

# WHAM: Winning Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan and Elsewhere



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WHAM: Winning Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan and Elsewhere

Henriksen



Thomas Henriksen  
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**On the cover:** ADJID, INDANAN, SULU, Philippines — An Army Special Forces soldier teaches local children about dental hygiene during a medical civic action project 23 May 2010 held at the Palan Elementary School. U.S. service members assigned to Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines worked alongside Armed Forces of the Philippines corpsmen and soldiers, and Sulu Provincial Department of Agriculture and Health medical personnel, aiding more than 250 people in everything from dental work to minor surgery. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Joshua Scott/released)





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Thomas Henriksen

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## Foreword

Dr. Henriksen argues that America needs to get back to the basics of counterinsurgency lest it bankrupts itself in nation-building and reconstruction projects that are driven from the top, not the bottom. Citing tremendously expensive “winning hearts and minds” (WHAM) efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, he hypothesizes that “WHAM operations must be waged with much less expenditure of U.S. dollars in the years ahead.” He offers Britain’s frugal victory in Malaya as one example of a low-budget counterinsurgency success that started with protecting the people, over time formed a representative government, and linked the people and their support to that government. Economic development was part of the strategy, but it was a supporting and complementary effort, not a major effort in and of itself.

He argues that success in Iraq was not because of a massive infusion of dollars, but because the people, represented and organized by the tribal leaders, were fed up with al-Qaeda’s murder and intimidation campaign and imposition of a strict form of Sharia law. The tribes in Al Anbar realized they could not defeat al-Qaeda on their own, so they partnered with their lesser enemies, the Coalition and the Government of Iraq, to rid their homeland of al-Qaeda.

Although Afghanistan is different, basics remain the same: security of the people and connecting the people to the government. It started in the north as Special Operations teams, backed by a full arsenal of Coalition resources, linked up with Northern Alliance Anti-Taliban fighters. The small U.S. footprint allowed General Rashid Dostum to paint the Pakistani Taliban and others as the “foreigners” as he partnered with Special Operations Forces (SOF) to recruit the support of the locals and defeat the Taliban. The challenge then became, and still is, linking the people to a government they see as legitimate. Economic aid and reconstruction are important, but they need to be complementary and supporting efforts rather than the prohibitively expensive and unsustainable ventures that they have become.

Dr. Henriksen’s research concludes with advocating a return to counterinsurgency fundamentals and encourages taking historical counterinsurgency lessons along with the recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan

into consideration. SOF readers will be challenged to scrutinize strategic approaches and resourcing of counterinsurgency operations in the future.

Dr. Kenneth Poole, Ed.D.  
Director, Strategic Studies Department

## About the Author

Dr. Thomas Henriksen is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. Until September 2003, he was the associate director for program development at the Hoover Institution. His other administrative duties included serving as executive secretary of the National Fellows and National Security Affairs Fellows programs, as well as director of the Media Fellows Program. Dr. Henriksen also serves as a senior fellow with the JSOU Strategic Studies Department.

His current research focuses on American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world, international political affairs, and national defense. He specializes in the study of U.S. diplomatic and military courses of action toward terrorist havens, such as Afghanistan, and the so-called rogue states, including North Korea, Iraq, and Iran. He also concentrates on armed and covert interventions abroad.

Dr. Henriksen's forthcoming book is entitled *America and the Rogue States*, which Palgrave MacMillan will publish late this year. He is also the author of *American Power after the Berlin Wall* (Palgrave Macmillan, October 2007). A prior published book is an edited volume on competing visions for U.S. foreign policy, *Foreign Policy for America in the 21st Century: Alternative Perspectives* (Hoover Institution Press, 2001). Other works include *Using Power and Diplomacy to Deal with Rogue States* (Hoover Essays in Public Policy, 1999) and the edited collection *North Korea after Kim Il Sung* (Hoover Institution Press, 1999).

He also authored or edited the following books and monographs: *Soviet and Chinese Aid to African Nations* (Praeger, 1980); and *Mozambique: A History* (Rex Collings, 1978); *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: Battle in the Bush* (Praeger, 1981); *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Mozambique's War of Independence* (Greenwood Press, 1983); *The New World Order: War, Peace, and Military Preparedness* (Hoover Institution Press, 1992); and *One Korea? Challenges and Prospects for Reunification* (Hoover Institution Press, 1994).



Additionally, he has written numerous journal articles and newspaper essays concerning international politics and security as well as U.S. policy toward rogue states in the post-Cold War era. Dr. Henriksen has also received research grants from the American Philosophical Society, State University of New York, National Endowment for the Humanities, and National Defense Foreign Language Fellowship Program. His book *Mozambique: A History* was chosen for the Outstanding Book Award for African History by Choice. During 1982, he traveled to the former Soviet Union as a member of the forum for the U.S.-Soviet dialogue.

Dr. Henriksen's education and public service developed in the 1960s, specifically earning his B.A. in History from Virginia Military Institute (1962) and his M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Michigan State University (1966 and 1969). He was selected for membership in Phi Alpha Theta—the history honorary society—as a graduate student. During 1963 to 1965, Dr. Henriksen served as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army. He taught history at the State University of New York from 1969, leaving in 1979 as a full professor. During the 1979 to 1980 academic year, he was the Susan Louise Dyer Peace Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Dr. Henriksen's national public service includes participation as a member of the U.S. Army Science Board (1984 to 1990) and the President's Commission on White House Fellowships (1987 to 1993). He also received a Certificate of Appreciation for Patriotic Civilian Service from the U.S. Department of the Army in 1990. He is a trustee of the George C. Marshall Foundation.

His JSOU Press Publications include *Dividing Our Enemies* (November 2005), *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States* (February 2007), *Is Leaving the Middle East a Viable Option?* (January 2008), *What Really Happened in Northern Ireland's Counterinsurgency: Revision and Revelation* (October 2008), and *Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency, and the Indirect Approach* (April 2010).

# 1. Politics and War: An Introduction

When lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom/the gentler gamester is the soonest winner. —William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

Politics is as old as war. And political calculation has been a part of military strategy since time out of mind. Alexander and Caesar made temporary alliances, spared the lives of combatants, granted benefits to subjugated peoples, and divided enemies not from any humanitarian impulses but from canny political assessment. Turning an erstwhile adversary into a battlefield ally made for shrewd military politics. Numbers matter in conflict. Increasing the size of an army or fleet by winning over a neutral or a belligerent to one's side could spell the difference between victory or defeat. Dividing enemies and adding ranks is an elementary tactic in all forms of warfare, hardly needing any elaboration. In its contemporary rendition, the United States embraced an elaborate and financially costly strategy of Winning Hearts and Minds (WHAM) among the populations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The vast expenses of these two contemporary WHAM campaigns cast doubt on the strategy's replication to other violent theaters.

Historically, not all commanders practiced “the gentler gamester” tactics, as penned by Shakespeare. The utter destruction of uncongenial neighbors represented the more routine practice in the history of warfare. Better a dead adversary than a possibly treacherous foe often summed up the warrior's thinking. Ancient and modern generals put to the sword not only enemy troops but also whole populations. Classical Rome fought wars and conducted pacifications with pitiless killing, destruction right down to the stone foundations as seen in leveling of the second Temple in Jerusalem, and even salting the ruins of vanquished Carthage.

Warfare retained its highly lethal character for civilians for centuries. As recently as World War II (1939-1945), military action included the application of massive bombings directly on civilians and combatants alike. In fact, governments singled out cities for massive aerial bombing and nuclear destruction. The post-1945 era strengthened the concept that armies won by destroying their opponents; but civilians were fair game, too. Smaller conventional force-on-force conflicts stretching around the globe—the Korean War, Israel's Six Day War, the eight-year Iran-Iraq War—all kept intact features of conventional warfare, with a minimum of battlefield politics.

During this same span of history, however, a political form of warfare—in which civilian sympathy mattered greatly—notched an impressive string of victories on unconventional battlegrounds. These astounding triumphs came at the expense of traditional armies by irregular forces. Harnessing rural populations to their cause, revolutionary movements sometimes defeated better armed and trained battalions. Mao Zedong’s “people’s war” established the paradigm during the 1930s. The next decade saw America’s Office of Strategic Services (OSS) aid French resistance fighters in irregular warfare against their German occupiers. After World War II, the principles of insurgent warfare were picked up by Cuba’s Fidel Castro, Algeria’s Houari Boumedienne, and Mozambique’s Eduardo Mondlane, who applied the principles of prolonged warfare to oust established regimes or colonial governments. The 1939-45 war weakened colonial powers, which also had to face the rising tide of anti-colonialism sweeping the globe, often in the form of insurgency.

Rather than two conventional armies with similar weapons squaring off on a battlefield, the participants in this ancient style of fighting (made new by instant “experts” and television commentators) are not evenly matched in weaponry. Known by a variety of terms—irregular warfare, insurgencies, partisan warfare, people’s war, and even guerrilla warfare—the fighters

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are so mismatched that rarely do conventional battles ensue. One side—the insurgents—must resort to asymmetric approaches (sneak attacks, hit-and-run tactics, sabotage, and assassinations of civil authorities) to defeat its superiorly equipped conventional adversary. These insurgents are too lightly armed, few in

number, or untrained to clash steel on steel with their heavier armed, better trained, and greater numbered enemies. The counterinsurgent armies struggled to govern, sustain civic services, and impose peace and stability. Their opponents—the insurgents—struck back with pinprick assaults to disrupt the government’s writ and install their own brand of political order.

The target of both sides is the people caught in the middle of what normally is a form of civil war. The populace is the source of intelligence, recruits, and funds or food. Gaining the complicity of the population—if not the outright loyalty—against the other side is the objective of the struggle



between insurgent and counterinsurgent. In this quest, the people's security, rather than material benefits, matters most for success. Individuals and groups make decisions to extend or deny assistance on their likelihood of survival at that time and in the future. Readers of this monograph hardly need more explanation since the military's interest has been long developing, and the publications are voluminous on counterinsurgency.<sup>1</sup>

What needs reminding to current students of insurgency, however, is that this irregular form of fighting enjoys a lengthy lineage stretching back centuries.<sup>2</sup> All the great recorded wars of ancient times included aspects of irregular warfare. Darius, Alexander, and Hannibal encountered scattered and small-scale resistance along with pitched battles against orthodox armies. These great captains and others, therefore, waged pacification campaigns as part of their conquests.

Today, insurgency and irregular warfare preoccupies the United States chiefly in Afghanistan but as well in the Philippines, Yemen, Pakistan, Iraq, and the Horn of Africa. Other states also confront irregular warfare. Russia is fighting an insurgency in its Caucasus; India wages an anti-insurgent campaign in that country's central region; and Thailand resists insurgents in its southern tier—to name just a few non-American hot spots. The circumstances vary from place to place. But one constant factor of modern-day insurgencies is the focus on the people at the center of the conflict. Thus the political dimension forms a vital part of this type of conflict. In the American way of counterinsurgency, the population's security looms large in the overall campaign. This orientation enjoys a rich legacy. As one French student of counterinsurgency wrote, "the army exists to protect the safety and possessions of civilians."<sup>3</sup>

## People and Insurgencies

Insurgents and counterinsurgents alike seek allies by gaining the support of the uncommitted people in a violent struggle. Both strive to attain legitimacy among the targeted population so as to make them accept their leadership. Bringing over the population to one side or the other has formed a part of military thinking since time immemorial. Besiegers of ancient cities often offered residents safe conduct if they surrendered their fortress without a fight. Sometimes, the attackers reneged on their pledge and treacherously slaughtered the defenseless inhabitants once the gates were opened. Other

times they let them live in peace, albeit under new rulers and dispensation. But if the defenders resisted their assailants, they could count on death or enslavement once the walls were breached. Thus, wooing people in warfare is a time-polished practice. Long before the expression *divide et impera* (divide and rule) was attributed to Machiavelli, the 15th-century Florentine political philosopher, military competitors from tribal chieftains to Roman Caesars employed the technique of splitting foes and conquering their remaining enemies. In our times, the population's allegiance is of the utmost consideration in America's current people-centric counterinsurgency strategy. This element of irregular warfare is so basic to Special Operations Forces (SOF) as to require little narration here.

What is so different today from most historical episodes of winning hearts and swords, however, is America's lavish expenditures directed at the targeted population. As this monograph makes plain, much of this effort is too costly and too ineffective. In the past, protection, safety, and survival alone were sufficient inducements to an embattled community. Today, winning hearts and minds has evolved in American hands from basic security to far-reaching, infrastructure-building enterprises. This evolution in warfare and its high costs are the subject of this monograph.

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There are counter-examples, however, to America's humane approach to populations caught up in an insurgency. Governments able or willing to ignore international censure can resort to barbaric tactics against insurgents. Among instances of this vicious policy is the recently concluded destruction of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, where the prevailing government bloodily pulverized the minority Tamils with gunfire until the insurgents were crushed along with many innocent civilians.<sup>4</sup> The Russians did much the same thing in Chechnya during the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Earlier, the Red Army tried to bomb and murder its way to victory in Afghanistan but failed to destroy the *mujahideen* resistance during the 1980s. In Algeria, the government also savagely destroyed an Islamist insurgent challenge to its power during the 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

In Afghanistan, the United States, unlike some brutal powers, rejected draconian scorched-earth approaches to combat the Taliban insurgents.

American forces or their allies have inadvertently killed innocents in errant attacks, for which they compensated and apologized to kin. But systematic annihilation of civilian populations flies in the face of current U.S. doctrine and practice. Indeed, its battlefield errors or misdeeds of its troops are investigated and perpetrators punished. In sheer fact, America has gone to extraordinary efforts building and funding extensive public services in Afghanistan as a means to fashion a modern state and to win over the populace. The concept of dividing enemies and winning over active or potential foes lies at the heart of modern-day American counterinsurgency warfare. In other words, politics and war are combined. How this mission is accomplished is an exceedingly complex endeavor, however. It is not free of kinetic actions, but it is not dominated by lethality either.

Historically, military chieftains have bribed neutrals and even enemies to join their ranks instead of those of their adversary. Promises of land, booty, or even crowns went to kings and warlords for their assistance. In the current version of war via politics, WHAM lies at the core of elaborate and expensive exertions, which is the subject of this study. Unlike centuries-old tactics, American and NATO forces reach out to ordinary people, not hierarchies alone, to enlist them in their cause. Gaining support from villagers and ordinary workers characterizes the current WHAM approach. True, military officers sit down to tea with tribal leaders, but the overall approach is aimed at protecting and alleviating community hardships.

