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# AN ART IN ITSELF

THE THEORY AND CONDUCT OF  
SMALL WARS AND INSURGENCIES

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THE 2006 CHIEF OF ARMY MILITARY  
HISTORY CONFERENCE

Edited by  
Peter Dennis & Jeffrey Grey



2006

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Cover photograph: Malaya, 1961. Two soldiers of C Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), going into operations by canoe, L1A1 self-loading rifles (SLR) at the ready on the Sungei Rui (River), north Malaya. Left to right: Jerry Shawcross, the river boatman hired to transport them, Rick Esbaha. (Donor C. Gowing)

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# Preface

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The 2006 Chief of Army's annual history conference dealt with a highly topical and relevant theme, the conduct and countering of small wars and insurgencies. Nowhere is this issue more pressing than within the ranks of the US military, faced with the challenges of Iraq and Afghanistan. In his keynote paper, Brian Linn contended that the British and Commonwealth approach to countering insurgency was regarded as a kind of alchemist's stone on the subject. This is undoubtedly true in historical time—as he pointed out, Sir Robert Thompson made a handy post-retirement career out of advising the Diem regime and its US patrons in South Vietnam on the 'lessons' of the British and Malayan conduct of the Emergency in the 1950s. Second, he makes an important point about intellectual and cultural comfort zones within national militaries, and about the way in which the US Army has talked itself into, or out of, parts of the spectrum of operational activity in a clearly self-defeating manner in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are two main themes that come through all the papers: the importance of national and national military culture, and the centrality of the human and humanistic dimensions of warfare in insurgencies and small wars. Historically, and to some extent currently, the Americans see a British and Commonwealth monopoly on successful counter-insurgency practice. The view from a British and Commonwealth perspective is not nearly so clear. Professors Jeffery, O'Halpin and Charters all point to the absence—even the myth—of a British 'template' for successful counter-insurgency practice, in Ireland and Palestine. There are other examples that could be added to the discussion.

The new penultimate draft manual for counter-insurgency produced by the US Army and the Marines has been criticised for not being sufficiently prescriptive, and this highlights the great problem currently in thinking about insurgency and the ways in which we must meet and defeat it. There is a small but growing academic literature on the subject that makes the point that defining and then understanding the insurgent is part of the key to defeating him, and that the nature of the insurgency in Iraq covers a series of bases. The Malayan Emergency frankly provides few, if any, helpful signposts in this process. The defining feature of the fighting in Iraq since the eruption of the insurgency following the capture of Baghdad and the defeat of Saddam is sustained, intense close combat on a protracted scale. Neither the British nor Australians had any experience of this in Malaya. It is worth noting as well that when, at the 'midpoint' of the Emergency in the 1950s, the British attempted to apply the Malayan 'model' (by then paying considerable dividends in

the Emergency) to the new eruption of anti-colonial insurgency in Kenya, it failed, pretty miserably. In short, while historical experience is invaluable in shaping the way we think about the problems posed, it cannot and does not provide a 'school solution'.

We thank the speakers for participating in the conference, and for the timely manner in which they delivered the texts of their papers for publication. The acting head of the Army History Unit, Brian Manns, and his staff, especially Rhonda Naismith, ensured the smooth running of the event and oversaw the logistics of speakers, participants and venues with their usual friendly efficiency. Trish Boaden designed the cover, while Margaret McNally has again been invaluable in setting the papers in their final form.

Peter Dennis & Jeffrey Grey

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## Notes on Contributors

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**Brigadier McGill Alexander** has many years of operational experience in both the South African Defence Force and the South African National Defence Force. He commanded 44 Parachute Brigade, the Johannesburg Military District, and in 1996-97 was defence attaché in Taiwan. He has written widely on professional military issues, including on the Cassinga raid into southern Angola in 1978.

**Professor John P. Cann**, a graduate of King's College, London, teaches at the Marine Corps University at Quantico, Virginia. Before entering civilian academic life he served in the United States Navy flying open ocean reconnaissance missions, retiring with the rank of captain. He is the author of *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961-1975* (2005).

**Professor David Charters** was for many years Director of the University of New Brunswick's Center for Conflict Studies and is Executive Editor of the *Journal of Conflict Studies*. He is the author of *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945-47* (1989), and edited, co-edited, and contributed to *The Soldier and the Canadian State: A Crisis in Civil-Military Relations* (1996), (1994), and *Military History and the Military Profession* (1992), amongst other works.

**Emeritus Professor Peter Dennis** retired from the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy in mid-2006 and is currently a Visiting Senior Fellow in the Department of History, National University of Singapore.

**Dr Michael Evans** served as a regular officer in the Zimbabwean National Army, and holds degrees from the Universities of Rhodesia, London and Western Australia. He was a Beit Fellow in War Studies at King's College, London. Formerly head of the Land Warfare Studies Centre in Canberra, he is now a Visiting Fellow at the Australian Defence College at Weston Creek. He is the author of numerous influential papers and monographs on strategic policy and developments in contemporary land warfare.

**Professor Jeffrey Grey** is a member of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, and a former occupant of the Matthew B. Horner Chair at the Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia.

**Professor Keith Jeffery** is Professor of British History and Director of Research at Queen's University, Belfast. He was the Lees Knowles Lecturer in Military History at Cambridge in 1998, and Parnell Fellow in Irish Studies in 2003-04. He is the author of *Field Marshal Sir*

*Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (2006), *The GPO and the Easter Rising* (2006), and *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-1922* (1984), amongst others, and is currently writing the official history of MI6.

**Lieutenant General Peter Leahy** is the Chief of Army. He graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1974, and was posted to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. From 1987 to 1990 he was the Australian Exchange Officer at the United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, where he instructed in Joint and Combined Operations and Counter-Revolutionary Warfare and completed a Master of Military Arts and Science degree. For his services as an instructor he was awarded the US Army Meritorious Service Medal. In 1993 he was Military Assistant to the Chief of the General Staff, and in 1994-95 he was Director of Army Research. In 1997 he was promoted to Brigadier and posted as Commander of the 3rd Brigade, the Australian Defence Force's Ready Deployment Force, and in 1999 he was appointed Chief of Staff at Headquarters Australian Theatre. He is a graduate of the Australian Army Command and Staff College, the United States Command and General Staff College, the British Higher Command and Staff Course, and is a Fellow of the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies.

**Professor Brian McAllister Linn** teaches at Texas A&M University. The leading authority on the Philippines War of 1899-1902, he has twice won the Distinguished Book Award of the Society for Military History, and among other distinctions has held a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 2004-05, during which time he worked on a forthcoming book dealing with war in American military thought.

**Major General Jim Molan** joined the Australian Regular Army in 1968, graduating from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1971. His regimental postings since that time include: service with the First Battalion, Pacific Island Regiment (Papua New Guinea), as a rifle platoon commander; the Ninth Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment, as Adjutant; rifle company second-in-command and rifle company commander in the Third Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment; Commanding Officer of the Sixth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, as a consequence of which he was appointed a member of the Order of Australia; and Commander of the Army's mechanised First Brigade. In addition, Major General Molan commanded the 1st Division and the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters from November 1999 until mid-2002 and is a graduate of the Army Command and Staff College, Queenscliff, the Joint Services Staff College and the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies. In 2004-05 he served in Iraq as Chief of Operations.

**Professor Eunan O'Halpin** is the Bank of Ireland Professor of Contemporary Irish History and Director of the Centre for Contemporary Irish History at Trinity College, Dublin. A member of the Royal Irish Academy, he is the author of *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies since 1922* (1999), *MI5 and Ireland 1939-1945: The Official History* (2003), and joint editor of the series *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*.

**Colonel Graeme Sligo** is a graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, Toronto. He holds degrees in history and law from the University of New South Wales and the University of Melbourne, respectively, and has held a variety of regimental and staff appointments within the Army. He is currently deployed to Iraq.

**Associate Professor Iain Spence** is head of the School of Classics, History and Religion at the University of New England. He is the author of *The Cavalry of Classical Greece: A Social and Military History* (1993) and *The Historical Dictionary of Ancient Greek Warfare* (2002), and has published numerous articles and papers on both ancient warfare and aspects of Australian military history relating to the mounted arm. He is a brigadier in the Army Reserve.

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## Introduction

*Lieutenant General Peter Leahy*

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Insurgency is as old as warfare itself, and historically one of the most common forms of conflict. Countering insurgency has an equally long, though often not especially distinguished, history. As T.E. Lawrence justly observed, ‘making war upon insurgents is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife’. The nub of the problem, demonstrated repeatedly throughout history, is that it is never sufficient to fight an insurgency—one must counter it.

The term ‘small wars’ also has a lengthy history, though it has only recently come back into popular use with consideration, in the United States at least, of the distinction between the great conventional conflicts in its history, such as the Civil War or the Second World War, and the numerous wars that paved the way in America’s rise to global superpower status. ‘Small wars’ were commonplace experiences for the British Army in the nineteenth century, their characteristics and practice encapsulated in C.E. Callwell’s excellent short primer for Army officers, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, published in 1906. One of the principal themes of this year’s conference derives from his observation that ‘the conduct of small wars is in fact in certain respects an art by itself, diverging widely from what is adapted to the conditions of regular warfare, but not so widely that there are not in all its branches points which permit comparisons to be established’.

In the British context, small wars ran the full gamut from deliberate campaigns aimed at the establishment of civil control, through what we would now recognise as peace enforcement operations, down to aid to the civil power in situations where the existing police forces are insufficient to maintain security and order. Taken as a whole, this spectrum of operational functions came to be known as ‘Imperial policing’ after a well-known book of the same title, by Major General Sir Charles Gwynn, first published in 1934 and still in use in the 1950s. The United States Marine Corps, similarly concerned with deployments to protect or further American interests in circumstances short of conventional warfare, collected its thinking and experience in its own *Small Wars Manual*, published in 1940.

The Australian Army has considerable experience of its own in the conduct of small wars and the countering of insurgency. Indeed, much of the history, and many of the traditions, of the Australian Regular Army was forged in the succession of conflicts to which Australian soldiers were committed in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. From

the Malayan Emergency—still regarded in many quarters as the ‘gold standard’ by which successful counter-insurgency may be judged—and Konfrontasi to the protracted campaign in Phuoc Tuy province, the Australian soldier learnt, refined and frequently excelled at the low-intensity operations, integrated with population security and nation-building measures that, taken together, are the characteristics of success in meeting and defeating the challenge posed by an insurgent force.

This year’s conference ranges widely across time and space. This is entirely fitting, since the conduct of small wars and the difficulties of countering insurgencies are common to armies everywhere. The papers consider the conduct of small wars in the ancient world; the difficulties of countering insurgency within a modern, first-world society such as the United Kingdom; the refinement of insurgency theory and practice in a colonial context, in this case in Palestine; the different approaches, and outcomes, to the waging and countering of insurgency in southern Africa; and the experience across the twentieth century of dealing with insurgent war in modern Iraq, whether by the British between the world wars or by the Coalition of the Willing as part of the Global War on Terror. The lessons of insurgency are learnt slowly, and often painfully, and there is no single answer, no ‘school solution’. As Lieutenant General Jim Mattis, who commanded the 1st Marine Division in the initial round of the war in Iraq and has since co-authored the joint Army-Marine Corps manual on counter-insurgency, has noted in this regard, ‘our leaders going into this fight do their troops a disservice by not studying (studying, *vice* just reading) the men who have gone before us. We have been fighting on this planet for 5000 years and we should take advantage of their experience’.

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# The US Army and Small Wars: An Uncomfortable Reality

*Brian McAllister Linn*

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I find myself in the strange position of giving the introductory lecture on Small Wars and Insurgencies to people who probably know more about the theory, and certainly more about the practice, than I do myself. Perhaps the reason I am here is to demonstrate the Peter Principle that people are inevitably promoted beyond their level of competence. In the United States the perception is that the British and Australians, both officers and historians, are the masters of the theory and conduct of small wars and insurgencies. This attitude is long standing. The US Army published its observers' reports on the Boer War, but not a history of its own counter-insurgency experiences in the Philippines that occurred at the same time.<sup>1</sup> Prior to World War II the Army school system devoted more time to British imperial pacification campaigns than to American ones. The Marine Corps devoted at least as much attention to the operations of the Anzacs at Gallipoli as to its own experiences in Haiti. Even the Army's official doctrine for small wars—a three-page training manual issued in 1922—was largely plagiarised from British sources. In similar fashion, the interwar US Marine Corps was so enamoured with Sir Charles Callwell's *Small Wars* that they named their own counter-insurgency manual after it.<sup>2</sup> In the 1950s, the US Army studied the lessons of Malaya as much or more than those of its former colony, the Philippines, against the Hukbalahap.

Both during the Vietnam era and today, Americans have drawn numerous unfavourable comparisons between US Army counter-insurgency and those of the British and the Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup> In the spirit of loyal allies, the British have not been averse to helping us recognise our limitations, as the recent critique by Brigadier General Alwyn-Foster

1. US War Department, Military Intelligence Division, *Reports on Military Operations in South Africa and China* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901); John P. Wissler, 'The Second Boer War', *Journal of the US Artillery* 15 (March-April 1901): 153-70. An attempt at an official history was suppressed by the Secretary of War: see John R. M. Taylor, 'History of the Philippine Insurrection Against the United States, 1898-1903: A Compilation of Documents and Introduction', Microfilm 9, Microcopy M719, National Archives, Washington, DC.
2. US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1940).
3. Robert M. Cassidy, 'The British Army and Counterinsurgency: The Saliency of Military Culture', *Military Review* 85 (May-June 2005): 53-9; Robert M. Cassidy, *Peacekeeping in the Abyss: British and American Peacekeeping Doctrine and Practice after the Cold War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

shows.<sup>4</sup> In a more modest way, the Australians have also contrasted their Vietnam counter-insurgency policies favourably to those of the Americans, as those of us who have seen *The Odd Angry Shot* are well aware.<sup>5</sup> And at a conference a few months ago to discuss the US Army-US Marine Corps *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, the director of the project, Lieutenant General David H. Petraeus, singled out the Australians for their help on the logistics chapter—the only chapter he thought had ‘got it right’.

For many years my area of specialty was one of the United States’ small wars, the so-called Philippine Insurrection of 1899 to 1902. But I am increasingly dubious about the direct application of the imperial war experience to current military realities. Moreover, as both an American and an American military historian, it is impossible to avoid the 800-pound guerrilla/gorilla in the room: the invasion and subsequent small war or insurgency in Iraq. Journalists and analysts are already writing respectable short-term histories of the origins and conduct of Iraq: books such as *Cobra II* and the aptly named *Fiasco*. Already reputations are undergoing dramatic reversals. Accounts that were only a few years ago hailed as definitive are now being dismissed as not merely superficial, but mendacious. Compare Bob Woodward’s fawning depiction of President Bush and his national security team in 2002 with the scathing portrayals in books published in 2006.<sup>6</sup> In February 2003, General Colin Powell had the singular lack of foresight to revise his best-selling autobiography to include his now infamous United Nations testimony. In the process, he gave an entirely new meaning to one of the book’s most notable passages: ‘Many of my generation, the career captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels seasoned in [Vietnam], vowed that when our turn came to call the shots, we would not quietly acquiesce in halfhearted warfare for half-baked reasons that the American people could not understand or support.’<sup>7</sup> And perhaps no general in American history has suffered such a rapid eclipse as General Tommy Franks who in less than a year went from brilliant warfighter to self-serving braggart.<sup>8</sup>

But even as they talk to veterans, read, and watch the news, historians must adopt a broader perspective, if only because primary research takes so many years. They also need to avoid the temptation to rigidly impose an interpretive template based on a particular small war, particularly an imperial small war, upon Iraq and Afghanistan. They must step back from today’s headlines and try to interpret the current situation as the logical

4. Nigel Alwyn-Foster, ‘Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations’, *Military Review* (November-December): 2-15; Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1966).
5. Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1962-1972* (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2001).
6. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002).
7. Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, rev. edn (New York: Ballantine, 2003), 144-5.
8. Andrew J. Bacevich, ‘A Modern Major General’, *New Left Review* 29 (September-October 2004): 123-34, [www.newleftreview.net/NRL26307.shtml](http://www.newleftreview.net/NRL26307.shtml).

outcome of decisions and events occurring decades ago. Journalists and military analysts are already answering the here-and-now questions: who was responsible for the lack of Phase IV post-invasion planning? Why there were so few troops committed to the occupation? Why has a general whose division was criticised for its ham-handed, even brutal approach to pacification been promoted? Historians need to focus on what they do best, the long-term questions.

And one of the big long-term questions is why the US Army—which only a few years ago was boasting it was the most dominant and effective land force ever—was so unprepared, and so slow to adapt to the insurgency in Iraq. This is a question not only of significance to scholars, but to military organisations that are considering the implications of the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs, or which seek to understand the dangers inherent in an army that becomes too enamoured of one concept of war, or which question whether, in a world of stealth technology and instantaneous communications, the capacity to deal with small wars and insurgencies is even necessary.

I am aware that, like the first books on the Iraq War, the first long-term historical interpretations may not stand the test of time. But we need to start the process, to follow the lead of Andrew J. Bacevich in trying to comprehend the ‘Big Picture’.<sup>9</sup> So, in a rare instance of practising what I preach, I will put forth my own thesis: the roots of the US Army’s problems in Iraq stem from a conscious decision after Vietnam to concentrate on the waging of Big War. For three decades American officers not only prepared to fight just one type of war—a large-unit conventional war against the Soviet Union or a surrogate—but they came to see war itself almost entirely in this context. The decision to focus on waging high-tech high-intensity warfare served the Army well in DESERT STORM and even in the three-week invasion of Iraq in 2003. But in preparing for some thirty years to fight the Big War, the US Army sacrificed much of its earlier expertise in the theory, practice, and art of Small Wars and Insurgencies.

That focus on the Big War is nothing new. Indeed, the US Army’s professional identity is largely a product of its claim to expertise in conventional nation-state warfare. And, to be fair, the same statement could be made of American military historians. Both communities share a common focus on tactics, operations, technology, mobilisation, generalship, and strategy—all of which were displayed in the nation’s two great industrial conflicts: the Civil War and World War II. It is therefore no surprise that both US Army officers and American military historians pay a disproportionate amount of attention to these two conflicts. Both wars were central to Professor Russell Weigley’s thesis that the ‘American Way of War’ is a way of Big War, a strategy of annihilation of the enemy’s military forces.

9. Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Some soldiers and historians have expanded Weigley's thesis to postulate an American Way of War based on all-or-nothing strategic goals, such as Unconditional Surrender, the concentration of overwhelming resources of personnel and materiel, and an emphasis on technology and firepower.<sup>10</sup>

So far, neither military historians nor military officers have been able to make a convincing case for an American Way of Small War. The United States has produced no outstanding theorist such as Great Britain's Charles Callwell or Frank Kitson, nor a distinct 'school' of counter-insurgency thought. The venerated Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* did not appear until 1940—a decade after the last contingency it was designed for.<sup>11</sup> Historians have made some progress in analysing the methods, techniques, tactics, and informal doctrine characterising American small warfare back to the Tidewater War of 1622. One soldier-scholar, John Grenier, has recently made a convincing case that 'small warfare' is America's 'first way of war'.<sup>12</sup> Grenier and others have shown that American citizens and soldiers adapted European tactical formations and equipment in order to campaign in the wilderness; they improvised logistical organisation; they created elite cavalry and reconnaissance units; they recruited indigenous guides; they conducted vigorous, even foolhardy offensive operations; and they attacked the enemy's society by destroying homes, livestock and crops. Historians have also found that successful campaigns combined political, military, and civil action and balanced punitive sanctions with benefits for collaboration. The Regular Army took over the mission of suppressing Native American resistance after 1815 and adopted many of these methods, adding to them European-derived tactics, discipline, weaponry, and organisation. Although it had its share of botched campaigns, atrocities, and even the occasional massacre—Custer's Last Stand is still one of the most written about events in American history—on the whole the Regular Army proved more than adequate to the task of fighting small wars. After 1898, when the United States became an imperial power, the Army adjusted to its new role, in the process waging one of the most successful counter-insurgency campaigns in Western imperial military history. Separated from their regiments by mountains and water, American officers operated almost entirely on their own, responsible not only for their own troops, but for the lives, prosperity, and government of thousands of civilians. In addition

10. Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (1973, repr. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977). Ken Booth, 'American Strategy: The Myths Revisited', in Ken Booth and Moorhead Wright (eds), *American Thinking About Peace and War* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978), 1-36; Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Toward an American Way of War* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003); Brian McAllister Linn, 'The American Way of War Revisited', *Journal of Military History* 66 (April 2002): 501-30; Donn A. Starry, 'A Perspective on American Military Thought', *Military Review* 69 (July 1989): 2-11.
11. Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Rising: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001); Charles E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* 3rd edn (London: Harrison and Sons, 1906); Frank Kitson, *Low-Intensity Operations* new edn (New York: Faber and Faber, 1991).
12. John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage, 2001); Douglas Leach, *Arms for Empire: A Military History of the British Colonies in North America, 1607-1763* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

to conducting military operations against the guerrilla resistance, they were responsible for overseeing the reconstruction of their locales. This environment required great individual adaptability, innovation, and internal discipline, an ability to almost instantaneously shift from active combat operations to civic reform to political action.<sup>13</sup>

Although there are a myriad of exceptions, as a general thesis it can be stated that from 1622 to the present, the American Way of Small Wars is essentially a strategy of expediency, adjusting tactics and policies to local conditions. When Americans and the Regular Army have had both strategic and tactical leaders capable of innovation, who are sensitive to the political and cultural dimensions of their area of operations, and who are able to combine tactical excellence with a long-term pacification strategy that combines coercion and conciliation, they have done well. When Americans have had unimaginative leadership, commanders who are culturally arrogant and confuse tactics with strategy, they have not done well. This may be why the few historians who have attempted to deduce an American Way of Small Wars have tended to focus on individual leaders or specific campaigns.<sup>14</sup>

The US Army has not provided such historians with much help in their endeavours. As an institution, it has never displayed sustained interest in codifying or incorporating the ‘lessons’ of its Small Wars and counter-insurgency experiences into a coherent doctrine. Indeed, the US Army has always worried that its junior officers might be too influenced by their own small war experience, and thus lose the managerial and technical skills needed to wage Big War. The Army’s attitude is typified by General Leonard Wood, who in 1907 dismissed the Army’s recent experience in the Philippines with the airy comment: ‘Lessons taught in schools of this sort (service against an inferior enemy) are of little value and usually result in false deductions and a confidence which spells disaster when called upon to play the real game.’<sup>15</sup> For the institutional US Army—and for most US military historians—the ‘real game’ has always been Big War.

13. The best survey is Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1998). On the US Army’s experience with small wars and insurgencies, see Durwood Ball, *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier, 1848-1861* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001); Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1901* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Robert R. Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004); Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York: Macmillan, 1973); Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). On recent interventions, see Daniel P. Bolger, *Americans at War, 1975-1986: An Era of Violent Peace* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1991); Peter Huchthausen, *America’s Splendid Little Wars: A Short History of U.S. Military Engagements: 1975-2000* (New York: Viking, 2003).
14. Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Sam C. Sarkesian, *America’s Forgotten Wars: The Counterrevolutionary Past and Lessons for the Future* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984). For a provocative revisionist view, see Rod Paschall, ‘Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine: Who Needs It?’, *Parameters* 14 (Autumn 1985): 33-45.
15. Leonard Wood to Adjutant General, 1 July 1907, Box 40, Leonard Wood Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

The one exception, and ironically, the one war that provided the genesis of both the American Way of War thesis and what might be termed the American School of Small Wars, is the Vietnam Conflict. It is no coincidence that Russell Weigley published *The American Way of War* in 1973. Nor that he deduced from both Vietnam and the nuclear stalemate that Americans' historical fixation on a strategy of annihilation was no longer feasible, and, in fact, was suicidal.<sup>16</sup> At the other extreme, proponents of the Small Wars School argued, and continue to argue, that had the United States followed its historic frontier and imperial practices—or, better yet, British practice—it might have secured victory, and certainly would have suffered a less traumatic defeat.<sup>17</sup>

Vietnam created such bitterness that for over a decade the Army, as an institution, all but rejected it out of hand. Even as the last combat units left, the Army was adopting a quasi-official mythology to explain the defeat. Typical was a 1972 article by Lieutenant Colonel Zeb Bradford, who declared that Army tactics had indeed succeeded—precisely because they relied on conventional forces, firepower, and technology. Bradford then reasoned that there was no need to make counter-insurgency a primary mission. Instead, small wars should be delegated to indigenous military units aided by the Special Forces. The Army should be committed as a 'fire brigade' only when the insurgency escalated to conventional warfare. Bradford's justification reveals much about both the Army's aversion to small wars and its own interpretation of American history and society:

The great strength of US fighting forces historically has been precisely that they have exploited their peculiarly American qualities and attributes. Highly mechanized and technical warfare reinforces our tendencies and talents and serves as a vehicle for evolutionary advance—counter-insurgency goes against the grain. We are a rich, industrial, urban country. Highly technical forces are compatible with our characteristics and resources.<sup>18</sup>

Almost a decade after Bradford's article, in 1981, Colonel Harry G. Summers published *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*. It soon became the closest thing to an 'official' Army interpretation of the war and still exerts a profound influence on Army thought about both Vietnam and small wars. Like Bradford, Summers' emphasised the success of Army tactics; indeed he claimed the Army had never been defeated on the battlefield. But, unfortunately, tactical success could not overcome a faulty strategy imposed by

16. Weigley, *American Way of War*, 467.

17. Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr, *The Army in Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup*; Lewis H. Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and the Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt, 1999).

18. Zeb B. Bradford, 'US Tactics in Vietnam', *Military Review* 52 (February 1972): 63-76. Dave R. Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978); William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Dell, 1980); John G. Geslin, 'Combat Power: An Ontological Approach', Student Research Paper, 1978, Naval War College Classified Library, Newport, RI. For an important early work by an Army officer that noted Army mistakes, see Bruce Palmer, *The 25-Year War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984).

incompetent civilian leaders. Instead of properly waging a conventional war to defeat the invading North Vietnamese, the Army had been sidetracked into a counter-insurgency campaign against the domestic Viet Cong guerrillas. The failure to attack the true centre of gravity led to stalemate and, ultimately, a loss of American popular will, so that even as the war was being won in Vietnam, the American public concluded it was lost. With some variation, that argument that the war was won in the field and lost at home continues to resonate within the Army.<sup>19</sup>

Given this face-saving interpretation, it is not surprising that the post-Vietnam Army turned its attention to what Bradford called ‘technical conventional warfare’. The wisdom of this course was allegedly demonstrated in what one official Army account dubbed the ‘Certain Victory’ of the Gulf War of 1991 and, at least initially, in the 2003 operations in Iraq.<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to see how this transition from betrayal in Vietnam to vindication in the Gulf has been interpreted within the Army as a heroic allegory. To quote the title of one laudatory account, this is the epic of ‘*How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War*’.<sup>21</sup> However chauvinistic the claim, it is crucial to note that the post-Vietnam Army reformation was both inspired by and dedicated to a very specific, if improbable goal: the defeat of a Warsaw Pact attack on NATO by conventional military forces.

For the US Army, the engine driving this transformation from Vietnam back to Big War was doctrine, promulgated in two key manuals: *FM 100-5: Operations (1976)*, usually referred to as Active Defense, and *FM 100-5: Operations (1982)*, or AirLand Battle. Army historians have tended to magnify the differences between the two, but in both, conventional battle in Central Europe was dominant. Small wars and insurgencies were completely ignored in the 1976 manual. They comprised barely a page in the 1982 version. Perhaps the best indication of relative status of Small Wars and insurgencies in US Army doctrine in the 1970s and 1980s are the terms assigned to them: Internal Defense and Development (IDAD); Low Intensity Conflict (LIC); and Military Operations

19. Harry G. Summers, Jr, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1981). On the Army's reaction to Vietnam and the importance of Summers' thesis, see Conrad C. Crane, *Avoiding Vietnam: The U.S. Army's Response to Defeat in Southeast Asia* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002); Michael J. Brady, 'The Army and the Strategic Military Legacy of Vietnam' (MMAS thesis: Command and General Staff College, 1990). When I was a visiting professor at the Army War College in 1999-2000, Summers was still assigned as *the* interpretation of Vietnam and *On Strategy* was on the Chief of Staff of the Army's recommended reading list.
20. Robert H. Scales, Jr, *Certain Victory: The US Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Staff, 1993); Tommy Franks with Malcolm McConnell, *American Soldier* rev. edn (New York: HarperCollins, 2005); Williamson Murray and Robert H. Scales, Jr, *The Iraq War: A Military History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003); Powell, *American Journey*; H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992).
21. James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1995). James Blackwell, *Thunder in the Desert* (New York: Bantam, 1991); James F. Dunnigan and Raymond M. Macedonia, *Getting it Right: American Military Reforms from Vietnam to the Gulf War and Beyond* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1993).

Other Than War (MOOTW). Even more interesting, the qualities that characterised American practice in Small Wars—flexibility, initiative, decentralised leadership, and aggressiveness—were now claimed as distinctive AirLand Battle attributes.<sup>22</sup> Big War doctrine in turn influenced procurement, so that virtually all of the Army's high-priority acquisitions—the Abrams tank, the Bradley fighting vehicle, the Blackhawk and Apache helicopters—were designed for the European battlefield. Doctrine also influenced force structure so that, in the words of Chief of Staff Carl Vuono, 'the design of all [Army] forces was based on AirLand Battle'.<sup>23</sup> The logical outgrowth of this were massive 20,000-man armour divisions permanently stationed in Europe, the billion-dollar National Training Center with its surrogate Soviet opposition force, and the enormous NATO REFOGER exercises in Germany. This fixation on fighting Big War continued up into the 1990s, long after it should have been manifestly evident—certainly to an officer corps claiming such expert knowledge in 'warfighting'—that the Warsaw Pact had not only collapsed, it was not returning.

The post-Vietnam Army often boasted of its global mobility and its ability to wage war across the 'spectrum of conflict', but in practice unconventional warfare was seen as not just the provenance, but the responsibility of Special Forces. But by the early 1970s, Special Forces were reduced to just three groups (compared to seven during the Vietnam era). Both Special Forces doctrine and training were geared towards training guerrillas to act behind enemy lines in the Big War in Europe.<sup>24</sup> The establishment of the Joint US Army-US Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict (CLIC) in 1985 may have further contributed to the ghetto-isation of the field and encouraged the belief by the rest of the Army that they did not have to deal with this subject.<sup>25</sup>

The perceived lessons of Vietnam are reflected in the 1981 version of *FM 100-20: Low Intensity Conflict*. This manual was as interested in specifying limits to US military involvement as in establishing doctrinal procedures for involvement. It emphasised that US national security interests were paramount and that the host nation was responsible for providing the conditions of peace and stability. The manual focused on deterrence and prevention as much as it did on counter-insurgency tactics. Insurgencies were best

22. HQ, Department of the Army, *FM 100-5: Operations (1982)*. On US post-Vietnam doctrine, see Paul H. Herbert, *Deciding What Has to be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5 Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1988); Walter E. Kretchik, 'Peering Through the Mist: Doctrine as a Guide for U.S. Army Operations, 1775-2000' (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2001); John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982* (Fort Monroe, VA: TRADOC, 1984).
23. Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works of the Thirty-first Chief of Staff, United States Army* (n.p., n.d. [Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992], 85).
24. David J. Baratto, 'Special Forces in the 1980s: A Strategic Reorientation', *Military Review* 63 (March 1983): 2-14; Alfred H. Paddock, Jr, *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins*, rev. edn (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 161.
25. Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project Final Report, *Analytical Review of Low-Intensity Conflict* (Fort Monroe, VA: TRADOC, 1986).

dealt with by removing their causes through a complete internal defence and development program that emphasised political, economic, and psychological action. Military operations needed to be coordinated with the IDAD program; the protection of the population, using minimum firepower, and training host nation forces were paramount.<sup>26</sup> On the whole, the 1981 manual and its 1990 revision provided useful guidance for Army advisors in Honduras, El Salvador and other Latin American nations. But given the small numbers of American troops involved—Congress limited the Army to 55 advisers in El Salvador—there was room for a great deal of improvisation and adjustment.

As El Salvador veteran Colonel John Waghelstein observed in 1985, ‘the real problem is not [Low Intensity Conflict] doctrine, but the amount of emphasis that the services place on the subject’.<sup>27</sup> At the risk of overstatement, the professional military education of most Army officers prior to 2000 was almost entirely focused on Big War. For much of the 1970s the Armor School and Field Artillery School had no instruction at all on low-intensity conflict. The Infantry School omitted unconventional warfare in its basic course. In the Infantry officer advanced course, all but 15 of the 34 hours devoted to unconventional warfare were on battalion-level military operations.<sup>28</sup> An overview of the curriculum at the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) from 1976 until the Gulf War shows conventional operations routinely taking up more than 90 percent of the course time devoted to warfare. In a typical school year—say 1982-83—the Low Intensity Conflict section included terrorism, insurgency, and internal development and defense—but was allocated only 23 hours out of the roughly 500 hours of course time. As a point of comparison, that same year the respective assignments for division staff procedures and tactics for AirLand Battle were 117 hours and 161 hours. In other years, the Small Wars instruction was part of a grab-bag course that included only tangentially related subjects such as joint operations, international relations, and peacekeeping.<sup>29</sup>

The Army’s best and brightest may have received even less instruction in the theory of Small Wars and Insurgencies. The elite School of Advanced Military Studies, a second-year program for the Command and General Staff College’s graduates, focused almost entirely at the division and corps-level and sought to develop a theory of the ‘operational art’ for conventional warfare. The Army War College emphasised grand strategy, campaign

26. HQ Department of the Army, *FM 100-20: Low-Intensity Conflict* (January 1981). HQ Department of the Army and Department of the Air Force, *FM 100-20: Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict, Final Draft* (July 1988). This manual was approved in 1990.

27. John D. Waghelstein, ‘Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine’, *Military Review* 65 (May 1985): 44.

28. Ibid., 44-8; Donald B. Vought, ‘Preparing for the Wrong War?’, *Military Review* 57 (May 1977): 16-34.

29. Student Text 20-9, Low Intensity Conflict, Counterinsurgency Case Studies; Proposed Essay Requirement, in Postinstructional Conference for P-851, Low-Intensity Conflict, both in P-851/86 Box 1, 1985-86 Course; Lesson Plan 771, Course No. 7: Studies in Low-Intensity Conflict, 1982-1983 CGSC School Year; *Catalog, Academic Year 1983-84*, CGSC, all at Combined Arms Research Library [CARL], Fort Leavenworth, KS. Ironically, in the 1990s two of the officers responsible for the curriculum—CGSC Commandant (later Chief of Staff Carl Vuono) and Deputy Commandant Crosbie Saint—would criticise the Army’s lack of attention to low intensity conflict.

planning, and military history, but almost entirely within the context of large-scale nation-state warfare. More invidious was that instruction that was supposed to be on Small Wars and Insurgencies was often incorporated into Big War theory and practice. At both CGSC and the War College, low-intensity scenarios routinely featured the deployment of division and corps operations in Korea or the Middle East. It may be argued that any limited war outside of Europe could be defined as 'small', but only if one argues, as the Army did, that anything short of a Soviet-American world war using nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons was 'mid-intensity warfare'.

Another indication of how conventional warfare subsumed the small wars and insurgency missions is the 'light force' initiative. In the 1980s, in part as a result of the botched Iran hostage rescue operation, the Army began to explore the possibility of a globally deployable intervention force. Initially this was envisioned as a mechanised force whose primary area would be the Middle East. But in the mid-1980s, in part as a sop to powerful Airborne and Infantry interests threatened by the focus on mechanised war in Europe, the light force became identified as a light infantry force. But although the reason for their existence was to intervene in small wars and insurgencies and thereby prevent them from escalating into a Soviet-American Big War, the light infantry divisions themselves received little specialised training in this type of conflict. Instead, throughout the 1980s their training, doctrine, and equipment were largely directed at fighting AirLand Battle in Central Europe against the Soviets. Since the light infantry were unable to withstand Soviet tanks—a humiliation repeatedly demonstrated in manoeuvres—their mission became to deploy in woods and urban terrain, hold territory, and free up the armoured forces for their decisive attacks. Critics castigated the light infantry divisions as a force 'Not Light Enough to Get There, Not Heavy Enough to Win', but missed the essential point: a tactical organisation created for low-intensity conflicts had been swallowed by the Army's dominant Big War fixation.<sup>30</sup>

In retrospect, the small wars the United States Army waged prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq demonstrate less a 'revolution' in warfare than a reversion to the one-sided colonial wars of the nineteenth century. They may even have taught the wrong lessons, convincing Army officers that Small Wars and Insurgencies were so easy that they required neither theory, nor practice, nor art. The intervention in Grenada in 1983, widely hailed as demonstrating the Army's rebirth, was, in the cold analysis of Major James M. Simmons, a campaign in which 'numerous errors in operational planning which could have produced

30. William B. Caldwell IV, 'Not Light Enough to Get There, Not Heavy Enough to Win: The Case of US Light Infantry' (4 December 1987), School of Advanced Military Studies [SAMS] Monograph, CARL. Charles C. Campbell, 'Light Infantry and the Heavy Force: A Marriage of Convenience or Necessity?' (2 December 1985), SAMS Monograph, CARL; Michael J. Mazarr, *Light Force and the Future of U.S. Military Strategy* (New York: Brassey's, 1990).
31. James M. Simmons, 'Operation Urgent Fury: Operational Art of a Strategy of Overwhelming Combat Power', 6 May 1994, SAMS Monograph. Ronald H. Cole, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Grenada, 12 October-2 November 1983* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1997).

fatal flaws were overcome by the sheer application of overwhelming US combat power' against a 'second-rate, poorly equipped, and disorganized opponent'.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the Army awarded more medals than there were soldiers in Grenada. The conduct of operations in Panama in 1995 also revealed considerable variation from approved AirLand Battle doctrine and a propensity to rely on firepower to resolve unforeseen problems. More ominously, Panama revealed the Army had considerable difficulty transitioning from combat operations to reconstruction. In particular, the Army's failure to anticipate or adequately prevent looting and violence would be repeated in 2003. DESERT STORM in 1991 completed the cycle, promoting a flood of self-congratulatory analysis. Only a few officers argued that the victory over Iraq was no more a template for future war than had been the charge of the lancers against the dervishes at Omdurman. But the post-Gulf War Army's attitude towards Small Wars was perhaps best summed up by one of the architects of the Panama invasion, Lieutenant General Carl Stiner, 'there were no lessons learned in this operation ... But we did validate a lot of things'.<sup>32</sup>

In a history conference, it is useful to reflect on the role of military historians during this period from the end of Vietnam to the Iraq War. Sparked in part by the Vietnam debacle, this era may have marked the renaissance of military history instruction within the US Army. Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s, military history was allocated two or three times the course hours devoted to Low Intensity Conflict. As a beneficiary of the Army's sponsorship of military history, I do not want to bite the hand that fed me. But perhaps a small nibble might be tolerated. I want to address an issue I referred to at the beginning of this paper—the dominance of British and Commonwealth authors, both civilian and military, in the field of Small Wars and Insurgencies. There is a reason for this—most American military historians avoided the subject. Although there are many exceptions, I would argue that the major interpretive works in land warfare and military history written in the decades after Vietnam reflect the Army's interests: institutional history, particularly institutional reform from within; Civil War and World War II campaigns and leadership; the Military Revolution; the role of technology; and the operational art, illustrated by the German blitzkrieg and Soviet operations. Works that attempted a broad treatment of counter-insurgency, terrorism, military occupation, and other topics of great utility today were not in vogue.

32. Quoted in Steven W. Senkovich, 'From Port Salines to Panama City: The Evolution of Command and Control in Contingency Operations', 7 June 1990, SAMS Monograph, 45. Terry N. Peck, 'AirLand Battle Imperatives: Do They Apply to Future Contingency Operations?', 24 May 1990, SAMS Monograph; Melissa A. Applegate, 'Military Power in Operations Other Than War' (MMAS thesis, CGSC, 1994). For official accounts, see *Operation Just Cause: The Incursion into Panama* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2006); Ronald H. Cole, *Operation Just Cause: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations Panama, February 1988-January 1990* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 1995).

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to identify those Army officers who cautioned against their service's focus on Big War. And, in our postmortem of Iraq, we may soon accord the small number of post-Vietnam Small War military intellectuals the same reverence now given to the architects of the DESERT STORM Army. If so, one of the heroes should be General John R. Galvin, who in 1986 scolded the Army about its attachment to its 'comfortable vision of war ... one that fits our plans, our assumptions, and our preconceived ideas'.<sup>33</sup> Galvin predicted the future belonged to 'uncomfortable wars' much different from the restricted battlefield encounters his service studied: 'warfare is no longer fought simply by the military. It now encompasses entire populations ... and its outcome depends more and more on their collective will'. Future wars would continue trends that were already dominant: the blurring of combatants and noncombatants; the growth of ideology; and the influence of civilian combatants on the nature and outcome of warfare. All three of his predictions have been borne out in Iraq.

Unfortunately, Galvin's warning went largely unheeded. The Gulf War was widely interpreted as vindicating the Army's focus on Big War. In the 1990s as the Army faced a drastic reduction of forces, it clung to the structure needed to fight Big War, retaining almost half of its divisions as mechanised or armour. What in retrospect are clear demonstrations of significant problems were largely ignored. The debacle in Somalia was interpreted as vindicating the Powell Doctrine that the US should avoid any conflict it could not win. While critics lambasted the slowness of the Army's response in the Balkans, its ponderous deployment, its fixation on force protection, its willingness to use firepower, one official historian hailed the 'transformation of attitude and of ways of thinking about military operations' and concluded that 'the one overriding conclusion ... was the continued relevance of the corps echelon of command'.<sup>34</sup> With even more hubris, General Wesley Clark declared that the Kosovo operation epitomised 'modern war—limited, carefully constrained in geography, scope, weaponry, and effects'.<sup>35</sup> But nothing could top the babble-speak of Army Vision 2010, which introduced such concepts as mass effects, dominant manoeuvre, precision engagement, full-dimensional protection, and asymmetric leverage. The Vision declared with absolute assurance: 'Modern technologies will exploit situational understanding phenomena to enable tailored, still undefined combat organizations to task organize quickly and fight dispersed with extraordinary ferocity and synchronization. Fused inputs from manned and unmanned sensors (including satellites) will provide unprecedented battlefield situational understanding to depths well beyond the horizon. Significant advances in avionics, weaponry, vehicle mobility, stealth, survivability,

33. John R. Galvin, 'Uncomfortable Wars: Toward a New Paradigm', *Parameters* 15 (Winter 1986): 2. Daniel P. Bolger, 'The Ghosts of Omdurman', *Parameters* 21 (Autumn 1991): 28-39.

34. Charles E. Kirkpatrick, "Ruck it Up!" *The Post-Cold War Transformation of V Corps, 1990-2001* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), 551-2. Dana Priest, *The Mission* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

35. Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Future of Combat* rev. edn (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), xxxviii.

and communication technologies will make the land force truly the force of decision on the 21st-century battlefield.<sup>36</sup>

The US Army that entered Iraq in 2003 was well prepared to fight the Soviet Union, or at least a demoralised, ineptly led, and deteriorating Soviet surrogate. It might even have been prepared, ten years hence, to battle in the high-technological star wars scenario of Vision 2010. But it was not prepared for Iraq. Believing that it had indeed ‘revolutionised the way that the American military conducted warfare, the Army sought to impose what Galvin termed its ‘comfortable vision of war’, and then was shocked when events rapidly spun out of control. What occurred after the conquest of Baghdad and what is now occurring, is testimony to the dangers of the Army’s single-mindedness after Vietnam. American officers, particularly at the company and field grade, once again have to re-learn the old traditional American way of Unconventional War, the strategy of expediency. The methods they are using—adapting tactical formations to terrain; improvising logistical organisations; forming special intelligence and reconnaissance units; recruiting indigenous guides and military forces—are all reminiscent of methods used by their seventeenth-century colonial predecessors and the US Army in its frontier and imperial wars. The irony is that the Army leadership has hailed these methods as improvisational, proof positive that the Army is an adaptive learning organisation. In fact, what they often represent is a deliberate rejection of the Army’s pre-Iraq doctrine and training. The US Army’s experience after Vietnam thus demonstrates that the theory and practice of small wars and insurgencies is an art unto itself. An Army that deliberately rejects this art and seeks to impose its own comfortable vision of warfare on the rest of the world, will soon pay the price for such hubris.

36. Army Vision 2010, [http://www.army.mil/2010/dominate\\_maneuver.htm](http://www.army.mil/2010/dominate_maneuver.htm).

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# Small Wars and Insurgency in the Ancient World

*Iain G. Spence*

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This essay examines the effects in antiquity of conducting small wars within the context of a larger war—or at least a power struggle between major alliance systems. It also, but much more briefly, explores how effectively ancient powers dealt with insurgency. The main focus of both of these topics is the Peloponnesian War of 431-404 BC, although some Roman examples are also included in the case of insurgency. The aim of the essay is to cast light on the conduct of small wars and counter-insurgency—and to demonstrate the utility of ancient military history.

The study of ancient military history offers the student of warfare some considerable opportunities and benefits, although there are limitations to this if the approach to military history is the fairly basic ‘lessons learned’ one. Modern warfare is much more complex in terms of tempo, weapons systems (including aircraft), communications, and logistics; we now operate in a ‘battlespace’ rather than a ‘battlefield’. However, if the study of military history is aimed more broadly at understanding warfare on all levels, ancient military history offers some real advantages. It should not replace the study of modern military history but it has a legitimate place in the curricula of officer training establishments and in the professional reading of military men and women. After all, Hannibal’s stunning success against the Romans at Cannae influenced both the Schlieffen Plan and Schwarzkopf’s planning for DESERT STORM.<sup>1</sup>

Note: unless otherwise indicated all dates are BC and all translations are my own. The following abbreviations apply:

Josephus, *Jf* = Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* (Penguin: *The Jewish War*)

Josephus, *Ant.* = Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*

Plut. = Plutarch

Thuc. = Thucydides (Penguin: *History of the Peloponnesian War*)

Xen. = Xenophon *Hell. Hellenica* (Penguin: *A History of My Times*), *Hipparch. Hipparchikos* (*Cavalry Commander*), *PH. Peri Hippikes* (*On Horsemanship*).

1. Cannae: Polybius 3.107-118; Livy 22.44-51. Schlieffen Plan: T.M. Holmes, ‘Classical Blitzkrieg: The Untimely Modernity of Schlieffen’s Cannae Programme’, *Journal of Military History* 67:3 (July 2003), 745-71, at n. 2 (although by adopting rather a rigid definition of the tactics used at Cannae Holmes actually argues that it did not influence the Schlieffen Plan of 1905); DESERT STORM: M. Evans, *The Continental School of Strategy: The Past, Present and Future of Land Power*, Land Warfare Studies Centre Study Paper 305 (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2004), 64.

The very lack of technical complexity relative to modern war that worries the ‘lessons learned’ school can in fact be an advantage. On a technical level, ancient warfare is simpler and less complex than warfare of today. This allows the student of ancient warfare to focus on the underlying, and in some respects enduring, characteristics of warfare without the distractions of the ephemera, such as specific weapons platforms. As General Schwarzkopf noted in a BBC interview in 2002, ‘the technology of war may change, the sophistication of weapons certainly changes. But those same principles of war that applied to the days of Hannibal apply today’.<sup>2</sup> The principles of war, the human factors, and what makes for a successful commander or successful organisation, are often easier to discern in ancient campaigns and actions. Some things *are* actually timeless.

For example, some 2300 years ago the Athenian soldier and writer, Xenophon, wrote a manual for aspiring Athenian cavalry commanders (*hipparchoi*). In this, he gives some excellent leadership advice which is entirely relevant today. He places a strong emphasis on regular training for his part-time citizen soldiers (including practising individual skills in their own time at every opportunity—much as we do in Australia today).<sup>3</sup> He also suggests *hipparchoi* can gain leadership credibility with their men by demonstrating competence in the basic cavalry skills.<sup>4</sup>

Elsewhere, Xenophon praises Iphikrates, a prominent Athenian general, for greatly increasing the skill and endurance of his ships’ crews en route to a campaign area by adopting a variety of exercises and competition between the crews.<sup>5</sup> However, later in the same book he criticises Iphikrates for conducting a cavalry reconnaissance with too large a force. He makes the perceptive comment in this instance:

... he sent out the whole of the Athenian and Corinthian cavalry as scouts. And yet, a small number is just as good as a large one for observation. In addition, if it is necessary to retire it is much easier for a few men than many to find an easy route and withdraw at their own pace. But could there be any greater folly than sending out a large group which is still smaller than the enemy? And indeed, as his cavalry were widely extended because of their numbers, when they had to withdraw they found themselves on very difficult terrain. As a result not fewer than 20 cavalrymen were killed.<sup>6</sup>

Some issues regarded as particularly topical in the 21st century were present in antiquity. For example, quite a lot of ancient Greek warfare was coalition warfare. It was very common in the fifth and fourth centuries for armies to be composed of contingents from different *poleis* (city-states). Like coalition forces today, ancient Greek coalition operations

2. <http://www.bbcprograms.com/pbs/catalog/hannibal/hannibalmain.htm> accessed 16 October 2006.

3. Xen. *Hipparch.* 1.5-7, 17-21; 2.2-9; *PH* 8.1, 10; cf. Xen. *Oeconomicus* 11.15-18.

4. Xen. *Hipparch.* 6.4-5.

5. Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.27-32.

6. Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.52; he appears to draw a general principle from this incident in *Hipparch.* 8.10-14.

were subject to problems of differing national aims, inter-state jealousy and rivalry over precedence and command status, language (or more accurately, dialect) differences, and wrangling over who paid for what. Nothing is really new.

Some of the major wars in antiquity, notably the Persian War of 480-79, the Peloponnesian War of 431-404, and the First Punic War (264-41) had a significant joint aspect. In fact, the ten senior military officers in classical Athens, the *strategoï*, were even more joint than today's commanders—just like Iphikrates above, they could be tasked to command an army or a navy according to need. Every Athenian trireme (a warship with three banks of oars) carried a contingent of marines and an Athenian fleet was therefore quite capable of conducting amphibious, or even limited land, operations. On such occasions the ships' crews could be, and were, used as light infantry.<sup>7</sup>

Another advantage in studying more remote wars is that it generally frees the student from emotional attachments or attitudes. These may be present for more modern events and may significantly cloud analysis and judgement. For example, examining the Hellenistic Greek, and later the Roman, struggle with the Jewish nationalist movement in Palestine probably allows for a more clinical detachment than studying the Israeli-Arab conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries. Looking at small wars and insurgencies in antiquity is less likely to arouse emotions which can interfere with the analysis than, for example, studying Vietnam, Northern Ireland, the Falklands, and Iraq. This obviously should not be pushed too far—history and archaeology *can* be used to serve the particular ends of a modern state or organisation and even non-partisan ancient historians can become very attached to their subjects. However, in general terms the student of ancient military history is much less likely to become engaged in heated *emotional* debate over their topic than the student of recent military history.

The focus on understanding the underlying or fundamental characteristics of warfare means a greater emphasis on the human rather than the technological face of war—although the latter is not entirely absent. For example, the development of the hoplite (a heavily armoured infantryman) in ancient Greece changed the way that warfare was waged, as did the invention of the catapult in 399, and the introduction of the *sarissa* (a long spear) into the Macedonian army by Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great. The introduction of the trireme in the late 6th century had a major influence on the conduct of Greek naval warfare, and the introduction of the stirrup in the 5th century AD had a similar effect on manoeuvre operations.

This emphasis on the human side of war relies, of course, on the assumption that human nature has remained basically the same since antiquity. However, it is fairly safe to argue this. There have been significant changes, particularly in the area of social practices and

7. Conversely, hoplites (heavy infantry) could be used as the rowers when it was important to have larger numbers of infantry at the destination, cf. Thuc. 3.18.3-4.

beliefs, but ancient warfare and power politics exhibit the same fundamental characteristics as today. Politicians and peoples then were just as motivated as modern politicians and peoples by ambition, greed, altruism, status, love, hate, patriotism, and fear. The main difference is that today we are perhaps better at camouflaging baser motives under the guise of more elevated ones, especially in the public arena. Even here, though, there is an advantage for the ancient historian; looking at more naked emotions and reasons than may well be obvious in more modern periods can be very instructive.

For example, the 1940 edition of the United States Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* defines small wars as:

... operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation.<sup>8</sup>

A strong feature of this definition is the need to intervene to restore stability and save lives. Although ancient powers did use arguments of altruism to justify military intervention,<sup>9</sup> in general there was a more honest admission of the advantages to be gained in terms of the national interest—whether political, military, and/or economic—than is often the case in more recent times.

The Peloponnesian War, the ancient Greek equivalent of a world war, fought in the fifth century between the alliance systems of Athens and Sparta, provides a good subject for this conference—particularly when approached from the Athenian perspective. The war was between two coalitions (although of rather a different nature), involved joint operations, and in several respects was asymmetric. The latter is perhaps unsurprising as Athens and her allies comprised a predominantly naval power while Sparta and her allies comprised a predominantly land power. As discussed below, part of the Athenian strategy was to avoid the traditional Greek land campaign—even at the loss of their agricultural production.

In addition, Athens was a democracy—the archetypal western democracy in fact. It was a more direct democracy than modern western systems (with the exception of some Swiss cantonal governments). There were no elected politicians, and government was conducted by an assembly open to all adult male citizens regularly meeting to decide on key issues. Unlike the 1940 USMC definition, Athenian executive power in wartime did not lie with a president, but with the *demos*, or the people of Athens. Athens was also a

8. United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office: 1940), 1.

9. For example, Livy 31.1 (Rome assisting Athens against Macedonian aggression) and 34.49 (withdrawing from Greece after the Second Macedonian War). The Athenian expedition to Sicily in 415 was in part ostensibly to help an ally, Egesta, Thuc. 6.6.2-3, 18.1.

wealthy imperial power—like the United Kingdom in the 19th and 20th centuries—and exercised the ancient equivalent of global reach. Like the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries, Athens had both the ability and willingness to project force considerable distances off shore in order to further its national interests.

Because of this, the Peloponnesian War provides some interesting insights into the conduct of war by a democracy in a coalition and joint environment. It also provides some good examples of small wars in the context of a general power struggle (which included a major war) between two superpowers.

The war was fought between the major land power in Greece, Sparta, backed by a land-based alliance system, the Peloponnesian League, and the premier Greek naval power, Athens, backed by the sea-based Delian League. The Delian League was part alliance system and part empire—although in 431 more of the members were subject to Athens than were allies. The contemporary Athenian writer, Thucydides, believed that the war essentially occurred because of Spartan concern and jealousy with the post-Persian War rise of Athens to become equally matched with Sparta as a power in Greece.<sup>10</sup> Although this perhaps understates the role of Sparta's allies in triggering the outbreak of the war, it remains a fundamentally sound analysis of the main cause.

Athens was in many ways an aggressive imperial power and its expansion inevitably placed pressure on members of Sparta's alliance system. In the five or so years preceding the outbreak of war in 431, under the leadership of Perikles Athens had placed considerable pressure on Sparta without directly threatening her, or her allies', territory.<sup>11</sup> In 431, Sparta was essentially in the position of having to either preserve its position in Greece by demonstrating that it could protect its allies and their interests from Athenian expansion or, alternatively, accept the likely collapse of the Peloponnesian League.<sup>12</sup> The latter was not really an option as it would seriously change the balance of power in Greece and remove one of the main safeguards the Spartans had against a revolt by the helots—the serf-like class in Spartan society. Unsurprisingly, Sparta chose to go to war.

The motivation for the war is important for determining the war aims and victory conditions for both sides—and the place of the small wars within the conflict. Although my personal view is that Perikles had left Sparta with little choice, legally Sparta was the aggressor.<sup>13</sup> To win, Sparta had to demonstrate conclusively that it was militarily capable of protecting allies such as Corinth and Megara from Athens. To do so really required a decisive defeat of Athens, or at least a decisive demonstration of power which would force Athens to remove its pressure from Sparta's allies.

10. Thuc. 1.23.4-6.

11. Thuc. 1.24-71, 82, 86-7, 118-25.

12. Cf. Thuc. 1.71, 81, 118.2.

13. Thuc. 1.145-6; 2.2-7; 7.18.

To achieve this, Sparta began the war with the traditional Greek offensive strategy.<sup>14</sup> This involved invading just prior to harvest-time with a land force composed primarily of hoplites, or heavy infantry (although supported by cavalry and light infantry), ravaging the enemy's agricultural land, and forcing them to come out to defend it. A pitched battle would then be fought between the two hoplite phalanxes, resulting (generally) in a decisive victory for one side or the other. If the enemy chose not to come out and fight, then the invader had won a moral victory and the loss of the crops would probably mean the defender would have to come to terms if the invasion were repeated the following year.

Probably around 80 per cent or more of Greeks survived by farming and few states could suffer the loss of their crops two-years in a row. In this particular case, Sparta no doubt believed that there was little risk of defeat. The Peloponnesian League forces significantly outnumbered Athenian land forces and held a qualitative advantage because of the Spartan army. Uniquely in Greece at the time, the Spartan hoplites were professional, full-time soldiers. According to Thucydides, Spartan opinion about the likelihood of victory was shared by others who thought that Athens would not last a year. At best some thought it might be two or three.<sup>15</sup>

The victory-conditions for Athens, however, were different. Athens did not need to inflict a decisive defeat on Sparta—only avoid suffering a decisive defeat itself. If it did so, the war would become a long one, with Sparta having no means of forcing Athens to make peace. If this occurred, Sparta would have failed to demonstrate that it could protect its Peloponnesian League allies. In effect, Athens could win by not losing, while, conversely, Sparta had to achieve a decisive military defeat of Athens in order to win.

Athens entered the war with a very different strategy from the traditional Greek one employed by Sparta and the Peloponnesian League. This strategy was developed by Perikles, although I have argued elsewhere that it was based on earlier examples and well understood by many Athenians.<sup>16</sup> It was a simple strategy, designed to maximise Athenian strengths and minimise their weaknesses by avoiding a major land engagement. Instead of defending their agricultural land, the Athenians withdrew behind their city walls and replaced the food losses by shipping in food from the empire.<sup>17</sup> Sparta was not in a position to prevent these imports as Athens had naval supremacy, based on the largest fleet of triremes in Greece. Athens' port was connected to the city itself by long walls which contemporary siege techniques could not breach. A blockade by either sea or land was therefore out of the question.

14. On this, see I.G. Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 121-3, 140-63, 165-79.

15. Thuc. 7.28.3.

16. I.G. Spence 'Cavalry, Democracy, and Military Culture in Classical Athens', paper delivered at the 'War, Culture and Democracy in Classical Athens' conference, Sydney, July 2006 (proceedings forthcoming, Cambridge University Press, 2007).

17. The policy (often called the 'island policy', after Thuc. 1.143.5) is outlined in two speeches ascribed to Perikles: Thuc. 1.139-44; 2.59-65.

As an adjunct to this core strategy of avoiding land battle against the full strength of the Peloponnesian League army, Perikles planned amphibious raids on the coast of the Peloponnese—particularly aimed at Sparta’s allies.<sup>18</sup> He also planned, and conducted, land attacks on the smaller neighbouring members of the Peloponnesian League once the main League army had left Attica each year. In this way Athens could demonstrate that Sparta was incapable either of really harming Athens or of protecting its own allies. If the Athenian strategy were successful, the most likely result of the war would be that the Spartans and/or their allies would tire of making ineffectual attacks and make peace. In this event, Sparta’s reputation would be damaged, the likelihood of defections from the Peloponnesian League would increase, and Athens would have strengthened its position in Greece—perhaps substantially.

It was a sound plan, but Perikles argued that it required an additional condition for success. In a speech outlining his strategy to the Athenian assembly shortly before the outbreak of war, he detailed the numerous Athenian resources but added the following statement:

I have many other reasons to hope for a favourable result—if you decide not to add to your empire while at war, and do not voluntarily take new dangers on yourself. I fear our own mistakes more than the enemy’s plans.<sup>19</sup>

Part of the reason for this advice was the unpopularity of the Athenian empire with both its subject members and with other Greeks. According to Thucydides, Perikles argued in another speech ‘your empire is just like a tyranny; it may perhaps have been unjust to acquire it—to let it go is dangerous’.<sup>20</sup>

Perikles’ strategy was followed, with little modification, until his death in 429. It had basically worked as he had planned, although one unforeseen effect was the outbreak of plague in Athens, helped by the overcrowding caused by the evacuation of the rural population to the city during the Peloponnesian League invasions.<sup>21</sup> The strategy was then extended to include occupying Pylos, a site on the Spartan coast, from where raids on Spartan territory were carried out and the helot population encouraged to defect and/or revolt.<sup>22</sup> However, in a major departure from Perikles’ policy in 424, an Athenian attempt to neutralise Thebes, Sparta’s northern ally, by a land invasion ended in a major defeat at the battle of Delion.<sup>23</sup> This was followed by a change in Spartan strategy. Prevented from

18. Thuc. 1.143.4; cf. 2.23ff. for the first implementation of this plan. This tactic seems to have been based on earlier practice, cf. Thuc. 1.108.5, 111.2-3. On the raids see H.D. Westlake, ‘Seaborne Raids in Periclean Strategy’, *Classical Quarterly* 39 (1945), 75-84.

19. Thuc. 1.144.1.

20. Thuc. 2.63.2; the empire is also described as a tyranny in a speech ascribed to Kleon, Thuc. 3.37.2.

21. Thuc. 2.47-55.

22. Thuc. 4.2-41; for the effectiveness of this, cf. 4.80.1-2.

23. Thuc. 4.76-7, 89-101.

ravaging Attica by an Athenian threat to kill over 200 Spartan prisoners captured in the Pylos campaign if they did so again, the Spartans attacked the Chalcidice.<sup>24</sup> This was the only part of the Athenian empire accessible by land and the loss of the major city in the area, Amphipolis, was a grave blow to Athens.<sup>25</sup> Athens and Sparta, both now suffering from a loss of territory and worried by their position, made peace in 421.<sup>26</sup> This peace, the Peace of Nicias, lasted until 413, when the war resumed again.

This then is the context for examining two very different small wars which occurred during the uneasy period of peace separating the two halves of the Peloponnesian War. The first of these small wars was the Athenian capture of the island of Melos in 416. The second was the Athenian attack on Sicily in 415 which ended in the destruction of the Athenian expeditionary force in 413. Although both had very different military outcomes, both contributed to the Athenian loss of the war in 404.

To take Melos first. It was a small island off the coast of the Peloponnese, colonised by Lakedaimonians.<sup>27</sup> As Thucydides notes,

the Melians ... had refused to submit to the Athenians like the other islanders, and initially [i.e. in the Peloponnesian War] had remained neutral; but later, when the Athenians had forced them by ravaging their land, they entered into open warfare.<sup>28</sup>

We do not know how big the city was, but it cannot have been large.<sup>29</sup> The Athenian expeditionary force comprised 38 ships, 2700 hoplites, 300 archers, and 20 mounted archers. The majority of this force was Athenian, but it included eight triremes and 1500 hoplites from the Delian League.<sup>30</sup> The campaign itself was pretty unremarkable and over within the year. The Melians were heavily outnumbered so the Athenians surrounded the city with a wall and left a garrison to starve them out. Several successful Melian raids against this garrison prompted Athens to send reinforcements, the pressure was increased, and the Melians were forced to surrender.<sup>31</sup> Thucydides rather laconically records the harsh outcome:

24. Thuc. 4.41.1, 80ff.

25. For the loss, see Thuc. 4.102-8. Athenian feelings in ran so high that they exiled Thucydides, the *strategos* in charge in the region, who was elsewhere when the Spartan force arrived at Amphipolis. Unsuccessful attempts to recover Amphipolis were a feature of much fourth-century Athenian activity.

26. Thuc. 5.13-24. Cf. Plut. *Nicias*, 9-10; Aristophanes, *Peace*, ll. 263-286.

27. Herodotos 8.48; Thuc. 5.84.2; Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.3.

28. Thuc. 5.84.2.

29. It has been calculated that the island could support a maximum population of 5000 in antiquity, but that it was probably actually 2000-3000: M. Wagstaff and J. Cherry, 'Settlement and Population Change', in C. Renfrew and M. Wagstaff (eds), *An Island Polity: The Archaeology of Exploitation in Melos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 136-55, at 136-45.

30. Thuc. 5.84.1.

31. Thuc. 5.114-16.

They [the Athenians] executed all the men of military age they had captured and sold the women and children as slaves. They settled the land themselves, after later sending out a colony of 500 men.<sup>32</sup>

What is particularly interesting about this very small war is, first, Thucydides' account of the reasons why Athens chose to attack this small city and, second, the results of the campaign. Thucydides records the Athenian reasons in an unusual speech, in the form of a dialogue between the Athenian generals and the Melian council.<sup>33</sup> The Melians put their faith in the justice of their cause and potential help from the gods and Sparta (neither of which actually eventuated). The Athenians espoused an argument based on naked imperialism. This was essentially 'might is right' and that justice is immaterial. The Athenians argued that as their empire was maritime they could not afford to have neutral islanders and leaving Melos free was a sign of weakness that could encourage revolts.<sup>34</sup> In addition, they brushed aside as unimportant the Melian question:

How will you not make enemies of all those who are now allied to neither side, when they see the things happening here and decide that at sometime you will attack them too?<sup>35</sup>

Clearly the campaign was a military success. However, it had other effects—although Thucydides does not specifically detail these. As I have noted, the Athenian empire was not popular. Although Athens justified it as a by-product of, and legitimate reward for, Athens' major role in the defence of Greece against Persia in 480-79,<sup>36</sup> there had been a history of revolts within the empire and it was clearly unpopular with many of its subjects.<sup>37</sup> It was also a source of fear to neutral Greeks. The growth of the Athenian empire, and Athenian power, had caused concern in Sparta and contributed to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431. As the Melians predicted, Athens' ruthless attack on, and destruction of, a small community must have increased the fear of Athens, and its unpopularity among other Greeks. The installation of a 500-strong Athenian cleruchy (a colony of men of military age)<sup>38</sup> must also have increased the suspicion that if Athens could do this to Melos, no independent community was safe. The use of cleruchies was a particularly hated feature of the Athenian empire and specifically banned when Athens set up its second maritime confederacy in the fourth century.<sup>39</sup>

32. Thuc. 5.116.4.

33. Thuc. 5.84-113.

34. Thuc. 5.99.

35. Thuc. 5.98.

36. Thuc. 1.73-5; cf. 5.89.

37. Thuc. 3.37.2.

38. Although there is some debate over whether the settlers sent to Melos constituted a cleruchy (cf. Wagstaff and Cherry, 'Settlement and Population Change', 136-55 at 141-2) this seems the more likely explanation.

39. *Inscriptiones Graecae* IP<sup>2</sup>43 = P. Harding, *From the End of the Peloponnesian War to the Battle of Ipsus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 49, document 35.

In 416, when Athens was still powerful, this hatred probably did not seem important. However, when the destruction of the Athenian and allied expeditionary force in Sicily opened a window of military opportunity this hatred and resentment led to a wave of opposition to Athens. Thucydides records that after the disaster in Sicily:

... all of the Greeks turned against Athens. Even though nobody asked them, those who had not been allied with either side thought they should no longer stand apart from the war but should voluntarily go against the Athenians—each considering that the Athenians would have come against them, if their Sicilian venture had been successful ...<sup>40</sup>

The second case study concerns this disastrous expedition to Sicily (415-13). The Athenian expeditionary force, which included large numbers of Athenian allies and subjects, was destroyed. The actual numbers are uncertain, but the original force consisted of 134 triremes (each with a crew of 200), 5100 hoplites, 1300 light troops and 30 cavalry and was reinforced at least twice.<sup>41</sup> Thucydides records that few Athenians made it home (although from other evidence we know that some did) and the number of prisoners alone was 'at least 7000'.<sup>42</sup> As a result of the disaster, Athens was thrown into a panic and a coup saw the Athenian democracy temporarily replaced by an oligarchic government.<sup>43</sup>

This loss of men and ships caused the Spartans, already upset by Athenian raids on their coast, to renew the war. The Peloponnesian League forces were joined, as noted, by other Greek states, including Syracuse (the major Greek city on Sicily and which had been the main objective of the Athenian attack). The defeat also sparked several serious revolts among the subject states of the Athenian empire. The Persians, keen to reduce Athenian influence on the coast of Asia Minor, and encouraged by the current Athenian weakness, provided increasing financial aid.<sup>44</sup> Although the Athenians hung on until 404, the defeat in Sicily, combined with Athens' general unpopularity, provided the necessary condition for Athenian defeat.

