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**Iraqi Democracy: American Nation-building
and Counter-insurgency in the Iraq War**

Diplomová práce

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Abstrakt

Od úspěšné bleskové operace, kdy Spojené státy zbavily Irák diktátorského režimu Saddáma Husajna, uplynulo již více než dvanáct let. Státisíce amerických vojáků se účastnily bojových a stabilizačních misí, postkonfliktní rekonstrukce země stála značné množství peněz. Přesto má Irák k míru velmi daleko.

Autor diplomové práce *Iraqi Democracy: American Nation-building and Counter-insurgency in the Iraq War* si proto klade otázku, proč se protipovstalecký boj a nation-building v Iráku nesetkal s úspěchem. Vychází přitom z předpokladu, že jednou z hlavních příčin neúspěchu dlouhodobé stabilizační mise v Iráku představuje samotná americká strategická kultura, která není připravena na konflikt nového věku.

Většina současných konfliktů neprobíhá konvenčně, jedná se často o asymetrické konflikty nízké intenzity bez přímého konvenčního střetnutí nepřátelských armád. Kvalitativní analýzou výsledků jednotlivých bojových a nebojových opatření na případu války v Iráku dospěl autor k závěru, že se pod vlivem dlouhodobé strategické kultury a konvenčního myšlení ve způsobu vedení operací Spojené státy nedokázaly přizpůsobit novému typu konfliktu a nepoučily se z dřívějších chybných rozhodnutí.

Abstract

It has been more than twelve years since the swift military operation removed Saddam Hussien's dictatorship from Iraq. Thousands of American soldiers participated in both combat and stabilization missions, the post-conflict reconstruction cost a significant amount of money. However, Iraq is far from being in peace.

Therefore, the author of the thesis *Iraqi Democracy: American Nation-building and Counter-insurgency in the Iraq War* poses a question why the counter-insurgency and nation-building efforts did not meet with success in Iraq. He works with the assumption that one of the reasons the long-term stabilization mission in Iraq was unsuccessful was the American strategic culture, which is not ready for conflicts of the new century.

Most contemporary conflicts are non-conventional; often we can see asymmetrical conflicts of low intensity without a direct conventional encounter of opposing armies. Using qualitative analysis of various combat and non-combat provisions in the Iraq War, the author concludes that under the influence of a long-term strategic culture and conventional mindset in the conduct of military operations, the United States didn't manage to adapt to the new type of conflict and it didn't learn its lesson from previous mistakes.

Klíčová slova

USA; Irák; nation-building; protipovstalecký boj; demokracie; strategická kultura

Keywords

USA; Iraq; nation-building; counter-insurgency; democracy; strategic culture

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Prohlášení

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V Praze dne 15. května 2015

Vojtěch Petráš

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych rád poděkoval PhDr. Janu Bečkovi, Ph.D. za jeho odbornou konzultaci a vedení práce v přátelském duchu, s pochopením pro preference autora jeho akademickou autonomii. Děkuji Mgr. Janu Benešovi za poskytnutí cenných zdrojů. Děkuji Mgr. et PhDr. Jaroslavu Zuckersteinovi za přínos v otázce konceptuálního uchopení tématu. Děkuji Doc. PhDr. Miloši Caldovi za vedení diplomového semináře a pomoc při zúžení a specifikaci tématu.

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V čem se oproti původnímu zadání změnil cíl práce?	<p>Cílem práce zůstává popsat americké snahy v oblasti protipovstaleckého boje a nation-buildingu a analyzovat jejich kroky v kontextu bezpečnostní situace v Iráku. Nově budou kroky konfrontovány s doktrínou protipovstaleckého boje (COIN), který bude stručně vymezen v první části práce. Závěrem by mělo být zhodnocení amerických počínů v Iráku a míra jejich kompatibility s doktrínou COIN.</p>
Jaké změny nastaly v časovém, teritoriálním a věcném vymezení tématu?	<p>Časové vymezení i teritoriální vymezení zůstává stejné, přičemž věcné vymezení patrně dozná určitých změn. Stále však bude ústředním tématem válka v Iráku a poválečná obnova v rámci snah USA.</p>
Jak se proměnila struktura práce (vyjádřete stručným obsahem)?	<p>Obsah práce bude oproti původnímu plánu stručnější, bude se jen okrajově zabývat mezinárodně politickým kontextem války a americkou pozicí ve světě (unilateralismus, militarismus) a hlavní těžiště bude analyzovat vývoj v Iráku. Autor se také rozhodl nijak obšírně neshrnovat historický vývoj země nebo prvotní válečné operace.</p>
Jakým vývojem prošla metodologická koncepce práce?	<p>Autor této práce chtěl původně provnávat povstání odděleně od nábožensky motivovaného násilí a činnosti mezinárodních teroristických organizací a buněk. Nicméně dospěl k závěru, že práce bude jednopřípadová studie, v jejímž rámci budou různé proudy povstání (kmenový, islamistický, sekulární, atd.) analyzovány společně vždy v kontextu činnosti USA.</p>

Které nové prameny a sekundární literatura byly zpracovány a jak tato skutečnost ovlivnila celek práce?

Zpracována byla především sekundární literatura, která se zabývá válkou v Iráku a protipovstaleckým bojem. Dále také zdroje, které analyzují strategickou kulturu USA. Jedná se (mj.) o Field Manual FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency od US Army a USMC, který definuje současnou teoretickou podobu protipovstaleckého boje postkonfliktních snah USA. Dále práce Davida Galuly, Davida Kilcullena a Davida Uck(o)a, kteří se zabývají doktrínou COIN i její aplikací v nestabilním prostředí. Je třeba také uvést Colina S. Graye, jehož publikace se zabývají také strategickou kulturou USA.

Zpracovaná literatura dopomohla k hlubší konceptualizaci tématu a utvrzení teoretického rámce práce. Autor se na základě toho více zaměří na konfrontaci teoretických východisek a praktických výsledků americké činnosti, čímž by se práce měla posunout od popisnosti více k analýze.

Charakterizujte základní proměny práce v době od zadání projektu do odevzdání tezí a pokuste se vyhodnotit, jaký pokrok na práci jste během semestru zaznamenali (v bodech):

- 1) kladení většího důrazu na doktrínu COIN
- 2) spojení rozličných odnoží povstání s cílem učinit práci koherentnější
- 3) odstranění redundantních částí práce (čistě historických)
- 4) ucelení tématu a hlubší konceptualizace

Podpis studenta a datum:

Schváleno	Datum	Podpis
Vedoucí práce		
Vedoucí diplomového semináře		

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Introduction

Context and purpose of the thesis

Today Iraq is again at war. A terrorist organization called Islamic State assumed control over significant territory in Iraq. Iraqi authorities and armed forces were unable to prevent and repel the uprising. Moreover, many Iraqis support the Islamist movement; they see it as a provider of stability, law and order, and economic opportunities. Many old government officials joined the militants and helped them with governance and management of “state” issues.

One of the most important factors which allowed the Islamic State organization to be created was the internal weakness of the state of Iraq—a state with problematic past and huge internal divisions. Heavily affected by several decades of authoritarian rule by Saddam Hussein, who took power in 1979, following Iraq-Iran War (1980–88) and the Gulf War of 1991, Iraq found itself in international isolation for a long time. Being at war for a long time, the country was in a problematic social and economic situation throughout the 1990s, amplified by economic sanctions and no-fly zones over its territory.

The United States had an ambivalent relationship with Hussein, resulting in two wars. The Desert Storm of 1990s was a rather brief operation followed by sanctions and international pressure. Nevertheless, the American administration concluded that Hussein did not learn his lesson from the conflict and that he had to be removed from power. For various reasons and with several justifications, the United States-led coalition invaded Iraq in March 2003 and overthrew the violent and corrupt regime of Hussein and his Ba'ath Party.

After Saddam Hussein's fall, Americans and their coalition stayed in Iraq in order to rebuild it and turn it into a stable and democratic country. Given the fact that twelve years after the invasion, a big part of Iraq is effectively controlled by Islamist groups, and that Iraq was unable to defeat them as well, we can conclude that the desired outcome of the 2003-2011 campaign was not achieved.

The United States has a long history of foreign interventions with variable outcomes. We should look back and analyze the provisions that United States used in Iraq between years 2003 and 2011 and try to find reasons for this failure. Only if a proper identification of problems and misconducts is provided, can the U.S. military and

government learn from their mistakes and adjust their policies in the future. Given the nature of modern and post-modern conflicts, the low-intensity conflicts are likely to dominate the warfare of the near future. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore prevailing trends in American nation-building and counter-insurgency, and the Iraq War can serve as an important indicator.

Research questions and hypothesis

This thesis tries to find an answer to following questions: *Why were the ultimate goals of nation-building and counter-insurgency not fully achieved in the Iraq War?*

To be able to answer the general question, we have to ask several sub-questions: *Did the traditional American way of war manifest itself in the conflict? What were the main obstacles in a successful implementation of counter-insurgency and nation-building in terms of American actions? Which major mistakes did the United States make?*

The hypothesis of this thesis states that *the American strategic culture is not compatible with low-intensity conflict and stabilization operations. This fact manifested itself in the war and the biggest obstacle was the American conceptual approach to operations of this type and the military mindset. The United States' actions were often counterproductive to the goals they tried to achieve in the war.*

Conceptualization of the key terms

Nation-building

It is impossible to find one correct definition of nation-building. Scholars argue about the historic precedents and cannot decide which operations to include in the package of nation-building operations and which not. The well-known RAND publication about nation-building characterizes the term as an effort that “involves the use of armed force as part of a broader effort to promote political and economic reforms with the objective of transforming a society emerging from conflict into one at peace

with itself and its neighbors.”¹ It is, in fact, a technical term for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction as perceived in the American discourse.

Francis Fukuyama makes a remark that the American approach rather represents “state-building coupled with economic development,”² because nation in the sense of a community with common identity, traditions, history, values, etc. cannot be artificially created; it has to evolve by a natural, spontaneous process. Fukuyama also suggests avoiding the term “reconstruction”. Reconstruction, by definition, is an effort that RE-constructs something, i.e. aims to rebuild something that has proven itself to be functioning before it was destroyed and therefore it could be built again. Post-war reconstruction of Germany and Japan can serve as an example of rebuilding institutional and economic base, restoration of state power in a war-torn state (even though with fundamental adjustments). On the other hand, nation-building (as referred to) in failing or failed states, such as Somalia, Afghanistan or Haiti, represents a different story where basic political and economic mechanisms are practically being introduced from the outside.³

The American understanding of nation-building is often criticized for accenting democracy as a tool of achieving the proclaimed goals. This democracy-oriented and practically Western-centric approach is sometimes accused of being a type of social engineering which implants something artificial to an unprepared society. However, democracy is rarely declared as an ultimate goal of a nation-building mission. It is rather considered to be a by-product of political and economic development; an auxiliary mechanism of the overall progress.

RAND authors in *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-building* break down the nation-building efforts into six main groups of tasks: security, humanitarian relief, governance, economic stabilization, democratization, and development.⁴ Those components, in an ideal situation, would all be present as a part of the overall effort. For the purpose of this thesis, we shall work with the RAND's broad definition, keeping in

1 DOBBINS, James. JONES, Seth G. CRANE, Keith, COLE DeGRASSE, Beth. *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*. RAND Corporation, 2007, xvii.

2 FUKUYAMA, Francis. *Nation-building: beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*. The John Hopkins University Press, 2006, p.3.

3 Ibid, p. 3-4.

4 DOBBINS, James, et al. *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, xxiii.

mind that its interpretation may be flexible based on circumstances and political needs of the actual nation-builder.

Counter-insurgency

Counter-insurgency (COIN) is an effort that seeks to prevent or suppress insurgency. Standardized NATO lexicon of military terms defines the term as “those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken to defeat insurgency.”⁵ An insurgency can be defined as “a struggle for control over a contested political space, between a state (or group of states or occupying powers), and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers. Insurgencies are popular uprisings that grow from, and are conducted through pre-existing social networks (village, tribe, family, neighborhood, political or religious party) and exist in a complex social, informational and physical environment.”⁶

Guerilla warfare is a very old concept highlighted (among others) by Carl von Clausewitz. It is a logical choice of the weaker party in an asymmetric conflict where, typically, the insurgency challenges the official ruler but it has not enough power to face him openly. However, this weaker player's effort is not strictly military. Its true purpose is to subvert the legitimacy and practical power to govern over the territory and provide security. In a successful scenario, the power projection of the government (or occupant) is reduced to minimum so that the insurgency organization has a chance to take over.

Therefore, both insurgency and counter/insurgency are necessarily political struggles. The violence is inherently included, but it is a tool, or as a symptom of the brutal political competition. Clausewitz's famous thesis which says that war is a continuation of politics by different means, is in this case still valid—only with a slight adjustment: Instead of linear perception politics – war, we can say that violence and politics exist together as equals. They constitute two sides of the same coin in COIN.

5 AAP-6 2010. Slovník termínů a definic NATO (English and French). Praha: Úřad pro obrannou standardizaci, katalogizaci a státní ověřování jakosti, odbor obranné standardizace, 2010, p. 131.

6 KILCULLEN, David J. Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency. *Remarks delivered at the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C., 28 September 2006*, p. 2.

Nation-building and counter-insurgency relationship

It is difficult to conceptually separate counter-insurgency and nation-building. The two notions overlap a lot as they coincide in many tools and in the approaches they adopt. However, they do not necessarily have to exist together in the same time and space. There can be a nation-building operation without any significant presence of insurgency. Disregarding potential insignificant and non-numerous incidents, we can say that the post-World War II reconstruction of Japan was a nation-building campaign without counter-insurgency.

Similarly, we can imagine an insurgency in a relatively functioning country, where no fundamental change at the level of the state is needed (or is already in process). All the provisions would then be adopted for the sake of suppressing the rebellion. Such case is most likely in cases where the insurgency is territorially very limited, the guerilla members are mostly foreigners or minority, or the ruling power has no interest in long-term sustainability of development of the country (in modern history it is arguably a scenario consisting of an occupation by a foreign, probably non-democratic country).

In most cases, when the state (or occupying country) is democratic and wants to achieve a long-term stability and development, it may be legitimate to consider the counter-insurgency to be an addition to nation-building – an element which helps to protect the fruits of nation-building efforts from the subversive elements in the society. Nevertheless, it is equally legitimate to consider nation-building to be a part of a broader counter-insurgency effort, which helps to adjust the political, economic and societal environment, in order to better control the population and root out the insurgency (or prevent it by eliminating the root causes and breeding ground for it).

In case of the Iraq War, this conceptual problem solves itself to a certain degree. The state was both war-torn/damaged/dysfunctional AND with an insurgency in place. Since the insurgency broke out in Iraq, the American efforts in the country could be labeled as both counter-insurgency and nation-building at the same time. Those two terms could be used almost interchangeably. However, if the situation does not require otherwise, this author prefers to use the term counter-insurgency in its broader meaning, which includes the systemic tools of nation-building.

Variables and operationalization

This thesis analyzes the impact of American steps on the overall goals of the war. Therefore, *American actions and provision in the war* are the *independent variable*; the *impact of those actions on the nation-building and counter-insurgency efforts* are the *dependent variable*.

In fact, the thesis assesses the U.S. strategy in the Iraq War. We can define strategy as adoption of means to achieve desired ends. If those ends are achieved, the strategy was correct. If the aims are not achieved, the means were either insufficient, or incorrectly adopted. This thesis works with an assumption that the United States has a long-term strategic culture which always, to a certain extent, determines the way means are adopted to achieve the desired ends.

The *influence of neighboring countries and international organizations*, as well as the *other members of American-led coalition*, is not analyzed. Therefore, they shall be considered to be *controlled variables*.

This thesis is an *instrumental case study*. It assesses the outcomes of Iraq War in order to show the broader trends in the conduct of this type of warfare by the United States. For this, it uses *qualitative analysis*. The low-intensity irregular warfare and stabilization operations are tremendously complex. Quantification of influence of the various factors cannot be done using any scale known to men. Therefore, the author chooses four main areas that he considers important for successful nation-building/counter-insurgency operation, and focuses on them.

Structure

The text is divided into three major chapters. The first chapter describes the changing political environment that led to adjustments in the way the U.S. perceived Iraq and the war. It offers context, in order to provide better understanding of the changing paradigm of the war.

Second chapter describes the U.S. experience in the nation-building and counter-insurgency, identifying some major long-term trends in conduct of missions of this and similar character. It provides an insight into the strategic culture of the United States and establishes the discourse through which the Iraq War is analyzed.

Third and most important part assesses the actual American provisions in the Iraq War, divided into four major “packages” dealing with: security sector reform, counter-insurgency and the surge, civilian-military cooperation, and democracy and legitimacy. An important part of this analysis is the identification of *Lessons Learned* – characteristic features that were typical for the selected field of the operational effort.

In the conclusion, the author tests the correctness of the hypothesis and illustrates the long-term features of the strategic culture which seem to be still in place.

Literature review

Much has been written about the Iraq War. The American involvement was almost nine years long, allowing many topics and issues to be analyzed. However, most of the available literature focuses predominantly on the background of the war, including faulted intelligence, weapons of mass destruction, and the War on Terror. Lots of the literature also either only touches upon the relevant phenomenon of nation-building and counter-insurgency, or is full of figures, numbers, and details which are not useful for the overall analysis.

