RESEARCH PAPER

What NATO can learn from "the surge" in Iraq

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*He is happy in his wisdom
who has learned at another's expense.*
Plautus

Introduction

What a difference 30,000 additional troops and a new strategy make. A few years ago, Afghanistan was commonly viewed as the model of a successful intervention while many politicians, military analysts, and pundits believed that the war in Iraq was being irretrievably lost. Yet today—although conditions still have a long way to go before normalcy has been achieved—the progress in Iraq following "the surge" directed by President Bush in January 2007 is widely recognized. All the indicators of violence: attacks against Iraqi infrastructure and government organizations; small arms, mortar and rocket attacks, and casualties among Iraqi civilians, Iraqi Security Forces, and Coalition Forces have sharply declined since July 2007. The situation has gone from being generally perceived as on the brink of disaster to being a success story (albeit belated and costly).

Juxtaposed with the Iraq war's declining casualties, violence in Afghanistan has been on the rise as the Taliban[2] seem to be gaining strength, the government remains weak and widely accused of corruption, and expectations of a flourishing economy that benefits the average Afghan have yet to be fulfilled. In what appears to be the reversal of a long-standing trend, more Coalition troops were killed in Afghanistan than in Iraq during May, June, and July 2008.[3] According to United Nations data, security incidents (attacks by the Taliban and other violent groups such as bombings, terrorism of other kinds, and abductions) have risen in Afghanistan every year since 2003. The U.N. reported an average of less than 100 per month during 2003 and 2004, but the figures have steadily climbed to approximately 425 per month in 2006 and 525 in 2007.[4]

An argument can be made that the increase in Coalition casualties are the result of more troops being deployed. Because there are more soldiers engaging in counterinsurgency operations, according to this hypothesis, the unfortunate increase in casualties is the logical result of greater efforts to take the fight to the enemy rather than a sign of enemy success per se. Yet other data appear to

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[2] The term "Taliban" is frequently used to designate all violent extremists in Afghanistan, but in reality there are at least four major discernable groups or categories of extremists that are the enemies of NATO and the Afghanistan government: Taliban (and Taliban in Pakistan), Haqqani Network, Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddun, and Al Qa'ida. (See Anthony Cordesman, "Losing The Afghan-Pakistan War? The Rising Threat," September 18, 2008 at: http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,4885/type,1/.)

[3] Mohammed Abbas ,"US combat deaths in Iraq plunge in July," Reuters, July 30, 2008 at: http://www.reuters.com/article/asiaCrisis/idUSL0709000

[4] Cited in Anthony Cordesman, "The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Report" (Second Edition), Center for Strategic & International Security, July 3, 2008, pp. 20 and 28. Available at: http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,4551/type,0/.

indicate resurgence by extremists. According to U.N. estimates, since 2005 the total area where accessibility by aid workers deteriorated has significantly exceeded the total area where accessibility has improved.[5] Additionally, as shown by the table below, the annual number of attacks targeting non-combatants has been climbing:

Table 1. Terror Attacks Targeting Non-Combatants, 2005-2007[6]

	Total terror attacks	Terror attacks causing at least one casualty or kidnapping	People killed, injured, or kidnapped by terror attacks
2005	491	366	1540
2006	969	695	3557
2007	1127	892	4673

Recent media reporting has focused on calls for more NATO troops in Afghanistan, often implying a parallel to the surge in Iraq. Yet attributing the turnaround in Iraq merely to the increase in the number of U.S. soldiers and marines that took place in 2007 is far too simplistic an explanation for the subsequent improvements in the security environment and political stability. Although the increase in troop strength was undeniably important, equally crucial were changes in tactics and strategy that made more effective use of previously deployed forces combined with a more comprehensive approach to integrating the military and non-military elements of national and international power (e.g., diplomatic, informational, military, and economic).

It would be foolish to suggest that a cookie cutter could be used to simply duplicate successful practices in Iraq and apply them to Afghanistan. Counterinsurgency efforts must be tailored to the specifics of each locality; these include geographic, economic, cultural, political, and tribal characteristics that may vary greatly between Iraq and Afghanistan. And of course, Afghanistan does not have the tremendous oil wealth that the Government of Iraq is able to draw upon. Nonetheless, it would be equally foolish to automatically disregard potential lessons from the turnaround in Iraq simply because "Afghanistan is different."

In addition to their impact on the tactical activities of units at the local level—where the differences between Iraq and Afghanistan would arguably be most relevant—many of the changes that complemented the surge involved adjusting the Coalition's process for assessing the situation and subsequently shifting the strategic focus of the campaign based upon the updated assessment. While NATO struggles to deploy sufficient additional military forces to Afghanistan, it may be particularly useful to examine the factors other than the increase in Coalition troop strength that were critical in reversing the situation in Iraq.

