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14. ABSTRACT

One key component to the strategy implemented by General Petraeus in Iraq was deploying up to five additional U.S. Army combat brigades and two U.S. Marine battalions to theater bringing the overall troop level in Iraq close to 168,000. This increase in American combat forces on the ground in Iraq has become known as the "Surge" and is commonly credited by politicians, the media, and members of the military as the reason for the sustained turn–around in Iraq's security situation since January 2007. This paper, through a Center of Gravity (COG) analysis of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), shows that the recent security successes achieved in Iraq have less to do with the surge forces and are more due to the lesser-known "Sons of Iraq" initiative.

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THE "SURGE" IN IRAQ, A CENTER OF GRAVITY PERSPECTIVE

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

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Abstract

THE "SURGE" IN IRAQ, A CENTER OF GRAVITY PERSPECTIVE

One key component to the strategy implemented by General Petraeus in Iraq was deploying

up to five additional U.S. Army combat brigades and two U.S. Marine Corps battalions to

theater bringing the overall troop level in Iraq close to 168,000. This increase in American

combat forces on the ground in Iraq has become known as the "Surge" and is commonly

credited by politicians, the media, and members of the military as the reason for the sustained

turn–around in Iraq's security situation since January 2007. This paper, through a Center of

Gravity (COG) analysis of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), shows that the recent security successes

achieved in Iraq have less to do with the surge forces and are more due to the lesser-known

"Sons of Iraq" initiative.

Introduction

      Few would argue that recent developments in Iraq's security situation are positive and encouraging, if not a significant collective indication that the current strategy implemented by LTG Petraeus and his staff is a successful one. One key component to this strategy was deploying up to five additional U.S. Army combat brigades and two U.S. Marine Corps battalions to theater, bringing the overall troop level in Iraq close to 168,000.[1] This increase in American combat forces on the ground in Iraq has become known as the "Surge" and is commonly credited by politicians, the media, and members of the military as the reason for the sustained turn–around in Iraq's security situation since January 2007. This paper, through a Center of Gravity (COG) analysis of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), intends to show that the recent security successes achieved in Iraq have less to do with the surge forces and are more due to the lesser-known "Sons of Iraq" initiative.

      The scope of this paper is focused on security at the operational level of the conflict in Iraq. While clearly there are significant challenges with the security situation there, especially with influence from Iran, Syria and other nations, these are strategic dynamics and thus not part of this research effort. In addition, the "enemy" in Iraq is exceptionally diverse and complex, making it inappropriate, if not impossible, to aggregate. Although al-Qaeda in Iraq and its members present just one of many existing challenges to Iraq's security, it is arguably the most lethal and significant, and explains this paper's focus on AQI's impact to security rather than those of Shia militias or Sunni rejectionists.

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography.)

[1] Global Security.org , Iraq Troop Levels, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_es.htm

Background.

The situation leading to the surge. Many readers may associate December 2006, with

ethno-sectarian violence levels and numbers of civilian deaths at their highest overall levels

since the invasion began in 2003, as the low point for U.S. Military efforts in Iraq. As charts

produced by General Petraeus' staff to support his testimony to the U.S. Congress show,

December 2006 was when security levels, in terms of civilian deaths and incidents of

sectarian violence, were at or near their worst levels since the war began. (Figures 1, 2)[2]

These conditions coincided with the culmination of several comprehensive efforts to

wholeheartedly review the situation and strategy in Iraq and provide recommendations to

President Bush for the way ahead. The separate advice from the Iraq Study Group, the U.S.

State Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a group of three retired generals

accompanied by two prominent academics led President Bush to determine, then announce a

change in strategy for Iraq during a televised address on 10 January 2007.[3]

This strategy contained six fundamental elements: Let the Iraqis lead; help Iraqis

protect the population; isolate extremists; create space for political progress; diversify

political and economic efforts; and situate the strategy in a regional approach.[4] In essence,

this change in direction was a comprehensive effort to focus on securing the Iraqi people. It

was focused primarily on Baghdad in order to buy time and space for the political process to

solidify, creating the engine to produce necessary social reforms and economic growth in the

future.   A key enabling component of this shift was a significant increase of combat troops,

both coalition and Iraqi, known commonly as the "Surge". The U.S. contribution to this

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[2] Petraeus, "Testimony," House, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., 2008, 30, 31.
[3] Fletcher and Ricks. "Experts Advise Bush Not to Reduce Troops."
[4] The White House. "Fact Sheet: The New Way Forward in Iraq."

increase was just under 29,000 combat troops while the Iraqi contribution was upwards of

125,000. The majority of these forces were employed in Baghdad and its surrounding towns

with a much smaller component assigned to Al Anbar Province to the West of Baghdad as a
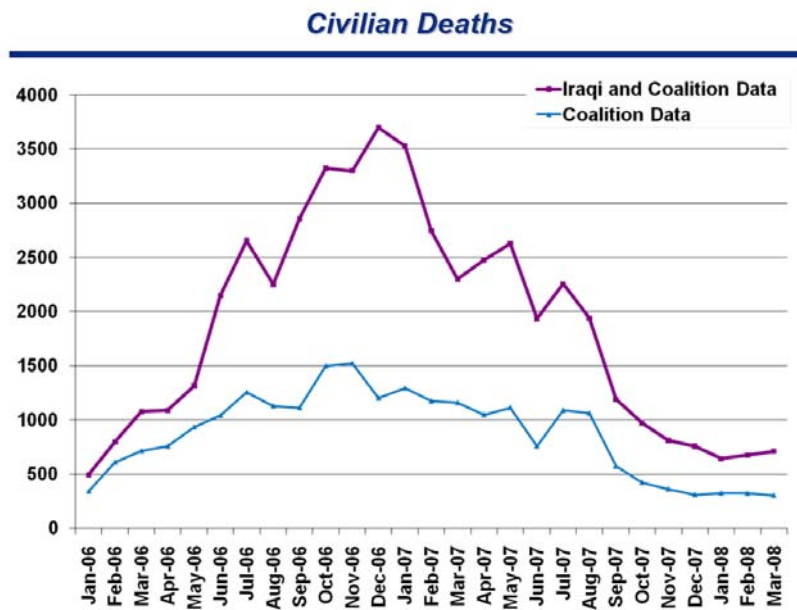
supporting effort. [5]

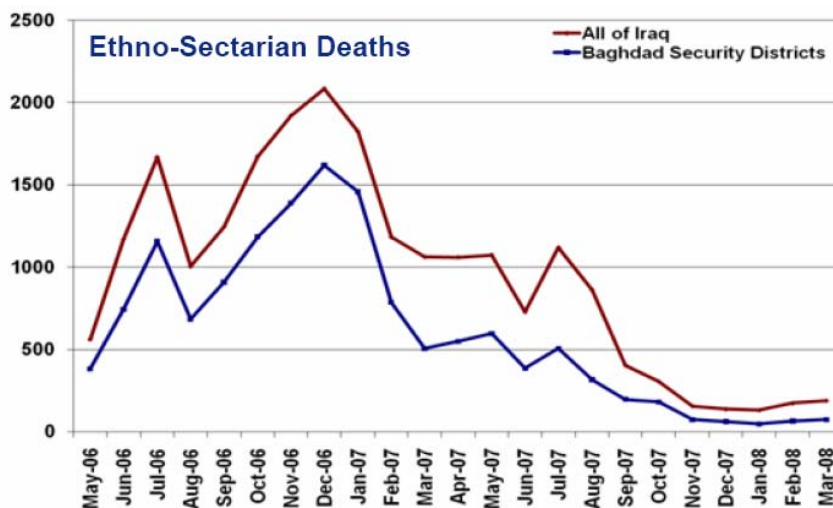Figure 1. Petraeus Briefing Slides, Congressional Testimony April, 2008

Figure 2. Petraeus Briefing Slides, Congressional testimony April, 2008

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[5] Petraeus, NWC Lecture,17 October 2007

