INSURGENCY IN IRAQ:
AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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FOREWORD

This monograph considers the patterns of insurgency in the past by way of establishing how much the conflict in Iraq conforms to previous experience. In particular, the author compares and contrasts Iraq with previous Middle Eastern insurgencies such as those in Palestine, Aden, the Dhofar province of Oman, Algeria, and Lebanon. He suggests that there is much that can be learned from British, French, and Israeli experience.

The monograph was delivered by invitation at the 15th Annual Strategy Conference of the U.S. Army War College in April 2004. It derived from work undertaken while the author was occupying the Major General Matthew C. Horner Chair of Military Theory at the U.S. Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this contribution to the debate on insurgencies, past and present.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

IAN F. W. BECKETT became Professor of History at University College, Northampton (UK) in January 2005, having occupied the Major General Matthew C. Horner Chair of Military Theory at the U.S. Marine Corps University, Quantico, from 2002 to 2004. He was formerly Professor of Modern History at the University of Luton (United Kingdom) and Senior Lecturer in War Studies at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. He was also Visiting Professor of Strategy at the U.S. Naval War College, Newport, in 1992-93. His publications include *Modern Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies* (2001) and *The Encyclopaedia of Guerrilla Warfare* (1999) while he was UK editor of *Small Wars and Insurgencies* from 1990 to 1997.

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Guerrilla warfare in one form or another was certainly the most prevalent type of conflict in the 20th century, if not before. For instance, British soldiers died on active service somewhere in the world in every year between 1945 and 1997, with the exception of 1968. Yet, the conventional warfighting experience was confined to 35 months of the Korean War, 10 days at Suez in 1956, 25 days of the land campaign of the Falklands in 1982, and 100 hours of land operations in the Gulf in 1991: everything else was some kind of low-intensity conflict. Much the same was true of other major armies.

The continuing proliferation of insurgent organizations suggests that insurgency is still widely perceived as an effective means either of achieving power and influence, or of bringing a cause to the notice of an international or national community. The end of European decolonization and the collapse of the Soviet Union together removed the motivational impulse for much conflict between the late 1940s and the late 1980s. However, arguably new ideological, political, and commercial imperatives are now encouraging intrastate conflict and insurgency amid the breakdown of the international bipolar political system and the emergence of identity politics and of many more nonstate actors. Indeed, between 1990 and 1996 alone, there were at least 98 conflicts worldwide, but only 7 of these were waged between recognized states.[1]

Various instances of contemporary insurgency have been categorized by different analysts in such terms as apolitical, primordial, traditionalist, pluralist, reformist, spiritual, separatist, and economic.[2] Certainly Islamic fundamentalism, which might be regarded more as an ideology than an expressly religious conviction, has emerged as a new imperative behind insurgency. Examples range from the struggle against the Soviets in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 to the continuing conflicts in the Philippines, Indonesia, Palestine, Algeria, the Sudan, Kashmir, Chad, and, of course, Iraq, although some of these conflicts may also be characterized in other terms such as ethnic or separatist insurgencies.

Notwithstanding new motivational impulses, however, and that insurgents increasingly are better armed, perhaps more fanatical, and, in some cases, better attuned to the information revolution than in the past, much remains the same in terms of the basic requirements for successful insurgency. Insurgency is still a highly political act arising from some sense of grievance, or upon the exploitation and manipulation of grievance. An insurgent leadership remains likely to be motivated better than the rank and file. Insurgency will still be the recourse of those initially weaker than their opponents and, although perhaps less protracted than in the past, its ultimate success may still largely depend on substantial external support. Above all, however, insurgency remains invariably a competition in government and in perceptions of legitimacy.

Insurgency or Guerrilla Warfare?

What, then, of the patterns of insurgency in Iraq, and how do they differ from, or compare with, the past? One fundamental question is whether what is being faced in Iraq is insurgency or terrorism, or perhaps merely a traditional form of guerrilla warfare or resistance. Prior to the 20th century, guerrilla warfare was understood as a purely military form of conflict—classic hit and run tactics employed by indigenous groups in opposition to foreign or colonial occupation where a conventional army either had been defeated or had never existed. Rarely did such guerrillas display any wider comprehension of the potential of irregular modes of conflict. Only in the 1930s and 1940s did guerrilla warfare became truly revolutionary in both intent and practice, with social, economic, psychological, and, especially, political elements grafted onto traditional irregular military tactics in order to radically alter the structure of a state by force. Thus, dissident groups that were initially in a minority and weaker than the authorities would seek power through a combination of subversion, propaganda, and military action. More properly, therefore, modern revolutionary guerrilla warfare was increasingly termed insurgency, guerrilla tactics being employed strategically to achieve a particular political and/or ideological end.