This paper provides an analysis of these factors and is structured as follows.[7] The next section provides an executive summary of key lessons from the turnaround in Iraq. Subsequently, the paper provides a short review of US strategic planning for the war in Afghanistan and how the perception of a "quick and easy victory" influenced the military strategy for the war in Iraq. (In both locations, the war effort suffered from inadequate planning and resourcing for the stability operations that were necessary following the defeat of the Taliban and Saddam's regime.) Later sections provide an analysis of individual key factors related to the emerging success in Iraq and provides recommendations for current operations in Afghanistan.

An Executive Summary of Key Lessons for Afghanistan from Iraq

- *Achieve Unity of Command Where Possible, and Unity of Effort Elsewhere*: Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) provides a single military chain of command with a combined military headquarters for all Coalition Force operations within Iraq. Where Unity of Command was not feasible, particularly regarding civilian programs such as reconstruction and economic development, Unity of Effort was instead achieved through improved cooperation and joint planning between military and civilian headquarters.
- *Perform Candid Assessment*: Periodic reporting and multi-disciplinary assessments involving both civilian and military analysts, as well as bringing in external experts, helped to provide decision makers with an accurate analysis of the current state of affairs in Iraq and led to recommendations for revising the joint campaign plan to reflect the changing situation.
- *Protect the Population*: The cornerstone of any counterinsurgency strategy, this was probably the single most important change in Coalition operations. The increase in troop strength helped to enable this shift, but the new strategy also entailed moving pre-surge Coalition Forces off of large bases and increasing their presence among the Iraqi population through patrolling and establishing joint security stations. The size and capability of Iraqi Security Forces were also significantly increased.
- *Engage "Reconcilables" and Build Local Security*: These interrelated efforts entailed recognition that some or many of the groups fighting the Coalition and the Government of Iraq could be persuaded or co-opted to fight Al Qaeda in Iraq and other extremists instead. Success in these initiatives reduced the total size of enemy forces facing the Coalition and also promoted "bottom-up" reconciliation efforts.
- *Connect the Central Government to Provincial and Local Governments*: Largely implemented through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the "top-down" efforts to build a capable Iraqi national government that promoted national reconciliation were linked to the "bottom-up" efforts to provide representative and capable government at the local and provincial levels and promote reconciliation by providing security and economic development to meet the needs of the populace.
- *Improve Control of the Borders*: An inside-outside strategy was implemented that significantly increased the

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[5] Cordesman, Ibid, pp. 36-37. Also see Senlis Council maps at: http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/maps.

[6] Cordesman, Ibid, p. 25. Terror attacks are those judged to be politically-motivated violence against non-combatants. For a definitional discussion see http://www.nctc.gov/.

[7] The focus on the surge in Iraq and its accompanying new strategy is not meant to imply that implementation has been perfect nor that the progress observed since mid-2007 is irreversible. Space limitations prevent a detailed analysis of the aspects of operations in Iraq that still require significant improvement. Despite significant gains compared to the period between 2003 and 2006, control of the borders and movement towards reconciliation at the national level are two items in particular that have achieved only partial progress.

size of the Iraqi Border Police along with larger and more frequent Coalition and Iraqi Army combat operations to disrupt the flow of terrorists and foreign fighters crossing into Iraq. These on-the-ground efforts were complemented with diplomatic efforts on the other end to persuade source countries to do more to stop exporting extremists to Iraq.

Revisiting the "Afghanistan Model"

Stephen Biddle has described the "Afghan Model" as "SOF [Special Operations Forces]-guided bombs doing the real killing at a distance…. All [local allies] have to do is screen U.S. commandos from occasional hostile survivors and occupy abandoned ground later on. America can thus defeat rogues at global distances with few U.S. casualties and little danger of appearing to be a conquering power."[8] Or, as *USA Today* summarized the situation: "Without a single battle tank or armored troop carrier, the United States and a ragtag rebel army routed Afghanistan's Taliban to claim the first major battle of the 21st century."[9] In a reflection of the Pentagon's belief that a revolution in military affairs would allow precision guided munitions, sensors, and other high-technology equipment to dominate the battlefield without a large army, few American conventional ground forces were originally employed in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Ironically, senior civilian policy makers in the Pentagon originally believed that the U.S. success in Afghanistan could provide a guide to military planning for the subsequent war in Iraq. One might say that this "easy" or incredibly intelligent special operations forces-led victory paved the way for those who thought a similarly lean, barely enough, and just-in-time military effort would also succeed in Iraq. The influence of the Afghanistan experience can be inferred from former U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith's book *War and Decision*.[10] Key lessons that American policy makers drew from the perceived success in Afghanistan included the importance of:

· Minimized presence of U.S. troops.
· A rapid turnover of sovereignty to Afghan leaders.
· Building Afghanistan's security forces to take responsibility for their own national security.
· Not engaging U.S. military personnel in nation-building.