Emphasis on the common man and woman as objects of political pursuit received a great boost from Mao Zedong and people's war in rural China beginning in the late 1920s and lasting over 20 years. Mao and his Communist Party cadres concentrated on winning over the Chinese peasants against the ruling Kuomintang government and later the Japanese invaders.<sup>7</sup> While Lenin recognized the usefulness of guerrilla war for political ends, it was Mao who harnessed the agrarian masses to Marxist revolutionary ends. By politically mobilizing rural areas in a revolutionary struggle, Chairman Mao encircled the country's cities and conventional armies of Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang movement in a protracted guerrilla war that morphed into conventional conflict by its conclusion in 1949. Mao Zedong's astonishing victory delivered not only a psychological and symbolic lift to would-be revolutionaries the world over; it offered up a veritable blueprint for anti-colonial struggles and rural insurgencies that could be adapted in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.<sup>8</sup>

As one consequence, the post-World War II era beheld a profusion of communist national liberation fronts fighting against colonial rule or established governments in the so-called Third World. Armed with a guerrilla manual, revolutionary doctrine, and even actual arms and instructors from the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, a spate of national liberation wars broke out in Algeria, Angola, Cambodia, Laos, Malaya, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Palestine, El Salvador, North and South Vietnam, Oman, Eritrea, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Insurgents relied on subversion, political murder, land reform, nationalism, and extravagant promises of Marxian “workers’ paradise” to chalk up a clutch of victories.<sup>9</sup>

To combat the raft of Soviet-sponsored national liberation movements, the United States went beyond the irregular forces that made up the OSS of World War II fame. The U.S. Army formed Special Forces in 1952. These units were linked with psychological operations, which were originally formed as part of the OSS. But America’s unconventional-war forces languished until President John Kennedy took office in 1961.<sup>10</sup> Speaking to the 1962 graduating class of West Point, Kennedy explained: “There is another type of war, new in intensity, ancient in origins—wars by guerrillas, subversion, insurgents, assassins; wars by ambush instead of by [conventional] combat. . . . It requires . . . a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.”<sup>11</sup> Afterwards, Washington put modest emphasis on what became known as Special Operations Forces.

The American way of counterinsurgency began to take shape during the Vietnam War (1965-1973). Yet its roots lie further back and elsewhere, of course. Americans fought as irregular forces even before their War of Independence. They used irregular military techniques against the French and before them against the Native Americans who inhabited what became the future United States. During the American Revolution, some patriots joined up with Ethan Allen’s Green Mountain Boys or Francis “Swamp Fox” Marion to stage hit-and-run attacks on superior British regular forces. From the nation’s founding, Americans fought as irregulars and later waged pacification wars and counterinsurgency campaigns within the continental United States, the Philippines, Nicaragua, and France during the Second World War. The lessons and techniques learned largely lapsed from these engagements. They were obscured by the two world conflicts, the Korean

War, and the Cold War preparations for industrial-aged battle, if the Red Army marched into Western Europe.

Not until the Vietnam War did the United States military start to think seriously (and then not consistently) about the elements of low-intensity conflict. U.S. military practitioners during the Vietnam War studied successful counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns elsewhere for applicable lessons to their anti-insurgent effort. Of these conflicts, the counterinsurgency in Malaya (now called the Federation of Malaysia) received the most attention. There the British prevailed over the communist guerrillas. Chinese-inspired national liberation wars at that time seemed unbeatable. Malaya, on the other hand, proved a counterinsurgent success story. Later it was referred to as the “domino that stood” against communist subversion.<sup>12</sup> In truth, the Philippines also turned back a protracted communist insurgency. Hence, it, too, never fell to communist-inspired insurgencies the way Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia did.

Not every anti-colonial struggle was a front for communist infiltration. For example, Israel’s low-intensity battle against the British presence in Palestine was fought for a Jewish homeland. The Algerian war against France clearly falls within the category of an independence struggle. Other national-front wars infused mixtures of nationalism and Marxism but not in equal measure. The guerrilla movements in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau won their independence from Portugal, instituted ruling parties with Marxian trappings, and devolved into one-party dictatorships similar to other Third World regimes, which never fought insurgencies to win their political freedom.<sup>13</sup> Against the backdrop of falling or teetering “dominoes” in Cuba, Guatemala, Indochina, and the European colonial empires, successive American administrations perceived a virtual rising tide of communist infiltration, subversion, and insurgent movements in the Third World. In this optic, Washington realized it must analyze contemporary history and learn from the experiences of others.



## 2. Hearts and Minds in the Malayan Emergency

The shooting side of the business is only 25 percent of the trouble and the other 75 percent lies in getting the people of this country [Malaya] behind us. — General Gerald Templer<sup>14</sup>

Malaya, a counterinsurgency milestone, was an obvious choice for close analysis by U.S. military officers and civilian officials. Among the anti-insurgency measures adopted by the British army is the subject of this monograph: winning the hearts and minds of the Malayan people in the long-running jungle war. WHAM is about politics. It is war not by other vague means, but politics conducted though the medium of war. It is essential to keep in mind that Britain was an impoverished country after World War II. Like France and Portugal, its colonial possessions were fast becoming a luxury of bygone times. For its Malayan conflict, Britain lacked the abundant material resources of the United States. In fighting a raging insurgency more than 6,000 miles from the British Isles, the country's civilian and military officials were compelled to wage the war on a shoestring. In light of America's extraordinary financial expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan, the parsimonious British campaign is worthy of study through a money lens.

It is the hypothesis of this monograph that WHAM operations must be waged with much less expenditure of U.S. dollars in the years ahead. From the perspective of massively expensive WHAM efforts within Iraq and Afghanistan, Britain's forced frugality transformed a necessity into a virtue. Examining the Malaya Emergency from a monetary standpoint offers not only a new perspective on an often-studied insurgency but also a lesson on cost-effectiveness.

Given the seminal role played by the Malayan Emergency in the formation of early U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, it is imperative to sketch a few of the key facts about the Southeast Asian country. Made up today of three territories, the Federation comprises the Peninsular Malaysia and two islands states—Sabah and Sarawak—on Borneo. But during the fighting against postwar Britain, the conflict raged on the Malaya peninsula. Later, British forces were engaged in northern Borneo.

Termed an “emergency” by the British government rather than a war, the Malayan conflict traced its roots to the Japanese occupation during World War II. Japan's military invasion unsettled Britain's colonial rule established

since 1874. When the war ended, various Malayan ethnic groups resisted the re-imposition of London's governance and competed with each other for control of a country slightly larger than New Mexico. The ethnic division formed a large part in grievances leading to the anti-British conflict and unexpectedly to its successful resolution. Fortunately for the British army, the insurgents' source of manpower depended almost exclusively on the Chinese population, who represented about 38 percent of the nearly 6 million inhabitants in the 1950s. Chinese migrants came to Malaya to work in the tin mines, rubber plantations, and copper mines run by British businessmen. Their impoverished conditions made them likely prey to revolutionary impulses.

Some half-million Chinese squatters lived on the jungle's edge, having been driven there by Japanese brutality. Marginalized during the war, they existed apart from the state services furnished by police, doctors, or judicial authorities. The Malayan Communist Party, in reality, assumed governing authority in the enclave. The party was a Chinese preserve, and the Chinese made up the bulk of what came to be a guerrilla army of 7,000 insurgents at its peak. The Federation's armed forces reached their peak of 30,000 soldiers in 1952, of which 22,000 formed the main combat element. Their effectiveness improved over time, as they moved away from large-scale sweeps to small-unit patrols and operations, based on intelligence usually turned over by the police. Helicopters also facilitated raids and strikes on guerrillas, operating at a distance from British bases.

Thus, the bulk of the insurgents came from a distinct minority of the total populace. During World War II, the Chinese had suffered the most at the hands of the Japanese occupation, in part, due to Japan's war in China itself. The balance of the people were Malay and indigenous peoples (about 60 percent), Indian (nearly 10), and about 12,000 British citizens, who made up the top officials, colonial service, owners and managers of the tin, timber, and oil industries. The Malay Peninsula was wrapped in almost 80 percent jungle with only a strip of cultivated lands, where much of the population lived.

Britain's initial reaction to the outbreak of communist guerrilla shootings and arson conformed to the all too common bloody crackdown. Government forces indiscriminately met insurgent fire with disproportionate fire. They waged a military-style campaign marked by shootings of rural Chinese squatters fleeing army patrols, burning homes, and meting out harsh



treatment to bystanders and suspects alike. These punitive counter-guerrilla tactics, in fact, nearly quadrupled the insurgent ranks from approximately 2,000 fighters in 1948 to 7,000 by the end of 1951.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence, Britain had to change and adapt its counterinsurgency strategy, embracing a WHAM campaign.

Since the Malayan Communist Party was 95 percent Chinese, the British authorities concentrated on drying up this Chinese “sea” to deny the guerrilla “fish” the ability to “swim” among the rural populace to use Mao’s well-worn metaphor. The Federation government “resettled and regrouped about one million squatters, mine workers and estate laborers” between 1950 and 1952.<sup>16</sup> Denying the insurgents an ability to

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*These punitive counter-guerrilla tactics, in fact, nearly quadrupled the insurgent ranks...*

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“swim” among a friendly and supportive populace amounted to a crucial step toward victory. The resettlement campaign, nevertheless, was temporarily overshadowed by the communist assassination of the British-appointed High Commissioner of Malaya, Sir Henry Gurney in 1951. His replacement proved to be an even greater nemesis for the insurgent bands. General Sir Gerald Templer, an army veteran of both world wars, assumed both top civilian and military posts as the High Commissioner and the Director of Operations. Recognizing the political hole card that Britain held, General Templer played it. On taking up his offices in early 1952, he set out to win popular support by a critical political promise. He announced that London planned on turning over independence to Malaya. Britain’s grant of sovereignty also carried the recognition of citizenship for the Chinese inhabitants as well as the Malays. Thus, the new Malayan citizens would take over political, commercial, and industrial posts in a self-governing nation. This far-reaching political decision undercut the communist agenda largely based on the elimination of British rule. Democracy and economic progress also undermined the communist’s proscriptions for doctrinaire, godless, austere communism, so off-putting to the largely Muslim population. Thus, Templer got off on the right foot even before his arrival.

The political stroke of granting independence ahead of defeating the insurgency took the wind out of the communists’ sail. It also imposed no financial burden on the British treasury; indeed, it offered a means to cut expenses. A multiracial and independent Malaysia politically disarmed the insurgents; but first the British had to mount a sustained campaign to

convince all segments of Malay society of their sincerity. The many local steps that the British and their allied Malayan counterparts undertook to move toward sovereignty would take us well beyond scope of this monograph. But it bears restating that the steps all fell into the low-budget category of expenses. These measures involved: (1) links to the Malay Chinese Association, which forged goodwill among other communities; (2) establishment of elected local governments overseen by Malayan citizens for which requirements were broadened to include over a million Chinese and over two and half million Malays as “federal” citizens; (3) nationwide elections to the Legislative Council, a sort of national assembly; (4) and the initiation of civic courses. This strategy linked people to their own government in the “best practices” tradition of WHAM.

This civics curriculum was set up to spread democracy and to enhance understanding of democratic government functions. Members of different communities observed firsthand the government’s departments in Kuala Lumpur. While in the capital, they also heard lectures and talked with senior officials about their duties and functions. The 3,600 attendees in 1953 alone of this government outreach program constituted a cross-section of the population ethnically and socially. Chinese, Malay, and Indian schoolteachers, laborers, village headmen, and representatives from other socioeconomic groups traveled to the federation’s capital. This process and increased security from violence allowed for popular elections to take place—a fundamental building block for democracy promotion, sovereign independence, and counterinsurgency victory.

With the election of the national Legislative Council in July 1955, Britain moved toward an “orderly phasing-out of institutionalized British influence” in the government.<sup>17</sup> Early in 1956, a joint Malaya-British conference hammered out the steps leading to independence. The conferees set up a sort of revolving monarchy to assuage the indigenous Malay rulers. A Chief Minister post, like that of Britain’s prime minister, was institutionalized along with cabinet portfolios in finance, commerce, and internal security to be immediately staffed by national leaders. They also created an Emergency Operations Council to coordinate the continuing fight against the guerrillas. A year and a half later, 31 August 1957, the Union Jack came down, Malaysia attained independence, and it joined the Commonwealth of Nations as a sovereign member. It was a five-year transition period from General Templer’s independence directive to the country’s actual sovereignty. By

building political legitimacy, the British and local authorities were able to cast the communist insurgents as instigators of aggression and subversion, not liberators coming to free the Malays from Britain's colonial rule. Thus, the civil and military plans were synchronized.

The British government also laid down a set of guidelines for its representative officials and security forces while combating the insurgents. Sir Robert Thompson, who wrote and implemented the Emergency Regulations, later played an advising role in the Vietnam War. He asserted that the counter-guerrilla forces must closely abide by laws to establish their legitimacy while ensuring that the insurgents appear as lawbreakers.<sup>18</sup> All the accoutrements of the legal framework—arrest warrants, proper judicial reviews, courtroom trials—lent a patina of respectability, moral authority, and legal standing to the British case against insurgent perpetrators of violence and intimidation. Britain's officers and officials regularly referred to the guerrillas as "communist terrorists," which also delegitimized the insurgents in the eyes of the local people.

Professionalizing and reorienting the Malayan police went a long way toward gaining popular sympathy. The British-run Federation government swelled police ranks sevenfold and diversified their functions. In 1947, the police numbered slightly over 10,000 members. Nearly four years later, they stood at the peak of 71,000 officers, although their ranks after 1953 began to thin. In addition to regular police officers, the force contained special constables, who carried out investigations for intelligence about terrorists. One important fact came to light as a result of proper police training: while only a fraction of the police came from the Chinese community, the police force was remarkably free of anti-Chinese behavior. At no time did the Chinese contingent exceed 2,000 officers in the entire Malayan police force during the Emergency.<sup>19</sup> The importance of this factor lies in the realization that a security force need not be ethnically balanced to act with professional conduct toward a minority population. A properly trained and correctly performing security operation can still win over the acceptance, if not the warm attachment, of an aggrieved minority prone to take up arms against central authority. Importantly, the Chinese were made part of the solution.

The Home Guard, on the other hand, more evenly reflected the Malay ethnic composition. By 1952, some 50,000 young Chinese men served in the Home Guard, whereas 100,000 Malay youths joined these units. General

Templer made the risky but effective decision to reform and arm the Chinese Home Guard that stood watch at the New Villages. Few of the Chinese guards defected or turned their weapons over to the communist guerrillas.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Chinese participation in the defense forces cemented their government support, constituting another means to induce loyalty among an estranged community.

