Information Warfare
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You must understand the role your enemy plays in affecting your winning communication strategy. Identifying who you are fighting and understanding their attributes may spell the difference between victory and defeat. You need to know who they are; how they see themselves; their roots, history, values, traditions, priorities, friends, and allies. You need to understand what is important to them and what is not. You need to understand how to communicate with them and through what channels and what messengers to use to effectively engage with them. You need to be able to explain to them what you are doing, how it affects them, what their stakes are, and why they should support your efforts or, failing that, decline to oppose them.

The general precept “know your enemy” is of critical importance. It is far easier to see who or what you expect or want to see, rather than to be objective. Chinese strategist Sun Tzu said, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”¹ This is about two confluent notions.

First, identifying your enemy is not always easy because enemies often avoid showing themselves. Ask any veteran of Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan. You need to devise dependable approaches to identifying the enemy. That is partly about intelligence collection and information gathering. It is about identifying every source possible as well as who can provide a means of identifying an enemy, including apparent friends whose agenda is hostile to yours.

Second, understanding your enemy. What motivates, inspires, threatens, or frightens an enemy? What coalitions does the enemy belong to—and what is the nature and composition of such coalitions? Understanding these things enables you to identify seams or divisions in coalitions and stories, narratives, themes, or messages that can create division or defection.

Mao Zedong stated, “Some people are good at knowing themselves and poor in knowing the enemy, and some are the other way round; neither can solve the problem of learning and applying the laws of war.”² Questions to ask include:

- Who is the enemy and how do you define them?
- How does the enemy see themselves?
- What does target audience analysis reveal as you break down a population into its demographic elements and the histories of their individual provinces, towns, villages, or valleys?
• How is the enemy organized?
• What is the enemy’s objective?
• How does the enemy define winning?
• What obstacles to success confront the enemy?
• Which of these obstacles can communication strategy surmount?
• What is the enemy’s communication strategy?
• What are the enemy’s story, narrative, themes, and messages?
• What language is the enemy using to express the above?
• How credible and persuasive to an enemy’s target audiences as well as to its own supporters and allies is the enemy message?
• Who comprises the enemy’s target audience(s)?
• What channels and messengers are the enemy using?
• How effective is the enemy’s strategy?

**Historical Examples**

**Pakistan.** President Yahya Khan launched an invasion of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in March 1971, after the 1970 parliamentary elections deadlocked. Bengali nationalism and political self-interest by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto ignited the war. Understanding what happened requires a look at the formation of Pakistan.

After World War II, the United Kingdom granted India its independence. Negotiations produced two new states: Pakistan and India. Pakistan was created for Muslims, while India was predominantly Hindu. Pakistan was an awkward creation. It comprised two geographically and culturally distinct areas 1,000 miles apart. East Pakistan was culturally uniform and citizens spoke Bengali. Its leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, led the Bangladesh Awami League.

West Pakistan (now Pakistan) was ethnically diverse and its feudal class produced the political leadership. Its citizens considered themselves superior to the Bengalis. Its population comprised four main ethnic groups: Punjabis, Pushtuns, Sindhis, and Baluchis; there were also other minorities. The elites spoke English, while much of the population spoke Urdu. Language differences and action by the west, which took a disproportionate share of the government budget and key government and military posts, fueled tensions.

Not until 1956 did Pakistan’s Constituent Assembly frame a constitution. It divided the National Assembly equally between East Pakistan and West Pakistan and made Urdu and Bengali national languages. Democracy was short-lived, however. In 1958, General Mohammad Ayub Khan seized power, jettisoned the constitution, declared martial law, and became president. Khan strengthened the economy, supported free enterprise, aligned Pakistan with the West, and worked to stabilize Pakistan. In 1962, he lifted martial law and enacted a new constitution, although it was flawed in giving an equal number of seats in the assembly to the less populous West Pakistan. He earned praise as one of Pakistan’s most able chiefs of state. One could argue that had Pakistan continued on the course Khan set, it could have avoided many problems that have beset it during the past 50 years and emerged, as India has, as a confident economic powerhouse.³

Khan lost credibility when India defeated Pakistan in a 1965 war over Kashmir. Bengalis felt repressed by his rule, which treated them as second-class citizens. Their sentiments moved toward seeking greater autonomy and perhaps independence from West Pakistan. Complicat-
ing matters—fatally for Pakistan’s fortunes at the time—was the emergence of the charismatic Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Initially, he served as Khan’s foreign minister. After India’s victory, he resigned, founded the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), and emerged as a Khan critic. Politicians are fond of pledging eternal friendship, but in politics eternity can be brief.

Popular discontent in 1969 forced Ayub Khan out of office. Another general, Yahya Khan, replaced him. Yahya Khan had poor political instincts. Like his predecessor, he set aside the constitution and declared martial law. He picked the wrong time for that action, however, as Pakistanis had wearied of military rule.

Bhutto and East Pakistani leader Mujibur Rahman, who led the Awami party, joined together to force an election in 1970. Yahya Khan set a “one person, one vote” rule. It was statesmanlike but lit the fuse for civil war because, predictably, East Pakistan’s larger population earned it a majority of the assembly seats, while the PPP won the most seats in the West. Bhutto and Rahman each wanted to be prime minister. That conflict played into the hands of the army, which had anticipated a political deadlock to be broken by making Khan the president. Rahman was also charismatic, but he lacked Bhutto’s backroom political skills. Khan was prepared to cede power to Rahman, but Rahman mucked up matters by demanding too much. Stoked by Bhutto, rumors circulated that Rahman was acting in league with India to control Pakistan. Deadlock persisted. Egged on by Bhutto, who kept warning Khan that Rahman and the Indians were colluding, Khan launched an invasion of East Pakistan. Bhutto assured him it would be an easy victory. It was more like genocide.

Muslims populated West Pakistan while the Bengalis, who populated the east, were mainly Hindu. “Kill three million of them,” Khan declared, “and the rest will eat out of our hands.” Khan neglected to consider how India’s prime minister, Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, also a Hindu, would respond. She sent in the Indian Army, which inflicted a humiliating defeat. The repercussions of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 are still felt today in continuing tensions in Kashmir and Pakistani paranoia about India’s involvement in Afghanistan, and a general (rather absurd) fear that given the right opening, India would invade Pakistan. Indeed, Pakistan’s military has exploited this paranoia since the nation’s inception to maximize its influence and power.

**Lesson:** Carefully think through how parties perceive themselves as having a stake in your actions and the message such actions will send. Yahya Khan never anticipated the Indian intervention. Religious motivations also complicate matters. Muslims of West Pakistan looked down their noses at the Hindus in Bengali. Their sense of innate superiority prompted indiscriminate violence and murder. Today, in Iraq and Afghanistan, Islamic extremists have used religion to bolster their credibility and to discredit Westerners. Action and pledges by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to restore the caliphate have proven to be its most resonant message. It pays to understand that people of the same faith will often act vigorously to support fellow believers who confront political challenge or violence from those of other faiths.

