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The **Democratic Strategist** is a web-based publication edited by three leading American political strategists and thinkers—political theorist William Galston, polling expert Stan Greenberg and political demographer Ruy Teixeira. It seeks to provide a forum and meeting ground for the serious, data-based discussion of Democratic political strategy.

The **Democratic Strategist** has three editorial goals—(1) to provide an explicitly and unapologetically partisan platform for the discussion of Democratic political strategy, (2) to insist upon greater use of data and greater reliance on empirical evidence in strategic thinking and (3) to act as a neutral forum and center of discussion for all sectors of the Democratic community.

As **The Democratic Strategists'** editorial philosophy states, the publication will be "proudly partisan, firmly and insistently based on facts and data and emphatically open to all sectors and currents of opinion within the Democratic community".

THE DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST STRATEGY MEMO

MILITARY STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATS –

HOW THE DEMOCRATS CAN ARGUE WITH MCCAIN AND THE REPUBLICANS ABOUT MILITARY STRATEGY AND WIN

BY JAMES VEGA

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MILITARY STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATS –

How the Democrats Can Argue with McCain and the Republicans about Military Strategy and Win

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PART I - UNDERSTANDING THE "PRO-MILITARY, BUT ANTI-BUSH'S WAR" VOTERS

Because of the number and variety of questions they ask on a single topic, the surveys produced by Democracy Corps provide Democrats with data of unique value. They make it possible to begin to visualize some of the larger political perspectives into which voters specific opinions are organized.

The recent D-Corps survey and analysis of opinion on National Security, for example, makes it possible to get a feel for the size of two broad groups – the firmly partisan anti-war Democratic "base" voters and the firmly partisan pro-Bush, pro-military" Republican "base" voters.

On the one hand, about 27% of the respondents in the D-Corps survey agreed with **every one** of the following five statements

Firmly Partisan Anti-War Democrats

- The Democrats will do a better job "insuring a strong military"
- The Democrats, more than Republicans "respect the military"
- The surge was "a mistake"
- In Iraq, America should "reduce the number of troops"
- Bush's policies have "undermined America's security"

On the other hand, about 45% of the respondents agreed with **all five** of the following statements

Firmly Partisan Pro-Bush's War, Pro-Military Republicans

- The Republicans will do a better job of "insuring a strong military"
- The Republicans, more than the Democrats, "Respect the military"
- The surge is helping to "win the war"
- America must "Stay the course", "finish the job" and "achieve stability"
- Bush's policies have "increased America's security"

The most important fact that emerges from this comparison is the very substantial number of respondents – about 30% – who do not fall in either category. They agreed with some of the five statements but not others.

But what do these “inconsistent” voters actually think? Among the respondents to the D-Corps survey as a whole, the main distinction was between responses to the first two questions and the final three.

On the one hand, only about 27% of all respondents to the D-Corps survey thought the Democrats would be better at “insuring a strong military” or “respecting the military”. About 55% thought the Republicans would be better.

In contrast, about 54% of all respondents agreed that “the surge was a mistake”, that “we should reduce the number of troops” and that “Bush’s policies have reduced America’s security”. Only about 44% thought we should “stay the course”, that “the surge” was working” and that Bush’s policies have “increased America’s security.”

In short, while a majority of Americans think Republicans are more favorable to the military, many are also strongly opposed to Bush’s policies. It is this significant “*pro-military, but anti-Bush’s war*” group that is the critical swing vote on national security.

As the authors of the D-Corps analysis note:

The imperative for Democrats is to repair the trust deficit the electorate has regarding Democrats when it comes to their use of the military instrument... It is important to understand the nature of this challenge clearly. It is partly about the willingness to use force... But the other part of the problem, the new survey suggests, is simply about Democrats’ familiarity and affinity with the military.

One source of the problem lies in the estrangement between liberal-progressives and the military, an estrangement that became deeply rooted during the Vietnam War. As William J. Astore, a retired lieutenant colonel in the Air Force who has taught at the Air Force Academy and Naval Postgraduate School has noted:

...the traditional liberal/progressive critique often begins by citing the insidious influence of Eisenhower’s “military-industrial complex,” throwing in for good measure terms like “atrocious,” “imperialist,” “reactionary,” and similar pejoratives. But what’s interesting here is that this is often where their critique also ends. The military and its influence are considered so tainted, so baneful that within progressive circles there’s a collective wringing of hands, even a reflexive turning of backs, as if our military were truly from Mars...

This is deeply entwined with the issue of social class. As Astore continues:

Our military remains deeply rooted in the broad middle-and working-class elements of society. Our Ivy League schools, our white-shoe law firms, Boston's Beacon Hill, New York's Upper West Side have little presence in it. Yet everywhere you go in blue-collar, small-town and rural America, you bump into ordinary people who know someone in the military: a nephew, a cousin, a close buddy from high school, even, these days, the girl next door.

http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174889/william_astore_in_the_military_we_trust

There is a simple social indicator that suggests the profound depth of this divide. Few liberals and progressives can name any of their close friends or co-workers who have a framed photograph of an earnest-looking young man or woman in a uniform proudly displayed in their living rooms. Among working class and other ordinary Americans, on the other hand, it would be very difficult to find any who do not have a friend or neighbor who has or has had such a picture on their wall.

The most basic and deep-seated attitudes of ordinary Americans toward the military are generally rooted in a complex and idiosyncratic mixture of personal experiences. For some the military was their path to an education or the first steps in adult life. For others, their attitudes were shaped by a father, brother, family member or close friend who served in the military and perhaps even lost his life in a war.

The way to cut through this cognitive Gordian knot is to recognize that people's attitudes toward the military can be seen as composed of two distinct subcomponents – a value system and a conceptual framework. To understand them, the key is to consider them separately.

Most Americans are familiar with the positive aspects of the military value system. It includes patriotism, self-discipline, bravery, technical mastery, cool-headedness and a commitment to something larger than money. Many anti-war Democrats may perceive the flag waving ads for Marines that are shown in the movie theaters and on TV as corny and manipulative, but for their intended working class audience the values and outlook they express are profoundly real and inspiring.

But the military value system goes deeper. As one sociological analysis noted:

...working people also feel an additional psychic bond with the men and women in the armed forces because the soldiers uphold very deeply held and distinctly working-class values: ruggedness and bravery, teamwork and group solidarity, loyalty, heroism and self-sacrifice. In the rest of American culture these virtues are given a much lower value than intellectual ability, ambition, competitiveness and the achievement of material success. For high-school-educated young men and women who are often not "successful" in these latter terms, the armed forces provide them with the opportunity to be seen as role models and heroes to their families, friends and communities.