## **Resettlement and New Villages**

The British authorities implemented another COIN measure of enormous effectiveness. They separated the Chinese population from guerrilla forces by resettling about one-fifth of the population between 1950 and 1952. The British colonial government moved squatters and laborers from mines and estates into settlements of approximately 1,000 people each. Encircled by barbed-wire and chain-link fences, the resettlement camps were guarded by a Chinese auxiliary police force. These “New Villages” had running water, electricity, medical clinics, schools, sanitation facilities, places of worship, and even family garden plots. The simple amenities were a blessing to many of the impoverished and neglected rural population. Security from insurgent threats and demands, nevertheless, counted for more than basic civic programs.

Gradually, the Federation increased spending to remedy the initial shortfalls in services. Yet, full and competent school staffing in Chinese proficiency lagged until the end of the Emergency. Public health programs and clinics also improved with more government spending. Still, about 20 percent received no direct healthcare by 1958.<sup>21</sup> Thus, healthcare and education never reached the desired capacity of the village camps. Nor did the British authorities construct large schools and aid stations; they made due with hut-like structures built from local flora, which delivered rudimentary education or medical treatment. The dire employment landscape received an unexpected boost when the Korean War created a demand for tin and rubber. Idled laborers found jobs and wages, which relieved pressure on the government to provide for the relocated people without work. The dislocation of the resettlement process and the resultant unemployment was offset by the mid-1950s as the Chinese laborers, rubber tappers, and farmers found good paying jobs. Thus, general prosperity and widespread safety from guerrilla

attacks defused anti-government grievances resulting from the resettlement and dearth of education and health services for many New Villagers.

A defensive perimeter fence surrounded the relocated people. These New Villages removed some of the grievances against an uncaring government. Still, the amenities furnished to the regrouped populations were modest compared to most urban conditions. There were no super expensive water treatment facilities, electrical power plants, modern-day dispensaries, or up-to-date schools associated with U.S.-built projects in Afghanistan and Iraq. There, in fact, were few large-scale infrastructure projects built during the Malaya Emergency. Peace, security, and political acceptance proved more persuasive for WHAM than huge expenditures for elaborate government-service structures.

Moving over a million people out of reach of the guerrillas certainly helped the government forces to isolate and marginalize the communist cadres, who intimidated, coerced, and generally co-opted rural folks for

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*Peace, security, and political acceptance proved more persuasive for WHAM than huge expenditures...*

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intelligence about the government soldiers and police, for food and money, and sometimes for recruits to replenish their ranks. As author Anthony Short wrote: the guerrilla

“could no longer move among the people as the fish moves through the water.”<sup>22</sup> Within the newly constructed resettlements, the government tried to better the economic, social, and political environment of the residents. Their safety from guerrilla attack stood highest among Britain’s priorities. Despite the overall success of the New Villages, elements within the population still helped the insurgents.

The widespread effectiveness of the New Villages, nonetheless, choked off most of the food and other necessities from communist guerrillas. The deprivation compelled the Malay Communist Party cadre to turn their energies toward non-Chinese populations in remote areas. But the native Malay and aboriginal populations were poor sources of assistance. Because of racial and religious difference, these people, with a few notable exceptions, generally withheld supplies and even killed hungry and destitute Chinese insurgents. Some Malays were regrouped into settlements for protection. Others sought the same medical and educational benefits doled out to Chinese New Villages.

The aboriginal people presented special problems for the government officials. They, too, resisted the Chinese guerrillas, but they rejected resettlement away from their own ancestral lands. When attempts to move them caused outbreaks of heretofore unknown diseases among the jungle people, the government backed off from relocation schemes. Instead, they opted for “forts” where the aborigines could go for safety if they wished. This more successful government campaign relied on anthropologists for knowledge to turn the aboriginal people away from the insurgents.<sup>23</sup> Safety and security were key, not wholesale spending on highways, hospitals, and government buildings.

An incoming Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton, drafted a report in December 1951 that captured the essence of Britain’s counterinsurgency dilemma: “You cannot win the war without the help of the population, and you cannot get the support of the population without at least beginning to win the war.”<sup>24</sup> Fittingly, Lyttelton identified two instruments to counter the guerrillas—armed forces and propaganda—in this most political form of warfare. He advocated a drastic increase in the recruitment of Chinese men for the Home Guard as one means to enlist that ethnic community on the government’s side. It was a keen political approach to winning over the participation of an anti-government bloc.

As the insurgency slackened in some areas of Malaya, General Templer initiated a new tack in his WHAM campaign. At its foundation, the fresh initiative offered carrots to replace the sticks of the previous policy. When the insurgent threat ceased in a given locality, the Emergency’s restrictive regulations were relaxed for inhabitants. The High Commissioner first declared the Malacca province’s 221 square miles a “white area” in September 1953. This designation entailed a lifting of some restrictions and easing of others. For example, curfews, food controls, limited business operating hours, and the movement of people and goods were curtailed. The New Village inhabitants were still required to stay within the resettlement compounds and to defend them if attacked by the communist guerrillas. Soon afterward, other lands were also classified as “white areas.” By the time Templer departed from Malaya in mid-1954, well over a million people lived in “white areas” along the country’s coast.<sup>25</sup> For the people chafing under a form of military rule, the opportunity to change their status to a “white area” proved a powerful inducement not to help the guerrillas and to cooperate with the authorities.

People, thus, were won over to the government's side by the suspension of martial edicts. In a sense, this technique amounted to a negative form of WHAM for it simply returned to the *status quo ante*. The authorities just restored freedom of movement and pre-insurgency liberties to the population. A positive application of WHAM, on the other hand, delivered social-welfare benefits to the contested population. Such amenities could be either modest (security, running water, rudimentary medical dispensaries) or elaborate (large-scale construction projects for electrical power generations or sewage treatment plants). As demonstrated in the British handling of the Malaya Emergency, the authorities opted for very modest enhancements of the populace's living standards. In the new American way of counterinsurgency, WHAM leapt from basic medical and minimal social services to mammoth facility projects for the population, as will be described.

### **The Low-Budget Information War**

Along with preparing Malaya for sovereignty, the British set about using propaganda to win popular support for the government and promoting antagonism toward the communist guerrillas. Battling communism, as noted earlier, meant combating it in the minds of the people. It also entailed persuading ordinary folks of the truthfulness of the government's case. This belated campaign came nearly two years after the start of the Emergency. The British authorities organized an Information Service Department in June 1952. The information services fell organizationally under the Home Ministry of the Federation but worked closely with Director of Operations, the position General Templer assumed. It was made up of a central office and representatives at the state and settlement level. Naturally, it concentrated on winning over the uncommitted villager and raising the public's spirits while undermining the guerrillas' morale. It tried to enlist those who were vocally of an anti-colonialist and nationalistic persuasion so as to keep them out of the communist's ranks. Thus, it appealed to Malayan nationalism. The government also turned the communist message against its practitioners. Because many of the Malays were Muslim, they harbored an inherent dislike of communism for its hostility to religion. The Islamic leaders, hence, threw their influence behind the authorities rather than godless communism.



The mechanics were simple and inexpensive; the Information Services Department dispatched speakers out to villages to preach nationalistic messages that conveyed a positive road to independence while condemning the guerrillas' resort to terrorism and coercion. These field officers used vehicles equipped with loudspeakers to broadcast messages and music. This technique worked well against the Japanese army during the war. So, British officers also applied it to the Chinese-dominated insurgency. They employed 90 communication trucks and four boats along the waterways with similar capabilities. Primitive as it may seem in the Internet Age, these mobile broadcasting units reached about a million people—one sixth of the population—each month. They also showed films to village audiences and staged local talent shows of singers, dancers, and acting performances. The locals were asked to participate and to act in anti-communist skits. All this may appear dated from our perspective, but it proved its effectiveness. In fact, many villages had never seen films before the mobile vans screened them for rural audiences. Usually a feature non-political film was preceded by newsreels and a short film, which allowed the government to present its message against the communists. Commercial cinemas in urban areas also patterned their programming along these lines.

People grew to identify with their government; it no longer appeared remote and impersonal in their lives. The established authorities were now making appeals, offering rights, and conferring societal improvements upon a formerly neglected people. The propaganda films also dispelled the invincibility of the mythic guerrilla figures. Villagers increasingly viewed "communist terrorists" as their victimizers who could be defeated by ordinary folk.

A second, low-budget but equally effective course of action integrated the rehabilitation program with winning over villagers to the government ranks. Former guerrillas were trouped before gatherings of rural folks. The onetime communist insurgents testified to the failings of their past lives, sometimes in highly emotional terms that conveyed sincerity and relief to be free of their past errors. The repentant guerrillas put the lie to communist propaganda that they would be tortured if they surrendered to the government. They also spoke authoritatively with inside information about communist subversion, intimidation, and manipulation to gain converts.

The Information Services Department also wrote news stories in several of the Malay languages and distributed them to local papers, which



appreciated ready-made items because their financial resources were limited. This meant that the Federation did not have to recreate its own news organizations. As an underdeveloped country with poor internal roads and communication networks, Malaya, as a result, boasted numerous local newspapers in the vernacular languages. The Emergency's Information Services, in addition, printed their own Malay and Chinese newspapers. These publications were widely circulated and successively read by customers in Chinese coffee shops. Some New Villages built reading rooms or information centers. Paper leaflets were specifically directed at guerrillas as a tool of psychological warfare. Leaflets were air-dropped in guerrilla zones.

The information crews also staffed radio programs, which broadcast news and opinions in different Chinese dialects along with shows in Malay, Tamil, and English. Little high-cost infrastructure accompanied these endeavors. The radio program, for instance, ran with a staff of 200, most of whom were indigenous to Malaya because of the required language proficiency. The radio broadcast coincided with the widespread purchase of radios, which was made possible by the booming economy during the Korean War. Radio communication was particularly effective with an illiterate population, as many people were in Malaya at that time. Mine owners and New Villages installed community radios for their respective audiences.

The Information Services also instituted psychological campaigns aimed directly at the guerrillas. It targeted messages to insurgent foot soldiers. The British also initiated a "buy-out" program, in effect, to give cash to guerrillas for coming over to the government side. Psychological warfare and cash were effective, but they made greater headway when they coincided with guerrilla setbacks on the battlefield. The guerrilla leaders also tightened discipline to offset government campaigns to induce their rank-and-file to defect. Money also was furnished for information leading to the arrest of terrorists, dead or alive. British officials were somewhat morally ambivalent about purchasing turncoats. When Malaysia obtained its independence, the new government felt no similar compunctions and widened the practice. As British authorities gained control of areas, and the local inhabitants dropped guerrilla support, they declared them "white." The "white" designation meant a lifting of burdensome restrictions, such as gate checks, searches, and food restrictions to keep rations out of guerrilla hands. These positive rewards worked well among the population and exemplified the expanding "oil spot" approach to controlling the countryside.

## WHAM in Malaya: A Frugal Victory

The foregoing summation of political actions in Malaya furnishes a context for what has become the most uttered quotation associated with securing popular sympathy of noncombatants in an insurgency. General Templer encapsulated his politico-military insight in a memorable phrase when he famously stated, “the answer [to the insurgency] lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the people.”<sup>26</sup> He

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*...the answer [to the insurgency] lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the people.*

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grasped that military forces alone could not defeat the guerrillas; he needed popular goodwill and even loyalty of villagers to isolate the guerrilla fighters from information, food, money, and recruits. Although

the British officer coined and popularized the notion of securing the population’s allegiance, the ideas giving it birth had percolated widely in the Cold War milieu. Battling the appeal of communism demanded ideological defenses as well as physical bulwarks.<sup>27</sup> But like all widely accepted and oft-quoted military axioms, the correct execution lies in the hands of soldiers, policemen, and officials on the spot. How they implement a principle not only can vary widely; it also depends on disparate historical, cultural, and socioeconomic circumstances that defy simplistic, rote application.

The British counterinsurgency model in Malaya emphasized political persuasion as very distinct from large economic investments to win the trust of the people. Liberty, democracy, and independence conveyed a direct political appeal to Malaysians. British officials and their Malay allies nurtured democracy and sovereignty at the grassroots level. As sketched above, they dispatched teams to the countryside to instill and guide the rural masses toward democratic leanings among peoples long-inured to low wages and restrictive colonial control on rubber plantations and tin mines. This was a low-budget campaign of civic education and political conversion. It stands in stark contrast to British practices closer to home and decades later.

In Northern Ireland, which the author analyzed elsewhere, Britain adopted an economic-based strategy to undermine the anti-crown insurgents. There, the British faced a low-intensity conflict for independence, which the London government was loath to grant the Six Counties because two-thirds of the inhabitants, mainly members of the Protestant faith,

strongly favored continued union with Great Britain. The other third of Northern Ireland residents were Catholics, many of whom wanted to break from British rule and join with the Irish Republic to the south of their enclave. To tap into the insurgent Irish Republican Army's population base, London funded an extensive array of benefits in the education, housing, and job sectors to offset grievances long felt by the Catholic minority.

The British sought to deflect the IRA's powerful allure among the minority. They spent hundreds of millions of dollars on social welfare programs over two decades. As this author found, the underappreciated socioeconomic approach to urban insurgency goes a long way in explaining how Britain defused the 30-year Troubles in Northern Ireland. This new understanding of how London prevailed takes serious issue with the over-emphasized capabilities of elite units and intelligence penetration of IRA cells.<sup>28</sup> While British security forces performed well, their kinetic actions must be subsumed within the larger WHAM strategy of the London government. Drying up the minority's social and economic grievances went a long way in undermining allegiance to Irish nationalism and the cause of the IRA.

But right after World War II, Britain's financial health neared expiration. For the Malaya Emergency, its empty treasury did not allow for financially expensive WHAM programs or gigantic infrastructure projects along the lines that the United States undertook in Iraq and Afghanistan, as will be seen. One authoritative study of the Malaya Emergency concluded: "It took twelve years, but it cost less than U.S. \$800 million in all, and could mostly be funded from Malaya's own tin and rubber export revenues."<sup>29</sup> In today's U.S. dollars that sum amounts to slightly over \$6.3 billion, a comparatively modest sum alongside the \$750 billion spent for the Iraq War. Fortunately for the British Treasury, the Malayan revenues picked up due to the heightened export of tin and rubber during the Korean War.<sup>30</sup>

Compared with British expenditures in Northern Ireland or American outlays in Afghanistan and Iraq, Malaya was counterinsurgency on the cheap because it focused on the politics of internal legitimacy and political independence rather than costly infrastructure development. WHAM was purchased at bargain-basement prices. And from a practitioners' viewpoint, it was no less efficacious and, indeed, may have been even more sustainable and effective than more lavish COIN efforts that have come to characterize America's intensive infrastructure-construction measures. The invigorated economic health of Malaya due to the Korean War also meant that London

and Kuala Lumpur were off the hook to provide jobs and wages for many of the Malayan workers.

