

## The Importance of Treating Culture as a System: Lessons on Counter-Insurgency Strategy from the British Iraqi Mandate

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### Introduction

The United States and its coalition partners have been militarily involved in Iraq since March 19, 2003, when Operation Iraqi Freedom I began. Two years later, Operation Iraqi Freedom I has ended, “major combat operations” have ceased—and Operation Iraqi Freedom II is now in full swing, with coalition forces stabilizing the country until full sovereignty for Iraq becomes a practical reality.

Aside from traditional generic concerns about nation-building, one could be forgiven for thinking that there would be relatively little that region-specific recent history might have to offer coalition forces as they confront a nascent Iraqi insurgency; but less than 80 years ago, America’s closest coalition partner—Great Britain—had similar experiences in the same country during their governance of it as a mandate. British lessons from the 1920s—when Iraq was first founded—are more pertinent for us than ever. In this paper, I argue that British “lessons learned” can be summarized in one sentence: *during occupation and reconstruction, great powers must be sensitive to the fact that culture is a system*. If political realities are to shift and nations are to be built, or at least reconfigured, then we must take into account political and social mechanisms operative on the ground in the region we wish to influence.

To make this case, my charter is four-fold:

1. First, I’ll briefly establish a theoretical framework for thinking about “culture as a system,” moving beyond Talcott Parson’s mid-Twentieth century model to a more subtle biological *cum* psychological conception of cultural processes.
2. Second, I’ll discuss two major accounts of British experiences with the Iraqi mandate—that of Toby Dodge in his 2003 opus *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press), and that of Charles Tripp in his recently revised 2000 book *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press). I’ll focus in particular on Dodge’s account of five factors the British failed to take into account, arguing that Dodge’s concluding chapter does not do full justice to the lessons that actually follow from taking his theses seriously.

3. Third, I'll offer my own spin on what coalition forces need to keep in mind as they translate Dodge's lessons 80 years into the future so as to usefully inform and improve current operational practice.
4. Finally, I'll discuss insurgencies and the cultures they swim in from the systems perspective to see if we can derive any general guidance from the British failure to take culture seriously. This is an ambitious charter, so my remarks will be brief and sometimes merely suggestive.

## Cultures and Systems

What would it mean to treat culture as a system? To answer this question, we must have some idea of what 'culture' is and what 'systems' are. This is not merely a semantic matter, as both these terms are theory-laden to the hilt. Culture is often thought to refer to social practices that are peculiar to a region or people; for instance, it's part of American culture that we place our index finger against our thumb while saying "A-OK" in order to let someone know we approve of their actions, while in some parts of Southwest Asia the equivalent gesture is offensive as it is seen as an attempt to curse the recipient. On this (shallow) view, to understand another culture means things like "don't eat with your left hand" or "don't show the sole of your foot" when traveling in Iraq. However, culture consists of far more than customs and courtesies.<sup>[1]</sup> In this respect, the best working definition of culture uses Franz Boas as a starting point (Boas was an early 20th century German cultural anthropologist):

"The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning."<sup>[2]</sup>

This working definition highlights several important things about "culture." First, culture is something that is shared between people; second, culture is primarily psychological, or the material manifestation (such as produced artifacts) of psychological processes<sup>[3]</sup>; third, culture is essentially adaptive (it will almost always be useful to ask "What is this for?" or "Why do they do this?"); and finally, culture is learned and transmitted through some process. These distinctions are important, especially for military planners.

The intensely social nature of culture will mean that one way to shift cultures is to enter into the social arena, and this will often require more people than would otherwise be the case (you can change the nature of a social entity by changing the amount of exogenously-inserted social creatures within it). The primacy of the psychological means that culture change will primarily (though not *only*, as we will discuss later) be a psychological operation. The adaptive nature of culture means that in the long run even if you are not able to change a culture internally, you may be able to get it to change by shifting the environment in which it evolves. Finally, since culture is learned (and not innate or genetically specified), that means it is part of an *open system*: with appropriate instruments, we can change the inputs and processes so that a different set of cultural norms, values and beliefs are output. *Ex hypothesi*, this is a good thing, as arguably Operation Iraqi Freedom is all about shifting a culture so that it embraces democracy and shuns extremist militancy (and even if it is not a good thing, this framework is useful because it helps us understand why that would be the case).

