

‘FLOWERS IN THEIR MINDS’:  
THE FAILURE OF THE US TO SUFFICIENTLY  
EVOLVE ITS CAPABILITIES TO SUCCEED IN A  
FOURTH GENERATIONAL WARFARE  
ENVIRONMENT

BY

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## ABSTRACT:

The US administration and military entered into a Fourth Generational Warfare war in Iraq in 2003 without having sufficiently evolved their practices to succeed in the same. A focus on Third Generational Warfare, and a lack of priority given to the psy-cultural battleground, led to an expensive and protracted engagement to satisfy US security requirements. This thesis will examine the contrasting ideas regarding the future of warfare, and then use the Iraq War of 2003 for specific examples of the failure to evolve to meet the demands of 4GW. The failure to evolve came from the top.

DEDICATION:

To John, whose care whilst I could not care for myself enabled me to pick up my pen again.

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## Introduction

The US military is the best funded and most technologically advanced in the world today. It boasts the ability to remotely pilot drones capable of beaming images of targets back to operators comfortably seated a few miles from their homes in the US, with the option of selecting to fire on those targets, all without ever risking a US life. Smart bombs, laser guided missiles, and F-22 Raptors are all at the command of the US military commanders, with their use guided by a level of situational awareness never before thought possible, thanks to intelligence gathering capabilities that far outstrip all previous efforts. The US military is a behemoth that should be capable of outclassing any foe, and yet, in Iraq from 2003 until 2011, this military giant was unable to defeat a rag-tag bunch of militia, insurgents, and ‘dead-enders’. The 2003 US ‘liberation’ of the Iraqi people became viewed by many of them as an invasion to be countered instead. This thesis will firstly examine the ideas around future uses of the military, and then show that the US prepared for one particular type of war in Iraq, and found itself embroiled in another, one which it was distinctly unprepared for.

Specifically I posit that the engagement in Iraq from 2003 until 2011 was an example of Fourth Generational Warfare (4GW), as described by Col. Thomas X. Hammes, which the US was unprepared to face. A mistaken belief in technological superiority, in part based on the faith in the supposed Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), led the US to prepare for a Third Generational Warfare (3GW) conflict, causing the US to cede the all-important psy-cultural battleground early on. 4GW “...is rooted in the fundamental precept that superior political will, when properly

applied, can defeat greater economic and military power...” (Hammes 2006). It involves the protracted use of Counter Insurgency (COIN) against an evolved type of insurgency, one made up of loosely affiliated groups using all available networks to pursue their only joint goal: the enemy’s defeat and withdrawal. As such, it involves post-conflict reconstruction where necessary, and a willingness to plan for extended engagements of decades and more. In short, it is the very antithesis of the high-technology short term war that the US envisaged in Iraq, and subsequently incorrectly planned and resourced for.

‘Liberators’ and ‘liberated’ view themselves in the context of their own narratives, and can revolt against being placed in alternative roles within other accounts. Mutual understanding can be lost as each group ascribes emotions and motivations onto the other, with bewilderment and anger on both sides. American troops entering Iraq in 2003 with their commander in chiefs’ exhortation to “...free its people...” were also entering into a narrative of mutual frustration already played out in theatres of conflict throughout the world. US expectations of being feted as benevolent liberators, and welcomed with cheering crowds throwing flowers crumbled in the face of a lacklustre reception and the growth of an armed insurgency. The descent into increasing violence and a protracted COIN campaign as the US seemed unable to cede governance to the Iraqi people was not a unique situation, and it was also not inevitable. Both by their actions and their inactions the US administration exacerbated existing difficulties and failed to understand and control the situation on the ground. Through ignoring advice that didn’t mesh with the best case scenario envisioned and failing to understand the nature of the warfare they were engaging in, the US administration’s wishful thinking and poor

planning led to chaotic mismanagement, and a protracted involvement in unpopular actions. Force was deployed and expended without utility and thus ultimately wasted. The US refusal to countenance planning for worst case post-war scenarios or engage with Iraqi points of view (other than those of a privileged few) led to a flawed psywar campaign in which the targeting of political will was not prioritised, and was ineffectively carried out. Instead the US focused on a mass of men, materiel and technology as cornerstones of the campaign, upon which 4GW is not dependent.

Psywar, an intrinsic part of 4GW as it pertains to targeting will, can prove problematic to pin down with a clear and all-encompassing definition. In similarity with other such nebulous terms as “terrorism”, the parameters of the definition to some extent depends upon who is setting them. The US Department of Defense (DoD) has set their own parameters and given their own definitions a number of times. To paraphrase the most recent DoD definitions, it includes the use of propaganda and other psychological actions. The primary purpose is to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes and ultimately behaviours of foreign hostile groups in such a way as to support the achievement of national objectives. (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2003)

Psywar can be an intrinsic part of many military and even civilian operations, making it difficult to distil the ‘psychological action’ out of a more general action. Psywar goes far beyond leaflet drops and radio and TV broadcasts, it encompasses more subtle actions than pure communication through multiple mediums. Merely broadcasting your message, the signal, is not sufficient to win the political will

needed to succeed in the achievement of national objectives. Ensuring that the signal is not drowned by the noise is more than communication, it is effective psywar. Understanding the noise that will impact on your attempts to win over the populace is part of the preparations that should take place prior to engagement.

The effective psywar practitioner needs to have a clear and in depth understanding of their own society and culture, as well as that of their enemy. An understanding of the enemy armed forces and their capabilities, equipment and tactics is no longer enough. In psywar the weight has shifted from targeting the enemy's armed forces, to targeting their civilian's and decision maker's attitudes. Thus the idea of how actions would be perceived, as well as what they directly accomplished, is an important consideration for the successful 4GW practitioner, as well as commanding a proven ability to manipulate or at least fully utilise the media. For example, during the Intifada, young Palestinian boys threw stones and sticks at the Israeli army tanks making their way into the camps. Although of course this method caused absolutely no physical damage to the tanks or in any way impeded their progress, the media coverage of this was invaluable in presenting the disparity between the opposing sides, and led to a huge up swell of support for the 'defenceless' Palestinians. Thus the tactic of not using armed militants to impend the tanks progress, whilst on the battlefield a complete failure in that it could not stop the tanks approach, was overall a massive success in that it increased support for the Palestinian cause and diminished it for the Israelis. (Hammes 2006) In 4GW success is not measured in the number of enemy killed or the amount of territory advanced, and superior force and numbers is no guarantee of victory. A protagonist can suffer repeated military defeat and yet emerge

victorious from the war. Whilst hesitant to invoke the spectre of Vietnam, there are echoes of this in that conflict, with a particular example the Tet Offensive, a military defeat for the Vietcong but a huge public relations victory. (Arnold 1990)

4GW would require a strong psywar plan and campaign; the human terrain placed at the forefront of any discussions about strategy and post war stability. Military actions and political statements should have been considered within the framework of a coherent and culturally astute psywar strategy, itself based on true intelligence and thorough research and analysis. Force should have been used with utility, with the strategic goal of a democratic Iraq as the overall target; a target achievable only by first prioritising and capturing the will of the Iraqi people.

Instead, the US planned for a 3GW war with a mass of men, materiel and technological superiority, and failed to use this force with utility, thus negating the advantages this force contained in comparison to the enemy's once the 3GW phase was over. The US positioned itself as a generous and powerful benefactor, reluctantly entering into a conflict to protect itself and its allies and remove the yoke of subjugation from the Iraqi people. In this narrative, the Iraqi people were a downtrodden citizenry eagerly awaiting the removal of their tyrannical dictator in order to embrace democracy and western style freedom. In this simplified story, with their superior firepower and military might the US would sweep into Iraq, remove Saddam Hussein, acknowledge the accolades of the Iraqi people and leave the country as a good example of democracy within the region. Existing studies completed by the US military and the Department of Defense regarding the feasibility of such a grandiose plan, for example in reports such as 1999 "Desert Crossing", pointed out the fallacies of such simplistic thinking, and spoke in more

measured tones regarding the state of the existing Iraqi infrastructure, the likelihood of civil war, and the repercussions of US involvement and regime change. The conclusions of Desert Crossing were not heeded, and the US military was deployed without a coherent post-war plan.

It is worth remembering that the US military spent only twenty-seven days, from the 20<sup>th</sup> of March to the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2003, on what might be termed 'conventional' military action, the 3GW phase of the war. This was the time during which the force used had utility. If the aim of the US administration had been to depose a dictator, destabilise a country, and end as the only military force still in play, then the campaign aims would have been achieved. With the fall of Tikrit, the US military had shown the efficiency of their massed firepower, technological superiority and deployment systems. An opposing force had been routed, and although Saddam had not been captured, the US was effectively the force and power in the majority of the country.

During combat operations, and prior to the official start of the conflict, the psywar elements of the campaign had been mostly well funded and, in so far as psywar can be judged, successful in their limited aims. A significant number of Iraqi Army personnel did return to their homes as leaflets exhorted them to rather than fight. As countless 'liberating' forces have discovered throughout history, however, liberation involves more than removing an existing regime. The US had been clear that one of the reasons for entering Iraq had been to liberate the Iraqi people; to free them from the tyranny of the dictator Saddam Hussein. Although many military successes could be counted in the twenty seven days of war, the

achievement of a liberated Iraq was not one of them. Nor had the US effectively managed to capture the will of the Iraqi people; the main aim in any 4GW. The force the US had deployed ceased to have utility after the end of conventional manoeuvres. The momentum that had carried the military to victory seemed to dissipate as troops awaited further instructions and clarification of their new role and level of authority with Iraq.

Immediately after the end of what could be classed as the 3GW phase of the operation, the troops were stalled without clear aims and authority levels. The previous regime had been destabilised and defeated but with no coherent post-war strategy and aims the troops on the ground were left floundering. With the removal of the old regime's tyrannical forces of law and order and the lack of a new system to take their place, crime and social unrest exploded. The US military had not adapted its practices, and the US administration had not advanced their foreign policies to facilitate a smooth transition from one regime to another. Looting, destruction, and a general breakdown of security and services resulted, eventually forming into a fully-fledged insurgency backed by other power players in the region. Increasingly unable to cede power and responsibility to an Iraqi-led government, and facing a ratcheting up of pressure domestically and internationally, the US found itself trapped in an almost universally unpopular war of occupation. The US entered the region with the mind-set of a benevolent liberator, the perception shift to viewing themselves as an occupier COIN force was a jarring one that could not be completed easily or quickly. More time was lost, and more battleground ceded whilst the US attempted to come to terms with their role in Iraq and respond to the ever worsening situation on the ground. The

insistence on planning for a 3GW war, with expectations of gratitude and spontaneous imitation of US democracy, hamstrung the US war effort before the first troops hit the ground. I will show that the failure to evolve to meet the demands of modern interconnected warfare plunged the US military into a war with no clear aims, where their force had no utility, and continued to keep them there whilst the US administration grappled for a face-saving solution.

In Chapter One I create four original definitions of the competing ideologies about the future of warfare, in which I will place and examine the concept of 4GW. This will include a comprehensive literature review demonstrating that 4GW is a useful concept and framework to utilise in this thesis. In Chapter Two I briefly examine the pre-war stage; the holes in the plans that were created and the failure to correctly identify and plan for potential 4GW. In Chapter Three I will show how the US botched communication, and resisted learning from the errors made, mirroring themselves in fiasco. In Chapter Four I will examine four particular examples of US 4GW failures, and contrast this to a small Special Forces success in one area of the country to show that overall failure was not inevitable. Ultimately I will show that the US had failed to evolve their capabilities to succeed in a 4GW environment.



## ChapterOne:TheFutureofWarfare

To examine the 2003 war in Iraq, an explanation and exploration of the concept of 4GW is first needed. As with all theories, 4GW and the idea of evolutions in warfare is a contested concept. 4GW is but one of many current concepts seeking to set out the modern style of warfare in an understandable conceptual framework. As this thesis examines the role of the US military and administration in the 2003 Iraq War, the pertinent concepts under discussion may be framed as responses to the question of the type of war that the US will need to engage in in the future in order to maintain global dominance. I would suggest that there are four broad groups of commentators:

1. Those who would argue that the US will primarily face enemies that will require the US to practise what is essentially 4GW, and COIN,
2. Others who insist that a future inter-state war between evenly matched powers is not 'imaginary' but imminent and should thus be prioritised, which almost always includes more developed tech as part of a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA),
3. Those who plan for the military to be able to do everything rather than specialise, and
4. Finally, those who argue that most of the military action in the future will be Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW).

I will briefly examine the current dominant writing and thinking in each of these areas. Many of the concepts under discussion have been debated for decades, and refined to fit the emerging global realities as wars have started, threatened, and fizzled out. In this chapter I will finally look at the much touted RMA as it pertains

to the US military. I believe that 4GW is a useful and pertinent definition of warfare that, despite being decades old, holds true in the principles to the emergent warfare the US is now involved in, and is thus a valid description of the warfare the US faced in Iraq at the conclusion of the 3GW stage of the war.

No valid commentator has tried to argue that warfare has remained unaltered and unchanged since it was first waged; all fundamentally agree that there have been evolutions and changes in methods, tactics, technology, and the economic-social bond during warfare. Most also draw the dividing lines in the same broad strokes as Hammes, author of the 2006 work *The Sling and The Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, upon which my understanding of evolutionary changes in generational warfare has been based. Most tend to start with Napoleonic warfare; great “armies of unprecedented size on country-smashing campaigns of conquest through decisive manoeuvre and, usually, battle” (Sheehan 2010, 47), which chimes with Hammes’ definition of the peak of 1GW to be the Napoleonic wars of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, very aptly so in the face of Napoleon’s assertion that “Victory goes to the large battalion” (Nagl 2002, xii).

The next change was the industrialisation of war, with civilian technologies such as railways, telegraph etc, and new weapons such as rifled and breech loading weapons, and with governments mobilising the populations to support the war. Hammes defines this as 2GW, and sees a key characteristic as the defensive having a clear advantage and priority over the offensive. (Hammes 2006) Whilst other theorists do not necessarily label this 2GW, with Michael Sheehan for example taking WW1 as an example of his classification of ‘total war’ (Sheehan 2010), the

industrialisation of war is nevertheless recognised a change in the type of warfare quite distinct from what had gone before.

Sheehan includes WW2 in his definition of 'total war', which he determines was a conflict between mass armies, with technology more or less equal on both sides, hence difficult to reach a decisive victory or defeat. As a result, new technologies such as tanks and chemical weapons created to regain the upper hand. Air power emerged, although this was not decisive until WW2. Societies were fully mobilised, and "state's economic and human resources increasingly seen as legitimate targets." (Sheehan 2010, 60) Hammes instead considers WW2 to be the epitome of 3GW. Blitzkrieg favoured the use of small concentrated units of mechanised power to shatter initial resistance, followed by the use of standard infantry to exploit gaps created in the defences and win territory. Manoeuvrability and leaders at the front of the engagement ready to respond to the changing situation on the ground were the key to initial success of the German armed forces. (Hammes 2006)

Within this time period there were specific advances in naval and air power technologies, with some decided that these are important enough to warrant their own categories of warfare. Sheehan discusses Naval Warfare as a discrete section, as he does Nuclear War, and Revolutionary War. Other considered categories include Space War (Jordan 2008). Whatever the classifications given, agreement has been reached that whilst the nature of war does not change, the prevalent method of warfare does. From this agreement, the debate about which type of warfare the US should prepare for starts.

