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## Lessons from 'the coalition of the un-willing'

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The war in Iraq hinges on the ability of the United States and its allies to sustain operations and maintain its collective will to fight. To this end, President Bush's "coalition of the willing" was never properly formed, nor does it command the resolve of its constituent nations. It is an alliance created without U.N. sanction, initiated on the deceit of American leaders, comprised of too few allies and existing against the wishes of large segments of each participating country's population. In other words, it never had a proper foundation for the level of effort required.

The results, therefore, are no surprise. Not only has opposition to the war intensified in each country, but it has cost the jobs of the prime ministers or presidents in virtually every country, and is prompting the withdrawal of critically needed troops. This does not bode well for the Iraqi people who do not seem interested in reconciliation anytime soon.

With the tide of the U.S. "surge" ebbing, and British and Australian forces completing withdrawals in 2008, the sober observer is forced to conclude that Iraq's civil strife will probably outlast us. Regardless of Iraq's future, our failure to correctly build a multinational force for Iraq provides numerous lessons to future, would-be allied commanders.

**First, dust off the works of Grotius and St. Augustine because the "just war theory" matters.**

Democratic countries should only go to war as a last resort, and if there is a just cause. There is wisdom to this beyond questions of ethics. It's crucial to harnessing the willingness of the people as an engine for victory. As Machiavelli noted, free peoples have a natural reluctance for war. Also, after committing to it, they tire easily of war. Counterinsurgency poses a distinct problem for us. The purported 10-year turn-around for defeating insurgencies and stabilizing nations exceeds our patience. To exhaust this patience further by lies, denied strategic blunders and the mistreatment of detainees causes the very spirit of the endeavor to easily lose its strength. So the next time France and Germany want more time for weapons inspections, perhaps we should listen.

## **Second, define success up front.**

Holding a military coalition together is not easy. Such coalitions exist on the approval of dozens of heads of state and their diverse, opinionated peoples. If you want to keep their support over the long haul, it is best to get their buy-in up-front. That means pushing a clear and consistent mission statement. "It's weapons of mass destruction; no, it's the 9/11 terrorists!; no, it's a new Iraqi democracy!; no, it's to prevent a regional war!" doesn't work. Additionally, it helps if the definition and conditions for success are specific. Then we will all know when it's time to bring the troops home, and it may give pause to heads of state before sending mixed signals such as "mission accomplished" P.R. stunts from aircraft carriers.

## **Last, in counterinsurgency, numbers matter.**

Using French and British military history as a guide, Gen. David Petraeus' implementation of "clear and hold" tactics in Iraq is greatly superior to the de facto "search and destroy" tactics of yesteryear. Clear and hold, though, is manpower-intensive, often requiring a population-to-peacekeeper ratio of 50 to 1. For Iraq's 25 million population, that adds up to a coalition force of no fewer than 500,000 troops on the ground. To offer a comparison, NATO forces possessed a population-to-peacekeeper ratio of 50 to 1.1 for Bosnia (1996), and 50 to 1.2 for Kosovo (1999).

If we wish to sustain such a large force for years, military planners further recommend a deployment rotation where an individual soldier would spend only 1 out of every 3 years deployed. This bumps our requirement for an Allied Force up to 1.5 million troops. Obviously, this number supersedes the current capabilities of any single democratic nation. The conclusion then is that if the free countries of the world insist upon keeping small, volunteer armies, they must band together to have a force large enough to meet the challenges of the "long war."

In a global society, it seems fitting that free nations are more dependent on one another than ever to be decisive in war. In light of this, we should all recommit ourselves to the principles that synergize our countries into successful military partnerships. Among these are honesty in place of self-serving dissembling, objectivity instead of exaggerated results and the persistent refusal of failures, and last, ethical conduct on the battlefield so that our allies may never have reason to question the merits of our cause. These, we believe, will characterize a just war in the modern context and lead to a better world. After all, what is the point of war if it doesn't bring about a better world?

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