The tools we can use to shift culture are myriad, although it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine them in any detail. Still, how cultures evolve *in generica* is useful to think about. Richerson and Boyd<sup>[4]</sup> discuss several mechanisms:

- *Random forces* include things like cultural mutation (e.g., someone misremembers an item of culture), cultural drift (effects caused by statistical anomalies in small populations;

- for example, if someone specializes in boat-building and that person dies owing to a chance event then the culture of boat building will disappear from that society).
- *Decision-driven forces* include guided variation (nonrandom changes driven by transformations in social learning), and biased transmission (such as direct bias, where individuals are more likely to remember or perform culture based on content; frequency-based bias, where commonness or rarity of a cultural variant influences choice; and model-based bias, where cultural traits are chosen based on who is exhibiting the trait).[5]

Now that we have some idea of what culture is and how it changes over time, we can discuss what it would mean to treat culture as an open system.[6]

Systems theory serves as the diagnostic model for culture. This approach, derived from the general systems theory of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, conceptualizes a system as an “organized cohesive complex of elements standing in interaction.” Interaction refers to two generalized patterns of behavior:

1. the relationships among the “complex elements,” or subsystems of culture; and
2. the relationship between the complex whole of culture and its environment (the super-system).

The former constitute the transformational processes of culture, telling us how culture is produced and changes, while the latter draws attention to the reality that cultures are open systems, continually exchanging information and energy with their surrounding environment.

As Thomas notes, “[a]s systems theory has matured, its benefits have been clarified. Thomas G. Cummings summarizes the positive “fallout” from systems thinking in his foundational book, *Systems Theory for Organizational Development*.”[7] While Cummings is talking about how systems thinking has improved our ability to design and influence *organizations*, his thoughts apply equally well to *cultures*. Systems thinking:

- enables thinking about cultures at a higher level of abstraction; it requires thinking in terms of general characteristics rather than thinking about a particular organization or similarities between particular organizations;
- transcends the branches of science;
- provides a common language for understanding organizational phenomena;
- enables thinking in relational terms rather than things, leading to a process oriented and contextual views of cultures;
- stimulates holistic appreciation of whole properties of cultures.[8]

In organizational theory, the term diagnosis means to employ systems thinking to assess a target organization’s condition so as to improve it; for our working theory of culture change, diagnosis will mean understanding cultures from that perspective for the purpose of influencing their development or changing them.

Talcott Parsons is perhaps the best-known proponent of the idea that we should treat culture (indeed, all of sociology) as a system, and his work has usefully informed this paper. Parson’s work is of uncertain status today; the functionalism that informs it is out of favor in many circles.[9] Still, his work is important, and my intuition is that nascent fields such as evolutionary psychology and cognitive neurobiology will put the teleology back into thinking, and that there will be a neo-Parsonian renaissance as a result. Even so, systems thinking has advanced since Parson’s time; it is now biological more than mechanical, with fewer deterministic assumptions and more respect for developmental issues and holistic concerns.[10]

To summarize: treating culture as a system involves identifying culture's relationships to the environment, discussing the inputs, transformative processes and outputs that result in shared beliefs and values in a society; culture is thus both a process and a product, a verb and a noun. In the next portion of this paper, I will summarize the results of Dodge's research into the British Iraqi Mandate using this terminology. Let's begin with a summary of the historical backdrop.

