

IRAQI INSURGENCY MODEL

by

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Abstract

Insurgency warfare is usually associated with revolutionary warfare and wars of liberation. It implies a parallel but separate political and military organization and a minimum level of discontent with a government sufficient to create objective conditions favorable for an insurgency.

There is a difference between resistance and insurgency. An insurgency is methodical in nature. Its goal is to gain power. Resistance to an occupation, as defined in this paper, is the active participation of individuals in acts that are directed against the ruling authority but do not cross the threshold of actively participating in an insurgency movement.

Insurgencies are shaped by existing conditions; the culture in which they develop and thrive, history, and national experience. Culture, history and experience also affect an individual's choice to choose resistance or to actively participate in an insurgency movement.

The goal of creating a “representative government for and by the Iraqi people; [and] underpinned by new and protected freedoms and a growing market economy” is nothing less than the restructuring of Iraqi cultural and ideological institutions. The desire to impose change is very close in spirit, if not definition, to what has been termed revolutionary warfare. Revolutionary warfare is not confined to strictly military action. The removal of Saddam Hussein by military force is not revolutionary. The act of changing a political and ideological culture and its institutions is.

What this paper proposes is to highlight the revolutionary nature of Operation Iraqi Freedom, define the difference between resistance to the occupation and insurgency in Iraq, develop a model to explain the dynamics of the Iraqi insurgency and outline its tactics and strategy and define the direction of the movement.

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Glossary

Insurgency: A struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g. organizational expertise, propaganda and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.

Network Centric Warfare: The concept of linking all aspects of warfighting into a shared situation awareness and understanding of common intent so as to achieve a unity and synchronicity of effects. There are five levels of theory and practice applicable in assessing a net war opponent: technological sophistication, social basis for cooperation, and common narrative about their involvement in an activity, organizational design, and doctrine.

Resistance: The active participation of individuals in acts that are directed against the ruling authority but do not cross the threshold of actively participating in an insurgency movement. It is cultural, ideological and structural and may be decentralized, spontaneous, or individual in nature. It may be expressed peacefully or violently. Examples of resistance are demonstrations against the ruling authority, acts of random sabotage, and small-scale, de-centralized attacks against coalition interests.

Revolutionary Warfare: Not confined within the bounds of military action. Its purpose is to destroy an existing society and its institutions and to replace them with a completely new structure. Any revolutionary war is a unity of which the constituent parts, in varying importance, are military, political, economic, social, and psychological.

Shame and Honor: Cultural construct of whereby individuals seek to avoid humiliation and to acquire *Sharaf*, or honor.

Society: According to Dr. Richard Law of Washington State University, a society is any group of people living together in a group and constituting a single related, interdependent community. This word is frequently taken to include entire national communities; we might, for instance, comment upon some aspect of U.S. society. Society can also be used to refer to smaller groups of people, as when we refer to "rural societies" or "academic

society," etc. Society is distinguished from culture in that society generally refers to the community of people while culture generally refers to systems of meaning.

Strategic Cause: A goal or purpose served with dedication and zeal. A strategic cause is one that can attract the largest number of supporters. It must be able to endure for the duration of the conflict or at least until an insurgent movement is well established.

Tactical Cause: A temporary goal or purpose resulting from the exploitation of a transitory difficulty, such as high prices, fuel shortage, scarcity of food, etc.

Tribal Culture: According to Dr. Richard Law of Washington State University, culture refers to the cumulative deposits of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, and notions of time acquired by a group of people in the course of generations. The main facets of tribal culture include honor (shame and honor), hospitality, warrior hood and revenge (blood feud). Demonstrating ones courage in battle is the key to understanding what motivates young men to fight. Goal is to avoid humiliation and acquire honor.

Chapter 1

Introduction

“I hereby announce that major combat operations in Iraq for today will officially end as of midnight tonight.” President of the United States George W. Bush, May 2, 2003.

With the end of “major combat operations” on 2 May 2003, coalition forces transitioned from a “high intensity conflict” to counter-insurgency operations. David Galula defines an insurgency as a “protracted struggle conducted methodically.... in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order”.¹ Insurgency warfare is usually associated with revolutionary warfare and wars of liberation. It implies a parallel but separate political and military organization and a minimum level of discontent with a government sufficient to create objective conditions favorable for an insurgency.² An insurgency is usually of a protracted nature since the conditions for an armed struggle may not initially exist, or are slow to develop. Moreover, it takes time to organize a movement, to recruit and train fighters, reach parity with an opponent and to subdue him.