Articles and monographs which are focusing on counter-insurgency in the Iraq War analyze in most cases only the surge period, without any broader conceptual and/or interpretative conclusions regarding the whole engagement of U.S. forces in the country. The most usual way of analyzing is using metrics and assessment of inputs – numbers of attacks, fallen soldiers and civilians, numbers of projects, resources invested, etc. It is difficult to find sources that analyze outputs and results of the provisions adopted.

Although there are few primary sources, this thesis mostly uses secondary literature. A valuable source of articles is the portal smallwarsjournal.com. *Foreign Affairs* and *Military Review* are often used, as well. Most of the available sources are in a way critical of the American approach to Iraq War. However, although they are often interpretative, only rarely do they deal with conceptual level of the American military involvement in Iraq.

An important conceptual overview is provided by the RAND study *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, by a collective of authors. Similar importance had the Francis Fukuyama's compilation book *Nation-building: beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*, where especially parts from Larry Diamond and James Dobbins are used. These

two authors also wrote different articles about Iraq, some of which are used in this thesis.

It is important to highlight the influence of the *Counterinsurgency Manual* from 2006, written by a team of authors, including Gen. Petraeus and Lt. Col. John Nagl. This document is revolutionary not only because of its content, but also for its very existence, which is very influential from the conceptual point of view, as it marks the population-centric counter-insurgency as the official doctrine for the first time.. It was an innovative conceptual document which establishes counter-insurgency theory in modern context and provides set of rules, recommendations, right practices of this field of warfare.

Aforementioned John Nagl is considered one of the leading theorist of the COIN community. He led a tank platoon in the first war in Iraq in 1991. Since then, he has focused on counter-insurgency, which became relevant with the 21st century wars. For several years, he was the president of an important American think-tank Center for a New American Security, which focuses, among other things, on irregular warfare. His work includes mainly the famous book *Eating the Soup With a Knife* about American strategic culture and counter-insurgency. Nagl analyzes the strategic culture of U.S. military and compares it with the strategic culture of the British army, concluding that the British were (during their colonial period) well-suited for low-intensity conflicts, as opposed to Americans.

Conceptual insight into the problematic of American strategic culture and irregular warfare is well processed in the work of Andrew Krepinevich. He analyzed military thinking and assessed the U.S. military attachment to conventional warfare. He deducted long-term trends from the Vietnam War in his book *The Army and Vietnam*, and used his conclusion in the article *How to Win in Iraq*. As an ex-officer of the U.S. Army, he has a thorough understanding of military thinking and procedures. Krepinevich is one of the leading American defense policy analysts.

A great source of information about the Iraq War was provided by the book *Losing Iraq: Insurgency and Politics* by Stephen C. Pelletiere, who was a senior CIA analyst and advisor on Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. He provides lots of insight and unusual observations. His book is very critical, pointing out misconducts and conceptual weakness of the American reaction to problems they faced during the war.

Colin S. Gray wrote an important monograph *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* which deals with American strategic culture and puts it in context with irregular warfare. He defines the American way of war in 13 main points that characterize the overall mindset of both policymakers and soldiers. His monograph is used to define the strategic culture for this thesis as well. Gray is a professor of International Politics and Strategic Studies and also a founder of defense-oriented think-tank National Institute for Public Policy.

The book *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* and article *Innovation or Inertia: the US Military and the Learning of Counterinsurgency* are both written by David H. Ucko, who is a Transatlantic Fellow at the Stiftung Wissenschaft and Politik in Berlin. He focuses on institutional learning and resistance to learn in the context of counter-insurgency. His main idea is that the U.S. military is unable to learn from the previous conflicts and adopts new concepts and approaches only with hardship. One of the main topic of his work is the institutional resistance of the armed forces and inertia in terms of an adoption of a counter-insurgency framework.

The last one to mention is the professor Jan Eichler from the Czech think-tank Institute of International Relation Prague. His area of expertise is, among others, the U.S. military culture and the way of war. Namely his book *Terorismus a války na počátku 21. století* and article *Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA v letech 2001–2008* were used. He describes the rise of Neoconservative movement and changes in foreign policy at the beginning of the 21st century. Bearing in mind the efficiency of American conventional power and their tactical dominance in conventional conflicts, Eichler identifies conceptual challenges to American strategic culture with implication to post-modern warfare.

1. The Great Gamble: Changing political and security environment

1.1 *Nation-building and the Neoconservative movement*

By the end of 1990s, the situation with Iraq was quite tense. During the Clinton presidency, the possibility of an invasion was quite low. American public was shocked by the fiasco in Somalia in 1993 that resulted in 18 American casualties and a withdrawal from the Horn of Africa. Saddam Hussein was aware of the fact that boots-on-the-ground were no option by that time. This fact provided Saddam with confidence; more bold actions were conducted against the no-fly zone enforced by Britain and U.S. and against the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations.⁷

Saddam Hussein remained on the top of the future target list for the top brass and the Pentagon planners. However, a large scale invasion, followed by a nation-building effort, was off the table. In the second presidential debate of 2000 between George W. Bush and Al Gore, Bush clearly expressed his opposition against the nation-building missions in general. He said: “And so I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win war. I think our troops ought to be used to help overthrow the dictator when it's in our best interests.”⁸

Bush's opposition against nation-building may have been caused by his efforts to distance himself from the previous administration (and its failures, namely Somalia) or his understanding of public opinion regarding this topic. However, his statement left an “open door” for an intervention against a potential dictator. There were at least three main obstacles to an immediate attack against Iraq after Bush's victory in the elections: 1) lack of support in the international arena, including allies of the United States, 2) lack of support for foreign interventions among the American public, and 3) generally weak position of G. W. Bush as president of the United States due to close election results (and subsequent recount in Florida and the Supreme Court intervention).⁹

7 MURRAY, Williamson. Scales, Robert H. *The Iraq War*. Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 36-37.

8 *The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate, October 11, 2000*. Debate Transcript [online]. [cited 02 Apr 2015] Accessible from: <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-11-2000-debate-transcript>.

9 MURRAY. Scales. *The Iraq War*, p. 38.

The situation significantly changed after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Before the terrorist attacks, an invasion to Iraq would hardly get support from the American electorate. Before 9/11, Bush found himself in a problematic position that required cautious and prudent approach resembling a dilemma. However, “as it turned out, the President did not have to come up with a response. The question was answered for him by others.”¹⁰

The ‘*us versus them*’ mentality that spread quickly after the trauma of 9/11 and the declaration of the War on Terror, enabled the Administration to include practically everyone in the ‘*them*’ group. With the perception of American moral superiority vis-a-vis the evil of terror and rogue states, Bush decided to include Iraq and Hussein into the equation, stating that “[...] Iraq and al-Quaida have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some al-Quaida leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. [...] Iraq has trained al-Quaida members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases.”¹¹ In the very same speech, the President tried to deal in advance with a potential opposition against the attack, saying that “[s]ome have argued that confronting the threat from Iraq could detract from the war against terror. To the contrary, confronting the threat posed by Iraq is crucial to winning the war on terror.”¹²

To understand the factors that enabled such a development, we must briefly look back to the year 1996. In *Foreign Affairs*, a prominent periodical, an influential article was published by William Kristol and Robert Kagan—who later founded the Neoconservative think tank *Project for the New American Century* in 1997. The article was named *Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy* and the authors argued for a rebirth of the pro-active foreign policy of Ronald Reagan that helped to defeat the Soviet Union. America, according to them, should assume greater responsibility in the world because of the American exceptionalism and moral superiority.¹³

10 Ibid.

11 BUSH, George W. Transcript: George Bush's speech on Iraq. In: The Guardian [online]. [cited 03 Apr, 2015]. Accessible from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/oct/07/usa.iraq>.

12 Ibid.

13 KRISTOL, William. KAGAN, Robert. *Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy*. In: *Foreign Policy*, Jul/Aug 1996 [online]. [cited Apr 04, 2015]. Accessible from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/52239/william-kristol-and-robert-kagan/toward-a-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy>.

The Neoconservative group became quite influential after the election of George W. Bush into the White House. Jan Eichler characterized this policy shift under Neocon leadership as a shift towards militarism and unilateralism;¹⁴ both principles were codified in the *2002 National Security Strategy*, but they reach at least six years further into the past, all the way back to the aforementioned article.

However, enthusiasm towards an international intervention (no matter how well it is backed with arguments) is not sufficient. Among the armed forces and the general public, we could observe a phenomenon called the Vietnam syndrome. This syndrome manifested itself by an unwillingness to conduct any big nation-building operation that would mean a massive military commitment.

Since the end of the Vietnam War, soldiers have had the tendency to refuse operations that would force them to wage the irregular war, including pacification operations, counter-insurgency and nation-building. It was unpopular even among the highest ranks in military to focus on nonconventional warfare, and the experience from the Vietnam conflict remained without a good use and practically vanished from the institutional memory of the armed forces.¹⁵ The refusal was also connected with the opposition of American public to the Vietnam War and the probable hostility of the people to any operation that would be resembling Vietnam.

The Vietnam syndrome in the military also caused a lack of interest in the topic among scholars and planners. *The Quadrennial Defense Review of 2001* (QGD) precisely illustrates the situation. The document “pushed for greater investment in information warfare and paid virtually no attention to counterinsurgency or stability operations. [...] Even while giving unprecedented attention to 'small-scale operations,' the 2001 QDR did not appreciate the possibility that a less-than-conventional campaign could be more demanding than a major combat operation.”¹⁶

14 EICHLER, Jan. Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA v letech 2001–2008. *Mezinárodní vztahy*. 2010, No. 2, pp. 48-70, p. 56.

15 CASSIDY, Robert M. *Back to the street without joy: Counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam and other small wars*. Army Europe Heidelberg (Germany) Commanding General's Initiatives Group, 2004, p. 99-100.

16 UCKO, David. H. *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press: 2009, p. 82.

Marginalized and often completely ignored, the nation-building was on the periphery of the military science and military planning. But the Neoconservative group decided to promote it and to “overcome the heavy Vietnam syndrome.”¹⁷

1.2 Support of the public and allies

Even though the influence of the Neoconservatives seems to be overwhelming, their influence on President Bush and his administration by no means reflected in influence on the American public and the allies. Even though the support of the public for the intervention was relatively high in the beginning, we can observe a decrease in support in time. By the time the war started, up to 72% of Americans supported the intervention in Iraq.¹⁸ Five years later, on April 2008, 63% of people in the opinion polls considered the war to be a mistake.¹⁹

At first, the American people demanded support from U.S. allies before approving any armed action against Hussein.²⁰ According to Raymond Copson, the situation changed “after the State of the Union message, with a majority coming to favor a war even without explicit U.N. approval.”²¹ In the famous speech, George Bush labeled Saddam Hussein a “brutal dictator, with a history of reckless aggression, with ties to terrorism, with great potential wealth.”²² Bush said about the potential future war with Iraq: “We seek peace. [...] If war is forced upon us, we will fight in a just cause and by just means, sparing, in every way we can, the innocent. [...] And as we and our coalition partners are doing in Afghanistan, we will bring to the Iraqi people food and medicines and supplies and freedom.”²³

Among the allies, the situation was not to be changed that easily. Germany and France opposed any plan to “disarm” Iraq by an invasion, with especially Jacques Chirac being an outspoken critic of the American positions. Moreover, Chirac revealed

17 EICHLER, Jan. *Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA v letech 2001–2008*, p. 54.

18 NEWPORT, Frank. *Seventy-Two Percent of Americans Support War Against Iraq*. In: Gallup [online]. 2003 [cited 03 Apr 2015]. Accessible from: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/8038/seventytwo-percent-americans-support-war-against-iraq.aspx>.

19 Ibid.

20 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*. Nova Publishers, 2003, p. 5.

21 Ibid.

22 BUSH, George W. *Text of President Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address*. In: The Washington Post [online]. [cited 03 Apr 2015] Accessible from: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/bushtext_012803.html.

23 Ibid.

his government's intention to veto U.S.-proposed resolution to the U.N. Security Council, which would de facto authorize an immediate armed intervention against Hussein's Iraq. Moreover, Russia and China promoted tougher regime of inspections and also opposed the war.²⁴

Diplomatic failure had more than just political implications. Turkey refused to allow American troops to create a second front in the north.²⁵ This complicated the performance of the original war plan. According to it, some 40,000 U.S. troops were supposed to enter Iraqi territory from Turkish soil to divide and disintegrate Saddam's defense. Before the invasion, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz travelled to Turkey in order to persuade the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan to change his mind. However, the Turks remained solid in their position and refused to cooperate.²⁶

Despite the obstacles that emerged on strategic and diplomatic level, George W. Bush decided to act more or less unilaterally and on March 17, 2003, he revealed the intention to attack Iraq, unless Saddam Hussein and his two sons leave the country within 48 hours. Hussein and his sons did not do so. Therefore, an invasion was put into a motion. However, European and Middle-Eastern societies did not accept the narrative of rogue Iraq and messianic USA that wants to free the Iraqi people. On March 15 and 16, there were several demonstrations against the U.S. policy throughout Europe, followed by boycotting of some American products.²⁷

Other demonstrations took place in countries who were formally allied or at least not unfriendly to the United States, such as Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan or Pakistan. Approval rating for the U.S. dropped significantly in those countries. Between years 2002 and 2003, the support for United States dropped from 30 to 15 per cent in Lebanon, and from 25 to only 1 per cent in Jordan, and majority of the people in those countries "said the U.S. effort to remove Saddam Hussein made the world more, not less, dangerous."²⁸

24 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 4-6.

25 Turks were afraid of the future influence of Kurds, possible influence of Iran in Iraq, and overall destabilization of the region.

26 PELLETIERE, Stephen C. *Losing Iraq: Insurgency and Politics*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007, p. 6-7.

27 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 6.

28 DUFFIELD, John. DOMBROWSKI, Peter. *Balance Sheet: The Iraq War and U.S. National Security*. Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 18.

It was hard for American administration to promote their war narrative (among other reasons) due to various reports indicating that U.S.-enforced sanctions caused famine in Iraq, killing hundreds of thousands of people and causing malnutrition of millions of others.²⁹ With Iraq being weakened to this extent, it was hard to narrate a story about an evil regime capable of anything.

1.3 From a simple war to a complicated one

For the American military, it was no big challenge to defeat the Iraqi armed forces. It was the second time in 12 years that Iraqis lost against an American-led coalition. Lt. Col. John Nagl, a leading American counterinsurgency thinker, led a platoon during the operation Desert Storm in 1991 and as he remarked, using the conventional forces and tactics, the U.S. turned the fourth-largest army in the world into the second-largest army in Iraq.³⁰ The invasion of 2003 did not differ much from the previous scenario.

American forces swept through Iraq rapidly and efficiently. They “pursued a strategy of rapid advance, bypassing urban centers when possible, pausing only when encountering Iraqi resistance.”³¹ The invasion was launched on March 19 and as soon as on April 9 Baghdad was conquered and the regime of Saddam Hussein removed from power. A quick and decisive victory was achieved once again by the coalition as in 1991. However, as opposed to the Desert Storm, there was a big difference – the United States stayed in Iraq in order to rebuild it.

President George Bush said on April 13 that “he would declare a U.S. victory when U.S. military commanders tell him that all U.S. war objectives had been achieved.”³² Approximately a week later, the major fighting was over and the operation shifted to a stabilization phase. A pursuit of former leaders connected to the regime

29 CROSSETTE, Barbara. Iraq Sanctions Kill Children, U.N. Reports. In: The New York Times, Dec 15, 1995 [online]. [cited 04 Apr 2015]. Accessible from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/01/world/iraq-sanctions-kill-children-un-reports.html>.

30 NAGL, John. *Knife Fights: A Memoir of Modern War in Theory and Practice*. New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2014, p. 19.

31 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 17.

32 Ibid, p. 9.

began, as well as a search for the weapons of mass destruction that were the major declared reason for the invasion.

There have been many speculations whether there would be the Iraq War, had Gore won the presidency instead of Bush. Frank Harvey observed that the distinction between Gore's and Bush's teams would not lie in the question whether to go to war with Saddam or not. The anti-war forces were actually in minority and in fact irrelevant to the presidential elections of 2000. The real distinction was between neoconservatives and multilateralists; it manifested itself in the way those two groups thought the war should be rationalized – is it sufficient to find legal reasons or is it necessary to ensure a broad political coalition?³³

Leon Fuerth, the national security advisor to Vice-President Al Gore, would probably be sitting in the office occupied by Condoleeza Rice, if Gore won in the 2000 elections. In a debate that took place on May 2002 Fuerth stated:

“Saddam Hussein is a continuing menace to the United States, and a final reckoning with him is in order. Replacing him, though necessary, is not sufficient. The entire political system he created must also be rooted out. Our objective should be the restoration of democratic governance in Iraq, and we should indeed reject the view that the Iraqi people are capable of living under no other rule but despotism. Finally, it is vital to the future security of the region that Iraq remain intact.”³⁴

Surprisingly enough, Fuerth promoted a regime change (even though not unilaterally enforced) and used same arguments as the Neoconservatives – democratization as a tool of ensuring security. This idea has its roots in the “theory of democratic peace”, according to which democratic societies tend not to wage wars with each other and according to Jan Eichler the Neoconservative movement “profiled itself as an idiosyncratic interpretation of the theory of democratic peace.”³⁵

What back then constituted a moderate position with today's optics seems to be quite hawkish. However, we should keep in mind that only one year after the 9/11 attack the American society still felt very vulnerable and endangered. President Bush also worked with the idea. He promoted democratization in the Middle East, stating on

33 HARVEY, Frank P. *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence*. Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 100-101.