The reasons why Athens sent the force to Sicily in the first place are of particular interest. It is clear that Sicily represented a major adversary, and the attempt to conquer it was a clear breach of Perikles' advice not to try to add to the empire. It could be argued that as the expedition was sent in 415, while Athens was at peace with the Peloponnesian League, Perikles' advice was irrelevant. However, it was an uneasy peace and some in Athens were opposed to involvement in Sicily because it was too dangerous. Thucydides makes it clear that the size and resources of Sicily gave it a combined military power comparable to Athens itself. He also records Nikias' arguments against going to Sicily. These included

40. Thuc. 8.2.1.

41. Thuc. 6.43; reinforcements: 6.94.4 (280 cavalry and mounted archers) and 7.20.2 (65 triremes [five from Chios], 1200 Athenian hoplites and an unspecified number of allies).

42. Thuc. 7.87.4.

43. Thuc. 8.45ff.; [Aristotle] *Athenian Constitution*, 29-33.

44. Revolts: Thuc 8.5, 16, 32, 35, 44; Persian assistance: Thuc. 8.5ff.; Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.4-9.

that the Athenians were leaving many enemies behind them; that the treaty with Sparta and others was tenuous; that other cities only had ten-day renewable truces with Athens; that Sicily was a major objective; and that even if the Athenians were successful, it would be very difficult to keep the island in subjection.<sup>45</sup>

Given these arguments, it strikes the reader as strange that the Athenians went to Sicily at all (which is no doubt exactly the impression Thucydides wished to create). However, there were several apparently good reasons for doing so. The first is because they were asked to. The Sicilian city of Egesta, doing poorly in a war with neighbouring Selinous, had requested aid.<sup>46</sup> Athens had always been interested in Sicily and successful intervention there could significantly boost Athenian power. Athens had also (with some reason) feared support to the Peloponnesian League from the Dorian cities on Sicily, notably Syracuse, and control of Sicily would end this potential threat.<sup>47</sup> If Thucydides is to be believed, some Athenians, including the main supporter of the venture, Alcibiades, saw Sicily as a stepping-stone to a subsequent conquest of Carthage.<sup>48</sup>

There were strategic advantages in Athenian control of Sicily and at the time the task was seen as manageable. Athens had one ally there, and potentially several others (both Greek settlers and non-Greeks), and an Athenian delegation had confirmed that Egesta had enough wealth to contribute to the war effort. In his speech in support of the expedition, Alcibiades argued that the Sicilian *poleis* had mixed populations without a deep sense of loyalty to their city and would not make a serious resistance. He added that the Peloponnesians were not a serious threat to Athens, which still had naval supremacy, and argued that adding Sicily to the empire would strengthen Athenian power in Greece. He also made an ideological appeal on the basis that Athens had not become great by inactivity and being risk-averse.<sup>49</sup>

Ironically, Nikias' final attempt to discourage the Athenians—making an exaggerated estimate of the forces required—actually convinced some of the waverers. These people, already a minority, were heartened by the thought that such a large force could not fail, or at least would be able to return safely if unable to seize control.<sup>50</sup>

As it turned out, the opponents of the expedition were correct. The riches of Egesta did not exist (the Egestans had fooled the Athenian delegates into thinking the citizens were wealthy by running pooled sets of gold and silver plates and cutlery ahead of their guests to be produced at every meal they attended in private households).<sup>51</sup> The Athenians

45. Thuc. 6.10-14.

46. Thuc. 6.6.2.

47. Thuc. 2.7.2; 3.86ff.; 6.6.2, 18.1.

48. Thuc. 6.15.2.

49. Thuc. 6.16-18.

50. Thuc. 6.19-24.

51. Thuc. 6.46.3-5.

failed to achieve a decisive victory on landing, and when the war dragged on the Spartans and Corinthians sent aid and military advisers to Syracuse.<sup>52</sup> Although Athenian mistakes contributed to their defeat, the main cause was miscalculating the military capability of the island, its will to resist, and the risk of assistance from Athens' enemies on mainland Greece. The result, as we have seen, was disaster in Sicily, and, ultimately, complete defeat by the Peloponnesians and their allies

I would now like to turn briefly to insurgencies. Those in the Peloponnesian War were not conducted as guerrilla wars but were revolts by cities which were members of the Athenian empire. These revolts generally took the form of conventional opposition, based around fortifying one's city and relying (generally unsuccessfully) on Spartan aid to prevent a full-scale Athenian response. The forms of these conflicts are not especially important, but they do shed some light on reactions to insurgency—particularly in the case of the Mytilenian revolt of 428-7.

The upper classes in Mytilene, the major city on the island of Lesbos, planned to revolt from Athens when their plans became known, but were forced into action prior to completing their preparations. In doing so they basically dragged the entire population of the city with them.<sup>53</sup> However, a vigorous siege by Athens led the Spartan military adviser sent to help the revolt to distribute arms to the ordinary people to increase resistance. Once armed, the people refused to cooperate and the city was surrendered. The Athenian assembly, incensed by the revolt, voted to kill all the adult male citizens of Mytilene and sell the women and children as slaves.<sup>54</sup>

A subsequent debate in the Athenian assembly reversed this decision and provides an excellent insight into the perennial issue concerning an insurgent movement—the tactics to be used and the degree of force to be applied.<sup>55</sup> The rapid and heavy Athenian military response had been successful in this case, but the question remained of the best method for deterring future revolts within the empire. This was a serious question—as noted above the empire was unpopular (both internally and with other Greeks), but Athenian power and its very survival in the Peloponnesian War depended on the empire.

Thucydides presents the two arguments as opposing speeches in the assembly. The first, by a politician, Kleon, whom Thucydides disliked, argues that the original punishment should stand. Like Billy Hughes at Versailles,<sup>56</sup> Kleon's view was that the victor ought to exact benefits from the loser appropriate to the offence. Apart from the need for consistency

52. Thuc. 6.46-7.8.

53. Thuc. 3.1-4, 13.2.

54. Thuc. 3.25-8, 36.

55. Debate and reversal: Thuc. 3.36-49. Degree of force: cf. J.C. Davis, 'The Cost of Expediency in Counterinsurgency Operations', *Small Wars Journal* 5 (Spring 2006), <http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/documents/swjmag/v5/davis.htm>, accessed 15 September 2006.

56. P. Spartalis, *The Diplomatic Battles of Billy Hughes* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1983), 77-8, 86, 96-168.

in decision-making, Kleon's main argument was that the punishment would act as a major deterrent to future revolts. Athens' mistake, according to him, was to allow too much freedom to members of the empire in the first place.<sup>57</sup>

Kleon's opponent, the otherwise unknown Diodotus, is careful to avoid an appeal to pity or compassion. His argument is pure Realpolitik. He points to the difference in attitude of the upper classes and the ordinary Mytilenians and argues that to punish them all will damage Athenian interests. The basis of his argument is that if surrender and/or resistance to the ringleaders of revolts is rewarded with death and slavery, future revolts will be more serious as the insurgents will be more unified and will fight to the bitter end.<sup>58</sup> Diodotus' logic that harsh measures actually increase resistance is compelling—there are numerous examples of that in modern history.<sup>59</sup> It also persuaded the Athenians to change their minds, and, when put into practice, largely failed in its intent of discouraging revolts.

Despite the apparently sensible leniency in the case of Mytilene, the remainder of the Peloponnesian War saw numerous revolts against Athens. Several of these occurred prior to the more general opportunity provided by Athens' defeat in Sicily. Interestingly, only four years later, when Skione revolted, Kleon was able to have the penalty earlier rejected for Mytilene accepted by the assembly.<sup>60</sup> When Skione was captured in 421, the decree was carried out.<sup>61</sup> This harsh measure, though, also failed to prevent future revolts against Athens.

Despite this, it remained the most common response to insurgency in the ancient world. In Spain, where resistance to Roman rule often took the form of banditry or guerrilla operations,<sup>62</sup> the Romans adopted several measures. The military response including adopting a more mobile and open style of fighting against the Spanish.<sup>63</sup> Other responses included hostage-taking and severe reprisals against both guerrillas and their supporters.<sup>64</sup>

Similar repressive measures were taken against the Jewish resistance movement, the Sicarii, in Palestine in the first century AD.<sup>65</sup> This group (so called after the daggers its members carried) was arguably the first to adopt urban terrorism in response to

57. Thuc. 3.37-40.

58. Thuc. 3.41-48.

59. Davis, 'The Cost of Expediency in Counterinsurgency Operations'; A. Mack, 'Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict', *World Politics* 27:2 (January 1975), 175-200, at 180-4.

60. Thuc. 4.122.

61. Thuc. 5.32.

62. Plut. *Marius*, 6; *Pompey*, 17; Strabo, 3.3.8; cf. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (New York: Norton, 1965), 13-28; *Bandits*, rev. edn (New York: Pantheon, 1969), 17-40.

63. Cf. Caesar, *Civil Wars*, 1.44.

64. For example, Plut. *Sertorius*, 3; Caesar, *Civil Wars*, 1.73; cf. L. A. Churchin, *Roman Spain* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1995), 41-2, 57-77. Such practices were also earlier used in Spain by Carthage, cf. Polybius, 10.34-8. For a broader critique of Roman methods in the provinces, see Tacitus, *Agricola*, 30.

65. On the identification of the Sicarii, see M. Smith, 'Zealots and Sicarii, their Origins and Relation', *Harvard Theological Review* 64:1 (January 1971), 1-19; R.A. Horsley 'The Sicarii: Ancient Jewish "Terrorists"', *Journal of Religion* 59:4 (October 1979), 435-58, at 435-6.

occupation.<sup>66</sup> They targeted prominent members of the Jewish ruling and priestly classes who cooperated with the Romans, assassinating them in broad daylight in crowded places.<sup>67</sup> They also adopted the tactic of kidnapping officials and offering their release in return for a prisoner exchange.<sup>68</sup> The Sicarii were extremely effective in creating a climate of fear among the ruling class, severely weakening Roman control, and harsh Roman countermeasures increased resistance to the point where a general revolt occurred.<sup>69</sup> However, in this revolt the Jews largely adopted conventional resistance and the bulk of the Sicarii, who had fled to Masada in AD 63 after a violent falling out with other Jewish groups, were destroyed when it fell in AD 72.<sup>70</sup>

Several conclusions can be drawn from this quick examination of small wars and insurgencies in the Peloponnesian War and later. To start with small wars, the first conclusion to draw—apart from the obvious one that you can be just as dead in a small war as a big one—is that so-called small wars can be a fatal distraction from more pressing threats. Athens allowed its focus on the ultimate game, the struggle with the Peloponnesian League, to become diffused and ultimately lost the war.

A second conclusion is that there is considerable difficulty in predicting what will be a small war. In the case of the Athenians, they considered that an attack on Melos and an expedition to Sicily would be small wars, well within their capacity to win. In theory, this was correct, and in the case of Melos, Athens won a fairly quick and militarily inexpensive victory. However, both these small wars had an adverse affect on Athens' position vis-à-vis Sparta in the balance of power in Greece.

The third conclusion is directly linked to the second. Two sets of calculations need to be made before embarking on a small war (or any war)—military *and* political. In the case of Melos, Athens calculated the military risks well. As with many 19th and even 20th century small wars fought by western imperial powers, Athens used overwhelming force to achieve a swift victory. Unfortunately for Athens, the political risks were not properly assessed and the rest of Greece saw the attack on Melos as yet another example of naked Athenian imperialism. This contributed to a climate of ill-feeling against, and fear of, Athens. This helped generate significant opposition, including military, to the city when its power was reduced in the final stages of the Peloponnesian War.

66. Name: Josephus, *Ant.* 20.186. Horsley, 'The Sicarii: Ancient Jewish "Terrorists"', 438ff.; for an alternative view, identifying the Sicarii as opposed to any sort of secular or religious Jewish (as opposed to Roman) authority, see S. Zeitlin, 'The Sicarii and Masada', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 57:4 (1967), 251-70, at 259-60.

67. Josephus, *BJ* 2.254-6; 7.254; cf. *Ant.* 20.164-6, 186-7.

68. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.208-10.

69. Effects: Josephus, *BJ* 2.256-7; Horsley, 'The Sicarii: Ancient Jewish "Terrorists"', 450-3. Countermeasures and the revolt: Horsley, 'The Sicarii: Ancient Jewish "Terrorists"', 445-50.

70. Josephus, *BJ* 2.254-8, 275-408; cf. Zeitlin, 'Sicarii and Masada', 253.

The Sicilian expedition was a different matter. Although Athens also miscalculated the political risks here, and the venture also contributed to general Greek opposition to Athens, it was the military miscalculation which was more important. Through poor intelligence (and the interpretation of intelligence) Athens became involved in a ‘small war’ which turned out to be a major one.<sup>71</sup> The almost total loss of the Athenian expeditionary force in 413 led to a major reduction in Athenian military capability. This reduction provided the opportunity for revolts within the Athenian empire and encouraged the Persians to become involved on the Spartan side. Arguably, the Sicilian expedition was the major reason for Athens’ loss of the Peloponnesian War.

The fourth conclusion is the importance of keeping one’s own population on side during small wars. However, this is a more tentative conclusion and perhaps based more on modern experience.<sup>72</sup> The Athenian armed forces were true citizen forces and in some respects the population was therefore indistinguishable from the army and navy. Aristophanes, for example, jokes about the militarisation of society during the Peloponnesian War.<sup>73</sup> There had been some opposition to Athenian imperialism prior to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War but by and large most Athenians believed that owning an empire was beneficial.<sup>74</sup>

Despite some tensions during the first invasion of Attica,<sup>75</sup> most Athenians seem to have been behind the war effort against Sparta and the Peloponnesian League—and this lasted for most of the war. However, there was more opposition to the Sicilian expedition, which a minority saw (correctly as it turned out) as unnecessary and dangerous when Athens was faced by a shaky peace and a still-hostile Sparta back on mainland Greece. With the loss of the expeditionary force, internal opposition grew to the point that there were two successful, albeit temporary, coups against the democracy. The overall strain of the Peloponnesian War was a major factor here, but it was Athenian involvement in a small war to which not all the citizens were committed—and especially the loss of that war—which set the conditions for internal tensions to manifest into action.

Although insurgencies have been a much lesser focus of this paper, I would like to suggest some conclusions based on the Athenian experience of revolts during the Peloponnesian War—supplemented by later Roman experience. Apart from the obvious conclusion—do not become involved in fighting insurgents who are attempting to gain

71. A small war can become a major one in terms of both military effort required and/or the adverse political/public opinion effects suffered.

72. Examples include Afghanistan, Chechnya, the Falkland Islands, and Iraq. Cf. Mack, ‘Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars’, 175–200; R.M. Cassidy, ‘Why Great Powers Fight Small Wars Badly’, *Military Review* (September–October 2002), 41–53.

73. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, ll. 561–2.

74. Opposition: Plut. *Perikles*, 12, 14. Benefits/general support: [Aristotle] *Athenian Constitution*, 24.3; [Xen.] *Athenian Constitution*, 1.16–17, 2.9–13.

75. Thuc. 2.21–22.

freedom from occupation, unless you have absolutely no choice—the first one is that there is no single proven method for dealing with an insurgency.

In Vietnam, the Americans attempted to adopt aspects of the British methods from the Malayan campaign but arguably largely failed because the circumstances were different. The Athenian experience also confirms the need to adjust to circumstances. The Mytilenian debate presents both sides of the argument over whether a revolt or insurgency is best dealt with by harshness or a more lenient ‘hearts and minds’ approach. Athens tried both and neither proved an effective deterrent—although it can be argued that the more lenient approach was probably better until Athenian military power had deteriorated to the point where widespread opposition became possible. Similarly, Caesar’s use of *clementia* (mercy) in the civil war was arguably better than the harsh methods employed by his opponents and by Sulla and Pompey in the previous civil war,<sup>76</sup> but these were not exactly insurgencies.

The normal Roman reaction to revolt and insurgency was harsh and repressive—in line with the Roman view that if you fight a war you fight to win. In general terms, these measures were effective in the short term (although not so much in the long term in Spain and Judaea) but beyond what a modern democracy could, or should, be prepared to support. In addition, Rome had total control in its empire and sphere of influence and was unconcerned with external public opinion, as we are (and to some extent should be) today.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, as is the case with small wars, a crucial element in dealing with insurgencies is the support of one’s own population and, to a lesser extent, external public opinion.<sup>78</sup> Second century BC Rome experienced significant fatigue over its inability to pacify Spain quickly,<sup>79</sup> not unlike Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya and the United States during Vietnam—and perhaps in Iraq if casualties continue to mount and the situation does not improve. One of the dangers for the United States here is that, just like Athens, there are plenty of people, and states, waiting to kick her if she stumbles.

76. *Clementia*: Caesar, *Civil Wars*, 1.23, 77, 86; 2.22; cf. 1.72 where his soldiers were against it. Sulla and Pompey: Plut. *Sulla*, 31-2; Plut. *Pompey*, 10 (but cf. 11), 16; Caesar, *Civil Wars*, 1.76; 3.14.

77. For a contrary view about world opinion see E.B. Glick, ‘Is World Opinion Important?’, *Military Review* (September-October 2002), 46-7.

78. For a very interesting discussion of the apparently intractable issues facing western democracies in this regard see Mack, ‘Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars’, 175-200.

79. L. R. Taylor, ‘Forerunners of the Gracchi’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 52:1-2, (1962), 19-27, especially at 19, 21-22; cf. H. C. Boren, ‘The Urban Side of the Gracchan Economic Crisis’, *The American Historical Review* 63:4 (July, 1958), 890-902, at 896, 899.

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## Some Problems and Lessons of Anglo-Irish War in the Twentieth Century

*Keith Jeffery*

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At both the start and the conclusion of the twentieth century the political relations between Great Britain and Ireland, and within Ireland itself, were almost entirely peaceful and were generally characterised by a high level of mutual tolerance and the widespread rejection of violence as either a legitimate or effective means of political expression or advancement. In 1900, on the nationalist side, apart from a few aging Fenian ‘dynamiters’ and a tiny handful of political extremists, there was no apparent likelihood of an organised military campaign in support of Irish separatism. Sinn Féin, the party which was to dominate the separatist cause for much of the century, did not yet exist, and when it was founded in 1905, the original conception of Arthur Griffith was that it should restrict itself to non-violent methods. At the end of the century Sinn Féin, which in a later manifestation had been most fully associated with the ‘armed struggle’ in Northern Ireland, had formally abandoned the military strategy which had dominated Northern Irish politics since the early 1970s. On the unionist side in 1900, although there had been some talk of armed resistance to the threat of Irish home rule, this did not emerge seriously until a decade into the century when the introduction into parliament of a home rule bill with a high probability of becoming law prompted the formation of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in January 1913.

Although the unionists pioneered political paramilitarism, it was nationalists who in 1916 set off the first of two main cycles of political violence which have dominated Irish politics in the last century. The first of these ran from 1916 to 1923 and began with the Easter Rising of 1916, a week-long engagement largely on orthodox military lines between some Irish Volunteers and British army units, many of which, initially at least, were composed of Irish soldiers themselves. Some 500 people were killed in the Rising. The great majority of these, about 300, were civilians, while 60 insurgents and 132 soldiers and police died.<sup>1</sup> Over the next three years, while there was little serious violence, the foundations were laid for the insurgent campaign which developed from early 1919

1. The best recent analysis of the Rising is Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Allen Lane, 2005); the best narrative account is Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999).

and lasted until a truce in July 1921, followed by negotiations leading to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 6 December 1921 which partitioned the island and granted a measure of independence—‘dominion status’—to the new ‘Irish Free State’.<sup>2</sup> In this period some 1200 people died: 550 army and police; 440 IRA and 200 civilians.<sup>3</sup> The Treaty, which failed to secure an all-Ireland republic, laid the basis for the 1922-23 civil war between the new Irish government and intransigent republicans. This was the most violent period of all, when in twelve months perhaps 1500 people died.<sup>4</sup> Between 1923 and the late 1960s there were sporadic outbreaks of violence, but there was nothing very sustained. Even the IRA’s border campaign of 1956-62, ‘Operation Harvest’, was less a coherent military operation than a series of largely unco-ordinated attacks on rural targets in Northern Ireland. The number of fatalities was very small. Only six security force personnel, all policemen, for example, were killed during the whole period of the campaign.

The second twentieth-century cycle of violence in Ireland was much more prolonged and costly than anything that had gone before. From 1969 to 1997 over 3600 were killed.<sup>5</sup> The majority of these deaths occurred in the 1970s. The worst year was 1972 with 467 deaths. From 1982 the statistics settled down (if that is the right way to express it) to an average of about 80 deaths a year until the early 1990s, marking a kind of stasis where neither side appeared to be gaining very much. In part this reflected a tactical change from about the mid 1970s, at which point both sides appeared to be prepared for a ‘long war’. The Provisionals abandoned their strategy of the early 1970s which had aimed at a complete breakdown of government. This depended on a large body of active IRA volunteers, but the rather loose organisation proved insecure and easily penetrated by the intelligence and security agencies. From 1976-7 they reorganised into a much more secure cell-based structure, and adopted a ‘long haul’ approach, in which a continued war of attrition against the security forces and economic targets was combined with the development of a political campaign. The government, too, reviewed strategy in this period and adopted a policy of ‘Ulsterisation’, whereby London aimed to shift the security effort more fully into the hands of the police and local security forces. Especially after the appointment of Sir Maurice Oldfield as ‘Security Co-ordinator’ (1979-80) the central direction of the security effort was improved and additional resources were put into long-term intelligence operations.<sup>6</sup> The evident sterility of the military campaign,

2. There is no satisfactory military history of the 1919-21 period, though Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), is essential for the British side and the conflict outside Ulster.

3. David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 85 and 249 n. 45.

4. The figures are very uncertain for the civil war. See *ibid.*, 118-19 and 133-4.

5. These fatalities are movingly and remarkably listed in David McKitterick et al., *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men and Women and Children who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburgh: Mainstream 1999; rev. edn 2001).

6. Some of these matters are discussed in Keith Jeffery, ‘Security policy in Northern Ireland: some reflections on the management of violent conflict’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 2:1 (Spring, 1990), 21-34.

the improvement of security-force performance and the growing success of the political wing of the republican movement (among other factors) produced a situation in the 1990s where talks began and a cessation of active operations was secured by 1997.

Although not every group laid down their arms, and although 'violence' did not entirely cease in 1997, the situation has remained sufficiently peaceable over the past ten years for us to hazard that the military conflict as we have known it may finally have ended. This gives us the opportunity to explore some aspects of insurgency and counter-insurgency common to both cycles of violence in Ireland, and to see if we can draw out, if only tentatively, some 'lessons' from this experience. This, too, might have some comparative relevance for the current British military commitments in the early twenty-first century. In a significant number of instances in the reflections which follow, 'Iraq' or 'Afghanistan' could broadly be substituted for 'Ireland'. At the time of the Second Gulf War, when British forces occupied Basrah, moreover, explicit parallels were drawn with Northern Ireland, and the assertion was made that the experience of service in the province had equipped the British army especially well for the challenges it would face. As the then Minister of Defence, Geoff Hoon, put it in April 2003: 'I think there is an obvious connection with Northern Ireland. In some ways I regret having to say it, but I think the experience of British forces over a long period in Northern Ireland of working in the community, of dealing with people on the streets, equips them superbly for the kind of tasks that they are now carrying out in the southern part of Iraq'.<sup>7</sup>

### THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

The words 'Anglo-Irish war' have been used in the title of this paper as no more than a short-hand way of indicating some, though not perhaps all, of the violent conflict which has afflicted the island of Ireland during the twentieth century. There is no single satisfactory term to describe even those two main bouts of violence in 1916-21 and 1969-97 between the IRA (itself a problematic categorisation) and 'Crown forces'. Except that there is, or, rather, are numerous 'single satisfactory terms' for the conflict, or conflicts, but these vary wildly (I was going to say violently) depending on who is using them. What may be called a mere 'criminal conspiracy' by one person, could well be a 'war of national liberation' for another. In any case, there is a kind of Irish historical variant of Newton's Third Law of Motion. It seems that for every statement, or definition, you make, an 'equal and opposite' statement can be made. This is not just a trivial point, for it reminds us of the politically-charged nature of both language itself as well as that of the conflicts which we are considering. Definitions and descriptions reflect the perceptions of the participants, which in turn have a critically important influence on their own decision-making.

7. Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, Lobby briefing, London, 7 April 2003, [http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/sofs\\_lobby\\_7april.htm](http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/sofs_lobby_7april.htm) (accessed 15 September 2006).

Each of the terms in ‘Anglo-Irish war’ is problematic. ‘Anglo’ appears to mean ‘English’, though in this case it surely does not. Is it the English people, the English army or the English government (led in 1919-21, for example, by a Welshman, David Lloyd George) which is doing the fighting? Perhaps ‘British’ would be better, so as to indicate that more than England or the English are involved? But ‘British-Irish war’ does not quite fit the situation, though the struggle could be characterised as a conflict over perceptions of Britishness and Irishness. Charles Townshend’s now-classic study of 1919-21, which is an essential text for any exploration of British counter-insurgency in the twentieth century, speaks of ‘the British campaign in Ireland’, eschewing any precise definition of what that campaign was: war, COIN, policing, peace-keeping or whatever.<sup>8</sup> The use of ‘Anglo’ in ‘Anglo-Irish’, however, fits the world-view of some Irish separatists, who wish to emphasise the *English* component of the *British* domination of Ireland. By this analysis the Scots and Welsh are fellow-victims of what we might call English imperialism. As the national anthem of the Irish Republic affirms, ‘out yonder waits the *Saxon* foe’.<sup>9</sup> It is the *Sassenach* who are to blame for everything.

In these multi-cultural days, when the old portmanteau terms no longer suffice—when, for example, British emigration to Australia has turned into ‘Anglo-Celtic’ emigration—‘Irish’, too, has become a slippery concept, and, despite the fervently-held beliefs of committed nationalists, it is difficult to construct a definition of Irishness (beyond the simplistic and unsatisfactory ‘if you are not with us you are against us’ assertion) which will exclude Irish people from the ‘British’ side. Irish people, Catholic and Protestant, even, dare I say, nationalist and unionist, can be found on both ‘sides’ of the conflict. Matters are further complicated by the fact that even to think in terms of only two ‘sides’ may be insufficient for a proper understanding of the situation.

This brings us on to the term ‘war’ which on one level implies a simple, bi-lateral engagement: us and them, allies and enemy, two sets of organised and readily identifiable forces fighting it out until a decision is secured for one side or the other. But if we are dealing with a situation where not only the participants have multiple identities but the issues are plural too, then the conflict itself might be plural, comprising overlapping and competing conflicts within and among as well as between the two ‘sides’. In addition, ‘war’ implies a degree of formality not always present in the Irish case (and elsewhere as well). Charles Callwell in his pioneering study *Small Wars* (of which more anon) famously wrote of ‘invertebrate war’,<sup>10</sup> where the apparent certainties of fixed positions and identifiable adversaries are absent, and it is with ‘invertebrate’ conflict that we are most concerned in Ireland.

8. Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921*.

9. Emphasis added. A wonderfully stimulating discussion of the adoption of the anthem, and other national symbols, will be found in Ewan Morris, *Our Own Devices: National Symbols and Political Conflicts in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005).

10. The full quotation is: ‘the quelling of rebellion in distant colonies means protracted, thankless, invertebrate war’ (C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 3rd edn 1906), 27).

While the ‘Anglo-Irish war’ is a common enough descriptor for the 1919-21 period of fighting, other titles are also used.<sup>11</sup> The ‘Irish war of independence’ is perhaps the most commonly-used formulation. Being both aspirational and descriptive, it is favoured (among others) by nationalists. That Ireland in 1921 was not fully independent (nor is it yet so) scarcely seems to matter. Sometimes it is known as the ‘Tan war’, taking its name from perhaps the most notorious portion of the government security forces, the ‘Black and Tans’, which is itself a nick-name for the militarised reinforcements drafted into the Irish police (see below), and graphically depicted in Ken Loach’s 2006 film *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*. But the use of this soubriquet, with its hint of a ‘sneaking regard’,<sup>12</sup> reminds us of the unorthodox dimension of the conflict. The 1919-21 violence was followed in 1922-23 by the Irish civil war, and the whole 1919-23 period is often broadly described simply as the ‘Troubles’, an apparently neutral term, which neatly side-steps any hint of agency or causation. It is as if the violence, like some malign bacillus, had flowed into Ireland from outer space or somewhere else far from home.

A similar lack of precise definition obtains with regard to the 1969-97 violence. Again, ‘the Troubles’ is the most popularly-accepted description. Among academics the ‘Northern Ireland conflict’ is favoured, though regarded uneasily by some commentators on the unionist side with its implication that Northern Ireland itself might inherently have been a conflictual, dysfunctional polity.<sup>13</sup> The term ‘war’ for this period, while habitually used by republicans and in some journalistic accounts of events,<sup>14</sup> has not found much favour with academic analysts, and where it has been adopted, it has sometimes been used with considerable abandon.<sup>15</sup> One scholar, Peter Neumann, writing from a military-strategic perspective, who uses the term quite carefully, nevertheless retains a certain ambiguity by using both ‘war’ and ‘the Northern Ireland conflict’ in the title of his study of British strategy.<sup>16</sup>

All this is to say that the descriptors adopted for any particular bout of violence can tell us as much about those using the terms as about the actual conflict itself, and that if, even after eighty years in one instance, no simple fixed and agreed description has yet been established for political violence in Ireland, we must conclude that the matter is complex and that we must pause before casually adopting one term or another.

11. The discussion here follows that in Keith Jeffery, ‘British security policy in Ireland 1919-21’, in Peter Collins (ed.), *Unionism and Nationalism: Conflict in Ireland 1885-1921* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1994), 163-4. Peter Hart has (as always) interesting things to say on this topic in his *The I.R.A. at War, 1916-23* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62-4.

12. It has been observed that among northern Irish nationalists (at least) there has tended to be a ‘sneaking regard’ for the ‘physical force’ tradition of Irish republicanism (*Northern Ireland: Problems and Perspectives, Conflict Studies*, no. 135 (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1982), 6).

13. See, for example, the discussion in John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 97-105, of unionist arguments that the violence in Northern Ireland was not inherent in the province but primarily the result of nationalist irredentism.

14. For example: James Adams, Robin Morgan and Anthony Bambridge, *Ambush: The War between the SAS and the IRA* (London: Pan Books, 1988), and Martin Dillon, *The Dirty War* (London: Hutchinson, 1990).

15. As in Richard Bourke, *Peace in Ireland: The War of Ideas* (London: Pimlico, 2003).

16. Peter R. Neumann, *Britain’s Long War: British Strategy in the Northern Ireland Conflict* (London: Palgrave, 2003).

### THE PROBLEM OF A MILITARY STRATEGY

One reason why the term 'war' recurs so frequently is naturally because of the involvement in the situation of specifically military forces. If the army is deployed and once a 'military strategy' is adopted (which may not *necessarily* be the case) then it follows, so the argument might go, that the challenge approximates to war, or, at the very least, is 'warlike'. On the other hand, there are strong political reasons for any government to resist the introduction of military measures and to deny the existence of a 'state of war'. Reflecting on the Irish situation of 1919-21, the Australian contemporary historian Keith Hancock observed that if the British government admitted that the conflict was a 'war', it would bestow legitimacy upon the IRA and the republican cause, thus conceding an important political point.<sup>17</sup> Here already was a part of the 'battle for hearts and minds', the battle so effectively waged in a later British counter-insurgency campaign in Malaya under the leadership of Sir Gerald Templer, a general with an Irish family background.

Initially at least the use of the army in Ireland was as much a matter of convenience as of deliberate policy. In 1916, faced with an explicitly military challenge—'rebellion' it may have been, but it was also undoubtedly war, not only because of the wartime context and the widespread assumption that the Rising was German-inspired, but also because of the formal military tactics adopted by the rebels themselves, which were those of an orthodox military operation. Uniformed detachments of 'Irish Volunteers' seized and occupied a number of prominent public buildings in central Dublin. In a kind of parody of the Western Front, these positions were defended against frontal assault and artillery fire from the British forces. One veteran of the Boer War, who was fighting on the Irish side in the rebel headquarters at the General Post Office, complained about the static Irish strategy. It was, he said, 'a mad business. Shut in here with our leaders, and the flags over our heads to tell the enemy just where to find us when they want us. We should', he argued, 'have taken to the hills like the Boers, but we're here now and we'll just have to stick it'.<sup>18</sup>

But it was not just a matter of tactics. More important, perhaps, was the political dimension. The rebels regarded themselves (and *had* to regard themselves) as soldiers in a real army, fighting a real war, rather than the subversive criminal gunmen the government would have them be. One of the reasons the executions of the rebel leaders after the suppression of the Rising had such a striking impact on public opinion was the fact that the leaders were *not* treated as prisoners-of-war and locked up for the duration, but executed after summary trial in military courts under the wartime Defence of the Realm Acts. The political ramifications of the executions were well illustrated by a famous speech the

17. Keith Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. I, *Problems of Nationality, 1918-1936* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 119-24.

18. Quoted in Desmond Ryan, *The Rising* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1949), 142-3. Ryan himself was in the GPO in 1916.

nationalist MP John Dillon made in parliament on 11 May 1916. ‘It is not murderers’, he said, ‘who are being executed; it is insurgents who have fought a clean fight, a brave fight, however misguided, and it would have been a damned good thing for you if your soldiers were able to put up as good a fight as did those men in Dublin—three thousand men against twenty thousand with machine-guns and artillery.’<sup>19</sup>

There is an echo here of the British policy debate in the postwar period. At the end of April 1920 a revealing conversation took place in 10 Downing Street between the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, and (among others) Field Marshal Lord French, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and head of the Irish administration. Also present were Sir Hamar Greenwood, Chief Secretary for Ireland, and Andrew Bonar Law, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the Conservative Party (government coalition partners with Lloyd George’s Liberals). French was pressing for the adoption of an explicitly military strategy:

It was now a question either of making a truce with the rebels or taking measures of war against them ... [Sinn Féin] had grown in strength and could be ousted only by force. The rebels had the advantage of using *methods of war* [emphasis added] and these methods were denied to us. It would be more effective to put the struggle on a war basis, as had been done in the Boer War when the rebels were seized and put into concentration camps.

Greenwood identified ‘murder’ as ‘the spearhead of the rebellion and short of it were all shades of terrorism’. But he hesitated to go as far as French in ‘taking measures of war’, merely recommending some technical improvements for the troops: ‘measures ought to be taken to make the army more mobile so that it would be moved about quickly to the centres of attack. For this purpose more motor cars and armoured cars were essential’. Towards the end of the meeting Lloyd George said ‘that the disorder must be put down at whatever cost’, but when taxed by Lord French on this, it became apparent that there were political costs which neither he nor Bonar Law were prepared to incur:

Lord French: would you go so far as to declare war?

Mr. Bonar Law: That would be a confession of failure.

The Prime Minister: You do not declare war against rebels.<sup>20</sup>

Lloyd George in fact modified this position eight months later by which time, even though the Irish Command had been reinforced by troops and armoured cars, the tempo of republican violence in Ireland had steadily continued to increase. On ‘Bloody Sunday’, 21 November 1920, a dozen British officers were shot dead in Dublin in a well-organised co-ordinated series of attacks. A week later the Crown forces suffered their greatest casualties in a single operation when sixteen Black and Tans were killed in the Kilmichael ambush near Macroom in County Cork. Lloyd George thought that this engagement ‘seemed to

19. Quoted in F.S.L. Lyons, *John Dillon: A Biography* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 382.

20. ‘Note of conversation’, 30 April 1920 (United Kingdom National Archives (TNA), CAB 23/21/23/20A).

partake of a different character from the preceding operations'. While the others had been 'assassinations', he told the Cabinet, Kilmichael 'was a military operation and there was a good deal to be said for declaring a state of siege or promulgating martial law in that corner of Ireland'.<sup>21</sup> So it was that in December 1920 and January 1921 'Martial Law' was imposed on eight counties in the south and west of Ireland. The military authorities wanted it extended to the whole country, but, still anxious to avoid the complete semblance of war, the government hesitated before introducing such a conclusively 'military' security regime. This partial policy made no sense. 'Martial Law everywhere is an intelligible policy, or Martial Law nowhere', complained Sir Warren Fisher, head of the United Kingdom civil service.<sup>22</sup>

It was symptomatic of the British government strategy in Ireland between 1919 and 1921 that it remained fatally (literally so for a fair number of police and soldiers) confused between military and civil priorities. In the end, it was not robust enough significantly to counter the organised military threat presented by the IRA, and, on the other hand, it was insufficiently informed about the dynamics of Irish politics to exploit and encourage the undoubted constituency across the country for the just and impartial maintenance of law and order. The political costs of a draconian security policy, in Ireland, Great Britain and further afield (for example, the USA where the Irish-American lobby was a significant power in politics), were believed to be far too high to justify their use.

This was accepted even by some soldiers. After the end of the campaign in Ireland and the British withdrawal from what became known as the Irish Free State, Major A.E. Percival (who was later the General Officer Commanding in Singapore in 1941-42) canvassed the opinions of fellow veterans of Ireland for some Staff College lectures he was preparing on guerrilla war. One such colleague was Bernard Montgomery, who had served as a Brigade Major in Cork in 1921, and who told Percival that 'to win a war of that sort you must be ruthless; Oliver Cromwell, or the Germans, would have settled it in a very short time'. Although 'Monty' had reason enough to take a hard line regarding Ireland—he was himself from Protestant unionist Irish stock and a cousin, Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Montgomery, had been one of the officers killed on Bloody Sunday—even he recognised the political imperatives of the situation.

Nowadays public opinion precludes such methods; [he continued] the nation would never allow it, and the politicians would lose their jobs if they considered it. That being so I consider that Lloyd George was really right in what he did; if we had gone on we could probably have squashed the rebellion as a temporary measure, but it would have broken out again like an ulcer the moment we had removed the troops.<sup>23</sup>

21. Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, ed. Keith Middlemas, vol. III, *Ireland 1918-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 41.
22. Report by Sir Warren Fisher, 11 February 1921 (House of Lords Record Office, Lloyd George papers, F/17/1/9).
23. Montgomery to Maj. A.E. Percival, 14 October 1923 (Imperial War Museum (IWM), Percival papers file 4/1). For Hugh Montgomery and Bernard Montgomery in Ireland, see Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Making of a General, 1887-1942* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), 154-63.

The tensions between 'civil' and 'military' approaches to security policy in Ireland in 1919-21 were replicated half a century later in Northern Ireland.<sup>24</sup> After the local police, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, had manifestly failed to 'keep the peace' and the army were deployed on the streets of Northern Ireland, for several years the army took the leading role in the security effort. Some senior soldiers displayed striking confidence in the army's abilities to manage the situation. Sir Timothy Creasy, the GOC from 1977 to 1979, tended to be quite bullish in this regard. In December 1977 he asserted that the Provisional IRA was being 'suppressed, contained and isolated', and he resisted the extension of 'police primacy' on the grounds that at least in some parts of the province the army could control the situation more effectively than the police.<sup>25</sup> This predicted suppression, containment and isolation, it should be noted, was a full 20 years before the Provos' final (we hope) cease-fire. By contrast, Creasy's successor, Sir Richard Lawson, took a more restricted and low-key view of the army's functions and clearly appreciated that an over-aggressive military approach could actually worsen the security position.<sup>26</sup>

Nowhere was this more dramatically and destructively illustrated than in Derry on 20 January 1972, another 'Bloody Sunday', when British soldiers shot dead thirteen unarmed men during a mass demonstration which had been prohibited by the government. But the deployment for crowd control of a tough elite unit, the Paratroop Regiment, tragically demonstrated what could go wrong when a formation expert in the use of lethal force (as any front-line military unit ought to be) is placed in a situation when the exercise of those very skills can do monumental human and political damage, in this case resonating on over thirty years later.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most outstanding instance where the 'military' and the 'political' collided in Northern Ireland was that of 'special category status' in the Province's prisons. This issue was at the core of the hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981. In June 1972 'special category status' was introduced for any convicted prisoner 'claiming political motivation and sentenced to more than nine months' imprisonment'.<sup>28</sup> This 'political status' permitted prisoners to wear their own clothes, removed work requirements and to a limited extent allowed inmates to organise themselves within the prison. It allowed the Provisionals to claim that their men, their *soldiers*, 'inside the wire' were effectively 'prisoners of war'. But in 1976

24. The intelligence dimension of this problem, both in Ireland and in other British counter-insurgency campaigns, is discussed in Keith Jeffery, 'Intelligence and counter-insurgency operations: some reflections on the British experience', *Intelligence and National Security* 2:1 (January 1987), 118-49.

25. Sidney Elliott and W. D. Flackes, *Northern Ireland: A Political Directory, 1968-1999* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1999), 220; Desmond Hamill, *Pig in the Middle: The Army in Northern Ireland, 1969-84* (London: Methuen, 1985), 220-2.

26. Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 262-3.

27. An enquiry (the 'Widgery report' of 1972) was widely regarded as unsatisfactory. A new investigation was promised by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in January 1998 and the 'Bloody Sunday inquiry' presided over by Lord Saville opened in April 1998. By September 2006, with its cost approaching £200 million, it had not yet reported. See [www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk](http://www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk) (accessed 15 September 2006).

28. Laura K. Donohue, *Counter-Terrorist Law and Emergency Powers in the United Kingdom, 1922-2000* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001), 172.

the then Labour government announced that special category status would be phased out, and from 1978 republican prisoners in the Maze Prison 'H' blocks began a series of well-publicised protests which culminated in 1980-81 with two hunger strikes, during the second of which ten republican prisoners died. By this stage a Conservative government had come to power in the United Kingdom, and the campaign became characterised as a battle of wills between the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who was determined to 'criminalise' the actions of gunmen, and the Irish republican movement, which was resolved to retain the sense of political legitimacy implied by political status. The hunger strikes ended in a fudge, with neither side conceding very much, but, as Laura Donohue has observed, 'the publicity generated by the H-block Campaign served to jump-start Sinn Féin's entry into the political arena'.<sup>29</sup> It was following the 1981 by-election victories of first the hunger-striker Bobby Sands, and, after his death, Owen Carron (as a 'proxy political prisoner'), that the Sinn Féin publicist Danny Morrison famously articulated the 'twin-track' military-political strategy which emerged during the 1980s. 'Will anyone here object', he asked delegates at the party conference, 'if, with a ballot paper in this hand, and an Armalite in this hand, we take power in Ireland?'<sup>30</sup> The lesson to be learned from this, of course, is that if the challenge is both political and military so, too, should be the response.

### THE PROBLEM OF PARAMILITARY FORCES

The Irish case suggests that insurgencies tend to creep up on governments; they gather momentum as sporadic attacks develop into something more organised and, if counter-measures are not swiftly imposed, insurgent expertise improves. Because the challenge begins in a civilian environment, the first targets are the most accessible representatives of the state, which generally speaking are the police. In 1916 among the very first casualties were two members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP), an unarmed force, one guarding Dublin Castle, the other patrolling in St Stephen's Green. By one account, the latter was shot by Constance Markiewicz who reputedly cried in delight, 'I shot him! ... I shot him!'<sup>31</sup> Whether or not this is true (and corroboration is difficult to find), the fatal conjunction of an armed female rebel and an unarmed male police officer illustrates *non-military* aspects of a violent challenge and confirms how difficult it is to generalise about such situations.

The start of the Irish republican campaign of 1919-21 is generally dated to 21 January 1919, when two policemen guarding a consignment of quarry explosive were killed by Volunteers at Soloheadbeg, County Tipperary. Most of the early attacks were directed

29. Ibid., 175.

30. Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: Macmillan, 2003), 225.

31. Max Caulfield, *The Easter Rebellion: Dublin 1916* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart edn, 1995), 66.

against the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and their scattered barracks. To meet this challenge the Chief Secretary (the executive head of the Irish administration) had at his disposal 9000 policemen. Available for reinforcement was a military garrison of nearly 20,000. In May 1919 Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), told the Cabinet that the army estimated that ‘the Sinn Fein organisation controls some 100,000 well-organised, though indifferently armed, men’. It was therefore necessary, argued the Irish Command, ‘to contemplate no mere police measures, but active military operations of a serious nature’.<sup>32</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, this might well have been a wiser strategy than that adopted, but there was actually very little likelihood of the government adopting any overtly military measures.

Through 1919 the RIC provided the front line of the security forces. The Irish constabulary, however, was more of a militarised gendarmerie than a civil police service on the classic British model. Unlike the DMP, it was armed and organised along military lines. Although enlistment held up quite well during 1919, by the end of the year local recruitment could not keep up with demand and for the first time the force began to enlist non-Irishmen, many of whom were ex-servicemen. Owing to a shortage of police uniforms many of the early British recruits were kitted out in a mixture of the very dark bottle green RIC uniform and khaki army service dress, which is where the term ‘Black and Tans’ comes from, the name originally being applied to a pack of foxhounds in County Limerick. For the rest of the year and into 1920 the government policy did not extend much beyond toiling on with an essentially civilian strategy, based primarily in the police. With the intensification of violence, which was increasingly directed at the military, however, the army came more into the scene.

In the spring of 1920 there was a reassessment of Irish policy. General Sir Nevil Macready was appointed GOC with a brief to get the rapidly deteriorating situation under control. Just under a month after he had officially taken up his duties in Dublin, Macready came to London to present a blunt demand for immediate reinforcements, including eight battalions of infantry, over 600 wireless and technical personnel, a ‘large Intelligence Staff’ and 234 motor vehicles. Sir Henry Wilson was worried about the call for additional troops. On 10 May he told Winston Churchill (the Secretary for War) ‘that before I would agree to send over 8 Battns, ... I must have some knowledge what it was all for. These Battns were struggling through their recruits course of musketry & were in no sense disciplined. We had England to look after, & Egypt & Mesopotamia [Iraq] & India & Constantinople [Istanbul] to look after, & until I knew what Macready was at I would not agree.’<sup>33</sup>

32. Memo. by CIGS, 26 April 1919 (TNA, CAB. 24/78 G.T. 7182). For the wider military context, see Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

33. Wilson diary, 10 May 1920 (Imperial War Museum (IWM), Wilson papers, quotation from which are with permission of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum). For Wilson’s views generally on Ireland, see Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Next day, the Cabinet, who were glad to get some apparently decisive guidance, and, according to Wilson, were 'frankly frightened', 'agreed that all Macready's proposals must be acceded to'. But with regard to the additional infantry Macready wanted, Wilson raised the problem of a general shortage of troops. If reinforcements were sent to Ireland, he argued, this would leave Great Britain dangerously exposed at a time when labour unrest appeared to threaten revolutionary activity at home, and when there were also constant demands for troops in other parts of the empire. In the light of his Cassandra-like warnings, the Cabinet decided simply to hold the battalions Macready had requested 'in readiness', should they be required in an emergency.<sup>34</sup>

But Macready still wanted men, and in order to ease the manpower shortage in Ireland, Churchill proposed that a 'special force of 8,000 old soldiers be raised at once to reinforce the R.I.C.', a suggestion which bothered Wilson, who favoured a more purely military strategy against the wider nationalist and communist challenge he perceived was the case in Ireland. Macready, he wrote in his diary, 'in reality ... is fighting New York & Cairo & Calcutta & Moscow who are only using Ireland as a tool & lever against England, & nothing but determined shooting on our part is of any use'.<sup>35</sup> While Wilson's favoured strategy in Ireland of a firm and robust military campaign was politically unpalatable to the government, his concerns about this 'panic measure of raising 8000 scallywags'<sup>36</sup> were remarkably prescient:

I can't imagine what sort of officers and NCOs we can get. I can't imagine what sort the men will be, no-one will know anybody, no discipline, no esprit de corps, no cohesion, no training, no musketry, no mess, no NOTHING. I don't like the idea. ... Then to make matters worse Macready proposes to draft these mobs over to Ireland at once & split them up into lots of 25 to 50 men over the country so there would be no hope of forming & disciplining this crowd of unknown men. It is truly a desperate & hopeless expedient bound to fail.<sup>37</sup>

Wilson was quite right. The force recruited was the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Although it only reached a maximum strength of 1500 men (in addition to 14,000 regular policemen) in mid-1921,<sup>38</sup> the Auxiliaries' robust and ill-disciplined tactics were powerfully to contribute to the progressive poisoning of Anglo-Irish relations, and the almost complete alienation of nationalist Ireland from the Dublin Castle administration. Even Lloyd George, who had hoped that the police could sort out the Irish bother 'on the sly' (as it were) came to worry about the corrosive impact caused by Black and Tan and Auxiliary excesses. 'There is no doubt', he wrote in February 1921, 'that indiscipline,

34. Wilson diary, 11 May 1920; Cabinet meeting, 11 May 1920 (TNA, CAB 23/21/29(20) appendix A).

35. Wilson diary (IWM, Wilson papers), 11 May 1920.

36. Ibid., 13 May 1920.

37. Ibid., 12 May 1920.

38. Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland*, appendix iii, 211-12, provides detailed figures for the police forces during 1920-21.

looting and drunkenness in the Royal Irish Constabulary is alienating great numbers of well disposed people in Ireland and throwing them into the arms of Sinn Fein'.<sup>39</sup> The Prime Minister was perfectly correct, but to the end he resisted calls (for example from Sir Henry Wilson) to adopt a more completely military strategy in Ireland.

Wilson carried his well-founded concerns about employing lightly disciplined bands of armed men in paramilitary formations to the new 'statelet' of Northern Ireland, created after the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. After he had retired as CIGS, Wilson became an MP and was enlisted as 'chief security adviser' to the Northern Ireland government. In a process described accurately by one critical historian as 'arming the Protestants',<sup>40</sup> the new Northern government reinforced the full-time police with an armed 'Special Constabulary', which was substantially based on elements of the pre-war UVF. At best it was perhaps a way of harnessing and controlling Protestant paramilitary violence; at worst it merely legitimised sectarian vigilantism. In March 1922 Wilson advised that the Special Constabulary should be expanded, but counselled that it should not be an exclusively Protestant body. The police should comprise citizens 'irrespective of class or creed', and 'encouragement should be given to Catholics to join equally with the other religions'. With the unhappy example of the Black and Tans no doubt in his mind, Wilson thought that firm military discipline should be maintained and recommended that a senior army officer should be appointed as military adviser to the government and to command all the police in the province.<sup>41</sup>

This advice was unwelcome and was never followed. After Wilson was assassinated in June 1922 the Northern Ireland government thereafter took their own counsel in matters of security. The Special Constabulary survived as the notorious and almost wholly-Protestant 'B' Specials who were to play a significant role in the escalation of sectarian communal violence in 1968 and 1969. This was so much so that one of the first reforms insisted upon by the British government in 1969 was its abolition. This followed the recommendations of a committee under Lord Hunt (who as John Hunt had conquered Everest in 1953) appointed to review policing arrangements in Northern Ireland. Hunt's report noted that the police in Northern Ireland were unique in the United Kingdom in that they were a military-style body (like their predecessor the RIC) which both provided conventional police duties as well as defending the state from perceived internal and external enemies. Hunt aimed to remodel the force along conventional British police lines. He proposed that it should be an unarmed body and wanted to relieve it of 'those tasks of a para-military nature which it had shouldered since its inception'. Hunt specifically argued that 'all threats

39. Lloyd George to Sir Hamar Greenwood (Chief Secretary for Ireland), 25 February 1921 (House of Lords Record Office, Lloyd George papers, F/19/3/4).

40. Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: The Formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920-27* (Dingle: Brandon Books, 1983).

41. Secret minutes of a conference at Ministry of Home Affairs, 17 March 1922 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, HA/20/A/1/8).

to the security of Northern Ireland from armed incursions and attacks, from whatever quarter and whatever form they may take, are a proper military responsibility and should rest with the Government at Westminster'. He also proposed replacing the Ulster Special Constabulary with a new part-time force under army command.<sup>42</sup>

The replacement for the 'Specials' was the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) a locally-recruited unit of the British army, liable only for service in Northern Ireland which came into existence on April Fool's Day 1970. In a sense, it was Henry Wilson's local auxiliary force under military discipline, but 50 years too late. In the early 1980s one senior serving army officer mordantly complained that the UDR had been 'foisted on the army for political reasons', that the army was not very happy about them, and that their only real benefit was that they provided a 'reassurance factor' for Protestants.<sup>43</sup> The UDR, in fact, were soon tarred with the same brush as the 'B' Specials. Despite attracting a fair percentage (up to 18 per cent) of Catholic recruits at the start, by the early 1980s, through intimidation and attrition the regiment had become some 97 per cent Protestant. It also had problems of ill-discipline and suffered some high-profile instances of collusion with Protestant paramilitaries.<sup>44</sup> In 1992 the UDR was amalgamated with the regular army Royal Irish Rangers in a new formation named the Royal Irish Regiment, which had one regular general service battalion and five part-time home service battalions. For some the change was no more than cosmetic, and as the security situation improved in Northern Ireland the home service element of the regiment has progressively been run down.

The troubled history of auxiliary security formations in Northern Ireland—USC, UDR and RIR (not to mention the reserve units for the RUC)—illustrates the complexities of enlisting local people into the security effort. This was clearly desirable on a number of levels. It enabled locals to take a share in the maintenance of law and order; it exploited local knowledge; it ideally sent a message to the IRA which could challenge its conception of a 'war of national liberation'; by boosting the local component of the security forces it reduced the number of 'mainland' personnel involved; and, not the least important, it was cheaper than depending on regular full-time forces. But the risks of paramilitarism and, in a deeply divided community, sectarianism were great, and were not always avoided in Northern Ireland.

The same difficulty has applied to the RUC and its Reserve. Hunt's hope for an unarmed, British-style police force did not long survive the realities of intense communal violence in 1970s Northern Ireland and the RUC, rearmed and developed into rather an effective and efficient force. But tainted by its association with the *ancien régime*, affected by

42. Report of the Advisory Committee on Police in Northern Ireland Cmd. 535 (Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969).

43. Interview, 26 August 1981.

44. Chris Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment: An Instrument of Peace?* (London: Methuen, 1991; and London: Mandarin Books, rev. edn, 1992) provides a serviceable account.

a continuing quasi-military culture and accused of partiality to the loyalist side, as part of the 'peace settlement' it transmogrified into PSNI, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, with which once more it is hoped to establish the ideal of the unarmed British 'Bobby'. This, ironically, is precisely at the moment when, in response to the terrorist challenge, British police forces, especially the Metropolitan Police, are themselves increasingly assuming paramilitary characteristics.

The problem of paramilitarism, or paramilitary forces, is endemic in any counter-insurgency campaign, where the establishment of flexible, mobile, for the most part lightly-armed and local forces has considerable attractions for an administration or military command facing an insurgent challenge embodying many of the same characteristics. But there is a real risk, as illustrated in Ireland, that the very forces thought to be best designed to counter the insurgent challenge, can themselves actually contribute to the problem they were created to solve. The lesson to be learned here is that these *can* be useful but they should not just casually be created, as it were on a whim, or a wing and a prayer. Borrowing the words of the old Anglican marriage service, it should not 'be enterprised ... unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly',<sup>45</sup> but 'discreetly, advisedly [and] soberly'.

### THE PROBLEM OF EXISTING EXPERIENCE

For most of the century the twentieth century British army had no specific, coherent doctrine for what has become known as counter-insurgency. Only really in the last quarter of the century, and primarily (though not, I think, entirely) as a result of the Northern Ireland experience, has the army developed such a body of doctrine. By and large British practice tended to be unremittingly pragmatic, and it drew on a very substantial amount of experience.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the rather ad hoc British approach towards fighting colonial insurgencies reflected the very length and diversity of that experience. Two Irish officers, however, Charles Callwell and Charles Gwynn, wrote books addressing the problem of 'colonial warfare'. Both had a measure of official sanction, and together they provided the basis for such doctrine as the British army possessed in this area in the years before the Second World War.

Callwell's volume, *Small Wars*, was first published in 1896 by Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the General Staff, and went through a further three editions between then and 1914. The Chief of the General Staff recommended the book to officers 'as a valuable contribution on the subject of the conduct of small wars', although he warned that the volume should not be treated 'as an expression of official opinion'.<sup>47</sup> Callwell's book is

45. Here the 1662 liturgy continues: 'to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding', which is perhaps not necessarily appropriate in this case.

46. The discussion here follows that in Keith Jeffery, 'Colonial warfare', in Colin McInnes and G.D. Sheffield (eds), *Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Theory and Practice* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 31-7.

47. C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: HMSO, 3rd edn, 1906), 4.

primarily a manual of tactics and good advice and draws principally on Britain's nineteenth-century experience. Callwell divided small wars into three main categories: 'campaigns of conquest or annexation, campaigns for the suppression of insurrections or lawlessness or for the settlement of conquered or annexed territory, and campaigns undertaken to avenge a wrong, or to overthrow a dangerous enemy'.<sup>48</sup> Whatever the type of war, Callwell stressed the importance of commencing with an absolutely clear objective. In the case of an expedition 'to put down revolt', he observed that this should be mounted not 'merely to bring about a temporary cessation of hostility'. Its purpose 'is to ensure a lasting peace. Therefore, in choosing the objective, the overawing and not the exasperation of the enemy' was 'the end to keep in view'.<sup>49</sup> In pacification operations, 'the enemy must be chastised up to a point but should not be driven to desperation ... Wholesale destruction of the property of the enemy may sometimes do more harm than good.' Although Callwell ostentatiously excluded any political consideration from his study, these observations clearly follow from an understanding that the matter under discussion is not purely military.

Charles Gwynn was equally chary of discussing political matters. His book *Imperial Policing* was first published in 1934. He had been Commandant of the Staff College from 1926 to 1934 and, finding that there was no satisfactory publication on this subject 'of increasing importance',<sup>50</sup> devoted his time in retirement to writing the book, which was quickly adopted as a standard Staff College text. Gwynn, who had been born in County Donegal, was a grandson of the Irish nationalist leader William Smith O'Brien, who had been transported to Tasmania for his leading part in the 'Young Ireland' rebellion of 1848. Although Gwynn was sufficiently proud of his descent from O'Brien that he included it in his *Who's Who* entry, it no doubt also made him more than usually sensitive to the political ramifications of the Anglo-Irish relationship. Thus in *Imperial Policing* he 'thought it inadvisable to draw on experiences in Ireland, instructive from a military point of view as many of them are'.<sup>51</sup>

Gwynn concentrated on a number of more-or-less contemporary case-studies, including Amritsar in India and Egypt in 1919, the Moplah (Mappilla) rebellion (also in India, in 1921), Palestine (1929 and, in the second edition, 1936 as well) and the Burma Rebellion of 1930-32. From these he extracted four general principles of imperial policing. The first was 'that questions of policy remain vested in the civil Government', a broad principle which confirmed the traditional British constitutional position whereby the civil power is ultimately supreme. The second principle was 'that the amount of military force employed must be the minimum the situation demands'.<sup>52</sup> Here the 'policing' dimension of 'imperial policing' was to the fore, and the formulation reflected the situation as it obtained in

48. Ibid., 25.

49. Ibid., 147, 149.

50. Charles W. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn, 1939), 1.

51. Ibid., 8.

52. Ibid., 13-14.

the British domestic environment, both for police action and in the context of ‘Military Aid to the Civil Power’.<sup>53</sup> Associated with the use of minimum force was Gwynn’s third principle, ‘that of firm and timely action’, which was somewhat of a platitude, more easily assessed *after* the event than before. The final principle was ‘co-operation’, indicating that the army should work closely with the machinery and forces of the civil power.<sup>54</sup> Of all Gwynn’s principles the last was the one most grievously unfulfilled in Ireland where the division of responsibilities between the civil administration, the police and the military command was never properly sorted out.

A few years after Gwynn’s *Imperial Policing* a study of British ‘sub-war’ was published which did take Ireland into account. This was Colonel H.J. Simson’s *British Rule and Rebellion*, published in 1937. ‘Since 1918’, he wrote, ‘sub-wars have been rather common in territories under British rule. Perhaps the best example of all, and the one most skilfully managed by the other side, was the Sinn Fein campaign in Ireland in 1920-21’. Simson identified two main lessons from the British experience. The first was ‘the need to deal promptly with resort to force in the interests of peace and of the submission of disputes to judgment’. ‘It is better to win first and then give, as we did in South Africa, than do as we did in Ireland in 1921 and are doing now in Palestine’. The second lesson was the now familiar one of the need for co-ordination, especially between the military and the civil power.<sup>55</sup>

Callwell, Gwynn and Simson sought to apply specific military ‘lessons learned’ from recent British experience of various imperial and colonial conflicts. A further problem is that of ‘learning from history’ in a more generalised way. In the first place is the natural tendency for military and political decision-makers to plan for the next war on the basis of the last one. This, of course, does not always work, as the French found out in 1940. In early twentieth-century Ireland ‘history’ taught that Irish rebellions—1803, 1848, 1867, and even if comparatively large-scale as in 1798—always failed. Rarely did Irish revolutionaries muster any wide popular support and their movements were riddled with informants so the government in any case knew what was going on. 1916 seemed to confirm this pattern, though the government’s prior intelligence about the Rising was patchy and ill-co-ordinated.<sup>56</sup> The Rising was not at all popular, the military defeat of the rebels was comprehensive and the republican challenge appeared once again to have been expunged. But the Irish separatist snake was only scotch’d, not killed, and the very

53. This is discussed in Keith Jeffery, ‘Military aid to the civil power in the United Kingdom: an historical perspective’, in Peter J. Rowe and Christopher J. Whelan (eds), *Military Intervention in Democratic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 51-67.

54. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 15.

55. H.J. Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1937), 37, 331, 119.

56. For a critical survey, see Eunan O’Halpin, ‘British intelligence in Ireland, 1914-1921’, in Christopher Andrew and David Dilks (eds), *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 54-77.

rigour of the Rising's suppression stimulated growing support for the Sinn Féin extremist wing of Irish nationalism, which was strikingly demonstrated by the return in the 1918 UK general election of 73 Sinn Féin members out of 105 Irish MPs.

Yet, even in 1919, Ireland was not at 'war'. While there were sporadic attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary, the first military casualties did not occur until Sunday 7 September when a group of soldiers, carrying rifles (but with no ammunition), was ambushed as they were about to enter the Methodist Church at Fermoy, County Cork. One soldier was killed and four were wounded.<sup>57</sup> At the inquest the following day the Coroner described the attack as 'an act of actual warfare' and the jury refused to return a verdict of wilful murder, finding 'that the deceased man died from a bullet wound caused by some person unknown'. Resulting from this, and setting a dismal pattern for the future, was a carefully co-ordinated series of reprisal attacks by the troops, wrecking 'every shop or place of business of the coroner and the members of the jury'.<sup>58</sup> So, from the first 'military' attack of the 1919-21 period, clearly non-military factors were at work as well. Far from there being a 'war', moreover, commentators could argue that since violence was in any case endemic in Ireland, what was happening in 1919 was just one of those periodic bursts of generalised Irish violence—'outrages' they were called—which had advanced *and receded* at intervals in the nineteenth century. But, as we have seen, 'history' in this instance was wrong, and Ireland progressively moved into something recognisably close to 'war' in 1920-21.

When the army were first deployed on active 'peacekeeping' duties in Northern Ireland in 1969, there is not much indication that any thought was given to the historical context, or the lessons which might be gleaned from previous experience in Ireland. As is also often the case in such circumstances, even if some thought and planning had been given to the insertion of troops into the given situation, no thought whatsoever had been given to their extrication. The absence of any considered exit strategy may partly be explained by the fact that, at least for public consumption, the deployment of soldiers is generally described as only being a very temporary, short-term operation. Northern Ireland was no exception to this. The official statement accompanying the deployment of troops in Belfast and Derry declared that 'the General-Officer-Commanding Northern Ireland has been instructed to take all necessary steps ... to restore law and order. Troops will be withdrawn as soon as this is accomplished. This is a limited operation.'<sup>59</sup>

57. The battalion commander's memoir of service in Ireland 1919-22, including the Fermoy incident, is reprinted in William Sheehan (ed.), *British Voices from the Irish War of Independence 1918-1921* (Cork: Collins Press, 2005), 193-206 (ch. 12 'Lieutenant Colonel Hughes Hallett').
58. *Ibid.*, 195; W. Alison Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland, 1906-1923* (London: Longmans, Green, 1923), 168-9.
59. James Callaghan, *A House Divided: The Dilemma of Northern Ireland* (London: Collins, 1973), 43-4. It might be observed that in the autumn of 2006 the return of the Northern Ireland garrison to 'normal' (pre-1969) levels has not yet been achieved.

What the army did bring to Northern Ireland was some colonial warfare experience. There is the perhaps apocryphal story of the army unit hurriedly sent to Belfast in the early days and told to bring the 'riot kit' packed in wooden crates. When they got to the streets, with mayhem all around, the boxes were opened and were found to contain banners saying 'Stop rioting or we will open fire' in three languages: English, Greek and Turkish. The unit, it appeared, were not long back from Cyprus. Much could have been learned from Charles Townshend's Oxford PhD thesis, which he completed in 1973. It seems, however, that the British government in those days was less inclined to inform military action on a PhD thesis than it has been more recently. When Townshend's thesis was published as a book in 1975, its relevance was noted by at least one reviewer. There are, wrote Robert Fisk (then a journalist working in Northern Ireland), 'some terrible similarities to the Irish war which still continues around Belfast'.<sup>60</sup> But these were more apparent to Fisk than the government as a whole, for many of the salutary lessons identified by Townshend had to be learned again through repeated painful and costly experience.

The possession of a coherent counter-insurgency doctrine has both advantages and disadvantages. No-one would deny the good sense in trying to learn from experience and develop sound general principles upon which to base specific policy-decisions. At Sandhurst in the early 1990s 'six principles of British COIN' were taught, as follows:

1. Recognition of the political nature of the problem
2. Necessity for civilian 'supremacy' in command and control
3. Importance of information and intelligence
4. Need to split insurgents from the people at large
5. Destroy the isolated insurgents
6. Necessity for political reform to prevent recurrence<sup>61</sup>

But even such evidently sane and sensible principles may not necessarily fit all circumstances. The danger of laying down what can become prescriptive rules is that they might end up being rigid and restrictive, potentially impeding a flexible and dynamic response to a particular challenge. *No* counter-insurgency situation is *exactly* like any other, even in Ireland (perhaps *especially* in Ireland), and any list of 'rules' perhaps needs to follow the pattern established by George Orwell in his absolutely indispensable essay, 'Politics and the English language' (1946), which is required reading for any serious student of any discipline which involves writing English. Orwell concluded his essay with five useful general rules, devised, as he put it, to 'cover most cases'. But there is a sixth rule, which, appropriately modified, should be added to any such list, and it is: 'Break any of these rules sooner than say [or do] anything outright barbarous'.<sup>62</sup>

60. *The Times*, 19 February 1976.

61. John Pimlott, 'Low intensity warfare: the British tradition' (paper delivered at RMA Sandhurst Department of War Studies Conference 'Low Intensity Conflict in the 1990s', 14-16 July 1993).

62. George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 4, *In Front of Your Nose, 1945-50* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 169.

### A FINAL PROBLEM: THAT OF 'NORMALISATION'

The experience of living through the 'Northern Ireland Troubles' confirms that there is a real problem when political violence—it might be insurgency or not—continues over a fairly long period of time with the result that individuals and societies begin to accommodate and tolerate it: the situation becomes 'normalised'. In the early days of the Troubles the Conservative Home Secretary Reginald Maudling made a celebrated (and for some notorious) observation that he could envisage a future situation in which the IRA would not be 'totally eliminated', but when their activities would be reduced to 'an acceptable level'.<sup>63</sup> Misquoted since as 'an acceptable level of violence',<sup>64</sup> the statement was regarded at the time as outrageously callous and cynical. Jonathan Bardon, however, has observed that it 'seemed more realistic to many with the passing of every violent year'.<sup>65</sup> What is thought to be an 'acceptable level of violence' is, of course, not by any means a constant. It will affect different participants in different ways and with differing intensity. What was, or had become, tolerable in Belfast might have been quite unacceptable in London. This was certainly the thinking behind the Provisionals' strategy in the 1990s of 'spectacular' bomb attacks in Britain, especially in the City of London.<sup>66</sup>

The risk of normalisation is reinforced by the fact that the costs of responding to insurgency and other violent challenges tend to mount up gradually and the cumulative political, economic, social, military, even ethical, impact only becomes apparent over time. In Northern Ireland, too, there was a point in the 1980s when the 'security situation' was more or less 'under control'. Most of the violence was confined to Northern Ireland itself, the great majority of the fatalities were suffered by Irish people and it seemed as if the IRA campaign could be met *ad infinitum*. It could even be argued, albeit by cynics, that some participants might even have had a vested interest in the continuance of the Troubles. Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groups could never aspire to the kind of social position and community power they achieved while the Troubles continued if 'peace' broke out and democratic politics became the norm. Mainstream politicians, whose positions in the majority of cases were defined negatively, by opposition to other parties, were saved the difficult task (as abundantly illustrated by the tortuous recent history of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive) of addressing themselves to real democratic politics, which might be defined as the essentially consensual 'art of the possible'. Even in the early 1980s, there were army officers prepared to assert that the army could now maintain its commitment in Northern Ireland indefinitely, and, indeed, a tour of duty in

63. *The Times*, 16 December 1971.

