

Argumentative Essay: COMPARISON OF VERACRUZ AND IRAQ

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Past situations have dictated strategic decisions for the future ever since the beginning of time and this premise is no different when you are considering the past occupation of Veracruz, Mexico and the current occupation of Iraq. In many ways the successes and failures in the two historic engagements have enhanced our understanding of counterinsurgency operations. We have learned in our years of service to our nation that without making mistakes there will be no learning from events or happenings. There are many different ways to interpret success and failure based on a persons beliefs or understanding of a situation. To think that you are the all knowing factor to any episode is to undermine your country and its mission of peace and liberty. The driving force is almost always the willingness of the population to change or adapt to a new way of life.

Veracruz

Clearly the incident at Tampico, Mexico on 9 April, 1914 was the distinctive factor that led to the six month occupation of Veracruz. Seven Sailors were sent to port to acquire oil for the ship that they were assigned to, the USS Dolphin. The mission was previously coordinated by the Navy leadership but there was a misunderstanding within the Mexican forces guarding the port. Upon arrival, soon after the Sailors had unloaded some of the oil cans to the dock, they were confronted by the muzzles of Mexican rifles. Neither the Sailors nor the Mexicans spoke each others language, so the Sailors were apprehended and taken to the troop's headquarters. When the Mexican force leadership realized the mistake they immediately released the Sailors. The Americans were looking for any reason to intercede in the Mexican Civil War and in turn Rear Admiral Henry T. Mayo demanded that the Mexicans draft a formal apology and raise the American flag to render a 21-gun salute immediately. General Huerta complied with a written

apology but refused to raise the American flag on Mexican soil. Admiral Mayo was infuriated and President Wilson was inspired to ask congress for an armed invasion. The United States occupation of Veracruz had begun.

President Wilson ordered the occupation of the Mexican Customs office based on an intelligence report of a weapons shipment that was soon to arrive for General Huerta's forces. A shipment of American made Remington rifles had been sent to Mexico via Hamburg, Germany to mask the origin of the distributor. On the morning of 21 April, 1914 the U.S. fleet began the bombardment of Veracruz to prep the battlefield for the ground force to follow and occupy. Since the majority of the Mexican forces were busy fighting the Mexican Revolution there were no real trained Soldiers to resist the U.S. occupation. Some cadets that were going to the naval academy were dispatched to try to thwart the American presence. Civilians were issued rifles and ammunition to also try to dispel the foreign occupation. The conflict was finished by 24 April except for some pockets of resistance and random sniper fire. The Mexican people had to resort to guerilla tactics as a last ditch effort to maintain their homeland.

The U.S. forces had succeeded in the occupation of Veracruz in the absence of any type of security within the city. The embargo was completely successful and a primary contributor to the victory. In the early nineteen hundreds any enemy would take threats or sanctions to a sovereign nation seriously compared to modern subversion of rules by aligned countries. Some of the issues that were uncovered during the skirmish would initiate policy within the United States. Evidence of the selling of weapons to potential enemies of the United States created legislature in the government to stop this treacherous dealing with our adversaries. In the future American corporations would be severely punished for such dealings that were uncovered. The occupation of Veracruz also stimulated new doctrine within the military in regards to the

occupation of Latin American countries and the idea of full spectrum operations. Clearly the plans that were masterfully generated for the numerous possible scenarios within the Mexican nation were put to good use.

On 30 April the Naval occupation force in Veracruz was relieved by Army forces. Major General Frederick Funston was in charge of the occupation. Even though the General had quite a bit of experience with war and leadership, this was like no other assignment he had ever undertaken previously. He was heading towards the end of his career at this time and began to show sensitivity towards the native people. General Funston struggled with the local refusal to work for the Americans because of the possibility of retribution from the old government once they would leave. Even after he cleaned the city and established a well oiled machine of want versus need for the city, he was never able to gain the respect and loyalty of the Mexican people. The cultural differences were too many and too vast to consider the mission a success. On 23 November after the coalition of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile had mediated the exit of U.S. forces, General Funston and his men left Veracruz. Soon after the dismissal of American forces the city was back to its previous state of disease and disarray.

The American forces were not willing to adapt to the populations culture or even consider that what they were doing may be negligible to a successful outcome. In their arrogance they missed any real reason for the lack of caring by the locals for their own well being. Whenever the U.S. military would inject themselves into any country during this time frame they would always attempt to force the western way of life onto people that had spent sometimes centuries living their own culture. The audacious nature of a Navy Admiral was what started the whole messy situation. The U.S. leadership at the time was looking for any reason to attempt to stabilize the Mexican Revolution because of the impact on the southwestern states within the

union. Ultimately, the removal of U.S. military forces sent the region back into the normal life routine of the residents and all successes reverted back to the original state of unrest, dilapidation, and disease. How much money was wasted on this failed occupation?

