Conflict Resolution in Small Wars:
A Counterinsurgent's Guide to Controlling the Hearts

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As the local story goes, many moons ago in the town of Mukisa, a man accidently killed a donkey. The owner was furious and sought compensation. The two men got into a disagreement over the terms of the compensation- one felt it was minimal since it was an accident, the other felt it was a violation of his honor. They quarreled for several hours, the situation escalated, and in the end, twenty men were dead. That is the way it is in Mukisa, an outlier of the Diyala River Valley of Iraq. Saddam manipulated the insanity of this town for his own benefit. From here, he recruited his Fedayeen: suicidal men incapable of rational thought. He molded them into a paramilitary force designed to check the instability of his own government. Later, they ran headlong into the breach of the American Thunder Runs.

--Abu Sayda, September 2006

Nobel Laureate John Nash's arbitration for non-cooperative games explains how to negotiate a fair settlement of utility in the midst of irreconcilable differences. This compensation helps to balance the minds of the populace, but it does not account for the emotional or hearts aspect. Utility is merely the value placed on a good or service. To achieve ashura, the constant absence of sorrow, a negotiator must arbitrate the emotional grievances. Nash shows us how to control the minds, but the economic models is exhausted in this limitation.[1]

The current rationale is that these types of conflicts cannot be resolved simply by military or rational, economic action. Paradoxically, the truth may be more subtle yet more complex. Is not one's heart collectively intertwined with one's mind? Certainly it is so we must extend past economic theory to offer some resolve. To heal, one must mend both the heart and mind. In the realm of hearts or emotions, sometimes one plus one equals three. Sometimes everything is a paradox.

The purpose of this paper is to explore non-kinetic, non-military indirect methods of conflict resolution for the Iraqi people. To explore these methods, we must turn to the field of psychology. This paper will examine how theories for conflict resolution and substance abuse treatment and recovery methodologies. Collectively, I will merge economic and psychological theory to model the hearts and the minds. In the end, and somewhere in between, this method may allow the United States to transition from the role of occupier to the role of arbitrator,

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[1] This relationship will be described in detail in my forthcoming thesis tentatively titled *Conflict Resolution and the Theory of Games*. Expected publication date is December 2009.

negotiator, and peace-maker. This method allows us to begin redeploying home. Furthermore, this method may serve as instrument of acceptance and healing from our own psychosis derived after the attacks of 9/11.

13 Points for Controlling the Heart:

> - Paradoxically, sometimes the more one tries to control the less control one really has.
> - Sometimes virtue may become toxic if taken to an extreme.
> - Sometimes we think too much. Think about it. Sometimes we just have to feel.
> - To forgive is not to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest.
> - Sometimes the problem set must be defined as it is, not as we wished it to be.
> - Forgiveness is a choice to let go of the hurt, anger, and pain.
> - Sometimes you have to help yourself before you can help others.
> - In the realm of emotion, one plus one may equal three.
> - Historic events and the feelings derived will not go away, but they can be accepted.
> - Thoughts, behaviors, and consequences can be adjusted.
> - In insurgency, games of zero-sum are catastrophic.
> - No one is innocent in war.
> - Winning is often the least bad resolution.

Traditionally, the art of conflict resolution and the science of psychology are more diplomatic in scope, tone, and nature. Typically, General personnel forces (GPF) in regular military units are ill-suited for diplomatic operations. They are neither conditioned nor prepared to conduct these forms of operations. Conversely, we condition our minds to suppress or compartmentalize emotions in order to remain rational under hostile fire; however, a counter-insurgent is not simply a warrior. A counter-insurgent must transition from warrior to diplomat as the battle progresses. In the absence of a fully qualified civilian peacekeeping corps, regular army forces are adapting. The switch from rational to emotional thought is a significant paradigm and culture shock.

