

Are We Winning In Iraq?

TESTIMONY

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“Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror.”

Donald Rumsfeld, Defense Secretary
October 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today, and to share my views with you on this important issue. My testimony briefly addresses the following questions:

- What is the character of the war in Iraq?
- What are the war’s centers of gravity?
- How does one wage a counterinsurgency?
- How can we measure success?

I. The Character of the Conflict

“Rebellions can be made by two percent active in a striking force, and 98 percent passively sympathetic.”

T.E. Lawrence (“of Arabia”)

In Iraq we are confronted with enemies waging insurgency warfare. An insurgency is a protracted, multi-phased struggle, whose objective is to overthrow the existing order. Insurgencies traditionally comprise three phases: first, insurgent agitation and proselytization among the mass populace—the phase of contention; second, overt violence, guerrilla operations, and the establishment of sanctuaries—the equilibrium phase; and third, open warfare between insurgent and government forces designed to topple the existing regime—the counteroffensive phase.

Specifically, Phase I revolves around founding a political movement and creating cadres by recruiting elements of the population. Phase I operations are characterized by efforts to expand the cadres and by acts of terror, such as murder, assassination and sabotage against the regime in power. In Iraq, these movements are ready-made, the product of the US-led military operation to depose Saddam Hussein and his Ba’athist Party. Remnants of that party, which is dominated by Sunni Muslim Arabs, form one insurgent group. Another potential insurgent group centers on Iraq’s Shi’ite Muslims, who comprise the majority of the country’s population.¹ Foreign

¹ It should be noted that, even within the ethnic groups themselves, Iraqi insurgent movements are far from unified.

insurgents—typically referred to as terrorists—constitute yet a third group, although they themselves appear to be an agglomeration of independent radical Islamist elements.²

In Phase II operations, the insurgents expand their base of support through attacks on government facilities and leaders. Hit-and-run guerrilla assaults against vulnerable regime forces (e.g., convoys) become common. Efforts are made to gain control over certain elements of the population, such as in remote areas where the regime's power is weak or in areas where the regime's forces find it difficult to operate (e.g., urban areas). Guerrilla units are drawn from this expanding base of support. The link between the population and the insurgents is critical. Unless they maintain their access to the population, the insurgents cannot extend their control. Success in Phases I and II enables Phase III operations.

In Phase III the regime finds itself confronting main-force insurgent formations that are willing and able to take on the government's forces in open warfare. However, activities consistent with Phase I and II operations continue as well. The insurgent's goal at this point is to create the impression of irresistible momentum that will eviscerate the morale of the regime's forces and trigger a massive popular uprising, leading to regime collapse.

In Iraq, US and other coalition forces, along with indigenous Iraqi forces, are fighting against insurgent movements whose operations are characteristic of Phase I and Phase II operations.

II. The Centers of Gravity

The Population: The War's Center of Gravity

In war, the center (or centers) of gravity can be defined as that asset, or set of assets, the loss of which will destroy an enemy's ability or willingness to continue its resistance.³ In conventional warfare, the enemy's military forces are often seen as its center of gravity. At other times the enemy's center of gravity has been depicted as its seat of power, its capital city, its alliance structure, or its economic infrastructure. This is not the case in insurgency warfare, where the population is the center of gravity. In the current war in Iraq, however, there are three centers of gravity, which are described below.

² The Iraqi Kurds form a fourth group. At present, however, they have not taken up arms in any significant numbers against the occupying coalition forces. One radical Islamic insurgent movement with origins in the Kurdish region of Iraq, *Ansar al-Islam fi Kurdistan* (Supporters of Islam in Kurdistan), has a membership whose composition is believed to be dominated by Kurds.

³ Clausewitz described the center of gravity as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends." Antulio Echevarria II notes that a literal translation of Clausewitz's views reveals the author focuses his discussion on tracing "the full weight of the enemy's force to as few centers of gravity as possible, when feasible, to one; and, at the same time, to reduce the blow against these centers to as few major actions as possible, when feasible, to one . . . Reducing the enemy's force to once center of gravity depends, first, upon the [enemy's] political connectivity [or unity] itself . . . and, second, upon the situation in the theater of war itself, and which of the various enemy armies appears there." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 485-486, 595-596; Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 19th ed. (Regensburg, Germany: Pustet, 1991), pp. 1009-10. Cited in Antulio Echevarria II, "Center of Gravity: Recommendations for Joint Doctrine," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 35, pp. 13-14.