U.S. Operational Objectives.   In his testimony to Congress in September 2007, General Petraeus articulated how his command was implementing the President's strategy specific to improving the security in Iraq. Essentially, they were to secure the Iraqi population, target terrorist groups and extremist militias, and to gradually transition security tasks to Iraqi Security Forces.   With testimony articulating a 55% reduction in ethno-sectarian deaths, approximately 2,600 insurgents and leaders killed or captured, and close to 140 ISF battalions in the fight across Iraq, Gen Petraeus provided clear evidence that U.S and Iraqi forces were backing up his words with action. [6]

AQI's strategic and operational objectives. Testimony in March 2006 from Gen Abizaid, then the Commanding General of United States Central Command, in charge of the overall U.S. military efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan highlights that "AQI's [strategic] objective is to create chaos in Iraq by inciting civil war between Sunni and Shia through terrorist acts such as the [February 2006] bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra. Such mayhem…will topple the elected government of Iraq and drive Coalition forces from the country…[enabling] AQI to establish safe havens for Islamic extremism within Iraq from which to launch terrorist attacks against other moderate regimes in the region."[7]

From correspondence in 2004 between the founder and long time leader of AQI, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, and Osama bin Laden, we learn the operational objectives (ways), AOI intends to accomplish their strategic objective in Iraq: "We are striving urgently and racing against time to create companies of mujahidin that will…secure places and strive to reconnoiter the country, hunting the enemy – Americans, [Iraqi] police, and [Iraqi] soldiers -- on the roads and lanes. We are continuing to train and multiply them. As for the Shi`a, we

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[6] Petraeus, "Testimony," House, 109th Cong., 1st sess., 2007, 3,4,5,8
[7] Abizaid, "Testimony", Senate, 15

will hurt them, God willing, through martyrdom operations and car bombs."[8] Since 2004, data clearly shows significant increased frequency of suicide attacks, ethno-sectarian violence, and attacks against ISF and U.S. forces, indicating AQI has pursued these objectives aggressively.[9]

Analysis

Center of Gravity Concept. Since its inception by Carl von Clausewitz in his book *On War*, the concept of the Center of Gravity has had several interpretations and variations through the years, particularly in the last 20 with the proliferation of global non-state actors and with military scholars and U.S. military doctrine's attempts to clarify its relevance and applicability in modern warfare. Clausewitz introduced the concept as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends". Renowned scholar of the operational art, Milan Vego defines it "as a source of massed strength—physical or moral—or a source of leverage whose serious degradation, dislocation, neutralization, or destruction would have the *most decisive impact* on the enemy's…ability to accomplish a given military objective.[10]

Others, like Dr. Joseph Strange, suggest COGs exist at, and therefore should be nested down to, the tactical level of war. Strange also provides a practical framework to assist planners in applying this critically important construct to the operational art, which has also influenced joint doctrine. [11] For the purpose of clarity, this paper will use Dr. Strange's method of Center of Gravity analysis as outlined in the U.S. Navy Planning Publication, NWP 5-01 from January 2007.

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[8]   Coalition Provisional Authority. "Full Text of Zarqawi Letter."
[9]   Petraeus, "Testimony," House, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., 2008, 29-32
[10] Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare*, VII 13,14
[11] Strange and Col Richard Iron

This COG analysis will first identify the critical strengths and weaknesses that exist for AQI to achieve its strategic and operational objectives stated earlier. From that, COGs at both the strategic and operational level will emerge. Next, a discussion of the critical capabilities necessary to protect the operational-level COGs will ensue, followed by an identification of key associated critical requirements and critical vulnerabilities that are relevant.

Critical Strengths and Weaknesses.

