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The Surge at Midpoint

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Counter-insurgency wars are a fusion of all forms policy executed toward achieving well-defined goals. The need for smart and effective policies in this particular type of warfare must happen in all political (which includes the military policies), economic, cultural, and social actions used as weapons to defeat the enemy. Only a combined and total effort of civil government, economic resources, uniformed military, paramilitary, intelligence security, and constabulary forces, and the participation of the “loyal” population at the community level can overcome a well-conceived, adequately supplied, superbly-led guerilla-terrorist organization.

Victory over insurgents happens in self-reinforcing and self-repeating series of steps. These steps happen at two corresponding levels: on the ground and above all over everything else. On the ground deserves examination first, for the purposes of this essay, because

the actual “surge” deployment of forces is the most visible thing in present war policy. The fact that its success or failure is measured in lives lost and people maimed, getting the new “strategy” right and understanding what that would be is most important.

On the ground, in Iraq, in the communities and neighborhoods themselves, the interlocking steps begin with understanding the reality the Coalition faces. First, there must first be intelligence on the guerilla-terrorists themselves: the channels of command and leadership, the supply system and the equipment, its individual soldiers and their tactics, and its location and operating environment. Only with this intelligence from every source available, particularly from the common people themselves who know more than it is realized, can the insurgents be thwarted or their organization dismantled. Second, security from insurgent attacks must be established wherever possible and to the largest possible extent. The secure areas usually begin in small locations that connect as they go. The security is to protect from death, injury or intimidation the population (and by default, the infrastructure of a community) on whose loyalty, active support, and

vital information is most important. The important thing is to not let a once “secure” area again become subject to attack. It becomes a clear and hold operation. If there is relapse of insecurity, the population becomes demoralize and uncooperative because they fear the insurgents. If the population fears the terrorists because the government cannot protect them, the insurgents will eventually win.

Third, the terrorist must be fought rather deceptively using indirect means. This includes the use of information warfare to disrupt and demoralize the guerilla-terrorist, sow suspicion between and get them to turn on one another. Encourage disloyalty and disillusionment that they are losing and that the effort is futile. Create defections to the government and desertion among their ranks with bribes, rewards, promises, incentives, and individualized appeals (from families, etc.). The indirect means is to dry up the insurgents’ legitimacy by having effective, orderly, law-observing government following a constitution (even a temporary one) that is fair to all factions and segments of the population. This government must reliably provide services, infrastructure,

protection, and social benefits that the population both needs and wants for their loyalty and cooperation. Finally, the footprint of heavily armed and uniformed military and paramilitary forces must be kept to a minimum amount of visibility and violence. These forces must follow well-understood procedures (understood by the population), used with justice, in their operations among the population. The uniformed can never, ever abuse, mistreat, threaten, or harm the general population indiscriminately—even at the risk of the safety of the uniformed military and paramilitary. This discipline is the hardest thing to get nervous, inexperienced, young soldiers to do. If this doesn't happen, the population sides with the guerilla-terrorists, even swelling their ranks. This indirect means of deceptive operations in a counter-insurgency war is aimed first at removing support for the insurgents from their support—the people themselves. The key to beating guerilla-terrorist is to win the common people. Without the common people, the terrorist

Fourth and last of these self-reinforcing steps is to use the intelligence, security and indirect means to go after the terrorist. Guerilla-terrorists organizations can only in the end be defeated by neutralizing, dismantling, and destroying their network. This action usually can only come once the other three steps have been at least partly fulfilled. Defected terrorist can be used to track down their former comrades for arrest or termination. They

can also infiltrate their own former networks to pass on intelligence that leads to its dismantling. Finding terrorist in their “bases” or homes can only come if the intelligence is precise and in-time. Their means of funding, supplying, and arming themselves can be cut off or minimized. Their command structure can be at the very least partly disrupted, a process that leads to mistakes by guerilla-terrorists. Secret service, constabulary, and judicial agencies can arrest, try and convict guerilla-terrorists with the minimum of violence or danger to the population. Large insurgent combat groups can be caught and destroyed, or defended against, by uniformed military and paramilitary forces. However, it is absolutely essential that for this direct means of hunting and eliminating the guerilla-terrorist organizations, it can only be effective if the intelligence, security, and indirect means—all of it depending on the general population, can be achieved in larger and larger increments.

