The Value of Social Capital to the Future of Iraq[1]

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This is a critical, yet hopeful, survey of the value of social capital to understanding the prevailing conditions in Iraq. The abundance of failures and paucity of progress in promoting a peaceful, stable, and democratic Iraq can be directly attributed to the lack of social capital between United States reconstruction representatives, the U.S. military and Iraqi civilians. The utility of social capital to the future of Iraq will be demonstrated in the following relationship: As social capital between the U.S. military, U.S. reconstruction authorities, and common Iraqis increases, the security and overall quality of life for Iraqis will increase.

Iraq is listed second, just ahead of Somalia and behind Sudan, in Foreign Policy's influential "Failed States Index for 2007." Seventy-five percent of Iraqis describe the state of security in Iraq as "poor" (IRI, 2006, 29). Iraqis do not have access to basic services including electricity, food, or even potable water because of this lack of security. Four million Iraqis are considered "food insecure and in need of food assistance" (UNAMI, 2007, 2). Only one in three children in Iraq under the age of five has access to safe drinking water (UNICEF, 2007). More than 80,000 Iraqi citizens have lost their lives since the invasion of 2003 (Iraq Body Count, 2007). Over 4,000 coalition troops have suffered the same fate (icasualties, 2007). More importantly to our study, common citizens do not trust their neighbors, the coalition and Iraqi security forces trying to protect them, or their representatives in government. Indeed, most would agree with a recent CSIS report claiming that the central government is less and less relevant to what happens in Iraq (CSIS, 2007). The fundamental source of conflict in Iraq is doubtless the "competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources" (Petreaus Report, 2007, 2). Iraqis and U.S. analysts alike are asking the same question: how did we get to this point?

American policy errors ran the gamut from political miscalculation and economic misallocation to social misunderstanding and military mismanagement. Past mistakes in policy formulation and implementation will offer us a portal

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through which to see the position social capital occupied in the reconstruction equation. Social capital is both an index of the overall conditions in Iraq and a vehicle for improvement. It is the hope of the author that any lessons or warnings gleaned from this analysis will be applied to mitigating suffering and promoting understanding in future circumstances.

Policy error and military failure combined to repress the formation of social capital, in many cases even eroding existing social capital, and directly contributed to civil strife in Iraq. Economic liberalization was prioritized over stability. A centralized and callous decision-making apparatus was favored by the Coalition Provisional Authority. The misunderstandings between Iraqis and coalition forces stemming from a complete lack of adequate training (particularly in cultural sensitivity), and copious misapplications of US power and resources illustrated the unpreparedness of the US military to be part of a nation-building effort. An assessment of social capital offers a more compelling explanation for the violence and continued instability in Iraq than political incompetence or economic stagnation. National reconciliation, seized upon by figures in the US public as the key to success in Iraq, is possible not through political initiative, but by a surge of social capital.

This will not be an exhaustive study of all that went wrong in Iraq or even a general exploration of the efficacy of political policies, as taken by both the Iraqi and US governments. This will be a focused study, treating political decisions, military strategies, and economic policies only in so much as they are directly relevant to the formation or erosion of social capital. There will be no discussion of the reasons to go to war in Iraq, nor any recommendation of the criteria for intervention. The United States, for reasons of obligation and capability, will be treated as the primary agent for change. As the security and political situation continues to evolve the Iraqi government will take over the mantle of primary effecter but with 130,000 foreign occupying troops still present we are not yet at that stage.

Conceptually, this paper will rely on the theory of social capital as described by the eminent sociologist Robert D. Putnam in his 2000 work, <u>Bowling Alone</u>. Putnam concentrates on the decline of church attendance, volunteering, membership in groups, letter writing, and even league bowling. While data exist on the amount of television Iraqis watch per day,[2] and even the type of programming they favor, our discussion of social capital in Iraq will depend on

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[2] In response to "How many hours of TV do you watch per day?" 31 percent of Iraqis replied 2-4 hours, 26% 1-2 hours, 18% 4-6 hours, 10% more than 6 hours, 7% less than 1 hour, and 5% zero hours (IRI, 2006). This is in sharp contrast to the 7-8 hours the average American watched in 1998 (Putnam, 2000, 222).

other evidentiary assets. This study will depend on informal evidence, supporting anecdotal information with quantitative data when available and appropriate. First-hand accounts, like those of former Iraqi minister of defense Ayed Allawi and front-line news reporters Michael Yon and Nir Rosen, will complement statistically based policy recommendations offered by the World Bank and the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq. The value of social capital to the economy of Iraq will be explored through the official polces of US reconstruction authorities and, as a counterpoint, the informal economy studies of Robert Looney. Security will be a consuming theme in this work and will be treated through the use of independent security contractors. The role of the military in promoting social capital will be considered through the counterinsurgency strategies of General David H. Petraeus. Case-studies, including the Local Governance Program and USAID educational reform, will also figure prominently.

