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**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED? REBUILDING THE IRAQI  
AND AFGHAN ARMIES**

by

James F. Beal

June 2016

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

James Russell  
Daniel Moran

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE June 2016	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED? REBUILDING THE IRAQI AND AFGHAN ARMIES			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) James F. Beal				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT  The two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated that the U.S. military must be prepared to conduct foreign security force assistance missions as a major element of the U.S. national security strategy. This thesis is a study of the United States' attempt to build strong central armies in Iraq and Afghanistan in the midst of a larger nation-building effort. Following the collapse of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes, the U.S. military was tasked to rebuild the national armies of Afghanistan and Iraq. Since the departure of U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011 and the withdrawal of combat advisors from Afghanistan in 2014, the Islamic State has gained control of significant territory in Iraq including Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, while the Taliban and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan control 30 percent of Afghan districts. The purpose of this thesis is to explain why, despite \$60 billion and more than a decade of military advisory efforts, the Iraqi and Afghan national armies are not unified sustainable forces loyal to the central government and capable of defending their territories from internal and external threats. There are four key premises as to why the Iraqi and Afghan armies have not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army: failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, creation of an army in the Western image rather than an army that meets the needs of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Iraq, Afghanistan, Iraqi Army, Afghanistan National Army, ANA, ISF, IA, counterinsurgency, COIN, military advisor, legitimacy, nation-building			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 103	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED? REBUILDING THE IRAQI AND AFGHAN  
ARMIES**

James F. Beal  
Major, United States Marine Corps  
B.A., University of Memphis, 1999

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
June 2016**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated that the U.S. military must be prepared to conduct foreign security force assistance missions as a major element of the U.S. national security strategy. This thesis is a study of the United States' attempt to build strong central armies in Iraq and Afghanistan in the midst of a larger nation-building effort. Following the collapse of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes, the U.S. military was tasked to rebuild the national armies of Afghanistan and Iraq. Since the departure of U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011 and the withdrawal of combat advisors from Afghanistan in 2014, the Islamic State has gained control of significant territory in Iraq including Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, while the Taliban and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant–Khorasan control 30 percent of Afghan districts. The purpose of this thesis is to explain why, despite \$60 billion and more than a decade of military advisory efforts, the Iraqi and Afghan national armies are not unified sustainable forces loyal to the central government and capable of defending their territories from internal and external threats. There are four key premises as to why the Iraqi and Afghan armies have not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army: failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, creation of an army in the Western image rather than an army that meets the needs of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>METHODS AND SOURCES.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>G.</b>	<b>THESIS OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>SHORTFALLS OF THE MILITARY ADVISOR ARE INSUFFICIENT TO EXPLAIN THE FAILURES OF THE IRAQI AND AFGHAN ARMIES.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>MISSION TO REBUILD THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>CURRENT SITUATION .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL ARMY.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>PREMISE ONE: POLITICAL FAILURE TO ACHIEVE LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNANCE .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>PREMISE TWO: LACK OF MOTIVATION AND WILL TO FIGHT.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>PREMISE THREE: AN ARMY IN OUR IMAGE, RATHER THAN AN ARMY SUITED FOR AFGHANISTAN.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>PREMISE FOUR: LACK OF LONG-TERM U.S. STRATEGY AND COMMITMENT .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>G.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>MISSION TO REBUILD THE IRAQI ARMY .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>CURRENT SITUATION— POST U.S. OCCUPATION .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE IRAQI ARMY .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>PREMISE ONE: POLITICAL FAILURE TO ACHIEVE LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNANCE .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>PREMISE TWO: LACK OF MOTIVATION AND WILL TO FIGHT.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>PREMISE THREE: AN ARMY IN OUR IMAGE, RATHER THAN AN ARMY SUITED FOR IRAQ.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>PREMISE FOUR: LACK OF LONG-TERM U.S. STRATEGY AND COMMITMENT .....</b>	<b>67</b>

<b>G.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CONFLICTS .....</b>	<b>77</b>
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>81</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>89</b>

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

3d MARDIV	3rd Marine Division
ANA	Afghanistan National Army
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense Security Forces
ANSF	Afghanistan National Security Forces
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
ATC	Advisor Training Cell
ATG	Advisor Training Group
CAS	close air support
CNA	Center for Naval Analysis
COIN	counterinsurgency
COR	Council of Representatives
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CT	counter-terrorist
CTSC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
IDAD	Internal Defense and Development
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIL-K	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant–Khorasan
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
MAGTF	Marine Air Ground Task Force
MCSCG	Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group
MCTAG	Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group
MNSTC-I	Multi National Security Transition Command–Iraq
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MRAP	Mine Resistant Ambush Protected
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan
OCINC	Office of the Commander-in-Chief

PMF	Popular Mobilization Force
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
SCETC	Security, Cooperation, Education, and Training Center
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction
SIGIR	Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOI	Sons of Iraq
TTPs	tactics, techniques, and procedures
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
USF-I	U.S. Forces–Iraq
USFOR-A	U.S. Forces–Afghanistan

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank Professors James Russell and Daniel Moran for their wisdom, guidance, and direction throughout the thesis process. I would also like to thank Professor Tom Johnson for his invaluable insights into counterinsurgency operations and expertise on Afghanistan. And last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my fellow officers, Roz, KJ, Kirk, Denny, Liz, Sean, and Bre, whose camaraderie and friendship made the time at Naval Postgraduate School an incredible experience.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explain why, despite \$60 billion and more than a decade of military advisory efforts, the Iraqi and Afghan national armies are not unified sustainable forces loyal to the central government and capable of defending their territories from internal and external threats.

## B. BACKGROUND

The two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated that the U.S. military must be prepared to conduct foreign security force assistance missions as a major element of the U.S. national security strategy. Following the collapse of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes, the U.S. military was tasked to rebuild the national armies of Afghanistan and Iraq. The growth of the Islamic State in Iraq since 2014 has demonstrated that the Iraqi Army has been unable to establish and maintain security and stability throughout the entire country following the departure of U.S. forces. Limited success against the Islamic State in Iraq has been as a result of a mix of Shi'a and Sunni militias, Kurdish *Peshmerga*, Iraqi Army, and coalition air power, not a unified Iraqi Army under the control of the Iraqi central government.<sup>1</sup> In Afghanistan, as of January 2016, 71% of the country's districts are under Afghan government control leaving the other 29% to be under control or influence of insurgent groups, chiefly the Taliban or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant–Khorasan (ISIL-K).<sup>2</sup> The ability of the Afghanistan National Army to provide security and stability in the absence of U.S. and coalition forces will be further demonstrated as the mission in Afghanistan continues to wind down. Commander of U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR-A) General John Campbell and National Intelligence Director James Clapper have both concluded that continued fighting

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Martin et al., "Iraq Control of Terrain Map: February 9, 2016," Institute for the Study of War, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20Blobby%20map%2009%20FEBRUARY%202016.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, January 30, 2016* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, 2016), 69, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2016-01-30qr.pdf>.



and a deteriorating security situation will make 2016 a worse year than 2015 in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

### C. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The significance of the research question is to gain a better understanding of the capabilities and limitations of what can be achieved through the military advisory mission to build, train, equip, and support the sustainment of a partnered foreign military in the achievement of U.S. national security objectives. Facilitating the security of our allies and partners around the world has been an enduring task of our national security decision makers dating back more than a century. In his article, “Helping Others Defend Themselves,” former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wrote: “Helping other countries better provide for their own security will be a key and enduring test of U.S. global leadership and a critical part of protecting U.S. security, as well. Improving the way the U.S. government executes this vital mission must be an important national priority.”<sup>4</sup> Throughout the last century, the U.S. military has learned and relearned the tremendously challenging and complex mission of military advising. The U.S. military has demonstrated exceptional innovation when faced with new challenges that requires the skillset of the military advisor. However, the U.S. military must gain a better understanding of the mission of foreign security force through a thorough analysis of the deficit between the expectation of what can be achieved and the actual outcome of foreign security force capability and capacity. The U.S. military’s role in foreign security force assistance will continue to be an enduring mission as a large part of the U.S. national security strategy.

The doctrine of the military advisor and foreign security force assistance was a key element of the U.S. and coalition force’s mission in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Building, training, equipping, and supporting the Iraqi and Afghan national armies to

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<sup>3</sup> *Assessing the Capabilities and Effectiveness of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Armed Services, 114th Cong., 2 (2016)* (statement of John F. Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), 2, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-16-17-TY.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Robert M. Gates, “Helping Others Defend Themselves,” *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2010): 11.

assume the lead responsibility of security was a critical element of the U.S. strategy in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The doctrine of the military advisor and foreign security force assistance reflects the importance of political, as well as military development. Joint Publication 3–22: Foreign Internal Defense states that “the construct of an Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) program should integrate security force and civilian actions into a comprehensive effort.”<sup>5</sup> Joint Publication 3–22 further states that “military activities in support of Foreign Internal Defense requirements are integrated into concepts and plans from the strategic level down to the tactical level.”<sup>6</sup>

Building the capacity of our partners and allies through foreign security force advisory and assistance programs is a critical element of our national security strategy and the mission of the U.S. Department of Defense. In the 2015 National Security Strategy, President Barack Obama wrote: “The United States will build the capacity of the most vulnerable states and communities to defeat terrorists locally. Working with Congress, we will train and equip local partners and provide operational support to gain ground against terrorist groups.”<sup>7</sup> The importance of building the capacity of our allies and partners through security force assistance and military advising in the President’s National Security Strategy has been echoed in the Quadrennial Defense Reviews (QDR) since they began being published in 1997. In the 2010 QDR, one of the key initiatives in shaping the force was that we will build the capacity of partner states. The QDR stated that a key initiative was to institutionalize and reform security force assistance in the general purpose force.<sup>8</sup> Building partner nation capacity was further stated in the 2015 Commandant of the Marine Corps’ Planning Guidance. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Joseph Dunford, wrote: “Building partner nation capacity is a key capability of forward-deployed MAGTFs (Marine Air Ground Task Force) and we must clearly define our capabilities and determine our institutional capacity for what is an

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Defense, *Foreign Internal Defense*, Joint Publication 3–22 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010), xi.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>7</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Defense, *2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Briefing* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), slide 7.

increasingly important component of the National Defense Strategy.” In his article titled “A Balanced Strategy,” former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates underscored the importance of building the capacity of our partner governments and their security forces to support U.S. national security interests:

Where possible, U.S. strategy must employ indirect approaches—primarily through building the capacity of governments and their security forces—to prevent festering problems from turning into crisis that require costly and controversial direct military intervention. In this kind of effort, the capabilities of the United States’ allies and partners may be as important as its own, and building their capacity is arguably as important as, if not more so than, the fighting the United States does itself.<sup>9</sup>

#### **D. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES**

The major problem addressed by this thesis is to explain why, despite \$60 billion and more than a decade of military advisory efforts, the Iraqi and Afghan national armies are not unified, sustainable forces loyal to the central government and capable of defending their territories from internal and external threats. There are two hypotheses that can be formulated by a comparison of the U.S. military’s efforts to rebuild the national armies of Iraq and Afghanistan. The first hypothesis is that the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan armies are a result of insufficient doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to select, train, organize, deploy, and employ combat advisors to partnered foreign security forces. The second hypothesis predicts that the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan armies is due to the internal domestic situation within those countries and a failure of the U.S. government and military to develop a strategy without a thorough understanding of the historical context, cultural landscape, resources, capabilities, and limitations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Both of these hypotheses have important implications for the U.S. military in preparing for future conflicts. The military advisor mission will continue to be an important task that the U.S. military will be required to perform in support of our partners and allies to achieve our national security objectives. According to the National Security Strategy of the United States, the U.S. military will continue to provide training,

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<sup>9</sup> Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* (January–February 2009).

equipment, and operational support to improve the capabilities and capacities of our partners to combat terrorism.<sup>10</sup> If the first hypothesis is correct, the U.S. military must conduct a thorough review of the doctrine and TTPs for the selection, training, and deployment of military advisors. If the second hypothesis is correct, the U.S. military must be able to use the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan as a framework to fully understand the importance of history, cultural landscape, resources, capabilities, and limitations and its importance in the development of a military strategy.

## **E. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This thesis evaluates the U.S. military's approach to the development of Iraqi and Afghan national armies. The thesis develops hypotheses to explain the deficit between the expectation of what could be achieved and the actual outcome in the development of Iraqi and Afghan security force capability and capacity. The outcome of this research can help explain how the U.S. military can better conduct the military advising mission in support of building partner nation capacity in the Middle East. In addition to a comparative analysis of the mission to re-build the Iraqi and Afghan national armies, this thesis will evaluate national security strategy and Department of Defense strategic documents to formulate how the U.S. military's military advising mission can better support the national security strategy and the objective of building partner nation capability and capacity.

The 9/11 attacks resulted in the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Though both Iraq and Afghanistan had very different regimes, militaries, and security forces, they are both similar in that following the toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Saddam regime in Iraq, the countries were both left with a vacuum of any semblance of forces to provide security. In late 2001, the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. Special Operations Command would provide support and operate alongside the Northern Alliance to capture Kabul and Kandahar and topple the Taliban regime leaving virtually no security forces to support the new Hamid Karzai

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<sup>10</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy*, 9.

government.<sup>11</sup> Following the successful invasion of Iraq and the toppling of the Saddam regime in 2003, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), L. Paul Bremer signed CPA Order Number 1 and 2. CPA Order 1 would direct the de-Ba'athification of Iraqi society and sought to prevent members of Saddam's Ba'ath Party from returning to positions of power in the new Iraqi government. CPA Order 2 would direct the disbandment of the old Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>12</sup> CPA 1 and 2 would leave Iraq with no government leadership or security forces other than that of U.S. and coalition forces.

During the campaign in Iraq, U.S. and coalition forces would be charged with rebuilding the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) from scratch following the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime and the disbandment of the old Iraqi Army. During the planning for the invasion of Iraq, the assumption was made that the Iraqi security forces would capitulate and be available to be reorganized to support law enforcement and security missions following the fall of the Saddam regime.<sup>13</sup> Following the toppling of the Saddam regime, there would be no security forces to fill the void and help establish security and stability in Iraq. U.S. and coalition forces would be tasked with rebuilding all Iraqi security forces from scratch, including both the army and the police. In 2004, the coalition forces would establish the Multi National Security Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC-I) with the mission to pull all elements of the ISF training mission under one command.<sup>14</sup> In 2005, MNSTC-I would gain the additional responsibility to mentor and provide assistance in building the capacity of the Ministries of Defense and Interior.<sup>15</sup> The goal of the ISF training mission was to facilitate the training of ISF to enable transition of security responsibilities to Iraqis. MNSTC-I would be tasked with providing trainers and advisors from the institutional level at the Ministries of Defense and Interior all the way down to the tactical level at the Iraqi battalions.

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<sup>11</sup> Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic, 2002), 338.

<sup>12</sup> Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace*, 339.

<sup>13</sup> Catherine Marie Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress* (CRS Report No. RL34387) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008), 59, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/101771.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

Throughout the ISF training mission in Iraq, U.S. and coalition forces would encounter a number of similar challenges. Among these challenges would be that operations at the tactical level would improve dramatically in a very short period of time, but the logistics and upper echelon planning capabilities at the ministerial levels could not survive the departure of U.S. advisors and the loss of U.S. influence at the political level.<sup>16</sup> Another challenge noted was after the departure of U.S. advisors, the ISF reverted back to the military culture of the Saddam era rather than accept the U.S. model under which they had been trained by U.S. and coalition advisors.<sup>17</sup> Reversion to the old Iraqi military culture resulted in two major outcomes that would limit the effectiveness of the ISF: increased divisions within the ISF along sectarian, ethnic, and tribal lines rather than allegiance to the state and the military chain of command and increasing centralized command and control that was not conducive to independent security operations.<sup>18</sup>

Beginning in 2004, the U.S. military was tasked with building the Iraqi Army from scratch. The U.S. military provided advisor teams to train, mentor, and advise the Iraqi Army from the battalion-level to the division-level.<sup>19</sup> These advisors “participated in a wide variety of activities—from advising their counterparts on administrative procedures to patrolling with them in Iraqi streets.”<sup>20</sup> As the Iraqi Army became more and more capable of independent operations, the advisor team’s mission evolved. The advisor teams at the battalion level focused more on staff functions, logistical support and planning, and command and control.<sup>21</sup> At the brigade and division levels, the advisor teams focused on high-level staff functions, leadership, and sustainment of their subordinate forces.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, Sam Khazai, and Daniel Dewit, *Shaping Iraq’s Security Forces* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> William Rosenau et al., *United States Marine Corps Advisors: Past, Present, and Future* (Alexandria, VA: CNA, 2013), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 36.

The advisory and assistance mission in Afghanistan would be similar to that of Iraq in the building of security forces from scratch; however, the key difference was that there were no professional standing security forces or army in Afghanistan before the fall of the Taliban regime. Samuel Chan, in “Sentinel’s for Afghan Democracy,” wrote: “Afghanistan has not had a national army since its fragmentation and subsequent disintegration after the collapse of Dr. Mohammed Najibullah’s Soviet-backed regime in 1992.”<sup>23</sup> The history of Afghanistan over the past century includes four instances of total disintegration of the military due to foreign invasion or civil war.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the history of Afghanistan, the government relied on tribal militia augmentation into the national army to fight foreign invasion or domestic disturbance.<sup>25</sup> The process of forming a professional standing military was severely limited by the tribal and ethnic schism within Afghan society. Ali Jalalai, former Afghan Army Colonel and top military planner with the resistance movement to the Soviet invasion, stated that “primacy of tribal and local loyalty among the soldiers impaired the army’s commitment to the government’s cause.”<sup>26</sup> The integration of the tribal militias into the Afghanistan security force structure would be a major challenge for U.S. and coalition forces in building a national army.