**Napoleon in Spain, Italy, and Russia.** As discussed in chapter 1, Napoleon Bonaparte displayed flashes of tactical genius. Political savvy marked his ascent to power, yet he was erratic and rarely strategic except at the tactical level. He turned in his best performances directing smaller armies, such as at
the Battle of Austerlitz, where line of sight enabled him to control maneuver and firepower. He had a strong grasp on the power of communication strategy and information warfare, however. His battle campaigns in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century were aimed primarily at building his image as a hero and the savior of French fortunes. That approach and effective networking paved his way to becoming first consul and later emperor.

However, Napoleon failed to think long term or within a grand strategic framework. His posture of humility at home was seldom on display in Italy. Professing to be a liberator, he reigned over a repressed population like a monarch while looting and pillaging. His failure to align actions and propaganda led to uprisings in 1806 that undercut the French position. He lacked sound strategic reason to invade Spain or to oust Charles IV and his son Ferdinand, with whom he had postured an alliance. Napoleon substituted one form of authoritarian rule for another. This ploy backfired and demonstrated what happens when strategy conflicts with a target audience’s aspirations and desires. The Spanish peninsular campaign (1808–14), as well as Napoleon’s campaigns in Italy and Russia, offer instructive lessons.

Lessons:

1. **Avoid hubris in evaluating the strategic situation.** Napoleon started a war without understanding how the Spanish would react. Their hostility was immediate. Historian Frank McLynn notes that “even those sympathetic to the Emperor concede that his Spanish policy was one of his greatest errors.” Bonaparte blamed advisors for misleading him about Spanish opinion but proceeded to wade into a morass that drove a wedge between himself and core political supporters. Napoleon was on a “downhill slide towards ultimate disaster” beginning in May 1808.

Napoleon’s experience is instructive. His military challenges paralleled some that Coalition forces confronted in Iraq and that may crop up in future confrontations or conflicts. In Iraq, some Iraqis sided with the United States, hoping to move Iraq to peace and stability. Others remained aloof and focused on preserving their own safety. Many Iraqis viewed al-Qaeda as foreigners and the Americans with open hostility. In Spain, Napoleon deposed Charles IV and installed his own inept, corrupt brother, Joseph Bonaparte, who was named King Joseph I of Spain. Joseph enjoyed support from *Afrancesados* (the “Francophiles”). But most Spaniards remained aloof. The Spanish guerrillas who opposed Napoleon achieved historical fame. Though they never numbered more than 50,000, they attacked the French ruthlessly. McLynn has described the guerrillas as “the rock on which Napoleon’s Spanish adventure foundered.” Romanticized as freedom fighters, “mostly they were old-style bandit chiefs whose activities were legitimated by the struggle for Ferdinand.”

Al-Qaeda beheaded prisoners and tortured them. The Spanish guerrillas skinned French captives alive, placed them between wooden boards and sawed them in half, plucked out eyes, and, according to one account, even boiled a French general alive. The French took hostages, summarily executed priests and captives, wiped out the population of Saliente, raped women, and smashed the heads of babies against walls. Employing a tactic unlikely to win hearts and minds, General Jean-Marie-Pierre Doursenne

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kept the bodies of three guerrillas hanging outside his window as a warning of what would happen to those opposing the French.\textsuperscript{14} History often rhymes.

2. \textbf{Grasp the role of religion.} In both Iraq and the Peninsular War, religion played a key role in information warfare and attests to its influence. Al-Qaeda denounced the Coalition forces as infidels and foreign occupiers. No less vehement about Napoleon’s occupation of Spain, the Spanish Roman Catholic Church declared the French to be “former Christians and modern heretics” and pronounced that killing a Frenchman was no greater sin than killing an animal.\textsuperscript{15}

3. \textbf{Know when to fold.} The French excited such popular hostility that the British saw a target of opportunity and intervened in 1808. Napoleon should have understood that the war in Spain was a loser and withdrawn his army. Instead, perhaps fearing loss of prestige, he simply distanced himself from the campaign.\textsuperscript{16} His decision compounded the difficulties confronting France in Spain and led to its defeat there. The Spanish were not going to yield to French hegemony, and, aided by the British under the leadership of Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, France became bogged down in a bloody, unwinnable war. Distacted by conflicts on other fronts and blinded by arrogance, Napoleon ignored ground realities and did not recognize the futility of pursuing an ill-judged invasion. It underscored his weakness as a grand strategist.

4. \textbf{Understand the power of nationalism.} During the 1948–50 insurgency in Malaya, the British made nationalism work for them in defeating a Communist insurgency led by Chin Ping, who had been Britain’s most trusted guerrilla in fighting the Japanese. The Masses’ Movement reached into most towns and villages. The flaw that the British exploited was that few Malaysians were in the Malayan National Liberation Army. It was almost entirely Chinese, many of whom were unwelcome squatters. The British embarked on a resettlement program that moved half a million Chinese to protected villages. Police work interdicted supply to guerrillas through difficult jungle terrain. Led by Lieutenant General Sir Harold Biggs, the British forged an “us versus them” narrative. It was well conceived and executed, and it paid off, capitalizing on nationalism and antiforeigner sentiments to discredit, isolate, and defeat the Communists.\textsuperscript{17}

In contrast, Napoleon’s behavior caused Spanish nationalism to work against him; the Spanish monarchy may not have inspired strong devotion, but Napoleon’s invasion and the manner of the French occupation ensured a debacle. Some saw in Spanish nationalism a rebellion against a foreign occupier driven by a message of “us versus them” that trumped Napoleon’s suggestion that he had come as an ally to help Spain fight the Portuguese. Nothing could detract from his forcing Charles IV and his heir to abdicate in favor of Napoleon’s brother.

Similarly, as discussed above, al-Qaeda in Iraq undercut its appeal by seeking to impose its version of Islamic life on Muslims who opposed what that life meant to them. That al-Qaeda was led by and mobilized non-Iraqis who dealt arrogantly with the tribes in al-Anbar enabled U.S. Marines to exploit Iraqi hostility to forge bonds of trust and effective alliances.
5. **Recognize a losing cause.** Napoleon’s Spanish morass was insignificant compared to his Russian catastrophe. Aside from his strategic stupidity in launching a major new war on the other side of Europe while struggling in Spain, the Russian campaign affirms the cost of failing to think things through. Militarily, the 1812 Russian fiasco is depressing even to read about. Napoleon planned poorly and had inadequate logistics, an inept military strategy, and incompetent military leadership. Films portray the Russians as wily adversaries who capitalized on a harsh winter to destroy Napoleon, when actually, the invasion went wrong from the start.

His communication strategy was equally flawed. McLynn observes that, typically, Napoleon positioned his invasion as a crusade for liberty. But that required aligning his rhetoric with action: giving Poland its independence and the Russian serfs their freedom. The thought seems never to have seriously crossed his mind, and he paid the price.