When working-class Americans refer to “our boys in uniform,” they are expressing an intensely felt emotional truth as well as a metaphorical one – that the soldiers and other personnel – men and women – are not only literally their children but are also the representatives of some of the best values of their culture.

http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=class_and_warfare

Liberals and progressives are, of course, also acutely aware of negative aspects of the military value system – enforced conformity, rigid obedience and the glorification of violence – characteristics dramatically portrayed in films like Stanley Kubrick’s “Full Metal Jacket” and “A Few Good Men”. But, even among firm liberals and progressives, there is a recognition that these characteristics are to a very significant degree unavoidable aspects of any military organization, no matter how purely defensive or altruistic its purpose.

Along with a distinct value system, however, the military world also has a distinct conceptual framework – one which is deeply internalized by its participants, but which many liberals and progressives simply do not understand.

At the level of the individual soldier or non-commissioned officer, the most important element of the military perspective is the *mission*. Higher level officers are taught a more abstract conceptual hierarchy of National Strategy, Military Strategy, Operational Strategy and Tactics, but for most military personnel, there are essentially only two main concepts – the mission and the strategy to accomplish it.

For the vast majority of the men and women serving in the military, since 9/11 their overarching vision of the basic mission in which they are engaged is prevent another terrorist attack on America. No other national goal (e.g. protecting America’s access to Mideast oil, remaking the cultures of the Arab-Persian world) remotely approaches the centrality of this basic mission in their minds. It is this mission, and no other, that inspires young 18 and 19 year olds to enlist in the armed services in the first place and to continue to serve without objection, to make huge personal sacrifices and to endure.

There is virtually no disagreement with this mission among most Americans. It is as close to a national consensus as there is on any subject.

In regard to the military strategy to achieve this goal, on the other hand, there is a vast amount of disagreement, not only among all Americans but within the ranks of the military as well. Various polls of both military personnel and of higher and lower level officers show that the initial consensus that existed in 2001 has now been replaced by widespread sense of disillusionment and strong dissent.

What this suggests for Democratic strategy is self-evident. To win the support of the millions of Americans who consider themselves “pro-military” but disagree with the Bush/Petraeus strategy there are three distinct sub-tasks that must be achieved.

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1. Democrats must demonstrate to “pro-military” voters that they sincerely honor and respect the value system of the American military.
 2. Democrats must distinguish and clarify to these voters that they completely support what most members of the armed forces see as their basic mission – protecting America from another terrorist attack. They must make clear that this is emphatically not the issue on which Democrats and Republicans disagree.
 3. Democrats must make clear that the real argument between Republicans and Democrats lies in the realm of military strategy – that the Republican military strategy is fundamentally flawed and that the Democrats have a better one.

To effectively make this case to the millions of “pro-military” voters, Democrats will have to learn how to do something that is unfamiliar for them. They will have to learn how to express their ideas in the language and framework of military strategy – to win the debate within the “strategic” conceptual framework in which “pro-military” voters want policies regarding Iraq to be discussed.

This is not as difficult as it may first appear. Generals like Wesley Clark do it routinely. The following four sections show how it can be done.

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MILITARY STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATS –**PART II - IRAQ IS NOT A "CLASSIC COUNTERINSURGENCY"; IT'S A FULL-BLOWN CIVIL WAR**

On the November 27, 2007 Charlie Rose Show, John McCain said of Iraq:

"This is a classic counterinsurgency we are engaged in right now. This is not a new strategy. General Petraeus has updated it, but the fact is it's a classic counterinsurgency."

Political journalists and observers paid little attention to this particular remark, seeing it as a vague generalization. People familiar with military matters, on the other hand, knew McCain was referring to something very specific – military publication FM -3-24 – *"The US Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual"*.

<http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>

This publication, written by General Petraeus along with Lt. General James Amos and Lt. Colonel John Nagl, was widely described as revolutionary when it appeared in December 2006. It was rapidly downloaded over 1.5 million times from the internet and generated more commentary than any other modern military publication. Most frequently, it was cited as the basis for Petraeus' new strategy behind the "surge".

FM -3-24 is a statement of military doctrine. It presents a "common language and common understanding of how army forces conduct operations" and in two important respects it does indeed represent a radical departure from the past.

First, the Counterinsurgency Field Manual represents a very dramatic break with the "Powell Doctrine" that emerged out of the disillusionment with the war in Vietnam. The Powell Doctrine held among its directives that, for the use of regular Army and Marine forces (1) there must be a clearly defined mission, (2) that force, when used, should be overwhelming and disproportionate to the force used by the enemy and (3) that there must be a clear exit strategy from the conflict in which the military is engaged.

The application of the "Powell Doctrine" was clearly evident in the conduct of the first Gulf War and commanded wide approval among U.S. military commanders at the time. From this perspective, anti-guerrilla campaigns were perceived as a very distinct kind of military operation that could best be handled by Special Forces and other highly specialized and uniquely trained troops.

The new Counterinsurgency Field Manual, in very stark contrast, defines anti-guerrilla warfare as a central task for the regular Army and Marines. The bibliography of FM-3-24 specifically cites books dealing with the strategy of post-World War II anti-guerrilla

campaigns in Malaya, Kenya, Algeria and Indochina as the principle models upon which the new strategy is based.

Along with this radical change in doctrine, the manual also takes a very strong position on a major military debate left over from the Vietnam War – a debate between the advocates of using virtually unrestricted firepower and military force – symbolized by terms like “carpet bombing” and “free-fire zones” and the advocates of an alternative approach identified with the slogans of “Winning Hearts and Minds” and “Vietnamization”.

FM -3-24 very aggressively and systematically champions the second approach. It defines counterinsurgency operations as nothing less than “armed social work” and bluntly asserts that such campaigns cannot win unless they succeed in protecting the civilian population and rebuilding the economy. More specifically it lists four major objectives (1) Security from intimidation, coercion, violence and crime; (2) Provision of basic economic needs, (3) Provision of essential services such as water, electricity, sanitation and medical care; (4) Sustainment of key social and cultural institutions

Just within the category of “essential services”, the detailed list of the objectives needed for success is startling –

- criminals detained
- timely response to property fires
- water treatments plants functioning
- electrical plants open
- power lines intact
- all schools open, staffed, supplied
- roadways and bridges open
- hospitals and clinics open and staffed
- trash collected regularly
- sewage system operating

There are similarly detailed lists for security, governance and economic development.

The manual energetically argues that nothing less than extensive “armed social work” of this kind can defeat an insurgency. As it dramatically states:

“The decisive battle is for the people’s minds...lasting victory comes from a vibrant economy, political participation and restored hope.”

But, who and what are the insurgents who must be defeated? In presenting its answer, the manual frequently tends to suggest the mental image of a basically peaceful village or urban area beset by a cadre of subversives infiltrating from outside. One of the most prominent charts in the book, for example, asserts the following:

"In any situation, whatever the cause, there will be –

- I. An active minority for the cause*
- II. A neutral or passive majority*
- III. An active minority against the cause"*

Moreover, FM-3-24 asserts, all insurgencies tend to be similar. *"All insurgencies"* it states, *"adhere to elements of a recognizable revolutionary campaign plan"* and *"Most insurgencies follow a similar course of development. The tactics used to defeat them are likewise similar in most cases"*.