Yet in the long run, these "lessons" turned out to constitute a narrow and short-sighted vision. A significant reason for the currently deteriorating situation in Afghanistan is similar to what plagued operations in Iraq much sooner: the failure to follow-up the initial military victory with a comprehensive approach that paid sufficient attention and devoted adequate resources to the security, governmental, social, economic, and ideological aspects of the campaign. The surge of troops

in Iraq combined with a change in strategy and tactics have helped to redress the initial shortfalls in these areas.

Lessons from Iraq for Afghanistan

– *Unity of Effort*

One of the principles of war is Unity of Command.[11] Although there have been changes to its title and composition, all Coalition Forces in Iraq have been under a single military headquarters during Operation Iraqi Freedom.[12] Rules of Engagement vary widely among the nations that contribute troops to the effort but military planning has been able to accommodate these differences through the selective assignment of subordinate missions while tactical and operational control rested within a single military chain of command.

When applying a whole-of-government or comprehensive approach to an operation, however, it has generally proven infeasible to have a single chain of command wherein military officers report to one civilian in charge (or civilians report to one commanding general) at the top of the pyramid. Thus, the best practical outcome may be Unity of Effort. While imperfect, the joint coordination between the military headquarters led by General David Petraeus and the civilian programs led by U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker was probably the best example of civil-military planning and cooperation within the U.S. government.

Even though their predecessors—General George Casey and Ambassadors John Negroponte and Zalmay Khalilzad—placed a great deal of emphasis on cooperation between their respective organizations,[13] General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker brought planning, coordination, and cooperation between the military and civilian headquarters to a new level. The planning process not only included effective coordination between the senior civilian and military actors, it also integrated the full range of their key activities. In the words of General Petraeus:

We have a comprehensive campaign plan…between the embassy—embassies—because not only the U.S. Embassy and Ambassador Crocker and his great team, but also the U.K., Australia, and other embassies of the Coalition, and the Multi-National Force-Iraq have combined in a joint campaign plan [that is] very, very comprehensive [and] has lines of operation that include not just security, but also political, economic, diplomatic [as well as] supporting lines, rule of law, governmental capacity, informational…and so forth.[14]

In addition to better integrating both military and civilian operations within the new joint campaign plan, interaction between military officers and diplomats increased as a result

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[8] "Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare," Foreign Affairs, March/April 2003.
[9] David Moniz, **"**Afghanistan's lessons shaping new military," USA Today, October 8, 2002 at: http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2002-10-07-afghan-lessons_x.htm
[10] New York: Harper Collins, 2008. Cf. pp. 101-102, 134, and 517.
[11] Of course, it is equally important to have capable, competent leaders and staffs who can work effectively together and take advantage of the level of unity of command or unity of effort available.
[12] All Coalition ground forces were initially under the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), which was replaced in June 2003 by Combined Joint Task Force-Seven (CJTF-7), which in turn transitioned to Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) in May 2004.
[13] General Casey and U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte published the first MNF-I/U.S. Embassy Joint Mission Statement to better coordinate the efforts of their respective organizations. Ambassador Negroponte's successor, Zalmay Khalilzad, established a new office within the embassy, Joint Strategic Planning and Assessment (JSPA), specifically to work with General Casey's staff and ensure the embassy's areas of responsibility were fully incorporated in the campaign planning process.
[14] Interview with Austin Bay, August 4, 2008. Transcript at: http://www.thearenausa.com/Petraeus.html. However, the plan was not shared with critical organizations such as the UN and the World Bank.

of efforts to implement the plan and monitor its outcome. Additionally, sections of military officers within the MNF-I headquarters were assigned to provide liaison and assistance to the embassy's political and economic offices.

Recommendations for Afghanistan

- *Military unity of command is essential. A single general officer, with a multi-national headquarters, should be in command of all U.S., ISAF, and special operations forces military operations in Afghanistan.*

- *It is arguable whether unity of command over both military and civilian operations (perhaps via a "proconsul") is possible. At the minimum, planning and cooperation between military and civilian organizations should be integrated horizontally at the national/ISAF level as well as vertically with the regional and local levels. A joint campaign planning process that involves all the key stakeholders should be considered for Afghanistan. Including the U.N. and Non Governmental Organizations in the planning process, where practical, might also help to improve progress towards common goals.*

– *Candid Assessment*

The headquarters of Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) and the U.S. Embassy Baghdad have routinely conducted periodic reviews of the Coalition's military and civilian efforts in Iraq. Two of these in particular set the stage for the surge and the change in strategy: the annual Joint Campaign Plan Review for 2006 and a Joint Strategic Assessment initiated by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker shortly after the beginning of their tenures in Iraq during early 2007.