    Social capital is the value wrought from social networks. An increase or decrease in social connections between people, both of a quantitative and qualitative nature, affects the nature of the relationship between those groups and individuals. There are two types of social capital, "bonding" and "bridging" (Putnam, 2000, 22). Bonding forces tend to insulate a group, composed of people with common interests, ethnicity, or other distinction, from interacting with dissimilar groups. Bridging forces, as one would expect, create opportunities for interactions between diverse groups. It would not be an overstatement to say that the reconciliation of the Iraqi people depends squarely on the ability of US troops and civil society representatives to facilitate the creation of bridging social capital between disparate factions.

    The endemic violence saturating US headlines and Iraqi lives in 2006 and 2007, whether resulting from sectarian feud, transnational terrorist activity, or insurgent uprising, will be approached with an eye toward the formation and erosion of social capital. Al Qaeda, the numerous Shia and Sunni sectarian militias, and Kurdish organizations like the PKK all represent groups formed out of bonding social capital. These exclusionist groups fill the vacuums left by local government and non-governmental organizations by providing "crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labor for local entrepreneurs" (Putnam, 2000, 22). A potential problem with bonding social capital is that by encouraging "strong in-group loyalty, [it] may also create strong out-group antagonism" (Putnam, 2000, 23). In a country occupied by foreign soldiers and teetering on the brink of mass sectarian violence, it is easy to see how groups formed out of bonding forces have slid into violent extremism. Psychologists have contemplated this shift, suggesting that the "black and white nature of most extremist ideologies is often attractive to those who feel overwhelmed by the

complexity and stress of navigating a complicated world" (Borum, 2004, 26). The Army's new counterinsurgency manual reinforces this basis for attraction:

> Recruits are often young men suffering from frustrated hopes and unable to improve their lot in life. The insurgent group provides them identity, purpose, and community in addition to physical, economic, and psychological identity. (COIN, 2006, 21)

Social capital is a dynamic force that can be manipulated to incite violence just as easily as it can be used to mitigate it.

Several decisions were made in the immediate aftermath of the invasion of Iraq that determined the priority social capital was to occupy in the course of the conflict. Some of the most egregious errors include a lack of appreciation for the nuanced history of Iraq's diverse communities, a stubborn attachment to preconceived (read American) ideas of progress, the adoption of a top-down and highly centralized interpretation of government, an unwillingness to explore diverse or creative solutions, and the emphasizing of economic liberalization and political party development over civil society. The decision to disband the Iraqi Army in the wake of the capitulation of Saddam's forces is where we will start. The disbandment of the Iraqi Army was based on several presumptions: that the army was a representation and tool of the Baath party, that the Iraqi people did not trust the army, and that if the army was left intact the Baath party and all its associated dictatorial connotations would survive as well (Bremer, 2007). What Paul Bremer, Donald Rumsfeld, and the rest of the Bush administration failed to include in their calculus was the value of the Iraqi Army as an existing set of social connections. Their fixation with the Baath party as a monolithic set of Saddam supporters blinded them to the potential usefulness of leaving this social network intact. Keeping the Iraqi Army would not have heralded a return to the Saddam regime, but rather would have demonstrated to the Iraqi people that America was not going to unilaterally impose its will. Engaging with the Iraqi Army, and vetting it of genuine Baathist war criminals in the process, would have given us a pipeline rich in social capital and authenticated our promise to listen to the needs of the Iraqi people. Clearly, the Bush administration did not study the lessons of the Vietnam War, namely that "actions directed at one 'audience' might affect others in an undesirable way" (Gaddis, 2004, 231). The dismissed Baathist Army Officers were doubtless the same people that organized and participated in the early, and continuing, stages of the insurgency in Iraq. By "wiping the slate clean" we exposed our weaknesses, shortcomings, and general bewilderment; the "total strangeness of the Iraqi social, political, institutional, and economic landscape" (Allawi, 2007, 127). The effect was that we increasingly drove ourselves into a

"physical and psychological ghetto" (Allawi, 2007, 127). The disbandment of the Iraqi Army ensured we started off in a ghetto of social capital.

The security void left in the wake of the disbandment of the Iraqi Army was enormous. A single Iraqi Army battalion existed seven months after the fall of Baghdad (Slevin, 2003). This security void was to be filled only partially by enlisted American military personnel. The rest would be shouldered by independent security contractors. In the study of social capital, security is one of the foundational blocks that must be present for more involved exercises to take place. Security and insurance costs, 20 to 40 percent of contracts by some estimates, have greatly diminished the impact of reconstruction projects (International Bank, 2005). Social capital teaches us that collective security projects can create positive externalities. After all, if someone ensures your safety, whether a defense contractor or a neighborhood watch, you benefit even if you "spend most of [your] time on the road and never even nod to another resident on the street" (Putnam, 2000, 20). These immediate positives, however, must be weighed against the long-term negatives of using independent security contractors. Unlike United States military and reconstruction representatives, independent security contractors are held accountable to few and operate under a minimalist definition of duty and obligation. That is to say, contractors work to satisfy the conditions of their contract. As representatives of the US government and the American people, the military and diplomatic personnel are held to a higher standard and commit themselves to broader definitions of duty and obligation. More directly, security contractors can be highly corrosive to social capital because they are not connected to the Iraqi people, and because they disrupt attempts to build social capital among Iraqis and US soldiers through their shoot-first mentality.

