Research Article

Counterinsurgency Policy in Phase IV of Operation Iraqi Freedom

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Abstract- Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) was launched on March 20, 2003 to move the regime of Saddam Hussein and help Iraqi people to rebuild a new Iraq. The outcomes of the operations demonstrate that plans and preparations were hastily made and with a lack of contingency plans. The role of civilian agencies working with the new Baghdad regime in the post-war era was not implemented successfully. The post war period's desired end states were not achieved as planned. What were the assumptions of CENTCOM before the OPLAN 1003? What did the counterinsurgency policy rely on? What was the reaction of the Iraqi people against the OIF army? How does this policy affect the desired end state? The aim of this article is to respond to the aforementioned questions. This paper seeks to demonstrate the weaknesses of the counterinsurgency policy pursed in the OIF and the measures taken in wake of the failure. Finally, the lessons learned are described and suggestions are given.

Keywords- Counterinsurgency; Iraq; Operation Iraqi Freedom; OPLAN 1003, Policy.

1. Introduction

The United States (US) Foreign Policy has instigated foreign internal conflicts in its application. The US has participated in efforts meant to stabilize war torn countries and assist them in recovering. Since the end of the Cold War, the US participated in both small wars and engaged in operations that are not involved in war (Forman, 2012). Through such involvement, the US military has encountered smaller contingencies, which involve integration with the civilians. This is a problem as the military preparation involves tactics used in large and advanced technological wars. Whenever the US military responds to a minor emergency, it is compelled to relearn how to manage these smaller contingencies. The wars in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan have provided insight about whether and how the US should operate in post-

conflict as well as in conflict environments. The two wars found a place in American history books based on the efforts and finances used, the number of military deployments, and the magnitude of the US casualties (Packer, 2005). The US had not experienced loss since the Vietnam War. However, the conflicts demonstrated the challenges the US faced regarding their participation in internal conflicts (Government Printing Office, Beyond Iraq: Repercussions of Iraq Stabilization and Reconstruction Policies, 2003).

Such challenges included the lack of military and civilian coordination, difficulty in achieving strategic success through tactical and operational methods, and the use of shortcuts. This article will therefore analyze whether the United States' presence in Iraq succeeded in stabilizing and reconstructing Iraq in terms of the implementation of its policies. It will focus on Phase IV, which is

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the last period of the military campaign to liberate Iraq. The main phases were as follows: Phase I, preparation for securing regional and international support; Phase II, shaping the battlespace; Phase III, decisive offensive operations; Phase IV, post hostilities (Fontenot et al., 2004).

2. Background Information

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) was a war plan implemented by the US. Popular belief among the policy makers assumed that Iraqi civilians would intervene in the military planning process. The initiation plans for OIF began on November 27, 2001. President George Bush requested the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Commander of United States Central Command (CENTCOM) Tommy Franks to reassess an existing war plan (OPLAN 1003) against Iraq. In a few days' time, Rumsfeld directed Franks to devise a new war plan that included deployment of fewer forces, new technologies, and insights acquired from the operation "Enduring Freedom," which was a seven-week operation undertaken in Afghanistan (Bensahel, 2006).

However, the war plan implemented for OIF proved incapable its purpose. The war plan had many problems in its initial planning and implementation. It made optimistic assumptions and did not have a contingency plan in case of unexpected outcomes. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) analysis observed that the OIF OPLAN did not document risk mitigation strategies in case assumptions were proven wrong. According to a 2006 report by the Joint Center for Operational Analysis, OIF planning did not examine the consequences of assumptions, which contributed to the inability of coalition forces to prevent the breakdown of civil order in Iraq (Reilly et al., 2012).

The plan also depended entirely on the coordination between the military and civilians. It assumed that the Iraqi people would welcome the Americans as their liberators. The assumption was so misguided that they believed that the civilians would even join them in combat when they learned of the intention of the US, which was to remove President Saddam Hussein and his administration from power. The US forces went into Iraq without preparation. "A valid assumption must have three characteristics according to their publication JP 5-0 Joint Operation as logical, realistic, and essential for the planning to continue" (JP 5-0,2011). As will be demonstrated below, the assumptions were not estimated successfully.