We should draw a distinction between resistance and insurgency. An insurgency is methodical in nature. Its goal is to gain power. Resistance to an occupation, as defined in this paper, is the active participation of individuals in acts that are directed against the ruling authority but do not

¹ Galula, David, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, Fredrick A. Praeger, Inc., NY, 1964, page 4

² Beckett, Ian F.W, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, Routledge, London, 2001, page 170

cross the threshold of actively participating in an insurgency movement. It is cultural, ideological and structural and may be decentralized, spontaneous, or individual in nature. It may be expressed peacefully or violently.

Examples of resistance are demonstrations against the ruling authority, acts of random sabotage, and small-scale, de-centralized attacks against coalition interests.

Insurgencies are shaped by existing conditions; the culture in which they develop and thrive, history, and national experience. Culture, history and experience also affect an individual's choice to choose resistance or to actively participate in an insurgency movement. The key difference between an insurgency and popular resistance is that an insurgency, due to its logical progression from one phase to another, can be effectively targeted and defeated. Acts of resistance are more difficult to counter and can continue long after an insurgency movement has been defeated. Although acts of resistance may be militarily insignificant its strength lies in the political and socio-cultural realm. An existing culture of resistance ensures a continuous recruiting ground for follow on generations of insurgents.

Chapter 2

Conditions

We want to make a new government, without Saddam but in the same style”.
Insurgent from the Sunni Triangle quoted in Newsweek, August 18, 2003

Insurgency movements are most vulnerable in the early phase of organization, and recruitment. A cause is required if the aim is more than simply causing havoc. The targeted population must be able to identify with this cause since early supporters must be recruited by persuasion. The cause must be powerful enough to encourage the population to assist or remain neutral in the insurgent’s pursuit to challenge the ruling authority’s administration, police and military forces.

In order to reduce its initial vulnerability, an insurgency movement will seek to exploit or create weakness. It cannot organize, plan, and recruit without some sort of protection and therefore will take advantage of areas where the control of the ruling authority is limited or non-existent. Or it will seek to create a weakness as in persuading the population that the ruling authority lacks the moral authority to rule. To survive in the formative phase, the insurgency carves itself a niche within which to maneuver. The present conditions in Iraq favor insurgent forces. But what is it that makes this situation different from previous insurgency conditions.

Regime change created the condition. Insurgency is usually associated with guerilla war. It presupposes an established government endowed with diplomatic recognition; legitimate power in the executive, legislative, and

judicial branches; control of the administration; financial resources; industrial resources; transport and communications facilities; use and control of the information media; command of the police and armed forces, and recognized moral authority.³

Regime Change versus Revolutionary War

Valid assumptions are the basis for legitimate predictions. The central assumption equates regime change to liberation but liberation from whom and to what extent? The first question is easily answered but the second less so. The goal of creating a “representative government for and by the Iraqi people; [and] underpinned by new and protected freedoms and a growing market economy” is nothing less than the restructuring of Iraqi cultural and ideological institutions. The desire to impose change is very close in spirit, if not definition, to what has been termed revolutionary warfare. The purpose of revolutionary warfare is to change an “existing society and its institutions and to replace them with a completely new structure.”⁴ Revolutionary warfare is not confined to strictly military action. The removal of Saddam Hussein by military force is not revolutionary. The act of changing a political and ideological culture and its institutions is. It is also far more difficult, resource intensive and time consuming.

Associating regime change solely with liberation neglects its revolutionary nature. The mistaken notion that the Iraqi civil service would remain intact and that Iraqi soldiers and police would transfer their loyalty to the coalition upon completion of major combat operations is directly related to

³ Ibid., pages 6-7

⁴ Merrit, Dennis, *Understanding Revolutionary Warfare*, USMC, Command and Staff College, 1990

minimizing the revolutionary nature of this war. Instead of grateful public sector employees willing to reestablish order after the dismantling of Saddam's security structure, most fled and refused to return to work.⁵ Without a functioning police, violence erupted in Baghdad. Looters ransacked Baghdad's antiquities museum, shops, and government buildings. The city descended into anarchy leaving many residents fearful and increasingly frustrated with the lawlessness.⁶

Regime change cut deeper than anticipated. The smooth transition from coalition to Iraqi control did not occur since there was no viable political regime to assume responsibility. The coalition would have to assume full responsibility for all facets of governance until a viable Iraqi interim government could be established. And by assuming full responsibility for Iraq's development the coalition transitioned from liberation to revolution. One of the objectives of revolutionary warfare is to change institutions and to replace them with a completely new structure.

The coalition effort was challenged from the start. The four key instruments of control; political administration; bureaucratic structure; police and military forces, were in total disarray. Establishing security was key in setting the tone for reconstruction to proceed. The Iraqi people would judge coalition efforts by what it accomplished, not by what it promised. Although coalition superiority in military force was irrefutable, the lack of a competent bureaucracy to address the concerns and needs of the Iraqi

⁵ Packer, George, *War After The War*, The New Yorker, November 24, 2003, pages 60-61

⁶ Fogarty, Maura, "Iraq Crisis Bulletin", April 13, 2003, <http://www.iraqcrisisbulletin.com>

citizenry proved a greater security threat. In practical terms the coalition had to meet the basic needs of the population quickly.