A House Oversight and Government Reform Committee memo found that the security contractor Blackwater fired first in 80 percent of the shooting incidents (House, 2007). Iraqis are terrified of Blackwater and other independent security contractors. As a heavily armed force with little to no oversight and a propensity to fire first, it's no wonder why. Many independent security employees are former U.S., British, or Australian soldiers. Often sporting weapons and body armor similar to that of U.S. troops, it is easy to see how Iraqis could become confused. On a visceral level one wonders what this does to their level of trust in the intentions of the United States, as well as the ability of US forces to protect them.

As a response to calls for greater oversight, a recent agreement between the Pentagon and State Department spelled out rules and guidelines for the use of private security contractors. It also allowed for contractors to be punished under US criminal law (Jelinek, 2007). This is an errant attempt to bring a force corrosive to social capital to heel. Not all contractors, and certainly not all their

employees, are American or even US-based. Why would they then fall under the jurisdiction of US criminal law? And, why only security contractors? Why don't translators or reconstruction contractors fall under US law as well? Iraqi authorities have demanded that private contractors be subjected to Iraqi law. Rather than allow the Iraqi government to show their people, and the rest of the world, that they are not impotent puppets to the coalition, US officials have ignored them as if they were children asking for their allowance. While due process may be an evolving concept in the Iraqi legal system, US representatives must recognize that Iraqi courts are the appropriate mechanism by which independent contractors, now enjoying a status akin to the British in Egypt under the Capitulations agreement, can be reconnected to the society they have wronged.

Performing the duties of a defense contractor is a very challenging task. The recently posted contract for the Ministry of the Interior requests that the winning contractor be able to possess the following materials and be able to perform the following tasks: trainers must have armed guards and armored SUVs for prompt transportation, they must develop a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) and have a QRF of their own able to respond in less than 10 minutes, the contractor must supply dog teams for explosive detection and crowd control, and the contractor must be able to communicate in Arabic or provide an interpreter (Pincus, 2007). Nowhere in this help-wanted advertisement is there a requirement for the contractors to have the "best interests of the Iraqi nation at heart" or even for the contractors to "promote democratic values." Independent security contractors are simply responding to demand, filling a void left by the inadequate numbers of formal protection available. US diplomatic officials and their Iraqi counterparts use independent security contractors because of their ease of availability and ease of implementation (Stratfor, 2007).[3] In other words, security contractors are more economically and politically efficient. Our mission in Iraq has to be about more than efficiency. Independent security contractors are self-interested. When the welfare of a nation is at stake, however, there must be safeguards against the "subordination of strategic interests to those of the organization implementing the strategy" (Gaddis, 2004, 233). In short, the proliferation of civic values through social connections isn't in the job description for defense contractors. Independent security contractors, born out of poor policy decisions by the US administration and the preoccupation of the US military with economic efficiency, have had an undeniably negative effect on social capital formation in Iraq.

The Bush Administration's obsession with economic liberalism was not limited to the world-wide advocacy of a free market approach, failed health care plans, or

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[3] Independent security contractor casualties are not made available to the media, another way in which contractors are more politically useful considering the public's aversion to US deaths.

free trade policies. The crass and presumptuous economic policies the US Occupation Authorities enforced in Iraq prioritized economic capital at the expense of social capital. World Bank officials, seemingly oblivious to the potential for civil unrest during an occupation by a foreign military, claimed that in post-war Iraq "economic efficiency of public expenditures would move to the center stage" (Edirinsighe, 2004, 66). US representatives presumed economic growth would placate the Iraqi public, ignorant of the fact that "businessmen had a very low reputation in Iraq" (Allawi, 2007, 380). Acculturated in Saddam's domination of the public sphere, Iraqis were naturally accustomed to seeing merchants "described by the government and the media as greedy, grasping, and steeped in unethical practices" (Allawi, 2007, 380). Keeping the UN Oil-for-Food scandal in mind, it's easy to see how Iraqis doubted the altruism of US economic initiatives. Social protection is the key to the food marketing system in Iraq, this fact cannot be overstated. The Public Distribution System (PDS), instituted by Saddam Hussein as a response to US sanctions, is the source of food for many Iraqis. The World Bank saw the danger in that "at least half the poor (25% of the population) are almost fully dependent on the PDS transfers," and acknowledged that a "breakdown in the food transfer-marketing system" would be the "worst thing that could happen in the transitional situation Iraq is facing now" (Edirinsighe, 2004, 13).