After the fall of Baghdad, there was increased looting, insurgency, and a break down in law and order for which the American forces were not prepared. The US also assumed that after removing the ministers and their advisors, the government would continue functioning. It believed that the ministries had the capability and power to run the government without ministers. This was not the case. Baghdad was the center of all decision-making as the government had a highly centralized structure (Bensahel, 2006). This incorrect evaluation created the breaking point of the Iraqi state and signaled the beginning of Phase IV of OIF. In planning Phase IV, US policy makers did not contemplate the presence of insurgents and paramilitary forces. The rebuilding of society in Phase IV became a difficult task since it required a non-linear approach instead of a linear progression. The military responsibility in Phase IV was the building of social institutions. However, the militaries' linear approach in decision-making proved to be a hindrance to rebuilding society.

In an operation planning process, the US military employs an approach that involves three levels: strategic, operational, and tactical.

The strategic level entails the stage in which the nation determines its national security goals and utilizes the available resources to complete such goals. The operational level involves the accomplishment of strategic objectives through campaigns in the operational areas. The tactical level of war entails the utilization of units and troops in combat and converting the combat power to successful engagements. In making decisions, the military therefore has to determine the purpose of the action. The military also predetermines the methods of achieving such ends. Lastly, the military determines the means or resources (Kem, 2005).

One of the main goals in Phase IV was the establishment of the rule of law and the

construction of institutions such as schools and hospitals that ordered society.

In light of this information, it is clear that the civilian aspect was the missing in the plan. The operational art was not designed thoroughly. Though the war plan to remove Saddam from office was brilliant, it had no contingency plan and therefore peace planning became a difficult task. Two years after the US invaded Iraq, the contrast between what was expected and what occurred was evident. For example, before the invasion, the Pentagon planners assumed that as few as 35,000 troops would be involved in the invasion in 2003. However, because of the increased insurgency and lawlessness, 150,000 troops were deployed to Iraq by the end of 2005 (Tucker and Hendrickson, 2005).

3. Counterinsurgency policy in Iraq

With the removal of Saddam Hussein from office in 2003, US policy makers and military leaders were not prepared for what was to come. The US faced increased insurgency in Iraq. The plans set out for Phase IV operations did not anticipate the raging insurgency that the US was about to face. According to some American military officials and outside observers, the US did not anticipate the insurgency threat since it was too gracious in removing Saddam from office. The insurgency came about because of the dissolution of Iraqi military units (Woodward, 2004). Most of the soldiers returned home assuming that their service as soldiers had ended. However, many others continued the resistance and went underground. The insurgencies proved to be a threat to the US campaign as they had a number of advantages such as knowledge of the terrain and home advantage. Additionally, the insurgency had access to explosives and arms (Tucker and Hendrickson, 2005). The insurgents had the ability to attack from unexpected directions. This made the US forces be suspicious of any Iraqi. The main advantage enjoyed by the insurgents was their ability to make the American military responses antagonistic to the interests of the indigenous population. This made any contact with the members of the population to be a source of danger to the military troops. The US forces' own propaganda relating to the motivation of the insurgents misled them. They failed to recognize the motivational factors as the nationalistic and religious revulsions and revenge following the death of fellow Iraqis in the hands of the Americans. The Americans believed that Iraqi people fought against them, as they were loyal to Saddam or Al-Qaeda (Hashim, 2006).

From 2003, the US and Iraqi forces have engaged in armed conflict where the counter insurgents and the insurgents resorted to a deadly learning game. Until 2006, the learning game evolved to a full-scale war. The participants in the war include American and Iraqi security forces against sectarian militia, jihadists, and Sunni Arab insurgents (Metz, 2007). The view of most military officials and policy makers is that the America's engagement in counterinsurgency strategy is inevitable in Iraq. They argue that the counterinsurgency measures are necessary because of the long war waged against the jihadists. In light of this argument, the US needed to put in place an organization as well as a strategy that could undertake counterinsurgency in the region.

The Department of Defense carried out counterinsurgency operations and other irregular operations. The Department of Defense, under the direction of the President, established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). The ORHA was a civilian-led office that was charged with creating a plan regarding the post-war situation in Iraq (Bowen, 2013). The creation of the ORHA resulted in the military and civilian authorities reporting to a single decision maker, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld (Bensahel, 2006).

However, things did not go as planned. The plan was that the ORHA would enter Iraq and begin their efforts as soon as the shooting ended (Bensahel, 2006). However, the ORHA was short lived. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) replaced the ORHA. By replacing the ORHA, a shift in the US policy directed towards post-war Iraq occurred. In the first months, CPA managed to work closely with the Baghdad ministries. However, the office was understaffed and plagued by constraints. The military had taken upon itself to begin local reconstruction activities in an effort to establish connections with the local inhabitants

(Rathmell, 2005). The creation of the CPA meant that the military would finally be relieved of these duties.

