

Send Julia Roberts, not tanks

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Key vocabulary

Match the words with the definitions:

insurgency
conventional

casualty
evacuate

dominance
invasion

role model
mistrust

1. A person killed or injured in a war or accident.
2. To be suspicious of somebody or something.
3. Usual, normal, regular.
4. An uprising against the government of a country.
5. A person respected by others as an example.
6. To remove someone from a place of danger.
7. The entry of an enemy army into a country.
8. Control or authority over other people.

2 Find the information

Find the answers to these questions in the article.

1. When did the Korean War start?
2. When did the Korean War end?
3. When did the Vietnam War start?
4. When did the Vietnam War end?
5. What happened in April 1975?
6. What country did the Americans call the “evil empire”?

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Max Hastings

The US armed forces are becoming pessimistic about their prospects of victory in Iraq. Many US soldiers remember what happened in Vietnam. In recent years the US army has become an effective tool for large-scale military operations overseas, but it has never been the right kind of force to fight against insurgency. Guerrillas and suicide bombers are very difficult for conventional forces to deal with.

Many years ago an American general 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." The US armed forces are fighting a kind of war to which they are not suited. But would military failure really be a defeat? Could America win in the end in Iraq by means in which armed forces play no part? Edward Luttwak, an American military expert, suggested that the US began to win the Vietnam War the day after its ambassador was evacuated from the roof of the Saigon embassy in April 1975. The military battle 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 everywhere. American values are taking over Vietnam just as they have taken over other nations with a desire to be wealthy.

Luttwak describes what is happening as the US acquiring a "virtual empire", built on dominance. This is a powerful argument, certainly in the eyes of Osama bin Laden, who is trying to mobilise the Muslim world to resist American empire-building. The terrorists of Al-Qaida are trying to fight against a cultural invasion that is more effective than weapons of war. Bill Gates and Steven Spielberg represent influences which are much harder to fight against than a regular army.

Luttwak's argument is that, while the US might have to leave Iraq without achieving a military

victory, American values will win the war in the end. Will Baghdad follow Vietnam and sell its soul to the US, in a way which Bin Laden would find disgusting? I am not arguing that military power has no purpose. But recent history suggests that America is less skilful in using military power to fulfil its national purposes than in using economic and cultural power.

Last spring in a refugee camp in Gaza, I asked a group of children what they enjoyed watching on television. Without hesitation they all said: "Rambo!" It is difficult to think of a less appropriate role model. What seemed significant, however, was not the character of Rambo, but where Rambo came from. Their parents had grown up to mistrust and hate America. But Hollywood has a much greater power than the power of President Bush and the Pentagon. Young Palestinians may hate the US, but they cannot avoid its culture.

Even if the insurgents in Iraq are successful in forcing the US to leave the country, they have much less chance of winning a war against Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts and so on, because they can easily enter Iraqi homes now that satellite TV is available almost everywhere in the country.

Powerful armies might become less relevant to the movement of societies in the 21st century than cultural forces.

Unfortunately, in the poorest and least educated societies on earth, military force will continue to decide who is in power. But wherever people are exposed to external cultural influences, and, in fairness to George Bush, "wherever they are given freedom to receive such influences", soldiers will have a less important role to play. The US armed forces might not win the war in Iraq. But in the long term, perhaps Microsoft and DreamWorks will succeed where George Bush and his military forces have failed.

The Guardian Weekly 2005-28-01, page 13

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3 Comprehension check

Which of these sentences are True and which are False according to the text?

1. The American army was very effective at the end of the Vietnam War.
2. Edward Luttwak believes that the Americans will win a military victory in Iraq.
3. It is more difficult to fight against cultural and economic influences than against a regular army.
4. Weapons of war are more effective than a cultural invasion.
5. The children in the Gaza refugee camp mistrusted Rambo.
6. Satellite TV is easy to find in Iraq.
7. Freedom to receive cultural influences will mean a less important role for soldiers.

4 Vocabulary - opposites

Find the opposites of these words in the text:

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| 1. relevant | _____ | 5. effective | _____ |
| 2. appropriate | _____ | 6. conventional | _____ |
| 3. successful | _____ | 7. significant | _____ |
| 4. skilful | _____ | 8. available | _____ |

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5 Vocabulary - word building

Complete the table:

	Verb	Noun		Verb	Noun
1.	achieve	_____	5.	argue	_____
2.	fail	_____	6.	receive	_____
3.	defeat	_____	7.	succeed	_____
4.	describe	_____	8.	hesitate	_____

6 Grammar focus

Look at this example from the text:

(Edward Luttwak thinks) American values will win in the end.

The 'will' form of the future is used here to indicate a prediction. There are several other examples in the text. Use these key words to make sentences.

The author thinks ...

- Soldiers/less important/role/play
- Military force/continue/decide/who/in power
- US armed forces/not win/ war/Iraq
- Microsoft/succeed/where/George Bush/failed
- Tom Hanks/Julia Roberts/enter/Iraqi homes
- American values/take over/Iraq

7 Discussion

Is it possible to resist cultural and economic influences?

Do you agree that economic and cultural power can change the world?

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KEY

1 Key vocabulary

1. d 2. c 3. a 4. f 5. h 6. g 7. e 8. b

2 Find the information

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1. 1950 | 5. The US ambassador was evacuated from the roof of the Saigon embassy |
| 2. 1953 | |
| 3. 1964 | 6. The Soviet Union |
| 4. 1975 | |

3 Comprehension check

1. F 2. F 3. T 4. F 5. F 6. T 7. T

4 Vocabulary – opposites

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. irrelevant | 4. unskilful | 7. insignificant |
| 2. inappropriate | 5. ineffective | 8. unavailable |
| 3. unsuccessful | 6. unconventional | |

5 Vocabulary – word building

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. achievement | 4. description | 7. success |
| 2. failure | 5. argument | 8. hesitation |
| 3. defeat | 6. reception | |

6 Grammar focus

1. Soldiers will have a less important role to play.
2. Military force will continue to decide who is in power.
3. US armed forces will not win the war in Iraq.
4. Microsoft will succeed where George Bush has failed.
5. Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts will enter Iraqi homes.
6. American values will take over (in) Iraq.