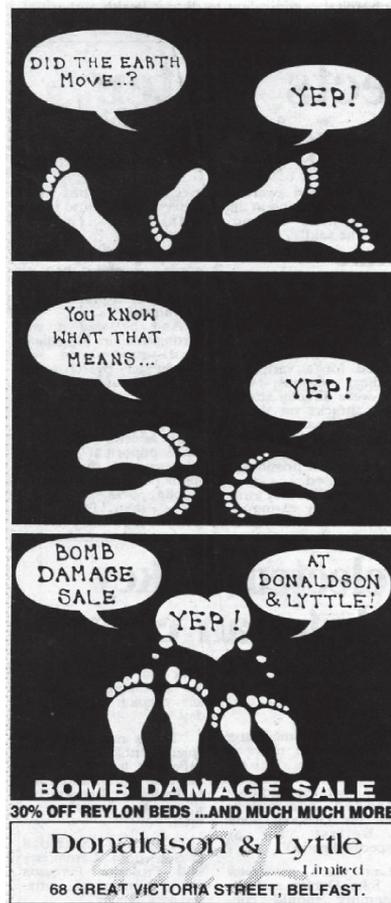
64. For example in Elliott and Flackes, *Northern Ireland*, 346. One source quotes him as saying 'that he could foresee a situation in which the IRA would "not be defeated, not completely eliminated, but have their violence reduced to an acceptable level"' (Sunday Times Insight Team, *Ulster* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 309).

65. Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), 679.

66. See the remarks in Richard English's excellent *Armed Struggle*, 278-9.

the province was terrifically good training and generally desirable for sharpening military skills. Other groups—academics, journalists, lawyers, people employed in the burgeoning ‘security industry’—have all made a living off the Troubles, and while it would be going too far to say that they would have wanted the violence to continue, in any attempt to resolve the conflict, it needed to be recognised that the dividends of peace might not universally apply to everyone.

People tolerate and accommodate events in different ways, and there may even be advantages to be gained from a terror bombing campaign against economic targets, as a furniture shop advertisement in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 9 June 1993 illustrates:



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# The Irish Experience of Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency Since 1919

*Eunan O’Halpin*

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In considering the possible historical lessons to be drawn from the twentieth-century Irish experience—both as rebels and as an independent sovereign state—we need to be realistic about the limitations as well as the utility of such an approach for the purposes of military science. On the other hand, no one could embark on any comparative studies if they were overly intimidated by the particularities of locality, culture, political context and so on.

Broadly speaking, my argument is a simple one: in a formal sense, that is to say as reflected in doctrine and policy, neither the new Irish security forces nor the British military drew great lessons from the Irish troubles of 1919 to 1923. The story of the Irish state’s countering of intermittent political violence since its foundation is largely one of the carefully calibrated use of emergency powers of arrest, detention and trial or more frequently (until 1962) internment, rather than of the incorporation into doctrine and training by the Irish army, as poachers turned game keepers, of lessons learned during the struggle against British rule from 1919 to 1921 (I agree with Keith Jeffery’s conclusion that the scale of political violence in parts of Ireland from mid-1920 to July 1921 justifies the use of the term ‘insurgency’). British military analysis of their Irish experience during the last years of British rule was also limited, and its influence on doctrine and planning for dealing with unrest elsewhere in the empire, and for the use of irregular warfare during the Second World War, was small. This may all seem a little odd, but I will attempt to explain why by drawing on both Irish and British sources.

## **AN IRISH MAO? THE MYTH OF MICHAEL COLLINS AS GUERRILLA LEADER**

In January 1967 Professor M.R.D. Foot, the eminent official historian of SOE in France and a distinguished veteran of the Second World War, presented a celebrated lecture to the Military History Society of Ireland in Dublin on ‘The IRA and the origins of Special Operations Executive (SOE) in France’. In due course this became the basis of a

The research upon which this paper is based was partly funded by the Trinity College Dublin Arts Benefactions Fund and the Institute for International Integration Studies.

published essay.<sup>1</sup> The core of Professor Foot's argument was that the British officers most closely associated with the development of irregular warfare doctrine immediately before and during the Second World War, particularly J.C.F. Holland and Colin Gubbins, had been profoundly influenced by their Irish experience, and that Gubbins as the military mainspring of the SOE established in July 1940 to promote irregular warfare and subversion in Nazi-occupied Europe drew largely on his observation of Irish rebel tactics in 1919-21. Professor Foot also attributed the eventual success of the Irish insurgent campaign in making Ireland ungovernably by Britain particularly to one man, Michael Collins.

Amongst Foot's audience was the British ambassador, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, himself something of an expert in irregular warfare, subversion and internal strife: he had served with SOE's Force 136 in Thailand in 1944-45, and as ambassador in Djakarta during the turbulent years of the mid-1960s had had on one occasion to join his military attaché in mounting an armed guard inside the chancellery building while an Indonesian mob attempted to break in, before eventually seeing 'our worst enemies killed or put in gaol or deprived of power' after the toppling of Sukarno in 1965.<sup>2</sup> Gilchrist thought the lecture brilliant. So too did Gilchrist's closest Irish friends, Colonel David Neligan and Major General Sean Collins-Powell, respectively Collins' self-styled 'spy in the Castle' between 1920 and 1921, and Collins' nephew. In a dispatch to London, Gilchrist bemoaned the absence of a single politician from the ruling Fianna Fáil party at the lecture.<sup>3</sup> But perhaps the Fianna Fáilers were right to doubt the weight of the speaker's argument, because a survey of interwar British military thought yields very few references to the intelligence, counter-insurgency or irregular warfare lessons of the Irish campaign of 1919-21, and almost none to Michael Collins as its supposed mainspring.

Foot's was one of the most elegant of many essays and one controversial film—Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* (1996)—which oversimplified the conduct and nature of the Irish War of Independence, exaggerated the role played in it by the iconic Michael Collins, overstated the effectiveness of Irish tactics, dwelt admiringly on the sophistication of Irish intelligence (which on analysis was usually equated with targeted assassination) and the impact of individual operations such as the assassination of alleged British agents in Dublin on 'Bloody Sunday' in 1920, and argued that Ireland provided a blueprint for successful insurgencies elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> These claims require careful consideration.

1. M.R.D. Foot, 'Michael Collins and irregular warfare', in M.R.D. Foot (ed.), *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western, 1928-1971* (London: Paul Elek, 1973), 57-69. Other examples of such oversimplifications include Tom Bowden, *The Breakdown of Public Security: The Case of Ireland, 1916-1921 and Palestine, 1936-1939* (London: Penguin, 1978), and Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1990).
2. Gilchrist to ? [possibly Sir Denis Greenhill of the Foreign Office], 6 May 1966, Churchill College Cambridge Archives (CCCA), Gilchrist papers, GILC 14B
3. Draft of Gilchrist to Foreign Office, 30 January 1969, CCCA, Gilchrist papers, GILC 962/14A.
4. For up to date reviews of conflicting interpretations of the nature and significance of 'Bloody Sunday' and for admirable explorations of what happened that day, see Anne Dolan, 'Killing and Bloody Sunday, 1920', *The Historical Journal* 49:3(2006), 789-810, and 'The IRA, intelligence, and Bloody Sunday', in Eunan O'Halpin, Jane Ohlmeyer and Robert Armstrong (eds), *Intelligence, statecraft and international power* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 119-31.

Michael Collins was a man of extraordinary and varied talents, but he was not the military leader of the Irish independence movement, being director of intelligence and minister for finance from 1919 to the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty in December 1921. He was not the author of the field tactics employed between 1919 and 1921, although he was a particular advocate of assassination of key targets such as political detectives, and in the nature of things neither he nor the IRA headquarters staff had much direct control over what the organisation did in the field.<sup>5</sup> While the general principles of how to conduct guerrilla warfare were laid down in the IRA publication *An t-Óglach* and in circulars, everything depended on local drive and initiative and on local circumstances. The first killings of the Anglo-Irish war, the shooting in murky circumstances of two armed RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) constables escorting a consignment of explosives to a quarry at Soloheadbeg outside Tipperary town, took place on 21 January 1919.<sup>6</sup> By coincidence, this was also the date on which Sinn Féiners elected in the December 1918 election—the party had won 73 of the 105 Irish Westminster seats on an abstentionist ticket—met in Dublin to proclaim an independent Irish parliament, *Dáil Éireann*, and to elect an independent government. It is clear that the killings of two inoffensive policemen, one a widower with six children, were a shock even to Sinn Féin supporters. Even as armed incidents increased during 1919, there was a struggle to assert political control of the IRA which was only partly settled in 1920 when the Dáil accepted responsibility for its actions, and IRA volunteers were instructed to take an oath of allegiance to the Dáil.<sup>7</sup>

The Irish War of Independence was one of relatively limited and sporadic violence, concentrated in Dublin city and in the southern counties: my research project *The Dead of the Irish Revolution*, which attempts to determine who died where, when and why during the 1916-23 period, indicates that between January 1919 and July 1921 there were just over two thousand deaths—British military and police, IRA, and civilian—attributable to political violence. In half of the 32 counties of Ireland there were 20 deaths or fewer, while in five there were ten deaths or fewer. By far the most violent places were Cork city and county (478), and Dublin city (261, a provisional figure which will rise once research is completed). These were followed by Tipperary (151), Kerry (135) and Limerick (114). The death total in no other Irish county reached 100. In the six north-eastern counties which became Northern Ireland after partition in 1920, violence was very limited and the number of deaths correspondingly small—less than

5. Peter Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins* (London: Macmillan, 2005), 241-3.
6. On the Soloheadbeg killings, see the problematic accounts in Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1924), and Desmond Ryan, *Sean Treacy and the Third Tipperary Brigade* (Tralee: Kerryman, 1945). The IRA's Third Tipperary Brigade headquarters at the time was the home and premises in Church Street, Tipperary, of my great grandfather P.J. Moloney, elected as a Sinn Féin TD in 1918. Statements of Sean Fitzpatrick and Senator Bill Quirke to pensions advisory committee, 7 April 1936, in James Moloney's Military Service Pensions Act file, in my possession. P.J. Moloney's premises was burned to the ground by masked police in 1920, and his son Paddy was killed in an engagement with British forces outside Tipperary town on 1 May 1921.
7. Eunan O'Halpin, 'The Army and the Dáil: civil-military relations within the independence movement', in Brian Farrell (ed.), *The Making of the Dáil* (Dublin, Blackwater Press, 1994), 107-21.

100 in all—up to the Anglo-Irish truce of July 1921 (in 1922 over 200 people died in Northern Ireland, the majority of them Belfast Catholics, in sectarian violence where the exclusively Unionist local security forces, themselves the main targets of IRA violence, were heavily involved in retaliatory and preemptive attacks on Nationalist areas).<sup>8</sup> Studies by Peter Hart, Marie Coleman, John Borgonovo, Fearghal McGarry and other scholars using recently released records, and classic analyses of aspects of the War of Independence such as those of David Fitzpatrick and Charles Townshend, underscore the variable distribution and intensity of anti-state violence during the War of Independence.<sup>9</sup> IRA tactics did show considerable development as compared with the 1916 rebellion: between January 1919 and July 1921, the IRA used almost exclusively guerrilla tactics, fighting at times and places of its choosing, concentrating on destroying the link between the RIC and the civilian population, and generally avoiding large scale confrontations for which IRA units had neither the manpower nor the weapons nor the means of safe disengagement. After the establishment of Northern Ireland and the creation of its own local security forces, the IRA also engaged in cross-border raids which were unavoidably sectarian in character, which begot reprisals against Northern Nationalist, and which solidified Northern Unionist opposition to any kind of long-term accommodation with the rest of Ireland.

Whereas the 1916 rebellion had been planned and mounted on a quasi-conventional military basis, the IRA campaign during the War of Independence saw the adoption of hit-and-run tactics and of assassination as tools of warfare.<sup>10</sup> Detectives with specialist knowledge of the separatist movement were particular targets, especially in Dublin city, but the shooting of alleged spies and informers also became a widespread though unevenly distributed practice. British forces also sometimes murdered people and left notices claiming that these were IRA killings, a practice alluded to in an IRA headquarters circular of April 1921.<sup>11</sup> Of the 21 killings by the IRA recorded in the relatively quiet county of Monaghan between 1919 and 1921, the majority were of civilians or of alleged informers, i.e. people who were neither British military or police. It is clear that the IRA shot civilians on the grounds that these had supposedly given information whereas in fact

8. 'The Dead of the Irish Revolution' is a three-year project (2003-6) financed by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The lead researcher is Dr Daithí Ó Corráin. For a trenchant defence of the use of local part-time security forces in Northern Ireland, see Arthur Hezlet, *The 'B Specials': A History of the Ulster Special Constabulary* (London: Tom Stacey, 1972).
9. John Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers and the "Anti-Sinn Féin Society": The Intelligence War in Cork City, 1919-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006); Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish Revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2002); David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1977); Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy, A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
10. For a recent authoritative discussion of the 1916 rebellion, see Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin, 2005).
11. IRA HQ 'General Orders No. 20 Spies', 20 April 1921, TB papers, in my possession (the family who own these papers asked that anonymity be preserved).

the reason was that they supported a rival political nationalist organisation.<sup>12</sup> The most notorious killing of an alleged informer, however, was that of a destitute semi-literate distiller of the illegal spirit *poitin*, Kate Carroll. This woman sent demented letters 'again & again to RIC Scotstown about where IRA had arms dumps and where the boys stopped at night'. The IRA learnt of this through a Post Office contact, and the matter was reported to the Brigade Commandant in whose power lay the decision whether or not to kill 'an alleged spy'. Two men were 'sent to warn her to stop at once or serious notice would have to be taken of it. She denied all knowledge but proof was forthcoming next day when another [letter] describing the man who had given her the warning'. The account simply ends 'etc.' because its author, who as battalion intelligence officer had uncovered the letters, could not bring himself to record that she had then been abducted and shot.<sup>13</sup> This ghastly killing of an insignificant woman known to be unbalanced, while it lay on some consciences for decades, complied with the IRA's rules for the handling of informers: the case had been reported up the line, and orders for action had been given. It reflected one significant development in tactics as compared with the 1916 rebellion and, notably, such increased ruthlessness found an echo in the conduct of British forces. John Borgonovo's disturbing account of civilian killings in Cork city bears this out very clearly. Not only was the city centre torched by masked police—some Auxiliaries (as the auxiliary police cadets, a temporary gendarmerie recruited from ex-British army officers in 1920 to bolster the RIC, were known) afterwards took to sporting a burnt cork hanging from their hats—but there were a number of assassinations, most notably of the IRA leader and lord mayor of Cork Tomás MacCurtain in March 1920. Such unattributable killings by British forces were eclipsed in scale by those of the IRA in the city, particularly after MacCurtain's death. Significantly, a large number of people killed by the IRA in Cork city were neither soldiers nor police, but civilians including young teenagers alleged to be collecting information on behalf of the authorities. Recently-opened sources have cast a chilling light on some of those deaths and the thinking behind them (at least as advanced in tranquility by some of the killers involved).<sup>14</sup>

IRA activities during the War of Independence were conditioned not only by the determination of local leaders but by circumstances. Many operations were abandoned, aborted, or inconclusive: the following description of an ambush by a Monaghan unit, written by one of the men who led it, is not untypical of accounts of engagements throughout Ireland:

12. McGarry, *O'Duffy*, 58-73.

13. *Ibid.*, 65-6; undated notebook marked IRA, TB papers.

14. Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers and the "Anti-Sinn Fein Society"*.

The [Black and] Tans were in the habit of attending Scotstown Fair & always traveled by same road to & from. The Co[mpany] planned an ambush ... on the road which the Tans always traveled on the way from the fair. It so happened that the Tans accompanied by lorry of M[ilitary] reversed the proceedings ... and came by the opposite direction thus upsetting the plan for ambush ... The Coy officers ... decided to get as close as possible to the road by which the lorries would have to travel. They only partially succeeded and did not get close enough to the road to effect damage to enemy the distance being too great & only five rifles available. It is regrettable to record that only one rifle was effective which covered our retreat: the British returned and raided the countryside but did not succeed in capturing any of the firing party.

The same officer wrote that 'the one great drawback was the want of weapons and materials', and that 'transport was often difficult to obtain. The men were compelled to walk or use a bicycle' to and from training and operations'.<sup>15</sup> The statements of many hundreds of IRA veterans in the Bureau of Military History papers in the Military Archives are also larded with references to ineffective home-made ammunition, defective explosives, and a crippling shortage of usable weapons.<sup>16</sup>

When guerrilla principles were discounted in favour of large-scale spectacles, the results could be disastrous: about 100 IRA men were captured by British forces in June 1921 while engaged in burning the headquarters of the Local Government Board in the Customs House in the centre of Dublin. Significantly, this operation had been commissioned by the Dáil government, in part perhaps to demonstrate that the IRA was its instrument, but also because it wished to destroy the capacity of the British administration to control local affairs in Ireland. The latter was an important political objective, but it made little sense from the perspective of the IRA because of the risks involved in concentrating so many men for so visible an operation so close to where substantial British police and military forces were stationed.<sup>17</sup>

The War of Independence saw British recourse to a range of approaches intended to discourage or to punish resistance. These ranged from the imposition of a prohibition on markets, cattle fairs or other elements of the local economy, to the destruction of keystones of the economy such as creameries (mainly communally-owned facilities on which farmers depended to process their dairy produce, and which were also important agricultural modernisation). In addition to, and sometimes as a prelude to such avowed

15. Undated notebook marked IRA, TB papers.

16. The 1793 Bureau of Military History testimonies were collected during the 1940s and 1950s and kept under seal until the Irish government yielded to sustained pressure and released them in March 2003. They have transformed research on the Irish revolution. A campaign is now underway for the release of the Military Service Pensions Acts records, to date only available to the families of individuals involved. These files, together with medals files also still closed, are probably the most valuable records on the IRA and its helpers, because they include a mass of detail about service, as well as confidential references and transcripts of candid confidential interviews with referees and claimants.

I rely on Ms Eve Morrison, a PhD student in the Department of History who has studied all the Bureau of Military History statements, for the generalisation about defective weapons and ammunition.

17. Townshend, *British Campaign*, 179-80.

and authorised official punishments, by the end of 1920 there was a growing problem of unofficial retaliatory actions of one sort or another, from the carrying of hostages on police vehicles to the burning of premises—or, in the case of Cork in December of that year, what *The Times* termed ‘a series of appalling reprisals, as a result of which almost the entire centre of the city is either in ruins or in flames’—to the targeting for assassination of prominent republican supporters, usually as a reaction to a successful rebel attack resulting in police or military deaths.<sup>18</sup> As in the case of the more recent Northern Ireland troubles, as historians we have to leave open the possibility that some of these unofficial assassinations were not simply a spontaneous and undirected response by groups of overwrought men pushed beyond endurance by the cowardly murders of devoted comrades but tactical exercises sanctioned if not commissioned at some level of command within the British forces. The British government also used the sanction of execution for those convicted of capital offences, although for a variety of reasons this provision was applied only sparingly and it provided the separatist movement with a succession of martyrs: the first IRA man to be executed, my grandmother’s younger brother Kevin Barry, became an important icon of the independence struggle. A medical student and ‘Just a lad of eighteen summers’, as the popular ballad puts it, he was sentenced to death for his involvement in an attack on a British army bread detail which resulted in the deaths of three soldiers, one of whom was just 15 years old. These details, and the point that he took full responsibility for his actions, were discounted during the international furore created by his sentence.<sup>19</sup>

### THE IRISH WAY OF CIVIL WAR

The War of Independence or Anglo-Irish war ended with a truce in July 1921, which was eventually consolidated by a treaty signed in London on 6 December 1921. The five months between truce and treaty saw a considerable expansion in IRA numbers, in anticipation of a possible resumption of conflict. Under the terms of the treaty, 26 counties of Ireland became the Irish Free State, a dominion within the British empire. The six north-eastern counties of Ulster, which had been relatively quiet between 1919 and 1921 but which had been at the heart of the problem how to reconcile the aspirations of a majority of Irish people for self-government with the intense attachment of Irish Unionists to the United Kingdom on grounds both of religious liberty and of economic interests, had been separated from the rest of Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, becoming the self-governing province of Northern Ireland. The 1921 treaty provided for a tripartite boundary commission to determine the final shape of the Irish border: most nationalists initially believed that such a commission would necessarily transfer the two northern counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh because of

18. *The Times*, 13 December 1920.

19. His nephew Donal O’Donovan has written an admirably dispassionate account, *No More Lonely Scaffolds: Kevin Barry and his time* (Dublin: O’Brien Press, 1989).

their majority Nationalist populations, an expectation proved entirely wrong when the commission finally reported in 1925. But faith in the commission, combined with the obvious difficulty of overawing the already well-entrenched Unionist administration in Northern Ireland, meant that the partition of Ireland was not the main focus of the disputes which led to civil war in the new Ireland. Rather, the issue was non-achievement of 'the republic' and continued membership of the British empire.

From a military perspective, the Irish civil war was not an edifying conflict. Professional military observers would probably have been appalled at the performance of both sides. The new state's army, which grew in size from about 8000 poorly-trained men when the war broke out to about 55,000 very poorly trained men when hostilities ended eleven months later, never looked like an efficient fighting machine utilising the modern instruments of warfare. In disposition and approach many units seemed to resemble more the lackadaisical Mexican *federales* of spaghetti westerns than a professional citizen army. But they won their war. Their opponents, while casting a more romantic shadow over recent Irish history, in fact performed far worse in military terms. This is shown in their preparations for confrontation. As negotiations between the Provisional Government and the anti-treatyite political leadership ran into the sands, a faction within the anti-treaty IRA occupied the Four Courts on Dublin's quays. This reflected a disastrous default to the mentality of the leaders of the 1916 rising, who had occupied the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin's Sackville Street, an almost uniquely bad choice for anyone seriously wishing to dominate an area let alone an entire city. Following the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson by the London IRA in June, the British government demanded that the Provisional Government crack down on anti-treaty dissidents, threatening to take military action against the Four Courts unless the Irish did so. When the Provisional Government initiated the civil war by opening fire on the Four Courts, that proved as hopeless a bastion as had the GPO. In 1922, as in 1916, the insurgents did not invest the obvious targets: the railway stations, the bridges over the canals on the north and south side of Dublin city centre which form a natural cordon, the telephone exchanges, and so on. Once evicted from the Four Courts after heavy shelling—the guns borrowed from the British army for the purpose were handed over by a detachment commanded by Colin Gubbins—the anti-treatyites regrouped in buildings in Sackville Street, from which they were again fairly easily evicted by shelling and infantry attacks. Despite beginning the conflict with a numerical advantage and a majority of experienced War of Independence fighters, the anti-treaty forces were completely outmanoeuvred outside Dublin by the ramshackle new army, which circumvented problems of movement by road and rail by shipping troops to each of the key coastal towns in the south and southwest where the rebels were strongest. As a result, by mid-August 1922 the anti-treaty forces held not a single fixed position. This was in some respects a comfort, because it meant that they could revert to the tactics of the War of Independence, which were those of sporadic ambushes, many of them fruitless, punctuated by long periods of inactivity. But the new

Irish army which they were fighting was led by men who had also fought in that war, who generally knew the terrain and the people as they did, and who had the backing of a popularly elected government with a mandate to uphold the treaty and the willingness to sanction ruthless measures to put an end to armed resistance. The anti-treaty forces under Liam Lynch did develop a concept of strategic defence along a line stretching across north Munster, but they never had the men, the weapons or the unity of organisation and command to put it into effect (my grandfather Jim Moloney was on Lynch's staff, and his brother Con was Lynch's deputy, but they spent almost all of the civil war on the run in north Cork, Tipperary and Limerick, areas where they had operated during the War of Independence).<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, because in the early weeks of the civil war government forces had established themselves in the key southern towns, eventually the anti-treaty groups—there was never a unified force—were fighting on two fronts and were captured piecemeal. The fact that the army took a further nine months to force a cessation of the anti-treaty struggle, to the intense frustration of some ministers, has been allowed to obscure the basic fact of its overwhelming success in the first months of the campaign. This was the great military achievement of Michael Collins, because he had established the new army and selected competent officers to develop it in the months leading up to the civil war (when the conflict broke out, he relinquished his civilian role of chairman of the Provisional Government and became commander-in-chief until his needless death in August 1922 in an otherwise inconsequential engagement with a handful of anti-treatyite riflemen in County Cork. His death owed as much to his inexperience under fire as to his reckless courage in refusing to take cover inside the escorting armoured car and leave the fighting to others).<sup>21</sup>

We should note two significant features of the new army's civil war campaign: a) there was considerable indiscipline, a good deal of retaliatory violence and killings of prisoners after surrender, and other unjustifiable acts some of which the government stood over, and the rest of which ministers ignored; b) the new army was immediately cast into the unwelcome roles of judge and executioner of captured anti-treatyites, who were subject to immediate court martial and if caught in arms were liable for the death penalty. In reality that measure was used in a small minority of cases, usually in areas where anti-treaty forces were quite active, but the phrase 'seventy seven'—the popularly alleged total of republicans executed by the army after sentence—became emblematic of government excess for a generation.<sup>22</sup>

20. Florence O'Donoghue, *No Other Law* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1954). Details and statements in James Moloney's military service pension file, in my possession.

21. Hart, *Mick*, 410-11.

22. In 1963 the Minister for Finance Dr James Ryan, an anti-treaty veteran, got into terrible difficulties in the Dáil while attempting to make the case for the new turnover tax, an unpopular technical measure which he, a bluff country doctor, did not himself remotely understand. He adroitly got out of his predicament simply by replying to his tormentors with the cry 'What about the seventy seven?'. This produced uproar, and the technicalities of the tax question were quite forgotten. Information from Dr T.K. Whitaker, secretary of the Department of Finance from 1956 to 1968, who was in attendance and had feared the measure would be defeated.

The civil war was a pretty miserable affair all round, and saw a continuation of the pattern of killings during the War of Independence. The anti-treatyites, like the IRA during the War of Independence, had the advantage that by and large they could kill whom they liked how they liked, soldier or civilian. The state, like the British forces before them, was rather more constrained by law and public opinion. This resulted in fairly widespread abuses of prisoners, and in the emergence of unofficial groups which carried out kidnappings and assassinations of people believed to be involved in anti-state activities. Most of the one hundred and fifty or so people so murdered were small fry, most notoriously the group of eight prisoners tied to a landmine and blown up at Ballyseedy in County Kerry (in reprisal for a booby trap explosion nearby in which five soldiers had been killed). The government's response to this and other atrocities by its forces was defiant rather than embarrassed, such excesses defended if not justified, where responsibility could not plausibly be denied, in terms of the assassination tactics of anti-treaty forces.

As compared with British military operations in Ireland just a year previously, there is nevertheless a clear contrast with the approach of the combatants during the civil war of 1922-3. Both sides avoided either collective punishments or the destruction of property or infrastructure as a form of sanction or reprisal. This obviously reflected two considerations: a natural reluctance on the part of the new state to destroy anything which it would later have to rebuild, or to hamper economic activity, combined with recognition, decades before the phrase 'hearts and minds' came to hand, that the government's popularity would scarcely be strengthened by such acts. On the anti-treaty side there were many attacks on the transport infrastructure, but solely with the aim of disrupting government operations, and none on economic targets (other than raids for money on banks and post offices), while attacks on property were mainly directed at the homes of Anglo-Irish landowners and prominent government supporters (the child of one government TD died in one such raid, the father of a government minister was shot in another). In some areas locals took advantage of the temporary collapse of government authority to occupy land, but such activity was not directly instigated by or linked to the anti-treaty side and its effects were very temporary. The government responded by creating a military 'Protective Corps' to drive off trespassers and protect disputed estates, an exercise which proved both effective and surprisingly popular. In general, therefore, for both sides in the civil war, damage to the economy and interference with property were by-products of the conflict rather than conscious elements of it.

In April 1923 Liam Lynch, by then the only leading anti-treatyite who did not grasp that the war was lost, was killed. His death effectively ended the civil war, and a few weeks later the IRA issued an order to 'dump arms'. Thereafter, Ireland experienced an extraordinary change: despite high unemployment and privation, the ready availability of weapons, and the deep divisions left by the civil war, the gun disappeared almost

completely from Irish political life. In the decade following the civil war, the IRA was responsible for perhaps a dozen deaths in all, and some of these were incidental killings in the course of armed robberies rather than planned assassinations. The organisation did not disappear—indeed, it regrouped and expanded considerably from the late 1920s on—but it was a relatively disciplined and by and large its members were under orders not to confront the new state directly.<sup>23</sup>

### WHAT THE IRISH MAY HAVE LEARNT FROM THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN

There is one area where it could be argued that the new Irish state did attempt to build on its War of Independence experience. In the early months of 1922 Collins did permit discussions with the anti-treaty IRA on possible joint operations in Northern Ireland, and plans were made to purchase weapons for use by the Northern IRA. These were envisaged by the Provisional Government not as a prelude to conquest, but as a means of putting pressure on the Belfast authorities to protect the Nationalist minority from sectarian attack. They may also have been intended to impose some control on pro-treaty as well as anti-treaty groups along the border, who were already involved in a series of violent local tit for tat clashes with the Northern security forces. The plans may also have been seen as a means of promoting good relations with anti-treaty forces. A number of Northern IRA men were brought down for training at the Curragh, the large military complex south west of Dublin inherited from the British army. The plans for organised operations in Northern Ireland evaporated, partly as a result of renewed discussions with the Belfast government in which undertakings were sought about the safety of the Northern minority.<sup>24</sup> When the civil war broke out many of these Northerners fought on the government side; others went home and were promptly interned by the Northern Ireland authorities. Amongst those who suffered were my grandmother's brother Dan Rice, who quit the Irish army and returned to County Down in December 1922 because he wanted no part of the civil war. He told the local police that he had no intention of resuming republican activities and only wished to be left alone. They believed him, but Belfast did not because he had been 'an extreme & dangerous IRA man & the principal organizer of the locality'. He was not released until Christmas 1924.<sup>25</sup> My

23. The best recent study of the IRA after 1923 is Brian Hanley, *The IRA 1926-1936* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002). Early attempts at a synoptic view of the movement up to the 1970s such as Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), and J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: A History of the IRA 1916-1970* (London: Anthony Blond, 1970) were written largely from republican oral sources and took a highly teleological approach which almost completely ignored the sustained failure of militant republicanism to undermine the democratic Irish state established in 1922 or to achieve Irish unity by force of arms.
24. Hart, *Mick*, 380-5; Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 66-128.
25. He was interned for two years, and according to his internment file was a leader of the October 1923 hunger strike on the prison ship *Argenta*. Minute, 15 February, and note of 24 October 1923, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, HA5/2317.

grandfather Hugh Halfpenny left Northern Ireland in May 1922 to escape internment (he had previously been interned in Dublin and in Ballykinlar camp in County Down during the War of Independence). In 1923 he was one of two men selected to approach the Northern Ireland government through the cabinet secretary Wilfred Spender, to see whether a group of Northern republicans would be allowed back to their homes on their private word that they would not engage in activities against the Northern state. This initiative was considered by the Northern authorities but was eventually turned down, on the grounds of the petitioners' previous IRA records and the danger that they might resume activities if they were allowed to come home.<sup>26</sup> When things quietened down in the mid-1920s many of these men did return, where they and their families were largely unmolested by the state.

By the end of the civil war the Dublin government held more than eleven thousand prisoners in gaols and internment camps. Release for most could be secured simply on signing an undertaking on future behaviour, but there was strong resistance to this. In the autumn of 1923 a number of hunger strikes were mounted to force the unconditional release of all detainees. The government held its nerve and the strikes collapsed after the deaths of a number of prisoners. Having proved its point, most of the prisoners were quietly released. By July 1924, the camps were empty. Internment remained a sanction of choice for the state, and was used extensively against both the IRA and the crypto-Fascist Blueshirt movement in the mid-1930s, during the 'Emergency' of 1939-45, when over one thousand republicans and a handful of German agents were locked up, and again after the initiation of the IRA's futile 'Border Campaign' of 1956-62. It is an open question whether, if internment had been reintroduced when the IRA resumed activities on a large scale following the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969, affairs would have taken the path they have done ever since. But what had been acceptable to Irish public opinion as late as 1958 was a political non-starter in 1970, as it became clear that, despite considerable pressure from London and some willingness to change amongst key Unionist politicians, the government of Northern Ireland was incapable of enacting thoroughgoing reform to provide equal rights and security for all its people and to dampen intercommunal strife. That paralysis provided fertile conditions in which the newly formed Provisional IRA and its loyalist paramilitary analogues could prosper, generating a security crisis which for decades rendered meaningful political restructuring in Northern Ireland impossible.

26. Colonel Spender (Northern Ireland cabinet secretary) to Minister of Home Affairs, 12 March 1923, reporting approach for a meeting with Hugh Halfpenny and Hugh Murray, spokesmen for a group of Northern IRA men who wished to return home. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, HA32/1/360.

## IRISH MILITARY DOCTRINE AND THE MEMORY OF 1919-22

The legacy of the War of Independence and civil war for the new Irish army was a complicated one. Once the civil war ended, the government set about reducing its large military establishment by as much as possible and as quickly as possible. Within a year, when numbers had already fallen from 55,000 to 17,000, there was a half-baked mutiny amongst experienced former IRA officers discontented about promotions and resentful of the development of the army along conventional lines. This was overcome without bloodshed by a combination of concessions and political duplicity—the minister for defence and the chief of staff, adjutant general and quartermaster general, none of whom had done anything wrong, were pushed out to appease the mutineers—and thereafter the state's main aim was to reduce the army to a size and condition just capable of meeting any renewed internal threat. Even there, the army was pushed firmly to the margins: its voluminous intelligence records built up during the civil war, which included about 30,000 personal files, were transferred to the new unarmed police force in 1926. Thereafter it was debarred from studying anti-treaty organisations, even though its main function was an internal security one. Instead it was organised for a conventional role, although in most respects it possessed only the vocabulary of a force prepared and equipped to defend the state from external aggression. An officer corps whose greatest expertise lay emphatically in irregular warfare duly turned towards the study of conventional military science. A small group of officers was selected to take courses in the United States, and on their return a military college was established. There officers pored over maps of Gettysburg and Bull Run, and practised organising and deploying large forces which existed only on paper. Internal security might be their real job—and the one in which the first generation of military leaders had considerable experience, not least as guerrillas—but it was not one for which the army was formally trained or encouraged to reflect on. Other officers took specialist courses in Britain—one of the more accomplished assassins of the War of Independence came first in his class on a chemical warfare course in 1925—all activities geared towards military professionalisation.

With the exception of the provision of what amounted to a parallel legal system for the handling by military courts of cases of serious political crime—during the civil war, again in 1931, again from 1934 to 1936, again from 1939 to 1945, and from 1957 to 1961—the army was not formally organised to discharge what in reality is its main active role, that of protecting the state from internal attack.<sup>27</sup> This remains the case today, with the exception of a small special forces unit established in the early 1970s in response to the twin threats of republican and of loyalist terrorism. Even during the period from

27. For a recent analysis of how the Irish state developed a legal framework to cope with political violence in its first two decades, see Seosamh Ó Longaigh, *Emergency Law in Independent Ireland 1922-1948* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006).

1940 to 1942 when there was a real risk of invasion by either Germany or Britain, the Irish army did not organise and train for guerrilla warfare although officers privately envisaged only limited efforts to defend key installations and cities, to be quickly followed by a resort to the tactics of 1919-21.<sup>28</sup> There was no attempt to create anything akin to the 'auxiliary units' hastily established in Britain in 1940-41 as stay-behind groups, or to cache weapons and materiel for use in the event of an occupation. Instead the state concentrated on building up a two-division army on conventional lines although without most of the equipment, weapons, vehicles and aircraft required. The reasons for this are clear enough: the political imperative for tight control of the army, and the related fear that the IRA might infiltrate any such stay-behind groups or at any rate get their hands on any weapons not safely stored in military custody. One organisation did start planning for irregular warfare in Ireland in the event of a German invasion, but it was not Irish: SOE's 'Claribel II' scheme was vetoed by Downing Street in 1941 because it would have involved putting British weapons and 'toys' into Irish hands and training the Irish in their use. Prime Minister Churchill took the view that this would only fortify the Irish in their intransigent refusal to join Britain's war.<sup>29</sup>

The civil war put an end to the possibility that the new Irish state would either contemplate the use of force or indirectly support republican paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. Given the determination of the Northern Ireland government and the strength of its security forces, this was just as well, since the sectarian violence in Belfast in 1922 had shown that there was no way of protecting nationalist enclaves far from the Northern Ireland border. There always remained a fear that some overzealous patriot in uniform might either attempt an armed sally into Northern Ireland, or seek to promote a nationalist insurrection there. The first possibility was privately discussed amongst a clique of senior officers in the mid-1930s, before commonsense intervened in the form of a bald and uncontestable analysis of 'Fundamental factors affecting Irish defence', which pointed out that the state was 'not relatively but absolutely disarmed'.<sup>30</sup> In 1969-70, at a time when the army was run down almost to extinction, an intelligence officer with more passion than sense, encouraged by two ambitious ministers, became involved in an intrigue to provide arms for use in Northern Ireland for a northern republican faction which became the Provisional IRA, causing a major political crisis. Inspired by his misreading of the role of Britain's SOE in fostering European resistance to Nazism, in 2000 this man remarked to this writer that had these plans to aid insurrection been allowed to come to fruition 'it would all have been over in four or five years' and Ireland would now be united and

28. Decode of Vichy French minister, Dublin, to Vichy, 15 January 1941, reporting conversation with an Irish officer, TNA, HW12/260.

29. Eunan O'Halpin, "'Toys' and 'whispers' in '16-land': SOE and Ireland, 1940-2", *Intelligence and National Security* 15-15, 1-18; SOE War Diary, 29 March 1941, TNA, HS7/214.

30. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, 136-7.

free.<sup>31</sup> There was also talk amongst a handful of hotheads in 1969 of a possible military incursion into nationalist areas adjacent to the border in order to provide protection for communities under sectarian threat. This was something for which the emaciated Irish defence forces were simply not equipped, as former officers have often pointed out.<sup>32</sup> In January 1971 the British military attaché, himself an Irishman, produced a sympathetic but realistic picture of the army's organisation and capabilities. The Irish military response to the outbreak of the Northern Ireland troubles had been very limited, for reasons both of weakness and of doctrine:

I am not sure that the Irish themselves have a considered defence policy. They have no staff organization to speak of, except for day to day administration ... there is no assessments apparatus like the J[oint] I[ntelligence] C[ommittee], and no continuing liaison with other departments such as the D[eartment of] E[xternal] A[ffairs]. There is no continuous planning or grading of priorities, although no doubt the Chief of Staff could, if requested, produce a paper.<sup>33</sup>

The political violence which engulfed Northern Ireland after 1969 saw the Irish army's internal security and border security roles become more salient. Even in 2006, eight years after the Good Friday Agreement brought an end to the Provisional IRA's armed campaign, the Dublin court which handles serious political offences is routinely protected by soldiers, and large cash shipments are still escorted by the army (officers take comfort in the claim that, over the years since 1969 and in contrast to the police, the army has never 'lost a prisoner or a penny' in discharging these unwelcome tasks). Yet, while the army does some training for such Aid to the Civil Power duties, it has never prepared for a frontline counter-terrorism role. Since 1923 it has been the police force—more precisely its armed Special Branch and associated units—which have had the lead role in confronting armed terrorist activities within the state.

### BRITISH REFLECTIONS ON THE IRISH TROUBLES, 1919-1922

What lessons did the British army draw from its Irish experience between 1919 and 1922? It might be thought that the conflict in Ireland between 1919 and 1921 would have left its mark on British military memory in terms of irregular warfare. Surely there were lessons to be learnt from the IRA's campaign, not least in terms of its intelligence

31. This was the late Captain James Kelly, speaking during an unscheduled visit to my office in Trinity College during which he announced his intention to sue me for my anodyne account of the 1970 'Arms Crisis' in *Defending Ireland*, 307-11. Captain Kelly set out his case in *Orders for the Captain* (privately published, Dublin, 1971) and *The Thimble Riggers* (Dublin: Sarsfield Press, 1999).
32. Colonel (ret.) Terry O'Neill PhD, who was a transport officer in the army's Western command (including the border areas) in 1969-1970, recalls the condition of the army's transport fleet at the time as pitiful, with many vehicles under constant repair and others cannibalised for spares.
33. Brigadier F. McMullan to Ministry of Defence, 6 January 1971, TNA, FCO33/1616.

operations, and from the British army's response? Yet evidence on the impact of their Irish experiences on Britain's military is hard to find. On the conclusion of the Irish campaign in 1922, the British army produced studies of a number of aspects of operations as a 'Record of the Rebellion in Ireland', including one useful and well-organised volume on intelligence.<sup>34</sup> While that study grossly overestimated the strength of the IRA, its overall analysis of the intelligence weaknesses of the British campaign, and its argument that these were well on the way to being remedied through the careful processing of prisoners' details and the systematization of record keeping, is one with which I broadly concur. It is clear that by the early summer of 1921 the intelligence activities of the British army were producing far better results than hitherto (notwithstanding calamities such as occurred in Cork where a trusted typist in divisional headquarters supplied the IRA with a continuous flow of information).<sup>35</sup> It is impossible to judge how much currency the intelligence volume of the *Record of the Rebellion* had in interwar Whitehall (although a copy in the Intelligence Corps Museum in Ashford was donated by an intelligence company operating in Londonderry in the early 1970s). In general, it seems that few British military thinkers sought to draw wider lessons from the Irish experience of 1919-1922.

In his influential work *Imperial Policing*, published in 1934, General Sir Charles Gwynn, himself an Irishman, wrote that he

thought it inadvisable to draw on experiences in Ireland, instructive from a military point of view as many of them were. Those who desire to study irregular operations of a guerrilla character will, however, do well to read books ... giving the personal experiences of some of our opponents. Such books as ... *With the Dublin Brigade* throw an instructive light on the psychology of irregular forces and give an opportunity of seeing events from the other side ... They reveal mistakes made by the regular forces and also the measures taken by them which proved most effective.<sup>36</sup>

(Incidentally, the author of *With the Dublin Brigade*, Charles Dalton, had been responsible for one of the worst atrocities of the civil war, the murder of three teenagers, one of them disabled, who had been caught putting up anti-treaty posters. Dalton afterwards left Ireland for Chicago, perhaps feeling he would fit in better there.<sup>37</sup>)

34. The intelligence volume has been published in Peter Hart (ed.), *British Intelligence in Ireland, 1920-1921: The Final Reports* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), and is discussed in Eunan O'Halpin, 'What the British knew', *Dublin Review* 8 (Autumn 2002), 109-14.

35. The woman concerned secretly married the IRA's key intelligence man in Cork city, Florence O'Donoghue. See Borgonovo, *Florence and Josephine O'Donoghue's War of Independence*. O'Donoghue was later to play an important intelligence role as southern command IO during the Second World War period: O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, 166.

36. John Pimlott, 'The British Experience', in Ian Beckett (ed.), *The Roots of Counter-Insurgency: Armies and Guerrilla Warfare, 1900-1945* (London: Blandford, 1988), 17-39; Charles Gwynn, *Imperial policing* (London: Macmillan, 1934), 8-9. Gwynn was one of a number of distinguished Irishmen with British military or civil service backgrounds who signed petitions to Churchill in 1940 and to the Canadian prime minister MacKenzie King in 1941 deploring the sectarian composition of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Home Guard. TNA, CJ4/30. My copy of *Imperial Policing* is heavily annotated in the hand of Colonel Dan Bryan, the outstanding Irish army director of intelligence from 1941 to 1952 who had learned his trade during the War of Independence and civil war.

37. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, 14.

Gwynn stands almost alone in mentioning Ireland in these terms. Most British writers on counter-insurgency operations found plenty of examples in various far-flung parts of the empire, from Egypt to Iraq to India, without reflecting on or even alluding to the Irish case.

Even as the British army's Irish conflict was ending, new methods of controlling insurgency were being tried out in Iraq, with air power as the main instrument of subjugation: the Irish general Berkeley Vincent, who was officer commanding in Iraq from 1922 to 1924, thought '... that this bombing was a dirty, one-sided game. Sir Percy [Cox] was not communicative about it, and was very difficult to hear, but I gathered that he thought it was the only thing we could do, and was in favour of it'.<sup>38</sup> Vincent 'longed to have the power to change the whole atmosphere in Iraq ... to keep the troops up to the mark, and to stop this ridiculous bombing of camels and donkeys, Arab tents and Kurdish mud huts. I used to express my views very plainly ... but being only a "bottle-washer" on the Staff, there was little I could do', and again recorded that he 'hated this bombing of women and camels, but the Politicals seemed keen about it'.<sup>39</sup> Lest Vincent appear a weak-kneed do-gooder, at another point he noted approvingly that 'the punishment by gun-boats and police was reported to have been effective. Villages were burnt, and some of the Head men were brought on board the gunboats, and, I heard privately, made to sit under the muzzles of the 6 pr guns when they were firing'.<sup>40</sup> His misgivings about aerial bombing and machine-gunning of insurgents and their homes related mainly to the fact that such tactics were not being used sensibly in conjunction with troops on the ground.

If the *RUSI Journal* is any guide, the British experience of irregular warfare in Ireland was simply not regarded as worthy of discussion. When reflecting on the conduct of guerrilla or irregular warfare behind enemy lines, interwar military contributors to the journal focussed on the First World War activities and operations of iconic figures such as T.E. Lawrence in the Middle East, and the Germans Wilhelm Wassmuss in Persia and von Lettow-Vorbeck in East Africa. Such was Wassmuss's reputation for stirring up the natives that his plans to return to Persia in 1924 caused great alarm in the India Office, despite his assurances to the British minister in Teheran: 'neither by acts nor by words I shall give utterance to anything unfriendly ... the unfortunate war between England and Germany during which I have only done my duty towards my country is a thing of the past'.<sup>41</sup> Wassmuss and Lawrence were exponents of what British military men regarded as the irregular fighter's main role, that of diverting the attention of the enemy, threatening his lines of communication, and drawing off his resources from the main fronts—during

38. Vincent memoirs, 7 January 1922, Vincent papers, Centre for Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College Dublin.

39. *Ibid.*, 22 April 1922.

40. *Ibid.*, extracts undated but both late January 1922.

41. Wassmuss (in Teheran) to Sir Percy Lorraine, 15 February 1924, IOR, L/PS/11/246.

the Second World War the British thought Lawrence's name sufficiently talismanic to circulate rumours in Germany that he was still alive and was directing a guerrilla organisation in the Western Desert.<sup>42</sup> After 1931, the *RUSI Journal* demonstrates that considerable interest was taken in Japanese operations in China, usually approvingly portrayed as a vindication of professional soldiering against localised banditry, and later in the decade the Spanish civil war evoked much comment. Britain's long experience of colonial counter-insurgency, including the violence in Palestine after 1937, also had an impact on thinking about both the use of and the countering of guerrilla tactics. It may be that the Irish troubles did not fit the military conception of what irregular warfare was all about—an adjunct to conventional operations away from the main front, usually sponsored by a conventional enemy, rather than an autonomous insurgency mounted explicitly in support of a political aim.

The few available papers of the irregular warfare thinktank MI(R), which had a brief existence between March 1939 and October 1940 and which was then absorbed by SOE, do indicate some interest in the Irish case. During the summer of 1939 MI(R) devoted itself to

a study of guerrilla warfare, first theoretically and then practically ... all available material was collected, including historical data about the Boer War, the Indian Mutiny, the Irish rebellion—with the doctrine embodied in the *An t-Óglach* series of instructions issued to the Sinn Fein rebels—the Grand Mufti's instructions to the Arab rebels in Palestine, and accounts of Russian experiences in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Trotsky's writings on the Russian Revolution were also studied. From this material were evolved two pamphlets entitled "The Art of Guerrilla Warfare" and "The Partisan Leader's Handbook", both compact treatises of the doctrine of guerrilla war.<sup>43</sup>

However, the Chinese and Spanish wars provided more recent and larger scale examples of the use of irregular warfare in support of conventional strategy. A lecture and accompanying reading list on irregular warfare prepared by an MI(R) officer in 1939 did include works on the Irish rebellions of 1798 and of 1916—the latter being Parminter's *Life of Roger Casement*, scarcely a guide to tactics although perhaps useful in demonstrating German manipulation of a subject people for diversionary purposes in the midst of a general war—and these books were evidently recommended because they reinforced the military concept of Irish insurgency as a diversionary tactic encouraged by Britain's major enemies.<sup>44</sup> The document made no reference at all to Irish guerrilla organisation and tactics or to the British military experience in Ireland between 1919 and

42. Such manufactured rumours from 1941, approved for circulation by a Whitehall committee, can be found in TNA, FO898/69.

43. MI(R) war diary, 3 September 1939–2 Oct. 1940, TNA, HS8/263.

44. Text of undated lecture [1939], TNA, HS/ Simon Anglim, 'MI(R), G(R) and British covert operations, 1939-42', *Intelligence and National Security* 20:4 (December 2005), 631-53.

1921. While an appendix reproduced the full text of what the lecturer termed the IRA's 'puerile' S-plan, the bombing campaign initiated in Britain in January 1939, this received consideration because the scheme enjoined IRA operatives to strike at economically and militarily significant targets in Britain rather than directly at the British security forces or the civilian population (this largely contrasted with the IRA's approach during the War of Independence, when, as already noted, economic infrastructure in Ireland was not a primary target). In October 1939 Guy Liddell of MI5, who had a particular interest in and knowledge of Ireland, noted that MI(R) was

run on the pattern of the Arab Bureau which ran the Arab revolution in the last war. Its function is to study subversive movements in enemy countries with a view to planning insurgencies in conjunction with military strategy. It does not go in for political dabbling.<sup>45</sup>

A second secret organisation, Section D, had been established in March 1938, this time inside SIS, to start planning sabotage and black propaganda operations: its founder Colonel Lawrence Grand recalled his meeting with C (as the head of SIS is generally known): 'We shook hands ... A war was looming and he wanted someone to look after sabotage ... My first question was "Is anything barred?". He replied "nothing at all"'.<sup>46</sup> There is nothing in his recollection or elsewhere in British records to indicate that the handful of officers in Section D, for which political dabbling was part of the *raison d'être*, reflected on Britain's Irish experience in planning for sabotage and subversion in Europe.

## CONCLUSION

This paper argues that it was a necessary condition of Irish political stability that the new state's army should, once the civil war had ended in 1923, turn its back on its direct experience of irregular or subversive warfare. Domestic circumstances, in particular the fear that a powerful defence establishment might seek to challenge civilian government (as happened in 1924), and the unresolved problem of Northern Ireland, with the temptations for patriotic action which that offered, combined to see independent Ireland develop defence forces which were formally organised and trained primarily for external defence. This was despite the state's unwillingness to provide either the men, or the equipment and weapons, for the army to discharge such a role effectively for even a limited period. Even during the period of greatest danger to the state's sovereignty, in

45. Liddell diary, 26 October 1939, TNA, KV4/185. On Liddell, see Eunan O'Halpin, 'The Liddell diaries and British intelligence history, 1939-45', *Intelligence and National Security* 20:4 (December 2005), 670-86, and (ed.), *MI5 and Ireland, 1939-1945: The Official History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003), 3-4.

46. Undated note by Grand [1940?], TNA, HS7/5.

the early years of the Second World War, the army was hastily expanded and trained, although still not properly equipped, for a conventional defensive role. A resort to the tactics of the War of Independence was certainly anticipated, but active training and preparation for such a role were discouraged because of the political imperative of tight central control of the army and its weapons lest these slip into the wrong hands and be turned either against the state or against Northern Ireland. The great lesson which independent Ireland absorbed from its experience of irregular warfare between 1919 and 1923 was, it transpires, constitutional rather than military: the state must ensure an absolute monopoly of the control of armed force, and the capacity to use such force should be embodied in a conventional army just powerful enough to deal with any likely internal threat.

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# Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency in Palestine, 1945–47

*David A. Charters*

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## INTRODUCTION

For many in the West the 9/11 attacks seemed to represent a fundamental break with the past. *The Economist* called 11 September 2001: ‘The Day the World Changed’.<sup>1</sup> I, among others, speculated that the attacks constituted a ‘Revolution in Terrorism Affairs’.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the daily litany of car bombs, suicide bombers, hostage-taking, and assassinations could easily suggest that the insurgency in Iraq has taken brutality to new heights. But if we consider these events in light of the history of insurgency, they seem less ‘revolutionary’ and more ‘evolutionary’. Indeed, it could be argued that apart from the use of airliners as missiles on 9/11, there is little that is truly ‘new’ about the so-called ‘new terrorism’.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, while the technology has changed, the ‘War on Terrorism’, whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, or on the streets of London, does not seem wholly unfamiliar; we have been here before.

In this paper, I will argue that much that we think of as new or innovative in today’s insurgencies was applied in the Jewish campaign to liberate Palestine from British rule in the 1940s. Similarly, the problems that confront and confound the American counter-insurgency campaign in Iraq did likewise to the British in Palestine. While American commentators are inclined to draw parallels between Iraq and Vietnam,<sup>4</sup> it is clear that the conflict in Palestine sixty years ago speaks to the present situation in Iraq more than many other campaigns.

1. *The Economist*, 15 September 2001, front cover and lead editorial.
2. David A. Charters, ‘9/11: a “revolution in terrorism affairs”?’ in David A. Charters and Graham F. Walker (eds), *After 9/11: terrorism and crime in a globalised world* (Halifax, NS: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 2005), 11-15.
3. Thomas Copeland, ‘Is the “new terrorism” really new?: an analysis of the new paradigm for terrorism’, *Journal of Conflict Studies* 21:2 (Winter 2001), 7-27.
4. See, for example, Phillip Carter and Owen West, ‘Iraq 2004 looks like Vietnam 1966: adjusting body counts for medical and military changes’, [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com), 27 December 2004; and Christopher Hitchens, ‘Beating a dead parrot: why Iraq and Vietnam have nothing whatsoever in common’, [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com), 31 January 2005.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The armed struggle against Britain in Palestine originated in the complex interaction of European social conflicts, British diplomacy during and after the First World War, and divisions within the Zionist movement. The rise of modern European nationalism combined with the long-standing marginalisation and persecution of Jewish minorities had two effects. First, at the end of the 19th century it revived and politicised the Zionist movement, which dedicated itself to re-creating a Jewish state, preferably within Palestine, which comprised the ancient lands of Israel. Second, it encouraged a wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine.<sup>5</sup>

British diplomacy during the Great War, intended to facilitate the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, committed Britain to an untenable contradiction. It was obligated both to create independent Arab states on former Ottoman lands *and* to support the creation of a Jewish 'homeland' on a portion of those lands. Britain's inability to fulfil and reconcile these obligations frustrated Palestinian Arabs, who during the 1920s and 1930s clashed violently with Zionists determined to create a new Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>6</sup>

The Zionist movement itself was divided into two broad camps: the Labour Zionists, an agrarian socialist movement, and the Revisionists, a more nationalistic faction. These ideological differences were exacerbated by the clashes with the Arabs, which forced the two factions to adopt somewhat different approaches to the use of force. The Labour Zionists, by far the majority among Palestinian Jews, favoured a strategy of 'active defence'. They created the *Haganah* (Defence Force) to protect the settlements; trained by Orde Wingate, a pro-Zionist British officer, the *Haganah* was also capable of limited offensive operations against Arab guerrilla forces.<sup>7</sup> The Revisionists, however, were dissatisfied with the largely defensive mindset of the Labour Zionists and favoured taking the fight directly to the enemy. Thus, out of a dissident rump of the *Haganah* was born the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* (National Military Organisation). In the late 1930s, it carried out a number of terrorist-style attacks on Palestinian Arabs and on the British. But the outbreak of the Second World War divided the Zionists further over the issue of cooperation with Britain. While the *Haganah* and the *Irgun* were willing to do so to a limited degree, dissidents within the Revisionist movement saw this as betrayal, since British policy toward Palestine, articulated on the eve of the war, proposed the creation only of an Arab state. These dissidents created a new group: the *Lochmei Herut Israel* (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel—LHI). Led initially by intellectual mystic Abraham Stern, they attacked the British administration and security forces in Palestine. After he was killed by the police in 1942,

5. Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A concise history of the Arab-Israeli conflict*, 4th edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 21-7.

6. *Ibid.*, 37-56.

7. 'The Haganah', *Jewish Virtual Library*, [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/haganah.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/haganah.html), accessed 25 July 2006.

they became known more commonly as the Stern Gang.<sup>8</sup> These three groups ultimately launched a terrorist insurgency after the war.

In the meantime, however, the Holocaust intervened. The near total destruction of European Jewry created a crisis within Zionism. While the Holocaust reinforced the moral case for a Jewish state, the prospect of doing anything seemed to be slipping away. The people the Zionists had counted on to build the new state were being systematically exterminated.<sup>9</sup> Efforts to rescue the survivors helped to shape a new ‘culture of survival’ against existential threats to Jewry. Thus it was a ‘militarised’ Zionism, embodied in the phrase ‘Never Again’, that confronted the British in Palestine in 1945.<sup>10</sup> To the extent that this movement represented the fusion of a religiously derived national culture and militant radical politics, it certainly presaged today’s faith-based extremists.

### AN INNOVATIVE INSURGENCY

The armed insurgency against the British was launched on the night of 31 October 1945 with a series of coordinated attacks by the three groups against a range of British targets.<sup>11</sup> Over the next 21 months, the insurgents carried out 363 attacks, inflicting more than 1000 casualties.<sup>12</sup> By today’s standards, with the bar being set by the war in Iraq, these figures do not appear impressive. But the raw numbers do not tell the whole story. The insurgency was notable for three reasons.

First, the insurgents’ strategy confronted the British with a ‘two-front war’: a strategic, political and psychological battle for legitimacy—the *right* to rule; and a tactical paramilitary battle for control—the *ability* to rule.<sup>13</sup> Using terrorism and propaganda to make the British position in Palestine untenable, the Jewish insurgents won both battles. Terrorism reduced the country to chaos, a state not unlike that currently prevailing in Iraq, while a constant barrage of pro-Zionist, anti-British propaganda mobilised support for the insurgents and opposition to British policy among its principal ally and creditor: the United States. Together, these efforts undermined Britain’s will to remain in Palestine.

Second, like those in Iraq the Jewish insurgents were tactically innovative. They constantly confounded the British Army by presenting them with new tactical challenges that defied easy resolution. These tended to offset or neutralise the army’s numerical and power advantages. Finally, like al-Qaeda, they expanded the battlefield into the international arena, conducting operations in Europe and Britain itself.

8. Joseph Heller, *The Stern Gang: ideology, politics and terror 1940-1949* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), parts one and two, examines in depth the nature of Revisionism and the rise of both the *Irgun* and the Stern Gang.
9. Yechiam Weitz, ‘Jewish refugees and Zionist policy during the holocaust’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 30:2 (April 1994), 351-68.
10. Bickerton and Klausner, *A concise history of the Arab-Israeli conflict*, 71.
11. David A. Charters, *The British army and Jewish insurgency in Palestine, 1945-47* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 54.
12. *Ibid.*, 52-64, Appendix III, 182-97, and Appendix V, 205.
13. *Ibid.*, 2-4.

## STRATEGIES OF CHAOS

The insurgency can be divided into two distinct phases. The first, lasting from October 1945 to August 1946, was the period of the so-called 'United Resistance', involving operations coordinated among the three insurgent groups. During this period they carried out 78 attacks. However, political and strategic disagreements between them precluded a wholly united front. The *Haganah* used violence as pressure tactic, to persuade the British to change their policy on Jewish immigration into Palestine. So, it limited its attacks mostly to targets related to efforts to curb immigration, such as coastal radar stations and police boats. But it also sabotaged the railway on several occasions, as a way of inflicting economic pressure on the British. By contrast, the *Irgun* and Stern groups pursued an all-out 'national liberation' war, and set no limits on targets or casualties, which included British troops and police, military bases and police stations, oil refineries, trains, bridges, and banks. The 'united resistance' fell apart after the *Irgun* blew up the Mandatory headquarters in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in July 1946, killing 92 people. After that, the *Haganah* largely withdrew from armed operations, leaving the field to the dissidents.<sup>14</sup>

This marked the opening of the second phase, which lasted until August 1947. Unrestrained by the need to cooperate with the *Haganah*, the *Irgun* and the Stern Gang dramatically escalated the levels of violence. Their 286 attacks over the next twelve months amounted to a four-fold increase in the number of incidents.

Convinced that the British were 'not free to suppress the rebellion in a sea of blood',<sup>15</sup> *Irgun* leader Menachem Begin employed a strategy that would simultaneously undermine British rule in Palestine while promoting the *Irgun's* image and message. He believed that once the revolt began Palestine would resemble a 'glass house'. The world's attention would be focused on events there and would protect the insurgents from extreme British responses. Every *Irgun* attack the British failed to prevent would be a blow to its prestige, while the act itself would enhance the reputation of the *Irgun*; a classic application of the anarchist strategy 'propaganda of the deed'.<sup>16</sup> In essence, the *Irgun's* strategy was designed to defeat Britain on both the legitimacy and control fronts.

Under Abraham Stern, the LHI once had a grand strategic vision, but it died with him. Instead, he left a legacy of commitment to individual terrorism, which the group turned into an obsession with revenge for his death. This became fused with the Marxist doctrine of his leadership successors, who believed Britain's position in Palestine was determined solely by economic interests. Consequently, the Stern Gang's strategy consisted of a combination of economic warfare and anarchist-style 'direct action' against senior

14. Ibid., 54-9.

15. 'IZL on lessons of the Greek rebellion', *Fortnightly intelligence summary*, no. 96, for the period ending 14 January 1945, Defence Security Office [MI5] Palestine, WO 169/19758, Public Record Office [PRO], United Kingdom; Menachem Begin, *The revolt: story of the Irgun* (London: W.H. Allen, 1951), 52.

16. Begin, *The revolt*, 52, 80, 93; *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, *The aims of the Irgun*, Jerusalem 1946, Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, f. 42, box 12, MG 690, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

officials and the security forces, especially the police. They believed that their efforts would show the Mandatory government to be ‘weak and ineffectual’, unable to ‘enforce law and order in Palestine unless they keep vast forces here’ at a huge cost.<sup>17</sup> This parallel application of the *Irgun’s* and Stern Gang’s strategies in 1946–47 eroded British control of Palestine through a cycle of resistance, repression, and reprisal. The result was a situation that deteriorated into chaos.

The King David Hotel bombing was a devastating blow to the British administration in Palestine. The bomb destroyed many offices of the Secretariat, which was responsible for much of the day-to-day routine work that kept government functioning. It took the lives of 21 senior civil servants and of many junior staff, such as clerks, typists, and messengers. Vital administrative files and records were destroyed. Neither the people nor the records could be replaced easily, and the administration of the mandate suffered as a consequence.<sup>18</sup>

The *Irgun* and Stern Gang carried out more than 90 attacks against economic targets. Most of these consisted of attacks on the railway. Mines damaged or derailed more than 20 trains, and five railway stations were attacked. These incidents disrupted and delayed railway traffic over a period of nine months from October 1946 to August 1947, with a resulting loss of commercial revenue. In addition, the insurgents attacked the petroleum industry a dozen times; most of these involved sabotage of the pipeline, but in March 1947, the Stern Gang destroyed 16,000 tons of petroleum products at the Shell Oil refinery in Haifa.<sup>19</sup>

The damage inflicted in these attacks cost Britain nearly 2 million, but the real damage was to its ability to govern the mandate. During the winter of 1947, Britain was forced to evacuate non-essential personnel and to concentrate the remainder in heavily guarded security sectors (known as ‘Bevingrads’), not unlike the ‘Green Zone’ in Baghdad.<sup>20</sup> Major search operations and even the imposition of Martial Law temporarily set back the insurgency, but failed to contain or defeat it. By August 1947 the rising insurgency had spilled over into large-scale Arab-Jewish communal violence.<sup>21</sup> At that point the High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, told the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech-Jones,

I cannot guarantee that the situation will not deteriorate to such a degree that the Civil Government will not break down ... it is by no means clear how much longer I can keep the Civil Service working under conditions such as exist at present.<sup>22</sup>

The insurgents’ strategies of chaos had worked; they had made Palestine ungovernable.

17. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 50–1; Heller, *The Stern Gang*, part three.
18. J.P.I. Fforde, ‘CID report on King David outrage’, 16 August 1946, CO 537/2290, PRO. See also: Thurston Clarke, *By blood and fire: the attack on the King David Hotel* (New York: Putnam’s, 1981).
19. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 63–4.
20. *Ibid.*, 121, and appendix V, 206. See also: Saul Zadka, *Blood in Zion: how the Jewish guerrillas drove the British out of Palestine* (London: Brassey’s, 1995), 159.
21. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 108–10, 124.
22. Telegram, Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 7 August 1947, CO 537/2299, PRO.

They also made life difficult for Britain on the political front through a well-organised propaganda campaign. They bolstered morale within their movements and among their local sympathisers. But they also reached out to potential supporters world-wide, especially in the United States. The US had a large and politically active Jewish community, and the US was the one major power able to exert influence on Britain. Insurgent propaganda repeatedly emphasised several major themes: first, that the insurgents were winning; therefore, a British withdrawal was inevitable. Second, the illegal character of Britain's Palestine policy, especially the limits on Jewish immigration violated the terms of the mandate. This shifted the blame for violence onto Britain and legitimised all Jewish resistance as 'self-defence'. Third, insurgent propaganda de-legitimised British rule by portraying Palestine as akin to a 'police state'. Closely linked to this was a theme that equated British policies and behaviour with Nazism and anti-Semitism. All of these themes rested upon at least a kernel of truth. British policy had not been changed since the outset of the war, at which time it favoured the Arabs and limited Jewish immigration, in contravention of Britain's obligations under the mandate. Palestine was no democracy; it was governed under emergency laws, enforced by a large military and police presence. And the words and deeds of some British officials and members of the security forces were infused with a patina of anti-Semitism. This embarrassed the British government and gave insurgent propaganda considerable credibility within its audiences at home and abroad. It allowed them to maintain pressure on the US government, and made it almost impossible for the Truman administration to cooperate with Britain in finding a negotiated solution to the Palestine crisis.<sup>23</sup>

Confronted with a deteriorating security situation which its forces could not reverse, torn by conflicting political pressures from its major ally, and embarrassed by negative propaganda which prevented it from securing international support, the British government assessed its options. It could 'muddle through' with no prospect of things getting better, or cut its losses and get out. It chose the latter course. On 26 September 1947, the British government announced its intention to withdraw from the mandate no later than May 1948.<sup>24</sup>

The Jewish insurgency and the resultant security situation was a major factor in that decision, but not the only one. First, Britain was in dire economic straits after the war, much of its wealth expended on the war effort and now dependent upon the United States. As the new Labour government sought to introduce major economic and social reforms, it was also coping with 'Imperial Overstretch': too many commitments and too many forces abroad. Second, as already noted, American policy toward Britain and Palestine was

23. Susan L. Carruthers, *Winning hearts and minds: British governments, the media and colonial counter-insurgency 1944-1960* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 30-2, 49-54; Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 27-9, 32-3, 36, 38, 65-70, 80-2.

24. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 40.

influenced and complicated by domestic politics and Zionist lobbying and propaganda. This frustrated British efforts to find a negotiated settlement. Second, after its visits and hearings, the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine had recommended partition of the country. But Britain would have to carry the burden of implementing that decision alone, in the face of Arab opposition, and it was not prepared to do so. Third, although the Chiefs of Staff were reluctant to give up Palestine, Britain had alternative locations for its troop bases: Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Kenya. Finally, granting independence to India and Pakistan at the end of August 1947 had deprived Britain of the centrepiece of the rationale for its Middle East policy: protecting the flanks of the sea lines of communication to the Empire. Imperial policy was in transition in a time of austerity.<sup>25</sup> Palestine was no longer vital to the security of the empire; it could be abandoned with alacrity. And it was.