The manual describes five basic varieties of insurgency, each with its most characteristic example.

- Conspiratorial (e.g. Lenin and the Bolsheviks)
- Military focused (e.g. Che Guevara and rural guerrilla bands)
- Urban (e.g. the IRA)
- Protracted Popular War (e.g. Mao Tse Tung, Ho Chi Minh)
- Identity focused (by religious affiliation, clan, tribe or ethnic group)

The manual notes that the last category is in many respects more accurately classed as a demographic variant of or a subcategory within the fourth variety of Maoist Protracted Popular War.

This typology very strongly reinforces the image of *"insurgents"* as a subversive minority infiltrating a passive population. The image is powerfully reinforced by a dramatic table that lists the specific tactics these *"insurgents"* employ:

"Ambushes, Assassination, Arson, Bombing and High Explosives, Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear weapons, Demonstrations, Denial and Deception, Hijacking and Skyjacking, Hoaxes, Hostage Taking, Indirect fire, Infiltration and Subversion, Kidnapping, Propaganda, Raids or Attacks on Facilities, Sabotage, Seizures."

This quite vividly underlines the image of insurgents as a fringe group of violent subversives who victimize innocent people. With only one or two exceptions, in fact, the list above makes the conceptual category *"insurgents"* indistinguishable from that of *"terrorists."*

This leads to medical analogies that identify insurgents with disease.

"With good intelligence, counterinsurgents are like surgeons cutting out cancerous tissue while keeping other organs intact"

"Counterinsurgency operations generally progress through three indistinct stages that can be envisioned with a medical analogy – (1) stop the bleeding, (2) inpatient care – recovery (3) outpatient care – movement to self-sufficiency."

This describes the insurgents, but who or what is the government that they oppose and that the U.S. counterinsurgents support? FM-3-24 offers a wide variety of labels

-
- “constituted government”
 - “established government”
 - “established government, occupying power or other political authority”
 - “an existing authority (which) may be an established government or an interim governing body”
 - “an emerging government”

This list quite noticeably avoids the use of the terms “legitimate” or “popular” to describe the governments the insurgents are challenging. In fact, FM -3 -24 quite clearly assumes that in many cases they will not be.

US forces committed to a counterinsurgency effort are there to assist a HN (Host Nation) government. The long-term goal is to leave a government able to stand by itself

(The U.S. role is) helping friendly forces reestablish political order and legitimacy where these conditions may no longer exist”

“Victory is achieved when the populace consents to the government’s legitimacy and stops actively and passively supporting the insurgency

Democratic liberals and progressives will find these quotes troubling on both moral and political grounds. The final quote above, in fact, has the disturbing implication that, in order to achieve “victory”, a “populace” that is “supporting the insurgency” can or should be compelled by American military power to “consent to the government’s legitimacy”.

The line between propping up an unpopular dictatorship and defending a popular or legitimate government gets entirely lost in this linguistic fog. It gives the U.S. military and political leadership a moral and political “blank check” to designate any force they choose as the “existing authority” or HN (host nation) – which must be defended by American troops – and to label any other forces they choose as “insurgents” – who must be crushed by American forces.

This aspect of FM –3-24 will be most strongly objected to by the liberal and progressive wing of the Democratic Party. But an even wider sector of the electorate will find it even more disturbing that – simply as a matter of fundamental military strategy – the simplistic “host nation vs. insurgents” framework of FM –3-24 simply does not work in the case of Iraq.

There are indeed some foreign volunteer fighters – from Western Europe, Iran and other Moslem countries – in Iraq but they remain a very small percentage of the combatants. The vast majority of the “insurgents” are native-born Iraqis who are not affiliated with either al Qaeda or Iran.

Yet the extraordinary fact is that the Counterinsurgency Field Manual simply defines the crucial concept of “civil war” entirely out of existence. In the series of formal definitions in FM-3-24 the term “civil war” is never defined. It simply does not exist.

This is, to put it bluntly, absurd. Most Americans see on the news that there is now a bitter struggle going on between three sectarian/ethnic groups in Iraq: (1) the Sunni resistance, (2) the ISRI/Badr militia group (which underlies the Dawa political party of the Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and (3) the followers of Moqtada al Sadr's Madhi Army.

Each one of these three sectarian/ethnic groups has substantial armed militias under its command and each one of these militias has been extensively documented engaging in acts of kidnapping, extortion, murder, criminal activity and intimidation. At the present time the United States is paying weekly salaries to 90,000 members of the first group, supporting the second as the "established" government of Iraq and (until recently) officially praising and honoring a cease-fire with the third.

This reality simply does not fit FM -3-24's model of a small, subversive movement of "insurgents" duping or terrorizing a passive or hostile population. On the contrary, for most Americans, it is nothing more than an act of common sense to face the fact that for several years now events in Iraq have reflected the ebb and flow of a violent ethnic and religious civil war.

Advocates of the current strategy, however, go to the most extreme lengths to avoid or obscure this reality. For example, in his congressional testimony on April 8th, General Petraeus carefully avoided using the term "civil war" to describe the "fundamental nature" of the conflict. Instead he used different words that defined precisely the same thing:

"In September I described the fundamental nature of the conflict in Iraq as a competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources."

Later in his testimony, when asked about the militias of Moqtada al Sadr he replied carefully that they were *"a movement that has to be not just acknowledged but addressed, acknowledged, reached out to by the government of Iraq."* Elsewhere, he said they must be *"to some degree, accommodated."*

Yet at the same time, however, he defined the "enemy" – the forces fomenting the violent ethnic conflict in Iraq by saying: *"...Various elements push Iraq's ethno-sectarian competition toward violence. Terrorists, insurgents, militia extremists and criminal gangs pose significant threats."*

Yet these are precisely the terms widely used to define the Sadrist militias who Petraeus at the same time argued, must be "acknowledged" and "accommodated". In fact, in the two weeks surrounding Petraeus' testimony, the Sadrist militias in Basra were described as all of the following:

"Renegade militias", "criminal gangs", "criminals and gang leaders", "outlaw militiamen", "Shia gangs and terrorists", "thugs", "extremist militias", "terrorist groups", "criminals and militia extremists", "Terrorists, insurgents, militia extremists and criminal gangs", "Bad actors", "hard core extremists."

In short, the Sadrist militias were – at exactly the same time and by exactly the same people – being described as a major social force in Iraq that had to be recognized and as a destructive fringe group of insurgents who needed to be crushed.

There is, in fact, a fevered and overwrought, almost desperate quality in the lurid language quoted above – an attempt to keep fitting one of the three contending religious and ethnic groups in Iraq’s civil war into the simplistic “Good Guys vs. Bad Guys” language of FM –3-24 and thereby dismiss them as fringe elements by the force of sheer vituperation.