Joint Campaign Plan Review. The 2006 Joint Campaign Plan Review was completed in December of that year and signed by General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad after several months in the drafting process. It concluded that Coalition operations were failing in virtually every line of operations and that "sufficient reliable forces" were needed to protect the population after areas had been cleared. General Petraeus has stated that this assessment resulted in a request for "additional forces… [that was] the catalyst for the surge."[15]

General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad's approval of a report with an explicitly negative conclusion was an act of political and moral courage, especially at a time when the official view from the U.S. administration in Washington had long been that things were progressing satisfactorily in Iraq despite a few setbacks. Earlier in the year, the February 2006 DOD report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," was so optimistic about political and security improvements that it stated the number of combat brigades would soon be reduced due to "several indicators of progress…."[16]

Additionally, senior administration officials had frequently suggested that the Media was providing the American public with a misleadingly negative impression of the war. Vice President Dick Cheney, for example, had implied that Americans were turning sour on the war not because the situation was actually deteriorating, but because "there's a constant sort of perception, if you will, that's created because what's newsworthy is the car bomb in Baghdad. It's not all the work that went on that day in 15 other provinces in terms of making progress towards rebuilding Iraq."[17]

Joint Strategic Assessment. General Petraeus took command of MNF-I in February 2007. Ambassador Crocker arrived the following month. As described by General Petraeus: "One of the first things we did after [Ambassador Crocker] arrived was to convene a joint strategic assessment team, a lot of big brains and folks that had a good bit of experience in Iraq, and we trusted to give us candid and forthright input."[18]

Members of the joint strategic assessment team (JSAT) included diplomatic and military personnel from the US, the UK, and Australia as well as academics who were not government employees. Although the vast majority had previous experience in Iraq, only two out of the almost two-dozen JSAT members were currently on the staff of the US Embassy Baghdad or MNF-I headquarters. Almost all of the team was brought in "from the outside" and represented a wide range of viewpoints. Roughly two-thirds of the team members were civilians.

The JSAT first performed an analysis of the situation, visiting first-hand with key Coalition and Iraqi leaders and a sample of Coalition and Iraqi units across the country. It found that the state of affairs in Iraq was complex and no single model of conflict was adequate to depict the current and evolving conditions. As summarized by one of the co-directors, Colonel H.R. McMaster, "…the conflict [had] shifted from what had been predominantly an insurgency, or the problem of insurgency and counterinsurgency, to a communal struggle for power and survival."[19] The situation entailed aspects of terrorism, insurgency, a failed or failing state, and civil war; but none of these descriptions alone conveyed a holistic understanding of the circumstances or provided a simple guide to policy or strategy. This new assessment of the situation in Iraq highlighted the need for a new plan.

The new plan. After completing its analysis of the situation, the JSAT drafted a proposal for a new joint campaign plan. It recommended significant revisions to the plan previously approved by General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad that had as its primary focus the transfer of security responsibility to the Government of Iraq.[20] Although the eventual transfer of

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[15] General David Petraeus, Press Conference at the National Press Club, September 12, 2007. at: http://www.cfr.org/publication/14199/press_conference_with_petraeus_and_crocker_national_press_club.html

[16] February 17, 2006, p. 3. Available at: http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/Iraq_Reports/. Of course, this report was published and the decision to reduce troop numbers occurred before the bombing of the "Golden Mosque" in Samarra on February 22, 2006.

[17] Interview with Bob Schieffer, "Meet the Press," March 19, 2006. Available at: http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/02/26/ftn/main1346210.shtml. Also see Michael O'Hanlon and Nina Kamp, "Is the Media Being Fair in Iraq" at: www.twq.com/06autumn/docs/06autumn_ohanlon.pdf and "TV's Bad News Brigade at: http://www.mediaresearch.org/SpecialReports/2005/sum/sum101405.asp.

[18] General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker interview with Jim Lehrer, September 12, 2007. Transcript available at: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec07/petraeus_09-12.html

[19] Interview with Laura Rozen, *Mother Jones*, October 18, 2007. Transcript at: http://www.motherjones.com/interview/2007/11/iraq-war-hr-mcmaster.html

[20] Frederick Kagan, "Misunderstanding the Surge." *The Daily Standard*, June 5, 2007 at: http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.26307,filter.all/pub_detail.asp. Also see Michael Gordon, "U.S. Is Seen in Iraq Until at Least '09," *The New York Times,* July 24, 2007 at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/24/world/middleeast/24military.html

responsibility to capable Iraqi Security Forces would remain important, the new plan would shift the near-term focus to the protection of the Iraqi population. Other significant changes included:

– Enhancing efforts to convince "reconcilables" to eschew violence and instead pursue their goals through the political process.
– Building sustainable security from the "ground up" as well as from "top down" by promoting political accommodation and obtaining agreements at the local level.
– Promoting linkages between national, provincial, and local governments.
– Significantly expanding the Iraqi Security Forces while simultaneously improving their professionalism and reliability.
– Placing greater emphasis on regional diplomacy to improve control of the borders from the outside in concert with enhanced internal efforts to disrupt the flow of terrorists and foreign fighters.

