, Coalition forces were unable, and still are unable, to adequately provide support and security to Iraqi civilians. Tribes have filled this security void. Additionally, tribes offer economic security. "The only way to get a job for many Iraqis today is by returning to the tribe" (Glain 2000). As more Iraqis turn to their tribe for support, this leads to a rise in tribal identity. Consequently, tribal sheiks' immense centralized support means they are able to influence vast numbers of Iraqis. This proved indispensable during the Sunni Awakening.

Influence of Tribes on State

All centralizing powers in Iraq, including the Ottoman and British empires and the Ba'ath party, have manipulated the tribal system. In order to control the Iraqi tribes, the Ottoman empire instituted *nizam i-cedid* , or 'the new order,' which gave Sheiks property rights to cultivate the land (Wilson 2006, 8). Additionally, a reward and punish system which took land from disobedient sheiks and distributed it to his rivals, weakened tribal ties and forced the sheiks to be dependent upon Ottoman enforcement (McFate 2008). Recognizing that divide and conquer was the easiest way to govern, the British followed the Ottoman strategy after WWI. They instilled a King and ensured that the new fledging monarchy was stronger than any individual tribe, but weaker than a confederation of them (Metz 1988). This way important matters would have to pass through British administrators. The Ba'ath party's initial goals in 1968 were to weaken and absorb the tribal structure along more secular national lines. After the Iran-Iraq War, though, Saddam was forced to incorporate and strengthen the tribes to stabilize the state.

American and Coalition forces were thus a historical enigma because they initially did not use existing institutions. CPA Director Bremer stated, "If it is a question of harnessing the power of the tribes, then it's a question of finding tribal leaders who **can operate in a post-tribal environment**. We'll have to rely on these people to carry the message of what the new democracy is about" (McGeough 2003). It appeared that Bremer wished to wipe away the old and instill the new (granted, none of his superiors countermanded his orders or removed him from his post). This was the result of policy makers fearing that rival states would be able to finance tribes and warlords. Adequate and appropriate use of the Iraqi tribes was an opportunity missed for years; it was "A failure to understand the role of tribalism . . . [which] led to some American units disproportionately empowering tribal structures, while others have virtually ignored them… A failure to recognize the different sources of authority can disrupt existing governance and resolution structures" (Wunderle 2007, 17 – 49). This not only was foolish, but undermined the credibility of the centralized government, particularly, for example, the Iraqi justice system. "Given the weakness of the new Iraqi state

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and in particular its legal system, it is not surprising that tribal law surged in to fill the gap . . . Weak laws and legislation, and corruption inside the authorities, are the causes"(Najm 2011). The conclusion, as of 2011, is that, "Tribal law now has the upper hand over civil law" (Najm).

In order to be represented and not ignored by the new government, tribal coalitions lobbied for support in the new democracy as early as November 2003. Most notably was the Sunni "Iraqi National League for Chiefs of Tribes headed by Thameer Al-Dulemi, and the Iraqi Tribal National Council, led by Hussein Ali Shaalan, both claim hundreds of sheiks as members" (Najm 2011). As noted by Steven Simon in *Foreign Affairs,* though, tribal influence needs to be gauged to ensure it does not get out of hand. "The result of allowing tribes to contest state authority is clear: a dysfunctional country prone to bouts of serious internecine violence" (Simon 2007).

CHATER 3: Smoke and Mirrors

The Iraq Surge "**Success**"

Taking advice from the 2006 Iraq Study Group[2] the Bush administration decided to, "support a short- term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize Baghdad . . . [which would] speed up the training and equipping mission" (Baker and Hamilton 2006). It is hard to argue with the numbers. As shown by Figures 1 and 2, civilian and military deaths dropped after its introduction. A year after Bush initiated the surge, mainstream media and Washington were praising the decision as a success.

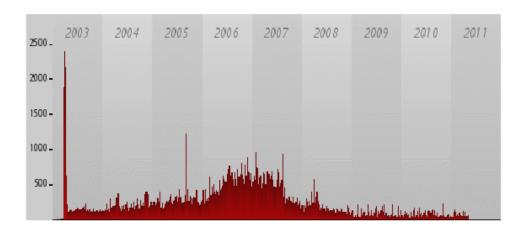Iraqi Civilian Causalities Per Month Between 2003 – 2011

Figure 1

Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities by Year
Source: http://icasualties.org/

Year	US	UK	Other	Total
2003	486	53	41	580
2004	849	22	35	906
2005	846	23	28	897
2006	822	29	21	872
2007	904	47	10	961
2008	314	4	4	322
2009	149	1	0	150
2010	60	0	0	60
2011	22	0	0	22
Total	4452	179	139	4770

Figure 2

Although violence was still prevalent, by late 2007 the drop in casualties had Jason

Campbell and Michael O'Hanlon (2007) of the Brookings Institution praising the policy

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Although violence was still prevalent, by late 2007 the drop in casualties had Jason Campbell and Michael O'Hanlon (2007) of the Brookings Institution praising the policy change. They argued that, "This is largely thanks to the surge-based strategy of General David Petraeus . . ." The Pentagon agreed, stating that, "the monthly numbers reflect in part the effect of the "surge" — the addition of 30,000 troops in and around Baghdad starting in midsummer" (CNN 2007). Additionally, Major General Kevin Bergner, top U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad at the time, praised the surge, stating that it, "has been very successful in its purpose, which was to reduce the levels of violence, the casualties, and to set better conditions for the important political steps that the government of Iraq very much needs to take" (CNN).

US mainstream media jumped on the surge success bandwagon as well. With casualty rates falling to their 2004 levels, the *New York Times* noted that the surge gamble:

Clearly, has worked, at least for now: violence, measured in the number of attacks against Americans and Iraqis each week, has dropped by 80 percent in the country since early 2007, according to figures the general provided. Civilian deaths, which peaked at more than 100 a day in late 2006, have also plunged. Car and suicide bombings, which stoked sectarian violence, have fallen from a total of 130 in March 2007 to fewer than 40 last month. In July, fewer Americans were killed in Iraq — 13 — than in any month since the war began (Filkins 2008).

The surge resulted in, "a calm unlike any the country has seen since the American invasion toppled Saddam Hussein in April 2003" (Filkins). David Brooks acknowledged in a *New York Times* article that, "before long, the more honest among the surge opponents will concede that Bush, that supposed dolt, actually got one right . . ." (Brooks 2008).

Historian Larry Schweikart was even so bold as to argue in *America's Victories: Why the U.S. Wins Wars*, that the surge's success came from the incredible casualties the U.S. military inflicted on al-Qaeda in Iraq and on the "insurgents" *before* 2007. He stated that, "The 'surge' was working before it worked. That is, one of the MAIN reasons it's working—which everyone seems to ignore—is that we killed more than 40,000 of these guys, wounded 200,000, captured 25,000, and in all likelihood another 10,000 simply quit or defected" (Schweikart 2007). Additionally he argued that, "The 'Roach Motel' strategy, as bloody as it is, works as well for us in Iraq as it worked for Lord Chelmsford when he sent his army into Zululand in 1879 to draw out the Zulus and destroy them" (Schweikart 2006). It appeared the U.S. had done the impossible. It had *killed* its way out of an insurgency. It is easy to state numbers – lower civilian and higher insurgent causalities – but claims of success may actually reflect the classic logical fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: after this, therefore because of this. That is, the surge could achieve a measure of success because of underlying preconditions not of the surge's making.

What was 'Success?' : Implications for COIN

Through 18 congressionally mandated benchmarks, the Bush administration in 2007 hoped to improve Iraqi state capacity and responsibility of the Iraqi government. As stated by D. Michael Shafer (1988, 12) in *Deadly Paradigms* though, "counter insurgency programs may place impossible demands on those expected to carry them out." Issued primarily for domestic political reasons (the public and Congress had turned undeniably against the war when they were issued in 2007) the benchmarks did not acknowledge what was feasible on the ground for the Iraqi government. Regardless, Greg Bruno's (2008) *What are Iraq's Benchmarks?,* summarized these benchmarks as: holding provincial elections; passage of oil revenue-sharing law; reversal of de-Baathification laws; amending Iraq's constitution; spending of reconstruction funds; as well as other various measures. Yet, as a *New York Times* article pointed out (Stolberg 2007), "Nobody in Washington seems to agree on what progress actually means– or how, precisely, it might be measured." This became a common theme in the aftermath of the surge. While 'success' was being defined simply as lower casualty levels, the core purpose of the surge, creating a competent and broadly representative Iraqi government, made little headway. "When CNN correspondent Candy Crowley observed that '"while few would argue about the success of the so-called surge in Iraq, there's no shortage of criticism about the political progress there,'" she revealed that by definition a successful 'surge' was supposed to make room for political progress" (Hart 2008). This definition of success, though, depended on whether the Iraqi government was willing to work towards a unified government.

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How much has Iraq progressed through these benchmarks? In its 2008 review, the Center for American Progress (2008) stated that Iraq had only met three of the eighteen benchmarks. Conversely though, in April 2008, General Petraeus testified to Congress that, "There has been agreement among the different political parties on a number of pieces important to reconciliation, if you will, and laws that represent reconciliation" (Katulis and Jual 2008). As shown in Appendix 1, Iraq appears to have made gains.