The transition from guerrilla warfare to insurgency does not depend, therefore, upon the size of any particular group, but upon

the intention to bring about fundamental political change through a political-military strategy of organized coercion and subversion, and, usually, also the attempt to mobilize a mass political base. While insurgents routinely might employ terror or intimidation in tactical terms, they have rarely done so at the strategic level. Consequently, perhaps it can be argued that terrorist groups, even if motivated by a similar ideology to insurgent groups, have tended to employ terrorism indiscriminately and as political symbolism without the same intention of taking over the state apparatus themselves and without any attempt to mobilize popular support.

Insurgency also implies an attempt to establish a political infrastructure based on some form of mass organization in order to cultivate popular support. There have been cases in which insurgents attempted to bypass the lengthy political preparation of a population recommended by Mao and by those who have espoused a broadly Maoist model of insurgency, and thus follow a shorter route to power. The most obvious examples are the rural *focos* inspired by Guevara and Debray in Latin America in the mid 1960s as a result of a flawed interpretation of the unique combination of circumstances that enabled Castro to succeed in Cuba between 1956 and 1959. In the same way, the belief in the ability of a small insurgent elite to exploit a minimum level of discontent and act as a catalyst for wider popular insurrection without consciously building a mass political support organization characterized the approach of the urban guerrilla groups inspired by theorists such as Marighela and Guillen in Latin America in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, none of these groups succeeded. The Maoist model itself has not always been successful. It failed in Malaya, the Philippines, Thailand, and Peru, in the latter after 17 years of preparation before the *Shining Path* actually launched its declaration of a "people's war" in May 1980. It follows, however, that those insurgencies that ultimately have been successful have been those capable of organizing a sufficiently durable political infrastructure to sustain a prolonged conflict.

The utility of the ability to prolong insurgency is equally applicable to either offensive or defensive insurgency, the former implying the seizure of power in a state, and the latter the expulsion of an invading or occupying force, or secession. One reason for the prolongation of conflict in the Maoist model of insurgency was that

the ultimate aim was always to build a conventional army capable of undertaking large scale military operations in a third, mobile phase of war, following the two earlier essentially political phases of the conflict. Building a conventional army, as did Mao and the North Vietnamese, however, has not always been essential to success when the aim of prolongation has been to raise the military and political costs for the incumbent authorities. Indeed, in many respects, for the insurgent, survival is winning. It also always has been possible to wage an effective urban campaign with far fewer insurgents than a rural campaign, but urban insurgencies have always proved vulnerable in the past.

The situation that has developed since President George W. Bush declared Operation IRAQI FREEDOM at an end on May 1, 2003, is a complex one. Among the Sunnis, a variety of groups have been identified. They are united only in the sense of having what have been called "negative" goals in opposition to U.S. presence; in seeking some return to the former status quo in which the Sunni minority have exercised power since the Ottoman period; or expressing a simple nationalist reaction to defeat.[3] Some are clearly restorationist groups drawn from the former regime, the Baa'th Party, the paramilitary *Fida'iyn,* and the Republican Guard. Some are anti-Saddam nationalist groups with no desire to see Saddam restored but resentful of U.S. and Western presence; others are Islamist groups, some members of which have been trained overseas or are foreign nationals, the latter including Syrians, Saudis, Yemenis, and Sudanese. Some activities have been the work of criminals or criminal organizations, large numbers of criminals being released at the end of the war and some certainly hiring themselves out for attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces. Indeed, the U.S. 4th Division's Taskforce Ironhorse reported in November 2003 that between 70 and 80 percent of those apprehended for making attacks in their area were paid to do so, the going rate being anything between $150 and $500.[4]