## **Backdrop: the Ottoman Empire Collapses & British Imperial Power Wanes**

The League of Nations awarded Iraq to Britain as a mandate in 1920. To understand why this happened, we need to grasp the large-scale historical forces at work at the time. First, the Ottoman Empire was collapsing, and the power vacuum produced by this collapse was being filled by imperial and colonial powers such as England and France. Great Britain was busy occupying former Ottoman territory in Mesopotamia, such as Basra (taken in November, 1914), Baghdad (captured in March, 1917), and Mosul (occupied in November, 1918); given its strategic importance as a land bridge between the Mediterranean and India, British interest in the region was understandable. While this may give the impression that European imperialism was waxing rather than waning, that is not the case. Second, European hegemony, under-girded by notions of cultural superiority, was in the decline. Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations was busy planning how to ensure stability in a world where imperial interests had otherwise provided form and structure to the international environment. The Mandate system was an expression of the waning power of Britain and France rather than a vindication of it.[\[11\]](#)

These two facts more than anything else shaped the early history of Iraq. No longer an Ottoman protectorate, nor a straight-forward British Imperial possession, the new Mandate of Iraq had to be shaped into a nation-state capable of independence from its nominal protector Great Britain, replete with all the capacities required for self-rule and sovereignty. The League charged Britain with the responsibility of ensuring this transition took place with a minimum of fuss. But owing to British failure to treat culture as a system, the transition was to be anything but smooth.

## **Dodge on British Misunderstandings**

Dodge contends that five factors contributed to the British failure to successfully manage Iraq's transition to sovereignty:

1. First, British administrators wore "conceptual blinders" regarding the nature of the Ottoman legacy in Mesopotamia; they romanticized "untainted" and "incorruptible" rural tribal leaders and vilified the "sleazy" effendi and city-dwelling remnants of the Ottoman Empire.
2. Second, and for related reasons, the British thought of Iraqi society as being deeply split between urban and rural populations, with the urban population unfairly stifling the agency of those living in the desert and countryside.
3. Third, Britain misunderstood the role of the shaikh in the region's culture, using this pre-modern figure as a channel for Herbert Simon-style bureaucratic *cum* rational administrative methods when they should have chosen other actors.
4. Fourth, the British misunderstood the "social meaning of land" by implementing European-style land tenure, elevating the Shaikh/Tribe over the Mallak/Sarkal, which backfired given the shaikh's tenuous political authority.
5. Finally, British use of airpower reinforced Iraqi perceptions that the British were despots, undermining their ability to influence the culture.[\[12\]](#)

I'll discuss each of these in turn in more detail, contrasting Tripp's take on events when it differs from Dodge's interpretation.

Dodge's first point boils down to the familiar objection that the British were in the grip of Orientalist delusions about the nature of Ottoman rule. Stereotypes were reinforced by the lack of empirically grounded knowledge about Ottoman governing structures. Two central stereotypes were: first, that the Ottoman Empire was superstitious, violent and corrupt; and second, that Iraq was fundamentally divided between tainted urbanites and Ottoman administrators and pure uncorrupted country-folk (I'll discuss the second more in the next section). As a result, the British thought of themselves as clearing away a "bad" Ottoman administrative apparatus so that a "good" British one could be put in place.

The literature of the time from those involved in British administration reinforced this impression. Consider British administrator-scholar Stephen Longrigg's statements in his book, written while serving in the British Expeditionary Force in the country: over 400 years of stagnant Ottoman rule, Iraq had changed little; the Ottomans had let the Iraqi people down in every respect, forsaking their "essential duties," failing to secure liberty and rights for the "...governed (however backward)".<sup>[13]</sup> This misimpression did great harm to Britain's ability to staff the revamped nascent Iraqi administration, as most of those who were educated enough to run the institutions had in fact been trained by the Ottomans, and it also reinforced the other factors Dodge discusses as complicating Britain's situation.<sup>[14]</sup>

The second factor influencing Britain's ability to manage Iraq is closely related to the first. The British tended to treat Iraqi citizens as immature children (indeed, Gertrude Bell wrote in 1907 that "[t]he Oriental is like a very old child...").<sup>[15]</sup> Those who were capable of self-rule were, unfortunately, already corrupted by the Ottoman influence. This made it easy for Great Britain to marginalize the opinions of the Iraqi public and to paint native administrators as being licentious overly sensual creatures. The demonization of rural centers and the elevation of rural leaders oversimplified the political culture of Iraq, making tribes the monolithic and dominant entity when in fact they were not.