Napoleon’s arrogance drove his mindset. He cheerfully ousted Charles IV from his throne and substituted his brother as the new ruler and never stopped to ask himself how the Spanish might respond to his imperialism, or to show that the new leadership he ordained might be a change that served the interests of the Spanish. It is not clear that any logical argument would have enabled the French, who executed their operations and tactics with brutality and arrogance, to overcome Spanish nationalism. But having embarked on that conflict, he would have benefited by asking hard questions such as what success would look like and what was plausibly achievable. Napoleon did not think that way. He focused on winning battles, not winning over continents.

**Modern Examples**

**America and Iraq.** Your ability to accurately identify and understand your enemy can tip the balance between victory and defeat, a point excellently illustrated by the two battles for Fallujah, Iraq, fought in April and November 2004. It is worth looking at these battles closely and drawing lessons.

Discussing Americans in Baghdad’s Green Zone, Larry Diamond, advisor to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, concluded that Americans were constrained by a myopic world view that focused on Western ideas or beliefs. Journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran reports in detail on the strategic awkwardness of a U.S.-led effort that failed to consider Iraqi perspectives. He eviscerates Western leadership that did not understand the political, cultural, or social dynamics of Iraq.

The most glaring example of blindness was arguably Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) head Paul Bremer’s decision right after arriving in Iraq to disband the Iraqi Army and ban members of the Baath Party from holding jobs. The ban included school teachers and lower-ranking civil servants who had been forced to join the party for political reasons. Those individuals and their families needed their jobs to survive. Most had anticipated that the Iraqi Army and Baath Party would continue to function to some extent to maintain order in the society. Criminals would be purged but the organizations had to be viable to maintain stability. Bremer ignored the reality that his actions would help create a reservoir of alienated Iraqis who joined and fueled the insurgency.

**The al-Anbar Tribes:** The prize for blindness in discerning tribal culture in al-Anbar Province in
western Iraq is a split decision between Bremer and terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. In his excellent book, *The Marines Take Anbar*, scholar Richard Shultz examines the cost that both sides paid for their ignorance during the first battle, in April 2004.

Bremer showed neither a comprehension of the importance of Sunni tribes in al-Anbar Province as a center of gravity there, nor did he appear to grasp their political/social dynamics. Shultz argues that the “central U.S. goal should have been to keep them [Sunnis] out of the hands of both the former regime elements and the Salafi jihadists.”

In his view, officials were more interested in transforming Iraq than stabilizing it. There was scant understanding of a variety of elements, including: 1) tribal history and what that history meant to the al-Anbar tribes, who were Sunni; 2) the fear of a Shia revenge campaign; 3) their demand for respect, a value they thought abused by American tactics of kicking in the doors of houses; 4) their worldview, which saw Americans as invaders and occupiers, and a historical narrative that demanded defiance; 5) the centrality of honor in their code of values; 6) the notion of collective duty to a tribe rather than individual right; 7) the salience of religion; 8) the need to demonstrate manliness in a male-dominated society; 9) the identities of key political actors and how they operated; 10) the need to be open to working with tribal leaders; and 11) a recognition that the tribes did not want to adopt Western ways or become like us.

The U.S. Marines figured that out. Shultz points out that the Marines have a culture of learning and adapting in combat. They learned from hard experience in western Iraq. Despite problems caused by the rotation of units, commanders reached out to local Sunni leaders to forge common ground against a common enemy whose values and agenda were hostile to these Iraqis. They capitalized on the fears that Sunnis harbored of Shias—whose population comprised a majority in Iraq and whom Saddam Hussein had brutally repressed—to offer partnership and security. The effort required was arduous, but eventually the Sunnis perceived the Americans as their hope for survival against the Shia rather than as their enemy.

The Sunni tribes offered partnership in fighting al-Qaeda, to whom sheikhs were losing power and at whose hands they faced murder. Working closely together with Iraqis built trust. They opened mosques that al-Qaeda had closed. They exploited an egregious mistake in al-Qaeda’s strategic approach. In 2006, al-Qaeda announced that its goal was to build an Islamic State modeled on the austere tenets of Salafism. The Sunnis were devout Muslims—but not Salafists. They did not like what al-Qaeda stood for, much less its violence conducted against anyone who dissented from its strictures or authority.

That was bad enough. But al-Qaeda, comprised of many non-Iraqis, were arrogant. They felt superior and made no effort to hide that sentiment. They displayed ignorance of Iraqi culture and failed to show respect to local Sunnis, wounding pride and alienating locals. They also failed to understand that Iraqis believed in the value of revenge. Shultz cites the “Arabic rule of five,” which holds that “‘if you do something to someone, then five of his bloodline will try to attack you.’ Kill a sheik and the whole tribe will come after you.”
Marines capitalized on al-Qaeda’s failure to offer security and a united front in defeating the terrorists and shielding Sunnis from Shias. This was classic COIN. The hard work paid off, using a clear build-and-hold approach rooted in an inkblot strategy that secured areas one place at a time.\textsuperscript{25} The Marines helped to train police, strengthening security that was provided by locals whom Sunnis knew and trusted. They increased the capability of the Iraqi Army, strengthening its ability to fight. Throughout this process, the Marines took pains to communicate that they would stand firmly with the Sunnis and stay with them. The Sunnis were not interested in friends for a day or a week. They wanted allies on whom they felt they could count for the long term. The Marines lived among the tribes, conducted patrols and joint operations, and step-by-step proved rather than merely asserted friendship and alliance.

What made the Marines special? In fairness, Bing West points out that the U.S. Army’s 82d Airborne Division, which preceded the Marines in al-Anbar, had made vigorous efforts to forge local ties only to be rebuffed.\textsuperscript{26} It is plausible that it took living under al-Qaeda’s brutal repression and coming to terms with the Sunnis’ loss of power in Iraq to motivate the tribes eventually to side with the Americans. But as a matter of strategy, Shultz’s view on what the strategy should have been makes sense.

**Lesson:** Changing behavior may require changing how a target audience sees itself.

In Iraq, once the tribes saw themselves as victims of a worse evil (al-Qaeda) than Americans (foreign, non-Muslim intruders), the Marines’ goal of forging an alliance became more plausible.

Zarqawi made the opposite mistake. He tried to impose an Islamic State modeled on Salafism on the Iraqis, who rejected the idea. When they resisted, he instituted a ruthless campaign of terror. His people beheaded and killed people, including police officers and tribal leaders. His people forced themselves into marriages with locals, held an unrealistic view of Iraqi jihadi, and considered themselves morally superior.\textsuperscript{27}

On the other side of the coin, journalist Mark Urban notes that Zarqawi’s tactics were driven by an information strategy aimed at establishing himself. Zarqawi was a Jordanian criminal who went to Iraq, not a native Iraqi. He understood that Arabs would respond to sensationalism and that it would attract volunteers from Syria or Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{28} He achieved short-term gain but long-term loss. Zarqawi may or may not have inspired support through a strategy that focused violence on foreigners. The lesson is that short-term gains can prove costly when you fail to think through the long-term implications.