Most armed opposition has been Sunni. Some leading Sunni parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iraqi Islamic Party apparently have resolved to engage in legitimate political activities, but Sunni clerics have largely condemned the Coalition presence. By contrast, although the Coalition presence is the principal barrier

between the Shi'ites and the power denied them for so long, many Shi'ite clerics have mostly condemned the failures to restore law and order, having perhaps calculated that Sunni insurgency currently lacks the ability to transform itself into anything resembling a national movement. However, there are armed militias attached to the two main Shi'ite political parties, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and Al-Da'wa, and there is clearly potential for Shi'ite participation in violence. Indeed, since April 2004, the militia of Muqtada al-Sadr, the so-called Mahdi's Army, has engaged in significant violence after the closure of his weekly newspaper by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the arrest of his deputy. Former exiled groups such as the Iraqi National Congress and the Iraqi National Accord also maintain militias. Another armed factor in the equation is the Kurds, but they are highly unlikely to participate in any anti-Coalition insurgency. The situation is made still more complex by the tribal nature of Iraq, with its extended clan and kinship system, the CPA having recognized the problem by establishing an advisory Council of Tribal Sheikhs.[5] It has been suggested on the basis of a letter seized in January 2004 that there is an Al-Qa'eda plan to foment civil war in Iraq by attacking the Shi'ite majority, but the document also implies frustration at Iraq not proving fertile ground for jihad and foreign holy warriors.[6] The number of foreign activists in Iraq thus far appears small.

Divisions within Iraqi society, of course, have always been of major significance. Indeed, as Gertrude Bell observed during the Iraqi insurrection against British control in 1920, while all groups were equally nationalist and espoused the idea of an Islamic government, the revolt meant different things to different people. Thus, Shi'ites anticipated a theocratic state under Shariah law; Sunnis, an independent Arab state under Amir Abdullah; and "to the tribes, it meant no government at all." Interestingly, even as astute an observer as Bell believed the revolt largely a result of external agitation by the Bolsheviks and the Turks. The British prevailed in the end partly by buying off some of the tribal leaders.[7]

Therefore, although elements required for an insurgency exist in Iraq, including some early U.S. and Coalition errors, widespread resentment and alienation, "occupation fatigue," and even cash and arms, there is not yet the cohesive leadership, political vision,

strategic direction, or unifying ideology to suggest the emergence of a real insurgency. It is generally easier to mobilize mass support in a defensive rather than an offensive insurgency since occupation, for example, may prompt a fundamentally different reaction on the part of the population to insurgents playing a nationalist card. Clausewitz argued that national character shaped the suitability of a population for waging people's war and, although this is too deterministic, the nature of a particular state and its population is of considerable significance. Some insurgencies, however, may simply lack the ability to progress to a wider base of support where they represent narrow sectional interests as in conflicts based upon separatism or ethnicity. It is evident that mosques do provide some basis for the organization that is beginning to emerge among the Sunnis, but a wider sense of alienation among the majority of Shi'ites sufficient to forge a more national response in opposition to the Coalition presence would be required to generate a centralized resistance movement.[8] Indeed, in November 2003 Paul Bremer indicated there was still no reliable information on the size and structure of the various groups carrying out attacks or their leadership. In February 2004, however, the U.S. military released a list of 32 suspects believed to be involved in organizing the insurgency, headed by Mohammed Yunis al-Ahmad, a former Ba'ath official for whom a reward of $1 million was offered. Rewards of $200,000 were offered for the next top 10 names on the list, all being former regime military or party figures.

The situation in Iraq has been characterized as perhaps an example of a "net war," in which loose groups often diametrically opposed to one another gravitate towards one another to carry out attacks, trade weapons or intelligence, and disperse, never to cooperate again. Equally, the British army has tended to view its own role in Basra as an extension of the "twofold war" of conventional operations concomitant with internal security operations it experienced in first taking control of the city in March 2003. Neither suggests insurgency in the sense usually understood since 1945.[9]

Parallels with the Past: The Insurgent Challenge.

The absence of a real insurgency, however, does not make the situation less dangerous, and whatever the motivation of any