As noted by the Center for American Progress (2008) though, "Even the most charitable interpretation of events suggests that U.S. congressional benchmarks are only partially met." It continues by stating, "Americans should not confuse the ability of the Iraqi parliament to meet procedural benchmarks with the profound inability of the country's many competing factions to make real political progress toward reconciliation"(Center for American Progress 2008). Fundamental sectarian conflicts, the key ingredients for civil conflict, still actively exist in Iraq in 2011. "All major ethno-sectarian groups in Iraq have their own (sometimes very different) vision of what Iraq is and should be" (Katulis and Jual 2008). This directly challenges the effectiveness of the Iraqi government. As noted by a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report "This infighting—and the belief that holding political power may mean the difference between life and death for the various political communities—significantly delayed agreement on a new government . . ." (Katzman 2011). The inability to find unity between rival political/sectarian positions is continuing to create fissures within the Iraqi government. "The lack of a broader and sustained focus on governance, or on improving key services, such as electricity, created popular frustration that manifested as protests since February 2011" (Katzman). A current prime example of this is the city of Kirkuk. Seen as the eternal homeland of the Kurds, it is also inhabited by Arabs and Turkmen, as well as being under the authority of the Iraqi government. The government's inability to mediate ethnic conflicts and pass comprehensive legislation over the division of land and oil along ethnic lines forced Iraqi citizens to take matters into their own hands. Consequently, as reported by Al Jazeera (2011) on May 19, 2011, twenty-nine people died and eighty were wounded after three bombs went off in what is now becoming the most violent city in Iraq. Peter Galbraith (2006, 173), in *The End of Iraq*, argued that this contested fighting threatens to literally rip the fragile country apart, stating, "Had Iraq's new political regime been secular or Arab in character, many Sunni Arabs might have been accepted being in the religious minority. For the new order to be defined in a way that relegated Sunni Arabs to a second-class status was unacceptable to almost all."

Tom Ricks (2009, 151) noted in *The Gamble* how David Kilcullen predicted that Petraesus, "would achieve his goals on security but not in politics." Paraphrasing Andrew Bacevich (retired U.S. Army colonel and professor of history and international relations at Boston University), Ricks notes, "The Americans were avoiding defeat by embracing political failure" (Ricks, 201). The FM 3-24 Manual states though that, "Long-term success in COIN depends on the people taking charge of their own affairs and consenting to the government's rule" (Petreaus and Amos 2006, 1-4). Thus, a competent political structure is critical for the HN to be prepared to handle the responsibility of its own COIN. At a lecture at the Carnegie Council, Tom Ricks explains:

(Did) the surge work? No, it did not. Why do I say that? The surge tactically… improved security. But the stated purpose of the surge, as stated by the president and the secretary of defense, was to create a breathing space in which a political breakthrough could occur. At the end of the surge, none—not one—of the basic political questions facing Iraq had been resolved:

• Most notably, oil revenue and how it's going to be shared.

• Secondly, power relationships between Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds.

• Is this country going to be a centrally controlled government or a loose confederation? Not determined.

• The role of the Kurds in relation to the rest of the country—specifically, the status of the disputed city of Kirkuk. Unresolved.

• Who holds power in the Shiite community? Unresolved.

• Relations between Iran and America, and how those affect an Iraqi government torn between the two? Not

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resolved.

So what the surge did was get a solid incomplete. It kicked the can down the road. That's not that satisfying to Americans, but sometimes kicking the can down the road, while not satisfying, is the best outcome. It sure beats the alternative of civil war, possible genocide, and possibly spilling over the borders and becoming a regional war (Ricks 2009).

As stated in the F 3-24 Manual, "Most density recommendations fall within a range of 20 to 25 counterinsurgents for every 1,000 residents in an [area of operations]. Twenty counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents is often considered the minimum troop density required for effective [counterinsurgency] operations" (Petreaus and Amos 2006, 1-13). With a population of roughly 31.5 million, this means 640,000 troops, at a minimum, would have been necessary for proper COIN. US forces numbered around 150,000 after the surge, while Iraq Security Forces (ISF) were around 591,700 (Peter 2008). While combined this is more than is needed for proper COIN, it is important to note that the ISF were not of the same caliber as U.S. forces, nor did they have a strong government to direct their operations. As noted by the Council on Foreign Relations, in 2007, "By the Pentagon's own estimates, only 65 percent of trained forces are available at any given time; others say the ratio is closer to 50 percent" (Bruno 2008). Additionally, the forces, "suffer from sectarian divisions," (Bruno) and, "Not only do Iraqi security forces fail to provide security; they have become part of the problem" (Bruno). Tom Ricks (2009, 197) quoted Lt. Col. Steven Miska on their effectiveness,: "In April 2007 a platoon of American soldiers was pinned down outside a mosque in western Baghdad's Kadhimiyah neighborhood and looked around for some help from Iraqi soldiers. 'Of the twenty-seven hundred Iraqi security forces that are in Kadhimiyah, no Iraqi unit would respond.'"

The U.S military was pessimistic about the effectiveness of the surge. Without enough troops (both U.S. and competent Iraqi forces) and in an environment that was falling apart, despair was high. Cpt. Liz Mcnally was quoted as saying, "Even given the perfect amount of resources, I don't know if what we're trying to do is possible" (Ricks 2009, 152). Most people in uniform were thinking 10 to 15 percent chance of success (Ricks 152). Still there were those who harbored optimism, among them Ambassador Crocker who stated, "I thought it could work. If I had thought it absolutely would not I would be insane to come out here . . ." (Ricks, 151). It appeared that the only true believer in the military was Gen. Petraeus who, "Didn't consider it a Hail Mary pass," and that "this mission was doable" (Ricks, 153). It was doable only if major risks were taken. Both U.S. Army General Raymond Odierno, operational architect of the 2007 surge, and General Fastabend, Petraeus strategic advisor, advised Petraeus on what needed to be done. In Fastebend's essay *It's Fourth and Long, Go Deep* Tom Rick notes that, "It can end well if the U.S. government would take more risks . . . to take some risk–not the one's you're comfortable with, but gut–wrenching, hold–your–balls risks" (Ricks, 157). Thus, the surge really was a 'gamble' for the U.S. military, and as with all gambling, there was a fair amount of chance. Looking at Iraq currently, although sectarian conflict is still present and political progress is constantly hampered, it *seemed* that the U.S. gamble paid off.

The Enemy of My Enemy: From Disaster to 'Success'

Given all the failures that the U.S. initially had in Iraq, the results of the surge were fortunate. Violence did indeed drop dramatically after the introduction of the surge. Clearly, as noted above with the F 3-24 Field Manual and other sources (*Washington Times* 2005, CNN 2005), more troops were always needed in Iraq. The surge, though, accomplished more than what would seem possible. This was because there were conditions already present in Iraq that allowed it to be successful. Although the U.S. took risks, conditions on the ground in the pre-surge political environment acted as the main precursor to its success. These conditions, as I will note, do not present themselves in Afghanistan. Thus, while COIN strategy was partially salvageable in Iraq, it cannot begin to work in Afghanistan.

In his 2007 speech announcing the surge to the nation, than President Bush (2007) stated, "Recently, local tribal leaders have begun to show their willingness to take on Al Qaeda. As a result, our commanders believe we have an opportunity to deal a serious blow to the terrorists." This statement suggests two elements of U.S. policy at the time. First, it suggests that tribal leaders had only *recently* had a change of heart, and secondly, it hints that U.S. policymakers orchestrated the surge with that knowledge. Examining U.S. policy in Iraq up to 2007, however, particularly its disregard for the tribal structure, demonstrates that the United States clearly was *not* fully aware why

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and to what extent the environment would change.

The classic Arabic proverb states that, 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend.' By taking advantage of the wedge that formed in late 2006 between Iraqi Sunnis and al-Qaeda, the U.S. hoped to kill two birds with one stone. In retrospect, the United States should never have had two enemies. Yet, the U.S. found itself with multiple threats because its policy clumped and labeled al-Qaeda and the Sunni insurgency under the broad term of "terrorists." Al-Jabouri and Jensen (2010) were understated when they said, "Misunderstanding between the United States and Iraqi Sunni Arabs fed the insurgency." American policy decisions which: disregarded the Sunni tribes, exiled the Ba'ath party, and disbanded fundamental institutions, proved to be destructive to U.S. objectives. When asking what the U.S. did wrong during the initial occupation, Major General John F Kelly summarized the response of dozens of sheiks, "'What did you do wrong? Everything'" (McWilliams and Wheeler 2009, 242). Even after all this, though, it appeared that Sunni tribal leaders were still waiting for the Americans to welcome them. "The tribal elite and the Sunni moderate majority still expected the United States would give Sunnis a reasonable share of power in the next government, even though the Bremer laws were confusing to them" (Al-Jabouri and Jensen, 2011). Instead, as noted, the US took policy steps that fueled the Sunni insurgency. The United States continued to stay the course. As Shafer demonstrates, "Indeed, we [the United States] still assume that if correctly managed, counterinsurgency can succeed anywhere. It is a dangerous assumption, for it may lead policy makers to commit American lives, lucre, and prestige to causes better analysis might have revealed to be chimerical" (Shafer 1988, 6). If the U.S. had been properly fixated on al-Qaeda, instead of sweeping together any and all forces that opposed the U.S. occupation, it may have been possible to divide and conquer its way to success. Unfortunately, its fixation was too broad and, consequently, its objectives too far out of reach.

Kilcullen states it simply, "Washington was focused on the big picture — Al Qaeda. It had ignored the separate, interlocking struggles" (Giovoni 2009). Thus, the United States first ostracized this potential ally for stability, then created ideal conditions – which were not there before – for al-Qaeda, before finally "discovering" the tribes long after they had been fighting Al – Qaeda themselves. U.S. actions created an environment ripe for al-Qaeda, fully financed and organized, to step in to take advantage of the disgruntled Iraqis. "Over time, the common cause between the two groups that were fighting us turned into an al-Qaeda kind of directed insurgency" (c 2009, 242). Due to Coalition actions, in particular the 2003 operations in Fallujah (McWilliams and Wheeler, 242), Sunni Iraqis believed that the U.S. was anti-Sunni, pro-Shi'a, and would not admit to wrong doings (McWilliams and Wheeler, 242). Conversely, al – Qaeda was a structured, organized ally, who could push back against the repressive U.S.