(Strategic) Accepting that AQI's strategic objective is to incite a civil war in Iraq on sectarian lines, two critical strengths emerge. U.S. Navy doctrine defines a critical strength as "the attributes, both tangible and intangible, that the enemy has and must use to achieve his [strategic or operational] objectives".[12] First and foremost, since terror is AQI's primary demonstrated mechanism to incite sectarian violence, the capacity and willingness to execute extremely violent and spectacular attacks must be a critical strength. Also, in order to successfully incite a civil war between the Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims in Iraq, AQI must have the support, whether indifferent, sympathetic, or coerced, of at least one of these sectarian groups, without which they would not have the freedom or ability to operate, and would lack a political base once it achieved its desired endstate. In his letter to Osama bin Laden, Zarqawi lays out where his organization intends to focus, Zarqawi describes the Iraqi Shia as "the lurking snake, the crafty and malicious scorpion, the spying enemy…who wears the garb of a friend, manifests agreement, and calls for comradeship, but harbors ill will and twists up peaks and crests."[13] Those among the Sunni insurgency/ resistance he titles Mujahedeen and describes as "the quintessence of the Sunnis and the good sap of this

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[12] U.S. Navy, "Navy Planning", NWP 5-01, C-2
[13] Zarqawi

country [who]…belong to the Sunni doctrine and naturally to the Salafi creed…[who] are working in isolation...[and who] need to band together and unite under one banner." [14] The remainder he refers to as the "the silent majority, absent even though present. …[who] look forward to a sunny tomorrow…and are thus easy prey for cunning information and political enticement…they are people of Iraq."[15] Given this, it is clear that Sunni support, when and however achieved, is a critical strength for AQI.

Critical weaknesses, as defined by Navy doctrine, are those "attributes, both tangible and intangible, that the enemy has and must use in order to achieve his objective, but which are weak and may impede the enemy while attempting to attain his objective".[16] In this case the key critical weakness for AQI at the strategic level is their ideology. As stated in a report by the Combating Terrorism Center's Harmony Project on al-Qaeda foreign fighters in Iraq, "Zarqawi's ideology is extremely exclusionary. He rejects tribal affiliations, Shiites, all Arab governments, and has developed major doctrinal schisms even with other Salafists. Zarqawi's extremism is likely his greatest weakness." [17] Given the makeup of Iraq Sunni culture, one based on secularism, tribalism, and nationalism, the extreme Islamist ideology is counter to those of the average Iraqi, as well as the rejectionist whose general goal in Iraq is to oust the occupying coalition and regain significant, if not complete control of the government.[18] The Islamic extremist ideology internalized by AQI seeks an eventual return to an Islamic State or Caliphate, governed by Islamic law which is contrary to the majority of Iraqi Sunnis.[19]

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[14] Ibid
[15] Ibid
[16] NWP 5-01, C-2
[17] CTC, West Point, *Harmony and Disharmony*, 37
[18] Abizaid, 14
[19] CTC, West Point, *Foreign Fighters in Iraq*, 3

(Operational) As mentioned earlier, Zarqawi states two operational-level objectives. The first is to attack U.S. and Iraqi Security Forces with Sunni insurgents (Mujahedeen), who employ improvised explosive devices (IEDs), hasty indirect (rocket and mortar) fires, sniper fire, and small arms ambushes. When considering the objective, only one critical strength emerges; the Sunni insurgents. Even Zarqzwi, through his writings, emphasizes the paramount significance of growing this force in order to be successful.[20] Some have argued that the key critical strengths are IEDs, leadership, training, finances, and safe havens/ support from the Sunni population.[21] This perspective, and others like it, misuses the COG construct by trying to analyze critical factors of the Sunni Insurgency, as opposed to the objective, thereby overlooking that it is insurgents collectively that constitute a true critical strength. AQI's second stated operational objective is to attack the Shia with spectacular results using suicide bombers (SB) and both suicide and remotely detonated vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIED/ VBIED). Here again, only one critical strength surfaces; the Martyrs, who are the vital element necessary to carry out suicide attacks and car bombs. It is clear that the key critical strengths necessary to achieve these operational objectives are the Mujahedeen/ Sunni Insurgency and Martyrs.

