Dr. Biddle began his talk by noting that he had been struck by how in the national policy debate about Iraq nothing is yet agreed. Most participants in the debate seem to share the idea that we are refighting Vietnam in Iraq but that this time we should do it the right way.

- Pro-war view: we are still not fighting the right way yet
- Anti-war view: we have already lost the hearts and minds battle so the US should pull its troops out now

However, there are big differences between the types of war in Vietnam and Iraq

- Iraq is a Communal Civil war
- Vietnam was a Maoist’s People’s war

If you start by looking at the war in the wrong light, then the result will be something even worse

Many of the Bush Administration statements about Iraq resemble Nixon Administration statements about Vietnam with both calling for:

- Economic Reconstruction – to win hearts and minds effort
- Political Reform
- Vietnamization / Iraqization to speed up bringing the troops home

Probably not a good idea to use Nixon statements as a template, however

- Although Nixon’s way did not succeed, it was not a bad way to handle a Maoist’s People’s war
- But Iraq is not a Maoist people’s war

In Maoist People’s War – ideological

- Ideas of right and wrong on both sides about good governance
  - Each side says “We can do it better”
- Might have a nationalist component but not necessarily
- Underneath everything there are economic issues
  - Related to the fairness of who has what

In a Communal Civil War – not ideological

- Everyone already belongs to a separate ethnic or communal group
No population available to swing from one ideology to another
- No overarching nationalist component
- Politics and security are at the base of these conflicts
  - Long histories of bad feelings about the other group(s)
  - Each side fears the other side will get to power first and destroy them

Maoist People’s War vs. Communal Civil War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maoist People’s War:</th>
<th>Communal Civil War:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Class-based insurgency vs. regime</td>
<td>• Ethnic group vs. rival ethnic group(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Struggle for good governance</td>
<td>• Struggle for ethnic self-interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Competition for allegiance of common pool of citizens</td>
<td>– No common pool of uncommitted citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Combatants aspire to represent rights of all citizens</td>
<td>– Combatants aspire to champion own group’s rights vs. others’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Importance of ideology</td>
<td>• Ideology unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Underpins insurgents’ claim to superior governance</td>
<td>– Populations know whose side they are on: manifestoes unnecessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Nationalist component</td>
<td>– Limited national identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Root cause often economic inequality</td>
<td>• Root cause often security dilemma</td>
</tr>
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</table>

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Iraq is a Communal Civil War
- Still a low intensity war using car bombs and IEDs
- Violence locations correlates with ethnic and sectarian regions
  - Sunni heartland: 40% of population with 85% of the violence
  - Rest of Iraq: 60% of population with 15% of the violence
  - Attacks against US because Sunnis see US as supporting Shiite regime
- Insurgents can’t agree on what to do: no manifesto, only identities

“Nationalism” only an issue in Sunni triangle
- Everything will be better if just the US were to leave
- Attacks on US not happening in Shiite/Kurdish areas
- Any nationalism is secondary

Sadr is a Shiite who attacked the mainly Shiite government
- Made little progress with the people – did not kindle any greater war
- Sadr’s existence is the exception that proves the rule: attacks are overwhelmingly inter- (not intra-) ethnic

This is not all semantics. Different types of wars need different strategies. Using the wrong one will make matters worse.
• Economic reconstruction – key only in a People’s war where economics is basis of these conflicts
  o May be no more than secondary in Communal war because they focus on identity
  o In Communal war fear being overrun by the other group – brute violence trumps economic worries
• Democratization issues – critical to People’s war where ideology a major focus
  o In Communal war could make things worse if country has no history of behaviors required in a democracy
    ▪ No one use to courting constituents
    ▪ No experience with compromise
  o Each side simply demonizes its rivals
  o Can make the divisions a lot deeper a lot faster
• Vietnam-/Iraq-ization – can be helpful in People’s war but heighten distinctions in a Communal war
  o In Iraq, do not know the real make up of the Iraqi army
    ▪ Information has not been collected for army or police
    ▪ Efforts to get more Sunnis to join have not gone well
  o Sunnis see Iraq security forces as powerful Shiite/Kurd force
    ▪ If that force was given more power/equipment, Sunnis would worry that much more
    ▪ So further empowering the Iraqi army would likely throw fuel on the insurgency fire since Sunnis would fight back
  o There are constitutional methods for making sure that one side does not get too much power over the other
    ▪ Fear that the side with the power would kill/destroy the lesser powered
    ▪ If all the coercive tools are held by one side, would make things worse
    ▪ Hard to get political solutions this way
  o What if Sunnis did join the military?
    ▪ If integrated into all units, would likely be ineffectual fighting unit since soldiers would worry more about each other than enemies
    ▪ If had separate brigades for Sunnis to protect only their own areas, would make a defacto segregation of the country, causing either
      • Intensified hatred among the ethnic/communal divisions
      • Unstable situation because the Sunni area would not be economically stable on its own