Background

> *No one is innocent in war.* --Jack Howell, Huey door gunner, Vietnam Veteran

Insurgencies stem from the perceived intensity, duration, and culmination of grievances unaddressed by a host government. Men choose to rebel once the grievance pass a certain threshold that they can no longer tolerate. Resistance Organizations are formed, and they begin to coerce and control the local populace into support for their cause in a three-fold manner: 1. the accumulation, access, and distribution of people, guns, and money, 2. Silence: the active and passive refusal to communicate or trust the government, 3. Direct and Indirect attacks on the government institutions and support infrastructure. In the beginning, nascent insurgencies maintain a comparative advantage in information: they can see the government, but the government cannot see them (McCormick, *Seminar on Guerilla Warfare*, January 2008).

As observed in Zaganiyah, Iraq in November 2006, sometimes an insurgency achieves a break point. This point is achieved by establishing a local military advantage, displacing (or

neutralizing) the residual presence of the old regime, and creating an alternative set of administrative and governing institutions. Essentially, the insurgency overruns a fixed amount of terrain creating a "No-Go" or denied area. Using Chairman Mao's classic insurgency principles, the guerrilla will replace the previous government with new institutions and begin re-education, population controls, and land reform. Eventually, these measures may prove too harsh or extreme violating the principles, morals, and values of the local populace resulting in the locals hating the new government (Few, *The Break Point*: *AQIZ establishes the ISI in Zaganiyah*, May 2008).

As observed by COL Sean McFarland and MAJ Neil Smith in Ramadi circa 2006, these new grievances can sometimes provide the conditions for a tipping point- the local populace turns against the new regime or insurgency. In Iraq, this point was dubbed the Sunni Awakening. Local Sunni leaders began cooperating with the government, and the conditions were set for the counter-insurgent to clear and hold the area. In counter-insurgency, timing is essential.

In the late fall of 2006 and early winter of 2007, weeks before the politicians in Washington approved the Surge, the Captain's War roared. Frustrated after multiple tours and endless years of stagnant Orwellian metrics of progress, company and battalion commanders began pushing the threshold to attempt to quell the on-going civil war: Army Tankers and Marines flooded Anbar Province, Strykers and Special Forces teams cleared terrorist camps outside Najaf, and an Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron flooded the Diyala River Valley and Turki Village to clear denied areas. We tried a new tactic. Instead of hunkering in large, guarded bases absorbing incoming mortar and rocket attacks while civilians struggled to survive an ethnic cleansing bordering on genocide, we began attacking the enemy and terrorizing the terrorist.

Tactically, the results were staggering, but they were not nested into a greater strategic plan. Prodded by our initial success and prompted by Washington's tacit consent, GEN Patraeas and LTG Odierno enacted the Surge- an audacious gamble to apply a comprehensive, holistic strategy in an attempt to avoid utter defeat and salvage America's reputation. Using classic counter-insurgency principles, the American Army finally occupied Iraq. As additional soldiers deployed into the streets of Baghdad, Baqubah, Basra, and Mosul, levels of violence dropped to nominal levels. We stopped the violence. For a moment, we controlled the minds of the people through securing the nation; however, we were unable to control the hearts.

In *The Gamble,* Tom Ricks' summarizes that "the Surge succeeded militarily but failed politically. Despite my unit's success in Zaganiyah during the Surge, many significant ethno-sectarian, religious, economic, tribal, and family problems persists that potentially could unravel any temporary tactical success. Despite my unit's success in controlling the minds, we could not control the hearts.

Current issues facing Zaganiyah:

- ➢ Loss of hope
- ➢ Acephalous society- key political, security, tribal and religious leaders murdered leaving vacuum of identity
- ➢ Recruitment of Sunni females to serve as suicide bombers.

- Shia targeting of "Sons of Iraq"
- Sons of Iraq pending dissolution as Americans stop paying them
- Daughters of Iraq pending dissolution as Americans stop paying them
- Shia refusal to reconcile with Sunnis and accept them into the government
- Unresolved tribal disputes
- Reemergence of Al Qaeda
- Home ownership, Land Rights, Property Rights- 5000 citizens (half the town) were displaced and most of the previous records of ownership where destroyed. Reintegrating them into the community is difficult i.e. everyone claims to own the riverfront property!!!
- Severe outbreak of cholera- the water flowing through the Diyala and Crescent River is tainted from the hundreds of dead bodies that have floated through it over the last several years.
- Unemployment rate- 80%
- Fatherless homes
- Crime- ranging from petty theft to rape
- Lack of a working government
- Illiteracy rate- 40%
- Sectarian security forces with agendas
- Decaying infrastructure

The more I tried to fix the problem, the more complex and wicked the problem became.