There would be a clear falling out between al-Qaeda and the Sunni insurgents though, as early as 2004. Major General John F. Kelly noted the brutality of al-Qaeda as early as 2004. "Al- Qaeda had come in strong at that point, you had [Abu Musab al-] Zarqawi, and these were brutal, awful men. The price for working with us [the Coalition] might have been that your eight-year-old daughter is brutally raped, and they send you the videotape, or she's raped and thrown into a bonfire. These kind of things were commonly reported" (McWilliams and Wheeler, 242). In general, "Al-Qaida's murder and intimidation campaign . . . alienated large numbers of Anbaris," (McWilliams and Wheeler, 30) Al – Qaeda, the United States' primary enemy in Iraq when the surge was implemented, ironically ended up assisting U.S. efforts because of this. It created an environment where Sunni sheiks were finally compelled to turn against it, ending their marriage of convenience against the U.S. As Sheik Jassim Muhammad Saleh al-Suwadawi noted,

We wanted to renegotiate in a week so as to reassess our situation and to avert conflict. But at the same time, one of the Albu Mahal tribe was assassinated—which is adjacent to me—by al-Qaeda. The Albu Mahal are my cousins. They are my children's uncles. They are relatives. I went back and reproached them. I said, "Look, you've opened another wound. You've just killed one of my tribesmen from Albu Mahal. We've just agreed that there will be no killing. Therefore, no agreement, no peace with you, period (McWilliams and Wheeler, 86).

Similar statements did *not* begin only after the surge. Iraqi Sunnis began fighting back long before the United States took initiative to act and assist.

"At the end of 2004, the conflicts between us and them [Al Qaeda] started," (McWilliams and Wheeler, 159) noted

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Sheikh Sabah al-Sattam Effan Fahran al-Shurji al-Aziz, whose tribe is credited with some of the first organized retaliation against Al Qaeda. Other Sheiks quickly followed suit. Sheikh Abdul Rahman al-Janabi stated in an interview, "We attempted an uprising against al-Qaeda many times . . . It was at the end of 2004, beginning of 2005 (McWilliams and Wheeler, 30). "The Albu Mahal tribe in al-Qaim initiated what became the Awakening in 2005 when they engaged in open warfare against al-Qaeda in Iraq . . . it seems to have served as a precedent" (McWilliams and Wheeler, 30).

In September 2006, Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha announced the formation of a tribal movement, the Sahawa al-Anbar, or al-Anbar Awakening. Frustrated with the extremism of al-Qaeda in Iraq and its disregard for the traditions and leadership of the Anbar tribes, Sheikh Sattar and his allies began to target al-Qaeda militants.

Since the Coalition did not trust Iraqi Sunni insurgents, the Iraqi sheiks had to take the initiative. A 2006 Sunni conference issued a communiqué that asserted, most notably: "The American forces were to be considered friendly, and attacking them was forbidden." "No cooperation or negotiation with Al-Qaeda, "was to be allowed, and Sunnis should "enter the political system . . . to participate in the election" (McWilliams and Wheeler, 47). Sheikh Ahmad Bezia Fteikhan al-Rishawi, president of the Iraqi Awakening Party, noted how they orchestrated both local security and formed the Awakening into a political entity without assistance before 2006.

I used to pay salaries to the police, who did not receive a salary for four months. Uniforms were imported from Jordan. I did not want them to look like militias by wearing civilian clothes. I wanted them to look official. We were careful not to conduct any military operations in civilian clothes, only in military uniforms. The martyrs who fell in battle, we used to go to their funerals and help their families monetarily. Weapons were short. We didn't have enough weapons, so we had to purchase what we could. These expenditures came out of our own pockets. At the time, we did not receive any support from the government of Iraq or the American forces (Montgomery and McWilliams, 67).

In fact, while many Sunni sheiks wished to combat the al-Qaeda threat, they were prevented, from carrying arms or were disarmed by the government, leaving them completely exposed to retaliation. Shiekh Wissam, current President of Iraqi Popular Front, noted in an interview with Colonel Gary W Montgomery that,

After too many killings had taken place, to the Iraqis . . . the nationalists rose up. I was the head of that movement. We gathered about 500 army officers from the last army, and we rose in 2005 . . . I went to Sa'doun al-Dulaimi. He was the defense minister at the time. He was my relative. I asked him to give the fighters permission to carry arms. I was not successful in that endeavor. We could not get government 's permission for them to carry arms (Montgomery and McWilliams, 71).

Wissam continues noting that, "we were not helped by the Americans. We were simply that involved, and we were told, "The enemy is behind you, and the sea is in front of you." After planning a military move on al-Qaeda in a neighboring territory, Wissam recalled how Prime Minister Maliki, and MP Methal al-Alousi denied his plans.

I got in touch with Methal al-Alousi. I said, "Okay, when are you coming? Bring your bags and come join us." He said, "Look, we were told by President Bush, ' Whoever goes to the governor's office is to be shot.'" . . . The American commander at the time in Anbar had switched his thinking 180 degrees. I asked him about his pledge to help us. He said, "Look, I cannot help you. As far as Jazeera goes, I'm not going to help you with logistics, or weapons, or what have you." As for the governor's office, he said, "Do not advance against it (Montgomery and McWilliams, 78).

While Iraqi Sunnis were ready to combat al-Qaeda between 2004-2006, the Iraqi government, and subsequently the United States, restrained them by preventing them from being armed and limiting their ability to act. "Instead of leveraging the traditional authority of the tribes, Coalition forces virtually ignored it" (McFate, Montgomery, Jackson 2006). It was only after U.S. forces changed their view under General Petraeus that there were open relations between the critically needed Iraqi Sunnis and the Iraqi government. Improvements were striking. Sheiks called upon thousands of their young men to enlist in the Iraqi police to patrol and protect their streets. Political conditions even improved temporarily as Sheiks, now seeing that the U.S. had a change of heart, encouraged their people to participate in government.

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We emphasized to them that their vote was very important and crucial at that juncture. We encouraged them for change. We obtained very good results in the election . . . After the election results are announced, we will form alliances with the people that garnered enough votes to have a majority and form a government. This is the Awakening. . . (Montgomery and McWilliams , 67).

Colonel Sean B. MacFarland, than Commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team noted how, "'One by one, the local tribes are beginning to flip from either hostile to neutral or neutral to friendly." He observed, " That's been probably one of the most decisive aspects of what we've done here, is bringing those tribes onto our side of the fence" (McWilliams and Wheeler 2009, 30). This implies that it was the U.S. actions that brought the Sunnis to the Americans, but the Americans initially excluded the Sunnis, and, in fact, it was the actions of al-Qaeda that forced the Sunnis to seek U.S. assistance long before the U.S. came to support the Awakening

Shafer notes (1988, 5) in *Deadly Paradigms* how,

Policymakers have misunderstood the sources of insurgency, underestimated the constraints of allies willingness and capacity to make suggested reforms, and overestimated the United States role as an outside promoter of security and development. As a result, their analysis of the potential for third world insurgency is self-frightening while their claims for success are self-congratulatory . . .

The success of the surge in late 2007 was highlighted in the media, and while significant troop levels are necessary for COIN, even after the surge troop levels were not anywhere near sufficient. Robert Haddick summarized a study written by Major Joshua Thiel, a U.S. Army Special Forces Officer, stating that statistical evidence between 2006-2009 shows that although there was a correlation between the surge and violence decreasing, it was not the cause.

Using data gathered from each of Iraq's 18 provinces and incorporating lags to account for the time required for new combat units to become effective in the field, Thiel concluded that there was no significant correlation between the arrival of U.S. reinforcements and subsequent changes in the level of violence in Iraq's provinces. Some provinces received reinforcements; others did not. Combat incidents went up in some provinces and down in others. But the connection between surge troops and the change in the level of incidents seems entirely random (Haddick 2011).

The *Al – Anbar Awakening Volume 1* reinforces this notion by stating that, "Of course the reality is there were almost no surge forces in Anbar," (McWilliams and Wheeler 2009, 266) yet conditions there changed dramatically.

A charitable evaluation of the surge forces would be that they enhanced the ability of the Sunni tribes to counter al-Qaeda and helped restore a semblance of order in Baghdad. Instead, though, the United States congratulated itself (than Senator Obama argued, the surge "succeeded beyond our wildest dreams" (Associated Press 2008).) and applied more pressure on Iraq. This became evident in attempts to push legitimacy on the Iraqi government (for example, with congressionally mandated issues benchmarks for Iraqi government performance). In truth, it seems the surge politically benefited Americans more then it ever could for the Iraqis, as it offered an opportunity for partial American withdrawal. Conversely, the 'Awakening' was always about the interests of the Iraqis. As David Kilcullen solemnly remarked in a lecture, "But part of this is that Iraq war isn't about us. It was never about us really" (Kilcullen 2009a). It was about key Sunni tribes coming together to resist an erstwhile ally.

A case in point of American guidance in Iraq manifested itself after al-Qaeda was driven out of prominent Iraqi provinces. As was feared, "There's an outside chance that tribes who have flipped from supporting AQI could simply flip back or go their own way once the coalition begins to withdraw" (Kilcullen 2009a). This proved truthful, and by the summer of 2007, "al-Anbar Province was largely cleared of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Without the common bond of a common enemy, the Awakening began to splinter as the groups that had come together started to pursue divergent interests" (McWilliams and Wheeler 2009, 31). Kilcullen (2009b) quoted a tribal leader in a lecture, saying, "'I'm so happy we've driven those Al-Qaeda dogs out of our district. Now that we've done that, the next step is we're going to turn on the Shia, and we're going to cling to finish the job." And I was like, 'well, that's not in the plan, buddy.'" Kilcullen continues by wisely stating,

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There's an Arab proverb, 'there's no friendship without a fight.' And I think there will be a need for them to find their own level, and figure out where things sit. And so – as I said, I don't think the war is over. The people in Iraq who have the least appetite for fighting is us. The Iraqis are still ready to fight each other if need be (Kilcullen 2009b).