But it simply will not work. No successful military strategy can possibly be formulated if its authors cannot even maintain a consistent definition of the enemy that it is designed to defeat. This is a matter of common sense that all Americans - either with or without military experience – can quickly understand. The conflict in Iraq is either basically a civil war among major population groups – which then requires one very particular and distinct kind of military strategy on the part of US forces - or it is an insurgency conducted by a small, unrepresentative and subversive fringe – which requires a quite different strategy.

Ironically, FM –3-24 presents a quote from the famous military strategist Von Clausewitz that seems almost directly addressed to this issue. In his book, *On War*, Von Clausewitz states:

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish ...the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.

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MILITARY STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATS –**PART III – THE SURGE ISN'T "WORKING", IT'S JUST "POSTPONING" – AND IN THE LONG RUN IT'S MAKING THINGS WORSE**

During his opening remarks at the recent Senate hearings on Iraq, John McCain described the situation as follows:

At the beginning of last year ...full scale civil war seemed almost unavoidable... (But) since the middle of last year sectarian and ethnic violence, civilian deaths and deaths of coalition forces have all fallen dramatically. This improved security environment has led to a new opportunity, one in which average Iraqis can in the future approach a more normal political and economic life.

...Today it is possible to talk with real hope and optimism about the future of Iraq and the outcome of our efforts there...we're no longer staring into the abyss of defeat and we can now look ahead to the genuine prospect ...of success.

McCain's optimism was somewhat dampened by the fighting in Basra and Sadr City that was occurring even as he spoke, but most of the discussion of Iraq during the Senate hearings indeed accepted the basic proposition that the generally falling level of violence during the preceding months did represent undeniable proof of "progress" or "success". Up until the week before McCain's testimony, most journalistic reports about Iraq quite optimistically described formerly empty streets now filled with pedestrians and markets and stores that had been closed and shuttered now open and filled with customers. On the surface, it certainly seemed plausible to assume that if the relative calm could be maintained, Iraq could steadily advance toward stability.

This corresponds with the average person's conception of civil or urban warfare – that if the streets of an area can be made safe, the local population will rapidly come to support the authorities and reject the forces seeking to create violence. For this reason, the citizens of western nations almost always approve of temporary cease-fires to stop violence.

Many military historians and strategists, however, disagree most strongly with this view. There is, in fact, a very substantial body of opinion which holds that temporary cease fires in civil wars very often do not permanently reduce violence, but simply postpone the fighting and can even make it worse when it recurs.

One of the leading contemporary military theorists, Edward N. Luttwak, Senior Fellow of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, is a prominent advocate of this perspective. In his influential book, *“Strategy – The Logic of War and Peace”* he notes that many civil wars are “low intensity” conflicts that do not automatically escalate to major set-piece battles. Rather, they proceed for long periods of time with a low, constant level of violence punctuated with occasional flare-ups and clashes.

As he says:

...in civil wars the intensity of the fighting is often low, the scale small with violence localized within a wider environment that the fighting might affect only marginally if at all...civil wars can therefore last for decades. No intense, large scale war can last for many years, let alone decades and some have burned themselves out in weeks or even days.

...But if war is interrupted before its self-destruction is achieved, no peace need ensue at all. So it was in Europe’s past when wars were still fought intermittently during spring and summer campaigning seasons, each time coming to an end with the arrival of winter – only to resume afresh in the spring...

Luttwak then proceeds to argue his main point, using the Balkans as one example:

Since 1945 wars among lesser powers have rarely been allowed to follow their natural course. Instead they have typically been interrupted long before they could burn out the energies of war to establish the preconditions of peace *...cease fires merely relieve war-induced exhaustion, favoring the reconstitution and rearming of the belligerents*, thus intensifying and prolonging the fighting once the cease-fire comes to an end.

...Dozens of UN imposed cease-fires interrupted the fighting between Serbs and Croats in the Krajina borderlands, between the forces of the Serb-Montenegrin federation and the Croat army and among the Serbs, Croats and Muslims of Bosnia. *Each time the belligerents exploited the pause to recruit, train and equip additional forces for further combat*. Indeed it was under the protection of successive cease fires that both the Croats and the Bosnian Muslims were able to build up their own armed forces to confront the well-armed Serbs. *...the overall effect was to greatly prolong the war and widen the scope of its killings, atrocities, and destructions*.

Luttwak applies the same logic to longer-term armistices:

Unless directly followed by successful peace negotiations, (long-term) armistices perpetuate the state of war indefinitely because they shield the

weaker side from the consequences of refusing the concessions needed for peace. Fearing no further defeats or territorial losses behind the indirect protection of the great powers that guarantee the armistice, the losing side can deny peace to the winning side, and even attack its lands in deniable ways by infiltrating raiders and guerrillas. *Armistices in themselves are not way stations to peace but rather frozen wars.*

Luttwak's analysis, which is shared by many other military historians, has profound implications for how the success of the surge should be measured. Simply counting monthly casualties or noting the return of cheerful Iraqis to the local marketplace is not an adequate measurement. If the underlying sources of civil conflict remain, the period of cease-fire may simply provide the opportunity for the combatants to rearm and resupply for renewed – and possibly more violent and widespread – conflict later on.

For example, Bobby Ghosh, *Time Magazine's* former Bureau Chief in Iraq, concluded a April 14th update on the situation as follows:

...the murderous rage I saw in 2006 and 2007 continues to fester. The Mahdi army may have ceased fire, and the Sunni insurgents may pose as friends of America, but both are just waiting. Unless Americans have a major change of heart about maintaining a substantial and aggressive military presence in Iraq, all the gains of the past year will amount to nothing.

This analysis of cease-fires is widely shared by many of the "realist" critics of the Administration and has been incorporated into their analyses.

For example, As Zbigniew Brzezinski argued in the Washington Post:

Contrary to Republican claims that our departure will mean calamity, a sensibly conducted disengagement will actually make Iraq more stable over the long term. The impasse in Shiite-Sunni relations is in large part the sour byproduct of the destructive U.S. occupation, which breeds Iraq dependency even as it shatters Iraqi society. In this context, so highly reminiscent of the British colonial era, *the longer we stay in Iraq, the less incentive various contending groups will have to compromise and the more reason simply to sit back.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/27/AR2008032702405.html>

General William Odom, former director NSA, argued similarly in testimony to the Senate:

The surge is prolonging instability, not creating conditions for unity. ..."Violence has been temporarily reduced but today there is credible evidence that the political situation is far more fragmented.

Let us consider the implications of the proliferating deals with the Sunni strongmen. They are far from unified among themselves. Some remain with al Qaeda. Many who break and join our forces are beholden to no one. Thus the decline in violence reflects a dispersion of power to dozens of local strongmen who distrust the government and occasionally fight among themselves. Thus the basic military situation is far worse because of the proliferation of armed groups under local military chiefs.

This can hardly be called greater military stability much less progress toward political consolidation, and to call it fragility that needs more time to become success is to ignore its implications. ...*What we are witnessing is more accurately described as the road to the Balkanization of Iraq, that is, political fragmentation.* We are being asked by the president to believe that this shift... is the road to political centralization. He describes the process as building the state from the bottom up.