34 Ibid, p. 101.

35 EICHLER, Jan. *Bezpečnostní a strategická kultura USA v letech 2001–2008*, p. 54.

February 26, 2003, that “the overthrow of Saddam Hussein by the United States could lead to the spread of democracy in the Middle East and a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.”³⁶ Later on Bush supposedly revealed to Palestinian politicians that his ideas in this respect were not only plain political measures but they were of a divine inspiration. He said: “God would tell me 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq'. [...] And now, again, I feel God's words coming to me, 'Go get the Palestinians their state and get the Israelis their security, and get peace in the Middle East'.”³⁷

The religious dimension of the war was not only Bush's issue. The American Congress was very supportive of the actions against Iraq. At first, it supported President's efforts to force Iraq to comply with the U.N. resolution and to punish states who did not adhere to sanctions imposed on Hussein's regime. Later, the Congress supported Operation Iraqi Freedom and the House of Representatives passed rather symbolic resolution, recognizing “need for public prayer and fasting in order to secure the blessings and protection of Providence for the people of the United States and our Armed Forces during the conflict in Iraq and under the threat of terrorism at home.”³⁸

This notion of moral superiority and morally justified mission helped to gain support for remaining of the American troops in Iraq. In fact, the results of the initial invasion were, despite the military smoothness, quite dubious. As Anthony Cordesman remarks, “[m]ilitary victory did not mean political victory or grand strategic victory. In fact, military victory was always the prelude to a much more important struggle: winning the peace. Like the Afghan War, the Iraq War had no clear ending. Although President Bush declared the fighting over in a speech on May 1, no senior official in the Iraqi regime surrendered.”³⁹

The stability of Iraq was rather fragile after the initial phase and many Iraqis themselves asked the U.S. to stay in the country in order to provide security for the new establishment in the transition to democracy. For example, the head of National Congress of Iraq asked Americans to stay, saying: “The military presence of the U.S.

36 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 11.

37 MacASKILL, Ewen. George Bush: 'God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq'. In: *The Guardian* [online]. [cited Apr 06, 2015]. Accessible from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/07/iraq.usa>

38 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 15.

39 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons*. CSIS, 2003, p. 144-145.

troops in Iraq is a necessity until at least the first democratic election is held, and I think this process should take two years.”⁴⁰ The idea of new elections, held as soon as possible, was also promoted by the most prominent Shia leader in the country – Ayatollah Ali al Sistani.⁴¹

United States indeed stayed in Iraq. There was a broad desire to start working with the international community in a joint effort to rebuild the country. Moreover, there was no clear point where it would be possible to say that Iraq is stabilized and troops can be withdrawn. Even when the situation started to deteriorate, President Bush refused to withdraw, stating: “Some observers [...] claim that America would be better off by cutting our losses and leaving Iraq now. This is a dangerous illusion, refuted with a simple question: Would the United States and other free nations be safer, or less safe, with Zarqawi and Bin Laden in control of Iraq, its people, and its resources?”⁴²

1.4 Iraq turns into an insurgency

The American advance through Iraq was fast. The U.S. troops encountered only mild resistance with only few oil wells being set on fire and immediately extinguished. However, some “paramilitary forces, particularly the Saddam Fedayeen, engaged in guerilla-style attacks from urban centers in the rear areas, but did not inflict significant damage.”⁴³ Iraqi officials realized that they had no chance to defeat U.S.-led coalition in an open and strictly military manner.

When the war seemed to be inevitable, Iraq found itself in a situation where the military had by no means the strength similar to year 1991. Therefore, an Iraqi retired general revealed to a journalist: “The considerable difference in power between Iraqi forces and the US-led alliance would naturally result in Iraqi forces resorting to guerilla warfare tactics in hit-and-run sort of confrontation, aimed at slowing down the invasion and inflicting as many casualties as possible on enemy troops. America's high-tech

40 Ibid, p. 145.

41 MARSTON, Daniel. CARTER, Malkasian. *Counterinsurgency In Modern Warfare*. New York, NY: Osprey Publishing, 2008, p. 242.

42 MacASKILL, Ewen. George Bush: 'God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq'. In: The Guardian [online]. [cited Apr 06, 2015]. Accessible from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/07/iraq.usa>

43 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 18.

weapons and air superiority would not be quite as effective in a guerilla war by well-prepared and armed regular and irregular forces in urban areas.”⁴⁴

Even though the resistance was not particularly strong at the beginning, there were many secret caches of weapons, ammunition and supplies, spread across the country. American troops found, confiscated and/or destroyed many of them, mostly due to tips from the local civilians.⁴⁵ Cordesman observed that “[t]he nation-building effort began to gather momentum by July 2003, but serious resistance began to develop from pro-Saddam, pro-Ba'ath, and anti-U.S. factions. Low-level fighting threatened to replace the fight between the coalition and Saddam Hussein's regime. The problems in the U.S. and British peacemaking and nation-building efforts had helped lead to a state of violence that produced an average of nearly one American casualty a day and sometimes as many Americans killed per day as during the actual war. Iraqi civilian casualties also continued, although no numerical estimates were possible.”⁴⁶

The insurgents attacked very often in populated areas where it was almost impossible to differentiate friends from foes. Reports “began coming out of 'atrocities'(is how the American command portrayed them) where 'civilians' would approach checkpoints manned by Americans and, then, when within range, attack. In other reported instances, Americans driving in convoy through Iraqi towns would find themselves suddenly under fire from seemingly innocent civilians lined up to watch them pass.”⁴⁷

Naturally, such development made the U.S. troops nervous. Mostly young people with very little or zero understanding of the local environment and society began to be “trigger-happy”. Number of casualties was higher than expected. Until the end of the year 2003 the number of fallen U.S. soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom reached 487 and number WIAs reached 2422 servicemen and women.⁴⁸ Soldiers were suspicious of any movement in their proximity and because of the language barrier, there were many unfortunate incidents of Iraqi civilian casualties. This phenomenon

44 HASHIM, Ahmed. *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq*. Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 1.

45 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 17.

46 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons*, p. 145.

47 PELLETIERE, Stephen C. *Losing Iraq: Insurgency and Politics*, p. 19.

48 U.S. Military Casualties – Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Casualty Summary by Month. In: Defense Casualty Analysis System [online]. [cited Apr 08, 2015]. Accessible from: https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/report_oif_month.xhtml

started a circle of violence that brought more combatants into the ranks of the insurgent groups, conducting more attacks and increasing the fear and paranoia among the U.S. troops.

Next two years of the war brought increased number of attacks and casualties, respectively. In 2004 the number of fallen soldiers doubled with regards to the previous year, reaching to 846 Americans; next year the situation was similar, with 844 deaths.⁴⁹ However, numbers in this case are not illustrative enough. The increased activity of the Iraqi insurgency caused a deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan, as well. Various guerilla techniques “travelled” from one theater of war to the other. Namely, suicidal attacks and use of IEDs were two phenomena adopted by Afghani insurgents and inspired by their “counterparts” in Iraq.⁵⁰

The situation was even more complicated by the fact that the insurgency was not unified and coherent group. It was rather decentralized effort of various little groups and cells that constituted three major streams of resistance with different inspirations: Secular/Ba'thists, tribes and Islamists.⁵¹ There have been only rough estimates of numbers of combatants and supporters of various insurgent groups. Their structures, mutual relations and foreign support has always been very hard to uncover.

In the presidential debate of 2004 between Bush and Kerry the latter criticized the Administration for not ensuring sufficient support from the allies for the war. John Kerry said: “This president has left [the U.S. soldier] in shatters across the globe, and we're now 90 percent of the casualties in Iraq and 90 percent of the costs. [...] I know I can do a better job in Iraq. I have a plan to have a summit with all of the allies, something this president has not yet achieved, not yet been able to do to bring people to the table.”⁵²

When George Bush entered his second term, the situation on the ground was critical. Kenneth Pollack remarks: “Immediately after the fall of Baghdad, Iraqis looked

49 Ibid.

50 HYNEK, Nik. EICHLER, Jan. MAJERNÍK, Lubomír. *Konflikt a obnova v Afghánistánu: kontext, prostředí a zájmy*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2012, p. 77.

51 BARAM, Amatzia. *Who Are the Insurgents?: Sunny Arab Rebels in Iraq*. DIANE Publishing, 2008, p. 16.

52 The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate, September 30, 2004. Debate Transcript [online]. [cited 08 Apr 2015] Accessible from: <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=september-30-2004-debate-transcript>.

to the United States to rebuild the country. Most did not particularly like having Americans in charge of their country, but they tolerated the American presence because they recognized their overwhelming need. After 22 months the United States has mostly worn out its welcome in Iraq.”⁵³

Polack continues with an intelligible explanation: “The problem is that Washington has not delivered on its promises; specifically, as far as the Iraqis are concerned, the United States has singularly failed to provide them with day-to-day security, basic services (regular electricity, clean water, gasoline, and other necessities of everyday life), jobs, etc. [...] The failures of the U.S.-led reconstruction effort have been the principal cause of the Iraqi insurgency and are slowly increasing the risk of all-out civil war.”⁵⁴ He wrote these words in the year 2005 and they turned out to be prophetic.

Throughout the next year, the hostilities increased. The number of “attacks grew from 70 per day in January 2006 to 180 per day in October.”⁵⁵ The main role in the new condition was played by the sectarian violence. Shi'a militias murdered many Sunnis and Sunny insurgents targeted Shi'a localities using car bombs and other malicious devices, often killing more than 100 civilians per day.⁵⁶

Especially difficult was the situation in Baghdad, where the U.S. commanders entrusted Iraqi security forces with the task to provide security and obviate the sectarian struggle. President Bush found himself under a significant pressure. He decided to stop relying on the native forces and decided to increase the number of U.S. troops in the country. This led to so-called “surge” that took place between 2007 and 2008. As discussed further in the text, the surge brought along new strategy and tactics, changing the state of affairs in Iraq significantly. However, a new leadership with different views was about to move into the White House soon.

53 POLLACK, Kenneth. *Saving Iraq: A Plan For Winning The Peace In 2005*. In: Leverett, Flynt. *The Road Ahead: Middle East Policy In The Bush Administration's Second Term*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005, p. 49.

54 Ibid, p. 49-50.

55 MARSTON, Daniel. CARTER, Malkasian. *Counterinsurgency In Modern Warfare*, p. 256.

56 Ibid.

1.5 Change of the presidents and withdrawal

Both main presidential candidates for the Democrats revealed their opposition to the planned surge. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama both thought that the power and responsibility in Iraq should be handed over to the locals and the United States should instead pivot to Afghanistan as its main mission.⁵⁷ Senator Biden also opposed the surge vocally. As it happened, the three critics of the policy became the President, the vice-President and the Secretary of State. Combined with the economic crisis the Iraq War became too unpopular and too expensive to continue.

Republicans did not lose the elections without a fight. Although the economic decline dominated the campaign of the election season of 2008, the “situation in Iraq was, by the only metric most Americans care about, improving dramatically. By the final quarter of 2008, the death toll among U.S. troops had fallen to its lowest level since the war began, down 85% from its peak in the second quarter of 2007. The public took notice, an optimism about progress in Iraq rose accordingly; the proportion of Americans believing that the war was going well grew from 29% to 52% over this period, reaching its highest level in more than four years.”⁵⁸ As mentioned before, the Iraq War was not the main topic of the elections, but the temporary advancement probably helped John McCain to win the Republican nomination.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Obama prevailed and became the President.

Obama's administration decided to withdraw the units by the end of December 2011 in accordance with the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement from 2008 which demanded so. There were some serious concerns about the ability of Iraqi security forces to provide security in Iraq. Moreover, conceptual framework of the armed forces of Iraq was non-existent and their equipment and training poor. However, the longer Americans stayed in the country the bigger were the political costs, as they were less and less popular among the general population. There were serious concerns that

⁵⁷ Hillary Clinton opposes Iraq troops 'surge'. In: The Guardian [online]. [cited Apr 09, 2015]. Accessible from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/17/usa.iraq1>

⁵⁸ JACOBSON, Gary C. George W. Bush, the Iraq War, and the Election of Barack Obama. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 207-224, p. 211.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 212.

staying further in the country would cause political backlash and destroy whatever partnership and relationship built.⁶⁰

On the other hand, many “Iraqi politicians from all communities, save the Sadrists, have voiced concern that the United States is too focused on withdrawing from Iraq, placing stability before democracy and strengthening Maliki's ability to maintain control of the country through the ISF rather than through the consent of Iraq's politicians or public.”⁶¹ For Americans (and Barrack Obama in the first place) it was necessary to focus on stability and security in order not to leave Iraq “defeated” and suffer political harm.

Leaving Iraq by no means meant a fundamental shift in the orientation of American policy away from the internationalism or a new wave of isolationism (as promoted by Patrick Buchan, Ron Paul, etc.). Rather, “it emphasized a commitment to 'renewing American leadership' and 'moving beyond Iraq' as part of this renewal.”⁶²

Barack Obama confirmed this trend in his well-known speech at West Point on December 1, 2009, where he introduced his new “Af-Pak” strategy, focusing on the Afghanistan-Pakistan sub-region at the expense of Iraq. He said: “[...] [T]he Iraq war drew the dominant share of our troops, our resources, our diplomacy, and our national attention [...]. Today, after extraordinary costs, we are bringing the Iraq war to a responsible end. We will remove our combat brigades from Iraq by the end of next summer, and all of our troops by the end of 2011. [...] But while we achieved hard-earned milestones in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated.”⁶³

By the end of 2011 one long and dreadful era of American military involvement ended. The responsibility for security and prosperity of Iraq was handed to the locals and the world could start watching the Iraqis struggle on their own.

60 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. Mausner, Adam. *Withdrawal from Iraq: Assessing the Readiness of Iraqi Security Forces*. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009, p. 206.

61 SKY, Emma. Iraq, From Surge to Sovereignty: Winding Down the War in Iraw. In: *Foreign Affairs*, Mar/Apr 2011, p. 8-9.

62 FAWCETT, Louis. The Iraq War ten years on: assessing the fallout. In: *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 89, No. 2, pp. 325-343, p. 337.

63 OBAMA, Barack. The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan. *White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Remarks as prepared for delivery at the United States Military Academy at West Point, 2009.*

2. The American way of war and strategic culture

2.1 *American experiences and institutional memory*

2.1.1 Nation-building

Most scholars count the era of nation-building since the American efforts of reconstruction after the World War II. Although there are discussions about comparable depth of changes in Germany and Japan – in Japan, the structural changes were somehow more fundamental but the Japanese were allowed to keep the emperor as the leader and symbol of state power – most of the scholars agree that Americans succeeded.⁶⁴ After all, both Germany and Japan managed to establish themselves as successful economies and respected members of the international community.

More problematic are the two major assistance missions that came after the World War II – Korea and Vietnam. With both operations, being primarily military operations with parameters of Cold War proxy wars, any structural reforms and assistance conducted during those two periods was done “under fire”. Therefore, we may not consider those efforts to be nation-building ones, as this thesis works with the definition which only accepts nation-building as a post-conflict endeavor.

Generally, during the Cold War it was problematic for the U.S. to stay in countries for longer time. There was a global competition for power between the two power blocks. Conflicts with the U.S. involvement tended either to be brief (as in Panama or Granada) or prolonged and bloody, with intensive fighting (Korea and Vietnam).⁶⁵ There simply wasn't the right international environment for nation-building. James Dobbins remarks that “the overarching imperative of American policy throughout these years was to maintain a global equilibrium with the Soviet Union without allowing any local dispute to escalate to the level of East-West confrontation.”⁶⁶

The situation changed after the fall of the Soviet Union. The Cold War ended and the world turned into unipolar one, with the United States being the dominant force.

64 FUKUYAMA, Francis. *Nation-building: beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*, p. 20.

65 DOBBINS, James. JONES, Seth G. CRANE, Keith. COLE DeGRASSE, Beth. *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*. RAND Corporation, 2007, iv.

66 DOBBINS, James F. *Nation-building and Counterinsurgency after Iraq*. The Century Foundation, 2008, p. 4.

In 1990s there was an increase of nation-building operations. Moreover, the duration of those operations increased, as well. With the end of bipolar world, we can observe rise of the state failure as well as willingness to intervene.⁶⁷ However, the U.S. were not always too enthusiastic about going to distant countries and risk lives and limbs of their soldiers because of a crisis that did not directly threaten the territory or vital interests of the USA.