In conclusion, while the U.S. attempted to mobilize a COIN strategy that would quell the violence and give rise to political unification, success was predominately derived from the Iraqis, while U.S. strategy was support. In truth, Iraqis were, and continue to be, the deciders of their fate. This was evident with the results of the Sunni Awakening, but it is also conversely evident in the political stalemate that has infected the Iraqi government. While the surge may have created 'breathing space' for the Iraqi government, for the U.S. to simply assume that the Iraq people will, and are able, to take advantage of of the opportunity is yet an additional example of how the U.S. does not truly understand the dynamics of Iraq. Whether Baghdad can create a broadly representative political system largely remains to be seen. The prospects for success in Afghanistan, however, are even more problematic.

CHAPTER 4: Afghanistan: The Surge Without the Success

Iraq – Afghanistan: The Vast Differences

Thus, the reduction in violence in Iraq after 2007 did not occur simply because of the influx of additional American troops. In reality, conditions emerging prior to the surge presented an environment ripe for change. Additionally, the impact of the tribal culture played a key role in enabling a transition. As stated previously, the Iraqi tribal culture creates a close knit, loyal, hierarchal structure centered on a sheik. Tribal membership can number into the tens of thousands, and the sheik, although not omnipotent, has the supreme influence over those in his tribe. This, in part, assisted the U.S. in its efforts to sway vast numbers of Iraqis because if the sheik was with the U.S. so were his men.

In Afghanistan, however, the United States is faced with a much bleaker picture. Not only are the same difficulties present – growing national insurgency, al-Qaeda cells, U.S. domestic pressure, insufficient troops, and others – but additional hardships have been placed before U.S. forces and policy makers. These include the attempts to engage in 'nation-building' in a country that has never been centrally governed for extended periods of time. Carl Von Clausewitz's words ring as true today as when he wrote them, "[the] supreme and the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesmen and the military commander have to make is rightly to understand the nature of the war in which they're engaging, not mistaking it for or trying to turn it into something that it's not" (Clausewitz 1976, 177). U.S. commanders and political leaders must soberly realize that U.S. objectives in Afghanistan, primarily denying al-Qaeda bases there, have already been accomplished without falling further into this quagmire. Assuming that positive changes will occur is a gamble. The US cannot assume what happened in Iraq will happen in Afghanistan. Success in Afghanistan will not arrive from a 'surge' as it appeared to happen in Iraq. There is no Sunni Awakening brewing in the background, or a serious al-Qaeda threat for the H.N to rally against. "Accidental success" will not rescue the U.S. from its political and military blunders this time. Only through reexamining US objectives, and identifying the key obstacles to those objectives, can the U.S. truly achieve any measure of prolonged success in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Tribal Structure

The tribal structure of Afghanistan is different than Iraq's. The unclassified Afghanistan Research Reachback Center report (2009, 6)*, My Cousin's Enemy is My Friend: A Study of Pashtun "Tribes" in Afghanistan*, stated that, "The tribal system is weak in most parts of Afghanistan and cannot provide alternatives to the Taliban or U.S. control. The Pashtuns generally have a tribal identity. Tribal identity is a rather flexible and open notion and should not be confused with tribal institutions, which are what establish enforceable obligations on members of a tribe." Unlike the more centrally structured Iraqi hierarchies, in Afghanistan "tribe" is a very loose word and in many cases there are other titles and identities that Afghans feel more comfortable with. When Afghans are asked, "What is your tribe?" It is common to receive responses that can include ethnicity, geographical location, one's profession, warlord's name, a village name, or a tribe. There is even a large percentage of Afghans who are not tribal at all, and tribal structure is meaningless to them. For those with a tribal identity, though, especially the Pashtun of the southwest who principally

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compose the Taliban,

Both in the past and where kin-based social structures still exist among Pashtuns, other social forms routinely arise and trump the importance of tribe and tribal organization. Rivalry between close male relatives, the formation of factions within kin groups, and the dynamics of patronage make Pashtun social structures far more complex than if they followed the classical anthropological definition of "tribe" (US Army, 14).

Echoing this, Kilcullen (2009c) noted during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee Roundtable on Afghanistan that,

I think the word "tribe" is getting us in trouble here. Tribe doesn't mean the same thing, say, in Iraq as it does in Afghanistan, for example. In Iraq, tribes were centrally- ordered hierarchies and you could make a deal with the sheikh and the tribe would carry out the deal; that's not how a Pashtun tribe works. It's what we call a segmentary kinship system — I don't want to get into the anthropology of it but basically . . . tribe identity is what anthropologists call contingent identity.

A reason for this is that, unlike in traditional Arab tribes which rely upon the undying loyalty of closely related males, it appears that for Pashtun Afghanis, 'the enemy of my *cousin* is my friend.' In brief, this is due to how scarce land is distributed among male relatives. Consequently, cousins become rivals over adjacent farmland, which in turn leads to heated conflicts. Additionally, this rivalry can become a 'keeping up with Joneses' scenario where honor and reputation are at stake. "If a cousin makes himself seem braver, better, or more successful, then a man will feel compelled to match the cousin or put him back in his place" (US Army 2009, 9). This 'arms race of honor' is as, "real as infringements against a land border, if only because they are 'representative' of some possible future event in which actual resources are involved" (US Army, 9). This intense environment, coupled with fickle identities, creates fractures that eventually prove detrimental for a top-down control of society. As noted by British intelligence in the 1920s, "The advantages which they [the Pashtun tribes] enjoy from their mobility, excellent intelligence and powers of endurance are largely neutralized by lack of cohesion and absence of any effective system of command" (Malkasian, Carter and Meyerle 2009). Additionally, three decades of war and the 'cleansing' of tribal leaders by the Taliban have further fragmented the tribal structure.

Afghan Insurgency

Initially a combination of mujahideen who fought in the Soviet-Afghan War, the Taliban insurgency consolidated and became a political-religious power during the subsequent Afghan civil war. As noted by Coll (2005, 14), with the financial and military assistance of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, it captured Kabul in 1996 and instituted the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It was ousted from power in 2001 during the US invasion and has since been regrouping and occupying land primarily in southern Afghanistan.

Unlike the Afghan tribes, the current Taliban is remarkably structured. "The Taliban's structure is resilient: centralized enough to be efficient, but flexible and diverse enough to adapt to local contexts," notes Dorronsoro (2009). Additionally,

On-the-ground observations and reliable evidence suggest that the Taliban have an efficient leadership, are learning from their mistakes, and are quick to exploit the weaknesses of their adversaries. They are building a parallel administration, have nationwide logistics, and already manage an impressive intelligence network.

This is coupled with the fact that the movement's leadership is in safe havens outside the country. Mullah Omar, the organization's founder and highest leader, has not been seen since 2001 (although, as Coll (2011) notes, he sends out audio tapes with orders). These safe havens, which are abundant in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, offer a restart point for the insurgency. As Afghanistan expert Barnett Rubin (2007) notes, "Few insurgencies with safe havens abroad have ever been defeated."

Ahmed Rashid (2008, 367), author of *Descent into Chaos*, notes that a NATO, US, and Afghan report in 2007 argued the Taliban insurgency is composed of four different categories, "hard-core extremist, madrassa inducted

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Pakistani fighters, unemployed youth, and disaffected tribes." There are local allies as well, such a Hezb-i Islami, who, "In the North especially, can more easily recruit from non-Pashtun ethnic groups" (Dorronsoro 2009). Although the Taliban are relatively unpopular, when considering the Afghan cultural norm of expelling foreigners, many Afghans have joined or collaborate with the Taliban simply to rid the land of NATO forces. Thus, as noted by Stenersen (2010, 23) in a Norweigan Defense Research (NDR) Establishment report,

The Afghan insurgency is made up of a complex network of actors with different interests. The networked structure of the insurgent movement and its heterogeneity is both a strength and weakness. For example, the Taliban leadership's ability to effectively recruit and mobilize local insurgent commanders by playing on local grievances has contributed to widening the scope and strength of the insurgency. However, it is also a potential weakness since these commanders, lacking the strong ideological conviction of the leadership, might easily change sides should local conditions change.

Acknowledging this, policy analysts, such as CFR Senior Fellow Stephen Biddle, believe that, "Because [the Taliban] in Afghanistan is so heterogeneous, there are opportunities to try and drive wedges between elements of that coalition and split it, and peel [off] particular factions, or particular warlords, or particular leaders" (as noted in Bruno and Kaplan 2009) While the Iraqi insurgency may have offered opportunities for reintegration wedges, the different segments of the Taliban do not appear to operate autonomously. In fact, as noted by Dorronsoro (2009), although the Taliban consist of multiple groups, "this does not mean that Taliban are inchoate or divisible." In realty, Dorronsoro remarks that is appears that these groups do not have autonomous strategies, but are all following distinct orders.

Rather than a weakness, the local autonomy of Taliban commanders is

necessary due to the nature of guerilla warfare, and in fact, it constitutes a strength. The Taliban are not confused or in confict over who is in charge in a particular district or province. Foreign observers recalling Iraq may wishfully imagine exploiting competition or in fighting among Taliban commanders, but the fissures are not there.

AL Qaeda: Public Enemy Number One

Al-Qaeda is part of this insurgency as well, but unlike the Taliban, al-Qaeda is not an Afghan born component. Though the Taliban offered a safe haven for al-Qaeda prior to 9/11 this does not imply close ideological goals and agendas. Barnnet Rubin (2005), director of the Center of International Cooperation, noted in 2004 that,

The Taliban, of course, are an indigenous Afghan, or Afghan-Pakistani, organization which really grew up during the 20 years that there were millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan — where the only education available for them was in madrassas, often in the [autonomous] tribal territories [along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan]. And it recruited from those people. They have an agenda about Afghanistan. They did not have a global terrorist agenda. So it's a completely different type of organization and problem [than Al-Qaeda].