I challenge you to ...name a single historical case where power has been successfully aggregated from local strongmen to a central government except through bloody violence ...It took England 800 years to subdue clan rule on what is now the English-Scottish border and it is the source of violence in Bosnia and Kosovo ...it has placed the United States astride several civil wars and *it allows all sides to consolidate, rearm and refill their financial coffers at US expense.*

<http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/32419>

Finally, Steven Simon, a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and past member of the NSA argued as follows in a recent, much discussed article in Foreign Affairs:

(The surge) is not linked to any sustainable plan for building a viable Iraqi state. If anything, it has made such an outcome less likely, by stoking the revanchist fantasies of Sunni Arab tribes and pitting them against the central government and against one another. *In other words, the recent short term gains have come at the expense of the long-term goal of a stable, unitary Iraq.*

The surge may have brought transitory success ...but it has done so by stoking the three forces that have traditionally threatened the stability of Middle Eastern states: tribalism, warlordism and sectarianism. States that have failed to control these forces have ultimately become ungovernable and this is the fate for which the surge is preparing Iraq. *A strategy intended to*

reduce casualties in the short run will ineluctably weaken the prospects for Iraq's cohesion over the long run.

<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080501faessay87305/steven-simon/the-price-of-the-surge.html>

In principle, it would be possible for advocates of the current policy to argue that Iraq is a typical of most civil wars and that, for some specific reason, in this particular case a temporary reduction in violence will rapidly lead to sustained reconciliation between the country's ethnic and religious blocs. But no serious argument along these lines has been offered by any major military historian sympathetic to the administration's views. Instead, the temporary reduction in violence over the last 9 months has been invariably presented as presumably self-evident proof that the surge is a success.

Yet average Americans, both those with military experience and those without, can see that the evolution of Iraq over the last five years offers far more evidence for the view that temporary reductions in violence simply postpone conflict rather than that they end it.

Of course, this time might turn out to be totally different, but, without a plausible rationale for why it might happen, such a hope is an exercise in wishful thinking rather than military strategy.

But what do the architects of the administration's military strategy actually think? Every senior commander in the American military has read Luttwak's book and is aware of its contents. What is their response?

In fact, the major architects of the "surge" do not base their strategy on the hope that temporary cease-fires will lead directly to sectarian and ethnic reconciliation. They actually have a quite different strategic vision – one with deep roots in military history.

MILITARY STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATS

By James Vega

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Understanding the "pro-military, but anti-Bush's war" voters

PART II

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The Republicans do have a military strategy – it's called "Divide and Rule", it takes at least 50 years, requires lots of casualties and – the half-hearted way we're doing it – almost never works

PART V

How the Democrats Can Argue with McCain and the Republicans about Military Strategy and Win

MILITARY STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATS –**PART IV – THE REPUBLICANS DO HAVE A MILITARY STRATEGY – IT'S CALLED "DIVIDE AND RULE", IT TAKES AT LEAST 50 YEARS, REQUIRES LOTS OF CASUALTIES AND – THE HALF-HEARTED WAY WE'RE DOING IT – ALMOST NEVER WORKS.**

The 2003 invasion of Iraq was not the first time in history that a western army won decisive military victories in the Middle East and then found itself bogged down in a tenacious guerrilla war. As the military historian Archer Jones noted in his book, *"The Art of War in the Western World"*, the same fate befell Alexander the Great 2,500 years earlier. After winning decisive victories against the Persian army in two major battles, he found himself unable to defeat the tribes of northern Afghanistan:

(Alexander's) opponents essentially followed a raiding strategy, attacking his outposts and, except for their strong points avoiding contact with large contingents of his army ...they sought to avoid strong Macedonian forces, concentrating on overwhelming weak detachments and then withdrawing.

(Alexander) established and garrisoned a large number of fortified military posts throughout the settled part of the county ...although the measures taken by the Macedonians strengthened the defense ...they failed to prevent the guerrillas raids. The invaders had too few soldiers to stop the raids in a large country in which the guerrillas had political support among the population.

Alexander was the first of the great conqueror-generals of western history. But the classic description of how a war of occupation should be conducted – one that was read by every British schoolboy learning his Latin in the era of the British Empire and by every modern graduate of West Point – is Julius Caesar's narrative of his conquest of Gaul. Caesar's dispatches to the Roman senate about his campaigns in what is now France, Belgium and Germany provided a model that all subsequent generals sought to emulate.

Western Europe in Caesar's time was a vast patchwork of small tribes, each controlling areas of one hundred or two hundred square miles, along with some 20 or 30 much larger cultural groups. Caesar, in contrast, had only a handful of legions under his command. But the Roman legion was a formidable fighting force that could routinely defeat Gallic armies two, three or four times its size. It was a highly trained and disciplined formation of about 5,000 men that could fight as a single cohesive unit, standing literally shoulder to shoulder, or it could quickly divide into smaller groups that

could maneuver and battle independently. A Roman legion could march all day at a pace almost twice as fast as most of its opponents and then build a walled, fortified camp before the sun had set. Roman military technology was far in advance of Gallic techniques and included the ability to build river spanning bridges, catapult artillery, siege towers and vast encircling walls around resisting Gallic cities within a matter of days.

But with only four legions when he began, Caesar could not hope to control the vast region from the Italian Alps to the English Channel by sheer military force alone. The key to his strategy was a complex network of alliances with some Gallic tribes and the deliberate fomenting of conflict between others – a method the Romans called *divide et impera* – divide and rule.

As the leading military monograph on Caesar's Gallic campaign notes:

(Caesar's) task was made easier by the inability of the Gallic tribes to unite to form a combined resistance to the invaders. Indeed some tribes supported the Romans, and the Romans played one tribe off against another, exploiting the territorial ambitions of different Gallic tribes and even political divisions within tribes.

Caesar (who frequently referred to himself in the third person in his dispatches) described one such maneuver as follows:

He (Caesar) impressed upon Diviciacus the Aeduan the importance, alike for Rome and the general safety of Gaul, of preventing the junction of the various enemy contingents, in order to avoid the necessity of fighting such powerful forces at once. He explained that the best way of effecting this was for the Aedui to invade the land of the Bellovaci and start devastating it.

In fact, reading Caesar's dispatches is almost like looking over the shoulder of a skilled chess player as he moves his pieces – legions, garrisons and allies – across a map of Western Europe, placing garrisons at strategic locations, rapidly moving troops to quell outbreaks of rebellion and negotiating a careful network of alliances and "treaties of friendship" with tribal leaders. Caesar's readers in the Roman senate were engrossed by his descriptions of how he maintained control over such a vast territory with his relatively small force.

Three features of Caesar's Gallic campaign stand out as key characteristics that reappear in later empire-building military campaigns.