However, because of the constraints, understaffing, and increased insurgency, only a handful of the CPA officials left Baghdad. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) sent more military police to address the issue. Most of the military officials felt that the use of combat troops for civic activities was ineffective. They felt that inadequate training did not allow them to perform such activities. This triggered the heated debate on whether the counterinsurgency policy was doing more harm than good. This was a result of the realization that even though counterinsurgency operations made some Iraqis feel safe and deterred some insurgents, it also antagonized other Iraqis. The Americans could not rely upon the Iraqi people in securing the country. The policy makers deployed more units to carry out patrols in Baghdad. More troops were deployed to the Sunni Arab areas (Metz, 2007).

CENTCOM and the Pentagon realized that the Saddam's supporters carried out most of the insurgent activities and the violence. The military personnel took a more aggressive stance. The US troops attacked the Sunni triangle by carrying out a series of raids and sweeps. The operation resulted in the capture and death of many insurgents. However, this had a negative effect on the public, as their actions turned the inhabitants against the US troops. In capturing and killing insurgents, Iraqi public support to the US degraded. The counterinsurgency became a vicious cycle whereby the civilians turned against the military and the military viewed every civilian as a potential enemy (Phillips, 2005).

The hostility of the Iraqi people increased and in turn, the hostility of the troops increased. The anger from the American troops resulted from losing friends and comrades in combat. In the beginning of the counterinsurgency campaign, the US military employed a velvet glove approach instead of a mailed fist approach. The velvet fist approach employed tactics that placed emphasis on the gathering of intelligence, winning the support of the inhabitants, and the use of friendly persuasion. However, a major section of the Iraqi public did not acknowledge the velvet approach. Most of the inhabitants associated the American occupation with their suffering. Additionally, the presence of foreign jihadists fueled the fire. They converted the conflict from a political conflict to a spiritual struggle.

4. Weakness of Counterinsurgency Policy

The counter insurgency efforts in Iraq had a number of weaknesses. The US used flawed strategic assumptions and did not plan adequately for an insurgency. The transfer of power to the new Interim Iraqi Government marked the end of the political phase of the US occupation in Iraq. Though the transfer of power signified a hopeful departure for the Iraqis, the country was still plagued with problems. Such problems included endemic violence, an economy that lacked functionality, a state that was shattered, and a decimated society. The situation today is that the Bush's administration's promises to the Iraqis fell short. This came about because of the increased miscalculations throughout America's occupation in Iraq. Additionally, killings continued to take place where the victims were Iraqis, Americans, and other foreigners.

One of the weaknesses in the fight against the insurgency was related to security. In post-war Iraq, the Bush administration was reluctant in committing additional forces in ensuring law and order. Washington had already received warning from military leaders who suggested that security needed hundreds of thousands of troops. The required number of troops was approximately half a million; however, the troops deployed to Iraq were less than a third of that number. Every call made to the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld related to deploying more military person fell on deaf ears (Diamond, 2004). The Secretary of Defense made it clear that deploying additional military personnel to Iraq was an unwelcome idea.

Another weakness of the counterinsurgency was the false hope around the top of the chain of command. Before the counterinsurgency, there was a misled assumption that with the removal of Saddam from power, the US would capitalize the good will by returning the country to the Iraqi people to create a democratic state. The number of

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troops needed at first would be few; but after a year, the number of troops would reduce to a few tens of thousands. However, with the dawn of the insurgency, the assumptions collapsed. The insurgents looted and sabotaged Iraq and the US troops stood by feeling helpless as the insurgents outnumbered them and they were not prepared to deal with insurgency. Even at this time, the Bush administration did not sanction sending more troops. They stood upon the misled belief that the insurgents defeat could occur in the near future (Diamond, 2004). Initially in the war against the insurgency, counterinsurgency measures dictated that the Americans could not escalate their efforts. This indicated to the insurgents and their supporters that their willingness to impose harm outweighs the Americans' ability to impose harm on them. Another weakness of the counterinsurgency was that American policy makers, in attempting transformation, did not establish security.

Additionally, the US policy makers also linked the insurgency in Iraq to the global war on terror. This distorted and clouded their judgment relative to the formation of a strategy to deal with the insurgency. They employed a strategy of slow destruction or attrition (Metz, 2007). This ultimately did not produce the expected results.