The first common challenge faced by all military advisory efforts was the selection of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines to be assigned as advisors. Retired Lieutenant Colonel James Willbanks, the Director of the Department of Military History at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and advisor in Vietnam in 1971, provided a summary of the literature on selection of military advisors. Willbanks wrote,

Part of establishing a viable and effective advisory effort is selecting and training the right personnel to meet the unique demands of the advisory mission; not everyone has the training, experience, maturity, temperament to be an effective advisor. The selection of officers and non-commissioned

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Chan, “Sentinels for Afghan Democracy: The Afghan National Army” (working paper, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 2007), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ali A. Jalali, “Rebuilding Afghanistan’s National Army,” *Parameters* 32, no. 3 (autumn 2002): 72.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

officers to be advisors must involve a conscious policy to find the right personnel to fill these critical assignments.<sup>27</sup>

During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the selection of advisors would vary widely. The U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps all contributed forces in support of the military advisory mission. To limit the scope of this thesis, research on the selection, training, and deployment of the Marine Corps advisors was chosen. The literature supports that although the Marine Corps made attempts to assign the right Marines to advisor billets, the large number of advisor billets and competing combat deployment requirements demanded in Iraq and Afghanistan did not always make this possible. The Center for Naval Analysis study on U.S. Marine Corps advisors stated that “the USMC struggled with how to screen for and impart ‘soft skills’ needed to be successful as a foreign military advisor...the 3d MARDIV (3rd Marine Division) looked for advisors with good interpersonal skills, the ability to build enduring relationships, and a proven track record in training and instruction.”<sup>28</sup> The author’s own experience in selection of military advisors was that they would largely be drawn simply from those that were available. The selection and assignment of Marines to advisor missions would be based on tasking a unit to fill a certain number of Marines of certain ranks and military occupational specialties to serve as advisors without regard for suitability to serve as an advisor.

The pre-deployment training of Marines assigned to advisor missions in Iraq and Afghanistan varied widely. There are accounts of teams having only a few weeks of pre-deployment training at organizations such as Security, Cooperation, Education, and Training Center (SCETC) and the Advisor Training Cells (ATCs) resident with the Marine Expeditionary Forces.<sup>29</sup> Many of these accounts were in the early years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the mission expanded and progressed, the pre-deployment training became more formalized and extensive through organizations such as the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group (MCTAG) and the Advisor Training

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<sup>27</sup> James H. Willbanks, “The Evolution of the U.S. Advisory Effort in Viet Nam: Lessons Learned,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 29 (2009).

<sup>28</sup> Rosenau et al., *Marine Corps Advisors*, 73.

<sup>29</sup> From the author’s personal experience as an advisor to the Iraqi Army in 2006.



Group (ATG) at Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms.<sup>30</sup> In Iraq, Marine advisor teams attended the U.S. Army-run Phoenix Academy in Taji, Iraq.<sup>31</sup> The Phoenix Academy provided further training on advisory and counterinsurgency tactics, techniques, and procedures.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, in 2011, the Marine Corps would stand up the Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG). MCSCG would replace ATG as the gatekeeper of institutional expertise on foreign advisor training, although foreign advising is just one aspect of their larger mission to support the security cooperation initiatives of the U.S. Marine Corps.<sup>33</sup> One notable example of institutionalized pre-deployment advisor training came from the 3rd Marine Division during the early years in Afghanistan. 3rd Marine Division would become a “repository of knowledge on advising and operations in eastern Afghanistan.”<sup>34</sup> The resident knowledge within 3rd Marine Division would become an important element of pre-deployment training and smooth transition between its advisors in Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup>

To explain the deficit between what the U.S. military was tasked to accomplish and what they were able to actually accomplish in building the capability and capacity of Iraqi and Afghan security forces, there must be a study of techniques and practices of effective military advisors. As part of this thesis, an important area of research is what makes an effective advisor and advisor team. The literature in this area has included studies in military advising missions throughout Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Although there are vast differences in cultures, values, and political and military conditions, there are common skills and techniques of effective military advisors. The first and most critical requirement of the effective military advisor is a thorough understanding of the language and culture of their counterparts.<sup>36</sup> The thorough

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<sup>30</sup> Rosenau et al., *Marine Corps Advisors*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> From the author’s personal experience as an advisor to the Iraqi Army in 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group, “Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group,” n.d., <http://www.mcscg.marines.mil/>.

<sup>34</sup> Rosenau et al., *Marine Corps Advisors*, 63.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2006), iii.

understanding of language and culture will provide the advisor with context for which he can adapt training and advisory techniques to suit the local conditions. A second requirement of the effective military advisor is the ability to “adapt U.S. organizational concepts, training techniques, and tactics to local conditions.”<sup>37</sup> A third key requirement is the ability of the advisor to establish rapport, increasing the likelihood that their “counterpart will accept and act on his advice.”<sup>38</sup> Although linked to the language and culture training of the advisor, the advisor must be able to understand, and work within, the values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns of their foreign counterparts.<sup>39</sup> The final aspect of effective military advisors is their individual personal and professional traits such as military proficiency, patience, persistence, personal conduct, professionalism, and willingness to accept hardship.<sup>40</sup> A key element common among all literature on military advisors is that a good Marine is not necessarily a good advisor. Particular skills and personality traits are required to be effective as a military advisor and should be screened for during the selection process.

In addition to the selection, training, and deploying of effective advisors and advisor teams, the doctrine of advising and foreign security force assistance was a key element of the U.S. and coalition force’s mission in Iraq and Afghanistan. The doctrine of advising and foreign security force assistance reflects the importance of political, as well as military, development. Joint Publication 3–22: Foreign Internal Defense states that “the construct of an Internal Defense and Development program should integrate security force and civilian actions into a comprehensive effort.”<sup>41</sup>

The literature on the war in Afghanistan since 2001, particularly the building and sustainment of the Afghanistan National Army, has focused on the challenges the army faces based largely on the challenges from the society from which it is drawn. These challenges include legitimacy of governance; traditional relationship between local,

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<sup>37</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, iii.

<sup>38</sup> G. C. Hickey and W. P. Davidson, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart: The Case of Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1965), v.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>40</sup> Rosenau et al., *Marine Corps Advisors*, 87.

<sup>41</sup> Department of Defense, *Foreign Internal Defense*, xi.

tribal, and central governments; and pervasive corruption. A major problem within Afghanistan that has resulted from the U.S. invasion and subsequent nation-building efforts has focused on the issue of legitimacy of governance. The U.S. and coalition forces sought to establish a legitimate government based on elections; however, a legitimate central government based on elections eliminated or marginalized the only two culturally acceptable sources of legitimacy in Afghanistan: traditional or religious.<sup>42</sup> The second major issue throughout the literature in Afghanistan is the relationship between the local, tribal, and central governments. The composition and functions of the government in Afghanistan requires a balance achieved between the top-down power of the central government and the bottom-up power of the local tribal and *jirga* leadership. Leadership and governance at the local level have been viewed by the Afghan people as not only legitimate but just.<sup>43</sup> A final major topic throughout the literature on Afghanistan is the pervasiveness of corruption by the patron-client structure in the Afghan government and society. Corruption is so pervasive because the leadership of Afghanistan has been unable to overcome their disposition for infighting and placing personal desires above national unity and stability.<sup>44</sup>

The literature on the war in Iraq and the subsequent nation-building efforts since 2003 has primarily focused on the ethno-sectarian conflict among its Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurdish communities. The intercommunal conflict in Iraq was largely due to long-held animosities between them that were exacerbated by U.S. government's disbandment of the old Iraqi Army and the removal of the Sunni ruling elite through be-Ba'athification laws.<sup>45</sup> Much of the literature on the war in Iraq and the development of the Iraqi Army stressed that: "Success of Iraqi force development depends at least as much on Iraqi

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<sup>42</sup> M. Chris Mason, *The Strategic Lessons Unlearned from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan: Why the Afghan National Security Forces Will Not Hold, and the Implications for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, 2015), 141.

<sup>43</sup> Jennifer Brick, "The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan," (Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Central Eurasian Studies Society, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), xv.

<sup>45</sup> Oren Barak, "Dilemmas of Security in Iraq," *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 4 (December 2007): Abstract.

political progress as on the strength and quality of Iraqi forces.”<sup>46</sup> A final major characterization of the attempt to build the Iraqi Army throughout much of the literature is the division of loyalties to family, tribe, or religious sect over that of loyalty to the Iraqi central government. This division of loyalties was highlighted by the collapse of the Iraqi Army Second Division at Mosul in the face of numerically-inferior and far less equipped fighters of the Islamic State. The Iraqi Army Second Division, made up predominately of Sunni and Kurdish soldiers, ultimately opted to defend their families and their territories rather than battle the Islamic State under the command of the Iraqi central government.<sup>47</sup>

In the study of the re-building of the Iraqi and Afghan national armies, it was important to study the construction of national militaries in contentious ethnic and conflict-ridden societies. The challenge of building a military in a contentious ethnic and conflict-ridden society often results in a military divided along sectarian lines threatens national unity and reconciliation.<sup>48</sup>

The final major area of literature to help understand the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan national armies is the U.S. military’s doctrine on counterinsurgencies and foreign security force assistance. An analysis of the efforts to rebuild the Iraqi and Afghan armies must be looked at through the lens of past insurgencies. A review of the historical principles of counterinsurgencies is important to evaluate the U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the most relevant to the construction of national armies loyal to the central government capable of defending their territories from internal and external threats are: “legitimacy is the main objective,” “political factors are primary,” “security under the rule of law is essential,” and “prepare for a long-term commitment.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman and Adam Mausner, *Iraqi Force Development: Conditions for Success and Consequences for Failure* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 6.

<sup>47</sup> Sarah Lord and Tony Ghazal Mouawad, *National Security in Divided Societies: A Comparative Case Study on the Reconstruction of the Lebanese and Iraqi Armies* (Washington, DC: Institute for Middle East Studies, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington Univ., 2015), 32.

<sup>48</sup> Anne Marie Baylouny, “Building an Integrated Military in Post-Conflict Societies: Lebanon,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristina Matei (London: Routledge, 2012), 251.

<sup>49</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency* (FM 3–24) (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), 1–21–24.

Further examination is needed to explain the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan national armies and their ability to defend their territories from internal and external threats. Are their failures due to the shortfalls in doctrine and employment of the military advisor team or is it due to the internal domestic situation within those countries and a failure of the U.S. government and military to develop a strategy without a thorough understanding of the historical context, cultural landscape, resources, capabilities, and limitations of Iraq and Afghanistan?

## **F. METHODS AND SOURCES**

This thesis uses a comparative case study approach, comparing the U.S. military's missions of building the Iraqi and Afghan national armies to examine the similarities between two armies that despite significant time and resources have largely been unable to defend their territories from internal and external threats. The case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan were chosen because of their many similarities and based on the author's personal experience as a military advisor in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, they present two versions of a similar problem. In both cases, the U.S. military was tasked to rebuild a military from scratch following the collapse of the previous regime in the midst of an insurgency and both occurring at approximately the same time.

This thesis will use a variety of sources to scholarly journals, policy papers, U.S. government documents including Congressional Research Service reports, and reports from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) and Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR). In addition, this thesis will use U.S. military doctrinal publications to more fully understand the U.S. military and government's role and approach to foreign security force assistance and counterinsurgencies.

## **G. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis is divided into six chapters using the case study and comparative analysis format. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter II explains why the shortfalls of the military advisor and the conduct of the military advisory mission are

insufficient to explain the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan national armies. Chapter III is an analysis of the case study of Afghanistan and the U.S. military efforts to construct the Afghanistan National Army. Chapter IV provides a case study of Iraq and the U.S. military efforts to construct the Iraqi Army. Chapter V is a comparative analysis between the case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan. Chapter VI is the conclusion and outlines implications for future conflicts.

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## **II. SHORTFALLS OF THE MILITARY ADVISOR ARE INSUFFICIENT TO EXPLAIN THE FAILURES OF THE IRAQI AND AFGHAN ARMIES**

Anthony Cordesman from the Center for International and Security Studies in *Iraqi Force Development* wrote, “The most important developments in making Iraqi forces effective has nothing to do with the forces themselves or with the nature of the U.S. support or advisory effort. Rather, they are about the ability to create levels of political compromise and conciliation that deprive the insurgency and Iraq’s civil conflicts of their popular base.”<sup>50</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to explain why, despite \$60 billion and more than a decade of military advisory efforts, the Iraqi and Afghan national armies are not unified, sustainable forces loyal to the central government and capable of defending their territories from internal and external threats. The first hypothesis is that the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan armies are a result of insufficient doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures to select, train, organize, deploy, and employ combat advisors to partnered foreign security forces. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the performance of the armies with embedded advisors and coalition enabler support were superior to those without. The superior performance of the Iraqi and Afghan armies with embedded advisors and coalition enabler support provides evidence to support the hypothesis that the failures of their armies were not attributed to shortfalls in doctrine and TTPs of the military advisory effort. This section will provide evidence against the hypothesis by a review of the capabilities and performance assessments of the Iraqi and Afghan armies with advisors and coalition support measured against those without.

The Afghanistan National Army (ANA) with embedded advisors and coalition support enablers such as close air support, fire support, medical evacuation, logistics, and intelligence achieved higher levels of capabilities and performance than those without. In 2014, all military advisors were pulled out of ANA units and remained only at the most

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<sup>50</sup> Cordesman and Mausner, *Iraqi Force Development*, 6.



senior levels of the ANA and Ministry of Defense (MoD).<sup>51</sup> In his testimony before the U.S. Congress, John F. Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, stated that “without the strong monitoring and mentoring arm of U.S. and coalition troops to help, it is increasingly unlikely they will develop into a robust and sustainable force. SIGAR has found that the capability of Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF) units regressed when deprived of U.S. or Coalition assistance.”<sup>52</sup> The regression of ANA capability when left without advisors and coalition enabler support has been echoed in SIGAR Quarterly Reports since 2010. SIGAR reporting stated that once units were deemed capable of independent operations, there was “significant levels of backsliding in their capability levels.”<sup>53</sup> SIGAR attributed this backsliding to the withdrawal of advisors and coalition enabler support once ANA units were assessed as being able to operate independently by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).<sup>54</sup> In “The Afghan National Army After ISAF,” Antonio Guistozi and Ali Mohammad Ali wrote that the ANA will show significant decay in their capabilities once the ANA no longer had embedded advisors. Guistozi and Ali wrote that eight out of nine ANA officers had positive views and enjoyed the support and advice given to them by advisors and that the presence of advisors was a psychological boost because of the advice and enabler support they were able to provide.<sup>55</sup> ANA officers also had positive views of their advisors because they were able to limit corruption within the ANA and were able to inform Kabul through the ISAF chain of command of the problems within the ANA.<sup>56</sup> In January 2014, the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) published the “Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces.” This assessment concluded that “international enabler support—to include

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<sup>51</sup> Antonio Guistozi and Ali Mohammad Ali, *The Afghan National Army after ISAF* (Afghanistan: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2016), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Sopko, *Assessing the Afghan National Defense*, 14–15.

<sup>53</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, October 30, 2015* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, 2015), 87, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2015-10-30qr.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Guistozi and Ali, *Afghan National Army after ISAF*, 5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

advisors—will be essential to ANSF success through at least 2018” and that “if the U.S. and NATO do not maintain a training and advisory mission in Afghanistan, the absence of advisors in 2015 is likely to result in a downward spiral of ANSF capabilities—along with security in Afghanistan.”<sup>57</sup> The importance of advisors and enabler support to the success of the ANA were demonstrated during recent operations in Kunduz. During operations in Kunduz, U.S.-provided close air support and Special Operations Forces advisors were vital in support of the Afghan National Security Forces’ efforts to retake the city from the Taliban.<sup>58</sup> In Afghanistan, the evidence supports that the ANA achieved higher levels of capability and performance with advisors and enabler support. The decay of capabilities of the ANA when uncovered from advisor and coalition enabler support supports the hypothesis that the failures of the ANA is not due to shortfalls of the military advisor, doctrine, and TTPs of the advisor mission.

As with Afghanistan, the Iraqi Army achieved higher levels of capability and performance when partnered with advisors and received U.S. and coalition enabler support. As reported by the Congressional Research Service in “Iraqi Politics and Governance,” at the time of the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, the 350,000-strong Iraqi Army was assessed as a “relatively well-trained and disciplined force” and “relatively well armed, utilizing heavy armor supplied by the United States.”<sup>59</sup> In the October 2011 Report to Congress, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction would report that U.S. Forces–Iraq (USF-I) would declare that the ISF is “the fastest-growing military, with the highest [operations tempo] in the world in the last eight years” and “the most capable counterinsurgency force in the Middle East and Central Asia.”<sup>60</sup> At the time of the U.S. withdrawal in December 2011, the number of security incidents and casualties sustained had “decreased since the ISF took the lead in security operations after the

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<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces* (Alexandria, VA: CNA, 2014), 4, 7.

<sup>58</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report, October 30, 2015*, 86.

<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Katzman and Carla E. Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance* (CRS Report No. RS21968) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), 10, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, October 2011* (Arlington, VA: SIGIR, 2011), 53.

signing of the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement,” continuing the decline since the U.S. surge and Sunni Awakening, or *sahwa*, in 2007–2008.<sup>61</sup>

With U.S. advisor support through 2011, the Iraqi Army would perform reasonably well and was capable of providing security across Iraq. The successful offensive in Basra against the Shi’a militias in 2008 would demonstrate that the Iraqi Army, with U.S. advisors and support, was capable of conducting military operations under the direction of the Iraqi central government. It was noted that during the Basra operation, the Iraqi Army units with U.S. advisors performed better than those without U.S. advisors.<sup>62</sup> Stephen Biddle in “How to Leave a Stable Iraq” wrote: the First and 26th Brigades, “deployed with Marine advisors, performed well, whereas the brigades without U.S. advisors and partners did poorly, with one effectively collapsing in combat.” Biddle would further conclude that the Basra campaign “would have ended in disaster if not for support from coalition firepower and the arrival of ISF with U.S. military and police training teams.”<sup>63</sup> The loss of U.S. advisors and coalition enabler support would uncover problems within the Iraqi Army. According to Anthony Cordesman in “Shaping the Iraqi Security Forces,” the departure of U.S. advisors led to growing levels of politicization and corruption from the highest levels of the Ministry of Defense and the Iraqi government leading to a division of loyalties and fractionalization along ethno-sectarian lines that significantly degraded the capabilities of the Iraqi Army as a unified national army loyal to the central government.<sup>64</sup> The Islamic State offensive in the summer of 2011 that seized significant territories of northern and western Iraq, including Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, demonstrated that the Iraqi Army was unable to defend its territories from internal and external threats. How did the well-trained and well-equipped 350,000 strong Iraqi Army, assessed as the “most capable counterinsurgency force in the Middle East” at the time of the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, fail to prevent the advance of the Islamic State?