The point here is to highlight context and influence. The insurgency was but one factor in the British decision to withdraw from Palestine, significant in itself, but not as a sole explanation. The insurgents had no influence on the situations in Egypt or the sub-continent. Had those situations—and Britain's—been different, less amenable to British strategic and economic concerns at that time, it is by no means certain that the British government would have abandoned Palestine so readily, even in the face of the violence there.

### TACTICAL INNOVATION

While the Jewish insurgents relied on 'tried and true' terrorist tactics, such as bombings, assassinations, and sabotage, they were also tactically innovative. Every tactic the British tried to contain the insurgency was matched by an insurgent innovation intended to offset British military advantages. The road network and the British Army's vast pool of motor transport gave them freedom of movement throughout the country. The insurgents reduced this freedom with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) disguised as mile-stone markers. The IEDs used about 15 kg of Ammonium Nitrate explosive, with 5-8 kg of bolts for shrapnel, the bomb connected by wire to a remote push-button detonator. They normally were grouped in threes and the insurgents regarded them as their most cost-effective weapon. They blew vehicles off the road and killed or injured their occupants. Bombs were also placed in abandoned vehicles. Similarly, in at least one attack the *Irgun* blew down the walls of a British police station with a massive vehicle-borne IED (truck bomb).<sup>26</sup>

25. Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine to Israel: mandate to independence* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 200-06, 220-38; Martin Jones, *Failure in Palestine: British and United States policy after the second world war* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986), 290-2; Wm. Roger Louis, 'British Imperialism and the End of the Palestine Mandate,' in Wm. Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey (eds), *The end of the Palestine mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 15-16, 22; Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 18-24, 109-10. The origin of the term 'Imperial Overstretch' has been attributed to Paul Kennedy, 'The relative decline of America', *The Atlantic*, August, 1997.
26. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 60-1; 'Avner', *Memoirs of an assassin* (London: Anthony Blond, 1959), 87; J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror out of Zion: Irgun Zvai Leumi, LEHI, and the Palestine underground, 1929-1949* (New York: St Martin' Press, 1977), 245, and photo between 251 and 253; John Newsinger, *British counter-insurgency: from Palestine to Northern Ireland* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), 24.

When the British passed death sentences on convicted terrorists, British military personnel and civilians were abducted and held for ransom. Some were flogged in retaliation for similar British corporal punishment, and two Intelligence Corps sergeants were executed by the *Irgun* after a mock trial. Their booby-trapped bodies were hung in an orange grove. Facing the death penalty, two imprisoned *Irgun* members sacrificed themselves in a 'martyrdom operation': they blew themselves up in prison with a smuggled grenade. Others were freed in an attack on Acre prison. In short, the insurgents skilfully neutralised Britain's ability to exert control of the security situation, while also humiliating the British government and thus undermining further its legitimacy. So, there is very little that Iraqi insurgents have done that was not previously attempted by the Jewish insurgents in Palestine. Dr Maurice Tugwell, who had served in Palestine as a British Army subaltern, reflected later that the Jewish terrorists were the best the British Army faced in the post-war era, and this prepared the army well for subsequent campaigns.<sup>27</sup>

### THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Since the insurgents' efforts were aimed at not only driving the British out of Palestine to clear the way for the Jewish state, but also at bringing the remnants of European Jewry to the anticipated new state, the insurgency was explicitly international. Zionist organisations of all stripes in the United States and elsewhere raised funds to transport refugees and also to sustain the armed struggle. And as noted, they also were in the forefront of the strategic political and psychological propaganda battle for legitimacy.

But the *Irgun* and the Stern Gang also extended the armed struggle overseas. Small networks of activists were organised among the refugees in Europe and within the Jewish communities in Britain. They attempted numerous operations, but only one was wholly successful. On 31 October 1946, the *Irgun* set off a large 'suitcase bomb' at the British embassy in Rome, causing extensive damage. It claimed that the attack marked the opening of a new front against the British, and the accompanying propaganda offensive was intended to 'bring home' the terrorist threat to the British people. But later plots in Britain failed.<sup>28</sup>

The Stern Gang also deployed a few members to Europe and recruited a few 'home-grown' terrorists in the United Kingdom. They plotted to assassinate British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin as he drove to work, but lacked the resources to carry out the attack. A bomb they planted under his seat in the House of Commons failed to detonate. The group claimed responsibility for a bomb in the War Office and a 'coat bomb' in a senior officials' club in London, but failed to blow up the Colonial Office. They also sent letter

27. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 61-3, 176.

28. *Ibid.*, 64; letters to author from former *Irgun* member Monte Harris, 15 February, 1 March 1978; interview with former *Irgun* member Dan Nimrod, Montreal, 14 June 1978; Bell, *Terror out of Zion*, 307-8.

bombs to British politicians and military leaders, but succeeded only in accidentally killing the brother of Roy Farran, whose role in the Palestine conflict is discussed later in the essay. The Stern Gang's only significant post-war 'international' operation was the September 1948 assassination of Swedish UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte in Jerusalem. They objected to his proposals for resolving the war with the Arabs. But the killing led to the disbanding of the LHI.<sup>29</sup>

British newspapers printed lurid stories of ruthless terrorists stalking the streets of London, but the reality was less dramatic. The *Irgun* and Stern Gang networks in Britain were small, under-funded, and not particularly competent. Furthermore, MI5 was keeping a careful watch on the would-be terrorists. Accustomed to the highly visible and heavy-handed police and security surveillance in Europe, the Jewish terrorists were deceived by the low-profile approach of the British security service. Likewise, in Italy the British and American security forces assisted the Italian police in the search for the embassy bombers. While they never caught the perpetrators, by the end of December they had arrested 21 *Irgun* members, including Ely Tavin, head of international operations. This forced the *Irgun* to relocate its international headquarters to Paris. It carried out a series of small attacks elsewhere in Europe, but never mounted another attack comparable to the Rome operation.<sup>30</sup> Nor is it clear that the attack contributed in any way to the British decision to withdraw from Palestine.

### COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS

Many of the counter-insurgency problems that confront the Americans in Iraq—the absence of viable policy guidance, an indifferent or hostile population, poor intelligence, inappropriate doctrine, ponderous and apparently futile operations, a negative public image and ineffective counter-propaganda—also plagued the British in Palestine. The majority of operations consisted of searches for arms and for wanted persons. Following the King David Hotel bombing, the army searched the whole city of Tel Aviv. In a significant departure, however, British forces in Palestine rarely employed lethal force.<sup>31</sup> Artillery, armour and air power did not provide fire support at all until British forces were withdrawing during the fighting between Arabs and Jews in late 1947 and early 1948. In Palestine, there was no British equivalent of the American battles for the control of Falluja.

29. 'Avner', *Memoirs of an assassin*, 19-23, 109-50; Heller, *The Stern Gang*, 239-55; Yaacov Eliav, *Wanted* (New York: Shengold, 1984), 240-6.

30. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 64-65, 75-76, 82; Nimrod interview, and Harris letters to author (fn. 28). The extent of MI5 awareness of suspected terrorists in Britain was revealed in a series of declassified MI5 documents obtained from the PRO by the BBC in April 2006. Copies were sent to the author by Philip Sellars, Executive Producer, BBC Documentaries Unit. These include: letter, J. C. Robertson, B3A Section, MI5, to Trafford-Smith, War Office, 27 August 1946; letter, Defence Security Office, Palestine and Trans-Jordan, to Director General of the Security Service, 6 December 1946; memo, Metropolitan Police, Special Branch, to B3A Section, MI5, 8 December 1946. Which files and record groups these came from is not indicated on the copies I received. See also, Bell, *Terror out of Zion*, 307.

31. Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 97-124, 133-45, 164-7; David A. Charters, 'British intelligence in the Palestine campaign, 1945-1947', *Intelligence and National Security* 6:1 (1991), 115-40.

### BRITISH TACTICAL INNOVATION

In spite of being burdened with an outdated doctrine and a predilection for large, ponderous operations, the British Army showed glimmers of insight, and a capacity to adapt. They supplemented large operations, which never had the advantage of surprise, with smaller actions that kept the insurgents off balance. These included: snap searches of houses and apartments; random identity and baggage checks on public transport; quick-reaction mobile roadblocks; night patrols; and raids mounted quickly to exploit intelligence. These actions invariably were more cost-effective than the larger ‘cordon and search’ operations.<sup>32</sup> The most noteworthy innovation was the attempt to employ Special Forces in the conflict. This has since become one of the hallmarks of British counter-insurgency strategy, but the Palestine campaign was its nursery. While the effort became mired in controversy, it demonstrated imaginative thinking about counter-insurgency. New information on this initiative has recently come to light, so is worth exploring in more detail.

Prodded by the new CIGS, Field Marshal Montgomery, who felt that the Palestine administration had not been tough enough on the insurgents, the Attlee government informed the High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, in January 1947 that they would support any action short of reprisals to combat the insurgents.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, ex-Chindit Brigadier Bernard Fergusson, who was serving as Assistant Inspector-General Training and Operations in the Palestine Police, felt that the Palestine security forces needed a fresh approach to counter-terrorism. He conceived of using British soldiers with ‘behind the lines’ experience to anticipate insurgent attacks and surprise them—turning the tables on the terrorists. Armed with Whitehall’s ‘blank cheque’ and the germ of an idea, he badgered the War Office with visits and memos, which fell on receptive ears, not only at the highest levels, but also at the fringes. As it happened, he was floating his idea at a time when the advocates of special forces were engaged in a ‘rear-guard’ action to preserve that capability in the face of post-war cutbacks. Former members of the SAS and SOE were being deployed on a range of semi-official clandestine missions that served to maintain the skills and prove their value.<sup>34</sup>

One of those who helped to ensure that Fergusson’s initiative would succeed was his former Chindit colleague Brigadier Mike Calvert, who was working actively ‘behind the scenes’ to keep the SAS and similar capabilities alive. He spread the word about Fergusson’s proposed force among the recently ‘de-mobbed’ special forces personnel. Four officers were recruited initially. One was despatched to Europe to counter *Irgun* efforts there. The other three were assigned to Palestine itself, though only two appear to have deployed. One was

32. Charters, *British Army and Jewish insurgency*, 114-16, 120-1.

33. *Ibid.*, 105.

34. Tim Jones, *SAS: the first secret wars: the unknown years of combat and counter-insurgency* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 14-32, 38-59, 60-4, 74-7.

Captain Roy Farran, a highly-decorated SAS veteran; the other was Captain James Alistair McGregor, an SOE veteran by that time serving in MI6. According to Tim Jones, Farran briefed McGregor on the scheme in the ‘Gents’ toilet at the Berkeley Hotel.<sup>35</sup>

There were supposed to be three ten-person undercover squads, one for each military district of Palestine: north, south, and Jerusalem, a division of responsibility which suggested an orientation more toward the army’s needs than those of the police (whose six districts did not correspond to the squad areas). This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that Fergusson, as the overall commander of the special operations force, reported to two senior officers: the IG of the police (Colonel William Nicol Gray) and the GOC Palestine, General Sir Evelyn Barker. In the event, it appears that Fergusson recruited only enough men for two squads: McGregor’s in the north, and Farran’s in the south. The two men arrived in Palestine on 17 March and began preparing their squads for operations. Two weeks later they went into action. Much of what they did remains unknown, but their work included plain-clothes and covert surveillance, clandestine foot patrols, ambushes, arrests, and ‘false flag’ operations. Except for the operation which went awry and sabotaged the whole endeavour, only one has been described in any detail. Acting in cooperation with the squads, the army set up a bogus road block, where they detained a laundry van. Farran’s squad borrowed it to capture an insurgent courier and some of his contacts, then returned it to the driver with an apology. Little is known about the results and effects of these operations. Except for more attempts to assassinate plainclothes police officers, they corresponded with a decline in insurgent action, but that may have resulted from the imposition of martial law on Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup>

This innovative approach to counter-terrorism operations, which presaged similar efforts in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland, ‘went off the rails’ in May 1947. On 6 May Alexander Rubowitz, a young member of the Stern Gang, was abducted while distributing leaflets in Jerusalem. He was dragged into a car and never seen alive again. Eyewitness accounts and a hat left at the scene pointed to Captain Farran. The press quickly caught the whiff of scandal and the situation rapidly ‘snowballed’ out of control. The press reported rumours of a secret police counter-terrorist cell operating independently of the police high command. The stories were picked up by American newspapers; throughout the summer they printed lurid stories alleging conspiracy, torture, and anti-Jewish pogroms. Complaints of police abuses became so common that the Palestine government had to create a special office to handle the problem. In the meantime, the squads were stood down. Then, to complicate matters further Farran—who sensed he was about to be made the scapegoat for a policy gone wrong—fled to Syria in June 1947. In a still

35. Ibid, 76-9.

36. Ibid., 80-3; David A. Charters, ‘Special operations in counter-insurgency: the Farran case, Palestine 1947’, *RUSI Journal* 124:2 (June 1979), 56-61, at 58-9; Charters, *British army and Jewish insurgency*, 123.

confusing sequence of events, he was either arrested there or returned voluntarily, only to escape again two days later. Fergusson persuaded him to return, and he was tried by court martial in October 1947. Due to lack of evidence, he was acquitted, then quickly and quietly escorted from the country. Fergusson followed shortly thereafter. According to Jones, McGregor, who had testified in open court, was inexplicably left to fend for himself; he and his wife hid from the Jewish insurgents for six weeks before escaping in secret to Egypt.<sup>37</sup>

Farran had resolutely maintained his innocence. The body was never found, Fergusson refused to testify, and eyewitness evidence could not be corroborated. However, evidence that was suppressed at the trial because it was declared privileged and inadmissible has since come to light. According to a report by the Jerusalem District Superintendent of Police, found in Israeli archives by an American lawyer, on 7 May Farran confessed to Fergusson that he had murdered Rubowitz during questioning in the car. The boy's clothes were burned and his body dumped in open country off the Jericho road. Unless the document is an extremely clever forgery, Farran's guilt seems to have been established beyond all reasonable doubt. As he died on 2 June 2006, he is no longer around to answer the charge.<sup>38</sup>

The flawed execution of an otherwise imaginative special counter-terrorism operation can be attributed to several factors. First, there was political pressure for 'results' that manifested itself in the 'blank cheque' from the government. In response, General Barker himself issued a follow-up directive, which stated that the goal of operational policy was 'to kill or arrest terrorists and to obtain ... their arms'.<sup>39</sup> These policies, in turn, opened the door to a second problem: their operational role and Rules of Engagement were left open to conflicting interpretations. Farran felt he had been given 'a *carte blanche* ... a free hand for us against terror when all others were so closely hobbled'.<sup>40</sup> Fergusson claimed later that he saw their role in more defensive terms: anticipating and ambushing insurgents as they came in to attack. Palestine government Chief Secretary Henry Gurney had another, and more confused, view. He acknowledged that the squads had been using 'unorthodox methods' against the terrorists, but insisted that 'No authority has ever been given for the use by any member of the police force of other than ordinary police methods in dealing with apprehended persons ...'<sup>41</sup>

37. Charters, 'Special operations', 56-61, at 59; Jones, *SAS: the first secret wars*, 82-4.

38. Charters, 'Special operations', 56-61, at 61, n. 33; K. P. Hadingham, 'Report on the alleged abduction and murder of Alexander Rubovitz, and subsequent police investigation', 19 June 1947, in telegram, High Commissioner for Palestine to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 June 1947, copy in author's possession, received from Judge Murray Richtel, Judicial Arbitrator Group, Colorado Springs, 2004; 'Obituary: Major Roy Farran', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 2006.

39. Quoted and cited in Tim Jones, *SAS: the first secret wars*, 83.

40. Roy Farran, *Winged Dagger: Adventures on Special Service* (London: Collins, 1948), 348.

41. Gurney to Creech-Jones, 25 June 1947, Papers of Sir Alan Cunningham, Box II, file 1, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford.

This points to a third problem. Tim Jones attributes this confusion to the dualistic place of the squads in the command structure, reporting to both the police and the GOC. As nominal members of the police, they were bound by the rules governing arrest procedures and the use of force. But as special forces operating under the GOC's orders, they may have been—or felt they were—subject to a looser interpretation of the rules.<sup>42</sup> That, and possible confusion over their roles and rules, were familiar problems, consistent with the wartime experience of special forces. Indeed, officers like Mike Calvert were fighting a rear-guard battle to preserve such units for those very reasons. Wartime commanders of regular forces had been frustrated by the tendencies of special forces to become a law unto themselves.<sup>43</sup>

Fourth, since they are by nature 'high risk' missions, special operations depend heavily for success on accurate intelligence. But the intelligence environment of Palestine was very poor. The Jewish population was mostly hostile to the British presence, and offered little information to the security forces. The language barrier prevented the Palestine Police from comprehending what was going on around them. The insurgents penetrated the police and government and attacked police and intelligence personnel to prevent them from working effectively against the insurgency. Moreover, the covert squads themselves did not consist of trained detectives and none of the members had more than a smattering of Hebrew. There was little likelihood that the squads would 'get the right man' by covert means when the intelligence system as a whole was dysfunctional.<sup>44</sup> As a result, the flying squads were 'flying blind': a recipe for disaster.

Finally, they were deployed in an unfavourable political context. Fergusson and Farran may have viewed their actions in light of wartime experience, but in Palestine the analogy was reversed. The Jewish population viewed British troops and police as occupation forces, not as liberators. Furthermore, by the time they were operational Britain had already referred the Palestine problem to the United Nations. In effect, British Palestine policy was 'on hold'. So the government's strategic guidance for the counter-terrorism campaign—to 'get tough' with the terrorists—was out of step with the political reality. The security forces were simply 'holding the ring' until the UN and the British government decided what to do. It was hardly an appropriate time to engage in aggressive, high-risk operations, but no one seems to have considered the political consequences if something went wrong.<sup>45</sup>

Although the Palestine campaign was largely overlooked by historians and by the British Army itself until the 1970s, it may have been more influential than this circumstance would suggest. Many of those who served in Palestine, such as army and police officers, and even senior civil servants like Sir Henry Gurney, went on to participate in the Malayan

42. Jones, *SAS: the first secret wars*, 83.

43. *Ibid.*, 13-22, 26-30.

44. Charters 'British intelligence', 115-40; Charters, 'special operations', 56-61, at 58.

45. Charters, 'special operations', 56-61.

Emergency and in subsequent campaigns, including Northern Ireland. Some of the problems encountered in Palestine were remedied elsewhere, suggesting that it may have been an instructive experience. Defeat, even if not formally acknowledged as such, can be a teacher.

## CONCLUSION

The Palestine conflict involved the first urban insurgency and counter-insurgency campaigns of the post-war era. The British were challenged by three insurgent groups, which used terrorism as a 'strategy of chaos' to make Palestine ungovernable. These groups were innovative, confronting the security forces with a myriad of new tactics and techniques that frustrated British efforts to contain the insurgency. They extended their operations overseas, even to Britain itself. They also employed 'Information Warfare' to erode the legitimacy of Britain's position in Palestine, its will to remain, and its ability to craft a political solution. Taken in the context of Britain's greatly weakened post-war position, the insurgents' strategy and tactics altered Palestine's status from that of a strategic asset for Britain to one of strategic liability, and contributed directly to the British decision to withdraw from Palestine.

For its part, having just won a major conventional war, the British Army was not attuned to counter-insurgency and had to 'reinvent the wheel', gradually returning to its 'Imperial Policing' roots. After a sluggish start, wedded to ponderous 'cordon and search' operations, the army gradually adapted more flexible and effective tactics. Similarly, the police experimented with special operations that presaged similar efforts in subsequent campaigns. By that time, however, the die was cast and they could not alter the outcome.

Michael Howard has cautioned against drawing specific 'lessons' from history, arguing instead that the purpose of studying history is to make us 'wise forever'.<sup>46</sup> With respect to extracting lessons from particular campaigns or battles and blindly applying them to others, he is undoubtedly right. But the insurgent and counter-insurgent campaigns in 1940s Palestine do offer some 'lessons', albeit not so much on the *conduct* of war. Rather, they tell us a great deal about how to view current conflicts. In an era when media bereft of memory treat all events as unprecedented, history provides perspective. It reminds us that—more often than not—'we have been here before'. That may not always be reassuring, since history is full of 'bad news'. But if the study of the past teaches us anything, it should at least teach us not to be surprised. Clearly, Iraq is not the first urban insurgency; nor is it the first counter-insurgency campaign to go 'pear-shaped'.

46. As cited in Dominick Graham, 'Stress lines and gray areas: the utility of the historical method to the military profession', in David A. Charters, Marc Milner, and J. Brent Wilson (eds), *Military history and the military profession* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), 147.

Furthermore, history should teach us to be sceptical of immediate claims that any particular event or development is ‘revolutionary’ or world-changing. The long-term significance of any event simply cannot be known at the outset, and may not be known for decades, if not centuries. In fact, its significance may never been ‘*known*’ at all, if by that we mean established as an unchallenged ‘*fact*’. Rather, its significance is more likely to be subject to endless ‘debate’ by historians. 9/11 *may* have been ‘unprecedented’ in scale, but it was not the first international terrorist attack, nor was this kind of terrorism the first to be viewed as a threat to ‘civilisation’. The same was said about the Anarchists more than a century ago, and their techniques greatly influenced those of the Jewish insurgents. Thus, it is probably premature to conclude that 9/11 represents a ‘revolutionary’ change in terrorism, or that it has changed the world in a fundamental way. Likewise, we should be cautious about making similar claims regarding the war in Iraq. If studying the Palestine campaigns—both Jewish and British—can teach us these things, then it has probably taught us a great deal.

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# **The Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa: Airborne Tactics in an Insurgency War**

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The Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa extended across many countries in the region and included a number of 'small wars', all of which could be classified as insurgencies. These ranged from battles in the bush (starting as no more than skirmishes and building up over the years to intensive conventional clashes involving armour, artillery and supersonic aerial combat) to vicious urban encounters foreshadowing the conflict in Iraq today.

Much has been written on the tactics and techniques of insurgency and counter-insurgency, and most of these are well known to military audiences. I have chosen to address a particular technique of modern warfare more generally associated with conventional military operations. Vertical envelopment, as a concept of manoeuvre, is well known and the helicopter has made it particularly applicable to counter-insurgency. However, the concept, using helicopters, parachutes and the air landing of fixed-wing aircraft may have reached something of an acme in the military operations conducted in Southern Africa.

The insurgents won all the wars in Southern Africa. Yet it is a common adage that wars are not ultimately won or lost by soldiers, but by politicians. In a true insurgency, this is perhaps especially so, given that the military aspect is but a small part of the struggle and that it is entirely subservient to the political. In fact, insurgencies are probably best characterised by the fact that the insurgents are invariably dedicated and often fanatical politicians who have been compelled to become soldiers in order to achieve their political aims, while the counter-insurgents are almost always professional soldiers who are not primarily motivated by political considerations.

In light of this, it may appear superfluous to examine a technique employed by the losers. Yet, in view of the ongoing incidence of insurgency around the world, it may just be of some value to consider a technique, which from a purely tactical consideration, was notably successful.

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to give an overview of the application of the airborne technique in the insurgency wars of Southern Africa with a particular emphasis on South Africa.

For a better understanding of human complexities of Southern Africa, an historical overview of conflict in the region is first given. It is also useful to understand the role of the physical environment in the decisions taken to employ the airborne technique, so an outline of certain geographical imperatives is also provided. Airborne operations in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique as well as in what was then Rhodesia are then touched on before considering the same types of operations by the South Africans in Angola and Namibia. The paper concludes with a brief look at the airborne aspect of the largely urban conflict that took place within South Africa.

### **BACKGROUND: A REGION WITH A HISTORY OF SMALL WARS**

Southern Africa, traditionally the region south of the great Zambezi River, is a part of the continent that has a long history of wars. These have been both internecine wars amongst the tribes of the indigenous population as well as colonial wars between the European settlers and the indigenous peoples.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there have been clashes and even bloody wars between competing colonial powers, some of whose descendants had become permanent residents of ten generations or more in South Africa; thus, battles of those wars have taken place in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Insurgency in Southern Africa could possibly be said to have had its roots in the efforts of the diminutive San people, the original inhabitants of this sub-continent, to hold their own against successive waves of what could well have been construed by them as 'invaders'. For this small population of primitive but peaceful hunter/gatherers, minor clashes were inevitable with the arrival of the cattle-owning Khoi and the later advance of the iron-age subsistence agricultural/herder Bantu peoples.<sup>3</sup> Their retreat into mountain redoubts and ultimately the desert, are evidence of how unsuccessful the San were in their attempts to wage an insurgent war against greater numbers and a more advanced civilisation.

Small wars among the Bantu tribes were frequent, with family feuds, often over honour and the most prized asset, cattle, being the most common cause. Such small wars erupted into a monumental campaign of bloodshed and brutal tyranny during the rise and reign of the great King Shaka of the Zulus in the early nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Already by then, European settlers had established themselves on the southern tip of Africa and were pushing inland. They had brought with them gunpowder, horses, forts and wagons, introducing into Africa an early version of the trilogy that changed the face of

1. Trehwella Cameron (ed.), *An Illustrated History of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1986), 50, 75-93, 115-26.
2. C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *Five Hundred Years—A History of South Africa* (Pretoria and Cape Town: Academica, 1973), 81-2.
3. Cameron, *An Illustrated History*, 36.
4. *Ibid.*, 118-19.

warfare in the modern world: firepower, mobility and armour protection. The Europeans quickly displaced the San, and the more peaceful Khoi soon succumbed to the ravages of European diseases for which they, like the Native Americans, had no resistance.<sup>5</sup>

However, it was in the conflict between the Europeans and the Bantu that real insurgency first became apparent in Southern Africa. It was cattle that had sparked the clashes with the San, who regarded the herds of the Khoi, the Bantu and the Europeans as easy game in the quest to find fresh meat. The Europeans brought the idea of individual land ownership into the region: an unknown concept in the cultures of the indigenous peoples. The failure of the Europeans to understand this, as well as their misinterpretation of tribal hierarchies and sources of authority, resulted in many small wars as the European settlers strove to obtain ever-more land to cater for their commercial approach to farming.<sup>6</sup>

The confusion and misconceptions were compounded by the differing attitudes towards settlement by first the Dutch, then by the British who replaced them, and lastly by the Boers who were determined to establish independent republics in the hinterland with no links to a colonial power.<sup>7</sup> These politics of European expansionism led to 'small wars' in South Africa between Holland and Britain that were no more than battles waged in accordance with the European wars fought on another continent.

The two colonial powers that occupied South Africa were in almost constant conflict with the black peoples of the sub-continent. There were nine wars fought against the Xhosa tribes of the Eastern Cape frontier, the first four by the Dutch and the remainder by the British.<sup>8</sup> The Zulu War of 1879, in which the mighty British Empire, after first suffering humiliation by defeat at the Battle of Isandhlwana, finally broke the might of the waning Zulu Empire, has become a classic study of a colonial war.<sup>9</sup>

There were other small wars by the British, waged against the Tswana people and later against the Matabele and the Shona of what became Rhodesia.<sup>10</sup> The Boers, in the meantime, had conducted their own small wars against the Zulus, the Matabele, the Tswana, the Barolong and the Sekhukune peoples. These were often punitive raids in retribution for attacks by the tribal warriors on their wagon trains or isolated settlements.<sup>11</sup> Both Boers and British frequently persuaded one warring tribe to ally itself with them against another. With borders or frontiers often vague and usually not even recognised as a concept by most combatants, the wars were confusing both in their course and in their results.

5. Ibid., 105.

6. John Milton, *The Edges of War* (Cape Town: Juta, 1983), 21-31.

7. Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), 159-60.

8. These wars are covered by Milton, *The Edges of War*.

9. The war is well documented by Frank Emery, *The Red Soldier* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977).

10. See W.A. Wills and L.T. Collingridge, *The Downfall of Lobengula* (1894, reprinted Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia Reprints, 1971).

11. See Johannes Meintjes, *The Voortrekkers* (London: Corgi, 1975).

More easily delineated was the First Boer War, known by the Boers as the First War of Freedom, which took place in 1880–81. Little-known because of the defeat it inflicted on the British, it was a graphic example of big power professional military incompetence in the face of a shrewd, rag-tag army of civilian farmers living all their lives at war with the indigenous population.<sup>12</sup>

The Second Boer War (1899–1902) could hardly be regarded as a ‘small war’, given the resources that Britain was forced to pump into the conflict and the fact that the two Boer republics threw virtually every able-bodied man that they had into the desperate attempt to retain their independence. The country was devastated, but the guerrilla phase that the war entered after the British occupation of Pretoria was probably one of the most brilliantly fought of all modern insurgent campaigns, despite the ultimate and inevitable defeat of the Boers.<sup>13</sup>

The outbreak of the First World War was seen as an opportunity by many Boers to revolt against the British yoke, and a rebellion erupted in 1914. It was a ‘small war’ of note, with Louis Botha, the Prime Minister of the new Union of South Africa, himself a former commander of the Boer forces, taking the field personally to quell the uprising by his former comrades.

Immediately after putting down the rebellion, the two-year-old Union Defence Force launched an invasion of German South West Africa (what ultimately became Namibia). Again, at its head was the Prime Minister, Louis Botha, in the uniform of a lieutenant general of the British Army. Probably one of the last heads of a government to lead his country’s forces in the field, Botha gave the Allies their first victory of that war when he defeated the German forces in the territory and occupied it in their name. A minor campaign in the First World War, its independence from any other theatre (it was the only independent land operation undertaken by a Dominion in the First World War) conceivably made it a ‘small war’ in its own right.<sup>14</sup> After this campaign, South African forces entered the more mainstream actions, fighting in East Africa, North Africa, Palestine and France.

The German South West Africa colony that had been conquered by the South Africans had had its own share of small wars and insurgency prior to South Africa’s arrival in 1914. It had long been a vast, trackless land of desert, mountain and savannah, sparsely peopled by disparate groups who waged almost constant small wars against one another. There were Bantu tribes in the north and in the south migrant descendants of the Khoi and mixed race former slaves of the Dutch in the Cape, all of who were competing for

12. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 230-1.

13. Siegfried Stander, *Like the Wind* (Cape Town: Saayman and Weber, 1985), 24, and Field Marshal Lord Carver, *The Boer War* (London: Sigwick and Jackson, 1999), 259.

14. Brigadier Peter Young (ed.), *History of the First World War*, Vol. 1 (London: Purnell, 1971), 348-53.

scarce water resources and grazing lands. The arrival of the Germans in 1884, latecomers amongst the European colonial empire builders, brought order and development to the area—but at a terrible price.<sup>15</sup> The Imperial Germans subjugated the tribes with horrific brutality. There were several bitter colonial wars, culminating in the genocidal conflict of 1904–08, during which the Germans exterminated three-quarters of the Herero and half of the Nama peoples.<sup>16</sup>

The heavy-handedness of the Germans left a legacy of racial bitterness. Moreover, when the occupying South Africans received a mandate to administer South West Africa by the League of Nations at the conclusion of the First World War, fresh resistance grew. The South African military violently suppressed a rebellion by the Bondelswart people in 1922, and other local efforts at resistance were met with equally harsh measures.<sup>17</sup>

Back in South Africa, sporadic actions of resistance were also crushed, as for example the massacre, in 1921, of the ‘Israelite’ religious movement.<sup>18</sup>

The Second World War saw some Fifth Columnist activity inside South Africa by a small minority of white Afrikaners sympathetic to the Nazis,<sup>19</sup> but on the whole South Africa’s attention was focused on its armed forces fighting for the Allies in East Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, Madagascar and Italy. South Africa fielded three divisions during the war (one of them armoured), as well as an independent brigade, a plethora of specialised engineering units and numerous fighter and bomber squadrons. Due to the high level of political tension and emotion in the country, use was made exclusively of volunteers and South Africa was one of the few countries to participate in that conflict that did not resort to conscription.<sup>20</sup>

However, it was only after the Second World War that organised insurgency began to take effect in Southern Africa. The West was seeing Communism as a dire threat and South Africa contributed a fighter squadron from its Air Force<sup>21</sup> as well as individual Army officers to fight for the UN in the Korean War. Back in South Africa though, it was the flowing tide of Black Nationalism throughout the continent that gave rise to an insurgent war that was to extend across the region for almost three decades.

15. Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa’s Border War* (Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1989), 10-12.

16. Colin Leys and John S. Saul, *Namibia’s Liberation Struggle* (London: James Currey, 1995), 1.

17. Muller, *Five Hundred Years*, 357.

18. William Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1994), 97-8.

19. See George Cloete Visser, *OB—Traitors or Patriots?* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1976), and Hans Strydom, *For Volk and Führer* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982).

20. *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, Vol. 11* (Cape Town: Nasou, 1975), 512-27. A succinct account of South Africa’s contribution during the Second World War can be found in the commemorative publication by Joel Mervis, *South Africa in World War II* (Johannesburg: Times Media, 1989).

21. See Dermot Moore and Peter Bagshawe, *South Africa’s Flying Cheetahs in Korea* (Johannesburg: Ashanti, 1991).

## THE BASTIONS IN THE SOUTH AMIDST THE DEMISE OF COLONIALISM AND THE DECISION TO RESORT TO ARMED STRUGGLE

The year 1957 saw the start of the scramble out of Africa by the European colonial powers. The independence of Ghana presaged a spate of decolonisation throughout the continent as the aversion to imperialism took hold in the aftermath of the Second World War. With the surge of African nationalism and in the light of the euphoric ideals of the new United Nations Organisation, there was an urgency among most of the old imperial powers to shed what had become something of a political and economic millstone around their necks. Colonies that had never developed into viable states, but which the competing states of Europe had carved into an artificial existence with no regard to traditional and ethnic population distribution, were now abandoned with little or no preparation for independence.<sup>22</sup>

For the oppressed people of Africa, the age of liberation had finally dawned. Most of the countries being granted their freedom had laboured under the colonial yoke for less than a century, but the exploitation of some by the Europeans and Arabs had gone back far longer than that.<sup>23</sup> The blight of slavery had left an indelible mark on certain of the black peoples of Africa, and now their future finally lay in their own hands.

Yet the euphoria was marred by political violence in many of the newly independent states. Civil wars and violent power struggles characterised the early years of independence of countries in central, east and west Africa. Invariably, the small white settler populations became victims of this violence, and though far more blacks than whites were massacred in these terrible conflicts, it was the white casualties that received the most graphic publicity.

In the south, where the colonial presence had been felt for over three centuries, where there were significantly greater white populations and where the infrastructure was highly developed and sophisticated, the spirit of '*uhuru*' that was sweeping the rest of the continent encountered predictable resistance. The whites of southern Africa looked on the events north of their borders with undisguised dismay.

The Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau were administered as overseas provinces of metropolitan Portugal. Though the Portuguese followed no official policy of racial separation, they were adamant that they would not grant independence to the three territories. As relics of a 500-year empire, the dictatorial government of Salazar clung tenaciously to these last vestiges of past greatness.

22. J.D. Fage, *A History of Africa* (London: Routledge, 1996), 460-1.

23. Ken Smith and F.J. Nöthling, *North of the Limpopo—Africa since 1800* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1993), 40.

Southern Rhodesia, after the break-up of the short-lived Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and the independence of Zambia and Malawi, retained a white-dominated government. When Britain attempted to move towards a majority black government as a preliminary to independence, the white government of Ian Smith issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence, making them rebels to the Crown.<sup>24</sup> It was the first such action by a British colony since the revolt of the Thirteen Colonies in North America in 1763, their Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the subsequent founding of the United States.

South Africa, however, provided a far more complex case for independence than did Rhodesia. Unlike Rhodesia, where the land had been a white colony for less than a century, here the whites had imposed their will on the indigenous population for over 300 years. In South Africa the twentieth century had been dominated by white politics and the country had had its own prime minister and cabinet since the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Yet prior to that, the first short-lived Dutch republic had been established in the Cape as early as 1795 and the Boer Republics in the Transvaal and Orange Free State had been established in 1852 and 1854 respectively.<sup>25</sup> The Cape Colony had itself received self-governing status in 1872,<sup>26</sup> and at the time of Union, the four colonies that constituted the new country were all self-governing.

The Afrikaners, descendants of the Boers, controlled the government of South Africa and, unlike whites in other African countries, did not regard themselves as settlers. They had been in the country for three centuries and did not see any other place as their homeland. After taking over the government of the country in the whites-only election of 1948, the Afrikaners worked steadily towards the achievement of their goal of a republic and a recovery of the freedom they had lost in the Second Boer War. In 1961 they achieved this, and withdrew South Africa from the Commonwealth.<sup>27</sup>

Even the English-speaking descendants of the British settlers had for the most part been in the country for five generations or more and their links with Great Britain were mostly, by the time this republic was being mooted, becoming tenuous at best. Having been in control of a land that had become the most highly developed in the continent, the whites were not easily going to hand over power to the subjugated black majority. This sentiment was reinforced by the horror stories that were emanating from those recently independent countries to the north.

24. Matthew C. White, *Smith of Rhodesia* (Cape Town: Don Nelson, 1978), 44-8.

25. Wikipedia.org, *Boer Republics, History*, 1.

26. Eyclopedia.com, *Cape Province, History*, 1.

27. See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*.

The stage was set for a conflict. The situation was exacerbated by the draconian legislation introduced during the 1950s and 1960s to implement the policy of apartheid. The government crushed all opposition to their racist ideology and organisations such as the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress (ANC) were banned. Individuals such as Nelson Mandela were arrested, tried and imprisoned. With the conventional might of the South African armed forces and the firm control over the black population that was exercised by the police, the Black Nationalist movements had no illusions about how they would have to wage their liberation struggle.<sup>28</sup> A resort to armed resistance would inevitably mean an insurgency war.

### **TERRAIN, TIME AND DISTANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE CRITICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE BUILDING OF AN AIRBORNE CAPABILITY**

Southern Africa is a region of vast distances and of varied terrain. A lush, well-watered eastern seaboard runs up against a precipitous escarpment that gives way to a lofty and extensive plateau, which in turn peters out into semi-desert and ultimately along the west coast becomes a harsh true desert—one of the oldest on the earth. From the Zambezi River to the Cape of Good Hope is a distance of some 2500km, and from the coast of Mozambique to the coast of Namibia is almost 3000km.<sup>29</sup>

The sub-continent is washed by the cold Benguela Current along its west coast and the warm Mozambique Current on the east. The western and central areas are sparsely populated and for the most part rural, while the fertile east coast supports a densely congregated populace. East of the great escarpment and to the north there are low-lying plains and gentle hills covered with bushveld (thick thorn brush and acacia trees). The high central plains are savannah grasslands and to the west there are thinly scattered, tall thorn trees. To the north, in Angola, Zimbabwe and northern Mozambique, the thick African bush stretches for hundreds of kilometres across terrain where infrastructure is primitive or non-existent. The sun is merciless throughout the year, but though the summers are searingly hot in the deserts and lowlands, winter nights see the temperature dropping to below zero on the Highveld, Karoo, Kalahari and Namib Desert.<sup>30</sup>

The South-Western Cape, an area of beautiful mountains and tranquil vineyards, is highly developed and urbanised, reflecting its 350 years of European settlement in its culture, its infrastructure and its architecture. Further along the coast to the east are other cities: Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban, all with good road and rail links to the central metropolis of Johannesburg, the city built on gold. Surrounded by other large mining towns and cities, as well as the capital city of Pretoria, this is the heartland

28. Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, 160-1.

29. *Reader's Digest Atlas of Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Reader's Digest, 1984), 8, 71.

30. *Ibid.*, 13, 18-19, 20, 22.

of South Africa. Highly industrialised and with a magnificent infrastructure, this is where the greatest concentration of people is to be found.<sup>31</sup>

Each city, and in fact every town in the country, built by the whites, has its dormitory black township. The bigger cities have many such townships, and it was here that the seething dissatisfaction of the masses manifested itself. Consequently, it was in the townships that the apartheid administrative structures and police maintained an iron grip on the black population.<sup>32</sup>

Borders between the countries of Southern Africa have always been notoriously porous. Remote for most of their lengths, they are typically colonial, often drawn in the capitals of far-off Europe by men who had never been to Africa. Rivers, seldom used in Europe as borders, were often the most common delineation between countries. Rivers, however, unite communities rather than divide them, so the international boundaries frequently split tribes and even families. Examples of this are apparent in the South African/Lesotho border along the Caledon and Telle Rivers and along the Cunene and Kavango Rivers between Namibia and Angola as well as the Zambezi between Zimbabwe and Zambia and the Ruvuma between Mozambique and Tanzania. Furthermore, some of the rivers are dry for the greater part of the year, providing no barrier at all, such as the Limpopo between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Rivers also change course, leading to constant disputes.

Mountains should constitute a better divide, but some of the ranges selected, such as the Lebombo between Mozambique and South Africa, are no more than a low range of hills, easily traversed on foot at almost any point. But the worst of the colonial boundaries was the imaginary straight line, following a line of longitude or latitude easily visible to the delegates at the Berlin Conference in 1884-85 on their maps, but totally meaningless to the poor wretches living there or to the soldier patrolling this frontier. Some of these lines, such as those between Namibia and Angola, or Namibia and Botswana, run for hundreds of kilometres across featureless terrain so flat it has virtually no inclination at all. Sometimes there is no vegetation and sometimes it is terrain covered with thick bush.

In appreciating the realities of the terrain of the region, it is not surprising that the military authorities in all three last white bastions made early decisions to acquire an effective airborne capability for deployment in the insurgent wars that they must have known were coming. In a region where railways were few and particularly vulnerable to sabotage; where the road network was often poorly developed and in a state of disrepair; where bridges were low, narrow and easily blocked or damaged; and where airfields could be decommissioned by merely placing a drum, a car wreck or even a few rocks on the runway, there had to be another way of moving troops fast and far at short notice.

31. Ibid., 40-3.

32. Thomas G. Karis and Gail M. Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1997), 230-7.

The answer lay in the parachute and the helicopter, and in providing direct fire support from armed aircraft.

Of course, the problem and the solution were not peculiar to southern Africa. Post-Second World War insurgent conflicts in other parts of the world had produced the same conclusions. The French in Indo-China had resorted to large-scale employment of paratroops against the Viet-Minh insurgents.<sup>33</sup> The British had inserted SAS paratroopers into the jungles of Malaya during their campaign against Communist insurgents.<sup>34</sup> Both countries had employed the fledgling helicopter in those conflicts. The Spaniards dropped paratroopers into the Saharan Desert to attack Moroccan insurgents,<sup>35</sup> while the French in Algeria<sup>36</sup> and the British in Borneo used helicopters with great skill against insurgents.<sup>37</sup>

It was therefore not surprising that Portugal, whose insurgent war was, in 1961, the first in southern Africa to commence, permanently stationed at least a battalion of paratroopers in each of its three African colonies. There were also various parachute-trained Special Operations Groups of about company strength.<sup>38</sup> The parachute battalions in Angola and Mozambique being located respectively in Luanda and Beira placed them centrally and close to the most active operational areas, as well as at an air base so that they could be rapidly moved in their twin-boomed Noratlas transport aircraft to wherever a crisis might arise in the immense territories. The Portuguese also acquired French Alouette III helicopters that they dispersed to flashpoints.

The doomed Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, crippled by unrest in the 1950s, was quick to appreciate how easily insurgents were able to prevent lorried infantry from reaching crisis areas and how some forces were cut off for weeks before they could be relieved. Alouette III helicopters were also acquired and a decision taken to establish a squadron of Special Air Service paratroopers.<sup>39</sup> With the break-up of the Federation, these assets were allocated to Southern Rhodesia, together with the Dakota C-47 aircraft to drop the paratroopers.<sup>40</sup> By the end of the Rhodesian war, the Army had trained almost all of its infantry as paratroopers.<sup>41</sup>

33. See *Histoire des Parachutistes Français, Vol. 1* (Paris: Société de Production Littéraire, 1975).

34. Philip Warner, *The Special Air Service* (London: William Kimber, 1978), 205.

35. Manuel Casablanca, 'XXX aniversario de los paracaidistas del ET', *Defensa* (Madrid: Ediciones Defensa) VI: 60 (Abril 1983), 14-23, at 17.

36. See *Histoire des Parachutistes Français, Vol. 2* (Paris: Société de Production Littéraire, 1975).

37. Harold James and Denis Sheil-Small, *The Undeclared War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1971), 86-91.

38. R.J. Bragg and Roy Turner, *Parachute Badges and Insignia of the World* (Poole, UK: Blandford Press, 1979), 49.

39. SANDF Archives, File No. KG/GPO/3/2/24/1, Vol. 2, Encl 14A, 'Besoek aan RRAF Salisbury', dd 14 Jul. 61.

40. Barbara Cole, *The Elite* (Amanzimtoti, SA: Three Knights, 1984), 21-2.

41. Bruce Hoffman, Jennifer M. Taw and David Arnold, *Lessons for Contemporary Counterinsurgencies—The Rhodesian Experience* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1991), 56.

In South Africa, also in the late 1950s, a decision was taken by the General Staff to establish a parachute battalion<sup>42</sup> and it was ultimately to be located at Bloemfontein, the most central city in the country.<sup>43</sup> In late 1960, while still in the process of establishment, its newly-trained members were sent to Pondoland, a remote part of the Transkei territory on the East Coast, where unrest had led to violence. For several months they operated against the insurgents using helicopters in countryside of thickly-wooded valleys and steep mountain butresses.<sup>44</sup> The South African Air Force (SAAF) was equipped with two small French Alouette II and one much larger Sikorsky S-55 helicopters, and this deployment proved beyond doubt the value of vertical envelopment to outflank insurgents in difficult, broken terrain.<sup>45</sup>

It was not long before South Africa also purchased the ubiquitous Alouette III, and subsequently also the French Super Frelon and eventually the Anglo-French Puma helicopters.<sup>46</sup> The same emergency had resulted in transporting the troops from both Pretoria and Bloemfontein to the Transkei by air, and this had been done by the SAAF using their fleet of Second World War Dakota C-47 aircraft. The airlift capacity of the Air Force was hugely augmented by the acquisition, in 1964, of seven American Lockheed Hercules C-130B aircraft, and in 1970 of nine Franco-German Transall C-160Z aircraft.<sup>47</sup>

The South African capability continued to grow, with a second, third and fourth battalion of paratroopers being formed, and ultimately a full parachute brigade that included artillery, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, engineers and logistic and technical support.<sup>48</sup> Three regiments of airborne Special Forces were also established.<sup>49</sup>

Clearly, the Southern African environment had produced a significant airborne capability in an effort to combat the insurgency that took place in that region. The question is: was the capability effective, given why it was formed?

### **COLLAPSE OF THE PERIPHERY: AIRBORNE OPERATIONS IN THE PORTUGUESE COLONIES AND RHODESIA**

The armed Liberation Struggle in Angola and Mozambique commenced in the early 1960s. In Angola it began with a push southwards by insurgents from the Congo into northern Angola between 15 and 17 March 1961. Between 20,000 and 30,000 people are said to

42. SANDF Archives, File No. KG/GPT/3/1/6 (Confidential), Encl 1, dd 20 Jan. 58.

43. SANDF Archives, File No. KG/GPT/2/2/1/4 (Report by Board of Officers: Parachute Training: Mobile Watch), dd 21 Jan. 61.

44. SANDF Archives, C Army Gp, Box No 451, Op SWIVEL (OC's Diary)

45. SANDF Archives, C Army Gp, Box No 575, Sitreps: Battle Group Alpha, Op SWIVEL.

46. Dave Becker, *75 Years on Wings of Eagles* (Durban: Colorgraphic, 1995), 103, 107 and 111.

47. C.J. Nöthling and Dave Becker, *The Pride of the Nation* (Pretoria: SAAF, 1995), 21.

48. *44 Parachute Brigade Information Brochure*.

49. Peter Stiff, *The Silent War* (Alberton: SA, Galago, 1999), 559.

have perished in the first few days of fighting.<sup>50</sup> The Portuguese reacted sharply and during their successful counter-offensive they carried out parachute drops of company strength. These were executed in August and September of that year at Quipedro, Serra da Canda and Sacandica, all in the north of Angola, using the *Batalhão de Caçadores Pára-Quedistas No 21* (21<sup>st</sup> Parachute Hunter Battalion).<sup>51</sup>

The campaign in Angola was long and arduous, and despite the early insurgent successes by 1972 the Portuguese security forces did seem to be gaining the upper hand.<sup>52</sup> There were many reasons for this: better morale amongst the government forces there (many of whose conscripts were Angolan as opposed to metropolitan Portuguese whites) than in the other colonies, a program of infrastructural development and good military leadership, amongst other things.

On a tactical level, however, it was not easy for the Portuguese to implement the airborne operations that seemed so suitable for the vast and underdeveloped land of Angola. Helicopters were in short supply and carried a very limited payload. They were primarily used for casualty evacuation or as gunships with machine-guns fitted to side doors and operated by the flight engineer. In the south of the country, close to the border with what was then called South West Africa, South African Air Force pilots dressed in Portuguese camouflage uniforms flew their unmarked Alouette helicopters in support of the Portuguese forces.<sup>53</sup> Their missions usually involved placing small groups of Portuguese soldiers into positions where they could cut off bands of insurgents.

The Portuguese paratroopers in Angola, nevertheless, carried out numerous jumps into inaccessible parts of the huge country to hunt down insurgents or to form stop lines during sweeps or attacks by ground forces. These included company-sized drops at São Salvador and Madureira in 1968.<sup>54</sup> Drops into the inhospitable forests of the *Dembos* region of north-central Angola were particularly effective.<sup>55</sup>

By 1970 the Portuguese military in Angola had 42 fighters for close air support, nine medium bombers, 54 reconnaissance planes, sixteen transports, 19 Alouette III and two recently arrived Puma SA330 helicopters. General Costa Gomes, Commander-in-Chief in Angola, infused a new spirit of aggression in the war when he employed these resources in a series of airborne offensives. Operation SIROCO was a large-scale action, spearheaded by airborne forces, which lasted from July to October of that year in the east of the country. The following year a similar operation took place. Both were spectacularly successful and

50. Al J. Venter, *Challenge* (Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1989), 227-8.

51. W.S. van der Waals, *Portugal's War in Angola* (Rivonia, SA: Ashanti, 1993), 74, and Bragg and Turner, *Parachute Badges*, 225.

52. Venter, *Challenge*, 257-62.

53. Van der Waals, *Portugal's War*, 208-9.

54. Bragg and Turner, *Parachute Badges*, 226.

55. Interview with Brig W.S. van der Waals, who participated in such a drop with the Portuguese in 1973.

by 1973 the war in Angola, militarily speaking, was going well for the Portuguese.<sup>56</sup> It was the aggressive use of airborne forces that contributed substantially to these successes.

In Mozambique, on the other side of the continent, the armed struggle commenced on 25 September 1964, when the first 250 Algerian-trained insurgents made their initial foray into the northern parts of the territory.<sup>57</sup> The conflict escalated rapidly and simmered throughout the remaining decade of Portuguese rule.

By 1973 there were five Noratlas and seven Dakota transport aircraft deployed in Mozambique on operations, as well as 14 Alouette and two Puma helicopters. They had 12 Fiat G-91 jets and 15 Harvard/Texan piston-engined aircraft to back them up with aerial firepower. These numbers might appear as insignificant and the aircraft as obsolete, but in the situation that prevailed at the time they gave the Portuguese an impressive airborne capability. Insurgent numbers were small, their armament puny and unsophisticated and the distances they had to cover were immense.

Yet even so, Portuguese commanders tended to overload the tiny Alouette helicopters, designed to carry only four passengers, with up to six armed troops at a time.<sup>58</sup> Damage to the aircraft and some hair-raising incidents eventually compelled them to stick to the specifications. In 1969, by utilising every helicopter he could muster, General Kaulza de Arriaga, the Portuguese ground forces commander in Mozambique, launched a major offensive called Operation GORDIAN KNOT. It was a massive series of heliborne assaults, preceded by artillery and air bombardments on some 60 insurgent bases and many smaller camps, and it rolled on to the following year.<sup>59</sup> It yielded some of the greatest military successes of the war, but as is the nature of an insurgency, the setback for the insurgents was only temporary. In a short while the infiltrations from Tanzania and Zambia resumed.

Despite this and other large subsequent operations conducted in Mozambique, the war generally went badly for the government forces. There was little understanding of the tenets of counter-insurgency, equipment and casualty evacuation were notoriously outdated and inefficient and the quality of Portuguese conscript troops from the metropolitan country was very poor. Morale was shocking. There were exceptions, such as the Army Commandos, the Naval Marines and the Air Force Paratroops<sup>60</sup> (the Portuguese were one of the last nations to follow the Second World War German practice of including their paratroops in the order of battle of the Air Force).

56. Van der Waals, *Portugal's War*, 193-7.

57. Venter, *Challenge*, 262.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Reg Shay and Chris Vermaak, *The Silent War* (Salisbury: Galaxie Press, 1971), 231-4.

60. Venter, *Challenge*, 266-7.

Overall, the Portuguese conducted the war in Mozambique with much less enthusiasm and professionalism than was the case in Angola. Though factions and tensions plagued the insurgent organisation in Mozambique, the Portuguese were unable to take advantage of this and were not on their way to winning the war in that colony when the revolution in Portugal in 1974 brought a sudden end to their military campaigns in all three territories. The Liberation War in the Portuguese colonies had suddenly and unexpectedly been won by default by the insurgents when the colonial power collapsed internally and unceremoniously withdrew all its forces back to the metropolitan country. In Angola, where it had seemed that the Portuguese could win, this resulted in a bitter civil war that raged for close on 30 years.

Rhodesia was a very different situation. Here the counter-insurgency campaign was conducted with far more professionalism, determination and fortitude than had been done in any of the former Portuguese territories. Here the central government was not located in a country far way and there was, for the government forces at least, an immediacy to the conflict that was foreign to the Portuguese campaigns.

There were sporadic attempts at insurgency in Rhodesia from the early sixties, but from the start of when the insurgents began to make a meaningful impact in 1966, the Rhodesian security forces relied heavily on airborne operations to counter their efforts.<sup>61</sup> They made optimal use of their small fleet of Alouette III helicopters to transport police and Army personnel to the scenes of contacts with the insurgents in order to follow up such contacts swiftly with searches and to block fleeing insurgents. This was possible in a country so much smaller than both Angola and Mozambique, with a far better developed infrastructure and with vast tracts of the country settled by white farmers.

Making this even more viable was the clandestine assistance given by the South African Air Force (on a much greater and more formally organised scale than had ever been the case with the Portuguese colonies) in the form of additional Alouette helicopters and their crews, this time posing as South African policemen and wearing police uniforms. Because the South African government had publicly announced that it was deploying police to Rhodesia to help the Rhodesian government combat 'ANC terrorists' that were attempting to infiltrate through that country in order to reach South Africa, this was deemed acceptable by the South Africans. The SA government denied military involvement in Rhodesia. However, with the first contingent of policemen sent to Rhodesia there was a sizeable group of South African paratrooper officers and NCOs, also dressed as policemen, who accompanied them.<sup>62</sup> It was an opportunity to gain first-hand exposure to the insurgent war. The paratroopers were quick to appreciate the value of the helicopter in the thick, often arid and isolated bush country that they operated in along the Zambezi Valley.

61. Shay and Vermaak, *The Silent War*, 34-6.

62. SANDF Archives, File No. BGG/301/15 (Top Secret), Vol. 1, 'Personnel Seconded to SAP', 31 Jul. 67-3 Jul. 69.

The Rhodesian government's decision to establish an SAS squadron meant that they had, in their tiny Army, a highly-trained unit of airborne specialists by the time the insurgents had launched their offensive in the late sixties. Many of the initial recruits were men who had served in the Rhodesian squadron of the British SAS in Malaya in the early fifties and had experience of the pioneering technique of that war of parachuting into the jungle after insurgents. The Rhodesian SAS had also participated with their British parent regiment in the insurgent war in Aden in the Middle East. There they had learned something of the rapidly evolving use of helicopters as a counter-insurgency tool.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, the Rhodesians made a detailed study of how the British employed helicopters in Borneo and the US heliborne tactics and new air cavalry concepts in Vietnam.

Because of this, the Rhodesians developed a highly successful technique known as 'Fire Force'. A Fire Force would consist of a company of soldiers (initially SAS troopers, but later, as the Special Forces such as the SAS and the Selous Scouts became occupied with more sensitive and demanding 'external operations' into Mozambique and Zambia, almost any infantry would be utilised), six Alouette helicopters and a piston-engined ground attack aircraft.<sup>64</sup>

A system of Observation Posts (OPs) would be utilised on the numerous small, rocky hillocks (known as *gommels*) that abound in many parts of the country. They would be located along insurgent infiltration routes that had been identified by military intelligence. These OPs of only two or three men each were often from the ranks of the Selous Scouts or the Rhodesian African Rifles. Mostly black men from the rural areas, with a keen eyesight and carefully trained in observation, they would survey the surrounding countryside from their well-concealed location atop a *gommel* and as soon as a group of armed insurgents was spotted moving across the bushy plains below, they would radio the company headquarters their exact position.

The Fire Force, quartered in a tented encampment at an often-primitive airstrip in the close vicinity, would be scrambled. A platoon of soldiers would be on standby and half of them would grab their weapons and equipment and run for the nearby helicopters, which had already been started up by their crews. The company commander or his second-in-command would brief the platoon commander, stick commanders (a 'stick' was the four-man group that would be in each helicopter) and pilots in a matter of a few seconds, and then they too would sprint for the aircraft.

Flying into the area in which the insurgents had been spotted in the four helicopters designated 'troopers', the 16 soldiers would be positioned by the Fire Force Commander (usually the company commander or his second-in-command) around the insurgents. He

63. Cole, *The Elite*, 15-20.

64. Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *Chimurenga!* (Johannesburg: Sygma Books, 1982), 144-50, and Hoffman et al., *Lessons*, 21-2.

would be in the fifth helicopter, designated the 'Command Car'. Aided by direct radio contact with the OP that had sighted the insurgents and probably still had them visual, the Commander in the Command Car and the accompanying 'K-Car' (Killing Car) would orbit the area while he directed his troops on the ground to hem in the insurgents and force them into combat. The K-Car had a 20mm cannon mounted in the side door, and the Command Car usually had a twin 7.62mm or .303 inch machine-gun mounted in its door. The moment any insurgent presented a target from the air he would be shot.

The helicopters playing the role of 'troopers' were used to reposition the sticks on the ground if necessary, or if the situation demanded it, they would be sent back to the airstrip to collect the remainder of the waiting platoon to reinforce those already on the ground and engaged in a running firefight with the insurgents. Should the insurgents succeed in holing up in one of the many caves in the *gommels*, the Fire Force Commander would call in the fixed-wing ground attack aircraft and this would bomb the cave with 'frantan' (the name used for napalm). This would usually terminate all further resistance from the insurgents. The commander, in the Command Car, would direct the whole operation from the air.

However, as the war progressed the efforts of the insurgents increased, new fronts were opened up and the Rhodesians found themselves facing ever-larger groups of insurgents. The Rhodesian Air Force simply did not have the resources in terms of the scarce helicopters to continue with Fire Force in this way (even after they acquired some old US Bell 212 helicopters on the black market). Equally, the highly-trained Special Forces such as the SAS and the Selous Scouts were increasingly used externally once Rhodesia adopted the principle of 'hot pursuit'.

It was therefore inevitable that other units, such as the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Rhodesian African Rifles would be utilised in the Fire Force role. The problem of insufficient helicopters was overcome by resorting to the dropping of paratroopers from Dakota aircraft. Fewer helicopters were needed to reposition the troops, who were now parachuted in four-man sticks wherever the commander required them.

The Rhodesians developed the Fire Force concept to a skilled, effective and rapid counter-insurgency tool. The numbers of 'kills' that they achieved was quite overwhelming. However, the insurgents kept coming. At times, the Rhodesian paratroopers forming part of a Fire Force were carrying out two combat jumps a day.<sup>65</sup> The South Africans, alerted to the tactical successes of the Rhodesian technique, sent some of their paratrooper officers to Rhodesia to serve on secondment to various Fire Forces and to bring back first-hand knowledge of how it was implemented.<sup>66</sup> Later, during the final six months of the war in

65. '1 RLI Notes', *Assegai* (April 1977), 11-12, at 11.

66. Official SADF Report VALSK BN/309/1 '*Afgedeelde Operasionele Diens Rhodesiese Leër*': Maj A. L. van Graan, dd 30 Dec. 77 (Classified Secret).

Rhodesia (1979-1980), the South Africans deployed two Fire Forces in the south of that country. Using their own Pathfinders as OPs, and with the much larger and faster Puma helicopters to transport and reposition their soldiers, the South African paratroopers scored phenomenal successes applying Fire Force tactics in the ideal terrain of that area.<sup>67</sup>

On their external operations, the Rhodesians were quick to grasp the viability of a deep airborne strike to disrupt insurgent activities. This was well illustrated by the largest of these operations, their assaults on Chimoio and Tembue during Operation DINGO on 23 and 26 November 1977. Using six Dakota aircraft and 42 Alouette helicopters (many of them gunships) supported by more than 20 bombers and ground-attack aircraft, they dropped 145 paratroopers and 40 heliborne troops to carry out the raid. Their first target was Chimoio, the enormous alleged ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army) operational headquarters and complex of guerrilla training and staging camps some 90km inside Mozambique. Three days later the same force was dropped on Tembue, another alleged staging base much further north, some 225km from the border.<sup>68</sup> Due to the element of surprise, these assaults resulted in some 1200 insurgents being killed and the bases being destroyed, while the Rhodesians lost only one paratrooper.<sup>69</sup> Some reports gave the ZANLA casualties as over 2000 killed, and although there were claims that most had been women and children, international reaction was generally muted. The raids, not surprisingly, had a huge impact on the collective psyche of the ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) leadership.<sup>70</sup>

Tactical successes, however, are not what bring victory in an insurgent war. Ultimately, the combined effects of international isolation and economic sanctions, war weariness amongst the whites who formed only about eight per cent of the total Rhodesian population and who bore the brunt of the war effort, a steady exodus of whites from the country, as well as pressure from South Africa, forced the Rhodesians to capitulate. The black majority supported the insurgents, and no matter how many guerrillas the security forces killed, there were always new recruits. Without a moral cause, the Rhodesians could never win against the insurgents who were in the majority and had the support of the world.

67. 1 Parachute Battalion Company War Diaries: A-Coy (15 Jan. 79-28 Nov. 80), E-Coy (24 Nov. 79-17 Jan. 80), F-Coy (17 Oct.-7 Nov. 79) and G-Coy (25 Jan.-10 Dec. 80).

68. Cole, *The Elite*, 169-89.

69. David Cauter, *Under the Skin* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1983), 140.

70. Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *Chimurenga!*, 194, and Cole, *The Elite*, 188.

## ANGOLA AND NAMIBIA: APOGEE OF THE AIRBORNE BUT VICTORY FOR THE INSURGENTS

The South Africans, with more resources at their disposal than the Rhodesians ever had, were able to utilise their airborne capability, if not always as effectively, then certainly over a far greater distance than their northern neighbours were. However, terrain and greater cunning on the part of the insurgents encountered in Namibia and Angola, caused the South Africans to place far less overall emphasis on airborne operations than did the Rhodesians.

Sceptical of the British and by extension the Rhodesians, the conservative South African military establishment deliberately neglected any detailed study of post-Second World War insurgent campaigns. The early lessons were thus learned in the hard field of experience, and it was only after the war began to gain momentum that the South African staff colleges took a hard look at Thompson's and later McCuen's writings. The reality of being involved in a war, albeit a small war, put the South African Army's staff training to the test, and it was found wanting.<sup>71</sup> Yet, in the military dimension of the insurgency war, the South Africans employed vertical envelopment from the start.

The first armed clash between South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) insurgents and the South African security forces was a helicopter assault. Ostensibly a police action, Operation BLOUWILDEBEEES saw paratrooper officers and men training and leading policemen into action. On 26 August 1966 an assault on an insurgent base set up inside Namibia was carried out by 35 security force members and eight Alouette helicopters. The base had only 16 insurgents in it. Two were killed, 14 captured and two escaped. There were no security force casualties.<sup>72</sup> It was the start of a 23-year insurgent war. The conflict was hugely complicated by the decision of the South Africans to intervene in the Angolan civil war of 1975-1976 and then to remain involved in the ongoing strife in that country.

As has been alluded to, even before the eruption of hostilities between the three main liberation movements in Angola on the departure of the Portuguese in 1975, the South Africans were operating in that country. This was always done in close co-operation with the Portuguese security forces. When the South African Defence Force (SADF) took over border protection from the South African Police in 1972, the paratroopers were already carrying out regular deployments in the strategically important Caprivi Strip. In 1974 the Portuguese warned of a large group of several hundred SWAPO insurgents moving from Zambia across south eastern Angola towards the Caprivi. Two companies of paratroopers

71. McGill Alexander, *Register of Officers who have Successfully Completed Senior Staff Training*, (Pretoria: SA Army College, 1995), 6.

72. SANDF Archives, 'Interim Report: Operation BLOUWILDEBEEES', dd 7 Sep. 66, and 'Report on Operation BLOUWILDEBEEES', dd 9 Sep. 66, both declassified Top Secret files.

were flown up from Bloemfontein in C-130 and C-160 aircraft and parachuted directly ahead of the advancing insurgents just inside Angola. Several days of confused hit and run operations saw the South African Army suffer its first casualty killed in action since the Second World War, several insurgents dying and a withdrawal back to Zambia by the guerrillas.<sup>73</sup>

The following year, as tension mounted prior to the imminent Portuguese withdrawal from Angola, a South African Dakota aircraft dropped paratroopers onto a disused airfield inside Angola. Their task was to relieve a beleaguered company of San soldiers under South African command. This they succeeded in doing after ongoing skirmishes with the SWAPO insurgents who had besieged them.<sup>74</sup>

The Angolan conflict developed very much along the lines of the Cold War, with the Angolan MPLA and the Cubans openly supported by the Soviets, while UNITA and the South Africans were backed, albeit somewhat reluctantly and usually surreptitiously, by the West. Between the two groupings, but drawing succour from the MPLA, who fully supported their liberation struggle, SWAPO intensified its insurgent war. This complex situation, which included several other minor actors, turned southern Angola into a battlefield for the next 14 years, with the conflict escalating into one of a conventional nature and making it difficult to differentiate between a war of that sort and what was commonly seen as an insurgent war.

It would be simplistic to state that the insurgent war was fought in Namibia against those insurgents that penetrated the territory from the 'host countries' of Angola and Zambia, while the conventional war, between MPLA and Cuban brigades and divisions pitted against South African battle groups and UNITA brigades, was waged inside Angola. In 1977 the South African prime minister authorised the application of the principle of 'hot pursuit' and thereafter the insurgent war was carried into the host countries<sup>75</sup>. Often the conventional and insurgent conflicts overlapped and were waged in conjunction with one another.

South Africa's unexpected involvement in the Angolan crisis prior to and just after the final Portuguese withdrawal in 1975 had a sobering effect on the SADF. Until then they had waged a low-intensity counter-insurgency campaign against a generally poorly trained and somewhat disorganised enemy. But their clashes with the Cubans, who were well-organised, effectively commanded and equipped with Soviet weaponry that was often superior to the mostly Second World War-vintage South African armament, came as something of a wake-up call to the SADF.<sup>76</sup>

73. SANDF Archives, C Army Gp (Op FOCUS), Boxes Nos 11 and 16.

74. Interview on 20 July 1990 with the officer who was the platoon commander of the paratroopers who carried out the jump.

75. Willem Steenkamp, *South Africa's Border War 1966-1989* (Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1989), 71.

76. Alexander, *Staff Training*, 6.

The availability of Angola as a host country for the Namibian insurgents, previously denied them because of the presence of the Portuguese, considerably shortened their lines of communication after 1975. In addition, the demise of the Portuguese empire served as a major incentive to insurgents in the Liberation Struggle, and the quality of military training henceforth offered to SWAPO was far better than what they had received before—possibly because those countries that provided the training were themselves encouraged by the victory in Mozambique and Angola.