Efforts were grouped into four main areas or "lines of operations," political, security, economic, and diplomatic. The main effort would be the political line of operations, with the other lines—including the security efforts for which the military would have lead responsibility—focused upon supporting the political efforts.[21]

Recommendations for Afghanistan

• *Periodic assessment and reporting processes covering the entire range of operations in Afghanistan—including security, diplomatic, governance and economic development—should be expanded, and to the degree practical, be made available in an unclassified format subject to external scrutiny.*

• *Coalition operations in Baghdad benefit from several periodic assessment processes managed by one office in MNF-I headquarters and one in US Embassy Baghdad: the Assessments Division under the Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategy, Plans and Assessment (DCS-SPA) within MNF-I, and the Deputy Director for Assessments in the Joint Strategic Planning and Assessment (JSPA) Office within US Embassy Baghdad. Similar structures should be considered for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Afghanistan.*

• *Operations in Afghanistan could benefit from a fresh joint strategic assessment that is rigorous and holistic—similar to the one empanelled by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in Iraq—that brings in outside experts to examine the full range of military, political, diplomatic, and economic development efforts.*

– ***Protect the population***

Even before the JSAT completed its recommendations, General Petraeus had directed a change in Coalition Force operations. In accordance with the new U.S. Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine,[22] protecting the population would be a primary mission. This shift in focus began before additional surge forces began to arrive; the number and frequency of patrols would be increased almost immediately in order to improve the ability to protect the Iraqi population and increase opportunities to collect intelligence.

Rather than continue the practice of consolidating troops on Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) for reasons of force protection and convenience, the new guidance was to minimize the use of FOBs and establish joint security stations in which Coalition Forces would live and work together with Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police units to provide protection to the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, protecting the Iraqi population included the avoidance of unnecessary collateral damage. In an interview with PBS *Frontline*, General Petraeus explained: "We are constantly doing what we call the operational calculus… [asking the question]: Will this operation take more bad guys off the street than it creates by the way it is conducted?"[23]

The guidance to establish joint security stations and reduce the number of troops on FOBs resulted in a significant increase in the effective use of existing troops to protect the population even before the "surge" troops began arriving. Additionally, this tactic enhanced cooperation between Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, and between the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police, and helped to increase the number of tips received from the Iraqi public regarding the locations of weapons caches and improvised explosive devices.

General Petraeus also directed the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq to significantly increase the number of Iraqi soldiers and police to be trained and equipped, essentially saying to "turn on the spigot" in contrast to previous guidance that had limited the size of Iraqi forces the Coalition would support with training and equipment. During 2007, the Government of Iraq also engaged in a "surge" of forces and increased the size of its army and police by more than 100,000 personnel.[24] This expansion was accomplished by increasing the capacity of the Coalition to train Iraqi soldiers and police as well as assisting the Iraqi Army and National Police in developing their own facilities and training programs thus enabling the Government of Iraq to eventually conduct its own security forces training.

The increase in the size was accompanied by a comprehensive effort to reform the security sector, especially the National Police which had a reputation for being the most sectarian of the Iraqi Security Forces. In coordination with the Ministry of Interior, Coalition Forces developed a detailed inspection scheme for police units and followed-up with an

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[21] Rich Lowry, "The Joint Campaign Plan: A strategy for stability in Iraq," *The Weekly Standard*, August 2, 2007 at: http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/013/935tlkui.asp.
[22] Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. It can be downloaded at: http://www.usgcoin.org/library/doctrine/COIN-FM3-24.pdf. Particularly noteworthy is the table on page 1-29, listing "successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency operational practices." When the manual was promulgated in December 2006, numerous officers in the MNF-I headquarters noted that the unsuccessful practices were currently common among Coalition operations in Iraq while few of the successful practices were being carried out.
[23] August 1, 2007. Transcript at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haditha/interviews/petraeus.html.
[24] General David Petraeus, "Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq," April 8-9, 2008. Available at: http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/04/general-david-petraeus-ambassa/.

extensive re-training (or "re-bluing") program. Coalition officials also pressed the Prime Minister to fire senior army and police officers who had engaged in egregious behavior.