First is the remarkable sense of utter self-righteousness and superiority with which Caesar conducted his campaigns. Caesar was actually quite sympathetic to the motivations of the tribes who opposed him, noting at one point that "all men naturally love freedom and hate servitude" and that "tribes which were considered the bravest and most warlike in the world naturally felt bitter resentment at the complete loss of this reputation which submission to Roman rule entailed". But he sees it as so completely self-evident that Rome

should dominate the Gallic peoples that it does not require discussion. He takes great care to present himself as a reliable ally and merciful conqueror, but there is no question in his mind that the Gallic peoples must ultimately be forced to submit to Roman control.

The second notable feature of Caesar's campaign is his complete and routine acceptance of systematic brutality and massive reprisals. Regarding one tribe, Caesar notes:

He (Caesar) resolved to make an example of them in order to teach the natives to be more careful in future about respecting the rights of ambassadors; he had all their councilors executed and the rest of the population sold as slaves.

And another:

Every village and every building they saw was set on fire; all over the country the cattle were either slaughtered or driven off as booty; and the crops, a part of which had already been laid flat by the autumnal rains were consumed by the great numbers of horses and men. It seemed certain therefore that even if some the inhabitants had escaped for the moment by hiding, they must die of starvation.

The starvation of civilian populations was, in fact, a standard method of Roman imperial warfare, as was the selling of entire defeated populations as slaves. Although Caesar at times expresses regret that the rebelliousness of the Gauls obliges him to commit these acts, there is no question in his mind that they are a natural and necessary part of maintaining order.

The final characteristic of Caesar's Gallic campaign that reappears in later conquests is the calm acceptance of the idea that in wars of this kind, an actual state of "peace" can never really be achieved. All a conqueror realistically seeks is to limit the warfare to a perpetual series of low-level rebellions that must be constantly combated. In the Gallic case, battles between Romans and Gauls had been occurring for over a century before Caesar arrived on the scene and it was not until well into the reign of the first Emperor Augustus that Gaul was considered pacified. Even then, periodic rebellions still occurred for another century.

After the decline of Rome, the next great colonial empire created by the strategy of *divide et impera* was the conquest of the New World. The conqueror of Mexico, Hernan Cortez, even more than Caesar, exploited the skillful use of the strategy to seize control of the country with only a literal handful of conquistadors. Although his victory is frequently credited to his European weapons – a small number of muskets and cannon – the most detailed modern account of his politico-military strategy – Mexican historian Jaime Montell Garcia's *La Conquista De Mexico-Tenochtitlan* – makes it abundantly clear that it was the skillful series of alliances he negotiated with the other indigenous cultures subjugated by the Aztecs that were of greater importance. The vast majority of the fighting during the *conquista*, in fact, actually occurred between different native cultures with the conquistadores playing only a relatively minor military role.

Divide and Rule played a similarly important role in the creation of the British Empire, particularly in India, which was a vast mosaic of languages, religions, ethnicities and cultures. One particularly vivid expression of the British approach was expressed by an artillery officer who said "I seek to have a different and rival spirit in my different regiments so the Sikh might fire into Hindoo, and the Goorkha into either, without any scruple in case of need."

In two respects these later empires followed the Caesarian pattern. First, both the Spanish and British had a similarly firm belief in the utter righteousness of their cause – the former saw themselves as saving the Aztecs from the flames of hell, the latter as saving the Indians from the darkness of ignorance and superstition. Second, both colonial powers were fully willing to use systematic brutality and massive reprisals to enforce their rule. Names like "The Black Hole of Calcutta" and visual images like the illustrations of the methods of torture used against rebellious Indians in Fray Diego De Landa's *Condicion de Los Indios de la Nueva Espana* have come down to the present day as reminders of what were considered "normal" and "acceptable" methods for suppressing native rebellion.

But in another respect the Spanish empire in the new world and the British Empire in India departed dramatically from the Caesarian model. Unlike Caesar's conquest of Gaul, both Spain and Britain did indeed fundamentally transform the indigenous cultures of the countries they conquered, imposing West European culture on top of the native economic, political and social systems. By the 20th century to most people it seemed entirely "normal" or "natural" that Mexicans should speak Spanish rather than Nahuatl or Indians English rather than Hindi.

Yet, it is important to recognize that this transformation was extremely long and vastly complex. The Spanish and British colonial administrations directly controlled the two nations' school systems, legal systems (courts, prisons), civil service and major economic institutions. And yet it took at least 50 and more like 100 years for a major sociocultural transformation to occur.

On reflection, it is clear why this would necessarily be so. In sociological and anthropological terms fundamental cultural change is best understood as a process that occurs not over a period of years or decades but over generations. For the first 20 or 30 years after a conquest, there are still many people who remember the previous culture in which they grew up and which continues to seem "normal" or "natural" to them, even if they are militarily subjugated by a foreign power. It is only as generational replacement brings in new generations who grow up, go to school, find work, marry, have children and pay taxes in a culture that is increasingly Spanish or British dominated that a fundamental social-psychological transformation gradually occurs.

Seen in the light of this historical background, the current strategy of Bush, Cheney and Petraeus in Iraq now finally begins to make sense.

On the one hand, as we have seen, U.S. strategy during the last year fits neither a "classic counterinsurgency" framework nor a "temporary cease-fire leading directly to stability" perspective. It is therefore almost comforting to find that there is actually a very different military strategy that is driving our current actions.

In fact, it is quite clear that the actual military strategy America has been following since last spring has been a “hedge our bets” variant of the classic *divide et impera* – simultaneously paying salaries to the Sunni resistance, declaring our support for the ISIR/Badr government of Nori al Maliki and honoring a prolonged cease-fire with the Mahdi Army (even though this last step gave them the chance to resupply, reequip and consolidate support in the economically vital south).

These contradictory actions make absolutely no sense as normal counterinsurgency tactics (which call instead for maintaining “unrelenting pressure” on the minority of insurgent “bad actors”) nor as standard UN style peacekeeping (which would not endorse massively subsidizing the arms purchases of probable future belligerents). But they make perfect sense as elements of a spur of the moment *divide et impera* adopted under the pressure of events.

And in fact, in larger perspective, a neo-Caesarian *divide et impera* imperial strategy has actually been the real, underlying “shadow strategy” that has guided the Bush Administration’s actions in the Middle East since before 2001. The basic outlines of this strategy were to (1) invade, occupy and pacify Iraq, (2) build an extensive and robust infrastructure of military bases in the country and then (3) use those bases as the staging areas for air strikes, commando-style raids, large airmobile operations and even full scale, Brigade and Division-level armored ground attacks on targets in Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and anywhere else in the region Administration policy might deem necessary.

There was nothing particularly secret about this strategy. That part of it which was not published in think-tank monographs and magazine articles in the conservative journals between 1996 and 2003 was gleefully blurted out over cappuccinos and canapés to solid progressive journalists like Josh Marshall, John Judis and others who then dutifully reported virtually all of its major elements to their readers. Many of the Neo-conservatives’ Power-point slides which showed the likely targets of future military actions could be overlaid almost exactly over a map of Alexander the Great’s major military campaigns.