In stating that the US was entering a 4GW war, it is important to examine exactly what that means, and the critiques that have been raised regarding this definition.

In his 2006 book; *The Sling and The Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and also in numerous articles, such as his 2006 article in the *Contemporary Security Policy* issue that was dedicated to 4GW, Hammes defines it thusly:

“4GW uses all available networks – political, economic, social and military – to convince the enemy’s political decision-makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. It is rooted in the fundamental precept that superior political will, when properly applied, can defeat greater economic and military power. 4GW does not attempt to win by defeating the enemy’s military forces. Instead, combining guerrilla tactics or civil disobedience with the soft networks of social, cultural and economic ties, disinformation campaigns and innovative political activity, it directly attacks the enemy’s political will. .. Strategically it focuses on breaking the will of decision makers. ... Finally, 4GW practitioners plan for long wars – decades rather than months or years. ... It is the antithesis of the high-technology, short war the pentagon is preparing to fight.” (Hammes 2006)

In examining the history of 4GW, Hammes states that “The first practitioner to both write about and successfully execute a 4GW {was} Mao Tse-Tung...” (Hammes 2006, 197) Other examples given include the Vietnam War, in Nicaragua, the Palestinian Intifada, and of course, the 2003 Iraq War. With each use of 4GW it has been refined, and tactics improved to take advantage of the new technologies. For example, the first Palestinian Intifada was totally reliant on mass media and international networks to get their message across, and thus neutralise the comparatively overwhelming military might of Israel. However, it is not the use of these networks that define 4GW, useful as they are as a method of attacking the

enemy's political will. Hammes states that "4GW practitioners have used networks successfully for a variety of reasons" (Hammes 2006, 210), and that "Networks have clearly evolved as the most effective way for small groups to take on major powers" (Hammes 2006, 219). However, he goes on to point out that "4GW has been around for over 70 years" (Hammes 2006, 219), and that during many of the earlier engagements, networks, in particular late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century communication networks, did not exist.

In conversation with Hammes via email to the author of this thesis, he clarified;

"...it is not the network paths or method that are important as much as the idea that one does not have to defeat the enemy's armed forces to win. The idea of network paths was not well developed during the US-Vietnam War. While some will point to TV news, remember that the news was limited to 3 national channels and their 30 minute evening reports. (5 days a week) Further, only about 5 minutes of each report might be dedicated to Vietnam. Nor were there high technology networks leading back to the Soviet leadership when the Soviets were driven out of Afghanistan. One can make an argument for network impact on the Israeli withdrawal but it took almost 20 years. Other conflicts show that defeating the will does not require extensive networks -- Algerian-French, Angolan-Portuguese, Britain-Aden, and others.

My contention is that the idea of attacking the will of the enemy decision

makers is key to 4GW. The increasing type and variety of networks are useful tools for executing that intent but are not essential.”<sup>1</sup>

As a concept, 4GW has come under criticism. There are those in Group 2 who believe that the US can and should stay out of insurgencies, 4GW, and all other forms of warfare that do not play to US strengths. John Ferris, Antulio J.

Echevarria II, Michael Evans, and Rod Thornton, writing in response to Hammes article on 4GW, argue that to think of warfare in distinct evolutionary stages is fallacious, with Evans stating that “A belief in a linear sequence of three discrete generations of manpower, firepower and manoeuvre in the evolution of modern warfare cannot be sustained...” (Evans 2006, 244) However Hammes does not ever suggest that only one type of warfare can exist at a time, pointing out that “...a quick survey of modern conflict shows that all generations of modern war and even pre-modern tribal war continue to take place today.” (Hammes 2006, 280) It is therefore not useful to critique 4GW on this count. It is useful however, to note that Hammes states that a newer generation of war will trump an earlier, for example; if a 3GW force engages a 1GW force, barring other considerations, it should win. That is the key element I take from this particular debate; the need to consider the type of warfare that each combatant is prepared for.

Thornton further suggests that “4GW is just another term to describe what many a soldier has been dealing with for many a year – insurgencies”, before stating that the use of the word ‘warfare’ to describe 4GW is itself incorrect, as “Insurgencies and war are, in many ways, mutually exclusive”. (Thornton 2006, 275) Leaving aside the idea that insurgencies are not warfare, and the obvious question of who should then fight them, if anyone, 4GW is defined by Hammes as often being an

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<sup>1</sup> Email conversation between the author and TX Hammes – please see Appendix A for full transcript

evolved form of insurgency. Insurgencies, like other forms of warfare, have not stood still over the last few thousand years; they have evolved and changed to better meet their goals. In particular, as Hammes points out, in 4GW "...we no longer face monolithic organizations that respond to a single leader and are driven by a single concept. Instead, we face coalitions of the willing." (Hammes 2006, 282) What can divide 4GW from earlier forms of insurgency is the lack of a unifying political idea that drives a cohesive group forwards, instead there are "...coalitions of opportunistic groups banded together for the single purpose of ejecting the outsider and then defeating the government." (Hammes 2006, 283) Instead of one insurgent group seeking to displace the government and gain power, in 4GW the enemy may be a number of loosely affiliated groups that know that once the foreign power is expelled, or the government overthrown, they will need to battle amongst themselves for power. (This was the nature of the insurgency that developed in Iraq.) Therefore COIN techniques can be very useful in fighting 4GW, but must be considered in light of the evolutions that insurgency has undertaken in 4GW.

As Frank Hoffman pointed out at the Boyd 2007 Conference in July 2007; "...it is now difficult to ignore 4GW. We may quibble with the accuracy or the necessity of the generational framework, or the selective historical foundation, but not with the need to comprehend and respond to today's most common mode of warfare". (Hoffman 2007) Martin Van Creveld states that "In explaining the nature of 4GW, Hammes has done us a service. In pointing out that it is going to be the most important form of twenty-first-century armed conflict, he is almost certainly right." (Van Creveld 2006, 231) In this work, it is not the exact historical accuracy of the idea of generational warfare that I want to examine and quibble over, it is

the definition of the type of warfare that the US is preparing for, and engaging in, which are not always the same. For this purpose, the definitions provided by Hammes of 3GW and 4GW are useful and pertinent. As Hoffman concluded; “Call it what you may, 4GW or Complex Irregular or Hybrid Warfare, it presents a mode of conflict that severely challenges America’s conventional military thinking”.

(Hoffman 2007)

There are those, the denizens of Group 2, who believe that the decision upon which type of warfare to focus on has already been made, and that is entirely wrong.

Colonel Gian Gentile in his 2013 book *Wrong Turn: America’s Deadly Embrace of Counter Insurgency*, argues that COIN has not worked for the US military, and never will stating that “The blunt answer is that hearts-and-minds

counterinsurgency carried out by an occupying power in a foreign land doesn’t work” although he does add the caveat, “unless it is a multigenerational effort.”

(Gentile 2013, 128) Commentators such as Gentile, Edward N. Luttwak, and to a slightly lesser extent Andrew J. Bacevich, are concerned that the recent

experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have led the military leadership to focus too strongly on COIN and 4GW type engagements, to the detriment of the fighting capabilities of the rest of the military. They do believe that war has changed, and that the US is involved in new types of warfare, however they also state that COIN does not work, and has never worked, and that therefore the US should stay out of such engagements and prepare instead for wars in which the US stands a chance of winning. Douglas Porch takes this argument in a slightly different direction, by arguing in his 2013 book *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*, that COIN and ‘war amongst the people’ are merely continuations of a particularly savage and colonial style of warfare, in which death and destruction



are just as prevalent. COIN is nothing more than another type of brute conquest, so although warfare may seem to have changed, it has in fact merely circles back to another expression of 'the white man's burden'. (Porch 2013)

There is a tacit admission in Gentile's book that the 2003 war in Iraq is 4GW and COIN, and that the tactics the US military used did not work. (Gentile 2013) He also directly contradicts Mary Kaldor, whose work is examined later as part of Group 4, in that he states that the separation of Baghdad, amongst others, into clearly defined Sunni/Shia areas, helped to stem the violence. In other words, separating into ethnic enclaves is what helped, in direct contrast to Kaldor's belief that this type of separation is harmful. "The third critical factor that worked to lower violence was the separation of Baghdad into discrete sectarian districts, either Shia or Sunni..." (Gentile 2013, 89) Porch too contradicts Kaldor, in that he finds ludicrous and harmful the idea that "...the universal appeal of Western values and the transferability of democratic institutions will cause right-thinking non-Western peoples to welcome invasion and occupation as a liberation." (Porch 2012, 294) Whilst he particularly picks up on Western values not having universal appeal, and Kaldor talks more of universally held norms and principles, I would agree more with Porch, in that past the basic Maslow Hierarchy of Needs, there are very few values that are universally held.

Gentile is not alone in calling for clearer strategy, although he expressly links failure in warfare to a lack of clear strategy at the top, stating that; "When a state gets its strategy right in war, tactical problems tend to be subsumed and improved within it." (Gentile 2012, 117) He examines the reaction to Vietnam for lessons, and concludes: "For the United States, the essential lesson from Vietnam is that

the crucial elements in war are not smarter counterinsurgency tactics, better generals, or more malleable popular support, but clear-headed thinking about policy and strategy that aligns ways, means, and ends relative to national interests and the potential of our enemies.” (Gentile 2012, 83) He seems personally offended at the ‘saviour general’ idea in particular, and dogmatically insists that right from the start the US military was employing COIN tactics in Iraq, to little effect. Whilst accepting that warfare has changed to varying degrees, Group 2 commentators argue that the US should not become involved in the new types of war, and should instead bolster conventional war fighting capabilities to enable the US to take on the next evenly-matched super power. Luttwak agrees, openly stating that “To refocus military resources on 4GW would be especially unfortunate for the US. ... The US is good at destroying objects and armed forces that assemble into conveniently targetable mass formations. ... We should remain focused on global strategy to preserve the imbalance of military strength that dissuades Great Power competition, leaving terrorists to police forces and staying clear of insurgencies.” (Luttwak 2006, 228)

Scholars in Group 2 tend to be also be those who argue for the US to spend more of the defence budget on improved and newer technology, as dominance through technological superiority is usually seen as an important aspect of still being able to win ‘conventional’ wars. This includes the use of technology to create better networks, and of course building some sort of ‘system of systems’ that would help eliminate the fog of war from the battlefield. In the 1990s, as the information age possibilities permeated most areas of academic discourse about the character of warfare, the idea of net-centric warfare (NCW) came into vogue. As Shimko points out “Net-centric warfare is the system of systems.” (Shimko 2010, 114) Two men

are usually credited with advancing the ideas of NCW: Admiral William Owens and Admiral Arthur Cebrowski. By the end of the 1990s and start of the 2000s, NCW had become an accepted part of the RMA. Much space was given to the idea of “...power derived from the strong networking of a well-informed but geographically dispersed force.” (Cebrowski and Gartska, 1998)

The problem with this view is that although the networks have certainly developed and been of use to the US military, there is still no ‘system of systems’ that can coordinate every aspect of the battlefield across all forces to remove the fog of war. Aside from the lack of technology able to accomplish this, the structure of the US military does not support this, and even if these rather large obstacles were to be overcome, a ‘system of systems’ would still have been of very limited use in the Iraq War of 2003, for example, after the initial 3GW phases. Technological superiority cannot substitute for manpower and skill, despite the hopeful thinking of those who yearn for warfare through machines, with no human casualties, at least not on the US side. Still, concerned about a future in which another superpower can gain dominance through outclassing the US with technological advances, proponents in Group 2 clamour for better jets, improved technology networks, and ever more technological munitions advantages.

Moving onto Group 3, those who argue that the US military will have to become a multi-headed hydra capable of delivering all things to all people, and that the US needs to be ready for anything. This has encountered obvious resistance in the form of budgetary restrictions, limited manpower, and the urge to specialise rather than risk mediocre performance across a range of tasks.

In the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review, the then Secretary of Defense William Cohen predicted that MOOTW would come to dominate the military's future missions. (Shimko 2010, 105) This raised a fundamental question that continues to affect military thinking, planning, and critique to this day. Is it preferable, is it even possible, to have a military that can excel at all forms of warfare, and MOOTW? MOOTW tend to be manpower intensive, long term, and involve a very wide range of tasks and therefore skills. Can the same forces be used to protect human rights, set up civilian police forces, protect and shelter refugees, AND engage in high-tech high-firepower wars against a highly armed and mechanized enemy? This debate has recently come to another head in the debate around the Iraq War and the lessons to be learnt from the engagement. There are those, such as Porch and Gentile as referenced previously, who argue that COIN does not work, and that restructuring and training the US military to focus on such warfare is dangerous, as it will dilute the valuable skills needed to engage in inter-state war against an opponent of similar scope and power to the US. (Most likely, China.) Harking back two decades and more to the intervention in Somalia, commentators such as these argue that the US has no role to play in nation building or being the world's policeman, and should not engage in MOOTW.

Thomas P.M Barnett is one of the theorists who argues that the US does need abilities across all spectrums, but that creating an all-purpose military force able to excel across core competencies in everything is impossible. He argues for the creation of two forces; one to wage war and one to wage peace. (Shimko 2010, 230) Plans for this have been critiqued by John A. Nagl and David Kilcullen, amongst others, and have never been more than vague. The thinking that leads to calls for the US military to compete in any arena is clearly based on a fear that the

wrong type of war is being prepared for, and prioritised. Unable to look to the future and plan for the types of wars the US will engage in, commentators call for the US to ready for anything, at any time. As Andrew F. Krepinevich pointed out before the U.S Senate Armed Services Committee "...the Army's leadership has rightly concluded that it needs a force capable of performing across the full spectrum of conflict at a high level of effectiveness. But in its attempts to become equally effective across a range of conflict types, it risks becoming marginally competent in many tasks, and highly effective at none." In short, although writers from the Economist to book authors to politicians have called for a multi-functional army, due to the constraints of reality, the question of what type of warfare the US will engage in is still one that needs to be answered for the US to effectively plan its force capabilities.

The commentators in Group 4 would argue that the role of the military has changed to the extent that the future of the armed forces is in MOOTW. This would be a huge departure for the role of the military; an armed force that is usually expressly set up to wage wars, either offensive or defensive, for the preservation of the society to which it belongs. It is worth noting the very important truism at this point: although the types and methods of warfare may have changed, war itself, as a fundamental concept, has not. In short, war is still, and remains, organized violence waged and/or threatened to achieve a political aim. All the advances, all the 'generations' of warfare from 1GW through to 4GW have not altered the fundamental nature of war. As Rupert Smith points out, a failure to understand this leads to force being expended without utility. (Smith, 2003) War is still the use of violence for political purposes, and whilst the character of the war may change, whilst technology and tactics improve, and the manner in which war

is waged may be subject to significant, even revolutionary change, the essential nature of what war is does not alter.