Recommendations for Afghanistan

· *Consider procedures, such as minimizing the use of FOBs in favor of a greater number of smaller security locations, in order to increase the presence of ISAF troops among the Iraqi population and provide security in remote areas where insurgents can easily intimidate and threaten the population.*

· *Protecting the population includes the avoidance of innocent casualties. ISAF should consider a review of procedures and rules of engagement regarding the use of close air support. Unity of military command is necessary to prevent conventional and unconventional forces from working at cross purposes by creating grievances that could benefit the insurgents.*

· *Effective counterinsurgency operations require sufficient capable and reliable forces to protect the population and provide the level of security necessary for economic development. These can be a combination of international and national troops, but they must be capable of securing villages and local areas and gaining the confidence of their inhabitants. This holds true for NATO forces as well as Afghanistan national forces. Enhancing national army and police forces with high quality advisors can help to bridge the capability gap.*

– *Engage "Reconcilables" and Build Local Security*

Instead of relying solely on military force to achieve victory or impose a settlement, under the new joint campaign plan the Coalition would build from the bottom-up as well as from the top-down and promote security by facilitating political accommodation at the local level.[25] Dr. David Kilcullen, a counterinsurgency advisor to General Petraeus, noted that this represented a less ambitious but more realistic short-term goal than nation-wide reconciliation: "Our notion of 'reconciliation'…is not necessarily where Iraqis are right now….The tribal and community leaders I talk to are more pragmatic and are looking for a compact or a settlement that brings an end to the violence. Restoring relationships is separate."[26] The new joint campaign plan expanded upon and enhanced earlier efforts by dedicating senior military officers and diplomats to assist unit commanders in identifying and negotiating with local leaders willing to fight against Al Qaeda and other irreconcilable groups and to ensure the Government of Iraq was linked-in with programs to create local security and stability.[27]

These so-called "bottom up" efforts did not merely involve Sunni tribes in Anbar, but were Iraq-wide to include Baghdad and some areas that were primarily populated by Shia. As of June 2008, there were 103,000 "Sons of Iraq" working in partnership with Iraqi and Coalition Forces to provide local security.[28] A report by the U.S. Institute of Peace summarized the results and strategy as follows:

Bottom-up tactics in Baghdad and central and western Iraq have brought about increased security, functioning provincial and local governments, improved provision of government services and some economic development. This approach is designed to create a virtuous circle of peace and economic development at the local level, to facilitate an environment in which common interests emerge and to lay the foundation for a more enduring political solution. The goal is to empower local leaders who have a tangible stake in sustaining peace and prosperity.[29]

Increased pressure was placed upon the Government of Iraq to link "top-down" efforts with the success at the local level. Colonel Michael Meese noted that "this local turning is forcing demands on the national government, and that's leading the national government to do some of their own reconciliation."[30] While lagging behind the progress widely seen at the local level, national level successes in the past year have included the passage of a pension law extending benefits to individuals previously excluded because they had worked under the Saddam regime, the Accountability and Justice Law (de-Ba'athification reform), a Provincial Powers Law, Amnesty Law, the 2008 Budget, and a change to the design of the Iraqi national flag agreed to by all key parties including the Kurdish.[31]

Recommendations for Afghanistan

· *Especially in contested areas, ISAF should build alliances at the local level as well as the national level, and devote the security and economic development resources necessary to encourage and maintain them.*

· *Increase efforts to assist and encourage the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to build nationwide political, economic, and social linkages with regional and local governments. Provide regional/local governance structures with legal standing and a means of revenue generation or sufficient funding from the central government.*

– *Connect the Central Government to the Provincial and Local Governments*

Based upon his earlier experience as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and the use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams

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[25] Linda Robinson, "Petraeus Tries to Make Headway in Iraq." *U.S. News & World Report*, May 20, 2007 at: http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070520/28petraeus.htm

[26] Ann Scott Tyson, "New Strategy for War Stresses Iraqi Politics," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2007 at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/22/AR2007052201600.html.

[27] Interview with Adam Bolton, Sky News, March 5, 2008. Transcript at: http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17471&Itemid=1

[28] DOD report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 13, 2008, p. iii.

[29] Daniel Serwer and Sam Parker, "Iraq After the Surge: Options and Questions." *USIPeace Briefing*, April 2008. Available at: http://www.**usip**.org/pubs/**usip**eace_briefings/2008/iraq_surge.pdf.

[30] Interview with Greg Bruno, Council on Foreign Relations, September 7, 2007. Podcast at: http://www.cfr.org/publication/14157/meese.html.

[31] Testimony of Ryan C. Crocker Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 8, 2008. Available at: http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2008/04/general-david-petraeus-ambassa/.

(PRTs) there, in November 2005 Ambassador Khalilzad initiated a program in concert with General Casey to establish PRTs in Iraq.[32] Ten PRTs were originally established. The purpose of the PRTs was to assist provincial governments in developing governing capacity; yet accomplishing their mission was often problematic—particularly due to transportation and force protection concerns.