It is important to note that al-Qaeda, just as it is in Iraq, is not a national movement. It has no ethnic base within Afghan society, nor objectives in the nation. Its brutal reputation has also long since been recognized with Afghani citizens, with 81% of Afghans believing that al-Qaeda contributes negatively to the world. (World Public Opinion 2006) In Afghanistan as noted by PBS (2011), United Nations Refugee Agency (2003) and Gall, Carlotta, and Khapalwak (2010), the Taliban accepted and are influenced by al-Qaeda not because they share some omnipotent plan or ideology, but because of financial considerations that allowed the Taliban to continue their operations against the United States and an Afghan government that appeared to exclude the Pashtun majority.

Optimistic Objectives

The United States has two primary goals in Afghanistan. The first is to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven again for al-Qaeda, where it could reorganize and coordinate strikes against the United States. Denying the Taliban the ability to overthrow the Afghan government is deemed necessary to accomplish this. Second, the US believes violence will continue to spill into Pakistan, creating opportunities for a possible coup against the Pakistani

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government, and thus giving insurgents nuclear armaments. By keeping forces in Afghanistan, the U.S. is capable of striking against al-Qaeda in Pakistan. Additionally, in a classic anvil and hammer military tactic, the U.S. presence in Afghanistan acts as the 'anvil' to al-Qaeda members by preventing them from fleeing the Pakistan 'hammer.'

Before leaving office, President Bush stated, "The interest is to build a flourishing democracy as an alternative to a hateful ideology" (National Public Radio [NPR] 2009). While not as flamboyant, the Obama administration is still flirting with nation-building. J Alexander Their, director of U.S. Institute of Peace and chair of the Institutes' Afghanistan and Pakistan Working Groups, stated that, "Our challenge in Afghanistan is not just to fight the insurgents, it's fundamentally to create an environment where governance and rule of law and economic development will also thrive. And those are things fundamentally that can be carried out by civilians" (NPR). Vice-President Biden though, noted that, "It is not our intention to govern or nation-build" (PolitiFact 2010). Jed Babbin, (2011) former US Deputy Under Secretary of Defense remarked that this,

Must be a considerable shock to Petraeus. His counterinsurgency strategy doesn't impose U.S. government on Afghanis but it is, by definition, nation-building. Its principal elements are expulsion of the "insurgents" (al-Qaeda and the Taliban) and replacing them with a structure that provides security and basic governmental services.

Petraeus himself even stated early this year that, "I am concerned that funding for our State Department and USAID partners will not sufficiently enable them to build on the hard-fought security achievements of our men and women in uniform. Inadequate resourcing of our civilian partners could, in fact, jeopardize accomplishment of the overall mission" (Miller, 2011). This echoes what that *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Petraeus and Amos 2006, 1-153) states, "Everyone has a role in nation building, not just Department of State and civil affairs personnel."

On December 2nd 2009, President Obama announced that he would order 30,000 more troops to join the current US and NATO troops in Afghanistan (Economist 2009). A document released in 2009 by the Obama administration, and obtained by *Foreign Policy* (2009), showed that U.S. objectives for the surge included: "Defeat the extremist insurgency, secure the Afghan populace, and develop increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can lead the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight with reduced U.S. assistance" and "promote a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and can eventually function, especially regarding internal security, with limited international support" (Foreign Policy 2009). Robert Gates stated in 2009 to a Congressional hearing that, "This approach is not open-ended 'nation building . . . it is, instead, a narrower focus tied more tightly to our core goal of disrupting, dismantling and eventually defeating al-Qaida by building the capacity of the Afghans" (Kunichoff 2009). The U.S. intention to not occupy Afghanistan indefinitely is what is meant by 'not open-ended.' In fact, troops were originally supposed to begin withdrawing in July 2011.[3] However, the administration's denials that US commitments are open–ended do not make its objectives any less nation building in character. In fact, there are policy makers, legislators and journalists (Shah 2011, Rubio 2011) who are still pushing for nation-building. Such ambitions though will continue to require heaps of U.S. blood and treasure, and they will strain an impatient American public. Unlike Iraq, where the U.S. found allies to achieve a manner of 'success', such a companion has yet to be found in the fractured Afghanistan landscape. Consequently, U.S. efforts to surge towards success will fall dramatically short.

Unobtainable Objectives

Although there are clear differences between Iraq and Afghanistan, there *are* similarities. Both insurgencies have felt exiled from the government and feared that, at least for the Iraqi Sunnis in the Iraq, their tribal base would be excluded. Additionally, the US surge in both countries attempted to provide time for the H.N. to build legitimate governments by diminishing violence. Also, both insurgencies were fueled in part by a cultural need to expel the foreign invader. But the great distinction is that in Iraq, while the Sunni insurgency had the military might of America pressing down on it, it also had the overbearing actions of al-Qaeda to contend with. Consequently, the Sunni component of the insurgency took measures in their self-interest to oust al-Qaeda by working with Americans. Conversely in Afghanistan, the al-Qaeda presence has long been degraded. CIA Director Leon Panetta estimated, "At most, we're looking at 50 to 100, maybe less" (ABC News 2010). Independent analysts Riyadh Jarjis and Shukria Dellawar (2010) summarized the differences between Afghanistan and Al-Anbar succinctly,

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First, no organized grass-root armed Afghan movement has risen against foreign al-Qaida fighters or Taliban in Afghanistan, as the Sunni Awakening Counsels did in Al Anbar. Two: al-Qaida is no longer thriving in Afghanistan. According to official Afghan, UN and U.S. estimates, there are less than 100 active fighters in the country. In contrast, the number of al-Qaida foreign and domestic fighters was in the thousands prior to the Awakening Counsels in Iraq. Third: the threat to the Afghan government and Coalition forces is largely generated from a home-grown and cross-border insurgency, the Taliban.

In terms of nation-building, Malkasian and Meyerle (2009) note, "In Afghanistan, tribes may have disagreements with the Taliban or Al Qaeda but no major rifts have yet been identified that might unite them behind the government." Consequently, the US is immediately disadvantaged in conducting COIN against the Taliban. In Iraq the surge fortunately corresponded with the Al-Anbar Awakening, lower casualties, and eventual conditions of US withdrawal.[4] In Afghanistan, the US handicaps included the corrupt Kabul government, Afghan tribal structure, a home based Taliban insurgency, corrupt police, and weak H.N. military. While violence levels have dropped since the introduction of the surge, "many intelligence estimates say that it [Summer 2011] will be as violent or perhaps even more violent' than 2010" (Vogt 2011). As noted by Haddick (2011), "Advised by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Joint Chiefs Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen, and Gen. David Petraeus, Obama is hoping that the success these surge proponents brought to Iraq will occur similarly in Afghanistan." In reality, the mission creep of nation building that the U.S. has acquired is attempting to counter insurmountable obstacles.

Government

The only thing more infamous than the weak influence of the Afghan government is its level of corruption. A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) study (2010), *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by Victims*, found that 59% of Afghans view public dishonesty as a larger concern than security or unemployment. There is $2.5 billion dollars going to bribes every year. "By coincidence, this is similar to the revenue accrued by the opium trade in 2009 (which UNODC estimates at US$ 2.8 billion). 'Drugs and bribes are the two largest income generators in Afghanistan: together they correspond to about half the country's (licit) GDP,'" (UNODC) With 90% of the world's opium production, both the insurgents and government take care to protect there assets.

Due to the short reach of Kabul, the government has been unable to provide for the basic needs for its rural citizens. Chivers (2011) reports that, "'The most common complaint we hear from Afghans,' said Lt. Col. David G. Fivecoat, 'is that we haven't seen the government in 'X' number of years.'" The Taliban have taken advantage of this vacuum, creating a shadow government that is able to collect taxes and orchestrate their government right under NATO's gaze. The *New York Times* noted in February 2011 that, "'There are tangible indicators that a shadow government does exist and has been strong for the past two or three years'" (Chivers). Additionally, in the Ghazni province,

On one level, the Taliban has firmly re-established its hold over civilian life in rural Ghazni. Even with an American battalion patrolling Andar and the neighboring Deh Yak District each day, the Taliban runs 28 known schools; circulates public statements by leaflets at night; adjudicates land, water-rights and property disputes through religious courts; levies taxes on residents; and punishes Afghans labeled as collaborators (Chivers).

Inevitably, rural Afghanis are interacting more with the Taliban than the Afghan government; and the US does not have the forces necessary to make it otherwise and to induce Afghans to work against the Taliban.

Afghan Forces

Starting in July 2011, US forces were supposed to begin handing over security to the Afghan military. As an instrument of the Afghani Government though, it suffers from the same ailments, and then some. Malika Helmandi, a member of the provincial council of Lashkar Gah said, in a recent *New York Times* (Rivera) article that, "Afghan forces were too few in number. 'It's still early to say goodbye to foreigners,' she said. 'Afghan national security forces have not gained the trust of the public so far. Most of them are drug users, mostly poorly trained, poorly equipped with low morale and no public support'" (Rivera 2011).

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The Afghan National Army recruitment rate appears to be on par with current objectives (Levin and Reed 2011), adding 70,000 troops in 2010, and "the Afghans are on track to meet goals of 171,000 soldiers and 134,000 police officers by October [2011]." (Johnson and Dupee 2011) As Johnson and Dupee noted though, this does not account for the massive desertion and how many soldiers are actually able to fight at particular time. At the current attrition rate of around 32 percent for the ANA (25 percent for Afghan police), only 70,000 of the 110,000 men that were recruited in 2010 remain engaged in some aspect of the national army according to U.S. Lieutenant General William Caldwell, the commander of NATO's training mission in Afghanistan." (Johnson and Dupee) Additionally, only "between 40 and 60 percent" (Johnson, and Dupee) of Afghani soldiers are ever present for duty at a given time. With US currently spending $12 billion dollars a year, and with the total annual revenue of Afghanistan being 1 billion, (Johnson, and Dupee) it is unlikely that the government will be able to support such a force when or if the US withdraws.