It was the pressure of circumstances (and often allies), that forced the U.S. to commit itself to the nation-building missions – a task promoted by supporters of the leading role of the U.S. in the post- Cold War era. Dobbins wrote on the topic that “[d]espite a more-supportive international environment, the cost and risks associated with nation-building have remained high. Consequently, the United States has not embarked on such endeavor lightly. It withdrew from Somalia in 1993 at the first serious resistance. It opted out of international efforts to stem genocide in Rwanda in 1994. It resisted European efforts to entangle it in Balkan peace enforcement through four years of bloody civil war. After intervention in Bosnia, it spent another three years pursuing a non-military solution to ethnic repression in Kosovo.”⁶⁸

Throughout the 1990s' missions, the aims and ambitions varied: “In Somalia, the original objective was purely humanitarian but subsequently expanded to democratization. In Haiti, the objective was to reinstall a president and conduct elections according to an existing constitution. In Bosnia, it was to create a multiethnic state. In Kosovo, it was to establish a democracy polity and market economy virtually from scratch.”⁶⁹ Despite certain reluctance for nation-building operations and Bush's initial opposition against them the 21st century's campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq proved themselves to be more ambitious and demanding. Dobbins says: “In Iraq, the United States has taken on a task with a scope comparable to the transformational attempts still under way in Bosnia and Kosovo and a scale comparable only to the earlier U.S. occupations of Germany and Japan.”⁷⁰

67 Ibid.

68 DOBBINS, James F., et al. *America's Role In Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2003, xv.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

One might expect that with more operations, United States would be able to conduct them more efficiently, using their previous experiences as a guidance of what to do, and what not to do. Examining the historical record, one can conclude that “the United States engages in ambiguous counterinsurgency missions far more often than it faces full-scale war. [...] Contrary to popular belief, the military history of the United States is one characterized by stability operations, interrupted by distinct episodes of major combat.”⁷¹ Despite this fact, a thorough lesson learned, followed by a proper doctrinal change, is virtually non-existent.

There are two ways of learning of military organizations: “through bottom-up adaptation in the field and through top-down innovation at the institutional level. While the former suggests changes in tactics, techniques, and procedures implemented on the ground through contact with an unfamiliar operating environment, the latter involves the institutionalization of these practices through changes in training, doctrine, education and force structure.”⁷² Without the process of codification, the “generation” of soldiers with proper experience from action may “die out” in the professional sense. Their successors are then forced to gather their own experiences and often to go through simmilar mistakes.

In case of nation-building, there was a codification document: Presidential Decision Directive 56, “which was the Clinton Administration's effort to codify its learning about how to organize postconflict reconstruction operations. PDD 56 was adopted in the wake of Somalia and Haiti; it was first applied during Kosovo reconstruction, and it was one of the reasons why that nation-building operation went more smoothly than did previous ones.”⁷³ However, this direction was abandoned with election of G. W. Bush. It was planned that a new comprehensive framework will replace it, but due to many protests from the Pentagon, it did not emerge. After the 9/11 attacks the United States found itself in “a new nation-building exercise in Afghanistan in the wake of its December 2001 defeat of Taliban regime, there was no agreed-upon internal U.S. government framework for organizing the reconstruction efforts there.”⁷⁴

71 NAGL, John A. Let's Win the Wars We're In. *Joint Force Quarterly*. Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 20-26, p. 23.

72 UCKO, David. Innovation or Inertia: the US Military and the Learning of Counterinsurgency. 2008, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 290-310, p. 293.

73 FUKUYAMA, Francis. *Nation-building: beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*, p. 8.

74 Ibid.

Naturally, with the new President from the opposing political country, we cannot be surprised that the new Administration tries to break ties with the old one and “deal with things in its own way.” All the more intense is this trend in case of nation-building that was so defamed by G. W. Bush in the pre-election campaign. On the other hand, surprising is the fact that in 2003 (more than a year after the start of the Afghanistan campaign) the Bush Administration closed the U.S. Army War College Peacekeeping Institute – the one and only DOD workplace which intensively studied this field – only to reopen it because of the outbreak of the Iraq War. However, this action could be explained by the institutional resistance of the U.S. armed forces against task that the military leadership doesn't consider to be worthy.⁷⁵

2.1.2 Counter-insurgency

The United States has a rich experience with counter-insurgency. During the Revolution of 1776, the colonists used irregular warfare and guerilla tactics to push the British soldiers out of their land. Later, Americans found themselves in the opposite position – as a power that faces insurgencies.

We may argue whether the secession of the Southern states was in insurgency. The Southerners were marked as Rebels fighting against the Federal Government. However, the majority of the military clashes was conducted by direct battles, using the regular tactics and strategy of that time – army versus army. Therefore, this writer does not consider the Civil War to be an insurgency in the sense used in this thesis. It was rather an example of conventional warfare of standing formation of soldiers, marching against each other typically somewhere in the fields. Sometimes it was a question of siege and conquest of forts or cities. Even though one can imagine some guerilla groups attacking the enemy from the rear with a hit-and-run tactics, the essential power of both sides lied in the large army groups.

An important experience came after the victory in the Spanish-American war of 1898. Americans occupied Philippines and soon after their occupation started there was a wave of rebellion and armed insurgency against them. The U.S. leaders adopted measures of population control, punishment and persecution, combined with “a broader

⁷⁵ CARAHER, Leigh C. *Broadening military culture*, p. 88. In: Binnendijk, Hans. Johnson, Stuart E. *Transforming for stabilization and reconstruction operations*. DIANE Publishing, 2004.

political-military campaign that included effective propaganda, payment of cash bounties for weapons surrendered by the insurgents, and building of schools and hospitals in a comprehensive public works program.”⁷⁶ This campaign against insurgency could be considered to be a successful one. However, the experiences were not implemented into the overall American military thinking. Nagl remarks that “the hard-won lessons of the campaign were quickly lost to the belief that such wars were not the army's true business and submerged by those of another large war fought with conventional tactics against a conventional army.”⁷⁷

The First World War confirmed such notion, of course. Thousands of soldiers were fighting openly against each other, using the most modern military equipment, machinery, trenches, artillery, etc. Following interventions in Russia and Mexico had character of short operations with no further long-term occupation and pacification of conquered territory and its population.

The only military branch that focused on unconventional tactics were the Marine Corps. Marines were not very suited for large-scale ground confrontations. Such role has always belonged mainly to the regular army. However, in the WWI they fought side by side with their U.S. Army counterparts. For Marines, this was an abbreviation to their common missions. Since the Spanish-American war until 1938 they conducted interventions in several countries. Most of these interventions were part of so-called “Banana Wars”—set of interventions in Caribbean that served the United States to enhance its influence in the region.⁷⁸ In these missions, Marines “executed protracted counterinsurgency campaigns against insurgent guerrilla forces, while simultaneously addressing civil administration duties.”⁷⁹

Their experiences were quite rich as they “landed in the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Mexico, Guam, Samoa, China, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic between 1898 and 1938; the Marines were America's version of British

76 NAGL, John. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 46.

77 Ibid.

78 LANGLEY, Lester D. *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001, xv-xvi.

79 FORD, Allan S. (Major, USMC). *The Small War Manual and Marine Corps Military Operations other than War Doctrine*. Diploma Thesis. Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2003, p. 23.

colonial army. Out of their experiences emerged the Small Wars Manual [...].”⁸⁰ The Manual tried to codify the lessons learned from the four decades of small wars but the ambition was soon to be turned into a disappointment.

Among the Marine Corps leaders there was a long-term divergence regarding the topic. One side promoted unconventional operations (so-called Military Operations Other Than War). The opposing side wanted to focus on amphibious assault doctrine and the ability of establishing of forward navy military bases (Advanced Naval Base doctrine/concept which was developed in 1922). The amphibious assault group prevailed over the small wars/counterinsurgency group and “Small Wars Manual faded from the Marine Corps' institutional memory.”⁸¹

Second World War again proved the conventional warfare to be relevant. There was only a little space for any military research of counterinsurgency. Even more intense was the trend with the beginning of the Cold War – nuclear parity and omnipresent danger of a full-scale war which threatened to turn nuclear caused majority of resources to be allocated in a way to counter the Soviet threat. The next breaking point came in Vietnam War that was about to serve as a showroom of American way of warfare and

2.2 The Vietnam disaster

Vietnam War is key for understanding the American approach towards the counter-insurgency and the low-intensity conflict, generally. As stated before, for the armed forces it was a trauma which has arguably never been shaken off. Much has been written about the war. Various authors analyzed the extent of American failure and its main causes. For this research, it is important to understand the conceptual substance of counter-insurgency that was not appreciated by the U.S. military.

The American military was too self-confident about its power and capabilities. They managed to beat the Japanese Empire in WWII, helped to tackle the Nazi Germany and stood firmly in Korea against the communist invasion. They had top-notch modern weapon systems, air superiority, material supremacy, and feeling of moral righteousness. There was a common notion that such strong military cannot lose against

⁸⁰ NAGL, John. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 47.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 48.

bunch of rag-tag guerilla fighters. However, the insurgents turned out to be pretty well organized, resilient and crafty in their way of fighting. They avoided direct confrontation, performed surprise attacks and then disappeared.

The U.S. was unable to find an appropriate answer. Andrew Krepinevich, a leading scholar on the Vietnam War, identified the main reason for the failure something he calls the Army Concept. He wrote: “The Army Concept of war is, basically, the Army's perception of how wars *ought* to be waged and is reflected in the way the Army organizes and trains for battle.”⁸² The military mindset seems to be the biggest obstacle in a successful conduct of counter-insurgency campaign. It was unable to abandon its principles and adjust to the environment of revolutionary warfare.

One of the main problems was the fact that the insurgents were able to ensure for themselves the support of local population. They were able to operate within the enemy territory with locals either actively supported them or were intimidated enough not to resist. As Krepinevich further noted: “Unfortunately, the Army's experience in war did not prepare it well for counterinsurgency, where the emphasis is on light infantry formations, not heavy divisions; on firepower restraint, not its widespread application; on the resolution of political and social problems within the nation targeted by insurgents, not closing with and destroying the insurgent's field forces.”⁸³

The U.S. military developed new battle techniques, such as the concept of air cavalry or huge deforestation. However, the main approach can be characterized as the direct “search-and-destroy” one. According to the counter-insurgency theory, this is inappropriate for such conflict. Nathan Springer shows the distinction between enemy-centric and population-centric COIN. The enemy-centric approach is suited for insurgencies with huge influence of foreigners, without the support of locals, where the population has connection to the government and the area is developed. On the other hand, population-centric approach is appropriate for situation, where the insurgency enlists mostly local people, the society is decentralized (tribes, remote villages, non-

82 KREPINEVICH, Andrew. *The Army and Vietnam*. The John Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 5.

83 Ibid.

developed society), the fighters are tolerated in the society and the area is not economically developed.⁸⁴

It is clear that the proper approach for Vietnam is the population-centric one. While the enemy-centric approach is focused mainly on capture-kill operation with the aim of physical destruction of the insurgents' groups and their removal from the society, the population-centric one is focused on isolation and political marginalization of the guerilla fighters and agitators.⁸⁵

Americans did not properly understand the political substance of revolutionary warfare performed by the insurgents – a concept stressed by Mao Zedong, one of the fathers of modern insurgency. It was also stressed by founding fathers of counter-insurgency: David Galula, Frank Kitson, Robert Thompson, and others. For the U.S. military the problem remained strictly military and therefore the solutions were also mainly of military nature.

There were some efforts to improve the situation in Vietnam. Their British counterparts with experiences from suppressing the rebellion in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency came to their aid. One of the assistants was Sir Robert Thompson – a valued COIN theorist but also an experienced commander of the British army. He tried to persuade Americans to switch to population-centric strategy and abandon the exhausting (and practically useless) search-and-destroy missions. However, despite some minor improvements the overall strategy remained basically the same.

Andrew Krepinevich recorder a statement of Sir Robert Thompson, who spoke about his endeavor in Vietnam, expressed disappointment and frustration. However, Thompson noticed that some of his advices did not remain unnoticed, especially regarding the Marine Corps: “Of all United States forces the Marine Corps alone made a serious attempt to achieve permanent and lasting results in their tactical area of responsibility by seeking to protect the rural population.”⁸⁶ They aligned themselves with the locals, creating joint teams. They patrolled their sectors and other Marines

84 SPRINGER, Nathan. Implementing a Population-Centric Counterinsurgency Strategy Northeast Afghanistan, May 07–July 08. *Small Wars Journal* [online], p. 2. 2010. [cited Apr 20, 2015] Accessible from: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/implementing-a-population-centric-coin-strategy>.

85 Ibid.

86 KREPINEVICH, Andrew. *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 172.

helped to organize issues in the endangered villages – they resolved problems, helped with projects and with civic organizing.

Unfortunately, the progress was rather limited and often it was contradicted by atrocities and lack of interest in the “true” counter-insurgency by most of the armed forces. Majority of people in the U.S. military refused to admit any mistake and adopted a contradicting thesis. As Nagl notes, their conclusion “was not that the army was too conventional in its approach to fighting the war in Vietnam, but that it was not conventional enough. [...] [and] the army was not allowed to use its firepower as widely and liberally as it would have liked.”⁸⁷ They thought that the war would have been won if there were more troops (especially on the borders), more bombings, more helicopters, and more of everything.

The post-war discussion resulted into creation of the aforementioned Vietnam syndrome. Nagl remarks: “Rather than squarely face up to the fact that army counterinsurgency doctrine had failed in Vietnam, the army decided that the United States should no longer involve itself in counterinsurgency operations.”⁸⁸ Therefore, an antipathy to nonconventional warfare was developed and it practically seized control over the military thinking of next several decades. Except for a brief and not too successful operation in El Salvador in 1980s (where some counterinsurgency attempts may be identified) the U.S. military refused to prepare for such operations and almost fully concentrated on conventional warfare.

In the eyes of the military, this approach paid off in 1991 during the conventional operation Desert Storm. Decisive victory was achieved along with confirmation of the American military's conceptual thinking about the nature of modern warfare. Twelve years later Americans found themselves in Iraq again, but the situation was completely different.

2.3 Strategic culture and 21st century way of warfare

Throughout the history of American military engagements, we can observe certain patterns of behavior that tend to remain more or less the same. The military

⁸⁷ NAGL, John. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 207.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

works as an organism, with institutional memory and culture. Despite some changes in technique and following adjustment in tactics, the strategic thinking and military mindset tends to remain unchallenged, being passed on from military generation to generation. It is common to call these trends the military culture, or strategic culture, respectively.

Colin S. Gray characterized the American strategic culture in 13 points, resulting from his observation of long-term trends in conduct of military operations. According to him, American way of war tends to be: *1. Apolitical, 2. Astrategic, 3. Ahistorical, 4. Problem-solving, 5. Culturally challenged, 6. Technologically dependent, 7. Focused on firepower, 8. Large-scale, 9. Aggressive, offensive, 10. Profoundly regular, 11. Impatient, 12. Logistically excellent, and 13. Highly sensitive to casualties.*⁸⁹

With regards to the irregular warfare, such as counter-insurgency and pacification (stabilization) operations, the strategic culture constitutes a serious obstacle to success. We may even say that it is often counterproductive. Moreover, these individual aspects of the strategic culture are not separated phenomena, but only various parts of a complex mentality. Some of the aspects are connected with each other.

The apolitical nature of the strategic culture suggests an unwillingness to care about political implications of the war – a trend that is deadly in counter-insurgency. The army feels that its main goal is to defeat the enemy in the field and then comes space for politicians to negotiate a peace. However, if the military needs not to win wars, but to win the peace, this can pose a serious threat to the national objectives. The astrategic notion means that American soldiers do not trouble themselves too much about the peace that comes after war. They focus on their actual enemy and not on the best overall strategy of acquiring the aims of war. Therefore, we can often see the lack of unity in effort, and also several measures adopted, but in opposition to each other.⁹⁰

Americans tend not to create lessons learned from the past in order to gain experiences from previous failures. They often change factors for problems, which can be solved – a scenario most often caused by a lack of understanding of different cultures

⁸⁹ GRAY, Colin S. *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2005, p. 30.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

and people. As an industrial power, the U.S. uses modern technologies, huge firepower and overwhelming numbers in order to trade loss of machinery for loss of lives. They try to wage war fast and decisively with great preparation and straight-forward offensive action focused on the destruction of enemy forces and material.⁹¹

Unfortunately for Americans, counter-insurgency requires patience, long-term commitment and restraint in the use of violence. Otherwise, the insurgents disperse among the population, avoid fighting, attack from the rear and sabotage any effort of administration and civic advancement promoted by the government or occupying power. There is a thin line between being someone who “freed” the country, and being someone who occupies it. Excessive use of force often brings along casualties among civilians and shifts the population's opinion towards the occupation narrative (enhanced by the insurgents' propaganda).