The above description of the “on the ground” level of fighting an insurgency is the heart of what the current Bush Administration surge “strategy” needs to accomplish. The key problem in the Iraq War is that as the U.S. has spent over four years of using its heavy-handed, extremely violent, very visible, futile and ineffective traditions of indiscriminate firepower, overwhelming force, and cultural insensitivity in fighting the guerilla-terrorist networks of Iraq.

As a result of the misuse of strategy, the population of Iraq feels intimidated by BOTH the Coalition military forces and the insurgents. The government's ineffectiveness to protect the people and provide services to the communities has lost and is losing the loyalty and cooperation of an ever-growing share of the Iraqi population and their tribal-system of leadership. Regrettably, the failures of political-military leadership at the very top of American government in Washington, D.C., among both civilians and uniformed personnel, in the White House and on both sides of the isle in Congress, may have lost the Iraq War without an opportunity for winning remaining. Time will tell.

First, the U.S. government has agreed that political benchmarks must be placed on the Iraqi government to measure progress. These measurements are conceived in order to determine if the strategy is working, if the Iraqi government can survive and operate with the support of its own people, and whether more U.S. blood and treasure will make a difference. Benchmarks on the Iraqi political leadership are necessary and fine. After all, the solution to the Iraq War lies first and foremost on Iraq establishing a political system which the majority of its citizens will support and whose cooperation is the first essential to defeat the insurgency.

The only thing wrong in this scenario is that the U.S. political leadership has no political benchmarks on itself.

The failure of the post-invasion occupation and counter-insurgency war has always been the U.S. political grand strategy for the war and the entire Middle East is fundamentally flawed. No matter what the U.S. military is capable of doing in Iraq, or in Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and everywhere else, U.S. foreign policy defeats the sacrifice of near 4,000 dead Americans and the 30,000 seriously wounded. Need we mention the tragedy of a half a million Iraqis murdered and the waste of 500 billion dollars of U.S. taxpayer money.

Wars all must begin with grand strategy—the setting of a desired political outcome. The U.S. uses the political propaganda that it wants democracy to transform the Middle East. When the wrong governments have been democratically elected, however, the U.S. opposes them and tries to destroy them. More cynically, it supports the most ruthless and reactionary dictatorships in the Middle East who forbid democracy and imprison, torture and murder their own citizens.

U.S. political policy in the Middle East is so absurd that it defies honest analysis. The absurdity is only possible because of the ignorance and apathy of the American people to accept it. The Bush Administration ruins any effort to equitably settle the Israeli-Palestinian problem by, no surprise, protecting Israel's land and water theft. Not any more surprisingly, the U.S. denies the democratically elected government of Palestine led by the "terrorists Hamas party" the support and acknowledgement it

needs to be a stable partner for peace negotiations. The American people have been lied to by their government and media into believing that failure to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not standing in the way of peace and security for the U.S. against Muslim fundamentalists everywhere. These lies to the American people are of true Orwellian dimensions.

Getting U.S. political policy correct and realistic is essential to the war against Islamist guerilla-terrorists, in Iraq and worldwide. In the weeks preceding this writing, the U.S. may have delivered the last cynical dagger into the soul of all the sacrifice. At this stage, when the originally scheduled units for the surge in Iraq have arrived completely in-theater, the Bush Administration announced that it would like to maintain a presence of 40,000-50,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in Iraq for possibly the next 50 years. The comparison was made with a UN Security Council-mandated military presence on the Korean peninsula 54 years after the end of active combat there. The difference, not pointed out, is that up until now at least, the South Korean government and most of the older people who remember the war, want the UN/US forces there.