In summary, a cash-strapped postwar Britain proved innovative and cost-effective in its WHAM operations. By providing physical security to Malaya's population and political acceptance for the Chinese minority, British forces managed to scale down the communist insurgents' violence. In the end, Britain achieved a rare victory over insurgent warfare and accomplished its mission frugally. As such, the Malaya Emergency offers an example that is worthy of SOF attention and study.

### 3. WHAM and the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War affords an even more pertinent case study of befriending local people amid a violent insurgency. It is nearly impossible to overstate the relevance of the Southeast Asian struggle (1965-1973) to the contemporary study of counterinsurgency. That conflict itself remains the most controversial military engagement in American history since the Civil War divided the nation during the 1860s. Coming not too long after the global cataclysm of World War II, Vietnam stood as a pivotal departure from conventional wars of the past to a type of warfare where military capacity alone proved inadequate to securing American ends. U.S. forces previously prevailed by the wholesale application of intense firepower and technological superiority to annihilate adversaries. Vietnam, however, was a far different conflict. During the 1964-68 period, the United States concentrated on military destruction of the insurgents, who often eluded their American opponents rather than stand and fight. Often U.S. firepower resulted in blows struck in the air. The Southeast Asian insurgency turned out to be America's most frustrating war. Yet, virtually every student of counterinsurgency warfare searches for lessons in the Vietnam experience.

To be sure, when U.S. military forces withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, they left a country still under threat but properly armed and trained to fight for its survival. This important point bears underscoring as

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*...when U.S. military forces withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, they left a country still under threat but properly armed and trained to fight for its survival.*

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the United States similarly prepares to pull back in some manner from Afghanistan in the years ahead. To avoid a repetition of the defeat of an allied government in Afghanistan following the U.S. military evacuation, Washington must adopt a different approach than it did toward South Vietnam in 1975. At that time, it washed its hands as the Saigon government was militarily overwhelmed by a conventional invasion from North Vietnam. No U.S. air support, spare parts, or fresh arms supplies flowed to the embattled South Vietnamese army because the U.S. Congress wanted to get beyond the divisive war. It mattered not that North Vietnam violated the Paris Peace Accords that it pledged to honor in 1973, including Article 9 that stated: "The South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination is sacred, inalienable,

and shall be respected by all countries.” North Vietnam unilaterally broke the cease-fire and its pledge to “respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity” of South Vietnam.<sup>31</sup> So, the American government stood aside while its erstwhile ally went down to defeat and subjugation. And the U.S. military incurred much of the blame for a lost war.<sup>32</sup>

It is not necessary to dwell at length on the history leading up to the American engagement in the Vietnam War. It began in 1950 as French forces fought to reestablish Paris’ colonial rule after the interruption of the Japanese occupation. U.S. advisors and war matériel went first to help France hang onto Indochina. By the date of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination in late November 1963, the Pentagon had 16,000 advisors in South Vietnam. The massive intervention of conventional ground forces commenced in mid-1965. A full account of that struggle is not required for readers of this monograph. The literature on the Southeast Asian conflict is voluminous but changing in its interpretations. Initially, a distorted view prevailed among journalists, commentators, and most academics, which has given way to more balanced studies.

These later assessments correct many of the misinterpretations and 1960s conventional wisdom. They are informative and analytical whereas their predecessors were argumentative, condemnatory, and one-sided against the U.S. military campaign in Southeast Asia. These new studies point to a much more positive view of American military operations within South Vietnam than the preceding polemical works.<sup>33</sup>

Rather than offering a chronological or military account of Vietnam, the reader’s attention will be directed to aspects of WHAM among the South Vietnamese people. For example, the South Vietnamese government attempted to replicate Malaya’s New Villages with its own version in the Strategic Hamlets, which fell well short of its and Washington’s expectations. What all the conflicts had in common was an American policy to reach out to various peoples for allies. Unfortunately, the South Vietnamese government often exacerbated tensions with groups within its jurisdictions, such as Montagnards and the Buddhist orders, rather gaining their support against the Viet Cong.

American efforts to gain indigenous adherents to its anti-communist cause began early in Washington’s intervention into South Vietnam. In his revealing book about U.S. Special Forces in the Vietnam War, Christopher Ives recounts an episode in late 1961, when Green Berets trekked into the

Montagnard's misty highlands.<sup>34</sup> Two Green Berets walked into a Rhade village (the dominant tribe of the Montagnards) and with minimal medical supplies treated a fever-ridden Montagnard girl. Her recovery and the resulting village appreciation began a bond of friendship that evolved into a close partnership with the Montagnard people.

Under attack by the Viet Cong (the South Vietnamese derisive term for communist guerrillas), this distinct ethnic minority in the Central Highlands bordering Cambodia and Laos were receptive to Special Forces' initiatives. The Special Forces offered training, arms, and assistance in village defense tactics. The Montagnard volunteers put aside their spears and crossbows

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*...Green Berets stood up local defense forces in scores of villages with very modest expenditures of resources.*

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and picked up surplus M-1 carbines from the Americans. The Green Berets also instructed Montagnard health workers and built clinics to serve the villagers. Wisely, the Special Forces included the shamans in their treatments of the ailing villagers so as not to alienate them in their plans to win friends and influence people. They also distributed food, medical supplies, indigenous-sized uniforms, and boots as well as small amounts of money for purchase of local goods. Living alongside the hill people and sharing similar hardships, the Green Berets stood up local defense forces in scores of villages with very modest expenditures of resources.

The great success in strengthening the anti-communist resistance was incomplete. The final phase should have been to weave the Montagnards into the overall South Vietnamese defensive architecture. To fashion a country-wide anti-insurgent response, COIN troops and advisers needed to complete the last step—tie the loyalty of the auxiliaries to the central government and forge a national identity, and not to themselves. But when the decision came to integrate the Montagnards into the South Vietnamese forces, many problems arose. For most of their history the two peoples were at odds. Lack of time, rigid timetables, and dearth of logistical and psychological preparation all figured in the shortcomings associated with implementing Operation Switchback. The South Vietnamese government and military bear much of the blame for these failures. U.S. military authorities also came in for criticism for not anticipating and avoiding the pitfalls.<sup>35</sup>

Other efforts at WHAM also relied on scant material support. The U.S. Marine Corps' often-touted Combined Action Platoon (CAP) program in

the northern I Corps also represented a prime example of frugal WHAM. The CAP program deployed squad-sized units to villages to enhance their protection, and it cost nothing in the capital account marked for nation-building infrastructure. This small program of some 2,500 men (out of the 79,000 Marines) at its pinnacle employment performed basic civic action/community development tasks. They constructed rudimentary schools, bamboo foot bridges, pagodas, wells, and dispensaries. But the Marines were “officially enjoined from choosing civic action projects, which should be done by the Vietnamese people or officials.”<sup>36</sup> They distributed school supplies and care kits of soap and other personal items, which sometimes wound up on the black market. But here too, the Marines sometimes felt that such gifting was “redolent of welfarism, a tendency that was anathema to their values.”<sup>37</sup> Overall, CAPs were inexpensive to operate. The central CAP mission was organizing effective defenses with the village-level Popular Forces. By living among the villagers, training their militias, and affording protection, some CAPs were effective, others were not, in winning over local sympathy.<sup>38</sup> Yet rivers of financial aid and streams of gigantic infrastructure development proved unnecessary for the central tenet of gaining local sympathy for the counterinsurgent forces.

Here again, the concluding phrase in building village-level resistance must be to ensure that local anti-insurgency units join tightly with the central government. Loyalty to U.S. forces alone will not foster an overall COIN strategy. So, while U.S. COIN units can help clear and hold territory as well as build government services, they must complete the final phase of counterinsurgency; they must transfer the village’s loyalty to the host government.

Even the much-maligned Strategic Hamlet Program, which tried to imitate the British success in Malaya through the resettlement of at-risk rural populations, drew on sparse stocks of civilian equipment and material, especially when compared to the vast nation-building projects launched in Iraq and Afghanistan. Started in 1961 by the president of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, the Strategic Hamlets, in sheer fact, were plagued by inadequate resources for schools, medical clinics, and other social programs. Money intended for rice cultivation and water systems was stolen by the local militias tasked with protecting the fortified villages. By late 1962, the Saigon government claimed to have erected 3,225 strategic hamlets to hold over 4 million people. When Diem was assassinated in late 1963, it came



to light that many of these hamlets existed only on paper. The South Vietnamese officials simply fed this misinformation along with other bogus reports to Washington.<sup>39</sup>

By Diem's death, the Hamlet enterprise was in a shambles. Between rampant corruption and devastating Viet Cong attacks, the settlements actually undercut the WHAM mission among the rural population. The Strategic Hamlets ended up alienating the very peasants it targeted for resettlement from their own central government.<sup>40</sup> If anything the resettlement scheme represents a counter-example in that counterinsurgency programs must provide genuine security and a minimum of benefits to the populace or else they can do much harm. They can wind up severing the link between people and their government.

### **U.S. Military and Civilian Infrastructure**

To be sure, the United States poured in vast material resources for construction of military infrastructure. Air and naval bases were built, upgraded, or restored to better serve the war effort itself. Airfields and harbors at Tan Son Nhut, Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang, Long Bin, and many other smaller bases were expanded to accommodate fleets of planes and virtual armadas of cargo vessels bearing troops, equipment, and matériel. American engineers also constructed roads, bridges, and utilities for the war. Before the war, only Saigon in the south had a deep-draft port. As a result of the U.S. military needs, six additional deep-water harbors were built by war's end in South Vietnam. The huge and unprecedented development enterprise of billions of U.S. dollars bequeathed an extraordinary legacy to the Vietnamese people for their economic viability. Many thousands of Vietnamese as well acquired skills as carpenters, plumbers, welders, electricians, and heavy-equipment operators that they would not have gained without the war.<sup>41</sup> The South Vietnam construction bonanza, however, directly contributed to the U.S. military campaign. The ports, buildings, and construction skills imparted to the country and its people were an indirect benefit of building military infrastructure.

Civilian financial assistance flowed first to the fledgling South Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem in June 1955—a decade before the influx of major combat forces in 1965. The precedent for helping a country struggling to fend off communist infiltration with non-combat assistance derived from the highly successful Marshall Plan to restore Western

Europe in the immediate post-World War period. Secretary of State George C. Marshall recognized that the war-ruined European societies could not economically recover without massive American financial assistance to rebuild factories, mines, harbors, and roadways. Unless they rebuilt their economies and radiated a promising future to their citizens, some European countries would fall prey to their own domestic communist movements. The acclaimed success of the Marshall Plan made it the ready template for all sorts of rebuilding efforts around the globe, sometimes with only limited applicability due to quite different historical circumstances from Western Europe during the late 1940s.<sup>42</sup>

South Vietnam was among the many recipient nations of American funds dedicated to economic and social endeavors in hopes of forging bulwarks against communist penetration. Indeed, the International Cooperation Administration and the Development Loan Fund, which was established to implement the Marshall Plan, first jointly administered non-military aid to South Vietnam. It directed initial funding to land reform programs to help the peasantry and to the training of South Vietnamese police forces and intelligence services in anti-guerrilla tactics. Like the notable achievement of the Marshall Plan, it hoped for a similar outcome in South Vietnam.

The John F. Kennedy administration stepped up and reorganized the foreign aid program to the Saigon government and to other capitals as well. The young president issued an executive order creating the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as an independent federal government agency, which the Department of State guided. This new agency marked a mushrooming of American assistance to South Vietnam and other countries. The largest American civilian WHAM undertaking was run by USAID.

Because of the nature of U.S. support to combat a rural insurgency in a poor land, Washington's exertions took on a showcase quality not altogether different than what took place in Iraq during the combat operations and is taking place in Afghanistan today. Between 1962 and 1975, South Vietnam received by far the largest portion of USAID assistance. Its expenditures in 1967 alone allocated more than \$550 million out of its total \$2 billion global budget, for a nation of some 17 million inhabitants.

For WHAM and shoring up a democratic country under siege, USAID built highways, hospitals, health clinics, schools, hydroelectric stations, and industrial centers. The agency also funded self-help projects and farming

cooperatives. It dispatched agricultural experts, engineers, teachers, nurses, civic advisers, and intelligence agents. Some 700 American physicians staffed USAID-built hospitals and medical clinics.<sup>43</sup>

Its best-known initiative was the Civil Operations and Revolutionary (Rural) Development Support Program (CORDS), an attempt to place all the diverse counterinsurgency activities operated by the military pacification advisory staffs and civilian organizations under one umbrella authority. In short, it was an interagency effort. Under CORDS, the USAID personnel worked with American and Vietnamese military and the CIA to fashion programs and projects to capture the population's loyalty for the Saigon government and to drain away rural support for the Viet Cong. Not all CORDS projects were passive in nature; the Phoenix program set its goal on eliminating the Viet Cong political infrastructure through conversion, capture, or assassination.<sup>44</sup> Indeed civic-action pacification was paltry compared to the straight military activities. In 1968, three years after Washington stepped up its war-fighting capability, the Pentagon spent nearly \$14 billion on bombing and offensive operations but only \$850 million on aid programs and pacification measures.<sup>45</sup>

The debate on the contribution of non-military actions for WHAM rages among former Vietnam War participants and historians, particularly in light of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A dimension of this discussion involves financial costs of all three conflicts. Obviously, this is a tricky comparison because it entails expenditures in different periods and circumstances. It also must figure in the amount of defense expenditures as a percentage of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product as well as the war's effect on the country's economy and inflation. As noted above, Britain spent a modest \$6 billion in today's dollars during the Malaya Emergency. One estimate placed the financial cost of the Vietnam War at about \$686 billion in today's inflation-adjusted dollars. For comparison the overall direct financial costs of the Iraq War vary, according to the estimator, but outlays came in around \$750 billion by mid-2010.<sup>46</sup> In the case of Afghanistan, the spending spigot is still open with a very rough estimate of \$100 billion a year on top of the already expended \$250 billion by the end of 2009.<sup>47</sup>

These estimates do not take account of war-related medical care justly furnished to wounded American veterans in the decades ahead. Nor do they include other so-called indirect outlays as the opportunity costs associated with spending money overseas and not within the United States.

One estimate combining current and future expenditures puts it at some \$3 trillion.<sup>48</sup> The enormity of the expense calls into question the current nature of people-centric counterinsurgency as fought with elaborate and costly WHAM infrastructure projects. These considerations are likely to have an impact on SOF missions.