The protracted nature of an insurgency is imposed on the insurgent due to his initial weakness and strength of the ruling authority he wishes to overthrow. It takes time for an insurgency movement to organize and establish its support network, to recruit and train its fighters, to reach parity, and to defeat the ruling authority. What makes the Iraqi experience unique is that the revolutionary nature of this war requires the coalition to organize, establish its own support network and recruit and train its supporters but on a much larger scale. Lacking an established government endowed with diplomatic recognition; a functioning bureaucracy; effective police and military, the coalition had to start from scratch. It takes time to prepare the population for democracy; establish appropriate democratic institutions and assist in solving ideological and ethnic dilemmas and create an effective police and military all the while fighting an insurgency.⁷ The insurgents have taken advantage of this situation and carved out a niche within which to maneuver. All insurgents share the same immediate objective which is to mobilize segments of the population against coalition initiatives, create disorder and discredit coalition provisional rule. The insurgents have a large pool of unemployed Iraqis from which to draw. Especially those that had jobs before regime change but have been unable to find work since and are now available for hire.

⁷ Civic education programs in the 18 governorates, 4 regions, universities and targeted capacity-builders, resource centers, and professional associations assist in the development of appropriate democratic institution.

Chapter 3

Resistance

Their minds work just as ours do, but on different premises. There is nothing unreasonable, incomprehensible, or inscrutable in the Arab. Experience of them, and knowledge of their prejudices will enable you to foresee their attitude and possible course of action in nearly every case.

~ T.E. Lawrence: The 27 Articles of T.E. Lawrence

Resistance to Change

The decision to collaborate with the coalition, resist or join an insurgency movement depends on whether the individual is capable of conceding defeat, acknowledging coalition occupation, and accepting the cultural and ideological changes in progress due to coalition initiatives. The ***Concede, Acknowledge, Acceptance*** link is crucial in determining whether an individual chooses to collaborate, resist, or join an insurgency movement. Individuals transition through these stages at different speeds, if at all, since it is quite possible not to transition from one stage to another. Individuals that are unable to concede defeat may join an insurgency movement⁸. On the other hand, individuals committed to rebuilding Iraq with coalition assistance may be honor bound to express token resistance since they do not want to be identified as an agent of an imposed culture. The tendency in this part of the world is to equate submission with acceptance of foreign values. Token resistance, although carried out within an overall atmosphere of

⁸ The *Concede, Acknowledge, Acceptance Concept* is based on Ian F. W. Beckett's study of French resistance during World War II. "*Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies, Guerillas and their Opponents since 1750*", page 57

collaboration, is an example of cultural resistance to the perceived imposition of foreign norms and values.

It is difficult to imagine waking up one morning and realize that your world has completely changed from one day to the next. Everything you knew to be true is now under assault. The lack of preparation of Iraqi society for new ideas and institutions, particularly those of alien origin encourage cultural and ideological resistance. It is incorrect to compare the removal of Saddam regime to the Allied defeat of Japan and Germany during World War II. While similar in some respect, it differs markedly in the preparation period required for social change. The critical difference between allied experiences in post-hostilities Japan and Germany and post-Saddam Iraq is that whereas both the German and Japanese regimes and the ideological basis for their existence were totally discredited, no such process took place in Iraq. Iraqi society experienced no catastrophic defeat and utter destruction of cities and civilian loss of life as in Japan and Germany. It neither witnessed public trials of war criminals, nor endured a long-term military occupation government. Coalition announcements of liberation prompted no widespread Iraqi reappraisal of existing political values and institutions. The coalition's efforts are challenged by traditional communal values toughened during the Saddam era. Good faith efforts at encouraging the emergence of new social attitudes and patterns of political power are opposed by traditional political norms.⁹

An appreciation of the cultural construct of shame and honor whereby individuals seek to avoid humiliation and to acquire *Sharaf*, or honor is

⁹ McCallister, William, *The Iraqi Insurgency Movement*, November 14, 2003, page 15

crucial when studying resistance. According to David Leo Gutmann, professor of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University Medical School, Shame/Honor is an irrational feature of Arab psychology, particularly in their profound vulnerability to humiliation due to perceived or actual loss of honor. Gutmann writes, “any opponent worth fighting is by definition honorable, and pieces of his honor can be ripped from him in a successful raid, to be replaced by figments of the attackers shame. The successful attacker has exported some personal shame to the enemy, and the enemy’s lost honor has been added to the raider’s store [of honor]”.

