

Send Julia Roberts, not tanks

Level 3 | Advanced

1 Key vocabulary

Fill the gaps using these words:

conspicuous
insurgency
devastating

painstakingly
maverick
humiliating

prosperity
emulate

repugnant
elude

1. A _____ is an independent person with ideas very different from those of other people.
2. If something is done _____, it is done very carefully and slowly.
3. If something is _____, it makes you feel very embarrassed and ashamed.
4. If you _____ someone, you try to be like them or copy them in some way.
5. If something _____ you, you do not manage to achieve your ambition or aim.
6. _____ means very noticeable or easy to see.
7. _____ means causing a lot of harm or damage.
8. _____ is another word for wealth.
9. An _____ is an attempt by a group of people to take control of a country by force.
10. If something is _____ it is extremely unpleasant or offensive.

2 Find the information

Find the answers to these questions in the article.

1. Which war started in 1950 and ended in 1953?
2. Which war started in 1964 and ended in 1975?
3. Who was US president from 1981 to 1989?
4. Who is the founder of Microsoft?

Now look in the text and check your answers.

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Max Hastings

There is growing dissension and dismay in the US armed forces about their prospects of victory in Iraq. The signs expressing solidarity with the nation's soldiers are still conspicuous around army bases across America. But commanders and soldiers alike are conducting an increasingly anguished debate. The spectre of Vietnam looms large in the minds of many US soldiers. In recent years the US army has been forged into a motivated, effective tool for large-scale military operations overseas. But it has never been suited to combating insurgency. Guerrillas and suicide bombers can impose a deadly corrosion on conventional forces.

Years ago, I heard an American general's lament for what was once a formidable cold war fighting machine. He said to me: "We went into Korea in 1950 with a very poor army, and came out of it in 1953 with a very good one. We went into Vietnam in 1964 with a fine army, and came out in 1975 with a terrible one." This is the threat that some thoughtful American officers see hanging over the Iraq deployment. The US armed forces are fighting the sort of conflict that least suits their capabilities. It would be a devastating blow to the confidence painstakingly rebuilt since Vietnam if the US, having committed enormous resources and suffered painful casualties, was obliged to quit Iraq without achieving its purposes.

Yet would military failure represent decisive defeat? Might not America ultimately prevail in Iraq by means in which armed forces play no part? Consider this proposition from Edward Luttwak, the maverick American strategy guru. In a recent speech to a British audience, he suggested that the US began to win the

Vietnam War the day after its envoy was humiliatingly evacuated from the roof of the Saigon embassy in April 1975. The military conflict was lost -- but, Luttwak argued, the US began to achieve victory culturally and economically. Vietnam may still be a communist state in theory, but in reality capitalism is taking hold at every level. American values, represented by corporatism and schools of management studies, are gaining sway over Vietnam as surely as they are over every other nation possessed of education and aspirations to prosperity.

Luttwak describes what is happening as the US acquiring a "virtual empire", founded upon cultural dominance - a convincing proposition, certainly in the eyes of Osama bin Laden, who is attempting to mobilise the Muslim world to resist it. Al-Qaida is seeking to combat through terrorism a cultural invasion more effective than stealth bombers and Bradley fighting vehicles. Bill Gates and Steven Spielberg represent influences much harder to repel than a field army.

Luttwak's remarks raise the fascinating possibility that, while the US might be obliged to abandon its military struggle in Iraq, its values will still triumph. Might Baghdad emulate Saigon in surrendering its soul to the US, in a fashion Bin Laden would find repugnant, long after the last American soldier has gone home? I am not arguing that military power is redundant. But recent history suggests that America is less skilful in exploiting armed might to fulfil its national purposes than in using economic and cultural power, without a soldier in sight.

Last spring in a refugee camp in Gaza, I was quizzing a cluster of children about what they enjoyed watching on television.

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Without hesitation they cried: "Rambo! Rambo!" It is hard to think of a less appropriate role model. What seemed significant, however, was not the identity of their icon, but its source. These children's parents had come to fear, mistrust and, often, hate America. Yet Hollywood possesses a power greater than any that President Bush can exercise through the Pentagon. Whatever the political hostility of young Palestinians to the US, they cannot escape its cultural ubiquity.

To return to Iraq: even if the insurgents are successful in forcing the US to abandon its armed struggle, they have much less chance of prevailing against Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts and their kind, who can sustain an occupation of Iraqi homes effortlessly now that satellite TV is almost universally available.