The Iraqi People

For both sides, the path to controlling the country is to control the people. As Mao Zedong noted, “The people are like water and the army is like fish.”⁴ The insurgents’ ability to *control* the population, whether through their willing cooperation or as the result of insurgent threats, acts of terror and intimidation, or the physical occupation of their community, is crucial to their success.

Access and, if possible, control over the population enables insurgents to deny critical intelligence to counterinsurgent forces. This is key. After all, if the counterinsurgent forces know who and where the insurgents are during the early phases of the insurgency, they have more than enough military capability to engage and defeat them. Access also provides the insurgents with an opportunity to gain critical intelligence concerning the plans and whereabouts of counterinsurgent forces, to recruit new members to their cause, and to obtain (or appropriate) food, medicine and other supplies.

Correspondingly, the inability of the government in Baghdad to exercise control over its population dilutes its strength, denies it replacements for the armed forces, makes taxes difficult or impossible to collect, and dries up sources of badly needed intelligence. Thus if the insurgents can gain control over the population through fear, popular appeal, or more likely a mixture of both, they stand a good chance of winning, although it may take a protracted period of time before the correlation of forces shifts in their favor.

It is important to note that, owing to the absence of personal security, the vast majority of the population typically remains uncommitted, providing support only when coerced, or when a clear winner emerges. As T.E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”) noted, “rebellions can be made by two percent active in a striking force, and 98 percent passively sympathetic.” The reason for this passivity among the population is that, so long as their security is at risk, individuals that take sides in an insurgency expose themselves to retribution. In Iraq, this is particularly true for those who oppose the insurgency. The inability of coalition and hastily trained indigenous Iraqi security forces to provide security for the population makes any efforts on their part to provide active support to the Iraqi government or coalition forces a highly risky proposition.

Insurgent control of the population explains why an insurgent movement can expand as a whole even while heavy casualties are inflicted on its guerrilla units. The insurgents simply continue to draw upon the country’s manpower pool to replenish their losses. Moreover, unlike the government, the insurgents have no need to secure the nation’s infrastructure or provide security to the population. Hence the insurgents are often able to meter their casualties to fit the circumstances of the moment. Consequently, the population’s security should be the top priority of the coalition forces, thereby denying access to the “sea” which the insurgent “fish” need to survive.

Defeating the insurgency is made both easier and more difficult by Iraq’s heterogeneous demographic makeup, which cuts across nationalities and religion. While the country is

⁴ Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong), *Aspects of China’s Anti-Japanese Struggle* (Bombay, India: n.p. 1948.), p. 48.

dominated by Muslims, it is also divided between the two predominant Muslim sects, the Sunni and Shi'ia, with the latter comprising roughly 60 percent of Iraq's population. It is made easier in the sense that the counterinsurgent forces can pursue a "divide and conquer" strategy that pits one group against another. It is made more difficult in that pre-empting the cause that animates one insurgent movement may not address the driving forces behind the others.

The American People

There is an important distinction to be made between insurgent movements that are being countered principally by indigenous government forces, and those that primarily confront the forces of an external power. The latter, of course, is the situation in Iraq. Up to the present, US and coalition forces have shouldered most of the burden. This can be exploited to the insurgents' advantage, if they can drain the will of the United States people to the point where Washington abandons an infant regime before it is capable of standing on its own and defending itself. In a democracy such as the United States, this could occur if popular support for the war erodes.

This is an important point, since the insurgents cannot hope to defeat US military forces in open battle (i.e., by moving to Phase III of the insurgency). American forces cannot be militarily forced out of Iraq. Consequently, the insurgents must pursue an indirect approach. Even though they are far weaker than the forces opposing them, they are relying on the active cooperation or passive acceptance of the vast majority of the indigenous population to sustain themselves. By so doing, they intend, over time, to convince the American public and its leaders that the war is not worth the cost in blood and treasure. Thus the conflict revolves around winning the hearts and minds of both the Iraqi people and those of the American people as well.

