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MILITARY INTERVENTION AND NATION-BUILDING: TWO FOLDS OF THE SAME COIN

Lieutenant-Commander J.C.S. Therriault

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**MILITARY INTERVENTION AND NATION-BUILDING:
TWO FOLDS OF THE SAME COIN**

By Lieutenant-Commander J.C.S. Therriault
Par le capitaine de corvette J.C.S. Therriault

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ABSTRACT

Counter-insurgency (COIN), as a strategic and operational art to 'bring order' to a restive population, has always been a failed policy option. The problem,… is that a foreign country, committing itself to rebuild or reshape another country's political and social dynamics is a fool's errand.

- John Bruni, *The Inadequacy of Counter-insurgency as Strategy*

1.   INTRODUCTION

Recent conflicts fought in Afghanistan and Iraq have resulted in foreign actors and military forces simultaneously conducting combat operations against insurgents and performing nation-building such as security sector reforms, infrastructure building, as well as economic and institutional development. These two conflicts in particular have pressed western militaries in reviewing their counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine and tactics. The most prominent conclusion that seemed to have emerged from these reviews is the need to fight the insurgents while concurrently gaining popular support and rebuilding national institutions and capabilities.[1] These conclusions may have been premature however. The high cost of these long wars for the invaders and the mounting civilian strife for the target nation may not substantiate attempting to rebuild a nation especially at a time when the concerns are either to fight the authorities and their foreign supporters in the case of insurgents and to re-establish security by the rest of society. Few care to or can afford to focus on reconstruction and institutionalization while the

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[1]   See Nigel Aylwin-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations," *Military Review*, November-December (2005): 2-15; Howard G. Coombs, "Canadian Whole of Government Operations: Kandahar – 09/2010 – 07/2011," *Conference of Defence Association Institute*, Ottawa: December 2012; see also Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire, "The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management: A Critical Analysis and Perspective," accessed 12 December 2012, http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/IRSEM_TheComprehensiveApproachtoCivilMilitaryCrisisManagement.pdf; as well as Mick Ryan, "The Military and Reconstruction Operations," *Parameters* (Winter 2007-08): 58-70; and many more articles on the subject.

insurgency is ongoing. Most of the population is either attempting to survive human catastrophes or trying to benefit from war related economic activities.[2]

Foreign aid in the forms of military assistance and reconstruction has proven extremely costly to contributors conducting simultaneous COIN and nation-building. The *United States government Counterinsurgency Guide* provides an extensive list of gloomy qualifiers that describe a counter-insurgency to include the following highlights: *Complex; population-centric; violent; difficult; controversial; ambiguous; long-duration and finally high-cost*.[3] In most cases, the "return on investment" has been elusive, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq as will be demonstrated later in this analysis. Worse yet, after more than ten years of broad based COIN operations, insurgencies remain strong in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraqi politics are in turmoil with a weak economy and inter-ethnic tensions remain high with regular acts of violence and terrorist attacks.[4] In Afghanistan, where little significant nation-building progress has been achieved most analysts believe there is no foreseeable chance for peace or survival of the democratic yet corrupt government.[5] Alternatively, there has been peace in Chechnya and economically viable reconstruction has progressed steadily where Russia began nation-building only after crushing the insurgency around 2005.[6]

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[2]   Michael Ignatieff, "State Failure and Nation Building," in *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal, and Political Dilemmas*, ed. J.L. Holzgrefe and Robert O. Keohane, 299-321 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[3]   Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State. *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, January 2009*. www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/pmppt.

[4]   The New York Times. "Iraq." Last modified 4 December 2012. http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iraq/index.html

[5]   See the various articles in the publication edited by Nick Turse, *The Case for Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (London: Verso 2010) or the salient work of Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, *Can Intervention Work?* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012).

[6]   See *The Christian Science Monitor*, "War-Ravaged Chechnya Shows a Stunning Rebirth – But at What Price?" Accessed 9 February 2013, http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2012/0321/War-ravaged-Chechnya-shows-a-stunning-rebirth-but-at-what-price, by Fred Weir; and *The Guardian*, "There is

Other threats that challenges nation-building during an insurgency include: shadow governance; sabotage of reconstruction efforts; diversion and targeting of humanitarian aid; systemic corruption; kidnapping for profit; political and worker assassinations; clashing military and NGO endeavors; regional interference by proxies and so on. Simply put, the challenge is enormous and beyond the grasp of Western nation given the high cost and the highly confined moral tactics that are acceptable and usable by public opinion standards. Indeed, if the COIN strategy involving fighting, gaining popular support, and rebuilding is not new, the only times it has proven successful has been when unethical tactics by contemporary standards were used. The implementation of massive population resettlement in Malaya to separate the insurgents from the population comes to mind.[7] Otherwise, most of these lessons were learned from COIN failures such as French COIN in Algeria, French and American COIN in Vietnam or Chinese COIN against Mao Tse-Tung – not actual successes.[8]

Perhaps it is time to reconsider the value of engaging in protracted broad base counter-insurgency and consider conducting limited and focused military intervention such as punitive actions when a threat must be engaged. It is the thesis of this study that simultaneously fighting an insurgency and conducting nation-building is not productive and has little chance of success. If necessary, only once an insurgency has been eliminated should nation-building be attempted.

Peace. We Have a New Airport. People Are Satisfied," accessed 9 February 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/22/russia, by Luke Harding.
[7]   Jason, Thomas, "Romancing the COIN," *Small Wars Journal* (13 March 2012): 2 http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/romancing-the-coin.
[8]   *Ibid*.

Objective and Methodology

> *The high cost in blood and treasure of these interventions and their long duration should make future administrations extremely reluctant to undertake these kinds of mission… The better course is to narrowly target adversaries that may be trying to take advantage of the situations… We do not believe it would be prudent to intervene with large ground forces with the goal of re-establishing stable governing authorities.*
>
> *- United States Defense Advisory Committee, A New US Defense Strategy for a New Era: Military Superiority, Agility, and Efficiency*

This paper aims to echo the views stated above by the United States Defense Advisory Committee and more specifically to demonstrate why these views should be compelling for any state considering fighting an insurgency and simultaneously conducting nation-building. To achieve this aim, this paper will conduct three case studies, namely the ongoing NATO counter-insurgency in Afghanistan, the US-led coalition attempts to establish security and rebuild Iraq after the invasion of 2003, and the late Russian wars in Chechnya. Before conducting the analysis of the three cases and draw conclusions, it would be prudent to inform the reader on the characteristics of insurgencies and the associated counter-insurgency strategies as well as what is implied by nation-building in contemporary terms.

2.   COUNTER-INSURGENCY AND NATION-BUILDING

Characteristics of Counter-insurgency

> *These are wars without front lines, without neatly defined starting and*
> *end points. They are messy, bloody affairs, in which attackers,*
> *typically without uniforms, engage in hit-and-run raids and often*
> *target civilians. They are, in short, guerilla wars, and they are deadly.*

> - Max Boot, *The Guerilla Myth*

What is counter-insurgency or COIN for short? Clearly, COIN aims to defeat an insurgency. But what is an insurgency? The United States government provides an effective definition and defines insurgency as "…the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region."[9] In classical COIN, a functioning government reacts to politically challenging local insurgents and attempts to defeat them using its security forces.[10] Although this type of COIN still applies in some regions today such as in Sri Lanka, it has become more common in contemporary time to see COIN conducted where insurgencies are born in failing states and where local authorities are struggling to rule such as in Somalia or as a result of a foreign invasions such as in Iraq in its early phase.[11] The cases of Sri Lanka and Somalia would be qualified as *revolutionary* insurgencies, which target local authorities. The case of Iraq before the U.S. withdrawal is best defined as a *resistance* insurgency, where insurgents primarily

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[9]   Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, January 2009*, www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/pmppt.
[10]   David Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency Redux," *Survival* 48, no. 4 (December 2006): 2.
[11]   *Ibid*, 2-3.

targeted invaders.[12] The case of Afghanistan would likely be both revolutionary and resistance in nature as will be further studied in the case study.

The conduct of counter-insurgency is a strategy, not a type of warfare;[13] however, insurgencies generally involve an asymmetric type of warfare – often called *guerilla* – where insurgents have limited fighting resources and the counter-insurgents have powerful military and security organizations. Guerilla "…is the tactic of last resort for those too weak to create regular armies."[14] Also coined *irregular* or *unconventional* warfare, guerilla is not a new or emergent type of warfare. Guerilla has been around since the early days of humankind. As highlighted by military historian Max Boot, irregular warfare is a misnomer as it has been the norm of armed conflicts throughout history, not the exception.[15]

Because of the political and polarizing nature of insurgencies, the resulting conflicts by and large affect society as a whole rather than be isolated to combatants. Insurgents are usually members of society who have decided to violently rise against authorities or invaders. The strength of an insurgency lies in its ability to win and maintain the support of the population, which it hopes will provide a broad support base for resources, safe areas, and intelligence.[16] While the significance of the population may have often been ignored or little considered in classic COIN, such as during Napoleon's invasion of Spain in early 19th century,[17] contemporary COIN has placed the population

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[12]   David Kilcullen, 4.
[13]   *Ibid*.
[14]   Max Boot, "The Guerilla Myth," *The Wall Street Journal – The Saturday Essay*, 18 January 2013, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323596204578243702404190338.html.
[15]   *Ibid*.
[16]   George Friedman, "The End of Counterinsurgency and the Scalable Force," *Stratfor,* 5 June 2012, http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/end-counterinsurgency-and-scalable-force.

at the centre of the strategy. In addition to targeting insurgents in a conventional way, the strategy involves isolating the population from the insurgents' influence, mentoring and supporting local governance, offering economic incentives, and protecting the population from insurgents' attacks.[18] There are many players influencing the orientation of an insurgency such as the leadership of all parties, local governance, foreign interests, members of the fighting forces, but the population is the one that gets to choose side or not: those in favour of the insurgency; those supporting the counter-insurgents; and those trying to make the best of a bad situation.[19]

To isolate the insurgents, COIN is to a great extent a battle to rally the population – especially those undecided who to support – to the side of the alleged legitimate government. This strategy is often called *winning hearts and minds*. Innumerable contemporary military reports and lessons learned analysis recommended that military forces include in depth cultural awareness and foreign social skills to win hearts and mind in order to win the information war and gain support.[20] This strategy has recently been criticized for a number of reasons. First that it is hubris for foreigners – often perceived as invaders – to believe that they can easily and rapidly adapt to a foreign culture and its complexities to influence their behaviour. Worse yet, foreign counter-insurgents often attempt to prop a government that for obvious reasons, has not been serving or protecting

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[17]   George W. Jr. Smith, "Avoiding a Napoleonic Ulcer: Bridging the Gap of Cultural Intelligence (Or Have we Focussed on the Wrong Transformation?)," Essay's 2004, Marine Corps War College, 2004.
[18]   George Friedman.
[19]   John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (July-August 2005): 22.
[20]   A good example is the following recent report from the U.S.: Army Department of the Army – US Army Counterinsurgency Center, *Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned* (Fort Leavenworth U.S.A., 16 November 2011), 11.

its own people, or a section of the population in the first place.[21] This is particularly a

problem when supporting or "selecting" a specific authority that may be partial to an

ethnic or religious group over another because that group has the monopoly on national

power.[22] Max Booth explains that in such circumstances, reality is that winning hearts

and minds is not achieved by nice gestures such as providing supplies and attempting to

gain acceptance among the locals, but rather by being less threatening than the insurgents

and actually retaining control of the population.[23] Being less threatening than the

insurgents implies limiting the level of violence to fight the insurgency so that the

population does not become a regular target. This means that counter-insurgents must

expose themselves to threats in order to come in close contact to insurgents hiding within

the population rather than targeting large areas resulting in significant collateral

damages.[24]

      Classic insurgencies were generally localized within a specific state, but

contemporary insurgencies often cross borders linked by ethnicity, religion or other

cultural relationships.[25] This provides additional safe havens to insurgents that can better

protect themselves from COIN forces, which may not be allowed to operate within

adjacent sovereign territories. Regional states and non-state stakeholders may have

interests in keeping a neighbouring insurgency alive and perhaps strengthening it;

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[21]   John Bruni, 1-2.
[22]   *Ibid*, 2
[23]   Max Booth, 4.
[24]   John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (July-August 2005): 24.
[25]   *Ibid*, 22.

therefore, the role of external agents can be significant. Support for the insurgents can also be transnational, beyond the immediate region.[26]

To better situate the coming case studies, it may be important to consider how insurgencies evolve and end. According to Gary Anderson, U.S. special advisor on counter-insurgency, there are four ways an insurgency can end: The insurgents win, depose the government and establish their own authorities which may or may not gain legitimacy; alternatively, the insurgency is crushed by force, often with devastating effects on society; third, the insurgency is deteriorated to the point where regular domestic policing activities can deal with it; and finally, through negotiations and compromises.[27] History has shown that no matter how an insurgency ends, it is always a long struggle. The think-tank RAND Corporation conducted a review of insurgencies since the Second World War that showed that successful counterinsurgency campaigns last 14 years on average and that unsuccessful COIN last for an average of 11 years. It is not uncommon for campaigns to last for more than 20 years.[28]

The many factors and characteristics of insurgencies discussed above influence the direction an insurgency will take and how COIN can best deal with the struggle. In any case, conducting COIN is a complex endeavour that requires significant resources from any government and its security forces, within its own country or abroad.