The PRT concept was reenergized by the "civilian surge" announced as part of President Bush's "New Way Forward" in 2007, which resulted in more than doubling their number. Most of the new PRTs were "embedded" within MNF-I brigade combat teams.[33] These changes helped to increase vertical integration of military and civilian efforts to complement the horizontal integration taking place at the embassy/MNF-I headquarters level while close cooperation between PRTs and military units mitigated many of the challenges of providing sufficient security for PRTs.[34]

PRTs worked to complement local security efforts with economic development and reconstruction programs. They also helped to provide conduits between the national, provincial, and local levels of government and to build what had not previously existed in Iraq: provincial and local governments responsible to their populations rather than Baghdad. In many cases, PRTs coordinated transportation to facilitate meetings between provincial and local leaders with ministries in Baghdad and also encouraged ministers and technocrats to visit provincial and local leaders and see first-hand the problems experienced outside of Baghdad.

Recommendations for Afghanistan

- *Increase the amount of civilian or military civil affairs expertise on PRTs in Afghanistan in order to provide more capability to improve governance at the local and regional level and to improve ties with Kabul.*

- *Consider expanding the number of PRTs in Afghanistan; link them more closely to military units conducting security operations in order to better integrate the counter-insurgency task of "clear" with the tasks of "hold" and "build."*

– *Control the Borders*

It is a long-established principle of war is that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to defeat an enemy who is allowed access to sanctuaries to stage, re-group, and re-arm its forces. By increasing security efforts along the borders and deeper inside Iraq as well as adding a diplomacy line of operation, the 2007 joint campaign plan implemented an inside/outside

approach to stemming the flow of foreign fighters and weapons.

According to Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, CPA and military officials realized as early as July 2003 that insurgents were being trained in other countries and then infiltrating into Iraq to launch attacks against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. Syria and Lebanon were training locations of particular concern.[35] The Government of Iraq originally authorized, and the Coalition agreed to train and equip, a force of approximately 28,300 Border Police who would largely operate from 258 border forts around Iraq. As of October 2005, approximately 17,000 had been trained and equipped.[36] However, fighters and arms were continuing to pour into Iraq from neighboring countries—particularly Syria.[37]

The size of the Border Police was subsequently increased as it became clear that Iraq's borders remained highly porous to infiltration by terrorists and foreign fighters (as well as the smuggling of contraband). By June 2008, the number of Border Police authorized had increased to 38,205 with 30,373 having completed training by the Coalition's Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq.[38] In early 2008, the Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement also began implementing a three-year strategy to increase the number of Border Police to 46,000 and raise the number of border forts and annexes to 684.[39] Coalition and Iraqi forces also conducted several large-scale border security operations as well as targeted the foreign fighter facilitation networks inside Iraq. These included joint operations between the Syrian border and Mosul in early 2007 conducted by forces from MNF-I, the Iraqi Army, and Iraqi Special Forces in order to disrupt foreign fighter transit networks.[40]

Perhaps most important, however, was that in addition to improving efforts to protect Iraq's borders from the inside, diplomatic efforts were given new impetus to secure the cooperation of countries that were sources of foreign fighters or transit routes. Direct talks between U.S. and Iranian diplomats received substantial media coverage. Less remarked, but probably more important, were efforts to convince Syria to take effective action towards stopping the flow of fighters and weapons through its borders, and getting source countries to stop the flow of fighters departing their nations to fight in Iraq. Additionally, the U.S. Embassy encouraged the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and senior Government of Iraq officials to directly engage Iraq's neighbors and other states in the region to request their support in preventing the smuggling of foreign fighters and weapons into Iraq.

The impact of U.S. and Iraqi diplomatic efforts has had little to no discernable impact on the behavior of Iran and Syria and

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[32] However, the PRTs first established in Iraq differed significantly from those in Afghanistan. In Iraq, they were led by the State Department with mostly civilian team members. In Afghanistan, they were led by the military and composed almost completely of military personnel. See Robert Perito, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq," US Institute of Peace Special Report 185, March 2007: http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr185.html.

[33] See http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0612/p01s02-woiq.html (accessed April 21, 2008).

[34] However, the PRTs in Iraq still face some freedom of movement challenges because US Department of State civilians have much more restrictive force protection/risk avoidance procedures than military personnel. They sometimes must remain on base in instances where military personnel are allowed to travel. In short, the American military is more willing to accept the risk of casualties in a war zone than is the State Department; this disparity is sometimes a challenge to civil-military teamwork and PRT effectiveness.

[35] L. Paul Bremer, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. Pages 104-105.

[36] DOD report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," October 13, 2005, p. 41.

[37] Elaine Grossman, "Measuring Casey's progress: Until Last Month, Iraq Campaign Plan Lacked Specific Benchmarks," *Inside the Pentagon*, March 31, 2005, p.4. Available at: http://www.d-n-i.net/grossman/measuring_caseys_%20progress.htm.