The capability of those soldiers who are present must be called into question. As noted by (Giustozzi 2008),

The ANA has grown dependent on close air support . . . The ANA does not have any personnel trained to handle close air support, nor does it seem bound to develop such skills in the foreseeable future. The fighting tactics that ANA officers have been learning from their trainers are largely based on American tactics; the infantry's main task is to force the enemy to reveal itself, allowing the air force to wipe it out with air strikes. There is little evidence that ANA units would be able to control the battlefield without such air support, or that they are learning the necessary skills.

The training that ANA soldiers do receive is minimal, with boot camp lasting only eight weeks. (Johnson and Dupee 2011) Additionally, the training they receive is very conventional, and thus is not useful in the environment. "By not practicing effective counter-guerrilla tactics, the necessary skills are not being developed, and it will not be possible to rapidly produce such skills in the event of a substantial change in the involvement of foreign troops in the war" (Giustozzi 2008).

There is also the issue of ethnic diversity within the armed forces. For a variety of reasons, including the stigma of Taliban/Pashtun relations and the historic relations of the U.S. with the Northern Alliance, Pashtuns are vastly marginalized within ANA. This is most apparent within the NCO and officer ranks where the Tajik ethnic minority consists of 70% of the battalion commanders (Giustozzi 2008). These disparities are reflected in the Afghan government. Although Karzai is ethnically Pashtun, most ministers represent ethnic minorities. "Given battalions which are largely ethnically homogeneous and with many within the officer corps having a background in ethnically-based political factions, the stage seems set for serious trouble in the event of a foreign withdrawal" (Giustozzi).

Recruit Locals

The U.S. military is looking for opportunities to replicate the Sunni Awakening in Afghanistan. Recent evidence of this is evident in the US backing the Shinwari tribe, who received $1 million dollars in development aid to combat the Taliban early last year (Foust 2011). Major Jim Grant (2009) noted in *One Tribe at a Time* that, "We must support the tribal system because it is the single, unchanging political, social and cultural reality in Afghan society." Additionally, "Because [the Taliban] in Afghanistan is so heterogeneous, there are opportunities to try and drive wedges between elements of that coalition and split it, and peel [off] particular factions, or particular warlords, or particular leaders (Bruno and Kaplan 2009). Both men make grave assumptions. First, although tribalism is indeed a reality in Afghanistan, to say it is "unchanging" ignores the changes that constantly occur, as well as the fickle manner by which tribes operate to ensure their best interests. Secondly, while there may be chances for the US to convert Taliban and tribal forces, there is no indication that they would take that opportunity.

While Afghanis may dislike the Taliban, they have a history of despising foreigners. Throw in a corrupt government, which appears unable to provide adequate security beyond Kabul and it becomes extremely difficult to win anyone's heart. Motlagh (2010) quotes Gilles Dorronsoro (author of *Afghanistan: Revolution Unending)*, stating that,

The main argument against these kinds of ad-hoc deals is that the most capable tribal militias have almost no faith in a Karzai-led regime seen as both weak and thoroughly corrupted. "There is no reliable Afghan partner," he says.

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"Most tribes are afraid to work with the Afghan government." Case in point: when the agreement was announced, one Shinwari elder was quoted as saying, "We are doing this for ourselves, and ourselves only. We have absolutely no faith in the Afghan government to do anything for us. We don't trust them at all."

While there are surely those who would step forward, a sense of entitlement, integrity, honor, dignity, as well as repercussions from the Taliban (typically death) prevent them. In *Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,* Dorronsoro (2009) remarks that, "the Taliban soldiers are also courageous. The insurgency accepts heavy losses, which contradicts the claim that a majority of the Taliban are motivated by money." An article published earlier this year by Reuters (2011) quoted a Taliban commander in Kandahar as saying, "If we were fighting for money we would try to find work. At the moment our country is invaded, there is no true sharia, there is crime and corruption. Can we accept these for money? How then could I call myself a Muslim and an Afghan?" Of course, there are those who join the insurgency – studies suggest up to half (*Reuters* 2011) – to escape poverty and unemployment. Programs, though, to reintegrate insurgents have largely been unutilized by potential defectors (*Reuters*), which suggests that the lack of Afghan governmental security, as well as the previous disenfranchising and humiliation of initial defectors (Reuters), deters Afghanis. "As Kai Eide, the former U.N. Special Representative said, you could buy a young man out of unemployment but how do you 'buy him out of his convictions, sense of humiliation or alienation from power?'" (Reuters).

Surge

Finally there is the surge itself. Lubold (2010) notes that the introduction of 30,000 more troops had the objectives of clearing the, "Taliban from population centers, then [to] 'hold' them until Afghans can 'build' normal lives." There appears to be some praise for the surge thus far. "In Afghanistan, where progress is expected to be incremental, the offensive has been seen as a success. In the wake of initial operations, markets opened, villagers returned, and some semblance of security emerged" (Lubold). Capturing population centers was relatively peaceful. As noted by Lubold, US forces, "telegraphed their intentions very publicly . . . Insurgents either left or went into hiding as the US and coalition forces arrived." (Lubold) The problem is that the next step requires U.S. forces to 'hold' until Afghans can 'build' normal lives. Without a competent government, such a conclusive objective may take a long time. Consequently, the insurgents simply have to wait, or maneuver their operations into the North where surge forces are lacking.

Thus, without a competent Afghani government, and unable to count upon the tribes or able to convert the Taliban, the US is left without a viable HN ally. Finally, although tired, the Taliban are patient and confident in their ability to win this game of attrition because, at the end of the day, they are more legitimate and responsive to the Afghan people then the Karzai government; their confidence is marked by the new spring offensive. (Carter 2011, Rubin 2011) This leaves the United States, and its NATO allies, alone in a foreign land, without anyone coming to assist.

CHAPTER 5: Salvaging Success

Original Objectives ARE Achievable

Thus, U.S. efforts to surge towards success in Afghanistan will fall dramatically short. As shown, this is due to shortcomings in the Afghan government, ANA, and tribal conversions, which themselves are handicapped by the tribal nature of the region. Additionally, instead of an al-Qaeda threat to band against, as there was in Iraq, there is only the massive intruding military of the United States. In a contest between a government constructed by a foreign entity and plagued by incompetence, and a national but repressive movement, most Afghanis will choose the latter. As noted by Lubold (2010)*,* a recent survey found that, *"*Only about 24 percent of the population supports the government of Afghanistan." Without government support, any current definition of 'success' in 'narrow nation building' is not going to be possible.

Thus, under these current Afghan conditions, 'success' needs to be reevaluated. As soberly noted by Kilcullen (2009c) to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, "We can decide to do more, to commit, to escalate, and to try and actually protect the Afghan population . . . we might not be able to afford it. It takes

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a long time to do this kind of thing. It takes a lot of troops. It would take a lot of money. And it's something that perhaps that country doesn't have the appetite." Shafer (1988, 10) also quite soberly mentioned that when dealing with insurgencies, "Success may be impossible." Continuing the current course will prove Shafer correct. In Iraq, the surge did not act as a catalyst for change, but rather occurred at a time where it was able to enhance the ripening conditions on the ground. In Afghanistan, there are no similar conditions, and the surge, as orchestrated now, will not produce the desired results. Thus a reevaluation of US objectives needs to be made. Luckily for the US it has already made progress in the right direction.

The conservative New America Foundation's Afghanistan Study Group report, *A New Way Forward,* advocates drastic changes and argues that it is possible to accomplish US objectives without the quagmire of nation-building. Although it raises multiple points, the following are paramount:

1. The United States has only two vital interests in the Af/Pak region: 1) preventing Afghanistan from being a "safe haven" from which Al Qaeda or other extremists can organize more effective attacks on the U.S. homeland; and 2) ensuring that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal does not fall into hostile hands.

2. Protecting our interests does not require a U.S. military victory over the Taliban. A Taliban takeover is unlikely even if the United States reduces its military commitment. The Taliban is a rural insurgency rooted primarily in Afghanistan's Pashtun population, and succeeded due in some part to the disenfranchisement of rural Pashtuns. The Taliban's seizure of power in the 1990s was due to an unusual set of circumstances that no longer exist and are unlikely to be repeated.

3. There is no significant Al Qaeda presence in Afghanistan today, and the risk of a new "safe haven" there under more "friendly" Taliban rule is overstated. Should an Al Qaeda cell regroup in Afghanistan, the U.S. would have residual military capability in the region sufficient to track and destroy it (New America Foundation 2009, 4).

The United States' original objective in Afghanistan was to dismantle al-Qaeda, and prevent its return. Along the way, though, the war's agenda took on its own momentum. It is difficult to locate al-Qaeda in Afghanistan today. Many were killed or fled during the initial U.S. invasion. CIA Director Leon E. Panetta noted last year in the *New York Times* (Sanger and Mazzetti 2010) that, "50 to 100 Qaeda operatives now in Afghanistan, American intelligence agencies believe that there are most likely fewer than 500 members of the group in a region where the United States has poured nearly 100,000 troops." However, as a worldwide "franchise" organization, al-Qaeda does not *need* Afghanistan, or Pakistan for that matter. An article from *Reuters* (2010) remarks on *Assessing the Terrorist Threat,* a report released for the US. National Security Preparedness Group. It notes that, "The danger, then from al Qaeda comes not just from its central leadership holed up in Pakistan, but in its ability to inspire and cooperate with like-minded groups." As such it has become a franchise operation that, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (Bryjak 2010), has influence in over 90 countries. With a budget deficit of 1.4 trillion dollars, it does not seem to be strategically wise for the US to be escalating an already staggeringly expensive war over the lives of a few hundred enemies when more cost effective measures could be used. Fareed Zakaria (2010) noted in a *Washington Post* article late last year that,

The legitimate question now is: Have we gone too far? Is the vast expansion in governmental powers and bureaucracies — layered on top of the already enormous military-industrial complex of the Cold War — warranted? Does an organization that has as few as 400 members and waning global appeal require the permanent institutional response we have created?