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<sup>61</sup> SIGIR, *Quarterly Report, October 2011*, 57–58.

<sup>62</sup> Stephen Biddle, Michael E. O’Hanlon, and Kenneth M. Pollack, “How to Leave a Stable Iraq: Building on Progress,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 5 (September-October 2008): 46.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>64</sup> Cordesman, Khazai, and Dewit, “Shaping Iraq’s Security Forces,” 10–11.

The performance of the Iraqi and Afghan armies with advisors and coalition enabler support has been assessed as capable to operate independently to provide security within their territories. When advisor and enabler support has been withdrawn, both armies have experienced major setbacks in the face of the Islamic State and the Taliban. The performance of the both the Iraqi and Afghan armies with advisors measured against their performance once the advisors have been withdrawn provides evidence against the hypothesis that the failures of their armies were not likely due to shortfalls in doctrine and TTPs of the military advisory effort, but larger, more comprehensive problems of governance and societies from which the Iraqi and Afghan armies are drawn.

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### III. MISSION TO REBUILD THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

At least 65 Afghan soldiers have defected to the Taliban, taking their weapons and equipment with them and 88 have been killed in days of heavy fighting in the volatile southern province of Helmand, the local provincial Governor said on Saturday...Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said in a statement that five commanders and 65 army soldiers “repented their mistakes and surrendered to Mujahideen,” bringing five armored personnel carriers as well as weapons and ammunition.

—James Mckenzie<sup>65</sup>

The preceding quote was taken from a November 2015 Reuters’ article titled “Dozens of Afghan troops defect to Taliban in Helmand Fighting.” Less than two weeks prior and following the temporary fall of Kunduz to the Taliban, Reuters also reported “Taliban threatens southern Afghan city, civilians flee.”<sup>66</sup> The Afghan city is Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital of Helmand Province. Though the ANA has appeared to be offering stiffer resistance than that of the Iraqi Army, these reports conjure comparison to the collapse of the Iraqi Army and the fall of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in June 2014.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain why, despite an immense military advisory effort over more than thirteen years and \$38 billion spent on the Afghanistan National Army, the ANA is not a sustainable force loyal to the central government and capable of defending Afghanistan from internal and external threats. There have been reams of academic work dedicated to the tactics, techniques, and procedures for the military advisor to train and mentor indigenous forces in the establishment and sustainment of a central army. The selection, training, organization, and deployment of combat advisors by the U.S. military has faced numerous challenges during the recent advisory missions in Iraq and Afghanistan; including poor quality of indigenous recruits,

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<sup>65</sup> James Mckenzie, “Dozens of Afghan Troops Defect to Taliban in Helmand Fighting,” Reuters, November 14, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-idUSKCN0T30EP20151114#wVOIy5P6yWUyTGPv>.97.

<sup>66</sup> James Mckenzie, “Taliban Threatens Southern Afghan City, Civilians Flee,” Reuters, October 20, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/afghanistan-fighting-idUSKCN0SE2C120151020#bzyYiAMdXaCfJrF>.97.

inadequate advisor screening and selection, inadequate pre-deployment training, language and cultural barriers, and command and control issues.<sup>67</sup> These shortfalls are, however, insufficient to explain why the ANA are losing ground to a resurgent Taliban and a growing threat from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant–Khorasan. There are four key premises as to why the ANA has not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army: failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, creation of an army in the western image rather than an army that meets the needs of Afghanistan, and the lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment.

These four premises are not novel concepts new to the U.S. military’s institutional knowledge base, but bedrock principles are laid out in the U.S. Army’s *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. The U.S. experience in Afghanistan over the past 14 years demonstrates a disregard for the principles of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine: “legitimacy is the main objective,” do not attempt to “build and train host-nation security forces in the U.S. military’s image,” “security under the rule of law is essential,” and “counterinsurgents should prepare for a long-term commitment.”<sup>68</sup>

Following the attacks on 9/11, U.S.-led forces would ally with the Northern Alliance, comprised of ethnic minority Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, to overthrow the Taliban government in Kabul.<sup>69</sup> The Taliban government, led by Mullah Omar, the “commander of the faithful,” was targeted because of their granting sanctuary to al-Qaeda and refusing to give up Osama bin Laden.<sup>70</sup> Left with virtually no government in Afghanistan, the U.S.-sanctioned Bonn Conference was held to “lay the groundwork for Afghanistan’s future political processes and institutions of governance.”<sup>71</sup> The Bonn

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<sup>67</sup> Rosenau et al., *Marine Corps Advisors*, 83.

<sup>68</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–21, 1–23–24, 1–29.

<sup>69</sup> Zachary Laub, “The Taliban in Afghanistan,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, last modified July 4, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/taliban-afghanistan/p10551>.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Thomas H. Johnson, “Afghanistan’s Post-Taliban Transition: the State of State-building after War,” *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 1–2 (2006): 2, doi: 10.1080/02634930600902991.

Accords would establish provisions for the reorganization of Afghan military forces and be the genesis for the U.S. military's role in rebuilding the Afghanistan National Army.<sup>72</sup>

“The real military strength of Afghanistan depends on the armed population rather than on the regular forces.”<sup>73</sup> This passage dates from the British experience during the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919 and underlies the idea that the Afghans were very poor at raising, deploying, and sustaining a regular army on a conventional battlefield.<sup>74</sup> The real source of military strength of Afghanistan was the raising of militias through the mobilization of local communities and tribes.<sup>75</sup> Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, Germany, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States have provided material support to raising and sustaining a central army in Afghanistan. Despite tremendous resources and efforts provided by both the central government of Afghanistan and outside actors, Afghanistan has been unable to establish and sustain a durable central army under the control of the country's political leadership.

#### **A. CURRENT SITUATION**

The current situation in Afghanistan has the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) responsible for security throughout the country. U.S. and NATO forces have shifted their focus to the train, advise, and assist mission as covered under Operation Resolute Support.<sup>76</sup> Throughout 2015, the Taliban and ISIL-K have increased their operational tempo throughout Afghanistan including major offensives in Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, and Helmand provinces.<sup>77</sup> As of September 2015, 30 districts centers have either fallen or are in danger of falling to the Taliban or ISIL-K.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Johnson, “Afghanistan's Post-Taliban Transition,” 3.

<sup>73</sup> Draft manuscript provided by Dr. Thomas Johnson of Antonio Giustozzi, *The Army of Afghanistan: A Political History of a Fragile Institution* (London: Hurst, 2015), 8.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>76</sup> Lauren McNally and Paul Bucala, *The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan Security* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2015), 24.

<sup>77</sup> Institute for the Study of War, “Militant Attack and Support Zones in Afghanistan: April–October 6, 2015,” 2015.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



Recent major setbacks for the Afghan government include the temporary capture of Kunduz, Afghanistan's fifth largest city and the provincial capital, by the Taliban. The Taliban controlled Kunduz for almost two weeks before the Afghan Security Forces were able to regain control with significant support from U.S. Special Operations Forces and U.S.-provided close air support.<sup>79</sup> Afghan Security Forces have also been continuously engaged with Taliban forces for the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah and the districts of Marjah, Musa Qalah, and Nad Ali in Helmand Province.<sup>80</sup> The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated that "the intensity of conflict in Afghanistan shows no signs of abating and the security environment has become more fragile and dynamic."<sup>81</sup>

The status of the ANA also presents a tenuous situation due to understrength of approved total forces, continued high attrition rates, and the absence of a Defense Minister for more than a year. As of July 2015, there are 160,461 soldiers assigned to the ANA (including the Afghanistan Air Force) out of the 195,000 approved end goal strength.<sup>82</sup> This leaves a deficit of 34,539 soldiers needed to fill the ranks of the ANA. According to the latest Quarterly Report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, the monthly attrition rate was 2.4% (3,851 soldiers), including combat casualties, discharges, and desertions.<sup>83</sup> According to a SIGAR Quarterly Report from December 2014, of the 149,185 soldiers, 30,000 were assigned to staffs and headquarters, leaving only 119,485 soldiers assigned to combat units.<sup>84</sup> Of those soldiers assigned to combat units, only 75,258 were actually present for duty.<sup>85</sup> The numbers of soldiers in the ANA has been a matter of dispute as recognized by a statement from the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CTSC-A) that "there is

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<sup>79</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report, October 30, 2015*, 86.

<sup>80</sup> Mckenzie, "Afghan Troops Defect."

<sup>81</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report, October 30, 2015*, 90.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>84</sup> Mason, *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, 73.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

no viable method of validating their personnel numbers.”<sup>86</sup> The numbers of ANA soldiers present for duty is widely skewed by inaccurate personnel reporting by commanders that report inflated numbers to receive additional pay and rations used to augment their salaries; a practice referred to as “ghost soldiers.”<sup>87</sup> The challenges of accurate reporting and personnel management are indicative of a force that lacks the leadership and organizational skills to manage their soldiers and resources. To compound the problem of leadership within the Afghanistan National Security Forces, political squabbling in the Parliament has failed to approve President Ghani’s three nominations for Defense Minister, leaving the country without for more than a year.<sup>88</sup>

The ANSF are supported by a coalition of 40 countries contributing 12,905 troops as part of NATO’s Resolute Support Mission as of December 2015.<sup>89</sup> The U.S. contributes the majority of forces with 6,800 troops.<sup>90</sup> After 2015, that number will fall to 5,500 U.S. troops through 2016 where the number of troops required will be re-evaluated.<sup>91</sup> In December 2015, NATO pledged to continue support to the Afghanistan national defense and security forces with \$4.1 billion per year through 2020 and a commitment of 12,000 NATO troops through 2016.<sup>92</sup>

## **B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL ARMY**

Antonio Giustozzi, in *The Army of Afghanistan*, states that the establishment of a central army is a “key process to state formation.”<sup>93</sup> This central army must be under the direct control of the political leadership as a key tool in wielding the power of the state

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>87</sup> Mason, *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, 71.

<sup>88</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report, October 30, 2015*, 91.

<sup>89</sup> NATO Afghanistan, Resolute Support Mission, “Troop Numbers and Contributions,” last modified December 2015, <http://www.rs.nato.int/troop-numbers-and-contributions/index.php>.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Cheryl Pellerin, “Obama Extends U.S. Troop Levels to Boost Afghan Security,” *Department of Defense News*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/604342/obama-extends-us-troop-levels-to-boost-afghan-security>.

<sup>92</sup> *TOLONews.com*, “Afghan Foreign Minister Welcomes NATO’s Commitment,” December 2, 2015, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/22620-afghan-foreign-minister-welcomes-natos-commitment>.

<sup>93</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 1.

and around this central army the state begins to emerge.<sup>94</sup> Geography, culture, and ethnic and tribal frictions play important roles in the power of the central government and establishment of a national army. The history of Afghanistan is characterized by a balance of power between the central government, the mullahs, and the tribal elders (*jirga*). In “Refighting the Last War,” Thomas Johnson and Chris Mason wrote that the balance of power was with the *jirga* and when the central government tried to extend its reach, “violent, conservative rural revolution led by the mullahs and framed in terms of jihad brought down the government.”<sup>95</sup> This was revealed during the reign of King Amanullah in the 1920s, the communists in the 1970s, and potentially with the current central government by the Taliban or ISIL-K.<sup>96</sup>

Antonio Giustozzi, in *The Army of Afghanistan*, wrote that “the need to create a more effective army was one of the driving factors in the modernization of Afghan society.”<sup>97</sup> The need to create a better trained and equipped central army dates back to the 1800s when Afghanistan’s neighbors in the Middle East and Central Asia outclassed its traditional feudal cavalry.<sup>98</sup> Many attempts were made by the Afghan monarchs throughout the 1800s and the first half of the 20th century to create a more effective, modern, European-style army, but for a number of reasons, Afghanistan would never be able to raise and sustain a durable central army. The historical challenges of the creation and sustainment of an Afghan central army were largely reflected from the society from the army is drawn. The first major challenge was the lack of funding through an ineffective and inefficient taxation system to support the modernization and sustainment of a modern central army. The second major challenge is an education system that was insufficient to support the training and technical skills required of military occupations such as engineering, artillery, aviation, and an educated officer corps. A third major challenge was the internal strife and division among the ethnicities and tribes in

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template,” *Military Review* (November-December 2009): 10.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 5.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Afghanistan. A fourth major challenge was the patronage system of military officer appointees that resulted in incompetent and often illiterate officers.<sup>99</sup> A fifth major challenge was the fascination and over-reliance on military technology at the expense of professional skills such as administration, education, and logistics.<sup>100</sup> A final challenge to the creation and sustainment of a strong central army was that the government designed an army to deal with internal disturbances. Abdur Rahman, the Iron Emir, was said to have “relied on the old practice of mobilizing local communities for waging internal wars, rather than on the regular army.”<sup>101</sup> Giustozzi labeled this the feudal model in which the regime would form “irregular forces under the control of rural elites, loosely connected to the ruling group.”<sup>102</sup>

The size of the Afghanistan central army would vary widely in size throughout the 20th century. At its smallest, the army under Habibullah II in the 1920s would consist of only 24,000 soldiers because the central government lacked the resources to raise and sustain a large central army.<sup>103</sup> At its largest (except for the modern Afghanistan National Army), the army under Mohammad Najibullah in the 1980s would consist of 160,000 soldiers and was attributed to the patronage of the Soviet Union during the Soviet-Afghan War.<sup>104</sup>

The collapse of the Najibullah regime at the hands of the mujahedeen in 1992 through the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, the Afghan National Army would dissolve into units loyal to local strongmen. Giustozzi in *The Army of Afghanistan* wrote: “The armed forces were essentially an irregular militia under the orders of charismatic warrior mullahs...staffed by professionals left over from the Soviet period.”<sup>105</sup> During the Taliban regime, Mullah Omar would wield direct control over these commanders who

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<sup>99</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 14.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

conducted their own recruitment in terms of how many and what type of men to recruit.<sup>106</sup> The Taliban did recruit specialists from the former Afghan National Army including tank crews, artillerymen, pilots, and communications specialists to operate and to train in the handling of sophisticated military equipment.<sup>107</sup> Despite low levels of training and military technology, the armed forces under the Taliban regime, through superior intelligence and shared ideology, were largely able to exert control over most of Afghanistan.<sup>108</sup>

### **C. PREMISE ONE: POLITICAL FAILURE TO ACHIEVE LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNANCE**

“Victory is achieved when the populace consents to the government’s legitimacy and stops actively and passively supporting the insurgency.”<sup>109</sup> The preceding passage from the Counterinsurgency Field Manual underscores the idea that the government’s legitimacy is paramount in achieving victory over the insurgency. The central goal of the counterinsurgent is to establish the government as legitimate in the eyes of the people and to be capable of providing basic essential services, security, and stability under the rule of law. Anthony Cordesman in “Winning in Afghanistan: Creating Effective Afghan Security Forces,” wrote that the lines of operation for the governance of Afghanistan must include the rule of law, capacity development and public service delivery, parliamentary strengthening, government accountability, and democracy and human rights.<sup>110</sup> The ANA, as an extension of the central government of Afghanistan in its efforts for security and stability, must be viewed as legitimate by both the people of Afghanistan and the soldiers within the ANA. If the Afghan central government lacks legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people, the ANA will not be viewed as a legitimate protector and source of stability and security.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>107</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 117.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>109</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 3.

<sup>110</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, Adam Mausner, and David Kasten, *Winning in Afghanistan: Creating Effective Afghan Security Forces* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), 49.

The sources of legitimacy of the government in Afghanistan play a critically important role in whether the people of Afghanistan view the government and its entities as legitimate to rule over the country. The father of modern sociology, Karl “Max” Weber, published his studies on the legitimacy of governance in his book *Politik als Beruf*.<sup>111</sup> Weber identified three sources of government legitimacy: traditional (dynastic and hereditary leadership such as monarchies and patrimonial systems), charismatic (religious authority), and rational-legal (institutional procedures and representative governments).<sup>112</sup> The history of Afghanistan demonstrates that legitimate government is derived only from traditional and charismatic sources.<sup>113</sup> The legitimacy from traditional sources in Afghanistan is derived from and represented by the monarchy and the patriarchal structure of the tribal system. The legitimacy from charismatic sources in Afghanistan is characterized by the religious structure and leadership of the *mullahs*. An example of this source of legitimacy was when the Taliban leader, *Mullah Omar*, donned the Cloak of the Prophet in 1996 and declared himself the *Amir ul-Mumaneen*, or leader of the faithful.<sup>114</sup>

In Afghanistan, the U.S. sought to impose legitimacy through Weber’s rational-legal model with the establishment of a Western-style electoral democracy and consent of the governed.<sup>115</sup> With the imposition of a rational-legal model of legitimacy, the United States eliminated or marginalized the only two culturally acceptable sources of legitimacy: traditional and religious.<sup>116</sup> The U.S. heavily influenced the 2002 *loya jirga* (grand council) which appointed Hamid Karzai as the Interim President.<sup>117</sup> He would remain as the President through nationwide elections in 2004 and 2009. The *loya jirga* is a forum comprised of hundreds of Afghan tribal leaders, politicians, and religious clerics

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<sup>111</sup> Mason, *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, 140.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Johnson and Mason, “Refighting the Last War,” 4–5.