When considering critical weaknesses, it is helpful to consider the failure of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), which was AQI's attempt in October 2006 to give itself an Iraqi face by naming a fictitious Emir, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, a uniquely Iraqi name. A Combating Tourism Center at West Point study identifies that as ISI attempted to solidify control through extreme violence and to impose Islamic law, it alienated all Iraqis, including the Sunni Insurgents, and was unable to secure the Sunnis or meet the religious expectations

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[20] Zarqawi
[21] Sell, "Iraq – An Insurgency Collage: Does Center of Gravity Apply", 12

of global al-Qaeda supporters.[22] Here we see how a critical weakness of AQI at the strategic

level (Zarqawi's extreme ideology) uncovered two critical weaknesses necessary to achieve

its operational level objectives; the ability to protect Zarqawi's "good sap" (Sunni Insurgents)

and the ability to impose Islamic law, thereby maintaining strong financial ties with

supporters of the greater al-Qaeda movement.

Center of Gravity (CG)

The next step in this analysis is to determine COGs at each level of war. Naval Warfare Pub

5-0 directs planners to thoughtfully select the most important critical strength(s) listed in the

previous step as the COG(s). Dr. Strange clarifies that COGs must "offer resistance…strike

effective (or heavy) physical or moral blows…(and that) at operational and tactical levels

they are almost invariably specific military forces.[23] When considering the level of

importance of AQI's critical strengths necessary to create ethno-sectarian war in Iraq (Sunni

Support versus AQI's capacity for extreme violence), in light of Dr. Strange's words, it

becomes clear that the capacity and willingness to use extreme violence is AQI's most

significant strength, its primary entity to achieve its strategic ends, and thus, the strategic

COG. Since this paper indentified, presented, and argued only two critical strengths, one for

each operational objective (Sunni insurgents, Martyrs), then they develop into the operational

COGs.

Critical Capabilities (CC). The next step in this process is to identify the critical

capabilities for each COG. NWP 5-01 accepts joint doctrine's description of a critical

capability as "crucial enabler for a COG to function".[24] Dr. Strange further adds that critical

capabilities of a COG should be articulated using verbs since these capabilities are what act

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[22] CTC, West Point, *Foreign Fighters in Iraq*, 5
[23] Strange and Irons, 7
[24] NWP 5-01, C-3

on an adversary.[25]   At this stage, this paper will focus its remaining analysis on the

operational level COGs, while continuing to weave threads to and from the strategic level as

appropriate. When considering the Martyrs or suicide bombers, their critical capability is to

create fear amongst the Shia, incite the Shia militias to retaliate, and discredit the GOI's

ability to provide security to them. As for the Sunni insurgents, their critical capabilities are

to limit Sunni support for ISF, limit ISF's overall effectiveness, disrupt U.S. Forces freedom

of maneuver, provide leadership/ C2 and direction to subordinate cells, and avoid American

military strengths.

Critical Requirements (CR). From these critical capabilities we next can discern the

"conditions, resources, and means" essential for each operational COG to fully produce its

critical capabilities. Joint doctrine defines these as critical requirements. It is useful to

combine both operational COGs for this step since they share similar critical requirements.

These crucial means, resources, and conditions are compiled and summarized in Table 1

along with the results of the next part of this analysis, determining critical vulnerabilities.

The key elements that both the Suicide bombers and Sunni Insurgents require are

munitions with, more importantly, caches to store/ hide them until the insurgents choose to

employ them. Colonel Mike Steele, a U.S. Army brigade commander who's unit operated

extensively throughout Salah ah Din Province in 2006 explains that although there

undoubtedly exist thousands of tactical caches across Iraq, of utmost significance are those

large caches that feed regional networks of IED and VBIED cells. These, more often than

not, are found in the densely vegetated and compartmentalized farms along major river

valleys, or in remote desert areas where U.S. and Iraqi Security Forces, who concentrate their

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[25] Strange and Irons, 7

efforts on population centers, have difficulty operating or routinely choose not to.[26] These

same desert regions are where other key operational requirements for AQI thrive, such as

training camps, locations to detain hostages and kidnap victims, "factories" for making

VBIED/SVBIEDs, and safe havens for planning, respite, and other leadership essentials.