The American Soldier

The United States is waging war in Iraq with a volunteer military. In this sense, the American soldier (and marine) has a "vote" in this conflict. If, at some point, the Americans who are doing the fighting in this war become convinced that it is no longer a worthy cause, or that it is a hopeless cause, they may become unwilling to risk their lives to achieve the United States' war objectives. If that happens, the troops may "vote with their feet;" i.e., they may cease to enlist or reenlist in sufficient numbers to sustain the level of combat strength in Iraq necessary to win the war.

A Key Asymmetry

In assessing the centers of gravity, one sees a key asymmetry favoring the insurgents. *For them to win, they need secure only **one** of the three centers of gravity, while the US and its allies must secure **all three**.*

Moreover, the three centers are not identical in terms of what animates their perceptions of progress in the war. For example, high US casualty rates may have little effect on the Iraqi people; however, they could erode support among the American people for the war, and could lead to recruiting and retention problems in the Army and Marine Corps. Thus despite progress being made in terms of winning over the Iraqi people, both the American public and the

American soldier may become disillusioned with the war if they feel that the Iraqis are not providing sufficient support.⁵

Similarly, US troops may come to believe that their tours in “hot spots” such as Iraq are too frequent to warrant their continued service (or their joining the Service). If that occurs, it may become too difficult to maintain the required forces in the field to deal with the insurgency, even if the Iraqi and American people support the war.

III. Defeating an Insurgency

*“I don’t think that unless a greater effort is made by the government to win popular support that the war can be won out there. **In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it.** We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it”* (Emphasis added)

President John Kennedy
September 1963

While the United States does not confront a unified, coherent enemy in Iraq, insurgent elements seem to be pursuing traditional insurgent strategies and tactics.⁶ The insurgents are clearly too weak to challenge coalition forces openly, and consequently appear to be targeting both the Iraqi population and public opinion in the coalition states.⁷ On the other hand, the counterinsurgent forces suffer from a discrimination problem—they cannot easily distinguish insurgents from the general population. Defeating them requires time, both to provide counterinsurgent forces with an understanding of the environment in which the insurgent forces are operating, and to win the hearts and minds of the population, which will produce the human intelligence needed to distinguish the enemy from noncombatants. Again, the population emerges as a center of gravity.

The key to defeating an insurgency is to attack it at the source of its strength: the population. If the counterinsurgent forces can deny the insurgents access to the people, the insurgents become like fish out of water, denied sources of manpower and information. The insurgents’ problem is further compounded if the people feel secure enough from retribution to provide counterinsurgent forces with intelligence on insurgent movements and the identities of cadre members. The prospects for gaining such intelligence are further advanced if the

⁵ The problem here is somewhat similar to the public finance “free rider” principle in which those that benefit do not shoulder their fair share of the burden. During the Vietnam War, for example, US officials often evinced concern that the deployment of additional US combat forces would produce “subtraction by addition;” i.e., that the South Vietnamese would find it increasingly easy to “let [Uncle] Sam do it,” husband their own resources, and minimize their military contribution.

⁶ The insurgent movements do, however, seem unified in desiring the end of US presence and influence in their country.

⁷ For example, although the linkage between the perpetrators and insurgent forces is far from clear, Spain appears to have been coerced into withdrawing its forces from Iraq in large part as a consequence of a terrorist train bombing in Madrid. The point here is that Spanish troops were not evicted from Iraq by insurgent forces; rather, they were withdrawn because the Spanish electorate, in the wake of the Madrid bombings, voted in a government committed to ending Spain’s participation in the conflict.

counterinsurgent forces have won the people's "hearts," by offering them the prospect of a better way of life if the insurgents are defeated, in addition to having won their "minds" by convincing the people that the insurgents will be defeated and that the government can provide the personal security necessary to convince individuals to provide the intelligence needed to identify who the insurgents are, and where they are located.

Should counterinsurgent forces instead focus their principal efforts on destroying insurgent forces, as is more typical of conventional warfare, and accord population security a low priority, they will play into the insurgents' hands. Insurgent casualties suffered under these circumstances will rarely prove decisive. So long as the insurgents maintain access to the population, they can rarely be compelled to fight. Thus they can meter their casualties to keep them at tolerable levels, and replenish their losses by recruiting from the population. It is only when the insurgents become truly isolated from the population that the real attrition of their forces can take place.