Some military forces have attempted to adapt to complex contemporary operations by using its military forces on multi-levels. U.S. Marine General Charles Krulak introduced the concept of the *three-block war* where forces may simultaneously be

[26]   David Kilcullen, 4.
[27]   Gary Anderson, "The Closers (Part 1): How Insurgencies End," *Small Wars Journal* (30 January 2011): 1-3.
[28]   Seth G. Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," *RAND*, Counterinsurgency Study Vol. 4. (2008): 10. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG595.html.

engaged in high intensity fights in one area, attempting to stabilize another, as well as being able to bring humanitarian aid to a third area.[29] Many states conducting expeditionary COIN – especially Western nations – have pushed further the scale of their efforts to enable weak or failing states by broadening their missions to include nation-building.

Contemporary Nation-building and COIN

> *Direct interventions and nation-building operations are enormously*
> *expensive under the best of circumstances (no armed opponents and a*
> *willing population); they can cost billions of dollars a week when*
> *actively opposed by irregular enemies.*
>
> - U.S. Department of Defence, *Military Support to Indirect Security*
> *and Stability Surge Operations*

To further shield a society from the woes of an insurgency and enable rapid recovery, contemporary expeditionary COIN has generally incorporated conducting social development such as security sector reforms, infrastructure building, as well as economic and institutional development. This non-warfare (non-kinetic in military jargon) aspect of COIN has generally been labeled *nation-building*. However, nation-building in its original sense relates to the coming together of people forming a *common identity* who will form a homogenous nation and perhaps evolve into a state.[30] It has been proposed that to build or rebuild a nation, two objectives must be achieved following a pre-condition: First establishing a representative government; and second, developing

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[29] Charles Krulak, "The Three Block War: Fighting in Urban Areas," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 64, Iss. 5 (15 December 1997): 139-141.

[30] Carolyn Stephenson, "Nation Building," *Beyond Intractability*, January 2005, http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/nation-building

institutions and an economic base for prosperity; however, security must be established as the pre-condition for success.[31] This is a multi-year process, and in fact, has been a multi-century development in the past. In the case of Europe, it is estimated that it took 300 to 500 years for some nations to be established in an orderly manner.[32] In contemporary terms, nation-building supported or led by foreign entities is a different experiment that faces many challenges, especially when conducted over a short period and attempted in a time of insecurity such as during an insurgency.

A first challenge is the ability to conduct nation-building. Conducting nation-building in a foreign land is akin to attempting to win *hearts and mind*. It is likely to be beyond counter-insurgents' grasp to develop programs effectively adapted to the particular culture and environmental circumstances to allow effective nation-building. As explained by Colin Gray, professor of international politics: "Most especially they cannot be built by well-meaning but culturally arrogant foreign social scientists.… Nations build themselves by and through historical experience."[33] This view has been highlighted in particular by research on the effectiveness of Western aid since decolonization in Africa and Asia. William Easterly, professor of economics, found that what seems to have worked best in failing states is empowering individuals in finding local solutions rather than bolstering bad governments and bringing Western ideas and methods.[34]

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[31]   Jayne A. Carson, "Nation-Building, The American Way" (Strategy Research Paper, U.S. Army War College, 7 April 2003), 2.

[32]   Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Publishers, 1996), 23.

[33]   Colin Gray, "Concept Failure? COIN, Counterinsurgency, and Strategic Theory," *Prism* 3 No. 3 (June 2012): 29.

[34]   William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done so Much Ill and so Little Good* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006).

Ignorance and misunderstanding of the local social fabric is a significant problem during nation-building by foreigners. The distribution of aid, local contracting, and assistance to local governance among the likely many factions, tribes, ethnic or religious groups can be delicate. The slightest sign of uneven distribution can result in perceived favoritism with surprising damaging effects on the counter-insurgents' credibility.[35] The local population and the counter-insurgents often have different interests. Despite appearing supportive of counter-insurgents' stabilization efforts, local powerbrokers do not always work towards peace and have hidden agendas.[36]

Not only can a foreign nation-building program be ill-designed due to complex social characteristics, but the mere presence of foreign counter-insurgents and externally-led nation-building activities can have insidious effects. Large military interventions such as COIN and nation-building can bring local corruption, artificial economies, and power struggles among surfacing powerbrokers. Corruption during conflict is often used to gain control and power over scant resources as a mean to survive, bypassing inefficient bureaucracy, or for pure profiteering.[37] Artificial economies can develop to sustain the temporary large forces and civilian agencies conducting COIN and nation-building. Such *synthetic* markets disappear and often collapse the local economy with the departure of foreigners.[38]

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[35]   Mick Ryan, "The Military and Reconstruction Operations." *Parameters* (Winter 2007-08): 63-64.

[36]   Cécile Wendling, "The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management: A critical Analysis and Perspective," Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire (1 January 2010), 88 http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/IRSEM_TheComprehensiveApproachtoCivilMilitaryCrisisManagement.pdf.

[37]   Alfred Bridi and Craig Fagan, "After the Conflict: Nation-building and Corruption," *Transparency International* – Working Paper No. 4 (2010): 2.

[38]   This is particularly apparent with the large NATO deployment in Afghanistan. See Kitty Logan, "Afghanistan business owners foresee collapse of "artificial" economy when NATO leaves," *CBS News*, 5 September 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-57506391-503543/afghanistan-business-owners-foresee-collapse-of-artificial-economy-when-nato-leaves/.

Another challenge rests in the capacity to effectively conduct nation-building. States often have large expeditionary military forces but few if any have equivalent expeditionary capabilities among their usually small foreign relation offices, foreign aid agencies, or any other national support agencies.[39] Consequently, nation-building efforts are often left to their military forces, which have little skills, un-related training, or lack the required manpower to conduct such tasks.[40] Many military forces involved in contemporary COIN have conducted stability operations to attempt nation-building in the absence of sufficient and more holistic national capabilities. For all intended purposes, stability operation is simply a military term to describe the more general concept of nation-building.[41]

Despite limited non-military resources, states conducting expeditionary COIN have recently attempted to deal with failing state crisis by implementing what is often called the *comprehensive approach*. The comprehensive approach can be defined "… as an attempt to establish greater cooperation between international and local, military and civilian actors, in order to improve the efficiency of their action in times of crisis by combining three levers: security, governance and development."[42] The contemporary concept took shape in the 90's when the international community was faced with such crisis as Somalia, Mozambique, Bosnia, Kosovo and many more where human security was perceived as a primary motivation to intervene. The concept has recently been further developed around the Afghan crisis following the NATO counter-terrorism measures in

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[39]   Adam Shilling, "Nation-building, Stability Operations and Prophylactic COIN," *Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute* (5 May 2010), 4-5.
http://pksoi.army.mil/PKM/publications/perspective/perspectivereview.cfm?perspectiveID=10.
[40]   Nigel Aylwin-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations," *Military Review*. November-December (2005): 5.
[41]   Adam Shilling, 3.
[42]   Cécile Wendling, 25.

the country.[43] Years of experimentation with the comprehensive approach have

highlighted mostly challenges to participating organizations: difficulty in achieving

civilian-military cooperation and disagreements on the concept; the level of involvement

by the contributing nations and financial partaking; difficulty in establishing sufficient

expeditionary civilian capacity; lack of information-sharing given the various national

interests; unequal relationships between military organizations such as NATO and the

UN; tensions within participating organizations; the limited skills and resources of

military organizations outside combat operations; uneasy military interaction with NGO;

competition between UN and NGO aid programs; and the perceived lack of neutrality of

participating countries by NGO.[44]

In addition to the challenges of developing sufficient skills and capacity to

effectively conduct nation-building, the absence of security may very well be the single

largest obstacle to success. As acknowledged by Mick Ryan, a senior Australian Army

officer who served in Afghanistan, only with enhanced security can reconstruction be

effective.[45] The celebrated COIN expert, David Galula who laid the contemporary rules

of effective COIN, himself admitted in 1962 that counter-insurgents had little chance, if

any, of achieving results through aid programs or attempts to improve people's living

standards during an insurgency.[46] Many analysts now believe that COIN should focus on

removing the insurgents and their supporters, not nation-building.[47]

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[43]   Cécile Wendling, 19-21.
[44]   *Ibid*, 36-82.
[45]   Mick Ryan, 58.
[46]   Jason, Thomas, 3.
[47]   *Ibid*.

**3.   COIN IN AFGHANISTAN - 2001 TO PRESENT: ONGOING…
       NOWHERE!**

> *But the central objectives of the Afghan intervention, state-building
> and counterinsurgency had been failures: the Taliban had not been
> defeated, and progress had not been made on the "rule of law,"
> "governance," "the legitimate monopoly on the use of violence," or
> any of the other ingredients of "state-building."*

> - Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?*

According to the US Congressional Research Service, the cost of intervention in

Afghanistan as of early January 2013 has reached US$557 billion all inclusive.[48] Yet,

most reports are gloomy regarding successes in "rebuilding" Afghanistan.[49] The BR

McCaffrey Association LLC consulting firm conducted a review of the situation in

Afghanistan in February 2013 and highlighted the following findings: Afghanistan

remains one of the most corrupt, impoverished and politically decentralized place on

earth despite over a decade of attempts at nation-building; the fight against insurgents

continues unabated with the highest number of attacks a day recorded in June 2012, 10

years after COIN commenced; the country continues producing and using narcotics

derived from opium production at a high rate, which is exploited by both insurgents and

still influential warlords for revenues; the Afghan security forces are incompetent and

highly unreliable – 20% of US military casualties are caused by deceitful Afghan police

and military; NATO forces cannot fully count on Pakistani forces to secure safe havens in

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[48]   Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,"
Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 4 January 2013), 2.
[49]   See Rory Stewart, "The Plane to Kabul" in Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, *Can Intervention
Work?* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012), 1-90.

the country to weaken Afghan insurgents – effectively, Pakistani forces selectively take offensive action against the Afghan insurgents operating from its territory; the Afghan intervention costs approximately US$6 billion per month to the US only, the major participant in the conflict, and two third of Afghans do not support the intervention; and the number of NATO casualties continues to mount with 20,000 American casualties alone (killed and wounded).[50] How can this combined counter-insurgency and nation-building intervention continue considering its obvious failure?

Rebuilding or perhaps more appropriately stated *building* Afghanistan altogether represents an enormous challenge. Afghanistan was and remains one of the least developed countries. At the onset of the U.S. invasion in 2001, Afghanistan figured 173 out of 177 countries on the United Nations index of human development. There were few paved roads and little electricity generated. There was insufficient food produced to sustain the population. Over a million had died as a result of ongoing insurrections and civil wars, which also displaced millions. Finally, there were no institutional organizations to establish a functional government.[51] This monumental nation-building project had to occur while fighting a widespread insurgency.

History, Demographics, and Culture

Without going into a full fledge Afghan study, it is important to understand the historical background and the generic Afghan environment that seriously challenge the

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[50]   Barry R. McCaffrey, "Withdrawal under Pressure Afghanistan 2013-2014: The Coming Civil War," *BR McCaffey Associates LLC* (13 February, 2013), http://www.mccaffreyassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Withdrawal-Under-Pressure-February-2013.pdf.

[51]   Douglas A. Wissing, *Funding the Enemy: How U.S. Taxpayers Bankroll the Taliban* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2012), 51-52.

conduct of COIN and nation-building in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a vast country with a

harsh environment and a diverse population. With a population of approximately 30

millions, most Afghans live in dispersed villages with less than 25 percent living in urban

cities.[52] Multiple ethnic groups also form society to include Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen,

Pashtuns, and Hazara. The Hazara, unlike the Sunni Muslims majority in other sects, are

of the Shiite Muslim sect.[53] As a result, reaching out to such a diverse and spread

population is difficult; not counting that ethnicity in Afghanistan is linked to

neighbouring countries with highly porous borders. This is especially the case with the

majority Pashtuns which are also found in large numbers in Pakistan.[54] Developing a

national sentiment is further challenged by the highly tribal nature of these ethnic groups

which continuously compete for local and family interests.

A highly resentful and xenophobic society has developed in Afghanistan due to

the millenniums of harsh foreign invasions.[55] The known span of invasions begins with

the invasion by the Armies of Alexander the Great to the current NATO intervention,

passing by the British attempts to control Afghanistan to prevent Russian expansions in

the 19th and early 20th centuries and the Soviets invasion of the 1980's to include

Afghanistan in its sphere of influence. Around 300 BC, Alexander and later Persia

managed to control the region, but at great cost when compared to their successes

elsewhere. The British Empire suffered heavily in attempting to control Afghanistan and

only ruled the region for short durations and in a wavering fashion until the British

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[52]   Joseph J. Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan* (Washington D.C.: National Defence University Press, 2011), 6-7.

[53]   Joseph J. Collins, 7-8.

[54]   *Ibid*.