**The Fallujah Battles:** The Coalition victory in the second battle for Fallujah in November 2004 turned heavily on understanding how insurgents there—including former Baath Party members, former members of Saddam Hussein’s army, and foreign jihadis—viewed propaganda and had employed it successfully during the first battle in April 2004.\textsuperscript{29} That understanding enabled Coalition forces to forge and execute a successful integrated information and kinetic strategy that defeated the insurgents and ended insurgent dominance of the city. The two battles for Fallujah offer important lessons. The strategies that both sides employed reveal much about how to judge the enemy and to anticipate its information strategy and counter with effective communication strategy.\textsuperscript{30}
Lessons:

1. **Information, not kinetic warfare, may be what determines the outcome; do not underestimate the enemy.** Insurgents won the first battle. They won partly by prevailing in information warfare. \(^{31}\)

   Four information challenges haunted the Coalition. First, the city was full of civilians who refused to be, or could not be, forced to evacuate. \(^{32}\) That helped insurgents use civilians to drive a wedge between themselves and the Coalition. Second, there was no information campaign to mitigate reports about civilian casualties among Iraqi and international public opinion. \(^{33}\) Third, although the CPA developed a public affairs plan to support the offensive, it did not address the Arab press. \(^{34}\) Fourth, there was no strategic plan for Fallujah that specified what seizure of the city would accomplish. \(^{35}\) Coalition commander Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, Paul Bremer, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld supported heavy use of military action, despite objections from the U.S. Marines on the ground, who protested that it was the wrong strategy. \(^{36}\)

   An attack was ordered, and the Marines attacked. Insurgents responded with adroit use of propaganda to discredit the Coalition. The tactics were devious but effective. Al-Qaeda claimed U.S. troops used night-vision goggles to see through women’s clothing. \(^{37}\) They showed dead babies on Al Jazeera at the main hospital, alleging they were victims of air strikes. Absent Western media to provide factual reporting, the insurgent narrative dominated the media. \(^{38}\) At the same time, insurgents appropriated the hospital as a command and control center—a place from which to spread false propaganda that they knew Coalition forces were likely to bombard. \(^{39}\)

   Violence ginned up insurgent recruiting among the religiously inclined and former Baathist elements threw in their support. Across Iraq, Iraqis perceived Coalition offensives as an attack on their whole society. \(^{40}\)

   Dexter Filkins reported that the insurgents undid every U.S. effort made to win over Fallujah residents. They blew up a brick factory the Americans had repaired. They shot teachers from a school the Americans had painted. Troops offered candy to children, but the children believed propaganda claims that it was poisoned. \(^{41}\) Insurgents placed teddy bears among the rubble before photographers showed up to convey the false impression that Americans were indiscriminately firing at civilians. \(^{42}\) Doctors declared hundreds had been killed in just a few days of battle, while children told the press that their parents had been gunned down. Many Sunnis sided with the insurgents. \(^{43}\) Al Jazeera aired stock footage from previous battles and claimed it was from the current battle. \(^{44}\)

   Insurgents vigorously conveyed and distributed the message that the April attack was an act of revenge by Marines for their casualties with the goal of punishing innocents for the actions of a few and that it killed civilians.

   General McChrystal noted that Arab satellite television fostered the perception that Americans were committing atrocities, using artillery to hit mosques or wipe out whole families. American newspapers repeated the claims. \(^{45}\) Across Iraq, insurgents showed their fighters photos of Abu Ghraib
prison and warned how badly they would be treated if captured.\textsuperscript{46}

2. Communication strategy fails when lacking local key stakeholder support. The Coalition obtained no buy-in for the attack from key players. They did not present a credible rationale that justified the attack to Iraqis or persuaded them it was being conducted in a reasonable, realistic way. General Petraeus consistently made the point that ultimate success depends on local leaders and that cultivating Iraqi leaders who were seen by their people as legitimate was vital to success.\textsuperscript{47}

His grasp of that political necessity was central to his success in commanding the 2007 surge. Success eluded Lieutenant General Sanchez, Bremer, and U.S. Central Command commander General John P. Abizaid, who overruled Marine protests. Their mistake was costly.

Within days after the battle commenced, the Association of Muslim Scholars called for a general strike and demanded the United States get out of Iraq. The Iraqi Governing Council protested the action, and the Iraqi leader Adnan Pachachi denounced the attack as illegal.\textsuperscript{48} Pressure applied from many directions spooked the top U.S. leadership—including President Bush (who, unforgivably, was never advised of the Marines’ firm contrary view)—into backing down from an achievable victory.

If your own people or allies fail to support what you stand for, you are probably going to fail.

3. Communication strategy must look at the broader impact of tactics. Complicating matters, Bremer and Sanchez did not adequately anticipate the wider national impact of the battle on attitudes, opinions, and behavior.\textsuperscript{49} Result: although Coalition forces would have prevailed militarily, the political blowback persuaded Bremer to call off the attack.

4. Failure to create a foundation for an information strategy unleashes consequences not easily reversed. The CPA did not have a strategy for addressing and embracing Arab media, including its bias or inaccuracies. As Marines attacked and Western media outlets feared capture and/or beheading, their television networks pooled video shot in Fallujah by Arab cameramen approved for entry into the city by the insurgents. Predictably, the pictures depicted destruction and death at the hands of the Marines.\textsuperscript{50}

Other Arab media outlets unrelentingly broadcast the “plight” of civilians in Fallujah. The internet amplified the message of Marine callousness and sped protests around the world on a minute-by-minute basis. During April 2004, a Google search on the term \textit{Fallujah} jumped from 700 to 175,000 stories, many critical of Marines. Between 4 April and 13 April, the CPA documented 34 Al Jazeera stories that distorted or misreported events.\textsuperscript{51}

Failure to incorporate the Arab media into its communications strategy neutered core U.S. messaging, while the volume alone validated insurgent messages. The mass of anti-American stories inspired the mistaken conclusion that the insurgent propaganda was factual.

Credibility drove national and regional support for the insurgents. This was achieved not just in the media, but in fiery sermons delivered at Sunni mosques. Clerical endorse-
ment spurred spontaneous support and mobilization of new fighters. The insurgents boosted their credibility by labeling their resistance an *intifada*, associating themselves with the Palestinians and their occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whose situation aroused empathy among many Iraqis. Lack of a strong U.S. narrative elevated insurgent credibility. Enemy propaganda that goes unchallenged is more likely to be—and here was—accepted as believable, credible, and persuasive.