Mary Kaldor, in the 2012 Third Edition of her book, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, asserts that inter-state war is becoming an anachronism, and that international peacekeeping should become cosmopolitan law enforcement. She sees warfare as having changed, but draws a remarkably different conclusion to Hammes. I would place Kaldor in Group 4, as she states that “The new type of warfare is a predatory social condition.” (Kaldor 2012, 113) She draws a distinction between the ‘old wars’ which were mainly between nation states, often over geo-political boundaries, and the ‘new wars’ which are a mix of war, organised crime, and massive violations of human rights. Those who are injured the most, who are disenfranchised the most, who suffer the most, are civilians, and this is deliberate. The antagonists attempt to create a climate of hate and fear, upon which their power rests. (Kaldor 2012)

Whilst sharing some similarities with COIN, the ‘new wars’ concept also has some key differences. “Instead of a favourable environment for the guerrilla, the new warfare aims to create an unfavourable environment for all those people it cannot control.” (Kaldor 2012, 104) So unlike revolutionary war and insurgency, this type of warfare does not attempt to create support amongst the people as much as it tries to simply eliminate any lack of support or resistance. It could be argued that this is less hearts and minds than it is fear and hate. Ideology has also lost its important place and is no longer key. In revolutionary war, revolutionaries tried to build model societies in areas under their control. Now “new warriors establish political control through allegiance to a label rather than an idea”. (Kaldor 2012,

103) The ‘labels’ that Kaldor refers to are linked to her idea that identity politics, both local and global, and making use of the new technologies, are used by those seeking to grasp and hold power. Hence the calls for people to be loyal to a ‘label’ rather than an idea, and the fostering of hatred towards those of a different ‘label’. (Kaldor 2012, 8)

Sheehan broadly agrees with Kaldor on the ‘new war’ type, although he defines them as ‘postmodern’ instead, stating:

“The purpose and objectives of armed conflict are also changing. Modern wars originated in the pursuit of perceived national interest. Wars tended to be driven by geopolitical assumptions, such as those fought in defence of the balance of power. Postmodern wars are often focused on ‘identity politics’. Power is pursued on the basis of a particular identity. These wars may break out in an effort to pursue ethnic cleansing, or religiously inspired holy war. Such conflicts are often particularly ferocious, and may not have clearly defined beginnings and endings, but they are however, no less political. ...

... Postmodern non-state institutions of violence tend to draw material sustenance not from such formal and centralized national economies and defence industries, but from private production and finance networks organised either locally or on a global scale. Such sources may include plunder and theft, hostage-taking for ransom, extortion, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering, remittances and material support from relevant diaspora communities, foreign assistance, and the diversion of humanitarian aid. For many of the combatants, such wars are an end in

themselves, they are ‘military entrepreneurs’ exploiting a new form of ‘war economy’.” (64)

He agrees with Kaldor on the new economic structure of the ‘new wars’, pointing out that in a globalised environment, profit from war can be a valid reason to prolong it for those making the money.

Kaldor defines the most recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as ‘new wars’, and goes on to state: “Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are good illustrations of the way in which misperceptions about the character of war exacerbate ‘new wars’” (Kaldor 2012, 12) In particular, the mistaken belief that technology can substitute for manpower, and that the best way to examine the situation was through tribal and ethnic lenses. She goes on to argue that the responses to these new wars are in general unhelpful at best, actively harmful at worst. By holding talks with those with guns, by de facto agreeing to the breakdown and fragmentation of society along ‘tribal’ or ‘ethnie’ lines, the UN and others legitimatises the warlords. She calls instead for a cosmopolitan approach, which would see international peacekeeping reconceptualised as cosmopolitan law enforcement. She calls for women’s groups, civil leaders, and ‘zones of civility’ to be included in the talks, just as much, if not in preference to, the warlords. For the purposes of this examination of warfare, Kaldor sees the role of the military as shifting very clearly and definitely away from warfare, and that it should be set up for MOOTW, in this case, ‘cosmopolitan law enforcement’. (Kaldor 2012)

I am unfavourably struck by Kaldor’s assertion. Whilst it is true that for the last few decades especially, the role of the military has expanded greatly, and includes international search and rescue missions, peacekeeping, and reconstruction work,



the idea of a military not set up for warfare in one form or another, that individual nation states, which do still exist, are happy to fund is hard to conceive of. In particular, when Kaldor argues that “Respect for international principles and legal norms...” (Kaldor 2012, 121) should be paramount, and that this political mobilization needs to “...override other considerations – geo-politics or short-term domestic concerns; it has to constitute the primary guide to policy and action...” (Kaldor 2012, 121), this is hopelessly doomed in the current global reality in which we exist and wars are waged. Not least due to the fact that although globalisation is a strong force for change, we are very far away from having internationally agreed principles and legal norms, as even a cursory examination of one issue such as gender rights will show.

Returning to Group 1, which includes Kilcullen, Nagl, and Hammes amongst others, and has been vocal since the Vietnam War. They posit that the US has been, and will continue to be involved in what are often termed ‘irregular wars’, ‘low intensity combat’, and COIN. Starting with Vietnam, moving on to Somalia, and now most recently into Iraq, they also point out that these are the only types of war in which the US cannot seem to win a decisive victory. Unlike Gentile however, they do not call for a retreat from this type of warfare, but for a better understanding of it and the use of improved tactics to counter it.

The defining characteristic of this warfare is that victory is no longer sought through defeating the enemy's military forces, but is instead sought through directly targeting the enemy's political will, through all available channels and networks. Although targeting political will is neither a new tactic, nor a unique one, its prominence in 4GW marks the latest generation of warfare as different

from the previous generations. In conversation with Hammes he confirmed that; “My contention is that the idea of attacking the will of the enemy decision makers is key to 4GW. The increasing type and variety of networks are useful tools for executing that intent but are not essential. But the caveat is that it will not work if the defeat means the destruction of the government accepting the defeat. That's why it works to drive out outside powers...”<sup>2</sup> This is similar to Nagl’s assertion regarding COIN: “Now defeating the army required that the people be defeated as well...” (Nagl 2005, 25).

When the US entered Iraq in 2003 it started off engaged in a 3GW war, one in which it enjoyed great success. However, after the end of conventional hostilities, the US become embroiled in 4GW, and as Hammes points out, 4GW “works best for defeating an outside power that is not at existential risk.”<sup>3</sup> This has been the situation the US has placed itself in places such as Vietnam, in Somalia, and in Iraq. The US’s existence has never been at risk, and they have continually been the outside power entering into another country with all the interrelated dynamics that involves. For this reason, those in Group 1 see the development of tactics to succeed in this type of environment as key for the US’s future success in warfare.

Kilcullen puts forward an amended “Twenty-eight Articles” for COIN warfare in his 2010 book *Counterinsurgency*, based on an article that went viral in 2006 amongst Coalition forces in Iraq. He argues that “Insurgency is the most widespread form of warfare today...mastering its techniques, pitfalls, and lessons – is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, a vital activity.” (Kilcullen 2010, ix) Nagl makes a similar argument in his revised 2005 book; *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*:

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Please see Appendix A for full transcript.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Please see Appendix A for full transcript.

Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam, in which he states that ‘irregular warfare’ is predominant, and the ability to counter it must be developed.

When looking for a testing ground to prove whether Group 1 or Group 2 have the right idea, the obvious proving ground would seem to be Vietnam. However to see the differences between high-tech high-intensity, and more 4GW methods, the better contrast would be the first Gulf War and the intervention in Somalia, more recent conflicts that have shown the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches.

Those who believed that a RMA had occurred saw the epitome of this new mode of warfare in the first Gulf War of 1990 – 1991. In this war the US brought huge technological superiority to bear, including complete air dominance, and won a war with negligible US losses in comparison to the Iraqis. In Keith L. Shimko’s 2010 book; *The Iraq Wars and America’s Military Revolution*, he spends considerable time exploring the concept of a ‘revolution’, and what would define such an event in military terms. Whilst not going into such depth here, it will suffice to say that “All agree that RMAs are characterized by significant changes in the conduct of warfare.” (Shimko 2010, 21) For those who had proposed that a RMA was underway in the US military, related to increased technological abilities and better-than-ever abilities to penetrate the fog of war, the Gulf War seemed an apt testing ground.

Early indications led to the Gulf War being hailed as a success for Group 2. Reports from the Coalition air bombardment stated that “ “Unable to attack or retreat in the face of Coalition air power,” Iraqi troops “could only hunker down and continue to suffer mounting punishment, both physical and psychological, from the

air.” By the conclusion of the land war, coalition forces had to deal with the unexpected problem of thousands of POWs who preferred surrender to fighting. Interviews testified to the impact of bombing and the lack of basic supplies such as food and water, especially for the frontline units. ...as a result “the impact of these strikes on the morale of the average soldier on the ground was immense.”” (Shimko 2012, 75)

The first Gulf War was brought to an end exactly 100 hours after Coalition ground forces initiated the ground attack that followed the heavy aerial bombardment. It was a tremendous military success for the US. However, could it truly be said to be an indication that the US had evolved an unbeatable military force, ready to face a new type of warfare? The victory was celebrated as one over a determined, resourceful, and well-equipped foe; a new type of war which the US would win. Shimko argues however that this victory was not one of the “unexpectedly lopsided victories” that serve as “possible harbingers of military revolution”. (Shimko 2010, 77) Although the Iraq Army had been built up and touted as the “third largest army in the world” (Berkowitz), with experienced leaders and battle hardened soldiers, making this the “most successful campaign in U.S. military history” (Citino), others refer to the war as a battle between a “minor military power” going head to head with the “world’s sole superpower”. (Keaney and Cohen) (Shimko 2010, 77-78)

In Desert Storm, the US forces faced the exact type of enemy that they had been preparing to fight for nearly a decade. Of course it had been anticipated that the troops would be Soviet, not Iraqi, but fundamentally the high-tech high-firepower Desert Storm war was one that the US was superbly ready to face. The US had the targeting capability, the precision weapons, and the warfare mostly took part far

away from large civilian populations, where it was easy to recognize the enemy and separate combatants from non-combatants. Success in this war, especially against an enemy, that whilst fighting the same type of war, had substantially inferior technology and firepower, should have been a given. It was not proof that the US had evolved the capability to win a new type of war, as was clearly shown just two years later when the US intervened in Somalia.

At the time there were questions raised about what had gone wrong for the US military in Somalia. Barely two years after US forces had won a stunning victory against an army touted as the third largest in the world, with talk of putting the spectre of Vietnam to rest at last, those same forces had been humiliatingly defeated by a small force of fighters armed with relatively primitive weapons. Whilst the size and commitment aspect is an easy excuse to focus on (hundreds of thousands of troops for Desert Storm, less than five thousand for the Battle of Mogadishu (Shimko 2010)), this is not the only reason for the turnaround in US success.

Andrew Bacevich writing in 1993 was not alone in pointing out that the difference between the two confrontations was a clear cut example of one enemy playing to the US's strengths, and the other playing to its weaknesses. In Somalia, the US faced a type of warfare that negated their advantages; as in Iraq in 2003, the US forces would find their technological and firepower advantages countered. Whilst I think it is doubtful that General Mohamed Farrah Hassan Aidid deliberately refused to engage in high-tech warfare, not least because he simply did not have access to the technology, and certainly not the budget of the US, the warfare he engaged in did refuse to play to US strengths. Urban warfare, in which the fighting takes place

in centres of high civilian, non-combatant density, and in which it is impossible to determine enemy combatant from non-combatant, drastically reduced the effectiveness of the US forces. Despite their targeting and precision weapon capabilities, no bomb was, or is, yet smart enough to determine exactly who in a crowded building is an enemy, and detonate to kill only those, leaving untouched the civilians amongst whom the enemy is hiding, and leaving undamaged the civilian infrastructure of the city. This problem, first seen in Somalia in 1993, was not addressed before the US entered Iraq in 2003. The start of the Iraq War in 2003 played to the strengths of the US forces, just as it had in the Gulf War. However, the urban warfare, the guerrilla warfare, the 'war amongst the people' that the US had lost in Vietnam, and in Somalia, once again defeated the US in Iraq in 2003.

In examining the impact of Somalia and the "Black Hawk Down" effect on US foreign policy, Shimko states that "The concept of "nation building" became almost toxic in discussions of American foreign and defense policy for a decade. Somalia raised concerns about committing American forces to ill-defined missions without clear exit strategies, echoing the Weinberger and Powell doctrines." (Shimko 2010, 102) We can see how this carried through to the 2003 Iraq War, when Bush and his cabinet were very clear from the start that they did not intend to be a part of any nation building. Rumsfeld was a believer in the RMA and the technological aspects of the same, and he too made it clear that he thought American forces were not there to build bridges etc. (Rumsfeld 2011) What those in power should have learnt from Somalia however was not that 'nation building' per se was unsuitable for American forces, but that their well-equipped, technologically advanced military had obvious weaknesses when facing the type of rag tag militia faced in Somalia, and then later in Iraq.

It is interesting to note that those in the administration preparing for the 2003 Iraq War were clearly proponents of the RMA, and would fall into Group 2. We can easily see how clearly Bush and Rumsfeld supported the idea of the RMA that had been in circulation by examining their statements about the future of the US military as they foresaw it. Bush, in a September 1999 speech at the Citadel military academy stated the following as part of his talk:

“Power is increasingly defined, not by mass or size, but by mobility and swiftness. Influence is measured in information, safety is gained in stealth, and force is projected on the long arc of precision-guided weapons...Our military must be able to identify targets...Then be able to destroy those targets almost instantly...” (Bush 1999)

In Rumsfeld’s talks and speeches, and later on in his memoirs, he too spoke of his military revolution as being fundamentally about creating light, lethal, mobile, and smaller military forces. (Rumsfeld 2011) He also saw the bureaucracy and leadership of the military itself as standing in the way of the RMA being fully realized. As Group 2 believers that this ‘revolution’, based in the main on technological superiority giving the edge over all enemies, Bush and Rumsfeld relied upon their 3GW ready troops to win the war in Iraq in 2003, with the minimum of men, time, and casualties.

In planning for the Iraq War in 2003, a very essential point about the RMA, and Group 2 thinking in general, seems to have been completely overlooked by the planners. “The RMA was about a revolution in warfare, not postwar stabilization.” (Shimko 201, 145) What is absolutely key to understand is that to look at the RMA as having completely transformed all types of warfare, and MOOTW, against all

types of opponents, and in all terrains and every situation, is to vastly over-inflate the impact of the RMA. As the US should have learnt from the Somalia debacle, the RMA only gave an advantage in the warfare it had been designed for. It did not mean, as Wolfowitz and others seemed to think, that the US military could now accomplish absolutely anything with dramatically reduced troop numbers. Nation building, post war stabilization, COIN; all of these, and all of the MOOTW, could not be accomplished through the RMA. They still require 'boots on the ground', long term engagements measured in decades not weeks and months, and troop numbers far above what the US military needs to win an interstate war against a vastly inferior opponent.