This led to the third factor contributing to British difficulties: their choice of the "strategic shaikh" (my verbiage) as the critical lever of political power. The British misconstrued the role that tribal shaikh's played in Iraqi life. A shaikh's community was fuzzy and oft-times ill defined, and the "shallow foundations" of a shaikh's power sometimes became all too visible when the British attempted to overlay a rational-bureaucratic form of social organization onto this organic community.<sup>[16]</sup>

Tripp's take on Britain's use of tribal shaikhs is not as explicitly critical. He implies only indirectly that the British attempt to use shaikhs as power-laden intermediaries changed the shaikhs' motivations.<sup>[17]</sup> Tripp argues that the spread of the 1920 revolt against the British was fueled in part by how local leaders thought British policies were influencing their power (as would be expected, tribal sheikhs in places like Kut and 'Amara did *not* join the revolt, while the marginalized urban Sunni notables actively encouraged it), which is indirect evidence for some of Dodge's points.<sup>[18]</sup>

Directly related to Britain's "bureaucratization" of shaikh power was their misunderstanding of the social meaning of land (Dodge's fourth factor). Managing land ownership and taxation is a critical part of nation-building, so it's no wonder that a British misapprehension here would have problematic consequences. In order to make taxation rational, all land parcels had to be divided up and assigned to individuals or institutions (this was how it became possible to know from whom to collect revenue). In the pre-colonial world, communal ownership, or flexible seasonal occupation, were usually the norm; "...individual ownership was often an alien concept."<sup>[19]</sup> In order to correct this shortcoming in efficiency to ensure that land was both owned by someone and farmed efficiently by them, the British Mandate staff had to choose between two approaches: focusing on the role of the shaikh or focusing on the role of the *sarkal*. The former was seen as reinforcing communal bonds, whereas leveraging the *sarkal* (the *sarkal* was the tenant or foreman in charge of organizing farming operations; he worked for the *mallak*, or landlord, who

had the right to demand *mallakiyah*, or rent)[20] was viewed as antagonistic. Since the British had already thrown their governance lot in with the sheikhs, it was only logical they would do so again when it came time for land reform. This was, ultimately, a *political* call on the part of the British—it would have been more efficient to collect taxes from the mallaks and sarkals than from other intermediaries.

Some British figures pointed out that it was an error to assume so much power and responsibility devolved to the shaikh or tribal figurehead (see, e.g., Major S. E. Hedgcock's concerns, discussed on page 115 of Dodge). But this did not stop the overall thrust of British policy from remaining shaikh-centered; for this reason (as Dodge elaborates during his discussion of the unrest in Muntafiq), the British did "ontological violence to Iraqi society." [21] What's worse, tax collection policy was rendered inefficient, which hindered the establishment of a capable Iraqi state. As a result, British imperial power manifested itself most starkly in the form of airpower.

This is the fifth major factor Dodge considers: the use of British airpower to impose order and enforce the collection of land taxes led to the perception of British Mandate officials as being despotic in their use of force. Rather than being seen as paternalistic, British instruments of state power were perceived as being despotic and indiscriminant. The "cost free" nature of bombing, surveillance from the air, and air "triumphalism" (all of which led to the RAF taking responsibility for order in all of Iraq in October 1922) contributed to Iraqi perceptions of the British as being the new imperialists rather than old friends. [22] Interestingly, when Tripp discusses airpower he does so not in the context of despotism, but rather by noting that ex-Ottoman officials viewed airpower as being of little use without "boots on the ground"; this informed debates about the necessity of conscription in the new Iraqi state. [23]

Ultimately, airpower, while authoritative, was despotic; it needed a political intermediary on the ground in order to be effective, and Britain's chosen intermediary of the shaikh was not up to the task for the reasons already discussed.

The British shortcomings Dodge discusses directly contributed to the multiple revolts and insurgencies faced by Great Britain during the mandate period (see pages 31-37 in Tripp for an effective summary; as I am pressed for space, I will not discuss in detail the chronology of revolts and insurgencies), reaching its peak in 1920, and spending itself in Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan's revolt in 1931 and 1932. Are there lessons the U.S. can learn from the British Mandate experience and their dealings with insurgency and revolt?