<sup>114</sup> Mason, *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, 141.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan*, 690.

that would gather to make decisions based on consensus.<sup>118</sup> The U.S. sought to impose a western-style electoral process that had no historical basis for the establishment of a legitimate central government. Peter Tomsen, the U.S. Special Envoy to the Afghan Resistance from 1989–1992, wrote in *The Wars of Afghanistan* that Karzai’s selection as the interim President cast him as a foreign puppet and the result of a foreign power putting its surrogate on the Afghan throne.<sup>119</sup> The U.S. and its NATO allies viewed the election of Hamid Karzai to the presidency as a great success, but the Afghan people viewed the “Karzai government as illegitimate because it was elected.”<sup>120</sup>

The composition and functions of the government in Afghanistan requires a balance achieved between the top-down power of the central government and the bottom-up power of the local tribal and *jirga* leadership. The strength of Afghan society and governance has traditionally been held at the local level by the tribe via the *jirga*. Afghans have viewed the central government as susceptible to losing its autonomy through the pressures and influences of foreign elements such as Pakistan, the Russia, and the United States. Leadership and governance at the local level have been viewed by the Afghan people as not only legitimate but just. In “The Political Economy of the Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan,” Jennifer Brick found that according to recent surveys, “78 percent believe their community leaders are fair and honest. 78 percent of those interviewed said that their informal customary local councils (*shuras* and *jirgas*) are effective at delivering justice and representing their interests.”<sup>121</sup> The strength of the elements of power at the local level was far underestimated by the U.S. and its attempts to create a strong central government with the ability to extend its reach across the countryside. The strength of the leadership at the local level was also highlighted by Jeffery Roberts in *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* when he wrote, “while Afghans have always refused to accept foreign rule, rarely have they proved

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>119</sup> Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan*, 691.

<sup>120</sup> Johnson and Mason, “Refighting the Last War,” 4–5.

<sup>121</sup> Brick, “Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations,” 2.

amenable to a strong central government.”<sup>122</sup> Further amplifying the relationship between the central and local governments, Peter Tomsen stated that key to stabilizing the country is for the central government to extend gradually its influence to the provinces through a cooperative relationship with the autonomous tribal and religious forces.<sup>123</sup>

The final aspect of the failure at achieving legitimacy of governance is the pervasiveness of corruption by the patron-client structure in the Afghan government and society. The corruption within the government of Afghanistan is addressed in nearly every academic study of the country. Peter Tomsen wrote that corruption is pervasive because the leadership of Afghanistan has been unable to overcome their disposition for infighting and placing personal desires above national unity and stability.<sup>124</sup> According to the Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures perceived levels of corruption in 180 countries, Afghanistan ranked next nearly last at 179th.<sup>125</sup> In Giustozzi’s *Army of Afghanistan*, he wrote that “the problem with client states such as Afghanistan is that they tend to be weak and ineffective. The aim to build an effective state is at odds with that of maintaining patron-client relations with it, as the latter compromises one of the key features of a state that is its legitimacy.”<sup>126</sup> The main problem with the patron-client system in Afghanistan is that power and influence were given through patronage to elements within Afghan society that had no claim to it based on the traditional or religious sources of legitimacy. In *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, Giustozzi wrote that a connection to Karzai or the U.S. government enabled local strongmen, notables, and militia commanders to achieve positions of power and influence within various levels of the Afghan central and provincial government including the Ministries of Interior and Defense.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Jeffery J. Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), xii.

<sup>123</sup> Tomsen, *Wars of Afghanistan*, xv.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>125</sup> Jade I. Rodriguez and Rebecca Lorentz, “Civil and Uncivil Society,” in *Afghan Endgames: Strategy and Policy Choices for America’s Longest War*, ed. Hy Rothstein and John Arquilla (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2012).

<sup>126</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 230.

<sup>127</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2007), 17.



#### D. PREMISE TWO: LACK OF MOTIVATION AND WILL TO FIGHT

Most of the ANA are not willing to fight and die for the central government of Afghanistan perceived as corrupt and illegitimate by the individual soldier. The Taliban, however, are willing to fight and to die waging *jihad* in the name of Islam. Giustozzi describes the sentiments of an Afghan village elder, “the Taliban are united and have faith in their goals, and they do not fight for money.”<sup>128</sup> In Chris Mason’s *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, he quotes Afghan war veteran and military analyst John Cook: “the Taliban, lacking any formal military training, poorly led and poorly equipped, often living in caves, enduring incredible hardships shows far more fight and aggressiveness on the battlefield than the Afghan army...the Taliban army believe in their cause enough to die for it, while the Afghan soldiers do not.”<sup>129</sup> In a recent article in *Small Wars Journal*, Lamar Fahad compares the effectiveness of two examples of Afghan armies: the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) under the Najibullah regime and the current ANA. The DRA Army was molded with nationalistic ideologies to unite the army in the common purpose of fighting the foreign enemy.<sup>130</sup> Comparing the success of the DRA Army at the battle of Jalalabad in 1989 with that of the failure of the ANA in Kunduz in October 2015, Fahad concluded that the national unity developed by Najibullah’s anti-Pakistani and anti-Islamist rhetoric was critical to the development of an army motivated behind a common cause.<sup>131</sup> This stood in stark contrast to the presidencies of Karzai and Ghani, who labeled the Taliban as political opponents and brothers, rather than as the enemy.<sup>132</sup> The development of national unity behind a common purpose against a common enemy is critical to the development and sustainment of the motivation and will to fight of the ANA.

In his comprehensive work on the army of Afghanistan, Giustozzi identified a number of reasons why the Afghan soldiers desert from the ANA: corruption among

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<sup>128</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 180.

<sup>129</sup> Mason, *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, 132.

<sup>130</sup> Lamar Alexander Fahad, “A Tale of Two Afghan Armies,” *Small Wars Journal*, November 3, 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/a-tale-of-two-afghan-armies>.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

officers, poor medical care and the neglect of the soldiers and families of the injured and killed, intimidation by insurgents, poor living conditions, lack of welfare system to support the ANA, service in remote locations far from the soldiers home, and the uncertainties of the impending departure of ISAF.<sup>133</sup> As with other elements of the Afghan government, corruption is evident within the Afghan security structures and further harms the morale and motivation of the ANA. According to the recent “Afghanistan Report” by the Institute for the Study of War, the U.S. Congress commissioned an independent assessment of the ANSF and found “pervasive corruption within the Afghan security institutions. Once the Operation Resolute Support mission withdraws its oversight...in 2016, patronage networks and factionalism have the potential to disrupt security force cohesion in the face of a revitalized Afghan insurgency.”<sup>134</sup> The challenges faced by the soldier in the ANA significantly contribute to the lack of motivation and will to fight and die for the central government of Afghanistan perceived as illegitimate.

**E. PREMISE THREE: AN ARMY IN OUR IMAGE, RATHER THAN AN ARMY SUITED FOR AFGHANISTAN**

“The Taliban don’t have D-30 howitzers, it doesn’t have [reconnaissance aircraft], it doesn’t have Mi-35s, Mi-17s, MD-530 helicopters. It doesn’t have up-armored Humvees. Yet the Taliban can still fight,” stated General John Campbell, commander of U.S. Forces–Afghanistan, in his testimony before the Senate on the status of the Afghan National Defense Security Forces.<sup>135</sup> The efforts of the U.S. and NATO to build an effective central army included creating an army modeled after the U.S. military rather than an army suited for not only the security threats but on the capabilities and resources of Afghanistan. The Counterinsurgency Field Manual named “to build and train host-nation security forces in the U.S. military’s image” in its list of unsuccessful counterinsurgent operational practices.<sup>136</sup> The U.S. attempt to create an army without a

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<sup>133</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 161.

<sup>134</sup> McNally and Bucala, *Taliban Resurgent*, 24.

<sup>135</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report, October 30, 2015*, 87.

<sup>136</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–29.

Careful analysis of the capabilities and resources of the Afghan state has led to critical vulnerabilities of the ANA. The critical vulnerabilities that have resulted in the creation and sustainment of the ANA by U.S. and NATO forces are the budget and funding of the ANA, adequate numbers of sufficiently educated and skilled manpower to meet the needs of the ANA, and a logistics and equipment sustainability system to support the ANA nationwide.

Afghanistan does not have the fiscal resources to sustain the ANA as designed and built by U.S. and NATO forces. The size and technical capabilities of the ANA do not match the fiscal resources at the disposal of the Afghan government. The ANA has an authorized end strength of 196,000 soldiers, almost 40,000 more soldiers than at its largest size under the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime in the 1980s.<sup>137</sup> Recent reports have shown that it will require approximately \$4 billion U.S. dollars annually to sustain the ANA at those troop levels.<sup>138</sup> NATO has committed to support the Afghan security forces with the required \$4.1 billion through 2020, but beyond 2020, Afghanistan's ability to fund the ANA is uncertain.<sup>139</sup> The FY 1394 (2015) budget for Afghanistan called for \$7.6 billion; however, their tax revenue generated only \$1.8 billion.<sup>140</sup> The tax revenue of Afghanistan would support less than 50% of the required budget for the ANA. Building an army that exceeds the financial resources of Afghanistan jeopardizes the sustainability of the ANA as a force for security and stability. The funding provided by outside actors such as the U.S. and NATO further perpetuate the challenge of legitimacy faced by the Afghan central government because this financial support makes them dependent on foreign support to maintain its security forces. This challenge adds to the skeptical views of the Afghan people toward a central government seen as a foreign puppet.

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<sup>137</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 9.

<sup>138</sup> Greg Jaffe, "Afghan Army to Cost U.S. Billions of Dollars after 2014 Withdrawal," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/afghan-army-to-cost-us-billions-of-dollars-after-2014-withdrawal/2012/02/16/gIQAtRAPIR\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/afghan-army-to-cost-us-billions-of-dollars-after-2014-withdrawal/2012/02/16/gIQAtRAPIR_story.html).

<sup>139</sup> TOLONews.com, "Afghan Foreign Minister."

<sup>140</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance, *National Budget Document, FY1394 Fiscal Year*, (Afghanistan: Ministry of Finance, 2015), 8, 10.

Afghanistan has long dealt with the challenge of the quality and quantity of manpower available for service in the ANA. In *The Army of Afghanistan*, Giustozzi named the lack of an education system to produce reasonable levels of literacy would not support the training and technical skills required for the professionalization of the ANA in fields such as artillery, aviation, engineering, administration, and logistics.<sup>141</sup> Giustozzi points to the method for which the ANA was formed as a source of friction for the forming of a professional military in Afghanistan. The all-volunteer ANA did not attract quality recruits from across Afghan society. Many of the recruits represented a much lower level of education than the average Afghan only enlisting in the ANA because of lack of opportunities elsewhere.<sup>142</sup> Giustozzi points out that the all-volunteer ANA did not allow for the recruitment of an army with professional skills important to the administration and logistics management of the force.<sup>143</sup> The armies of Afghanistan had traditionally used conscription to form an army enabling it to gain soldiers that possessed high levels of education and professional skills. Unfortunately, neither the quantity nor quality of recruits available for service in the ANA would be able to be influenced by U.S. and NATO military advisors. The U.S.'s attempts to build a large, all-volunteer central army in Afghanistan may be at odds with the realities of Afghan society.

The ANA has had difficulty in creating and sustaining a logistical system that could support the needs of its units spread throughout the country. Technologically advanced systems such as Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAPs), armored personnel carriers, and helicopters currently fielded to the ANA compounded the challenges faced by the Afghan logistics system. The after-action report from a U.S. Marine Corps advisor team assigned to the ANA 215th Corps in Helmand Province wrote, "the ANA struggle with maintaining the equipment they have and managing the supply chain from MoD to the Corps and out to the Kandak level. This is evidenced by the vehicle maintenance readiness Corps-wide, contracted weapons maintenance, and

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<sup>141</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 151.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

minimal heavy equipment maintenance.”<sup>144</sup> The ANA’s logistics system was based on the U.S. military’s model of “pull” logistics.<sup>145</sup> The pull system relies on units requesting supplies and maintenance parts based on their varying needs of the mission and operational tempo. This system requires a significant level of “coordination and integration but...is more efficient and effective, delivering the right supplies to the right place at the right time.”<sup>146</sup> The pull model of logistics is a very efficient model for the U.S. military because of a sophisticated logistical system managed by logistics professionals and utilized by commanders and staff that have the training and experience to foresee and plan for their logistical requirements alongside their operational requirements. Giustozzi noted that the highly centralized logistical system slowed the flow of supplies because “superior officers tended to be reluctant to release material.”<sup>147</sup> Despite significant mentoring and training by logistics advisors, the ANA has not developed and implemented a logistical system that can meet the needs of its highly dispersed forces. This trend of poor performance of the ANA’s logistical system can also be attributed to U.S. forces providing virtually all logistical support through the advisor teams. A report from the NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM-A) and ISAF regarding the logistical dependency of the ANA concluded: “As of summer 2013, NTM-A and ISAF were still writing most contracts for the Afghan MoD, and transferring to them most resources, so that even if the new approach were successful, ANA logistics could not be ready for 2015...logistics are the Achilles’ heel.”<sup>148</sup> The logistics system put in place by U.S. and NATO advisors to support the ANA was built on an image of the U.S. military logistics and supply system and did not account for the training, infrastructure, culture, and resources available to the ANA. No matter how proficient the ANA are at the tactical level against insurgent forces, the failure to establish an effective

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<sup>144</sup> F. W. Charlonis, *215th Corps Security Force Assistance Advisor Team OEF 12.1 After Action Report for Period of 01 Oct 2011–09 Feb 2013* (Afghanistan: Regional Command Southwest, 2013), 14.

<sup>145</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 165.

<sup>146</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 165.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

and efficient logistics system remains a critical vulnerability of the ANA. This shortfall echoes the enduring military quip that “amateurs talk tactics, professionals talk logistics.”

#### **F. PREMISE FOUR: LACK OF LONG-TERM U.S. STRATEGY AND COMMITMENT**

“Taliban leadership was doggedly pursuing a strategy of destabilization, neither the U.S. nor the Afghan government ever had a consistent strategy lasting more than a year,” wrote Antonio Giustozzi in *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*.<sup>149</sup> Hy Rothstein, in *Afghan Endgames*, would echo the lack of long-term strategy when he wrote: “The brilliant initial success that resulted in the collapse of the Taliban regime and pushed al-Qaeda into hiding was followed by eight years of inept policy and strategy.”<sup>150</sup> The change of political and military leadership and domestic politics, both in the U.S. and in Afghanistan, brought changing strategies and varying levels of commitment over 14 years of war.

The changing strategy in Afghanistan over 14 years of war had a significant impact on the viability and legitimacy of the Afghan government and, in turn, the ANA. In an address to the nation on October of 2001, President Bush outlined the U.S. strategy as a counter-terrorist (CT) operation that included “carefully targeted actions...designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.”<sup>151</sup> In December 2001, the Bonn Agreement, a UN-brokered and heavily U.S.-influenced deal, would lay the groundwork for arrangements to create permanent government institutions in Afghanistan.<sup>152</sup> However, according to James Dobbins, a Bush Envoy at the Bonn Agreements, “the goal of ‘democratic development’ was merely ‘an afterthought of the White House.’”<sup>153</sup> The CT

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<sup>149</sup> Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 238.

<sup>150</sup> Hy Rothstein, “America’s Longest War,” in *Afghan Endgames: Strategy and Policy Choices for America’s Longest War*, ed. Hy Rothstein and John Arquilla (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2012).

<sup>151</sup> George W. Bush, “Presidential Address to the Nation” (speech, Washington, DC, October 7, 2001), White House, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

<sup>152</sup> Johnson, “Afghanistan’s Post-Taliban Transition,” 2.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

operation, run predominately by U.S. and allied Special Operations Forces, lasted from 2001 to 2004. Throughout these years, Afghanistan was viewed as an economy of force mission to that of Iraq. The mission in Afghanistan would receive just enough troops and resources to meet basic mission requirements as the main effort of the U.S. military was Iraq. Through 2008, the number of troops in Afghanistan would never exceed 30,100 while nearly 160,000 troops would be deployed to Iraq.<sup>154</sup> In 2008 and 2009, the mission in Afghanistan would incrementally grow from a CT operation that of nation-building. In an interview on PBS, General McKiernan, NATO and ISAF Commander, would echo the ideas of nation-building by stating, “Let’s not put it in military terms, because it’s going to take security, it’s going to take governance, and it’s going to take socioeconomic progress, all three of those in a comprehensive way.”<sup>155</sup> In 2009, General McChrystal would be appointed as Commander, ISAF. In his Initial Assessment upon assuming command, he stated that a new strategy was needed; a new strategy that included an “integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency campaign that earns the support of the Afghan people.”<sup>156</sup> Also in 2009, President Obama would surge 30,000 additional troops to support the COIN strategy and expanded mission. McChrystal’s COIN strategy would largely continue under the leadership of General Petraeus. Beginning in 2011 through present operations, President Obama would pursue what has been termed “Afghanization,” a play on President Nixon’s Vietnamization. The Afghanization strategy is an attempt, with domestic politics in mind, to turn over operations, security, and governance to the Afghans as soon as possible with the fewest casualties. Over 14 years of war in Afghanistan, the strategy has suffered from incrementalism in its progression from CT to COIN to nation-building to Afghanization. Incrementalism and an ever-changing strategy have demonstrated that the Afghan government and ANA could rely on varying levels of commitment from U.S. political and military leadership.

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<sup>154</sup> Amy Belasco, *Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY1012: Cost and Other Potential Issues* (CRS Report No. R40682) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 9, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf>.

<sup>155</sup> David McKiernan, interview by Margaret Warner, *PBS News Hour*, PBS, March 17, 2009.

<sup>156</sup> Stanley A. McChrystal, *COMISAF’s Initial Assessment* (Afghanistan: Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, 2009), 1–1.

The commitment of U.S. troops and resources are vital to the success of the ANA. For many years, the ANA and the Afghan government had heard the calls of the U.S. government for setting an end date to U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan. Setting an end date to U.S. military involvement provided the Afghan people no guarantee that promises made by the Afghan government will be upheld upon U.S. departure. The Afghan people fear that the security situation will further decline because the Afghan security forces lack the capability to maintain security and stability without significant support from U.S. and NATO forces.