It was the general awareness of this Neo-Caesarian “shadow strategy” operating behind the scenes that gave the press coverage of the Iraq invasion its weird, Kabuki Theater character. Journalists were universally aware that the date for the invasion had been set the previous fall, based on the predicted optimal temperature and weather conditions in southern Iraq and Bagdad, and yet they earnestly reported “shocking” new discoveries that supposedly provided the missing “smoking gun” that suddenly proved an invasion was necessary. Leading Administration spokesmen and defenders confidently declared themselves totally unfazed when their most basic predications turned out to be totally false (e.g. that we would be greeted as “liberators” or that “secular” Iraqis would not sink into sectarian civil war) and quickly began to be quoted as “the leading experts” once again. In fact, everybody knew that their monumental errors in judgment were not really important because they were only part of the superficial PR packaging of the invasion and not part of the fundamental long-term military strategy.

In the view of the neoconservatives and the administration, in fact, the Neo-Caesarian shadow strategy has actually been a solid success. A substantial American military presence

in Iraq has become an international *fait accompli* and a massive network of 70 bases, 38 major supply depots, 18 fuel storage centers, 10 ammunition dumps. 1,900 tanks, and armored vehicles, 700 aircraft and 43,000 trucks has been created.

The recent elevation of General Petraeus to head the Central Command for the Middle East and Central Asia – replacing a general who was not sufficiently enthusiastic about using Iraq-based, American forces to threaten and if necessary attack Iran – is, in effect, the formal recognition of this Neo-Caesarian *divide et impera* shadow strategy as the basis for the future US military role in the Middle East.

There are a vast range of moral, political and diplomatic objections that can be raised against this Neo-Caesarian strategy. For the moment, however, it is important to focus on its purely military aspect.

There are three important lessons from previous wars of occupation and empire that suggest that ultimately this strategy is likely to fail.

First, we have far too few troops to actually achieve either of the two major post-invasion objectives that the original strategy was designed to achieve – to seriously win the “hearts and minds” of the people in Iraq and to have available a large enough military force to successfully launch a substantial military incursion into Iran.

The military force that would be necessary to accomplish these objectives goes far beyond the military’s immediate problems of overextended troop rotations and maintaining proper military reserve levels in other areas of the world. Fully achieving either one of the objectives above would require something like a hundred thousand additional troops at the barest minimum – and achieving both objectives would require hundreds of thousands, particularly if – as it should be – the Powell Doctrine of requiring overwhelming and disproportionate force would be followed rather than gambling on operations using barely adequate or less than adequate forces.

Second, unlike previous empires, America is constrained by global media oversight and world opinion from using extreme tactics of reprisal and massive retaliation that have often proven brutally effective in the suppression of other guerrilla wars (In the post-war period French tactics in Algeria became notorious for their systematic brutality, for example, while in Central America death squads, mass executions and the destruction of entire villages were endemic). The advocates of this approach (who tend to have nicknames like “blowtorch Bob” or “piano-wire Bill”) grumble mightily about cowardly half-measures, but the regular U.S. military itself is sufficiently aware of the catastrophic effect on Arab and Moslem opinion of events like Abu Ghirab and indiscriminate civilian casualties to think that the trade-off can today be worthwhile in purely military terms.

Third, without Americans taking a major direct role in running the country, we will not significantly westernize Iraq’s culture. To significantly reduce culturally sanctioned corruption, near-universal ethnic and religious sectarianism and tribal nepotism, pervasive anti-American ideological indoctrination in the schools and systematic indifference to

western notions of legal rights and justice, the historical evidence indicates that a full-scale colonial administration – covering the civil service, school systems and police and court systems – would be required for an extended period of years. Otherwise the examples of Lebanon and the occupied territories under the PLO suggest that even after one or more decades there may be little cultural change.

Therefore, given the limited forces currently at our disposal and our unwillingness to use extensive brutality or direct colonial administration, what we are left with is a strategy that will end up looking very much like Julius Caesar's continually improvised, "putting out one fire after another " approach in the conquest of Gaul – regularly dispatching troops from one area to another to put down a city-wide rebellion in one place and then having to redeploy them to battle resurgent guerrilla activity somewhere else. Equally, while we do have the forces to make a temporary raid or launch an aerial bombing campaign against Iran , we do not have enough to achieve the long-term occupation of any major Iranian city much less the overthrow of the government as a whole. (Caesar actually conducted several brief harassing raids into Germany during his Gallic campaigns but never attempted to make any major incursions because he considered his forces far too meager)

Now there is no doubt that, if it wished to do so, The US is financially and demographically able to decide upon a massive national mobilization – one that would bring back the draft, deploy 750,000 troops in the Middle East, formally make a commitment to stay 30 or 40 years and be willing to accept ongoing casualties for that entire time. This would be a militarily realistic set of steps to propose in order to guarantee the achievement of the two objectives above. But with our currently limited forces, it is not at all clear what the sacrifices American troops are being asked to make are really going to achieve.

In the current election campaign, John McCain is offering extravagant promises of creating a peaceful, happy Iraq with just our current level of forces. But he offers no plausible explanation for how this can actually be achieved. Pro-military voters may admire McCain's values and character, but they also take military strategy seriously enough to recognize when they are being given the run-around. The Democrats need to offer pro-military voters an alternative military strategy – one that they can examine side by side with the Republican strategy and decide for themselves simply makes more sense.

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MILITARY STRATEGY FOR DEMOCRATS –**PART V – HOW THE DEMOCRATS CAN ARGUE WITH MCCAIN AND THE REPUBLICANS ABOUT MILITARY STRATEGY AND WIN**

To summarize the argument thus far:

There is an important "pro-military, but anti-Bush's war" voter group. Winning their vote is critical for Democratic candidates at every level of the 2008 election.

To win the support of these voters Democrats need do three things

1. Democrats must demonstrate to these "pro-military" voters that they sincerely honor and respect the value system of the American military.
2. Democrats must distinguish and clarify to these voters that they completely support what most members of the armed forces see as their basic mission – protecting America from another terrorist attack. They must make clear that this is emphatically not the issue on which Democrats and Republicans disagree.
3. Democrats must learn how to express their ideas in the language and framework of military strategy – to win the debate with the Republicans within the "strategic" conceptual framework in which "pro-military" voters want policies regarding Iraq to be discussed.

In previous sections three basic ideas about America's military strategy in Iraq have been presented.

1. That the conflict in Iraq is now a full-scale civil war, not an insurgency
2. That in many civil wars. short-term cease fires often just temporarily postpone deeply-rooted religious and ethnic conflict – and even make the ultimate violence even worse
3. That "staying the course" or "finishing the job" in Iraq implies not only refereeing the bitter civil war for many years but also profoundly changing the nation's society and culture. These are objectives that will require long years, more soldiers, constant casualties and that – without using brutality, reprisals and direct US military rule – probably still will not be achieved.