The proposed solution to the economic efficiencies permeating the food marketing system in Iraq, increasing private control over food marketing in Iraq, was impractical and negligent considering the security situation in Iraq. Widespread fear and distrust stemming from the insurgency was multiplied by the failure of US authorities to secure the wheat and cereal Iraqis depended on to survive. The US failed to see the potential value of social capital in the situation. The PDS was not obsolete or irrelevant now that sanctions had been lifted, as claimed by World Bank officials (Edirinsinghe, 2004, 11). Taking over the PDS, originally designed to assure "basic food security to the entire population, and [maintain] political stability (Edirinsinghe, 2004, 66)," would have immediately given US soldiers an avenue to display their commitment to Iraqi communities. In 2007 US soldiers in Baqoubah finally got to do what one soldier called "the most important thing we've done" (Lair, 2007). After fighting back Al-Qaeda the US military assumed the duties of the PDS and delivered 560 tons of wheat to people in the Diyala province. Not knowing exactly how the system worked soldiers learned through interaction:

> The system of what people expect was learned through long conversations
> with local sheikhs and government officials, often in smoke-filled offices

over cups of chai or seated around the family living rooms of local leaders. (Lair, 2007)

The obtuse economic policies of the US Occupation Authorities, oriented towards macroeconomic growth instead of the improvement of the daily lives of Iraqis, is just another instance of the devaluation of social capital in Iraq.

The violent fluctuations of the Iraqi economy and inability of the government to provide for the basic services of its citizens led to the creation of an informal economy in Iraq. In this way the development of an informal economy in Iraq followed a "pattern seen in other parts of the world—the informal economy tends to grow during periods of political, economic, and social crises" (Looney, 2006, 4). US economic analysts have been slow to pick up on the relevance and implications of the informal economy. Without a doubt attempts must be made to "integrate the analysis and qualification of the informal economy into an overall review of economic and military developments in Iraq" (Looney, 2006, 4). The potential for insurgent groups to penetrate and use informal economies to their advantage must be counseled. An informal economy, arising out of an environment of uncertainty and distrust, depends on limited trust networks between friends and family. Extended trust networks, networks of social capital in which "individuals enter into a transaction with only limited information about the counterpart's specific attributes," are the key to developing the economy in Iraq (Looney, 2006, 9):

> The key challenge facing the economy is developing the conditions conducive to the creation and growth of extended trust networks to encourage the growth and development of this type of networking. (Looney, 2006, 16)

The centralized, top-down approach of US economic policy-makers and implementers must be abandoned for one that is "decentralized and inclusive" (Looney, 2006, 27). In short, it must be recognized that when economic and political activity is "embedded in dense networks of social interaction, incentives for opportunism and malfeasance are reduced" (Putnam, 2000, 21).

The reconstruction of Iraq's educational system was another battlefield to be won or lost by Washington's decision makers. The US Agency for International Development was well aware of this and instituted a program in which "in a one-year period, USAID rehabilitated about 2,400 schools, nearly one-fifth of Iraq's schools, and distributed nearly nine million science and math textbooks" (Allawi, 2007, 382). Nevertheless the program was the subject of much criticism, acutely after it was a revealed a "large portion of the textbook contracts were awarded to printers outside Iraq" (Allawi, 2007, 383). Education is central in the process of

socialization. The classroom is the factory of human capital and facilitator of social capital. In Iraq fewer and fewer children were going to school. It was reported that only "28% of Iraq's graduation-age population (17 year olds) in the centre and south sat their final exams in 2007 (2006/2007 school year), according to the Ministry of Education" (UNAMI, 2007). The pressures of the civil unrest in Iraq clearly affected the performance of those that did stay: "Of those who sat the exams only 40 percent passed, a decrease from 60 percent passed in 2006" (UNAMI, 2007). Some of the older students who left the classroom joined the insurgency while the rest stayed at home, afraid to venture outside of the relative safety of their homes. This is a clear erosion of social capital; the true debt caused by this education gap may not be incurred for years. Strategies to combat this slippery slope exist, such as "sowing dissent among radicals" and "intervening in schools, churches, and prisons to prevent radicalization" (Summit, 2005). Even something as small as the content of textbooks can have national repercussions:

> The content of textbooks became a leit-motif of the Iraqi condition. Issues of secularism and religion, the privileged position of Islam in society, liberal values versus traditional cultures, co-existence of Arab and Kurdish nationalisms, the varying Shi'a and Sunni interpretations of historical and religious issues—the list went to the heart of the Iraqi dilemma. (Allawi, 2007, 384)

A discussion of social capital in Iraq without considering religion would be negligent. Religion in Iraq was not a subject to go wanting in both Iraqi and US forums of discussion. Under the Baathist regime religion was mostly secularized. Right under the surface, however, was a devout community of believers. Unfortunately most of the attention has been diverted to the role of religion in the political institutions of Iraq. Statistics like "49% of Iraqis choose clerics or religious leaders as their first choice for the drafters of their constitution (by comparison only 13.9% designated their political party representatives as their first choice) (IRI, 2005, 28)" grab US headlines but do not contribute to the understanding of the high levels of violence in Iraq. Our discussion centers on the role of religion as an impetus to the formation of social capital. Islam must be approached not as just a faith or a collection of practices but as an "identity and loyalty—for many an identity and loyalty that transcends all others" (Lewis, 2003, 17).[4] In the cauldron of violence and illegitimacy of Iraq, "religious observance

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[4] The International Republican Institute (2006) found that of the TV programming that Iraqis typically view, 31% is related to religion.

became a matter of affirming one's particular identity, transcending other considerations and scruples" (Allawi, 2007, 384).