Failure to consider the agenda and motives of the Arab media outlets with access to a battle produced an inevitable problem. Qatar-based Al Jazeera and Saudi-based Al Arabiya are both Sunni and both supported their Sunni brothers in Iraq. Such sectarian positions naturally influenced such media outlets to favor the insurgent narrative. Jack Guy worked as a senior information operations advisor on the Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (CAAT) for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul in 2010. According to Guy, “That happened because we had not done our Target Audience Analysis at the command level. As a broader lesson looking to the future, too many Political Advisers (POLADS) are simply not schooled in this.”

The second battle for Fallujah produced many other lessons as well.

**Lessons:**

1. **Information operations and public affairs worked jointly to ensure message discipline, consistency, and efficiency.** The role of public affairs is much debated. The author’s work, *Persuasion and Power* (2012), discusses the hypocrisy of many public affairs officials in espousing the view that their role is to “inform” and not to “influence.” Actually, they engage actively—and correctly—in influencing audiences.53

   Army General Mark T. Kimmitt’s adroit handling of the Abu Ghraib fiasco was a masterpiece of political campaign management. During the Iraq war, a CBS *Sixty Minutes* episode broadcast allegations that U.S. military personnel had abused the human rights of Iraqi prisoners.54 The events transpired between November 2003 and March 2004. A report to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) of an investigation led by Major General Antonio M. Taguba found that the U.S. Army’s 800th Military Police Brigade personnel were guilty of punching, slapping, and kicking detainees; jumping on their bare feet; videotaping naked male and female detainees; forcibly arranging detainees in sexually explicit positions for photographing; forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate while being photographed or videotaped; positioning a naked detainee on a box with a sandbag on his head and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electronic torture; using military working dogs without muzzles to intimidate and frighten detainees; and other abuses.55

   The revelations and accusations were a political debacle for the United States, whose ability to operate in theater depends on seizing and maintaining the moral high ground and communicating that it conducts operations in a manner consistent with American values that respect the dignity of human beings and fair play.56 The military removed Brigadier General Janis L. Karpinski of duty as the commander at the prison.
Kimmitt got the facts, developed a narrative, and then reached out to the media proactively to disseminate the narrative. He got ahead of the story and made it clear that the United States would handle the controversy with transparency and that the matter was an aberration and did not reflect American values. In a 28 April 2004 statement, he praised a U.S. soldier for coming forward with the facts and placed matters in context:

That soldier came forward. He presented evidence to his chain of command. The chain of command brought it forward. General Sanchez, upon hearing it, immediately started a criminal investigation. . . . That outcome . . . has resulted in criminal charges being levied against six soldiers. . . . [This behavior] does not reflect the vast majority of coalition soldiers, vast majority of American soldiers that are operating out of Abu Ghraib Prison. We have had thousands, tens of thousands of detainees in Abu Ghraib. We have understood that a very, very small number were involved in this incident, and of the hundreds and hundreds of guards they have out there, a small number were involved in the guards.

I’m not going to stand up here and make excuses for those soldiers. I’m not going to stand up here and apologize for those soldiers. If what they did is proven in a court of law, that is incompatible with the values we stand for as a professional military force and its values that we don’t stand for as human beings. 

As Kimmitt promised, the military prosecuted and imprisoned offending soldiers and discharged them from the Army. Confluently, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld testified before House and Senate committees and underscored the message that conduct at Abu Ghraib had been “fundamentally un-American.” The U.S. military ensured that the events were placed in context, as did Rumsfeld. Military police lacked proper training, for which there was no excuse. Still, they confronted a difficult, hazardous situation. Documents revealed that inmates vomited after meals, sharpened toothbrushes into makeshift weapons, and initiated attacks on soldiers and riots. One detainee regularly covered himself in his own feces.

Abu Ghraib seriously damaged U.S. credibility everywhere. But instead of burying the facts and lying about them, prompt action to get the facts out and ensure that audiences heard all sides of events limited the damage.

In contrast, the Jessica D. Lynch fiasco was a poorly handled mess, but it aimed at influencing audience response. Private First Class Lynch was a soldier fighting in the 2003 Iraq War who went missing in action and was presumed a prisoner of war (POW). Actually, she sustained injuries when her Humvee crashed after her convoy had taken several wrong turns. Her gun jammed with sand, so she could not use it. She was taken prisoner and taken to a hospital in an-Nasiriyah, where Iraqi doctors and nurses treated her well. An alarmed U.S. military dispatched special operations personnel to rescue her from what they surmised were life-threatening circumstances. They stormed the hospital at which she was recuperating.
and in no danger, a point she made in dismissing any talk that she had been a hero.\textsuperscript{60} Public affairs personnel had glorified the incident to the media as an example of heroic rescue by courageous operators worthy of an action thriller. The story backfired when the truth came out, and public affairs personnel looked silly.

The point—for those who think that in practice the Pentagon treats public affairs as an exercise in putting out just the facts rather than capitalizing on perceived opportunities to drive narratives, themes, and messages—is this: in both the Abu Ghraib scandal and Lynch episode, public affairs officers acted to influence audiences as surely as any psychological operation or political campaign.

Here is the reality: public affairs have both the right and the duty to influence target audiences. Communication consultants and directors for political figures and private companies understand that. Respect the precept that truth is our ally. The media’s role is to provide a channel through which to reach target audiences. However, government makes policy, and its servants should explain, defend, and advance the policy. If unable to competently perform that job, the solution is to fire the incompetents and hire public affairs officers who can do it properly and effectively.

During the November 2004 Fallujah battle, the commanders understood that communications needed to be tightly organized. The public affairs and psychological operations teams were unified. It was a smart decision that drew misplaced criticism from those who did not understand communication strategy or information warfare.

Bottom line: do not allow Pentagon definitions or bureaucratic turf sensitivity to obstruct good communication strategy.

1. **Anticipate how kinetic and information activity will resonate locally where an operation unfolds, as well as more broadly.** Commanders understood that winning the battle required securing political support nationally among insiders and the Iraqi public, within the international community, among partners, and among local citizens affected by the fighting. This time they defined the goals of the operation and calibrated kinetic action to satisfy that requirement. There is no formula, but the care taken to address each target audience and to satisfy its concerns helped achieve victory.

2. **The language used to define operations and actions matters.** Originally, commanders named the second battle Operation Phantom Fury. Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi argued that the operation needed a name that would resonate politically with the population. It was renamed al-Fajr (New Dawn). The aim, Allawi said, was to seize and maintain control of the narrative in the media coverage throughout the Arab world and throughout the country, so that everyone would understand what the Coalition was doing, why it was necessary, and why Iraqis benefitted from the operation. New dawn was a phrase more likely to resonate with Iraqis. It helped drive the message that ejecting insurgents from Fallujah would produce a better quality of life and security inside the city, free from the fear of terrorists.\textsuperscript{61} Although the second battle elicited a national blowback, that situation stemmed from earlier strategic failures. Allawi made a good suggestion and commanders wisely heeded it.
Information operations expert Jack Guy, who has advised on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, adds this observation: “Locals always have good ideas (to a point) that are often better than the American-Iraqis, American-Afghans, or American-other nationals we hire for specific situations. The caveat is that too much time in the U.S. may deteriorate their sense of home and render their counsel counterproductive.”