## 4. WHAM in Iraq

For years after the intervention into Iraq on 19 March 2003, the United States military executed its most successful WHAM campaign ever during the course of a full-blown insurgency. The U.S. Army and Marines won over enough Sunni tribes in central and western Iraq to defeat the al-Qaeda-backed insurgency against the American-led coalition. The complete story of the astounding turnaround in the ground war is still emerging.<sup>49</sup>

This much is certain; the conduct of sound COIN principles started well before the now-famous “surge” of 28,500 additional combat troops into Anbar province starting in February 2007. Operation Iraqi Freedom traversed from lopsided victory of high-speed, armor-led, blitzkrieg warfare that pulverized Saddam Hussein’s regular Republican Guard divisions in three weeks to a grinding, bloody insurgency. From then on, the American-led coalition faced a metastasizing resistance movement, except in the Kurdish regions. Instead of peace, a bacchanalia of violence erupted from many groups. The U.S. military, thereupon, transformed itself from a super-kinetic, conventional war machine to a counterinsurgency force. Individual U.S. Army and Marine officers without top-down direction independently mounted WHAM operations two years before the publication of the *U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual* in December 2006.

The overtures to divide enemies, split friends from foe, and court sympathizers were implemented piecemeal, gradually, and through trial-and-error efforts. Brigade and battalion commanders sat down to sip tea and talk with Iraqis.<sup>50</sup> Average Iraqis grew desperate at the savage, daily violence in their midst; they turned to American troops to protect them. To help the U.S. forces, they passed along tips locating arms caches and the whereabouts of the insurgents. Americans alone offered an escape hatch from the pandemic of violence engulfing their neighborhoods.

At its core, the WHAM strategy entailed protection and security for local peoples, not material inducements. The Sunni people, who make about 20 percent of Iraq’s populations, for centuries formed the backbone of the country’s military and bureaucracy. Of all ethnic communities, the Sunni benefited most from the 24- year dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. The Shi’a, who comprised approximately 60 percent of Iraqis, suffered greatly under the Hussein tyranny because the minority Sunni considered them heretics, deserving death, torture, or at least severe discrimination. The other main

ethnic group, the Kurds, made up less than 20 percent of the population. Although most Kurds adhered to the Sunni branch of Islam, their non-Arab ethnicity and sense of ethno-nationalism angered Baghdad's ruling elite, who frequently shelled and chemically gassed the northern Kurdistan quadrant.

What brought Sunnis and Kurds to the coalition's side was their need for physical security. The long-suffering Kurdish people had enjoyed a modicum of U.S. protection since the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Because Saddam Hussein ruthlessly crushed the internal uprising in the wake of his defeat, the United States, Britain, and France instituted northern and southern no-fly zones in Iraq to keep Hussein's warplanes from pulverizing the inhabitants on the ground. The northern no-fly zone afforded bombing protection to the three-province-wide Kurdistan. Behind the

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*What brought the Sunnis and Kurds to the coalition's side was their need for physical security.*

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allied shield, the 5 million Kurds inched toward a fledgling democracy and nurtured brisk commerce and trade especially with Turkey.

Only American power, supported by Britain (the French dropped out of the air patrols in December 1998) guaranteed the safety of the mountainous enclave.<sup>51</sup> Its territorial security and economic growth can be added to the list of American accomplishments in promoting democracy and economic prosperity along with postwar Germany, Japan, Italy, Taiwan, and South Korea. But security had to come in front of the historical cart, not stability, democracy, or development, which normally come after it. In the opening days of the Iraq War, the Kurds in their northern fastness joined with the invading U.S. Army against Hussein's Republican Guards.

After the defeat of Iraq's regular army, the Kurds wanted the security that the American deployment afforded. Unlike Iraq, the Kurdish population welcomed their deliverers as did the World War II French during the triumphal allied parade down Paris' Avenue des Champs-Élysées.<sup>52</sup> From the opening days of the war until the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq, the Kurdish provinces stayed moored to the American ship of security. The Kurds welcomed the U.S. boot print on their soil. They were open to long-term military bases within the enclave's borders to protect their semi-autonomy from the Shiite-dominated Baghdad government and from neighboring Arab-populated Iraqi provinces.<sup>53</sup>

Washington's presence, moreover, requires minimum financial assistance to Kurdistan for infrastructure or other nation-building type projects. An enterprising people, the Kurds excelled in self-sufficient economic growth in a fertile land with well-endowed water supplies and ample oil reserves along with deposits of rock sulfur, coal, copper, and gold. Their relatively peaceful environment after the fall of Saddam Hussein enabled them to leap economically ahead of the rest of the country, which plunged into sectarian violence and bloodshed. Although a self-contained quasi-state, Kurdistan does possess disputed regions with the larger Iraq. Within the contested belts separating the two territories, much political friction makes Kurdish-Arab tensions a powder keg, which some 800 U.S. troops managed to defuse by their soldiering alongside the Kurdish and Iraqi troops.<sup>54</sup>

The Sunni rapprochement with the U.S.-headed coalition followed a far more tortuous and bloody journey than the Kurd's short step. While Kurds and Shi'a benefited from the destruction of Saddam Hussein's tyranny, the Sunnis suffered more than a fall from grace. They lost their political standing and economic privileges directly linked to Hussein's dictatorship. Little wonder that the Sunnis formed the backbone of resistance to the U.S.-organized occupation, particularly in their homeland out in western reaches of Iraq.

There, of course, was a Shiite insurgency led by the Moqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand cleric, who aided and abetted street militias in Baghdad and elsewhere against the coalition and Sunni residents. Al-Sadr's Jaish al-Mahdi (Mahdi Army) staged attacks on U.S. forces and officials in the elected government until American troops and Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki brought the militia to heel. Additionally, Iran directly aided and abetted the anti-coalition groups. Its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force organized, trained, and equipped Special Groups that planted particularly lethal explosively formed penetrators—improvised explosive devices that were especially deadly against armored vehicles—and ambushed coalition forces along Iraq's eastern borderlands.<sup>55</sup> Over time, the new Shiite politicians governing in the central government temporarily clamped down on these elements along with the semi-officially sanctioned Shiite death squads that preyed on Sunni civilians particularly in Baghdad and Basra. The eventual cease-fire among Shiite militias allowed the United States to focus its attention on the Sunni insurgency.

Moreover, the additional combat troops associated with the “surge” that flooded into Baghdad in 2007 undercut the support and power of al-Sadr’s Mahdi army. Earlier the Sadrist forces had carried out what amounted to ethnic cleansing in Baghdad neighborhoods. By expelling large numbers of Sunni inhabitants from the capital, the Shiite gunmen made it easier for U.S. troops to protect the few remaining Sunni in their near-homogenous districts. The few Sunnis still living in the Baghdadi environs feared for their lives. They were willing to join forces with the United States against their Shiite tormentors and Sunni extremists. Exclusively Sunni or Shiite enclaves made for clear-cut ethnic redoubts, with less chance of attacks by outsiders. In brief, the ethnically cleansed neighborhoods were easier to protect from terrorism.<sup>56</sup>

Outside the capital, the embattled Sunni population in central Iraq faced multiple threats from Islamist extremists from their own ethnic community as well as Shiite-government security forces, irregular militias, and night raids by Shiite death squads working from the government’s Interior Ministry. Al-Qaeda and other Islamist movements had made steady inroads among the Sunni since the collapse of the Hussein regime. The Islamic State of Iraq—an umbrella grouping for al-Qaeda and its Salafist allies—waged a terrorist campaign on their fellow Sunnis, coalition forces, and the Shiite population. These militant Salafist groups initially capitalized on their Sunni brethren’s antipathy for the Shia as well as their hostility to the American presence in Iraq. The armed groups relied on terrorism to spur anti-American attacks and to impose an extreme variant of Shariah, or Islamic law, on their fellow sect members. The average Sunni chafed under the radical strictures, prohibiting cigarettes, music, alcohol, and cinema-going. Many women disliked wearing the traditional *burqa* and conforming to the male-dominant Wahhabist religious practices.

Hammered by Shiite forces on one side and Salafist militants on the other, the Sunni sheikhs in the middle turned to the United States for alliance and protection. This dramatic metamorphosis occurred during the second half of 2006 in Baghdad and Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province. The Anbar sheikhs dubbed their political re-alignment the “Awakening.” American military units in Anbar and also Diyala province north of the capital were already engaged in COIN operations, which embraced WHAM procedures. Thus, the goals of the sheiks and the U.S. forces converged. Both wanted security against al-Qaeda operatives. The roots of WHAM among



the Sunni population most assuredly pre-date the implementation of the surge beginning in early 2007. Meetings began in 2004 between U.S. field commanders and tribal sheikhs based among the Sunni in Anbar province, who sought protection and money to sustain themselves. From these American officers developed an understanding of their enemies and the best way to defeat or neutralize them through COIN and WHAM when the opportunity arose in 2006.

In reaction to al-Qaeda's wanton bloodshed and its proclamation of an Islamic State of Iraq inside the city of Ramadi, bands of tribal sheiks rebelled. They started to organize their populations against the extremist attackers in October 2006. This effort coincided with stepped-up SOF raids against high-value militant targets, killing and capturing many. It also marked a change in strategy to protect the populace by the expansion of small forward operation bases within Ramadi to more than 10 outposts. Police stations were set closer and closer to the populated neighborhoods. The U.S. forces also constructed a police academy that trained and paid the recruits in order to strengthen local security. The biggest thing the local American commander did was understand the nature of COIN and WHAM by protecting the Sunni tribal sheikhs and their followers who wanted to resist al-Qaeda. This collaboration between the U.S. soldiers and Marines and Sheikh Abdul Sattar Bezia al Rishawi, a minor but charismatic chieftain, was tantamount to a pivot point of the insurgency. Sheikh Sattar brought over to the American side his tribesmen and other sheikhs, which changed the course of the war.<sup>57</sup> Once more, the critical final link needed to be forged between Sunni tribal forces and their central authority in Baghdad. As with the Montagnards, the transfer phase for tribal units is necessary not only for a nationwide effective COIN campaign but also for a stable post-conflict environment. In the case of Iraq, there was resistance from central government to incorporate the Sunni units and from the Sunni tribesmen to join with the Baghdad government which was dominated by Shi'a.

The U.S. forces correctly applied one important COIN and WHAM principle in Ramadi to protect the local population. American soldiers accompanied by Iraqi troops demolished many gutted buildings that insurgents used as sniper dens and bases for attacks. Removing the rubble also paved the way for new government buildings downtown. The improved security furthered the sheiks' appeal for their tribesmen to join the Iraqi police. Thousands did sign up in late 2006 to be policemen and manned checkpoints and walked

foot patrols within city limits as U.S. and Iraqi forces cleared blocks of insurgents and weapons caches. Feeling safer, citizens secreted intelligence tips to the security forces about the whereabouts of the enemy.<sup>58</sup>

From Ramadi, the U.S. troops and their Iraqi allies deployed westward up the Euphrates River valley. Patrolling on the river and its banks, the allied forces shut down the transit route for foreign jihadis, who flowed in through Syria from the Muslim world. The allied presence denied enemy infiltrators total freedom of movement down the riverine passage. This interdiction curbed the movement of non-Iraqi insurgents insinuating themselves into Baghdad. The U.S. Army honed and adjusted its WHAM techniques in Ramadi and western Anbar province prior to unveiling the Baghdad Security Plan in the early months of 2007. Among the most significant tribal leaders was Sheik Sattar, who

more senior and connected sheikhs viewed as a second- or even third-tier figure of the minor Abu Risha tribe in Ramadi. Out of necessity to protect his tribe and his personal business

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*For the tribes' survival, the Americans became their lifeline while al-Qaeda held the knife to cut it.*

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interests from al-Qaeda, Sattar marshaled several other tribes under the U.S. banner through charisma and gumption. The need for security and U.S. funds motivated tribes to swing against al-Qaeda and its tactics of murder, intimidation, and hyper-violent sectarianism. For the tribes' survival, the Americans became their lifeline while al-Qaeda held the knife to cut it.

The story of American success was repeated in Baghdad and Diyala province with local variations due to differing circumstances. The steady presence of U.S. forces proved vital to convince the local people that they would be protected in return for information on insurgent activity and weapons caches. General Raymond Odierno, Commanding General, U.S. Forces-Iraq, stated in a post-Iraq interview that as soon as U.S. troops "put up T-walls around a couple of buildings they [Iraqis] would come out of the woodwork." America's top commander explained that the fortifications signaled to the community a "somewhat permanent" basing, meaning American forces were "not just gonna come through here for a few days and leave us [Iraqis] and we'll be slaughtered."<sup>59</sup> Tellingly, the key factors for WHAM centered on staunch protection and martial cooperation against a common enemy rather than extravagant U.S. largess. Some Awakening ("Sons of Iraq") forces got no salaries from the United States. They sported

their own weapons. What they received was U.S. firepower when need, along with other types of military back up against the mutual foe—al-Qaeda.

Where it was concrete T-walls in Iraq, it was steel and burlap Hesco barriers in Afghanistan that convinced locals to work with NATO forces. The dirt-filled Hesco blocks signaled more permanent bases to Afghans. General Petraeus explained that the “Hesco inkspots” are a symbol that NATO is here to stay.<sup>60</sup> Safety and security stood foremost in the minds of the militant-threatened populace.

Standing up neighborhood watch-type defense or interacting with existing militias flourished when indigenous forces believed they had a better than even chance of prevailing against murderous insurgents. In some sense, then, WHAM resembled *leasing or renting* “hearts and minds,” not winning once and forever the populace’s loyalties. Pulling out on an embattled people, however, almost ensures that they will look to others for their safety. In Iraq, for instance, the U.S. withdrawal of combat forces completed by 31 August 2010 has seen a reversal of some former Sunni allies back into the al-Qaeda camp. Faced with a resurgent al-Qaeda and a hostile Shiite-dominated Baghdad government, groups of Sunnis joined or rejoined al-Qaeda’s ranks for safety, money, or both.<sup>61</sup> Even some impoverished Shiite provided intelligence and bombs to al-Qaeda for their own survival.<sup>62</sup> Amid violent and chaotic conditions, ordinary people will adapt and accommodate to survive.

During the Vietnam War, Jeffrey Race in his classic book, *War Comes to Long An*, described the political dexterity of the peasantry in looking after its own welfare in turbulent times. Race called attention to how middle peasants or small businessmen stayed clear of leading a vigorous “prosystem” effort while “making profits under the market system without exerting leadership in the political sphere” despite “the cognitive capacity, the resources, and the extra-village connections necessary to sustain a linkage role” they possessed. Instead, the middle peasants took a “leadership role with the revolutionary structure” of the communist guerrilla cadre. They sensed it was smarter “to have a strong position in a potentially hostile organization” so as “to protect one’s economic position” than in the Saigon government “organization that ignored them.”<sup>63</sup> The transience of political loyalty must come at no surprise for those living in highly politicized and lethal environments.