This feature of Arab psychology may help coalition forces to differentiate between actions designed to merely resist the coalition presence and those actively supporting a particular insurgency movement. Small arms, grenade, and rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attacks against coalition forces between August and December 2003 numbered 952, 112, and 685 respectively¹⁰. Given that these weapons are readily available in Iraq and that they require little or no coordination to employ, it is not unreasonable to assume that a percentage of these attacks are individual expressions of resistance rather than the actions of insurgents. This is especially true in the rural areas where tribal culture still dominates. Isolated attacks against coalition forces in the rural areas may be attempts by “humiliated” individuals to inflict shame on the enemy in exchange for ripping pieces of honor from him.

¹⁰ CJTF-7 Significant Activities (SIGACTS) collected between August – December 2003

Cumulative Effect and Perception

Individual acts of resistance fall into the realm of policing, but the cumulative effect of individuals resisting give the impression that they are the result of an insurgency when in actuality they are not. The occasional drive-by shooting, grenade or RPG attack differs greatly from the coordination required for an improvised explosive device (IED) or vehicular-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack. Discussion with coalition military police personnel reveal that individuals arrested for small arms attacks are detained and confined in a “military intelligence hold” status until interviewed by coalition intelligence personnel. If it is determined that the individual is not connected to an insurgency movement, he is returned to the general prison population and charged with a criminal offense. Coalition forces are already acknowledging unofficially a difference between an insurgent and a de-facto resister. Improvements in IED construction and placement, on the other hand, are an indicator of detailed organization and planning .

Badge of Honor

Resistance to the occupation is worn like a badge of honor since it reaffirms that even though an individual might have to submit temporarily to the humiliation of foreign occupation, he does not have to concede defeat. Although the individual may accept that ideological and cultural changes wrought by coalition initiatives may be inevitable, he does not have to submit to these changes without a fight. To reinforce this point an unnamed Shi’a-Iraqi urged his fellow countrymen to “damn all the satellite channels that repeat the occupation’s statements...[that] the resistance in Iraq is pure Sunni. We want here to highlight the role of the Shi’a young men in the

resistance.... The Shi'a have a big role in the resistance, with their brothers, the Sunni".¹¹ The honor that is bestowed upon those resisting the occupation both psychologically and physically cannot be dismissed.

On a final note, the population's sympathy for resisting foreign norms and values is not to be confused with an individual's complicity with an insurgent group. The former, relative to insurgency terms, is passive the latter – complicity - is active. The popularity of the insurgent's cause is insufficient by itself to transform sympathy for resistance into complicity and participation in an insurgent group.¹²

¹¹ “*Who Said That Only The Sunnis Are Attacking The Occupation? (Resistance)*”, Al Basrah Website, December 28, 2003. <http://www.albasrah.net>

¹² The Sunnis of the Al Anbar region for example are mixed in their acceptance of the coalition presence. The majority view seems to be cultural and religious resistance to being occupied. But to the Sunnis in the “triangle” the coalition is not just an occupying power. It is the coalition that is disempowering the Sunnis – first, directly through military occupation, and ultimately by leaving the Sunnis subordinated to the Shia in the new Iraq. (Keith W. Mines, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Governance Coordinator, “*The Cornered Tiger: Iraq's Sunnis After Saddam*”, Al Anbar Province, December 26, 2003)

Chapter 4

The Iraqi Insurgency

With the end of major combat operations in Iraq, coalition forces are now opposed by a number of insurgent organizations employing asymmetric methods of organization and warfighting. The ability to adapt to these methods will determine the success of the coalition to secure and rebuild Iraq. The longer it takes to subdue an insurgency, the greater the danger that the battle for the population will be lost. Failure to decisively defeat this threat may encourage spreading of the idea that the withdrawal of coalition forces is in the best interest of the Iraqi people. The insurgents understand that while it is not necessary to gain the sympathy of a majority of the population to govern, what is essential is an effective organization that controls the local population.

Engines of the Insurgency Movement

The Iraqi Insurgency is a misnomer. Coalition forces are not opposed by “one insurgency” but rather by a number of “small insurgencies” that constitute the engines of the insurgency movement. These small insurgencies are embedded within the population of which the fighters are but one element. It is these small insurgent groups that form the centers of resistance to the coalition. One assessment, based on unclassified sources, estimates the current number of organizations at approximately 30 groups.¹³

¹³ “*Insurgency Primer*”, CPT Charles Kyle, 1st IO Command, Ft Belvoir, VA, page 1