The RMA methods showed success in the early days of the 2003 Iraq War. Whilst in 1991 the US military had been unable to effectively fight in sandstorm conditions, improvements in technology meant that in 2003 the airpower the US could bring to bear was actually most heavily used during the 3 day sandstorm that started on March 25<sup>th</sup>. (Shimko 201, 154) Whilst ground troops rested, the air bombardment was relentless. As a result "...large portions of the Iraqi Army simply shed their uniforms and melted away, leaving the battlefield and taking their weapons with them." (Shimko 201, 155) Here I would argue that RMA and 3GW tactics were helping to win the initial engagement, whilst sowing the seeds for the insurgency and civil war later. The US military was amply able to demonstrate that they had air dominance, technological superiority, and could strike the massed formations of the Iraqi Army at will, even whilst the Iraqis were forced to hunker down and wait out a sandstorm. In the face of this, it made sense for many Iraqis to take heed of the leaflets dropped and desert, which helped secure a quick victory for the US. However the RMA did not cover how to deal with these armed, trained,



fighters once the initial engagement was satisfactorily concluded, and this is where the US tipped from success to defeat, as the war became 4GW in nature.

It is clear that the US military, in common with militaries around the globe, is increasingly having to cope with ever more varied demands upon its resources. It is common sense then to look at where the highest demand is likely to be, and structure the force to meet that effectively. In doing so the thoughts on the future of warfare can be discerned. The US military that entered Iraq in 2003 was superbly equipped to cope with the initial phase of the war, which was, depending up on the definition you prefer, either a classic example of 3GW, or the epitome of the RMA. When it came to targeting the political will of the enemy however, and attacking the will of the enemy decision makers, the US was incredibly unprepared. An assumption that the RMA models that allowed fewer troops to win wars would also allow fewer troops to win peace, and the reluctance of the administration to engage in 'nation building', drastically reduced the effectiveness of the force that was sent to Iraq. Once the 3GW part of the war was over, the technological superiority did not prove to be the decisive edge the US needed. The US became engaged in war amongst the people; war in which the enemy hid amongst, and was often sheltered by the civilians, urban warfare in which the enemy never massed to be shot at, and in which the engagement would be slow and painful. The US entered into 4GW as Hammes describes it, and was woefully underprepared.

## ChapterTwo:HolesinthePlans

“No one starts a war--or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so--without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.” Carl von Clausewitz. (Clausewitz 1989, 579)

I have already touched on the views of Donald Rumsfeld and President George W. Bush, in as much as these pertained to a favourable view of the RMA. Given the fondness in the administration, and parts of the military, to tout the benefits of a high-tech force able to win wars in the minimum amount of time, and with the minimum numbers needed, it can be no surprise that in planning for the 2003 Iraq War, these ideas coloured the entirety of the planning. The US failed both of the factors set out by Clausewitz as precursors for a sensible start to warfare. Firstly, the overall strategic aims were not well thought out. Secondly, fundamental misunderstandings about the nature of the war that was to be engaged in led to incorrect assumptions about how it could be conducted. The administration, buoyed by the hopes of a similar victory to the 1991 Gulf War, planned for a relentlessly 3GW war; a war in which the RMA would provide the edge needed to succeed once again. As a result, at the cease of ‘conventional’ hostilities that played to US military strengths, the US military force ceased to have utility, and as it floundered, opened the gates for a 4GW insurgency to develop.

There are three particular points to note, which will be investigated in this chapter. Firstly, there is the lack of clear intelligence gathered on Iraq. In any war, disaster resulting from a failure to gather intelligence and plan properly

would not be surprising, however I do discern some unique attributes within this failure. The belief in the RMA having created a US force that could penetrate the fog of war as never before, and succeed in battle with far fewer numbers than previously considered feasible, led to false assumptions about the capabilities of the US military to win ANY engagement, not just one that played to their strengths, and downplayed the importance of the lack of intelligence that had been gathered regarding Iraq. Intelligence regarding the Iraqi people, society, and infrastructure was drastically lacking, and without this there was no way to target Iraqi political will to support the US goal of a democratic Iraq, or even a recognition that this would be necessary.

Secondly, the spaces between the administration and military focus. The disconnect between the military and the civil administration can perhaps best be summarised as a difference in goals. The US military had a goal defined by a negative: the removal of Saddam Hussein. The administration by contrast quickly moved their public goal after no WMDs were found to a positive: the liberation of Iraq into a democracy. They failed to work with each other to determine responsibilities for each phase and a clear transition from one to the other, including a hand over from military control to civilian. Due to this, the first aim was achieved, and the second immediately and unconsciously sabotaged from within. In the space between these aims lies the gaping hole of a lack of unified cross-directorate post-war planning.

Finally, the lack of 4GW style planning, including handovers, post-conflict stages, and psywar aspects relating to democracy promotion. Dangerous assumptions were

made by the Bush administration about the reception that US forces would receive and the existing circumstances of the Iraqi people and state infrastructure. As discussed previously in Chapter One, the US administration eschewed ‘nation building’ and protracted engagements. Hence the plans for Iraq to become a democracy were hardly worthy of the name, seemingly based on the hope that Iraq would embrace Western style democracy without a concerted campaign to convince them to do so being needed. To create a democratic government involves harnessing the support of the population, targeting their political will to support it. If the US had recognised that the situation in Iraq could become a 4GW engagement, or at the very least that the 3GW stage would not achieve a democratic Iraq, the aim of creating a democracy could have been expressed in 4GW terms. As they failed to do so, they failed to adequately plan and resource to meet this goal. The US did not plan for 4GW, started pursuing elements of it late, and did so badly. The failure to plan directly led to the growth of a networked insurgency past the initial conflict stages. This chapter will examine the pre-war planning and the immediate post-conflict actions to show that the US failed to plan past the 3GW stage of the war, and thus started to sow the seeds of their own defeat once the 4GW phase started.

Some notable figures in the administration of President George W. Bush, namely Paul Wolfowitz (US Deputy Secretary of Defense), Richard Perle (chairman of the Defense Policy Board), and Donald Rumsfeld (US Secretary of Defense)<sup>4</sup>, are the personalities that I would argue Joseph Nye describes when he refers to “a group

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<sup>4</sup> Signatories to a 1998 letter from the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) to President Clinton calling for the removal of Saddam Hussein, a call they repeated to President George W. Bush on September 20<sup>th</sup> 2001. (Roston 2008)

of people within the Administration, who came into power and looked at American military preeminence, [and] devised the view... called ‘the new unilateralism:’ that the United States is so powerful that we can do as we wish and others have no choice but to follow. They have used that view as a way of applying American military power to all sorts of problems.” (Nye 2002) These neo-conservatives and associates saw military might as the deciding factor in conflicts. This method of approaching conflict is rooted in 3GW and a belief in the RMA, and the tactics employed are completely unsuited to the more dynamic, media-centric, and globally connected 4GW type of engagement. (Hammes 2006)

Within the administration Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, noted neo-conservative hawks, set up the Office of Special Plans (OSP) in September 2002, which quickly became the main source for President George W. Bush of “raw” intelligence from Iraq. (Allawi 2007; Galbraith 2006) The traditional intelligence community operatives, still reeling from the failure to prevent 9/11, did not have the strength to argue that their customary caveat-hedged reports were factually accurate although not as dramatic as would have been preferred. Within the OSP information was gathered and sifted to bolster a view of Saddam as ready and able to deploy or sell WMD, but weak militarily and liable to crumble due to lack of popular support<sup>5</sup>.

Ahmed Chalabi has been termed “the man who pushed America to war”. (Galbraith 2006; Roston 2008) As part of the Iraqi National Congress, Chalabi was welcome on

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<sup>5</sup> In 2007 the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General produced a report in which the role of the OSP was examined, and whilst the conclusion was that the actions of this group were not “illegal or unauthorised”, they were “inappropriate given that the intelligence assessments were intelligence products and did not clearly show the variance with the consensus of the Intelligence Community”. (DoD OIG 2007)

Capitol Hill, and particularly amongst the neo-conservatives such as The Project for the New American Century (PNAC) whose ideas for the US's place on the world stage would prove useful to him. Chalabi had long enjoyed US government support, proving useful to anyone who wanted to hear about an alternative to Saddam. Even President Clinton, hardly a neo-conservative, supported him during his tenure.

(Ryan 2010) Chalabi, personally and through his networks, painted a picture of an Iraq before Saddam that had been tolerant of many creeds and cultures, and ripe for democracy, an Iraq that could exist again after U.S help to remove the obstacle of Saddam. (Roston, 2008) An image perhaps rose tinted through the lens of nostalgia.

Believing the claims of Chalabi and others led the planning down the track of a relatively easy 'liberation'. This type of regime change would only stand a chance if the head could be amputated and the body survive a transplant; it assumed that the functions of the state and infrastructure could continue under new leadership. As existing exercises had already shown, Iraq was neither unified nor ready to undergo a peaceful transition to a democratic government, and information on the infrastructure was wholly inadequate.

The over confidence regarding the ease of winning a war against Saddam was not dented by "Desert Crossing"; a 1999 war games exercise led by General Anthony Zinni, running the scenarios envisaged to occur in the event that the US went into Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein. The Desert Crossing exercise was pessimistic in its assumptions: it stated that a democratic government was not a feasible goal, aggressive neighbours and internal strife could lead to a protracted civil war, and

estimating a minimum required number of 400,000 US troops. In the slides created in 1999 to sum up the exercise, the conclusions were that the “ending of military intervention does not mean end of engagement” (Secret: Desert Crossing Seminar: After Action Report Briefing, July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1999, Slide 18<sup>6</sup>), that “the development of a Pol-Mil plan should begin immediately”(Ibid., slide 20), and that “a lack of information on internal Iraqi opposition conditions severely hampers contingency planning”(Ibid., slide 22).

The Desert Crossing Exercise has of course been proved correct in many of its assumptions; it was a well thought out exercise that could have been very useful to US war planners. It showed a 3GW style engagement alone would not be sufficient. General Zinni’s question to Central Command during the pre-war phase; “Are you guys looking at Desert Crossing?”, and their reply of “What’s that?” (Ricks 2003) have been quoted in numerous articles, showing that the exercise and the conclusions it drew were not heeded. Apart from the specific advice regarding troop numbers and the potential of a fragmented Iraq further destabilising the region, the Desert Crossing conclusions and the general tone of the report emphasised the importance of cross-directorate working and multiple agency planning, highlighting that the military could not be expected to fulfil all roles relating to humanitarian and reconstruction work<sup>7</sup>. This advice was ignored in the pre-war planning phases, as the Coalition Provisional Agency (CPA) was only set up in one location, Baghdad, as opposed to the minimum of 18 areas that Zinni et al had proposed.

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<sup>6</sup> Please see Appendix B for a copy of the slides

<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix C for a copy of the report

Desert Crossing was not the only resource that the planners in the administration discounted. As Ricks argues in his book, “It wasn’t that there was no planning. On the contrary, there was a lot...But much of the planning was shoddy, there was no one really in charge of it, and there was little coordination between the various groups.” (Ricks 2006, 79) Plans in existence included the Future of Iraq Project, Desert Crossing, plans from Central Command, and the infamously incoherent Joint Task Force IV power point slides to name a few. For example, the Future of Iraq Project from 2001 onwards, although often chaotic in organisation and poor in recommendations, did point out numerous issues that could arise in a post-Saddam Iraq, but was not widely recognised as a valid base for post-war planning. (Diamond 2005)

Without one person, or even one department taking overall responsibility for the post-war planning, strategy became fragmented. Concurrent with the planning for the Iraq war, Rumsfeld was in addition attempting to transform the Department of Defense and the military along the lines of the RMA. (Rumsfeld 2011) The conflict in Afghanistan was also taking its toll, particularly affecting the ability of Central Command (CentCom) and top level military thinkers and planners to combine their efforts to create a post war plan for Iraq. Domestic concerns around finances and troop numbers also clouded judgement about the amount of troops needed to be engaged, with Rumsfeld insisting on reducing the troop number estimate given to him by CentCom. (Rumsfeld 2011)

The lack of information regarding the internal situation in Iraq extended beyond internal Iraqi opposition conditions; there was in general a lack of intelligence



regarding basic information on the Iraqi infrastructure, psychological conditions of the populace, many of whom had grown up knowing only Saddam's rule and hearing only his misinformation, and economic stability. It was assumed that the Iraqi civilian infrastructure had almost completely recovered from the previous military engagements, when in fact the power plants and numerous other essential parts of the civilian infrastructure were in a state of constant cannibalisation to continue operating, and required urgent large scale investment and refurbishment. No plans were put in place to secure these installations and no budget was set aside for their continued operation. (Chandrasekaran 2006) Also lacking in the considerations was the true psychological state of the Iraqi populace, who had endured Saddam's rule for 24 years. During that time Saddam had consciously worked to create a state of fear and mistrust within the general populace as well as his own party; with children encouraged to inform on their parents, mock trials and executions, disappearances, tortures, and an informant network that was believed to have spread so wide and so deep that people no longer felt comfortable openly expressing their true thoughts and emotions. Iraqis had learnt to mistrust information, to look for the hidden meaning in communications and actions, and keep a tight rein on any dissenting thoughts and actions. (al-Khalil 1989) In such circumstances it was naive to expect people to throw off their mental shackles and line the streets cheering their 'liberators' as soon as they arrived, however this expectation was allowed to percolate through the pre-war planning without serious challenge. This mistaken belief regarding the welcome for US troops in Iraq filtered down right from the top, with Vice-President Cheney stating in an NBC interview just before the war that "...the people of Iraq...will welcome us as liberators." (Galbraith 2006, 87)

On the other hand, while there is no doubt that Iraqis had suffered under Saddam's rule, with his use of terror and complete dominance, often neglected in the strategic thinking was the fact that Iraq as a whole had actually enjoyed increased prosperity and development simultaneously with this terror. (Chandrasekaran 2006, 123) The literacy rate of the populace had shot up from 0.5% in the last years of Ottoman rule, to 18.3% in 1957 to over 50% by the early 1980s, (al-Khalil 1989, 85). Women had gained more rights relative to their position in the tribal and familial hierarchies pre-Saddam (although it could be argued that women had gained power relative to the traditional male hierarchies only through ceding that power instead to the state), and the state ensured almost full employment. These developments bolstered Saddam's power, however, they also improved living conditions and wealth for most Iraqis, although the main beneficiaries were of course Sunnis. Under his dictatorship, factions and divisions within Iraqi society were forced to work as a roughly cohesive whole; tensions still existed between different religious and ethnic groups, but they were never allowed to bubble over into anything resembling a civil war. Saddam had the monopoly on violence. (al-Khalil 1989) This psychologically damaged society would be both the battleground and the prize to be won in the US occupation, however it was not understood prior to the invasion.