Dodge himself argues in his (useful but all too brief) concluding chapter that we need to focus more on the development of trust in Iraqi civil society, that we need better intelligence, and that we should have a better grasp of the structure of Iraqi society. I agree with all these recommendations; however, I think treating culture—and insurgency—as a system actually leads to recommendations that are more *broad-reaching* than these. In the final section of this paper, I briefly discuss what follows from treating insurgencies and violent movements from a systems perspective so as to add fuel to Dodge's fire.

## Systems, Cultures, and Insurgencies

To ensure we consider the full range of policy options available for confronting insurgencies, I offer the following list of bullets. None (of course) are "magic" bullets, but taken together, they (hopefully) provide a coherent and workable alternative to a counter-insurgency strategy sometimes hobbled by a failure to think *systematically* about the nature of violent non-state organizations and their relationship to cultural millieus.

### 1. Force on force confrontations are only a small part of the "confrontational equation."

Insurgencies embrace asymmetric warfare: the forces they field are non-traditional, striking in ways that maximize the effect they can produce on far larger forces while using only minimal resources. Confronting such a force with yet another force (e.g., using soldiers to stop suicide bombers) can work, in the short term; but to have this as the primary or only aspect of your strategy is to play directly to the strengths of asymmetric confrontations (this is why insurgencies choose this tactic to begin with). We must be more asymmetric than our adversaries, and that involves coalition members striking in ways that maximize the effect *they* can produce using only minimal resources.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld expressed much this sentiment in a portion of the infamous two-page memo to his staff (including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz) that was leaked to USA Today on October 22, 2002:

Does the US need to fashion a broad, integrated plan to stop the next generation of terrorists? The US is putting relatively little effort into a long-range plan, but we are putting a great deal of effort into trying to stop terrorists. The cost-benefit ratio is against us! Our cost is billions against the terrorists' costs of millions.[24]

## ***2. Insurgents can be deterred.***

Violent non-state actors (VNSA) are often thought to be irrational. For that reason, critics contend, it's impossible to deter them... they can only be destroyed. However, an open systems perspective on VNSA development reveals multiple opportunities we have to influence VNSA ontogeny in a way that uses proximate psychological mechanisms to preclude action contrary to our interests. Broaden our notion of deterrence and of psychology, and use those expanded notions to deter VNSA when they can be deterred. If culture is primarily a psychological phenomenon, and insurgencies interact with cultural institutions during their growth and development, then we should be able to prevent insurgencies from forming, or deter them when they do, by having an appropriately subtle understanding of that complex cultural system.

## ***3. We should all become ecologists.***

A critical insight for counter-insurgency strategy is that webs of environments, interactions and processes both contribute to and constitute VNSA growth. Those involved in formulating anti-terror strategy need to be experts in these webs of structured interactive relationships. We could do worse than taking our cues from those who manage eco-systems such as foresters, farmers, and artificial life theorists. Or, as UCLA research fellow Raphael Sagarin maintains,

The real challenge is to apply evolutionary thinking to homeland security in a more structured, broad-based manner. Evolutionary biologists, ecologists, and paleontologists understand better than anyone the evolutionary successes and failures of genes and species and what it takes to survive in the natural world. Officials prosecuting the war on terrorism should bring experts on evolution into the discussion.[25]

The members of the military profession involved in combating VNSA directly should, at the end of the day, be part of a transformed cadre of military professionals, possessing a very different set of skills not traditionally associated with the warrior profession: this is not our grandfather's security environment. Biology, rather than physics, might be the operative structuring metaphor.