The commitment of U.S. resources was an important aspect of the ANA's ability to conduct effective operations. Throughout the war in Afghanistan, the ANA had access to the range of military assistance from ISAF advisors that included logistics, command and control, intelligence, finance, air transport, and fire support, including extremely effective close air support (CAS). Many of these resources were unavailable to the ANA because of training and limited capabilities of the fledgling Afghan Ministry of Defense. The Afghans have significantly advanced in creating effective and sustainable solutions to challenges such as command and control, logistics, and intelligence support, but have been unable to develop an effective system for close air support due to a gap in trained personnel and available equipment. The "Afghanistan Report" from the Institute for the Study of War in March 2015, stated, "close air support is vital for Afghan security forces fighting the insurgency. It provides a significant tactical advantage...as security forces lose access to this capability, militants will be able to recover more quickly from counter operations and re-launch attacks in contested areas."<sup>157</sup> During recent operations in Kunduz, U.S.-provided close air support was vital in support of the ANDSF's efforts to retake the city.<sup>158</sup> The commitment of close air support to the ANA provides not only a tactical advantage but a significant advantage for the morale of the ANA. According to a recent assessment for Congress, the Afghan Air Force will not be operating near capacity until at least 2018.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> McNally and Bucala, *Taliban Resurgent*, 22.

<sup>158</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report, October 30, 2015*, 86.

<sup>159</sup> McNally and Bucala, *Taliban Resurgent*, 22.



The establishment of the ANA brings with it a long-term commitment to support the training and operations for the ANA to be successful in providing security and stability in Afghanistan. The success of the ANA in providing a secure and stable Afghanistan is critical to supporting the legitimacy of the Afghan government. In *Afghan Endgames*, Hy Rothstein and John Arquilla would write about the importance of a long-term commitment that “undermines our enemies’ belief that time is on their side.”<sup>160</sup> The Counterinsurgency Field Manual echoes the need for a long-term commitment for a successful counterinsurgency: “The populace may prefer the HN government to the insurgents; however, people do not actively support a government unless they are convinced that the counterinsurgents have the means, ability, stamina, and will to win...The populace must have confidence in the staying power of both the counterinsurgents and the HN [host nation] government.”<sup>161</sup>

## **G. CONCLUSION**

The United States and its NATO allies undertook an immense military advisory effort to rebuild the Afghanistan National Army following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. The literature that has resulted from the experience of the military advisor to the ANA has focused on tactics, techniques, and procedures for the training of indigenous forces. The shortfalls of the organization and operations of the military advisor and the advisor team are insufficient to explain why the ANA has not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army and are losing ground to a resurgent Taliban and an expanding ISIS. The four key premises that explain this deficit are the failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, the creation of an army in the western image rather than an army that meets the needs of Afghanistan, and the lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment. The nation-building experience of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan has underscored the importance of the foundational principles laid out in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine.

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<sup>160</sup> Hy Rothstein and John Arquilla, “Understanding the Afghan Challenge,” in *Afghan Endgame: Strategy and Policy Choices for America’s Longest War*, ed. Hy Rothstein and John Arquilla (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2012).

<sup>161</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–24.

The experience in Afghanistan has provided critical lessons to military and strategic planners engaging in military operations that require large-scale military advisory efforts as part of nation-building or counterinsurgency campaign. The first and most critical lesson is that there must be a thorough understanding of the historical context of the mission and strategy chosen to achieve the end state. The strategy chosen in Afghanistan sought to impose a Jeffersonian democracy centered on a strong central government did not respect the Afghan history and culture of local and tribal governance based on traditional and religious sources of legitimacy. The historical context of Afghan governance and its relation with society is highlighted by Thomas Johnson in “Afghanistan’s Post-Taliban Transition.” Johnson wrote, “Past attempts at modern state formation in Afghanistan that have directly challenged the local tribal and religious structures of society have resulted in ethnic backlash and state failure.”<sup>162</sup> A second critical lesson learned is despite significant time and resources invested; an outside force cannot build a strong central army capable of providing a secure and stable environment if the government is not viewed as legitimate and worth fighting and dying for. The third critical lesson learned is that the military advisory mission is an extremely important mission that advances the capacity and capability of partnered or allied nations, but military and strategic planners must understand the limitations of what can be achieved. The military advisor is capable of providing training and capabilities to partners and allies in support of the national strategy, but the military advisor cannot build an army from scratch if the government it serves is viewed as illegitimate by the soldiers and the populace nor can the advisor give it the motivation and will to fight.

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<sup>162</sup> Johnson, “Afghanistan’s Post-Taliban Transition,” 7.

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#### IV. MISSION TO REBUILD THE IRAQI ARMY

Iraqi army capitulates to ISIS militants in four cities.

—Martin Chuluv, Fazel Hawramy, and Spencer Ackerman<sup>163</sup>

Iraqi soldiers, police drop weapons, flee posts in portions of Mosul.

—Chelsea J. Carter, Salma Abdelaziz, and Mohammed Tawfeeq<sup>164</sup>

Jihadist group forces Iraqi military to retreat, takes control of pipeline land.

—Patrick Martin<sup>165</sup>

Iraqi army retreats from Tikrit after assault stalls.

—Raheem Salman and Maggie Fick<sup>166</sup>

In the summer of 2014, headlines depicting the collapse of the Iraqi Army in the face of the Islamic State offensive in northern Iraq dominated the national and international news. In 2014, the Islamic State<sup>167</sup> launched major offensives in Nineveh, Salah Al Din, and Anbar Provinces, taking control of the major cities of Fallujah, Mosul,

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<sup>163</sup> Martin Chuluv, Fazel Hawramy, and Spencer Ackerman, “Iraq Army Capitulates to ISIS Militants in Four Cities,” *Guardian*, June 11, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/11/mosul-isis-gunmen-middle-east-states>.

<sup>164</sup> Chelsea J. Carter, Salma Abdelaziz, and Mohammed Tawfeeq, “Iraqi Soldiers, Police Drop Weapons, Flee Posts in Portions of Mosul,” *CNN*, last modified June 13, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/10/world/meast/iraq-violence/index.html>.

<sup>165</sup> Patrick Martin, “Jihadist Group Forces Iraqi Military to Retreat, Takes Control of Pipeline Land,” *Globe and Mail*, last modified June 11, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/jihadist-group-forces-iraq-military-to-retreat-takes-control-of-pipeline-land/article19131291/>.

<sup>166</sup> Raheem Salman and Maggie Fick, “Iraqi Army Retreats from Tikrit after Assault Stalls,” Reuters, July 16, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-idUSKBN0FL0U720140716>.

<sup>167</sup> This paper uses the term Islamic State to refer to the self-declared caliphate that has also been called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), or Daesh.

and Tikrit.<sup>168</sup> Nowhere else was the failure of the Iraqi Army more prominent than its performance in Mosul against fighters from the Islamic State. In Mosul, the Iraqi Army was reported to have approximately 30,000 soldiers organized into two divisions who retreated largely without firing a shot in the face of an estimated 800 Islamic State fighters.<sup>169</sup> How could this happen? At the time of the U.S. military's withdrawal from Iraq, the Iraqi Army was assessed as a "relatively well-trained and disciplined force" comprised of approximately 350,000 soldiers.<sup>170</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to explain why, despite an immense military advisory effort over more than seven years and \$20 billion spent,<sup>171</sup> the Iraqi Army is not a sustainable force loyal to the central government and capable of defending Iraq from internal and external threats. There have been reams of academic work dedicated to the tactics, techniques, and procedures for the military advisor to train and mentor indigenous forces in the establishment and sustainment of a central army. The selection, training, organization, and deployment of combat advisors by the U.S. military has faced numerous challenges during the recent advisory missions in Iraq and Afghanistan; including poor quality of indigenous recruits, inadequate advisor screening and selection, inadequate pre-deployment training, language and cultural barriers, and command and control issues.<sup>172</sup> These shortfalls however, are insufficient to explain why the Iraqi Army failed against the Islamic State. There are four key premises as to why the Iraqi Army has not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army: failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, creation of an army in the western image rather than an army that meets the needs of Iraq, and the lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment.

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<sup>168</sup> Yasir Abbas and Dan Trombly, "Inside the Collapse of the Iraqi Army's 2nd Division," *War on the Rocks*, July 1, 2014, <http://warontherocks.com/2014/07/inside-the-collapse-of-the-iraqi-armys-2nd-division/>.

<sup>169</sup> Chuluy, Hawramy, and Ackerman, "Iraqi Army Capitulates."

<sup>170</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 10.

<sup>171</sup> *Learning from Iraq: A Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction: Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs*. 113th Cong., 1 (2013), 59, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg81868/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg81868.pdf>.

<sup>172</sup> Rosenau et al., *Marine Corps Advisors*, 83.

These four premises are not novel concepts new to the U.S. military's institutional knowledge base but bedrock principles laid out in the U.S. Counterinsurgency Field Manual. The U.S. experience in Iraq demonstrates a disregard for the principles of COIN doctrine: "legitimacy is the main objective," do not "build and train host-nation security forces in the U.S. military's image," "security under the rule of law is essential," and "counterinsurgents should prepare for a long-term commitment."<sup>173</sup>

In March 2003, a U.S.-led coalition force launched the invasion of Iraq which resulted in the spectacular defeat of Saddam Hussein's military forces in 21 days. Following the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime, nearly all government and civil institutions disappeared overnight plunging the country into chaos and a sectarian civil war. The key elements of the U.S. strategy were democratization and the construction of a national army.<sup>174</sup> As part of the implementation of this strategy, the Coalition Provisional Authority<sup>175</sup> established CPA Order Number 1, the prohibition of members of the Ba'ath Party from serving in the new government, and CPA Order Number 2, the dissolution of the old Iraqi Army.<sup>176</sup> The unintended consequences of the U.S. strategy and CPA Orders Number 1 and 2 would place the Shi'a majority (approximately 60% of the population) in the dominant political position within the new government and the new Iraqi Security Forces, while exacerbating the marginalization of the Sunnis.<sup>177</sup> After four years of a grueling civil war marked by sectarian violence, a "surge" of coalition forces combined with the Sunni awakening, or *sahwa*,<sup>178</sup> provided additional security to support the development the Iraqi Security Forces and a strengthened and inclusive Iraqi central government. Declining violence as a result of the surge and the *sahwa*, and the failure to

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<sup>173</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–21, 1–23–24, 1–29.

<sup>174</sup> Carter Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (United Kingdom: Osprey, 2008), 241.

<sup>175</sup> Coalition Provisional Authority—The agency, led by L. Paul Bremer, responsible for governing Iraq immediately following the defeat of Saddam's regime until the transfer of authority to the Iraqi Interim Government in June 2004.

<sup>176</sup> Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 241.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Sahwa*—Arabic for "awakening." The Sunni Awakening was defined by the Sunnis joining with coalition forces and the Iraqi government to combat al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). They began to see AQI as a greater threat than coalition or Iraqi forces.

achieve a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to maintain U.S. forces in Iraq, would result in the departure of U.S. forces in December 2011.<sup>179</sup>

To explain why the Iraqi Army has not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army despite an immense U.S. military advisory effort and \$20 billion, this chapter will begin with an overview of the current situation in post-U.S. occupation Iraq followed by the historical context of the Iraqi Army within Iraqi society. Following the current situation and historical overview, this paper will examine four key premises for the failure of the Iraqi Army.

#### **A. CURRENT SITUATION— POST U.S. OCCUPATION**

Immediately following the U.S. military departure from Iraq in December 2011, Iraq would begin to experience a deterioration in both its security and political situation because of increasing domestic and sectarian strife and would ultimately result in the loss of significant territory to the Islamic State. Just days following the U.S. departure from Iraq and President Obama declaring Iraq a “sovereign, stable, and self-reliant country,” Iraqi Prime Minister, Nori al-Maliki, issued an arrest warrant for Tariq al-Hashimi, the Vice President and influential Sunni figure, for allegedly ordering assassinations, forcing him to flee to Turkey.<sup>180</sup> In March 2012, the Iraqi Council of Representatives (COR) attempted to collect signatures to request a no-confidence vote against Maliki, but was unable to gain the number of signatures needed.<sup>181</sup> In December 2012, following a stroke suffered by Iraqi President Jalal Talibani, Maliki moved against Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi, another influential Sunni, when he arrested 10 of his bodyguards forcing him to flee to the Sunni-dominated Anbar Province.<sup>182</sup>

2013 would be marked by anti-Maliki demonstrations and growing sectarian conflict that would spread across Sunni areas in several provinces and within Sunni districts in Baghdad demanding reform or repeal of antiterrorism and de-Ba’athification

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<sup>179</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 8.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>182</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 21.

laws and improved government services.<sup>183</sup> In early 2013, the ISF conducted attacks against Sunni demonstrations, including the killing of 40 civilians in the town of Hawijah, resulting in Sunni extremists stepping up attacks against the ISF.<sup>184</sup> In an attempt to quell the violence, Maliki took steps toward reconciliation by transferring more authority to the provinces and the easing of de-Ba'athification laws.<sup>185</sup> However, in late 2013, Maliki issued yet another arrest warrant for Sunni parliamentarian, Ahmad al-Alwani, that ultimately ended in the ISF killing al-Alwani's brother and a number of his bodyguards.<sup>186</sup> Beginning in late 2013, the rising sectarianism would result in the ISF shutting down a protest camp in Ramadi (the capital of the predominately Sunni Anbar Province). In early 2014, fighters from the Islamic State, joined by Sunni protesters, ISF defectors, Sons of Iraq, and tribal fighters, captured the major Anbar Province cities of Ramadi and Fallujah.<sup>187</sup>

The situation in Iraq in 2014 would be characterized by the rapid offensive of fighters from the Islamic State capturing significant territory in northern and western Iraq. By the fall of 2014, the Islamic State had seized the major cities of Mosul, Tikrit, Baiji, Sinjar, Ramadi, and Fallujah and had advanced as far as the outskirts of Baghdad.<sup>188</sup> In the face of the advancing Islamic State, the Iraqi Army had all but disappeared. From 2014 through 2015, the Islamic State offensive would be halted by Kurdish *Peshmerga* fighters, Iranian-supported Shi'a militias, and coalition air strikes.<sup>189</sup> Since the collapse of the Iraqi Army in Mosul in June 2014, the Iraqi government has relied heavily upon the sectarian militias to combat the Islamic State. By February 2016,

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> ISW Iraq Team, "Control of Terrain in Iraq: August 4, 2014," *Institute for the Study of War*, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/2014-08-%204%20Control%20Zone%20Map\\_0.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/2014-08-%204%20Control%20Zone%20Map_0.pdf).

<sup>189</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, Summary.



Iraqi forces, a mix of Shi'a and Sunni militias, Kurdish *Peshmerga*, Iraqi Army, and coalition air power, have succeeded in retaking Tikrit, Sinjar, Baiji, and Ramadi.<sup>190</sup>

## **B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE IRAQI ARMY**

To understand the challenge presented to the U.S. military in the reconstruction of the Iraqi Army following its dissolution by CPA Order Number 2 in 2003, it is first important to understand the Iraqi Army in a historical context. The Iraqi Army was created by the British in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Arab Revolt during World War I.<sup>191</sup> Jeremy Sharp from the Congressional Research Service wrote: “The Iraqi army has never been able to effectively integrate the country’s Arabs and Kurds, as the army has traditionally been a strong institution and a source of pride among many Iraqi Sunni and some Shiite Arabs.”<sup>192</sup> Sunni Arab officers formed the core of the Iraqi Army, “which was primarily designed to be an internal security force with little or no ability to project power beyond Iraq’s border.”<sup>193</sup> The Iraqi Army was designed to battle rebellious elements of society such as the Kurds in the north and Shi’a in the south.<sup>194</sup>

When Iraq gained its independence in 1932, the Sunni officers became more politicized, which resulted in the 1958 military coup led by Major General Abdul-Karim Qassim to overthrow the monarchy.<sup>195</sup> Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Iraqi Army would experience tense relations between Sunni and Shi’a officers as a result of Kurdish revolts in northern Iraq and institutional discrimination within the army against the

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<sup>190</sup> Martin et al., “Iraq Control of Terrain Map: February 9, 2016.”

<sup>191</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, *Iraq’s New Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences* (CRS Report No. RS22093) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005), 2, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22093.pdf>.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

Shi'a.<sup>196</sup> These sectarian tensions would be exacerbated by the Sunni dominance of the officer corps at 70%, while Shi'a comprised 20%, and Kurds at 10%.<sup>197</sup>

Under Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi Army would be designed on the coup-proof model and be built around internal security forces and elite military units (Republican and Special Republican Guard units) to prevent regular army units from overthrowing the regime.<sup>198</sup> Saddam's efforts to build a coup-proof military would place trusted Sunni and Ba'athist loyalists in positions of power within the Iraqi Army structure. Saddam's coup-proofing model relegated Shi'a to low-level conscripts within the regular Iraqi Army that would bear the brunt of casualties in the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s.<sup>199</sup>

The U.S. military's efforts to rebuild the new Iraqi Army following the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime would turn the tables on the Sunni-Shi'a schism within the Iraqi Army. The dissolution of the old Iraqi Army and de-Ba'athification CPA Orders would have a dramatic impact and result in the new, predominately Shi'a, Iraqi Army.<sup>200</sup> The Iraqi government and the U.S.-led coalition endeavored to create a national army that integrated Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurds.<sup>201</sup> An integrated Iraqi Army would be critical to bear the burden of counterinsurgency operations across the diverse sectarian landscape of Iraq. U.S. forces would not have the legitimacy as they were increasingly viewed as an occupying force by both Shi'a and Sunni populations. By the time U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq in December 2011, the 350,000-man Iraqi Army was viewed as a "relatively well-trained and disciplined force."<sup>202</sup> To highlight the sectarian schism within the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Prime Minister Hayder al-Abbadi in 2014, would not dispute claims that the Iraqi Army was 80% Shi'a Muslim and referred to by Sunnis as an "Iranian occupation force."<sup>203</sup> According to the Congressional Research Service, the Islamic State offensive

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<sup>196</sup> Sharp, *Iraq's New Security Forces*, 2.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 241.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>202</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 10.