Removing Saddam from power would not just 'free' the people and only disadvantage the privileged members of his elite, it would also radically alter the fabric of society in Iraq as a whole, and lead to economic disadvantage even as it supposedly granted political freedom. A cohesive plan for how this dramatic shift

would be managed was lacking in the pre-war stages. It was the responsibility of the administration rather than the military to plan for such a shift, as it would out of necessity involve huge societal changes that a military force would inherently be ill-equipped to manage. It would be a long term effort that would require participation from multiple agencies, protected by and working with the military, but certainly not supplanted by them. The challenge was to win the political will of the people, and that is not achievable with overwhelming military force alone. In fact, the ‘crush them’ mentality popular amongst neo-conservatives still convinced of the US’s ability to intervene unilaterally has been shown by a recent RAND Corporation study to have strong evidence against its success in COIN. (Paul et al 2010<sup>8</sup>)

When the US entered Iraq it was not immediately entering into 4GW; there was no insurgency yet to fight, and the adversary was Saddam and his supporters. However, the war aims past the removal of Saddam were not achievable through 3GW methods, and a well thought out plan would have acknowledged this and prepared for the potential of insurgencies, and planned to secure Iraqi’s political will.

Given the chaotic nature of the pre-war planning, the secrecy with which a relatively small number of troops had to be manoeuvred into position, and the almost farcical inaccuracy of the intelligence regarding Iraq, the first twenty seven days of warfare were a great success for the US. The ‘Fortress Baghdad’ so feared by Rice and President George W. Bush (Woodward 2004) failed to materialize and

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<sup>8</sup> Please see Appendix D for the table

most of Iraq was under nominal US control within a month. Even as the US was winning the short initial battle, however, it was losing the longer term war. Internal bickering and wrangling between departments and personalities in the administration, left unchecked by the President, stymied those on the ground. The President had repeatedly asked about humanitarian aid and how quickly it could be delivered, making it clear that this was a priority for him. (Woodward 2004) Accordingly, many post war plans focused on supplying essentials of life and coping with refugees, with precious little effort expended on planning for long term security and peace.

A lack of unity at higher levels in planning strategy will filter through the ranks to sow confusion and disorder below. When planning the war in Iraq, there was a clear lack of unity in the National Security Council (NSC), and particularly between the State Department, led by Colin Powell, and the Department of Defense, headed by Donald Rumsfeld. (Woodward 2004) Opposing views within a NSC are to be expected, however the fundamental disagreements between these two men regarding the future of Iraq, whether to wage war, and how to conduct such a war were allowed to continue throughout the US invasion. This lack of cohesiveness right at the upper echelons of power would prove disastrous as the war in Iraq progressed.

There was also a lack of continuation of leadership in the administration and the military. At the time that Paul Bremer was entering Iraq to take control of the CPA and replace Jay Garner of The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), a number of other replacements were taking place in the

military, and certain administration members were absenting themselves from further engagement with Iraq. General Franks was preparing for retirement, and General Shinseki also retired, with Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz both refusing to attend his retirement ceremony, pointing to a huge disconnect between the civil and military arms of the government. (Ricks 2006, 156) Feith had also distanced himself from the situation in Iraq, with one Pentagon official describing him as somebody who “agitated for war in Iraq, but once the decision is made to do it, he disengages.” (Ricks 2006, 167) This in addition to General Frank’s much quoted comment that Feith was “the fucking stupidest guy on the face of the earth”. (Goldberg 2005) These shifts and bickerings are worth noting as they show that the US had indeed failed to understand how the war could develop. In 4GW war it is essential that knowledge, especially local knowledge from those on the ground, is maintained and passed over gradually to new incomers. Relationships that have been built up need to be nurtured and incrementally moved over to new contacts, and clarity regarding the overall mission needs to be confirmed. (Nagl 2002)

A plan appropriate for a potential 4GW war would have seen a continuation of leadership at the top levels, and gradual replacements with long handover periods further down the ranks. Instead, by confusing regime removal with regime change, the administration and the military both had end points for key staff occurring at precisely the wrong times when the delicate balance between instability and insurgency tipped.

Another example of this disconnect, and perhaps a more obvious one in the sense of the media impact, is provided by the looting. ORHA had created a list of sites in

Baghdad that it would be imperative to provide security for. This compiled list was passed to the military, however it was never given the importance it warranted and disseminated to ground level commanders. Instead the military had their own list, which prioritized the Ministry of Oil and allowed the looting and destruction of two very important institutions: the Baghdad Museum and the Ministry of Information, the impact of which will be discussed later. (Chandrasekaran 2006; Diamond 2005)

The lack of military support for ORHA over the list of important sites was not an isolated incident, but instead symptomatic of a general marginalization of this group. Garner had been asked to take control of ORHA on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2003, a mere two months before the war began. In his brief the assumptions made by the administration are clear and revealed to be woefully inaccurate. Garner was briefed with running post-war Iraq until an interim Iraqi government was set up by the Iraqi people, which was predicted to take about 90 days. Feith assured him that the Iraqi people would move quickly to take control of their country and handle the infrastructure, painting Garner's role as light touch and mainly concerned with immediate humanitarian assistance that was the President's priority. (Chandrasekaran 2006) This is perhaps the starkest proof that the planning by the administration was fatally flawed.

Ricks refers to a "cloud of cognitive dissonance" at Rumsfeld's level and above (Ricks 2006, 168), as the situation in Iraq failed to meet any of their expectations and the force stalled. Garner and others were discovering that the Iraqi infrastructure had already been weakened by years of cannibalization, by the

bombing campaign, and finally by the looting, leaving it in dire need of expensive and extensive overhauls. As the expected and hoped for Iraqi control of infrastructure and government failed to materialize the ORHA's lack of funding and resources started to create a power vacuum. Garner and his team were obviously floundering. The administration clearly agreed that under the ORHA Iraq was not shaping up as they expected, as less than a month after Garner had arrived in Iraq, he was told that he was to be replaced by L. Paul Bremer III. The ORHA would also be supplanted by the CPA. Whilst the ORHA had been envisaged as light touch and merely a quick staging post before Iraqi take over, the CPA, and Bremer in particular, saw their brief as far more long term and involved. Bremer was clear from the outset that he saw himself fulfilling an important role and aimed to "take clear, public and decisive steps" to reinforce that idea throughout Iraq. (Ricks 2006, 158) He was entering an arena however in which the US had lost the initiative, the US force had ceased to have utility, and in which the 4GW aspects of the mission were still not prioritized or even understood. There was not an understanding yet that the US was starting to be dragged into a 4GW engagement, and the actions being taken were hastening that eventuality.

Bremer's actions, particularly his notorious decisions regarding the dissolution of the Iraqi Army and de-Baathification, will be discussed as 4GW failures as well as strategic mistakes further on. Aside from the large mistakes such as the first two executive orders, other missteps added to the difficulty of winning the Iraqi people over. As those within the administration had not considered that this would be a necessary action, it was lacking in the post war plans. The rosy view did not allow for a post war scenario in which the US would find it necessary to engage in soft

power diplomacy and psywar to win over the populace. Galbraith also points out what he terms a “...culture of arrogance that pervaded the Bush administration” (Galbraith 2006, 83) that led them to completely neglect learning anything about the country they were about to invade. Saddam was a ruthless dictator who kept an iron grip on his monopoly of violence. When the US deposed him, they made no immediate moves to supplant his authority, allowing instead a power vacuum to develop that was immediately filled. In the next chapter I show how the US botched its communication, and lost the trust of the Iraqis. Faulty pre-war planning, poor intelligence, and a tangled chain of command all contributed to this failure.



### Chapter Three: “The Signal and the Noise”: The US Fails, and Fails to Communicate.

When targeting the will of people is the fundamental aim in warfare, as it is in 4GW, communication will be key. Communication in this case relates to how the US communicated their message to their soldiers and personnel deployed to Iraq, to the Iraqis, and to the rest of the world. It involves the messages given by the terms used to describe the engagement, as correctly labelling the conflict is necessary to conceptualise the response, and of course the use of the media.

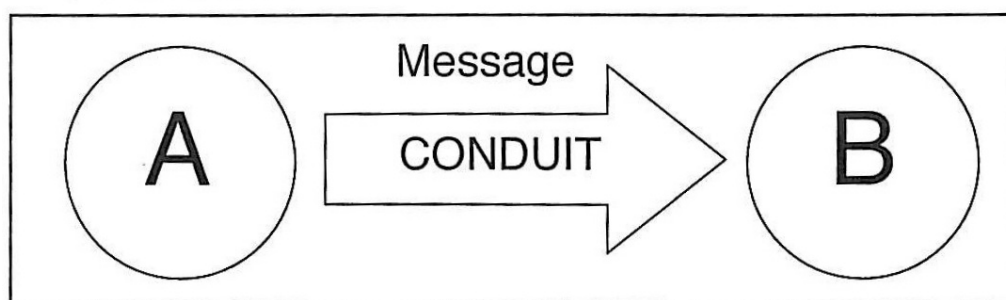
In each area the US made serious missteps regarding the approach taken from the outset, which naturally led to costly mistakes in theatre. The errors in approach were fundamental in nature, speaking to an administration and military grappling with a type of warfare they were unprepared to engage in. Significantly, the US decision makers were also unwilling to recognise these errors, and correctly classify the type of warfare they were engaging in and use appropriate tactics, adhering instead to a vision of the situation far removed from reality. This was not an approach conducive to 4GW, as a learning environment was not fostered from the top down. Inspecting the high level errors of approach in communication and military organisation will demonstrate the general ineptitude of the US entering and occupying Iraq, whilst the next chapter will delve deeper into specific examples.

Excellent communication is paramount in 4GW, as a 4GW war is inherently about the message, the story being told, and the strength with which it can be conveyed

and understood by the target audiences. (Hammes 2006) Communication is the responsibility of both military and civilian authorities, as it refers not only to official communications such as speeches and leaflets to Iraqis, instead reaching much broader to encompass actions taken in theatre which may be interpreted and ‘read’ for messages, the internal narrative the US told itself, and the external projection of its actions it showed to the world. (Bolt 2012)

As Andrew Mackay and Steve Tatham point out, “Audiences do not sit passively and receive messages; instead they contextualize them according to a host of external factors...”. (Mackay and Tatham 2011, 77) In short, a communications model does not resemble the very basic picture following in which the US could take position “A” and simply send their official message out to be received by the Iraqis in position “B”.

FigureOne:Basicmodelofcommunication (Mackay and Tatham 2011, 76)

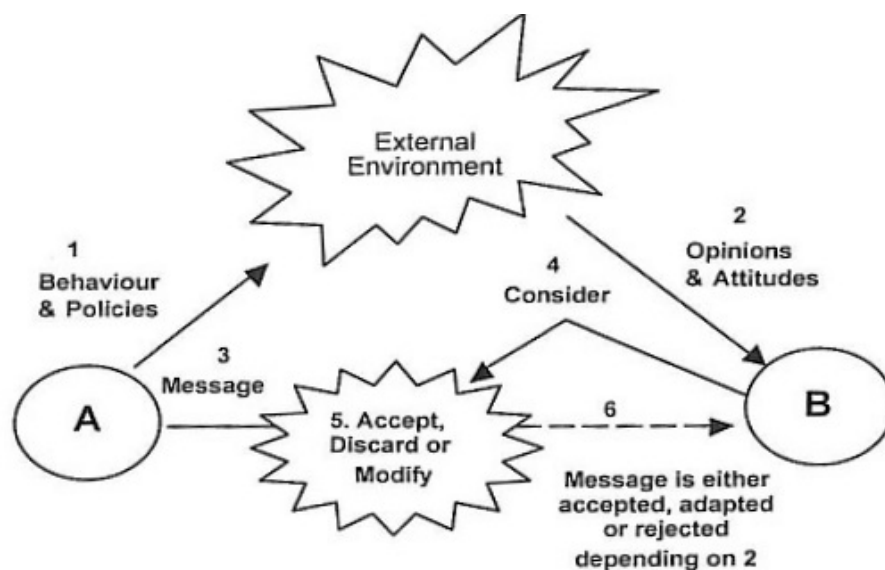


Instead, official messages are heavily contextualized by unofficial messages, outside events, and actions. They are further received through a filter of cultural belief and understanding that may distort the intentions of the sender. An actual communications model may more resemble the following, in which messages can

be accepted, discarded, or modified based upon a number of factors that influence both parties. Opinions and attitudes already in existence may further act upon both “A” and “B”, with or without their conscious knowledge.

Figure Two: Mackay and Tatham pragmatic-complexity model of communication.

(Mackay and Tatham 2011, 79)



Thus, when President George W. Bush confidently asserted that “...we are rehabilitating power plants, water and sanitation facilities, bridges, and airports...The primary goal of our coalition in Iraq is self-government for the people of Iraq” in his address to the United Nations General Council in 2003, this official message would have been received very differently in Iraq. (Bush 2003) Within Baghdad Iraqis had witnessed looting that encompassed even hospitals, were struggling with power outages and a lack of basic services, and were under the meddling control of the CPA. Any official message would be filtered through the ‘noise’ of all of these events, dosed with a healthy amount of scepticism bred from decades of propaganda translation, and automatically sifted for clues as to which side to back for the best chance of security.

When examining the communications from the US administration and military therefore, it is important to consider not just the message, but also the cultural assumptions that underpin them and the filter through which they would be perceived by the target audience. Paul Bohannon, a prominent anthropologist, once wrote that “There is no more complete way to misunderstand a foreign civilisations that to see it in terms of one’s own civilisation.” (Mackay and Tatham 2011, 79) In the US assumptions about the Iraqi willingness to embrace Western-style democracy the US administration was guilty of this very action. The desirability of democracy was seen as a given, hence the promise of it was believed to be a powerful inducement. The US saw no initial need to ‘sell’ the idea; to the contrary, it was seen as the hook with which to win Iraqi popular support. A more realistic approach to the planning would have noted that democracy was not necessarily the preferred Iraqi method of governance, unsurprisingly for a country created only after World War One, most Iraqis held loyalty along tribal, religious, and clan lines rather to political parties. Commander Abel Nouri, the deputy chief of the Iraqi Navy, remarked in 2005 “It is not that I do not like democracy, it was more that we Iraqis were not used to exercising freedom. We are like prisoners set free from prison. We do not know what to do.” (Downes 2006, 214) Even if Iraqis had wanted to band together in political groupings, over two decades of harsh repression of all political movements other than the Ba’ath Party had ensured little prior experience of such a system. If the US was wedded to the idea of an Iraq governed by Western-style democracy, it should have planned far more concertedly for how to foster a desire for the same in Iraqis. Alternatively if the main concern was a ‘free’ Iraq without Saddam

Hussein, the US should have been prepared to accept a form of government chosen by Iraqis rather than insisting on democracy, let alone offering it as a reward.