In establishing security for the population, priority in intelligence efforts should focus first and foremost on the insurgent infrastructure, not insurgent forces. By rooting out the insurgent cadres that live among the people, insurgent forces lose their eyes and ears, and coercing the population becomes much more difficult. Moreover, the local inhabitants are likely to feel more secure if the principal threat to their security lies outside their town than if it exists within. At present, the Iraqi insurgents are principally operating inside urban areas. Getting them out and keeping them out will require a protracted investment in providing security and enabling reconstruction. In this respect, the arrangements reached with insurgents in Fallujah and Najaf, respectively, that allowed insurgent forces to operate in those cities, as opposed to government security forces, was a significant setback for the United States' counterinsurgency campaign.

It bears repeating that security for the people is the *sine qua non* for winning their hearts and minds. Once a sufficient level of security is established, civic action, public works and other forms of reconstruction can proceed within acceptable levels of risk.⁸ Local elections can be held, and those who assume office need not fear for their lives. Local security forces can be established to protect their community's stake in a future that promises economic gain and access to the political power.⁹ Indeed, the political, economic and social elements of the counterinsurgency campaign must be well integrated with the military dimension. There must be a unity of effort and a unity of command. For example, civic action, or reconstruction, in the

⁸ Actions of this type are designed to pre-empt the insurgents' cause by demonstrating to the people that their lives will be better if the counterinsurgents prevail, and that the people will ultimately decide their own fate, first through local elections, and then, as more areas of the country become secure, regional and national elections. This takes considerable time to bring about, and are one reason why defeating an insurgent movement tend to be a protracted enterprise.

⁹ These paramilitary forces should be drawn from the inhabitants of the area, and trained in counterinsurgency operations such as small-unit patrolling, night operations, and ambush. As with progress in various forms of civic action, this training process takes considerable time, far more than the time allotted for by coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the United States has understandably tried to replace US troops with Iraqi security forces, the fact is that training indigenous security forces takes time. Hence Washington's dilemma: it needs to reduce its troop strength to reduce the strain on its forces and to provide security with an Iraqi Face; yet that security can only be provided by well-trained forces, which will take considerable time to accomplish.

absence of security merely increases the potential resources available to insurgent forces, or provides easy targets for insurgent acts of sabotage.¹⁰

Developing a secure environment in which reconstruction can take place takes time. The reason for this is that the population's support is conditional on the government's ability to demonstrate convincingly that it has both the means and the will to persevere. This critical factor has been lacking in the United States' strategy for dealing with the insurgents. Despite professions that America will "stay the course" in Iraq, the population has, in fact, been subjected to a series of course changes by the US Government that provide a very weak foundation upon which to win the hearts and minds of the people.

Measuring Success

What metrics does one use in measuring whether or not we are making progress in defeating the insurgency? How ought we to think about metrics we choose?

First, metrics must focus on trends in the war, not snapshots at a particular moment. Insurgencies are by nature protracted affairs, and success can be gauged only over time. Second, in selecting metrics, one must consider their possible second-order or "hidden" effects. Consider, for example, a metric that sees enemy casualties as a way of whittling down insurgent strength. This metric, if pursued indiscriminately, may increase noncombatant casualties, and alienate the population. Ultimately, this could find the insurgents more than offsetting their losses as a consequence of enhanced recruiting opportunities with the disenchanting population. Third, metrics should be reviewed on a frequent basis to insure they have proven (or remain) valid. Finally, metrics should not be viewed in isolation. They must always be linked back to the war's centers of gravity.

The Iraqi people are likely the principal center of gravity. If progress is being made in winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, it is likely—though not assured—that the support of the American People and American Soldier will be sustained, at least over the near- to mid-term future.¹¹ This leads to three key questions:

- "Hearts"—Do the Iraqi people share the same objectives as their government and the coalition forces?
- "Minds"—Do the Iraqi people believe that these objectives are likely to be achieved—i.e., that the insurgent groups will, in the end, be defeated?

¹⁰ Note that this does not imply perfect security. A town or village can weather an occasional insurgent attack, even if some loss of life is involved, far better than they can endure a string of assassinations that demonstrate the insurgents are living among them. The former implies a relatively high degree of security, while in the latter case security is effectively non-existent.