[55]   *Ibid*, 8-11.

departure in 1919 due to Afghan insurrections and wars.[56] Finally, the Soviets suffered a

devastating defeat against the *mujahedins* – soldiers of God in broad translation – while

attempting to establish and support a communist regime in Kabul.[57] It is interesting to

note that the Soviets invested significantly in Afghan infrastructure[58] and nation-

building[59] while attempting to establish a stable communist regime in Kabul. However,

none of those efforts seemed to reach out to xenophobic and communism adverse

Afghans outside of Kabul. The Soviet use of highly destructive fighting tactics in the

populated rural areas did not help.[60] Despite harmful and ongoing internal divisions,

Afghans have historically come together to expel foreigners, sharing the same abhorrence

for invaders who, wave after wave, have attempted to impose their ways on resilient

Afghans.[61]

Given the diverse and dispersed population as well as the complex geography

devoid of transportation infrastructure, politic is local rather than centralized in

Afghanistan.[62] It is no surprise that Afghan kings of the past and contemporary

governments have had little control over the population and that attempts to impose a

central authority have failed, often raising insurgencies.[63] Most Afghan governments have

only been able to control the immediate vicinity of the historical Capital, Kabul, with

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[56]   Kenneth Katzman (4 January 2013), 1.
[57]   *Ibid*, 1-3.
[58]   *Ibid*, 2.
[59]   Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 255.
[60]   *Ibid*.
[61]   *Ibid*, 4.
[62]   Joseph J. Collins, 13.
[63]   Stephen Tanner, 3-4.

occasional influence on distant ruling warlords through bribery. Effectively, current President Hamid Karzai has often been mocked as the *Mayor of Kabul*.[64]

The power and influence of warlords in Afghanistan is important to understand. They have historically provided local governance until the arrival of the Taliban in the mid-nineties and again after the demise of the Taliban following the American invasion of 2001. Looking at recent history, we see that the effects of the Soviet war in the 1980's were profound and allowed warlordism to grow. Although the Soviet invasion unified the Afghan insurgency, the mujahedins came from various ethnicity and different tribes that had diverse ideologies and often fought for scarce resources during the conflict with the Soviets.[65] At the end of the war and when Soviet authorities ceased support to the fragile Afghan communist regime, the various mujahedin groups attempted to expend their control on sections of the country. Infighting soon flared up between the various factions. Kabul became the big price for the larger factions and the centre of heavy fighting which eventually decimated the city. Other head of factions established local dictatorships elsewhere in the country, some ruling peacefully while others controlled their fiefdoms through fear, abuse, robbery, and general violence.[66] Harvesting poppy fields became their primary source of revenue, which also fuelled the only viable local economy.[67] Religious and pious Afghans who fought the Soviets went to study Islam in *madrassas* – religious schools – mostly in Pakistan. One of them, Mullah Omar, a Ghilzai Pashtun, was appalled by the conduct of warlords in the region of Kandahar in Afghanistan. Offended by what he witnessed, he formed the Taliban, a group regimented by an

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[64]   Barry R. McCaffrey.
[65]   Stephen Tanner, 253-254, 262.
[66]   Joseph J. Collins, 35-36.
[67]   Stephen Tanner, 278.

extreme form of Islam, which grew powerful and managed to take control of most of the country during 1994-1996.[68] The Taliban would either imprison or kill warlords and many fled to Iran, Pakistan or elsewhere. Islam as practiced by the Taliban, is opposed to tribal traditions and the Taliban did all they could to prevent tribal power to rise, further reducing the chance of emerging tribal warlords.[69] Only the Northern Alliance, a former mujahedin Tajik group led by the warlord Massoud, managed to hold on to the Panjshir Valley in the north and opposed the Taliban.[70]

The Taliban was originally popular among Pashtuns for stopping warlord's abuses; however, their interpretation and harsh practice of the Muslim Sharia law quickly rendered them unpopular and as much feared as were the warlords. The Taliban, using pre-modern governance, was ineffective in developing the country and poverty rose while public health drastically declined.[71]

The highly unstable and hardly governed state of Afghanistan resulted in significant meddling into Afghan affairs by external agents and neighbouring countries. Other than invasions by distant colonial states (Britain 19th and 20th century) and invasions to maintain spheres of influence (Soviet Union in the 1980's), Afghan neighbours and powerful states have played a continuous hand in attempting to contain the political instability in Afghanistan or prevent any other states to develop alliances that would be detrimental to their national interest. Iran and Pakistan have historically been the major culprits with other states such as China and India to a lesser extent. During the Soviet invasion for example, multiple states engaged and supported various mujahedin

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[68]   Charles Allen, *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), 290-292.
[69]   *Ibid*, 291.
[70]   Stephen Tanner, 285.
[71]   Joseph J. Collins, 38-40.

factions. Iran provided arms and money to their Shiite brethrens, the Hazara.[72] China

provided arms to the mujahedin through Pakistan to prevent Soviet expansion and to

counterbalance India's influence in the region.[73] The *mujahedin* benefited heavily from

U.S. weapons and funds funneled via the Pakistani intelligence agency, the Inter-Service

Intelligence directorate (ISI).[74] The ISI favoured specific factions, usually the most

fundamentalist and extreme Muslims such as the Hizb-e-Islami group led by Gulbuddin

Hekmatyar, a fundamentalist Afghan warlord.[75] Later, the ISI would support the

Taliban.[76] It is even said that the Taliban was an ISI creation.[77] Pakistani interference in

Afghanistan's affair has historically been motivated by the need to prevent a potential

alliance or strategic cooperation between Afghanistan and India.[78] For Pakistan, a weak

Afghanistan is a good thing. If the Afghan environment was always complex, the arrival

of Al Qaida in Afghanistan and the events of 9/11 would further complicate everything

for everyone.

Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Security Assistance Force

Following the events of 9/11 and the confirmation that Al Qaida was the culprit,

the U.S. demanded to the Taliban that they hand over Osama Bin Laden, founder and

leader of Al Qaida. Effectively, the Taliban had been harbouring Bin Laden and his

organization for some time. Within the American overall context of fighting terrorism

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72   Stephen Tanner, 251.
73   *Ibid*.
74   Kenneth Katzman (4 January 2013), 2.
75   Stephen Tanner, 272.
76   Charles Allen, 291.
77   James, F. Dobbins, *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books Inc. 2008), 25, 32.
78   *Ibid*, 35.

under *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF), the U.S. launched an invasion of Afghanistan to hunt Al Qaida and depose the Taliban.[79] What began as a small scale and precision military operations under OEF eventually became a full fledge counter-insurgency and nation-building operation sanctioned by the United Nation (UN) and conducted by NATO and partners.

The U.S. initial combat operations that began October 2001 resembled punitive measures that aimed to help the local opposition in unseating the Taliban and destroy Al Qaida safe havens.[80] The opposition consisted of the Northern Alliance and a number of Pashtun warlords and powerbrokers who opposed the Taliban, to include the post-Taliban and long standing President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai.[81] Using air power, Special Forces, and small military units in direct support of the Afghan opposition proved successful. By mid-December 2001, the Taliban had given up power and by May 2003, the Taliban and Al Qaida had given up the fight.[82]

This self-defence style intervention could have been sufficient if the objectives had remained within the envelope of OEF, which was to disrupt terrorists and prevent further attacks against the U.S. and the West by fundamentalist Muslims. However, it was felt that abandoning Afghanistan on its own after the Soviet withdrawal of the 1980's created the failed state that ensued and that the country needed support to re-establish governance and security to prevent the re-occurrence of civil war.

The initial military successes brought much optimism. With the Taliban and Al Qaida on the run, the U.S. administration felt that a stabilization program needed

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[79]   Kenneth Katzman (4 January 2013), 8.
[80]   *Ibid*.
[81]   James, F. Dobbins, 21-39.
[82]   Kenneth Katzman (4 January 2013), 9.

minimum efforts. Initial plans were centered on establishing a representative government that would especially satisfy the Northern Alliance and the Pashtun tribes to prevent a return of the 1990's warlords and ethnic competition.[83] Surprisingly, this was easily achieved. All groups of interest, in particular the dominant Northern Alliance accepted the Pashtun Hamid Karzai as interim leader and sufficient power sharing was developed among the various group's interests to form a government.[84] In order to maintain security, prevent rivalries, and allow time for an Afghan security force to build up, a small UN force – the International Security Assistance Force or ISAF – was deployed under the auspices of NATO and initially centered on Kabul. ISAF initially had a limited mandate as circumscribed by the U.S. American authorities foolishly expected that Afghans would secure their own nation in short order, despite having no functioning institutions or security forces.[85]

Deploying a stabilization force to Afghanistan and establishing a western backed government generated the opposite effect and instability rapidly followed. As western forces and aid agencies arrived, an insurgency developed. The Karzai administration had been in power for just a few months when the Taliban and other Afghan insurgents began offensives in 2002 and demanded the end of the pro-western government as well as the departure of foreign forces.[86]

Those who understood Afghanistan and who knew its history saw this coming.[87] Rory Stewart, academic and British foreign affairs public servant warned that attempting wide-scale nation-building and counter-insurgency in a foreign land such as Afghanistan

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83   James, F. Dobbins, 20.
84   *Ibid*, 102.
85   James F. Dobbins, 103.
86   Seth G. Jones, 30-31.
87   Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, 69.

is counter-productive. He saw himself the absence of insurgents when he safely crossed Afghanistan on foot in 2002 before ISAF arrived and before development commenced. Today and after hundreds of billion of dollars invested in counter-insurgency and nation-building, insurgents litter the country side of Afghanistan.[88]

NATO and western agencies working in Afghanistan have demonstrated the infamous ignorance of local culture and the associated miscalculations of foreign nation-builders in general. Discussing how poorly the West has done in Afghanistan, Rory Stewart drew a parallel with former U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara who acknowledged that in Vietnam, the U.S. acutely ignored the history, culture, politics, and the personalities of the people and leaders of Vietnam and the surrounding nations.[89]

A significant source of failure at conducting nation-building is the ignorance or disregard of local practices by nation-builders. Sometimes, cultural distinctions can be world apart and the living environment simply too dissimilar to allow sufficient adaptation for foreigners. In the case of Afghanistan, these challenges are compounded by the scarcity of contacts between nation-builders and locals, which prevents the parties from learning from each other. This problem is indeed pervasive in Afghanistan. Reasons for this situation are many: Linguistic and cultural barriers; western twisted and self-serving ideas; short tour lengths of foreign militaries and aid workers; and security restrictions.[90] This last factor – security restrictions – is perhaps at the root of the problem. The scale and violence of the insurgency is such that it is simply too dangerous to maintain continuous contact with locals. Because insurgents persistently target counter-

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[88]   Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, 49.
[89]   *Ibid*, 13.
[90]   *Ibid*, 25.

insurgents and nation-builders, contacts are kept to a minimum to minimize risk to foreign forces and workers. Lengthy contacts also increase the danger of collateral damage to locals due to proximity and promote the killing and intimidation of locals by insurgents due to a perception of affiliation with foreigners.

To protect them from the Afghan insurgents, foreign development workers and foreign government officials end up spending most of their time within secure compounds. These compounds are often far and isolated from the population centres that are assumed to need development aid and where insurgents hide.[91] Of course, officials and workers eventually travel to establish contact with local authorities and the population as well as to get a sense of the environment. These journeys involve endless and constraining security and safety measures that use most of the available time to conduct external work.[92] As of late, the threat has particularly increased to Afghan security forces as well as to foreign militaries due to the infiltration by insurgents. In 2012, 45 NATO troops were killed by Afghan security forces members suspected of having been insurgent infiltrators.[93] The training of Afghan forces and overall Afghan and foreign cooperation has significantly suffered as a result of reduced contacts outside of training sessions to minimized the risk of further infiltrator incidents.[94]

In Afghanistan, the clash between fighting the insurgency and attempting to build up the country has been acute. Insurgents developed a policy of targeting and harassing local and foreign workers who support foreign development projects. Small groups of

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[91]   Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, 14-15.
[92]   *Ibid*.
[93]   Greg Jaffe and Kevin Sieff, "Training Suspended for New Afghan Recruits," *The Washington Post*, 1 September 2012, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-09-01/world/35496637_1_afghan-local-police-afghan-troops-afghan-government.
[94]   *Ibid*.

insurgents easily manage to delay, hold, or prevent all-together development projects while forcing huge security commitments from counter-insurgents. For example, the Canadians spent CAN$10 million to build a 23 km paved road linking Zangabad with Talikhan, Mushan and Bazaar-i-Panjwaii in the Kandahar province. The Taliban murdered some and intimidated other of the 800 workers involved in the project. It required significant Canadian, American, and Afghan forces, using most of their resources such as tanks, combat helicopters and many troops to protect the project and the workers for months. The few Taliban involved eventually gave up.[95] In the end, the Taliban simply moved their harassing and murdering scheme elsewhere, while protection forces were required to continue patrolling the road and the adjacent villages. How rapidly and how efficiently can a nation be rebuilt at such a rate? How many more heavily armed troops are required to continuously secure new projects threatened by small bands of insurgents?