The cultural lens of Iraqis would naturally share many facets with other Arab states as their histories and traditions interlink, and of course tribes and religions do not follow state boundary lines<sup>9</sup>. The probable reaction of these neighbouring states should therefore have been included in planned communications, as they would necessarily influence the situation in Iraq. Whilst it is doubtful that any message would have resulted in whole hearted support for the invasion, the US could have done more to counter negative perceptions; perceptions that become even more relevant when Iraqis gained access to TV channels such as al-Jazeera, which will be discussed later.

The messages from the US did little to reassure other Arab states. Examples of rhetoric from President George W. Bush include “We are advancing freedom in the broader Middle East”, (Bush 2005) and “the United States ... will help the Iraqi people ... create the institutions of liberty in a unified Iraq, at peace with its neighbors”. (Bush 2002) His 18<sup>th</sup> March 2003 address on the eve of the invasion is particularly rife with references to unwarranted threats and promises of liberties, the two twining round one another to create a tapestry of justification for US action. Excerpts from this alone include “...patient and honorable efforts to disarm the Iraqi regime without war... Our good faith has not been returned... The regime has a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East... The danger is

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<sup>9</sup> The understanding that tribal politics would be key was lacking at the highest levels. As late as January 2003 President George W. Bush was unaware that there was a difference between Sunnis and Shiites. (Galbraith 2006)

clear...with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other...The United States and other nations did nothing to deserve or invite this threat... The United States... will work to advance liberty and peace in that region.”

These statements, and others regarding the ‘tyranny’ and threat of Saddam Hussein, do little to assuage any of the concerns from the Arab states. Many would argue that the US did indeed invite and deserve this perceived threat from Saddam through their continued support for Israel at the expense of Palestinians, the most pressing justification ahead of perceived moral lassitude and general anti-American fervor. The case for war was laid out as necessary due to threats to the US, a dangerous precedent of pre-emptive warfare that would not have reassured countries that could imagine finding themselves so targeted due to association with the nebulous and all-encompassing term ‘terrorists’. The stark bi-polar choice of “with us or against us” left no room for the subtlety and nuances of international diplomacy, in which the US is just one player. At a time when the US supported states in the area ruled by monarchies, with systems of governance that were decidedly undemocratic, their fervor to bring peace and liberty to Iraq alone was also questionable. (Tatham 2006)

The message being exported overseas is just one factor that merits consideration. In 4GW war the people are the centre of gravity upon which the entire endeavour hinges; the prize to be won rather than merely the battleground upon which the war is fought. Any service men/women or administration employees who were to be deployed to Iraq should have had this drilled into them prior to their

deployment, and emphasised repeatedly once there. They should have been given cultural lessons about Iraqi culture, studied the history of the area, and attempted as far as possible to respect local customs and traditions. In a short period of time before deployment there are of course limits to how in-depth such cultural training can be. The US should however have focused on their human capital and found their most talented and adaptable professionals to immerse in study. These individuals should have been prepared for long deployments in which they could build up interpersonal relationships of mutual trust with Iraqi stakeholders, and function as a bridge between Iraqis and the US. The organisational philosophy of the US military and administration was not however suited to such engagement, focused as it had been since the 1990s on modularity and multi-functionality of troops. (Lujan 2013) Rather than deep regional specialists with language fluency, who spend many years, decades even, building up relationships and a systematic knowledge of areas of interest, the Pentagon has instead focused on creating generalists who can deploy anywhere, at any time. (Lujan 2013) Whilst this approach has its benefits, it cannot replicate the trust built over long engagements, and personal rapport fostered by talented people who are experts in relationship building. Without these deep level regional specialists the US should have at the least focused their personnel psychologically to see the Iraqis as the prize and the lynchpin to success, instead however, it could be argued that a great number of US personnel saw Iraqis not as the prize, but as the enemy.

Although there was much talk about ‘liberating’ Iraq, and implied gratitude from the Iraqis, the message that Iraq was linked to the attacks of 9/11<sup>10</sup> led to a

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<sup>10</sup> Please see Appendix E for tables showing the prevalence of this viewpoint amongst US citizens.

mindset that saw Iraqis as the adversary. The combination of this attitude, and later, a perceived lack of gratitude for US efforts, poisoned the relationship. US soldiers who had been led to believe that Iraqis would be grateful to see them arrive reported surprise that “there was no happy reaction from the Iraqis. We were greeted with indifference. No one clapped or waved flags. They just stared at us and waited for us to leave.” (Crawford 2005, 205)

As regards integrating with and respecting the culture which they would be entering, apart from a few special forces exceptions such as Ar-Rutbah, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, and Tal Afar, (Gordon and Trainor 2013) there was instead a concerted effort not to challenge US forces or civilians with the unfamiliar. The Green Zone in Iraq is the most prominent example of this; US administration and military camped out in Saddam’s former palace, eating pizza and pork hot dogs, often served by Muslim Iraqis, by a pool, and venturing into the streets mainly for high speed patrols in armoured cars and Humvees. (Chandrasekaran 2006) A lack of Arabic speaking service and civilian personnel has been cited many times as a problematic factor in post-conflict Iraq, but further than this there was a lack of understanding regarding the basic cultural courtesies. An ex-British Army security contractor, amongst others, has given examples of witnessing US failures to understand a situation on the ground, perhaps the most pertinent of which involves a peaceful demonstration in 2004. A 10,000 strong crowd of Iraqis was marching loudly but peacefully, carrying pictures of their religious leaders and chanting. They were demanding free elections, exactly what the US was claiming to offer. An oil convoy guarded by US troops was attempting to use the same road, and the US troops may have thought the marchers were



there to block the convoy. They descended into the marchers, fired shots into the air and screamed at them to disperse, turning a peaceful demonstration into a fully-fledged angry mob. The crowd did disperse, but with the belief that the US forces were there to deny them access to a free election. (Ashcroft 2006, 195) The lack of respect shown to the Iraqis would have turned the mood of the entire crowd, and those they told the story to, against the US.

Further examples include the US not participating in the cultural exchanges that many Iraqis found essential in polite dealings; finding interminable exchanges regarding the health of one's family and colleagues a waste of time when business was to be discussed. (Ashcroft 2006) Conducting house searches without the male head of the household being present, using sniffer dogs, and body searches of females were all acts that convinced many Iraqis that the US had no respect for them or their country and were there to humiliate and repress them. (Allawi 2007, 186) These measures also did not serve to reassure Iraqis regarding their own security. Leading up to the 2005 election General George W. Casey asked his Commander's Initiative Group to analyse polling data to ascertain the challenges ahead. They found that 50% of Iraqis surveyed did not feel safe in their own neighbourhoods, and that a scant 23% felt that the presence of the coalition in any way contributed to their safety. (Gordon and Trainor 2013, 99)

Alongside these personal interactions, the wider message being communicated was not a reassuring one for most Iraqis. The US had taken over Iraq, but seemed to care little for how most Iraqis would survive. Those entering the country through the main portal of Baghdad Airport had their passports stamped; "Baghdad International Airport. Entry. CPA" and the date. (Downes 2006, 55) There was no

mention of Iraq, no recognition that this was anything other than a CPA controlled area. US road convoys travelled through crowded streets by blaring their horns and firing warning shots at cars that neglected to move out of their way fast enough. (Ashcroft, 2006) Those that had warning shots were actually fortunate, as many others were fired upon in the streets and at checkpoints by jumpy US military personnel, leading to avoidable civilian deaths and understandable rage at the US forces. The ideas held by many of the US ground troops in Iraq were terrifyingly simplistic, with the entire scenario being divided into “good guys” and “bad guys”, with no understanding of the subtleties of the complex society they were operating in. (Downes 2006, 229.) Even before the abuses at Abu Ghraib came to light, there was plenty of evidence for Iraqis to conclude that the US was an occupying force determined to treat the Iraqi people with disdain and contempt. Against the communication impact of all these actions, official flyers and leaflets, grand speeches, or sanctioned messages broadcast by the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) would have little to no effect.

The military and administration that was making these missteps was clearly unsuited for the type of warfare in which it was engaging. It is worth looking at the state of the military in particular, beyond the previously mentioned modularity, as that organisation was undergoing a restructure from the very top at the time of the conflict. Rumsfeld was clear in his memoirs that one of his most fundamental aims in taking up his post was to transform the military; to restructure it to better fit with situations of the modern age. He required forces that were, in the words of the President who appointed him, “lethal, light, and mobile.” (Rumsfeld 2011, 294) Rumsfeld also states that intelligence needed to improve, although he focuses

on how it needed to improve in order to better facilitate precision targeting, a very 3GW approach rooted in the belief that the RMA would provide success in warfare through technological advances. Throughout his memoirs, and throughout the planning and conduct of the conflict in Iraq, he fails to recognise the importance of intelligence for more than physical and targeting needs. His experience in the military led him to have strong views on what it should be used for. In his memoirs he reasserts his view that “I did not think resolving other countries’ internal political disputes, paving roads, erecting power lines, policing streets, building stock markets, and organizing democratic governmental bodies were missions for our men and women in uniform.” (Rumsfield 2011, 482) This was a viewpoint he shared with the President, and National Security Advisor Condeleeza Rice, both of whom had openly mocked the idea of using the US military for ‘nation building’ in the 2000 election campaign. (Gordon and Trainor 2013) Almost all such nation-building actions are important parts of waging successful psywar, particularly the “constructive” side of COIN, in which you offer to the populace a better system of governance and structure.<sup>11</sup> (Gavrilis 2009)

The military was not the sole organisation to fail to achieve long term aims in Iraq. There could broadly be said to be three dimensions to the situation: the military dimension concerned with the defeat of Saddam; the political dimension of returning sovereignty to Iraqis in the form of a democratic government; and the societal dimension of caring for and helping Iraqis. All three should have been part of an integrated whole of liberation, with military and civilian agencies working

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<sup>11</sup> The stock exchange, admittedly, seems more of a vanity project than an essential post-conflict reconstruction effort, especially when you consider it was tasked to a 24 year old with no financial experience. (Galbraith 2006, 126 and Chandrasekaran 2006)

together in different areas towards the same overall aim. The second two dimensions, the political and the societal, should have been the main responsibilities of first the ORHA, and shortly thereafter the CPA. In post-conflict liberations, or indeed in any post-conflict situation, it is important that people see actions to improve their lives happening very quickly. (Diamond 2005) Instead of this Iraqis initially experienced a hiatus in which no one seemed to be in charge, followed by the incompetent bungling of the CPA, an organisation that seemed to focus on the minutiae of administration whilst allowing the basics of reconstruction to be ignored. Commentators who experienced working with the CPA report a dichotomy of overall grandiose schemes to transform all of Iraq, and incessant tinkering with the detail of even the simplest schemes. (Chandrasekaran, Downes, Diamond, Galbraith, North, Ricks) It was given the derogatory nickname, the “Can’t Provide Anything”. (Galbraith 2006) Under the rule of the CPA the Iraqi people actually experienced a decrease in their standard of living as far as the essentials of life and security are concerned. To take the provision of electricity as one example, in Baghdad citizens under Saddam had become accustomed to more hours of electricity than the rest of the country, and whilst electrical demand did outstrip supply (approximately 3,500MW produced to 7,000 – 8,000MW needed), (Haddad and Piven 2013) there was a fairly constant supply of power. Under the CPA the demand increased as Iraqis purchased goods previously unavailable under sanctions, such as air conditioners and satellite dishes, yet the supply dwindled, and was shared across the entire Iraq grid rather than focused on Baghdad.

Although the US remained obstinate in its early determination not to engage with the constructive side of COIN, their enemies were quick to seize the advantage this

offered them, perhaps better understanding the nature of communication through action; the propaganda of the deed. When the Mahdi Army briefly took control of Sadr City in the Sadr City Uprising, they took control of the power plants and kept the electricity flowing for 24 hours a day. This was in contrast to the CPA rationing imposed on the strained electrical infrastructure; a necessary rationing if the Iraqi electrical grid was to survive. The 24 hour provision of electricity would not have been sustainable, however it sent a powerful message to the Iraqi citizens about the ability of the insurgents to provide where the coalition was unable or unwilling to. (Gordon and Trainor 2013, 69) As a psywar tactic, it was brilliant.

Whilst the CPA held meetings about redrafting Iraq's traffic laws to include restrictions on following other cars too closely, and promulgated memos regarding an entire new democratic system to encompass the whole of Iraq, outside the Green Zone these debates seemed far removed from the reality of daily life. The CPA should have been working with the military to maintain order through military means in the short term, whilst seeking out local authority figures to take over the social and political aspects. Not least because local contacts would far better be able to navigate their way through a society and power structure that they understood well and the US seemed blind to. Numerous examples show that the US failed to take offered opportunities to work with tribal leaders willing to support the coalition, not least because the prevailing US view was that the tribal structure was old-fashioned and obsolete under a new democratic form of governance. (Gordon and Trainor 2013)

Although it cannot be stated with complete definition when the situation in Iraq tipped into a fully-fledged insurgency, within a few months the US forces were engaged in COIN warfare. 4GW is an evolved form of insurgency (Hammes 2006), hence COIN tactics need to be used to counter it. In the Iraq theatre, however, it would seem that those lower down the command chain were the first to realise and correctly define the type of combat they were embroiled in, whilst their efforts were hampered by those above them who stubbornly refused to accept that they were fighting an insurgency even as they started to lose it. Bremer insisted on calling the insurgents “terrorists” (Diamond 2006, 47); Rumsfeld named them “pockets of dead enders” (Ricks 2006, 169); and Wolfowitz called them both “remnants of the old regime” and “the last remnants of a dying cause”. (Ricks 2006,170) The military and civilian agencies, such as the CPA, are very hierarchical. The actions and mood of the whole are reliant upon the words and guidance of those at the top. If the commander-in-chief and the top echelons of both the military and civilian administration state that there is no ongoing war, no prolonged conflict, and certainly no “quagmire” or insurgency, then this necessarily impacts on the effectiveness of the forces below them. A refusal to countenance that COIN operations need to be implemented will hamstring the utility of the force on the ground; unable to define the conflict that it finds itself engaging in, or use the techniques best suited to it.

Even as the Defense Department and senior commanders refused to classify the enemy as insurgents, local and regional commanders were trying to change their methods from the ground up. Setting up online forums such as “Small Wars Journal” and trading tips and techniques in person and via emails, ground level

commanders recognised the war they were fighting and made efforts to meet it appropriately. (Kilcullen 2010, 19) In the second battle of Fallujah in 2004, some Marines even used a Microsoft chat programme to share intelligence and reports with one another and the general Army, a method that proved far faster and safer than the approved military technique of physically running between organisations to speak face-to-face, as only high level echelons of each organisation were officially allowed to communicate. (Gordon and Trainor 2013, 119) Contemporary COIN techniques and learning from the practise of the same was brought into the full light of military analysis, with approval from the top levels of leadership, only as recently as 2006. (Kilcullen 2010) That left three years for those at the ground level to quietly discuss the issue amongst themselves and attempt to win a war their organisations had not fully admitted they were engaged in. Although it is the mark of an organisation fit for 4GW warfare that it will out of necessity be a learning and self-critical organisation (Hammes 2006), the willingness to examine strategy and tactics came too late for the military that entered Iraq in 2003.