Religious leaders and groups are the gatekeepers of legitimacy in Iraq. Through the adulations and admonitions of imams on the day of prayer (Friday), the fates of many nascent political and civil society projects are decided. Religious groups are also the arbiters of information, sharing stories about a community's history that "provide models of how actions and consequences are linked and are often the basis for strategies, actions and interpretation of the intentions of other actors" (COIN, 2006, 21). Religious councils and organizations represent a point of inflection for social capital. That is to say, they are a latent network of social connections that can be spurned or included. Bernard Rougier, a French sociologist, was a witness to the indoctrination of extremist groups in Lebanon. Rougier spent five years living among Palestinian refugees in the most densely populated Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. He noted the transformation of identity in extremist groups caused by the

> real-time production of salafist-jihadist ideology, the way preachers played a decisive role in reframing social reality exclusively in religious categories, and the deep changes that those networks effect in perceptions of self and other. (Rougier, 2007, 22)

A similar transformation has occurred in Iraq. As a function of social capital, religion in Iraq must be treated with sensitivity and must always be engaged in dialogue.

Fundamentalists and extremist groups manipulate social capital and religion for their own purposes. They deny affiliation with or sympathy towards a larger national Iraqi cause and tend to adopt an encompassing worldview that affirms their exalted position as compared to the masses (Antoun, 2001). At times they manipulate this position to portray themselves as the "voice of the people," while at other times they distance themselves to emphasize their purity of purpose (Antoun, 2001). For extremist groups it is less in the religious character of their message itself than in how persuasive it is. As others have observed, Osama Bin Laden's success in advocating violence lies not in his religious piety, but in his ability to construct and articulate a "consistent, convincing case that an attack on Islam is under way and is being led and directed by America" (Scheuer, 2005, 7). For extremist groups violent action became an injunction from God, impossible to ignore. Insurgents, likewise, were held together by "family loyalties, tribal affiliations or a commitment to an extreme form of Islamism" (Allawi, 2007, 180). US strategizers failed to realize that "action in defense of identity and authenticity can be more fundamental than action in defense of interests" (Thomas, 2003, 32).

Preventing the radicalization of disaffected Iraqis will depend on initiatives similar to a plan the United Kingdom Department for Communities and Local Government developed concentrating on promoting shared values including faith based platforms, supporting local solutions, creating forums on extremism, and engaging areas of radicalization like religious schools by monitoring curricula (Preventing, 2007). It will also depend on the development of democratic institutions as avenues of expression that can reduce tensions. In Crimea the minority Muslim Tartars were able to avert ethno-religious conflict by relying on their existing democratic structures. The leaders of the Tartar legislative body, or Mejlis, were challenged by radicals but "swiftly silenced the radicals with popular tolerance and education campaigns at local mosques" (Ziad, Chomiak, 2007).

This paper seeks to convince all relevant actors of the value of social capital in Iraq by constructively analyzing the mistakes and failures made by the US military and Occupation Authorities, as well as highlighting the areas of progress. In the second half of 2007 sectarian violence began to decline and the overall security situation in Iraq tentatively began to improve (Petreaus Report, 2007). While these results may be preliminary, this paper will treat these improvements in peace and stability as an identifiable trend. This reversal of course can be attributed to the encouragement of social capital between US personnel and Iraqis on a daily basis. How well these gains are consolidated will depend on the proper assessment of policies with social capital as the cornerstone.

It is difficult to point to an event or date that signified the beginning of the insurgency in Iraq. Regardless, the insurgency offers a window into the psyche of the Iraqi people. In 2005, 48 percent of Iraqis felt their country was headed in the right direction (IRI, 2005). In 2006 only 41 percent replied in the affirmative and 19 percent said they didn't know if their country was headed in the right direction, an increase of almost 8 percent over the previous year (IRI, 2006). How the US has responded to the insurgency, from General Ricardo Sanchez to General David Petraeus, will weigh heavily in our discussion of the value of social capital in Iraq.

Iraq has been a testing ground for the preparedness of the US military for counterinsurgencies, a type of asymmetrical warfare that most analysts agree will dominate the coming decades. Reciprocity and trust are key concepts in understanding social capital. Trust is an often precarious game of give and take, depending on the ability of the individual to "subordinate their own interests to those of larger groups and to associate and cooperate with each to achieve economic purposes and other social satisfactions" (Looney, 2006, 9). Reciprocity and trust are social norms that can be understood to be phenomena driven by interaction, and as commodities "purchased" with credibility. Therefore, in order to increase the social capital of a network involving skeptical groups, it is necessary to build trust and demonstrate commitment. In short, with regards to the

US military and the insurgents, the Iraqi people will continuously ask "who will help them more, hurt them less, stay the longest, earn their trust" (Sewall, xxi).