## ***4. VNSA are not monolithic, nor do they exist in splendid isolation.***

VNSA do not spring onto the international scene fully formed and made of solid granite. They develop over time, and as they do so, they articulate parts that have functions. VNSA are

(thankfully) neither *hermetically* nor *hermeneutically* sealed. They exist as part of an open system and the parts of a VNSA are constantly exchanging matter and energy with that system; more, the meanings VNSA leadership use to reinforce group and role-specific identity, are not water-tight but are culturally influenced. Undermine a VNSA's "story," and you go a long way toward winning the hermeneutic struggle.[26] VNSA are not granite-like rocks that can only be crushed. Instead, they are more like extremely porous stones—pour in the right kind of liquid at the right temperature, let it sit overnight, and the rock disintegrates from the inside, slowly falling apart.

### **5. Confrontation happens in many ways.**

There are multiple paths towards successful confrontation with VNSA and the environments that generate them. We should not think of the war on terrorism or the Iraqi counter-insurgency effort as consisting only in armed struggle. Rather, aspects of this war may be more like the "war" on illiteracy—war-like in the sense that we take (or ought to take) the root causes of illiteracy very seriously and struggle mightily against them, but not war-like in the sense that we shoot bullets at people who can't read. Effective use of the multiple instruments of state power is not to shrink from confrontation, nor to handle VNSA with kid gloves; rather, it is to boost our ability to successfully shape the international security environment in a maximally efficacious manner. This will include the shaping of socially transmitted behavior—the shaping of culture.

### **6. Effective, possibly non-traditional, intelligence is critical.**

Doing this all well is an intelligence intensive enterprise. Much of our intelligence, especially military intelligence, is geared towards traditional battlefield-style warfare. The sources and methods used to gather this intelligence will be useful, but perhaps more useful will be improved *warning analysis* and *forecasting* related to the root causes and transformative processes discussed in the first third of the book. Much of this intelligence will be open-source, but will be manpower intensive and require a rich conceptual infrastructure in order to organize effectively. Actionable intelligence needs to be placed in boxes that bear a clear connection to policy and strategy; open-systems theory does some of this work for us. Most importantly, highlighting the failures of theorists to come to grips with the *culture* they want to influence from a systemic perspective cues us to the critical need for solid cultural intelligence. This intelligence will be all about the inputs, processes, and outputs of the culture in which insurgents and VNSA "swim" and will consist of so much more than facts about customs and courtesies (recall our definition of culture at the start of this paper).

## **Conclusion**

I don't mean to imply that none of these points are factored in to our current national security posture; on the contrary, seeds of them can be found scattered throughout our national security apparatus and in our reactions to events in contemporary Iraq. Rather, my contention is that (in the main), we have *tended* (again, albeit not in every case) towards output confrontations, ignored deterrent options, undervalued ecological insights, treated VNSA monolithically and without due regard to their meaning-laden nature, defaulted to a narrow sense of confrontation rather than a broad sense, and not focused effectively on the appropriate cultural intelligence tools. Moreover, our expertise is centered on specific groups, thus demanding a policy so nuanced that it lacks the cohesion required to synchronize the instruments of power. This is understandable, given the lack of a comprehensive framework for thinking about such organizations.

If we are to overcome some of our disappointments with the results obtained thus far in our war on terror, though, we would do well to embrace systems thinking. If the experience of the British with the Iraqi Mandate is to inform policy, we would do well to think of culture as a system so we can examine the system with open eyes and in a scientifically rigorous manner, something the

British manifestly failed to do. We also need to understand the feedback relationships present with systems of culture (this would, in the best of worlds as prediction is always a mostly unachievable gold-standard, have enabled the British to forecast how the coercive use of airpower would be viewed by the population of Iraq).

There is much at stake here. The success of our national security posture (itself a manifesto for forced culture change abroad) rides on whether or not we are willing to think creatively and “outside of the box” about historical circumstances like the British Iraqi Mandate, as Dodge has done. Taking his insights and extending them so that we can ensure that instruments of state power are used in a way that actually achieves the desired cultural effects remains our next great intellectual strategic challenge.