## Chapter Four: Squandered Trust: Examples of “Betrayal” and Missed Opportunities

"What we have lost and what has been broken is priceless. We will never put a number on it." Donny George, Director General of Iraq's State Board of Antiquities. (George, 2003)

"Freedom's untidy...stuff happens..." "Looting is an unfortunate thing...it happens and it's unfortunate..." Donald Rumsfeld (Rumsfeld 2011, 477)

The disconnect between Iraqis and the US administration seems epitomized in these two separate responses to the looting in Baghdad at the cessation of conventional warfare in May 2003. The collision of such disparate viewpoints confronted with a fracturing Iraq ate into any tentative trust that may have been built between Iraqis and their occupiers. Trust is not implicitly given to those who simply title themselves liberators; it has to be earned by more than the removal of an oppressor and their regime. Trust does not have to spring from ideological similarities, or even agreement, but it is essential in COIN. David Kilcullen, the well regarded author of Counterinsurgency, summarizes this point when he notes the truism that the people you want to support you, or at least not oppose you, don't have to like you, but they must trust you. (Kilcullen 2010) Faced with a dangerous situation such as a civil war or an occupation, the majority of people, if not directly involved, will choose to support the side that they believe offers the most security and safety. They may not support that side's ideology or wholeheartedly subscribe to its tenets, but they will offer it tacit support if they



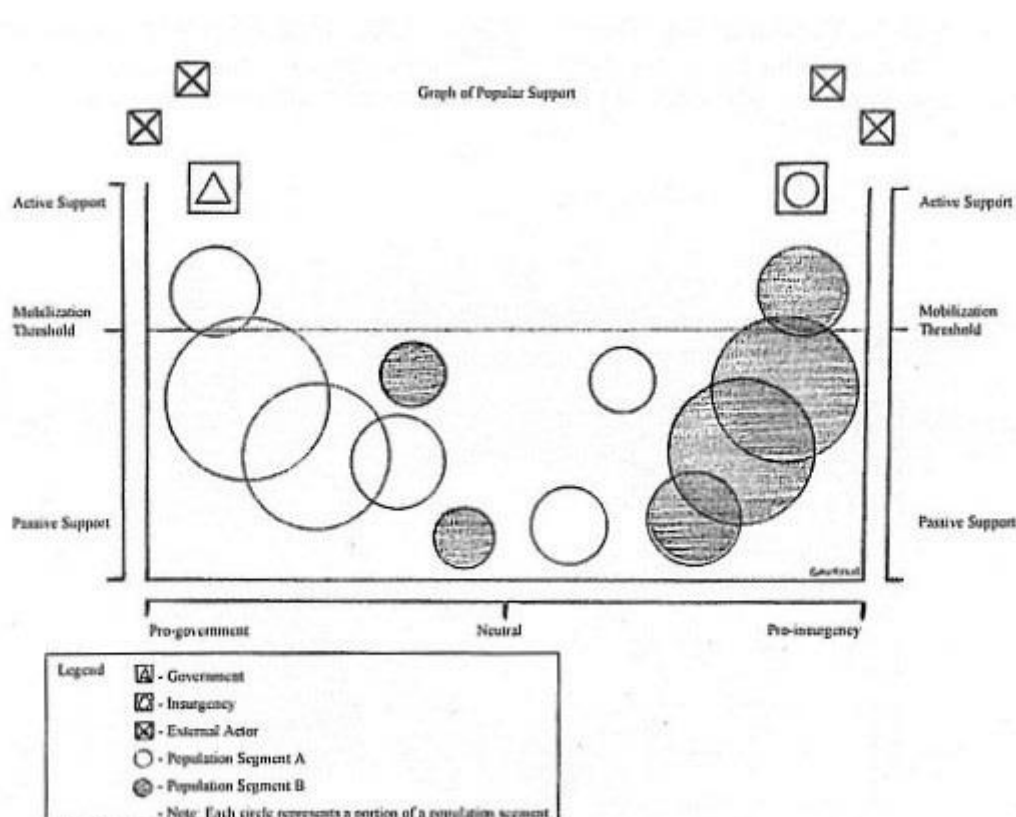
trust that the promises made, threatening or enticing, will be kept. The US had promised to remove Saddam, and they had done, but by then failing immediately to keep law and order and continue the provision of the necessities of life, they lost the trust and respect of the Iraqi people they had just 'liberated'. By not viewing themselves as in interim but immediate control of Iraq, with the inherent responsibilities of the same, they lost prestige and allowed an insurgency to develop.

I have chosen to focus on four particular examples, out of many, of US actions that corrosively eroded the psychological contract between the US and Iraqis; the lack of response to the immediate post-war looting, the failure of the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), and the first two CPA orders ordering de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi military. These examples epitomize certain important facets of 4GW failure; a lack of control and thus trustworthiness in the realm of security, a failure to control the message, an unwillingness to co-opt and cooperate with existing power players, and the disenfranchisement of a trained, armed group of potential allies or at least neutral players. Contrasting these large scale failures to a small scale Special Forces success in Ar-Rutbah demonstrates that these failures were not inevitable, and provides a population-centered warfare model to examine.

The US military and civil administrations both failed to consider the population as the centre point of warfare. James A. Gavrilis, an ex-Special Forces officer who had initial success in the Ar-Rutbah area of Iraq when he was tasked with taking it

during the invasion, has created a model for population-centered warfare which in its simplest form is represented thus:

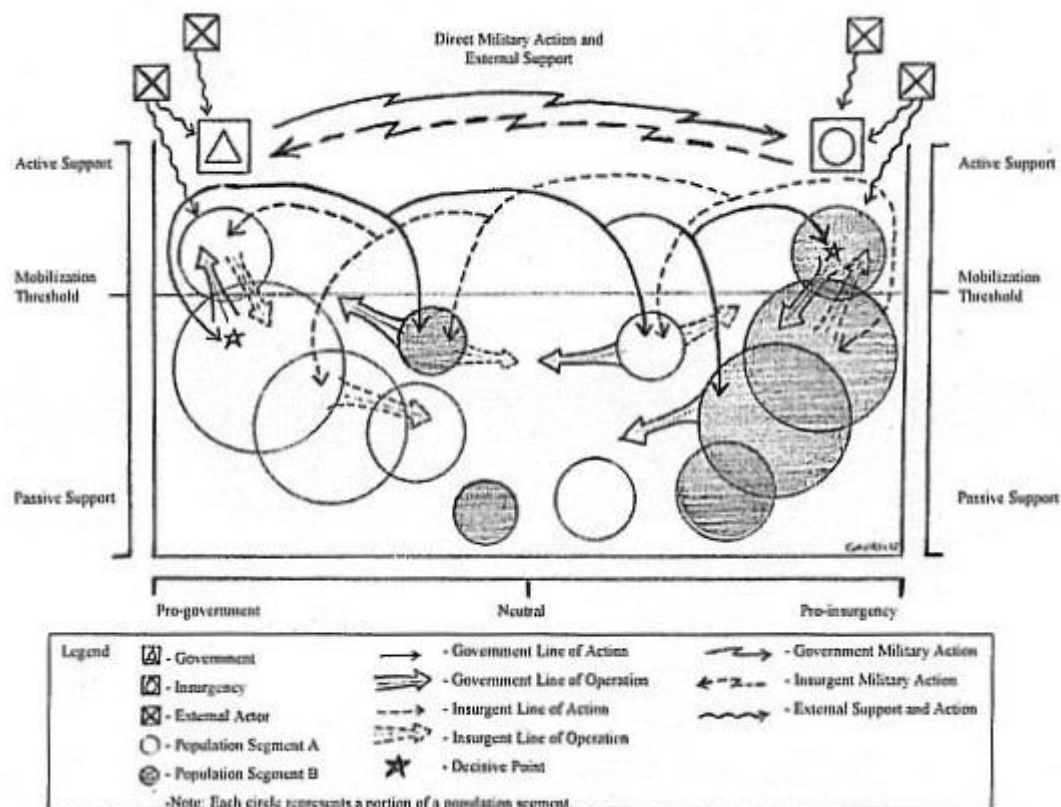
Figure Three: Gavrilis model of population centric warfare - basic state of play at start. (Gavrilis 2009, 7)



Gavrilis further expands this model from the basic state of play at the start of an engagement to demonstrate how actions and messages on both sides may influence the population segments. The government's goal is to act on the population segments, through the military (as this is a model that is military specific), in such a way as to move them towards passive or active support for the government, whilst stopping insurgency actions and countering insurgency messages that may move population segments to support the insurgency. The model takes notes of

external actions and actors, useful for 4GW engagements, which due to their connected nature and use of the media are rarely if ever fought in a vacuum free from external influence. Whilst the model is not ground breaking in terms of overall theory, it is the concept of examining and reporting on the battlefield with the population as the centre of gravity that is vital. Through mapping the population, and planning military actions based on how this action could move the population segments it requires officers and decision makers to keep the population and their potential reactions at the forefront of their minds in decision making and planning. An adaptation of this model for civilian agencies could have been of great use, however it is worth noting that these models, along with others, are only valuable assets if there is true intelligence and an understanding of the nature of the population segments attempting to be influenced. Without this knowledge to guide the planning and anticipate population segment movements, the model is nothing more than guesswork. It requires honest appraisals of progress, and the willingness to change tactics if needed; to be an adaptable, intelligent, learning organisation.

Figure Four: Gavrilis model of population centric warfare—military action and external support (Gavrilis 2009, 14)



The Gavrilis model concerns primarily COIN, but is useful for considering how best to counter an insurgency before it has started (traditionally the best time to do so). If, in these figures, we substitute the occupation forces, both military and civil, for the “government” in the model, we can see how the US should have acted upon the population segments in order to influence them and bring them towards either active or passive occupation support. Those who it was impossible to co-opt to the cause should have been removed and if necessary eliminated, however those who could be swayed into occupation support should have been the targets of focused psywar to move their support levels. Gavrilis put his model into practice in Ar-Rutbah, and against a backdrop of increasing hostility towards US troops he succeeded in constructive engagement with the Iraqi populace. Within a

few weeks talks with the future (Iraqi) mayor, head of police, and various other power players were well under way. (Ricks 2006, 152) Gavrilis was busy in creating what he terms the “constructive side” of COIN, which he holds to be more important than the destructive side. By this he refers to creating an alternative form of government and outperforming the adversary. (Gavrilis 2009) He was dealing with this concept at a fairly micro level in one province, however it was a concept that the US would have done well to consider for the entirety of Iraq. Gavrilis examined Ar-Rutbah as an integrated whole comprising of geographical, societal, economic, military, and political layers, and prioritized the population as the most vital element of his campaign. Ar-Rutbah was only under the control of Gavrilis for a short time, realistically preventing a theoretical extrapolation of his methods across Iraq, however the fact that this area was not only pacified, but actively engaged with US forces in reconstruction helps evidence that the ever-worsening situation in the rest of Iraq was not unavoidable.

Instead of considering the use of a model such as this, immediately after the fall of Baghdad a lack of action regarding the looting moved many away from such passive or active occupation support. The first images from Baghdad were jubilant and promising, including a large statue of Saddam being toppled and Iraqis swarming around to hit it physically including with their shoes. Although not quite the cheering crowds strewing flowers over US tanks that would have been welcomed, these images showed Iraqis expressing their hatred of the old regime and even (briefly) working together with the US forces to dismantle some of the obvious signs of it. Within hours of these images being broadcast to the world however, far less salubrious images were filling TV screens. Looting began in the Ministry of

Industry, and quickly spread. Within days the lawless rampaging had spread to include ransacking the Museum of Antiquities and the Library amongst other precious stockpiles of irreplaceable culture and history. Images on the news showed Iraqis running with loot past stationary US forces sitting in their tanks and standing fully armed guarding nothing more than the Ministry of Oil. Popular perception can be more important than reality, so no matter the intent, the failure to stop the looting promulgated the perception of an impotent, or worse, uncaring US force. Aside from the immediate psywar loss of prestige, not acting to stop this looting had long reaching serious implications for the US post war presence in Iraq. Looters destroyed or stole valuable information crucial to post war reconstruction, including records of Ba'ath party membership, schematics for the water supply, and personnel records for Ministries amongst others. (Allawi 2007)

The looting was an immediate and immense disaster in 4GW terms on multiple levels. It showed the US forces as weak and unable to control the city. The lack of authority displayed immediately ceded control to whoever could take it. In their failure to protect culturally important sites, the US forces seemed uncaring and dismissive of the importance of such stockpiles of heritage and culture. One journalist was told by a cleric in Baghdad "I simply cannot understand how your soldiers could have stood by and watched. Maybe, they are weak, too. Maybe they are wicked." (Diamond 2005, 282) Iraqi trust was being squandered immediately, as Baghdad citizens had to make choices about where their future security and safety lay, and the US military did very little to support and reassure them. The psychological contract between Iraqis and the US was being broken before there

had been a chance to truly cement it, with the political price being, as Larry Diamond put it; “having Iraqis equate freedom with disorder and violence.”  
(Diamond 2005, 282)

Martin E. Sullivan, chairman of President Bush's Cultural Property Advisory Committee, resigned on April 17<sup>th</sup> 2003 over the looting, along with a number of his colleagues. He stated that "The tragedy was not prevented, due to our nation's inaction." Gary Vikan, a member of the committee who resigned, further stated: “We certainly know the value of oil, but we certainly don’t know the value of historical artifacts.” Unfortunately, the sight of Marines guarding the Ministry of Oil whilst the Museum and Library were ransacked gave this viewpoint credence in the eyes of the watching world and the Iraqis who saw it first hand.

The communication from the top echelons of US power further reinforced the image of an uncaring US removed from the reality of the situation. “Freedom’s untidy”, and “stuff happens” from Rumsfeld, sent the signal that the administration did not take the destruction and violence seriously. On the ground the top ranks in the military were echoing the “hands off” approach that the administration was touting. Brigadier General Vincent Brooks seemed to concur with Rumsfeld about the role of the military: “At no point do we really see becoming a police force... What we see is taking actions that are necessary to create stability.” (Brooks 2003)

A gradual erosion of any gratitude that Iraqis might have felt was taking place which would damage occupation efforts in the long term. The brutality and harsh

repression of the dictatorship under Saddam cannot be overlooked; there would have been many Iraqis who were pleased to see him go, even if they were not equally pleased to witness the US arrive. The dilemma faced by many Iraqis was precisely that; they wanted Saddam to be overthrown, but did not relish the prospect of being a “defeated” country. (Downes 2006) There was a chance to capitalise on the happiness and relief many Iraqis would have felt at the removal of Saddam from power, but it would necessitate careful handling and a complete lack of victor posturing by the US. Although early messages from the US promised that the war was with Saddam, not Iraqis, initial jubilation at his removal was quickly clouded by the chaotic turn of events on the ground.