Facing a tenuous and foreign environment, and under heavy pressure to keep casualties to a minimum, the US military under General Sanchez adopted a "round them up and ask questions later" policy that certainly came back to haunt them. The majority of American troops stayed in large air-conditioned bases stationed 50 miles outside of major population centers. Cultural misunderstandings and general uncertainty create doubt as to the intentions of an intervening force. US Marines, still toting their weapons and wearing their boots, walked into mosques during Friday prayers and mistakenly bound and handcuffed men in front of their families (Rosen, 2005). In a culture based on patriarchy and tribal understandings of reputation, mistaken captures and interrogations became grave and unforgivable insults. The US military failed to prevent the conditions leading to the insurgency, failed to identify the violence in Iraq as a popularly supported insurgency, and until recently fought a myopic campaign emphasizing tactical victories over a cohesive counterinsurgency strategy. Increasing social capital between US forces and the Iraqi public would reduce uncertainty and allow intentions to be more clearly conveyed.

Since General Petraeus took over on 26 January 2007 as the commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq, the US military has adopted a counterinsurgency strategy. Counterinsurgency warfare must be appreciated as the "most complex and maddening type of war" imaginable (Sewall, 2007). Host governments risk legitimacy by relying on troops to win the support of their public. Although civil society organizations and the military often share the same goals, namely to "stabilize and rebuild a country to the point where it no longer needs outside assistance," they often perceive each other as having competing agendas (Taft, 2006, 10). Even the capacity of those institutions specializing in diplomacy and dialogue, like the US Department of State, is in question when considering the rigorous demands of a counterinsurgency campaign: "One fact sums it up: more people play in Army bands than serve in the US foreign service" (Sewall, 2007, xxx). Ground forces, in the absence of adequate support, must be prepared to assume the roles of "mayor, trash collector, and public works employer" (Sewall, 2007, xxxi). Counterinsurgency strategies represent a stark departure from accepted military approaches:

> Conventional US doctrine has implicitly justified collateral damage in the name of decisive victory: while overwhelming force may inadvertently harm more noncombatants initially, it ultimately serves a humanitarian purpose by ending hostilities sooner. (Sewall, 2007, xxviii)

The Weinberger-Powell doctrine of overwhelming and decisive offensive force has almost no utility in counterinsurgency warfare. In fact, the utility of force will decline the more you use it. The safety of the troops themselves is secondary to that of the population. Because insurgents often act in order to provoke retaliation, inaction may be the best response for the counterinsurgent. All of this amounts to blasphemy in light of conventional military doctrine.

Social protection, including the restoration of basic services, food security, and even "freedom from disease and the restoration of human dignity," is paramount to a counterinsurgency campaign (Taft, 2005, 8). While humanitarian interventions continue to have some hold on the conscience of the American public, counterinsurgency campaigns would not inspire the increasing militarization of American foreign policy. The level of commitment on all levels a counterinsurgency campaign requires, in the way of human, technological, and especially psychological capital, strongly cautions against wars of opportunity.[5] It is without question that one of the things the Counterinsurgency Manual hopes to impress upon the reader is that "if we wish to succeed with any approximation of honor, counterinsurgency will demand more than we are accustomed to giving" (Sewall, 2007, xxxviii).

Counterinsurgency strategy amounts to nothing less than an operationalizing of social capital. The tactics can range from issuing marines guides for cultural awareness (so-called "smart cards") covering important ethnicities and religious holidays (Marine Corps, 2006),[6] to a complete redesign of the deployment of American troops. General Petraeus saw the error in keeping his troops cooped up in large "enduring bases" in that "if military forces stay locked up in compounds, they lose touch with the people, appear to be running scared, and cede the initiative to the insurgents" (COIN, 2007, 31). The insurgency targeted segments of the population which were likely to swing the support of the general people, including doctors, professors, and lecturers (Allawi, 2007).[7] Petraeus ordered his troops to live and operate in the neighborhoods they would have to protect, thereby adopting a strategy that "reinforces the connections with the people that establish real legitimacy" (COIN, 2007, 31).

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[5] Andrew Bacevich would likely disagree with this assessment citing the encroachment of counterinsurgency strategies on areas traditionally left to civil society and other actors (Bacevich, 2005).

[6] The 2006 version of the USMC smart card included useful cultural customs such as "admitting 'I don't know' is shameful for an Iraqi" and that "constructive criticism can be taken as an insult."

[7] Occupation authorities actually fed this logic by assuming that the "more advanced the degrees held by the ministers the more competent the cabinet would be" (Allawi, 2007, 378).