Other times, security and stabilization measures not only brought the wrath of insurgents, but also that of the population. In Marjah, Helmand province, American and British forces conducted poppy eradication projects with the aim of cutting a significant source of funding for the insurgents, reducing narcotic based corruption, and preventing the country from further developing into a narco-state. In the end, none of those objectives were reached. Insurgents fought hard to retain their hold on Marjah and the population mostly sided with them. The population considerably depended on poppy cultivation for survival. They saw their source of revenue disappear with no viable

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[95]   Matthew Fisher, "Canadian troops helped set stage for Afghan revolt against the Taliban," *Canada.com*, 24 March 2013, http://o.canada.com/2013/03/24/canadian-troops-helped-set-stage-for-afghan-revolt-against-the-taliban/.

alternative. A multitude of quality of life and development projects accompanied the

security operations but could not alleviate what was perceived as an assault on the

livelihood of the population.[96] No western aid could compensate for old habits.

It is often believed that COIN must include aid and stabilization projects to

succeed.[97] In Afghanistan, the opposite seems to apply. Western projects dating to the

1950's such as attempts in turning Marjah in Helmand into a modern city and Soviets

building of airfields and complex road systems in the 1970's have been falling to pieces

ever since.[98] Afghans have rejected all of the above through insurrections. The trend

continues today given that foreigners continue trying to impose their will in the form of

irrigation projects along uncultivable land, introducing incompatible machinery, or

rebuilding hydroelectric dams for non-existing cities.[99]

Western efforts to develop effective Afghan institutions during the current period

of conflict have seen constant challenges and failures. Attempts to develop the rule of law

represent a particular example of failure. One of the greatest popular dissatisfaction in

Afghanistan has been the lack of justice, and in particular, abuses from Afghan

authorities. These issues have also fuelled the insurgency. After hundreds of millions of

dollars have been spent on developing rule of law related capacity and institutions, most

Afghans have greater faith into the Taliban's "shadow governance" informal justice

system then the formal Afghan process.[100] Notwithstanding that the Taliban impose their

presence through intimidation and persuasion and that like parasites they demand lodging

and food from the population, at least they provide a familiar sense of order that the

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[96]   Nick Turse, *The Case for Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (London: Verso 2010), xiii-xiv.
[97]   Adam Shilling, 2.
[98]   Nick Turse, xv-xvi.
[99]   *Ibid*, xvi.
[100]   Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, 45-46.

Afghan government has been unable to address.[101] Despite establishing western

democracy style checks and balances, the Afghan formal legal system remains highly

corrupt and ineffective.[102] This can be explained by the conditions created during counter-

insurgency, especially in the multi-tribal and multi-ethnic environment found in

Afghanistan. To fend off the Taliban in 2001, the U.S. relied on local tribal warlords and

their militias. It may have been intended to absorb these militias into formal Afghan

security organizations such as the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan National

Police (ANP) or the Afghan Border Police (ABP), however, warlords managed to either

retain their personal militias or re-formulate them into private security organizations.[103]

Effectively, many warlords became government officials and using their personal power

and interests, ensured they retained control of their militias in one form or another.[104]

Because of the wide-spread insurgency and the insufficient number of foreign and

formal Afghan forces available to fight and maintain security, it has been convenient for

ISAF and Afghan authorities to allow militias to secure their own neighborhood or

employ them to secure ISAF and ANA lines of communications either as formal militias

or semi-legitimized private security organization for the hire.[105] Allowing militias to

operate and worse, to employ them, significantly de-legitimize Afghan National Security

Forces (ANSF) in the eyes of the population. Worse yet, these informal security

organizations are not fully liable to the authorities and are not liable to the population,

which they abuse on a regular basis to satisfy the interests of the warlords or favour their

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[101]   Patrick Bishop, *Ground Truth, 3 Para: Return to Afghanistan* (London: Harper Press 2009), 105.
[102]   Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, 45.
[103]   Christian Dennys, "Watching While the Frog Boils: Strategic Folly in the Afghan Security
Sector," *The Centre for International Governance Innovation*, The Afghanistan Papers no. 9 (October
2011), 13-14.
[104]   *Ibid*.
[105]   *Ibid.*

tribes or ethnic groups. Because warlords and their militias support foreign forces and or

the authorities one moment and support their own interests another, they often are

friendly forces one day and enemies the next. This ritual is highly destabilizing and only

encourages corruption. Rory Stewart demonstrated how ISAF made such faulty choices

when he explained how in 2004, the organization attempted to disarm and demobilize the

militia of Ahmad Morghabi, a powerful commander in the province of Ghor. ISAF re-

armed him and his militia a few year later to once again attempt to disarm them a year

after. Although a former ally in the fight against the Taliban and a former commander of

Afghan Army troops, Ahmad had become an opponent to ministers in Kabul because of

his affiliation to an overtly powerful and considered disobedient governor in Herat, Ismail

Khan. Ismail was himself later targeted by ISAF. Saddly, under Khan, Herat had been one

of the better administered and developed provinces, if not in accordance with Kabul's

desire. Years later, ISAF and Afghan authorities had determined that the ANSF was

unable to protect villages from insurgents. Militias like that of Ahmad became again

popular and offered to act as what was called *local defence forces*.[106] Just a year later, it

was assessed that the ANSF had improved enough to defend the population and attempts

were made to disarm such militias again. This ongoing dance has been highly counter-

productive and clearly shows that it is nearly impossible to conduct effective nation-

building during an insurgency.

　　Sadly, ISAF and Afghan authorities were right that the ANSF had been unable to

protect the population. The Afghan National Police (ANP) does not escape from the cycle

of corruption. Under paid, de-legitimized by militias, and continuously open to insurgent

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[106]　　Gerald Knaus and Rory Stewart, 46-50.

attacks, most end up surviving through corruption themselves. The ANP is notorious for abuses and are often more dreaded and detested than the Taliban. The ANP is well known for their abuses of drugs, extortion schemes, and physically abusing the population to include raping.[107]

Corruption by powerbrokers, interested parties, and Afghan authorities is not only found within the security and judiciary apparatus, but also in all economic sectors. Nation-building and particularly economic development during conflicts is highly corruptible and leads to violence. In the current conflict in Afghanistan, it appears that individual and inner group short-term goals trump national or common long-term benefits. This is amplified by the tribal nature of the society. It is common practice for powerbrokers to favour their tribes at the cost of others. This brings constant factionalism.[108] This behaviour is especially found during economic activities and leads to corruption. If this is common at the domestic level in Afghanistan, the problem is compounded by the plethora of development projects financed by foreign nations. While the Afghan insurgency is usually attributed to the Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network and foreign fighters, local tribes and criminal organizations also fuel local violence for gaining economic advantages or due to dissatisfaction with the distribution of project funds. Acts of violence and intimidation against new development projects first attributed to insurgents frequently turn out to be caused by criminals and warlords who feel their businesses have been marginalized or rejected for new constructions while their

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[107]   Patrick Bishop, 105.
[108]   The Economist, "In the Dark: Afghanistan's Tribal Complexity," 31 January 2008, http://www.economist.com/node/10608929.

competitors – often from other tribes – have been selected.[109] While nation-building may

be well-intended and oriented towards the common good, self-interested insurgents and

criminals counter those efforts.

Nation-building involves empowering local capacity, which can be tricky during

an insurgency. The cost of rebuilding Afghanistan would have been huge in itself but

fighting an insurgency as well made it that much more costly. To keep the cost in check,

it was decided to accept a level of risk and contract many resources through local

powerbrokers and warlords even if most had links to criminal activities such as benefiting

from the illegal opium market.[110]

Corruption, vendettas, power struggles, and political power plays have been

normal state of affairs in the Afghan government since its inception. Given the

monumental challenges in developing Afghanistan during this conflict, little has been

done to stop it. More precisely, ISAF and the international community simply can't risk

alienating large portions of society affiliated to tribal powerbrokers that represent them.

Unfortunately many are linked to criminal and corrupt activities that damage the

legitimacy of the central authorities and fuel the insurgency. Examples abound of such

circumstances. Douglas Wissing – journalist, author and scholar – provided the following

case for demonstration: Given that Hajji Zaman Ghamsharik was well known for drug

smuggling, and that he had helped Osama bin Laden escaping from Tora Bora in 2001 at

a time when Hamid Karzai was fighting the Taliban, one would believe that Ghamsharik

would be bared from Afghan politics under Karzai's presidency. Not so in Afghanistan

where power plays and political survival take precedence over effective governance.

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109   Jason Thomas, 3.
110   Douglas A. Wissing, 26.

Worse yet, in 2002, Ghamsharik was involved in the assassination of Hajji Abdul Qadir, who was Karzai's administration vice president under the newly established Afghan Transitional Administration. Qadir, among other tribal powerbrokers and opium traders, had been a rival to Ghamsharik. The later went on exile for years but was invited back by Karzai himself during the 2009 elections to bolster his outnumbered ranks of Pashtun in the Afghan government. Ghamsharik was assassinated in 2010 during a high profile political event. The Taliban rebutted their involvement, a rare occurrence for a political assassination. There were many potential suspects given Afghan power struggles and high political corruption.[111] In the end, few Afghans trust their government while the remainders sing along the same song and are in it for themselves. Afghans also know that foreigners can't help it. There is no one to run a better government. At least the Taliban maintained some level of security and kept warlords on a leash. The insurgency continues unabated today. If anything, history shows us that conducting nation-building in Afghanistan has fuelled instability and revived insurgencies, not countered them.[112]

Conducting punitive attacks against the Taliban and Al Qaida in 2001 pushed the belligerents to safe havens in adjacent countries. Given that the Taliban was mostly a Pashtun organization and that they are also found in Pakistan, that destination was selected by the organization to take cover and re-organize. As explained earlier, the Taliban and other insurgents were originally supported by Pakistani intelligence and that support has not stopped according to multiple reports. We have also seen that it is in Pakistan's interest to keep Afghanistan weak, unstable, and especially unresponsive to India's calls for bi-lateral cooperation and establishing commercial ties. Consequently,

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[111]   Douglas A. Wissing, 46-47.
[112]   Nick Turse, xvi.

Pakistan has not been cooperating fully with the demands of the UN, the U.S. and ISAF in preventing the Taliban and other insurgents from operating in relative safety from its territory.[113] Sarah Chayes, former reporter, author, and special advisor to the American Military on Afghanistan affairs, described her experience while employed in Afghanistan as an advisor. She illustrated how in 2002, a respected chief of Police in Kandahar Province explained that Pakistani military officers had been fomenting tensions to destabilize southern Afghanistan after the collapse of the Taliban. These Pakistani officials were in contact with Gul Agha Shirzai, then Governor of Kandahar Province, to influence him in starting a civil war with Ismail Khan, the Governor of Herat. Khan was a Tajik who feared an increasing Pashtun influence post-Taliban and he had himself considered expending his influence in Kandahar. This could not arrive fast enough for the Pakistani who kept pushing Shirzai to preempt Khan. Such an incident would have sparked a civil war of magnitude. Only pressure from President Karzai and American sponsoring of Sherzai's militia averted this conflict.[114]

  Short of engaging in a protracted war within Pakistan and other adjacent countries, there is only so much that ISAF and the international community can do to eliminate safe havens accessible to Afghan insurgents. The question then becomes: Was it worth launching a full COIN and nation-building experiment when all that could be successfully achieved in Afghanistan was a punitive attack against the Taliban and Al Qaida while keeping the option of preempting a return of terrorist sanctuaries?

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[113]   Joseph J. Collins, 95-97.

[114]   Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 172-176.

4.   IRAQ 2003-2011 - HUBRIS UNLIMITED

> *…Iraq is another case where Americans have tended to treat counterinsurgency as if it were a third marriage, "a triumph of hope over experience." The prior history of the insurgency shows that the US began by underestimating the scale of the problems it really had to face and just how many resources, how much time, and how expensive in dollars and blood the cost would be.*

> - Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency*

The cost of intervention in Iraq has been estimated at $US4 trillion to the U.S. counting for expenses that continue and will continue to mount for some time. These ongoing expenses include interest payments on borrowing for the war, the cost of caring for veterans, the cost of protecting American assets and enterprises remaining in Iraq and other indirect costs.[115] As of 10 April 2013, the U.S. alone suffered 4,422 deaths and had 31,936 wounded in action as a direct result of the 2003-2011 war in Iraq.[116] The U.S.-led coalition officially declared the end of its operations in Iraq on 15 December 2011 and commenced its final withdrawal.[117] As foreign military forces were closing bases and handing over to Iraqi security forces, Iraqi insurgents were capitalizing on the weaker position of military forces withdrawing to strike at them.[118] In March 2013, reports indicated that violence had been on the rise since the departure of coalition forces in 2011

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[115]   Christopher Hinton, "Iraq War ends with a $4 trillion IOU," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 December 2011, http://articles.marketwatch.com/2011-12-15/general/30778140_1_iraq-war-iraq-and-afghanistan-veterans-budgetary-assessments.

[116]   Department of Defence – News, "Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) U.S. Casualties Status," Accessed 10 April 2013, http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf.