As the lines were redrawn from early in 1975 and the Angolan/Namibian border became the new frontier in the insurgent war, the struggle of the Black Nationalist forces intensified.<sup>77</sup> The vast Ovamboland plain, location of the largest population concentration in Namibia, became the focal point of the conflict. The South Africans embarked on an ambitious intensification of their program for self-sufficiency and armament modernisation while revising their tactical training and doubling the initial period of conscription of white males to two years in January 1978.<sup>78</sup>

From the start of this enhanced intensity in the war, the South Africans applied their own version of the Rhodesian Fire Force technique. The absence of high ground to provide OPs, however, meant that it became far more reactive in nature. Unable to observe infiltrations by the insurgents, the helicopter-borne paratroopers had to wait for an infantry patrol to make contact with guerrillas before flying in to reinforce them and join the fray.<sup>79</sup> In effect, this often meant that a Fire Force operation deteriorated into an airborne follow-up that sometimes lasted for several days before insurgents would be run to ground. South African successes in Namibia, in terms of insurgents killed or captured, never matched those of the Rhodesians in Fire Force operations.

The South Africans, conscious of this, had sent (as already mentioned) paratrooper officers to Rhodesia to study the technique and to participate in operations with the Rhodesians. This broadened their thinking in the application of the technique, but the terrain in northern Namibia and the significantly better-trained and ingenious insurgents that they were encountering there, continued to limit their successes.

This, despite having the Puma helicopters to transport troops. The Pumas were vastly superior to the Alouettes in terms of both payload and speed. Nevertheless, the ubiquitous Alouette continued to do sterling service for the South Africans as both a gunship and a command ship.

77. Colin Leys and John S. Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle* (London: James Currey, 1995), 24-5.

78. Paul L. Moorcraft, *Africa's Superpower* (Johannesburg: Sygma Books, 1981), 66.

79. Steenkamp, *SA's Border War*, 202.

When the South Africans were deployed inside Rhodesia towards the end of the war in that country in 1979, they immediately noticed the difference that terrain made to the application of Fire Force. Two companies of paratroopers provided two permanent Fire Forces in the south of Rhodesia as part of Operation BOWLER for six months, right up to the election in that country in March 1980. In the countryside dotted with prominent *gommels*, with their Puma helicopters, highly motivated troops, and experience gained in combat against the very proficient SWAPO cadres, the South Africans soon exceeded the 'successes' of the Rhodesians. It made no difference to the result of the war though. When the Rhodesians agreed to the elections at the Lancaster House talks the year before, the insurgents had already won.

Back in Namibia the South African paratroops put the lessons they had learned to good use.

One variation of the Fire Force technique, adapted to the featureless terrain in which the South Africans had to operate, was known as 'Butterfly Operations'.<sup>80</sup> It involved identifying suspect areas where intelligence sources had indicated the presence of insurgents. The Fire Force was then moved into the area, and a succession of surprise sweeps would be carried out through *kraals* and huts by helicoptering the troops in without warning and using gunships to cut off anyone who bolted.

Unlike the Portuguese with their *aldeamentos* and the Rhodesians with their protected villages, the South Africans never tried to concentrate the local population into areas where they could be tightly controlled by the military. However, they enforced a strict curfew, largely by using airborne forces. In a sophisticated modification of the Fire Force technique known as 'Lunar Operations',<sup>81</sup> a Dakota planeload of paratroopers would cruise around at night (generally when it was close to full moon), maintaining a height of some 8000 feet above ground level. At the same time, a light spotter aircraft would circle around suspect areas. As soon as the crew spotted the headlights of a vehicle or identified some other form of movement on the ground, the helicopters were alerted to become airborne and the Dakota would descend to drop height (800 feet above ground level).

Using flares, smoke or white phosphorous grenades dropped from the command ship, the Commander would indicate Dropping Zones for five-man sticks to parachute into, while the gunship forced the vehicle to a stop with bursts of 20mm gunfire. The curfew-breakers would be surrounded and captured, or the operation would turn into a sometimes-confusing firefight.

80. E-Coy, 1 Para Bn War Diary, 28 Sep.- 2 Oct. 79.

81. A record of these operational night jumps are located in the Parachute Training Centre's Para Jump Record Book, held at the Centre in Bloemfontein.

Another variation of Fire Force introduced by the South Africans, known as 'Bakkie Operations',<sup>82</sup> entailed sending out a surreptitiously-armoured civilian truck, occupied by armed but disguised or concealed soldiers, into an area known to have an active insurgent presence. A Fire Force was kept airborne in the nearby vicinity and was activated immediately when the vehicle was ambushed. Although they would arrive over the area within minutes, it was a risky operation and those in the vehicle stood a good chance of not surviving!

The last of these innovative operations were known as 'Rubber Duck Operations'. They were the most dangerous, as they entailed sending out a vulnerable decoy vehicle to attract an insurgent attack, at which point the Fire Force would be activated.

The Fire Force concept, because it was directed at moving groups of insurgents rather than against static bases, was, in its various innovative guises, employed right to the end of the insurgent war in Namibia.<sup>83</sup> The insurgents never really found ways of countering it, other than using shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles such as the SA-7; but these were large, heavy and cumbersome so they were almost never carried.

However, in addition to the small-scale Fire Force operations, generally controlled at company level and rarely including more than a platoon at a time, the South Africans also carried out numerous larger-scale airborne operations, sometimes almost conventional in nature. These ranged from company- to battalion-sized parachute drops and helicopter operations. Some were insertions, while others were full-scale assaults.

The largest and most spectacular, but also the most controversial South African airborne operation was the parachute assault on Cassinga in May 1978.<sup>84</sup> Operation REINDEER was carried out by a composite parachute battalion of mostly reservists called up for the occasion. It entailed an attack on a former mining town some 260km inside Angola. SWAPO claimed that the target was a refugee camp, while the SADF insisted that it was the headquarters for the insurgent campaign into Namibia, as well as a transit, training and recuperation centre for insurgent recruits.

The South Africans executed an early morning air strike using Canberra and Buccaneer bombers and Mirage fighters, followed by the parachute drop of the battalion from C-130 and C-160 transport aircraft. Making use of close air support the paratroopers took almost six hours to subdue Cassinga, and then withdrew by helicopter in two waves, the last one a hot extraction taking place under heavy fire from a Cuban armoured counter-attack. Puma and Super Frelon helicopters were used for the extraction, and a refuelling point had to be established to make this possible.

82. A 'bakkie' (pronounced 'buckie') is the South African term for a small pick-up truck or light delivery vehicle.

83. Personal Diary of Cmdr 44 Parachute Brigade, Apr. 89.

84. See McGill Alexander, 'The Cassinga Raid' (MA dissertation, University of South Africa, 2003).

The casualty list tallied at four paratroopers killed, one missing and 12 wounded, including the battalion commander; the insurgents, or refugees, depending on who tells the story, suffered between 800 and 1000 dead and at least as many wounded. However, by its very nature, every insurgent base includes civilians and the nature of insurgency is such that a differentiation between combatants and non-combatants is tenuous at best.

There were many other parachute operations, often conducted at night, both in Zambia and Angola. Usually they were insertions of a company or a platoon to carry out deep patrols inside the host countries in areas where insurgents were located (e.g. Operation STOOMPOT in Zambia 1979<sup>85</sup>). Others were to place stop lines in position at the last possible moment when an insurgent base had been identified and was being attacked by ground forces. For such operations, the drop was often conducted in the dark, shortly before dawn. Examples were Operation MOONSHINE in Angola, also in 1979,<sup>86</sup> as well as Operation DAISY in November 1981.<sup>87</sup> The latter was a less-than-successful battalion drop at night.

Several helicopter assault operations were carried out against insurgent bases inside Angola, always with great success. Puma helicopters were used to transport the troops while Alouettes provided gunship close air support and a command platform. Two particularly successful operations of this type were Operation KLIPKOP<sup>88</sup> and Operation DORSLAND,<sup>89</sup> both in 1980, both in South Western Angola. Where insurgent bases, such as those attacked in these operations, were located fairly close to the border, helicopters were the obvious means to carry out rapid raids and return before any counter-attack could materialise.

The insurgents, however, were quick to realise their vulnerability to airborne attack. After the assault on Cassinga and the many other airborne operations carried out by the South Africans during the late 1970s and early 1980s, SWAPO no longer constructed bases that were concentrated into a small area. Instead, the bases were divided into several sections that were spread across an area of many square kilometres. This made it almost impossible for a parachute attack, with the extremely limited mobility of paratroopers after landing, to be considered as a viable option. By also locating their bases further away from the border and deeper inside the host countries, the insurgents successfully countered the threat of helicopter assaults. The limited range of the helicopter prevented its use across long distances without the complexity of setting up refuelling stations.

85. D-Coy, 1 Para Bn War Diary (4-16 Jul. 79).

86. E-Coy, 1 Para Bn War Diary (18-22 Jul. 79).

87. 3 Para Bn War Diary (4 Nov. 81).

88. B-Coy, 1 Para Bn Coy Cmdr's Verbal Orders, dd 29 Jul. 80.

89. G-Coy, 1 Para Bn War Diary (20 Oct. 80).

All this compelled the South Africans to increasingly resort to motorised, mechanised and light armoured columns to carry out their deep penetration raids against insurgent bases. This was far more expensive and logistically intensive than using the airborne option, and placed the security forces at risk for much longer periods. The QFL, or 'Smokeshell' Base, was a typical early example of this, requiring several mechanised columns and an involved helicopter refuelling arrangement when the South Africans attacked and destroyed it during Operation SCEPTIC in May 1980.<sup>90</sup> Using the more unwieldy mechanised option also often negated the element of surprise, and frequently bases were attacked, only for the security forces to find that they had been vacated, sometimes only hours or even minutes before the arrival of the assault element.

Nevertheless, as the war increased in intensity, the clashes became ever more conventional in nature and the paratroops got one last opportunity to carry out a parachute operation. During Operation PINEAPPLE in 1987, two companies of paratroopers dropped in Angola to ambush convoys that were replenishing insurgents deployed along the border with Namibia.<sup>91</sup>

But the bush war was coming to an end.

Towards the end of the Rhodesian bush war and the wars in Angola and Namibia, the South Africans planned major airborne operations that were thwarted by political developments. In the case of Rhodesia, Operation MELBA was to be a battalion-sized attack on an insurgent Assembly Point, established in terms of the ceasefire for the Rhodesian conflict.<sup>92</sup> Two companies of paratroopers were to be dropped as stop lines to hem the several thousand insurgents against the river on the banks of which the Assembly Point was located. Two other companies of paratroopers, mounted in Puma helicopters and supported by Alouette gunships, would then launch the assault. The operation was rehearsed in South Africa, just across the border from Rhodesia, and the paratroopers stood by, awaiting the results of the election to be made known. However, when the results were announced, the South Africans had backed the wrong candidate. Muzerewa, who they had expected to win and in support of whom they were to launch the attack, was soundly thrashed by Mugabe at the polls! The paratroopers stood down and the South Africans slipped quietly out of Rhodesia as it became Zimbabwe.

In Angola, the insurgent war had been overtaken by the conventional conflict by 1988. The South Africans were facing off against the Cubans after their tank battles at Cuito Cuanevale in southeast Angola. South of the border the South Africans had dug in with a mixed force that became known as 10 Division.<sup>93</sup> North of the border the crack armoured

90. SANDF Archives, SCEPTIC Gp, Box No. 1 (SAAF Participation) and Op SCEPTIC Sitreps, Box No. 4 (Army Documents).

91. Interview with D-Coy Cmdr, 1 Para Bn, 13 Jun. 95.

92. Hand-written Operational Orders for Op MELBA dd Feb. 80 and B-Coy, 1 Para Bn Coy Cmdr's Verbal Orders dd 28 Feb. 80.

93. Helmoed-Römer Heitman, *War in Angola* (Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1990), 308.

Cuban 50 Division was adopting a threatening posture towards Namibia and the South Africans. The Cuban division included more than a hundred T-55 and T-64 tanks. There were also integrated Cuban/SWAPO units in southwestern Angola.<sup>94</sup>

The Cubans, however, had a vulnerable logistic line of several hundred kilometres that threaded over a steep mountain escarpment pass from the isolated port of Namibe. The South African 44 Parachute Brigade drew up a plan to do a night attack on the lightly-defended Namibe and destroy its harbour and railhead. The brigade was cross-trained in amphibious operations and planned to drop half of a battalion group by parachute and land the other half from naval support vessels using landing craft and helicopters. They would withdraw the whole force in the landing craft and Puma helicopters, back to the support vessels. Deprived of a logistic resupply capability, the Cuban 50 Division could then be attacked by the South African 10 Division.<sup>95</sup>

Again, alas for the South Africans, it was not to be. The whole operation was rehearsed in detail by 44 Parachute Brigade at Walvis Bay in Namibia. However, the frantic diplomatic activity of the Americans and Russians at the time that the Soviet empire was collapsing resulted in a ceasefire. Under UN supervision a timetable was worked out for a phased withdrawal from Angola by the Cubans, and from Namibia by the South Africans, so the planned Operation HANDBAG never took place.

However, in Namibia the paratroopers were called on to carry out one last airborne operation before their final withdrawal. With all SADF elements remaining in the territory either demobilised or confined to barracks and the police disarmed except for rifles, SWAPO broke the ceasefire. In terms of the UN Security Council Resolution 435, the SWAPO freedom fighters were to remain in bases inside Angola until the UN had taken over control of Namibia in anticipation of free elections. Despite this, several groups of a few hundred heavily-armed insurgents each crossed the border on the night of 1 April 1989. They attacked the lightly-armed police patrols as well as temporary bases.

All efforts on the part of the UN to persuade SWAPO to desist from the violence were in vain. As the UN did not yet have peacekeeping troops deployed in Namibia in any strength, it was powerless to enforce a peace along the volatile northern border of the territory. With fighting raging unabated for days and with a growing loss of life, the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN was compelled to authorise the SADF to mobilise and deploy six battalions to quell the violence. Because most units had been demobilised and their weaponry despatched back to South Africa, this took some days, and even then, there were not six battalions available in the territory.<sup>96</sup>

94. Fred Bridgland, *The War for Africa* (Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1990), 348.

95. Personal Diary of SO1 Operations, 44 Parachute Brigade, 7 Jun.- 26 Sep. 88.

96. See Peter Stiff, *Nine Days of War* (Alberton, South Africa: Lemur Books, 1989), for a description of this final campaign in Namibia.

So it was that 44 Parachute Brigade was tasked, as part of Operation MERLYN, to fly a battalion group from Pretoria to the area of conflict—a distance of almost 2000km. Within 14 hours of being tasked, the battalion group had carried out an air landed operation and was engaged in the fighting. They had landed on a small airstrip at Ehomba in the remote Kaokoveld area, and when helicopters arrived they resorted to the Fire Force technique, which the mountainous, open terrain lent itself to. Within a few days the insurgents were scattered, driven back across the border with significant casualties and the peace process was back on track.<sup>97</sup>

As the curtain closed on the Namibian war, there was one more crisis that almost saw the biggest airborne operation yet carried out in Southern Africa. The inhabitants of Namibia were now finally able to prepare for a UN supervised election. The South African forces had all been withdrawn by mid-1989. Yet, until the election had taken place, the territory was still administered by South Africa, albeit ostensibly under the auspices of the UN Special Representative.

When SADF Military Intelligence indicated that SWAPO was set to pre-empt the elections and were preparing to take over the administration in the capital city by force, it caused a stir amongst the South African General Staff. Except for one mechanised battalion group confined to Walvis Bay (then still a part of South Africa), there were no SADF forces left inside Namibia. The distances were too vast to cross rapidly with substantial forces, and almost all UN forces were located close to the border in the distant northern reaches of the territory.

Should SWAPO attempt to carry out such a coup, they would be firmly ensconced long before anything could be done about it. Moreover, after their violation of the UN ceasefire just a few months earlier, the South Africans felt they had every reason to suspect them of this new ploy.

An airborne operation would be the only viable option. Once again, 44 Parachute Brigade was tasked to prepare a contingency plan, this time to relieve the city of Windhoek.<sup>98</sup> However, this time they were provided with more resources than they had ever dreamed of previously. With the war now over, aircraft were available that had previously been allocated to all sorts of operational tasks. The brigade had at its disposal the following transport aircraft:

- 6 x C-130B Hercules
- 8 x C-160Z Transall
- 15 x C-47 Dakota
- 2 x DC-4 Skymaster

97. Personal Diary of Cmdr 44 Parachute Brigade, 8-27 Apr. 89.

98. Personal Diary of Cmdr 44 Parachute Brigade, 21-24 Aug. 89 and 2-4 Oct. 89.

This gave the paratroopers the ability to drop two battalions, a light artillery battery and some engineers and Special Forces for specific tasks. Operating from the huge airfield at Upington, close to the Namibian border, the flights of the aircraft would have to be staggered to cater for their incompatible speeds and to ensure that they all arrived over the Dropping Zones around the city simultaneously. Envisaged as a stiletto-type operation, inflicting minimal collateral damage, it was rehearsed north of Pretoria.

Once again, an intelligence report was proved wrong, and the elections took place peacefully. The paratroopers stood down.

### **SOUTH AFRICA, THE LAST IDEOLOGICAL BATTLEFIELD: URBAN AIRBORNE OPERATIONS**

Inside South Africa, the Liberation Struggle had intensified since the spontaneous riots by the black youth of Soweto in 1976. Generally, the police had managed to keep the sporadic outbursts of violence under control and to suppress the black nationalists. However, the mood amongst the black people in the country was becoming more militant and the apartheid government was increasingly compelled to call in the SADF to reinforce the police.

From 1984 it became almost standard practice to deploy military elements inside those black townships where resistance was strongest. It was not a task that the soldiers relished, and the paratroopers were particularly uncomfortable carrying it out. Fortunately for them, their commitments in the war in Angola and Namibia meant that they were used for internal urban operations only infrequently.

However, with the termination of the war in those two countries, they became available and soon found themselves enmeshed in the urban quagmire that is many a soldier's nemesis. The Liberation Struggle in South Africa took on a form quite different from that of the Struggle in neighbouring countries. Unlike its neighbours, South Africa was a largely industrialised society with sophisticated cities and a highly-developed urban infrastructure.

Accordingly, the insurgent war in South Africa was primarily an urban one and troop levels steadily increased as unrest grew in the townships. Resigned to this type of conflict, the paratroops began to think of innovative ways to employ their speciality. During December 1990 and January 1991, 2 Parachute Battalion, one of the constituent units of 44 Parachute Brigade, was deployed in the Durban area of what was then the province of Natal. The battalion commander, on several occasions, inserted a company of his paratroopers into squatter townships on the outskirts of the city to conduct surprise searches for illegal weapons and suspected insurgents. This was done by parachuting them into open fields nearby. Immediately after jumping, the companies would conduct patrols, throw cordons, carry out sweeps and set up hasty vehicle checkpoints on approach roads. Though the technique yielded varying concrete results, it did produce a decrease in

violence and agitation in those areas.<sup>99</sup> This could be ascribed to the spectacular manner in which the paratroopers arrived without any warning.

Over the period May and June 1991, 3 Parachute Battalion, using Dakota aircraft, conducted several platoon-sized parachute drops into open fields inside the sprawling township of Soweto, close to Johannesburg, doing the same sort of thing. These small operational drops were so successful that they then carried out a battalion-sized drop on 11 June onto a large field between the shacks and the surrounding mine dumps on the edge of the township as part of Operation FAGGOT. The aircraft utilised for the drop this time were C-130 Hercules and C-160 Transall transports.<sup>100</sup>

The paratroopers rapidly fanned out into the township, where they met up with police and threw cordons around houses in designated areas as well as setting up checkpoints in adjoining streets. Searches by police revealed several weapons caches and some suspects were arrested. However, the operation caused an outcry by the recently unbanned and largest insurgent organisation, the ANC, who objected vociferously. It was a time of negotiation between the government and the insurgents and such actions were regarded as overtly aggressive and thus not politically correct. So no further drops were made in the township. This put an end to certain experiments by then embarked on by 44 Parachute Brigade. Investigations were already under way to insert a whole platoon of paratroopers into a football field, using advanced static-line techniques with steerable square canopies.

Nevertheless, one more urban operational drop was carried out, back in Natal, on 18 December that year. Here a company of paratroopers dropped near the village of Groutville to conduct patrols in a politically volatile area. The whole of the province of Natal had become something of a powder keg, with violence between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) almost endemic. In Natal, where the largest black tribe in South Africa—the warlike Zulus—are found, a virtual civil war was erupting. The progressive and liberal ANC, sensing victory in the liberation struggle, was trying hard to make inroads and gain influence in the province. However, most of the Zulus supported the IFP, a traditional and conservative tribal organisation.

Political disagreements led to violence that rapidly escalated in the rural midlands of Natal. Armed clashes, massacres and ambushes turned certain parts into no-go areas where the police would not enter. This necessitated the deployment of the Army, and the SADF found itself trying to keep the two factions apart. The paratroopers were quick to realise that a parachute insertion could place a relatively large force in position at short notice and with a high level of surprise, with the added advantage that the method of arrival was extremely spectacular and awesome to the often-unsophisticated tribesmen.

99. Colonel McGill Alexander, 'South African Airborne Operations' (unpublished paper prepared in 1995).

100. Ibid.

Therefore, during 1993 the paratroopers again were jumping into action. Deployed in the Natal midlands to help keep the peace, 1 Parachute Battalion carried out numerous operational jumps amongst the bush-covered hills of this sub-tropical land. Companies and platoons were inserted into isolated areas to conduct patrols and searches.<sup>101</sup> It proved cheaper than helicopter insertions and far larger forces could be positioned in one go. Certainly, it enabled the paratroopers to prevent the warring factions from slaughtering one another

At the same time, the two insurgent organisations, the ANC and PAC (Pan-Africanist Congress), were now using the notoriously porous borders of South Africa to infiltrate insurgents and smuggle weapons into the country. Almost as often as they were deployed in the townships and the Natal midlands, the paratroopers were used for border protection. Although South Africa's borders were nowhere near as remote as those they had patrolled in Namibia, the paratroopers found this much more to their liking than urban deployments.

Nevertheless, with the rapidly changing political scene in South Africa, any thoughts of airborne operations were out of the question. Already in the early 1990s, the government was involved in talks with the ANC, until then regarded as the main insurgent movement. Further operations of this sort were considered prejudicial to these talks. This epitomised the stage that the insurgent war had reached: essentially, the government had already recognised the victory of the insurgents and was merely negotiating a peace. Within a year of the airborne operations in Natal this had been done, and South Africa moved on to the first democratic elections in the country in April 1994.

The final domino had fallen—the war was over. Victory had gone to the insurgents.

### **LESSONS LEARNED FROM LIBERATION**

Airborne operations in the Southern African Liberation War, a classic insurgency war, played a significant role—not in the outcome, which was determined by politics, but as an effective tool of counter-insurgency.

From the tentative and unsure efforts of the Portuguese, through the aggressively pioneering and confident application of the Rhodesians, to the flexible and varied innovations of the South Africans, the airborne capability proved to be very relevant to the military side of an insurgency conflict.

It enabled highly trained forces to get to where they were needed in a minimum of time; it ensured that the element of surprise was used optimally; it created psychological dislocation amongst the insurgents; it was a force multiplier; and it forced the insurgents to change their tactics and follow more complex and highly demanding procedures.

101. Ibid.

Ultimately, however, it proved that no military tactic or technique, regardless of how effective, is of any use against a political aim that is well-founded, irrefutable, soundly and cleverly propagated and relentlessly prosecuted by those who understand that their victory is ultimately inevitable.

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## **The Portuguese Colonial Experience in Southern Africa, 1961–74**

*John P. Cann*

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In the decade of the 1950s, the ‘winds of change’ were blowing through Africa. The largest colonial power, Britain, was freeing its colonies at a regular pace in step with its reluctant promise made to the United States during World War II. Following the independence of British India in August 1947, its empire wound steadily down, and by the mid-1960s all of its African possessions were independent countries for all practical purposes. France, despite its reduced circumstances, remained adamant in retaining its colonies and fought two losing conflicts, Indochina between 1946 and 1954 and Algeria between 1954 and 1963. During the Algerian conflict, an exhausted France began to grant independence to the remainder of its colonies at a rapid pace. With the 1959 débâcle in the Belgian Congo and its independence the following year, Portugal then possessed the last intact colonial empire. Portugal was the first colonial power to arrive in Africa and became the last to leave. As other European states were granting independence to their African possessions, Portugal chose to stay and fight despite the small odds for success. That it did so successfully for thirteen years across the three fronts of Angola, Guiné, and Mozambique remains a remarkable achievement, particularly for a nation of such modest resources. While its struggle was largely overshadowed by the United States’ involvement in Vietnam and is now largely forgotten by non-Portuguese scholars, the lesson from this experience is that a counter-insurgency campaign can be successful, even for a country lacking wealth in manpower, treasure, and experience. Portugal was able to leverage the soft power of its social programs alongside its low-intensity military fight and to support both with diplomatic, economic, and informational initiatives to trump insurgent claims. As we shall see, a key part of Portugal’s winning national strategy was its cooperation with its neighbours in southern Africa. This applied to friend and foe alike and sought to achieve mutually beneficial economic results that could cause a subordination of ideological differences and a rein on common insurgent activity.

## THE BEGINNING

On 15 March 1961 approximately 5000 poorly-armed men crossed the northern border of Angola at numerous sites along a 300-kilometre strip and proceeded to create mayhem. This number is thought to have been increased to as much as 25,000 through forced recruiting.<sup>1</sup> These incursions and attacks were instigated by Holden Roberto, who had founded the nationalist movement of the *União das Populações de Angola* (UPA or Union of Angolan Peoples) in the mid-1950s based on the transborder Bakongo population and the premise that Angola should be fully independent. He had been influenced by events in the Belgian Congo, where violence against the whites had delivered independence, had held the view that a militant approach was required with the Portuguese, and had acted accordingly. The death toll in the first week was estimated at 300 whites and 6000 blacks, and this figure is thought to have risen to about 500 whites and perhaps 20,000 blacks by the time that the force was checked by local militias of farmers and loyal blacks.

Portuguese forces in Angola at the time numbered 6500 troops, of which 1500 were European and 5000 locally recruited. They were spread across Angola in various training roles and unprepared to repel a full-scale invasion. Equally unprepared was the Portuguese war machine, which was unable to bring troops to the area in appreciable numbers until 1 May 1961, and it took until 13 June to reoccupy the first small administrative post of Lucunga.<sup>2</sup> It was not until October of that year that the north returned to near normalcy.

Portugal faced an intimidating array of insurgent organisations in its three African colonies. These forces were in the beginning quite fragmented, but to the extent that they could mend their relationships with one another, they presented a solid and formidable front. In Angola at the commencement of the war the primary opposition was centred in three nationalist movements. The first was the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA or the National Front for the Liberation of Angola), which was frequently referred to by its old initials of UPA and had an active force of about 6200 men based in the Belgian Congo. This number remained largely unchanged throughout the war. The second was the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA or the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), initially led by Agostinho Neto. The MPLA operated from various sites until 1963, when it settled in Congo (Brazzaville), the former Middle Congo of French Equatorial Africa. The bulk of its effective force moved to Lusaka in Zambia in 1966 to open an eastern front and is estimated to have been about 4700 strong from that time until the end of the war in 1974. Finally, the UPA/FNLA breakaway movement of *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA or National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) was formed by Jonas Savimbi in 1966 with only about 500 fighters.

1. Willem S. van der Waals, *Portugal's War in Angola 1961–1974* (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing, 1993), 64.
2. Estado-Maior do Exército (EME), *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África (1961–1974)* [Historical-Military Report of the African Campaigns (1961–1974)] (Lisbon: Estado-Maior do Exército, 1988), Vol. II, 27.

Aside from Angola, there were nationalist movements associated with Guiné and Mozambique that prior to the events of 1961 were hoping to negotiate concessions with the Portuguese on self-determination. In Guiné efforts by local nationalists to organise began in the early 1950s. The *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC or African Party for the Independence of Guiné and Cape Verde) was founded in September 1956 by local *assimilados* and educated Cape Verdeans. Its initial political organisation prompted an aggrieved dockworkers' strike on 3 August 1959, which ended in a violent disaster when it was broken with excessive military force. Fifty workers were killed, and the incident became known as the 'Pidjiguiti dock massacre'. PAIGC leadership quickly realised that peaceful protest would not achieve its objective of self-rule and independence. Accordingly, it shifted its strategy to one of clandestinely organising the rural population for an insurgency. PAIGC had learned hard lessons in 1959 well ahead of the MPLA and UPA/FNLA experiences of 1961, and had shifted its approach accordingly. It was not prepared to begin guerrilla war in Guiné until January 1963, when all of the elements for success were in place, including firm sanctuaries in adjacent countries. It began to field a force in 1962 and built it to about 5000 regular troops and 1500 popular militia by 1973.

In Mozambique the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO or Mozambique Liberation Front) was founded by Eduardo Mondlane. He, too, absorbed the lessons of 1961 and was not prepared to launch a guerrilla war until some three years later in September 1964, after his small army was trained. Mondlane, in coming late to the nationalist movements against Portugal, was very much influenced by the trend in Angola and Guiné. His organisation initially developed similarly to the PAIGC and experienced the same sort of problems in subordinating military operations to political leadership. His doctrine paralleled that of the MPLA and particularly of the PAIGC with its emphasis on political indoctrination, and it was along these lines that he sought to conduct his military campaign. Mozambicans had already tried peaceful demonstrations with the same consequences as occurred in Angola and Guiné. At Mueda in 1960 reputedly about 500 Africans were killed in a demonstration. FRELIMO felt that armed struggle was the only answer, as Portugal would not grant self-determination and would destroy those who demonstrated for political freedom. It began with a disorganised force of uncertain strength and by the early 1970s had an active force of 7200 regulars and 2400 popular militia.<sup>3</sup>

The internal struggles within these movements frustrated their effectiveness throughout the campaigns in all of the theatres. Leadership in the MPLA changed hands three times in its early years and blunted its capability to wage war until 1966, when it found an opportunity to open an eastern front from the sanctuary of Zambia. Splitting the headquarters between Lusaka and Brazzaville also hampered its direction. While the UPA/FNLA continued under Holden Roberto, his 'foreign minister', Jonas Savimbi, broke away to form UNITA, creating

3. Neil Bruce, 'Portugal's African Wars', *Conflict Studies* 34 (March 1973), 1-22, at 22.

a disruptive crosscurrent in its momentum. Also Roberto married into the family of his host nation's president and became more attracted to a comfortable life in Léopoldville than the rigors of aggressively leading a nationalist movement. Eduardo Mondlane, the founder of FRELIMO, was assassinated in 1969, and PAIGC founder Amílcar Cabral was assassinated in 1972, both in part because of internal power struggles that were fostered by the activities of the Portuguese secret police. These leadership changes altered the posture of both movements. In these cases polarisation against the Portuguese was the result of each successor's strategy to reduce internal party friction.

Despite these shortcomings, 27,000 insurgents spread over the three theatres was a problem for Portugal in that it was difficult to prevent their entry, and once across the border, it was difficult to locate them. Their ability to cross the long, unpatrolled borders in the remote areas of Africa and to make contact with the population represented a dangerous threat. In no other modern insurgency was there such a multiplicity of national movements across such a wide front in three theatres. Because the theatre of Guiné is isolated from those of Angola and Mozambique by half a continent, is not a part of southern Africa, and is an entirely separate story in itself, we will spend our time with the two larger colonies.

Following the uprising and the re-establishing of security in the north, Angola became relatively quiescent. With reoccupation of the affected areas, the conflict was reduced to low-level exchanges across the border along the Zaire River and the rugged and remote areas of the Dembos, a mountainous jungle stretching to the east. It was not until 1966 that the three competing nationalist movements of Angola would open fronts in the east after being stalemated in the north for some five years.

### CRITICAL LINKS

In September of 1965 Dr António Salazar, the Prime Minister of Portugal, met with his Council of Ministers in Lisbon to discuss geopolitical developments, their likely impact on Portugal, and the policies needed to address each. Foremost in their discussions was the unilateral declaration of independence, or the UDI, that Rhodesia was considering and the effect that it would have on Portuguese military, diplomatic and commercial interests in austral Africa.

Nyasaland (Malawi) had been independent since July 1964 and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) since October, and now Southern Rhodesia stood alone as the last territory of the extinct Central African Federation and a British colony enjoying a large measure of autonomy. Southern Rhodesia had long-established democratic institutions based on the British pattern but under conditions that centred control of the country in a white minority with overt racial discrimination. While the constitution installed in 1961 was administratively efficient, its political structure was difficult to reconcile with African nationalist movements. Nevertheless, Southern Rhodesia had been a most loyal British

colony, and sympathies ran high in the United Kingdom for the aspirations of the Rhodesian settlers. The Portuguese government consequently had to define its position in anticipation of the clash between the British and the local government in Rhodesia over the direction of the colony, independence in the style of Malawi and Zambia or continued white minority rule.

The Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique held the economic fate of Zambia, Malawi, and Rhodesia in their grasp, as the bulk of imports and exports flowed through their ports and connecting rail and pipeline systems. These are shown on Map 1.

**Map 1 – Southern African Railway System**  
(map courtesy RELOGS)



In the case of Zambia, the Benguela Railway (CFB) ran from the capital, Lusaka, through the copper belts of Zambia and Katanga Province of the Congo (Zaire) and across Angola to the port facilities of Benguela and Lobito. This communication link provided vital earnings for Zambia and the Congo and important transit fees for Portugal. Built with British capital and run by British administrators, it was the guardian of prosperity in Angola, Zambia, and the Congo. It was thus in no one's interest to disrupt this link.

Mozambique held the key to Rhodesia, Zambia, and Malawi, and to a lesser extent South Africa. The rail system from the port city of Lourenço Marques (Maputo) connected directly west to the South African network with its hub in Pretoria and northwest via Malvernia and Vila Salazar directly to the Rhodesian capital of Salisbury (Harare) and via a junction through Bulawayo to Lusaka. A second key rail link ran from the Mozambican port of Beira to Salisbury alongside an oil pipeline to a refinery at Umtali just across the border. The third key railway ran from the port of Nacala westward into Malawi. Beira also had a track north connecting with the Nacala line to Malawi.

Over the two railways from Lourenço Marques and Beira something like 60 per cent of Rhodesian exports moved.<sup>4</sup> This rail connection was not only important to Rhodesia but also to Zambia, as most of its imports of oil and other necessities came either from Mozambique through Rhodesia or over the longer route from South Africa through Botswana. The importance of maintaining functioning economies in Rhodesia as well as Zambia and Malawi from the Portuguese perspective, whether ally or opponent, was to secure its borders with these nations and to maintain the economic growth in Angola of 11 per cent per annum and in Mozambique of about nine per cent.<sup>5</sup> Such growth was dependent on trade and within Portuguese strategy was important in maintaining economic prosperity to trump nationalist arguments. As a consequence, Portugal assumed a neutral stance that governed its conduct in two areas. First, Portugal would as a matter of policy grant free transit and access to the ocean ports under its sovereignty irrespective of the political ideologies or positions assumed by its neighbours.<sup>6</sup> The design of this policy was to maintain communication and cooperation with these neighbours and to ensure their functioning economies. It was also to protect Portuguese infrastructure from insurgent activity, as for instance, Zambia would forbid its resident nationalist movements from attacking the rail links that supplied it with necessities or were integral to its export earnings.

4. Anthony R. Wilkinson, Introduction to Michael Raeburn, *Black Fire* (London: Julian Freedmann, 1978), 45.

5. John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961–1974* (St Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 9.

6. Jorge Jardim, *Rodesia: O Escândalo das Sanções* [Rhodesia: Sanctions Doublecross] (Lisbon: Intervenção, 1978), 12.

Second, the Rhodesian case was a British responsibility, and Portugal would not take sides in this quarrel.<sup>7</sup> It did not expect Britain to intervene in the ongoing insurgencies in the Portuguese colonies, and conversely Portugal had not argued with the British path followed with Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia or Swaziland, all of which had borders with Mozambique. These two policies were anticipated to be awkward for Britain, but Portugal would follow them as best as it could to serve its interests, particularly with respect to Rhodesia. It was in Portuguese interests to have a stable and functioning government in Salisbury to protect their shared 1300-kilometre border, as Mozambican security was already threatened by Tanzanian hostility and by insurgent infiltration from Zambia and possibly Malawi. A hostile situation in Rhodesia would trigger an escalation that could not be immediately met with the means available to the military leaders in Mozambique. While additional men and matériel could be made available, such a request would be unwelcome in Lisbon.

### AFRICAN DEVELOPMENTS

The Portuguese insurgency in Mozambique probably would not have developed as such but for the British granting of independence to Tanzania in 1961. It was the emergence of Julius Nyerere first as its premier and later in 1962 as its president that was the most telling development, as he was an ardent nationalist who was passionately committed to supporting and providing a home for African liberation movements. These included the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) of South Africa, Southwest African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO), *Movimento Popular da Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Joshua Nkomo and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Robert Mugabe in their struggle to unseat the white regime in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and most importantly to our story, the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO).

Nyerere proved to be a skilled negotiator and peacemaker among his revolutionary guests, and as an avowed Marxist and advocate of the single-party state, encouraged a similar policy with these fellow travellers. He was considered a model leader among those in the fraternity of emerging African states, although the average Tanzanian would have had difficulty understanding this view. During the early years of his tenure, he managed to destroy the fragile Tanzanian economy primarily through the arbitrary nationalisation of hundreds of white-owned farms. This conversion from a functioning rural commercial economy to a dysfunctional collectivised Marxist one was an economic disaster. In a similarly ill-conceived ideological decision he replaced English with Swahili as the national language, with all of the commercial and cultural isolation that it implied. He personally presided over an increasingly militant, xenophobic, and beggared state and held divisiveness in line

7. Ibid.

through the liberal use of his Preventive Detention Act and East German-trained security police to imprison opponents. As with most paranoid strongmen, Nyerere was constantly blaming his self-induced problems on mythical exterior forces and alluded frequently to a 'white imperialist plot'.<sup>8</sup> His apparent commitment to human rights on the world stage was clearly at odds with his actions at home. The future FRELIMO government in 1975 would embrace similar policies and in so doing spawn its own insurgency, the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO or Mozambican National Resistance).

Eduardo Mondlane, who with Nyerere's help had consolidated most of the disparate Mozambican nationalist movements into FRELIMO, was personally endorsed by him as its leader in a September 1962 inaugural national conference at Dar es Salaam.<sup>9</sup> Mondlane was an intellectual educated in South Africa, Portugal, and the United States, and it is believed that Nyerere selected him to lead FRELIMO while he was teaching anthropology at Syracuse University. Soon after this inauguration and in anticipation of the struggle, FRELIMO sent its first 250 young volunteers to the newly independent Algeria for military training.<sup>10</sup> Later the United Arab Republic provided similar support until the 1970s. As training matured, recruits were flown to more efficient, purpose-designed centres in the Ukraine aboard Aeroflot aircraft and given their initial instruction by seasoned insurgent professionals. This process was able to produce better trained personnel in volume not only to replace losses but also to expand the FRELIMO army. The graduates were then returned to the Tanzanian camp at Chingoe under Communist Chinese supervision.<sup>11</sup>

Mondlane and Nyerere also established a network of bases on the Tanzanian side of the border. The primary one was Nachinghea, and depots were built at Songea, Tunduru, and Lindi. There were also five bases next to the border for staging incursions: Mbamba Bay, Chamba, Lukwila, Newala, and Mtwara. It was from these that Mondlane maintained his insurgent campaign into Mozambique.<sup>12</sup> As one would expect, Nyerere controlled the flow of arms from Communist China, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe on behalf of FRELIMO.

Initial FRELIMO strength was derived from the overt support of the Makonde people, who lived in the north of the Cabo Delgado district of Mozambique and immediately across the Rovuma on that portion of the Makonde Plateau in Tanzania. They formed a bellicose and itinerant nation that had been in place at least a thousand years.<sup>13</sup> René

8. Al J. Venter, *The Zambesi Salient: Conflict in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1974), 193.

9. John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution: The Anatomy of an Explosion (1950-1962)*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969), 284.

10. Ian F.W. Beckett, 'The Portuguese Army: The Campaign in Mozambique, 1964-1974', in I.F.W. Beckett and J. Pimlott (eds), *Armed Forces and Modern Counterinsurgency* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 136-62, at 140.

11. Venter, *The Zambesi Salient*, 81.

12. *Ibid.*, 48; Bruce, 'Portugal's African Wars', 8.

13. José Verdasca dos Santos, *Memórias de um Capitão* [Memories of a Captain] (Lisbon: Universitária Editoria, 2004), 143.

Pélissier describes the Makonde as a tribe of 'intransigent warriors' who are 'allergic to all forms of authority and outside influence'.<sup>14</sup> Over the years they successfully rejected Islam, Christianity, and German and Portuguese attempts to administer them. They tended to remain animist and to worship their ancestors. By the early 1960s the Makonde in Tanzania had become thoroughly infiltrated by FRELIMO cadres and thus were the major source of insurgent recruits.<sup>15</sup>

This sudden welcoming of outsiders was due to the granting of independence to black-ruled Tanzania and its subsequent hostility towards white-ruled Mozambique. The Makonde people prior to 1961 had been divided by a border with no fence or strict frontier enforcement, and indeed, there was little overt Portuguese presence in the area. This nominal division did not affect their tribal unity, as they were free to move back and forth across the international border unhindered. The national polarisation initiated by independence brought almost complete restriction to intratribal communication, and the Makonde in Tanzania at the instigation of FRELIMO became concerned with fighting the Portuguese to re-establish their freedom of movement within their tribal region. FRELIMO activity had drawn Portuguese forces into the Makonde ancestral grounds of northern Mozambique and made the border an issue. FRELIMO leadership was Bantu in origin and held in contempt by the Makonde; however, the Makonde in Tanzania were willing to align themselves with FRELIMO to expel the Portuguese and re-establish the link with their people in Mozambique. This was a short-range goal, for over the long run linking with FRELIMO would put Bantus in charge of Mozambique and make the Makonde subservient to them. For FRELIMO its alignment with the Makonde meant limited success, for the Makonde were interested only in regaining their own ground and not in having the Bantu or anyone else transit their area. In turn the Makonde held no interest in pushing further south, so FRELIMO was quickly stalemated in the north as much from inter-tribal rivalry as from Portuguese martial activity.<sup>16</sup>

FRELIMO had begun with a planned program of infiltration, subversion of the population, and raids. There was the hope of mass insurrection against the Portuguese authorities, again in the vein of Holden Roberto's logic embodied in the UPA/FNLA attacks in the north of Angola during March 1961, but the population was too dispersed and divided for this course to be a realistic expectation. The Makonde in Mozambique, for instance, did not necessarily share the revolutionary fervour of their kin across the border. Some Makonde were persuaded to join FRELIMO; however, true to their traditions most rejected this intrusion and were subjected to the standard tools of terror, such as murder, torture, and selective kidnapping, when they did not provide active help. In 1973 Neil

14. René Pélissier, *Naissance du Mozambique: Résistance et Révoltes Anticoloniales (1854–1918)* (Orgeval: Pélissier, 1984), 19.

15. Venter, *The Zambesi Salient*, 48.

16. Peter J. H. Petter-Bowyer, *Winds of Destruction* (Victoria: Trafford, 2003), 229–30.

Bruce made the observation that, according to defectors, more than 450 Makonde had been murdered by FRELIMO, 1000 wounded, and 6500 captured since 1964.<sup>17</sup> The accuracy of these figures is less important than the fact that atrocities were being committed on quite a large scale by African against African. In a country where the population was composed of 19 tribes and 17 different language groups and where it is distributed over nearly nine million people, these practices destroyed any genuine FRELIMO hope of creating a broad popular base.

When this failure became evident in the late 1960s, FRELIMO was forced to seek a new strategy and open a second front in the Tête District. In looking at a map of the area, one can readily see that it would have been far easier to use Malawi for that front; however, its president would not permit it for fear both that his communication through Mozambique to the sea would be severed and that such activity would also make his country a battleground.

### THE NEW FRONTS

Northern Rhodesia was granted its independence and became the Republic of Zambia on 24 October 1964, following Tanzania by some three years. Kenneth David Kaunda, a former schoolteacher turned politician, became its first president. He had become an ardent nationalist in the 1950s, had led the drive for Zambian independence, and like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, was passionately committed to supporting and providing a home for African liberation movements. He and Nyerere, thought alike, as both espoused the single party socialist state and clung to political power through this vehicle. The journalist Chanda Chisala correctly, if emotionally, describes Kaunda as a power-hungry, selfish, greedy dictator who had little respect for human rights and less tolerance for contrary opinions.<sup>18</sup> In 1972 he bulldozed his new constitution into effect and banned all political parties except his own. Citizens could be and were jailed for such trivialities as not displaying his portrait in their offices. While espousing Christian principles, he was happy to detain dissidents without trial and abuse them with beatings, starvation, torture, and solitary confinement.<sup>19</sup> He used the term 'stupid idiots' to describe his opponents, who eventually became a majority of Zambians.

If Kaunda was a bad political leader, then he was an even worse economic one with his catastrophic record of mismanagement. He inherited the second-wealthiest nation in Africa, after South Africa, and proceeded to reduce it to the bottom of the ladder of world economies by any measure. He nationalised the private commercial sector both to direct the dispensing of jobs and to support his socialist concept. This included everything from

17. Bruce, 'Portugal's African Wars', 8 and 20.

18. Chanda Chisala, <http://www.zambia.co.zm/articles/kaunda.html>.

19. Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 381.

copper mines to hair dressers and dry cleaning shops. It has been estimated that Kaunda controlled 40,000 patronage positions in the capital of Lusaka alone.<sup>20</sup> Zambian industry withered. Kaunda had assumed that the copper mines would be an inexhaustible source of revenue to fund his policies and hired thousands of unnecessary hands to buy political acquiescence. Unfortunately Zambian copper production peaked in 1969, the year before nationalisation, and subsequently began its long and steady decline.<sup>21</sup> Kaunda, in the pithy words of journalist Melvin Durai, allowed the Zambian economy to slide halfway down Victoria Falls while he hypnotised his countrymen with the traditional waves of his white handkerchief.<sup>22</sup> His trademark was a white linen handkerchief woven tightly between the fingers of his left hand.

Zambia was blessed with fertile land, reliable rainfall, and enormous agricultural potential. It was self-sufficient in food supplies at independence, and yet Kaunda's misguided agricultural policy created debilitating food shortages. Kaunda had government officials telling farmers what to grow, purchasing their crops when harvested, and selling them at heavily subsidised prices.<sup>23</sup> Generous agricultural sector loans were granted with little attempt at collection, a not-too-subtle political bribe. Corruption in other sectors was equally as bad or worse with the predictable result of wide-spread and persistent economic decline. Zambians remember Kaunda's rule as a time when shops were so bare that even the relatively well-off had trouble buying soap.<sup>24</sup>

Kaunda implemented many other foolish and idealistic policies. His most bizarre was that of promoting a national 'self-sufficiency' through the erection of tariff barriers and currency controls and of thereby isolating the Zambian economy from the rest of

20. Ibid., 380.

21. Annual Zambian copper production fell from a peak of 700,000 tons in 1969 to fewer than 300,000 in 1995. During the years of Kaunda oversight, cash was drained from mining to fund other discretionary programs to the point that routine equipment maintenance and replacement were almost entirely foregone. Today huge investments are needed to replace outdated machinery and import technology to regain competitiveness. It has been estimated, for instance, that the Nchanga open-pit mine, the country's most productive, needs \$150 million in new equipment. At present, cash flow is so anaemic that the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines, the government mining entity, cannot buy a simple gravel crusher to harden the pit roads during the rainy season. On the other hand, a tour 3000 feet down into the Konkola mine shows the huge potential, and huge potential costs, that investors face. It is a vast formation that has 3.8 per cent copper ore, about three times as rich as many mines in the Americas and big enough to last 100 years. Countering this potential is the cost of digging, which has been estimated at \$600 million. Despite these problems, mining giants, such as the South African Anglovaal and the American Phelps Dodge, were showing interest in 1996 with the accelerating improvement in world copper demand and the consequent high prices. By 2003, however, credentialed investors, such as AngloAmerican, had abandoned their investments as unattractive because of unforeseen capital requirements to modernise the operation as well as other local problems. For instance, electricity and fuel costs were uneconomically high, and the needed work permits to import the required technical experience were not forthcoming. As the major, recognised companies with mining pedigrees withdrew or avoided further involvement in Zambia, they were replaced with relative unknowns with uncertain mining credentials. This development led to further reversals in Zambian mining. Lastly, while the government wishes to privatise its mines and add funds to its coffers, it still wishes to dictate beyond any reasonable level how private commercial firms will run their extraction businesses in Zambia.

22. Melvin Durai, <http://www.melvindurai.com/kaunda.htm>.

23. Robert Guest, *The Shackled Continent: Power, Corruption, and African Lives* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 152.

24. Ibid., 153.

the world. This included an idealistically-driven embargo on trade with apartheid South Africa. Such trade could have easily alleviated the food shortages that plagued his country, but Kaunda felt that it was more important for Zambians to suffer rather than to break with his ideal. Of course the State House pantry never suffered.

As long as Kaunda was able to exploit the colonial dowry, he could pursue his misguided economic and African nationalist policies. Once it was exhausted, however, his political future became tenuous. While the tide was with him, though, he made Zambia the home for numerous nationalist movements. Indeed he hardly met one that he did not like. His landlocked country shared a frontier with no less than six countries, three of which were fighting active insurgencies, Angola, Rhodesia, and Mozambique. This gave him ample opportunity to make trouble for his neighbours. Within two years of coming to power, Kaunda offered sanctuary to the ANC, FRELIMO, MPLA, SWAPO, UNITA, ZANU, and ZAPU. The MPLA and UNITA would pursue their campaigns against the Portuguese in eastern Angola.

Frustrated with Léopoldville's restrictive position on operations in northern Angola, the MPLA resolved at its January 1964 Conference of Cadres in Brazzaville to begin a calculated move to Zambia. From there it could re-establish its offensive. While Agostinho Neto elected initially to remain in Brazzaville, he would put his trusted associate Daniel Chipenda in charge of the eastern front, and from this point, things developed rapidly for the MPLA.

The supply chain in support of this offensive began with Julius Nyerere in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, through which arms flowed from such supplier-states as the Soviet Union, Communist China, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Cuba. Dar-es-Salaam was not only a port of entry but also the centre for training the armed elements of the ANC, FRELIMO, MPLA, SWAPO, and ZAPU.<sup>25</sup> From this centre of mischief, arms supplies and trained insurgents flowed to eastern Angola over a lengthy trail that wound through Tanzania and Zambia for nearly 1000 kilometres to Lusaca. From here there was a northern route of another 400 kilometres that served forces entering the Cazumbo Salient of Angola and a southern one of about 300 kilometres that supplied thrusts both across the Cuando River and along the Zambesi into Angola. These routes are detailed in Map 2.

Subversion of the population in the east of Angola was estimated by the Portuguese to be a modest six per cent in 1965 and had grown to about 42 per cent by 1968, the year that the MPLA offensive attained its height.<sup>26</sup> As military pressure was applied,

25. Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *A PIDE/DGS na Guerra Colonial 1961–1974* [The PIDE/DGS in the Colonial War 1961–1974] (Lisbon: Terramar, 2004), 283.

26. António Pires Nunes, *Angola 1966–1974, Vitória Militar no Leste* [Angola 1966–1974, Military Victory in the East] (Lisbon: Prefácio, 2002), 6.



there was a steady decline in insurgent presence and effectiveness until the conclusion of the campaign in early 1973. Over the five-year period the insurgents, and particularly the MPLA, were destroyed and their political elements reduced to spent forces despite Kaunda's support. Throughout this period regular contact was maintained with Zambia through the British administrators of the CFB in an attempt to improve relations. The trouble on this front began with a UNITA military adventure on Christmas Eve 1966. Five hundred insurgents attacked the Portuguese garrison of Teixeira de Sousa, which was the border station on the CFB, and suffered a disastrous defeat with over 300 dead. UNITA was soon alienated from its vital Zambian support, as Portugal struck at the fragile Zambian treasury by closing the railway to its and Congolese (Zairian) copper exports for one week. Again in April 1967 there were two UNITA acts of sabotage on the CFB infrastructure, and again Portugal closed the railway and threatened lengthier closures unless attacks ceased. Thereafter UNITA was unwelcome in Zambia, and the MPLA was put on notice not to interfere with the CFB. Congo (Zaire) likewise put the UPA/FNLA on notice. In an attempt at improving relations, Portugal also initiated two diplomatic missions to Zambia; however, they were unsuccessful, and Kaunda was described by Joaquim Moreira da Silva Cunha, the Portuguese Foreign Minister, as a 'treacherous' leader who understood only 'firmness and force'.<sup>27</sup> From the Portuguese perspective it was thought that while you may not like the enemy, if you maintain a dialogue with him, at least you know what he is thinking. On a brighter front, Portugal, which had closed its border with the Congo (Zaire) following the attacks of 1961, reopened it in 1970, when the insurgent situation throughout Angola had been brought under control, and allowed unrestricted population movement. As Colin Beer has observed, 'Angola had been virtually pacified while the situation in Rhodesia steadily deteriorated'.<sup>28</sup> The differing balance sheets of these campaigns were an indication of the degree that the political and military establishments of those countries understood such conflict.

In 1968 FRELIMO moved to Zambia and sought a new front in the Tête District of Mozambique. As in the Niassa and Cabo Delgado districts directly across the Rovuma River from Tanzania, insurgent activity proved difficult. Portuguese presence in Tête had historically been limited, and the sparse population of less than one person per square kilometre had been largely left to follow its own pursuits. Proselytising consequently proved extremely difficult, and FRELIMO resorted to selective terror to gain the forced support of the population. By September 1971 some 55 traditional chiefs north of the Zambezi River in Tête had been murdered as a result of this policy.<sup>29</sup>

27. Joaquim Moreira da Silva Cunha, *O Ultramar, O Nação e o "25 de Abril"* [The Overseas Provinces, the Nation, and the "25th of April"] (Coimbra: Atlântida Editora, 1977), 62–7.

28. Colin M. Beer, *On Revolutionary War* (Bromley: Galago Publishing, 1990), 7.

29. Kaulza de Arriaga, *The Portuguese Answer* (London: Tom Stacey, 1973), 74.

The most significant Portuguese activity in Tété was the massive Zambezi River hydroelectric project and dam at the Cahora Bassa gorge. This scheme, when completed, would supply power to Mozambique and South Africa through a high-tension transmission system stretching thousands of kilometres into the host countries. More importantly to the insurgent campaign would be the creation of the Cahora Bassa Lake, which was to be a vast reservoir 280 kilometres in length and 38 kilometres at its widest point.<sup>30</sup> This source would irrigate hitherto dry but fertile lands in an effort to bring prosperity to Tété and Mozambique and harness this income for Portugal. This project and its lake were seen potentially as an effective block to FRELIMO and other insurgent infiltration through Tété and into central Mozambique and Rhodesia. As it was, by 1971 FRELIMO, encouraged by its Communist Chinese advisers, became active in the area south of the Zambezi in Tété near the village of Daque and at the several neighbouring villages of Deveteve, Nura, and Sierra do Comboio.<sup>31</sup> These FRELIMO bases also hosted ZANU insurgents, a source of great concern to Rhodesia, which began conducting 'hot pursuit' operations into Tété after August 1971, when a FRELIMO assassination squad entered Rhodesia and heightened interest. Up to 1969, when the level of political violence suggested increased underground activity by the nationalists, the Rhodesian military front had been largely quiescent. The nationalists had found a new weapon in the land mine, and the first incident occurred in early 1971, when a Landrover on a routine visit to a border post with Tété detonated a TMH-46 Soviet anti-tank mine.<sup>32</sup> While the vehicle was destroyed, the driver miraculously escaped.

Rhodesia and Portugal had exercised a spirit of military cooperation that had extended from the mid-1960s and included secondments of Rhodesian troops to the Portuguese army fighting in Mozambique. With the developing threat from Tété during 1972 and 1973, the Portuguese command in Mozambique granted Rhodesia exclusive military rights over the entire Tété region south of the Zambezi.<sup>33</sup> The Portuguese simply did not view Tété in the same light as the Rhodesians. For the Portuguese, there was little commercial value to the territory outside of Cahora Bassa, and it was virtually unpopulated. As a consequence, little effort was spent on the countryside.

On the other hand, Tété represented an easy route for the insurgents to access Rhodesia and was a grave concern to its government. While Portugal was maintaining a modestly effective lid on insurgent activity in Tété, it was beginning to face an overall battle fatigue that was reflected in major national financial and morale problems, as its colonial war had been active since 1961. The conscripts from the *metrópole* sent to fight

30. António José Telo, *História da Marinha Portuguesa: Homens, Doutrinas e Organização, 1824–1974 (Tomo I)* [History of the Portuguese Navy: Men, Doctrine and Organisation, 1824–1974 (Volume I)] (Lisbon: Academia de Marinha, 1999), 616.

31. Henrik Ellert, *The Rhodesia Front War: Counter-insurgency and guerrilla war in Rhodesia 1962–1980* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1993), 88.

32. *Ibid.*, 87.

33. *Ibid.*, 90.

in Mozambique showed little interest in the war and aimed to limit their risk in order to return home in one piece. On the other hand, Rhodesian forces were fighting for their homeland and would not shy from risks. Military activity in Tête accordingly accelerated in coordination with the Portuguese.

Unfortunately for Rhodesia, middle-ranking Portuguese officers effected a coup in Lisbon and toppled the government on 24 April 1974. From this point onward the Rhodesian military assumed de facto security duties in Tête. This would be an uphill struggle, for as Portugal attempted to extract itself from the fight, Rhodesia would be forced to assume the full burden. It was clear that Portuguese withdrawal from Africa and specifically from Mozambique on 25 June 1975 profoundly altered the political and military balance in Southern Africa. Rhodesia now had its entire 1300-kilometre eastern flank exposed and was left with only the 222-kilometre frontier with South Africa free of infiltration out of a total frontier length of 2964 kilometres. In 1975 it was estimated that there were about 400 insurgents inside Rhodesia and about 5500 externally.<sup>34</sup> By April 1977 security authorities admitted that up to 2350 insurgents were operating in the country and another 10,000 more training in Mozambique and Tanzania.<sup>35</sup>

These sorts of wars were, above all, political wars and required victories on political fronts. The French had won militarily in Algeria but lost the political battle and thus the war. The same might be said of the Portuguese. The Portuguese government needed the support of its citizens as well as its military to conduct a successful campaign, as it was the population that would pay the taxes and provide the recruits to conduct the war. As time wore on, the Portuguese people began increasingly to vote with their feet to avoid the economic and social penalties of the war, such as a domestic inflation rate in 1974 of about 20 per cent. This diminishing public support created severe recruiting problems, and indicative of this feeling, annual emigration rose to 170,000 in 1974. Over the period of the war an estimated 1.5 million emigrants reduced the workforce to 3.5 million and the total population to 8.6 million, roughly where it remains today.<sup>36</sup>

As far as the Portuguese military was concerned, its effort had been designed to bring security to the various colonies and provide the politicians with the time and opportunity to solve the political problem of bringing the African population into the political, social, and economic mainstream. Continuing to fight indefinitely to preserve Salazar's New State status quo had little chance of success in a world of newly independent former colonies. When the politicians failed to provide the military with the complementary support, it was the military that initiated what came to be known as the Carnation Revolution and provided the political solution that not only freed the colonies but ultimately liberated Portugal and made possible a transition to democracy.

34. L.H. Gann, 'Prospects for White Resistance', *Africa Report* 22 (September-October 1977), 9-14, at 10.

35. Wilkinson, Introduction to *Black Fire*, 47.

36. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa*, 192.

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# The Wretched of the Empire: Politics, Ideology and Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia, 1965–80

*Michael Evans*

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It has been written that the character of insurgency in the era of decolonisation and of the Cold War represented a phenomenon that was eighty per cent political and only twenty per cent military.<sup>1</sup> This equation was clearly proven in the case of Rhodesia where, following a successful rebellion against the British Crown in 1965, a small population of 250,000 white settlers fought a long and bitter racial civil war against an African nationalist insurgency. It was a civil war that lasted seven years between 1972 and 1979, cost 30,000 dead, 275,000 wounded and which created 1.5 million refugees. In December 1979, a ceasefire agreement was declared and was followed in February 1980 by all-party elections which saw a guerrilla political victory at the polls and the birth of the new state of Zimbabwe.

What is most interesting about the long Rhodesian bush war is not so much its operational details, but its politics. If the politics of a counter-insurgency campaign are misconceived then the strategy drawn from those politics is almost certain to be flawed. As the leading American military historians, Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, have observed, in any type of war, no amount of operational virtuosity can redeem fundamental flaws in political judgment. Moreover, the question as to whether policy has shaped strategy, or strategic imperatives policy, becomes irrelevant—since any combination of politico-strategic error, if not identified and corrected swiftly, leads to disaster.<sup>2</sup> In a telling passage the two scholars note:

[In war] it is more important to make correct decisions at the political and strategic level than it is at the operational and tactical level. Mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected, but political and strategic mistakes live forever.<sup>3</sup>

1. David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 89.

2. Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, 'Lessons of War', *National Interest* (1988/1989), No. 14, 83-95.

3. *Ibid.*

In terms of counter-insurgency warfare, Rhodesia is a vivid illustration of how politico-strategic failures ‘live forever’. In Rhodesia, a combination of dysfunctional settler politics and the adoption of a peculiar far right-wing ideology came to underpin the rationale of a counter-insurgency effort and led, inexorably, to the strategic defeat of the white Rhodesians.<sup>4</sup>

It was the dictates of political ideology that led Rhodesia’s security forces into the classical dilemma of all counter-insurgents: victory in every tactical battle with guerrilla forces in the field, but loss in the vital strategic battle to win over the ‘hearts and minds’ of the population. In 1979, writing shortly after a personal visit to war-torn Rhodesia, the distinguished British analyst of counter-insurgency, Sir Robert Thompson, noted sombrely that one of the most difficult lessons for a regular military establishment to understand is the reality that undefeated armies can lose wars against insurgents, particularly if an insurgent movement can impose unacceptable political costs which slowly sap a government’s power.<sup>5</sup> Under such circumstances, observed Thompson, ‘while losing every battle it [the insurgent movement] is winning the war. In short, the [counter-insurgent] army wins all the battles and is still defeated in the end’.<sup>6</sup>

Much can be learned by Western counter-insurgency specialists from the way in which the technical military proficiency of the Rhodesians was rendered irrelevant due to their ideological, cultural and ethnocentric failings in the crucial area of political strategy. Despite possession of a military establishment that was steeped in British counter-insurgency practice from Palestine and Cyprus through Kenya and Malaya to Aden, the Rhodesians lost their war because they failed the acid test of strategy: ‘know your enemy’—and the white settlers neither knew, nor sought to understand, their enemy.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter examines four areas of the Rhodesian experience. First, it examines how a conservative Anglo-Saxon settler society in Africa faced by the revolution of decolonisation became utterly disorientated by change and embraced a peculiar and extremist political ideology that justified rebellion against the British Crown and which eventually created a civil war situation in the country. Second, the way in which Rhodesia’s successes in early counter-insurgency operations only served to increase settler ideological resistance to change and blinded the white rebels to the need to adopt timely political reform, is

4. A detailed study of settler political ideology and its vital nexus with counter-insurgency can be found in Michael Evans, ‘The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980’, unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Western Australia, 1993.

5. Sir Robert G.K. Thompson, ‘Regular Armies and Insurgency’, in Ronald Haycock (ed.), *Regular Armies and Insurgency* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 9-10.

6. Ibid.

7. The best scholarly analysis of Rhodesian counter-insurgency remains J.K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (London: Croom Helm, 1985). Other useful studies include Henrik Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front War: Counter-Insurgency and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1980* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1989); Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia, 1965-80* (Marshalltown: Sygma/Collins, 1982); Michael Evans, *Fighting Against Chimurenga: An Analysis of Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia, 1972-79* (Salisbury: Historical Association of Zimbabwe, 1981).

analysed. Third, a snapshot is provided of the evolution and strategic character of the major Zimbabwean nationalist guerrilla campaign that began in 1972 and the challenge that it presented to the Rhodesian state. Finally, the paper analyses how after 1972, Rhodesian political ideology simultaneously fuelled a popular insurgency while proving incapable of sustaining a viable counter-insurgency strategy.

### RHODESIAN SETTLER SOCIETY AND THE CRISIS OF DECOLONISATION

Rhodesia was unique in the British Empire and Commonwealth in having the status of a self-governing colony from 1923 onwards. This status reflected the reality that Rhodesia was a product of Cape sub-imperialism led by Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company rather than British imperialism led by Whitehall. It was this unique history of settler colonialism that was to shape the future and, in many ways, was to determine the fate of Rhodesia in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup>

The type of self-governing settler society that was created in Rhodesia the first half of the twentieth century was a monolithic blend of Cape English influence and British settler power based on contemporary theories of segregation. It was a racially exclusive and deeply conservative, landlocked society that is well-captured in the 'Children of Violence' novels of the Rhodesian writer, Doris Lessing.<sup>9</sup> It was an insular society that was philosophically ill-prepared for the rapid political changes that followed the Second World War, particularly the revolution of British decolonisation that began in the late 1950s. It must be remembered that in 1956, in British Africa, no colony had achieved independence; less than a decade later, the British Empire in Africa had ceased to exist.<sup>10</sup>

From the late 1950s, Rhodesian politics became polarised between white Rhodesians who wanted minority 'independence on record' and black Zimbabwean nationalists who wanted rapid majority rule from the British Government. As Britain decolonised, it became clear that Rhodesia could only move from self-government to full independence by dismantling segregation in favour of a process of non-racial political reform that would permit unimpeded progress towards African majority rule.<sup>11</sup> However, the Rhodesian

8. See Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), especially Part One on the rule of the British South Africa Company.

9. See Murray Steele, *'Children of Violence' and Rhodesia: A Study of Doris Lessing as Historical Observer* (Salisbury: Central African Historical Association, 1972). The anatomy of the Rhodesian political system is analysed by Colin Leys, *European Politics in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), and by D.J. Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

10. For the international significance of European decolonisation see John Darwin, 'Decolonisation and World Politics', in David Lowe (ed.), *Australia and the End of Empires* (Geelong: Deakin University Press, 1996), 7-24.

11. For overviews see James Barber, *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Kenneth Young, *Rhodesia and Independence: A Study in British Colonial Policy* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967); Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); Anthony Verrier, *The Road to Zimbabwe, 1890-1980* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986); and J.R.T. Wood, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia's Bid for Independence During the Retreat from Empire, 1959-1965* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishers, 2005).

settlers were unnerved by the rapid retreat of European colonial rule in Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Events such as the Mau Mau rebellion and the eclipse of settler power in Kenya, the collapse of the ill-starred multiracial experiment of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; and the descent of the Belgian Congo into anarchy convinced many Rhodesians that African rule was synonymous with barbarism.<sup>12</sup>

Added to these external crises came the outbreak of ethnic violence in Rhodesia itself, waged by the two main African nationalist movements that emerged at the beginning of the 1960s, the Ndebele-dominated Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo and the Shona-dominated Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by such figures as Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe. As the Mayor of Salisbury, Dennis Divaris, later recalled, the years between 1960 and 1963 were 'the dark days of loaded revolvers by the bedside'.<sup>13</sup> To white Rhodesians, then, British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan's famous 'Wind of Change' in Africa was seen as a political tsunami and by the early 1960s fear of change radicalised settler politics. In December 1962, in a fateful general election, non-racial political reform was rejected when the Rhodesian Front (RF) party, unexpectedly, came to power.

The RF represented a settler alliance not only of Rhodesian-born farmer-politicians such as Ian Smith, but of diverse, expatriate Britons and English South Africans ranging from aristocrats to artisans.<sup>14</sup> The RF included such figures as Scotland's leading peer, Lord Angus Graham, the seventh Duke of Montrose, a leader in the British Israelite movement; the sickly, but politically resolute, English-born and Cambridge-educated lawyer, Clifford Dupont, later to become the first President of the rebel Rhodesian Republic; the wealthy right-wing Cape ideologue and devotee of General Franco, P. K. van der Byl; John Gaunt, an upper class Englishman, whose father, Sir Ernest Gaunt, had commanded a naval division at the battle of Jutland; Brigadier Andrew Dunlop, of the Argylls, who had served on Montgomery's Eighth Army staff; William Harper, an English-born racial ideologue and 'Bengal Chancer' from the end of the Raj in India; and the fiery John Newington, the populist champion of the white artisan and railway worker. Added to these figures was a host of small businessmen, farmers, former civil servants, solicitors and military and police officers, many of whom had been dispossessed both physically and psychologically by British decolonisation.<sup>15</sup>

12. The charged atmosphere of the times is well conveyed in Sir Roy Welensky's memoir of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, *Welensky's 4,000 Days* (London: Collins, 1964), and by J.R.T. Wood, *The Welensky Papers: A History of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (Durban: Graham Publishing, 1983).
13. Divaris in the *Rhodesia Herald*, Salisbury, 23 April 1969. For accounts of the rise of African nationalism see Natham Shamuyayira, *Crisis in Rhodesia* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), and W.W. Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1978).
14. For the rise of the Rhodesian Front see Evans, 'The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980', 21-34.
15. *Ibid.*, esp. ch. 2.

