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Thinking Differently About Winning the Peace

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I would like to focus my remarks on what we can learn from Iraq and how to do the “next Iraq” better. It is silly to think that regardless of how Iraq turns out, the lessons learned mean we will never do this again. Nations fight wars. After wars they face the task the winning the peace. That will never change.

Waltzing in the Cold War

I wrote a book called *Waltzing in the Cold War* about the history of Austria after World War II, where the U.S. participated in an occupation—much like it did in Germany. U.S. forces were supposed to be there for two years. They stayed for ten years.¹

To put this effort in context, I looked at every U.S. occupation going back to the American Revolution, when we tried to get Canada straight, and one of the things I discovered is that we did them all exactly the same. Every one of them was an *ad hoc* affair, and when we were done we immediately purged any lessons that we might have learned. And then after the next war, when transitioning from warfighters to peacekeepers, we would reflexively start over all over again as though we had never done it before.

I call this the rhythm of habits. Every time we do this, we basically start from scratch. We always do it the same way and there are some things that we institutionally always do. For example, we always do a very poor job at interagency operations—getting all the federal agencies to work together. And we always use our military in much the same way. We also do a very poor job of doing post-conflict planning before

Talking Points

- Winning the peace is part of fighting and winning the war. Historically, American occupations tend to be *ad hoc* affairs. We do a poor job at interagency operations and we expect war-fighting military structures to adapt to post-conflict operations.
- In order to better win the peace, we should scrap the “Combatant Command” system and put in place a structure better suited to 21st century wars.
- Second, we should develop a military capability that is specifically designed for winning the peace, which would look something like a constabulary force—a military force designed to be a hybrid of law enforcement and traditional military.
- Third, we should require the Department of Defense to contract for the human capital resources it wants to sustain in the other agencies.

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and during the conflict. And we take war-fighting military structures, which are not really well suited to post-conflict operations, and we try desperately to adapt them. Eventually we figure out that our forces that fought so well in battle are not well equipped, trained, and organized to win the peace—that using the military that won the war to win the fight for peace creates as many problems as it solves.

Needless to say, though, we always, or at least usually, *ad hoc* our way to victory. As Winston Churchill said, “Americans can always be counted on to do the right thing...after they have exhausted all other possibilities.”

The “Disease and Unrest” Formula

Victory does not always mean that you get the end state you want. Think of how many times we have pushed the re-boot button on Haiti. However, we do usually, after trial and error, get the fundamentals right—by rediscovering them as if no army had ever thought of them before

There is actually a great term for this. During World War II, they called it the “disease and unrest formula.” It goes like this: When you occupy a country, there are three things you have to do before you leave to prevent it from devolving into mass death, chaos, and revolution: (1) prevent a humanitarian crisis; (2) establish a legitimate government; and (3) create security forces that can support that government. Then you have pretty much laid the foundation for people to determine their own future. Once you have done that, it is really up to the country to rebuild itself.

The disease and unrest formula is not nation-building. I think the term “nation-building” is just silliness. There is actually, as far as I can tell, no historical example of nations rebuilding other nations. Nations re-build themselves. Europe certainly rebuilt itself after World War II. The Marshall Plan did not come along until 1948, after legitimate governments had been established in the postwar coun-

tries of Western Europe, after basic security had been restored. The Europeans themselves directed how funds available under the Marshall Plan would be spent. We get all the credit. They did all the heavy lifting.

I find, by and large, that we are relearning these lessons in Iraq. Because of the failure to move quickly to reestablish a sovereign government and field security forces to protect the country, the forces in the region that are intent on sowing violence and chaos had sufficient time to mobilize themselves and make the task of turning Iraq over to the Iraqis a daunting challenge.²

The question is, “What have we learned from this going forward?” I would hope it is that *ad hoc*-ery carries great strategic risks. It risks squandering victory.

How do we prevent this from happening again? The one thing that I learned about the Department of Defense (DOD) from my years in the military is that if a military doesn’t retain for very long institutions, force structure, traditions, budgets, and doctrine, after a couple of years, it vaporizes away.

How we can preserve the lessons relearned at such a terrible price? I want to offer up three quick recommendations.

Rethink “Combatant Command”

The first recommendation is that we have to scrap the “Combatant Command” system. The organization of Combatant Commands—CENTCOM, NORTHCOM, SOUTHCOM, etc.—evolved after World War II to direct global U.S. military operations. It was a command structure designed to fight the Cold War. However, virtually every problem we face in the 21st century does not require exclusively, or in many cases even primarily, military response. It requires a *regional* response, and it requires inter-agency response at the regional level. Combatant Commands are not designed to do that.