¹⁴ To think in terms of a hierarchical insurgency movement is misleading. Rather, the movement is the result of a cumulative effect of many small insurgencies operating under a powerful coordinating message. While the type of regime sought after differs with each insurgency group fighting to overthrow the ruling authority, all insurgent objectives include the expulsion of the coalition. The goal to expel the coalition imparts a powerful coordinating message that lends a general direction to the insurgent network in Iraq.¹⁵

Insurgent actions focus on discrediting coalition efforts to reshape the institutions of Iraqi governance and political culture. The attacks began at a time when the Iraqi political establishment had a weak administrative bureaucracy, a distrusted national police force, disbanded military and lacking in moral authority. Insurgent attacks avoid decisive conventional engagement and exploit acts of terror to sabotage economic reconstruction and to undermine the image of the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraqi Governing Council. Terrorism, assassinations, and intimidation directly affect the citizenry's psychology. The local population lives continually in fear and in the presence of permanent danger. An opinion poll by the Office of Research, Department of State, dated January 6, 2004 identifies "security

¹⁴ It is not inconceivable that a number of groups consist of the same individuals and are using more than one name to give the appearance of a much larger insurgency movement than actually exists.

¹⁵ Groups such as the Popular Resistance for the Liberation of Iraq, Saddam's Fedayeen, and Patriotic Front coexist with groups of differing ideologies such as the Islamist Armed Vanguard of Mohammad's Second Army, Iraqi National Islamic Resistance and Iraqi Resistance Brigades. Although groups such as the Iraqi Resistance Brigade have repeatedly denied that their attacks on coalition forces are the work of Ba'athist loyalists they have vowed to "continue to fight every foreigner... and... the agent (sic) Iraqi Governing Council until victory [has been achieved]".

as the greatest worry among urban residents”. Residents of Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, Hilla and Diwaniya named safety and security as the greatest worry (62% overall). Ultimately, the population begins to feel isolated and defenseless. Insurgent attacks that continue unabated over time reinforce the perception that the coalition is weak and ineffective, an essential piece in a campaign to rid Iraq of foreign influence.

Chapter 5

The Insurgency Network

Network Centric Approach

The insurgency network ranges from limited associations at the local level to regional and countrywide links. A specific group within the network can exploit these links to perform attacks outside its area of operation. Current assessments as to the level and extent of coordination and collaboration among the various insurgency groups differ. Presently, individual insurgency groups seem to limit their activities to particular areas and seldom venture outside their zones of operations. While it appears that attacks against coalition forces in the Sunni Triangle are well coordinated, it does not appear that a centralized command exists to coordinate attacks nationwide. Instead, those wanting to establish an insurgency group do so independently. These groups attack coalition interests at will without a central command directing their activities. Many small self-contained groups may operate autonomously in an area. Instead of providing an opportunity to concentrate and to destroy one tightly organized system, coalition forces must find and destroy many smaller ones. This loose association allows for various groups to come and go according to particular needs and opportunities. The ebb and flow of insurgent activities, represented by an increase or decrease of attacks against coalition forces, creates the perception of a robust insurgency movement. In actuality, it may only represent the comings and goings of individual groups. This method of self-

organization eliminates the need for controlling each and every attack. The result is a steady rate of attacks over time.

The network lacks an obvious center of gravity making it very resilient to outside attacks. Since no centralized leadership exists to direct its activities, even if parts of the network are damaged, it will continue to function and adapt. Individuals and groups take the place of those that have been arrested or killed by coalition operations because the connections between insurgent groups that remain intact can be redirected. This means that the window for successfully exploiting attacks against the network is time sensitive because the network continually evolves. As one group is destroyed, another takes its place and the overall network adapts.

Network Life Cycle

The life cycle of the Iraqi insurgency network can be understood as a series of four sequential and overlapping phases.

Phase One (Motivate). The emergence of individual insurgent groups are motivated by a cause. The insurgent must be able to identify himself totally with the cause and the population theoretically attracted by it. The cause must be able to endure for the duration of the struggle or until the insurgency is well under way. This differentiates a strategic cause from a tactical one resulting from the exploitation of a temporary situation, such as fuel shortages or power outages. The strategic cause in this case is to end the occupation, discredit the ruling authority, and to force the withdrawal of coalition forces from the national homeland. The ideology of the vast majority of insurgent groups seems a blend of fervent nationalism, Islamic extremism, and hatred of the United States. The cause imparts a common

frame of reference for all groups and links them, if not ideologically, then psychologically.