particular group, the aim is clearly to sow divisions both between the Iraqis and the Coalition and also among Iraqis themselves. It is also to raise the costs of U.S. and Western presence since there can be little expectation on the part of these various groups that they are capable of challenging the Coalition's military superiority. Indeed, far from reading *Black Hawk Down* as Saddam apparently suggested to his followers, it seems more likely opponents of the United States in Iraq have read Menachem Begin's *The Revolt*. Begin's intent, when leading the Irgun campaign in Palestine between 1945 and 1947, was to raise the political and military costs of the continued British presence sufficiently to persuade them to quit, especially as he was convinced that the British could never seriously contemplate outright suppression. Indeed, the self-imposed restraint of the British response has been likened to that of "a police state with a conscience," the choice between total repression and total withdrawal forcing the British to turn over the Palestine problem to the United Nations (UN) in September 1947.[10] The elements of Begin's campaign and that of the other Jewish insurgent group, *Lohamei Herut Yisrael* (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel or LEHI), more popularly known as the Stern Gang, are instructive. Over 58 percent of all attacks were directed at British military and police personnel, LEHI favoring taxi or truck bombs and the Irgun road mines. In all, just under two-thirds of attacks were with mines, and just under a quarter with bombs. Some attacks, such as that on the headquarters of the British Mandate secretariat in the King David Hotel in Jersualem in July 1946, or on the Haifa police headquarters in September 1947, were particularly spectacular. Subsidiary attacks were mounted against economic targets, with the railways attracting 18 percent of all attacks. The campaign was exported briefly, with the bombing of the British embassy in Rome and attacks on British servicemen in Germany and Austria, while there was a highly effective insurgent propaganda campaign, and any British measures against the insurgents were invariably followed by specific reprisals.[11]

The pattern of Iraqi activity thus far looks remarkably similar to that in Palestine with roadside bombs, which have also been used by Hezbollah in Lebanon, and other so-called improvised explosive devices; ambushes of soft-skinned vehicles; opportunistic rocket-propelled grenade and shooting attacks on military personnel;

attacks on civilian members of the Coalition authorities and foreign personnel working in some way for the Coalition; attacks on Iraqi "collaborators," most recently police and army recruits; and attacks on economic targets such as power stations, oil installations, and pipelines. There has also been an increase in the number of attacks upon "soft" targets, principally civilian gatherings. This does not reflect the tactics employed in Palestine during the Mandate but does reflect insurgencies elsewhere and an increasing confluence between insurgent and terrorist methods.

An analysis of the U.S. fatality reports produced by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) from May 2003 to March 2004 indicates that 30.8 percent of U.S. fatalities were the result of bombs or improvised explosive devices; 14.3 percent, the result of stand off weapons in terms of rocket-propelled grenades and mortars; and 10.5 percent, the result of small arms or grenades. Downed helicopters accounted for 13.1 percent of fatalities, with the remaining 30.6 percent the result of accidents of varying kinds and other nonhostile causes. It is likely that the proportion of deaths due to small arms increased substantially with the outbreak of greater violence in April 2004, but, as the communiqués relating to U.S. Marine Corps deaths are no longer made specific for operational reasons, the calculation has become more difficult.

While many of the early attacks on Coalition forces in Iraq were amateur in nature, there has been a growing sophistication, and also an increasing tendency as reported by the U.S. 2nd and 4th Divisions, towards more long-range attacks, with rifle-propelled grenades being supplemented by rocket and mortar attacks, often from improvised launchers.[12] In Aden between 1965 and 1967, there was a cognate transition from amateur attacks in which insurgents often blew themselves up—in one early attack the insurgent threw the pin rather than the grenade—to more effective and more numerous incidents. Incidents thus rose from 286 in 1965, to 540 in 1966, and to 2,900 in 1967, with grenades, road mines, and sniping taking most British lives. Similarly, a transition from short-range to long-range attacks is reminiscent of the increasing preference of the insurgents in the Dhofar province of Oman between 1965 and 1975 in shifting from short-range ambush to long-range bombardment, enabling them to withdraw more quickly. A general assumption appears to be that the

suicide bombings so familiar from the Palestinian *Intifada*, though also from the Shi'ite campaign against the Israelis in Lebanon, are more likely to be the work of foreign elements than Iraqis.[13]

It might be noted in terms of installations that a particular feature of the Iraqi revolt in 1920 was an attack on the railway system, which was the principal means of mobility for a British garrison short of both manpower and any other means of reacting quickly to events beyond possessing a few armored cars and aircraft. Indeed, the British subsequently advanced along the tracks, repairing as they went and establishing the kind of blockhouses to guard them reminiscent of the South African War. Rather similarly, blockhouses and other physical barriers such as wiring the Trans-Jordanian frontier were utilized by the British in response to the "Arab Revolt" in Palestine between 1936 and 1939, along with a "village occupation" policy and intensive patrolling.[14]