4. **Inspire support from local allies by showing them you will win.** Coalition forces needed Iraqi forces to participate in the operation. Concerns abounded about how they would perform. Coalition forces addressed that partly by taking pains to show their Iraqi allies the extent of Coalition forces and logistical support. It proved a huge confidence builder. The lesson is that one should never presume that allied units will believe that siding with U.S. forces will help ensure victory. Take action that inspires moral will and loyalty. Show that playing on your team will pay off.

5. **Use local forces when possible in attacking local, high-visibility, and sensitive targets.** Giving the lead to local units fighting in the cause of their own nation and for their own people is smart. They know their culture, their people, what is important to them, how to best communicate effectively with them, and they speak the same language as fellow citizens. From the United States’ standpoint, if we are helping people to protect their nation, they ought to bear responsibility for taking the lead in providing such protection.

6. **Encourage local leaders to take the lead and do the talking.** Allawi was wisely designated as the key spokesperson. General Petraeus has stressed the importance of giving the lead to local leaders. Quoting T. E. Lawrence, he noted: “Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them.” Allawi was better than tolerably good during this battle. He was tough, courageous, talented, and effective.

7. **Understand foreign populations’ ability to see through a communication ruse.** Novelist Louis L’Amour wrote that just because someone does not speak English does not mean they do not have good ideas. In other words, do not confuse failure to speak English well for stupidity.

In Afghanistan, the Marines in Nawa District positioned District Governor Abdul Manaf to front for them in dispensing aid. Manaf was more than happy to play the role, which made him seem big and important. Rajiv Chandrasekaran reported that this action thrilled the Marines and USAID, who thought the Afghan government was trying to help them. Locals saw through the ruse, and it undercut the credibility of the effort. The lesson is obvious: do not think that people who talk, walk, dress, act, and look differently are fools.

8. **Achieving information dominance is critical.** Winning the information battle was a make-or-break issue in Fallujah. Commanders thought in terms of an information operations threshold: the point at which enemy information-based operations aimed at international, regional, and local media coverage might undermine the Coalition forces’ ability to conduct unconstrained combat operations. Coalition forces embedded more than 90 journalists representing more than 60 me-
dia outlets to help disseminate and drive the Coalition narrative, themes, and messages.

Coalition forces worked vigorously to communicate that they would make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. One tactic was to frighten civilians into leaving while reminding them they owed the insurgents no loyalty.\(^1\) Coalition forces understood that al-Qaeda would stoop to any level to accuse them of firing at civilians, even though, as in Afghanistan, they never hesitated to hide in buildings inhabited by women and children or use them for shields.\(^7\)

9. **Deny the enemy opportunities to spread false propaganda.** Coalition forces moved at the outset of the operation to seize the hospital, denying insurgents a second opportunity to use it as a center for its information warfare.\(^7\)

10. **Employ combat cameras to obtain footage that supports and helps drive your narrative factually.** In conducting the operation to seize the hospital, Coalition forces deployed one combat cameraman and two advisors outfitted with helmet-mounted video cameras to tape the operation. The helmet-mounted video was used to feed the media. Correspondent Kirk Spitzer was embedded with the force, providing a third-party source to footage. He broadcasted video clips via satellite to the CBS news facility in London for rebroadcast by CBS in New York. Other combat cameramen captured other aspects of the action.\(^7\) These efforts ensured that the images of the action communicated through the media put out the facts, not distorted enemy propaganda.

11. **Show the media the torture houses used by the enemy and characterize them with language that drives the message about enemy barbarity.** Coalition forces showed embedded media the torture, slaughter, and execution houses, and consciously employed that language to characterize what the media was seeing.\(^7\) That helped define the players, justify Coalition action, maintain the high ground, and discredit the enemy. This media blitz was coordinated tactically, operationally, and strategically—meeting the definition of a good information operation.

12. **Let the media, not the government, tell the story.** U.S. government sources—military and civilian—are less credible to audiences than the media. Provide the media with the information, characterize it in a manner consistent with desired narrative, story, theme, and message—then let the media tell it. The identity of the messenger makes a difference, as audiences judge credibility. The media is more credible than any government or army. Coalition forces did that well.\(^7\)

13. **Develop a message that resonates with civilian populations affected by an operation.** Civilians did not want better water plants, bland assurances about a better life, or money. They wanted jobs. Messaging directed toward Iraqis stressed that aligning with the Coalition would produce government that created good jobs.\(^7\)

14. **Mount a campaign to secure buy-in from local populations as well as regional leaders.** Allawi helped muster support from regional leaders such as Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan’s King Abdullah II while informing Iraqis about the impending assault. He made clear the target was terrorists, not the people of Fallujah. He made clear that nonmilitary options had been exhausted.\(^7\)
15. Avoid the trap of using enemy brutality as the justification for kinetic action; focus on positive benefits to civilians. In Fallujah, some pressed for messaging about insurgent atrocities against locals. However, that message was not credible, although it might be in a different situation. In Fallujah, the U.S. military felt that showing pictures of dead civilians could backfire. People might see it as proof of Coalition brutality, not insurgent terrorism. The key here is to let local (host nation) media play an active role in messaging.

16. Advise civilians how to protect themselves. During the first battle, civilians filled Fallujah. During the second, Coalition forces caused most to evacuate. Those who remained behind were advised to stay out of the way and off the streets, not to call out, and not to carry a weapon. Painstaking efforts were made to avoid civilian casualties.

Civilian casualties are a challenge in any conflict. Major General Richard F. Natonski and other commanders understood that. Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Bing West—a former U.S. Marine—delves on it incisively in *The Wrong War*, a controversial, unsparing critique of the U.S. effort in Afghanistan and the doctrine of COIN. West argues that “war required agonizing decisions between protecting your own soldiers and placing civilians at risk.” In Afghanistan, West argues, civilian casualties alienated a population that was happy to accept U.S. aid and in many ways became dependent on it. Yet, it declined to support U.S. or ISAF troops and often turned on them, no matter how hard they worked to help and protect the local population.

Dexter Filkins reported the same thing about Iraq. Soon after Saddam Hussein was ousted, Filkins found himself with Ali, a medical assistant who had been hauling dead and wounded from buildings that the Americans had bombed. “I saw how the Americans bombed our civilians with my own eyes,” he quotes Ali as saying. Ali told him that had “forfeited his support” for Americans, despite having no love for Saddam.

It bears noting that COIN supporters suggest that West misinterprets the doctrine, which they argue is about control and convincing the population that you are going to win rather than winning hearts and minds, as they feel West believes.