What bound these diverse figures together was their shared British military service in the Second World War, a common settler identity rooted in nostalgic Kiplingnesque ideals of Empire and, above all, Anglophobia, a conviction that through decolonisation, Britain had treacherously abandoned blood ties of kith and kin forged in two world wars. As Lord Graham bitterly put it in October 1964, ‘everything that most of us who grew up in the last 50 years have learned to regard as sacrosanct ... [British] courage, kinship, flag, Crown and the characteristic of not betraying one’s friends [has been cast aside by modern Britain]’.<sup>16</sup>

In his famous 1961 study of the psychology of anti-colonial struggle, Frantz Fanon writes of *les damnés de la terre*, the ‘wretched of the earth’, the dispossessed peasantry who reclaim their soil and who are rehabilitated by history through revolution.<sup>17</sup> To a large extent, the settlers who formed the Rhodesian Front party were a group of British colonial expatriates who sought redemption by a counter-revolution against the temper of their age and who thus came to represent not *les damnés* of the earth, but of the empire. Deeply hostile to the metropole’s rapid shedding of empire, the RF party’s embittered mixture of Rhodesian-born, British and English South African members was utterly committed to upholding settler power by a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) from Britain and by crushing the political threat of African nationalism by force.<sup>18</sup>

What made unconstitutional action possible was the fact that Rhodesia as a self-governing colony, had long possessed its own security forces. Moreover, participation in the short-lived Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland between 1953 and 1963 led to Rhodesia emerging with the bulk of the modern Federal military arsenal. By 1963, the Rhodesian security forces were composed of a regular army of 3400 soldiers, including two infantry battalions, one of the all-white Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI) and the other of the all-black Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR), along with a crack special forces unit, ‘C’ Rhodesia Squadron of the Special Air Service (SAS). These regular units were backed by 15,000 territorial reservists of the Royal Rhodesia Regiment.<sup>19</sup>

In terms of air power, the Royal Rhodesian Air Force was a small but technologically-advanced force equipped with Hawker Hunter jets, Canberra bombers, an array of light attack aircraft and Alouette helicopters. Finally there was the powerful 7000-strong paramilitary British South Africa Police backed by 25,000 field reservists.<sup>20</sup> By African standards, the Rhodesian security machine was formidable, ranking second only to South Africa’s in the sub-continent. It was essentially these forces that were to be used in the counter-insurgency campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s. Possession of its own military forces

16. Rhodesia, Parliamentary *Debates* 1964, Vol. LIX, 29 October, 684-91.

17. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books edn, 1967).

18. Evans, ‘The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980’, ch. 3.

19. Peter McLaughlin, ‘The Thin White Line: Rhodesia’s Armed Forces since the Second World War’, *Zambezia: The Journal of the University of Rhodesia* VI (1978), 175-86.

20. *Ibid.*

and a conviction that South Africa and Portugal would support a settler rebellion, led the Rhodesian Front Government to plunge down the dangerous path of unconstitutional action and civil war between 1965 and 1979.<sup>21</sup>

Given this background, it is therefore impossible to understand Rhodesia's counter-insurgency war without first comprehending the character and ideology of the Rhodesian Front party. In its pursuit of settler political supremacy, the RF regime abandoned much of Rhodesia's British liberal democratic tradition. The ruling party either refined, or introduced, draconian security legislation, notably the Emergency Powers Regulations. In addition, the party also recruited the South African-born propaganda expert, Ivor Benson, a former acolyte of British fascist leader Oswald Mosley, as Government Information Adviser to assist it in seizing control of broadcasting and television, so turning the electronic media into powerful instruments of ideological and psychological propaganda. Through a combination of security legislation and electronic propaganda, the Front Government destroyed its political opponents. By 1965, it had imprisoned most of the leading African nationalists, while parliamentary politics had been purged of any organised white liberal opposition.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the party constructed an extraordinary cult of personality around Prime Minister Ian Smith that was unprecedented in the annals of modern British political practice, a cult that cloaked Smith in political infallibility as a national saviour, a Rhodesian Cincinnatus laying down his plough for politics to become the defender of Western civilisation in Africa. A popular saying ran, 'the first word in Rhodesian is Rhodes but the last is Ian'. At the 1966 Rhodesian Front Congress, Smith was compared variously to Albert Schweitzer, Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln by adoring delegates.<sup>23</sup> The Rhodesian leader became in the words of the British observer, Sir Nicholas Cayzer, 'the subject of a fantastically unreal legend'.<sup>24</sup> In the fifteen years between the seizure of independence in November 1965 and the creation of Zimbabwe in April 1980, the Smith leader cult was a powerful influence in settler politics. On a visit to Rhodesia in March 1978, the leading American political scientist, Professor William J. Foltz, was moved to remark, 'there is no equivalent in the United States for the unabashed suspension of political judgment among whites towards a leader that I find here in Rhodesia'.<sup>25</sup>

21. For Rhodesia's relations with South Africa and Portugal see Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record, Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964-1981* (London: John Murray, 1987), 23-60, and James Barber and John Barratt, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security, 1945-1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 135-6.

22. See Morris Hirsch, *A Decade of Crisis: Ten Years of Rhodesian Front Rule* (Salisbury: Peter Dearlove, 1973); Larry W. Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia: White Power in an African State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); and Elaine Windrich, *The Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe: Censorship and Propaganda under Rhodesian Front Rule* (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1982), part one.

23. Report in the *Sunday Mail* (Salisbury), 25 September 1966.

24. University of York, United Kingdom, The Papers of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor, Sir Nicholas Cayzer to Slessor, 3 April 1966.

25. Foltz interview in the *Rhodesia Herald* (Salisbury), 18 March 1978.

Philosophically, the RF developed an extraordinary ‘world-struggle ideology’—what the British historian James Barber has called ‘a new Dark Ages philosophy’—to justify the dominance of settler supremacy. Central to the Front’s world-view was the belief that the sudden end of British colonial rule and the rapid emergence of African nationalism could not be explained by reference to either changing international conditions or the internal dynamics of Rhodesian race politics. Rather, rapid change in Africa could only be attributed to the pernicious influence of external forces in the form of international communism supported by a Western appeasement led by an effete and decadent post-imperial Britain. These external enemies threatened not just Rhodesia, but Western civilisation in Africa and they could only be defeated by Rhodesians making a heroic stand on the banks of the Zambezi.<sup>26</sup>

The Front’s world-struggle ideology was based on a conspiratorial interpretation of modern politics that emphasised virulent forms of Anglophobia, anti-communism, anti-internationalism and anti-liberalism. Because a UDI had only one historical model, that of the American colonists of 1776, many of the elements of RF ideology were adapted from American radical right-wing movements of the 1950s and 1960s, ranging from McCarthyism through the John Birch Society and the Liberty Lobby to the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and various fringe Goldwater Republican groups.<sup>27</sup> To this radical brew, the Front added the nostalgic Churchillian rhetoric of indigenous settler Toryism and so adopted a variant what has been described by American scholars as preservative extremism—that is, an extremism based on the politics of status anxiety.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, when Ian Smith seized independence from Britain on 11 November 1965, the illegal Rhodesian declaration was modelled on that of the American colonists in 1776 but couched in the modern language of the contemporary US radical-right. For example Smith announced:

We may be a small people, but we are a determined people who have been called upon to play a role of world-wide significance. We Rhodesians have rejected the doctrinaire philosophy of appeasement and surrender ... Even if we were to surrender does anyone believe that we would be the last target of the Communists and the Afro-Asian bloc? We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity.<sup>29</sup>

26. Barber, *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion*, 281-94.

27. Evans, ‘The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980’, 50-78.

28. See Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: The Free Press, 1965); Daniel Bell (ed.), *The Radical Right* (New York: The Free Press, 1964); Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raaab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970* (London: Heinemann, 1971); and Jonathan Martin Kolkey, *The New Right, 1960-1968, With Epilogue, 1969-1980* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983). The influence of the US radical right on the Rhodesian Front is examined in great detail in Evans, ‘The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980’, 54-78.

29. Ian Smith, *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith* (London: Blake Publishing, 1997), 106.

The UDI stand was, in this way, transformed from an unconstitutional defence of local racial privilege into a glorious moral struggle for Western civilisation in Africa. American radical right wing ideas of anti-communism and liberal appeasement merged with nostalgic beliefs that Rhodesia was the heir to all that had been apparently lost in the modern Western character. As Brigadier Andrew Skeen, the Rhodesian High Commissioner in London in 1965 and later a leading RF MP, wrote, Rhodesian UDI was taken in the spirit of Thermopylae and Lepanto when Western civilisation had been rescued from an 'Eastern tide' by a 'few determined and resolute people'.<sup>30</sup> Skeen went on to note:

In the 20th century the forces of the East, which again seek to overwhelm the Western world, are fighting with subtler weapons such as the ideology of communism, the various methods of exploiting information and by exploiting world organisations. This process had gone a long way by the summer of 1965 when it received its first serious check when Rhodesia assumed the role of champion of Western civilisation.<sup>31</sup>

Rhodesia's world-struggle ideology was, of course, a flight into fantasy but it was a potent fantasy, an appeal to the politics of colonial memory that was at once revolutionary and romantic, novel and nostalgic. Its conspiratorial themes of British betrayal, Western appeasement and international communism were attractive to many Rhodesians because they absolved settlerdom from undertaking the vital task of internal race reform. Its epic theme of a defence of Western values on the Zambezi tapped into the deepest recesses of a generation of Rhodesians schooled in British military heroism from Rorke's Drift to Dunkirk.<sup>32</sup>

As a justification for a UDI in the 1960s and as a mechanism for ensuring settler unity to overcome the economic sanctions and international isolation that followed rebellion, the Front's world-struggle ideology was remarkably successful. In four general elections between 1965 and 1977, the Rhodesian Front won every single white seat in parliament and its world-struggle ideology came to dominate official political discourse. However, as a philosophical guide to modern counter-insurgency practice in the 1970s against an African guerrilla war that grew out of racial injustice, such an ideology was fatally dysfunctional and contained the seeds of strategic disaster and it is to this issue that this essay must now turn.

30. Andrew Skeen, *Prelude to Independence: Skeen's 115 Days* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1966), Introduction.

31. Ibid.

32. Evans, 'The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980', 100-29.

### **INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY: THE ZAMBEZI VALLEY CAMPAIGN, 1966-71**

The weakness of the Front's world-struggle ideology when applied to fighting an insurgency that stemmed from internal racial inequality was not immediately apparent, largely because of the mistakes made by Zimbabwean nationalist guerrillas in the first round of the guerrilla war—what might be loosely called the Zambezi Valley campaign of the years 1966-71. After UDI, two ethnic guerrilla armies emerged, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the military wing of ZANU, and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the military wing of ZAPU. Both guerrilla armies operated from Zambia and from the mid-1960s until the early 1970s their cadres employed a strategy of frontal assault across the Zambezi River into northern Rhodesia. The insurgents sought to detonate revolutionary situation by using a variant of Che Guevara's *foco* theory in which guerrilla vanguards would engage the enemy in widespread fighting. The insurgent leadership hoped that the ensuing chaos would encourage British or UN military intervention to overthrow the rebel Government in Rhodesia.<sup>33</sup>

With its background of long operational service in Malaya and later Aden, the Rhodesian military had been preparing for an insurgent threat since 1960. In 1966 the Government introduced a command and control structure of joint security committees modelled on those used in the Malayan campaign, a system that was to remain in place until 1977. At the apex of the Rhodesian system was a civil-military Security Council chaired by the Prime Minister. A Security Force Headquarters (SFHQ) was created under the control of an Operations Coordinating Committee (OCC) comprised of the Chiefs of Staff, the Commissioner of Police and the Director-General of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). A countrywide system of joint operations committees (JOCs) organised on a provincial and district basis reported to the OCC through Security Force Headquarters.<sup>34</sup>

In the second half of the 1960s, Rhodesia experienced overwhelming success in its counter-insurgency operations partly because of good organisation and superior military training but also due to the strategic and operational mistakes of the nationalist guerrillas. Operating from Zambia, communist-armed and trained ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas infiltrated across the Zambezi, into the northern escarpment of the Zambezi Valley, a largely uninhabited and inhospitable region. The guerrillas made many elementary mistakes.<sup>35</sup>

33. For an account see Anthony Wilkinson, *Insurgency in Rhodesia: An Account and Assessment, 1957-73* (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 100, 1973), 8-13, and Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, ch. 1.

34. Rhodesia, Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Security and Defence Directive* (PMR. 24-1969 as amended) (secret), 'Part Three: Organisation and Command of the Security Forces', 19-23. Copy in author's possession.

35. J. Bowyer-Bell, 'The Frustration of Insurgency: The Rhodesian Example in the Sixties', *Military Affairs* XXXV (1971), 1-5.

For example, they moved in columns, wore green fatigues and used a standardised boot that made identification and tracking relatively easy. Moreover, in August 1967, ZAPU committed a strategic blunder when it formed a military alliance with the South African African National Congress's military wing *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and launched a joint insurgent campaign into northern Rhodesia. This development led South Africa to dispatch a contingent of 2000 paramilitary police to patrol the Zambezi where they reinforced the Rhodesians until 1975.<sup>36</sup>

The Zimbabwean nationalists, in effect, attacked the Rhodesians at their strongest point along the Zambezi River salient. Between 1966 and 1971, in a series of combined air-ground operations codenamed NICKEL, CAULDRON, GRIFFIN, BIRCH and PLUTO, Rhodesian security forces killed over 300 guerrillas and captured nearly 500 for the loss of 14 dead and 27 wounded.<sup>37</sup> It was a comprehensive tactical victory and in March 1970, J.H. Howman, the Rhodesian Minister of Defence, made the claim that 'Rhodesia has achieved the unique distinction of being the first country in the world to win the first decisive round in its encounter with communist aggression'.<sup>38</sup>

Yet Howman's declaration of counter-insurgency victory was premature and led the Rhodesian Front Government into the fatal assumption that it commanded widespread African political support. Having defeated what it viewed as externally-inspired communist terrorist aggression Ian Smith claimed that Rhodesia possessed 'the happiest Africans in the world'.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the African population of six million was allegedly so happy that they did not desire any form of political change or self-determination but were content to live as peasants under their traditional Chiefs. For their part, the Chiefs, paid servants of the Rhodesian Government, were described approvingly by Smith, as 'fine old men, nature's gentlemen [who] are not interested in political power'.<sup>40</sup>

African society was portrayed by the all-powerful Ministry of Internal Affairs, the modern version of the old Native Affairs Department, as a kind of eternal iron-age idyll, half Rousseau, half Rider Haggard.<sup>41</sup> This paternalistic and archaic view of African society ignored the impact of modern political nationalism and led the Government to introduce the retrogressive and discriminatory 1969 Constitution, a piece of legislation that doomed the African to almost permanent political impotence.<sup>42</sup>

36. Dumiso Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation', in Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (eds), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London: James Currey, 1995), 24-32.

37. Author's interviews with Major General R.R.J. Putterill, Chief of the Rhodesian General Staff, 1964-68, Salisbury, 24 March 1981, and with Colonel E.M. Willar, Chairman, Rhodesian Joint Planning Staff, 1970-72, Harare, 26 July 1982.

38. Statement in the *Rhodesia Herald*, 20 March 1970.

39. *Rhodesia Herald*, 25 November 1971.

40. Speech to the Rhodesian Front Congress, *Rhodesia Herald*, 22 September 1972.

41. See for example Ministry of Internal Affairs, *The Voice of the Tribes* (Salisbury: Government Printer, January 1968), 1-5, and N.J. Brendon, *The Man—and his Ways* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1969), *passim*.

42. Rhodesia, *Proposals for a New Constitution for Rhodesia* (CSR. 32-1969), 3-12.

Rhodesia's apparent defeat of African insurgency, the consolidation of UDI around the 1969 Constitution and a declaration of a Rhodesian Republic in 1970 persuaded the British Conservative Government of Edward Heath to concede a political settlement in 1971. This settlement endorsed much of UDI in return for a Rhodesian commitment to majority rule, a situation, however, which was not expected to occur until the 21st century. Believing that it commanded popular African support, the Rhodesian Government agreed to a British-supervised Test of Acceptability of African opinion led by Lord Pearce in order to approve the Anglo-Rhodesian settlement, a process which most of the Front politicians seemed to believe would be a formality.<sup>43</sup>

The result was disastrous for the Smith Government and foreshadowed the coming of civil war. Rhodesia's Africans overwhelmingly rejected any settlement negotiated by the RF, and the Pearce Commission's Report, published in May 1972, stated that 'mistrust of the intentions and motives of the Government ... was the dominant motivation of African rejection at all levels and in all areas'.<sup>44</sup> In December 1972, seven months after the Pearce Commission Report revealed mass African disaffection, ZANU's exiled *Dare re Chimurenga* (Revolutionary War Council) in Lusaka launched a new guerrilla offensive into Rhodesia.

### THE ZIMBABWEAN INSURGENCY CAMPAIGN, 1972–79

In 1971, the Portuguese military's inability in Mozambique to contain FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) guerrillas from infiltrating into the Tete province adjacent to northeast Rhodesia opened a strategic vector for ZANLA insurgents. Chinese-trained and equipped guerrilla cadres, undetected for a year, entered north-east Rhodesia and concentrated on the politicisation of the Shona peasantry. ZANLA exploited rural discontent with settler rule and used spirit mediums to develop a people's war strategy. The mastermind behind the new ZANLA campaign was the *Dare's* operations chief, Herbert Chitepo. Chitepo abandoned the unsuccessful confrontation strategy of the 1960s in favour of Mao's doctrine of protracted people's warfare based on the formula of 'time, space and will'. *Time* to politicise the people would be gained by exploiting *space* and both *time* and *space* would then yield revolutionary *will* in the form of supporters and recruits to the *Chimurenga* cause.<sup>45</sup> In November 1973, Chitepo outlined the strategy to be followed:

43. Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia: White Power in an African State*, 121-5, and Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, ch. 9.

44. United Kingdom, *Rhodesia: Report of the Commission on Rhodesian Opinion under the Chairmanship of the Right Honourable the Lord Pearce* (Cmnd. 4964, 1972), 109-12.

45. E.L. Katzenbach, Jr, and Gene E. Hanrahan, 'The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-tung', in Franklin Mark Osanka (ed.), *Modern Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: The Free Press of glencoe, 1962), 131-46. For the development of the ZANLA campaign see David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981); Paresh Pandya, *Mao Tse-tung and Chimurenga: an Investigation into ZANU's Strategies* (Braamfontein: Skotaville, 1988); and Josiah Tungamirai, 'Recruitment to ZANLA: Building Up a War Machine', in Bhebe and Ranger, *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, 36-45.

The strategical aim is to attenuate the enemy forces by causing their deployment over the whole country. The subsequent mobilisation of a large number of civilians from industry, business and agriculture would cause serious economic problems. This would have a psychologically devastating effect on the morale of the Whites.<sup>46</sup>

Chitepo had accurately gauged that Rhodesia's weakness lay in its limited settler demography. The Rhodesian Government possessed a white population the size of Bournemouth to control a country the size of France—a huge task. In December 1972, after a year of subversion and politicisation, the guerrillas launched a wave of coordinated attacks on white farms and communications in the Centenary and Mount Darwin areas. One of the few aspects of the Rhodesian bush war that both the counter-insurgents and the insurgents agree upon was the significance of the opening up of the northeast operational area. In 1982, Ken Flower, the long-time head of Rhodesian intelligence, reflected, 'the turning point in Rhodesia was Chitepo's fateful decision to avoid frontal attack and carry on the war through the people'.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in 1985, Robert Mugabe described ZANLA's infiltration of the north-east in 1971 as a 'pivotal, epochal development in the evolution of the entire armed struggle'.<sup>48</sup>

In April 1974, the Lisbon coup and the subsequent collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa in 1975 opened up the strategic nightmare of the entire eastern frontier of Rhodesia in a rapidly escalating insurgency along a 1200-kilometre front. And worse was to follow when in 1976, the ZANLA offensive was complemented by a ZIPRA campaign to infiltrate guerrillas into northern and western Rhodesia from bases in Zambia and Botswana. By 1977, in the wake of the assassination of Herbert Chitepo by Rhodesian agents, ZANLA became dominated by the icy Marxist intellectual, Robert Mugabe, while ZIPRA had united around the veteran bourgeois nationalist, Joshua Nkomo. The two guerrilla armies formed a loose, uneasy alliance called the Patriotic Front which, by 1978, succeeded in engulfing Rhodesia in a protracted three-front strategic insurgency that was beyond the capacity of the Smith Government to contain, still less, defeat.<sup>49</sup>

### RHODESIAN COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGY 1972–79

The RF Government refused to view the insurgent threat of the 1970s as a classic guerrilla war and instead interpreted it through the cosmic lens of its radical right wing world-struggle ideology. Any link between insurgency and domestic politics was dismissed. In February 1974, Ian Smith declared that the insurgents represented an external communist

46. Chitepo in *Third World*, London (March 1974).

47. Author's interview with Ken Flower, Director-General Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), 1964–81, Harare, 14 April 1982.

48. Robert Mugabe, 'ZANU's Struggle, 1963–79', *Liberation*, Copenhagen (November–December 1985), 9.

49. For the Zimbabwean guerrilla campaign after the fall of the Portuguese see Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*, chs 7–13, and Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia*, chs 3 and 9.

controlled clique of terrorists who could only be defeated by a military strategy designed 'to exterminate ruthlessly all forms of terrorism'.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, although the Rhodesian security forces applied all of the administrative features of their Malayan-style system of counter-insurgency, the key principle of political pacification based on respect for African culture or customary practice was wholly missing. RF ideology refused to concede that any 'hearts and minds' strategy was necessary to win the allegiance of the African population. In April 1974, the RF parliamentarian, Rodney Simmonds, summed up the Government's approach to counter-insurgency:

The gloved hand approach to administration, with pardons, amnesties, hearts and minds campaigns and rehabilitation will not work here ... We are facing a pagan enemy with an intellect different from that of the Caucasian, bent upon annihilating our society and we are going to have to fight with every physical resource at our disposal, without soul-searching and recrimination.<sup>51</sup>

Government propaganda concentrated on dehumanising the guerrillas as communist vermin, criminal scum and primitive *magandanga* (wild men). The behaviour of the guerrillas, said Ian Smith in November 1973, 'is more akin to that of an animal, than human being'.<sup>52</sup> Coercion and punishment thus ruled counter-insurgency practice ranging from summary arrest and collective fines through the confiscation of property and livestock to the mandatory death penalty for harbouring guerrillas. Moreover, the Malayan-style of strategic resettlement involving a protected village system introduced by the Rhodesians was used less as a means of population security and more as a means of creating depopulated 'free fire' zones for security force operations.<sup>53</sup>

Not surprisingly, as the RF regime's approach slipped into the realm of political dysfunction, several leading Rhodesian counter-insurgency specialists became RF opponents. Notable among these figures was Allan Savory, a young, former Rhodesian Front MP, who—disillusioned with the character and policies of the Smith Government—had crossed the floor. Savory, a charismatic figure, had served with the Rhodesian SAS and was the country's foremost expert in the politics of insurgency warfare. Well-read in the literature of insurgency, he accurately foresaw that lack of political reform was leading Rhodesia into a civil war that, for demographic reasons alone, could only end in settler strategic defeat.<sup>54</sup> Throughout 1973 and 1974, Savory, demonstrating enormous moral courage, delivered a series of lone speeches in parliament and around the country calling

50. Rhodesia, Ministry of Information, Statement from the Prime Minister's Office, 12 February 1974, and *Rhodesia Herald*, 19 February 1974.

51. Simmonds, letter to the editor, *Rhodesia Herald*, 11 April 1974.

52. Rhodesia Ministry of Information, 'Prime Minister's Address to the Nation', 11 November 1973, 1-5.

53. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 79-99.

54. Author's interview with Allan Savory, Harare, 18 August 1985.

for the primacy of political over military action. Savory quoted Sir Robert Thompson's famous fourth principle of counter-insurgency outlined in the latter's classic text, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*: 'the Government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas'.<sup>55</sup>

In March 1973, in a major speech in parliament, Savory pleaded for a negotiated internal racial settlement declaring that Rhodesia was 'now entering a classical guerrilla war, Mao Tse-tung's phase two'.<sup>56</sup> Smith's reply to Savory in December 1973 remains a lasting testament to the ideological radicalism of the Rhodesian Prime Minister. He condemned Savory as an appeaser and a white Judas and stated:

Following the practice of the BBC, the British Labour party, the left-wing overseas press, the OAU and the Communists, he [the member for Matobo has] dignified with the title of 'guerrilla warfare' the treacherous and murderous attacks perpetrated by these [terrorist] scum on the helpless African tribesmen.<sup>57</sup>

Smith's view of insurgency highlights one of the most extraordinary features of the Rhodesian civil war, namely that the settler leader was 'the only Western Prime Minister in office [in the 1970s] with practical experience as a guerrilla'.<sup>58</sup> In the later stages of the Second World War, Smith had fought with the Italian *partisani* against the Germans in the Po Valley. Yet ideology seems to have blinded the Rhodesian Prime Minister to the parallel between his own irregular warfare experience and that of his African countrymen who, like himself, faced a regular army with superior organisation, weapons and training.<sup>59</sup>

In his memoirs, Ken Flower, head of Rhodesian intelligence, has described how, by early 1974, the counter-insurgency effort had become 'a no-win war' because of its political failings. Government propaganda had long prevailed over fact and no senior uniformed figure was, at this time, prepared to encourage disillusionment or to mention the possibility of defeat. Flower writes, 'most of the electorate by this time were unable to discriminate between fact and fancy, or were so confused to have lost all powers of discrimination, and their leader appeared as one who had assumed a cloak of infallibility'.<sup>60</sup> This climate of ideological unreality and political delusion meant that the counter-insurgency effort became overwhelmingly military in character. Government thinking was summed up by E.A. Sutton-Pryce, from 1974 a Deputy Minister for Security, when he observed, 'we must prosecute this war with maximum force rather than minimum force'.<sup>61</sup>

55. Papers of C.A.R. Savory, National Archives of Zimbabwe, Historical Manuscripts Collection SA 22, 'Speeches by Allan Savory on Security'; Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 55.

56. *Debates 1973*, Vol. LXXXIII, 30 March, 1191-2.

57. *Ibid.*, Vol. LXXXV, 7 December, 2218-19.

58. This point is made by Lewis. H. Gann, 'Rhodesia: The Rebel Republic', in J. E. Dornan (ed.), *Rhodesia Alone* (Washington, DC: Council on American Affairs, 1978), 26.

59. Smith's experiences as a partisan are recalled in his memoirs: *The Great Betrayal*, ch. 4.

60. Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 120.

61. *Debates 1973*, Vol. LXXXIV, 19 June, 81-2.

Throughout 1975 and 1976, the Government's 'maximum force' approach to counter-insurgency was the central message that the Rhodesian Minister of Defence, P.K. van der Byl, conveyed in his various addresses to Rhodesian troops deployed throughout the country. Van der Byl declared that, 'Rhodesia is not fighting a race war, but a conflict between whites and the great majority of blacks against power-hungry militants armed by communists'.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, the Minister urged troops to go out, and as he put it, 'slay the terrorist beasts', to shoot curfew breakers and collaborators and, if African villagers harboured guerrillas, then, 'naturally they [must] be bombed and destroyed in any manner which the commander on the spot considers to be desirable in the prosecution of a successful campaign'.<sup>63</sup> Such a draconian approach to counter-insurgency only served to play into the hands of those Zimbabwean nationalists who were Marxist radicals, notably Robert Mugabe, and to yield to them the very politico-strategic equation they prized: namely the time, space and will to recruit thousands of alienated young Africans to a Zimbabwean revolutionary war waged along Maoist lines.

The philosophy of maximum military force, or as it was colloquially known by RLI troopers, 'the scheme of slotting floppies', thus prevailed at all levels of Rhodesian counter-insurgency. In terms of Rhodesian tactical success in the field, there were two military developments of note. The first was the development of vertical envelopment Fire Force operations using helicopter gunships, paratroop aircraft and light attack planes as quick-reaction units to eliminate guerrilla forces. As a tactical attrition system, the Fire Force with its sweep lines and stop groups was deadly efficient, accounting for thousands of guerrilla deaths in action.<sup>64</sup> Second, the Rhodesians, building on the theories of Frank Kitson and Ian Henderson in Kenya, introduced pseudo-operations into their counter-insurgency effort by forming the Selous Scouts special warfare regiment commanded by a Malayan Scouts veteran, Lieutenant Colonel Ron Reid Daly.<sup>65</sup>

The Scouts had exceptional results in terms of 'turning' guerrillas and in achieving kill rates—accounting directly, or indirectly, for 68 per cent of all insurgents killed by 1978.<sup>66</sup> Along with the SAS, they were also responsible for several daring and successful cross-border raids on guerrilla bases in Mozambique and Zambia.<sup>67</sup> However, the Scouts lacked the ethical and legal standards so scrupulously upheld by the older Rhodesian SAS unit. Long immersion in the clandestine war of pseudo-operations turned many of

62. *The Times* (London), 28 August 1976.

63. Rhodesia Ministry of Information Statement, 'Minister of Defence Reviews Passing Out Parade', 14 May 1976, 3-4; *Debates*, 1976, XCIII, 2 July, 605.

64. See J.R.T. Wood, 'Fire Force: The Evolution of Helicopter-Orientated Bush Operations', in Al J. Venter, *The Chopper Boys: Helicopter Warfare in Africa* (London: Greenhill Books, 1994), ch. 5.

65. Thomas Arbuckle, 'Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: An Assessment', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* CXXIV (1979), 46-9.

66. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 132-4.

67. For a highly romanticised, but well-detailed study, see Ron Reid Daly and Peter Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War* (Alberton: Galago Publishing, 1982); Ron Reid Daly, 'War in Rhodesia: Cross-border Operations', in Al J. Venter (ed.), *Challenge: Southern Africa within the African Revolutionary Context* (Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing, 1989), 149-88.

the Selous Scouts into mirror images of Mr Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's famous novella, *Heart of Darkness*. They became rogue elements, as guilty of illegal activities as the very guerrillas they were fighting. Like the notorious French *barbouze* trigger men and the paras in the Algeria War of 1954-62, significant numbers of Selous Scouts became implicated in activities that included torture, field executions, political assassination, kidnapping and the use of chemical warfare in what one writer has described as 'Rhodesia's no-holds-barred intelligence war'.<sup>68</sup>

Increasingly, then, throughout the Rhodesian security forces, tactical proficiency in the field took the place of educated knowledge of the political-strategic dimensions of people's war. By mid-1977, as Ken Flower records in his memoirs, 'a 'no-win' war was becoming a 'losing' war'.<sup>69</sup> A serious psychological-political warfare approach rooted in knowledge of African languages, culture and customs was difficult to mount simply because the Smith Government did not recognise its necessity. In Flower's view, an effective 'hearts and minds' campaign was inhibited because many in the RF caucus 'did not believe that Africans possessed such organs'.<sup>70</sup> The Rhodesian counter-insurgency effort was thus marked by a striking combination of ideological delusion, ethnocentric arrogance and military overconfidence. At every level of activity, 'kill rate' statistics became the barometer for success at the expense of strategic pacification and political reform. Yet, in the end, it mattered little that the kill rate always stood at 10:1 in favour of the Rhodesian security forces because tactical victories could not be converted into lasting strategic success.<sup>71</sup>

Only in July 1977, amid growing strategic deterioration, widespread bloodshed and accelerating white emigration, did the Commander of Combined Operations, Lieutenant General Peter Walls, a Malayan veteran, begin to publicly call for a political solution. Rhodesian security chiefs then submitted a joint memorandum to the Government stating 'no successful result can be attained by purely military means. It is now more vital than ever to arrive at an early political settlement before the point of no return beyond which it will be impossible to achieve any viable political or military/political solution'.<sup>72</sup>

However, by 1977, in the wake the Portuguese coup and of Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola, a political settlement that upheld the long-term interests of the white minority in Rhodesian was unlikely. By this time, the RF Government had long since become a strategic liability to the main supporter of UDI: South Africa. As early as December 1974,

68. See Peter Stiff, *See You In November: Rhodesia's No-Holds Barred Intelligence War* (Alberton: Galago Publishing, 1982), and Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front War*, 99-123.

69. Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 120.

70. Author's interview with Ken Flower, Harare, 14 April 1982. Only in 1977, the fifth year of the counter-insurgency campaign, was a Rhodesian Psychological Warfare Directorate created. It functioned without significant success: Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 146-69.

71. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 131-4; 245-9; Evans, *Fighting Against Chimurenga*, 23-5.

72. 'Military and Police Implications of the Quarterly Threat: 1st July 1977 to 30th September 1977', reproduced in Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 189 and 308-10.

recognising that the Smith Government could not defeat a protracted insurgency, the Vorster Government in Pretoria decided to facilitate the end of white rule in Rhodesia in favour of a moderate African government which it hoped would seek to inherit, rather than seek to overturn, the governmental institutions of the settler state.<sup>73</sup> To this end Vorster forced the Smith Government to release the detained African nationalists and to enter negotiations. The Rhodesian leader's 1997 memoirs, *The Great Betrayal*, bitterly record the overwhelming South African diplomatic, military and economic pressure—fully supported by the United States and Britain—that was exerted in order to force the Rhodesian Front to embrace a political solution to the insurgency that was contrary to its ideology.<sup>74</sup> As Smith emotionally declared at Rhodesia's annual Battle of Britain ceremony in September 1977, '[all] those countries we stood and fought with in 1940 have [now] turned against us and sided with the pack of communists, despite the fact that we are standing for the same ideals and principles of 1940'.<sup>75</sup>

Yet by the time a reluctant RF Government signed an Internal Settlement with bourgeois, pro-Western African nationalists—Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and traditional Chief Jeremiah Chirau in March 1978—the possibility of ending the insurgency through a moderate African government was remote.<sup>76</sup> Neither Muzorewa nor Sithole had significant guerrilla support; nor did they have the political stature of either Mugabe or Nkomo. The rapidly growing guerrilla armies were now too strong to be ignored in any political settlement. In August 1977, President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania summed up the consequences of the Rhodesian Front's obduracy in failing to compromise earlier with African nationalism by remarking, 'Smith and his army must go ... Had it been two years back, when a peaceful solution was still possible, it would have been possible for the new government in Zimbabwe to inherit the entire structure—the army, the police and other institutions'.<sup>77</sup>

With guerrillas flooding into Rhodesia, the country fell even deeper into a whirlpool of violence and atrocity in what ZANLA cadres called a *Gukurahundi*—a storm of war. On the guerrilla side, in June 1978, ZANLA guerrillas massacred 12 British missionaries at Elim in eastern Rhodesia; in August 1978 and again in February 1979, ZIPRA guerrillas shot down two civilian Air Rhodesia Viscount passenger aircraft with surface-to-air missiles. Surviving white passengers were summarily executed and overall 107 people

73. For South African-Rhodesian relations see Barber and Barratt, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security, 1945-1988*, 181-6, 216-20, 261-2, and B. Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonisation in Regional and International Politics* (London: Frank Cass, 1990), chs 4-5.

74. Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, especially chs 14-18.

75. *Rhodesia Herald*, 30 September 1977.

76. By late 1979, guerrilla numbers had swelled to over 50,000 fighters with some 15,000 (10,000 ZANLA and about 5000 ZIPRA) forward deployed into Rhodesia and the remainder either in reserve or undergoing training in external camps: see Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 248.

77. Quoted in the *Rhodesia Herald*, 31 August 1977.

were killed in the two Viscount atrocities. On the Rhodesian side, in May 1978, security forces shot dead 50 African civilians and wounded another 24 in a massacre in Gutu in southeastern Rhodesia.<sup>78</sup>

By September 1978, the security situation could only be controlled by the introduction of martial law and by the continuous mobilisation of thousands of troops and police. The grave security situation meant that the first ever majority rule elections held in April 1979 could only be mounted through fielding 60,000 Rhodesian police and troops to protect voters.<sup>79</sup> Thus, when Bishop Abel Muzorewa's United African National Council (UANC) party won the election it was utterly dependent on the Rhodesian security machine while Ian Smith himself assumed an *éminence grise* political role as Minister without Portfolio in Muzorewa's new Government of National Unity.<sup>80</sup>

At no stage did Smith or any of the leading RF politicians renounce UDI or their radical right world-struggle ideology. Instead, the RF party merely sought to infuse its ideological influence into a Muzorewa Government that had won political office but not true political power. Muzorewa's weakness was symbolised by the fact that the new state itself was called Zimbabwe-Rhodesia while the new government's five year national strategy plan began with the statement:

The national security of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia is seriously threatened by communist imperialism on the one hand and on the other by an ultra-liberalistic philosophy of the present governments of [the] Western powers, especially the United States of America and the United Kingdom.<sup>81</sup>

The tragedy of the Muzorewa Government was, therefore, that it bore the RF's ideological mark of Cain and proved incapable of bringing the civil war to an end. Thus the internal nationalist moderates rapidly lost popular electoral support. By mid-1979, the three-front guerrilla offensive had become relentless and counter-insurgency operations were costing one million dollars a day with a death rate of 2000 people per month.<sup>82</sup> Eventually, in December 1979, faced by a bloodbath and after a spate of international crisis diplomacy, all parties to the Rhodesian crisis finally agreed to a ceasefire and attended British-brokered negotiations at Lancaster House. It was these talks that culminated in March 1980 in Robert Mugabe's decisive election victory over Muzorewa and the birth of modern Zimbabwe.<sup>83</sup>

78. Evans, 'The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980', 344-5.

79. See Lord Boyd's report in United Kingdom, *Report to the Prime Minister on the Election held in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in April 1979*, May 1979, and Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 243-4.

80. Evans, 'The Role of Ideology in Rhodesian Front Rule, 1962-1980', 324-49.

81. *Ibid.*, 222.

82. *Ibid.*, 349-50.

83. See Commonwealth Secretariat, *Southern Rhodesia Elections, February 1980: The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group on Elections leading to Independent Zimbabwe* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1980), 'Annex A'.

## CONCLUSION

In the annals of the modern history of small wars, Rhodesia is probably the best example of a counter-insurgency campaign rendered ineffective by an almost complete lack of a realistic political strategy to complement an efficient military effort. In Rhodesia, settler military strength was unable to be converted into an effective tool to negotiate a timely political compromise because the Rhodesian Front Government was incapable of differentiating between accommodation and appeasement. It is difficult to disagree with J.K. Cilliers's judgment on Rhodesia's counter-insurgency effort:

Ian Smith and his inflexible colleagues had been entirely circumvented in a revolutionary struggle of classic proportions fought on a total frontage. It could be proudly asserted that Rhodesia had never lost a single battle but had most ignominiously lost the war.<sup>84</sup>

Through its peculiar world-struggle ideology, adopted to fight against British decolonisation and African nationalism, the Rhodesian Front Government of Ian Smith utterly misinterpreted the character of the insurgency it faced. It insisted that the insurgents were external Marxist terrorists rather than internal nationalist guerrillas, the tools of a global conspiracy rather than of a domestic racial crisis. In this manner, *les damnés* of the Rhodesian Front political leadership sought to turn the Chimurenga war into something that it was not—a crusade against international communism and Western appeasement. The terrible irony of this policy was that the longer the Smith Government refused to accept that it faced an authentic racial civil war, the more time it ceded to Marxist radicals such as Robert Mugabe to win political influence at the expense of genuine African nationalist moderates such as Abel Muzorewa.

'A civil war is not a war but a sickness', wrote the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 'the enemy is within. One fights almost against oneself'.<sup>85</sup> This great truth was never understood by Rhodesian Front politicians. In a real sense, the Rhodesian security force commanders were compelled by settler ideologues to deny the political dimension of British counter-insurgency they had learned in Malaya and to adopt a strategy that emphasised tactical attrition over political pacification. Such an approach proved utterly self-defeating and ended in disaster in 1980 when Robert Mugabe, exploiting years of people's war, swept to electoral victory. Ultimately, the fate of white Rhodesia is grim testimony to the eternal truth of Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum in *On War*:

84. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 57.

85. Quoted in Anthony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), xxv.

The supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish ... the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.<sup>86</sup>

86. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88.

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# The British Experience in Mesopotamia and Iraq, 1918–32

*Colonel Graeme Sligo*

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British forces, the Indian Army and local forces fought a number of small wars in Mesopotamia and Iraq from 1918 to 1932. These included operations in the Kurdish areas, operations against the major revolt of 1920, and operations against the Ikhwan (Wahhabi) tribesmen from Najf in Saudi Arabia. Iraq became legally independent in 1932 and a member of the League of Nations but British influence continued. In 1941, in the context of a second global war, British land forces reoccupied Iraq and remained until 1948.<sup>1</sup>

If one could summon a cast of historical figures to a large cocktail party or reception, the guest list for the UK Mesopotamia function would make for lively reading: Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George, Lawrence of Arabia and Prince Faisal, Gertrude Bell, John (later ‘Pasha’) Glubb, the father of the later Soviet spy Kim Philby, proconsuls Sir Percy Cox and Sir Arnold Wilson, the young Arthur (later ‘Bomber’) Harris, and amongst the Marsh Arabs, the explorer Wilfred Thesiger, who reputedly performed 6000 circumcisions in eight years.<sup>2</sup> And at the margins, in Persia and the shores of the Caspian Sea, General Dunsterville, the alleged model for Kipling’s ‘Stalky and Co.’<sup>3</sup>

Margaret MacMillan, in her recent history of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, has recounted the musings of Lloyd George:

One day during the Peace Conference, Arnold Toynbee, an adviser to the British delegation, had to deliver some papers to the prime minister. ‘Lloyd George, to my delight, had forgotten my presence and begun to think aloud. ‘Mesopotamia ... yes ... oil ... irrigation ... we must have Mesopotamia; Palestine ... yes ... the Holy Land ... Zionism ... we must have Palestine; Syria ... h’m ... what is there in Syria? Let the French have that.’<sup>4</sup>

1. Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 120.
2. On Wilfred Thesiger, see Simon Courtauld, ‘A Far From Plodding Pedestrian’, *The Spectator*, 25 February 2006, 41.
3. On Dunsterville, see Sir Arnold T. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920: A Clash of Loyalties: A Personal and Historical Record* (London: Oxford University Press and Humphrey Milford, 1931), 24-44.
4. Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 381.

While the situation was somewhat more complex than Toynbee's anecdote implies, it did suggest two important themes on the small wars of Mesopotamia: first, that the small wars often grew out of the cessation of a big war, or in this case the cessation of 'major combat operations' in 1918; and second, the use of military force by the British (except in 1920) was very much subordinate to 'policy', realism, 'national interest', and the British Government's continuing redefinition of what constituted success in Iraq. A third theme does emerge, not of well-formed counter-insurgency doctrine, but attributes in British practice that carried forward *into* well-formed British doctrine that developed after the Second World War.

### THE END OF THE GREAT WAR

What of the scene in 1918 at the cessation of major combat operations, and our first theme? In 1914 in anticipation of war with the Ottoman Empire, the original British object had been to occupy Abadan Island on the (present-day) Iranian side of the Shatt-al'Arab waterway. Abadan Island housed the oil refineries and tanks of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, later known as BP. In the event of war with Turkey, the force commander had been instructed to proceed to occupy (Turkish) Basra. The force, an Indian Army brigade, was at anchor near Bahrain in late October. Hostilities broke out with Turkey on 31 October and war was formally declared on 5 November. The next day the force landed at Fao (in present-day Iraq), and near Abadan on 8 November. Reinforced, the force occupied Basra on 23 November 1914.<sup>5</sup>

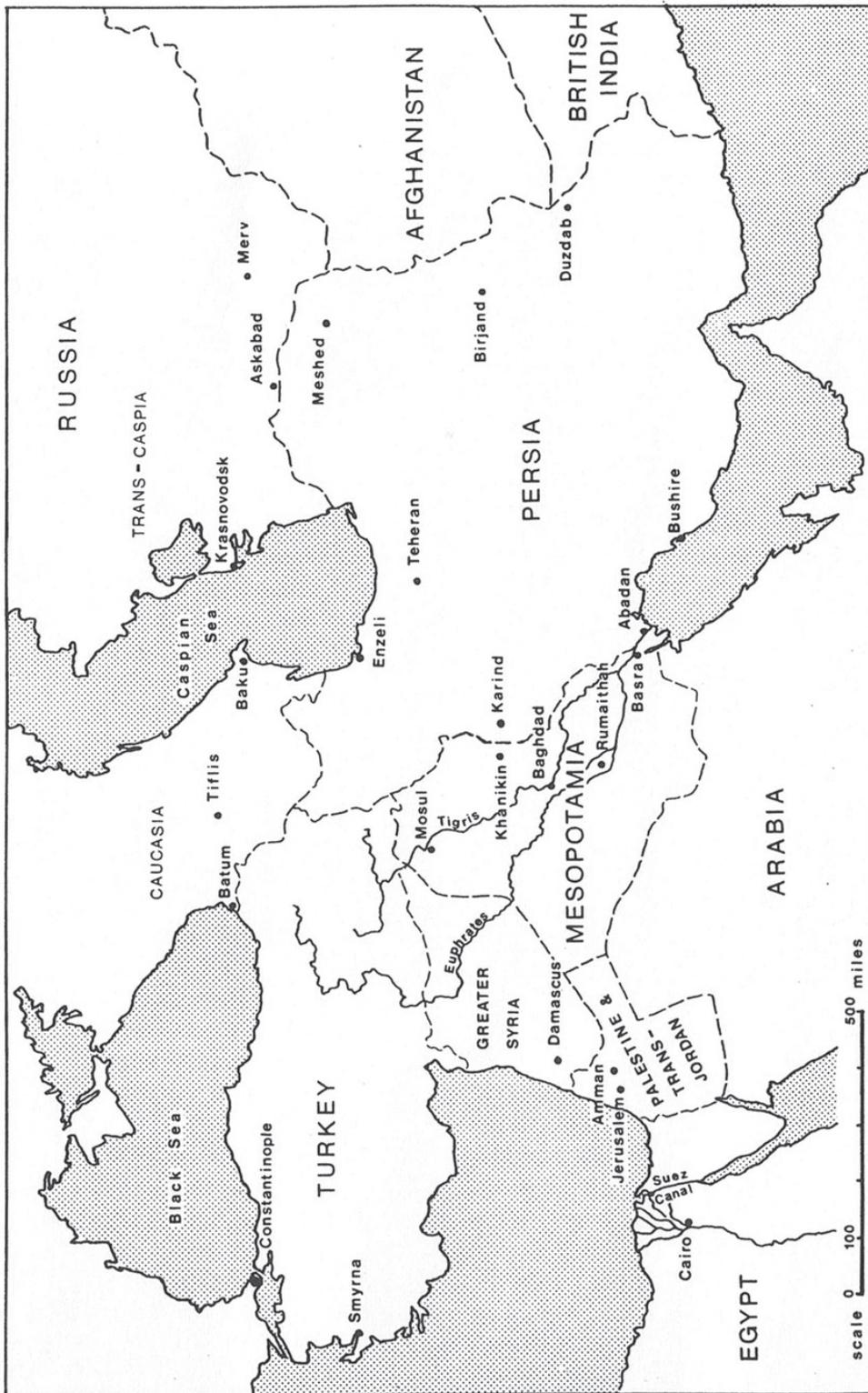
The primary object of the force, known as Indian Expeditionary Force D, was to create a positive moral effect on the Arab chiefs at the head of the Gulf, and to reassure them of British support against Turkey. The Turks were contemplating attacks in the area. Protection of the oil stores was a secondary object.<sup>6</sup> British policy in the Middle East (and this expedition) has to be seen in the context of long-standing British concerns: Middle East policy stressed the primacy of India and concerns with Imperial communications. Oil was cited at the time as an additional reason (not a primary one) for British presence in the region.<sup>7</sup> Oil production in Persia circa 1918 was only about one per cent of world production and the oil reserves in Mesopotamia were unproven and not developed. The primary advocate for oil in the region was the Admiralty, as the Royal Navy was keen to reduce its reliance on naval fuel supplies from the United States and Mexico.<sup>8</sup>

5. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, *Loyalties Mesopotamia 1914-1917: A Personal and Historical Record* (London: Oxford University Press and Humphrey Milford, 1930), 8-9; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 31-2; A.J. Barker, *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914-1918* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 38-41, 46-7.

6. Wilson, *Loyalties Mesopotamia*, 9.

7. Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 36.

8. *Ibid.*, 35.



The Middle East, 1918-22

Source: Keith Jeffrey, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 34. Map reproduced by permission of Sally Visick, cartographer.

The American scholar Anthony Cordesman has commented:

There is a consistent failure to understand how the grand strategy of the war changes during the conflict and becomes dictated by the course of the fighting and the conditions of the war. Most of all, history shows how often wars do not end with the last major battle, how rarely they end with well-planned conflict termination, and how many times ‘peace’ actually consists of years of political struggle, active insurgency, or becomes the prelude to another conflict.<sup>9</sup>

The war with the Ottoman Empire involved British, Indian and Dominion forces operating in three land areas of operation: a primary offensive by Allenby’s forces that concluded in Damascus in September 1918, Arab irregular operations under Faisal and Colonel T.E. Lawrence, and the Mesopotamian campaign. In Mesopotamia, after an appalling series of events and errors, the British and Indian forces advanced up the Tigris under General Maude and captured Baghdad in March 1917.

The Armistice with the Turks was signed in the Mediterranean off Mudros on 30 October 1918 and hostilities were to cease the following day.<sup>10</sup> By this stage British forces, now under General Marshall and consisting in all of some 350,000 men, had advanced up the Tigris to within forty miles south of Mosul (to Qaiyara) and had defeated the Turkish Sixth Army. Undaunted by the Armistice, War Office orders were received in Baghdad on 2 November for the military occupation of the city of Mosul, and this was effected in the days after 7 November.<sup>11</sup>

For about 400 years prior to 1914, Mesopotamia had been administered as part of the Ottoman Empire with varying degrees of rigour. That Empire, of course, also governed parts of Caucasia, and Syria and Palestine. Mesopotamia was not governed as one administrative unit, rather as three distinct *vilayet*, what we might term ‘provinces’: Mosul province in the north; Baghdad in the centre; and Basra in the south.<sup>12</sup> In 1918 the three provinces had a total population of about three million. The three provinces consisted of a highly complex (some might say fractured) mix of Shi’a and Sunni Moslems, a Jewish community in Baghdad, and Christians. The region had a range of ethnic groups, Arab, Kurd, Turcoman, and Christian Assyrian. The Kurdish population predominated in Mosul province, where the terrain adjacent to present-day Turkey and Iran is extremely mountainous. In Basra province Shi’a Arabs dominated, but overall it was a highly complex mosaic—for example the holy Shi’a cities of Karbala and Najaf are located within 60 and 100 miles of Baghdad—and the areas at the head of the Persian Gulf in 1914 were dominated by local sheiks, whom Britain had cultivated over a long

9. Anthony Cordesman, ‘Iraq, Grand Strategy, and the Lessons of Military History’, 2004 *S.T. Lee Lecture on Military History*, [www.http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/grimsley1/dialogue/cordesman.htm](http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/grimsley1/dialogue/cordesman.htm), accessed 14 May 2005.

10. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 16.

11. *Ibid.*, 16-17, 18-21.

12. Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 29, 31.

period.<sup>13</sup> Over several centuries the Ottoman Empire had become skilled in the politics of ‘divide and rule’, and in Mesopotamia the Turks had tended to favour the minority Sunni Arabs as the administrative and military class.<sup>14</sup>

Anticipating that the defeat of the Ottoman Empire would create a political and administrative vacuum, three senior political officers and staff had been attached to the British forces: Sir Percy Cox (since 1914), Colonel Arnold Wilson (since 1915), and Miss Gertrude Bell from 1916. All were immensely experienced in the region and all three spoke Arabic, Farsi and other languages; Bell had edited literary works in those languages and later founded the national museum in Baghdad. A civil servant, Sir Percy Cox had served in the Middle East since 1893 and after 1918 effectively became Britain’s ‘chief troubleshooter’ in the region, serving as Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia from 1916 to 1918, then UK Minister in Tehran for two years, then British High Commissioner in Baghdad from 1920 to 1923. With admirable flexibility, the British even made Cox an honorary Major-General.<sup>15</sup>

In the period from 1915 in Basra and from 1917 in Baghdad, the British had begun to develop a civil administration over the occupied areas, similar to a ‘direct administration model’ from India. This civil administration by 1920 had done much work—in the paternalist tradition—in agriculture, irrigation, transport, humanitarian assistance, health, law and order, and revenue collection. It was a model of direct administration that was to fall out of favour with London policymakers after 1920.<sup>16</sup>

With the end of the War in 1918, the British Army was in control of vast areas of enemy and other territory. The next problem was ‘what to do with it?’ Within Mesopotamia there were expectations by some that the Allies would assist in setting up ‘indigenous governments and administrations’,<sup>17</sup> in the words of the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, concerning the Ottoman provinces. On the part of the Kurds there expectations of Kurdish independence, and amongst the Mesopotamian Sunni Arabs, secret nationalist societies had earlier developed.<sup>18</sup> There was a range of wartime understandings and agreements, some contradictory, which required review and resolution. Which leads to a second theme—what *were* the demands of British Government policy and how were British military actions *in Mesopotamia* linked to that policy?

13. Ibid., 8, 28-32.

14. Ibid., 19, 45; Sir John Glubb, *War in the Desert: An RAF Frontier Campaign* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 70, 72; John Glubb, *Arabian Adventures* (London: Cassell, 1978), 26.

15. W.D. Hogarth, ‘Gertrude Margaret Lothian Bell’, *The Dictionary of National Biography 1922-1930* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 74-6; Philip P. Graves, ‘Sir Percy Zachariah Cox’, and E. Bonham-Carter, ‘Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson’, in *The Dictionary of National Biography 1931-1940* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 196-9 and 910-12 respectively.

16. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 72-100, 156-85; Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 7-8, 15-16; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 36-9, 44-5; Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press for St Antony’s College, Oxford, 1976), 14-20.

17. Quoted in Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 147.

18. Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 27-8; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932*, 116-21.

### FURTHERING BRITISH INTERESTS

British policy, and British military actions, in Mesopotamia fell into two major periods: first, the 1918 to 1921 period characterised by external debate and disagreement, and concluding internally in a violent insurrection in Mesopotamia in 1920; and second, the period from 1921 to 1932, a period where British economic, administrative, and military commitments in Iraq were deliberately limited, in order to further ‘wider British interests’, or limit damage to those interests.

I will later suggest that internally, the 1918 to 1921 period varies, and that locally in Mesopotamia there was good civil-military cooperation up until early 1920 when there was a change of military command.

In the first period, after 1918, there was extensive external debate. Internationally the Paris Peace Conference, which engaged Allied leaders continuously for the first six months of 1919, led to a reordering of the international order and the end of British hopes of direct annexation of parts of the former Ottoman Empire.<sup>19</sup> The eventual compromise was a system of mandates under the League of Nations. Agreement had to be reached with the French over Syria and Mosul province, and the resurgence of Turkey under Attaturk led to conflict and negotiations over Mosul province (not settled until 1926), and many other issues.<sup>20</sup>

Within the Government, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, was pushing a strong line arguing for continued British intervention in Persia and Trans-Caucasia, which was a great drain on Army resources generally.<sup>21</sup> Specifically for the Mesopotamia force, this committed large numbers of troops into combat and lines-of-communication duties in remote and inhospitable terrain in Persia and north.<sup>22</sup> The Army more generally was under enormous strain during this period with demobilisation, pressure to cut spending, and growing commitments for domestic security in Britain and Ireland, and overseas in the Army of Occupation in Germany, in Eastern Europe, Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Persia and elsewhere, and in operations against the Bolshevik Government.<sup>23</sup>

Opposition developed in Britain to what the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Henry Wilson, called ‘interference’ in everyone else’s affairs. In 1921 Wilson quoted another senior General, Sir Philip Chetwode, who alleged that ‘the habit of interfering with other people’s business, and of making what is euphoniously called “peace” is like “buggery”: once you

19. Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 6-8; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932*, 19-20.

20. Peter J. Beck, “A Tedious and Perilous Controversy”: Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 17 (April 1981), 271; see also Robert Olson, ‘The Battle for Kuristan: The Churchill-Cox Correspondence Regarding the Creation of the State of Iraq’, *The International Journal of Turkish Studies* 5:1 (1993), 121-36.

21. Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 33-5, 136-40; Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 27-9.

22. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 30, 44; Sir Aylmer Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 325.

23. Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 12-14, 18-26, 49-51.

take to it you cannot stop.<sup>24</sup> Leaving aside the experience of British Generals, the Army was heavily over-committed. The local effect of this within Mesopotamia was that by June 1920 the garrison had been reduced to an effective strength of 7200 British and 53,000 Indian troops, of whom 4200 and 30,000 respectively were actual combat troops.<sup>25</sup>

Early policy in Mesopotamia was further complicated with no one government minister and department being responsible and accountable for British actions in the three Turkish provinces. There was no clear direction to the British civil administration in Mesopotamia, and in London there were disputes between the various Ministers and between departments: the India Office; the Viceroy and Government of India; the Foreign Office; the War Office; and finally the Colonial Office. With Churchill's appointment as Secretary of State for the Colonies in February 1921, the new Middle East Department of the Colonial Office took charge.<sup>26</sup>

The worst 'small war' of this early period was the insurrection from June to October 1920. In the grand tradition of British official life, there were long-standing linkages between the British participants. The Commander on the ground, General Aylmer Haldane, had been Churchill's partner in his famous escape in 1899 from the Boers. The first phase of the troubles was 'the build-up' from January to May 1920.<sup>27</sup> There were few acts of violence but there were urgings of jihad, hostile agitation from Syria and Persia reached Mesopotamian centres, and there was agitation by secret societies, whose members were often Mesopotamian Arab former officers of the Ottoman Army.<sup>28</sup> The announcement of the British Mandate from the San Remo Conference in April 1920 was interpreted by Arab opinion as British annexation. The announcement sparked mass meetings in Baghdad, and from May 1920, just prior to Ramadan, there was an unusual commingling of Shi'a and Sunni interests. In these early months of 1920, the Civil Commissioner, Wilson, believed that the decision was taken for violent action.<sup>29</sup> Wilson recalled a confidential discussion with Mesopotamian leaders in June 1920:

I mentioned the Kurdish minority, and the powerful Shi'a element on the Euphrates (my three interlocutors were Sunnis); they replied that both groups were ignorant peasants who could easily be kept in their place, the former by the mutual jealousies of their leaders, the latter by the same agency and through the priesthood, who, they said, were at one with the nationalist party. After nearly two hours of conversation on these lines, conducted with courtesy and restraint, it became clear that no compromise or understanding was possible.<sup>30</sup>

24. Quoted in *ibid.*, 36.

25. Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, 325; Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 149.

26. Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 7, 8; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932*, 48-9.

27. For a discussion of the 'time and place' sequence of the insurrection, see Graeme Sligo, 'The British and the Making of Modern Iraq', *Australian Army Journal* II: 2 (2005), 275-86.

28. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 227-8; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 28.

29. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 237, 251-4, 310-12.

30. *Ibid.*, 269.

In the second phase, from June to July 1920, there was a series of attacks at Tall Afar, Baghdad, and along the Euphrates and the railway line south of Baghdad to Kifl. These latter uprisings occurred at Najaf, Kufa, Hilla, Kifl, and Rumaitha, to the extent that by the end of July much of the mid-Euphrates area was in rebel hands. The rebels often struck in areas from which British forces had redeployed; Haldane described the adverse state of the country as ‘a sheet of parchment, which rises at any point where a weight is lifted from its surface’.<sup>31</sup> In the third phase, from August 1920, the rebellion spread west and northeast of Baghdad, to Fallujah, Ramadi, Baquba and Shahraban.<sup>32</sup> In the fourth phase in August–September there were killings, incidents and sieges in the north at Kifri, Arbil and Aqra. By October 1920 British forces (including local levies) had regained control, but harsh measures had been used, including air attack and punitive expeditions to extract fines and burn villages.<sup>33</sup> The British estimated they had faced about 130,000 armed persons. The British forces demanded a great number of reinforcements and additional units, and there was huge expense (at a time of domestic stringency) in putting down the rebellion. About 6000 of the local population were killed and 800 British and Indian troops died.<sup>34</sup>

From the military experience in 1920, the economic costs, and the international environment, the British decided that a cheaper method had to be found. Even evacuation, or the holding of Basra province only, were considered as ‘last-resort options’. In March 1921 the new Colonial Secretary, Churchill, convened all the Middle East experts to the Cairo Conference.<sup>35</sup>

Curzon, somewhat unkindly, suggested that Churchill would ‘be under an irresistible temptation to proclaim himself King of Babylon’. Churchill’s biographer Roy Jenkins continued: ‘That he did not do, but he nonetheless enjoyed himself enormously in an informal viceregal role. He picked up Clementine in the South of France, had a luxurious voyage with her from Marseille to Alexandria, was ineffectively stoned on arrival in Cairo by Egyptian nationalists, but presided satisfactorily over the conference in a closely guarded Hotel Semiramis ...’, with some sidetrips for painting to the Pyramids.<sup>36</sup>

There had been much manoeuvring and soundings in the previous months, but the Conference confirmed the new direction: the Colonial Office would run affairs; the British would operate in Iraq through indirect rule or influence; subsidies would be paid to indigenous rulers; a principal of the Arab Revolt and Lawrence of Arabia’s comrade,

31. Ibid., 273–4, 278, 294–9; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 43.

32. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917–1920*, 282–4, 292–4.

33. Ibid., 284–91; MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 408.

34. Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, 318–19, 328, 331; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 44.

35. Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography* (London: Plume, 2001), 359; Jafna L. Cox, ‘A Splendid Training Ground: The Importance to the Royal Air Force of its Role in Iraq, 1919–32’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 13: 2 (January 1985), 162.

36. Jenkins, *Churchill*, 359.

Prince Faisal, would become King of Iraq; and that the cost of enforcing order in the Mandate would be radically reduced by handing over military control to the Royal Air Force (later agreed as 1 October 1922), and by withdrawing most of the Army units.<sup>37</sup>

Some have retrospectively criticised British policy for not staying longer in Iraq and not building western democratic institutions.<sup>38</sup> These criticisms neglect to examine the constraints and realism of the British. Aside from the immediate aspects above, it was a period of some instability in British domestic politics. Between November 1922 and October 1924 there were three General Elections in Britain within a two-year period. After short Bonar Law and MacDonald governments, some stability emerged with the Baldwin administration of 1924 to 1929, but domestic pressure for withdrawal continued.<sup>39</sup> Ongoing social, economic and military involvement in Iraq on the level, especially in staffing and funding, of the period 1918 to 1921 was unsustainable. Britain was in economic and to some extent social crisis and there were higher priorities world-wide for Britain than long-term, intensive engagement in Iraq in the 1920s.<sup>40</sup>

At the military level, the RAF took over responsibility from the Army in October 1922. British military force was used selectively and on the basis of strict economy of financial expenditure. The overriding concern was that the RAF's military force should not be a burden on the Exchequer, and that it supported the intent of the British High Commissioner in his dealings with King Faisal and the Iraqi Government. Ultimately airpower in this context was about the restoration or preservation of civil order.<sup>41</sup> We should note that the laws of armed conflict and internal British regulatory restraints were vastly different in the 1920s. Military enforcement was primarily in rural, not urban areas. Sir Arthur Harris, a Squadron CO in Iraq in the 1920s, later commented on RAF methods against tribesmen:

37. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 48-9; Philip Anthony Towle, *Pilots and Rebels: The Use of Aircraft in Unconventional Warfare 1918-1988* (London: Brassey's UK, 1989), 14-16; Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground', 162; Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 135-6.

38. For example, Joel Rayburn, 'Last Exit from Iraq', *Foreign Affairs* 85: 2 (March/April 2006), and aspects of Karl Meyer, 'An Unfortunate Occupation', *The Australian Financial Review*, 15 July 2005, 3-4.

39. After a Conservative revolt, Lloyd George resigned as Prime Minister in October 1922. Naturally British foreign policy was affected by British domestic politics (and vice versa), and one of the issues in Lloyd George's downfall was controversy over Chanak and the perception of an overly adventurous foreign policy. Given domestic considerations, Turkish pressure on Mosul and other issues, one could hardly expect the new Bonar Law government to put huge national resources into Iraq. Of Bonar Law, Roy Jenkins has commented: 'He was Martha to Lloyd George's Mary. His background was emphatically not louche, but nor was he either inspiring or inspiriting. His life, particularly after the early death of his wife in 1909, was peculiarly joyless. Almost his only recreations were playing chess, eating rice pudding and smoking cigars.' Jenkins, *Churchill*, 345.

40. Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 12, 18, 27-8; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 79-80, on the 'Quit Mesopotamia' campaign of 1922-23 and consideration of evacuation of Iraq, and 168-9 on the Cabinet Committee reviewing Iraq policy in 1929 under J.H. Thomas; Mark Heller, 'Politics and the Military in Iraq and Jordan, 1920-1958: The British Influence', *Armed Forces and Society* 4: 1 (November 1977), 78; on the earlier costs (1919-20), Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground', 158-9.

41. Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 136, 147; Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground', 163-5.

When a tribe started open revolt we gave warning to all its most important villages, by loud speaker from low-flying aircraft and by dropping messages, that air action would be taken after 48 hours. Then, if the rebellion continued, we destroyed the villages and by air patrols kept the insurgents away from their homes for as long as necessary until they decided to give up, which they invariably did.<sup>42</sup>

Two historians have described the effect on Iraqi society thus:

The deployment of air power was clearly a blunt weapon; bombs dropped from above 200 feet were wholesale in their effect. The power deployed was authoritative but ultimately despotic. Air power could not explain, it could not negotiate, and it could not distribute largesse. For air power to have any infrastructural effect on the population, the state needed a certain type of mediator.<sup>43</sup>

And:

Perhaps the most serious long term consequence of the ready availability of air control was that it developed into a substitute for administration. Several incidents during the Mandate period indicate that the speed and simplicity of air attack was preferred to the more time-consuming and painstaking investigation of grievances and disputes. With such powers at its disposal the Iraq Government was not encouraged to develop less violent methods of extending its control over the country.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, from the RAF's perspective, it was determined to make a success of 'Imperial policing', so that it could win its campaign for survival against the Army and the Navy.<sup>45</sup> Internal RAF operations were against recalcitrant tribesmen generally, but were also particularly focused in the 1920s and 1930s against Kurdish tribesmen and Kurdish separatism. With external threats, the RAF dealt with raiding tribes from Saudi Arabia, and was also decisive in repelling Turkish military offensives into the Mosul vilayet in 1922, by inflicting heavy casualties on the Turkish ground troops.<sup>46</sup>

Although the Mandate continued through the 1920s, from 1922 there was a shift to a Treaty approach between Iraq and Britain. In terms of vital British interests, it was important for Britain that its air bases and air lines of communication to India were maintained, and that Iraq did not fall under the influence or control of a hostile power.<sup>47</sup> As to (the then known, small) oil reserves in Iraq, what was vital to Britain was that no foreign power should be in a position to *deny* British access to those oil supplies.<sup>48</sup> In

42. Sir Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive* (London: Collins, 1947), 22-3.

43. Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 156.

44. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 268-9.

45. Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground', 157-8, 159-60, 163, 166.

46. Harris, *Bomber Offensive*, 22; Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground', 168-70, 170-1.

47. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 68-9, 89; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 52; Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 146, 153; Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 17, 21, 22-3, 34.

48. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 106-7, 113-14; Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 35.

terms of imperial priorities, Iraq in the 1920s was not as vital as, for example, Egypt or Aden,<sup>49</sup> or the Suez Canal.

Thus British policy after 1921 was based on economy and furthering of some long-term British interests. Military policy and practice was subordinate and reflected a military technological solution to the problem of maintaining internal order and repelling incursions across Iraq's frontiers. From both domestic pressures and policy inclination, Britain lobbied to end the Mandate in 1932,<sup>50</sup> but British influence, airpower and bases remained. This introduces a third and summary theme—what contribution did the experience, in the 1920s and after, provide for British counter-insurgency or 'small wars' doctrine.