[117]   Thom Shanker, Michael S. Schmidt, and Robert F. Worth, "In Baghdad, Panetta Leads Uneasy Moment of Closure," *The New York Times*, 15 December 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/16/world/middleeast/panetta-in-baghdad-for-iraq-military-handover-ceremony.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

[118]   *Ibid*.

and that *Al Qaida in Iraq* had re-emerged and strengthened their relations with Sunni insurgents.[119] Clearly, the state of conflict and the insurgency has never been over in Iraq. Just as appalling was the poor level of reconstruction achieved during the nine year conflict.[120] Putting aside the whole controversy of the reasoning for invading Iraq, it appears that intents to simultaneously counter the ensuing insurgency and rebuild Iraq failed miserably.

Key Cultural Characteristics and Demographics

Iraqi culture is characterized by a mix of ethnic and religious groups, as well as tribal affiliations. Approximately 80% of the population is ethnic Arabs and nearly 20% are Kurds who live almost exclusively in the North of Iraq.[121] Most Arabs of the Middle East have adopted nationalist attitudes coupled to the various states they inhabit in the region. The Kurds, also found in Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Georgia, have however adopted a separatist stance with the desire to form a greater Kurdistan as a separate nation.[122] The Kurds have been repressed and prevented secession in all the countries they live; however, the Kurds of Iraq have enjoyed an unprecedented and growing level of independence in Iraq since the 1991 First Iraq War.[123]

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[119] Linda Lavender, "Iraq," *NATO – Civic-Military Cooperation Centre – Complex Coverage*, 05-18 March 2013, https://www.cimicweb.org/cmo/ComplexCoverage/Documents/Weekly%20Newsletter/nCC023%20CFC%20Complex%20Coverage%20Review%20(19-Mar-13).pdf.
[120] Jeffrey R. Smith, "The Failed Reconstruction of Iraq," *The Atlantic*, 15 March 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/the-failed-reconstruction-of-iraq/274041/.
[121] Tony Karon, "Understanding Iraq's Ethnic and Religious Divisions," 24 February 2006, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1167476,00.html.
[122] *Ibid*.
[123] *Ibid*.

Since modern times, Iraqi Arabs of the Sunni sect of Islam have represented less than 20% of the population, however, they dominated national politics and they controlled the mixed Sunni minority and Shiites majority as well as the Kurds from the time the Ottomans gave them leading administrative positions prior to the Second World War until the U.S.-led invasion of 2003. The Shiites and the Kurds had been severely oppressed in Iraq under the Sunni leadership until the demise of the Sunni *Ba'athist Party* of *Saddam Hussein* in 2003.[124] It is important to understand that Saddam maintained control over a highly divided society. The Kurds were suspicious of Arab Shiites who they expected would turn Iraq into an Islamic state similar to Iran if they could take over power. Arab Sunnis feared domination and retribution by the majority Shiite. All Arabs resented the overly secular and pro-Western Kurds.[125]

Nature of the Insurgency and the Civil War

Following the successful invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the U.S.-led coalition faced a violent insurrection and later a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. Both had roots in history and Iraqi culture and should have been identified by the coalition as probable unfolding events following the demise of Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party. While a civil war was possible simply based on the historical Shiites and Kurds resentment of Sunnis, the events that followed the First Gulf War of 1991 should have also triggered considerations for a potential insurrection against Western forces and the U.S. in particular in 2003. Following the successes of the Western coalition in defeating

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[124]   David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2005), 23-24.
[125]   *Ibid*, 5.

the Iraqi military and liberating Kuwait, the U.S. Bush administration made a number of

decisions that would prove disastrous to the Shiites and the Kurds in Iraq. First, the U.S.

chose to stop the war without toppling Saddam's regime, believing it would collapse on

its own. Second, armed with confidence of Saddam's coming demise, Washington

encouraged the Shiites and the Kurds to revolt against Saddam. Finally, the coalition did

not eliminate the main elements of the Iraqi military, nominally the Republican Guard

units, and permitted Iraqi forces to operate helicopters in the no-fly zones. Saddam was

therefore able to crush the Shiite and the Kurd rebellions when they attempted separate

uprisings. Two hundred thousand Shiites were killed and one million and a half Kurds

fled in the freezing mountains of Turkey and Iran while Washington watched. The Kurds

were eventually protected by an American declared and patrolled no-fly zone. [126] Twelve

years later, the Shiites remembered being abandoned by Washington when the U.S.

invaded Iraq.[127] Rather than supporting the U.S.-led coalition, Shiite militias eventually

formed and opposed them. This was just the beginning of American mistakes.

The Sunni Arabs initiated the early insurgency. The American-led interim

administration in Iraq – the *Coalition Provisional Authority* (CPA) – made major

mistakes that would bring the wrath of a section of the Sunni population. The CPA

disbanded the Iraqi Army and no salaries, pensions, or pay of any kind would be granted.

Most soldiers were Shiites who had been conscripted against their will and accepted their

fate with little fanfare; however, the professional soldiers and officers were extremely

frustrated as they were left with no revenues, no employment and no pride. These military

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[126]   David L. Phillips, 24-25.
[127]   Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: The penguin
Press, 2006), 5-6.

professionals joined their Ba'ath Party members, public servants, and other security

service personnel who were also dismissed and left with no options to earn a living. Not

only had these Sunnis been segregated and disenfranchised, they were also humiliated by

having to live under a foreign occupation. Adding insult to injury, the CAP began

replacing them by a growing number of Shiites. These actions sufficed to motivate many

Sunnis to raise an insurgency against both the invading force and the new emerging Shiite

authorities. Of note, these actions were recommended by the Shiite Ahmad Chalabi who

was hired by the CPA as head of the *De-Ba'athification Commission*.[128] When it was

realized to be a mistake and the decision to provide benefits was made, it was too little

too late.

Sunnis Arabs rely on tribal affiliation for social cohesion, political action, and

even run economic activities. In Iraq, the Sunnis are organized in hundreds of tribes that

maintain close cooperation within their groups. Saddam obviously favoured the Sunni

population. Saddam provided financial and employment incentives to tribal leaders and

their families to secure their support and ensure that tribal competition did not compete

with the Ba'ath Party. With the removal of Saddam, many tribes saw their prestige

disappear along with revenues and special patronage. Many families were relegated to

lesser status and no compensation. Adding to their frustration were the security measures

put in place by the coalition to limit the movements of insurgents and cut their logistic

lines of communication. These actions interfered with the underground smuggling

activities conducted by tribes to supplement their revenues as a result of economic

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[128]   Institute of Peace – Special report 134, *"Who Are the Insurgents? Sunni Arab Rebels in Iraq"*
(Washington, D.C. April 2005), http://www.usip.org/publications/who-are-insurgents-sunni-arab-rebels-iraq.

hardship that followed the earlier years of UN sanctions. As happened with the military and Ba'athists, many joined or supported the insurgency intending on regaining their economic and political status and prestige.[129]

As instability grew, an Islamist insurgency developed. Iraq harbored small and weak Sunni extremist groups prior to the coalition invasion, but Saddam was able to ruthlessly quash their activities. These groups were given greater freedom of action as insecurity and disorder developed. They would eventually become the primary source of instability in Iraq.[130] Groups like *Ansar al-Sunna*, *al-Faruq Brigades*, and *Al Qaida in Iraq* (AQI) would eventually thrive on fighting Christian invaders, heretic Shiites, and secular Kurds.[131] Sunni extremists of AQI under the leadership of the late *Musab al-Zarqawi* wanted a sectarian war and launched terrorist attacks against the Shiites. The resulting civil war greatly reduced chances of Sunni-Shiite cooperation that endures today. These extremists were augmented by small numbers of foreign *jihadists* who came to fight foreign *non-believers* and what they perceived as heretic Shiites in the name of Islamist Sunni forefathers.[132] Foreign fighters have been particularly violent and have provided significant financial resources to sustain local Iraqi Islamic insurgents.[133] Not only did the U.S.-led coalition invasion free extremists from Saddam's Iron fist, but it also attracted transnational Muslim extremists who together would fuel the internal sectarian war and worsen the insurgency against the coalition and the Iraqi authorities.

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[129]   Institute of Peace – Special report 134, 6-7.
[130]   Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," Center for Strategic and International Studies – Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy (9 December 2005), 129, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/051209_iraqiinsurg.pdf.
[131]   Institute of Peace – Special report 134, 13.
[132]   Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 128-129; and Institute of Peace – Special report 134, 12.
[133]   Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 106.

Worse yet, this would add enemies and enlarge the American-led *Global War on Terrorism* (GWoT). In fact, some assessed that Iraq became the main battleground of the GWoT.[134]

Iraqi Shiites resented the American presence nearly as much as the Sunnis and they formed a separate insurgency that also targeted coalition forces. However, it is the need to defend against Sunni extremists and perhaps the desire for retribution against former Ba'athists that motivated the formation of organized groups of fighters that would launch the sectarian war. Over a dozen organizations were recorded varying in sizes from less than a hundred to tens of thousands.[135] There were two main groups with political representation and able to derail post-Saddam nation-building: The *Badr Brigade* – also called the *Badr Organization* – was the militant arm of the *Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq* (SCIRI). SCIRI existed before the 2003 invasion and operated from Iran where it launched low-level attacks against the Ba'ath Regime.[136] The Badr Brigade was suspected of receiving support from Iran. The organization's focus was to protect Shiites' interests, especially from Sunnis attacks. The Brigade was also accused of conducting targeted killings of Ba'athists.[137] The post-invasion Iraqi Minister of the Interior, *Bayan Jabr*, was also accused of increasing the ranks of the prominently Shiite national police with Badr Brigade's individuals to support the so called anti-Sunnis *death Squads* and back Shiites' interests. Jabr was a former Badr Brigade's member.[138]

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[134]   Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 106.
[135]   *Ibid*, 141-142.
[136]   British Broadcasting Corporation, "Guide: Armed Groups in Iraq," 15 August 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4268904.stm.
[137]   Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 143.
[138]   British Broadcasting Corporation, 15 August 2006.

Jabr was keeping much of its police operations secret and did not inform the coalition.[139] It seems that the coalition had less power over domestic affairs than intended and progress of post-Saddam governance was out of their control. The other main group, the Mehdi Army, was led by a prominent and radical Shiite cleric, *Moqtada al-Sadr*. Sadr vehemently opposed the Americans and the coalition presence in Iraq.[140] The Mehdi Army first focused on fighting the U.S.-led coalition and Iraqi security forces. The Mehdi also accused the Iraqi interim government of being an American puppet organization. There were accusations and evidence that Sadr directed political assassinations and the killings of Iraqis serving the Interim authorities. Sadr opposed both Sunni and Shiite leaders who attempted to work with the coalition to rebuild Iraq. He later joined the political process and his political supporters eventually gained 30 seats within the Shiite faction. This allowed him to fight Iraqi efforts to work with the coalition in rebuilding the country. Much like the Badr Brigade, the Mehdi Army protected Shiites' interests and conducted sectarian killings and conducted attacks against the Sunnis. There was also evidence that the organization was armed and supplied in part by Iran.[141]

Either motivated by the need to survive or to benefit from lawlessness, criminal organizations spurred in Iraq following the invasion. Some were closely associated with insurgents while others were extensions of disenfranchised Sunni tribes. Kidnapping foreigners for ransom became big business that crossed between insurgents and criminals. While insurgents mostly threatened coalition and Iraqi security forces as well as Iraqi authorities, criminal mostly threatened the population, which lost confidence in the new

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[139] Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 145.
[140] British Broadcasting Corporation, 15 August 2006.
[141] Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 143 and 146; and British Broadcasting Corporation, 15 August 2006.

government to protect them.[142] Just like the insurgents, criminals create instability, insecurity, and deprive the authorities of legitimacy when they are unable to curb criminal activities.

Finally, some Iraqis joined the insurgency in retribution for fellow country people and relatives who died as a consequence of the invasion and in reprisals for collateral damage sustained at the hands of the coalition. Foreign lack of respect for Iraqis during the stabilization phase also motivated the insurgency. Collateral damage is an unfortunate consequence of any war, but it must be well-managed notwithstanding. The difficulties of identifying insurgents among the population pushed the Americans in conducting highly invasive house searches, improper arrests, and use violent measures. The Americans particularly failed at respecting Iraqis, Arabs, and Muslims' traditions and culture. Using dogs to search houses, male soldiers to search women, handcuffing men in front of their wives, stepping on detainees heads to immobilize them and many more actions by non-Iraqi security forces were highly offensive and showed insensitivity to Iraqis;[143] all to demonstrate that conducting COIN is highly challenging and that local subtleties can easily overwhelm counter-insurgents. The high profile revelation of abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison likely sealed tight support and recruiting for the insurgency. In a complex and multi-ethnic environment, it is more likely that foreign counter-insurgents will create enemies then make friends.

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[142]   Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 102-103.
[143]   Institute of Peace – Special report 134, 7-9.