<sup>203</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 10.

in the summer of 2014 would leave the Iraqi Army with “as few as 50,000 soldiers and very low morale.”<sup>204</sup>

### **C. PREMISE ONE: POLITICAL FAILURE TO ACHIEVE LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNANCE**

“The most important developments in making Iraqi forces effective has nothing to do with the forces themselves or with the nature of the U.S. support or advisory effort. Rather, they are about the ability to create levels of political compromise and conciliation that deprive the insurgency and Iraq’s civil conflicts of their popular base,” wrote Anthony Cordesman in “Iraqi Force Development.”<sup>205</sup> Cordesman describes the importance of political action by the Iraqi government to achieve legitimacy and conciliation across all segments of society. The central goal of the counterinsurgent is to establish the government as legitimate in the eyes of the people and to be capable of providing basic essential services, security, and stability under the rule of law. The U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual underscores the imperative of achieving political legitimacy within the list of historical principles for counterinsurgency: legitimacy is the main objective and political factors are primary.<sup>206</sup> This section will address the issue of failure to achieve legitimacy of governance and its impact on the Iraqi Army by a study of the fractionalization of religious and ethnic segments of Iraq, corruption and politicization of the Iraqi Army under Prime Minister Nori al-Maliki, and reform efforts made by Prime Minister Hayder al-Abadi.

The fractionalization between religious and ethnic segments of Iraqi society had a significant impact on the formation and sustainability of the Iraqi Army following the U.S. invasion and toppling of the Saddam regime in 2003. In “Building an Integrated Military in Post-Conflict Societies,” Anne Marie Baylouny wrote: “Militaries are often viewed as crucial instruments of post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. Yet throughout much of the developing world...those militaries are crippled by

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Cordesman and Mausner, *Iraqi Force Development*, 6.

<sup>206</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–21–22.

fractionalization.”<sup>207</sup> The fractionalization of Iraqi society played a major role in the Iraqi government being viewed as illegitimate, particularly by the Sunni community. According to a 2014 study conducted by the social science research company, D3 Systems, 66% of Sunni Arabs, 31% of Shi’a Arabs, and 39% of Kurds viewed the Iraqi government as illegitimate.<sup>208</sup> The fractionalization of Iraqi society, particularly in the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, would play an important role in the perceived illegitimacy of the Iraqi government and its effect on building a sustainable national army.

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 would result in the spectacular defeat of the Iraqi military and the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime. In the wake of the defeat, Iraq was instantly plunged into chaos as a result of the instantaneous deprivation of security and basic essential services that had been the responsibility of the Ba’athist regime. De-Ba’athification and the dissolution of the old Iraqi Army in May 2003 by Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority would amplify the loss of even the legitimate functions provided by Saddam’s Ba’athist regime such as basic policing, utilities, and public infrastructure. The predominately Sunni-led Iraqi Army and Ba’ath Party would be excluded from the post-Saddam political landscape and widen the division between the Sunni and Shi’a. The two key pillars of the U.S. strategy, democratization and formation of a national army, would make U.S. military and civilian leadership unknowingly complicit in furthering the divide between the Sunni and Shi’a.

In pursuit of the strategy of democratization, the CPA would establish the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) in July 2003 as an interim advisory body to lay the ground work for an elected, representative government but openly establish a quota system based on sect and ethnicity.<sup>209</sup> In an attempt to create a representative government and at the urging of Shi’a and Kurdish leaders, the composition of the IGC was based on the

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<sup>207</sup> Baylouny, “Building an Integrated Military,” 242.

<sup>208</sup> D3 Systems, Inc., *Crisis in Iraq: A View from the Ground* (McLean, VA: Author, 2014), 5.

<sup>209</sup> Safa Rasul al-Sheikh and Emma Sky, “Iraq since 2003: Perspectives on a Divided Society,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 53, no. 4 (2011): 120, doi: 10.1080/00396338.2011.603565.

presumed ethno-sectarian demographics of Iraq.<sup>210</sup> The council's 25 members would include 13 Shi'a Arabs, 5 Sunni Arabs, 5 Kurds, a Turkoman, and a Christian.<sup>211</sup> The quota system, in the establishment of the IGC, unknowingly "crystallized and reinforced identity politics (which naturally disadvantaged Sunnis) as the basis for the new Iraq."<sup>212</sup> 2005 would be a critical year that would exacerbate the divide between the Sunni and the Shi'a. Since the Sunnis boycotted the transitional parliamentary elections and attempted to vote down the Iraqi constitution, the Shi'a and the Kurds emerged dominant in the newly-elected Council of Representatives, President, Prime Minister, and cabinet positions.<sup>213</sup> As a result of their diminished roles in the economic and political power structure of Iraq, the Sunnis would be driven toward the insurgency. Carter Malkasian would write in "Counterinsurgency in Iraq:" "They [the Sunnis] stood to gain more by waging war than accepting the outcome of the political process. The election of a legitimate government based on a Shi'a majority actually encouraged Sunnis to fight."<sup>214</sup> The U.S. strategy of democratization would become a major contributing factor to 42% of Iraqis viewing the Iraqi government as illegitimate.<sup>215</sup>

The other key elements of the U.S. strategy in Iraq, creation of a national army, would have important consequences for increased fractionalization and the perceived legitimacy of the Iraqi government. Prior to 2003, the Iraqi Army was viewed as a strong, patriotic institution that played a major role in the security of Iraq.<sup>216</sup> Under Saddam, the security sector leadership was dominated by Sunnis who were viewed as trustworthy and reliable by the regime, particularly so in the elite military units such as the Republican Guard, Special Republican Guard, and the Fedayeen Saddam.<sup>217</sup> It is important to

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<sup>210</sup> Fanar Haddad, "A Sectarian Awakening: Reinventing Sunni Identity in Iraq after 2003," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 17 (August 2014): 80.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 2–5.

<sup>214</sup> Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 259.

<sup>215</sup> D3 Systems, Inc., "Crisis in Iraq," 5.

<sup>216</sup> Barak, "Dilemmas of Security in Iraq," 462.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

distinguish these units from what Oren Barak in “Dilemmas for Security in Iraq,” labeled “ordinary” army units who joined the army for more practical reasons such as a paycheck.<sup>218</sup> This was evident during the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s when Shi’a represented the majority of combat casualties within the Iraqi Army.<sup>219</sup> The dissolution of the Iraqi Army in 2003 was precipitated by U.S. officials viewing all of the army as Saddam’s army and embarking on the strategy to build a new military: the Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>220</sup> The effect of the dissolution of the old Iraqi Army and the de-Ba’athification policies became the primary ideology of the new Iraqi government. These policies had the unintended consequence of focusing on what the army was not (a Sunni force); rather than what it should be (an integrated force of Sunni, Shi’a, and Kurds) and significantly impacted the legitimacy and inclusion of Sunnis into the new Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>221</sup> Disenfranchised with the formation of new Shi’a-dominated political structure, the Sunnis were significantly underrepresented within the Iraqi Security Forces. Though Sunnis represented 20% of officers, they represented only 10% of enlisted personnel.<sup>222</sup> Barak underscored the importance of what he termed, “communal imbalance in Iraq’s security sector,” and its impact on the inclination of the Sunnis to participate politically.<sup>223</sup> The disenfranchisement of the Sunnis based on the new Shi’a-dominated political and military structure drove many Sunnis, many who were in the old Iraqi Army, toward the insurgency. The disenfranchisement of the Sunnis against the Iraqi government precipitated the rise of Sunni insurgent groups such as Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the corresponding rise in Shi’a militias and insurgent groups. These groups not only battled the U.S. and coalition forces in an attempt to gain control of Iraq, but also battled one another in what would be referred to as the Iraq civil war. In late 2006, the inclusion

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<sup>218</sup> Barak, “Dilemmas of Security in Iraq,” 462.

<sup>219</sup> Melanie Bellini, “Identity Warfare: Constructions of National Identity and the Rise of Sectarian Violence in Modern Iraq” (master’s thesis, Wellesley College, 2012), 56.

<sup>220</sup> Barak, “Dilemmas of Security in Iraq,” 462–63.

<sup>221</sup> Lord and Mouawad, *National Security in Divided Societies*, 24.

<sup>222</sup> Barak, “Dilemmas of Security in Iraq,” 463.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

of Sunnis into the Iraqi Security Forces would undergo significant change as a result of the *sahwa* movement and support their inclusion into the Iraqi political structure.

The *sahwa* movement would be a critical turning point in the Iraqi political landscape through enabling Sunni inclusion into the Iraqi government against their common enemy: Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The inclusion of Sunnis into the Iraqi political structures, including the ISF, would have a dramatic effect on the perceived legitimacy of the Iraqi government and succeed in dramatically decreasing violence and easing sectarian tensions.<sup>224</sup> By 2006, the Iraqi civil war had taken a dramatic toll on the Sunni and Shi'a relations throughout Iraq. The Sunnis faced three challenges to their political and economic power: a perceived Iranian-supported Shi'a led government, a battle with U.S. forces for control of Anbar and Sunni provinces, and the Sunni-dominated AQI.<sup>225</sup> Partly attributed to the "surge" of U.S. forces into Iraq, the Sunnis began to view AQI as a greater threat because of its practice of bypassing the tribal and local power structures, the traditional sources of political and economic power in the Sunni areas.<sup>226</sup> In addition to combating AQI, the Sunnis felt that if they were to continue battling the U.S.-supported and Iranian-influenced Shi'a government, they would lose significant power and be confined to the resource poor western regions of Iraq.<sup>227</sup> The *sahwa* movement would first be controlled by the U.S. as part of its negotiations between the *sahwa* forces and the Maliki government. In 2008, the U.S. would transfer responsibility of *sahwa* forces over to the Iraqi government who agreed to incorporate them into the ISF and government positions.<sup>228</sup> The political success and reduction in violence through the incorporation of *sahwa* and Sunni elements into the ISF and Iraqi government would be short-lived. By 2012, despite negotiations between the U.S. and Maliki governments, Maliki would all but abandon Sunni inclusiveness into the Iraqi government and lay the ground work for the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq.

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<sup>224</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 5.

<sup>225</sup> Al-Sheikh and Sky, "Iraq since 2003," 124.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

Politicization and corruption of the Iraqi Army under the Shi'a-dominated Maliki government would play a crucial role in the perception of political legitimacy of the Iraqi government. The Maliki government, in conjunction with the *sahwa*, made great strides in forming an inclusive government bringing all ethno-religious sects together and being viewed with greater legitimacy across all Iraqi communities. The reductions in violence that resulted from the surge and *sahwa* significantly contributed to the political stabilization in Iraq.<sup>229</sup> In 2008, Maliki took two important steps to increase the perception of legitimacy in his government. The first was the successful March offensive to clear Basra of armed Shi'a factions and other militant groups caused many Sunnis and Kurds to see that Maliki was willing to battle armed groups, even if they were Shi'a.<sup>230</sup> The second key step undertaken by Maliki was the provincial powers law that gave expanded powers to provincial governing councils that included provincial legislation, regulations, and choosing governors and deputy governors.<sup>231</sup> From 2008 through 2011, the Sunni-Shi'a civil war would come to an end and national and provincial elections would be held where "political parties abandoned the use of sectarian identities...and presented themselves to the public as non-sectarian and representative of all components of Iraqi society."<sup>232</sup> These steps made by all communities across Iraqi society, including the Maliki government, were tremendously positive measures that would signal the government and Iraqi Security Forces as being perceived as legitimate. However, beginning in 2011, the Maliki government would come under increasing pressure to end U.S. occupation of Iraq providing an opening for the re-emergence of the sectarian rift.

2011 through 2014 would be a pivotal years in Iraq that included events that would challenge the legitimacy of the government and the Iraqi Security Forces and have a significant impact on the failures of the Iraqi Army and rise of the Islamic State. These factors included the failure of the U.S. and Iraqi governments to achieve a Status of Forces Agreement, Maliki's failure to include the *sahwa* militiamen into the Iraqi

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<sup>229</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 6.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>232</sup> Al-Sheikh and Sky, "Iraq since 2003," 135.



Security Forces, the arrest warrants issued for influential Sunni political leaders by Maliki, and the politicization and corruption of the Iraqi Army by Maliki.

In 2011, the U.S. and Iraqi governments were unable to reach an agreement on a SOFA that would extend U.S. troop involvement in Iraq past 2011.<sup>233</sup> The negotiations required to ratify the SOFA would require a ratification vote by the Iraqi COR.<sup>234</sup> The Maliki government was able to gain support from most factions to extend U.S. presence; however, he was unable to gain support from the powerful Shi'a cleric Moqtada al Sadr, who threatened to reactivate his Mahdi militias to oppose any agreement on continued U.S. troop presence.<sup>235</sup> In addition to the internal pressure to prevent the extension of U.S. troop presence, efforts to agree on a SOFA would be hampered by U.S. internal politics and possible Iranian influence.

The Sunni militiamen, the Sons of Iraq (SOI), as part of the *sahwa* were folded up into the Iraqi Security Forces or given civil service positions within the Iraqi government. An official U.S. report in 2012 indicated that approximately 70,000 SOI fighters had been integrated into the ISF or been given civilian jobs; however, there are indications that many Sunnis have been “pushed out of their positions, marginalized, or not been paid.”<sup>236</sup> According to a Congressional Research Service Report, only about two-thirds of the SOI have received the benefits promised as part of their integration into the ISF.<sup>237</sup> Although the exact number is unknown, many of these militiamen are believed to have become disillusioned with the Maliki government and joined the Islamic State.<sup>238</sup> The failure of the Maliki government to follow through on his pledge to integrate SOI militiamen into the ISF coupled with a perceived expansion of Shi'a and Iranian influence, the Iraqi government was losing the credibility and legitimacy that it had worked so hard to build.

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<sup>233</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 8.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Cordesman, Khazai, and Dewit, *Shaping Iraq's Security Forces*, 42.

<sup>237</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 14.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

As a result of Maliki's reemerging divisive sectarian actions of the issuance of arrest warrants for numerous influential Sunni political leaders and the failure to fully integrate SOI militiamen into the ISF, the Sunni areas of Iraq would experience growing sectarian conflict. The anti-Maliki demonstrations and growing sectarian conflict would spread across Sunni areas in several provinces and within the Sunni districts in Baghdad to demand reform or repeal of antiterrorism and de-Ba'athification laws and improved government services.<sup>239</sup> Maliki's return to divisive sectarian rhetoric and actions would continue to deplete the perception of legitimacy of the Iraqi government by all communities in Iraq.

The corruption and politicization of the Iraqi Army under Maliki have undermined the legitimacy of not only the Iraqi Army, but of the Iraqi government as a whole. Corruption, politicization, and nepotism have tremendously corrosive impacts on an army that relies on trusted leadership, discipline, and rule of law. The corruption and politicization of the Iraqi Army consisted of many different aspects. Maliki created the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (OCINC) to maximize civilian control of the military but in practice, used the office to facilitate the appointments of military officers based on personal loyalty in a coup-proofing scheme similar to the Saddam regime.<sup>240</sup> The U.S. attempted to limit his powers, but was unable to sufficiently influence his actions through this office.<sup>241</sup> According to the Congressional Research Service, "following the [U.S.] withdrawal, competent commanders were in some cases replaced by Maliki loyalists and many commanders viewed their positions as financial and political rewards."<sup>242</sup> Of the 14 commanders appointed in April 2013, "11 were Shi'a, two were Sunni Arabs (one of whom was a staunch Maliki loyalist), and one a Kurd."<sup>243</sup> Former Multi-National Division-North Commanding General, U.S. Army Lieutenant General Mark Hertling

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<sup>239</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 21.

<sup>240</sup> Lord and Mouawad, *National Security in Divided Societies*, 37.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>242</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 10.

<sup>243</sup> Lord and Mouawad, *National Security in Divided Societies*, 37.

would be quoted as saying that Maliki had been “replacing good Sunni and Kurdish commanders with less capable Shi’a officers with ties to the Maliki government.”<sup>244</sup>

The politicization and corruption of the Iraqi Army were clearly apparent in the collapse of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division in Mosul in June 2014 against the Islamic State. The politicization and corruption by Maliki as demonstrated through the removal and appointment of military officers based on personal loyalties established a precedence that filtered its way down to the lower levels of the Iraqi Army. In “Inside the Collapse of the Iraqi Army’s 2nd Division,” Yasir Abbas and Dan Trombly would characterize the 2nd Division as “undermanned, underequipped, and undertrained, due in large part to misallocated resources.”<sup>245</sup> This misallocation of resources was directly attributed to the corruption and nepotism at all levels of the Iraqi Army. Corruption with the Iraqi Army consisted of embezzlement of money allocated to purchase food for the soldiers forcing them to use their own money to purchase food in the local markets, selling of designated military fuel on the black market, and the practice of reporting soldiers present for duty so that the leadership could pocket their salaries, a practice known as “ghost soldiers.”<sup>246</sup> These corrupt practices throughout the ranks of the Iraqi Army placed an additional burden on an already strained organization that dropped their weapons, vehicles, and uniforms and fled without barely a shot despite significant numerical superiority to the Islamic State in Mosul.

Following the Islamic State’s offensive in the summer of 2014 that saw it gain control of large swaths of northern and western Iraq, Hayder al-Abaydi replaced the divisive Maliki as the Prime Minister of Iraq.<sup>247</sup> The western-educated Al-Abaydi, who was exiled from Iraq during Saddam’s reign, pledged to practice more inclusive politics and reverse the divisive policies of Maliki.<sup>248</sup> Al-Abaydi has attempted to deal with the underlying divisions in Iraqi society by reversing many of the policies of Maliki

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<sup>244</sup> Lord and Mouawad, *National Security in Divided Societies*, 39.

<sup>245</sup> Abbas and Twombly, “Collapse of the Iraqi Army.”

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 23.

<sup>248</sup> Zachary Laub and Jonathan Masters, “The Islamic State,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, last modified March 3, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/islamic-state/p14811>.

including abolishment of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, public disclosure of government corruption, and amendments to the de-Ba'athification laws to reintegrate former regime members into the political process.<sup>249</sup> His efforts are aimed at promoting a more inclusive political environment for which the Sunnis would take a bigger part and pull support away from the Islamic State.