What is to be done?
Need to see US actions in Iraq as ways to bring about a civil war termination; not ways to end a Maoist people’s war
Currently on-going efforts
- US attempting to push all sides into talking to each other – could be helpful in brokering an interethnic constitutional compromise
- Economic development needs to be done, no matter how little it actually helps
  - Morally correct thing to do despite any strategic value
Other things that could be done
- Slow down the build up of the Iraqi army
  - Avoid getting too far ahead of the political developments
  - Must not think of this as just a tactic to get US troops out of Iraq
  - Must think of it as way to help make the big political deal among the sides
  - Right now many do not really want to make the big deal
    - They fear that they will lose too much if they give up too much
    - If the compromise they agree to goes bad in the future, it could mean genocide
    - So on-going violence may be bad, but could be a better choice than the chance of genocide
- Strongest US card to play is its hugely powerful military
  - Must use a threat to realign/reduce US forces which would allow violence to escalate
  
  Current US policy undermines this leverage, reducing prospects for a deal

  ◐

  • Sunnis view:
    - If security forces include Sunnis, they aren’t threatening so: why compromise?
    - If exclude Sunnis, they would be threatening but not different than now so: why compromise?
  
  • Shiites/Kurds view:
    - US promises to stay until/unless Iraqis can defend themselves, regardless of negotiating behavior so: why compromise?

Bottom line: US must threaten to realign or leave in order to push whichever side is not compromising

- In the starkest version US would tell Sunnis that unless they start compromising that all the help would go to the other side including all the equipment they need
  - Violence would likely escalate
- Alternatively, if compromising going on then US would be willing to stay on to ensure that there are no problems
- Need to say about the same thing to both sides
- US policy should depend on what happens in Iraq
  - US needs the ability to change sides, too
  - Currently, US policy says we will stay until you can take care of yourselves
- US must be ready to allow both sides get more violent
Prognosis

- Case for pessimism:
  - US domestic politics may undercut US leverage
  - Sustained US presence could break the US military
    - May need to stay in Iraq longer than current US military could last
  - Security dilemma may reach point of no return before Iraqis can seal bargain
    - Need a government that can make a deal stick
  - Requires emergence of credible Sunni political leadership
    - Not yet at a point where political leaders have “street cred”
  - Shiite split could create impossibly complex negotiation
    - Already seeing some evidence of this split
    - Could get to point of too many sides involved to reach one compromise
  - Requirements:
    - Cool-headed, clear-sighted bargaining behavior on all sides
    - Deft diplomatic balancing act by US
    - Situation might get overtaken by problems before a compromise could be reached

- Case for optimism:
  - All parties underlying interests better served by power sharing compromise
    - No side wants to have things get worse
    - Good sign that things did not get worse after the bombing of the shrine in Samarra
  - US has powerful leverage – if we use it
    - Military needs to get out of the way of compromise dealings

Bottom line: US needs to shift its strategy to win in Iraq

Question and Answer Session

Al Qaeda in Iraq is a symptom, rather than the cause of the violence
- If things were under control in Iraq, then Al Qaeda would find it hard to work there
- If the ethnic/religious issues get resolved, the Al Qaeda problem will probably go away or reduce significantly

Iraq and Iran: Three possible outcomes in Iraq, of which 2 are bad for Iran
- Iran does not want an all out civil war nor a democracy in Iraq
- Iran would prefer to keep things going much as they are going now
  - Keeps US pinned down in Iraq and busy to be threatening to Iran
• Recognize that Iraq will put its own interests first