Phase Two (**Coordinate**). Groups establish loose links and associations. Support groups evolve and relationships are formed. The logical choice for the network backbone is the remnants of Saddam's intelligence and security forces. The General Intelligence Directorate (GID) or Mukhabarat's Special Operations Directorate was responsible for covert operations and specialized in bomb making and assassinations, as well as maintaining highly trained agents with language and cultural training. The General Security Services (GSS) or Amn al Amm played an active paramilitary and covert role in security and intelligence operations in the Kurdish region. They also monitored the daily lives of the inhabitants of every town and village and had personnel assigned to every police station nationwide. Additional talents include wiretapping, and surveillance. Both the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) and the Military Security Service (MSS) specialized in enforcing security in the military and could call upon special mobile brigades to enforce loyalty if required.¹⁶

Coordination between the various insurgent groups is far more difficult than it first appears. To exclaim that Saddam's former intelligence and security forces are responsible for coordinating all attacks against coalition forces is to neglect the fact that the intelligence and security forces themselves were competitors during the Saddam era. Saddam created a number of these

¹⁶ Gordesman, Anthony, H. *Iraqi Intelligence and Security Forces and Capabilities for Popular Warfare (Working Draft)*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, January 16, 2003, pages 3-6.

agencies and encouraged suspicion among them to maintain control. It is therefore implausible that one central directorate coordinates all anti-coalition efforts. This fact, on the other hand, reinforces the notion that the coalition is facing a number of smaller insurgencies; some led by individuals from differing intelligence and security backgrounds.

Phase Three (**Consolidate**) Groups begin to consolidate and stabilize relationships to create efficiencies. Consolidation is greatly influenced by cultural and ideological compatibility among the smaller groups. Umbrella organizations emerge that may include ex-intelligence and army personnel, former Ba'athists party members; foreign jihadists, professional terrorists; paid common criminals and disaffected Iraqis. Most organizations exploit tribal and kinship ties to forge alliances. Groups with secular and ideological affinities create efficiencies through a shared support and intelligence network.

Phase Four (**Dominate**). Stronger groups begin to exert control over lesser groups within the network. The struggle for dominance has already begun under the guise of vengeance killings. In Basra, some 25 to 30 ex-Ba'ath party members have already been assassinated since mid-October.¹⁷ Active cells are operating solely dedicated to executing former Saddam officials. Although these assassinations can be dismissed as mere vendetta killings, the greater effect is the elimination of potential rivals in specific geographic areas. It sends the message that certain areas are off-limits. The car bomb attacks against the Shi'a mosques in Baquaba on January 12, 2003 may fall

¹⁷ Ratnesar, Romesh, "Vengeance Has its Day", Time Magazine, December 1, 2003, page 58.

into this category. Baquaba is a predominantly Sunni town, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad¹⁸. The intent of these attacks may have been to prevent the small Shi'a community from developing into an effective political force.¹⁹

Thirty years of Saddam rule reinforced the idea that there is no substitute for physical force. Physical force is indispensable both for gaining and staying in power. It is essential for subordinating any and all factions to one's will.²⁰ As the insurgency network evolves, we will begin to note the rise of one or more distinct groups attempting to dominate the less powerful.

¹⁸ “*Deadly Blast at Iraqi Mosque*”, January 12, 2004, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/10/iraq/main592505.shtml

¹⁹ In February 1999, after the assassination of the Grand Ayatollah Mohammad al-Sadr, Max Van Der Stoel, UN Commission Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Iraq sent a letter to the Iraqi Government expressing his concern that the killing might be a part of an organized attack by the Ba'ath Government against the leadership of the Shia community. The Saddam government did not respond.

²⁰ Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, “*Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography*”, Grove Press, NY, 1991, page 24.

Chapter 6

Insurgent Tactics

Anatomy of Insurgent Activities

Isolated attacks attract attention and promote concern among the population. Attacks against public facilities and infrastructure cause general alarm among the population, which often blames the coalition for being unable to insure the country's peaceful transition to democratic rule, or as is often the case blame instability on "democracy".²¹ Selective killings of low ranking government officials such as council members, policemen, and community leaders seek to intimidate and or eliminate collaborators. Calculated acts of terror, conducted in as spectacular a fashion as possible seek to reinforce the message that the ruling government is incapable of providing a safe and secure environment for change to proceed.²² Once the population has been isolated from the ruling authority, insurgents are free to organize and manipulate the population at will.

Rural Tactics

Insurgent methods of attack include remotely or timed detonations of VBIEDs, road side ambushes, RPG attacks against both wheeled and tracked

²¹ "We care about democracy, but there is nothing real. I don't know the meaning of democracy. There is nothing real." Focus group conducted in Basra and Najaf December 14-16, 2003. This is in reference to security – the respondents associated the lack of security as evidence that democracy is not real in Iraq and transferred lawlessness to their perception of democracy.