As a pre-World War II movement, the "Arab Revolt" was essentially an old-fashioned guerrilla war against the British, lacking much of the political sophistication associated with the genuine insurgencies faced by the British in Palestine after the war and later in Aden. There was certainly a higher guerrilla organization centered in the Arab High Committee led by the Mufti of Jerusalem, a degree of coordination in attacks on Jewish settlements and upon pipelines and railways, and wide support for the guerrillas in terms of the provision of food, shelter, and recruits in the villages, hence the British adoption of the village occupation policy. The heightened British response in 1938, however, led to a rapid decline in the level of violence, stifling any escalation of the situation into an insurgency. In some respects, therefore, the situation in Iraq parallels the events in Palestine in 1936 and 1937, especially as a Jewish population, convinced that the British could not defend their settlements, began to take the law into their own hands, deploying their own military units. By contrast, although the pattern of military activity by the Irgun in 1945-47, and by the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the smaller Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) in the case of Aden, are entirely similar to that in Iraq since 2003, the Irgun and the Marxist NLF had a far higher degree of organization than anything yet experienced in Iraq. Moreover, the aims and ideologies were abundantly clear. While not obviously a Middle

Eastern insurgency, the campaign of Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston (EOKA) against the British on Cyprus between 1955 and 1959 also is remarkably similar to that of the Irgun, albeit that the aim was not independence but union with Greece.

Parallels with the Past: Counterinsurgent Response.

In terms of the response to the situation in Iraq, there are clearly some experiences of Arab or Islamic insurgency that sound appropriate warning notes. The French experience in Algeria between 1956 and 1962, for example, has some similarities, albeit that the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) was largely secular in character. There were clear divisions between Arabs and Berbers within the nationalist movement, and popular support, or rather acquiescence on the part of the population, was ensured through terror and intimidation rather than the FLN projecting a coherent alternative social and political order. Indeed, there was something of a civil war between Muslims, some 180,000 of whom fought for the French. The French, however, largely failed to capitalize on divisions among their opponents, and made errors in decapitating a relatively moderate internal Muslim political party in 1954, the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLD), and the external moderate leadership of the FLN by forcing down Ahmed Ben Bell's aircraft inside Algeria in October 1956. Moreover, the French squandered the advantage of their long-term familiarity with Algeria and its peoples by declining to consider a future for Algeria other than as a part of metropolitan France and not seriously addressing Muslim political and socio-economic grievances. The ability of the FLN to find refuge across international frontiers was largely nullified by the construction of physical barriers along the Moroccan and Tunisian frontiers, and French military operations were generally successful in both urban and rural areas. But in almost every respect, the attempt to win hearts and minds failed because it was carried out in ways that alienated, rather than won, support

Apart from being very thinly spread, the French Special Administrative Sections and Urban Administrative Sections tasked with winning hearts and minds were not always sensitive to local customs, tended to view the Muslim population as vulnerable to FLN

contagion, and too readily confused acquiescence with acceptance of the imposition of an alien culture. Moreover, winning hearts and minds sat uneasily with large-scale resettlement, the deliberate fostering of an internal refugee problem, and the brutal methods utilized to win the Battle of Algiers in 1957, in which intelligence was gained primarily through systematic torture of detainees. In the process, there was increasing international criticism of France, increasing domestic opposition to the war in France itself, and damaging politicization of the army.[15]

Israeli counterinsurgency methods are also to be avoided; the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) taking a heavy-handed approach and, in keeping with its offensive conventional doctrine, regarding instant retaliation as a means of destroying those responsible for attacks and of longer-term attrition of the insurgent threat. There has also been targeting of specific individuals since 1992 in the belief that the removal of key members of the opposing infrastructure will paralyze opponents and give full rein to internal rivalries among those seeking to succeed to the leadership. It has to be said, however, that the systematic elimination of leaders of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah has not diminished markedly the incidence of attacks and seemingly serves to provoke further hostility to the Israelis not only among the Shi'ites of southern Lebanon, but among the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. If anything, what is sometimes called deterrence by punishment has entrenched anti-Israeli opinion.[16]