¹¹ It must be noted that some conflict exists among the centers of gravity—the three centers are not identical in terms of what animates their perceptions of the war. Thus, for example, aggressive US military operations undertaken to enhance the Iraqi peoples' security may help secure that center of gravity, while at the same time—if substantial US casualties are incurred—risk undermining the centers of gravity comprising the American People and American Soldier.

- Security—If provided with a secure environment, are the Iraqi people willing to take an active role in defeating the insurgency?

In short, if we win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, and provide them with security against retribution by the insurgents, they will provide much of the critical human intelligence regarding who the insurgents are, and where they are located. With that knowledge, the counterinsurgent forces will have a decisive advantage in the war.

Strategic Metrics

Given the Bush Administration's objectives, it appears there are two metrics at the strategic level of the conflict, which address overall war aims. One is whether our operations in Iraq are enabling a shift toward more democratic regimes in the Arab/Islamic world. The second is whether we will experience, as a consequence of this war, a shift away from the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Campaign Metrics

What metrics might be useful in gauging progress in the counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq? Here I will present and briefly comment upon several popular (and somewhat problematic) metrics, as well as several other metrics that appear promising.

Insurgent Force Levels

Enemy troop strength is often used to gauge the military balance in both conventional and insurgency warfare. In the case of Iraq, it does not appear that attempting to count the enemy would be a particularly useful measure of his strength or our progress in the war. Historically, it has often been exceedingly difficult to obtain an accurate assessment of insurgent force levels.¹² Unlike the counterinsurgent forces, many insurgents are not “full-time” participants in the conflict. Some “insurgents” engage in hostile activities not because they are “true believers” (e.g., are devoted to the Ba’athist, radical Islamist, etc. cause), but because they are coerced into participating, or co-opted (e.g., those Iraqis who will plant an IED for a fee.)

Number of Assassinations (e.g., religious leaders, senior government officials)

The fewer the number of assassinations, the better the government is seen as able to protect its own officials. From the population's perspective, if the government cannot protect its own, it is difficult to see how it can protect individual citizens from insurgent coercion and retribution.¹³

¹² One also must be careful that this metric does not lead to a “body-count” approach to the war, as occurred in Vietnam. Traditionally, the surest way to reduce insurgent strength is to win the hearts and minds of the population, and deny the insurgents access to them by providing security. Once access is denied, the insurgents' recruiting source dries up—his forces are attrited indirectly, and in a manner much more likely to be sustained than the direct approach that puts primary emphasis on killing insurgents.

¹³ Of course, as with many metrics, one must be careful in interpreting them. If, for example, the government were so thoroughly infiltrated by insurgents, it may no longer be necessary to target government officials. Or, if the insurgents believe US popular support for the war is weakening, they may intentionally shift their focus to the centers of gravity that are the American people and the American soldier.

Insurgent Leader Casualties and Defections

Similarly, if the insurgents cannot protect their own leadership from being killed or captured, they are likely both losing the intelligence war, which is key to defeating an insurgency, and demonstrating their inability to protect their infrastructure from government penetration. This will likely discourage recruitment, as prospective recruits will infer that an insurgent movement that cannot shield the identity and location of its leaders can hardly be expected to do so for those lower in the chain of command.

Correspondingly, if insurgents are defecting in increasing numbers, or (better still) as a growing percentage of the overall insurgent force, this would indicate that we are winning the hearts and minds of the “true believers;” i.e., they are coming to believe that their cause is no longer worth fighting for, or that it is a hopeless cause.

Success in this area is a clear indication that the counterinsurgent forces are winning the intelligence battle. Since winning that battle will very likely mean that individual citizens are stepping forward to provide information, it also means that the “hearts and minds” of the Iraqi people are being won over—and that a critical center of gravity is being secured.

Combat Intensity

It is tempting to measure the number of combat incidents as a sign of insurgent strength, and the lack thereof as a sign of their weakness. This must be done with care, however, as a lack of insurgent activity does not necessarily mean success for the counterinsurgent forces. One suspects the combat incidents around Fallujah in the summer of 2004 were quite low. Yet this was hardly a measure of the counterinsurgent forces’ success. Rather, it was a clear signal of their impotence.