What techniques are used for terminating a communal civil war?
• Do they end usually with negotiations or a decisive military victory?
  o Usually one side gets significantly stronger
  o Almost never is there a complete destruction of the other force
  o Eventually come to a negotiated asymmetric settlement
  o Even military victories usually lead to negotiations
• Historical studies show about one chance in three of ending a civil war with negotiations rather than a cataclysm
  o Even so, need to take the chance of negotiating
  o Stakes too high not to try

Economic and intelligence issues
• US does need to provide economic reconstruction aid in Iraq
  o Moral obligation, even if not all that helpful
  o Can’t be done alone by non-military government elements since dealing with mass murderers on the other side
• Best intelligence available is essential to the work
  o But it is never enough
  o There may be some debate about whether we could ever actually get it
  o Anything we get is unlikely to be sufficient to our needs

What would have happened if the US had sent in 500,000 troops to start with?
• Inter-ethnic problems only crop up where there a vacuum
  o Saddam had had a monopoly of force but US took that away
  o Then inter-sectarian feuding was allowed more leeway
• Even with many more US troops, likely would have had some feuding
  o However, US could not have sustained forces at that level
  o Could have filled the vacuum in the early days and that might have been enough to stabilize the situation

There are some signs of improving relations among the groups
• Partially from improved US tactics

• All insurgencies have a mix of motives
  o But different groups give different weights to different motives
• Predominantly ethnicity and sect determine the degrees of importance of each motive

Foreign Affairs article "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon" did not assume that things in Iraq were hopeless
• It would be surprising if the situation got much further without the US taking strong actions against both sides
• Correlation of forces should be arranged in favor of compromises
  o Do things slowly and in stages
• Bush Administration has recently been saying things that sound like they may be trying this approach
• US may want to ramp up its efforts to say that we will leave unless a compromise is reached

What does compromise in Iraq look like?  Partition is being talked about
  • Separate countries would not be acceptable
    o Sunnis would not get enough resources to make a country sustainable
    o Sunnis are obviously willing to shoot people over this
  • Federalism would be a softer form of separatism
    o There is a big spectrum of possibilities
    o US needs to use its leverage to move things along
    o Need to decide about how much each section has in relation to rights, resources, etc.
    o Many cultural dimensions to negotiate

Senator Biden offered one possible division plan in the 1 May New York Times
  • Plans should be more about what the Iraqis want, not what we want
  • Everyone could come up with a different reasonable compromise plan
    o It would be hard to get the parties to agree to any one of them
  • The situation does not call for a Salomonic decision
    o It is more important to find a way to push all sides to some negotiated point

What can the US do to strong arm the Sunnis?
  • The Shiites may be more of a problem
    o Right now depending on the idea that Shiites would compromise
    o To some Iraqis, this is the second US betrayal
  • Perceptions of who the US is behind or against may not relate to reality
    o Generally believed that US is helping the Shiites
    o US could enhance that perception by giving them more tanks, helos, and other equipment
    o US needs to be flexible and not get pinned down
  • It is not clear that the US has the ability to be the third party responsible for ensuring stability
    o Army might be able to do something for rotational policies to make service in Iraq a little less onerous to maintain troop levels longer
    o Domestic side of the issue is more problematic
      • US people want to see:
        • That the US plan might actually be working
        • That the US body count is kept to a low level
• If US population sees that it is sacrificing for something that will work and improve the situation, they will be more willing to keep troops in Iraq longer
  • Example: Bosnia

There is a need for a great deal of interagency participation
  • US owes the Iraqi people help in all areas of reconstruction
    o To do so needs interagency efforts
  • Not just economic reconstruction involved so no other agency has the breadth that the military has in all the required tasks

Winning hearts and minds is not just a historic saying
  • US will likely need to do something similar again somewhere
    o That will require a big interagency effort
  • But Iraq is a Communal Civil War and the military is the most important agency there

Other insurgencies are likely in the future
  • This form of conflict has always been there and will continue to exist
  • Must not neglect the concept of fighting major wars, too
  • Need to be able to handle these problems in many different ways
    o Many diverse issues get involved
    o Result: US will need many different counter-insurgency strategies