The New Way Forward report (New American Foundation 2009, 5) appears to have the answer,

Al Qaeda sympathizers are now present in many locations globally, and defeating the Taliban will have little effect on Al Qaeda's global reach. The ongoing threat from Al Qaeda is better met via specific counter-terrorism measures, a reduced U.S. military "footprint" in the Islamic world, and diplomatic efforts to improve America's overall image and undermine international support for militant extremism.

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Even more importantly, the report argues, is that attempting to establish an effective centralized government in Afghanistan to accomplish U.S. goals is an "ambitious and fruitless effort" with no clear "success" and no historical precedent. It is "not essential to U.S. security and it is not a goal for which the U.S. military is well suited" (New American Foundation, 4).

The New Way Forward appears to offer sound advice. It suggests the US should downsize military operations, and thus its military footprint, to reduce the negative backlash that is used for insurgency recruitment. The US should encourage economic development. It should continue to focus security efforts on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Kilcullen, though, has concerns with a strategy heavily focused on dealing with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He stated that, "The problem with the second one is it's not going to work" (Kilcullen 2009b). He argues that even the most anti-terrorist approach is economically and logistically consuming.

If I'm an intel asset on the ground and I have eyes on a terrorist target, I need to know where that target is, not now, but at preparation time, plus flight time, plus approval time for my strike asset. So if my strike asset is a Special Forces unit, that's 10 minutes flight time away, and it takes half an hour to get ready, and it takes 20 minutes for me to get approval, then I as the intel guy need to know where is the target going to be in one hour . . . you need enough relationship with the local population to generate the information . . . you need enough relationship with the local population to generate the information to queue . . . So even the most enemy-focused, completely kinetic terrorist approach, or antiterrorist approach in Afghanistan would require close bases with U.S. forces on them. . . . (Kilcullen 2009b)

Thus, in order to effectively conduct operations against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, a reasonable force and relatively close base would be necessary. This comes into friction with the previous advice by *The New Way Forward* though to downsize forces to reduce the 'foreign invader' stigma. Consequently, the advice of the *New Way Forward* proves detrimental to its own stated objectives, particularly with respect to its third point. If U.S. were to pullout they would not have the sufficient logistic capabilities to perform counter terrorism operations. Coupled with the fact that the Taliban refuses to ceasefire until all foreign forces have withdrawn means that even following this strategy, U.S. bases used to conduct attacks on al-Qaeda would still have to contend with the Taliban as well. Kilcullen (2009b) seems to agree,

You know, Afghanistan is a sovereign state. Why would it tolerate an approach that treated its country as little more than a launch pad for attacks on al Qaeda while doing nothing to alleviate poverty or institute the rule of law or improve health and education? What would be in it for the Afghans? And moreover, why would the Taliban just obligingly put their insurgency on hold so that we could focus on al Qaeda?

The Taliban Tincture

As shown, the US surge in Afghanistan will not get optimistic results because the ambitions of Washington are disconnected from the realities on the ground. Additionally, it appears focusing entirely upon the initial U.S. objective of preventing an al-Qaeda resurgence in Afghanistan (which in its own right requires moderate COIN in order to acquire correct intelligence and have protected bases) would still mean dealing with attacks from the Taliban. Both of these solutions, though, neglect an option in Afghanistan that, until recently, was taboo for U.S. policymakers. In a deeply fractured country, with a non-responsive government, the U.S. should turn to the only entity that is structured, organized, *and* willing to listen to the US, namely, the Taliban. While it may taste bitter, the truth is that the Taliban is not the United States' most pressing enemy (In fact, the State Department does not even list the Afghan Taliban as a terrorist organization).

A recent *New York Times* article (Lieven and Lodhi 2011) is pessimistic about what will happen if the ANA, backed up U.S. air support, is eventually enlisted to conduct COIN operations.

The overwhelming probability therefore is that existing U.S. strategy will lead to a situation in which, once American troops withdraw from an active ground role, the Taliban will re-establish their control of the countryside and besiege the southern and eastern cities, which will be defended by a mixture of the Afghan National Army on the ground and

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U.S. firepower in the air. Because they will need their help in this war, the Taliban will be compelled to preserve their links to Al Qaeda, and continue to draw revenue from the heroin trade.

The key here is to understand that the Taliban will continue to seek assistance with al-Qaeda as long as it deems it necessary for survival. As stated earlier, the Taliban have always viewed themselves as holding legitimate power in Afghanistan. Additionally, feeling exiled from the government, the ethnic majority Pashtuns, although obviously not staunch defenders of the movement, feel compelled to assist the Taliban. Thus by reconciling with the Taliban, sharing power in government, and withdrawing US forces, it may be possible to get the Taliban to support the main objective in Afghanistan – ensuring that al-Qaeda do not return and rebuild in Afghanistan.

Of course, such hopes are fanciful if the Taliban refuse to talk. Back in October 2001 Frantz (2001) noted that the Taliban were willing to negotiate with the U.S. on, "turning over Osama bin Laden to a third country, apparently in an effort to avert a military attack by the United States and its allies." (Bush [2001] though responded with, "There's no negotiation–they must have not heard–there's no negotiation. This is nonnegotiable.") Currently, evidence suggests (DeYoung, Finn, and Whitlock 2011, *BBC* 2010) that they are willing to negotiate again, and may have been negotiating with the Karzai administration since 2010. A recent *Times* article (Karon 2010) noted that Taliban expert Ahmed Rashid believes, "that the Taliban may be ready for a power-sharing deal because they recognize the limits of their insurgency: while they can prevent Karzai from governing most of the country, U.S. firepower can prevent them from taking control too." Additionally Mullah Omar has recently announced that, "a Taliban regime would not threaten the security of any other state in the world (translation: no sanctuary for al-Qaeda)," but only if, "Western armies agree to leave Afghanistan" (Karon). Dorronsoro and DeYoung (2010) noted in a Carnegie Endowment article that,

While the Taliban's position is likely to improve, many high-level Taliban want some form of negotiation. More importantly, the Taliban leadership is deeply dependent on the Pakistani military, which wants negotiation and an orderly exit of Western forces from Afghanistan as opposed to a humiliating Vietnam-style retreat.

Finally, while the Taliban had initial preconditions to negotiations, as noted by Ahmed Rashid (2010), they appear willing to forgo them. "There are Taliban preconditions that seem to be watered down too because the Taliban were insisting that they wouldn't talk until the American forces started to leave. But they seem to be willing to put that aside for the time being" (Rashid).

Although the primarily discussion of this thesis is Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistan, which has long standing historic ties with the Taliban, cannot be ignored when attempting to negotiate with the Taliban. MacDonald and Haider (2010) quoted Gilles Dorronsoro as saying, "If the United States wishes to negotiate an orderly withdrawal of coalition troops and a guarantee that al Qaeda will not return to Afghanistan, it must make a deal with the only parties who can deliver on it: Pakistan and the Taliban." Since 1980's the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) helped bolsterer anti-Soviet mujahideens before finally creating the Taliban. It continues to view them as an asset to secure its national interests against India in Afghanistan (MacDonald and Haider).

As noted by a Taliban logistics officer (Moreau 2010), Pakistan is playing a "double game." For the Americans, Pakistan continues to readily accept billions of U.S. dollars in aid to combat the Taliban in Pakistan, as well as to secure the borders with Afghanistan. While Pakistan does arrest Taliban members, the ISI also continues to readily fund the Taliban. The same logistics officer remarks that, "roughly 80 percent of the insurgents' funding, based on his conversations with other senior Taliban," come from the ISI. In fact, "He says the insurgents could barely cover their expenses in Kandahar province alone if not for the ISI. Not that he views them as friends. "'They feed us with one hand and arrest and kill us with the other'" (Moreau). The ISI sporadic arrests and extensive funding helps keep the Taliban in control. A former Taliban cabinet minister noted, "We are like sheep the Pakistanis can round up whenever they want" (Moreau). Consequently, as stated by Michael Georgy (2010) "All sides know Pakistan is needed for any settlement because of its influence over senior Taliban leaders."

There are a few things to consider though. The Taliban in Afghanistan are a nationalist force. It is clearly currently beneficial for them to accept funding from Pakistan, just as it received financial, logistical, and military support from al-

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Qaeda. The Taliban, just like Pakistan, though, are looking after their best interests. Thus, while the Taliban readily accept aid, and Pakistan readily attempts to keep them under control, this does not mean that the Taliban will inevitably and always follow the interests of Pakistan. Georgy (2010) notes that, "After all, most Taliban leaders are nationalists, not global jihadists like al Qaeda, who are likely to resist too much Pakistani meddling in Afghanistan's affairs." This compliments Pakistani Taliban expert Rahimullah Yusufzai's statement that, "They are not going to be somebody's puppet just like that" (Georgy). This is also coupled by the ethnic animosity of Pashtun Taliban and the Pakistani Punjabi benefactors.

This relationship has caused tensions between the U.S. and Pakistan, with the U.S. wanting Pakistan to increase COIN operations. The fact though is that, although they have launched "selective operations to try to appease the Americans," (Georgy 2010) Pakistan has readily been unreliable in this regard. Instead Pakistan has been lobbying for negotiations. "It wants a well calculated pullout that fully takes into account Islamabad's interests" (Georgy).

Karon (2010) remarks that,

Pakistan is talking to the movement's leaders and urging Washington to do the same. Pakistan hopes to orchestrate a political settlement in which the Taliban and other Pakistan-friendly Pashtuns would be given far greater influence in a new regime but would agree to share power with other communities and cut ties with al-Qaeda.

While negotiations were never America's first plan, Pakistan will play a critical and influential role if any talks can succeed. As noted by Michael Georgy (2010),

An unstable Afghanistan may not be so bad for Pakistan. It would feel threatened by any strong central government with close ties to India. Islamabad may prefer to see power in the hands of provincial warlords and Taliban factions it can manipulate.