### TOWARDS A COUNTER-INSURGENCY DOCTRINE

John Shy and Thomas Collier have provided one view of the post-1945 British response to revolutionary war, one which also summarises UK counter-insurgency doctrine:

The British response [in post-1945 counter-insurgency] had none of the ideological fervor of *guerre révolutionnaire*, but was instead more like that of their colonial tradition at its best: tight integration of civil and military authority, minimum force with police instead of army used when possible, good intelligence of the kind produced by 'Special Branch' operatives, administrative tidiness on such matters as the resettlement of civilians in habitable sanitary camps, and a general readiness to negotiate for something less than total victory. On the military side, British colonial experience showed again its capacity to train effective local forces, a patient view of the time required for success, and a preference for the employment of small, highly skilled troops in well-planned operations rather than massive use of firepower.<sup>51</sup>

Using Shy and Collier's model, it is clear that there was tight integration of civil and military authority at the local level within Iraq. But as discussed for the early period, the local civil and military 'Indianisation' or direct rule model was not what the policymakers in London wanted by 1921. For this and other reasons in 1920-21 there was a 'disconnect' between high civil policy and local implementation. Solely at the local level, in the view of Civil Commissioner Arnold Wilson, the military and civil sides had worked well and closely together before early 1920, but not so during the period of General Haldane's command from March of that year. There was good local civil-military cooperation in the period 1918 to early 1920, albeit on a model of 'direct administration'.<sup>52</sup> In the Mandate period, say from 1922, the military force—the RAF—was tightly integrated into the requirements of the British High Commissioner, and in London the Air Ministry was under the Colonial Office for policy in Iraq.

49. Heller, 'Politics and the Military in Iraq and Jordan', 78.

50. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 169-70, 192.

51. John Shy and Thomas Collier, 'Revolutionary War', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 854.

52. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 1-2, 21, 135-6, 270-1, 276-7.

Then there is consideration of the ‘hearts and minds’ aspects. At the level of ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of the civil population, or military action in support of local self-determination, or the furthering of a local polity or polities from which workable civil societies could emerge, the British were not working within such a construct. Perhaps the closest stage were the benevolent aspects of the civil administration prior to June 1920, but aspects of that same administration, such as its pervasiveness and revenue collection, were contributors to the insurrection of 1920.<sup>53</sup> Clearly, after 1922, the dropping of bombs from aircraft, for civil order and sometimes for revenue collection, was not conducive to reconciling the population to the government in Baghdad. King Faisal, although the probably the best of the limited choices open at the time, and respected for his role in the wartime Arab Revolt, was not of Mesopotamia, and was ultimately unable to create a coherent, consensual civil society.<sup>54</sup>

The British clearly recognised the Kurdish, Sunni and Shi’a regional influences. However, the British were faced with Turkish intransigence over Mosul province and the need to administer a mandated territory with some geographical coherence. Once agreement emerged from the Peace Conferences, and British policy decisions were confirmed at the Cairo Conference of 1921, economy, order and furthering of limited British interests became predominant. In a colonial era where India was so important, and British finances so straitened, it was unrealistic to expect ‘nation-building’ by the British or a political scenario akin to Malaya in the 1950s.

And what of Shy and Collier’s two final points, selective use of firepower and military engagement with local forces and population? On firepower and manoeuvre, the use of ground troops was ultimately effective during 1920, but tactical errors were made.<sup>55</sup> During the insurrection, the 34,000 ‘effectives’ (two divisions) in Mesopotamia in June 1920 had to be reinforced with the equivalent of 21 battalions (plus artillery and engineers) from India by the end of September.<sup>56</sup> This was not an example of ‘economy of force’ or selective use of firepower. In the period after 1922 there was economic use of force through the RAF, but not limited or discriminate firepower as far as building a civil society in counter-insurgency terms. Indeed, for the RAF Iraq contributed strongly to the development of

53. Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 41; Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 43–4; Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 135; also John Glubb, *War in the Desert: An RAF Frontier Campaign* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 69 [on Iraq, September 1920]: ‘Disturbances had been going on for several months, and a number of Iraqi tribes had rebelled against the authority of an administration which aspired really to govern the country in a manner which their former rulers, the Turks, had scarcely attempted.’

54. Tripp, *History of Iraq*, 47–8; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 44–5.

55. For example, the Manchester Column—a mixed infantry/cavalry force of battalion group size—retreated from Kifl to Hilla in July 1920 and lost 180 killed, 160 POW and 60 wounded (Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917–1920*, 278–80). In addition, at the operational level, Wilson probably did realise in May 1920 that a serious rebellion was imminent, a view with which General Haldane did not agree. Haldane was away in Persia from 6–19 June, and repaired to the hill station at Karind, Persia, from 24 June 1920, with much of the military HQ. *Ibid.*, 273–7.

56. Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*, 318–19; Jeffery, *British Army and the Crisis of Empire*, 150–1.

*conventional* doctrine, for example Harris's squadron developed bomb-sighting equipment and did extensive work with night-flying and night-bombing.<sup>57</sup>

The Mesopotamian experience did confirm the importance and effectiveness in developing local levies, although not to the extent of creating an effective Iraqi army.<sup>58</sup> The British successfully developed local levies, most of which remained loyal and some of which were so militarily effective they were resented by segments of the population. For example the RAF's bases had been defended before 1932 by its own armoured car squadrons and local levies, including a very effective force recruited from Christian Assyrians. The historian Philip Towle has commented: 'The CAS [Chief of Air Staff] hoped the Iraqis would absorb the Assyrians into their own armed forces once the country became independent, but the Iraqis decided to kill them instead.'<sup>59</sup>

What Mesopotamia and Iraq did confirm was the importance in developing expertise in local cultures and languages in officers—military and civil. Aside from the expertise of the senior civil staff, such as Cox, Wilson and Bell, there was an extraordinary range of military officers working with the civil administration who developed knowledge, insight and rapport with local tribes and communities: for example, Major Soane with the Shi'a and later the Kurds, who had worked in the region since 1905, and Colonel Leachman with the tribes on the Tigris.<sup>60</sup> Captain John Glubb, later commander of the Arab Legion, developed great expertise in the Samawa and Hilla areas with the tribes, and was later important the southwest in persuading Iraqi tribesmen to defend themselves against the Wahhabis (the Ikhwan raiders from Najd in Saudi Arabia), who in 1929 were suppressed by King Ibn Saud.<sup>61</sup> Following on from the policy practice of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army, there was great emphasis upon the learning of languages and local engagement, consistent with the smaller establishment after 1922.

## CONCLUSION

The British engagement with Iraq and the 'small wars' of Mesopotamia in the 1920s developed from the cessation of a major war in 1918. In grand strategic terms, the British were operating on a broad canvas, and attempting to deal with the territorial and political vacuums caused by the defeat of the Central Powers, including the Ottoman Empire. In a different context, Henry Kissinger remarked of Britain that its 'war strategy and foreign

57. On Harris's development in Iraq of bomb racks, bomb sights, bombing accuracy, and night bombing, see Dudley Seward, *'Bomber' Harris: The Story of Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Harris* (London: Sphere, 1990), 36-40, and Henry Probert, *Bomber Harris: His Life and Times* (London: Greenhill Books, 2001), 52-3; also Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground', 175-6.

58. Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 136-43, 144-5.

59. Towle, *Pilots and Rebels*, 22.

60. Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, 82-3, 152, 292.

61. Towle, *Pilots and Rebels*, 18; Cox, 'A Splendid Training Ground', 170; Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 151-4; Glubb, *War in the Desert*; John Glubb, *Arabian Adventures* (London: Cassell, 1978).

policy were closely linked. Since Great Britain's resources were far more limited than those of the United States, its strategists had always been obliged to focus on means as much as ends.<sup>62</sup> After 1918, conflict did not cease, and in the Middle East the British faced negotiations with France, tension with Turkey, and in Persia, and problems along the Mesopotamian borders. In Mesopotamia, it dealt with internal disorder, frontier conflict and attempts at separatism.

In the early years in Mesopotamia, 1918 to 1921, British policy and administration had to be effected in an environment of shifting international order and a debate over British strategic objectives. Generally at the politico-military level, there was tight integration of British policy objectives and military action—the exception was the year in which the four-month insurrection occurred, 1920. From 1918 to 1919, the generals in Mesopotamia were dealing with war transition problems on the ground and the strategic direction (in Persia and Mesopotamia) with the forces available and as well as they might. After 1921, with strict economy, limited British political objectives and a small military force, there was strong integration of the political and military aspects. An observer today might not agree or approve of British and RAF methods of 'air control', but they were the means accepted in the 1920s.

In terms of counter-insurgency doctrine, British 'small wars practice' in 1920s Iraq was not the same as British post-1945 counter-insurgency doctrine. Post-1945 there was often a focus on building a polity or a coherent civil society, for example through military support for national self-determination. British practice in Iraq reflected the specific British interests and necessities of the 1920s in the Middle East.

However, the experience in Iraq in the 1920s did demonstrate some of the building blocks of later doctrine: for example, British military acceptance and understanding of the highly political nature of small wars and 'operations other than war'; a preparedness to learn local languages and attempt to understand local cultures and religions; a flair for engaging with local groups and for training militarily-effective local levies; and finally an understanding of the critical requirement for tightly integrated civil and military action.

62. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), 403.

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## **Phase IV Operations in Iraq: A Perspective by an Australian**

*Major General Jim Molan*

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### **INTRODUCTION: MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE TARGET COUNTRY**

As I was assigned for duty in the Middle East Area of Operations in April 2004, I realised that I knew very little about Iraq. In the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Intelligence community I was considered an Indonesian expert and Australia's region had been my major focus, having lived in Indonesia for five years. My Middle East knowledge was essentially general knowledge, hopefully above average but nothing approaching a specialist level. And of course, given the short notice that I had to deploy to Iraq, there were very few steps that I could take to improve that knowledge. It was also impossible to tell on the day that I arrived how much I would need to know of the big world outside a dark Operations Room, compared to what I could pick up on the job.

I had a sketchy knowledge of what nowadays we call the 'battlespace' of Iraq. The term 'battlefield' is still used by those at the lower end of the fighting spectrum and is certainly still applicable. But the term 'battlespace', although sounding a little precious, is nevertheless a handy term. It implies that what was once a two-dimensional space is now at least three dimensions, including the ability to manoeuvre by air as well as on the surface of the earth. In recent times the fourth dimension of Space has assumed enormous importance and Time and Information are other dimensions that must now also be considered. Every morning in Iraq I would see the product from our space operations, and every hour of the day I would see the product of operations in the air above what, in the more simple times of those who fought over Mesopotamia for thousands of years before we arrived, was once a two-dimensional affair.

I had gained most of my knowledge of the geography of Iraq when I was a member of the Australian Strategic Command Group during the 2003 Iraq War. That was limited to the perspective of a computer-generated image and focused mostly on the southern half of Iraq, and a few parts of northern Iraq where US troops used the air dimension

Disclaimer: These are the personal impressions of Major General Molan. He is not a spokesman for the ADF or for the MNF-I, and except where stated otherwise, his impressions apply to his time in Iraq.

to move into Iraq directly from Europe. In the Strategic Command Group I had been concentrating on how we in the ADF commanded the war, not so much on what was occurring in the war. My role at that time was to assess and report on the effectiveness of our strategic command procedures.

On the ground in Iraq, the battlespace architecture took some time to get used to. I remember the first time I went to Falujah and Najaf from Baghdad. I was amazed that it only took 20 minutes or so by helicopter. This was an important issue for me. I looked forward to long flights because I could sleep or at least doze. A trip of 20 minutes to Najaf was of no value as a sleeping opportunity! I was surprised again when it only took two hours Blackhawk flying to reach Mosul from Baghdad, after a very quick refuel in a place known as 'Quai West', or more accurately Qayarah West. But these relative distances that defined the 'battlespace architecture' very quickly became fixed in my head the more I operated in Iraq.

When I first arrived, I did not have any real feel for the history of the country prior to Saddam's time. I could chat with anyone about the Majapahit Kingdom in Java, but I had no idea of what for years was referred to in Australia as 'Ancient History'. And there was too much current history around that needed studying to embark on ancient history at this stage. But there are many traps in such ignorance, and even towards the end of my tour in Iraq, I was still coming across them.

In February 2005, the Iraqi forces that belonged to the Ministries of Defence and Security were approaching a level of operational competence that could only be described as basic. The Defence Minister did not actually control any forces because a Coalition organisation raised, trained and sustained them for him and they were then passed to me to be allocated to a Coalition commander for operational use. No matter how enthusiastic about Iraqi operations that the Defence Minister became, he could not add more complexity to an already complex battlespace.

The Minister of the Interior was a different matter. He had raised a number of battalions of Police Commandos and they remained under his control. In his enthusiasm to join in the struggle for his country, he continually demanded a role for which neither he nor his forces were yet prepared. Iraq is a very complex battlespace with highly-armed and aggressive Coalition forces from 28 countries, armed contractors, inexperienced Iraqi security forces, local police, Special Forces working overtly or covertly, and of course a determined enemy trying to create havoc. We knew that to win this war we had to assist the Iraqis to play the major role in the security of their own country. But we did not want the Iraqis conducting operations without us being able to coordinate all our activities and so lower the probability of friendly forces shooting each other.

In order to discuss the operations that the Interior Minister wanted to conduct, the Commander of the US 1st Cavalry Division and his Chief of Staff, who were responsible

for the area around Baghdad, met many times with the Minister and his staff to try to get them into the fight, but also to bring practicality to their enthusiasm. Such meetings were inherently frustrating as each group tried to achieve their own aims. Our Iraqi friends were keen to conduct operations but if they did so in an uncontrolled manner, they were likely not only to get themselves killed, but also get us killed. The negotiations between the 1st Cavalry Division and the Iraqi Police, with me in a generally coordinative role, went on for some time. Unfortunately they had no concept of the danger to us and to them. It was difficult to get our friends to be specific as to times, dates, places and support requirements, and we were concerned that their concept was to go into a very dangerous area with inadequate forces.

On 10 February 2005, I received a call from a Marine colonel, my liaison at the Ministry of the Interior. He told me that something was going on but the Iraqis were not bringing him into it. This was a common difficulty in such operations but I told him to keep trying to see what our friends were doing, and I passed the warning down to the Chief of Operations of the 1st Cavalry Division. Whatever the Iraqis were likely to do, it would be in the 1st Cavalry Division's area.

Just after lunch I received a call from the Minister himself asking for help. He explained that he had sent about 150 police from a Police Commando battalion normally based in Najaf but temporarily resident in Baghdad, down to a very dangerous place called Salman Pak, just to the south of Baghdad in north Babil province. His intention was to raid this area and to capture some enemy. The force that was sent down was commanded by a man I knew from the Ministry called Amir, who led gallantly and as a result was wounded very early in the fight. North Babil was on the seam between the Sunnis and the Shi'as and was also a major munitions industry area during Saddam's days. I had come unstuck in North Babil many times during the previous year. This was right in the centre of an area that the media claimed that we in the military called the 'Triangle of Death', a term that I had never heard uttered by any member of the MNF-I. But still, I was very wary of North Babil.

But the Minister was asking me for help. His police in their unarmoured vehicles had tried to conduct a raid but were ambushed to the north of Salman Pak. The commander Amir was injured and his police were surrounded, had taken casualties and were now trying to get away to safety. He did not have radio contact with his group but had gained his information by mobile phone, directly from the force. I said that I would do what I could and began moving an unmanned aircraft known as a Predator over the area so that we could look down on what was occurring and figure out what was going on. I also told the Cavalry what I knew and warned out the Marines in Anbar province who bordered on the Cavalry's area. My notes at the time tell me that I was called about two o'clock in the afternoon. A few minutes later I also noted that the Minister rang back and told me through his interpreter that his police had tried to break contact with the enemy and move

to the safety of 'the arch at the Madai'en Cemetery'. We had 1st Cavalry Division Apache helicopters in the air heading for the area but I could not give the Cavalrymen any more information as to the exact location of the fight, or the 'arch at Madai'en cemetery'. So, as the Apaches transited and we readied a reaction force from the nearest unit, we looked for some kind of 'arch' in a 'cemetery'.

The 'arch' that the Minister was referring to, we later discovered, was the mausoleum of Salman the Pure, the first Persian to convert to Islam. We found the arch at about the same time as the Apaches found it and we could see from the Predator pictures the police cars parked around and inside what was definitely an arch. A little local knowledge is a great thing and of course we had asked our Iraqi liaison officer in the Strategic Operations Centre about this arch. Although he knew of the arch, he only knew generally where it was. At that stage, I had yet to meet an Iraqi who could read a map, but they worked brilliantly on local knowledge. It took what was left of the police about an hour to get back to the arch from the ambush site and they rallied there and at the local Salman Pak police station. It was not until about 3 pm that the Predator and the Apaches found the bulk of them. At this stage, the Police had been fighting a losing battle against the enemy for at least two hours before help arrived in the form of the Apaches and members of a local Iraqi battalion, the 305th Battalion. The 305th still did not fully link up with the remains of the police until nearly five o'clock in the evening.

It was later assessed that the police were opposed by about 150 enemy who dispersed the police after the initial ambush and, as a result, they never recovered their balance. The local police station was not secured until nearly eight o'clock that night. The police suffered four killed, 78 injured and eight missing, and they lost 45 vehicles in the afternoon's fighting. A sequel was that during a routine meeting about a week later, my Marine police liaison officer reported that at the Ministry, an Iraqi lieutenant colonel was arrested at gunpoint, supposedly as the man who betrayed the raid. Local knowledge is a powerful tool in a country where there is minimum reliance on maps, and maximum reliance on verbal descriptions of places.

### **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COUNTRY**

By Australian standards, Iraq is a small country. But when you are conducting military operations and have to be economical with your forces, a country even 1000 km by 1000 km is big enough. The major feature of Iraq, of course, is the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. There are 18 provinces for a population of 27 million. The people of Iraq are a mixture of ethnic and tribal groups but generally Kurds in the north, Sunni Arabs in the centre and Shi'a Arabs in the south. The country was formed in the years after the First World War by a conglomeration of three Ottoman provinces: Mosul, Baghdad and Basrah. It is interesting for Australians to note that many of the troops that we thought

of as Turkish soldiers who fought us on the Gallipoli peninsula were in fact from the Mesopotamian provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

Iraq borders six countries: Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. There are very large snow-capped mountains in the north, vast flat deserts in the centre and west, fertile flat plains between the two rivers, and the hot and humid al Faw peninsula in the south.

Despite not knowing where the Madai'en Arch was after nearly a year in the country, I quickly began to learn much and to realise that Iraq was an incredible place. Popularly referred to as the cradle of civilisation, it is said to be the site of the Garden of Eden, the Great Flood, and of course the city of Babylon. The oldest constantly-occupied city in the world is said by the Iraqis to be at Irbil and has been occupied for some 4000 years. Iraq is the birthplace of Abraham and, unfortunately, the birthplace also of Saddam Hussein. Finally, Iraq was cursed by having the second-largest reserves of oil in the world.

I gained my greatest feel for this country from travel, more by air than by vehicle. I travelled extensively by vehicle but mainly in the Baghdad, Najaf, Falujah, Mosul, Basrah and Irbil areas, and out on the Iran border. I certainly had a very good feel for the urban landscape in Iraq.

Most of the rest of the country I saw from the air. I travelled more by Blackhawk helicopter than by the big four-engine Hercules aircraft. Whenever Blackhawks went anywhere they travelled in pairs and flew very low and fast. This allowed me to see, between bouts of sleeping or dozing, the simple Iraq rural landscape. My most-travelled route was that between Baghdad and Mosul and as you moved further north the country changed significantly in its greenness. It went from desert to rolling green hills, then the low mountains or Jabal around Baiji before the serious mountains of the far north led to the Turkish and Iranian border. In the north, there seemed to be green grass at almost any time of the year, but in winter the rains were more pronounced north of Baghdad and the grass responded accordingly.

The grass and the shepherds with their small flocks were prolific. Unlike Australia, every flock in Iraq had a shepherd, sometimes a man or a woman, or sometimes two or three young children. The sheep were white with black heads and shared nothing in common with those fat, woolly Australian sheep that I knew so well.

Water defines Iraq and the water table is obviously quite close to the surface. Wells in many parts of Iraq are not round hand-dug affairs but nowadays are slits in the earth's surface that seem to have been dug by a backhoe on a tractor, and normally with a small engine driving the pump which is located down in the depth of the slit. In many of the slit wells that had been used for some time, the ubiquitous reeds, some several metres in height, grew out of the well and broke the monotony of the desert.

In the vicinity of the slit wells were very simple earth houses and as we thundered over, if the occupants were outside they would normally wave, either as a simple greeting or possibly as a form of healthy insurance against random attack. It was not unusual to see large tents being used in the vicinity of the mud houses or located by themselves, obviously to accommodate the shepherds as they moved with the sheep between pastures. I saw very few camels in Iraq. Maybe there are more out in the deserts of Anbar Province.

The cultivated irrigation around these wells and houses were squares of very shallow ditches into which the water was led. I watched the local Iraqis where I lived in the Green Zone watering the gardens and they all seem to have an innate capability to 'lead' water from its source in order to grow things. In the land between the two rivers, the irrigation seemed to come as much from the ground waters as by large canals. The big canals seemed to be used to take sweet water to cities rather than to rural holdings, but there were certainly many canals. Like any modern country, Iraq is crisscrossed with high-tension power lines. The uniquely Iraqi feature is that many of them have been destroyed. Usually it will be a single tower that is down, but less commonly it will be a series of towers that have been blown and have settled at an unnatural angle, or toppled entirely.

What I saw of the Tigris in Baghdad is typical of the Tigris as far north as Mosul. It is wide and fast-flowing, or narrow and even faster flowing. It is fringed by reeds and as often as not it has a light oil slick on the surface. One of the greatest sources of oil going into the Tigris was a river crossing at Baiji, the al Fatah crossing. Here a major bridge was blown down in the 1991 Gulf War and the oil pipes that once ran through the bridge have been re-laid on the bottom of the river. They were a frequent target of the insurgents and whenever they were hit, some oil would always go into the river.

A memorable feature of the Iraqi country side is that almost every hill has the remains of an entrenched military defensive position on its crest and back down its sides. Some are old and worn by the weather, some are very new. There are fighting positions for infantry, larger bunkers for command posts and larger bulldozed holes obviously for artillery or tanks. On the flat desert, especially around the old Saddam-era bases (many still being used by the Coalition), once again you can see the old defences. Security fences and watch towers roll off into the distance across the flat desert. Positions for dug-in tanks can be seen reflecting their tactical groupings. Trench lines are less common but can still be seen. Buildings such as barracks and airfield maintenance facilities are almost all trashed. From the most impressive barracks complex to what might have been a local police barracks at some road intersection, often the only thing standing is the frame. The people reclaimed what was theirs from the Saddam apparatus, even taking the roofing material, the window and door frames, and anything else that could be used.

Regularly we would fly across munition dumps. Munition dumps throughout the world must be big so that different types of ammunition can be separated and an explosion in one group does not set off sympathetic explosions in every other part of the complex.

The ammunition depots in Iraq were not only enormous but they were everywhere. In the looting spree following the collapse of the Saddam regime, the ammunition depots were also looted but some suggested in a more systematic way and not by the average Iraqi. What sustained the insurgency in Iraq was not so much the import of weapons and ammunition from outside Iraq, but the fact that the country was awash with weapons and ammunition. When I arrived in Iraq there was an enormous effort to destroy the ammunition. I remember seeing a figure that Iraq had 800,000 tonnes of ammunition that was in the process of being destroyed by contractors. I would have been impressed had I been told that the figure was 8000 tonnes, but 800,000 is incomprehensible. Anything that could be used by the new Iraqi security forces was collected and re-distributed but the new Iraqi army had no artillery, and the only current use for Chinese 152 mm artillery rounds or South African 155 mm artillery rounds was as roadside bombs or car bombs by terrorists. Until the ammunition depots could be destroyed they had to be protected. Early on, Iraqi troops could not be used because they were too easily intimidated. In the early stages we did not have enough Coalition troops to protect every part of every munitions dump that often had perimeters as long as 15 kilometres. So for some time, the munitions depots were the insurgents' self-service munitions stores until we either destroyed the ammunition or centralised it and redistributed it.

### ANCIENT HISTORY

Iraq is referred to as the cradle of civilisation but historians tell us that the most remarkable innovation in Mesopotamian civilisation is 'urbanism'. The idea of the city as a heterogeneous, complex, messy, constantly-changing but ultimately viable concept for human society was supposedly a Mesopotamian invention. My observation in Iraq was that the concept has not been much improved since those days. It is ironic now that the most common form of combat operations in Iraq is urban operations. The bigger the city, the greater the routine combat operations that were being conducted. We fought every day of the week in Baghdad, Basrah and Mosul. I visited Mosul on one occasion and flying from one base to another we flew over Mosul University which is built over the ancient city of Nineveh, which was the Assyrian capital and the capital of a world empire. It was located on a very good crossing-point over the Tigris, and the language spoken in the streets of Nineveh was Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ. Saddam Hussein liked to be portrayed in the costume of Nineveh's ancient Assyrian Rulers.

On another occasion I flew from Mosul to Irbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Autonomous Region. Irbil was important because it was located on a strategic caravan route to India and China. Amongst other things, the area is known for the fact that a famous battle took place on the plain between Mosul and Irbil during which Alexander the Great crushed the Persian Darius III in 331 BCE. On the day that I flew from Mosul to Irbil I knew nothing about dates and times and I was more worried about Zarqawi than either

Darius or Alexander the Great. It was the middle of winter and there was rain and low scudding clouds. I could see one place that looked like plains and a river crossing and, I said to myself, it could have been the scene of the battle. I will never go back there again, so I will claim that I saw the place where the Persian Empire was dealt a fatal blow.

### COMPLEXITY OF IRAQI SOCIETY

Counter-insurgency is a fight for the will of the people which makes the people the focus for everything that occurs. The 27 million Iraqis are therefore the centre of gravity for both the insurgents and those who would stand against them. The population of Iraq is 60 per cent Shi'a, 20 per cent Kurds and 20 per cent Sunni Arab. Many of the Sunnis believed at the time that they were a much greater percentage of the total population and statements to the contrary just proved that they were being oppressed. But this is only one part of the complexity of Iraq. Iraq is like those Russian dolls where as one doll is opened, there is another doll, another mystery, inside. And you make generalisations, as I do, at your own peril. I remember that General George W. Casey, Commander, Multi-National Force Iraq, once told me of a conversation that he had with one of the Ministers in the Interim Government who was trying to illustrate the complexity of his own society. The Minister offered General Casey his own succinct wisdom as: 'All of Iraq is not Islam. All of Islam is not Shi'a. All of Shi'a is not Clergy. All of Clergy is not Iranian'. It was just confusing enough to be true.

The other commonly heard explanation of the complexity of Iraqi society is the one that goes something like: 'Me and my brother against my cousin. Me and my cousin against my village. Me and my village against a stranger'. It is fair to say that Iraq had many of the characteristics of a feudal society, where the rights of those in society are not yet prescribed and power is seized by force by individuals, clans, tribes, often under the guise of sectarian loyalties. Iraqi nationalism is built in large measure on tribal and sectarian prejudices with a nod towards Pan-Arabism. The Ba'athists in Saddam's time directed these sentiments against selected foreigners and groups identified as the former Regime's foes: Westerners, Kuwaitis, Gulf Arabs in general, Egyptians, Israelis, Iranians, and Iraqi Shi'a to name just a few.

I gained something of an insight into this magnificent country of Iraq by the success of a television show that burst onto Iraq's TV screens towards the end of 2004. It started informally in Mosul when the local Police Chief was invited to appear on the Mosul TV station and to talk about the insurgents and a recent particularly bloody incident. He was so compelling that he was invited back, and he offered to bring some of the insurgents that he captured to show the viewers. This occurred and the insurgents that he brought back told the viewing audience how they had been recruited in Syria, how they had been trained, how they had moved to Iraq, what they had been paid, and how they had

committed the killings. One insurgent even described himself as a Syrian intelligence officer. Most were foreigners or 'foreign fighters', as we generally called them. The show developed and the next week the television station assembled the families of victims of the captured insurgents to confront those who killed their loved ones, in the first Iraqi reality TV show. It soon developed that the show would be used to tell people about insurgents who were not yet captured but who had committed murder and so were wanted. This was indeed great theatre and was widely reported in the local press, the Arab media and in the Western press.

The show took off as a phenomenon and by early 2005, was being shown across the country with local variations. Many questioned the contrition of the stars of the show and how their confessions had been obtained. It was called in translation 'In the Grip of the Law' but was generally referred to by the Coalition as 'Iraq's Most Wanted'. Its legality was questioned by the Western media. For the Coalition, it is not legal to publicly exploit 'detainees', but insurgents captured by the Iraqis were not considered 'detainees' in the sense of prisoners of war, but were technically criminals and so for the Iraqi Police there was no prohibition.

Two Iraqi majors who had attended the Australian Staff College in Canberra when I was the Commander, and whom I met again in Baghdad on once occasion, were that very evening rushing back to their barracks to watch 'In the Grip of the Law'. One of the two had a relative who was killed in an incident that was being featured. Ali, my interpreter, gave me an interesting explanation when we were talking about the attitude of the Iraqis towards the success of the show: 'Not only are you a foreigner', he paraphrased his people's reaction, 'but you are not even successful because we caught you'.

Iraqi society was also fundamentally lawless. Force and violence had been factors in Iraqi society for much longer than Saddam, but Saddam raised it to an art form. The police were so compromised that if a normal citizen had a problem, he would rarely think of taking that problem to the police. He would go to his family, his tribe, his imam, pay some strongman to get him justice, or just buy his way out of his problem. This attitude produced great problems as we tried to re-constitute the Iraqi Police and then expected them to act honestly so that the Iraqi people would come and tell them who the insurgents were. This level of lawlessness in Iraq society was also reflected in the gun laws. Each Iraqi household was legally permitted to own one AK47 plus a small amount of ammunition, and the weapon did not have to be registered—in fact it was impossible to register them. The occupation force authorities agreed to carry this over from the Saddam era because if we could not guarantee security to every family, then it was quite unfair to increase the vulnerability of honest Iraqis to criminals by banning the ownership of weapons. This made house searches by our troops very difficult and normally only an excessive number of weapons drew the attention of searchers.

## RELIGION

You cannot separate anything in Iraq from religion, and voting patterns are a good example. The results of the first few elections in Iraq were always going to follow sectarian lines and no one should have been surprised at this. It is only in my lifetime that religious background in Australia ceased to be a major determinant of voting patterns.

Iraq is an Islamic country. The Prophet Mohammad died in 632 AD and all the Muslim lands were gathered together under what was called the Caliph, a religious and political chief. I read that after reaching its zenith under two dynasties, the Abbasids (Baghdad Sunni) and the Fatimids (Cairo Shi'as), the Caliphate went into decline, and Islamic dissidents began to challenge the Caliphs. Sunni Muslims defended the legitimacy of the Abbasids Caliphate centred in Baghdad, but the Shi'a believed that the Caliphate should revert to the Imams, descendants of Ali, the prophet's son-in-law.

The result was the two main streams of Islam: Sunni and Shi'a. Iraq is only one of two countries in the world that have a Shi'a majority, the other being Iran. This connection with Iran complicates issues even more and is a dynamic that is exploited by anyone who wants to beat a religious or a nationalist drum. The Shi'a majority is the ruling majority in the Iraq government and consists of a number of Shi'a groups in coalition, many of whom are linked back into the Shi'as who fled to Iran to avoid the Saddam purges. To increase the complexity, the Shi'ites are allied with the Kurds, who are Sunni Muslims but not Arabs, who also fled from Saddam's army into Iran and other places.

I was assured by the first Iraqi that I came to know relatively well—he was a Director General in the Department of Health—that the difference between the Sunni and the Shi'a streams of Islam is no greater than that between Protestants and Catholics in Europe. And in certain parts of Europe, Protestants are still killing Catholics and vice versa. This educated and western-aware Iraqi also told me that Sunnis and Shi'as lived relatively happily together until Saddam started to exploit the differences for his own purposes. He mentioned to me a statistic that said that 30 to 50 per cent of Iraqi marriages were between Sunnis and Shi'as, which if it is true, you would think must have a stabilising effect on the country.

## NATURE OF THE INSURGENCY

The Sunni Arabs, called thus to distinguish them from the Sunni Kurds, were used both by the colonisers of Iraq and by Saddam as administrators. When you read something of Iraq's history you can see that there is a strong element of victims and victimisers. During Saddam's time, the Sunnis were the oppressors and the Shi'ites and the Kurds were the victims. With few exceptions the Sunnis provided the leadership of the country and the leadership of the organs of state power, in particular, the Military, the Police and the

Intelligence. Therefore, there is a deep sense of injustice in the new Iraq amongst those who were victimised against those who were the victimisers. The Sunnis, as a minority, have every right to fear any system of government that does not respect the rights of minorities, for they suddenly find themselves a minority with little power. For those who were victimised, the Kurds and the Shi'ites, the idea of a democracy that upholds the rights of the minority oppressors is a difficult concept. The only thing that will overcome this problem, the key issue in the formation of a real democracy in Iraq, is a sense of justice in the new government. If there is true justice, the majority of the Sunnis will come across. If there is not inclusiveness but vindictiveness, then the insurgency will be extended indefinitely.

I spent most of my time in that part of Iraq that was called the 'Sunni Triangle' for the simple reasons that this insurgency was predominantly a Sunni insurgency and that is where the fighting was. I have seen no formal declaration of what the Sunni Triangle is but if you drew a line that started at Baghdad, went west through Falujah and Ramadi and followed the upper Euphrates to the border town of al Qaim, if you then went northeast from there to the ancient city of Mosul and then back down south to Baqubah and then to Baghdad again, you would probably have produced as good a Sunni Triangle as I ever saw. In drawing that line, of the 18 provinces of Iraq, you would have encompassed most of the four provinces of Anbar, Baghdad, Salah ad Din, and Nineveh, and perhaps parts of Babil and Diyala. In each of the four provinces there is at least a majority of Sunni Arabs, but in all cases the population in these areas is mixed, no more so than in Baghdad.

And the population is changing as a result of the insurgency or as a result of a desire to right old wrongs. In certain areas the minority is moving out to live with its ethnic grouping because they feel threatened. In other areas, such as around the oil-rich area of Kirkuk, a traditional Kurd area where Saddam forced the Kurds out and replaced them with Sunnis, the Kurds are moving back in by stealth or by force to reassert what they see as their birth right.

For the year that I was in Iraq, there was no indication that the Sunni Arab insurgency has spread outside of these four Sunni provinces of Anbar, Baghdad, Salah ad Din, Nineveh and parts of north Babil and Diyala. There were very nasty insurgent attacks outside of these areas, of course, and particularly along the seam between the ethnic and sectarian groupings such as in north Babil province, but not the kind of support that makes an insurgency. Of course the Sunni insurgency was not our only opponent and when we fought the Shi'a militias, we fought them across the southern Shi'a provinces, particularly in Najaf, Karbala, Basrah, Amarah and Baghdad.

## PROBLEMS OF GOVERNMENT

It is difficult to know what the Sunni Arab leaders' goals were at the early stage of this insurgency. They lacked a central point in their leadership. They had no one who was the equivalent of the Grand Ayatollah Sistani who was the leader of the Shi'as and who was highly respected and had great credibility. The closest that I saw to a leadership body was the Muslim Ulema Council—shortened to 'MUC'—centred on the Mother of all Battles Mosque in Baghdad. It was led by Harith al Dari, and his son Muthanna al Dari, and both were very closely associated with the insurgency, close enough for us to consider them insurgents. We tried to have these two arrested on numerous occasions but the Shi'a-dominated Interim and Transitional Governments were reluctant to move against any Sunni cleric.

Certainly the Sunni leadership said that they wanted Coalition troops out of Iraq but I was always of the opinion that if the Coalition left early, then those who would suffer most would be the 20 per cent of the population who were Sunnis facing the wrath of the 80 per cent of the population that were Shi'a and Kurds. The Sunnis also wanted assurance of participation in the political process, the Government, the Police and Army. The Sunnis demanded moderation of the de-Ba'athification process which had probably gone too far and which of course affected the Sunnis almost entirely. It may even be possible to say that the Sunnis at this early stage did not have a specific agenda that would translate into politics. Many Sunnis just wanted the privileged position that they enjoyed under Saddam to be restored.

We always saw that the Sunnis would be split between hard-liners and moderates, and this was no more pronounced than in the election that completed my tour in Iraq in January 2005. The Sunni religious leadership had advised their followers to not participate in this, the first of three elections mandated by the UN. As a result, only approximately four per cent of Sunnis voted and much to their surprise, the process did not stop dead in its tracks. There seemed to be a belief amongst the Sunnis that they could hold the rest of the country to ransom by not voting and that the entire process would then be considered illegal. We had rehearsed this eventuality for months because it was always likely. We had prepared the world public for it. The media that opposed the war in Iraq continually questioned us on what we would do if the Sunni vote was low and it took us some time to arrive at the approach that the Sunnis could not hold the whole country to ransom, and that the process would proceed. As soon as the Sunnis started to realise that they had taken themselves out of the political process as a result of the advice of their own leadership, the rank and file began to question that leadership and to demand accountability. The second vote in October 2005 (the Constitutional Referendum) and the General Election in December 2005 proved that our approach was correct as the Sunni vote was reported in the media as approximately reflecting the Sunni proportion of the overall population .

But questioning the Sunni orthodoxy is not necessarily a good thing to do if you are a Sunni. As the backlash against the Sunni leadership grew following the January 2005 failure of the Sunnis to vote, a Sunni Imam in the Sunni heartland, Ramadi, issued a local fatwa saying that it was illegal to attack the Iraqi soldiers in the Iraqi Security Force, the ISF. He was murdered. Another defiant Imam reissued the Fatwa and he then had to go into hiding.

We thought early in 2005 that we could detect the emergence of moderate Sunnis in Anbar Province. Some Sunni Arab leaders were seeking engagement in the political process and they have since engaged successfully. Some Sunni tribal leaders have tried to address the issue of violence in their own societies. There was even a movement more directly against the extremist, a movement again led by courageous Sunni religious leaders who in February 2005 gave anti-insurgent sermons in the mosques at the request of Minister of Defence, himself a Sunni. They even went as far as preaching that the ISF have a duty to kill insurgents, they oversaw the sermons of other more radical imams, and in some cases they even closed certain mosques that supported the insurgency.

This was the impact of the political process on more moderate Sunnis. Of course Zarqawi and his extremists were not fools and saw this as the greatest threat to themselves. We understood that foreign radicals like Zarqawi would attempt to radicalise the Sunni Arab insurgents, so that they could harness the Sunni movement to their extremist ends. Soon after April 2005, as Zarqawi realised the effect that the elections was having on the Sunnis, he directed the most extraordinary violent campaign of intimidation against anyone in Iraqi society who did not take an extremist view.

My first exposure to the Shi'a was when I was required to arrange security for a range of people who went to visit the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the Iranian-born and most influential of all the Shi'a clerics. He lived in a fortified house in Najaf and was probably the most protected person in Iraq. I had no idea of his importance until he played a key role in the fighting in August 2004 in the holy city of Najaf.

Sistani was the best thing that the Shi'as had going for them. He worked in a different world from we Westerners but he was still worldly-wise and a man able to make a decision, although often it would take a long, long time. He was not a puppet of the Iranians and he did not believe in a role for the Ayatollahs in the governance of Iraq, a significant difference from the mullahs of Iran, but his people exercised real power in all the governments of Iraq since the occupation, and he exercised real power over almost every Shi'a. For us he was a blessing regardless of how difficult he was to deal with because he was a point of authority with whom we could interact.

I had initially made the assumption that we were in Iraq to fight what we generally called 'the insurgency', which to us meant the Sunni Arab insurgency. This was far too simple. Two of the three most significant fights that I was involved in were against a Shi'a

militia led by Moqtada al Sadr. These occurred in April and in August 2004. The August fight was predominantly against Moqtada's Mehdi Army whereas in April 2004, everyone from every faction and grouping came out and had a go at us. And of course, in the period between April and August 2004, the Mehdi Army did not politely retire to its barracks, but maintained a constant series of lower-level actions against the Coalition.

The Shi'as are as complex a group of people as any in Iraq. Being 60 per cent of the population, democracy has delivered them control of the government of Iraq, but in the best traditions of democracy, they do not have total control. The real measure of the Shi'as will be whether or not they can overcome their personal antagonism for their old masters the Sunnis, and offer inclusiveness in government.

The leader of a radical element amongst the Shi'a is Moqtada al Sadr. Moqtada al Sadr was the son of a revered Shi'a cleric who was imprisoned and finally executed by Saddam Hussein. Moqtada had been a thorn in the side of the occupation forces for some time. He was fanatically anti-US but this was not his only fault. There was an Iraqi warrant out for his arrest for the murder of a rival cleric. He was protected from direct action by his status as the son of a prominent Shi'a and the fact that he had a very significant following. His following was across most of the Shi'a south but particularly in the enormous Baghdad suburb known as Sadr City with its population of about one or two million, in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, and in the third largest city in Iraq, Basrah, and nearby Amarah. He was the head of the Mehdi Army which was estimated at one stage to be ten thousand strong, but many of these were only 'casual' fighters. At the time, it was remarkably well armed and very aggressive. Its members did us the favour of dressing in black and wearing an Islamic green scarf around their heads, which meant that they could be distinguished from civilians with much greater ease. Moqtada himself was the master of brinkmanship and he took us to the edge on a regular basis. Sometimes he overstepped the mark and very heavy fighting was the result. But he was young, he was said to be charismatic and he was certainly a firebrand. He had more lives than a cat and I remember that after the horrendous fighting in August, he escaped from the Imam Ali Shrine in the city of Najaf in a convoy of ambulances. Not for him the provisions of the Laws of Armed Conflict.

His influence was everywhere across the south of Iraq and I noticed that even police would have his picture taped to the inside of their police car windows as they patrolled, and Iraqi soldiers would have his picture taped to the butt of their rifles. His father set up an organisation that still exists in Iraq called the Office of the Martyr Sadr or OMS. It was a focus for the son Moqtada and his militia, and it not only did charitable work but it enforced a very strict view of Islam.

The highlight of the Shi'a religious year, for all Shi'as across the world but especially in southern Iraq and in Iran, was Ashura and Arba'en. The Ashura feast commemorates

the death and martyrdom of the founder of the Shi'a religion, the Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali Abi-Talib, or Imam Ali. In the holy city of Najaf there is the Imam Ali Shrine which is the Vatican of the Shi'a religion. Arba'en, I am told, means forty: 40 days and 40 night of mourning after the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Ali. Arba'en features a procession from Najaf to Karbala, which commemorates the movement of Imam Ali from Najaf to Karbala to fight a Sunni Army and his death from wounds received in combat.

The Shi'ites feel that they have always been disadvantaged by Sunnis and the passion and martyrdom of Imam Ali is the ultimate example. Ashura and Arba'en is not only celebrated at the Imam Ali shrine and on the road from Najaf to Karbala, but also at a collection of important mosques across central and southern Iraq such as the al Askari Mosque in Samarra, the al Khadamia Mosque in Baghdad, the Kufa Mosque which borders on Najaf, and the Imam Husayn and Abbas Mosque in Karbala. As such it is a big event ripe for exploitation by terrorists such as Zarqawi who wished to foment a civil war between the Sunnis and the Shi'as. Up to one million people attend Ashura and Arba'en in order to celebrate the life and death of Imam Ali; a large percentage of them are Iranian Shi'as. Across southern Iraq are many Iranian travel agencies that cater almost solely for the Ashura ceremony. Ashura and Arba'en is a very difficult challenge if you have to provide security but the Iraqi Army and Police have now twice performed that function effectively.

Moqtada's Mehdi Militia was not the only militia in the south. There were two others with which we had to deal. These militias were associated with the main two Shi'a organisations that were sometimes referred to as parties, but which provided a much wider service to their constituents than just politics.

The first of the organisations was Da'wa which was far more of a social movement than a party. It was formed in the late 1950s and was the first attempt by the Shi'a in Iraq to organise politically. As the Ba'athists came to power they attacked Da'wa and it had nearly disintegrated by the early 1980s. It has a militia or an armed wing and there is always the possibility that there will be armed conflict with its rivals, but more about local issues than about national issues or points of principle.

The second of the Shi'a organisations is SCIRI, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution of Iraq. Its military wing or militia was called the Badr Corps and later the Badr Organisation. SCIRI is the dominant element in the Shi'a Alliance and was formed by Shi'a refugees who had fled to Tehran during the worst times of the persecution by Saddam. In fact it was formed out of Da'wa splinters and its aim was to unite various resistance organisations. Recently it has been comforting to see that Da'wa and SCIRI have been acting more like a bloc. The biggest area of potential conflict in my time in Iraq was in Najaf where the Governor was Da'wa and the Chief of Police had strong ties to SCIRI leadership.

The Kurds had been operating as a semi-autonomous state under the KRG or the Kurdish Regional Government, for many years. They had had their own army, the Peshmerga or 'Pesh' as they were called, since 1962 and had been in close cooperation with the US since the 1991 Gulf War. The Pesh strength was estimated to be 55,000 to 65,000 men with perhaps half in each of the two competing arms of Kurdish political life, the PUK or Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the more moderate of the two, and the KDP, the Kurdistan Democratic Party under Massad Barzani. The occupation forces had authorised them to a maximum of only 35,000 for internal security in the KRG but it seemed that the way they got around this was to have a certain proportion of their forces in the Iraqi Army.

I spent a lot of time working with the Kurdish Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq during the Allawi Government, Barham Salih. He was an extraordinary man. My contact with him was mainly over one issue, the security of the Iraqi infrastructure. The two occasions when I had most to do with him were firstly during a sustained attack on the oil infrastructure in Iraq when I wanted the Iraqis to use their own security resources more, and secondly when I was looking for US\$500 million to form 18 battalions of troops to protect the oil, rail and electricity infrastructure.

In the first instance, I had been 'in active discussion' with the Iraq Oil Minister about taking more responsibility for security and, for a range of complicated reasons, he had not been persuaded. Despite his reluctance to commit Iraqis to the task, he expected that Coalition soldiers would defend his oil pipes. I had played his game for many months and it was time that his Ministry pulled their weight. I finally told him that there would be no more Coalition troops on the oil pipes until he spent the money that I knew that he had been allocated for security, for weapons, personnel and equipment. I had stood my ground because the oil industry was on the point of collapse and every one was screaming.

A particularly memorable meeting occurred in the Deputy PM's house late one night with all the major players in the oil industry and most of the major players in relation to finance in Iraq. As well, the US Ambassador was there and oil-interested representatives from places such as the CIA. The discussion was very heated and often personal. The Oil Minister accused me of not being able to understand the threat in Iraq, and I accused him of using his security funds to keep his dilapidated oil industry working and not for security. As a result his industry was going backwards, and his oil was flowing into the sand as the pipes were blown.

I had known the Oil Minister since I had arrived in Iraq about nine months before and we had worked closely together. For the time that the Coalition was an occupying force, I had personally controlled every aspect of security in three Ministries: Oil, Electricity and the rail directorate of Transport, and life had been relatively simple. The Minister for Oil had been the same man for all that time and we had developed a prickly but workable

relationship. He was undoubtedly a patriot and from everything that we could see, he was honest. He was one of the few ministers in the Allawi government who actually knew his portfolio because he had worked all his life in the various arms of the Iraqi oil industry, and just to be alive under Saddam was no mean feat. But he maintained that the only thing that the Coalition should be doing was protecting the oil lines, and I argued that Iraqis must join us in this activity if for no other reason than the transition of the war to the Iraqis had commenced in every other sector of Iraqi life. In a very acrimonious meeting, the Deputy PM finally directed me to provide some troops, and the Minister to provide lots of money. Within a few hours I had Coalition troops back on key parts of the infrastructure and the Minister, having agreed to everything that the Deputy PM directed, quick as a flash did absolutely nothing. This was a man who had survived Saddam—we were hardly a challenge.

The next series of meetings was a follow-on from that meeting. Because the Oil Ministry would not provide money or troops I had taken Coalition troops off the oil infrastructure again, and once again everyone from Baghdad to Washington was screaming. Once I had everyone's attention, my proposal was that the Iraqi State take over the security of the oil industry through the formation of 18 battalions of well-equipped troops; the US\$500 million cost of raising these troops could be met by the money saved in only two years by stopping only a small proportion of the attacks on the oil pipes. We probably met ten times over about six weeks on this as we worked out the details. The US Embassy and the Ambassador were right behind me. I refused to agree to these battalions just being normal Iraqi Army battalions because if they were, they would be taken off the oil infrastructure when it suited the local commanders who were only worried about their local issues. I had seen it time and time again over the previous year. Both the Iraqi Army and the MNF-I gave a low priority to the protection of the strategic infrastructure, so with everyone expecting me to do it but having no resources, I was left holding the baby. Given that I never received any attention until there was a crisis, I legitimately used the next crisis to suggest long-term changes. Again Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih came out on my side and allocated the required money for the first year for these battalions and gave the direction that they be formed. He then made the Oil Minister allocate part of the funds back to the government. What was more, he did this in the period after the January 2005 election when he could have claimed a moratorium on all new policies before the new government was installed. He was indeed an impressive man.

### **NATURE OF THE COALITION: ORGANISATION, RULES OF ENGAGEMENT, STATUS OF COMMAND**

The military manifestation of the 'Coalition of the Willing' in Iraq was called the Multi-National Force-Iraq, or MNF-I. This was a force that covered every level of military competence across most of the world. At its top level the MNF-I was without doubt the

largest, most modern, most potent force currently deployed on operations anywhere in the world. The core of MNF-I was capable of conducting 21st-century 'near networked' warfare across the full spectrum of conventional and special operations, and its operations are integrated, as they should be, very much into the political, information and economic realms. The MNF-I operates every day in a politically-charged and media-scrutinised environment. In such a climate, the combat engagement is certainly more dramatic but no more important than the delivery of electricity and sewage services to the people. And in this situation, the fair management of information has never been more critical. In this war, though, we were conducting a counter-insurgency, and much of the most advanced capability of this force was less than relevant and sometimes counter-productive.

By my count, 38 countries have provided troops to Iraq since the major military operations ended in April 2003. For one reason or another, 14 had left by the time that I completed my tour of duty in April 2005, but the total number did not add up because some countries did not want to publicise their involvement. Three countries, Australia, Albania and Georgia, had increased the number of troops that they had in Iraq in the early part of 2005, or were about to increase their numbers. The exact number of foreign troops in Iraq at any one time was confusing and General Casey had the normal amount of trouble that every deployed force has in accounting exactly for who was in the country and who was not. I remember noting that on the day I handed over the responsibilities of Chief of Operations of the MNF-I to my successor on 28 March 2005, there were 28 countries listed as having troops in Iraq and that the total number of foreign troops in country was 175,049. Australia's contribution to this force actually located in Iraq was 311 at that time.

Eight of the 14 countries that had withdrawn their forces had done so in the year that I was in Iraq, and three or four are talking about it. Of the 175,049 foreign troops in Iraq, about 25,000 were contributed by other than the US, and the balance of roughly 150,000 was American. Many of the contributions were very small but at least they were there. Many of the contributor nations were in Iraq as much to assist a major ally as they were to assist the people of Iraq. As General Tommy Franks said about the contribution of Coalition troops to the invasion of Iraq: 'It does not make any difference what size or kind of contribution a nation gives. The first rule of statecraft is that every nation on this planet will do what it perceives to be in its own best interests'.

The withdrawal of nations from the Coalition was something that offered the anti-US media of the world, much of it from the US, a chance to criticise the resolve of the Coalition. But the withdrawals had almost no impact on the ability of the Coalition to fight the insurgency, for two reasons. The first is that the burden of combat was being carried almost entirely by the US and by the UK. And the second is that one country has joined the Coalition in fact if not in name—Iraq—and in massive numbers. By the time that I left Iraq in April 2005, the Iraqi Security Forces, consisting mostly of the Army and

the Police, had gone from very low numbers to 145,000 Iraqis organised in 99 combat battalions, and as I write this in the middle of 2006, there are 117 Iraqi combat battalions and about 250,000 troops.

Regardless of what individuals may think of the how the Coalition forces arrived in Iraq and whether or not the invasion was justified, by the time that I arrived one year after the cessation of 'major combat operations' following the invasion, the force was solidly there. The force that I joined in Baghdad was a force of occupation. It was run by an organisation called the Coalition Provisional Authority or CPA led by a US proconsul (technically the Presidential Envoy) called Ambassador L. Paul 'Jerry' Bremer, and it attempted to run every aspect of the country directly or through what was called the Iraqi Governing Council. Iraq at the time was run in accordance with the Transitional Administrative Law, the equivalent of a constitution that had been written very quickly but which, as I came to understand it and its value, was an extraordinary document. It contributed much to the Iraqi constitution accepted in October 2005. In a myriad of discussions and arguments across Iraq in the three years since the invasion, it was what most people on the Coalition and Iraqi side accepted as the ultimate authority in routine matters. Once Ambassador Bremer left, the legality of the Coalition presence was based on UN Resolution 1546 which consisted of the UN Resolution itself plus a letter from Prime Minister Allawi and a letter from Secretary of State Powell, spelling out the details and what was agreed. UNSCR 1546 mandated a process that would take Iraq from the end of the occupation to a state of full autonomy by means of three elections. The first was to be in January 2005 and was to elect a transitional government. The second was to be in October 2005 and was to ratify a constitution for Iraq. The final step was to be in December 2005 when an Iraqi Government was to be elected on the basis of the constitution. That government would be neither Interim nor Transitional and would run a full term. The UNSCR gave us much more than just the political milestones. It gave us practical authority in a number of areas such as the legal right to detain people in Iraq. It defined General Casey's job in relation to the various Iraqi Governments and it stated words to the effect that the Coalition Force would operate in partnership with the Iraqi Security Force to enable the 1546 political process to occur. This was a solid legal base. Given that most of the people involved in the process could variously be described as 'reasonable', the system worked.

Ambassador Bremer and the CPA took over a country that had been affected by the Ba'athists for around 35 years. For a long period of that time, Saddam's rule had been total and his authority had been derived from the direct physical intimidation of the population. It was a level of intimidation that made other authoritarian rulers, such as Suharto, appear almost benign. This abuse was inevitably going to impact on the willingness of the Iraqi people to use their initiative, to exercise the freedom to speak out that they now had, and the willingness that they displayed in becoming involved. Those who survived the

Saddam era and stayed in Iraq for all those years were those who kept their heads down, who did as they were told, and who, if there was a problem that could not be ignored, solved it by using family or trusted friends, never by becoming involved with any of the organs of government. Many of those who were noticed by the regime now lay amongst the 300,000 bodies that we had found in mass graves across the length and breadth of Iraq, and a bullet to the back of the head was a bonus when the alternative was a long period of torture and then death.

Overall, the real impact of three decades of Saddam and the Ba'athists was felt on the spirit of the Iraqis, and this could be seen every day in every contact that I had with them. Almost no one valued the freedom that they had suddenly been given; no one was yet convinced that it would last, and therefore the question was: why risk your life and the life of your family on what might have no substance? Few people stepped up to take responsibility for anything because failure had always had extreme consequences. As a result there was an initial heavy reliance on those Iraqis who had been exiled or for other reasons had been overseas, and although many were patriots, some were self-serving. But in my time in Iraq I saw this reluctant spirit change and within the limited circles in which I moved, I saw the re-emergence of an Iraqi spirit, and I saw it no more dramatically than in the response of Iraqis to the elections in 2005.

Military organisation is an esoteric subject but if you wish to be successful in martial matters, then organising your military in terms of who works for whom, and what they all can do, is something that aspiring Caesars take very seriously. There is a popular misconception that everyone in a military force will do as they are told, and that they will do anything that they are told. This is very far from the case. Military forces, even from the same country, come together with the equivalent of a contract. They can only be used in the way that the contract allows and if a commander tries to use them differently, he may face outright refusal. Authority in military operations is carefully prescribed to meet the situation at hand, and hopefully it can be flexible enough to meet the situations that you were unable to predict.

When all the military forces that you want to use to run your war come from one country it is still a difficult proposition to make anything work. But when they come from 30 different countries, each with their own agenda and their own fears, it is a very complicated business indeed. And the MNF-I was just about as complicated as it gets.

The war in Iraq is a big war, a very dangerous war, and the stakes are very high for most nations involved. It is a war being run by the US but with participation from a range of countries, and all of them have various levels of democracy but all also have high levels of accountability to their own people. The peoples of each country, whose sons and daughters constitute the Coalition Force, would not appreciate it if too many were killed, or for certain countries, if any at all were killed. So the 30 governments who

have contributed forces to the MNF-I did not give the US Commanding General of the MNF-I their young men and women and then politely step back. Each contingent was given to the Force for a particular period, for a particular task and with specific directions how the Force should carry out that task. If the commanders on the ground proposed to use the force in a way that was not agreed, National Commanders have the obligation to object in the first instance, and then refuse in the second.

How the elements of the force would fight and what each element can be asked to do are managed through what are called the Rules of Engagements (ROE) and Status of Command.

Rules of Engagement are detailed directions from a government that lay down how a military unit or an individual is to use force. Every country approaches Rules of Engagement differently but generally they are referred to as 'offensive' rules if they are relatively free of constraints, or 'defensive' rules where the use of force might be severely constrained. Offensive rules allow a force to go out and find the enemy and to fight the enemy wherever they find them. Defensive rules of engagement may only allow the force to conduct limited operations, to protect those that it is directed to protect, and to defend itself if it is attacked. But even offensive rules of engagement can be restrictive in certain areas and, as a result, ROE can be very detailed.

In general, only the US in Iraq had truly offensive rules of engagement and as a result it carried most of the burden of combat operations. Because the US went out looking to fight the enemy, it took the vast majority of the casualties, 2400 killed by mid-2006. The UK's 8000 troops had defensive rules of engagement in Iraq but the rules were such as to permit them to carry out a wider range of operations than most, but to carry them out in only specific areas, the south of Iraq. As a result, the UK forces were the second most effective combat force in Iraq and had suffered about 100 killed. Other countries lay at various points on the spectrum from offensive to defensive, some had the majority of their force on defensive and then parts of their force (often their Special Operations Forces) on more offensive ROE. Other national contingents, as the joke went, were not allowed to go outside if it was raining. Most forces had rules prepared for a worst-case situation that permitted the force to fight more offensively if things turned very bad, very fast. These were referred to as Dormant ROE and allowed a defensive force to become offensive in a very short period of time, without detailed and protracted negotiations with their parent governments.

The Status of Command of a force within a Coalition determines what authority that a commander has over the soldiers assigned to him. The most flexible level of command, referred to by some nations as 'full command', means that the force can be used by a commander for anything he wants, for any length of time, and in any part of an area of operations. That means that a unit based in Mosul, such as the US Stryker Brigades, could

suddenly be moved from Mosul to any part of Iraq and be used for full-spectrum combat operations at any time without reference to anyone. Full command normally only applies to a national force if it is working for a commander of the same nationality.

There is a range of other technical terms that describe the status of command of the force that limit its use in terms of the mission that it might be given, for what period it might be used, and where in the operational area it might be used. For example, a certain national force might be sent to Iraq and placed in the Coalition, but might only be able to be used for the protection of certain reconstruction activity in a particular part of Iraq, and even in the case of heavy fighting, is not to conduct offensive operations. This means that even if the force is attacked around the reconstruction project, it can only conduct such action as protects the project and those working there, and cannot under its commander go out and find the base of the enemy that is attacking it. Individuals were under similar command arrangements, and the Australian Government gave me to the Commanding General MNF-I under 'operational control' for duties as Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in the MNF-I for a prescribed period of time, with certain other constraints. This meant that I remained under command of an Australian commander in Australia at all times and that, without consulting with Australia, the CG MNF-I could not suddenly use me as a field commander or, as was proposed at one stage, as a media spokesman, without reference back to Australia.

### **HOW COUNTER-INSURGENCY IS COMMANDED**

Dealing with 30 or so countries each with different ROE and under different status of command was a complicated process, but was certainly manageable. Sometimes it was managed by putting like nations with similar rules of engagement under one commander into a certain discrete area which had a low expectation of heavy combat, but where the forces could contribute to protection of the local people and the process of reconstruction. In these areas there may have been less of a need to conduct full offensive combat operations. The Polish-led division, centred on the ancient city of Babylon, was an example of this, and their contribution was real and was valued. Even in an emergency, the Commanding General of the MNF-I could not suddenly move any Coalition unit to Baghdad to assist US forces without starting negotiations at the national level. As the second battle of Falujah approached in November 2004, we needed a force to temporarily hold part of North Babil province on the Euphrates River so we could move the Marines that were normally there across to Falujah as part of the assault force. The local British commander and the Commanding General of the MNF-I made a local agreement, but before this could be formalised at the national level it was revealed by the media and a very embarrassing situation ensued.

For most of the time I was in Iraq, the MNF-I was distributed across Iraq in six geographical areas each under a separate commander. Four of those areas were commanded

by US commanders, one was under a Polish general and one under a British general. Each was referred to by their location in relation to Baghdad. For example, the Polish Division was located to the south of Baghdad but still in the centre of the country and so was called Multi-National Division Centre South, or MND-CS. The British were all the way down to the southeast in the Basrah area and so were called MND-SE. The US Marines owned the area to the west of Baghdad and so were called MND-W. A US army division was centred on Tikrit to the north of Baghdad and so was called Centre North, and a US force was located in the north of the country around Mosul and was called MND-N. There were no forces located in the Kurdlands except liaison elements because there was very little threat there and the Kurdish Regional Government was more than competent to handle it. Finally, a US Army division was in Baghdad itself and was called MND-Baghdad.

In unit design, nothing was standard in Iraq and units were tailored to meet the task that they normally had, not necessarily what they were doing in Iraq. Divisions were known by their traditional titles and they gained great strength from these titles and the history that was behind them. When I was in Iraq, I served with US units such as the 1st Armoured Division, the 1st Infantry Division, the 1st Cavalry Division, the 1st Marine Division, elements of the 25th Infantry Division, and headquarters such as the V Corps, the III Corps, VII Corps and the XVIII (Airborne) Corps. But generally, they all consisted of mixtures of infantry, armoured vehicles, artillery, helicopters, combat engineers, headquarters and the logistic soldiers who transported them, maintained them, policed them and supplied them. Then there were specialist units such as the Civil Affairs units that conducted specialist activities where the military and the civilian population interact (schools, elections, humanitarian assistance, governance), Psychological Operations that acted as a conduit to how a particular audience might think, and Public Affairs that tried to ensure that our version of events was conveyed to the world media. Finally there were Special Operations Forces that conducted the more specialised operations such as targeting the enemy leadership, training of local forces and hostage rescue. So the force was both large and complex to match the task that the MNF-I had.

The divisions in Iraq were of varying size to begin with because of their traditional design, and then their boundaries changed as the tactical picture demanded, and they varied again. For example, at one stage leading up to the elections in January 2005, the US Army's 1st Cavalry Division based in Baghdad was temporarily allocated part of Anbar, North Babil and Diyala provinces, and I remember at one stage it was twice the size of a 'normal division', perhaps as big as 38,000 personnel.

The Marines in Anbar Province had their own unique structure. Being Marines, the design of their forces was optimised for use from amphibious ships and to be supported logistically and with fire support from those ships. Since the invasion of Iraq they had been used hundreds of kilometres away from the nearest ship—Baghdad is approximately

400 kilometres from the sea—but they were flexible enough to do this. The Marines had a division similar to an Army division but with less heavy equipments such as tanks, more infantry and their own aircraft. The Marines also had a three-star officer running Anbar in what was called a Marine Expeditionary Force or MEF, but he answered in the command chain to an Army three-star officer who commanded the Multi National Corps. This flat rank structure was never a problem as I observed, as they were always reasonable men. When I first arrived in Iraq, before the arrival of the four-star General Casey, there was a three-star Force Commander with a three-star British Deputy Commander, a three-star Corps commander who in turn commanded a range of tactical forces, one of which was headed by a three-star Marine commander. Again, with reasonable men in the chain of command this does not represent a problem. The Marine force was big and had responsibilities to match its size. Normally the MEF numbered about 34,000 strong but at one stage, during the second Falujah battle in November 2004, I recall that it grew as large as 42,000 people.

These six divisions of troops plus those that supported them, numbering about 150,000, were under the control of a headquarters specifically designed to command this number of troops in this type of tactical operation, referred to in the military as a Corps Headquarters, and was under a US three-star (Lieutenant General) commander. This was the Multi-National Corps–Iraq, or MNC-I

At the top of the chain of command was the HQ MNF-I, a headquarters not only designed to conduct purely military operations and to give directions to its subordinate headquarters, but also to work at the political level in Iraq and to conduct planning and operations in relation to reconstruction, media, economics, and political activities. Most US headquarters in Iraq were beautifully-created specialist headquarters designed, manned and trained to conduct a specific function—except for Headquarters MNF-I. The strategic headquarters was initially an ad hoc headquarters put together from whoever was available at the time. The HQ MNF-I was supposed to be 999 personnel-strong but my staff division (Operations) in the HQ was seriously undermanned until just before I left Iraq in April 2005, when the right number of people with the right skills started to come in. The majority of the workers in HQ MNF-I were US Reserve soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, and although you could not fault their enthusiasm and their dedication, they were often without the skills and experience that you tend to take for granted in a full-time, fully-manned and trained headquarters. So, in summary, the forces that were scattered across the battlespace were multi-national and the ‘Force’ (MNF-I) commanded the ‘Corps’ (MNC-I) who commanded the ‘Divisions’ (MND), each of which had a discrete geographical area.

The Corps headquarters, in comparison with the Force headquarters, was military perfection and I lusted after its capability. It was fully manned and staffed by full-time

professionals. They had been together as a team for years and they would stay together for the year that they were in Iraq. In my partisan attempts to get more staff, I emotively used to describe my part of HQ MNF-I as 'a collection of well-intentioned amateurs'. There was enough truth in this statement to make it usable. We were supposed to translate General Casey's desires into formal military orders and to pass those orders on to our subordinate commands, but to begin with, we had to train our staff in the operations part of the headquarters how to actually write an order, how to operate the battle command computers and how to make the kind of plans that Operations Division made. In my experience, this 'ad-hocery' has more than a touch of inevitability about it and is more like what we need to be prepared for in military operations until that day, yet to come, when we can foretell the future and we have unlimited resources. People who can work in an environment of near anarchy are those that are the most valuable, particularly early in any war. Initially my part of the Headquarters had people posted in who were there for three months, six months, seven months or one year. We trained continually and as fast as we trained them and they gained experience, they rotated back to the US or the UK or Australia.

The normal procedure in a HQ was to keep the more important elements in the chain of command up to date with what was happening as any situation developed, usually by just picking up a phone and speaking human to human. But at a certain time it was necessary to issue a written order that caused all the parts of this mighty machine to work together. The written order confirmed what might have been initially passed by voice and informed those parts of the machine not in on the original conversation that certain things were happening or had to happen.

The main form of written order issued by HQ MNF-I was called a Fragmentary Order or 'FRAGO' in the local dialect, but much larger formal operations orders were also issued. Some orders were only a few lines long, others might have been 50 pages long. Some were relevant for only a few hours and some were like policy and stayed relevant for many months. All orders that came out of HQ MNF-I were issued under my name as Chief of Operations but under the authority of the CG MNF-I, and I issued something like 2000 orders in under a year. General Casey was adamant that I issued too many orders and he looked at the number of orders that went out each day with a great deal of scepticism, and publicly commented to this effect each morning as I briefed him at the daily Battle Update. 'Well done Three', he would chide, 'you got through another day and only issued five orders'. For the first few months that MNF-I was in existence, while we sorted out the personnel and conducted training as well as fought a war, I reverted to passing orders initially by voice to my opposite number at the Corps HQ or other subordinate Headquarters, and then tried to confirm it all by written order as soon as possible. The Corps were good enough to do anything and in the early stages,

they absorbed our deficiencies. Because I used the phone so often, I used to joke that my aim in life was to write and issue an order before our subordinate headquarters actually completed the activity that we were telling them to do.