COL Steele's assessment was that the enemy was strongest where his forces we're not, and

that was in the vast desert, the enemy's operational enabler.[27]   Other critical requirements

include recruiting, both those for martyr actions and insurgent cells, communications

between insurgents and their leaders, access to Shia target areas (mosques and

neighborhoods), and overall Sunni support.

Critical Vulnerabilities (CV).   Joint doctrine defines critical vulnerabilities as critical

requirements, or components thereof that are in some way deficient and are thus vulnerable

to attack. In attacking, neutralizing, or defeating these vulnerabilities, one can either

immediately or cumulatively have a decisive impact on the enemy's COG.[28] (See Table 1)

The critical vulnerability for all AQI's operationally critical requirements that are tied to

remote, rural, or desert areas is the Sunni Bedouin tribal system. This is perhaps the most

significant operational vulnerability due to its extensive reach across all AQI's critical

capabilities and if properly exploited and attacked should bring decisive success. These areas

are where the Bedouin tribes live and where the tribal system provides what government for

centuries has been unable, or perhaps unwilling, to offer; basic services, rule of law, order,

etc.[29] Another critical vulnerability is revealed in General Abizaid's testimony to Congress

when he stated, "There is little popular support for these terrorists and foreign fighters, but

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[26] Steele briefing
[27] Steele briefing
[28] Strange, 8 and NWP 5-01, C-4
[29] Al-Shumari, Sheik Sabah, Sunni Bedouin tribal leader, from numerous conversations with author March 2007-October 2007 while a serving as a battalion commander in Iraq.

their ability to intimidate entire communities enables them to operate from constantly shifting

safe havens."[30] This testimony confirms that AQI must use coercion and terror to acquire

and maintain safe havens, as its extreme ideology is inconsistent with most Iraqis.

Additional critical vulnerabilities are those associated with recruiting, such as high

unemployment, which along with a struggling new form of government has fueled a feeling

of disenfranchisement among Sunnis and provided incentive to join insurgent groups.   AQIs

leaders must communicate and use non-secure means to do so, exposing yet another critical

vulnerability. To attack large gathering of Shia, bombers must have access to mosques and

neighborhoods, which is vulnerable to establishing security with credible ISF, replacing Shia

dependence on militias. Finally, AQI's critical operational weaknesses of not being able to

protect the Sunni population from retaliatory Shia militia attacks, and its inability to impose

Islamic law are also critical vulnerabilities since they counter AQI's ability to man and

finance its operations.

Impact of the Surge. As referenced in the introduction, there has been undeniably

significant improvement in Iraq's security situation, a trend that continues to date, with

average daily attacks on U.S. forces dropping from 180 in February 2007 to around 25 in

September 2008. U.S military fatalities are correspondingly down from 126 at the peak of

the surge to just 18 per month in August 2008. Additionally, there has been an 80% reduction

in civilian deaths since the surge troops began deploying to Iraq.[31] Through both his

testimonies to Congress, Gen Petraeus cites several key factors with achieving this turn-

around. In these reports, Gen Petraeus cites the positive impact of increased numbers of U.S.

and ISF and their employment in counter-insurgency (COIN) roles to secure the Iraq people,

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[30] Abizaid,15
[31] Righter, "How General Petraeus led Iraq out of its darkest moment"

as well as in offensive operations, assisted by elite counter-terrorism forces, to pursue AQI and reduce its sanctuaries.[32]

When viewed through our CG-CC-CR-CV analysis, one can arguably see how these surge forces specifically contributed to this successful turn-around. The operationally significant impact of surge forces was in attacking AQI's critical vulnerabilities associated with the following critical requirements; access to Shia mosques and neighborhoods, communications between insurgents and their leaders, and Sunni support. The surge of both U.S and ISF coupled with COIN principles created the capacity to secure Baghdad, the central front for ethno-sectarian violence, using "dozens of joint security stations"[33] thereby neutralizing AQI's access to Shia neighborhoods. This in-turn had to affect the ability of Shia militias to retaliate, thereby protecting the Sunni population. The additional forces also assisted special operations forces in exploiting intelligence from AQI's non secure communications to kill and capture close to 100 AQI leaders and around 2,500 insurgents. [34]

Through offensive operations, surge forces were also successful in attacking urban safe havens, discovering caches, as well as disrupting IED making facilities. This paper argues, however, that these contributions, though locally and collectively important, were only tactically significant since they were focused on population centers and not the desert, AQI's operational enabler.