Conversely, a large number of insurgent attacks may reflect their weakness, and not their strength. Such a rash of attacks could be stimulated by insurgent fears that they are losing the war and must do something dramatic to reverse the unfavorable (from their point of view) trends.

Nevertheless, it is worth tracking insurgent activity, not so much to get a sense of whether progress is being made in defeating them, but rather to get a sense of their priorities and trends in their behavior. For example, combat incidents could provide insights on trends in the scale of enemy attacks (e.g., small group, sizeable force, large-scale units), their targeting priorities (What are they targeting: civilians? US forces? convoys? infrastructure?), and their level of success (Were casualties produced? Facilities destroyed?). These data may also tell us how effective counterinsurgent forces are in certain elements of their strategy, or signal a shift in their strategy. For example, if the data show that the insurgents are moving away from attacks on government officials, or if these attacks are experiencing a far lower success rate, then counterinsurgent efforts to protect key government officials may be paying off.

US Casualties

To the extent that US casualties are linked to a decline in support for the war among American soldiers in particular and the US public in general, they are an important metric. However, it is not clear that this is the case, at least not given the current casualty rate, which is far below that

suffered during the Vietnam War. Furthermore, unlike in the Vietnam era, no US citizen risks becoming a casualty in Iraq unless they volunteer for military service. To be sure, the American public might, at some point, become horrified by the level of US casualties. Still, this might just as easily lead to a redoubling of the American people's determination to see the war through to a victorious conclusion, as to stimulate demands for a US troop withdrawal.

As noted above, a more important issue for the two American centers of gravity may be the "free rider problem." If it is perceived that the Iraqis do not want to fight for their own freedom against undemocratic insurgent movements, US soldiers (and the American people) may become increasingly reluctant to make sacrifices on behalf of what is perceived to be indifferent beneficiaries.

Winning the Intelligence War: The Link to the "Hearts and Minds"

It bears repeating that winning the intelligence war is critical to defeating an insurgency. Coalition forces have overwhelming combat capability. If they know who the insurgents are, and where they are, victory is assured. It is crucial that ways are identified to measure progress in this area. Consider, then, the following metrics:

Percentage of Contacts with the Enemy initiated by US and Coalition Forces. The focus is **not** on the number of offensive operations that coalition forces launch relative to the insurgents; rather, it is the number of contacts that are initiated by coalition forces relative to the enemy. The metric is used to find out how we are progressing in the intelligence war, which is a surrogate for getting a handle on the population's disposition. The thinking here is that a positive trend in this metric is an indication not only that the initiative is passing from the insurgents to the counterinsurgent forces, but also that a key link in this effort is the willingness of the population to provide "actionable" intelligence. When the Iraqi people support US war aims, believe the US will prevail, and believe they are secure from retribution by the insurgents, they are much more likely to provide information as to where IEDs might be planted, or when an insurgent ambush is planned, or who among them might be cooperating with the insurgents. Along these lines, among the most useful metrics would be the following:

Percentage of IEDs Intercepted/Destroyed vs. those Detonated. Again, this may be a useful surrogate for measuring whether or not the government and its coalition allies are making progress in winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. To capture this trend, IED intercept figures would have to be broken down by type. For example, IEDs might be intercepted due to government/military surveillance or by tips from the civilian population, or by shoddy emplacement by the insurgents, or other factors. The key here is to track the level and effectiveness of civilian involvement in dealing with this form of insurgent attack.

Percentage of Contacts with the Enemy Initiated by Coalition Forces relative to Contacts Initiated by Iraqi units. Since ultimately this war must be won by the Iraqi people themselves, and since the United States should avoid creating a "free rider" problem with respect to indigenous Iraqi forces, measuring the percentage of contacts with the enemy initiated by coalition forces relative to contacts initiated by indigenous Iraqi units (e.g., National Guard units; police forces) might be useful. Simply put: What percentage of contacts with the enemy involve

indigenous Iraqi forces? Of these contacts, what percentage are initiated by Iraqis, and what percentage by the insurgents?