In order to combat insurgent groups, which can be considered organizations competing for the support of the people, military commanders must "identify cleavages between groups and cross-cutting ties (for example, religious alignments that cut across ethnic differences)" (COIN, 2007, 51). Combating insurgencies also means persuading the population through what the military calls "psychological operations," in other words propaganda. The psychological operations of the US military have lagged behind the increasingly sophisticated propaganda used by the insurgents. The competing propaganda of insurgents can be seen as the outward face of an ideology. Army commanders have pondered the attributes of ideology, stating it provides a "prism, including a vocabulary and analytical categories, through which the situation is assessed" (COIN, 2007, 21). This same ideology can also "shape the movement's organization and operational methods" (COIN, 2007, 21). Intelligence collection was another challenging process in Iraq. The conditions in Iraq severely hampered conventional intelligence collection being as "officers of the CIA could not freely travel without conspicuous armed bodyguards" (Allawi, 2007, 127). Intelligence in a counterinsurgency, generally regarded as the purview of the specialist, [8] instead becomes the duty of every soldier (COIN, 2007).

In counterinsurgency campaigns the military must persuade the general population that it is there for their benefit. The military in effect adopts a patron-client relationship in which "an individual in a powerful position provides goods, services, or other resources to followers in exchange for political support or loyalty, amassing power" (COIN, 2007, 55). In Anbar, Diyala, and various other provinces of Iraq, local militias have been incorporated into counterinsurgency security plans as "Concerned Local Nationals." In Anbar, the result has been particularly dramatic. Monthly attack levels have declined from "some 1,350 in October 2006 to a bit over 200 in August of this year" (Petraeus, 2007, 4). This was a direct result of the ability of the military to secure the support of the local populace. In Baqoubah a former insurgent group, the 1920 Revolution Brigades, participated in patrols of their own communities with US soldiers (Yon, 2007). Tribal sheiks and former insurgent groups joined forces with the military in defiance of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and as an expression of the increasing social capital between US troops and Iraqi citizens. Policy makers would be rash to assume that the improved security in Anbar and other areas of Iraq was the result of US military strategy. As common enemies were identified and common goals agreed upon, a symbiotic relationship coalesced between the US military and Iraqis.

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[8] There also exists a tension between expertise and application in the intelligence community. Michael Scheuer, a former CIA analyst, even claims that "expertise is a career killer" (Scheuer, 2005, 245).

In some ways the military has embraced the analysis of social capital. The military assesses the potential of insurgent organizations by graphing their social network. This social network graph is based on the dyad, two nodes on a single line representing a connection between two people. Links between nodes (people) are categorized by the nature of their relationship: "kinship (brother of), role based (boss of), affective (likes), interactive (prays with, demonstrates with), and affiliation (same clan, club)" (COIN, 2007, 215). Military planners can also use this graph to assess the viability of the insurgency in more general terms.[9] While couched in different language this social network graph amounts to nothing less than an operational depiction of the value of social capital to fighting the insurgency in Iraq.

The success of a counterinsurgency plan will depend on how well it is implemented by the military, coordinated with the host government, complemented by civil society organizations, and accepted by the population. We come full circle in realizing that a counterinsurgency plan, the most inclusive and flexible of any military strategy, has its limits. Counterinsurgency doctrine is a vehicle, a means to an end and an implicit acquiescence to the "primacy of politics" (Sewall, 2007, xliii).

While largely concentrating on the average citizen, counterinsurgency doctrine also recommends the creation of "coordinating mechanisms, such as committees or liaison elements to facilitate cooperation and build trust with HN [Host Nation] authorities" (COIN, 2007, 40). These elements would assist implementation of other strategies by "reducing sensitivities and misunderstandings while removing impediments" (COIN, 2007, 40). The weakness of the central government contributed towards the propensity for Iraqis to seek assistance and redress grievances through the many civil society organizations operating in Iraq, including 32 international humanitarian NGOs (UNAMI, 2007). The counterinsurgency manual directly recognized the value of civil society organizations when listing as one of its broad indicators of progress the "presence or absence of associations…formation and presence of multiple political parties, independent, professional associations, and trade unions" (COIN, 2007, 107). The Counterinsurgency Manual also addressed both the beneficial and detrimental potential of the media.[10] In the absence of a local council, military commanders are to help fill the void.

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[9] "An increase in network density indicates the likelihood that the insurgent groups can plan and execute coordinated attacks. A decrease in network density means the group is reduced to fragmented or individual-level attacks (COIN, 2007, 220)."

[10] From the counterinsurgency manual: "Embedding for days rather than weeks runs the risk of media representatives not gaining any real understanding of the context of operations and may lead to unintended misinformation" (COIN, 2007, 90).

> Encourage the populace to create such a body. Teachers, businessmen, and others who enjoy the respect of the community should be strongly encouraged to come together and form a temporary council to serve in such capacity until a more permanent organization can be elected. (COIN, 2007, 95)

Civil society organizations, like the Fund for Peace, have recognized the value of their own expertise in training peacekeepers to develop cultural sensitivities and offering historical background to conflicts (Taft, 2005).