Nation-building, Reconstruction and Counter-insurgency

In 2003, coalition forces and the Americans in particular arrived in Iraq totally unprepared to communicate and work with Iraqi to rebuild the country and establish effective governance. For example, the American in charge of post-war reconstruction immediately after the invasion did not have an Arabic interpreter among his staff.[144] In typical Western invader fashion, cultural, historical and political characteristics of the society targeted was misunderstood if considered at all. Washington expected the war to be short and decisive; it was. The Americans also expected that support for the fall of Saddam would allow an easy transition to a democratic Iraq government; it was not. They had no plans other than putting in place a strong Iraqi figure that would align with American interests.[145] It turned out that the man they initially selected had personal interests, much like Saddam and other despots. The difference was that Ahmad Chalabi was willing to work within the American democratic system. He was an Arab Shiite who ran the Iraqi National Congress; an organization born in the 1990's and based in Northern Iraq with the objective of overthrowing Saddam and his Ba'ath Party.[146] In typical fashion with power hungry individuals running a liberation movement, Chalabi realized he had to get external supporters and financing. As the American drums of war started beating in the early 2000's, Chalabi who had spent time studying and working in the West made contacts in Washington and managed to convinced the Administration and his Iraqi counterparts that he was by far the best placed person to inform Washington and represent both parties. He also managed to convince Washington that the Iraqi population would

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[144]   Toby Dodge, "How Iraq Was Lost," *Survival* 48, no 4 (2006): 162.
[145]   David L. Phillips, 67.
[146]   *Ibid*, 4.

easily side with the Americans following an invasion and that it would be simple and cheap to restructure Iraq along democratic lines. The U.S. soon began financing Chalabi and the INC. Chalabi and the INC became the main source of intelligence on Iraq before the 2003 invasion. Chalabi began feeding false, exaggerated and unfounded information that would eventually make its way into the decision making process to invade Iraq in March 2003. It would later be found that much of the American funding to Chalabi and his corrupted organization was diverted to personal interests. It is no surprise to find that Chalabi had been found guilty of misappropriation in Jordan where he had founded and embezzled the Petra Bank of millions of dollars.[147] As usual, a country at war is a field to be plundered. Not only did Chalabi abuse American trust, he did it for his personal desire for power and financial gains, not to ensure a safe environment for his country people.[148] Building the new Iraqi nation was set for trouble before it started. Oftentimes, host nation leaders are unreliable, corrupt, and cannot be trusted to prioritize the common good. How can foreigners even consider attempting nation-building of a distant country?

The status of the Kurds poses a significant threat to Iraq national unity given their general desire for secession rather than inclusion. The U.S. policy on Kurds is ambivalent. Not only did the U.S. protect the Kurds after the 1991 Gulf War, they also supported them through the INC, which had significant Kurd representation. In 1992, the Kurds planned to create a Federated State of Kurdistan in the northern safe areas. They also indicated they would remain committed to Iraq's territorial integrity. This did not alleviate existing fears among INC Arab leaders that the Kurds were planning to separate

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[147]   Kenneth Katzman, "Political Scenarios in Post-War Iraqi," in *Iraq: Reconstruction and Future Role* (Abu Dhabi: The Emirate Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2004), 72.
[148]   David L. Phillips, 67-76.

from the country. This concern was shared by Turkey, Iran and Syria, which have large

and secessionist Kurdish populations as well. While Kurd groups fought over land control

and funds, the American continued exploiting alliances with the Kurds to gather

intelligence and invade Iraq in 2003.[149] This was a great risk for a short-term invasion

period gain considering that it could alienate relations with neighboring countries in the

long-term, especially Turkey. The Americans kept putting the future of the Iraqi nation at

risk and alienating Iraqi Arabs when after the invasion, they allowed the Kurds to

"displace" Turcomans and Arabs so they could regain control of lost territories to Saddam

prior to the invasion. Worse, the U.S. closed their eyes on kidnapping and imprisoning of

innocent Arabs by Kurds.[150] This certainly further fuelled Sunni and Shiite insurgencies.

Notwithstanding, the U.S. pressured the Kurds to remain within Iraq, although they would

continuously support their requests for special accommodations. Today, fears and

tensions remain considerable among Iraqi Arabs and foreign nations regarding the special

status of the Kurds.[151]

      As the insurgency grew in the South, Iraqis began questioning the value of having

been liberated from the terror of Saddam. With little governance, ongoing insecurity, and

a significant part of the population involved in the insurgency, living conditions started

deteriorating. The U.S. had severely misjudged the condition of the Iraqi state and

institutions before the invasion, not counting the flawed advice they received from the

INC and individuals such as Chalabi. The last years of rule under Saddam were based on

terror rather than effective state managing. Original American plans were to disband Iraqi

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[149]   Kenneth Katzman, "The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq," *Congressional Research Service* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 October 2010), 1-2.
[150]   Anthony H. Cordesman (9 December 2005), 155.
[151]   Kenneth Katzman (1 October 2010), 2-9.

senior leadership and employ local bureaucrats to re-launch the state machinery. Given

that the state had begun falling apart well before the invasion, everything had to be rebuilt

from scratch.[152] Being completely unprepared for the challenge, it took the Americans too

much time to re-establish services and the population grew impatient and became

unsupportive. In addition, the Americans had little consideration for Iraqis' participation

and leadership in the interim government. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was

considerate enough to establish an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) as early as July 2003;

however the CPA handpicked former Iraqis exiles they controlled and Kurd allies rather

than seeking influential and recognizable figures by the Iraqi population and the local

leadership. In essence, the IGC was a CPA figure head, nothing more. The Arab Iraqis

saw through it. This heavy handed approach to rebuilding Iraq proved ineffective by

alienating the population.[153] It is interesting to note that the insurgency campaign built up

and took shape soon after the creation of the unpopular IGC. The population in general

may not have actively supported the insurgents, but anti-Americanism rose in parallel to

the insurgency.[154]

If the first rule of COIN is to protect the population, the coalition failed miserably

from the beginning. Coalition forces were completely unprepared to face the seas of

crime, looting, and the insurgency. The coalition forces were never able to bring the

insurgency to a reasonable level and as we have seen, they were still under attack when

they left. Iraqis, to include the IGC, pointed the finger at the American presence and their

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[152]   Patrick Clarkson, "Iraqi Reconstruction and regional Security," in *Iraq: Reconstruction and Future Role* (Abu Dhabi: The Emirate Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2004), 19-20.
[153]   Bathsheba Crocker, "Checking the Rising Tide: Anti-Americanism in Iraq and the Future of the US-Iraq Relationship," in *Iraq: Reconstruction and Future Role* (Abu Dhabi: The Emirate Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2004), 54-59.
[154]   *Ibid*, 48-49.

U.S. centric policies for creating insecurity, popular uprisings, and lacking the ability to deal with insurgents and criminals. As some Iraqis police officers said after their academy got bombed by insurgents in the fall of 2003, "This is the Americans' responsibility," … "Iraq never had car bombings before."[155] If the Americans realized early that it was key to develop a native security force, its military still remained at the forefront of the fight for too long, which further fostered anti-Americanism, motivated the insurgents, and attracted jihadi style terrorists.[156]

Many portrayed the 2007 U.S, surge as the determining factor for significantly weakening the Iraqi insurgency. Some analysts challenged that depiction however. The surge was meant to change the military focus on fighting the insurgents to protecting the Iraqi population by boosting the number of troops by approximately 30,000.[157] In addition, the surge was to give Iraqi authorities breathing space for nation-building.[158] Old and recent studies of the surge show that it failed at nation-building and only reduced violence rather than disabling the insurgency.

During the main surge effort from spring to fall 2007, political reconciliation actually regressed. Seventeen ministers of the cabinet out of 38 left the government and few were willing to share power among the main sects. The economy did not fare better with still 60% unemployment at the time.[159] With the causes of insurgency still alive, no troop surge could change the political or economic landscapes. Although the troop surge

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[155]   Dexter Filkins, "The World: A Bedeviled Occupation; For a Bleak Horizon, Rose-Tinted Glasses," *The New York Times*, 7 September 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/07/weekinreview/the-world-a-bedeviled-occupation-for-a-bleak-horizon-rose-tinted-glasses.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm.
[156]   Bathsheba Crocker, 50-53.
[157]   David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 129.
[158]   Jessica T. Mathews, "The Surge Has Failed in its Objectives," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 2007, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/po38_iraq_surge_final.pdf.
[159]   *Ibid*.

unbalanced Al Qaida and likely helped reduce violence, the evolution of the civil war and the re-alignment of the insurgency were by far responsible for a significant reduction in fighting. Before the additional U.S. troops arrived in spring 2007, Shiite militants had gained the upper hand over Sunni rebels, pushing them out of previously mixed neighbourhoods. Simply put, the Shiite had won the civil war and the Sunni could barely fight anymore, thus violence overall had already begun to dwindle when the surge occurred.[160] In addition, Iraqis decided to stop or reduce their support to insurgents during the surge. This was not due to a sudden respect or desire to work with stronger coalition forces or Iraqi authorities, but rather because the population became fed up with Sunni extremists and Shiite militias brutality. During the surge, Iraqis in general still resented coalition forces and remained unwilling to support the power sharing arrangements between the various sects, especially the outnumbered Sunnis.[161] By fall 2007, most Iraqi still looked for non-government sources of security such as militias, criminal entities, tribal affiliations, and even Al Qaida for some.[162] Large-scale operations such as military surges often bring resistance rather than cooperation from the population. The Sunni population was often fed-up with multiple check-points, searches, and constant patrols impeding circulation and economic activities.[163]

Reconstruction in Iraq has been plagued by high cost, corruption, and the effects of the insurgency. A particular case highlights how insecurity led to failed or inefficient efforts in reconstructing key infrastructure for example. A key bridge supporting oil and

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[160]   Iver Gabrielsen, "Why Did Violence decline During the US Surge in Iraq," *Small Wars Journal*, 4 February 2013, http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/why-did-violence-decline-during-the-us-%E2%80%9Csurge%E2%80%9D-in-iraq.
[161]   *Ibid*.
[162]   Jessica T. Mathews.
[163]   Patrick Clarkson, 25.

gas pipelines passing over the Tigris River was destroyed during the initial invasion in 2003. Seeing the bridge high value in re-launching the frail Iraqi economy, it became a priority to rebuild it. However, such infrastructure is easy and high value target for insurgents. Therefore, it was decided to burry the pipelines rather than rebuild the bridge. Rebuilding the bridge would have cost $US5 millions, but an underground line was about five times as expensive. Given the geologic environment it was later found impossible to achieve and the cost swelled to $US100 millions in part due to suspected fraud, and obvious delays. Three years later, the pipelines were finally operational, still open to attacks, and $US1.5 billions in oil revenues had been lost due to the long delays and speculation on building methods.[164] Notwithstanding the typical mismanagement and fraud style handling of contracts during conflicts, the Americans may never have been able to effectively develop the infrastructure of Iraq. The insurgents continuously targeted development projects to de-legitimize the American presence and the Iraqi puppet authorities. This was particularly the case with the all-important oil production infrastructure. Insurgents and quite possibly other Iraqi interests continuously sabotaged oil pipelines. Insurgents openly said they would do everything to prevent oil from leaving the country.[165]

Overall, the Iraqi economy has seen minimal improvements since reconstruction commenced in late 2003. This is mostly attributable to poor security, political instability, and corruption. For example, fearing these threats, no major Western oil company bid for

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[164]   Jeffrey R. Smith, "Waste, Fraud, and Abuse Commonplace in Iraq Reconstruction," *The Center for Public Integrity*, updated 18 March 2013, http://www.publicintegrity.org/2013/03/14/12312/waste-fraud-and-abuse-commonplace-iraq-reconstruction-effort.
[165]   Chris Kraul and Edmund Sanders, "Bombing Disrupts Flow of Iraqi Oil" *Los Angeles Times*, 17 August 2003, http://articles.latimes.com/2003/aug/17/world/fg-pipeline17.

oilfield development projects in the Iraqi's last offer for bidding.[166] Public infrastructure remains insufficient. On average, Iraqi household receive less than 15 hours of electricity a day and 90% own portable power generators to supplement the national grid. Only 30% of the population has access to the public sanitation network.[167]

Reports accused the U.S. military of mismanaging the re-construction of Iraq and recommended that a national office be established to manage overseas nation-building activities. Effectively, the U.S. military controlled 87% of reconstruction projects in Iraq.[168] What the reports failed to identify was that although the military was clearly not the best organization to conduct such activities, no other organization was capable or willing of effectively staffing on site management offices because the security situation was simply inadequate. Therefore it fell on the military to lead reconstruction efforts while fighting the insurgency; two incompatible and overwhelming responsibilities under one management. Leaving too much to the military is a recurring theme in COIN. The same issue existed at the political level in Iraq. The military was entrusted with all aspect of the war; counter-insurgency, development, nation-building and all. As Danielle Pletka, U.S. foreign policy advisor said: "We entrusted far too much political responsibility in Iraq to our military commanders."[169] The issue is actually worse. Military forces sent overseas to conduct COIN are not only expected to conduct all functions of COIN and nation-building, but they are also expected to do it all at once. This is unrealistic and in most cases, unachievable.

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[166]   Bloomberg Editorial, "Finding Iraq's Economic Miracle," 19 March 2013, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-19/finding-iraq-s-economic-miracle.html.
[167]   United Nations Development Program in Iraq, "About Iraq," accessed 4 May 2013, http://www.iq.undp.org/AboutIraq.aspx.
[168]   Jeffrey R. Smith.
[169]   Thomas E, Ricks, 129.