It can also be noted that the South Lebanese Army (SLA), formed originally in 1978 and used by the Israelis in the security zone of southern Lebanon from 1982 onwards to man check points and border fortifications and to undertake some motorized patrolling, was not a success. It not only lacked sufficient training but also was seen as Israeli puppet. The perception was compounded by the Israelis themselves viewing the SLA as mercenary auxiliaries. Defections from it increased markedly after 1995, and the Israelis abandoned it when they withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.[17] As the issue of the SLA raises the question of a constabulary or border force, it is at least possible that the intended revival by the U.S. Marine Corps of a Combined Action Program (CAP) may yield considerable benefits, the CAP scheme as applied in Vietnam being itself something of a legacy of Marine cooperation with U.S.-raised gendarmerie in

campaigns such as those in Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic in the 1920s and early 1930s.[18]

In terms of the British responses to insurgency in the Middle East, the army's offensive operations in Palestine usually consisted of cordon and search, over 170 such operations being mounted at battalion or brigade level, but with 25 percent bringing no results at all and only exposing troops to false accusations of brutality or looting. Moreover, although the British eventually deployed 90,000 men, large numbers had to be used solely to guard static installations such as the railways and the oil pipelines. Two large-scale operations were held. Operation AGATHA between June and July 1946 involved 10,000 troops in a search of three cities and over 30 settlements. Operation SHARK in July and August that same year employed 21,000 troops in imposing a 36-hour curfew on Tel Aviv's population of 170,000 and netting 787 suspects although Begin escaped by hiding in a secret compartment for 4 days.[19]

Aden was a similar failure for the British but largely as a result of the premature announcement by the Labour government in 1966 of its intention to leave South Arabia, undermining at a stroke the authorities of the Federation of South Arabia and the whole counterinsurgency effort. Increasingly, indeed, federal officials and even local governments in the emirates, sultanates, and sheikhdoms either left the country altogether or threw in their lot with the insurgent movements. In any case, intelligence had never been forthcoming freely from the population, and there was now little incentive to cooperate. Arab members of the Special Branch already had been targeted by the insurgents, and the local police forces were thoroughly infiltrated, both the South Arabian Police and Aden Armed Police mutinying in one particularly notorious incident in June 1967, killing 22 British servicemen and taking control of the Crater district of Aden for 15 days until order was restored.[20]

The Dhofar campaign, however, was a major success, the Omani response being guided by a British Army Training Team (BATT) drawn from the Special Air Service and by various seconded or contracted British officers. Imperial Iranian and Jordanian forces also arrived to assist in 1973 and 1974, respectively. After 2 years in which the war was effectively being lost, within 24 hours of the assumption of power by Sultan Qaboos in July 1970, a substantial

political and socio-economic plan for the regeneration of the previously neglected Dhofar province was announced. The Dhofar Development Committee supervised the expenditure of £218 million between 1971 and 1975 and also acted as the coordinating body of the civil-military effort at provincial level. Spearheading the coordinated effort on the jebel were the Civil Action Teams. They established centers, dug wells as a focus for a nomadic population, and introduced educational and medical facilities, as well as effecting longer-term improvements in cattle stocks and market opportunities for local goods. The process, however, was greatly assisted by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) insurgents who were Marxists and attempted to impose an ideology that was anathema to the two fundamental principles of jebali life, namely Islam and the tribal system. Indeed, it led directly to defections from PFLOAG, these defectors becoming the nucleus of the pseudo units known as *firqat*. An effective propaganda campaign built on the slogan, "Islam is our Way, Freedom is our Aim," and the establishment of successive physical barriers across PFLOAG infiltration routes from Yemen completed the process of separating insurgents from a population that increasingly had a vested interest in the status quo.[21]

While the Dhofar represents very much a model campaign in an Islamic country, the problem was of a far lesser magnitude to that existing in Iraq. Indeed, the sheer scale of the reconstruction required in Iraq following so many years with a decaying infrastructure and a repressive regime, in which survival depended upon maintaining a low profile, is immense. There has been no such reconstruction and nation-building problem since the reintegration of Germany and Japan into the international community after World War II: in neither of those cases, however, was there an insurgency. Perhaps Reconstruction after the American Civil War is a better analogy, but if some political and other problems are similar, there is little comparison between the mid-19th century and the 21st century in terms of expectations of social and economic requirements for modern life.[22]