17. Look for ways to instill paranoia among the enemy. Action, not just words, is integral to communication strategy. Coalition forces heightened enemy paranoia by killing high-value targets. Any action that heightens anxiety among the enemy may interfere with its judgment and cause it to commit mistakes. Uncertainty and fear are critical to instilling paranoia.

18. Evaluate how local, tactical victory may affect a national narrative and its impact on national strategy. Coalition forces scored a decisive military victory, but this success provoked a national backlash. Sunnis saw in the sacking of Fallujah a new narrative of American brutality and occupation that justified national resistance. In the aftermath, violence in Iraq intensified; the challenge grew harder, not easier.

Afghanistan. At the time of this writing, the United States and the Taliban have signed a peace
accord. Nevertheless, understanding how groups like the Taliban function is essential in countering such enemies. The Taliban uses many tactics, including print, to communicate its messages. They warn against cooperating with the Afghan government or the Coalition. They employ videos to influence the media and internet users. They also use traffic stops to help identify collaborators and intimidate potential government allies. Killing government officials and allies gives teeth to Taliban communications and illustrates the confluence of words and action in forging communication strategy. Jack Guy makes the point that “the Taliban plan their activities for the effects they want to achieve and will commit forces against overwhelming odds to do so. They intuitively understand information warfare.”

Somalia. General Mohamed Farrah Aidid advised General Anthony C. Zinni that before visiting tribal leaders he should arrive with food and medicine rather than guns, so that the first time they see U.S. forces they associate Americans as different from other militias and gun toters. Do not surprise anyone, he warned; prepare the way. Surprise visits by armed groups can communicate intent for conflict in an area in which a party can be a friend one day and an enemy the next. General Zinni heeded his advice. Aidid’s point about friends becoming enemies was borne out when Task Force Ranger was sent to arrest him later on, igniting the incident referred to as Blackhawk Down. The point is to understand the culture and the agendas of a culture’s leader. Agendas shift. When it served Aidid to be friendly with Americans, he showed friendship. When his agenda clashed with the American agenda, he did not hesitate to shift posture and proved himself an able adversary.

Endnotes

6. See Dwyer, Napoleon.
9. McLynn, Napoleon, loc. 7827 of 15527, Kindle.
10. Bell, The First Total War, 284.
11. Bell, The First Total War, 285. One should caution against simplifying a more complex strategic picture. Napoleon was at times adept in his use of information strategy. At other times, it eluded him, costing him dearly. Napoleon’s reputation as a commander rests on his erratic tactical brilliance, which shone brightly at battles such as Austerlitz and Friedland. Deeply flawed judgment proved a calamity in Russia, Spain, Egypt, Leipzig, and Waterloo and in his general inability to discipline and harness his impulses to
conduct warfare. He was a poor strategist once he got beyond the tactical level and conducted warfare because he felt impelled to do so. He allowed his large, and largely useless, family to exploit his power for wealth and position. He was hit-and-miss in his selection of marshals, often seeming unable to distinguish those with exceptional ability, such as Louis-Charles-Antoine Desaix, Louis-Nicolas Davout, André Masséna, and Jean Lannes, from mediocrities such as Joachim Murat, Emmanuel de Grouchy, Michel Ney, and, arguably, Nicolas-Jean de Dieu Soult, although Soult has his defenders. See Peter Hayman, Soult: Napoleon’s Maligned Marshal (New York: Sterling, 1990). In a much earlier book, R. P. Dunn-Pattison agrees with Hayman. See R. P. Dunn-Pattison, Napoleon’s Marshals (London: Methuen, 1909). Picking the right people to achieve your goals counts.

12. McLynn, Napoleon, loc. 8941 of 15527, Kindle.
13. McLynn, Napoleon, loc. 8553 of 15527, Kindle.
15. Bell, The First Total War, 287.
16. See McLynn, Napoleon, loc. 8878 of 15527, Kindle.
18. At Austerlitz, Napoleon had about 85,000 soldiers. For his Russian campaign, he assembled 650,000 for his Grande Armée. A smaller army lent itself to tight discipline, rapid movement, and adroit maneuver tactics that enabled Napoleon to concentrate power at critical points. See Robert Asprey, The Reign of Napoleon Bonaparte (New York: Basic Books, 2001); and McLynn, Napoleon. McLynn is incisive in deconstructing Napoleon’s triumphs and defeats.
19. McLynn, Napoleon, loc. 9927 of 15527, Kindle.
21. George Packer, The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005). Bing West asserts that both the Pentagon and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) had the opportunity to object to Bremer’s decision but failed to follow through. See West, No True Glory, 24. Most reports suggest that the military on the ground in Iraq understood that Bremer was making the wrong decision and said so but were overruled.
22. Shultz, The Marines Take Anbar, 27. The discussion on the tribes is drawn from Shultz’s analysis, 27–32, 37–38, 45. Shultz places part of the blame for missteps on Condoleezza Rice, as well, but Bremer was the one with authority on the ground to make decisions during his time there. Bremer evidently doubted the tribes would or could pose a challenge to central authority in Baghdad. Shultz, The Marines Take Anbar, 53. In No True Glory, Bing West reported that the 82d Airborne, which preceded the Marines in Anbar after the invasion, made vigorous overtures to local notables for help and conducted civil reconstruction such as building a soccer stadium that locals then trashed. He notes that 82d Airborne leaders complained that the CPA failed to deliver sufficient resources to get much done, a challenge complicated by the need to obtain congressional approval for releasing money. He cites as examples the idiotic requirements that instead of hiring local seamstresses to sew uniforms for Iraqis or acquiring vehicles for Iraqi police, competitive bids had to be taken within the United States. It was time-consuming and financially wasteful—and sent the wrong message to already skeptical audiences whose support the Coalition needed to win.
23. In Mark Urban, Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq (London: Little, Brown, 2011), 31, the author records one Iraqi’s reaction to American tactics: “We don’t like Saddam; he was a dictator. But the Americans, they handcuff us, they put us on the floor in front of our wives and children. It’s shameful for us.” See also West, No True Glory, 15.
25. The term inkblot strategy refers to subduing a large hostile region with a relatively small military force. The occupying force establishes a number of small safe areas that are dispersed across the region and then pushes out, extending its control until eventually the spots join the way ink spots spread on a piece of paper. Historically, the inkblot strategy is associated with the Vietnam War. See Greg Mills, “Calibrating Inkspots: Filling Afghanistan’s Ungoverned Spaces,” RUSI Journal (August 2006).
28. Urban, Task Force Black, 47.
29. There’s a debate about whether al-Qaeda in Iraq was there under that name.
3. In interviewing LtGen John Sattler, Malkasian suggested “tough fighters plus a thousand part-timers who would grab a weapon to defend the city of Islam or whatever someone told an impoverished, impressionable teenager to defend.” West, No True Glory, 63.