Eventually, I realized that I could not fix the Iraqi's problems. I accepted my personal limitations. I began to consider the problem in Zaganiyah. I question the COIN dogma- medical emergency versus mental health. Security without reconciliation and resolve is a farce. Counter-Insurgency is neither a means nor an ends within itself.

For the United States government, the first step is acceptance and realization of our lack of control. Despite the chaos and havoc we caused during our initial invasion, we are not responsible for the underlying problems of this country. The anecdote of Mukisa is a testament to this fact. The Pottery Barn rule is not valid in our foreign policy planning and implementation. The violence and fighting in Iraq was present long before we conducted the Thunder Runs. The acceptance of our own lack of control will provide us with a better self-awareness.

The second, and most important step, is to separate the plight of the Iraqi people from our collective self-esteem. After 9/11, we descended in a compartmentalized psychosis, a temporary insanity, as our homeland was attacked by a small group of religious extremist. These men were simple criminals, yet we overreacted and began a period of perpetual conflict against an ideology. Our intentions were pure, but sometimes even a virtue becomes toxic if taken to extremes. Current partisan politics over winning and losing in Iraq are dividing our country into red and blue states. Our founders cautioned us that if we are divided then we will fall. Sometimes, one has to help themselves first in order to help others.

Instead of considering the Iraq dilemma a medical emergency, I submit that it is time to consider it akin to having a loved one facing an addiction problem. We can force intervention, send them

to rehab, or call the police, but until they accept they have a problem, we cannot help them. We reached a break point and tipping point in Iraq, but we never reached a breakthrough. We can control the minds for a temporary time, but we can never control the hearts.

Five Step Model on Reconciliation[2]

EVENT	FEELING	THOUGHTS	BEHAVIOR	CONSEQUENCES
Disagreement	<u>Anger</u>	I'll never forgive him	Refuse to talk	Perpetual Conflict
	-Hate	I cannot trust him	Continue to harm	Genocide
	-Insecurity	I need to seek revenge	Continue to fight	Civil War
	-Resentment	I need retribution		Poverty
	-Jealousy			Anarchy
	-Shame			

Reasons Not to Forgive:

➢ Other guy should go first
➢ He got away with something
➢ If I forgive, he wins
➢ Cannot forget the grievance
➢ They deserve my anger
➢ I still have negative feelings
➢ Too much time has past
➢ The intensity and duration of the grievances are too drastic
➢ The anger has become my identity
➢ Catch 22
➢ The grievance will happen again
➢ They won't accept my forgiveness
➢ Shows weakness
➢ Makes me vulnerable
➢ They don't deserve my forgiveness
➢ They were wrong; I was right

Reasons to Forgive:

➢ Make peace with yourself
➢ Move On- Forward with life
➢ Restore Relationships
➢ Life is too short

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[2] Derived from Dr. Barbara Book's seminar on forgiveness, Kansas VA hospital, March 2009.

- Holding on to the anger hurts me
- The anger is killing me
- Takes up too much energy to hate
- Effects Family
- What is Forgiveness?
- Deep, Sincere Apology
- Letting Go and Moving On
- Freedom is an act upon itself- letting go of the negative energy
- Cathartic
- What is not Forgiveness?
- Forgetting what happened
- Pardoning or Absolving criminal acts
- Condoning the actions
- Reconciliation
- Reparations

We cannot accomplish anything more for the Iraqi people. They must accept, resolve, forgive, and remember. Otherwise, they will live in perpetual conflict. When they are ready, we can assist, but we cannot do it for them. Emma Sky cautions, "Violence begets violence." She is right.

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