The U.S. military retained most of its main features in 21st century, as well. Jan Eichler analyzed the main common aspects of the American wars of the new century. He found out, that most of the operations are well-prepared, including important detail of the mission and careful distribution of tasks among troops. Despite the leadership of high generals, many targets are of symbolic value and they are often chosen by politicians—a fact strongly noticeable at the end of 20th century during the Operation Allied Force and the bombings of Yugoslavia.⁹²

Eichler further agrees with Edward Luttwak—a leading expert on the military issues—that major incentive during operation planning is the security of soldiers and minimization of risks of American lives. Luttwak calls this phenomenon “post-heroic warfare”, characterized by thorough preparations before fighting and by a conduct of war that prefers air strikes over land operations (whenever possible). Those are performed from safe distance (high-altitude), with huge emphasis on targeting the anti-aircraft equipment of the enemy. Most of the time, when the weather is not optimal, missions are not allowed, even though they would be possible when flying in lower altitude.⁹³

91 KREPINEVICH, Andrew. *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 5.

92 EICHLER, Jan. *Terorismus a války na počátku 21. století*. Praha: Karolinum, 2007, p. 290.

93 LUTTWAK, Edward N. Give War a Chance. *Foreign Affairs*. Jul. - Aug., 1999, Vol. 78, No. 4, pp. 36-44, p. 40-41.

Eichler also stresses emphasis of aerial bombing in the beginning of each major campaign, potentially followed by the land operation/invasion, when most of the major strongpoints of the enemy are destroyed. During the airstrikes, Americans tend to combine both area and target bombings. As a result, he sees “a cumulative effect that quickly crushes the enemy's defensive potential and systems of command. The enemy troops suffer such a shock that they are then unable to wage a successful defensive war. [...] It fully confirms American unprecedented dominance in conventional military strength and information dominance.”⁹⁴

Another important feature of the U.S. modern warfare is the use of Special Forces, in American case mostly used for search-and-destroy missions, where key targets and strongpoints of the enemy are identified and annihilated. Another characteristic is the use of proxies – local fighters fighting on behalf of the United States. These allies tend to understand the local environment and have good motivation, resulting from previous persecution and grievances, which makes them well motivated and often willing to undertake risks that would be unacceptable for American soldiers.⁹⁵

94 EICHLER, Jan. *Terorismus a války na počátku 21. století*, p. 291.

95 *Ibid*, p. 291-292.

3. LESSONS LEARNED FROM IRAQ

3.1 *The security sector reform*

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime Americans realized with fullness how corrupt and brutal the regime was. United States Institute of Peace *Special Report* states: “Saddam Hussein ruled through a sophisticated structure of intelligence and security services, a vast network of informers, and a brutal hand in dealing with dissent. He skillfully balanced competing forces within the country, playing upon ethnic and religious rivalries and using cooptation and financial inducements. Saddam concentrated decision making within a tight circle of close relatives, fellow tribesmen, and individuals from his hometown, Tikrit. Beyond this ruling group, he relied upon patronage, networks, tribal allegiance, ethnic affiliation, and economic leverage in maintaining power. At the core of this system was a pervasive security apparatus.”⁹⁶

This short excerpt describes exactly the dreadful situation in the country before the invasion. Therefore, it is surprising that in their planning, Americans expected that the security apparatus would abandon its loyalty towards Saddam and remain in place. They planned to cooperate with the army and police in order to provide security in the turbulent times after the country is conquered, or liberated, respectively. Before the Operation Iraqi Freedom begun, only a “limited amount of preparations had been undertaken to provide advisory teams to reform the Iraqi security ministries and forces, but a large-scale program to restructure and rebuild them was not envisaged.”⁹⁷

Contrary to the expectations, most of the security forces simply disappeared. Those forces who did not continue with resistance (such as Saddam's Fedayeen forces) vanished and their stocks were being rapidly looted. Weapons, equipment, vehicles and furniture was stolen by the members of the forces themselves and by the general population. Looting was a general trend. Therefore, civilian “watch groups” emerged in many places. With the collapse of some public services, such as water and electricity supplies, Iraqis sought to find provision for themselves by looting and stealing. Riots

⁹⁶ PERITO, Robert M. *Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Public Security in Iraq: Lessons Identified*. DIANE Publishing, 2008, p. 2.

⁹⁷ RATHMELL, Andrew, et al. *Developing Iraq's Security Sector: The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience*. RAND Corporation, 2005, x.

and lynching of former government officials occurred. Americans stood in front of a hard decision: Intervene strongly and decisively (with a risk of alienating the population) or not to intervene (with a risk of severe deterioration of social situation that could lead to anti-American moods in a long run).⁹⁸

On May 23, 2003 the Coalition Provisional Authority decided to dissolve most of the institutions of the old regime, including The Ministry of Defense, The Iraqi Intelligence Service, The National Security Bureau, The National Assembly, The Army, Air Force, Navy, paramilitary organizations, and many others. All members of Entities, mentioned in the CPA order were to be dismissed by April 16. Most of them were entitled to a termination payment, except for those considered to be Senior Party Members, including military officials with the rank of Colonel or above.⁹⁹

With this step, most of the responsibility remained on the shoulders of U.S. troops and the new security forces of Iraq, formed and trained from scratch. It is no surprise that when the “Coalition Provisional Authority handed over authority to the Iraqi Interim Government on June, 28, 2004, [...] [i]nsurgent and terrorist violence was escalating, organized crime was flourishing, and the security situation was threatening both the political transition and the reconstruction program.”¹⁰⁰

There were many senior officers in the Iraqi military. The Iraqi military had more than 10, 000 Generals.¹⁰¹ Promotions were a way for Saddam to ensure the loyalty of his forces. He also filled the ranks with people loyal to him personally. Among the Sunnis there was a notion that the security forces were high quality and fully functional. However, the Iraqi police was especially corrupt and incompetent. They have been a rather passive force, instead of being a major pillar of the regime. However, it meant that their investigations were often a question of highest bidding. Most of the lower officials in military were not well trained and experienced, as initiative was mostly strongly discouraged.¹⁰²

98 COPSON, Raymond W. *The Iraq War: Background and Issues*, p. 19.

99 The Coalition Provisional Authority. 23 May 2005. [online]. [cited Apr, 30, 2015] Accessible from: www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf

100 RATHMELL, Andrew, et al. *Developing Iraq's Security Sector*, ix.

101 TERRILL, Andrew W. *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification Program for Iraq's Future and the Arab Revolutions*. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2012, p. 38.

102 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. Baetjer, Patrick. *Iraqi Security Forces: A Strategy for Success*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006, p. 13-14.

The Coalition Provisional Government and the Iraqi Interim Government promoted Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs. It “has been a standard feature of most nation-building operations and is generally regarded as a necessary condition for the transition to sustainable peace. In Iraq, DDR was conceived as two distinct programs: DDR of former Iraqi military personnel, and transition and reintegration of armed opposition groups.”¹⁰³

Nevertheless, the effort to reintegrate the former soldiers and other military personnel was complicated by so-called de-Ba'athification. Andrew Terrill characterized the process accordingly: “De-Ba'athification for Iraq was initiated by U.S. policymakers in 2003 as the process of eliminating the ideology of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party from public life and removing its more influential adherents from the Iraqi political and administrative system.”¹⁰⁴

It was a thorough activity that unfortunately caused many grievances. It “included many innocent Iraqis who had simply gone along with former regime to survive or because of the very national threats that developed during the Iran-Iraq War.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, this political “purge”, due to the nature of Saddam's regime, tended to target mainly Sunnis, as the composition of the fallen regime included disproportional number of them.¹⁰⁶

Among the high-ranking military officials, this was an even bigger disappointment. The pre-invasion Iraqi military felt like they were being held hostage by the regime. The army was infiltrated by loyal Saddam's officials, who organized long ideological lessons of indoctrination. Most of the military personnel felt tensions between the circle of Saddam and themselves and it was hard for them to identify fully with the regime. They hoped that the invasion would help them to get rid of such people; it was one of the reasons why the resistance during the invasion phase was not as strong as it could have been. However, most of the officials in the military were

103 RATHMELL, Andrew, et al. *Developing Iraq's Security Sector*, p. 65.

104 TERRILL, Andrew W. *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification Program for Iraq's Future and the Arab Revolutions*, p. 1-2.

105 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. BAETJER, Patrick. *Iraqi Security Forces: A Strategy for Success*, p. 13.

106 Ibid.

forced to become members of Ba'ath party – a fact that later often caused termination of their careers.¹⁰⁷

We may observe some efforts that went against the trend of indiscriminate punishment of all the former Iraqi high-ranking security force's officials. For example General Petraeus, when he was responsible for the Ninevah Province, often met former Saddam's officials and helped them to get jobs in factories for appropriate money. He also gathered former Ba'athists and made deals with them: in exchange for not engaging with the rebellion and not sabotaging his efforts, he tried to assist them to find jobs in their fields or even return to their former positions. Some other commanders stood up against the one-size-fits-all measures of de-Ba'athification and refused to get rid of people with experience and without any crimes committed. However, those were rare exceptions.¹⁰⁸

With many young and talented members of the Iraq's security community who were laid off, the security situation was deteriorating. Americans had to rely mostly on themselves. In words of Larry Diamond, “[t]he American occupation of Iraq – for all the British and other international participation, it was in its leadership and design an American occupation – never came to grips with the massive security deficit in Iraq, and more fundamentally, with the nature of the social and political reality that the United States was bound to confront in postwar Iraq.”¹⁰⁹ The war developed in a different way than expected. American planners did not presume the level of anarchy and looting in the police, military and other forces, as well as the degree of incompetence and corruption. They were not able to foresee the fact that new Iraqi security forces will not be reliable partners at all.

Despite the fact that most of the responsibility regarding the security and stability in Iraq, there were never enough boots on the ground to enforce it. As Diamond remarks, “the Bush administration was never willing to commit anything near the force necessary to secure a viable postwar order in Iraq. Military experts had warned that the

107 TERRILL, Andrew W. *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification Program for Iraq's Future and the Arab Revolutions*, p. 37.

108 Al-JABOURI, Najim Abed. JENSEN, Sterling. The Iraqi and AQI roles in the Sunni Awakening. *Prism*. 2010, Vol. 2, pp. 3-18, p. 10.

109 DIAMOND, Larry. *What Went Wrong and Right in Iraq*. In. FUKUYAMA, Francis. *Nation-building: beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*. The John Hopkins University Press, 2006, p. 174.

task would require, as Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki told Congress in February 2003, 'hundreds of thousands' of troops.’¹¹⁰

According to the counterinsurgency theory, there is no single ideal number for the number of troops required to provide stability and security. However, the optimal range lies somewhere between 20-25 counterinsurgents per 1000 inhabitants in order not only to suppress but also to prevent insurgency from occurring.¹¹¹ In case of Iraq this “optimal” number would be lie approximately between 700,000 and 900,000 soldiers. It is obvious that American (and Coalition) boots on the ground never reached anywhere near this number.

The low numbers of U.S. soldiers were a result of pre-war miscalculations and political unwillingness to put more American in jeopardy, rather than a notion of so-called “light footprint”.¹¹² This thesis promotes the minimal necessary intervention, where most of the destructuralization and reconstruction is supposed to be done by the locals – and the intervening power should only guide, supervise and assist. Americans found themselves in a dubious position because they neither adopted the light footprint approach, nor did they mobilize enough resources for a full-fledged top-bottom external reconstruction effort.

The insurgency was not the only problem the United States faced in Iraq. There were problems with criminality, as the general policing did not work properly. Any country that is supposed to be reconstructed and rebuilt needs to be pacified enough in order to ensure enough “space” for the nation-building efforts. As stated before, the Iraqi police were unreliable. There was a huge deficit in volume of police instructor forces and police assistance in general.

The United States had two different experiences with policing from the 1990s: Bosnia and Kosovo. In Bosnia, “local police remained responsible for public security while international military forces separated combatants and enforced disarmament and demobilization. In Kosovo, by contrast, the international community was compelled to

110 Ibid.

111 U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps. *Counterinsurgency, FM 3-24, MCWP 3-33.5*. Washington, DC: Headquarter Department of the Army and Headquarters Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2006, p. 1:13.

112 DOBBINS, James F. *Nation-building and Counterinsurgency after Iraq*, p. 7.

assume responsibility for law enforcement from first day of the intervention.”¹¹³ At first, the idea was that the Iraq post-conflict reconstruction would be similar to the Bosnia scenario. When the Iraqi police forces proved themselves almost worthless (if not non-existent), the United States did not ensure support of the international community and did not provide enough police forces.

The causes of this failure may have roots in the fact that “while the Kosovo approach may have its advantages, it is only feasible in relatively small societies in which the international community is ready to make a relatively large investment. Replicating the Kosovo approach in Iraq, [...] with a population 12 times larger, would have required the deployment of 60,000 international civil police officers, a number far exceeding the total number of such police currently deployed worldwide.”¹¹⁴

The Iraqi Police was the biggest of the Iraqi Security Forces. Its development took more time than others did, as the U.S. Department of State supervised it. After the responsibility was switched to DOD, the Iraqi Police started to focus more on paramilitary abilities instead of the general policing potential. Up to the point of the Coalition withdrawal, it was ill equipped, not trained enough, and without needed quality and infrastructure.¹¹⁵

Due to the lack of security, many groups in Iraq created their own militias and paramilitary groups. Any attempt to map their structure or count their members was almost instantly condemned to failure. Many Iraqis acted opportunistically, being part of several organizations: militias, crime organizations, and security forces (at the same time). Sometimes the crime organizations politicized themselves or started to be more ideological. In other cases, politically or ideologically motivated groups turned into common criminals for profit and abandoned their original purpose.¹¹⁶ In this environment, it was hard for the security forces of both Iraq and United States to operate efficiently and not to make mistakes that would alienate innocent people.

113 DOBBINS, James. JONES, Seth G. CRANE, Keith, COLE, DeGRASSE, Beth. *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, p. 25.

114 Ibid, p. 26.

115 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. MAUSNER, Adam. *Withdrawal from Iraq: Assessing the Readiness of Iraqi Security Forces*, p. 163.

116 WILLIAMS, Phil. *Criminals, Militias, and Insurgents: Organized Crime in Iraq*. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009, p. 221-223.

Before the Americans left, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) were facing problems with weaponry, training and loyalty of members and their efficiency was questionable. Nevertheless, with some 650,000 members (as of 2010), the ISF “[saw] itself as a strong, modern, progressive institution, fully capable of fulfilling its national mission.”¹¹⁷ It is questionable whether the inner notion of capability equals actual (fighting) efficiency and whether the internal confidence of leadership equals support from the general population, especially in a country as internally divided as Iraq.

3.1.1 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The United States carefully planned the invasion into Iraq. They succeeded – Saddam's regime fell very fast and without extensive casualties on the U.S. side. Americans planned the operation well. However, they made many mistakes regarding the prognosis of post-invasion development in the country. Thinking that with the military defeat, the war is won, they were unwilling to commit sufficient force to secure the country in the aftermath of the major fighting. There was lack of international support and contribution of troops, which resulted in deterioration of security situation in Iraq. Relatively harsh measures taken in order to deal with supporters of the old regime backfired and complicated the development of new security forces. Not learning from the past, Americans assumed responsibility that was too big for their capabilities in terms of manpower, mentoring abilities and planning.

Planning an intervention, the United States should carefully assess the situation in the targeted country. Pre-operation analysis should work with the worst-case scenario rather than to rely on optimistic predictions. The United States should decide whether it is able and willing to assume the necessary responsibility and be prepared if the post-war situation to deteriorates quickly. There should always be a prospect of long-term cooperation between the host country and the assisting coalition. Moreover, Americans should ensure international support for their effort in order to share the costs, responsibility and risks with others. Last, but not least, Americans should be very reserved regarding any steps of unilateral political rectification of grievances caused by

117 POLLACK, Kenneth M. SARGSYAN, Irena L. The Other Side of the COIN: Perils of Premature Evacuation from Iraq. *The Washington Quarterly*. 2010, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 17-32, p. 18.

the toppled regime and rather to push for an individual treatment and possible “redemption” of non-criminal members of the former regime, implemented along with the new political representation.

3.2 The insurgency and the „surge“

Andrew Krepinevich identifies three major sources of the Iraqi insurgency: “One is the inexplicable lack of U.S. postwar planning. The security vacuum that followed the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime gave hostile elements the opportunity to organize, and the poorly designed and slowly implemented reconstruction plan provided the insurgents with a large pool of unemployed Iraqis from which to recruit. The second source is Iraq's tradition of rule by those able to seize power through violent struggle. Washington's muddled signals have created the impression that American troops may soon depart, opening the way to an Iraqi power struggle. The third source of the insurgency is the fact that jihadists have made Iraq a major theater in their war against the United States, abetted by the absence of security in Iraq and the presence of some 140,000 U.S. targets.”¹¹⁸

In other words, the three main causes of insurgency are results of 1) American mistakes, unpreparedness, and misperceptions, 2) the inner structure of the Iraqi society and its own long-term political dynamics, and 3) a global phenomenon reaching beyond the borders of Iraq.

Regarding the third source of insurgency, David Kilcullen calls the phenomenon “global insurgency”. The global insurgency is a worldwide movement of jihadists, with a common ideology and enemy (the West, mainly the United States and the United Kingdom). They are connected with financial links, personal ties, common history, religion, etc.¹¹⁹ Iraq served as serves as an “incubator” of the global jihadi insurgency.

Americans started the Operation Enduring Freedom with the doctrine of “shock and awe”. Only few would argue that application of this doctrine was unsuccessful. However, for the post-invasion period such approach is counterproductive. The paradigm after the initial phase changed: Iraq was no longer an enemy. Arguably, the

118 KREPINEVICH, Andrew F. Jr. How to Win in Iraq. *Foreign Affairs*. Sep/Oct 2005, Vol. 84, No. 5, pp. 87-104, p. 89.

119 KILCULLEN, David. Countering Global Insurgency. *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 2005, Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 597-617.

people of Iraq were never the enemy, only Hussein and his regime (plus those who decided to defend it). Since the old regime had fallen, there was no reason for “shock and awe” - a doctrine that is in opposition to the (Military) Operations Other Than War.¹²⁰

Kalev Sepp explains the roots of the aggressive attitude of the U.S. forces accordingly: “In the post-Vietnam era commanders were encouraged to view their assigned terrain not as towns and farms with populations and property to secure, but as battlefield, devoid of civilians, where firepower could be brought to bear on an opposing army without hesitation.”¹²¹ Nevertheless, this trend was soon to be changed.