Sympathy sometimes extended just to the coalition forces on the scene. It lapsed when allied troops pulled out for other areas. Rather than reinforcing local successes, for example, in Anbar during 2005, the top U.S. command withheld additional troops. After clearing terrain of the enemy, it turned over newly liberated territory to inexperienced Iraqi troops for the “hold phase.”<sup>64</sup> Al-Qaeda brutally filled the vacuum with targeted killings and a renewed blood-hold.<sup>65</sup> This turnover came too early as Iraq lacked an effective national government to which local loyalties could be tied. The first election for a National Assembly took place in late 2005, but the bickering parliamentarians could not form a government until the following April. The slow political process hindered the COIN campaign, which faced daunting odds by late 2006. To survive, many locals in Anbar joined the Salafist militants or acquiesced to their puritanical rules. American construction projects or expensive WHAM exertions meant nothing to those whose lives were under immediate death threat. Personal survival trumps dam-building or hydro-electrical projects.

Other observers noted earlier that U.S. SOF won the respect and allegiance of Vietnam’s Montagnard peoples by sharing their hardships and dangers. But this loyalty was not transferable to the central South Vietnamese government in Saigon.<sup>66</sup> As one Vietnam-era memorandum issued by U.S. military and civilian authorities clearly specified: “It is recognized that the population must develop a stake in their government worth defending if this security effort is to endure.”<sup>67</sup> Developing a stake in homegrown institutions prospered best with Iraqis tied into political movements that advanced their security concerns and their reliance on effective local governance.

The U.S. military seized the opportunity to divide their foes and build their own ranks with Sunni Arab tribesmen, despite initial reservations about cooperating with enemies that had killed coalition troops. But American commanders refused requests for arms from their newfound allies. In fact, they demanded that tribesmen submit fingerprints, retinal scans, rifle serial numbers, and home addresses. This information and other data could be readily used to identify any turncoats who rejoined the insurgents. In retrospect, there were few betrayals until the months prior to the ending of the American combat role in Iraq on 31 August 2010. Then some members of the Sons of Iraq movement re-joined al-Qaeda, although their decisions stemmed from self-preservation calculations because Islamicist insurgents had mounted several bombings and assassinations in the first half of the

year.<sup>68</sup> During the height of al-Qaeda attacks that peaked in 2006, U.S. military officers successfully re-channeled an anti-American and anti-central government tribal movement into a powerful nationalistic force that backed the American presence and dialed back attacks on Baghdad's forces. The WHAM strategy relied on bestowing protection, status, and cooperation to the sheikhs of embattled tribes, which confronted al-Qaeda's bloody assaults almost daily.

### **WHAM and Infrastructure**

Aside from WHAM operations to blunt the Sunni insurgency against the coalition forces, the United States and its coalition allies instituted an enormously expensive reconstruction effort in Iraq. This construction work sought mostly to build Iraq infrastructure that had suffered from decades of underinvestment by the country's dictatorship and from international sanctions imposed on the heels of the Persian Gulf War. The U.N.-mandated economic embargo was intended to compel Saddam Hussein to come clean on his research and production of weapons of mass destruction—the principal reason for the U.S.-orchestrated invasion of the Middle Eastern country. Sanctions and Iraqi slough resulted in worn out oil refineries, roads, hospitals, bridges, and almost any structure except Hussein's many palaces.

Unlike American reconstruction in post-World War II Germany, where the extensive Allied bombing devastated cities, factories, and transportation links throughout the former belligerent power, Iraq construction was directed at restoring dilapidated or nonfunctioning civil facilities. Although President George W. Bush promised a Marshall Plan-type rebuilding first in Afghanistan during his memorable speech at the Virginia Military Institute (the alma mater of George C. Marshall) in April 2002, his administration turned initially to Iraq.<sup>69</sup>

Washington undertook a host of reconstruction projects in the wake of the coalition invasion. With minimal funding from its "coalition of the willing" partners, the United States set out to build electrical-generating facilities, water-pumping stations, sewage treatment plants, hospitals, slaughterhouses, and prisons. The U.S. government contracted with giant American construction firms. These companies soon encountered cost overruns due to unanticipated outlays for beefed up security in the escalating insurgency engulfing the Persian Gulf country. One estimate noted that construction costs were 30 percent over estimates due to heavy security

expenditures. Foreign governments and companies hired private security contractors to protect workers and building sites.<sup>70</sup> Often the construction corporations, in addition, were ill-prepared to cope with the adverse and unfamiliar conditions within Iraq. Their locally-based sub-contractors were also not up to necessary competence levels required. Pervasive corruption and frequently squandered funds also accounted for larger than anticipated outlays.

One of the key projects undertaken shortly after the Iraq invasion involved a pledge to step up the electrical power generation in Baghdad to relieve the sweltering population during the scorching summer. Baghdadis suffered from heat prior to the U.S.-headed occupation, but they pinned the blame on the coalition for lack of available electricity and nearly every other inconvenience. The Coalition Provisional Authority, a U.S.-set up body, announced a goal of increasing electrical power generation to 6,000 megawatts daily for a year later in 2004. By termination of Operation Iraqi Freedom on 1 September 2010, the goal set seven years earlier still was beyond fulfillment, despite the expenditure of \$4.9 billion dollars in U.S. funds. Meanwhile, power consumption more than doubled due to the flood of consumer goods into the capital, including air conditioners.<sup>71</sup>

Other infrastructure installations fared better but most exceeded original cost estimates. For example, a sewage treatment facility in the war-torn city of Fallujah eventually cost \$104 million, three times the projected costs. A children's hospital jumped to the figure of \$171 million from \$37 million. Another major unrealized goal centered on pushing up Iraq's oil output to above pre-invasion levels. Some \$2 billion invested in protective steps secured crude production from terrorist assault. The output of just over 2 million barrels a day, however, stayed about the same as in early 2003.

The total reconstruction pledge to Iraq amounted to \$53 billion. About \$20 billion of that figure went into training and equipping the Iraqi security forces, which played an important part in stemming the insurgency. The U.S.-headed coalition stood up a force of 400,000 police officers buttressed by an army of some 200,000 troops. But the success rate for concrete-and-steel complexes—some 1,500—fell to sub-standard levels. Many were never completed. The prison in Khan Bani Saad, for example, just north of Baghdad, was abandoned unfinished after \$40 million had been spent on it. The same dismal outcome awaited partially built hospitals and power plants. The Iraqi government has taken on only 300 of the original 1,500 handed

over to it from the United States.<sup>72</sup> The legacy of haphazardly planned and never-executed construction projects is far less than stellar for America's image.

American and other allied nations did achieve many positive results in Iraq. They contributed to making Iraq the 12th fastest growing economy in 2010. Moreover, it is expected to grow at a 7 percent clip for the next several years. The country is expected to have a budget surplus in 2012. Unemployment at 15 percent is high but down from the astronomical heights of three years earlier; it, moreover, is less than some American communities. Electrical production, a key indicator during the hot summer months, was up by 40 percent from prewar levels but still inadequate because more people owned air conditioners, which placed heightened stress on electrical power generation. The International Monetary Fund concluded that "Iraq has made substantial progress since 2003."<sup>73</sup>

The stability that the coalition forces achieved in Iraq by 2008 derived from their increased presence, sound COIN strategy, effective WHAM tactics, and collaboration from Sunni tribes hard pressed by al-Qaeda's callous disregard for human life. The nation-building infrastructure played a much less important role. In fact, many of the construction programs went uncompleted. Half-built schools, abandoned medical clinics, and partially finished office complexes for civic services littered the countryside—a testament to failure rather than achievement. The huge financial outlays, half-completed buildings, and charges of corruption discredit strategies for replicating similar endeavors elsewhere should the need arise.





## 5. Afghanistan: the Evolved State of WHAM

The Afghan campaign has involved not just mission creep but mission multiplication. — International Institute for Strategic Studies 2010 Strategic Survey<sup>74</sup>

As in the Iraq War, the United States placed a premium on protecting Afghans from the first days of the American-led intervention in fall 2001. Special Operations Forces and other operatives concentrated on militarily teaming up with the Northern Alliance movement, which had fought the Taliban regime in Kabul from its base inside the Panjshir Valley in the country's northeastern quadrant since 1996. Supported by U.S. Air Force and Navy warplanes, the SOF-Northern Alliance forces swept the Taliban rulers from power. By early 2002, the Taliban had been routed, and Osama bin Laden and his inner circle of followers fled across the border into Pakistan.

Washington slowly and reluctantly instituted limited government services and institutions in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to accompany its military presence. Ranked habitually at the bottom—or just above Somalia—of the world's most poverty-ridden countries, Afghanistan possessed gargantuan needs. It lacked nearly every politico-economic institution—centralized government, national defense force, countrywide judiciary, transportation, and communication apparatus, functioning health sector, and educational system—of modern nationhood. Its roughly 30 million inhabitants benefited from no statewide, or even district-level, developed industrial or agriculture economy. Afghanistan had become the largest opium-poppy grower and exporter in the world by the late 1990s. Its narcotic products flowed to Iran, Russia, and Europe.

Locally villagers also planted fruit trees and shepherded sheep to sustain themselves. Backward and underdeveloped, history bypassed it for centuries. Its divisive ethnic and regional characteristics in some sense, render Afghanistan not a true 21st-century nation. Rather, it resembles a 19th-century territory of several micro-states within a loosely drawn confederation with a weak central authority. Each of the subdivisions contains its own ethnic population—Pashtun, Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek—in a complex and sometimes antagonistic mosaic. Into this politico-economic vacuum

bestrode the United States military to oust the Taliban and rout the bin Ladinists.

The U.S.-spearheaded intervention broadened into a NATO mission that implemented many nation-building endeavors. The NATO presence was less an army of occupation than an armed charity operation to lay the economic and political foundations for a severely underdeveloped country. This reconstruction program saw multiple projects in social welfare, public works, democracy making, and social engineering. Among one of the most important was the establishment of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to include an army and police forces. The period from the 2001 invasion until the inauguration of a new American president in 2009 begs for clear and dispassionate analysis. So far the blame for the Taliban's resurgence is laid at the feet of Washington's diverted attention to Iraq after its 2003 intervention. A more penetrating examination is needed to account fully for the NATO setback. For our purposes, it suffices to write that the Taliban staged a rebirth and remounted attacks that accelerated from mid-2005. When the new government took office in Washington in early 2009, the Taliban had reasserted their deadly influence in the southern and eastern reaches of the country. A new approach was required to arrest the spreading insurgency, when the Pentagon and the White House decided on a shake up in leadership.

Population protection lay at the heart of the change in COIN strategy set forth by the incoming General Stanley McChrystal, who assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan in June 2009. A SOF officer, General McChrystal came to the Afghan position after extensive experience in waging a highly effective lethal campaign against al-Qaeda and other militants in the Iraq theater. The new top commander acknowledged many times the importance of enemy casualties. Even so, he noted another metric in the shadow conflict with the Taliban. The general officer declared: "the measure of effectiveness will not be enemy killed. It will be the number of Afghans shielded from the violence."<sup>75</sup> Population protection, thus, became his touchtone for COIN progress against the insurgents. Less delineated in this strategy was the crucial tie between low civilian casualties and the Afghan government's legitimacy. As noted earlier, SOF's role is to assist in connecting the loyalty of villagers to their district and central governments. Such a game plan undermined the Taliban's imposed authority at the grassroots level.

WHAM meant going beyond the mere passive acceptance by the populations of the ISAF presence. It entailed the Afghans' cooperation with U.S. and NATO forces at first. Most tellingly, it meant the transference of loyalty and legitimacy to the Kabul government. When the locals volunteered intelligence tips as to whereabouts of Taliban fighters or their arms caches, they demonstrated a commitment to the coalition mission and their own government. The rising numbers of Taliban killed and captured testified to the stream of tip offs to SOF, which relied on informants as well as electronic intercepts. This information was not just a metric in itself but an indicator of headway among the locals. One reliable source noted that SOF units were killing or capturing about a dozen Taliban nightly, especially among the Haqqani network. The father and sons Haqqanis operate within Afghanistan and from their base in North Waziristan in Pakistan's lawless Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The relentless SOF raids have reportedly forced Haqqani mid-level commanders to leave their Pakistani redoubt to fill the depleted ranks in Afghanistan with fresh leadership. These attacks also reportedly drove a wedge between field commanders, who felt under incessant threat, and rear echelon leaders, who enjoyed relatively more safety.<sup>76</sup>

## WHAM for Partners

WHAM also envisions local peoples joining in their own defense. Calling people to their colors always ranks near the top in the WHAM scheme of things. First off, counterinsurgency campaigns are troop-intensive undertakings, requiring as a rule of thumb "a range of 20 to 25 counterinsurgents for every 1000 residents."<sup>77</sup> Not all the counterinsurgent forces needed be U.S. troops. ISAF forces and Afghan units also can count in counterinsurgent ranks. Expanding the forces of order against their enemies demanded the utilization of indigenous recruits in most modern-day counterinsurgencies. The British recruited Malayas in their Malayan Emergency, the United States depended on South Vietnamese forces, and both the French and Portuguese relied on local manpower in their counterrevolutionary wars in Algeria and Mozambique, respectively. Enlisting native men-at-arms not only enlarges the COIN forces but also decreases the insurgent recruitment pool. Most vitally, the tribesmen or villagers' enlistment in the government forces can initiate loyalty ties with the established government. If these ties endure (without a defection or desertion), then the *leasing* of hearts and

minds phenomenon can be checked. If not, it is wise to recall that battle-field politics, like ordinary politics, relies on temporary alliances. Thus, a “leasing” of confidence may be all that is attainable and needed in the run up to victory.

The importance of local linkages to central authority can hardly be over-emphasized. In the Iraq War, the turnaround came when Sunni tribesmen formed the Awakening (Al Sahawa) movement and joined with the U.S.-headed coalition to combat al-Qaeda and other militant groups whose murdering and mayhem nearly destroyed Iraqi society. The Awakening movement brought over to the American side large bodies of armed tribesmen who were knowledgeable about their enemies and their local terrain. The Iraqi-bred auxiliaries made excellent partners for defensive and offensive operations as well as for intelligence on al-Qaeda terrorists. Along with collaborating with the Sunni tribal militias against insurgents, U.S. forces also worked with the Baghdad government’s security forces, who were mainly from the Shiite population.