"Economic and Quality of Life Indicators" in Iraq drawn up by the Brookings Institution, for example, deal in such matters as improvements in the output of megawatts of electricity; millions of

barrels of oil and millions of litres of diesel, kerosene, gasoline, and potable water produced each day; the child immunization rate; and crime and unemployment rates. In the case of the U.S. 4th Division's Taskforce Ironhorse, there were 2,012 civic action projects underway in November 2003, with 1,063 having already been completed, yet only $18.4 million of $139.8 million worth of projects had been spent. In the area of the Polish-led International Division, a key focus was creating 67,000 jobs as part of the overall target by the Coalition Provisional Authority of creating 300,000 jobs. It is also intended to raise 40,000 men for the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps by April 2004, and 71,000 policemen and 40,000 men for the new army by July 2004.[23] The scale of the military effort is also considerable. The U.S. 4th Division's Taskforce Ironhorse, for example, undertook five successive operational phases between June 8-November 6, 2003, of which Operation IVY NEEDLE from August 11-September 9 alone involved 182 raids, 11,590 Coalition-only patrols, 2,285 joint patrols, 373 flash checkpoints, and 905 static checkpoints. In all, up to November 6, 2003, there had been 361 raids, 21,877 Coalition-only patrols, 3,504 joint patrols, 2,653 static checkpoints, 1,919 flash checkpoints, and 843 ambushes.[24]

A Way Ahead?

One member of the CPA apparently has a sign hanging in his office which proclaims: "End State: A durable peace for a united and stable, democratic Iraq that provides effective and representative government for and by the Iraqi people; is underpinned by new and protected freedoms and a growing market economy; and no longer poses a threat to its neighbours or international security and is able to defend itself."[25] How that ambitious mission statement might be achieved, of course, is the question, especially given the need to reconcile a revived centralized authority with more local forms of authority and the nature of the differing racial, religious, and tribal communities in an artificial creation with no democratic tradition such as Iraq. Much will depend upon the earliest possible establishment of a government that enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of a majority of Iraqis. In the meantime, however, the restoration of law and order and the reduction of violence to an acceptable level

will best help to create a situation in which stable government can emerge and function. The emphasis upon an "acceptable level of violence," a phrase used by a British Home Secretary, Reginald Maulding, to describe the government aim in Northern Ireland in 1971, is a deliberate one, given the potential for insurgencies to be sustained over a considerable period of time.

It has been suggested above that the basic patterns of insurgency have not changed materially, and, indeed, that there are similarities between the emerging situation in Iraq and some earlier insurgencies in the Middle East. It follows, therefore, that the essentials of counterinsurgency also have remained fairly constant and that the kind of basic requirements for success that can be identified in campaigns since 1945 still hold good. These requirements are, first, a recognition of the need for a political rather than a purely military response to insurgency; second, a need for coordination of the civil and military response; third, a need for the coordination of intelligence; fourth, a need to separate insurgents from the population; fifth, a need for the appropriate use of military force, which generally means the minimum necessary in any given situation; and, last, the need to implement long-term reform to address the grievances that led to support for the insurgency in the first place.[26] These are as applicable to offensive or defensive insurgency as to irregular conflicts falling short of insurgency. Equally, they are as applicable to Iraq as they were once to the British mandate in Palestine, or to Aden, Algeria, and Oman. Where they were not adhered to, as in Palestine, Aden, and Algeria, counterinsurgency failed; where it was, as in the Dhofar, counterinsurgency succeeded.

Thus, in Palestine, Aden, and Algeria, the political response to insurgency was weak. In Algeria, the French declined to address Arab political and socio-economic aspirations through the belief that it was part of metropolitan France: independence was not on offer, and there was also a substantial European settler population. In the case of Palestine and Aden, Labour governments were not prepared to make the long-term commitment to law and order required to demonstrate an intention to defeat insurgency. While there was a reasonable degree of coordination of civil and military response in Algeria, albeit with a heavy military influence, there was frequently a mismatch of political and military objectives in

Palestine and Aden. Intelligence in both Palestine and Aden was exceedingly poor through insurgent infiltration of the police forces and the obvious lack of long-term reward for cooperation with British authorities soon to depart. In Algeria, of course, intelligence was often obtained through institutionalized torture, where the attempt to separate insurgents from population by the erection of physical barriers and through large–scale resettlement also tended to alienate the population rather than win hearts and minds. With the population primarily in urban concentrations in Palestine and Aden, it was not practicable to attempt resettlement, and attempts to separate insurgent from population by means of propaganda was notably unsuccessful. The heavy-handed French military approach to operations in Algeria certainly resulted in the elimination of much of the FLN by 1960, but military success could not be translated into political success, given those other failings already outlined. British military operations in Aden were more sophisticated than the crude cordon and search methods used in Palestine but, again, military success was of little account, given the political imperative to cut and run.