Despite the renewed efforts of al-Abaydi to heal the simmering sectarian divisions that remerged under Maliki, his efforts were hampered by the battle against the Islamic State. With the collapse of the Iraqi Army in Mosul, the Shi'a militias were sent into battle in Sunni areas as the only viable alternative to the Islamic State. There have been unconfirmed reports of atrocities and human rights violations by these Shi'a militias against Sunni communities during fighting with the Islamic State that has fueled Sunni suspicions of al-Abaydi and the Iraqi government.<sup>250</sup> In 2015, Shi'a militias, with Iranian advisors, captured the city of Tikrit from the Islamic State demonstrating that al-Abaydi remained heavily-dependent on the power of the Shi'a militias to battle the Islamic State.<sup>251</sup> However, in December 2015, a reinvigorated Iraqi Army trained by U.S. advisors and supported by coalition air power, captured the Anbar capital of Ramadi from the Islamic State without the support of the Shi'a militias.<sup>252</sup> The steps taken by al-Abaydi to heal the sectarian divide and restore the perception of legitimacy among all communities in Iraq will be critical in the battle against the Islamic State. The recent success of the *Peshmerga* in the north and the Iraqi Security Forces in Ramadi suggest that his political reforms are having a significant positive impact in the battle against the Islamic State.<sup>253</sup>

#### **D. PREMISE TWO: LACK OF MOTIVATION AND WILL TO FIGHT**

A lack of motivation and a will to fight greatly contributed to the failures of the Iraqi Army in the face of the rapidly expanding Islamic State. The lack of motivation and

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<sup>249</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 23.

<sup>250</sup> Laub and Masters, "Islamic State."

<sup>251</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 27.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

will to fight is not an assault on the bravery and willingness of the individual Iraqi soldier to go into battle against his enemy, but a criticism of for who they are willing to fight. In *Strategic Lessons Unlearned from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan*, Chris Mason amplified this theory by writing: “In reality, there is nothing in Baghdad that the men of the Iraqi Army were going to fight and die for, made this outcome entirely predictable. It was a strategic repetition of South Vietnam.”<sup>254</sup> By the time U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq in December 2011, the 350,000-man Iraqi Army was viewed as a “relatively well-trained and disciplined force.”<sup>255</sup> Through the time of the U.S. withdrawal, in concert with the *sahwa* and the growing perception of legitimacy of the Iraqi government across all communities of Iraqi society, the Iraqi Army was a force capable of providing security across the entire country. By the end of 2011, the Iraqi Army, through corruption and politicization, would begin to fractionalize and see the return of simmering sectarian and tribal divisions. Without the perception of a legitimate central government in Iraq, soldiers and civilians would return to tribal and local allegiances. An anonymous U.S. Marine Corps Colonel that served as an advisor team leader to the Iraqi Army would summarize this phenomenon by describing the loyalty of soldiers and leaders were first to their families, then to their tribes, and then to their religion.<sup>256</sup> That Marine Colonel would further state, “Iraq as a nation falls at the bottom of the list [of loyalty]. Combine this with lack of cohesion, unity, loyalty, and camaraderie among themselves, and you have an organization that will disintegrate under pressure.”<sup>257</sup> The collapse of the Iraqi Army against the Islamic State in Mosul was both a symptom and a cause of fractionalization and return to local and religious loyalties.

The fractionalization of the army and decreasing perception of legitimacy of the Iraqi government, Iraqi soldiers would revert back to local, tribal, and religious loyalties. The reversion to ethno-religious loyalties, particularly after the summer 2014 Islamic

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<sup>254</sup> Mason, *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, 184.

<sup>255</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 10.

<sup>256</sup> Mason, *Strategic Lessons Unlearned*, 183.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

State offensive, were most visible in the reemergence and strength of Shi'a militias, the Kurdish *Peshmerga*, and the Sunni to the Islamic State.

The collapse of the Iraqi Army in Mosul would precipitate the reemergence of the Shi'a militias in the fight against the Islamic State. The Shi'a militias and Popular Mobilization Forces (PMFs) would halt the advance of the Islamic State to Baghdad, and by the end of 2015, would retake areas north of Baghdad, including the major cities of Tikrit and Baiji.<sup>258</sup> Following the Islamic State's seizure of Mosul in June 2014, Iraq's top cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued a *fatwa* to encourage Iraqis to "take up arms to defend their country and their people and their holy places."<sup>259</sup> In response to the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who answered the call, the Iraqi government declared the establishment of the Popular Mobilization Forces.<sup>260</sup> The PMFs, funded and given legitimacy by the Iraqi government, are viewed by the Sunnis as Shi'a militias that are sectarian agents of Iran.<sup>261</sup> These PMFs have also been subject of allegations of abuses and human rights abuses against the citizens in Sunni areas while battling the Islamic State.<sup>262</sup> The ethno-religious loyalties of the Shi'a militias was even acknowledged by al-Abaydi in an interview with *Spiegel* saying that, "[the militias] are very powerful because they are ideologically motivated."<sup>263</sup>

The Kurds, integrated into the Iraqi Army and within the *Peshmerga*, are intensely loyal to the Kurdish Regional Government and have largely been successful in defending its territories from the Islamic State, including the recapture of Sinjar and Mosul Dam. The 2nd Division was the Iraqi Army unit stationed in Mosul and the

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<sup>258</sup> Institute for the Study of War, "Iraq Control of Terrain Map: November 25, 2015," November 25, 2015, [http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20Bobby%20map%2025%20NOV%202015\\_0.pdf](http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20Bobby%20map%2025%20NOV%202015_0.pdf).

<sup>259</sup> Mustafa al-Kadhimi, "Will Sistani Be Able to Control Popular Mobilization Forces?" *Al-Monitor*, March 12, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-sistani-righteous-jihad-fatwa-popular-mobilization.html#>.

<sup>260</sup> Al-Kadhimi, "Popular Mobilization Forces."

<sup>261</sup> Renad Mansour, *The Sunni Predicament in Iraq* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2016), 10.

<sup>262</sup> Al-Kadhimi, "Popular Mobilization Forces."

<sup>263</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 27.

division in which the Kurdish *Peshmerga* were integrated.<sup>264</sup> It is likely that a major contributing factor to the collapse of the Iraqi Army in Mosul was due to internal divisions between the Sunni Arabs and the Kurds that contributed to the lack of coherence and unit of effort.<sup>265</sup> Sarah Lord and Tony Ghazal Mouawad wrote: “Ultimately, the Kurds opted to defend their territories rather than try to defend other communities’ territories.”<sup>266</sup> Kurdish forces have been successful in defending their territories while retaking territory lost to the Islamic State such as Sinjar and the Kirkuk oilfields.<sup>267</sup> The collapse of the Iraqi Army in Mosul can be, at least partly, attributed to the priority the Kurds placed on ethno-religious loyalties over that of the nation of Iraq.

The Sunni members of the Iraqi Army were in a tumultuous position because they were forced into the position to choose between the Islamic State and the Iraqi government viewed as illegitimate who did not represent Sunni interests. Many of the Sunni soldiers of the 2nd Division in Mosul lived with their families in the local area and upon threats from the Islamic State chose the safety of their families over that of fighting for the Iraqi government.<sup>268</sup> These soldiers lacked the will to fight for the Shi’a-dominated Iraqi central government they deemed as illegitimate because of corruption that left them without necessary resources, equipment and the inability to protect their families from the Islamic State.<sup>269</sup> The Sunni in Anbar, Nineveh, and Saladin Provinces were forced to choose between the Islamic State and the perceived illegitimate Iraqi central government. Ethno-religious loyalties proved to rise the loyalty to tribe and religion over that of the nation and significantly contributed to their will to fight for the Iraqi Army.

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<sup>264</sup> Lord and Mouawad, *National Security in Divided Societies*, 32.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 17.

<sup>268</sup> Abbas and Twombly, “Collapse of the Iraqi Army.”

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

In December 2015, Iraqi Security Forces and Sunni tribal fighters, trained by U.S. advisors and supported by U.S. airpower, recaptured Ramadi from the Islamic State.<sup>270</sup> The Iraqi Army victory in Ramadi would be a symbolic victory that would support the perceived legitimacy of the Iraqi government because the victory would be achieved without Shi'a tribal fighters.<sup>271</sup> The reforms by al-Abaydi and the retaking of Ramadi without Shi'a militias was an important step to support the perception of legitimacy of the Iraqi government across all communities in addition to demonstrating that the Iraqi Army can defeat the Islamic State and provide security across Iraq. In an effort to further integrate the Sunni into the Iraqi central government and security forces, al-Abaydi approved the appointment of 40,000 Sunni fighters into the Popular Mobilization Forces in January 2016.<sup>272</sup> According to the PMF spokesman, thousands of Sunni fighters have already joined the ranks in an effort to what al-Abaydi hopes will form the basis of the Iraqi National Guard.<sup>273</sup> The measures taken by Al-Abaydi would be important steps toward political inclusion of the Sunni into the Iraqi government and peel away their support from the Islamic State.

**E. PREMISE THREE: AN ARMY IN OUR IMAGE, RATHER THAN AN ARMY SUITED FOR IRAQ**

De-Ba'athification and the dissolution of Saddam's Iraqi Army forced the U.S. military to undertake building the new Iraqi Army from scratch. A key element of the U.S. strategy in Iraq was the construction of an integrated, national army "representative of Iraqi society at large...to transcend Iraq's religious and ethnic boundaries and keep the country unified while fighting the insurgency."<sup>274</sup> As a result of de-Ba'athification laws and the dissolution of the Sunni-led old Iraqi Army in an effort to create a new integrated

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<sup>270</sup> Cathaleen Chen, "Iraqi Forces Retake Ramadi: A Symbolic Victory against ISIS," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 28, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2015/1228/Iraqi-forces-retake-Ramadi-A-symbolic-victory-against-ISIS>.

<sup>271</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 27.

<sup>272</sup> Mustafa Saadoun, "It's Official: Sunnis Joining Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units," *Al-Monitor*, January 14, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/01/iraq-sunnis-join-shiite-popular-mobilization-forces.html#>.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Sharp, *Iraq's New Security Forces*, 1.



Iraqi Army, the U.S. was unknowingly complicit in furthering the sectarian division. The U.S. military attempted to create a new Iraqi Army that was blind to the sect, ethnic, or religious backgrounds of its soldiers and to be representative of the society from which it comes.<sup>275</sup> In an effort to create an integrated, national Iraqi Army in the image of western militaries, the U.S. military turned a blind eye toward the ethno-religious makeup of the new Iraqi Army which ultimately ended in the Iraqi Army being dominated by the Shi'a.<sup>276</sup> The Counterinsurgency Field Manual named "to build and train host-nation security forces in the U.S. military's image" in its list of unsuccessful counterinsurgency operational practices.<sup>277</sup> The U.S. attempt to create an army without a careful analysis of the sectarian influences within the Iraqi state has led to critical vulnerabilities of the Iraqi Army.

The U.S. military attempted to build an Iraqi Army in the image of the U.S. or western militaries where ethno-religious identities would not be a factor in the organization of the army. Through de-Ba'athification laws, dissolution of the old Iraqi Army, and the Sunni nature of the insurgency, the new Iraqi Army came to be dominated by the Shi'a.<sup>278</sup> The U.S. failure to recognize and take steps to mitigate the sectarian divisions in the Iraqi Army has significantly impacted their effectiveness in maintaining a monopoly on violence within Iraq. In "Building an Integrated Military in Post-Conflict Societies," Anne Marie Baylouny wrote: "The experience in Iraq demonstrates that when state security forces are viewed as controlled by a sect in a contentious ethnic, conflict-ridden society, democracy and the functioning of that military across all segments of the state are compromised."<sup>279</sup> Baylouny further states: "Turning a blind eye to sect or religion when constituting a military will be counterproductive."<sup>280</sup> The U.S. military's attempt to build an ethno-religiously blind army on the model of U.S. and western militaries severely crippled the effectiveness and sustainability of the Iraqi Army. The

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>277</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–29.

<sup>278</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 10.

<sup>279</sup> Baylouny, "Building an Integrated Military," 251.

<sup>280</sup> Baylouny, "Building an Integrated Military," 252.

sectarian realities of Iraq demanded that a determined effort be undertaken to ensure that a balance of sects would be achieved across all of the Iraqi Army.

**F. PREMISE FOUR: LACK OF LONG-TERM U.S. STRATEGY AND COMMITMENT**

The U.S. military's efforts to rebuild the Iraqi Army from scratch in the middle of a nation-building campaign and sectarian civil war required a long term strategy and commitment. The effort to rebuild the Iraqi Army was a key component of the counterinsurgency campaign to set the security conditions to support the establishment of a legitimate democratic government.<sup>281</sup> Dr. Conrad Crane, lead author of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual, wrote, "COIN always requires considerable money, manpower, and time...critiques of the U.S. performance in COIN is an assumption that Americans have neither the patience nor the will required for success in protracted conflicts."<sup>282</sup> The high levels of commitment of manpower, resources, and time through 2011, including the surge and the *sahwa*, achieved significant gains in the two key elements of U.S. strategy: democratization and construction of a national army. The U.S. departure in December 2011 would see the return of sectarian divisiveness and a deteriorating security situation that attributed to the rise of the Islamic State.

U.S. military advisors to the Iraqi Army were the key element of the U.S. strategy to rebuild the Iraqi Army. Military advisors provided training and mentorship to their Iraqi partners that included skills ranging from small-unit urban tactics to logistics to staff planning processes.<sup>283</sup> In addition to providing training and mentorship to the Iraqi Army, the advisors would also provide key enabler support such as close air support; medical evacuation; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support.<sup>284</sup> With U.S. advisor support through 2011, the Iraqi Army would perform reasonably well and was capable of providing security across Iraq. The successful offensive in Basra

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<sup>281</sup> Malkasian, "Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 250–51.

<sup>282</sup> Conrad C. Crane, "Minting COIN: Principles and Imperatives for Combating Insurgency," *Air and Space Power Journal* 21, no. 4 (2007): 59.

<sup>283</sup> From the author's personal experience as an advisor to the Iraqi Army in Haditha, Iraq.

<sup>284</sup> From the author's personal experience as an advisor to the Iraqi Army in Haditha, Iraq.

against the Shi'a militias in 2008 would demonstrate that the Iraqi Army, with U.S. advisors and support, was capable of conducting military operations under the direction of the Iraqi central government. It was noted that during the Basra operation, the Iraqi Army units with U.S. advisors performed better than those without U.S. advisors.<sup>285</sup> Stephen Biddle in "How to Leave a Stable Iraq" wrote: the First and 26th Brigades, "deployed with Marine advisors, performed well, whereas the brigades without U.S. advisors and partners did poorly, with one effectively collapsing in combat." Biddle would further conclude that the Basra campaign "would have ended in disaster if not for support from coalition firepower and the arrival of ISF with U.S. military and police training teams."<sup>286</sup> Despite the critical support of U.S. advisors and coalition firepower, the Basra campaign was a significant victory that facilitated the perception of legitimacy of the Iraqi central government because it demonstrated that it was willing to battle the sectarian militias. It further demonstrated when properly advised and supported, Iraqi Army units were capable of conducting operations that provided a secure and stable environment for the fledgling Iraqi central government. The sudden departure of U.S. advisors and support in December 2011 would have drastic consequences on the Iraqi Army.

In 2011, the U.S. and Iraqi governments were unable to reach a consensus on the SOFA that would extend U.S. presence and guarantee immunity of U.S. forces from Iraqi law.<sup>287</sup> The SOFA would fail because of domestic politics in both Iraq and the U.S. The powerful Shi'a cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr, would be adamantly opposed to further U.S. presence and would pressure the Shi'a-dominated Iraqi government to refuse to sign the SOFA.<sup>288</sup> The domestic politics of the U.S. would play a role in the failure of a SOFA largely due to President Obama fulfilling a campaign pledge to end the war in Iraq.<sup>289</sup> The sudden departure of U.S. forces and advisors resulted in the increased politicization

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<sup>285</sup> Biddle, O'Hanlon, and Pollack, "How to Leave a Stable Iraq," 46.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>287</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 8.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 8.

and corruption of the Iraqi Army.<sup>290</sup> With U.S. advisors present throughout the Ministry of Defense down to the battalion levels, they were able to stem the tide of this politicization and corruption through oversight and cooperation.<sup>291</sup> The departure of U.S. advisors within the Iraqi Army increased the politicization and corruption within the Maliki-controlled army and contributed directly to its deterioration post-2011. Anthony Cordesman in “Iraqi Force Development,” echoed the need for a commitment based on conditions, not time, when he wrote: “The goal should not be to rush U.S. forces out of Iraq as soon as possible without regard to the realities of Iraqi force development and the political conditions and levels of civil violence under which the ISF must develop and operate.”<sup>292</sup> The US’s strategy and commitment of manpower and resources was driven by time and not conditions. The lack of a long term strategy and commitment to fully support the key elements of U.S. strategy in Iraq, democratization and construction of a national army, were detrimental and ultimately contributed to the failure of the Iraqi Army and the ability to maintain an inclusive government viewed as legitimate across all communities of Iraq.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

From 2003 to 2011, the United States and coalition partners undertook an immense military advisory effort to rebuild the Iraqi Army following the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime. The U.S. spent \$20 billion on the construction of the Iraqi Army in an attempt to create an integrated national force loyal to a legitimate central government and capable of providing security under the rule of law across all communities in Iraq. The collapse of the Iraqi Army in Mosul in June 2014 against numerically inferior forces of the Islamic State demonstrated the Iraqi Army was not capable of defending Iraq from internal or external threats.

This chapter has sought to explain why, despite an immense military advisory effort and \$20 billion spent on recruiting, training, and equipping the Iraqi Army, the

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<sup>290</sup> Cordesman, Khazai, and Dewit, *Shaping Iraq’s Security Forces*, 10.

<sup>291</sup> From the author’s personal experience as an advisor to the Iraqi Army in Haditha, Iraq.

<sup>292</sup> Cordesman and Mausner, *Iraqi Force Development*, 3.

Iraqi Army has failed to secure Iraq against the Islamic State. There are four key premises as to why the Iraqi Army has not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army: failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, creation of an army in the western image rather than an army that meets the needs of Iraq, and the lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment.