The consequences for getting the detail of running day-to-day operations wrong were enormous. As a simple example, I remember that my Operations Room had to arrange that a civilian humanitarian convoy be escorted by a mixture of Coalition and Iraqi protection elements from a meeting point on the edge of Baghdad to where they were to deliver the aid. This is a simple military task and I approved the order with the arrangement that the exact location of the meeting point was to be sent later and directly to the three moving parts of the activity, the US protection force, the Iraqi escort and the humanitarian trucks. I also arranged that one of my officers and a protection party would be at the rendezvous and she was to be in contact with my operations room by radio at all times to ensure that the marrying-up of the three elements occurred. Over the next few hours the meeting point changed for very good reasons and my staff passed the new coordinates to all concerned. But the friction of war intervened and the only body that was at the latest meeting point was my liaison officer. The other three groups were at various previously-issued different coordinates. Baghdad is not a good place to be asking for directions and the inevitable happened. The Iraqi escort and the US escort were both attacked in separate locations as they tried to find the correct meeting point in the crowded streets surrounding the major highway and as a result, casualties were suffered. To have this happen does not help your credibility, and credibility and trust are everything in war. For the first few months as we tried to get on our feet, HQ MNF-I had little credibility at all, a direct consequence of our 'ad hoc' creation.

I will stay away from the controversy about whether the force that the Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld put into Iraq was big enough for the stabilisation task or not. This is an issue that has been too politicised to be worthy of further debate. Just as in every military operation that I have ever been on, we certainly had few people sitting around looking for a job, and we had no field units under-employed. And I would have to say that on those occasions when General Casey wanted extra troops, he was given them. But by Australian standards, the force deployed in Iraq was enormous, and by world standards it was very big indeed.

### **HOW COUNTER-INSURGENCY IS FOUGHT**

In less technologically advanced days, even 50 years ago, to occupy a country the size of Iraq would have required perhaps up to a million troops. However, the MNF-I is probably the most technologically advanced force in existence and with its surveillance and reconnaissance capability and its speed of deployment, I am personally convinced that it needs less troops to be effective than traditionally was the case. With a modern

force such as this, although there are lots of problems in knowing where the enemy is, we can be fairly sure where the enemy is not, and if we find the enemy where we did not expect, we can move there very fast. Previously, a force would have needed to physically locate forces in most areas just to know that the enemy was not there, or to be available to confront him if he suddenly appeared there. Nowadays we can surveil areas by technical means, from space or from high up in the atmosphere, and so we can locate the troops that we have in places where the enemy is more likely to be, and where it is not possible to use technical means to find him, mainly in the cities amongst the people. But in the cities among the people, you cannot compromise. You need lots of troops to establish presence or the enemy will establish his presence and control the people and you lose.

The way that forces are used in this form of counter-insurgency warfare does not differ from how forces have been disposed in counter-insurgency operations for many years, but there are what I consider to be new aspects.

First, a framework of forces is located across the country, mainly in the populated areas because insurgency is about influencing the will of the people; people live in cities and insurgents live in cities also to influence the people and to hide amongst the people. The role of these forces is to apply 'population control' measures such as check-points on roads, identity checks in population centres, searches for weapons in house and buildings, and to be handy to protect the people and the infrastructure from attack by the insurgents. This consumes very large numbers of forces. In this area, you cannot have too many troops.

In each area there is a series of Quick Reaction Forces or QRF, who react to a crisis in their area if small units are attacked, or if the people are attacked and more than the local forces are needed. Just about every commander in Iraq holds some forces back from deployment to be used as a QRF. Sometimes the QRF is used to react to an opportunity—insurgents might be sighted or intelligence might indicate that an activity might occur in a particular area and the QRF moves to that area to be able to react earlier, or to deter what was planned from happening. Some QRFs are on very high levels of readiness and literally sit in or on their vehicles with their battle equipment on listening to the tactical radio nets, ready to move. Some other QRFs might be on a few hours' notice to move so they can conduct maintenance on their vehicles, conduct local training or just sleep. Others might have the duties of a reaction force as a secondary duty and might be conducting a cordon and search operation but would always be able to come back to base within half a day, reconstitute themselves, rest, re-ammunition themselves, and be ready to deploy within, say, 24 hours. As soon as the very high readiness QRF deploys, the local commander immediately re-tasks the next most ready unit to increase its readiness and to be ready to move as a back-up QRF if the incident develops.

The QRF, along with the check point, must have been the most common sight in Iraq. In every base that I entered, almost the first thing that you would see in the vicinity of the

tactical headquarters was a collection of vehicles drawn up in a straight line (or a series of lines that formed a square for a big unit), crews sitting beside, on or in the vehicles, with commanders either in the vehicles or actually in the nearest tactical headquarters listening to the battle, watching it on the TV picture from a drone and waiting to be called. I always noted the irony of the East European QRF units from Poland or Ukraine or Estonia or Georgia, sitting around in the heat and the dust with their Warsaw Pact equipment, a range of equipment that I had seen as 'enemy equipment' for the first 20 years of my military career.

With the framework in place and the QRFs ready, the next moving part of the counter-insurgency force was the Special Operations Forces that moved across all boundaries within Iraq in order to find and capture or kill the insurgent leadership. In Iraq, these Special Forces consisted of a Task Force that was run from the highest level, which was HQ MNF-I. For their day-to-day operations, these forces worked directly for General Casey and, as Casey's Chief of Operations, it was one of my tasks to coordinate many of their functions. The Task Force's primary job was to search for and find the al-Qaeda in Iraq group led by Abu Musab al Zarqawi. The Task Force was totally self-contained, with its own intelligence organisation plus detention facility, its own aviation, and its own supporting units. It normally searched during the day and acted at night, either raiding targets or striking targets through precision bomb attacks.

The next part of the counter-insurgency force is the intelligence system. This consists of a vast number of sources across all of Iraq that fed information into a number of nodes that try to give meaning to the information, summarise it for commanders at every level, and turn it into 'actionable intelligence'. Once information is actionable, that is, it is of sufficient precision to conduct a raid or an attack, then we, the 'operators', can do something about it. Each day at about 4.30 am I would receive a book that had a summary of the last 24 hours intelligence take in it, and this was the first thing that I read each day. Every couple of hours through the day I would receive updates, normally from both my Special Forces liaison officer or intelligence officer. The great uninformed continually criticise the US for not having good human intelligence, that is agents on the ground who could speak the language and know what the Iraqis were doing and thinking. Our human intelligence (HUMINT) was indeed less than we would have liked and this was publicly admitted before Congress on any number of occasions, but we tried to compensate by the use of other forms of intelligence that went a long way towards minimising the deficiency.

If a particular problem arose, the US would form a Joint Inter-Agency Task Force or JIATF that would bring awesome resources to bear on the specific problem. But the biggest resource was usually the young, highly intelligent non-commissioned intelligence analyst under the direction of a more experienced officer. I have watched us know almost nothing about a problem and in a number of weeks, with these primarily human resources, know enough to start conducting operations against targets.

The final part of the counter-insurgency force was the organisation that built up the local Iraqi forces so that at some stage, the Coalition could transition the fight to the local forces and go home. If the insurgency in Iraq is at all typical of those we have faced for the last 60 years, it will last for approximately nine years. But the Coalition should not be involved in the insurgency for nine years because this is basically an Iraqi fight, and at some stage the Iraqis will take over the fight, just as the Malaysians took over their fight against the Communist Terrorists in the middle of the last century. The trick is to ensure that we do not transition the fight too early because you only have to fail once in this type of situation, and you have lost a country. It will be a fine judgement as to when to withdraw, and the withdrawal should be gradual and should never set up the Iraqis for failure. At some stage it will be appropriate to set a public timetable, but not until very late in the day. The element in MNF-I that created the new Iraqi Security Force was called the Multinational Security and Transition Command – Iraq. Its acronym was MNSTC-I and it was pronounced ‘minsticky’, much to the initial annoyance of its commander. MNSTC-I was all across Iraq and did the most amazing work. It fundamentally recreated an army, a police force, and border guards; it recruited and trained and equipped them, built their barracks and training areas, and on many occasions led them into battle. As well, it assisted in the creation of capability within the ministries that enable the Iraqi Government to effectively run internal security. If our efforts in Iraq are successful, then MNSTC-I should receive a disproportionate amount of the credit.

So with the framework in place to protect and control the population, with the intelligence in place giving us the best information that we can get to anticipate what the insurgents will do, with the Special Forces moving across the battlespace capturing and killing the insurgent leadership, and with the Iraqi Security Forces being created so that we can hand over their fight to them and then go home, one would think that this counter-insurgency game should be a breeze. Unfortunately, reality and the human factor impinges on our theory.

The Coalition Forces that we had in Iraq were never sufficient to establish a dominating presence in the number of population centres that were required, so it was imperative that the Iraqi forces come on-line in large numbers as soon as possible. This is a different issue from the ‘not enough troops’ issues. Iraq is a big country with a large population. Counter-insurgency is all about presence, and a presence that understands counter-insurgency. Presence means that the population and the infrastructure can be protected, and with presence and a receptive force comes local intelligence. Because the Coalition, mainly US, could not be everywhere, whenever we did go anywhere, the insurgents just kept their heads down until we left and then continued on with their intimidation and their destruction. This meant that the areas that we did not permanently occupy did not deliver any significant intelligence to us and commanders had little local knowledge. As well, when we had to come together to conduct large operations such as the Samarra or

Falujah assaults and the pre-election shaping operations in the Upper Euphrates and in Baghdad, we had to take troops from other areas and so expose the population in those denuded areas to the insurgents without any assistance.

The troops did magnificently, moving from one area to another and fighting and re-fighting battles. As well, what we called the linear infrastructure, the oil pipes, the electricity power lines and the rail tracks, could never be adequately secured and the basic human need in any big city is energy. The number of Coalition troops meant that the need to supplement our troops with Iraqis became progressively more important. Some Iraqi troops were used too early but most commanders realised that we did not want to rush the Iraqis to failure, and we carried the burden of both large offensive operations and local framework operations while the Iraqi units were raised, manned, trained and blooded. It is only in the middle of 2006 would it seem that they are approaching some acceptable level of competence across the entire force, and each step up in competence is being challenged by the enemy.

It is common knowledge that the Special Forces hunted Zarqawi across the country for years but despite many close encounters, they were not able to kill him until mid-2006. The good side of this story, as we announced regularly as we did it, is that those same Special Forces conducted many raids and strikes every night. We managed to kill the al-Qaeda leadership in Falujah before the assault, specifically Umar Hadid, and over the same period killed or captured the al-Qaeda leadership in Mosul and Baghdad several times over. For a period of time we concentrated on killing or capturing terrorist car bomb technicians, and we could see the results of this offensive on the number and quality of car bombs that were produced. Car bombs are not a simple thing to produce and as we eradicated the experienced specialists, we saw fewer car bombs. Of those that we saw, we noticed an increasing number that either exploded prematurely on some road somewhere, or when launched against a target, did not explode at all. Of course the terrorists reconstituted themselves and because of the success of our operations against them and because of their fear of the results of the elections, in mid-2005 they commenced a brutal and murderous campaign against the Iraqi people, particularly the Shi'a. If we had not been so successful against the Zarqawi's foot soldiers, the onslaught against the Iraqi people may have been far worse.

The US forces that were in Iraq in 2004 and initially in 2005 were the same forces that were designed to conduct military operations against like-forces such as Saddam's divisions or the Warsaw Pact in the Fulda Gap in Germany. It is not possible to change the structure or the ideas of military forces quickly but it is always possible to adapt what you have if you have imaginative commanders at all levels. What I observed in Iraq on the part of the US was an enormous flexibility of mind and willingness to innovate. Many others saw what I saw but did not interpret it as flexibility.

## THE BRITISH APPROACH VERSUS THE AMERICAN APPROACH

In the time that I served in the HQ of the MNF-I, I knew a very impressive British brigadier called Nigel Aylwin-Foster. He was the deputy commander of the US organisation that was responsible for creating the new Iraqi Army, the 'minsticky' (MNSTC-I) that I referred to before. When he was on a course in the US after his tour in Iraq, he wrote an article critiquing the US Army's performance in Iraq. This unflattering article was published in a US professional military journal (*Military Review*) because the US is not afraid of professional debate, unlike many militaries in the world. His article attracted headlines around the world such as 'US Army its own worst enemy: British Officer'. Nigel accused the US Army of cultural ignorance, moralistic self-righteousness, unproductive micromanagement, and unwarranted optimism. His view was that the US Army had been slow to adapt its tactics, and its approach during the early stages of the occupation 'exacerbated the task it now faces by alienating significant section of the population'. Nigel wrote that the US Army was full of soldiers showing qualities such as patriotism, duty, passion and talent, 'Yet it seemed weighed down by bureaucracy, a stifling hierarchical outlook, a predisposition to offensive operations, and a sense that duty required all issues to be confronted head-on'. He said that this reflected the US Army's traditional focus on conventional warfare, which is less applicable in counter-insurgency operations where 'the quick solution is often the wrong one'. Nigel was of the opinion that 'intense conformism and overly centralised decision-making' slowed Army operations in Iraq, giving the enemy time to respond. This article received widespread coverage in Australia and certainly provoked intense reaction among US officers, some of it quite personal. One senior US officer from the US Army's School of Advanced Military Studies was quoted as saying: 'I think that he's an insufferable British snob'. But there were more measured responses.

This is not just an example of familial bickering between two very similar countries separated by a common language. Having read the article in the *Military Review*, I do not think that it was half as extreme as the headlines tried to make it. It was generally very constructive. But it makes an important point. There was a difference between the way that the US Army and the British Army operated in Iraq. Because we Australians (outside our excellent Special Forces) are not yet involved in sustained combat operations in Iraq, should the ADF try to learn from one or from the other? What the issue goes to is the very nature of Coalition operations, of how different we find that nations are and the stresses that this creates in any such grouping. Its value is that it forces us to understand what you must be able to do to overcome the differences. The ultimate irony is that, from my observation, similar stresses existed with the US Marines!

Nigel looked at the same set of facts that I looked at in Iraq, and came up with a different conclusion. Perhaps because his role in Iraq was to create the Iraqi army, and as such he continually butted heads with US bureaucracy (military and non-military), with

Iraqi bureaucracy, and with those that were responsible for controlling how money was spent, he saw a side of the US that I was spared. But I spent a year in the middle of the US military controlling operations by mainly US Army and Marine units, and I did not come away with the negative aspects of his view. Of course there was cultural ignorance, moralistic self-righteousness, unproductive micromanagement, and sometimes even small amounts of unwarranted optimism, but you would get that with any large force made up of human beings. I saw more unwarranted optimism in the CPA than I ever saw in the US Army and at no time did I see General Casey exhibit anything that approached unwarranted optimism.

But was this a US Army thing? Nigel's view was that the US Army was slow to adapt its tactics, but I think that it is an extraordinary achievement that the US Army switched from being the best conventional army in the world to a counter-insurgency force, perhaps flailing, in only a year or so. What an impressive achievement while your soldiers are being killed in the midst of a war. We will probably never know if the approach of the US Army during the early stage of the occupation 'exacerbated the task it now faces by alienating significant sections of the population', but squadrons of commentators will offer their opinion. It may have been the case but if it was so, I would spread the blame a little wider than just the US Army. I agree with Nigel that the US Army was full of soldiers showing qualities such as patriotism, duty, passion and talent, and of course there was bureaucracy. From my position high up in the hierarchy, I did not see an unreasonable hierarchical outlook! I did see a predisposition to offensive operations, which often resulted in a desire to confront issues head-on. Of course, on occasions it is best to not act or to act deliberately in counter-insurgency operations. However, I did not see an offensive bent as a general fault, and doing things slowly in Iraq can also have dire consequences.

In some quarters it is seen as obeisance not to roundly criticise the US. Some people hold the view that the only way that a small power can maintain its independence is to always object to what the major power is doing. The attitude is: we might be only small but we told them! But in the sphere in which I worked, I fully realised the difficulty in achieving what the US military was achieving, and I think that I would find common ground with Nigel on that. But I watched the US Army change as it fought. I saw commanders who were very flexible in their approach to tactics, commanders who knew that the war would be won in the sewers and the provision of employment to Iraqis. There was not a US commander in Iraq who was not fully aware of the need to improve the lot of the common Iraqi, and they pleaded for more money to run such programs, or for flexibility in how money could be spent. I watch today as the US military adjusts in almost every aspect of its enormous organisation for the Global War on Terror, for the Long War. And I doubt that any other military in the world could do it.

Life in the MNF-I was sometimes tough in relation to interpersonal relations. I spent a good deal of my time in tense relations with my fellow generals, with members of the US

Embassy from the Ambassador down, and with those Iraqis that I worked with. I used to joke that I was so well integrated into the US system that Casey was as hard on me as he was on my fellow US officers. I would say to my Executive Officer, an Australian major, that if I had not had three arguments by morning tea and received one 'beating' from the Commanding General, it was a very quiet day indeed. I had a particularly prickly time with Nigel's boss who was a great soldier, but often uncompromising on issues that I brought before him. Perhaps this was Nigel's problem. I tended to look at how the US had adapted its force and be amazed that it had only taken them a year from April 2003 to April 2004 to adapt the force significantly to meet a new threat that they were neither structured nor trained to face. Nigel saw the same period of adaptation and saw it as a fault of the US Army that it took that same year to adapt. One cup was half full and one was half empty.

We tend to think that the US and the UK, being in Iraq together, were fighting the same war. This is wrong. They were indeed in the same country together but they were fighting a vastly different war. At times, Basrah and Amarah were indeed tough, and the British fought in a way that I certainly admired. But the level of violence and threat was such that, at times, the British were able to move around the streets in berets and try to relate to the people in the manner of Northern Ireland. But the US operated almost entirely in the Sunni Triangle and it was a vastly different proposition to operate there than to operate in Basrah. The US did not suffer 2400 killed in Iraq compared to the UK's 100 killed because the US Army is incompetent. The US suffered such casualties because they fought in a vastly more demanding operational situation. If you are going to fight, you are going to get hurt. As I used to say to my own people who believed the popular simplistic myths about the British being so good and the US being so bad: 'Try walking down the streets of Ramadi without your body armour and your helmet so that you can relate to the people. You might be able to do it in parts of Basrah at certain times, but you will only ever do it once in Ramadi'.

The British were very experienced in operations in Northern Ireland and I hold their military in the highest regard, but it does not follow that the British always benefited from their experience in Northern Ireland. In fact, I suspected that they were sometimes hampered by their Northern Ireland experience. Southern Iraq was not Northern Ireland. The Sunni Triangle was even less like Northern Ireland than where the British were operating. The British were prepared to tolerate levels of insurgent and militia activity that the US forces would never have tolerated and, at the time, this concerned me deeply. Only time will tell who is right but I favoured the US interventionist approach in those areas where the US was operating. I need to stress that the US approach was not mindless nor was it universal.

The first British Deputy Commander of the MNF-I, John McColl, was a superb fellow and was one of my two closest friends in Iraq and I missed his wit and his charm when he

went. The two British Deputy Commanders of the Corps, both major generals, Andrew Graham and Andrew Farqhar, were very good friends and we kept ourselves sane with late-night phone calls, often in very challenging times. I also had several British colonels working for me and they were outstanding professionals.

### **FORCE SIZE**

One of the biggest issues about the US military in Iraq was the adequacy of the size of the force. The problems with becoming engaged in this issue, apart from the fact that it has been politicised, is the ability to judge force size against some criteria. There was a RAND report that received high visibility for a time in 2004 which said that, based on historical data, to counter an insurgency in a population the size of Iraq, we should have 1000 'international' troops per 100,000 population. With a generally-agreed Iraqi population of 27 million, this report saw a need for 270,000 'international' troops in the country. This was an improvement because most of the previous comment had been based on comparing the number of troops that we had against some assessment of the number of enemy combatants. That is a less than useful activity. At the strategic level, the key ratio in any such discussion is not the number of troops compared with the enemy that you face, but the number of troops per head of population.

Given the increased level of technology in Iraq in relation to surveillance and mobility, there could have been some figure below the RAND 270,000 that produced the same result that was achieved historically. But we cannot avoid the fact that both Malaya and Northern Ireland took time. In my time in Iraq, with every available soldier and policeman, Coalition and Iraqi, on the streets for the 30 January 2005 election, we managed to field 300,000 troops for a few days. But by the middle of 2006, with the Iraqi forces at about 271,000, the Coalition Force at about 150,000 and with about 30,000 security contractors in the country, the total of competent troops fighting the insurgency in Iraq approaches the RAND study number. But the issue for the Iraqi Security Forces then become one of leadership, loyalty and capability.

I would have to point out that our job was not made any easier by the fact that the Ba'athists released 34,000 criminals on to the streets just before the invasion, and it was estimated that there were 30 million AK47 rifles and 500,000 machine guns somewhere in the country from the old Saddam army. And lastly I would say that the IRA were often referred to as 'hard men', but by any standard, the likes of Abu Musa'ab al Zarqawi were in a class of their own. The Iraq war is not the Malayan Emergency and it is not Northern Ireland, and its uniqueness must be appreciated.

A large proportion of the controversy that has swirled around Iraq and the US involvement focused on whether or not the disbanding of Saddam's Army in 2003 was the correct move. There is a view put that the insurgency could have been nipped

in the bud had the remnant of Saddam's army been retained and used to soak up the unemployed manpower that sustained the insurgency in its initial stages, as well as being a counter-insurgency force itself. Much of the comment that advocated retaining the army is based on the assumption that there was something to retain, that it could have been re-established from those who just went home at the end of the war, and that if it could have been brought back into existence, it would have been effective in some way. From my observation, hardly one step in the logic stands up.

The Iraqi Army was a great Iraqi institution. It had played a central role in the history of Iraq since Iraq came together out of the Ottoman Empire, and I hope that it plays a similar role again in the future of a democratic Iraq. But it had, in my view, been fatally compromised by Saddam. Under Saddam, it had been used as a means of oppression of the people, and while relying on a mass of Shi'a conscripts, it was officered predominantly by Sunnis and it did not have a great reputation for success.

Several things struck me in chatting to Iraqi officers, mostly Shi'as or anti-Saddam Sunnis, about Saddam's time. The first was that most of them supported the eight-year war against Iran, even though one million people were said to have been killed and nothing significant seemed to have been gained. The second was how they were ashamed to be universally considered an ineffective army. The third was that no matter how many times a colonel or a general promised to be able to put together an element from the old army to work with us, they were never able to do it. The most public example of this, but by no means the only example, was the Falujah Brigade which should have proved to any one watching that the Iraq army under its old guise had been assigned to the rubbish bin of history and should stay there.

Saddam's army was roughly the size of the US full-time army, about half a million, yet it was said to have had ten thousand generals. This figure is feasible because I reckon I met just about every one! By comparison, in its active army, I am told that the US has perhaps 300 generals. The Iraqi regular army was a corrupt and brutal force. It had severe problems of bad morale, corrupt leaders, shoddy equipment, and a reputation for brutality. Even if you could bring it back, the question is: would you have wanted to? Would the Kurds and the Shi'as ever have accepted the Iraqi Army back under its Sunni officers, and if you had tried to exclude its officer corps, what were you bringing back in reality? The police force was worse. It was totally corrupt and no Iraqi would ever approach a police officer unless to bribe him to overlook something or to take action against someone else.

The effective raising and training of the Iraq Security Forces did not really get into stride until early in 2004. It was in this period that the real problems in re-raising the Army were seen and decisions were taken to spend the money that was required. Finally, it was made a central part of the US mission in Iraq and with the money, staff, direction and the drive of its commander, Lieutenant General David Petraeus, it started to come into existence.

Individual training was relatively easy, but training in units, brigades and divisions was very hard. The same ethnic and tribal fissures as affected every other part of Iraq also affected the Army. There were terrible US legislative problems in spending the money that had nominally been allocated and the most valuable skill in Iraq for some time was financial contracting. Language was no less a problem in raising the Army than in anything else we did. The rotation policy for US staff also worked against us. It was still a year for the US Army personnel, but seven months for the US Marines and four months for some air force personnel.

The first general charged with creating the Iraqi Army told me of the lack of urgency he had to fight against, the lack of vehicles, the lack of heavy weapons. I could see that we were asking battalions of what were then called the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC) armed only with AK47s, to go up against insurgent elements armed with AKs, medium and light machine guns and Rocket Propelled Grenades. The ICDC was a regional force and if they were stationed in Najaf, they could not be moved to Baghdad to assist, even in an emergency. The formation of what was called the Iraqi Army was a way of getting around this regional handicap that we had given ourselves. The first Iraqi battalion finished its basic training in early 2004, but when I arrived the Iraqi Army was still only supposed to be used for external defence. As we tried to use the ICDC inappropriately in the first half of April 2004 against much stronger forces, 50 per cent of the soldiers in the areas around Baghdad and 30 per cent of those around Tikrit and around al Kut deserted, and 80 per cent of the forces around Falujah found other things to amuse themselves with. I noted at the time that an internal Pentagon report found that the 'The first Iraqi Army Infantry battalions finished basic training in early 2004 and were immediately required in combat without complete equipment ... Absent without leave rates among regular army units were in double digits and remained so for the rest of the year'. These units were incapable of doing a search and destroy mission much less conducting an assault into a place such as Falujah, and who could blame them for voting with their feet.

I watched the effort that was put into remedying all these problems throughout 2004 as I was going about my job. Part of my responsibility was to take the battalions as they came off the assembly line and process them to the US Corps headquarters that would use them operationally. As well, I had a lot to do with the Iraq Army as we tried desperately to find troops to put back into Mosul during the fighting in Falujah in November and December 2004. The Chief of Operations of the Iraqi Army was a lieutenant general who commanded a T72 tank battalion and then a T72 brigade in the Iran war. He was injured in that war and sent to recover in various training positions and so stayed out of the mainstream of the Iraqi Army until he took up a variety of intelligence postings under Saddam.

He and I were supposed to work closely together and to have what was called a 'counterpart relationship'. I very much liked talking to him because it was one of my few

chances to see inside the old Iraqi military psyche. With me, through an interpreter, he was outgoing in a very patronising way. Towards the end of 2004, we tried to open up even more to our Iraqi counterparts and once a week he attended a more comprehensive Battle Update in my Operations Centre. At one Update I remember that the issue of the waterway called the Shatt-al-Arab came up, the issue that Saddam had used as a *casus belli* to start the Iran war, when the Iranians arrested some British Marines. It was as though you had thrown a switch and my counterpart was right back in 1980. He delivered a diatribe against the Iranians that made our hair stand on end, even through an interpreter, and demonstrated that he lived in his own unreconstructed world. But he had many enemies amongst the Iraqis and his arrogant attitude towards the new Iraqi leadership that was emerging meant that he would never get on in the new environment. There was a raft of very impressive young Iraqi commanders coming through. I was sad to see him go, but it was right that he went.

The numbers and the cost involved in putting the Iraqi Security Forces back together were frightening, and most if not all was being paid for by the US. After the wars and the looting and the fact that Saddam had not invested in his security forces for many years, there was almost nothing that could be used again by the new force. There was hardly a barracks standing and those barracks that were standing or that could have been turned to military use were already being used by the Coalition forces. So to begin with, accommodation had to be re-built or extensively refurbished, all of which took much time and much effort. This applied to almost every suburban police station in almost every city across Iraq, which not only had to be refurbished, but had to be fortified because they were so regularly attacked. At almost all border 'forts' there was nothing usable and everything had to be re-built. As well the infrastructure for an army was not in place. It was difficult enough to put together the units that would deploy into the field, but it was as equally difficult to put together a communication system that linked all the barracks and headquarters across Iraq that told the units when they had to deploy into the field, and what they had to do.

The completed Iraqi Security Forces will be 271, 000 strong and as I write this in the middle of 2006, they are approaching that level of manpower. When completed the Army will have ten divisions each of three brigades each with three battalions in them, and the combat support troops (armour, artillery, engineers, communications) and the combat service support troops (maintenance, transport, supply) are being completed. Just before I left Iraq in March 2005, the ISF had 147,000 trained and equipped personnel. Some 82,000 were in various police units, beat policemen or border security, all under the Ministry of the Interior, and 64,000 were in various Army units under the Ministry of Defence. At any one time there might be 18,000 in training and another 30,000 awaiting training, many of the latter in the Police. At about this time I noted that there were 90 combat battalions that could be used on a daily basis, 16 actually controlled by

the Ministry of the Interior and 74 under the control of the MNC-I but administered by the Ministry of Defence. This force was far from perfect, and we rejoiced at any sign of competence.

The ISF has been subject to the most horrendous intimidation program that could be imagined. Soldiers cover their faces when on the street so that their families do not get killed. Given that there is no banking system to speak of in Iraq, and certainly no electronic banking, most units had to be given one week off per month to go home and to give their families money. This week of travel was rotated so that normally one quarter of any force could not be used because it was travelling home. The travel period also offered the insurgents a great chance to hit the troops as they did not carry weapons on leave, but they looked like soldiers and often Shi'a soldiers had to travel by public transport through Sunni areas. One trick that worked very effectively for some time in Mosul was that taxi drivers would pick up soldiers at the bus depot and take them to a pre-arranged point where they would be handed over to insurgents and executed. During the lead-up to Falujah in November 2004, insurgent intimidation effectively destroyed two brigades (six battalions each of about 700 soldiers) in the Mosul area.

The development of the ISF was not something that was restricted only to certain organisations such as the MNSTC-I. Everyone in Iraq had a responsibility. The development philosophy came straight from history and was what T.E. Lawrence wrote in 1917: 'Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them'. We converted that sentiment into a succinct phrase or 'bumper sticker' as the Americans called it, and that was: 'Don't do it for them—help them to do it'. This was much harder than you would think.

For all its faults, the ISF has come a long way. When Prime Minister Allawi came to power in June 2004, he had one deployable combat battalion in the Iraqi Army. By the time I left there were 99 combat battalions available for operations, and two-thirds of them had seen combat. Given the speed of creation, a marvel in itself, is it any wonder that they will need time?

It has been the policy since late in 2004 when we started planning for a future past the 30 January 2005 elections, that the fight in Iraq would be transitioned to the Iraqis. Even at the earliest stage of planning, it was decided that there would be no 'exit plan' as such but that there would be a 'plan to win'. The military aspect of this plan to win was that the Coalition Force would hold the line while the ISF developed, that the ISF would not be rushed to failure, that the Iraqi government played a crucial role in counter-insurgency operations, that the Ministries of Defence and Interior needed to be developed along with a competent Iraqi intelligence capability, and that the final withdrawal of Coalition forces would be decided by when the ISF and the government of Iraq were ready. I still have not seen anything that indicates that the plan has changed. In fact, I think that the

public statements coming out of Iraq, out of Washington and out of the capitals of the Coalition nations have been remarkably consistent.

The goal, of course, is to hand over responsibility for internal security in Iraq to the Iraqis. It is their fight and they should prosecute it as soon as possible. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has said that by the end of 2006, 90 per cent of the country will be the responsibility of the ISF, with Coalition forces acting in a supporting role. Everything indicated that this was generally on track until about mid-year 2006, when there was a setback in Baghdad, and a very large number of US troops had to be sent back in to the city. I would like to think that it is only just a setback but time will tell

I saw the ISF come from almost nothing to a force that showed promise. Given what has been thrown at them, it is amazing that they have come as far as they have. During my time I saw them fight in the second Najaf battles in August 2004 and in the second Falujah battle in November 2004, in Sadr City on and off but especially in the lead-up to the January 2005 election, and in Baghdad and Basrah. I remember that two Iraqi brigades had responsibility for two sectors of Baghdad as I was leaving, and they were active in the 1st Infantry Division attack on Samarra, and in operations in Tal Afar and in Mosul. In the elections it was the ISF who protected the 5200 polling booths, deployed in groups of 10 to 15, with Coalition Forces as backup but always a good distance away. On Election Day we were subject to 250 separate attacks and the polling booths themselves were subject to forty vest-bomber attacks, none of which penetrated the booths. On that day there were five instances of truly outstanding heroism by the ISF that I heard of, and two of those you would have thought deserved a Victoria Cross equivalent. The ISF do not have the confidence, expertise or equipment of the Coalition Forces but it is their country and their people and the elections showed me that they can be motivated and they can truly fight. In March of 2005 I remember that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, told a Congressional panel meeting that Iraqi Forces were dying at twice the rate per capita of US Forces. In the last 12 months, he said, the ISF had suffered nearly 6000 casualties, with about 1573 killed. Some of them at least have picked up part of the burden.

### **NATURE OF THE ENEMY: TACTICS, MOTIVATION, NUMBERS**

Our enemy in Iraq was complex. In his own inimitable style, the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, once referred to those who opposed us in Iraq as a bunch of 'dead enders'. Our difficulty in conveying this complexity to the general public was best picked up by a cartoon. Early in 2004, Doonesbury did a cartoon that had Brigadier General Mark Kimmit, the forceful Coalition spokesman at the time, being interviewed by Fox News. 'General Kimmit', the cartoon began, 'Fox News again. Is the Coalition continuing offensive operations to establish a stable Iraq?' 'Correct', Doonesbury has Kimmit replying.

‘The Coalition is continuing offensive operations to establish a stable Iraq. To that end we are engaging elements of al-Qaeda, the Sadr Militia, the Zarqawi network, Ba’athist insurgents, Hezbollah, the Sunni Mujahadin, and foreign Jihadists.’ ‘So it’s just a few dead enders’, replies the Fox interviewer. ‘Them too’, replies Kimmit.

So it is very difficult to come up with a single term that describes our enemy in Iraq. The term ‘enemy’ was rarely if ever used—I have used it much more since I came back than when I was in Iraq. The term ‘insurgent’, meaning someone rising in active revolt against established authority, is often used but only covers one part of the enemy. The militias were a significant force and gained our attention for intense periods between April and August 2004. They seem to have gone quiet at the moment but could always make a comeback. The Jihadists are not militias and not so much insurgents as they are downright terrorists. Many of the kidnappers are not insurgents or Jihadists or militia members but plain criminals of the basest kind. So it was difficult to know who your enemy was. It was a fairly good test that whoever was trying to kill you at any one time should be considered your enemy. But I believe that it is the indiscriminate use of terror as a weapon that links almost all opposition groups in Iraq. The only difference is that some groups use terror more than others. We did try to lump them all together with one name and that was ‘Anti-Iraq Forces’, or AIF, and this term was very widely used when it was not important to be more specific. When I had to discriminate, I favoured a way of referring to our enemy in Iraq in four groups: former regime elements, Jihadists, militias and criminals

The Former Regime Elements (FRE) were, as the name suggests, ex-Ba’athists and ex-military from the Saddam regime. Generally they were Sunnis who rejected the new post-Saddam era, and in our continuing attempt to invent more acronyms, were also referred to as Sunni Arab Rejectionists, or SAR. In a memorable exchange between the Chief of Intelligence, Brigadier General John Defreitas, and General Casey, John simplified the issue by referring to them as ‘pissed-off Arabs’ and the term stuck. The advantage that the FRE had was that they were trained in the use of weapons and explosives so they had the skills, and they normally had money which had been removed from Iraq in the dying days of the invasion, and now was being repatriated to kill Americans. One of the main keepers of this money was Saddam’s daughter who spent time in Jordan and would funnel the money back in to Iraq with couriers.

At the time there was a going rate for committing acts of violence against the Coalition—US\$50 for a road side bomb or US\$150 to kill a policeman. The FRE financier would require proof that the bomb had been placed and so, on many occasions the emplacer would remain behind with a camera to collect the proof so that he could be paid. Those who attacked us for money could be countered to a certain extent by giving them a stake in the future of Iraq, and by giving individual Sunnis a job. Fifty dollars for a roadside bomb might be attractive if your family needed food. So for us, to

establish jobs and a functioning economy was a big issue. At the same time we established consequences for committing acts of violence against the Coalition. In areas that were frequently attacked by roadside bombs, groups of snipers would lie in wait and if they saw someone emplacing a bomb, they would be shot without warning. Fifty dollars is only attractive if you are alive to take the money back to your family. The higher the chance of being killed emplacing a bomb, the less you are likely to be willing to do it for a pittance. The more money that the FRE has to pay the casual insurgent for each bomb planted, then the fewer bombs that could be used against us. This was a lesson in supply and demand that we did not have to teach the Iraqis. One of our ongoing strategic ends was to split these casual insurgents off from the mainstream FRE through economic and political means, and to some extent, this worked.

The Jihadists, as they were commonly called, were Islamic extremists, or recently I have heard them referred to as Islamo-Fascists. When speaking to the US Congress in July 2006, Prime Minister Maliki described our enemy in Iraq as 'Impostors of Islam'. They were often foreign global Jihadists, coming from as far away as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, but normally from Jordan, Saudi Arabia or the black Islamic nations such as Sudan. Some called themselves Arab nationalists and so brought a different strain of Arab history into the equation. The most prominent of the Jihadists was Abu Musab al Zarqawi, or AMZ, who in October 2004 publicly associated himself and his group with al-Qaeda. This gave a true global dimension to his struggle and encouraged an exchange of resources between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, and solidified Iraq as the premier jihad battlefield. Having merged, Zarqawi then changed the name of his organisation to 'al-Qaeda of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers', or QJBR. Zarqawi was a Salafist extremist, Salafism being a particularly pure form of Islam, more pure even than the Wahabist stream of Sunni Islam followed by Osama bin Laden and many Saudis. To us, Zarqawi was the face of jihad.

There were two problem with such extremists. The first is that a strategy to split them by using economic and political weapons was never likely to succeed given their extreme views. And the second problem was that they often saw being killed in battle or in a suicide attack, which they referred to as a 'martyrdom operation', as absolute victory. In most cases, they had to be killed or captured.

There are several militias still active in Iraq, despite continual attempts to have them disband. The most active and the most dangerous of the militias is the Mehdi Militia (MM) who answer to the Shi'a cleric Moqtada al Sadr. As I write in mid-2006, the new Unified Iraqi Government under Prime Minister Maliki has just commenced another attempt to disband the militias, particularly the Shi'a militias answering to the two major Shi'a groupings, SCIRI and Da'wa. His success or failure will be an indicator as to whether the central government in Iraq has any chance of extending its powers across Iraq, particularly into the Shi'a community.

Criminality has been a consistent theme of countries that have moved from autocratic forms of government to more democratic forms of government, and can be seen in Russia and all the post-Soviet states, and in the former Yugoslavia and failed states throughout Africa. Most of the kidnappings in Iraq are conducted initially by criminal gangs and then the hostages are either ransomed quietly back to the family, or sold on to Jihadists who might like to use them for both propaganda purposes or to get money to finance their activities. Certain foreign governments paid very large amounts of money to effect the release of their citizens and so directly financed the insurgency that their soldiers were battling. Criminality is a real threat to the perception of security that exists within Iraqi communities and criminality will not be beaten by the Coalition but will only be beaten by a combination of the Iraqi Police and the people of Iraq. Criminals will get even stronger as the insurgency weakens, but should be able to be kept to tolerable levels until the new Iraqi state can address the criminals head on.

We do need to keep in the front of our minds that the enemy in this struggle are indeed evil. Attacks by the enemy in Iraq are indiscriminate, murderous, and intimidatory with, of course, absolutely no accountability. The themes that occur to me after one year of the closest scrutiny of my enemy was the constant misuse of religious shrines, mosques, and medical facilities such as hospitals and ambulances, a willingness to use terror and intimidations, and no thought of offering a constructive alternative for the Iraqi people. One only needs to read anything that Zarqawi writes, and to look at the daily actions of all anti-Iraqi groups, to see that transgressions of the Laws of Armed Conflict are institutionalised within those groups in Iraq. Transgressions of the Laws of Armed Conflict, even merely allegations, are comparatively few on the Coalition side, and are neither condoned nor institutionalised.

One way of characterising the enemy that the Coalition faced in Iraq is to describe it as a localised Sunni insurgency with Jihadist and criminal involvement, and with the possibility always of various militias becoming active again. There is no indication that popular support for the insurgency has spread outside of the Sunni provinces, and there were indications for some time that even Sunni support might be fracturing. I am satisfied that this is not a new Vietnam—the insurgency is not widely popular, nor is it widespread, but it is intense where it exists. It covers its lack of depth and support by being vicious and violent. The enemy in Iraq is fighting for the hearts and minds of every voting American and Briton as much as they are fighting to control the Iraqi population. Because all decent people in the world are appalled at the violence perpetrated on the Iraqi people and reported in such graphic detail through the media, it is sometimes difficult to keep the war in Iraq in perspective.

Rather than concentrate on the day-to-day headline grabbing violence, and the carping about the failures of the Coalition, I found it of value in maintaining my own perspective

over a tough year to ask myself: what did the enemy try to do but failed? During my exposure to Iraq, the enemy has demonstrably failed in 12 critical areas. He has failed to stop the Coalition Provisional Authority and the transfer of authority; to stop the Iraqi Interim Government; to stop the Iraqi Transitional Government; to kill the emerging Iraqi leadership; to stop the formation of the Iraqi Security Forces; to stop the 30 January 2005 election; to stop the October 2005 constitution; to stop the General Election of 15 December 2005; to stop the formation of the Unified Iraqi Government; to maintain its safe havens, torture houses and chemical laboratories in Falujah; to stop the transition of operational areas from the Coalition to Iraqi army and police units; and to stop initial improvements in the Iraqi economy through reconstruction. Despite the tone of much popular commentary, this would seem to indicate that the Coalition and its Iraqi allies must have done something well in the three years of this war.

What the AIF has done well is to attack the population of Iraq with a view to creating a sense of revulsion in Coalition nations for the war, and if necessary, taking Iraq to civil war. They have done this by concentrating on the sectarian divide that exists in Iraq and by applying extraordinary levels of violence. But the creation of extreme anarchy is a dangerous tactic for the insurgency. There is a backlash against extremist groups in Iraq by the victims of intimidation, and only time will tell who will endure.

The most prominent tactic that is used by the AIF is the tactic of suicide. The most common form of suicide attack is the car bomb where a suicide bomber is either given a specific target and sent to his death, or is given a roving commission to drive around the streets of a city looking for a target. It was the latter suicide bomber that most frightened me every time my group of vehicles was caught in a traffic jam in Baghdad, and it was this threat to us and to all Coalition convoys who worked in the Red Zone that caused the kind of behaviour that so annoyed the good Iraqis in those cities who were trying to go about their normal lives. Having been attacked a few times, I decided that it was a fair tactic on our part to drive against traffic, on the footpaths, through red lights and through houses even if we did annoy the honest burghers of Baghdad. To them I apologise but my crew and I are alive today, and many others are not.

The car bomb is a poor man's smart bomb. It is stealthy, it is very accurate in that it can be driven right up to the target, and it is destructive. The type of explosive in a car bomb was really determined by the target that it was meant for. If the idea was that the car bomber was to try to get through a check point and to attack a target inside a base, then the explosive might be moulded into the seats and any other area that would conceal it from a guard standing right alongside the car and checking the driver's documents. Every Coalition and Iraqi soldier was schooled in how to detect a car bomber and what the give away signs were: a nervous driver, wires visible in the car, a car that sat low on the road indicating that it was carrying a heavy load.

Most car bombs had several means of detonation. There might be a switch actually on the bumper so that the car would explode if it rammed the target. There might also be a switch by the driver so that if the ramming switch failed, then the driver could detonate the car bomb manually. The other time that a manual switch would be used is if the bomber was trying to bluff his way through a check point so as to get inside a base, and if he looked like being discovered he would hand-detonate the vehicle at the checkpoint, killing as many as he could. Several times there were descriptions of guards who were approaching or checking a vehicle and it was obvious that they suddenly realised that they were standing next to a bomber, and in the split second before the explosion, were seen to turn away from the car and try to sprint to safety.

In many cases the explosive used was in the form of several artillery shells wired together to explode simultaneously. This was devastating because not only do you get blast but an artillery shell is designed to generate big ugly destructive shards of shrapnel. Artillery shells were heavy and so sometimes the car rode unusually low and so could be identified.

It was not unusual for a car bomb to go off prematurely. Guards at a check point might report that for no apparent reason, a car in their general vicinity suddenly exploded in the total absence of a target. On one or two occasions the bomb did not detonate. The one that comes to mind was a car bomb that attacked a tank by driving into the side of the tank. The impact knocked the driver out so he was captured alive, but the impact also made the artillery shells roll out of the back of the car, something that you could laugh about well after the event. Things must have been financially tough in some parts of the insurgency because guards at one gate of the Green Zone observed a driver acting strangely on the approaches to the check point. As they watched, the car rolled to a stop several hundred metres away on a bridge across the Tigris. The driver got out and could be seen through the vision devices at the check point to be crying as he tried to push the car towards the check point. Finally, unable to push the car, he sat down beside it still crying. The guards approached very cautiously and detained him. He had run out of petrol.

Normally a car bomber will be the only passenger in the car on its final journey. Our sentries tended to look very closely at cars occupied by only one person. There was one occasion when a car with a man and a woman in it was permitted to pass a US convoy on a highway and halfway along the convoy, the car swerved into a vehicle and exploded, killing both the man and the woman. It was possible that it was a double suicide but also possible that she did not know that the car was a bomb.

On another occasion, an insurgent was asked to deliver a bulk-fuel tanker that had been rigged as a bomb to a place where it was going to be handed over to the suicide driver for a planned attack. The insurgent did as he was bid, but without his knowledge the tanker was rigged for remote detonation. As he drove past a Shi'a mosque on the way to the supposed drop-off point, his comrades detonated the tanker. The blast devastated

the mosque but the unsuspecting tanker driver was not killed but very badly burnt and was able to get out of the cab. It was assumed by the first responders that he was from the mosque and with the other casualties he was taken to a civilian hospital. When he woke up, he was in great pain and he was not happy. He drew attention to himself, asked to be handed over to the Coalition, and then proceeded to tell us all about his mates who set him up.

Suicide cars bombs were the biggest threat to polling day on 30 January 2005. If a large number of car bombs had destroyed a number of polling booths early on polling day, and this event was then beamed around Iraq and the world by an accommodating media, the election would have failed. One of our major strategies was to protect the voters from the car bombs on Election Day and we achieved this by a number of strategies. On polling day, there was not one car bomb used against any one of the 5200 polling booths across Iraq. We were attacked by 40 vest-suicide bombers on the day but due to the heroism of the Iraqi soldiers and police, not one reached a polling station. We have also been able to successfully keep car bombers away from the last two Ashura and Arba'en Shi'a religious ceremonies. As a postscript, Prime Minister Allawi publicly announced on 31 January that a Downs Syndrome person had been used by the insurgents as a suicide bomber on Election Day. It could have been propaganda by the PM trying to capitalise on the success of the day, but if you can believe it, then there is indeed evil in the world.

To defeat car bombs you need a great awareness of how they operate, where they are made and who is involved in their manufacture. Normally there are many rings of defence against such weapons with the physical barrier being the last ring of defence. The tragedy is that if you stop the car bombers from attacking hard targets like bases and convoys, they merely go where you are not and attack defenceless people. Thus the number of times that schools, mosques, funerals and market places are hit increases the more we harden our bases.

It is common knowledge that Iraqis, as a rule, do not do suicide attacks. One Iraqi once said to me, 'We Iraqis are not as desperate as the Palestinians yet'. Suicide bombers predominantly come from Saudi Arabia and then from a range of Arab, Gulf, North Africa and European countries. Of course there needs to be a process to bring the men in from over the borders and to house and feed them while they wait their turn, and to keep them motivated. The suicide bomber is permitted to write a last letter home but these bombers are still a product of their generation—they prefer to use mobile phones to say goodbye to their mothers. It was not unusual for our intelligence people to hear these farewell calls, and although the suicide candidate would not know his target, we could get a good idea whether the next day was going to be rough or not. At one stage, the martyrs were banned by their handlers from having or using mobile phones because the insurgent leaders knew that we monitored all calls, but boys will be boys and many secreted phones on themselves and used them at the last moment.

The attraction of suicide is part of the deal. These people come to Iraq to die and to kill as many of us or the Iraqis as they can. But there were never hordes of them. In the period that I was in Iraq I remember that our estimate was that 50 to 100 foreign fighters came across the borders into Iraq per month, of which 30 might be suicide bombers. It was an unusual month in Iraq where we had as many as 100 car bombs per month, that is, roughly three per day.

The only group in Iraq that the Zarqawi network hated more than the Americans was the Shi'a because, in the eyes of the extremist, they had been given the gift of true Islam and had rejected it. On 8 February 2004, a suicide bomber attacked the crowd at an ISF Recruiting Office in Baghdad in the post-election enthusiasm to join the ISF, killing 21 and wounding 27 applicants. The statement put out by the insurgents after the event was fairly standard and went: 'A Lion in the Martyr Brigade of al-Qaeda from the Holy War in Iraq attacked a gathering of apostates seeking to return to the apostate Police Force'.

### LEVELS OF VIOLENCE

The level of violence is high in Iraq by any standard but in the time that I was in Iraq, April 2004 to April 2005, it was still localised. The central four provinces, known as the Sunni Triangle with 40 per cent of the population of Iraq (Anbar, Baghdad, Salah-ad-Din, Nineveh), had 80 per cent of the violent incidents. The other 14 provinces had less than four incidents a day. An 'incident' was anything that appeared on a major database of operational activities that we maintained, and might be a major attack on an installation, a car bomb, or a kidnapping, but did not include major offensives or operations initiated by us, such as the Samarra or Falujah assault. It was very important for us to have some measure of the level of violence and where that violence was occurring. We put much effort into creating a database that for all its faults was the only way then available to measure the level of the insurgency.

In March 2004, just before I first arrived in Iraq, the Coalition was being attacked 150 times per week. In April, there was a spike in violence that took the numbers off any scale as we battled the Mehdi Army in Baghdad and across southern Iraq, and the Sunni insurgents and extremists in Falujah and in Baghdad. After the spike, the number of attacks per week settled down to a higher level than before, to about 250 per week. This continued until August 2004 when there was another spike associated with the Mehdi Army attacks in Najaf, but the violence settled down again at a higher level than before, to 550 attacks per week. We dreamed of the good old days in March when we were only being attacked 150 times per week! Attacks continued at 550 per week until the week before the election on 30 January 2005. In those seven days, the attacks on us peaked, with the Coalition being attacked 800 times, and 250 of those attacks actually occurring on Election Day itself, including the 40 vest-suicide bombers previously mentioned.

Again it is difficult to draw many conclusions except that our enemy recognised the importance of the election and made an all-out effort to stop it. The terrorist cells were normally only three to ten people in number, with some up to 20-strong. It was rare that they came together in larger number but I remember a very sophisticated and relatively complex attack on a police station in the Daura area of Baghdad that involved about 100 insurgents, an ambush of a fuel convoy at Salman Pak areas that also involved 60 to 100 insurgents, and the previously recounted ambush of the police in the Salman Pak areas that also involved large numbers. The Shi'a militias were different and were not organised like the Sunni insurgents or the terrorists. Thousands of Shi'a opposed us in Najaf and in Sadr City, and Falujah was an anomaly when 3000 to 6000 fighters came together in November 2004.

Many interpreted the increase in attack figures to say that over a certain period the insurgency was getting stronger. This could be the case but it ignores the fact that we did not know the initial strength of the insurgency or of the militias at the start point of the fight. As well, for a given number of insurgent or terrorist cells, an increase in activity could always be achieved by increasing the level of activity rather than by increasing the number of Iraqis forming new cells. You can easily double the number of attacks without an increase in insurgent strength just by doing two attacks in the period when you previously did one. Counting of AIF numbers and activities was indeed an imprecise science. Attack figures that I read in the media in the middle of 2006 are once again in the area of 800 attacks per week and seem to be generated not only from the traditional sources of FRE, terrorists, militias or criminals, but now by the increasing sectarian violence involving payback killings by what are referred to as Death Squads, with the involvement of elements of the Iraqi Security Forces.

I considered that the only reliable numerical assessment of the strength of the enemy in Iraq was the total of those that we killed and detained while they were fighting us. In the period that I was in Iraq, in rough numbers, we killed 9000 AIF, and at any one time, we had about the same number in detention. When I first arrived in Iraq I remember reading a report that the total number that opposed us was in the order of 6000. Given the numbers that we had already killed and detained, the 6000 figure was probably wrong!

At one stage a prominent Iraq intelligence official made a public statement that there were 40,000 to 50,000 Anti-Iraqi Forces in Iraq. The problem that we all faced was that none of us had a starting figure, so his guess was certainly one view, but it all depends on whom you count. I was as dubious of this view as I was of most information that we received from Iraqi sources. Iraqis had an attitude to intelligence and to intelligence-related figures that I found difficult. It seemed to come down to that fact that we would always be told what our interlocutor thought would impress us and the bigger the figure the better. And that applied at that early stage to those in the nascent Iraqi intelligence system, but I am sure that they have overcome that now.

But the real problem was who you classify as Anti-Iraqi Forces. There were those who said that you should count all of those who opposed our occupation of Iraq. According to the polls, that would come to 80 per cent of the total Iraqi population of 27 million. But that is ridiculous and the actual attack figures did not back that up. You could look at the first assault on Falujah in April 2004 when it seemed like every adult male in this city of 300,000 opposed us. At its peak in the time that I was in Iraq, we were only seeing 800 attacks per week and if you make some assumptions, such as every one of those attacks was carried out by a cell consisting of five fighters, and each cell only conducts one attack per week, then you get 160 cells at five members, totalling 800 active insurgents. Again a relatively meaningless figure.

Those on the periphery of the war, such as the media, wanted an easy way to numerically state the size of the insurgency, but there *is* no easy way. Many in governments demanded precise knowledge and there *was* no precise knowledge. From everything that I saw in the time that I was in Iraq, I would say that the following was an estimate at that time. Roughly, those who actively opposed us by using force may have numbered as few as 20,000 in a population of 27 million. That 20,000 may have consisted of 10,000 Former Regime Elements, 3000 (possibly up to 10,000) in the Mehdi Militia (but this varied widely), perhaps 1000 in the Zarqawi network and 5000 assorted extreme criminals and nutters. Of course I cannot say what the figures might be after I left. The fact of the matter is that a modern society can be totally disrupted by very small numbers of dissidents if those people are prepared to use extreme violence. The more extreme the violence, then the smaller the numbers can be.

The motivation of those who opposed us by force in Iraq is as complex as anything else in this war. Money was certainly a motivating factor and money was frequently used to procure the services of casual insurgents to plant a roadside bomb or to carry out an attack. Ideology by itself plays a part but only for the core of most organisations, be they Sunni insurgents, militias or terrorists. Socialisation is very important. If everyone is attacking the Coalition then why not join in. This applies particularly if your tribal friends are part of the action and if you can see very little consequence for taking part, and especially if someone gives you money for doing it. If you lose your enthusiasm for conducting simple acts such as planting roadside bombs for a small amount of money, then your motivation might be reignited by threats and intimidation from those that want you to place the bomb, and as well they still give you some money. And of course everything that you do can be under the justification that to attack the Coalition or even your Shi'a neighbour is to strike a blow for Iraq and for Islam against the Crusaders and the apostates who are occupying your country and threatening the true religion.

Understanding the motivation was particularly important in order to devise counters to the insurgency. The approach that we took was to establish a range of solutions, parts of which were consequence and deterrence. It was a given that we would protect

ourselves if we were attacked but the casual insurgent would rarely take on a Coalition unit directly unless the situation was perfect. Quite logically, they would prefer to have a go at a Coalition unit with a roadside bomb or sniping from an ambush position followed by a very quick withdrawal. But if you are conducting attacks against the Coalition for money, for thrills and because your mates are doing it, then offering jobs to more people in a particular area as a response by itself will not work. This is because it is still easier to just put a bomb by a road once a week or to fire the odd shot. But having started being a casual insurgent, and having realised that the consequence is often death or detention, to withdraw is often difficult because you are likely to attract unwanted attention from the hard men in the local area. What is needed is to make it very dangerous to attack us or the people in any way, to offer jobs so that people do not need the money from insurgents, and disrupt the local insurgent leaders so that they have less of a chance to intimidate local youths. This of course is not easy, and employment often takes time to create effects at the local level. Hence the enthusiasm of the insurgents for destroying the infrastructure that brings energy to the people, and from which you can create employment and a satisfying standard of living.

At once stage, crucial oil pipelines that brought crude oil, petroleum products and gas from the wells at Kirkuk down to Baghdad were continually being attacked where they crossed the Thar Thar canal north of Baghdad. This was a strategic issue for us and the insurgents knew this. They attacked the energy infrastructure in an attempt to isolate the five-and-a-half million people in Baghdad from energy supplies so that the credibility of the Iraqi Interim and Transitional Governments would be affected, the people of Baghdad would see no benefit from their liberation from Saddam, and so that the economy could not recover and so generate jobs. It was a very effective strategy and for most of the time that I was responsible for the security of the strategic infrastructure of Iraq, we were rarely able to deliver more than 12 hours of electricity per day to Baghdad, and as often as not it was four to six hours per day.

The attacks on the Thar Thar crossing were a serious threat. It was not possible to protect all of the linear infrastructure across the country because there were, according to my friend the Oil Minister, something like 6000 kilometres of major pipes. The Thar Thar canal crossing was vulnerable because the 12 separate pipes in this corridor were buried for most of their length, except where they crossed canals. At this point, they either ran just above the surface of the water or just under it. Anyway, it was very easy for the attackers to hit the pipes and to get away quickly because they did not have to spend a long time digging the pipes up. Every time the canal crossing was hit we repaired it. We built a watch-tower on the site and staffed it with contractors who employed local staff who were then intimidated and ran away, having permitted yet another attack. We surveilled the site and patrolled it, but we could not afford to station reliable troops on the crossing, and even if we did, the attackers would have then gone to another canal

crossing and blown that up. Our main tactic was to out-repair these people but that was always a second-best solution.

At the same time as we tried to protect the pipes at the crossing, I engaged the local population through local commanders and sent some of my Civil Affairs soldiers to the nearest town with a pocketful of money to buy information about who was doing the attacking. The best information that we could get (and it was always suspect) was that the franchise to attack the Thar Thar canal pipes was held by the son of a local Shayk, a tribal leader. According to our informer, he was being paid a good amount of money by someone in Tikrit to blow the pipes, to watch us repair them and then to blow them again.

The object of our suspicion was quietly visited and told that we knew it was him and that we would put him away if he did not stop. He denied everything, of course, and told us that it could not be him attacking the lines, because he held a locally-issued contract from the Northern Oil Company to actually use his tribal members to protect the pipe lines. This was not uncommon and I had been through this anomaly a number of times with the Minister of Oil. Because we were desperate, we let contracts to protect the lines to local tribal figures, really as a means of bribing them not to blow them up. This created two problems. In some places, those on our payroll still blew up the lines because the insurgents paid them as well as us. Or those who had missed out on the legal protection contract from us, normally other local tribes, were blowing the pipes up to prove that they should have received the contracts in the first instance. Nothing is as it appears in Iraq.

At the same time as we tried to frighten these people off attacking this important crossing by threats and bluster, we set up covert sniping positions around the crossing. We had tried this before with mixed results. It was always difficult to get sniper teams from local units because they are a scarce asset, so I had to sell this idea to the local commander on the basis that he would achieve something for the effort of his men. If you put the sniper teams out too early after you repair the lines then they can sit around for a long time without a target, and the snipers are then withdrawn by their units and the unit commanders are sceptical of our subsequent requests. On this occasion we asked for them to go in a few days after oil was flowing in the pipes following the last attack, and they almost immediately got a hit. The young men whom they killed as they fixed charges to the pipes were from the same tribe as he who had the contract to protect the pipes, but we could make no link back to him that would allow us to detain him. We then visited him again after this event and told him for the second time that we knew it was him, that it was his fault that his tribal members had been killed, and that if he was smart he should stop attacking the pipes, and tell us who in Tikrit his contact were. We offered him a very large amount of money as a reward if he told us who the insurgents were, and promised to increase his contract from the Northern Oil Company if he took real responsibility for the security of the pipes. As well, we would start up a system of employment in the town that would put his people back to work and bring some level of prosperity to the town. He

denied everything still and refused to assist us, protesting his innocence, but the attacks on the pipes stopped for a longer time than before. In the meantime I also instituted a range of other ways of bringing energy into Baghdad, anticipating that I would lose these pipes at some stage in the future.

Finally, the snipers having been withdrawn, the pipes were blown up again. It was then that we found out that the tribal leader that we had been engaging had been murdered some few days before by the insurgents. Perhaps he had tried to get out of his arrangements with them. Perhaps the insurgents thought he was compromised because we were watching him. Zarqawi used to boast on his web site that he had killed many Sunnis who would not support him or who had second thoughts about supporting him. Iraq is a tragically tough place.

The insurgents themselves had a voice and we often heard that voice. The TV show called 'In the Grip of the Law' has been mentioned. But other insurgent or terrorist voices reached us from various sources. Two al-Qaeda 'Abu Talha' cell members (the name Abu Talha being the name of their leader or Emir) were detained in Mosul. We had reports of them speaking to each other and commenting on the change in attitude that occurred after the 30 January elections. This comment was of great interest to me because of my involvement with the elections. Referring to a small town to the south of Mosul, they are heard to say that it seemed as though 'all of Hamam al Allil had enlisted' in the Iraqi Security Forces against the insurgents after the election. One warns the other that '1000 Iraqis volunteered to join the Iraqi National Guard (a previous term for the Iraqi Army) there (in Hamam al Allil) and will attack anyone on suspicion of being Mujahadin'. Another foreign fighter detainee regretted his Mujahadin days. 'I should never have watched al Jazeera', he said. Al Jazeera is widely watched outside of Iraq but I saw figures at one stage which said that only two per cent of the Iraqi viewing public subscribed to al Jazeera.

From other sources, chat revealed the impact on the insurgency of the post-election effect in their area. They were telling each other that three or four Mujahadin were being taken by the authorities each day. They expressed their surprise at Coalition Force tenacity and were surprised that we would take a spouse for questioning. They referred to the Coalition Force as 'dogs' and said that 'these dogs came and arrested Masri and took pictures, they will now be able to recognise us'. I remember reading a report of a conversation where one insurgent is talking to his friend outside Mosul, complaining bitterly of the lack of weapons and ammunition in Mosul at the time. We had withdrawn forces from Mosul for the Falujah battle and then rushed them back in, particularly tanks and Bradley armoured fighting vehicles, to regain control of Mosul. He asked: 'We have nothing to fight the tanks with. We have no RPGs left, only rifles. What do they want us to do, be slaughtered?' His friend used one of the common Muslim invocations to God and said (the translator noted that it was in a resigned manner): 'Now might be the time to die'.

Those who oppose us in Iraq are not invincible. Neither do they represent the will of the Iraq people. They are relatively small in number and they offer nothing to the Iraqi people for the future. Almost everything that they have touched has failed except violent intimidation and murder. They have successfully removed the rule of law from Sunni areas. It was always our expectation that because of the success of the political process, they may lessen the level of direct violence against the Coalition Forces and only attack us when we expose vulnerability, or they discover a weakness. They certainly did this for a while, and that was still the trend as I left in April 2005. Tragically, what they have done because of the threat that the political process represents to their goals, is to turn on the Iraqi people with a breath-taking vengeance. They are an active and intelligent enemy and they are more than capable of changing and adapting. No one tactic or technique will beat them in the short term, and to win we must be able to go the distance until the institutions in Iraq can take over. What that distance is will be the big question. What the insurgent can always do, and probably have done by now, is to extend the timeline for what they consider success, try to infiltrate the police, the army and the security ministries, and try to set conditions for their ultimate success over a longer time period. At the same time, of course, they are trying to create something like 'civil war', and to create so much anarchy in the country that we will assess that the price is not worth the prize, and we will go.

### **THEORIES OF INSURGENCY**

In our evening periods of study of our insurgent enemy following the Operations and Intelligence nightly briefs, we considered the theories that might lie behind our opponents in Iraq. It is hard to identify one single traditional insurgent theory as being the driving force behind what is called an Insurgency in Iraq. The Urban Terrorist Strategy, where our opponents attacks the government or the 'authority' in the country, the government or the authority in turn cracks down on the people, and the people are enraged and support the insurgents, might work in some places at some times, but is not a determining strategy in Iraq. In the Cuban 'Che Guevara' Foco (hearth) Strategy where many small fires joint to create a conflagration, the insurgents attack the government, and because the government is ineffective in its ability to protect itself, the people or the economic process, the government loses legitimacy and the people are encouraged to support the AIF over a wide area. This could be seen in parts of Iraq, especially in the attacks on the infrastructure and on reconstruction. In a Protracted Strategy, the political and military wings of the insurgency, together with support from outside Iraq, attack everything (Sunni, Shi'a, government, infrastructure, security forces), while a political wing denounces the violence and over time offers itself as the solution, and this is still possible. At the moment there is no sign of a credible political wing of this insurgency appearing from anywhere.

Nothing neatly fits the Iraq situation but as you try to classify the actions of the insurgency so far, you might be able to say that the Urban Terrorist has in certain parts of the country adopted a Foco Strategy which may have started to become a Protracted Strategy. Just to complicate matters even further, I strongly suspect that there are different strategies in different phases of their own existence in different areas within Iraq

I am very realistic in relation to the problems that the Coalition experienced in conducting complex counter-insurgency operations in Iraq, because I was part of our successes and failures. But as well, I was never struck by how good the Former Regime Elements were at insurgency, and I guess there is no reason why they should be particularly good at it. There is not a tradition of insurgency in Iraq as you might be able to find in Asia, and particularly Southeast Asia. Mao Tse Tung in *On Guerrilla War* said that 'We consider guerrilla operation as but one aspect of our total or mass war because they, lacking the quality of independence, are of themselves incapable of providing a solution to the struggle'. Yet it is so difficult to find those other parts of the insurgency in Iraq that might deliver the insurgents ultimate victory even in a protracted struggle. What they must rely on is a lack of resilience on our part, and Western resilience could be totally revived by the next 9/11 that occurs. Fundamentally, no group within the insurgency offers the Iraqi people anything meaningful as an alternative to what is now being offered by the Unified Iraqi Government backed up by the Coalition, but in an environment of extreme violence, that is a difficult message to sell. Zarqawi has admitted this in his correspondence with al-Qaeda on a number of occasions, and his attitude to the success of the election and his inability to reconcile any form of democratic government with Islam, should in the end mean rejection by the bulk of the Iraq people.

## CONCLUSION

In our Western military culture, we tend to stress tangible military factors, and I lived and breathed those tangible factors for the year that I was in Iraq, but we did have a very broad view of what was happening. In the West we study weapons, logistics and manpower under any number of different names. The more sophisticated insurgents on the other hand focus on the intangibles such as space, time and will. Some insurgents are willing to trade space for time, and then trade time for will. This is essentially a trading of the 'space' of the Coalition's military challenge in Iraq for 'time' in the political challenge for 'will', both inside Iraq and outside Iraq. To win, an insurgent must create political conversion and political conversion takes time, and probably needs a certain amount of space somewhere. But of course we are not an impassive player in this drama, and we are not going to sit back and watch it occur. It is not an excuse but an acknowledgement of reality to say that most wars are marked by extreme friction in the first few years, even those such as Malaya and Northern Ireland that are touted by critics of this war as the great successes of counter-insurgency.

Control of the will of the people is more important than control of land but in the Iraq situation, you must be able to control some space or land in order to begin the political conversion that is needed. This is why Falujah was so absorbing to me. The insurgency owned Falujah for many months but instead of setting up the equivalent of the 'workers' paradise' or even a religious heaven on earth that could be used to discredit us, the insurgency applied extreme Sharia law to the Sunni residents of Falujah and abused them. It was the insurgency that made a strategic error, and over about three months the Jihadists in Falujah drove the vast majority of the 300,000 citizens of Falujah out, which facilitated us attacking the Jihadist. They too are not perfect in their strategy.

I have heard it said that we in the Coalition define success as the will to win but the insurgent defines success as the will not to be defeated, and there is some truth in this. What I found interesting is that there is no shred of intellectual content in what the insurgency is doing in Iraq, just a lot of terror. They are offering the people only a return to being ruled by a privileged class, or a return to the ninth century. Outside of religion, there are no big ideas around with which to rally the people to the insurgents. I admit that as a Westerner and a Christian, I may be missing something here, but if the big idea is now Islam in its more extreme forms, then we certainly recognise it, and so will many moderate Iraqis. Regardless, what all of this means to me is that it becomes critically important for the Coalition to be able to oppose this insurgency over a longer period of time, at least until the ISF and the Irawi government can carry the fight. What it means to the insurgent is that they must make the best of our short-term view of the world, and increase our fatigue by increasing the cost to us in lives and in treasure, and play on our decency by making us feel guilty for the Iraqis whom they murder.

In my view, the struggle for will is the most important aspect of this war. The most important and most difficult aspect of this struggle over the long term is for the Coalition to gain the trust of the Iraqi people. However, the will that is critical in the short term may be the will outside Iraq, mainly of the American people. Although the insurgents can make the fight inside of Iraq very difficult and very costly especially for the Iraqi people, I believe that they will not win the struggle either for physical space or for the Iraqi people's will. Over the long run though, this may be totally irrelevant if our will to stand firm collapses.

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