Iraq

The ground war started on 20 March, 2003 and continues to this day. The original premise was that Saddam Hussein was producing weapons of mass destruction in direct violation of the United Nations Security Council agreement of 1991 from the first Gulf War. There were also allegations of human rights violations and support or harboring of international terrorists. The initial invasion was a complete success even with a few little hiccoughs enroute to Bagdad. Two of the main issues were with the 507th Maintenance Company and the operational pause to wait for the logistical elements to catch up to the front lines. Once Bagdad fell and Saddam had disappeared into the population the main issue was how to secure the battle space. The conventional battle was over and President Bush declared victory after landing in an aircraft on the deck of USS Abraham Lincoln. It became evident soon after that security of the key positions and terrain was not handled properly with the number of forces utilized in the invasion. Soon after the government was dismantled Al'qaeda placed international emphasis on fighting the infidels in Iraq. The flood of insurgents into the region caused mass chaos to the point of making it almost impossible to secure any of the major cities within the borders. The leadership continued to fight the battle within Iraq with limited success. Saddam Hussein was captured in a spider hole soon after on 13 December, 2003.

The problems were stacking up for the American troops. One of the main situations that occurred within the realm of responsibility was the prison scandal at Abu Ghraib. Suddenly the phrase of "hearts and minds" became the new mission for the U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We were failing in the media and the actions of the few became the norm in the television society. The people of Iraq became outraged at the conduct of the Military Police Unit in control of the renowned prison. This was the prison where Saddam Hussein had citizens tortured and mutilated at his convenience. A mass number of people were unemployed and too poor to provide for their family resulting in the beginning of the business of insurgency. The guerilla tactics of the locals, militias, and the insurgents became the business that the Americans needed to isolate and destroy. Until it was decided to create a surge and actually secure the country, the violence was continuous and progressive. Multitudes of explosive devices were detonated every day to kill and maim American servicemen.

Eventually the surge became a reality and the country was secured. It was not a perfect result but it was progress to let the Iraqi government actually try to take charge and get organized to eventually take over all aspects of sovereignty. The military leadership became aware of the battle within the media and the criticality of straight-talk with the citizens funding the war. The American people were not longer willing to accept part of the story or a slice of the pie when it comes to the men and women in uniform. Deception was uncovered almost immediately after the facts of any incident and then the damage control became the eight hundred pound gorilla. The Secretary of Defense eventually was forced to resign because of the cover-ups and incidents within the country that were leading to unrest with the local population. Also the initial failure to secure the country and the dismissal of advice from the Generals leading the military at the time caused the unfavorable opinion of the Secretary of Defense. Lately the mission only gets press coverage when someone dies or the Department of Defense front loads a story of interest.

Cultural Comparisons

The similarities between the occupation of Veracruz and the ongoing situation in Iraq are vast. Both incidents were started based on a false assumption or hidden agenda. President Wilson wanted to get involved with the Mexican Revolution because he thought they were eventually going to harm the American way. President Bush wanted to get involved in Iraq for reasons that we may never know. It has been said that he was upset that Saddam Hussein plotted to kill his father and even that he had planned the invasion prior to even being elected. Allegations of altering intelligence to achieve the end-state have also been addressed. The future will tell us more than we know now. The people of Veracruz were patriotic and did not realize that they had such problems with their country. The same was true with most Iraqis. If you do not have what an average American has you will never miss it or expect to achieve that life standard. In our arrogance to help these populations we blew past what the inhabitants may have wanted and force upon them what we deemed necessary and right. People have to want to make life better and become more self-sufficient for their own benefit and not to suit the international community.

Veracruz was one of the first times the United States Military was forced to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The people and few resources of the city of Veracruz were no match for the superior force structure and resources of the United States Navy. Therefore, the small contingents of resistance within the city had to adapt to guerilla tactics to address the unwanted taking of their homes. The effort was not sustained and approximately six months later the U.S. military left. In Iraq the speed and precision of the operations to overthrow the government and all its military forces created a huge vacuum for all the insurgents to capitalize on. After the occupation we transferred into nation building operations and ultimately had to conform to the insurgency with our counterinsurgency operations. The people believed that they

were better off when Saddam Hussein was in power than after the Americans disbanded the military and government. The insurgency became organized and maintained a structure with methods that surprisingly countered all of our endeavors. They were shockingly successful at their attempts to cripple the most feared super power in the world.

Currently the mission in Iraq is a success story and a complete change from years past. The political struggle within the United States has become the most apparent story when the topic of Iraq is addressed. The total cost of the mission and the future costs of the occupation are constantly debated within our government buildings. The thought that the Army will eventually break because of the operational tempo plagues us within the media and every personnel briefing we receive. Our reenlistment rates are holding steady for now but not without challenges. Bonuses have been implemented to coerce Soldiers to stay in the Army to support the Global War on Terror. We do not know when the money will run out or the people will become complacent with the current issues worldwide.

Conclusion

The comparison of Veracruz and Iraq creates an understanding of how much history actually does rhyme in certain aspects when you lay out the methods or terms of battle. Our persistent need to fix a culture or society within the world dynamic remains to be one of our biggest weaknesses. Until we have grown in our own culture to the level of understanding required to compliment free thought rather than create international stigma we should not inject ourselves into situations that we do not comprehend. If we would simply take a step back and see things for what they really are and not place the American spin on everything we would be a much more respected nation. Ultimately we are doomed to repeat the history we created when we lose our sense of responsibility to the people of the country we are engaged with and to our

own people. Until American politicians regain the proper moral base and ethical premise that they work for and represent the people of the United States, our country will collapse into a never ending downward spiral.

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