Finally, the United States enjoyed a close working partnership with the Kurds in northern Iraq that had matured since the end of the Persian Gulf War. The Kurdish enclave remained mostly peaceful and passive toward the American military presence. Indeed, the Kurdish leaders saw the U.S. troops as a sort of insurance policy against their long-term Sunni enemies and the new Baghdad government in the hands of the Shiite majority. Both communities despised the Kurds and coveted their lands and oil reserves.

In Afghanistan, the WHAM strategy for bringing over groups and individuals to the American fold got a head start from the country’s long-running civil war and ethnic divisions. Ethnic communities and warlords formed the basis of the anti-Taliban resistance after the radical movement seized Kabul in 1996. Other cities and extensive rural stretches soon fell to the Taliban militias and their mobility wing of pickup trucks packed with turban-wearing riflemen. These divisions carried over to the U.S. intervention. Afghans, in a sense, self-divided themselves between pro- and con-Kabul groups. What the central government failed to do was reach out itself to disaffected areas and tribal groups to build legitimacy.

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*...it is wise to recall that battle-field politics, like ordinary politics, relies on temporary alliances.*

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Whereas the Pashtun ethnic community almost exclusively made up the Sunni-orientated Taliban extremists, other ethnicities and sects formed the National Alliance that resisted the Talibs. Out of necessity, the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Hazaras, and Aimak came together for self-preservation. Their most effective and charismatic chieftain, Ahmend Shah Massoud, fought rearguard actions, sprung ambushes, and generally threw up defensive road blocks to protect a narrow sliver of territory north of the capital near the Hindu Kush. From his lair in the Panjshir Valley, Massoud sallied out striking the Taliban forces and keeping their extreme brand of Islam at bay.<sup>78</sup> The Northern Alliance survived Massoud's death at the hands of Osama bin Laden two days before al-Qaeda's September 11 attacks on American soil. The resistance movement allied itself with the American-organized counterattack into Afghanistan in fall 2001.

The SOF-led intervention (along with other agencies) liberated the long-suffering Afghans from the political and religious tyranny of the Taliban.<sup>79</sup> For the next several years, Washington and its NATO allies in the ISAF enjoyed a mostly pacific landscape. Both the Taliban and the bin Ladenists had been vanquished and expelled from the badly scarred Central Asian country. Most of the population greeted the U.S. forces as liberators who lifted the puritanical Shari'a law imposed by the Taliban in their bid to return Afghan society to ways of the 10th century. After years of war against the Soviet invaders, the internecine bloodshed among warlords and private militias, and then religious tyranny, the Afghans seemed content to bask in the U.S.-imposed stability and peace.

The United Nations helped in standing up the Hamid Karzai government in restoring order and preparing the land of towering peaks and winding valleys for independence. Money was spent on roads, schools, and medical clinics. ISAF formed an Afghan National Army and an Afghan National Police. Neither became truly effective security arms of the struggling government. Stretched thin, U.S. and allied forces often looked to powerbrokers and warlords to rule cities and towns. Some of these figures acquired vicious and venal reputations in the period after the Soviet withdrawal. During the mid-1990s, their brutality and corruption, in fact, made the Taliban takeover welcome to many harassed and cheated Afghans.<sup>80</sup> The Talibs reacted swiftly and harshly to wayward behavior, such as thievery, official corruption, and adultery along with more mundane pursuits such as kite flying, whistling, photography, and listening to music. The Taliban

staged public executions and amputation of limbs for transgressions. They marginalized women and prohibited men's haircuts and beard trimming. Many Afghans grew weary of the draconian codes and hailed their foreign liberators, at least initially.

After the Taliban regime fell from power, an opportunity was lost by the Kabul government to establish legitimacy in the countryside. But its incompetence and corruption left an opening for the Taliban insurgents to infiltrate, intimidate, and establish shadow governments in villages and districts, particularly in the country's southern and eastern borderlands. Had a more thoughtful, capable, and better resourced ISAF force been put in place, perhaps, too, it might have been more effective in closing the door to a Taliban comeback.<sup>81</sup> It would need to have followed the strategy of holding, building, and transferring after the Taliban had been cleared.

But Taliban and their al-Qaeda allies working through violent networks stealthily penetrated Afghan borderlands along the Pakistan boundary. They established a militant underground and shadow governments. They persuaded, intimidated, and recruited for years. Like a cancer, the Taliban cadres infected the body politic before displaying any of the usual telltale signs such as assassinations and bombings. As it were, Taliban insurgent bloodshed started to pick up in 2005. Three years later, the United States and ISAF faced an insurgency raging across the eastern and southern countryside.

## **COIN and WHAM**

By early 2009, violent subversion burned across the southern landscape like a smoldering underground peat fire. Just months after entering the Oval Office, President Barack Obama deployed additional troops to arrest the worsening insurgency. Without that deployment, ISAF lacked the minimal forces to protect the southern population increasingly at risk to heightened persuasion, indoctrination, and fear. Once the host citizenry completely fell under the Taliban thrall, the task of weaning them away from the insurgents became nearly impossible. Protection of the local population loomed as job one in the U.S. counter-response to the swelling insurgency. The American-led ISAF also turned with renewed vigor to mobilizing Afghans into various self-defense forces.

Lifting a page from the Iraqi playbook, the U.S. military officers hoped for local militias to sweep away the menace. The Iraq War offered an example of a widespread tribal-rooted rising in revulsion and fear against a terrorist frenzy that inflicted virtually indiscriminate violence in a country's mid-section. Afghan conditions differed markedly from those in Iraq, where al-Qaeda committed serious mistakes with its almost indiscriminate terrorism.

Unlike the Afghan Taliban, or the 1930s Chinese communists, the al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was less interested in carving out an insurgent state with civic functions and limited amenities. Under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, AQI sought to ignite an inter-sectarian blaze that would mobilize the Sunni in a jihad against the Shia before they could consolidate their power in Iraq. His larger goal was to expel the "crusaders" and then to oust apostate Arab governments in the Middle East before liberating Palestine.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, Zarqawi's tactics reflected a disdain for, if not outright hostility to, Iraqi Sunnis with prolific attacks on the minority community by assassinations or suicide bombings. He and his agents worked to impose a puritanical Salafist social and legal system on the unwilling Sunni community. In time, Zarqawi's methods alienated many Sunnis, driving them toward the U.S.-led coalition forces for security and survival in the face of the Jordanian terrorist mastermind's heavy-handed and violent measures.<sup>83</sup> American and allied military forces on the ground, as noted above, capitalized on the divisions to turn the tide against al-Qaeda and other extremist militias. The surge of additional U.S. ground troops in early 2007, therefore, encountered receptive conditions. The Afghan Taliban

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*...the Taliban conformed, Maoist-like, to an insurgent-state model.*

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made few such errors as AQI did in the Persian Gulf nation.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban adhered more closely to the now-classic insurgent pattern of setting up shadow governments to win over and hold the active participation of the rural masses than al-Qaeda offshoots did in Iraq. Within these Afghan enclaves, the Taliban conformed, Maoist-like, to an insurgent-state model. They levied taxes, arrested criminals, and held courts to settle disputes. They set up checkpoints and issued travel permits to some trusted villagers. In a few instances, the insurgents also engaged in road-building projects. Insurgents also imposed puritanical codes on their subjects. When persuasion failed, they also meted out brutal corporal punishment on the spot and burned fields when farmers failed to pay taxes



to the Taliban. Individual Talibs were not above shaking down the locals for money, however. Additionally, insurgent commanders also accepted money from district officials to refrain from attacking ISAF truck convoys carrying supplies to NATO troops.<sup>84</sup>

International assistance projects were often popular with ordinary Afghan villagers. As a result, some of the Taliban allowed them to operate. These insurgents cut deals with foreign non-government organizations (NGOs), granting them safe-passage agreements so long they as conducted their programs with strict neutrality. If the NGOs handed out farming implements, dispensed agricultural advice, and gave vaccinations to people and livestock without passing along information on the insurgents to the U.S.-led coalition forces, then these aid groups were spared Taliban attacks. The Taliban expected the NGOs to focus on their own humanitarian activities. The insurgent bands leave the NGOs alone if they abstain from participating in government or coalition projects, which the Taliban attack. These ground rules permit hundreds of NGOs to obviate the need for private security guards.<sup>85</sup> Although this *modus operandi* enables scores of worthwhile charitable endeavors to proceed, it also results in some credit flowing to the Taliban, who appear also as agents of enlightened policies to the Afghan populace.

To counter Taliban advances, the United States and its NATO partners set about to train, equip, and properly staff a national army and police force. They still often relied on tribal militia, warlords, or powerbrokers with private mini-armies. The ISAF plan envisions a territorial-wide security apparatus. Washington has dedicated some \$25 billion—about half of all U.S. reconstruction dollars spent in Afghanistan since 2001—for the Afghan National Security Force. The Obama administration is spending some \$11 billion more during the current year to ramp up the security ranks, which are regularly depleted by desertions at high rates.<sup>86</sup> The Afghan Prioritization and Implementation Plan established a timeline to put seasoned Afghan security personnel in charge of military operations throughout the country by 2014. U.S. forces had gained some insight from U.S. Army Major Jim Gant, a SOF officer, in working with “tribal engagement” among one tribe in the Konar Valley of southern Afghanistan in 2003. But they had to look beyond Gant’s “family member” engagement to foster local/central links to further Kabul’s legitimacy.<sup>87</sup> The Afghan Prioritization and Implementation



Plan envisioned specific forces and targets for October 2011, although some U.S. troops started to withdraw in July 2011.

The main elements of this Afghan force are sketched below:

**The National Army Approach.** Soon after the U.S.-coordinated intervention, Washington and allied capitals turned to the formation of a national Afghan military force. The Afghan National Army was to serve as defense force and a national building block to foster a unified and cohesive national state. Assisted by the United Kingdom, Canada, France and other countries, the United States took the lead in developing the ANA. From the onset, the NATO training cadre aimed to fashion a multiethnic army, representative of the country's mosaic of ethnicities. Recruitment has been hardest among the Pashtuns, who form the backbone of the Taliban. Desertions and low reenlistment rates have been a problem since the start of the ANA.<sup>88</sup> The change of Washington administrations in early 2009 marked an added impetus to standing up a larger capable land force. President Obama's plan to begin withdrawing some U.S. troops in mid-2011 required an Afghan replacement force. By late 2011, there were approximately 134,000 Afghan soldiers in the ANA. The goal was to increase troop strength of the ANA to 171,000 by October 2011. These twin numeric levels for the ANSF could be revised upwards in the months ahead for a total force of over 400,000 personnel. The target date for a seasoned Afghan security force is set for 2014, when most NATO units are scheduled to leave.

**The Afghan National Police.** Along with building an army, the NATO Training Mission is developing the Afghanistan National Police. In a counterinsurgency campaign, police play a vital role. They are often much closer to the people than the army; they are often better at investigating attacks. The current ANP force numbers around 109,000 officers. The intermediate goal was to expand the police to 134,000 officers by October 2011.

**Afghan Local Police.** The most rudimentary type of local self-defense is the formation of a community militia system for rural areas. These police units build on the *Arbeki*, which formed the traditional village defense force. Soon after General Petraeus took command in June 2010, he persuaded President Karzai and his Cabinet to form police units for regions where few NATO or Afghan troops are present. The goal was to have 10-person teams formed in about 900 villages by March 2011. These local officers have the power to make arrests and turn over suspects to government officials. The initial figure of 10,000 recruits might give way to a larger force, if

enlistments prove strong and if the units prove their mettle. Initially, the Kabul government feared that local forces might become the seeds of warlord armies, beyond central authority's control. To alleviate these concerns,

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*In short, the literacy campaign embodies cultural reordering by boosting education over traditional views of what is important...*

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the direct supervision and payment of Afghan Local Police were placed within the hands of the Interior Ministry. General Petraeus also pledged to the Karzai government that it could eventually disband or incorporate the local police in the Afghan National Police force. Some

SOF were assigned to mentor the village-level units, which some observers likened to armed community watch teams equipped with AK-47s and paid salaries of roughly \$120 monthly, which is good remuneration among impoverished villagers. The pay is 40 percent less than the Afghan National Police so as not draw away personnel from nationwide police.<sup>89</sup>

**Counterterrorism Pursuit Teams (CTPT).** As revealed in his book, *Obama's Wars*, Bob Woodward described this collectively known unit of 3,000 Afghans. It undertakes a number of sensitive missions. Authorized by former President Bush, these well-trained and well-armed teams conduct reconnaissance, surveillance, intelligence, and armed operations. They reportedly have an intelligence-gathering (non-military) presence in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan under the supervision of the OGA or "other government agency." The CTPT members tap into local informants, passing along information for drone aerial attacks on insurgents. These teams also operate from bases in Afghanistan's southern belt, where they are sometimes used in heavy fighting. Trained, in part, by the SOF, the personnel are highly motivated and better paid than general purpose soldiers in the ANA.<sup>90</sup>

The brief outline of security forces sketched above leaves out significant facts. Because the Afghan recruits are some 80 percent illiterate, their NATO trainers have embarked on extensive literacy programs. The training allows police officers to read license plates and ID papers. Proficiency in reading also contributes to the overall authority of the police and troops. As one trainer expressed the societal benefits, the population looks admiringly "at their police force through a completely different lens" because of their literacy. In short, the literacy campaign embodies cultural reordering by boosting education over traditional views of what is important in village life.<sup>91</sup>

NATO reports 50,000 Afghan police and army recruits received literacy training by September 2010. They estimated this figure would jump to 100,000 Afghans in the following year. Promotions within the police ranks depend, in part, on literacy. Traditionally, Afghans gained recognition and stature from personal bravery, established lineage, or the reward of their leaders for traits other than education. Remaking the social order to approximate the Western norms is a transformational undertaking and a rarefied refinement on the elementary WHAM efforts, which concentrated on providing security to villagers under insurgent threat.

Another lever used to re-channel the society's direction centered on the place of women in Afghan life. Schools for girls and young women formed one means to change traditional ways. Whereas many Afghans, even in remote villages, wanted their daughters educated, other Afghans, such as the Taliban, considered the prospect as anathema, justifying a splash of acid in the face of a schoolgirl. Despite the difficulties, Afghan rural folk, as evidenced by Greg Mortensen's *Three Cups of Tea*, recognize the need for education of their youths, even girls. The NATO presence carried this modernizing tendency further than mere literacy for women. It opened police and military ranks to female officers. The army and the Afghan National Police had used women for culturally sensitive missions such as to enter homes and to carry out body searches of other women. By September 2010, nearly 300 women served in the Afghan National Army. Late in that month, 29 women graduated from the Kabul Military Training Center as second lieutenants in the ANA. As the first to graduate from the 20-week officer candidate school, they were trained for service as finance or logistical officers.<sup>92</sup>

The program envisioned more female officer candidates in the future as a new "pure female" facility is being constructed.<sup>93</sup> According to progressive voices, these and many other similar efforts to nurture a 21st-century multicultural tolerant society are worthy in themselves, as they remove overly strict norms and taboos that retard personal freedom, societal advancement, and economic development. Others feel that traditional societies should evolve at their own pace rather than that of outsiders. The social engineering programs, however, are examples of expansive WHAM approaches, stretching well beyond the traditional COIN policies of protection and defense of targeted populations.