²² The August bombing of the UN Building, and the October bombing of the Red Cross sought to isolate the coalition internationally while the December 31 car bomb attack on the Nabil restaurant in central Baghdad that killed eight people sought to reinforce the perception that the ruling authority is incapable of guaranteeing security.

vehicles and rotary wing aircraft, surface-to-air missile strikes against both fixed wing and rotary-wing aircrafts, as well as strikes against infrastructure and transportation systems²³. While these actions generate disorder, they also stress the resources of the opposing force. These attacks, especially in rural areas are primarily carried out to organize the population. A successful ambush against coalition forces may be considered a military success but it is not a victory if it does not bring the support of the village or town, or implicate the population against the ruling authority. Attrition of the enemy is a by-product of the attack. The primary goal remains maintaining popular commitment for the insurgency.

The insurgency in the Sunni Triangle is beginning to test the commitment of some of the local inhabitants in Fallujah. Reports of fading support for the insurgency in Fallujah are directly related to the continuous violence in the city. A number of local residents have stated that they no longer feel proud of the insurgents since “they have made bombings and anti-coalition attacks part of everyday life”.²⁴ Beyond the rhetoric to kill the foreign invaders and that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein will leave the Sunni powerless in a Shi’a dominated government no viable political blueprint is offered by the insurgents in case they win.

²³ A Surface-to-Air (SAM) missile struck one civilian Airbus 300 cargo plane operated by DHL express courier service after takeoff from Baghdad International Airport in November 2003. The aircraft performed a safe emergency landing at Baghdad International Airport.

As of January 16, one hundred attacks have been carried out against the Iraqi railroad. Attacks have targeted tracks, engines, and railcars.

²⁴ Allam, Hannah, “*We are tired of it: Support for resistance in Fallujah may be waning*”, Knight Rider, January 12, 2004

Urban Tactics

The objective is to create instability, stress the ruling authority's ability to react and attack the government's credibility directly. This tactic exploits the complexity and anonymity of the urban area. Insurgent operations in urban areas, on the other hand, require greater compartmentalization because the government's alertness is enhanced and the possibilities of betrayal greater.

Assassinations, ambushes, and VBIEDs are the preferred methods of attack in urban areas. The August bombing of the UN Building, and the October bombing of the Red Cross are examples of urban attacks intended to isolate the coalition internationally. The December 31 car bomb attack on the Nabil restaurant in central Baghdad killing eight people wanted to reinforce the perception that the ruling authority is incapable of guaranteeing security.

Effects on Population

Indiscriminate acts of terror neglect the post insurgency period. If the insurgent's tactic is to exploit terrorism to create a viable insurgency movement it will fail due to the turmoil it causes in the lives of ordinary Iraqis and bitterness it breeds. As late as November 2003, editorials in the Arab media applauded attacks against coalition forces as "stirring proof that Iraqis – and by extension their ethnic brethren – were not completely humiliated by the relative ease with which a U.S. – led coalition toppled Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party regime".²⁵ Only a small number of Arab observers were concerned to see that international aid workers and Iraqis were killed along with coalition personnel.²⁶ As indiscriminate

²⁵ Bryson, Donna, "Some Arabs celebrate strikes on U.S. troops in Iraq", The Associated Press, November 4, 2003

²⁶ Ibid.

attacks continued Iraqis began to push for a civil defense force that would hunt down insurgents and help foil attacks. They argued that Iraqi's were better suited to weeding out insurgent supporters and identifying foreign fighters.²⁷ The effort to exploit terrorism will prove counterproductive in the long run.

Coalition Response

Coalition military forces are adapting to insurgent tactics. Greater situational awareness and improved information gathering are brought to bear against insurgent forces. Insurgent actions are increasingly anticipated by coalition forces and preempted or countered immediately. Much of what insurgents and terrorists gain by dispersing and decentralizing is negated by these efforts. Dispersion and decentralization no longer confer the advantage they once held. While insurgents and urban terrorists might opt for increasing the number of attacks and decreasing the size of their operations, coalition forces are doing the same while at the same time retaining the ability to mass the effects of superior firepower at will.^{28 29}

²⁷ A number of Sheiks in Basra petitioned the Coalition Provisional Authority to establish a security council and offered the services of their tribes to protect vital infrastructure. They desired emergency proclamations authorizing them to carry out executions against perpetrators of serious crimes. Similar request were made in Dhi Quar and Al Muthana.

²⁸ Smith, Edward R. *Effects Based Operations*. CCRP. November 2002, pages 150 - 151.

²⁹ "There are too many informants now, too many spies working for the Americans", quote by resident of Fallujah. Allam, Hannah, "We are tired of it: Support for resistance in Fallujah may be waning", Knight Rider, January 12, 2004. Shared situational awareness allows small units to seize the initiative and to preempt, or respond quickly to insurgent threats.