In Oman, of course, as in other successful counterinsurgency campaigns such as those in Malaya (1948-60), Kenya (1952-60), and Borneo (1962-66), the political response was eventually a measured one, with clear political objectives articulated for the population, with real incentives laid out for the maintenance of the status quo. Coordination of the civil and military response was ensured through a sophisticated committee structure, which embraced intelligence services. A combination of physical and psychological measures when combined with political incentives successfully isolated the insurgents from the population, while the use of minimum force ensured that the population was not alienated from the security forces. Moreover, the incentives on offer had sufficient long-term promise in addressing political and other grievances to prevent any recurrence of insurgency. Malaysia (embracing both Malaya and Borneo) and Oman remain stable polities and, while hardly a shining example of good governance, Kenya also has avoided much of the bloodshed that has destabilized so many other post-independence African states.

These are essentially British principles and, although there have been failures—significantly, mostly urban campaigns—the

British army has been far more successful than most in combating insurgency. While Middle Eastern examples have been stressed so far, there are also lessons to be learned from the British experience in tackling an organization which displays characteristics of both an insurgent and a terrorist group. It has operated principally in an urban environment but also in a rural environment, has enjoyed refuge across an international frontier, and has manipulated the situation within a deeply divided community. That experience, of course, is that in Northern Ireland, a long-running threat since 1969 despite a supposed cease-fire in effect since 1997. It can be noted that the British army indeed has achieved an acceptable level of violence, but with a substantially larger ratio of security forces to population than is currently in Iraq. In Northern Ireland, it has been 20 per 1,000 inhabitants, whereas in Iraq, it is currently 6.1 per 1,000.[27] There was also a useful continuity and familiarity with operational areas established through a system of some battalions serving long tours and others shorter tours of 2.5 years and 6 months, respectively.

Some special forces were deployed in Northern Ireland and, most certainly, as already indicated, in Dhofar, albeit in support of larger conventional forces. It is not that long ago that Rod Paschall suggested that counterinsurgency was so destructive of military "norms" that it should be contracted out to private security organizations.[28] To some extent, there has been something of a privatization of certain security roles in Iraq while, of course, U.S. and British special forces are particularly involved in operations in Afghanistan, which seem, arguably, atypically suited to them in collaboration with local forces.[29] An ongoing argument appears to be that counterinsurgency should be the preserve of special forces, itself a reflection of a much older debate in the U.S. military both before and after the Vietnam experience. Equally, there has been an argument about the lack of "light" infantry available initially for post-war stabilization operations in Iraq. One should also be mindful that it is often the case that the least sophisticated armies are the best practitioners of counterinsurgency because lack of resources compel them to keep it simple and engage principally at the same level as their opponents. Indeed, as long ago as 1887, Charles Callwell rightly noted that, in small wars, it was "the disciplined army that is obliged to conform to the methods of those of adversaries infinitely inferior in intelligence and armament."[30]

This would suggest that, while there is a need for specialized forces in some cases, and, on occasion, for heavier forces in counterinsurgency, ideally there is a need for a force capable of undertaking a variety of roles from within its own capabilities. It also helps if there is a tradition of small wars experience on which to draw. There is such tradition within the U.S. armed forces. Recently, the Strategic Issues Research Institute has suggested that Charles Gwynn's *Imperial Policing* of 1934 be issued to U.S. forces.[31] In many ways, Gwynn's work grew from that of Callwell in developing principles for British counterinsurgency but notably without taking any account of wider political issues. That was not a failing of another text, which also drew its inspiration from Callwell and which is more readily available to U.S. audiences, namely the two editions of the *Small Wars Manual* of 1935 and 1940 developed by the U.S. Marine Corps. For all that there are contradictions and some major assumptions in the *Small Wars Manual*, it remains distinctly useful for those facing the challenges of Iraq. Too often, conventional armed forces have had to learn the same lessons over and over again when the solutions have been within reach in their own past.

The scale of the problem may be far greater in Iraq than in past Islamic and Middle Eastern insurgencies or, for that matter, the Marine Corps experience in Central America and the Caribbean in the 1920s and 1930s. The process may also be far longer, but the geo-strategic prize is almost inestimable.

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