5. Potential Areas of Improvement

In reducing the violence in Iraq, the US should consider changing its strategies and approaches. The existing policies need adjustments. Recently the additional troops have been deployed Iraq to deal with the insurgency. Additionally, the coalition has also used Iraqi forces to deal with the insurgency. This approach involves increasing force levels to a point where the policy makers will witness escalation in the violence. This strategy does not guarantee success in the near future, since 2003 the situation is the same. The US should employ a policy and strategy that reduces violence and ensures the safety and security of Iraq (Oliker et al., 2007).

In terms of the security policies in place, the US should ensure that the Iraqi forces become less sectarian to increase their effectiveness in the war against the insurgency. The Ministry of Interior should undergo thorough reforms since it is associated with instances of violence. Commissions should be established to vet the security personnel. Members of the vetting commissions should include representatives from each party. There should be thorough investigations related to the specialized police units. The next step would be to disband the units with records of abuse and malpractice. Government funds should not flow to the militia and therefore better financial control must exist. To do this, the US policy makers must establish a system of transparency and oversight. Additionally, joint patrols may reduce the perception of foreign occupation among the Iraqi people. The Iraqi police should respond to violence cases and lead the patrols. An equally stronger justice and prison system should reinforce the efforts of the Iraqi police. The US should fund the Iraq prisons and courts to ensure that the police's efforts are not in vain (Oliker et al., 2007).

For the sake of peace in the region, counterinsurgency measures must employ demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) strategies. This strategy will only be effective once the fighting decreases. The US government should collaborate with the Iraqi government in the formulation of a DDR program. When the fighting subsides, the program should target militia members and insurgents. Additionally, they should target redundant government security personnel. The individuals targeted may acquire job training from the DDR program. The program may prove to be an expensive venture. However, the US may provide advice and resources in making it a reality (Hoffman, 2004).

Counterinsurgency efforts should involve exerting maximum pressure on the insurgents relative to their freedom to act. The counterinsurgency operations employed by the US had a tactical approach. It involved conducting door-to-door raids and patrols (Jabar, 2004). This method became counterproductive over time. On the other hand, this confused the law-abiding citizens who did not know what to expect from each side. A counterinsurgency strategy success depends on the achievement of balance between these elements. If the US fails to maintain such balance, the enemy will continue reconstruction as well as

regeneration constantly (Pirnie and O'Connell, 2008). To do so, the US must have the capability and willingness to apply force in precise and appropriate measure (Smith, 2005). Since the insurgency in Iraq enjoys support from the population, the military cannot defeat it alone. The US also needs to form partnerships with the Iraqi security forces in conducting operations. Additionally, the US should engage in harmonizing training between the US Special Forces and their indigenous counterparts.

6. Conclusion

The US has learned many lessons from its experience in Iraq. Some of the lessons learned include the importance of collaboration with the Iraqi forces in dealing with counterinsurgency. The US has also learned about how to combine military and civil affairs. Additionally, the experience gained in the experience in Iraq indicated to the American agencies and the military that there was need to reshape. The US should also increase its expertise in nation building (Dobbins, 2003). Establishing a department whose primary responsibility involves reconstruction and stabilization can increase the experts in this field. On the other hand, the military must use more time in training its troops on how to deal with the insurgency, especially since it had dealt with a similar problem in Vietnam. From this perspective it is clear that the plans were hastily made.

Another important lesson is the importance of employing realism when devising war plans (Adams, 2006). The politically unrealistic assumptions used in designing the war plans were not aligned with the realities in the ground. The other consideration the US should make involves employing strategic pluralism. Strategic pluralism is an attitude that avoids the belief that "we can do it better next time" and instead employs an attitude that suggests, " we won't do it at all" (Tucker and Hendrickson, 2005). The fact that threats are always unpredictable guides this attitude.

The Americans had to come to a realization that war is a policy instrument. In other words, the only justification to war is its service towards achieving a political aim. The creation of the American war plan that did not accommodate the most important political goal reflected this state of mind. This political goal or aim involved successful reconstruction. The American war plan did not consider or anticipate the challenges the US would face after removing Saddam and his administration from office. America's policy makers who are both military personnel and civilians should move away from the stupendous attitudes of fire and movement. Instead, they should focus on the political achievements that war would accomplish.

Relative to the coalition, the US learned that in every mission they should employ mechanisms that guarantee unity of effort. It is important to establish institutions to deal with the insurgency and other conflicts before the onset of the crisis. The survival and effectiveness depends on its staffing. The experience in Iraq also showed the country the importance of making early plans. The purpose of early planning mechanisms involves challenging assumptions and making adequate contingency plans. Additionally, to align the resources with the set priorities, the planning process must be integrated with the management and resource allocation processes.

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