Within these first few weeks the US had a chance to win trust, take decisive control, and send a clear message. One of the avenues available to them should have been the Iraqi Media Network (IMN). Don North, a veteran television producer, had been asked by Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to head up the IMN in post war Iraq. This contract had come from the Pentagon<sup>12</sup> and was to comprise a full media system including a daily newspaper, a national television station, and a national radio station. (Chandrasekaran 2006) It was an impressive scope, and when North accepted the job he was eager to start planning for how they would accomplish the remarkable job of setting all this in place in a post-conflict country. The IMN should have been a tremendous asset to the coalition and the US; able to present news and information in a manner favourable to them. However, the shambolic planning and set up, and the complete lack of prioritization for the IMN meant that it was useless.

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<sup>12</sup> After some internal manoeuvring by Feith and his assistants.



Before setting off for Iraq, North was informed that much of the planning and pre-purchasing had already been completed, but when he saw the equipment that had been purchased he was dismayed. 'It was like they bought everything from a flea market in London,' he stated. (Chandrasekaran 2006,147) North had planned to use the studios and equipment in the Iraqi Ministry of Information, including their transmission equipment; however, this building was hit by a direct strike from the US military and completely razed.

The building had contained the equipment and studios for the Iraqi Broadcasting and Television Establishment (IBTE), an organization under the control of the Ministry of Information in which it was housed. Under Saddam strict controls were in place regarding all forms of media, and only sanctioned messages were broadcast, usually full of praise for Saddam. (al-Khalil 1989) Up until the last hours of conventional warfare high ranking party members continued to try to spin the news into tales of glorious success for Saddam (the most notable of these being 'Chemical Ali', whose farcical pronouncements were widely reported on), however the grip on the media had been lost. This would have been the perfect time to bring a fully operational IMN into the picture, however once again a lull in US activities was visible. Enterprising Iraqis stepped into this breach and started to sell satellite dishes, items previously banned and unavailable to the majority of Iraqis. With these dishes Iraqis could pick up on world news broadcasts, and perhaps most importantly they could access stations such as al-Jazeera. This Arabic language station did not portray the invasion in a positive light, and was highly critical of the US and its actions. By insisting on viewing themselves as

liberators rather than occupiers, and with a particularly laissez faire approach to liberation, the US was ceding ground. An occupier could have restricted access to media for a short time, but a liberator in the style of the US “hands off” model could not do the same. As such, the control was removed but nothing credible was put forward to take the place of the previous structures. (Chandrasekaran 2006)

The IMN had issues beyond the shoddy equipment that greatly affected its credibility with an Iraqi audience. Don North eventually ended up naming it “Project Frustration” and quitting in July 2003, stating in January 2004 that “...a credible media has not been realized”. (North 2004) He referred to the level of control that the CPA demanded, including insisting that all their news conferences and other events be covered. CPA officials went as far as to rehire staff fired by Ahmad Al Rikaby, stating that only the CPA could make staffing decisions. Under Bremer the CPA was known for its lofty goals, coupled with a belief that it was the highest level of authority in Iraq. This led it to interfere and micro manage projects. This was not competent planning, but rather destructive short-term micromanagement that stymied the efforts of those experts who were attempting to create a true free press. Under CPA interference the IMN became a mouthpiece for the occupation; unable to critique US actions and hardly a bastion of press freedom. Despite the large sums of money granted to the overall project, the ground level situation continued to be dire in terms of equipment, with North stating that requests for essential items costing under \$500 were routinely denied. The continuing decline of journalistic standards, coupled with the easy access to satellite broadcasts sounded the death knell for the IMN. By 2004 a State Department poll showed just 12% of Iraqis were watching the broadcasts or using it

as a news source, with the vast majority instead turning to al-Jazeera or al-Arabiya (63%). (North 2004)

By insisting on turning the IMN into a coalition mouthpiece, the US administration made a serious error. Iraqis, bombarded for decades with propaganda, were well able to recognize it when they saw it and dismiss it as such. The credibility of the IMN was destroyed, whilst simultaneously access to credible but perhaps anti-American biased news sources was granted. Against this backdrop the US administration within Iraq would have to work even harder to regain the control of the message that they had ceded.

Of course, some CPA actions were so drastically short sighted that it would be hard within Iraq to couch them in positive language. The first two orders of the CPA under Bremer were the now infamous de-Ba'athification order, and the dissolution of entities created by Saddam, including and mainly affecting the military.

Although these acts were in themselves 4GW failures, their communications impact is also important. The juxtaposition of these orders against previous inaction gave a mixed message regarding US levels of control and long term aims. A confusion in the message only adds to mistrust and the perception of incompetency. The US had initially made it clear that they expected the Iraqi people to take charge of a post-conflict Iraq. After the end of conventional warfare however this message was muddled by the orders and micromanaging nature of the CPA. As oppose to leaving governance to Iraqis, the CPA moved to take detailed control of many aspects of Iraqi reconstruction, attempting to crudely graft uniquely Western elements into

Iraqi governance and society. In my opinion the US was here falling in-between two models for post-conflict presence, and failing to capitalize on either.

The initial order dissolved the Ba'ath party, but went further than that to state that all members of the Ba'ath party were "removed from their positions and banned from future employment in the public sector", effectively banning them from being at all involved in the restructuring of Iraq. (Galbraith 2006) Although this could at the surface layer be seen as a decisive blow against the old regime, it was in fact disastrously naïve and short sighted. In Iraq, there had only been the Ba'ath Party, no other political party had been allowed to exist, hence there was no opposition party that could be turned to for the provision of leadership or guidance. Under Saddam, all professionals above a certain level had been forced to join the Ba'ath party to continue to advance in their careers, or even to retain them. (Chandrasekaran 2006) By refusing to allow any Ba'ath party members to hold positions of responsibility, Bremer had in one pen stroke managed to disenfranchise all the doctors, lawyers, managers, directors, and other people essential for the running of Iraq's infrastructure. For those who had been expecting something similar to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation practice this was a terrible blow to their plans. Iraqis who had joined the Ba'ath party under coercion and had never played an active role in the party were treated the same as those who had believed its ideology and accepted an active role. In psywar terms, this disenfranchisement of the very people who had run Iraq in the past demonstrated the perceived lack of trust the US administration had in the Iraqi people, despite their proclamations to the contrary.

The second order further undermined any trust that the US was there to liberate Iraqis and then leave as promised. This order disbanded the Iraqi military. Some years on from the event, Bremer would argue that there was no army left to disband, and the order he signed had been a mere formality recognizing that the Iraqi army had already disbanded themselves. (Bremer 2007) Others, such as Walter Slocombe, the civilian who had been asked to take control of the Iraqi military, disagree. (Chandrasekaran 2006, 80) The Iraqi army had mostly left their bases and returned to their homes even before the end of the conventional warfare. Numerous leaflets and other propaganda from the US, including President George W. Bush's speech on the eve of war, had encouraged them to do so. The leaders of the army however insist that they were ready and waiting to be called up again, to serve a new Iraq. One lieutenant colonel, Mustafa Duleimi, stated as Bremer landed; "We're waiting for our orders." (Chandrasekaran 2006, 81) Bremer took the view that as there were no visible Iraqi army battalions camped around Baghdad in surrender, and as the bases had been looted, there was no existing Iraqi army. He further stated that to retain the old army would have eroded trust in the US, using as an example the Iraqi police force, most of which was kept on and has since proved untrustworthy. (Rumsfeld 2011) What he failed to address was the fact that signing an order that disbanded the army without engaging in any dialogue with them first created a section of Iraqi society that was armed, trained, and robbed of their prestige, not to mention pay and careers.

The Iraqis affected by these two orders were the exact segment of society that a great deal of psywar effort should have been poured into. These were the managers, the professionals, the armed and ready fighters who could have been an

enormous help and support to the US efforts. Not all of these Iraqis would have been willing to work with the US, and some would have been entrenched in the resistance to US efforts. Those that it would have been impossible to convert did need to be removed from power and neutralized, however no effort was made to distinguish between the enemy, supporters, and those who were wavering in the neutral zone and could have been co-opted. Through these two orders the CPA did move those who were neutral and undecided about whether to resist or support the US, however they moved them into opposition instead of support. It would be near impossible for the army, disbanded with no honour, no pay, and no consultation, to support the US now. In fact, it was even seen by some as a mistake not to have resisted the US led invasion more fiercely. Some soldiers felt that they had trusted the US by abandoning their bases, and this act of good faith was used against them. One ex-military man lamented the perceived betrayal: “I was a big man in the old air force defence corps, but now I am nothing. They have abolished the army and the police and replaced it with nothing.” (Downes 2006, 57)

The failures highlighted in this chapter are merely the most obvious manifestations of the overall failure of the US military and administration to develop their practices to succeed in 4GW. Had they developed this capability the US would have stood a much better chance of forestalling the rise of the networked insurgency that arose. Through these notable missteps the US alienated a large and crucial segment of the population, lost control of the message and allowed others to co-opt it, and surrendered the monopoly on force crucial to maintaining law and order and thus winning Iraqi trust. Within 24 hours of ‘winning the war, the US had

started to lose prestige, respect, and most vitally the trust of the people they claimed to be liberating. This downward trajectory continued, and it would take years of scrambling around in the chaos and mess of a fracturing Iraq before any sort of cohesive and coherent post war plans emerged. By that time an insurgency was taking its toll on US personnel, the financial costs of war on the US were spiralling every upwards, and Iraq had become a morass of newly formed terrorist groups using the occupation as justification.

### Conclusion: Imaginary Flowers no Substitute for Evolution

“When I asked, for instance, if the Administration was too enamoured of the idea that Iraqis would greet American troops with flowers, he argued that some Iraqis were still too intimidated by the remnants of Saddam’s Baath Party to express their emotions openly. “But,” Feith said, “they had flowers in their minds.””

(Goldberg 2005)

Those who promulgate the view that military might alone is sufficient to achieve foreign policy aims would have been immensely frustrated by the intransigent refusal of the 2003 Iraq invasion to follow the plans laid out. Despite vast technological superiority and fast manoeuvrability, the highly equipped US war machine found itself eventually enmeshed in the tangle of tribal politics, billion dollar rebuilds of utilities infrastructure, and in propping up a country best described as a failed state in a post-conflict situation. Military might held no power over public opinion. Iraqis did not form a cohesive grateful whole, thankful to the US for the removal of Saddam, but instead fractured into multiple groups who often seemed to have hatred of the US as their only common factor; a classic 4GW insurgency. Within the US the fervour for war quickly dimmed to the extent that as early as the end of 2003 the military was planning that the strategic centre of gravity should be “coalition public opinion”, with the acceptance that “At best, we have only the most grudging support of the Iraqi people...most of them want us to leave as soon as possible.” (Gordon and Trainor 2013, 98) In short, the “flowers in their minds” had proved to exist only in the rosy mental gardens of the planners in the US.



The political aims the US wished to achieve could not be realised by short term military force alone. As covered in Chapter One, 4GW is not unique in its requirement to harmonise the political and military aims for long lasting success, however the importance of targeting the political will is paramount in 4GW. 4GW calls for a population centric approach to warfare, in which the political will of the people is the primary goal. As in COIN the enemy must be cut off from their support; both internal and external. The severance of the enemy from his support cannot be accomplished via traditional military means in isolation, such as checkpoints and patrols, as support refers not only to physical elements such as weapons and supplies, but also to tacit and philosophical support that the military cannot build mental checkpoints against or identify via an aerial drone survey. 4GW demands time and labour intensive tactics in which every military action is used to advance an overall political aim.

Politically the US administration believed that through military might they could impose an alien form of government on a land and culture they had not taken the trouble to attempt to understand other than in the terms of reference of their own civilisation. Unable or unwilling to countenance that US style democracy and freedom was not a shining beacon to which every civilisation aspired, they failed to show respect to the culture they were entering, and through this committed multiple faux-pas that hampered their efforts.

These failures of planning did not need to translate into long term failure in theatre. It became increasingly clear to many on the ground within the early days of the occupation that the US could not act with impunity and achieve its goals;

however, a blinkered insistence on staying the course was the message from the top. Rather than exhibiting the hallmarks of an intelligent and learning organisation, and self critically examining tactics and strategy, the highest level decision makers continued down the path of a regime change that existed only in their minds and plethora of Power Point slides. At the very top levels of the US administration there seems to have been an unwillingness to play the long game; to invest time in training dedicated officers for particular regions around the globe, including taking the brightest and best to study languages, history and culture, and build robust personal relationships with the indigenous power players. The failure to evolve comes from the top.

The metrics of 4GW are not couched in the media friendly language of 3GW, in which it is possible to report on square miles gained and number of enemy killed. Although Rumsfeld firmly wished to change the military, his changes would not have seen it evolve in the manner needed to succeed in 4GW environments. His belief in military might measured in technological superiority and speed would instead have kept it preserved in the amber of a time of conflicts which the US would like to choose to engage in, however the enemy is not offering the US that choice.

The US not only lost the momentum that could have carried them to a longer term victory, but gained the hatred and ire of many Iraqis. The narrative the US told itself about the war was an archaic fairy tale, a simple story of good versus bad with two dimensional characters lacking subtlety or nuance. 3GW tactics and strategies, coupled with a laissez-faire approach to liberation, shackled the

personnel involved to planning and execution that could not succeed in the 4GW environment. Ultimately, Douglas Feith's incredibly obtuse remark, "They had flowers in their minds" reveals not the mental state of Iraqis, but rather the US administration's refusal to face reality and evolve their practices to flourish in a world of 4GW engagements.

The US faces some stark choices about future involvement in foreign conflicts. Over ten years after the Iraq invasion of 2003, there are calls for the US to abandon COIN altogether, and disengage from any type of "nation building". (Gian 2013) The costly and lingering involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan have blunted any public enthusiasm for future interventions, and led some commentators to state that COIN does not work. I would argue that COIN and psywar do not work if they are underfunded, deployed late, and given impossible aims. COIN and psywar alone are not tactical 'silver bullets', capable of achieving any given aim with minimal casualties and cost. They should be part of an integrated whole of an approach that prioritises the will of the people as the target, and aims to satisfy US security requirements at a moral and financial cost the US can accept. Rather than grasping at new doctrine and relying on saviour generals, the US needs to intellectually grasp and internalise the basic principles of soft power, psywar, and 4GW to salvage and maintain a leading role on the global stage. If it fails to do so, the US, for all its military technological advancements, will become a lumbering dinosaur doomed to expensive and protracted failures in future military involvements.

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