Chapter 7

Insurgent Strategy

The objective of the insurgents is clear. It is to destroy the coalition's power of prestige and, once the coalition's prestige is destroyed, the removal of its rule and that of the Iraqi Governing Council will follow automatically. But beyond the immediate objective no concrete political blueprint is discernable for what is to be accomplished once the coalition is expelled. A detailed study of a number of public statements by insurgency groups leaves one none the wiser. All espouse the defeat of foreign aggressors and their collaborators. But the existence of a strategic cause does not suffice. While the cause may appeal to a segment of the population it provides no vision for the future of Iraq. One questions whether the "strategic" cause of ridding the foreigner will be able to endure for the duration of the struggle, especially since it requires infrastructure attacks to advertise insurgent activities.

Attacks against the pipeline networks and their support systems, for instance, translate into gasoline and heating oil shortages. Gasoline and heating oil shortages are tactical causes easily exploited. While the strategic intent is to fuel Iraqi frustration and anger and to lessen the credibility and legitimacy of the coalition, the tactical cause will only resonate with the population for so long. Iraqis are slowly beginning to acknowledge that insurgent attacks are the cause of their hardships, although many continue to blame the coalition for its failure to provide for adequate security.

Reconstruction efforts are creating the conditions for greater participation of Iraqis in providing security. The coalition is unable to ensure collaboration simply by helping the Iraqi people. It is within the security context that

collaboration with coalition forces increasingly becomes the only choice that the Iraqi people can make. As more and more Iraqi security forces assume responsibility for security blaming the coalition will lose its attraction³⁰. Progress in reviving the economy, reconciling different sectarian and ethnic groups, and transitioning administrative responsibilities to Iraqi authority further undercuts insurgent's claims.

The Iraqi population associates security with economic recovery and acknowledges the on-going insurgency as detrimental to this process.^{31 32} This is not to say that tactical causes will no longer motivate individuals to attack coalition forces. What it implies is that the majority of Iraqis are not interested in insurgency at the expense of Iraq's future development. Insurgent groups are increasingly becoming identified as spoilers.

Loss of public support for continued violence is inevitable. Unable to dislodge coalition forces some insurgent groups will simply fade away. The more committed groups will seek to dominate their respective niche in preparation for the inevitable power struggle that is sure to follow if the coalition is unable to reconcile power sharing among the different sectarian and ethnic groups. Much of the ideological verbiage with which to persuade

³⁰ Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 28, "*Establishment of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps*". 3 September 2003

³¹ Ibid. When asked which action would be most effective in improving security, the top recommendation from Iraqis is to provide jobs for the unemployed. "*Opinion Analysis*", Office of Research, Department of State, Washington, D.C., January 6, 2004.

³² Ninety-nine percent of Iraqis surveyed in Baghdad, Basrah, Kirkuk, Hilla, and Diwaniya feel attacks against Iraqi civilians are harmful to the future development of Iraq, followed by 97% against Iraqi police, 94% against International Organizations, 86% against Iraqis working with the coalition, 81% against civilian coalition officials, and 67% against U.S. forces.

the undecided will become merely a front behind which to secure or bolster positions of influence. Others will increasingly turn to organized crime for personal gain in a reviving economy. The insurgency will wither but it will not die. It is adapting to changes in the environment.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The future Iraq will be the product of an on-going process of state and national definition -- the first is a product of politics, the second of culture. It is a mistake to study insurgency in isolation from other activities. Coalition efforts are tightly interlinked and shaped by the environment. Powerful dynamics develop over time that determines both success and failure of policies. Policy successes or failures are determined interactively and drive us to make the interaction itself the unit of analysis. Resistance and insurgency are a response to coalition efforts for change. It was inevitable due to the revolutionary nature of this war. Economic recovery is what the majority of Iraqis wish for and this wish, in the end will force insurgents to adapt to changed circumstances.

Future Challenges

In the final analysis it is important to address the results of an opinion poll conducted by IIACSS.³³ Ninety-six percent of individuals responded no when asked if they were members of a political party. Eighty percent responded no when asked if they currently supported a political party. Eighty-three percent responded no to the question if there was a political party they were inclined to support. Seventy-eight percent did say that they were more likely to support a political party that provided services for their neighborhood, helped the poor, and supported education. These poll results

³³ Interviews conducted by IIACSS in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Diwaniya, Hilla, and Ramadi, November 19-28, 2003.

indicate that there is no political party to integrate and aggregate Iraqis. Individuals lacking this integrating mechanism may opt for an individual relationship with the state that could imply return to a more authoritarian state. Or, it could indicate that Iraqis are depending more on kinship and family ties for stability and security until the reconstruction efforts bear fruit. The greatest danger is a return of a demagogue, exploiting perceived inequalities and sense of humiliation to gain power. Success will depend on the coalition's ability to unite the Iraqi people as a nation and to sustain the development of democratic institutions and political reforms.

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