“Actionable” Intelligence Provided by the Local Population. Correspondingly, it might be useful to measure the percentage of contacts with the enemy that stem from “actionable” intelligence provided by the local population. The higher the percentage, the greater the likelihood that the locals both share our objectives and feel secure enough to volunteer information. The goal here, of course, is to determine whether two key objectives are being met. First, are the Iraqi forces taking on an increasing share of the burden in the war against the insurgents? Second, what kind of cooperation are they receiving from the people in the form of actionable intelligence? If the trends are positive, it offers considerable encouragement.

“Market Metrics”

There is some evidence that the insurgent movement comprises not only those that are unremittingly hostile to the idea of a free and democratic Iraq and to the United States, but also those who are unemployed or part of the criminal element released from Iraqi jails shortly before the beginning of the Second Gulf War. “True believers” in the insurgent cause should not need any special incentive to undertake violent action against the Iraqi Government or coalition forces. However, there are clear indications that the insurgents are offering payments to Iraqis to plant IEDs, and declaring bounties for the killing of certain categories of individuals (e.g., Iraqi governmental officials, US soldiers, etc.). To the degree this is occurring, it indicates that the insurgency is struggling to expand its ranks, and must buy support. Given this, it would be helpful to keep track of the “market” in this aspect of the struggle. What are the insurgents offering to those who will plant an IED? Detonate one? Commit suicide in a car bomb attack? What kind of bounty are they placing on the lives of their enemies, and how does that price change over time?

The assumption behind these “market” metrics is that the higher the price the insurgents are paying people to engage in these actions, the fewer people there are who are willing to do them. Reduced supply is driving up the cost. The lower supply may be indicators of US success in meeting other objectives, such as economic growth (which, by reducing unemployment, may reduce the number of individuals willing to “work” for the insurgents), a greater sense of security (making it more difficult for insurgents to gain access to people for the purpose of “employing” them to attack the counterinsurgent forces), or a stronger sense of popular commitment to the new Iraq regime (leaving fewer people vulnerable to being co-opted by the insurgents to perform these tasks).

Of course, the price could drop at the same time there is a dramatic increase in attacks. This would be far more worrisome. Here it seems likely the price would drop because Iraqis are attracted to the insurgent movement in ever-increasing numbers. Should that become the case, the increased supply of “true believers”—those who act out of conviction—would reduce the need to hire individuals to conduct these attacks for money. In economic terms, the demand

would be reduced relative to the supply of individuals available and, hence, the price would drop.¹⁴

V. Conclusion

We are, at present, engaged in a protracted conflict with an enemy waging a transnational, theologically based insurgent movement. While the conflict is global, the central front is, at present, clearly in Iraq, where we are confronted by several insurgent groups, principal among them those seeking a Ba'athist restoration and those fighting under the banner of radical Islam.

This war is marked by a severe asymmetry. The centers of gravity in this war are the Iraqi people, the American public, and the American soldier—all three must be secured to achieve our objective. The enemy, however, need only secure *one* of these three to emerge victorious.

It is difficult to discern a coherent US strategy for defeating the insurgency, or to accept that adequate metrics have been identified to gauge whether or not progress is being made. Those metrics that are most often cited, such as level of enemy attacks, US casualties, and numbers of Iraqi security forces trained, are likely to prove of relatively low utility in determining if we are winning the war. Assuming an effective strategy can be devised, it will almost certainly focus on the “hearts and minds” of the three centers of gravity and, by extension, winning the intelligence war.

¹⁴ In terms of measuring the success of ongoing operations to defeat the insurgents, one might examine yet another “market” force. In this case, we might trace the trend in the cost of certain key insurgent weapons. For example, what is the price of an AK-47 on the black market? A ton of explosives? On the other hand, given Iraqi culture (most people own their own weapons) and the fact that, under Saddam Hussein, the country boasted numerous ammunition dumps, the ability to restrict the supply of weapons or explosives may be very limited, at least until the latter stages of the insurgency when the government’s ability to control what goes on inside its borders becomes stronger. This is not to say the government should not, for example, attempt to secure its ammunition supplies. Rather, it is a recognition that, in failing to do so immediately after the end of major combat operations, US and coalition forces enabled the market to be flooded. This combined with the relatively low rate of munition expenditures by the insurgent, means that there is very likely a generous supply of munitions available. One also notes the success insurgents have had in seizing equipment and munitions provided to Iraqi police forces that have had their command posts or police stations overrun in attacks.