The United States appears ready for negotiations also. Although for years it has refused to talk, believing the Taliban did not offer anything substantive, and then only with preconditions, it seems the U.S. understands the importance of dialogue. While the Pentagon still believes in reintegration rather than reconciliation (as noted by a European diplomat, "The U.S. military only wants to talk with their boots on the Taliban's neck" [Lieven and Lodhi 2011]), "There is a growing consensus in the international community and among many U.S. experts on the idea of peace talks with the Taliban — not just to break away individual commanders, but to draw the movement as a whole into a peace settlement" (Lieven and Maleeha). These experts include both Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates who are working with NATO to orchestrate peace talks with Taliban leaders, Kabul, and Pakistan. As stated by Robert Gates (Cooper and Shanker 2010), "We have always acknowledged that reconciliation has to be part of the solution in Afghanistan, and we will do whatever we can to support this process."

While it is unknown how long negotiations would last, the U.S. is working in the right direction by opening dialogue. A recent *New York Times* article quoted an official, who wished to remain unnamed, as stating, "'What is required is structured engagement with all Afghan communities, including the Pashtun and therefore representatives of the Taliban, around a new political project" (Gall 2009). The rhetoric of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has also changed. Although originally three preconditions[5] would need to be met by the Taliban before talks could start, these preconditions, as noted by Lieven and Lodhi (2011), are now simply objectives to have completed by the end of negotiations. Not only may reconciliation of the Taliban within the Afghan government prevent the resurgence of al-Qaeda – the U.S.'s main objective – but also the eventual U.S. withdrawal will unload the financial burden of the war.

The U.S. cannot continue how it has.

They cannot by themselves defeat an insurgent force whose chief aim is to expel foreign forces from its home country. The political settlement America and its allies have been struggling to uphold is unsustainable unless and until the forces of conservative religious nationalism as represented by the Taliban are somehow dealt into the game (Cowper-Coles 2011).

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In December 2001, the Bonn Conference, which hoped to create a new Afghanistan, was a "victors' peace" (Cowper-Coles) and did not include the Taliban, or significant Pashtun leadership. The Taliban were thought defeated, but it is obvious now that the Coalition had merely, "pushed them back" (Cowper-Coles). With a new conference occurring in December 2011, it will be paramount to include all participants. As President Obama acknowledged in May 2011, "We're not going to militarily solve this problem. What we can do, I think, is use the efforts we've made militarily to broker a political settlement . . . Ultimately it means talking to the Taliban" (BBC 2011). While the exact outcome from deliberations is yet unknown, what is certain is that the fighting will continue, and will intensify as both parties realize the implications of battlefield results at the negotiating table. As Gall (2009) notes, "It will be, fundamentally, a contest over the terms under which the Taliban are to resume a role in governing Afghanistan, not over whether they will play any role at all."

Vast Differences, Same Conclusion

There are countless variables that separate the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the potential for US policy success there. These variables include tribal structures, demography, geography, and the nature of their insurgencies. While they lack general comparisons, the main purpose of US continued involvement in both nations was the same, to prevent 'safe-havens' for al-Qaeda. In both nations an attempt at COIN was introduced to accomplish these goals, and in both there was an erroneous perception that disengaged potential resources and organizations in favor of a westernized COIN paradigm. After years of policy that created something of a self-fulfilling prophecy in Iraq, the surge attempted to offer time to the fledging Iraqi government to build legitimacy. The surge miraculously appeared to work with a dramatic reduction in violence that offered an opportunity for U.S. withdrawal. The success of the belated strategic epiphany, however, rested on preconditions in Iraq that produced the Awakening. These same conditions, though, have not yet produced political unification in Iraq. In Afghanistan, the Obama administration ordered a similar surge to 'hold and control' until the Afghan government could take over operations. Afghanistan clearly does not possess the same ingredients that allowed a measure of success in Iraq. A fractured society and weak government provide no obvious allies for the United States and, ironically, al-Qaeda was not a strong enough influence in Afghanistan to drive the population towards U.S. objectives. Instead the U.S. is left with an insurgency that does not pose a threat to American security yet is being perpetually aggravated by Western foreign influence attempting to produce unfeasible and impractical results.

The Sunni tribes, and the subsequent Sunni Awakening, were largely ignored until the 11th hour by the United States. Sunnis, feeling threatened by American policy that deconstructed standing institutions and created a possible anti-Sunni government, retaliated. In Afghanistan this bears some resemblance to the Taliban and their Pashtun tribal base as the Pashtun majority were proportionately in control of Kabul through the Taliban before the organization was ousted by the United States. The U.S. support of a government that is largely seen as corrupt, a puppet, and ostracizing the Pashtuns, further fuels the fires of resentment that offer recruitment for the Taliban. The lesson of Iraq was to use the sectarian organizations already in place or risk disenfranchising entire segments of the population. This lesson was repeated in Afghanistan, but unlike in Iraq where the Sunnis took the initiative to work with the Americans, it is now the American's turn to realize that any reasonable form of success in Afghanistan will only occur once the Taliban, and its Pashtun tribal base, is reconciled with the Kabul government.

The U.S., as of July 2011, has begun to take the initiative to foster this reconciliation as well as withdrawing U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan. In a recent speech (ABC 2011), Obama announced that 10,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan would be returning home before the end of the year. By next summer this would increase to 30,000, thus returning total U.S. forces in Afghanistan to pre-surge levels. The goal is a full withdrawal by 2014, by which time there will be sufficient Afghan military forces to control the country. It is evident though that the Taliban have a stark advantage over the ANA. A recent Taliban offensive highlighted their incompetence. "They ran away and left us there!" remarked Nazeer Amiri of the ANA after the Taliban assault on the Intercontinental Hotel ended. "I saw some of the security forces flee with their weapons. I was begging them to give me their guns, so I could shoot back" (King and Yaqubi 2011). It took a NATO intervention to eventually scatter the Taliban.

Recalling the U.S.'s objective of preventing a safe haven for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and acknowledging that Afghan forces will likely be ill prepared to handle this role *and* combat the Taliban, the U.S. needs to be willing to

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reconcile with its own prejudices about the enemy and about success. Specifically, the US must come to terms with the fact that the Taliban are not a threat to U.S. national security and that 'success' in Afghanistan will not arrive from military conquest (As Secretary of State Hilary Clinton notes [Brahimi, Pickering 2011] "We will never kill enough insurgents to end this war outright.") The Obama administration appears to have taken steps towards a more realistic stance. President Obama argued,

America will join initiatives that will reconcile the Afghan people, including the Taliban. Our position on these talks is clear, they must be led by the Afghan government, and those that want to be part of a peaceful Afghanistan must break by al-Qaeda, abandon violence, and abide by the Afghan constitution (ABC 2011).

It will be prudent to incorporate the Taliban because it will ultimately depend upon them if al-Qaeda returns to Afghanistan. Withdrawing without reconciliation will only expedite the country's deterioration. Recent intelligence (Cloud and Barnes 2010) suggests that, "the Afghan Taliban does not want to be seen as, or heard of, having the same relationship with AQ that they had in the past." The U.S. and Karzai government should take full advantage of this mindset and opportunity and continue to push forward negotiations. Failing to act now will only increase the cost of blood and treasure that the U.S., the Taliban and the Afghan government must pay, making political compromises all the more challenging in the future.

As a recent report (Brahimi and Pickering 2011) by The Century Foundation noted,

Securing defections of insurgents or trying to co-opt senior-level Taliban to join the Kabul regime is unlikely to be sufficient to bring peace; reconciliation with the insurgents will eventually have to involve creating a broader political framework to end the war.

This thesis did not indulge in what this 'broader political framework' may be, and we must acknowledge that the evidence that all parties will be willing to negotiate is not overwhelming, but compromises in divisions of power, political order, human rights, and the justice system will surely be debated in the coming years. Inevitably, if negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban persist, it will lead to amendments in the Afghan constitution that satisfy both parties. While the U.S. will surely insist on a democratic system with high standards in human rights, it is strategically more important to the U.S. that the Taliban simply adhere to a constitution, allowing for greater stability and subsequently denying the chaotic environment that al-Qaeda needs to thrive.

While the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have vast differences, America's conclusion in both will depend upon the local structures. The U.S. surge in Iraq was a gamble that largely paid off because the U.S. finally recognized the Sunni Awakening. While the U.S. will not be given such a luxury in Afghanistan, "a negotiating process allows [the U.S.] to shape the ultimate political outcomes with more confidence than by reliance on a prolonged and inconclusive war" (Brahimi and Pickering 2011). Thus, if "success" depends upon the prevention of an al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan, and this "prevention" is contingent on the actions of the Taliban, the U.S. should continue to engage and wager on the negotiating table.

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[1] *Fiasco* notes that in 2003, "The problem is, we had insufficient forces to secure and freeze the situation and capitalize on that moment" (Ricks 2006).

[2] The Iraq Study Group was a bi-partisan panel appointed by the U.S. Congress in 2006 to assess the situation in Iraq, and of U.S. – Iraq policy, and recommend policy corrections. It produced a vast document containing dozens of findings and recommendations including: Neighboring countries must be involved in Iraq, acknowledged that Iraq diverted resources from Afghanistan, advised for a transfer of power to the new Iraq ruling class, and the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces in Iraq.

[3] While there was initial speculation as to whether this deadline would be reached, President Obama recently announced that U.S. forces would indeed begin withdrawing in July 2011.

[4] At the time of writing the U.S. has not completely withdrawn from Iraq. While none of the approximately 40,000 U.S. troops are officially operating in a combat role, casualties persist. In fact, U.S. casualties in Iraq are at a three-year high. U.S. and Iraq officials are suggesting that U.S. forces may remain in Iraq after 2011 to ensure the stability of the Iraq government.

[5] As noted by Lieven and Lodhi (2011), "They must renounce violence … abandon their alliance with Al Qaeda, and abide by the Constitution."

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Written by: Michael Dean Krebs
Written at: University of Maine
Written for: Prof. Timothy C.Cole
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