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are a model of civil-military cooperation (Taft, 2006). These PRTs have been used in Afghanistan and are increasingly being employed in Iraq. In Afghanistan PRTs consisted of coalition and NATO elements alongside "50 to 300 troops as well as representatives from multinational development and diplomatic agencies" (COIN, 2007, 44). PRTs are a creative step forward in utilizing social capital in war zones. Similarly, the "Human Terrain System", a project embedding anthropologists and sociologists with US Army regiments in "human terrain teams," is an attempt to strengthen the bonds of the social network working for the betterment of Iraq (Rohde, 2007). Anthropologists are experts in the analysis of social forces. Their use in Afghanistan and Iraq is an attempt to increase social capital between the military and the population through expertise.[11] Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the Human Terrain System represent progress in the use of social capital for the improvement of Iraq. Their true impact will depend on the level of support they enjoy from US reconstruction officials and the US military.

A more illustrative case for the value of social capital may be found in the mixed results of the Local Governance Project. The Local Governance Project (LGP) was an umbrella initiative that included the "establishment of representative councils, service delivery capacity-building, civil society strengthening, decentralization policy development and civic dialogue" (Brinkerhoff, 2005, 1). The potential of the LGP was enormous. Local councils could be crucial in fostering a broader sense of community responsibility and in identifying needs and concerns. Council members would be empowered to use their position as a mechanism of change "in addressing their concerns by reaching out to a variety of sources" (Brinkerhoff, 2005, 12). The success of these councils depended on the constant reinforcement of social capital. The number of citizens participating in Baghdad neighborhood council elections increased as "experience accumulated

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[11] The American Anthropological Association objects to the use of anthropologists as part of the Human Terrain System because of ethical considerations.

and the process and objectives became better known" (Brinkerhoff, 2005, 10). The LGP has also benefited existing civil society groups by reinforcing "social capital through increasing opportunities for communication and knowledge transfer among social and ethnic groups" (Brinkeroff, 2005, 11).

The LGP had several success stories worth noting. It succeeded in assisting the Association of Disabled Veterans in al-Basrah in rehabilitating a community facility for physical therapy, training and recreation. The LGP also helped pool the resources of groups with common interests as it did in Kirkuk in August 2003 with the support of a conference on civil society development. In Karbala, LGP staff "provided training to the Iraqi Human Rights Watch and the Former Prisoners and Families of Victims Association to organize outreach and dissemination workshops" (Brinkerhoff, 2005, 7).

The LGP ran into several obstacles that greatly attenuated its long-term contributions to a peaceful and stable Iraq. The first was a built-in illegitimacy due to its foreign origins; some even saw them as an American import (Brinkerhoff, 2005). The application of local governance projects also carried with them an inherent contradiction: "fulfilling targets mandated by CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] to keep to the programmatic script for Iraq's reconstruction, while building local government and civil society and responding to local demand" (Brinkerhoff, 2005, 3). In other words, the LGP had to serve too many masters. Dialogue sessions moderated under the auspices of the LGP were effective "largely due to the ability of the facilitators to express these concepts within an Iraqi context, confronting different ways in which Islam, tribalism, and Arab and Iraqi could be defined in ways that made them compatible with democracy" (Brinkerhoff, 2005, 9). This was seemingly lost on donors to the LGP who typically exercised excessive control, sacrificing long-term legitimacy for "short-term engineered outcomes that accord with their predetermined preferences" (Brinkerhoff, 2005, 14).

Scholars of social capital have observed that the greater the interpretation of vertical linkages and horizontal bridging social capital, the more likely it is that a society will possess inclusive and democratic institutions that foster cohesiveness and conflict mediation (Colletta and Cullen, 2000). The lesson of the Local Governance Project is that viable governance in Iraq depends on the restoration of vertical social capital, reconnecting citizens with government in a constructive manner, and encouraging bridging capital across sectarian lines (Brinkerhoff, 2005).

In the end social capital is only a tool. How well we use this tool will depend on how well we learn from past failures, build on instances of success, and plan for the future. While it is hard to argue against increasing security and quality of life for Iraqis through social capital, there exist influential competing alternatives. The

most popular is the partitioning of Iraq along sectarian lines. Scholars argue that the US must put aside any "preconceived notion about preferred outcomes, such as multinational democracy, and accept a more workable outcome" (Baker, 2007, 11). This "Union of Iraqi States" would ensure the peaceful and stable coexistence of all of Iraq's proud communities and allow US troops to withdraw (Baker, 2007). While Americans may support this partition plan because of frustration with current approaches, it ignores the wishes of the Iraqi people. When asked of the importance of the establishment of a unity government to the future peace and stability of Iraq, 89 percent described this as extremely important (IRI, 2006, 22). More directly, 66 percent of Iraqis strongly disagreed with the "segregation of Iraqis according to religious or ethnic lines" (IRI, 2006, 40). It is highly doubtful that a segregation of Iraqis, against their will and necessitating military action, would redress the longstanding grievances the communities of Iraq have against one another or produce a peaceful and stable society.

The future of Iraq will be highly dependent on the role social capital plays in the national reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. The American military and reconstruction apparatus have not completely ignored social capital to date. Rather, their policies could be accurately described as sporadically supportive, frequently erosive, and generally dismissive. The United States has a unique obligation and lone ability to effect deep change in Iraq. If the United States is to leave behind a viable government and stable society in Iraq it must readjust its policies and reallocate its resources to reflect the centrality of social capital formation.

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