The Iraqi people, by large majorities in polls, have opposed such a semi-permanent military occupation. The same holds for other Muslim peoples, but not their US-endorsed dictatorships. They want to be left alone as soon as they possibly can be. The

point to which they will tolerate a U.S. occupation (in all but name) is when one side or the other has decisively won control. The Iraqi people will eventually and overwhelmingly support whichever side—American-supported or guerilla-terrorists—that meets their needs for security, sovereignty, order, services, and policies. It goes without saying that one of these policy needs is the respect for Arab culture and the Muslim faith in the Middle East. Justice for the Palestinian demi-nation is a prime concern.

As stressed in this article, U.S. grand strategy/political policy regarding the Middle East, exclusive even from any military strategy or policy, is the first condition to win in Iraq. But the U.S. has consistently done and shown since 1943, it does not respect the needs of the Arab peoples and their Muslim faith to be treated with dignity, respect, justice and fairness. In the future, into this breach of credibility will step a great- or even an emerging super-power that does not bear the burden of America's demands for the region to submit. This new replacement power, to which would accrue all strategic benefits deriving from the region's oil resources and its political and economic gravity, could very well be China, Russia, India or the European Union. With that, the eclipse of America's unrivaled power would begin, and the United States would begin passing into history as the world's once and lost great empire of liberty undone by the ignorance

and apathy of its own greedy and selfish people.

At the “grand strategic level” of political policy in the multiple wars, perception and merit are key. If allies, neutrals, and enemies clearly understand the intent of what America says, the world must then be convinced of the integrity and correctness of what America does. Without these vital companions called awareness and action, no amount of force, no measure of sacrifice or wealth, no malformed assumptions of wishful thinking or arrogant disregard for the “way things are” will overcome any enemy. And neither will self-delusion gain support of friends or serve as credible rewards or effective deterrence against those presently indifferent or potentially hostile at some later date.

The Bush Administration’s “surge” concept may succeed in killing a vast amount of guerilla-terrorists, in Iraq or indeed anywhere it is being applied without publicity, as in Afghanistan. In the process, innocents will be killed and infrastructure destroyed. But only with a clearer, more sensible design for foreign policy, the lack of which is America’s most self-defeating obstacle, will a long-term success in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Islamic rim in general, or even against radical Islamism in Europe and the American homeland itself, be at all possible.

Considering the present attitude and viewpoint of the Bush Administration about the need for unilateral applications of

militarized violence, a change from traditional post-World War II foreign policy regarding the Muslim countries is extremely unlikely. America’s grand strategy for the region depends on securing access and complete, if indirect, domination of Persian Gulf oil. It may not be so premature to declare that the “surge” has already failed, expected short-term gains or public relations spin notwithstanding.

Victory in this “great” ideological struggle of the 21st Century, between radical visions of the future of Islam and the reactionary, equally radical, vision of “New Imperialism,” will not be for one side or the other. Regardless of which sides kills more people or which side gives up, unless the victory for peace, prosperity, safety, and humanity is won for everyone, all peoples—Muslims, Jews, Christians, Confucians, Hindus, etc.—everyone—loses.

Finding the solution to the world’s problems can only be led by the the United States. But America cannot compel others to accept the “poison of its own point of view.” The world must join together and cooperate, to be sure, but Americans must be first among equals in a new vision. It has the resources and intellectual energy to make the solutions easier and far better than without American willingness to do it. But the ideal, the work and the sacrifice is not limited to governments. The people—the mass of people everywhere—must believe and act on their own to bring about a better world. The

vision can only be one that secures the most liberty for all peoples and nations, economic freedom everywhere, an honest cooperation for mutual security (not inevitable mutual destruction), and, most importantly, the strength and unity within and between diverse communities. Such a concept can be called “Libertarian Internationalism”: The idea that liberty without exception is god-given for all men and women. Only individuals informed can act on this. It can’t wait. It all begins with personal awareness and committed action. If enough people think and act toward the higher good of all humanity, without greed and overcoming fear, then the future belongs to light of peace, not the darkness of human nature.

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