In 2004, Americans tried to lower down the level of fighting; they “made important course corrections to its approach to Iraq, accelerating the return of sovereignty to an Iraqi government [...]. Unfortunately, the security situation there had deteriorated beyond the point where even the best-organized peace enforcement operation on the model of Bosnia or Kosovo could suffice to stabilize the situation. Resistance that was initially limited to former regime holdouts and a few foreign fighters metastasized into the beginning of a nationalist insurgency.”¹²²

Even though the initially critical situation improved a little under the General George Casey (commanding from June 2004 to February 2007) there was a new wave of violence, especially with respect to the sectarian struggle which experienced a boom after the bombing of the al-Askari temple in Samarra in the beginning of year 2006. This was one of the most important places for the Shi'a Muslims and it caused an outrage among them.¹²³ The insurgency turned into a decentralized and highly fragmented form, where “[t]he divisions of Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd are further divided by the inner cleavages and rivalries within each group characterized by factionalism and in-fighting.”¹²⁴

120 ULLMAN, Harlan K. WADE, James P. *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*. Washington, D.C.: National Defence University, 1996, p. 38.

121 SEPP, Kalev I. From ‘shock and awe’ to ‘hearts and minds’: the fall and rise of US counterinsurgency capability in Iraq. *Third World Quarterly*. 2007, Vol. 28 , No. 2, pp. 217-230, p. 219.

122 DOBBINS, James. Learning the Lessons of Iraq. In: FUKUYAMA, Francis. *Nation-building: beyond Afghanistan and Iraq*, p. 227.

123 COLLINS, Joseph J. The Surge Revisited. *Small Wars Journal* [online]. 2013 [accessed Apr, 28, 2015]. Accessible from: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-surge-revisited>

124 WALKER, Lydia. Forging a Key, Turning a Lock: Counterinsurgency Theory in Iraq 2006-2008. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 2009, Vol.32, pp. 909-918, p. 911.

The situation was difficult for the U.S. military which was not prepared for such a resistance and violence without “someone to shoot at“. According to their military and strategic culture, the armed forces were suited to fight conventional war and to defeat an enemy. Nevertheless, there were some commanders of various ranks, who understood the dynamics of the irregular warfare. One of the most prominent figures was David Petraeus: “While successfully restarting the economy of northern Iraq, then Major General Dave Petraeus used the metaphor 'money is ammunition' to encourage his officers' use of emergency relief funds to get Iraqis back to work on recovery projects. The phrase itself, however, revealed the degree to which his officers and soldiers believed that firepower was the solution to all problems.”¹²⁵ It was very hard to people like Petraeus to persuade both the politicians and their fellow soldiers to change the way they saw the war.

David Petraeus and his fellow COIN-friendly officers and advisors persuaded George W. Bush to change the strategy. Bush announced it in his address to the nation on January 2007. He revealed the plan to send additional five brigades, some 20,000¹²⁶ troops to Iraq, most of them to Baghdad and the Al Anbar province.¹²⁷ The direction of the surge was influenced by the Bush's War on Terror and his focus on al-Qaeda and other terrorists. Baghdad was chosen because it was the place where most of the international media was present; terrorists attacked there a lot, because it enabled them to “make their point” with the results being broadcasted almost immediately. The Al Anbar province was a place where al-Qaeda had a strong influence; it is a province in the west of Iraq inhabited mostly by the Sunni Muslims.

Despite his rhetoric about terrorism, Bush probably understood the context of the surge and its implication for COIN and stabilization of the country. On one hand, he spoke about safe havens for terrorists who may be able to repeat 9/11 attacks and religious extremists, but that seems to be only the top layer. The president expressed in the speech several relevant thoughts about the counter-insurgency:

125 SEPP, Kalev I. From ‘shock and awe’ to ‘hearts and minds’, p. 218-219.

126 The final number was higher, approximately 30,000 troops.

127 BUSH, George W. Transcript: President Bush Addresses Nation on Iraq War. In: The Washington Post [online]. Jan, 10, 2007. [cited Apr 30, 2015]. Accessible from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011002208.html>

“In earlier operations, Iraqi and American forces cleared many neighborhoods of terrorists and insurgents but, when our forces moved on to other targets, the killers returned. This time, we will have the force levels we need to hold the areas that have been cleared. [...] These troops will work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations. [...] A successful strategy for Iraq goes beyond military operations. Ordinary Iraqi citizens must see that military operations are accompanied by visible improvements in their neighborhoods and communities.”¹²⁸

This excerpt illustrates the conceptual change in the American thinking about the Iraq War. President Bush here indirectly suggests the adoption of the “clear, hold, build”¹²⁹ counterinsurgency doctrine, already announced by the end of 2005. This doctrine promotes to clear the area from the insurgents, not to withdraw, but to build up the security for the local population and rebuild the institutions of the host nation in the area.¹³⁰ The Counterinsurgency Manual 3-24 from December 2006 codified this doctrine. General Casey to a certain extent resisted these efforts; he was trying to maintain the light-footprint approach in order to switch the responsibility to Iraqis themselves as soon as possible and he “had never requested the number of troops needed to carry [the COIN approach] out.”¹³¹

Similarly, the announcement of “joint troops” of American and Iraqis was anchored in the Manual of 2006.¹³² It was an attempt to build on experiences from Vietnam. So-called Combined Action Platoons of Vietnamese soldiers and U.S. Marines were relatively successful, but the approach was not supported enough.¹³³ During the surge, we can observe recovery of this framework, mainly thanks to General Petraeus, a COIN expert who was appointed as the commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq in the beginning of 2007.

128 Ibid.

129 Later extended to “shape-clear-hold-build-transition” framework

130 U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps. *Counterinsurgency, FM 3-24, MCWP 3-33.5*, p. 5:18

131 Davidson, Janine. *Lifting the Fog of Peace: How Americans Learned to Fight Modern War*. University of Michigan Press, 2011, p. 173.

132 U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps. *Counterinsurgency, FM 3-24, MCWP 3-33.5*, p. 5:18

133 NAGL, John. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 157-158.

In the second half of the year 2006, American casualties were extremely high: about 100 KIAa and 700 WIAs per month.¹³⁴ The number of dead Iraqi civilians averaged at 1,500 monthly. During the surge in 2007, the American troops were sent to most problematic locations. Therefore, number of casualties initially increased, as there were more American targets for the insurgents/terrorists, only to drop by the end of the year. From 2008 to 2011 both the numbers of killed soldiers and civilians were steadily significantly lower than in 2006.¹³⁵

The surge had serious opponents in United States, who believed that the security it may bring would be only of temporary character. However, the Bush administration decided to proceed with the plan in order to enable the ISF to regroup and “to buy the time and space for the Iraqi government to move forward with national reconciliation and improve its delivery of public services.”¹³⁶

The surge did not only bring more troops to Iraq. As stated before, the primary mastermind behind the plan was General Petraeus, who adopted new approaches: “[He] replaced a prior emphasis on large, fortified bases, mounted patrols, and transition of Iraqi security forces with a new pattern of smaller, dispersed bases, dismounted patrolling, and direct provisions of U.S. security for threatened Iraqi civilians. Proponents of the 'Surge thesis' hold that this combination of more troops and different methods brought the violence down by suffocating the insurgency and destroying its ability to kill Americans or Iraqis.”¹³⁷

Indeed, we can observe a return to the 'good practices' of counterinsurgency and the population-centric approach, as established in the Counterinsurgency Manual of 2006. Nevertheless, however the new strategic and tactical adjustments brought temporary success, there are voices who argue that Petraeus and his new COIN impulse were only partly responsible for the change and there was an equally important phenomenon that influenced the positive development of the Iraq War: the Anbar Awakening.

134 BIDDLE, Stephen. FRIEDMAN, Jeffrey A. SHAPIRO, Jacob N. Testing the Surge: Why did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007? *International security*. Summer 2012, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 7-40, p. 7.

135 Ibid.

136 SKY, Emma. Iraq, From Surge to Sovereignty, p. 2.

137 BIDDLE, Stephen, et al. Testing the Surge, p. 7-8.

The western Iraqi province of al Anbar with predominantly Sunni population was from the beginning one of the most violent places in Iraq. Across the borders there are three Sunni countries: Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria. As John McCary remarks, “[i]n what is most easily described as a marriage of convenience, Sunni insurgents and foreign Sunni al Qaeda fighters in al Anbar had formed a strategic and tactical alliance against what was perceived as an occupation by the United States or, more pointedly, against the occupation of a Muslim land by a largely Christian force [...]”¹³⁸

However, after some time, the Sunni affiliation of the al Anbar population proved not to be the only motivation for its actions. Extremist groups started to dominate the economy in the province and the local tribes started to be dissatisfied with the development.¹³⁹ Arguably, the U.S. forces enabled the uprising of the local sheiks through several steps, combining direct and population-centric counter-insurgency, i.e. they focused on the general population along with lethal strikes against al-Qaeda key figures (*high value targets*).¹⁴⁰

Americans adopted the tactics of “employing carefully focused lethal operations, securing the populace through forward presence, co-opting local leaders, developing competent host-nation security forces, creating competent host-nation security forces, creating a public belief in rising success, [and] developing human and physical infrastructure.”¹⁴¹ In addition, Sunni militias who were fighting against U.S. troops were armed, trained and funded by Americans now. This was conducted primarily in the province capital of Ramadi, but also in the remote areas.

The surge is generally considered to be successful. However, the leaders in al Anbar decided to turn against al-Qaeda before the surge began, and the changed tactics and increase in the numbers of troops potentially only enhanced their effort. Already in September 2006, “an Iraqi-led coalition of Sunni tribal sheikhs in al Anbar publicly announced their split with al Qaeda and began working with U.S. military forces to oust the foreign-led terrorist group.”¹⁴² Considering the fact that the surge was announced

138 McCARY, John A. The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives. *The Washington Quarterly*. January 2009, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 43-59, p. 43.

139 Ibid.

140 MacFARLAND, Sean. SMITH, Niel. Anbar awakens: The tipping point. *Military Review*. March-April 2008, Vol. 42, pp. 41-52, p. 41.

141 Ibid.

142 McCARY, John A. The Anbar Awakening, p. 43-44.

half a year later, we may conclude that it built on pre-existing conditions, though successfully.

Another theory that may relativize the sole contribution of the surge is the *cleansing theory*. According to this theory, the decrease of sectarian violence was caused primarily by exhaustion of both camps (Sunni and Shi'a). The creation of aggressive Shi'a militias after the bombings of Samarra shrine in the beginning of 2006 caused (especially in Baghdad) most of the Sunnis to move to the city's periphery or to leave Iraq for good.¹⁴³ As Cockburn witnessed, “[i]n many areas, Iraqis say bitterly, ‘the killing stopped because there was nobody left to kill.’ There are very few mixed neighborhoods left.”¹⁴⁴

Biddle et al. work with this thesis, rejecting its literal interpretation, but generally agreeing with the message: “While the populations were intermingled, the violence was intense, but the fighting progressively immixed the two groups, yielding large, contiguous areas of uniform makeup with defensible borders between them. This in turn resolved the security dilemma, and as neighborhoods were cleansed, the fighting petered out as a product of its own dynamics rather than as a response to U.S. reinforcements.”¹⁴⁵ It is a generally accepted idea, that the proximity of hostile entities deepens the security dilemma, where each side attributes an aggressive intention to the other side and starts to react based on the assumption; it is a self-fulfilling prophecy that results into a spiral of violence, where separation and distance between the two groups may constitute of one of the possible solutions.

Whatever explanation of the COIN success by the end of 2007 one accepts, the results represented by decreased casualties is undeniable. For many Americans the success meant that the war is inevitably coming to a victorious end. However, General Petraeus warned several times against a premature withdrawal based on the temporary positive trends in the war. As soon as on April 26, 2007 CNN already reported on the passing of a withdrawal bill in the Senate:

“Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wisconsin, said Thursday that Congress is using ‘the power of the purse’ to end the war and compared the maneuver to how Congress ended

143 COCKBURN, Patrick. Who IS Whose Enemy? *London Review of Books*. March 2008, Vol. 30, No. 5, pp. 14-15.

144 Ibid, p. 14.

145 BIDDLE, Stephen, et al. Testing the Surge, p. 14.

U.S. involvement in Somalia in 1994. 'When the mission ends, the funding ends, and that's perfectly reasonable,' Feingold said. 'Gen. Petraeus will have the funding as long as we feel there should be a mission there, but there shouldn't be a mission there anymore by the end of next March.'"¹⁴⁶

In 2008, Barack Obama signed a mutual agreement that enabled the United States to stay in the country until December 2011 and "in February 2009, [he] announced that he intended to reduce U.S forces in Iraq to just 50,000 and to end their combat mission by August 2010."¹⁴⁷ General Petraeus was replaced by General Odierno, then his deputy. United States started to prepare for the withdrawal, also argued for by the improved security situation on the ground. However, the structural causes of the insurgency and the internal violence, in general, were not removed. This fact was soon to be manifested by the weakness of the new Iraqi regime in the crisis that came soon after the American withdrawal from the country.

3.2.1 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Americans were able to adapt and adopt a new strategic approach, arguably well suited for the environment in which they were. They were also able to use some of the changing factors to their advantage. However, the COIN strategy was adopted after a long period of increased violence and with a reluctance, after a long and hard debate. For a long time, the U.S. military focused on conventional approach, refusing any irregular warfare tactics. After the improvement of the situation, they soon started to seek an exit strategy, once again underestimating the possible long-term unfavorable development.

To defeat an insurgency is a long and dreadful task. Americans have to get used to the fact that it costs lives and material. Soldiers have to be put into risk with a strict restraint regarding the use of force. They have to recognize environment favorable for potential growth of resistance and adopt necessary provisions soon enough. They should focus on the protection of endangered groups of the population in order to deny the

146 'Senate passes Iraq withdrawal bill; veto threat looms.' In: CNN [online]. April 26, 2007. [Cited May 1, 2015]. Accessible from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/04/26/congress.iraq/>

147 POLLACK, Kenneth M. SARGSYAN, Irena L. *The Other Side of the COIN*, p. 17.

insurgents/terrorists safe have, support and recruitment. Host-nation security forces shall be engaged in the process in a timely manner. Local members of armed forces (especially police officers) should be deployed to sectors well-known to them. Moreover, Americans should inform about their success in order to “sell” the COIN effort to the public both home and in the host country. Finally, the effort should not be terminated once the situation improves, because the forces of resistance may be encouraged to “wait their enemy out.”

3.3 Civil-military cooperation or rivalry?

In the American military, we can observe a long-term opposition to any irregular missions and tasks. For example, Operation Fardh al-Quanoon which “formally directed U.S. troops to conduct population-centered counterinsurgency on the streets of Baghdad and to provide sustained security and services to its population”¹⁴⁸ was declared to be a success. However, it had to be “forced upon the military brass.”¹⁴⁹ The institutional resistance mainly from U.S. Army and Marine Corps had many reasons. One of the main ones was the notion that soldiers are supposed to fight the enemy and not to do social work – it is simply not something that soldiers should do.

In conventional warfare, this is more or less true. Yet, as repeated several times, in counter-insurgency is this notion highly counterproductive. The population is not the enemy, but the armed forces must work with it. As opposed to the regular warfare, the military has to assume two important capabilities: “first, it must be able to see issues and actions from the perspective of the domestic population; second, it must understand the relative value of force and how easily excessive force, even when apparently justified, can undermine popular support.”¹⁵⁰ Considering their mentality and training, for common soldiers this means an overall shift in their mindset.

As a Coalition officer in Iraq noted, “too much of the force remained conceptually in warfighting mode in the post combat phase, and failed to understand that every soldier becomes a CIMIC¹⁵¹ operator in COIN and [Stability and

148 UCKO, David. H. *The New Counterinsurgency Era*, p. 103.

149 Ibid, p. 139.

150 AYLWIN-FOSTER, Nigel. Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations. *Military Review*. Nov-Dec 2005, pp. 2-15, p. 4.