[38] DOD report to Congress, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," June 13, 2008, p. 35.

[39] Ibid., p. 45.

[40] Ibid., p. 28.

their support to insurgents and foreign fighters.[41] However, according to General Petraeus the regional diplomacy encouraged several source countries to "make it much more difficult for young men to take a one-way trip to Damascus." The combination of external diplomatic and internal security efforts overall reduced the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq by about 50% between late 2007 and early 2008.[42]

Recommendations for Afghanistan

· *The attempts to obtain cooperation from Pakistan in controlling its side of the border and to eliminate Taliban sanctuaries—and problems with Pakistan's willingness and ability to cooperate—have been well publicized. Yet as long as Taliban forces can move freely across the border into safe zones in Pakistan, and return to Afghanistan when they are ready to fight again, they will be nearly impossible to defeat. NATO, possibly through the EU and UN, should work to attain a wider diplomatic engagement of Pakistan to obtain better cooperation in controlling its border with Afghanistan.*

· *In addition to enhanced diplomatic efforts to obtain regional cooperation, consider dedicating more forces (whether ISAF, Afghan, or both) to controlling Afghanistan's borders.*

· *Afghanistan faces challenges in "troops to task" to provide physical security along the borders and diplomatic challenges in gaining full cooperation from the national governments in some neighboring countries. Particularly in critical areas, these efforts need to be complemented at the local level to win over tribes on both sides of the border.*

Conclusion

Although the increasing the number of troops deployed in Iraq by approximately 30,000 soldiers and marines was important, also important were the decisions to acknowledge that the effort prior to 2007 was failing and bringing together a diverse team of military and civilian experts to develop a fresh assessment of the situation and recommend a new campaign plan. The need to send more troops to Afghanistan is widely acknowledged, but is much easier said than done. Establishing a joint strategic assessment team to examine the situation and entire range of NATO operations in Afghanistan, with a broad array of military and civilian experts presenting diverse views, may be politically challenging but could help to identify useful changes in strategy. Such an assessment could also provide impetus towards improving the integration of military security efforts with civilian governance and economic development programs.
Arguably, the single most important change accompanying the surge of troops was shifting the priority of military effort away from transition of security responsibility to the Government of Iraq and instead making it the protection of the Iraqi population. This shift also resulted in moving many troops off of large bases and increasing the geographical space covered and the duration of their presence among the population. In contrast to the "drive-by" nature that was frequently the case with earlier patrolling or clearing operations, the creation of long-term joint security stations, which consisted of Coalition Forces, Iraqi Army soldiers, and Iraqi Police working together, resulted in improved security by maintaining security forces in areas of instability. In Afghanistan, many villages occasionally see International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops but extremists and their pernicious influence returns shortly after the ISAF patrols depart.

Recognizing that many individuals and groups fighting the Coalition and Government of Iraq could be persuaded or co-opted to provide local security and to pursue redress of their grievances through the political process, rather than violence, reduced the size of the enemy forces while adding allies. These efforts combined with protection of the population to reduce the ability of extremists to attack those who cooperated with the Coalition or Government of Iraq. Political efforts and programs to increase responsiveness and capability of government at the central, provincial, and local levels to meet the basic needs of the population produced a synergistic effect to create a mutual interest in the success of Iraqi governance. The hurdles facing Afghanistan regarding infrastructure and the penetration of the central government into remote areas may be greater than those confronting Iraq, but experience shows that combining security, governance, and economic development can help to increase the perceived legitimacy of the central government and make extremists less attractive to the local populace as well as less able to threaten them.

The geography of Afghanistan's frontiers and the tenuous situation in Pakistan makes controlling the borders particularly challenging. It may be a nearly impossible task. While the experience in Iraq seems to show that military forces and border police alone cannot stop the flow of insurgents and arms across such a large and mountainous area, combining efforts at physical control with diplomatic efforts to secure the assistance of neighboring and source countries may help to ameliorate the problem. In the case of Afghanistan, obtaining the cooperation of tribal leaders may be more important than that of national government leaders.

Perhaps the most important lesson for NATO from Iraq is that the right strategy and sufficient resources can alter what seemed like a hopeless situation into one that merits cautious optimism. In Iraq, putting each of the key factors described above into operation entailed difficult decisions and risk, such as accepting the probability of increased casualties in the short run in order to increase Coalition Force presence among and engagement with the Iraqi population. It will be very hard to make similar changes to the ongoing operations in Afghanistan. However, maintaining the status quo or making only small adjustments is unlikely to change the trend of deteriorating security. If NATO fails to make a major shift, it risks losing the war in Afghanistan.

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[41] Ibid., p. 22.
[42] Interview with Adam Bolton, ibid.