## About the Author

Major Casebeer is a Middle East Area Studies student in the National Security Affairs Department of the Naval Postgraduate School. An intelligence analyst and Council on Foreign Relations term member, his book *Natural Ethical Facts* (2003) is now available in paperback with MIT Press, and his co-authored book *Warlords Rising* (2005), with Troy Thomas and Steve Kiser, was published last month by Lexington Books. His most recent non-CCC publication is the essay “Scientific Ethics” for MacMillan’s *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics* (2005). This essay was improved tremendously by comments from Barak Salmoni, Major Troy Thomas, James Russell, Tom Johnson, Major Jennifer Chandler, and Major Steve Kiser; Major Casebeer would like to thank them all for their critiques and insights.

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## References

1. I am not saying we should ignore these components of culture. On the contrary, they can in some contexts be critically important. As William Graham Sumner (1906, 3) notes, culture results from “...the frequent repetition of petty acts.”
2. Daniel G. Bates and Fred Plog, *Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd Edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 7.
3. I realize this goes against the grain of contemporary sociological thinking. So be it. An elaborate defense of the reducibility of sociological facts to facts about group and individual psychology is beyond the scope of this paper. An intuition that there is no such thing as “social aether” is all that is needed at this point. In many respects, my approach is like that of Durkheim’s, but I explicitly reject any dualisms, preferring a token reduction of the sociological to the psychological.
4. Richerson, Peter J. and Robert Boyd, *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

5. There is so much of importance I'm omitting from this paragraph, including the symbolic nature of culture and its relationship to individual meaning. Topics like this will be discussed in more detail in other publications.

6. The discussion in the next two paragraphs owes much to Troy S. Thomas' research for Troy S. Thomas and William D. Casebeer, [Violent Systems: Defeating Terrorists, Insurgents, and Other Non-State Adversaries](#) (USAF Institute for National Security Studies Occasional Paper 52, 2003). See also Thomas, Kiser and Casebeer's *Warlords Rising: Confronting Violent Non-State Actors* (Lexington Books, 2005) for an application of systems theory to terrorist organizations and other violent armed groups.

7. [Violent Systems: Defeating Terrorists, Insurgents, and Other Non-State Adversaries](#), 7

8. [Ibid.](#), 6-8.

9. For an introduction, see chapter 5 of Malcom Waters, *Modern Sociological Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1994). For pointed criticisms, see 176-187 of Trevor Noble, *Social Theory and Social Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

10. This packs a lot into a paragraph without much explanation. Apologies if it is indecipherable.

11. Summary ideas taken primarily from the opening chapter of Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003)

12. This final point could be the basis for an entire book, supremely relevant to contemporary Air Force planners in Iraq.

13. Paraphrased from Dodge, *Op. Cit.*, 47.

14. Tripp's discussion of the British Mandate in chapter two of his book is curiously devoid of any references to Orientalism or British attitudes (the word "orientalism" does not even appear in the index). There are a few passing references to British condescension towards Iraqi ability to self-govern, but aside from this there's no substance along which to compare Charles Tripp's *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Dodge's *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) on this axis. Of course, this is in itself telling.

15. Dodge, *Op. Cit.*, 64.

16. *Ibid.*, 87.

17. See the discussion on 42 of Tripp, *Op. Cit.*

18. Tripp, *Op. Cit.*, 44.

19. Dodge, *Op. Cit.*, 105.

20. *Ibid.*, 109.

21. *Ibid.*, 129.

22. *Ibid.*, 147-149.

23. Tripp, *Op. Cit.*, 61.

24. See the original article, "[Rumsfeld's war-on-terror memo](#)," *USA Today*, October 22, 2003SA Today of October 22, 2003 available as of January 10, 2004, or the excellent summary of the incident by Fred Kaplan, "[Rumsfeld's Pentagon Papers: His leaked memo is the most astonishing document of this war so far](#)," *Slate.com*, October 23, 2003.

25. See Raphael Sagarin, "[Adapt or Die: What Charles Darwin can teach Tom Ridge about homeland security](#)," *Foreign Policy*(September/October 2003): 68-9.

26. For elaboration, see the Casebeer and Russell, "[Storytelling and Terrorism: Towards a Comprehensive 'Counter-Narrative Strategy](#)," *Strategic Insights* IV, 3 (March 2005).