Impact of the Sons of Iraq The successes in Al Anbar and Salah ah Din Provinces, conversely, had much less to do with the surge forces. Significant security improvements in Al Anbar began in September 2007, well before the first surge forces deployed there, and were mostly a result of the Sunni tribal awakening led by Sheik Sattar, a prominent and

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[32] Petraeus, "Testimony," House, 109th Cong., 1st sess., 2007 and House, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., 2008
[33] Petraeus, House, 109th, 2
[34] Petraeus, House, 109th 4

charismatic Sunni tribal leader. In fact, Al Anbar province saw its forces grow by only 2,000 troops during the surge months, and Salah ah Din province didn't receive any.[35] In his September 2007 report to Congress, Gen Petraeus confirmed that "the most significant development in the past 6 months likely has been the increasing emergence of tribes and local citizens rejecting Al Qaeda and other extremists".[36] By April 2008, Gen Petraeus described this movement as having "…prompted tens of thousands of Iraqis- some, former insurgents- to contribute to local security as so-called "Sons of Iraq". With their assistance and with relentless pursuit of Al Qaeda-Iraq, the threat posed by AQI-while still lethal and substantial- has been reduced significantly."[37] Data shows that the "Sons of Iraq" members have grown close to 100,000 to date, all under contract with U.S. forces, with each earning an average of $300 a month.[38]

Why the Sunni tribes started siding with the Americans to fight AQI is somewhat debatable and not the focus of this paper. Bing West, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for President Reagan and respected author on the war in Iraq, argues that is was the behavior of American troops over time, consistent with COIN principles, that caused a change in Sunni attitudes.   Although they had grown to hate AQI, they could not win the fight against it alone; they needed to unite with U.S. forces to do it.[39] More important, however, is what the "Sons of Iraq" were able to achieve. Again, by reviewing our CG-CC-CR-CV analysis, the specific reasons for success become clear.

The operationally significant contribution of the "Sons of Iraq" was in attacking AQI's critical vulnerabilities associated with its critical capabilities of munitions/caches,

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[35] Bing West
[36] Petraeus, 109th, 5
[37] Petraeus, 110th, 21
[38] West
[39] West

training camps, VBIED/SVBIED/IED factories, recruiting, financing, safe havens, and Sunni support.   By offering to pay Sunni tribesmen to protect their own villages, the U.S. military was reaching out to a population disenfranchised by its government and suffering under AQIs violence, intimidation, and attempts to impose Islamic law. It was the catalyst that allowed Bedouin tribal leaders to begin what they had long wanted to do, take back their towns, villages, and farms from AQI. Finally, the Sunnis had someone on their side. This and a $300 per month salary was enough to curb unemployed men from having to join the insurgency for subsistence, significantly hurting recruiting and directly diminishing AQIs operational COG. With means to retake their terrain and regain their honor, Sunni Bedouin tribes (AQI's overarching critical vulnerability) went into action. Knowing the locations of AQI munitions caches, training camps, bomb-making factories, prison cells, and safe houses, the "Sons of Iraq" directly attacked these critical requirements thereby neutralizing AQIs critical capabilities.

Conclusions

While many associate the recent successes in Iraq's security situation solely with President Bush's decision to deploy an additional 30,000 combat troops, there were actually several key factors that worked together to create this remarkable turn-around. To achieve his stated operational objectives (secure the Iraqi population, target terrorist groups and extremist militias, and gradually transition security tasks to Iraqi Security Forces) Gen Petraeus encouraged sound COIN fundamentals across Iraq, while employing the bulk of the surge forces, both U.S. and Iraqi, to secure Baghdad and its surrounding suburbs. When analyzed using a COG framework, one can see how this was operationally significant.