33. MajGen Richard Natonski, commander, 1st Marine Division, LtCol Michael McCarthy et al., interview with Bill Knarr, 9 December 2005, 28, transcript provided to author by Dr. Knarr, hereafter Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview. McCarthy served as the fire support coordination officer in the Civil-Military Operations Center. Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 5. To understand how media can dramatically portray events, view Jeremy Scahill’s 2013 documentary Dirty Wars. The national security correspondent for The Nation, Scahill offers withering criticism and skepticism about America’s approach to fighting violent extremism. This author strongly disagrees with his conclusions, which treat an operational error in Afghanistan causing civilian casualties, for which the U.S. apologized, as a dark military conspiracy; absurdly infer that the decision to back Somali warlords, which was made by civilian policy makers in Washington, was made by the military or other government personnel; and argue that killing al-Qaeda volunteer Anwar al-Awlaki (who also placed his son in harm’s way) was wrong. The implication that SOF forces are cavalier in inflicting casualties among civilians is notably egregious. Actually, a study of 2,245 counterterrorism missions conducted in Afghanistan from May 2010 through April 2011 revealed that 84 percent saw no shots fired, while 1,862 missions captured or killed the intended target and/or their associates (83 percent). LtGen John F. Mulholland, USA, “U.S. Army Special Operations Command State of the Command Brief” (PowerPoint briefing, 3 June 2011), 14, as cited in Jim Thomas and Chris Dougherty, Beyond the Ramparts: The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2013). 19. Still, it is important to comprehend and anticipate how events may be reported. The film’s interview with retired Gen Hugh Shelton in defending a JSOC operation in Afghanistan offers a valuable case study in how not to conduct a press interview and what to avoid.

34. West, No True Glory, 60. Anticipated phases and timelines for the operation, West reported, were not laid out—warning the population, consulting with allies, gaining Iraqi agreement, preparing the media, consulting with Congress, and marshaling forces.

35. West, No True Glory, 60. The first battle was a response to the murder of four American contractors as they crossed through Fallujah. Apparently, President George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Bremer and his coterie wanted to send a message that such action would not be tolerated, without tying that sentiment to a cohesive strategic plan. It bears stressing that the order to proceed overruled protests from U.S. Marine commanders on the ground ar-
guing against the attack. The Marines preferred a different approach that would reduce the insurgency, install capable Iraqi security forces, and revive Fallujah prosperity. West, *No True Glory*, 58–61.


41. Filkins, *The Forever War*, 83. West makes the same point in *No True Glory*, chapter 1.


44. Comments by LtGen James Conway, Camp Fallujah, 29 April 2004, and an interview with LtGen John Sattler at Camp Pendleton, 10 November 2004, as cited in Malkasian, “Signaling Resolve, Democratization, and the First Battle of Fallujah.”


46. Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 43.


50. West, *No True Glory*, 92–93. After the Egyptian military oust-ed Mohamed Morsi as president in 2013, Egyptian television stations were also caught using old footage to portray current events. Maintaining a lookout for such distortions and calling them out is a key element in maintaining message discipline.


52. Jack Guy, interview with author, 1 June 2013.

53. The book offers a detailed analysis of the different forms of strategic communication, including information operations as it embraces psychological or military information support operations, public diplomacy, propaganda, and public affairs. Those who wish to know more should read Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*.


56. An important distinction lay in the status of the detainees. On 7 February 2002, President Bush signed a statement declaring that the Geneva Conventions did not apply “to our conflict with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere in the world.” See White House, “Statement by the Press Secretary on the Geneva Convention,” press release, 7 February 2002. The administration stated that the Geneva Convention would apply to Taliban detainees but not “to the al-Qaeda international terrorists.” The Abu Ghraib detainees were treated as al-Qaeda operatives.


64. LtCol Michael McCarthy put it this way: “[The Iraqis] didn’t really know what was going on, but once they took a look
around and saw tanks and Marines and soldiers, and guns and helicopters, you could see their calmness: ‘We are actually on the winning team this time.’ They realized that they weren’t getting kicked in, they weren’t getting shoved into the city with us just watching them, but we were there with them, and they were on the team, and that they were on the right side.” Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 37.

65. Journalist Dexter Filkins, who was on the ground during the second battle, reported that in fact this was an American battle and dismisses assertions that Iraqis were shouldering the burden. See Filkins, The Forever War, 192. Military servicemembers who were interviewed off the record argue that Filkins overstates his point.

66. MajGen Richard Natonski took pride in that aspect of the second Fallujah battle. See Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 34.


69. Chandrasekaran, Little America, 196.


72. See Chandrasekaran, Little America, 38. Fear of killing civilians was a key factor in the development of COIN doctrine.


76. See Col Bob Napp comments in Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 42.

77. Napp comments in Natonski and McCarthy et al. interview, 30. Said Napp: “One of the key things on the leaflets [we distributed] was identifying what was of value to the Iraqi people as opposed to what was of value to us.”


81. West, The Wrong War, 29–30, 43. This book is not the venue for debating the merits of COIN versus counterterrorism (CT) or other notions. Fred Kaplan, John Nagl, and others strongly espouse COIN. See Fred Kaplan, The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013); and Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife. West offers a searing indictment of the view that COIN applied well to Afghanistan. In Little America, experienced journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran sides more with West’s view. Many argue that vital elements of COIN were not implemented in Afghanistan. Karzai’s government was viewed as corrupt and incompetent and provided no cause or catalyst to rally citizens. The inkblot notion of progressively securing areas in which populations could be protected—and identified through a census—did not occur. At this writing, the Afghan National Army (ANA) has yet to meet standards of proficiency that would enable it to take over the fighting if American troops withdrew, although some argue that the ANA is improving steadily and moving toward shouldering the real burden of fighting. They argue also that lack of air support as the United States withdraws from the country presents a huge obstacle to the ANA’s ability to succeed. A final problem confronting application of COIN in Afghanistan is that Pakistan has provided a sanctuary to which the Taliban can flee. In Duty, Robert M. Gates quotes Gen McChrystal’s concisely stated point that CT can disrupt but not defeat an enemy. McChrystal states: “CT operations are necessary to mitigate a sanctuary but to defeat a terrorist group, host nation capacity must grow to ensure a sustainable level of security. . . . Without close-in access, fix and find methods become nearly impossible. Predator [drone] strikes are effective where they complement, not replace, the capabilities of the state security apparatus, but they are not scalable in the absence of underlying infrastructure, intelligence, and physical presence.” Gates, Duty, loc. 6599 of 11052, Kindle.

82. West, The Wrong War, 29–30.


84. Filkins, The Forever War, 89.

85. See Andrew Exum, “In Afghanistan with our Warrior Elite,” Wall Street Journal, 19 February 2011. Exum admires West’s on-the-ground reporting but argues that, unlike most military professionals whom Exum, himself a veteran, dealt with regarding Afghanistan, West misconstrues both the doctrine of COIN and the approach to winning that the United States has taken in this difficult conflict.

86. Shultz, The Marines Take Anbar, 105–06.