151 Civil-military cooperation.

Reconstruction] operations.”¹⁵² The remark of Canadian retired General MacKenzie is equally valid for the U.S. stance: “[S]oldiers are not social workers with guns. Both disciplines are important, but both will suffer if combined in the same individuals.”¹⁵³

One of the biggest problems of the post-invasion phase of the OIF was the fact that most of the responsibility for the nation-building effort was centralized in the Department of Defense.¹⁵⁴ Fukuyama noted that Pentagon's Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy who was supposed to lead the reconstruction “had no prior experience with this kind of operation and had limited institutional capacity [...]”¹⁵⁵ Apart from the tremendous lack of experience and experts the U.S. post-conflict reconstruction and nation-building effort “was organized far more for humanitarian emergencies than for the kind of security and economic reconstruction effort the Iraqis actually needed.”¹⁵⁶

The trend of “every-man-for-himself” approach continued not only in Washington, D.C., but also on the ground in Iraq. As Cordesman remarked, “the jointness in military operations during the war did not lead to any effective coordination or 'jointness' between the military forces still fighting against low-level threats and the new civil administration of the nation-building effort.”¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the military jointness was not perfect, either. Many commanders of stationary forces throughout the war complained about especially Special Forces entering their areas of responsibility without any previous consultation and “undertaking operations (such as raids against an influential sheik) without considering how such actions might destroy carefully nurtured relationships.”¹⁵⁸

The U.S. military was able to mostly solve the problem of communication and competences relatively well by 2007. Communication channels within the military were well established and the centralized structure of armed forces enabled them to find a

152 Ibid.

153 Cited in: BAKER, John. Quick Impact Projects: Towards a 'Whole Government' Approach. *Paterson Review (The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs)*. 2007, Vol. 8, pp. 1-22, p. 4.

154 RATHMELL, Andrew. Planning post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq: what can we learn? *International Affairs*. 2005, Vol. 81, No. 5, pp. 1013-1038, p. 1020.

155 FUKUYAMA, Francis. *Nation-building*, p. 9.

156 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. *The Iraq War*, p. 145.

157 Ibid.

158 BOOT, Max. More Small Wars: Counterinsurgency Is Here to Stay. *Foreign Affairs*. Nov/Dec 2014, pp. 5-14, p. 13.

mediator that was able to resolve disputes or ambiguities from the position of authority. However, between civilians and military commanders it was hard to resolve disputes and their relations varied a lot: “Some of the U.S. military commanders developed close relationships with their civilian advisers, but just as often, the relationships were antagonistic and dysfunctional.”¹⁵⁹

Military and civilian participants in the war often blamed each other for unsuccessful results. Civilians complained about lack of security in those areas where they were supposed to be deployed. In addition, they had a feeling that their military counterparts do not listen to them properly. Soldiers, on the other hand, criticized their civilian partners for not playing more active role and for lack of efficiency. The truth is that among the civilian experts, deployment to a war zone was considered dangerous and not particularly career advancing.¹⁶⁰ Military, on the other hand, was stuck — especially in the beginning—in its conventional mindset that complicated the effort of the civilian nation-building workers.

The feeling of security deficit on the side of civilian workers tended to be solved by hiring security contractors. These private companies had a colorful range of mission, ranging from protection of VIPs, securing strategically important objects, protection of convoys, and other tasks. Their services were used by the Department of State, USAID, and other government agencies and NGOs. Even during the surge, despite the increase of U.S. military troops, there were more contractors in Iraq than government soldiers.¹⁶¹

In Iraq, only those contractors working for DOD numbered in March 2011 64,000 as opposed to 46,000 U.S. uniformed soldiers, thus constituting 58% of Department of Defense workforce in the country.¹⁶² The biggest portion of them had in non-combat assignments; they “performed base support functions such as maintaining the grounds, running dining facilities, and performing laundry services.”¹⁶³

Contractors working for various government agencies and NGOs brought few positive trends to the war, trying to fill the void space between military and civilians.

159 Ibid, p. 14.

160 UCKO, David. H. *The New Counterinsurgency Era*, p. 180.

161 SINGER, Peter W. *Can't Win with'em, Can't go to War without'em: Private Military Contractors and Counterinsurgency*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007, p. 2.

162 SCHWARTZ, Moshe. *Department of Defense contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background and analysis*. DIANE Publishing, 2010, p. 15.

163 Ibid.

David Kilcullen noticed that “the efforts of private firms like Aegis Defence Services, whose Reconstruction Operations Centres and Regional Liaison Teams [were] flexible inter-agency organizations that have worked extremely well in Iraq, are worth emulating.”¹⁶⁴ Moreover, contractors are generally quite flexible and readily usable; they “have been quick to jump into the Iraq project.”¹⁶⁵ However, their successes were rather limited and in general, contractor caused many problems to the nation-building and COIN efforts.

There is a well-known 2007 incident, when in Baghdad members of Blackwater killed 17 people in the Nisour Square. This incident caused outrage of the Iraqi people and a harsh reaction of Prime Minister al-Maliki. Already in 2004 the U.S. Congress adopted provisions that enabled to prosecute of those contractors from United States by courts at home. However, only 12 of them have been actually prosecuted (including six men involved in the Nisour Square incident).¹⁶⁶ Even if we decide to consider the Nisour Square and other similar incidents to be only aberrations and excesses, there are other problems with contractors – more conceptual ones.

There was an overall lack of oversight over the private security companies, which fact is important not only because of their potential prosecution, but also because of their mission itself. In terms of law, the private contractors have always been in a “shadow zone”. Furthermore, they have also been in a shadow zone in terms of military issues. The much-needed unity of effort is essential for a successful COIN. Everyone has to know what the main goal is and even though the Clausewitzian friction causes plans to crumble, they must adapt and find new solutions that comply with the overall strategy. With proper instructions, training and awareness of the COIN principles, soldiers are usually at least partially able to behave duly.

Contractors are a different story. With many “masters” they serve, they usually focus on their immediate task, no matter what the costs are. Not to be mistaken, they often fulfil their duties with precision, courage, and even heroism. However, “their private mission is different from the overall public operation. Those, for example, doing escort duty are going to be judged by their bosses solely on whether they get their client

164 KILCULLEN, David J. *Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency*, p. 7.

165 EKBLADH, David. *From Consensus to Crisis: The Postwar Career of Nation-Building in U.S. Foreign Relations*. In: FUKUYAMA, Francis. *Nation-building*, p. 36.

166 BOOT, Max. *More Small Wars*, p. 13.

from point A to B, not whether they win Iraqi hearts and minds along the way.”¹⁶⁷ Intimidation, trigger-happiness, aggression, and non-compliance with the general strategy often accompany the service of contractors.

Colonel Peter Mansoor from the U.S. Army is a well-known figure within the community of COIN thinkers. He commented on the role of private contractors and their role in counter-insurgency accordingly: “[The U.S. military needs to take] a real hard look at security contractors on future battlefields and figure out a way to get a handle on them so that they can be better integrated – if we're going to allow the to be used in the first place [...] if they push traffic off the roads or if they shoot up a car that looks suspicious, whatever it may be, they may be operating within their contract – to the detriment of the mission, which is to bring the people over to your side. I would rather see basically all armed entities in a counterinsurgency operation fall under a military chain of command.”¹⁶⁸ The previous excerpt is primarily about the “fighting” contractors. However, those with non-combat tasks could in a long run be counterproductive for the American efforts in COIN.

When General Odierno commanded troops in Baghdad, he was very concern with their security; he did not want to lose any soldier, unless really necessary. Sepp notes that Odierno “placed the welfare of his soldiers absolutely above that of the Iraqi people, who expected the Americans to provide for their security, as the Iraqi army and police could not. [...] He eventually gave the order to his troops to 'increase lethality' in their operations. His top priority in counterinsurgency, he said, was to obtain the best possible weapons and equipment for his soldiers – to help protect them from the threats they faced. How this type of mission-focus might help Iraq become a functional and viable nation-state, however, remains unclear.”¹⁶⁹

Odierno's troops in Baghdad serve as an example of a broader phenomenon. When the troops were not on duty, they usually closed themselves behind heavy walls from steel and concrete, into (as again ironically remarks Sepp) “large fortified bases, where they could eat 31 flavors of ice cream and guard only their own perimeter.”¹⁷⁰ Americans would have never had such big bases without the help of contractors, who

167 SINGER, Peter W. *Can't Win with'em, Can't go to War without'em*, p. 6.

168 Quoted in: *Ibid*, p. 7.

169 SEPP, Kalev I. From ‘shock and awe’ to ‘hearts and minds’, p. 219.

170 *Ibid*, p. 223.

provided the needed logistical support. Without them, if the military were supposed to take care of the facilities all by themselves, it would have been impossible. Number of troops needed for such task would not be politically viable.

Singer calls this basing habit “the 'Green Zone' mentality problem of sprawling bases, which runs counter to everything General Petraeus pointed to as necessary to winning a counterinsurgency [...]”¹⁷¹ The Green Zone mentality turned military into something that “soldiers sometimes called a 'self-licking ice cream cone' – an organization that fought to sustain itself rather than to achieve a mission.”¹⁷² The costs and inefficiency of this approach is not its only problem. It “not only created supply-line vulnerabilities but also cut off troops from the populace, neglecting an essential part of any successful counterinsurgency campaign.”¹⁷³

A way to connect both the military and civilian workers with the population of Iraq was the project of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). These efforts for Iraq were first announced in 2005 by Condoleezza Rice, who said that the mission of PRTs would be to “marry our economic, military, and political people in teams to help local and provincial governments get the job done.”¹⁷⁴ At first, the PRTs were led by officials from the Department of State and included military members, security contractors, and other government agencies (such as USAID, Department of Agriculture, Department of Justice, etc.)¹⁷⁵

In 2007 with the “New Way Forward” approach of the Bush administration that included the surge, new PRTs were announced to be created. The newly created teams were supposed to have a slightly different role. They were embedded in the Brigade Combat Teams, and thus had a military leadership. In then promoted COIN 'clear, hold, build' approach, the military component was supposed to 'clear' and 'hold' the area, and the civilian component was the one to 'build'. Their way of achieving the goal was distribution of money and resources in order to create jobs. They also worked with local, municipal, tribal and other authorities.¹⁷⁶

171 SINGER, Peter W. *Can't Win with'em, Can't go to War without'em*, p. 5.

172 BOOT, Max. *More Small Wars*, p. 12.

173 Ibid.

174 PERITO, Robert M. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2007, p. 1.

175 Ibid, p. 1-2.

176 TARNOFF, Curt. *Iraq: Reconstruction Assistance*. DIANE Publishing, 2011, p. 16.

Despite the fact that the new embedded PRTs (ePRTs) were smaller in their size, the Department of State had troubles to find an appropriate number of civilian experts to deploy in the new teams. Soon after the announcement of new emerging PRTs, “the State Department was forced to turn to the Pentagon for volunteers to fill these 'civilian' PRT posts.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, up to the year 2007 there was no pre-deployment training for civilian officials who were supposed to be deployed in the PRTs in Iraq.¹⁷⁸

Despite some success in grass-roots project and an obvious advantage resulting from the PRT members' knowledge of the local environment, civilians in these teams were highly dependent on the protection provided by the military. Since the announced withdrawal it had been obvious that the projects were most likely condemned to failure once the U.S. military leaves the area.¹⁷⁹ The dependency also caused the PRT civilian workers to spend “an inordinate amount of time dealing with administrative and support issues.”¹⁸⁰

Altogether, the PRTs' results were hard to assess. They were criticized for the fact that they “lack clear lines of authority, agreed missions, and measurable objectives.”¹⁸¹ There is a popular belief that the PRT projects were inspired by the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support from Vietnam. Indeed, there is a clear resemblance. However, as Ucko concludes, the Vietnam CORDS program involved way more people than PRTs both in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the “\$7,8 billion (adjusted) per year spent on CORDS at its peak also \$2 billion devoted annually to PRTs in Iraq.”¹⁸² The Provincial Reconstruction Teams were a good initiative that was unfortunately understaffed, insufficiently funded, and unable to attract enough experts to participate in it.

3.3.1 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The civilian-military cooperation is in long-term problematic for Americans. The military has a perception of its own role and despite some attempts to change it, the mindset generally remains in existence. Moreover, there is a rivalry

177 DAVIDSON, Janine. *Lifting the Fog of Peace*, p. 172.

178 PERITO, Robert M. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq*, p. 3.

179 TARNOFF, Curt. *Iraq: Reconstruction Assistance*, p. 16.

180 PERITO, Robert M. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq*, p. 7.

181 Ibid.

182 UCKO, David. H. *The New Counterinsurgency Era*, p. 164.

between the Department of Defense and the Department of State regarding the role of the two in the post-conflict reconstruction. Both departments outsource some of their tasks to security contractors, whose rules of engagement differ a lot and whose impact is often counterproductive. Despite some successes with Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and other projects, those initiatives are rather limited in their impact. Americans lack experts who would be qualified and willing to participate in nation-building efforts. Moreover, many resources are wasted by military in their complicated logistics, instead of being used in the local projects and development.

Americans should better conceptually approach reconstruction. They should carefully assess advantage of all government agencies and set their goals and authority. With a better planning, the allocation of resources should be reconstruction-oriented rather than supportive of self-sustaining bases. Private contractors will probably be a part of future conflicts. However, they should be anchored in a clear judicial environment. All incidents should be investigated and offender prosecuted in order not to alienate the local population. The U.S. government should consider creation of an umbrella agency whose task would be coordination of nation-building efforts and development of a thorough conceptual approach.

3.4 *Democracy and legitimacy*

Iraq is a highly divided country. Saddam Hussein held it together only at the cost of brutal measures, corruption and intimidation. After the fall of Ba'athis regime, every social group tried to promote its own interests. Democracy as the new paradigm of governance seemed to be a meaningful choice for Iraq. After all, in democracies of western fashion, all components of the society are supposed to have a word in public affairs and participate on them. However, Iraq proved to be highly problematic.

The original Coalition Provisional Authority was replaced with the Iraqi Interim Government in June 2004. Since then, Iraqis were considered sovereign in their political fate. There were no significant achievements of the Interim Government, but it was able to prepare the elections of 2005 – which turned into a success. Iraqis elected the transitional national assembly, provincial assemblies, and Kurdistan regional assembly. The turnout was very good in the Shi'a southern regions of Iraq (70%) and in Kurdish northern regions (over 80%). However, most of the Sunni leaders and political figures

ignored the election process. In the al-Anbar province, only 2% of the voters exercised their right to vote.¹⁸³ The road to the 2005 elections was everything but easy.

From the beginning, there were voices calling for decentralization of Iraq and its division into three main semi-autonomous regions with a loose central control over them. However, this solution was not viable due to 3 main factors: 1) there were no clear borders between the Kurdish, Shi'a, and Sunni population that would enable to draw a line between the three new units; 2) the possibility that “such a division would confirm wider fears across the Arab world that the United States invaded Iraq to weaken a strong Arab state,”¹⁸⁴ and 3) an inevitable future dispute over the oil revenues.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the major oil fields are located in the north and south of Iraq, and the western part of the country would probably come short.

It was thus decided to hold the country together. However, it was hard for the common Iraqis to feel a national unity, primarily due to the security deficit which manifested itself in numerous violent incidents, high civilian casualties from U.S. troops and contractors engagements with militants and lack of basic services or rule of law. Moreover, there was a deepening distance between the authorities and the population. Sooner or later, all the important headquarters closed themselves behind heavy walls into separated zones with increased security. Both Iraqis and Americans tended to travel only sporadically, and in armored convoys that avoided contact and engagement with the people for security reasons, as many of them were assassinated or kidnapped.¹⁸⁶

Since the beginning of the post-invasion phase the American allies from the Iraqi people pressed for the transition of power to the hands of Iraqis. The U.S. and the military commander Bremer appointed in July 2003, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). Apart from the fact, that it was appointed by the occupying power and had no democratic legitimacy, it has only limited powers, and its role was rather advisory. On one hand, members of the IGC could nominate new ministers, and propose time

183 DIAMOND, Larry. *What Went Wrong and Right in Iraq*, p. 173.

184 BAKER, James A. HAMILTON, Lee H. *The Iraq Study Group Report*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 39.

185 Ibid.

186 DIAMOND, Larry. *What Went Wrong and Right in Iraq*, p. 177.

schedules for new constitution and elections, but, on the other hand, there were severe internal disputes within the council, based on political, religious, and ethnic basis.¹⁸⁷

United Nations demanded that the IGC creates a timetable for the constitutional transition until December 15, 2003. Due to the inability of the council to find a solution, Americans decided to act unilaterally and developed their own transitional timetable, called the November 15 Agreement. However, it was only partly an agreement; even though it was formally approved by the IGC, the council had no other option. The Agreement set a date for the end of political occupation on June 30, 2004. However, as soon as by the end of February of that year, the IGC pushed through a Transitional Administrative Law – a semi-constitutional provision that dominated the political space in the country until the end of 2005 when an elected government under the new Constitution assumed power.¹⁸⁸

The problem with the November 15 Agreement was primarily the fact that it suggested election in May 2004 that were supposed to be council-based. According to the Bremer's plan, the voting would be conducted “by members of the provincial and municipal governing councils established by the Americans and British. These council members had gotten into power because of small, unrepresentative selection processes overseen by the occupation authorities [...]”¹⁸⁹ Naturally, Americans wanted to have “their” people in the governing structures in order to ensure that they would cooperate. Moreover, they saw this provision as necessary for the de-Ba'athification efforts.

It is ironic that Americans who were supposed to bring democracy to Iraq promoted undemocratic measures. Even more ironic is the fact that the major opponent of the plan was a Shi'a Muslim cleric and Grand Ayatollah named Ali Husayni al-Sistani. Sistani issued a *fatwa* calling for popular sovereignty, demanding that popular elections replace the council-based elections proposed by Americans. His demands did not go unnoticed; he organized tens of thousands of protesters in the streets of Baghdad

187 DIAMOND, Larry. Building Democracy After Conflict: Lessons From Iraq. *Journal of Democracy*. Jan 2005, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 9-23, p. 10-11.