Through the implementation of multiple Joint Security Stations, surge forces displaced the need for citizens to rely on Shia militias for protection, a critical vulnerability, thus limiting Sunni insurgent and suicide bomber access to Shia neighborhoods and gathering places, a critical requirement for AQI. Additionally, ongoing offensive counter-terrorism operations, bolstered in part by additional conventional troops, focused on exploiting AQI's non-secure communications, a critical vulnerability, to track down, kill or capture insurgent leaders, an obvious critical requirement for AQI's success.

Most significant, however, was the recognition and support, both moral and financial of the Sunni tribal awakenings. These movements gained significant momentum, evolving into what is now collectively known as the "Sons of Iraq", responsible for the most operationally significant contributions to recent security successes. By enabling Sunni tribes to secure the areas where they live, the U.S. Military was able to significantly extend its operational reach to where it previously could not routinely operate, and where AQI was thriving. By exploiting the knowledge and capacity of the Sunni Bedouin tribes, AQI's most considerable critical vulnerability, the U.S. Military was able to attack AQIs ability to store and build bombs, train, recruit, finance, seek refuge, and plan its operations; all critical requirements for AQI's operational success.

*The true value of center of gravity may be the framework the concept provides for
thinking about war. In other words, the process of determining centers of gravity may be as
Important as the product..Milan Vego*

Recommendations

Two key recommendations emerge as a result of this research effort. First, this paper

validates the usefulness of COG analysis in the current operating environment, one

characterized by increasing global awareness, growing numbers of non-state actors, a viable

global terrorist threat, and a tendency towards COIN operations.   Although this paper

acknowledges that using the COG framework may not in itself be the modern day "holy

grail", it does strongly recommend that operational planners consider using this useful tool to

effectively focus limited national resources toward achieving operational and strategic

objectives.

Secondly, this process proved useful in highlighting the contributions that were

operationally paramount in achieving the recent security gains in Iraq. If correct, this effort

identified the "Sons of Iraq" as the key and essential ingredient to Iraq's turn-around, one

that has possibly become Iraq's operational COG for maintaining security, and which must

be preserved.   Accordingly, the proposed plan to transition "Sons of Iraq" members into the

ISF or other forms of employment has arguably become the critical vulnerability in

sustaining recent security gains. This paper strongly recommends that both the U.S. Military

and the GOI recognize the critical requirement to conscientiously manage the transition to

properly and deliberately reintegrate these young Sunni men into Iraq's future. Failure to

protect this critical vulnerability puts everything at risk.

AQI CG (Operational)	CC
• Suicide Bombers/ Martyrs • Sunni Insurgency/ Mujahedeen	• Create fear amongst the Shia • Incite Shia militias retaliation • Discredit GOI's ability to secure Shia • Limit Sunni support for ISF • Limit ISFs effectiveness • Disrupt U.S. Forces FOM • Provide leadership/C2 to cells • Avoid American military strengths.
CR	CV
• Munitions/ caches • Training Camps • VBIED/SVBIED/ IED factories • Recruiting • Access to Shia Mosques/ neighborhoods • Communications between insurgents and leaders • Financing • Safe havens • Sunni Support	• Large caches require space, desert tribes know/control these areas • Large, remote area required, desert tribes know/control these areas • Difficult to keep secret, need space and/or always have to move. Desert tribes know/control areas • Unemployment, disenfranchisement, rely on "enemy of my enemy is my friend" • Security provided by Shia militias, can replace with neutral U.S.Forces and credible ISF • Non secure communications, can be exploited and used to kill/capture leaders • Kidnapping for ransom requires remote deserts "jails", desert tribes know/ control areas • Desert tribal areas, gained through coercion, Islamic law not wanted • Shia Militia retaliation, can't protect their Operational COG

Table 1: Summary of CG-CC-CR-CV Analysis

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