1. James Jay Carafano, *Waltzing into the Cold War: The Struggle for Occupied Austria* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).
2. James Jay Carafano, Ph.D., and Dana R. Dillon, “Winning the Peace: Principles for Post-Conflict Operations,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 1859, June 13, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg1859.cfm.

And it is often a response planned least well in Washington, where folks are removed from the realities of the region, its people, and its geography. Trying to plan the peace in Washington is like trying to plan the war in Washington. It is a bad idea to have people in air-conditioned offices a thousand miles away planning how a village will raise a child. Post-conflict planning is an operational activity that really needs to take place in the field, and so I think that with very few exceptions we should scrap the “Combatant Command” system and replace it with a regional command structure that has a much stronger inter-agency character.

Where today we have combatant commanders sitting around 24/7 thinking about how to plan the next war, we need staffs in the field sitting around 24/7 thinking about how they are going to perform the post-conflict peace. These should be permanent staffs, and then if a conflict actually happens, they should roll over and become the new operating staff for the occupation authority.³

Force Restructuring

The second recommendation I would propose is to look at the military force we use to conduct these missions. Where do you get the forces you need? There are three options. You can pay somebody else to do it (friends, allies, or contractors); you can take the combat forces you have and reconstitute them to do post-conflict missions; or you can maintain specialized forces for the task. Quite frankly, I think a nation like the United States—with the breadth of global security interests and concerns that we have and the incredible resources we can bring to bear—ought to have the flexibility of being able to do all three.

First, we should invest in capacity-building in other countries so they can do these things when that is appropriate. Second, even with friends and

allies we are never going to have enough of anything, so we are always going to need as an option the ability to take existing military force structures and agency capabilities and re-jigger them for post-conflict operations. However, you want to have an off-the-shelf plan for how to do that and not wait to figure it out after the armistice is signed.

Third, we should have a military capability that is specifically designed for post-conflict missions. This should be a “dual-use force,” because if you actually sit down and do a laundry list of the kind of things you expect the military and its inter-agency partners to do in Baghdad after battle—and you did a laundry list of the kind of things you expected them to do in New Orleans after the flood—the lists are very, very similar. If we built the right kind of force structures in the National Guard, we would have a dual-use force that would have application both in many homeland security settings at home and in many, many operations overseas—in theatre support and post-conflict support, as well as humanitarian operations.⁴

Now specifically, to the reconstruction force: What would it look like? My argument is that it would look something like a constabulary force, which is a military force that is designed to be kind of a hybrid of law enforcement and traditional military. It would have expansive contracting capabilities, like the Army Corps of Engineers, and assessment and management capabilities, like the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and imbedded inspector-general capability. If you put all these things in the blender, I think that is essentially the kind of force structure I would look for.⁵

Sustaining Human Capital

My third recommendation touches on the question: How do you sustain the human capital—an educated, trained, and ready-to-go professional work-

3. For detailed recommendations see James Jay Carafano, “Missions, Responsibilities, and Geography: Rethinking How the Pentagon Commands the World,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1792, August 24, 2004, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg1792.cfm.
4. For specific recommendations, see James Jay Carafano, “Shaping the 21st Century National Guard and Reserves,” Testimony, May 4, 2006, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/tst050406a.cfm.
5. James Jay Carafano, “Foreign Disasters: Lessons for the Pentagon’s Homeland Security Efforts,” Heritage Foundation *Executive Memorandum* No. 979, August 29, 2005, at www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/em979.cfm

force—and maintain the intellectual and expansible base to support post-conflict missions that might come around only once every few decades? In the military it is relatively easy to build this force structure in the National Guard. We would have lieutenants, captains, majors, generals, retired people, and civilians that would do this year-in and year-out. That is a relatively easy sustainable thing. The real question is how to do it in the other federal agencies.

And so I have a novel notion: We buy it! We put this as a line in the DOD budget, and we tell DOD to contract the human capital resources it wants to sustain in the other federal agencies. Then DOD negotiates with other agencies year-in and year-out—what kind of people they will maintain to support these missions if they come about, what kind of education and training they will have, what kind of positions they want to retain—and DOD then funds them to do that. That makes it a win-win for everybody. DOD contracts for what it needs, the other agencies get money to have people that they would

not have otherwise, and it doesn't come out of their core budgets. Then when we do go to a mobilization scenario, and we mobilize people from these other agencies, they are already there. Operational expenses are then paid for by supplemental funding.

Conclusion

The military's job is to fight and win the nation's wars. We have relearned a lesson in Iraq that we have learned a thousand other times: Winning the peace is part of fighting and winning the war. Unless we build institutions, doctrine, organizations, traditions, and practices throughout the federal government, we will relearn that lesson again next time.

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