188 Ibid, p. 11.

189 COLE, Juan R. I. The Ayatollahs and Democracy in Iraq. *ISIM Review*. Spring 2006, Vol. 17, pp. 34-35, p. 34.

and Basra. He achieved to attract international attention to the problem, resulting in involvement of the United Nations.¹⁹⁰

Americans were surprised by the internationalization of the issue and the strength of popular resistance towards their one-sided solutions. The Sistani's approach prevailed and popular vote decided the elections for constitutional assembly in March 2005, referendum about the new constitution in October and general election for the government by the end of the same year.¹⁹¹

The United States had searched for an important religious authority to align with. At first, they chose Ayatollah Abdul Majid Khoi to promote their interests. However, Khoi was murdered in Iraq few days after he arrived. After his death, Khoi was replaced in the position of an American front-runner for the new Iraq by Achmed Chalabi, whose biggest goal was to punish Ba'athists and prevent them from entering the new government and other important positions. Chalabi was very active, after the invasion he was travelling across the country promoting Iraqi-American friendship and trying to win political points. However, he was not popular both among Iraqi people and American military.¹⁹²

Originally, Chalabi was planned to be the figure to rule from behind, being irreconcilably anti-Ba'thist. Khoi was supposed to be "the face" of new Iraq; as a religious authority, he was likely to be popular especially among the Shi'a majority.¹⁹³ As opposed to both Chalabi and Khoi, Sistani was a person who reined in Iraq after the Iraq-Iran War and after the Gulf War. He withstood the repression of Hussein's regime even when other clerics were persecuted and the Iraqis felt better connection with him rather than with exile leaders.

Generally, it can be said that in Muslim countries, such as Iraq, democracy is "problematic as an effective ideology because Islam forms the basis for conceptions of government and authority (despite the secular views of many Iraqis)."¹⁹⁴ Due to this fact, it was even more surprising that many religious leaders supported general elections

190 Ibid.

191 DIAMOND, Larry, *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 11.

192 PELLETIERE, Stephen C. *Losing Iraq*, p. 78-85.

193 Ibid, p. 81.

194 McFATE, Montgomery. JACKSON, Andrea V. *The Objectives Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition*. *Military Review*. Jan-Feb 2006, pp. 13-26, p. 20.

and democratic principles. Sistani even aligned himself with and ideological rival, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, who “clearly disagreed with Sistani about clerics playing a key role in politics.”¹⁹⁵

Hakim also wasn't an American asset. He came from Iran and probably was an Iranian agent. Moreover, he was probably involved in the murder of American “hope” for Iraq, Abdul Majid Khoi. He also came to Iraq with a numerous militias own his own.¹⁹⁶ The two most prominent figures that aligned to promote democratic governance were outsiders to the U.S. plans, but popular in Iraq. This illustrates the American failure to rely on the right figures in their effort to rebuild Iraq to their own image.

The lack of understanding of the local political environment are in a sharp contrast to what Simon Chesterman wrote: “Modern trusteeships demand, above all, trust on the part of local actors. Earning and keeping that trust requires a level of understanding, sensitivity, and respect for local traditions and political aspirations [...]”¹⁹⁷ Diamond concluded that “the occupation of Iraq lacked these qualities, and the Iraqi people knew it. [...] The suspicion of U.S. intentions was further exacerbated by its excessive reliance on Iraqi exiles, some of whom were themselves widely distrusted by the Iraqi public.”¹⁹⁸

Speaking of the new Iraqi democratic legitimacy and expatriates, we can't not touch upon Nouri al-Maliki. He was the first Prime Minister of Iraq elected in 2006 who stayed until the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2011. He spent 27 years in exile only to return to war-torn country, with mutual mistrust between all three major groups: Sunnis, Shi'as and Kurds. Himself being a Shiite, he had to cope with the Sunni fear that they will find themselves at the bottom of the society, resulting in resistance and insurgency. Moreover, he had to deal with the Kurdish warlords in the North, driven in their actions partly by greed and partly by the memories of years of oppression.

After his election the violence in Iraq was about to reach its peak. Due to the situation, Maliki cooperated with Americans and also promoted inter-factional negotiations. In 2007, along with his officials from Ministry of Interior and Defense,

195 COLE, Juan R. I. *The Ayatollahs and Democracy in Iraq*, p. 35.

196 PELLETIERE, Stephen C. *Losing Iraq*, p. 79.

197 Chesterman, Simon. *You, The People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 257.

198 DIAMOND, Larry. *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 16.

they “were regularly visited by Anbar Awakening leaders, and Maliki fully supported their fight against al-Qaeda.”¹⁹⁹ However, after the power of al-Qaeda in the Sunni regions was mostly broken, the mistrust came back and “tensions persisted with the Shiite-led local government. The Awakening accused the local and national police forces of [...] torturing the Sunni fighters they detained. With bad blood between the sides, al-Maliki ordered a security offensive in Diyala that amounted to a crackdown on Sunni parties and paramilitary groups. [...] Hundreds were detained.”²⁰⁰

Shortly after the incident one of the prominent Sunni leaders of the Awakening movement, Abu Ali, was captured by Iraqi Special Forces and imprisoned in Baghdad. Americans intervened and persuaded Maliki to release him. It is unclear whether he accepted the U.S. demand because of political calculation, fear, or because of the fact that Abu Ali helped to fight against al-Qaeda before. The relations with Sunnis and the Awakening were improved a little, but remained a kind of marriage of convenience, based on intimidation and reward principle.²⁰¹

As soon as the violence in Iraq dropped, Maliki started to act unilaterally, using Special Forces to target and harass his political rivals, sent troops to fight militias in Basra, and almost started a war with Kurds in the north because of territorial disputes. American soon started to have a feeling that Maliki is out of control, counterproductive to their efforts, and they “employed satellite reconnaissance, normally reserved for US adversaries, to keep track of Iraqi units.”²⁰²

One of al-Maliki's main goals after the surge and improvement of the security situation was to get Americans out of the country. He pressed for setting the withdrawal dates and only reluctantly signed treaties that enabled the U.S. troops to stay longer. U.S. officials and military commanders were not afraid to confront him harshly, but only to a certain extent. Bush didn't allow them to really press on Maliki for a simple reason – there was no viable option of replacement for him.²⁰³

199 Al-JABOURI, Najim Abed. JENSEN, Sterling. The Iraqi and AQI roles in the Sunni Awakening, p. 14.

200 PARKER, Ned. Machiavelli in Mesopotamia: Nouri al-Maliki Builds the Body Politic. *World Policy Journal*. Spring 2009, pp. 17-25, p. 20.

201 Ibid.

202 LEBOVIC, James H. *The Limits of U.S. Military Capability: Lessons from Vietnam and Iraq*. John Hopkins University Press, 2010, p. 198.

203 Ibid, p. 172.

Therefore, al-Maliki remain autonomous leader and a “loose cannon” until the withdrawal of U.S. troops – a fact that he considered his accomplishment. Parker remarks that since the year 2008 various factions in Iraq had “come to see the benefits of forging alliances with Baghdad and the consequences of failing to do so.”²⁰⁴ Moreover, the country had “started to resemble not a Western-style democracy, which was the goal when the United States invaded, but the authoritarian model that governed Iraq before 2003.”²⁰⁵

Maliki's case perfectly illustrates what Steven Metz wrote about the foreign intervention in states with insurgencies and factional tensions: “The most effective posture for outsiders in not to be viewed as an ally of the government and thus a sustainer of the flawed sociopolitical-economic system, but rather to be seen as a neutral mediator and peacekeeper, even when the outsiders may have a greater ideological affinity for the existing regime than the insurgent. [...] We need to remember that our allies often consider the reforms which the United States defines as key to long-term success as more of a threat than the insurgency itself. Elites in states faced with an insurgency do not want a pyrrhic victory in which they defeat the insurgents only to lose their own grip on power.”²⁰⁶

3.4.1 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Americans bet on the wrong people to help them win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis. Most of their allies were exiles who did not have the support of the locals. They couldn't even try to win their trust as the security situation didn't allow them to meet the common people and talk to them. The proclaimed shift towards a democratic regime was slow. It was even more problematic due to the fact that there was a lack of reliable Iraqi people who would participate without any ulterior motives or greed. The United States allowed Prime Minister Maliki to establish a semi-authoritarian regime ruled mostly by Shiites. Due to their lack of knowledge about local political dynamics, they wound themselves in a situation without any (relevant) allies.

204 PARKER, Ned. Machiavelli in Mesopotamia, p. 17.

205 Ibid.

206 METZ, Steven. *New Challenges and Old Concepts: Understanding 21st Century Insurgency. Parameters*. Winter 2007-08, pp. 20-32, p. 30.

In a future operation, Americans should focus on security that would allow their allies to connect with the population. They should also try to choose local figures and persuade them to collaborate with them. In order to ensure the national unity, U.S. should push forward a governance framework which demands a nation-wide sectarian and etnical participation, at least for some time. They do not necessarily have to promote an full-fledged Western liberal democracy, but rather try to act with comprehension, and try to find the delicate balance between anarchical decentralization and authoritative regime which alienates the minorities and regional leaders.

Conclusion

The American troops left Iraq with an ambiguous feeling. Terrorist attacks and insurgency were still present. Iraq was far from being a fully functional democratic state and security forces were hardly prepared to assume full responsibility for the security in the country. National reconciliation and unity was not achieved. On the contrary, new grievances were made. The government was dominated by a figure that was dubious, corrupt, and incapable of reliable functioning.

The brilliance with which the invasion phase was conducted was in a sharp contrast with the post-invasion stabilization efforts. A well-planned and well-performed military operation of conventional nature that overthrew the regime was replaced by a clueless occupation without proper conception, resources, and strategy.

The United States acted unilaterally; Americans were not able to ensure broad international support for the war. Moreover, their stabilization and reconstruction efforts were full of misperceptions; they expected a massive support of the Iraqis, and far less resistance from the Iraqi armed forces. Their intelligence failed them, as well. No one anticipated that Saddam's most loyal and heavily indoctrinated fighters – the Fedayeen – would fight so hard to defend their leader. In fact, not many people actually knew about their existence and functions.

There was an assumption that the security forces would mostly stay operational and that they would collaborate with the “liberators”. What a surprise it was when the security forces collapsed or kept on resisting. There was no plan that would count with that possibility. It shows the symptoms of the American way of war being *astrategic*. The harsh dissolution of Ba'ath party that included many experienced and non-criminal military and police officers had political consequences that were also not properly foreseen. Therefore, we can conclude that this is a testimony about *apolitical* nature of the U.S. strategic culture.

There were some improvements regarding implementation of COIN strategy and a shift in the conduct of war was under General Petraeus. However, he was (and still is) in a minority. The changes came after a long period of troubles marked by wrong strategy (inconsistent with the population-centric COIN). Even the relatively successful surge did not bring as many troops as probably needed. This shows that the United States did not properly capture the nature of revolutionary irregular conflict. Therefore, the

profoundly regular nature of U.S. military and strategic culture manifested itself in the war.

The initial notion that insurgents could be traced and eliminated resulted in easier recruitment efforts of the insurgent organizations. Enemy-centric approach adopted in the beginning was a counterproductive measure which brought a vicious circle of violence in the country without any significant accomplishment and reduction of power on the side of the resistance groups. We may conclude that this straightforward approach is a sign of *problem-solving, optimistic* strategic culture.

The American military focused a lot on protection of its troops. There was an unwillingness to put soldiers in harm – something necessary for a successful counter-insurgency. Trigger-happiness that characterized the U.S. troops, as well as contractors, resulted in extensive numbers of civilian casualties, and harmed the hard-won trust of the local people. It is a sign of American way of war still being *highly sensitive to casualties*, and also *aggressive, offensive*. Moreover, the high number of civilian casualties, caused among others by frequent raids of Special Forces, and shelling of inhabited areas were caused by the fact that U.S. troops are in the long run *focused on firepower*.

Despite their rich experiences with nation-building and stability operations, Americans did not manage to learn their lessons from the past. Attempts to repeat some successful provisions from the past (such as PRTs) were underfinanced and inefficient. Therefore, we may observe that their approach to the war was *ahistorical*. The calls for withdrawal as soon as the violence decreased between years 2007 and 2008, and the predictions that stability operations would last up to five years, serves as a testimony about the *impatience* of American way of war.

Americans aligned themselves with wrong people, mostly expatriates, and often from the West. They were unable to gain trust of the population and “plead the American case” in front of Iraqis. Not enough people came from U.S. to Iraq with appropriate language skills. The lack of understanding of local traditions, political dynamics, and ethnic, religious and tribal links shows that in the Iraq War the United States were *culturally challenged*. Without proper human resources and intelligence assets in the country, it was hard for the U.S. to gather reliable human intelligence.

Therefore, they had to rely on technologically complicated signal intelligence and visual reconnaissance and surveillance, thus making them again *technologically dependent*.

The mistrust of the people was further enhanced by the fact that those who were supposed to protect them were hiding behind heavy walls in their large bases – little Americas. This is a sign of strategic culture being both *large-scale* and *logistically excellent*. Unfortunately, the large-scale nature of the involvement was to high extent consumed by the need of logistical support. That resulted in much of valued resources being allocated inefficiently instead of being used for bringing security to the streets of Iraq.

We may conclude that Americans did not learn from the past the way they should have. They did not manage to overcome their long-term strategic culture. Manifestation of this culture in their conduct of war and their actions in counter-insurgency and nation-building efforts caused them not to achieve the national goals. Iraq was not left being secure, prosperous, nor stable. It shall be concluded that fully successful implementation of counter-insurgency and nation-building that would bring desired outcomes could not be achieved. There were some attempts to stand up against the long-term trends in strategic culture, but they were rather temporary and only partial. Therefore, the *tested hypothesis was proven valid*.

In the future, we can expect return of the Vietnam syndrome characterized by significant resistance of the U.S. armed forces to change their mindset towards irregular warfare. Attempts to bring a change in planning, bring attention to operations-other-than-war, and conceptually modernize American strategic thinking will probably face animosity and refusal from the top brass of the military, as well as Pentagon and DOD high officials. The military will probably refuse to adopt irregular warfare as one of its main goals for the future conflicts. We can see the counter-insurgency community being ridiculed as “COINdinistas” and stability operations being labeled as inappropriate for the strongest military in the world. Only future conflict will show whether the American strategic community has the ability to produce Lessons Learned and better adapt to the nature of contemporary warfare.

Shrnutí

Spojené státy americké opustily Irák v situaci, kdy v zemi probíhaly časté teroristické útoky, mezi jednotlivými složkami společnosti panovala nevraživost a ekonomická situace byla nestabilní. Irácké ozbrojené síly byly nespolehlivé, zkorumpované, špatně vyzbrojené a vycvičené, a často se do nich infiltrovaly rozkladné živly. Jejich schopnost zajistit bezpečnost v zemi byla velice omezená. Navíc docházelo často k excesům a irácké ozbrojené síly byly využívány v politickém boji.

Demokratické principy se v zemi dostatečně neetablovaly, nový premiér Málíkí se ukázal být vládcem s autoritativními tendencemi, náchylným ke korupci a zastrašování oponentů a nekontrolovatelným. Celkově se doba po invazi začala stále více podobat době před invazí.

Můžeme konstatovat, že cíle protipovstaleckého boje a nation-buildingu, tedy vytvoření stabilního, bezpečného a soběstačného Iráku, se nepodařilo naplnit.

Spojené státy nedokázaly zajistit dostatečnou mezinárodní podporu pro stabilizační operaci. Nasazení dostatečného množství jednotek bylo politicky neprůchozí, proto se musely USA spoléhat na služby soukromých bezpečnostních firem. Jejich působení se ukázalo být do velké míry kontraproduktivní, vzhledem k cílům, kterých chtěly USA v Iráku dosáhnout.

Celková rekonstrukce a stabilizace Iráku byla neefektivní, zejména kvůli nedostatku civilních expertů, jejich nezkušenosti a nízké motivaci. Ozbrojené síly USA se ukázaly být ve vleku své tradiční strategické kultury, která se vytvářela během desetiletí, až staletí. V iráckém konfliktu se jí nepodařilo překonat, ačkoliv jisté náznaky pozorovat můžeme, zejména v působení týmu okolo generála Petraeuse.

Nedokonalé plánování, špatný odhad situace po invazi a neúspěch při působení na iráckou populaci způsobily, že nation-building probíhal nekonceptně, v bezpečnostně nejistém prostředí. Stabilizační fáze po invazi je příkrým kontrastem s efektivitou při vojenském tažení proti Husejnovu režimu, což potvrzuje tezi, že Spojené státy jsou povahou své strategické kultury schopny vypořádat se lépe s konvenčním konfliktem, než s nekonvenčním konfliktem malé intenzity.

Hypotéza se prokázala být validní. Práce identifikuje *Lessons Learned*, které shrnují poznatky o hlavních chybách a potížích Spojených států při poinvazní fázi války v Iráku a ukazuje, v jakých formách se definovaná strategická kultura během konfliktu

projevovala. Celkově je pohnávací fáze války v Iráku hodnocena negativně. Práce obsahuje částečná doporučení stran toho, čeho by se měly Spojené státy v budoucnu při podobné operaci vyvarovat.

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