Many "pro-military, anti-Bush's war " voters have already reached some version of these key conclusions by themselves, based on their own common sense and their daily observation of the news on TV. This is what underlies their view that (1) "the surge was a mistake", (2) that Bush's policies have "undermined America's security" and (3) that we should "reduce the number of troops".

So how can Democrats present speak to these voters – offering them an approach expressed in the language and conceptual framework of military strategy?

Most pro-military Americans will agree that there are three basic things any politician owes to the American people – and even more to the men and women of the armed forces themselves – before he or she proposes to send or keep American troops in combat.

1. A clearly defined mission and objectives
2. Sufficient resources to do the job
3. An explicit exit strategy

Most Americans, whether pro-military or not, will agree that if a politician cannot or will not provide these three things, he or she simply does not deserve the support of the American people.

Let's look at each of these in turn:

1. A clearly defined mission and objectives

John McCain defines the mission and objectives he proposes to achieve in Iraq as follows:

"...The establishment of a peaceful, stable, prosperous democratic state that poses no threat to its neighbors and contributes to the defeat of terrorists".

Fredrick Kagan, a leading architect of the surge, offers an only slightly less utopian formulation of the same vision:

"...a stable, representative state that controls its own territory, is oriented toward the West and is an ally in the struggle against militant Islamism"

In either case, however, the basic mission is awe-inspiringly ambitious and at the same time very vaguely defined.

The Democrats, in contrast, can propose a very clearly defined and focused set of missions for US forces in Iraq – one that follows directly from the fundamental mission of all US forces since 9/11 – to protect America from another terrorist attack.

Specifically, there are three key missions for US air and ground forces in Iraq

- (1) Applying overwhelming destructive force against any active anti-US terrorist training camps, headquarters, staging areas and other sites in the region.
- (2) Occupying, neutralizing or destroying any nuclear weapons or other WMD facilities in the region that fall into terrorist hands or otherwise present a clear and present danger.
- (3) Deterring any conventional armor/infantry attack on Iraq that might be launched by Iran or any other nation in the region.

Along with these key missions, US forces in Iraq should also perform a variety of non-combat missions (such as providing support and training for Iraq armed forces, conducting

intelligence gathering operations, disrupting terrorist infrastructure, organizing and recruitment and providing protection for US forces and installations).

On the other hand, Democrats can and should specifically reject any of the following missions for US forces:

1. Supporting one side or another in Iraq's ethnic and religious civil wars
2. Westernizing Iraq's society and culture
3. Protecting privileged or low cost US access to Iraq's oil
4. Remaking the societies of the Middle East
5. Maintaining and garrisoning enough troops in Iraq to be able to successfully invade and occupy Iran and/or Syria

This two-part formulation of the appropriate mission for US forces is essentially consistent with the positions of the two Democratic candidates. It differs by expressing the ideas in terms of the mission or missions that we are asking the men and women of our armed forces to perform rather than the exact number of months withdrawal should be allowed to take or the exact number of residual forces that should remain. For anti-war Democrats, of course, these latter numbers have now become fundamental litmus tests of the sincerity of candidates' promises. But it is worth emphasizing that they became so only because the Bush administration kept continually changing their definition of the mission that America was trying to accomplish.

For pro-military voters, this strategic, "mission-oriented" way of talking about this subject is far more persuasive than debates over seemingly arbitrary deadlines or troop numbers because they see the fundamental question as follows:

"What is the mission that you are asking our brave sons and daughters to risk their lives for, to fight for and possibly to die for? You owe it to the men and women of the armed forces as well as to their husbands, wives, parents and family to give Americans straight, honest and concrete answers."

Democrats will have no difficulty on this score. Most fully support an absolutely firm and decisive military response to any threat of actual terrorism like 9/11. But they do not support putting our soldiers in harms' way to achieve the five other goals noted above.

Republicans, on the other hand – and particularly the neo-conservative strategists behind the Republican strategy in Iraq for the last five years – will find this way of framing the issue extremely inconvenient. The essence of their political strategy has consistently been to describe the mission they propose as "defending America from terrorism" while in fact actually trying to use the men and women of our armed forces to achieve one or more of the five other goals listed above. Being asked to explicitly avow or disavow these additional missions will place them on what General Sherman once famously called "the horns of a dilemma".

2. Sufficient resources to do the job

The resources that are needed to carry out any military mission are determined by the nature of the mission itself. John McCain's vaultingly ambitious mission requires a correspondingly vast allocation of resources. To remake Iraq as a *peaceful, stable, prosperous democratic state* will require vastly more troops, funding, resources than are currently allocated or available.

Even now US troops in Iraq are stretched thin, serving excessively long tours of duty and leaving many other vital security interests of the United States unmet. Newspaper articles regularly report the growing shortfalls and degradation of the nation's military equipment and supplies. A fully honest discussion of the resources McCain's mission will require would involve giving serious and honest consideration to reinstating the draft and approving significant new taxes. In the absence of this kind of honest discussion, the only option is a consistently underfunded and undersupported mission that cannot achieve its objectives.

The Democratic mission, in contrast, – even returning to Powell doctrine of insisting upon using overwhelming and disproportionate force – would still require much less than the current troop levels – by some calculations, perhaps only one-third – and would therefore reduce the stress on the armed forces and allow a return to normal troop rotations, the reestablishment of proper strategic reserves in other areas of the world and still also allow significant forces to be redeployed to Afghanistan where there is a better case for their utility.

3. An explicit exit strategy

The mission John McCain proposes is explicitly designed to not have a clear exit strategy – we must remain until a massive transformation of Iraqi culture and society is achieved. It is a war that can and will require generations to complete.

The Democratic mission, in contrast, implies a steady redeployment of our troops away from patrol and guard duty in dangerous, contested areas and to more easily defensible positions in bases detached from highly populated areas. The issue is not exactly how long this redeployment should be planned to take, but it that it is established as a clear and explicit military objective.

Conclusion

Many Americans will not support the Democratic position. Some will genuinely believe that American men and women should indeed fight and die to achieve the neo-conservative missions noted above. Others will assume that, even if the Democratic position appears to make more sense, Republicans are still better suited to make decisions about military mission and strategy. Some will simply support the slogans of "victory" and "finishing the job" without questioning their meaning.

But based on the opinion data, these people could easily be a minority by next November. A substantial group of Democratic voters are firmly anti-war and will vote for any Democrat on that basis. Another group may disagree on Iraq but choose to vote for Democrats on the basis of other issues.

But for a critical swing group of “pro-military, anti-bush” voters the approach outlined in these pages may play a significant role in convincing them that – although they have long distrusted Democrats on military matters – simply as matter of military common sense, the Democratic strategy for Iraq is better than John McCain’s. The Democratic approach is supported by many people within the military, it is endorsed by many major military thinkers and it also corresponds with the common sense conclusions of most ordinary Americans. It is simply a better military strategy.