The experience in Iraq has provided critical lessons to military and strategic planners engaging in military operations that require large-scale military advisory efforts as part of nation-building or counterinsurgency campaign. The first and most important lesson is that the strategy must be developed with a thorough understanding of the historical context and the realities of Iraq. The U.S. sought to impose a representative democracy in a country that had a deep sectarian divide as a result of decades of oppression under the Saddam regime. The U.S. was unknowingly complicit in widening this sectarian divide through the de-Ba'athification laws and the dissolution of the old Iraqi Army. A more careful review of the history of Iraq and the realities of the sectarian divide might have resulted in a more cohesive strategy for democratization and the construction of an integrated, national army. A second critical lesson learned is despite significant time and resources invested; an outside force cannot build a strong central army capable of providing a secure and stable environment if the government is not viewed as legitimate and worth fighting and dying for. The third critical lesson learned is that the military advisory mission is an extremely important mission that advances the capacity and capability of partnered or allied nations, but military and strategic planners must understand the limitations of what can be achieved. The military advisor is capable of providing training and capabilities to partners and allies in support of the national strategy, but the military advisor cannot build an army from scratch if the government it serves is viewed as illegitimate by the soldiers and the populace nor can the advisor give it the motivation and will to fight.

## V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The two case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan offer unique insight into the U.S. military's mission to rebuild the national army following the collapse of the existing central government. In both cases, the U.S. military was assigned the mission to rebuild the national army and a strong, democratically-elected central government while the country was embroiled in a violent insurgency with internal and external actors and influences. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military was assigned the task of rebuilding a national army that was loyal to the democratically-elected central government and capable of defending their countries from internal and external threats.

In both of these examples, the U.S. military would have to rebuild the army from scratch. In Afghanistan prior to 9/11, Guistozzi described the ANA as “essentially an irregular militia under the orders of charismatic warrior mullahs,” who had been appointed by and were directly responsible to the Taliban leader Mullah Omar rather than to the Ministry of Defense.<sup>293</sup> Guistozzi would also write that the formal structure of the ANA “dissolved between 1992–3 and its units in the provinces were taken over by local coalitions of former insurgents.”<sup>294</sup> The rapid collapse of the Taliban government and its security force structure as a result of the U.S. and coalition invasion in 2001, left the U.S.-led coalition with the task to rebuild the ANA from scratch. In Iraq, following the defeat of the Iraqi Army and collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime, the Iraqi Army would have to be rebuilt as a result of Coalition Provisional Orders 1 (de-Ba'athification) and 2 (dissolution of the old Iraqi Army). Prior to 2003, the Iraqi Army was a large, relatively well-trained and equipped national army loyal to the Saddam Hussein government. The Iraqi Army was built by Saddam as a coup-proofing force consisting of a conscript and volunteer regular army and a better trained and equipped Republican Guard force and intelligence apparatus to ensure regime survival. With the implementation of CPA 1 and 2, the U.S. military, like Afghanistan, would be tasked to rebuild the Iraqi Army from scratch.

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<sup>293</sup> Guistozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 117, 120.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military expended tremendous resources and human capital in the construction of national armies; however, following the departure of U.S. and coalition forces, neither army has proved capable of maintaining loyalty to the central government and defending its country from internal and external threats. Afghanistan has seen a reemergence of the Taliban and a growing threat from the Islamic State that has resulted in significant ANA attrition and the loss of numerous cities and districts. The collapse of the Iraq Army in Nineveh, Saladin, and Anbar provinces at the hands of significantly numerically-inferior forces of the Islamic State demonstrated the inability to defend Iraq from both internal and external threats. In both cases, ANA and Iraqi Army forces have made slight gains in their efforts to regain territory lost to the Taliban and the Islamic State. These gains have largely been attributed to U.S. and coalition air, logistics, and intelligence support. In the case of Iraq, the Iraqi Army has also found support from the Shi'a and Sunni militias, Kurdish *Peshmerga*, and advisors from the United States and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

This thesis has sought to explain the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan armies because of four premises: the failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, creation of an army in the western image, and lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, these four premises provide explanation to why the U.S. military was unable to construct a national army loyal to the central government and able to defend the country from internal and external threats.

The failure to achieve legitimacy of governance was a major factor in the failures of both the Iraqi and Afghan armies. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the efforts to rebuild the army and the central government were carried out concurrently with the conduct of a counterinsurgency campaign. The Counterinsurgency Field Manual states that “the primary objective of any COIN operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government.”<sup>295</sup> The Counterinsurgency Field Manual further states that a government viewed as legitimate can best manage the security, political, economic, and social development efforts of the country.<sup>296</sup> As a critical element of the central

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<sup>295</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–21.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

government's efforts for security and stability, the perception of legitimacy in the eyes of the population and the soldiers is a key aspect of the national armies of Iraq and Afghanistan. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, significant portions of the society did not view the central governments as legitimate. In Afghanistan, the U.S. imposition of a strong, democratically-elected central government was not viewed as legitimate in a society whose only culturally accepted sources of legitimacy are traditional (dynastic or hereditary) and religious. The U.S. efforts to create a strong, central government failed to achieve a balance between the bottom-up power of the local and tribal leaders and the top down power of the national government. The failure to achieve legitimacy of governance in Iraq stems from democratization and de-Ba'athification that led to the fractionalization of Iraqi society following the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. The dissolution of the old Iraqi Army, de-Ba'athification, and democratization of the Iraqi government facilitated the rise to power by the Shi'a majority and led to the marginalization and political exclusion of the Sunni Arab minority. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the politicization and pervasive corruption within the army and the central government were significant contributing factors to the perception of legitimacy by both the soldiers and the population it is supposed to serve.

Motivation and will to fight had a major impact on the failures of both the Afghan and Iraqi Armies. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the individual soldier was not willing to fight and die for a central government that they viewed as illegitimate and did not represent the various ethno-sectarian elements of the society. The motivation and will to fight is linked to the failure of both governments to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the people. In Afghanistan, the ANA would not be willing to fight for a government viewed as illegitimate and corrupt. The soldier's perception of the Afghan government and of the leadership within the ANA has significantly contributed to an attrition rate from 3% in October 2015 to 3.4% in January 2016.<sup>297</sup> In Guistoizzi's "Army of Afghanistan," he wrote that among the reasons for desertion are corruption among officers, poor medical care and neglect of soldiers and their families, service in remote locations away from

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<sup>297</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, April 30, 2016* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, 2016), 102–3, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2016-04-30qr.pdf>.



their ethno-sectarian region, and the uncertainties of ISAF departure.<sup>298</sup> Like Afghanistan, elements within the Iraqi Army suffered from a lack of motivation and will to fight. The lack of motivation and will to fight had its roots in the de-Ba'athification and democratization process that exacerbated the fractionalization of Iraqi society along ethno-sectarian lines. This lack of motivation and will to fight was not so much a question of bravery, but for whom they are willing to fight. The three main ethno-sectarian groups that formed the Iraqi government and Iraqi Army each had greater loyalties to their family, tribe, and religion than they did to the nation and the Iraqi central government. This division of loyalties was made clear with the collapse of the Iraqi Army 2nd Division in the face of the 2014 Islamic State offensive in Mosul. The 2nd Division, made up primarily of Sunni Arabs and Kurds, collapsed virtually overnight when the soldiers chose the security of their families, tribes, and ethnic group over that of the Iraqi government. The effectiveness of the Kurdish *Peshmerga* and Shi'a militias in the battle against the Islamic State are examples of the motivation and will to fight for an entity that is perceived as legitimate and representative of the people: the governments of Iraqi Kurdistan, the Shi'a-dominated Iraqi central government, and the Shi'a religious leadership in Iraq. The politicization and corruption of the Iraqi Army leadership by the Maliki government was an additional contributing factor to the perceived illegitimacy of the Iraqi central government.

The Counterinsurgency Field Manual named “to build and train host-nation security forces in the U.S. military’s image” in its list of unsuccessful counterinsurgent operational practices.<sup>299</sup> In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military attempted to construct and sustain national armies without a careful analysis of the society, culture, capabilities, and resources of the society from which it is drawn. In Afghanistan, the U.S. attempt to create an army without a careful analysis of the capabilities and resources of the Afghan state has led to critical vulnerabilities of the ANA. The critical vulnerabilities that have resulted in the creation and sustainment of the ANA by U.S. and NATO forces are the budget and funding of the ANA, adequate numbers of sufficiently educated and

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<sup>298</sup> Giustozzi, *Army of Afghanistan*, 161.

<sup>299</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–29.

skilled manpower to meet the needs of the ANA, and a logistics and equipment sustainability system to support the ANA nationwide. In Iraq, a major shortfall of the U.S. strategy to construct a new Iraqi Army resulted from the attempt to build an integrated, national army blind to religious and ethnic identities like that of a modern western army. As a result of de-Ba'athification laws and dissolution of the Sunni-led old Iraqi Army in an effort to create a new integrated Iraqi Army, the U.S. was unknowingly complicit in furthering the sectarian division. The U.S. failed to recognize and take steps to mitigate the ethno-sectarian divisions that resulted from the dissolution of the old Iraqi Army and De-Ba'athification laws. As a result of sectarian fractionalization, the new Iraqi Army became characterized as an overwhelmingly Shi'a force not inclusive of the Sunni and Kurdish sects within its ranks.<sup>300</sup> The sectarian realities of Iraq demanded that a determined effort be undertaken to ensure a balance of sects across all of the Iraqi Army and support it being viewed as legitimate and representative of Iraqi society.

The lack of long-term U.S. strategy and commitment had a significant impact on the construction, sustainment, and capabilities of the Iraqi and Afghan armies. FM 3–24 emphasizes that one of the historical principles of a counterinsurgency is to be prepared for a long-term commitment.<sup>301</sup> The counterinsurgency operations and efforts to rebuild the Iraqi and Afghan armies required a long-term commitment of manpower and resources. Timelines, rather than performance or capability milestones, often driven by U.S. domestic politics, had a significant impact on the governments and armies of Iraq and Afghanistan. In both cases, the level of commitment of U.S. resources were based on time and not on conditions. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the armies achieved higher levels of proficiency and success on the battlefield with embedded military advisors than those without, particularly with enablers such as close air support, logistics, and intelligence support. Excellent examples of this are the 2008 Basra campaign in Iraq and the 2015 operation to retake Kunduz in Afghanistan. The success of these operations relied heavily on U.S. enabler support, particularly close air support, logistics, and intelligence. The success of the Iraqi and Afghan armies to provide a secure and stable

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<sup>300</sup> Katzman and Humud, *Iraqi Politics and Governance*, 10.

<sup>301</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1–24.

environment are critical to support the perception of legitimacy of the central governments. The strategy in Afghanistan suffered from incrementalism that began as counter-terrorism then progressed to counterinsurgency, and then ended with the nation-building strategy of “Afghanization.” With varying levels of commitment of resources and manpower, the war in Afghanistan was an economy of force mission to that of Iraq. Varying levels of commitment and a drawdown timeline for U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan produces uncertainty in the Afghan people in the army and government’s ability to maintain security and stability. In Iraq, the domestic politics of both Iraq and the U.S. contributed to preventing a long-term commitment of U.S. advisors and enabler support. The failure of the U.S. and Iraqi governments to achieve a Status of Forces Agreement can be attributed to U.S., Iraqi, and Iranian politics. A long-term commitment of U.S. advisors and support would have enabled the continued strengthening of the Iraqi government and military institutions and would likely have been able to stem the tide of politicization and corruption through oversight and cooperation.<sup>302</sup> The lack of a long term strategy and commitment to fully support the key elements of U.S. strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan were detrimental and contributed to the failures of the Iraqi and Afghan armies and the ability to maintain an inclusive government. In both case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. was tasked to build a national army and democratic government from scratch following the collapse of the central government in the midst of a violent insurgency. The similarities of the mission and of the outcome in both Iraq and Afghanistan provide important insight into the military advisor mission and the mission to rebuild a national army as part of a nation-building strategy. Failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, creation of an army in the western image, and lack of long-term U.S. strategy and commitment are common principles that support the primary shortfalls of the nation-building mission in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The four premises addressed in the case study provide an explanation as to why the U.S. military has failed to build a national army that is capable of defending Iraq and Afghanistan from internal and external threats under the control of the national government.

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<sup>302</sup> From the author’s personal experience as an advisor to the Iraqi Army in Haditha, Iraq.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CONFLICTS

Since 2001, the U.S. military endeavored to rebuild the national armies of both Afghanistan and Iraq following the toppling of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes. As of January 2016, \$38.6 billion has been spent recruiting, training, and equipping the 160,000 soldiers of the Afghan National Army and Air Force.<sup>303</sup> At the time of the U.S. departure from Iraq in December 2011, \$20 billion had been spent recruiting, training, and equipping the 350,000 soldiers of the Iraqi Army. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, neither of the national armies are sustainable forces loyal to the central government capable of defending their territories from internal and external threats. In Afghanistan, 71% of the country's districts are under Afghan government control leaving the other 29% to be under control or influence of the Taliban or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant–Khorasan.<sup>304</sup> In Iraq, the Islamic State maintains control over large swaths of territory in northern and western Iraq including Iraq's second largest city, Mosul. By February 2016, Iraqi forces have succeeded in retaking Tikrit, Sinjar, Baiji, and Ramadi; however, this success can be attributed to a mix of Shi'a and Sunni militias, Kurdish *Peshmerga*, Iraqi Army, and coalition air power, not a unified Iraqi Army under the control of the Iraqi central government.<sup>305</sup>

The purpose of this paper has been to explain why despite nearly \$60 billion and more than a decade of military advisory efforts, the Iraqi and Afghan national armies are not unified, sustainable forces loyal to the central government and capable defending their territories from internal and external threats. The selection, training, organization, and deployment of combat advisors by the U.S. military has faced numerous challenges during the recent advisory missions in Iraq and Afghanistan; including poor quality of indigenous recruits, inadequate advisor screening and selection, inadequate pre-

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<sup>303</sup> SIGAR, *Quarterly Report, January 30, 2016*, 72, 80.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>305</sup> Martin et al., "Iraq Control of Terrain Map: February 9, 2016."

deployment training, language and cultural barriers, and command and control issues.<sup>306</sup> These shortfalls however, are insufficient to explain why the Iraqi Army has failed against the Islamic State and the ANA are losing ground to a resurgent Taliban and the growing threat from ISIL-K. There are four key premises as to why the Iraqi and Afghan armies have not met the expectations of a sustainable and legitimate central army: failure to achieve legitimacy of governance, lack of motivation and will to fight, the creation of an army in the western image rather than an army that meets the needs of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the lack of a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment.

The experience in Iraq and Afghanistan has provided critical lessons to military and strategic planners engaging in military operations that require large-scale military advisory efforts as part of nation-building or counterinsurgency campaigns. The first and most important lesson is that the strategy must be developed with a thorough understanding of the historical context and the realities. We must endeavor for a thorough understanding of the cultural and political landscape of the country for which we are providing support. Any attempt to build an army must first begin with an understanding of the cultural landscape, resources, capabilities, and limitations of the host country. We must build a national army not in the western image, but in a manner that meets the needs and resources of the country it serves. In Iraq, the U.S. sought to impose a representative democracy in a country with a deep sectarian divide as a result of decades of oppression under the Saddam regime in the midst of a violent sectarian civil war. The U.S. was unknowingly complicit in widening this sectarian divide through de-Ba'athification laws and the dissolution of the old Iraqi Army. A more careful review of the history of Iraq and the realities of the sectarian divide may have resulted in a more cohesive strategy for democratization and the construction of an integrated national army. The strategy in Afghanistan also sought to impose a representative democracy centered on a strong central government that did not respect the Afghan history and culture of local and tribal governance based on traditional and religious sources of legitimacy. The historical context of Afghan governance and its relation with society is highlighted by Thomas Johnson in "Afghanistan's post-Taliban Transition." Johnson wrote, "Past attempts at

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<sup>306</sup> Rosenau et al., *Marine Corps Advisors*, 83.

modern state formation in Afghanistan that have directly challenged the local tribal and religious structures of society have resulted in ethnic backlash and state failure.”<sup>307</sup> A second critical lesson learned is despite significant time and resources invested; an outside force cannot build a strong central army capable of providing a secure and stable environment if the government is not viewed as legitimate and worth fighting and dying for. The military advisory mission is an extremely important mission that advances the capacity and capability of partnered or allied nations, but military and strategic planners must understand the limitations of what can be achieved. The military advisor is capable of providing training and enabling capabilities to partners and allies in support of the national strategy, but the military advisor cannot build an army from scratch if the government it serves is viewed as illegitimate by the soldiers and the populace nor can the advisor give it the motivation and will to fight. The advised military can use the advisor and the enabler support as a source of motivation and will to fight, but it will not likely outlast the uncoupling of the military advisor with their partnered military. The third key lesson is that for the military advisor mission to increase its likelihood of success, we must be prepared for a long-term commitment in both time and resources. There is evidence to support that in both Iraq and Afghanistan, those units that retained military advisors and their enabler support (close air support, intelligence, logistics, etc.) performed better than those without. The cases of the Iraqi Army during the Basra campaign and the success of the Afghan National Security Forces during recent operations in Kunduz support this thesis. U.S. military advisors were relatively successful in limiting the politicization and corruption among the Iraqi and Afghan armies while they were still embedded with their partnered units. Hy Rothstein and John Arquilla in *Afghan Endgames* echoed the historical principle of COIN, prepare for a long-term commitment, by stating that “long term commitment would undermine our enemies’ belief that time is on their side.”<sup>308</sup>

The exploration of the military advisor mission is an important study of what can be achieved in the enabling the capacity and capabilities of our allies and partners as part

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<sup>307</sup> Johnson, “Afghanistan’s Post-Taliban Transition,” 7.

<sup>308</sup> Rothstein and Arquilla, “Understanding the Afghan Challenge,” 11.

of the U.S. national security strategy. The missions to rebuild the Iraqi and Afghan armies provide examples of the capabilities and limitations of the military advisor mission and a more thorough understanding of what this mission can achieve. The U.S. military's mission to rebuild the Iraqi and Afghan armies from scratch in the midst of a nation-building adventure overlooked the societal, organizational, and institutional weaknesses in the government and society for which the central army is a critical element. In short, the U.S. government built the teeth before it built the tail.

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