5.   THE CHECHEN WARS – AVOIDING THE COIN DOCTRINE

*Thus, before starting major reconstruction programs something
should be done to bring into political and public discourse the
attitudes which clean the road of the conflict and do not close the door
for the Chechens to exercise these shared identities.*

- Valery Tishkov, *Understanding Violence for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in
Chechnya*

What Valery Tishkov highlights above in his assessment of the First Chechen War

is that without terms for conflict resolution and no end to fighting, there is little chance

for effective nation-building.[170] Notwithstanding the brutality and the devastating

consequences of wars in Chechnya, a fragile yet real peace exists today in the republic

while reconstruction is successfully taking place.[171] The Russians avoided conducting

counter-insurgency the way it had been evolving in other parts of the world, such as in

Somalia or as it would evolve in Afghanistan and Iraq later. There were no *hearts and*

mind campaigns, no development programs, and little support to governance; that was

until the insurgents gave up or were reduced to criminality. The Chechen Republic was

then re-introduced to the Russian Federation. Relatively successful development

programs were initiated, a government was established and a local economy, albeit

minimalist, re-emerged connected to the rest of the federation. There has been strong

accusations and evidence that peace, security and governance have come at the price of

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[170]   Valery Tishkov, "Understanding Violence for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Chechnya," *Centre
for Applied Studies in International Negotiations - The rehabilitation of war-torn societies Series - Geneva*,
January 2001, 15, http://www.chechnyaadvocacy.org/conflict/Tishkov.pdf.
[171]   Luke Harding, "There is Peace. We Have a New Airport. People Are Satisfied," *The Guardian*, 22
February 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/22/russia.

strained political liberty and restricted freedom of speech.[172] However, this is a pervasive state of affairs throughout Russia and not a Chechnya specific situation within the federation.[173] Considering the apparent successes by Russians in stabilizing and rebuilding Chechnya, their approach is worth an analysis.

Origins of the Russian-Chechen Conflicts

Between the 16th and 18th Centuries, the Caucasus region was at the crossroads of three developing Empires: Modern Persia under the Safavid Dynasty; the Ottoman Empire; and the Tsarist Russian Empire. The three Empires vied for control of the region. If the Chechen first supported the Russians due to beneficial and mutual trade, they quickly turned against them and sided with the Ottomans because Russians showed little respect for their Chechen allies. Russia continued pressing forward in the Caucasus and following a peace treaty with the Ottoman, it took control of the region in the late 18th Century.[174]

Chechens and Daghestanis of the Caucasus formed an Islamic state that fought Russian annexation until their incorporation in the Russian Empire in 1860. Chechens however never fully complied with Russian authority, mounting insurrections at opportune times. Two main instances of Chechen rebellions include uprisings during the Russian civil war of the 1920's and during the Second World War German invasion.[175]

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[172]   Luke Harding.
[173]   David Boaz, "Freedom in Russia," *CATO Institute – CATO at Liberty*, 18 August 2011, http://www.cato.org/blog/freedom-russia.
[174]   Emil Souleimanov, *An Endless War: The Russian-Chechen Conflict in Perspective* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Gmbh, 2007), 44-46.
[175]   Svante E. Cornell, "The War against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 169.

Soviet-Chechen clashes were bloody and brutal. Chechen generally conducted assassination campaign against Soviets who used extermination campaign in response.[176] In 1944, Stalin became convinced that Chechens collaborated with the Germans and decided to deport Chechens to Kazakhstan. The voyage was conducted in cattle like fashion where an estimated one quarter of the population died of disease, exposure to the elements, and famine. Thereon and to this day, many Chechens believe that they cannot live in security under Russian authority.[177]

Islam slowly penetrated the Caucasus from the 16th Century. Chechens like their Caucasian brethrens, slowly adopted Islam as their religion incorporating local way of life and traditions over nearly 500 years. If Islam was significantly diluted by local customs in the Caucasus region, it remains that the religion became the ideology that helped drive Caucasian liberation movements to fight the Russians. For Chechens, Islam also became a social mobilization cry encouraged by Muslim Imams.[178]

After the Second World War, the Soviets established population control methods and communicated deep propagandist messages to guard against Chechen insurrections. Chechens were prevented from living in high mountains and dense forests to deny safe havens to potential insurrectionists. Chechen were deprived of education and leadership positions until the seventies, after which time most of the education was only made available in Russian, minimizing access to only a small portion of the Chechen society. Soviets falsified Chechen history records to propagate messages that the early-modern period was marked by Chechen desires to join the Russian Empire and efforts to establish

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[176]   Emil Souleimanov, 73.
[177]   Svante E. Cornell, 169.
[178]   Emil Souleimanov, 52-56 and 61-62.

strong ties. Finally, mixed-marriages were highly encouraged to dilute the Chechen ethnicity.[179]

As the Soviet Union economy and internal integrity began weakening beginning in the 1970's, so did Moscow's ability to control and administer distant lands. Administration of bordering republics such as Chechnya was left to local elites of influential clans, which became more powerful and independent.[180]

The First Chechen War

Given the stressed Russian and Chechen historical relationship, it is no wonder that Chechen elites sought independence soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early nineties. The National Congress of the Chechen People (NCCP) formed in mid-1991 under the leadership of an ex-Soviet Air Force General, Johar Dudayev. The NCCP under Dudayev took power by violent coup in October 1991 and re-affirmed Chechen independence from Moscow.[181]

Moscow's reaction was slow and disorganized given Russian's own political crisis that followed the disintegration of the Soviet Union. A mix of diplomatic efforts and rapid military interventions launched by Moscow proved fruitless. By 1993, Russia had not formally declared the status of Chechnya. It had especially not recognized the independence of the republic.[182] The Chechen self-determining position was a torn on the side of the Russian who faced similar sentiments in other republics of the Caucasus,

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[179]   Emil Souleimanov, 76-79.
[180]   Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitri V. Trenin, *Russia's Restless Frontier: The Chechnya Factor in Post-Soviet Russia* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 5.
[181]   Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitri V. Trenin, 17-18.
[182]   Emil Souleimanov, 84-95.

which were of prime importance for the exportation of oil resources.[183] When Russian

President Yeltsin consolidated its power in Moscow and saw that Dudayev began facing

internal opposition in 1994, he took advantage of the weak Chechen political situation

and organized a local and pro-Russia Chechen assault on Grozny, the Capital, supported

by small Russian units. The force was easily defeated by Dudayev's Abkhaz Battalion.[184]

Seeing the ineptitude of local opposition forces, the Russian military organized and

launched an initial attack on Grozny on 26 November 1994. This time, it was the Russian

military going in.[185] The small Russian force achieved little.

Using conventional air and land bombardments, the Russian Army launched a

much larger offensive on 11 December 1994 that first destroyed large sections of the city

and surrounding suburbs. The Army then moved in along city streets with tanks and

infantry. The intent to present a show of force made them easy targets for the Chechens

who used guerilla tactics. The Russians on the other hand, had no urban warfare skills.

The Russian Army was crippled before even beginning given it had not fought under such

conditions since the Second World War. A group of 50 organized Chechen fighters could

hold battalions to exhaustion and withdraw to their safe havens in the mountains.[186] It is

however important to note that Chechen rebels were loosing strength by late 1995, when

the Russian military managed to hold position and even push the insurgents back in the

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183   Svante E. Cornell, 170.
184   Svante E. Cornell, 169 and Emil Souleimanov, 97.
185   Emil Souleimanov, 98.
186   Matthew N. Janeczko, "The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 1: Winning the Battle, Losing War, 1994 ? 1996," *Small Wars Journal* (30 October 2012), http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-russian-counterinsurgency-operation-in-chechnya-part-1-winning-the-battle-losing-the-wa.

mountains.[187] Both sides were near exhaustion by the time of the Khasavyurt Peace

Accord signature in August 1996.[188] What perhaps crippled Moscow was the loss of the

Russian public support. Russians were able to witness the horrors committed by both

sides. Effectively, in that new era of political freedom in Russia, medias were able to

report from Chechnya.[189] The Russian political will to continue the war was finally

knocked by a terrorist style hostage taking in a Russian city. A Chechen warlord and his

men held 1,500 hostages barricaded in a hospital. Russian Special Forces failed attempts

and the death of dozens of civilians led to the cease-fire.[190] By the end of the First

Chechen War, various estimates put the number of casualties between 35 to 120

thousands.[191] The Russian forces made no efforts to connect with the population, and both

sides had engaged in brutal tactics and abuses of human rights, which disgusted the

Russian population.[192] It must however be noted that Chechen rebels and the remnant of

Chechen authorities did little to protect their own population during the war. Many

Chechens were disgruntled with the rebels who conducted themselves like thugs and gave

little respect for the population in general.[193] It seems that if Chechen fighters – seen as

defender of the nation – at least had gained the mind of the population, they likely did not

gain their hearts.

There had been no attempts to rebuild or conduct reconstruction during the

conflict. There were futile attempts at establishing Russian governance and stabilizing the

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[187]   Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 121-126; and Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitri V. Trenin, 23.
[188]   Matthew N. Janeczko, 30 October 2012; and Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitri V. Trenin, 27.
[189]   Matthew N. Janeczko, 30 October 2012.
[190]   *Ibid*.
[191]   Emil Souleimanov, 125.
[192]   Matthew N. Janeczko, 30 October 2012.
[193]   Anatol Lieven, 80-84

socio-economic condition, but the war engulfed daily life in Chechnya and there was no space for institutional or economic activities. For example, Yeltsin was promising Chechens constitutional rights while the military was being ordered to expand attacks against towns and villages.[194]

It was a resounding defeat of the Russians in every aspects of the war except for one. In the years leading to the conflict, Russia had managed to establish control over adjacent Trans-Caucasian Republics to the point where none joined in the fight against Russia. By effectively propping their local governments, Russia was able to manipulate each republic and make sure they would do their part in preventing a Chechen War spillover. This prohibited the Chechens from establishing safe havens in the region. This is not to say that Chechens gained no external support and did not use cross border safe areas, but these were few and threatened by neighbouring security forces.[195]

The cost of the First Chechen War to the Russians can only be estimated given that Moscow releases little information to the public. The Russian military reported 3,000 military deaths and 8,000 wounded, although these numbers are disputed. The monetary cost is estimated between $US1.3 and $US2.6 billion.[196] Hundreds of millions of dollars were allocated for post-conflict reconstruction, but most of the money disappeared in corruption. The war lasted only two years, which is years shorter than historical trends during counter-guerilla and counter-insurgency operations and the total cost of the war to the Russian coffers represent a minute fraction of what has been seen in Afghanistan and Iraq for NATO and coalition countries.

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[194]   Emil Souleimanov, 100-104.
[195]   Anatol Lieven, 96-101.
[196]   Sam Vaknin, "Chechnya War: Economic Cost to Russia," *Global Politician*, 7 April 2005, http://www.globalpolitician.com/default.asp?2562-chechnya-russia.

The First Chechen War was obviously not a resounding success. Russian

authorities and its military were left humiliated and beaten. Chechnya was left in rubbles

with little economy running. Although elected, the rebel based government was

dysfunctional and gradually lost authority to the rising radical militants. Criminality and

lack of governance led to instability.[197] It was a very fragile ceasefire indeed. All this led

to the Second Chechen War and more fighting would arise. At least, the Russians knew

when to break a futile fight.