How fascinating it will be if great armies prove less relevant to the movement of societies in the 21st century than cultural forces. We saw a foretaste of this in the last part of the 20th century. It was not Ronald Reagan's rearmament of America that

brought the Soviet "evil empire" to its knees, but economic failure, and it was the same force that obliged the South African apartheid regime to surrender.

In the poorest and least educated societies on earth it is likely that power will continue to be contested at gunpoint. But wherever people are susceptible to external cultural influences -- and, in fairness to George Bush, "wherever they are given freedom to receive such influences" -- soldiers are likely to find their relevance diminished.

I do not think the US armed forces will achieve their military purposes in Iraq. The soldiers who have become pessimistic about the campaign they are waging are probably right. But in a long historic view, Microsoft and DreamWorks could achieve a dominance of Baghdad and a power over Iraqi society that eludes George Bush and his armoured legions.

The Guardian Weekly 2005-01-28, page 13

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text:

- The basic message of the text is:
 - America cannot win the war in Iraq.
 - Iraq is the same as Korea and Vietnam.
 - America will not win the war in Iraq through military activity but through external cultural influences.
- What brought about the end of the Soviet Union and the apartheid regime in South Africa?
 - Ronald Reagan's rearmament of America.
 - Cultural influences.
 - Economic failure.
- Which of these sentences is true according to the text?
 - The USA had a good army at the start of the Korean War.
 - The USA had a good army at the start of the Vietnam War.
 - The USA had a good army at the end of the Vietnam War.
- Why will it be difficult for the insurgents in Iraq to stop the cultural invasion?
 - Because Microsoft is very powerful.
 - Because many people have access to satellite TV.
 - Because they are fighting against the US army.

4 Vocabulary - find the word

Find a word in the text....

- which is another word for 'ghost'.
- which literally means 'a sad song' but can also mean words expressing sadness or disappointment.
- which is an adjective meaning 'very impressive in size, power or skill'.

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4. which means 'no longer needed'.
5. which means 'a small group of people very close together'.
6. which means 'the state of being present everywhere'.
7. which is a verb meaning 'to defeat someone'.
8. which means the same as 'reduced'.

5 Vocabulary - collocations

Fill the gaps with the prepositions that normally follow these words:

1. suited _____
2. commitment _____
3. represented _____
4. hostility _____
5. relevant _____
6. susceptible _____
7. pessimistic _____
8. power _____

6 Grammar focus

Look at this sentence from the text:

What seemed significant...was not the identity of their icon, but its source.

The writer is saying that it was not the identity of their icon but its source that was significant. He uses the word order in the example to give his sentence a more emphatic style.

Rewrite these sentences in the same way. Here is an example to help.

Economic aid is most important.
What is most important is economic aid.

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1. Cultural influences tend to be extremely powerful.
2. Guerrilla warfare defeated the Americans in Vietnam.
3. American values and corporatism will take over.
4. The availability of satellite TV is a key factor.
5. Economic failure brought the Soviet Union to its knees.
6. Cultural forces will prevail.

7 Discussion

Do you agree with the main idea of the text that cultural and economic forces are more powerful than conventional military forces?

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KEY

1 Key vocabulary

- | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. maverick | 4. emulate | 7. devastating | 9. insurgency |
| 2. painstakingly | 5. eludes | 8. prosperity | 10. repugnant |
| 3. humiliating | 6. conspicuous | | |

2 Find the information

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Korean War | 3. Ronald Reagan |
| 2. The Vietnam War | 4. Bill Gates |

3 Comprehension check

1. c 2. c 3. b 4. b

4 Vocabulary – find the word

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. spectre | 4. redundant | 7. prevail (against) |
| 2. lament | 5. cluster | 8. diminished |
| 3. formidable | 6. ubiquity | |

5 Vocabulary – collocations

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. suited to | 4. hostility to (towards) | 7. pessimistic about |
| 2. commitment to | 5. relevant to | 8. power over |
| 3. represented by | 6. susceptible to | |

6 Grammar Focus

1. What tend to be extremely powerful are cultural influences.
2. What defeated the Americans in Vietnam was guerrilla warfare.
3. What will take over will be American values and corporatism.
4. What is a key factor is the availability of satellite TV.
5. What brought the Soviet Union to its knees was economic failure.
6. What will prevail will be cultural forces.