Still another modern-day nation-building endeavor centers on ethnically balancing the armed forces in a version of contemporary American affirmative action programs. In the Afghan case, this translates into recruiting Pashtuns from the southern areas. Estimates hold that Pashtun men make up about 43 percent of the ANA, a figure that roughly corresponds to their size in the general population. But few of this group came from the embattled south, where the Taliban strongholds are located. In spite of strenuous recruitment programs, the percentage of southern Pashtun recruits dwindled to single digits in mid-2010.<sup>94</sup> Mixing together Tajiks, Hezerra, Uzbeks, and Pashtuns into multi-ethnic military units is not without its challenges for a society at war. This integration project likewise strays beyond the traditional WHAM goals of recruiting local allies.

### **WHAM with Reform in Afghan Society**

WHAM, as currently waged, resembles a political election within a mature democracy. The contending parties make promises to the “electorate” so as to gain and to hold their votes. NATO and its Afghan allies promise and implement a future filled with modern roads, schools, hospitals, and even clean politics. This philosophical game plan entails dealing with societal aspects well beyond the strictly military field. Along with setting up ethnically homogenous Afghan armed forces, it means connecting average Afghans to their government first through honest and fair elections and then through effective and honest rulers.

Assembling credible and efficient institutions has not been without difficulties in a politically and economically backward land. The flawed presidential election in 2009 and the equally compromised parliamentary election of September 2010 confounded American and NATO efforts to create honest governance. All societies labor under the burden of official graft, but in Afghanistan the problem pervasively reaches from the village level to the presidential palace. The scale of illicit activities is evidenced by reports of between \$1 and \$2.5 billion in cash being spirited out of Afghanistan to the United Arab Emirates in 2009. The latter figure represents about a quarter of the Afghan gross domestic product.<sup>95</sup>

The United States and its allies have set up Afghan anti-corruption task forces to investigate graft, trained the investigators, and dispatched advisers to reduce high-level governmental malfeasance. The issue loomed so

adversely over the entire enterprise that General Petraeus tasked one of his rising stars—Brigadier General H.R. McMaster—to lead anti-corruption efforts, pointing to how far U.S. COIN efforts can venture from basic WHAM endeavors that embody local protection. The objective, of course, was to lessen corruption in Kabul as means to nurture the central government's legitimacy. It would have been far better had the sitting government undertaken anti-corruption steps rather than the United States.

Recognizing that low-level corruption directly fueled the Taliban insurgency with needed cash, U.S. military officials tugged the enforcement focus back to the grassroots level. They embraced the concept that local corruption was more harmful to the counterinsurgency because villages saw and felt the effects directly. This revised focus has targeted police shake downs for cash, small powerbrokers' fees, and funds flowing from security contractors (and even on occasion from the U.S. military) to insurgents as 20 percent "protection tax" payments that allow for safe passage of supply trucks.<sup>96</sup> The refocused anti-corruption to the district and village level also took into account the stiff resistance at the uppermost rungs of the Kabul government. ISAF officials, American special envoys, and foreign diplomats have often found themselves at cross purposes with President Karzai over allegations of corruptions within his innermost circle.<sup>97</sup> The outsiders pressed the Kabul government to clean up allegations of bribery and influence peddling so as to restore the population's faith in their own civic institutions.



## 6. Some Dollar Amounts and the Future Debate

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States has expended more than \$1 trillion to wage the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as tabulated at the end of 2009. The spending breakdown at that time amounted to \$750 billion for Iraq and \$250 billion for Afghanistan.<sup>98</sup> During 2008, the peak year for combined war spending, costs represented 1.9 percent of America's Gross Domestic Product. While a comparative bargain compared to the 37 percent in 1945, the peak year for defense spending during World War II, the Iraq and Afghan price tag comes to a nation heavily indebted after decades of federal deficit spending.

The extent of American and allied reconstruction in Afghanistan can be grasped by a glimpse at the U.S. Agency for International Development's undertakings. USAID embarked on substantial rebuilding of reliable infrastructure and energy networks for the country's economic growth. For example, it rehabilitated 1,667 kilometers of roads to increase security and trade. USAID joined with multi-donor initiatives to expand access to low-cost electricity to more than 20 percent of the populations. It also restored the Kabul Power Plant and the Kajaki Dam, which furnishes electricity to the southern area. Furthermore, it irrigated lands, improved the growth of non-poppy crops, and treated livestock. Additionally, it assists the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (small, joint civilian-military groups) that deliver security and development projects to the rural level of Afghan society. Finally, USAID and other donors expanded at least some minimal healthcare to about 85 percent of the population.<sup>99</sup>

Despite much progress, the United States and its allies encountered steep problems working in Afghanistan. One obstacle has been the lack of qualified civilian experts to correctly implement the vast rehabilitation projects. Poor oversight also caused major problems when aid programs were linked to the broader counterinsurgency initiative.<sup>100</sup> Another roadblock has come from interagency turf struggles.<sup>101</sup> Yet another complication arose from concerns about construction monies fueling corruption and even winding up in the Taliban's pockets. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates himself voiced uneasiness about the flow of funds. He said that he had concerns about "billions and billions of dollars coming into Afghanistan from the international community, that that assistance has become one of those sources of corruption."<sup>102</sup> General Petraeus also recognized the need for

greater oversight because the contracting business funds “will unintentionally fuel corruption, finance insurgent organizations, strengthen criminal patronage networks, and undermine our efforts in Afghanistan.”<sup>103</sup> But more needs to be done.

Even the widely touted Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) has fallen under scrutiny. Company grade and field grade officers disbursed CERP cash payments of a few hundred or low thousand dollar amounts so as to put idle men to work on local refurbishments or building initiatives. The program tried to enlist military-aged males in civilian reconstruction and to stimulate the local economy while also improving or constructing civic service structures rather than have them join the insurgents. CERP in Afghanistan funded some 16,000 small-scale humanitarian projects such as building local schools or repairing culverts with \$2 billion in micro-grants to village leaders. Shortfalls in accountability of the spending, lack of follow up on projects, and neglect in sustaining them once underway were among the issues raised by investigators.<sup>104</sup> These and other drawbacks argue for refinement, if not reconsideration, of the massive rehabilitation remedies linked to current WHAM doctrine in Afghanistan. All the various reports from the Government Accountability Office point to wasted money for infrastructure projects. The authoritative Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan published its final report to Congress on 31 August 2011. It noted that “at least \$31 billion, and possibly as much as \$60 billion, has been lost to contract waste and fraud in America’s contingency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.”<sup>105</sup> These figures are damning for the infrastructure-laden WHAM orientation to COIN.

The sheer magnitude of the dollars spent on WHAM reconstruction makes it a very expensive way to wage counterinsurgency. The cost of the Afghanistan war reached \$107 billion for the 2010 fiscal year, which concluded 31 September 2010. The overall costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars accounted for 1.9 percent of the nation’s GDP, as noted. This figure falls well below the burdens of the Korean or Vietnam wars, which came in at 3 and 2 percent, respectively. The difference between the current Afghan conflict and past wars lies in their duration. The fighting in the mountainous South Asian country has entered its tenth year, surpassing even the protracted Vietnam conflict. To date, the United States has “appropriated more than \$51 billion for relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan since fiscal year 2002.”<sup>106</sup> To many Americans, the U.S. anti-insurgency conflict



in Afghanistan is remote, derided by critics, surrealistically detached from future terrorist threats, and overly expensive for construction of Afghan infrastructure. In particular, that money could be invested in an American infrastructure, which has witnessed deterioration in the country's highways, roads, bridges, viaducts, and transportation systems.

And, above all else, the massive and accumulating federal debt over \$15 trillion is impacting the national priorities and political elections. The Congressional Budget Office's projections hold that the debt could rise above 90 percent of the GDP by 2020, a dangerous threshold for the economy. Interest payments on the mushrooming deficit spending are projected to consume ever-great amounts of the government expenditures. Currently, some 7 percent of the entire federal budget is devoted to servicing the exploding deficit spending.

The sobering debt prospects portend fiscal austerity. Military expenditures are most likely to be squeezed because they are considered discretionary spending. Other larger parts of the federal budget constitute mandatory entitlements like Social Security outlays and Medicare payments to senior citizens. These programs and other social welfare spending account for nearly 60 percent of the annual federal budget. Projected deficit spending and exploding debt accumulation have already received much attention within the Pentagon, which called for deep cuts in future defense budgets.<sup>107</sup>

The stratospheric expenditures of the anti-insurgent struggles as was waged in Iraq and as is being waged in Afghanistan are likely to re-open the debate on the proper strategy to combat insurgent-based terrorism. As al-Qaeda's tentacles or its imitators materialize in Yemen, Somalia, and North Africa, Washington will need to strengthen its response to these militant havens as well as to other possible infestations. How to proceed will be governed, in part, by deliberations about costs and effectiveness.

In the months before President Obama announced the administration's decision on its Afghan strategy in his speech at West Point Military Academy in late 2009, the policy air was thick with commentary about the correct way forward. On the one side, there were advocates for a troop build up, people-centric game plan accompanied with nation-building programs, such as reliable infrastructure and energy networks for economic development. This doctrine soon acquired the label as the counterinsurgency model when compared to another strategy.<sup>108</sup>

Opposed to a large U.S. presence and nation-building effort, a different set of proponents set forth a scaled down battle plan. It called for a light-footprint of U.S. forces in-country. That force was envisioned to be made up of SOF, intelligence assets, and support elements to sustain commando raids, drone attacks, and aerial strikes. It relies on “kinetic” action to capture or decapitate al-Qaeda operatives, and to a much lesser degree the Taliban or independent terrorist networks. It also called for accelerated training of Afghan forces and for lending them support as they took the lead against the Taliban. It was dubbed the counterterrorism option. Its singular purpose was to avoid “another Vietnam,” to keep U.S. options open, and to escape an entanglement with a corrupt and ineffective Kabul government.<sup>109</sup> Detractors argued a reliance on unmanned strikes and night raids would cede ground to the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.<sup>110</sup> President Obama’s decision in his West Point speech temporarily silenced the debate on the strategy for Afghanistan.

As other terrorist figures step out of the shadows, the discussions will resurface about the best course of action. The extent and type of WHAM policy will in all likelihood stand front and center in reviews about U.S. approaches to defusing the terrorist threat from ungoverned spaces or failing states around the globe. WHAM lies at the core of “protect-the-population” counterinsurgency and plays a role even in counterterrorism-type missions. It cannot be ignored no matter whether the choice is for the counterinsurgency or counterterrorism option. The degree of protection, in reality, may differ. The steep financial expenditures associated with the current COIN operations, however, seem almost certain to be a deciding factor. America’s current way of WHAM is prohibitively expensive for the multiplying terrorist-linked insurgencies springing up in the world’s ungoverned spaces.

Fiscal constraints will weigh heavily on the current WHAM strategy, particularly the large U.S. expenditures on elephantine infrastructure projects, societal modernization, national education, and civic-building to align the local populations to a host government. In brief, it seems highly unlikely that the United States will undertake similar interventions and pacifications on the scale of the Iraq and Afghan wars. The exorbitant financial costs of the twin wars have effectively put the brakes on the evolution of WHAM from small-scale civic action programs to the current enormously expensive nation-building schemes in Iraq and Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda

leaders recognize the financial pinch their Iraq and Afghan insurgencies have placed on the United States.<sup>111</sup> Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) touted its “Operation Hemorrhage” in its online English language magazine, Inspire, that promised the United States a death by a “thousand cuts” using small, inexpensive attacks and feints that would cost billions of dollars to confront and defeat.<sup>112</sup>

The AQAP and other terrorist networks have turned to a cost-imposing strategy, which the United States must sidestep or go broke. Jihadi theoreticians, indeed, conspire to bleed and to enervate the United States with

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*It behooves COIN tacticians to practice prudence...*

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multiple outbreaks of shadowy conflicts in the far corners of the earth.<sup>113</sup> Forewarned is forearmed about al-Qaeda’s revenue-sapping formula to defeat the

U.S. It behooves COIN tacticians to practice prudence in applying high-cost counters to an internationalizing threat.

People-centric campaigns are likely to assume more modest and cheaper approaches to win (or lease) the loyalty of rural villagers and urban dwellers by deploying a slender U.S. presence against insurgents. The SOF role in the Horn of Africa, Colombia, Yemen, and the Philippines offer examples of COIN training and limited civic-action assistance. This type of micro-scale, relatively inexpensive WHAM may never return the United States to the frugality of a handful of Green Berets with shoulder bags of medicines among the Montagnards in 1961 Vietnam, as noted earlier in this monograph. But the basic concepts of WHAM will in all likelihood endure. As Roger Trinquier, one of the French high priests of counterinsurgency succinctly wrote: “The *sine qua non* of victory in modern warfare is the unconditional support of a population.”<sup>114</sup> Even though winning “unconditional support of a population” may prove to be a goal rather than a realistic attainment, the counterinsurgent’s focus must always be, as General McChrystal put it, to gain their “trust and confidence” that must then be direct to the host nation.<sup>115</sup> In short, the American response to militancy requires allies.<sup>116</sup> And these allies are fostered by friendship from governments.

The slogan “winning hearts and minds” must be mentally changed among SOF and other units engaged in COIN. It must now be WHAM *for the host nation*. It is not enough to nurture local loyalty to U.S. service members, who rotate in and out of an insurgency. It must be the core mis-

sion to transfer not only cleared, held, and built up pieces of geography, but also the loyalty of its inhabitants to their governmental institutions.

For those SOF training indigenous forces or conducting kill-capture raids, their missions seem, if anything, even more vital as the larger, infrastructure-laden endeavors face an inevitable reduction by a cash-strapped America in the years ahead. Although Afghan villagers ask for schools and medical clinics, they prize the freedom to move about without fear of insurgents. Personal security remains the essential factor in WHAM to recruit fighters and informants and to deny insurgents the same essentials along with food, money, and shelter. In the future budget-restricted environment, it is crucial to recall that the primary ingredient in WHAM tactics lies with safeguarding the population to build their trust and confidence in their own defense and then to transfer their political allegiance to a legitimate host government for a satisfactory COIN outcome.

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