The Second Chechen War

A formal peace treaty signed in May 1997 followed the 1996 Peace Accord. The

treaty provided the Chechens with some autonomy but an official decision regarding full

independence from the Russian Federation was pronounced deferred until 31 December

2001. This allowed Moscow to control Chechen external relations and isolate the

Republic.[198] In the years following the peace treaty, Chechens failed at building their own

nation, were unable to consolidate internal politics or develop a modern efficient state, all

due to group competitions and self-interests.[199] Chechen instability and criminal activity

spread to Dagestan, the bordering Republic. Militants on both sides began plotting

together, especially Muslim extremists.[200] In 1999, Chechen Islamic militants led by

Basaev and Khattab took control of villages in the Russian Republic of Dagestan near the

Chechen border with the aim of establishing an Islamic Republic and spread their

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[197]   Vitaliy S. Belzerov, Andrew Gustafson, and Olga I. Vendina, "The Wars in Chechnya and Their Effects on Neighboring Regions," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 48, no. 2 (2007): 180.
[198]   Svante E. Cornell, 171.
[199]   Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitri V. Trenin, 28-29.
[200]   Enver Kisriev and Robert Bruce Ware, "Prospect for Political Stability and Economic Development in Dagestan," *Central Asian Survey* 21, no. 2 (2002): 146.

influence from there. They failed to gain popular support and were pushed back by local forces. This event added to increasing Russian fears of Islamic extremists due to suspicious terrorist style attacks in Russia gave newly elected President Putin ammunition to gain popular Russian support for military intervention. [201]

During the Second Chechen crisis, Muslims represented one seventh of the Russian Federation population. In Chechnya, Muslims were and remain by far the majority of the population. The First Chechen War was not a religious conflict. Religion had little influence on the course of the war despite a generalized rebirth of the Christian Orthodox and the Muslim religions throughout the Russian Federation after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Second Chechen War did not take root in religion either; however, religion became a highly influential factor, especially for Muslim Chechen fighters and the few fundamentalist foreign fighters who joined them.[202] Although formations of Muslim extremist fighters began to appear during the First Chechen War, it is during the Second War that they became a significant and powerful fighting force.[203]

The unprepared Russian forces had learnt hard lessons during the First Chechen War. It is with a revitalized and better trained force that Russia entered the Second Chechen War; however, they remained unprepared for the Chechen asymmetric warfare tactics. Having rejected Chechen independence, the Russians were coming to re-integrate Chechnya into the Federation this time and the war turned into an insurgency. Chechen insurgents of all origins, let it be nationalists or Islamic extremists, rejected Russian

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[201]   Dzhabrail Gakaev, "Chechnya in Russia and Russia in Chechnya," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa, 34-39 (London: Anthem Press, 2005).
[202]   Peter Shearman and Matthew Sussex, "Globalization, 'New Wars' and the War in Chechnya," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa, 205 (London: Anthem Press, 2005).
[203]   Emil Souleimanov, 103.

governance. Much like in Iraq and Afghanistan, insurgents lived, hid and operated within the population, exposing civilians to Russian counter strikes.[204] This time, Chechen fighters used almost exclusively guerilla and terrorist style warfare for which Russian forces remained unprepared to fight. The Russian military stuck to conventional warfare and compensated their lack of counter-insurgency skills with heavy handed handling of the population and using powerful weapons to dislodge insurgents.[205] Neither side was winning the conflict given they were fighting a different war. As portrayed by Malashenko and Trenin, "…the conflict became one between an elephant and a whale, each invincible in its own medium."[206]

Chechen insurgents managed to better penetrate adjacent Caucasian republics to establish safe havens during the Second Chechen War than during the first. Threatening economic sanctions, Russia still managed to pressure the local authorities to reduce Chechen use of neighbouring sanctuaries and control arms smuggling.[207] If neither side were outright winning combat operations, the isolation of Chechens was a first step to significantly weaken them. The next was to infiltrate their ranks and create discord. During the Second War, Chechen insurgents fought independently and had difficulties coordinating their action and even fought each other due to disputes. This was in good part because Russian secret services had managed to infiltrate their ranks and split the resistance.[208]

Much like during the First Chechen War, both sides conducted atrocious acts of violence to psychologically weaken the adversary. Acts of looting, raping, random

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204   Matthew N. Janeczko, 2 November 2012.
205   *Ibid*.
206   Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitri V. Trenin, 42.
207   Svante E. Cornell, 174-175.
208   *Ibid*, 174.

revenge killing, kidnapping and extortion for profits took their toll on both sides and unfortunately, the population suffered significantly. It is interesting to note however that according to the Red Cross, 65% of casualties were fighting age males (16-50 years old) and not the typical non-fighting groups of Chechen society.[209] The Chechen population may not have suffered as much from collateral damage as often recounted. To avoid collateral damage, the Russians established concentration camps to control the population. This is where Chechen civilians may have suffered the most. Often called *filtration camps*, the population was rounded up and many were tortured, interrogated and summary executions have also been reported.[210] Indeed, all Chechens were considered enemies.

When the Russians managed to defeat the Chechen insurgency in battle, the latter further emphasized limited terrorist tactics and all but stopped direct combat confrontations. Chechnya was left in disarray with a frayed society, lacking governance, and suffering economic decline.[211] Instability and violence had not fully disappeared, but left with limited and isolated incidents, Moscow was now able to turn to governance and reconstruction. There has been much criticism about the fact that Russians maintained an enemy-focused approach to the conflict and ignored the principles of COIN.[212] It may actually have been their salvation. Despite occasional terrorist style attacks and less than ideal governance, Chechnya has been able to stabilize and proceed with rebuilding.

Re-establishing governance became a priority as the insurgency weakened. Of course, Moscow picked a government that would be friendly and obedient to Russia.

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[209]   Peter Shearman and Matthew Sussex, 212.
[210]   Tony Wood, *Chechnya: The Case for Independence* (London: Verso, 2007), 102.
[211]   Emil Souleimanov, 15.
[212]   Matthew N. Janeczko, 30 October 2012.

Avoiding outright insult to the Chechen population, Moscow selected an ex-separatist who had previously been a leading religious figure in Chechnya. Ahmad Kadyrov was appointed President of the Republic believing he could break support for separatists and create dissention among their ranks given his separatist background and religious credentials. Despite establishing Islamic laws to protect local Muslim interests, Kadyrov became a symbol of Russian oppression only held in place by a brutal security apparatus centered on pro-Russian militias.[213] Ahmad was assassinated in 2004 and has since been replaced by his young son Ramzan Kadyrov who has somewhat improved Chechens' living conditions.[214] Under Ramzan's ruling, reconstruction has accelerated and Muslim traditions have been further imposed.[215]

As Russia saw the Chechen conflict cool down in 2004, the Russian Audit Chamber proposed the creation of an economy revival plan for Chechnya. Based on the reconstruction of the Chechen oil industry, the program would direct oil revenues to post-war Chechen nation rebuilding under Chechen management. Unfortunately, there was little faith in Chechen effectively managing reconstruction funds given the deep seated corruption history of Chechen leaders and bureaucrats.[216] Much like the lack of personal freedom, corruption is not a Chechen specific issue in the Republic, but a Russian-wide disease. The lack of economic development in Chechnya should not be seen as an indication of weak Russian efforts, but rather as an institutional and social-wide deficit. Some have gone as far as saying that the Chechen Wars were not wars of liberation or

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[213]   Emil Souleimanov, 191-194; and Tony Wood, 167-168.
[214]   Luke Harding.
[215]   Fred Weir.
[216]   Robert Bruce Ware, "A Multitude of Evils: Mythology and Political Failure in Chechnya," in *Chechnya: From Past to Future*, ed. Richard Sakwa, 113-114 (London: Anthem Press, 2005).

holy Islamic wars, but commercial wars.[217] By the time money and funds reach the general population, much has been reaped by clan leaders and their immediate clan members and elite administrators.[218]

There was no official ending of the Second Chechen War, although the insurgency has been segregated to a few remnant groups in the Chechen Mountains. Major military operations ended in 2004. The International Institute for Strategic Studies estimated the cost of the Second Chechen War to Russia at $US110 million a month.[219] For a war that lasted more or less five years, the total cost would be approximately $US7 billion not including post-war reconstruction. It is estimated that 30,000 to 40,000 Chechen civilians died as a result of the conflict with over 270,000 refugees and 100,000 having left the country. Most refugees have since returned to a fragile and oppressed yet rebuilding nation.[220] According to the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid Agency, it is with the improved security and political stabilization that an ambitious reconstruction plan with long-term humanitarian assistance is possible in Chechnya.[221]

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[217]   Aleksei Malashenko and Dmitri V. Trenin, 16.
[218]   Vitaliy S. Belzerov, Andrew Gustafson, and Olga I. Vendina, 182 and 192.
[219]   Sam Vaknin.
[220]   European Commission for Humanitarian Aid, "Humanitarian Aid for the Victims of the Chechen War," December 2010, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/chechnya_en.pdf.
[221]   *Ibid*.

CONCLUSION

> *The acknowledgement of lack of progress in Afghanistan and the*
> *moderation of the Libyan intervention – with all its flaws and risks and*
> *uncertainty – may be signs of sanity, and reasons for hope.*

> - Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?*

Since the end of the Cold War, Western military forces have had to rethink the nature of contemporary warfare. No longer preparing to fight large conventional forces, they have redesigned and retrained their armies mostly for the conduct of counter-insurgency. They have also attempted to support nation-building or rather have been forced into leading such endeavours as security sector reforms, infrastructure building, as well as economic and institutional development. The populations of Western countries have demanded that their government conduct limited bloodless wars, protect human rights, and more recently, keep the cost to national coffers low. Using reference books dating from early 20th Century to contemporary publications from self-acclaimed COIN specialists, Western forces have turned their military practices upside down trying to reorganize entire societies while fighting shadow enemies. They have mostly failed and at great cost to their nation.

Insurgencies affect a nation as a whole, and therefore, conducting effective COIN becomes a wide-scale operation that must extend tentacles in all sections and aspects of society: politics, economy, security, development, infrastructure and so on. To do so means developing relationships with a large number of actors who do not necessarily have the same priorities and the same perceptions of the problems as others and as the counter-insurgents. This means never-ending influence activities that can interfere with

each other. The insurgents also have a vote; if effective COIN means isolating the

population from the insurgents, it means breaking apart the society since insurgents are

members of society. For alien counter-insurgents, who have little understanding of a

foreign nation, this is an impossible proposition. Coin as recently developed in the West

is simply beyond grasp due to the complexity and the huge resources necessary. Adding

nation-building to the mix multiplies an already heavy burden on counter-insurgents.

Developing a society takes decades to centuries in the natural environment. Adding a

state of conflict involving foreigners to the mix is akin to throwing fuel on a fire.

Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in Afghanistan where the population is

unable to choose between politically competing camps and where their choices are

blurred by the presence of foreign counter-insurgents. Afghans are isolated by a myriad of

actors who play for their own interests; let it be the insurgents, the authorities of even the

counter-insurgents. Attempts by NATO to reach out to the needs of the population or

support the developing authorities are continuously impeded by the insurgency or the

corrupt powerbrokers. For Afghans, there are two evils: the insurgents who remove their

freedom but provide them with a familiar sense of governance; and a puppet and corrupt

government propped by alien foreigners who can't protect them. Counter-insurgents can

barely protect themselves let alone protect the locals and help them build a country. After

12 years of COIN, nation-building, and hundreds of billion dollars spent, the insurgency

remains strong; there is little political or economical progress; and there is a real threat

that the Afghan government will fail due to the pending departure of foreign forces.

The situation is also grim in Iraq. The initial coalition successes in defeating the

Iraqi military did not translate in successes in establishing security for the population and

did not set the stage for internal stability. Ignorance and disregard for the social

characteristics of Iraq led to compounding mistakes that spread the seeds of insurrection; trying too hard to prevent the survival of the old regime, and trusting that ethnic groups would work together in rebuilding a nation proved disastrous. In addition and as in Afghanistan, the U.S. initially chose to establish a puppet government that was immediately rejected by opposing groups. Rather than focusing on establishing and maintaining security, the coalition attempted to conduct nation-building in an environment completely alien to them. It did not take long for an insurgency to develop, grow, and begin targeting the coalition rebuilding efforts. Once again, as in Afghanistan, the coalition could barely protect itself, let alone protect the population and effectively focus on reconstruction. Eight years later and with still mounting costs in the trillions of dollar, the coalition forces left Iraq unstable, lacking infrastructure, and with a dysfunctional government.

In typical Russian fashion, focusing on eliminating the threat and ensuring a pro-Russia government was what mattered during the Chechen Wars. Unwilling and unable to fight a counter-insurgency, Moscow launched conventional punitive attacks against Chechens without concerns for the population. Refusing to obey the laws of COIN even during the insurgency of the Second Chechen War, the Russian military took an enemy-focused approach to eliminating the insurgency, even if it resulted in significant collateral damage. To Moscow, there was little difference between the population and rebels and these were seen as symbiotic entities. Perhaps given to the limited successes experienced in battle, the Russians put little efforts in nation-building and conducted no reconstruction until the battles were over. The First Chechen War was short and ended in a stalemate. Chechen mostly retained control of their destiny, even if they could not effectively rule themselves. Russia had lost little, with perhaps the exception of its pride. Moscow was

much more determined during the Second Chechen War. The war was bloodier, costlier, and it lasted longer, but Russia got its way this time. Today, the Chechen insurgency is confined to the mountains and is little more than a nuisance, if not a potential threat for the future. Although totalitarian and oppressive, the government of the Russian Republic is now able to focus on reconstruction and establishing a functioning economy. Despite high cost in human lives and high cost to rebuild the country, the two conflicts have cost a fraction of the NATO operations in Afghanistan and the coalition operations in Iraq.

Despite the apparent positive findings regarding the conflicts in Chechnya, this analysis is not proposing that the Russian approach should be emulated, at least not in its entirety. Clearly, the heavy handed approach of Moscow and its military has no chance of being replicated by North American and European countries in the near to mid future, not counting the fragility of the Russian successes in the long-term. However, it begs the question; is the current approach to simultaneous COIN and nation-building by foreign expeditionary forces the way to go? Should there be a middle ground where intervention could reduce a threat, yet limit foreign interference and allow local authorities to conduct culturally sensible nation-building? Should intervention be limited to punitive actions? The intervention in Libya might provide food for thoughts and subsequent analysis. Comparatively in Libya where NATO fought a limited and focused punitive war against the Qaddafi Regime, the total cost was approximately US$2 billion for the U.S. and in the hundreds of millions only per NATO countries. Notwithstanding the challenges, the situation in Libya today is hopeful.[222]

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[222]   Kevin Baron, "For the U.S., War Against Qaddafi Cost Relatively Little: $1.1 Billion," *The Atlantic*, 21 October 2011, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/10/for-the-us-war-against-qaddafi-cost-relatively-little-11-billion/247133/.

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