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**OPERATION *IRAQI FREEDOM*: AN OPERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO
COMPLETE THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF *DESERT STORM***

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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16 May 2003

Abstract

This paper will show that Operation *Iraqi Freedom*'s operational success makes good the strategic shortcomings of *Desert Storm* and positions the United States and its coalition partners favorably to achieve policy goals in the region. To put this argument in perspective, the shortcomings of the first Gulf War, which occurred despite a stunning operational victory, will be examined. Next, although major military operations in Iraq have only recently concluded, several operationally significant military lessons learned during the first Gulf War were applied in the recent conflict. These lessons and their impact will be reviewed. Finally, arguments will be offered regarding the future posture best suited to achieve regional security goals.

**OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM: AN OPERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO
COMPLETE THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF DESERT STORM**

The guilty have more to fear from war than the innocents. . . Let tyrants fear.

George W. Bush, “Speech aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*.”

President George W. Bush, while declaring military success following the most recent conflict in Iraq, has left little doubt as to the resiliency of his policy of preemption announced in the *National Security Strategy* in 2002.¹ War, or the threat of war, will be a prominent implement in the toolbox of statecraft in the future. Given the speed and relative low cost of Operation *Iraqi Freedom*—in terms of collateral damage and the scant American and coalition casualties—preemption seems an attractive alternative. However, this apparent shift in policy causes concern for others. Resultantly the United States is at a crossroads in the region, and the outcome of the current war and subsequent peace effort will set the stage for America’s future in the Gulf area and the surrounding region. U.S. credibility and commitment to the region are at stake. Moderate and liberal Arab nations look to the United States to promote regional security—a view shared by the industrialized nations of the world dependent on Gulf oil. Various fundamental Islamic factions pose unique and paradoxical problems for the United States. American military presence is viewed by many Arabs and Muslims with disdain and mistrust, and the presence of American forces over the long-term could have a destabilizing effect. This is evidenced by the considerable following of al Qaeda and its sympathetic supporters. The United States as the guarantor of regional security and as the remaining world superpower is viewed with increasing skepticism. Relationships with long-standing allies have been tested. A common outlook is that the United States is a nation emboldened to act on its own interests

¹ U.S. President, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, (Washington, D.C.: September 2002), 15.

seemingly without regard for the concerns of other nations. It is uncertain at present how the world will react both short-term and long-term to the apparent policy of preemption.

The foundation to understanding Operation *Iraqi Freedom* requires an examination of the first Gulf War. The limited nature of that conflict failed to achieve or promote long-term peace in the region, setting the stage for the current war. Further, it can be argued the presence of coalition forces required by the intransigent nature of Saddam following *Desert Storm* and his unwillingness to yield to United Nation's demands exacerbated regional security issues in the Persian Gulf following Operation *Desert Storm*. However, the unlimited nature of the current conflict, resulting in the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, offers both challenges and opportunities for the immediate and long-term future.²

This paper will show that Operation *Iraqi Freedom*'s operational success makes good the strategic shortcomings of *Desert Storm* and positions the United States and its coalition partners favorably to achieve policy goals in the region. To put this argument in perspective, the shortcomings of the first Gulf War, which occurred despite a stunning operational victory, will be examined. Next, although major military operations in Iraq have only recently concluded, several operationally significant military lessons learned during the first Gulf War were applied in the recent conflict. These lessons and their impact will be reviewed. Finally, arguments will be offered regarding the future posture best suited to achieve regional security goals.

² David Kaiser, "Introduction to Clausewitz," Lecture. U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 18 November 2002. Limited and unlimited wars are defined during the presentation of the curriculum of the Strategy and Policy Department based on Clausewitz' general description of war in his treatise On War. Unlimited

Operation *Desert Storm* – A Limited Effort to Garner a Lasting Peace

The first Gulf War commenced with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 1 August 1990. International condemnation of Iraq's abhorrent behavior was quick and nearly universal. Within days, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) implemented Resolutions 660 and 661. UNSC Resolution 660 was passed on 2 August 1990, condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and calling for the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces and the settlement of the underlying disputes between Iraq and Kuwait by negotiated settlement.³ Three days later on 6 August 1990, the UNSC acted again, passing Resolution 661 calling for economic sanctions against Iraq.⁴ Based on the above, President George Bush crafted four principles to guide United States policy in the aftermath of the Iraq takeover of Kuwait:

First, we seek the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, Kuwait's legitimate government must be restored to replace the puppet regime. And third, my administration, as has been the case with every President since Franklin Roosevelt, is committed to the security and stability of the Gulf. And fourth, I am determined to protect the lives of American citizens abroad.⁵

war requires the "overthrow of the enemy" or the complete submission of the enemy. Limited wars are fought over any lesser goal. Clausewitz does not explicitly refer to these exact terms.

³ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 660, Condemning the Invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, S.C. res. 660, 45 U.N. SCOR at 19, U.N. Doc.S/RES/660 (1990), passed 2 August 1990. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 14-0 with Yemen abstaining. The dispute between Iraq and Kuwait centered on the repayment of loans between the nations during the Iran/Iraq War, alleged slant drilling of oilfields, and possession of the offshore islands of Wafrah and Bubiyan.

⁴ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 661, Imposition of Economic Sanctions on Iraq, S.C. res. 661, 45 U.N. SCOR at 19, U.N. Doc.S/RES/661 (1990), passed 6 August 1990. The resolution passed by a 13-0 margin, with Yemen and Cuba abstaining.

⁵ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, (New York: Vintage, 1998), 340. Dalbey in his work, "The March to Baghdad: Did We Stop Too Soon?" Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1997 further distills additional military objectives from the U.S. Central Command's perspective. The Central Command mission statement, an obvious analysis of National Command Authority policy and deliberation, details the following key tasks: 1) Neutralize Iraqi National Command Authority, 2) Eject Iraqi Armed Forces from Kuwait, 3) Destroy the Republican Guard, 4) As early as possible, destroy Iraq's ballistic missile, weapons of mass destruction capability, and 5) Assist in the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait. Unarguably during Operation *Desert Storm* tasks 2 and 5 were accomplished. Task 1 was accomplished but to what degree. This task was perhaps too ambiguous. Task 3 was not accomplished by Central Command, and task 4 became the catalyst for Operation *Iraqi Freedom*.

Working skillfully and in conjunction with key allies, President Bush was able to forge a diverse alliance with traditional European allies and with critical and influential Middle East leaders. Most notable among these leaders were Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. Gorbachev's cooperation was essential because of the historic role the Soviet Union had played in supplying military equipment and training to the Iraqis. Also of concern was the fear of a Soviet Veto in the UNSC, potentially dampening any major diplomatic efforts. King Fahd's support was critical because Saudi terrain, facilities, and support were essential in introducing and sustaining coalition forces. The role of Mubarak was particularly noteworthy, and it was his efforts which unified Arab nations against Saddam. An Arab summit held on 10 August 1990, led by Mubarak, reached an agreement to send troops to defend Saudi Arabia against Iraqi aggression. Mubarak expressed to President Bush the reason for his success, indicating that the fact the Americans had pushed diplomacy first was vital.⁶

Fearing that sanctions imposed by the UNSC and the defense of Saudi Arabia might not be enough to convince Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait, U.S. policy makers began to contemplate a forcible expulsion. Again using the United Nations to send the message, the growing coalition was successful in ensuring UNSC Resolution 678 was passed on 29 November 1990 authorizing "all member states cooperating with the Government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before 15 January 1991 fully implements [the resolutions] . . . to use all necessary means to uphold and implement . . . [all those resolutions] and to restore international peace and security in the area."⁷

⁶ Ibid, 344. Twelve of 21 nations attending supported Mubarak's initiative.

⁷ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 678, Authorization for the Use of Force to Implement Resolution 660, S.C. res. 678, 45 U.N. SCOR at 19, U.N. Doc.S/RES/678 (1990), passed 29 November 1990.

The consistent use of the United Nations to assist in implementing the desires of the coalition was precedent setting—a double-edged precedent which did not escape the President. Although he personally believed that a UN resolution was not necessary to restore Kuwaiti sovereignty, he forged ahead using the UN for “political cover.” This unifying ploy was useful in keeping the Soviets “on board” and demonstrating that the United States was using all means to resolve the issue peacefully. However, the first President Bush realized that a potentially negative precedent would be set as well—an ironic precedent by extension that his son would live with during the second war with Iraq. He stated: “. . . we had set an expectation that we should request authority [from the UN] again when it came to use force to implement the original resolutions.”⁸

While the various UNSC resolutions reflected the publicly known desires of the American administration’s stated policy objectives, there were other issues being debated behind close doors. Specifically, should coalition forces broaden the war by striking Iraqi targets outside Kuwait and in Iraq proper? What level of destruction of Iraqi forces was desirable? And what would be the implication of destroying significant portions of Iraqi forces on the subsequent regional balance of power with Iran? Finally, what should be done about Saddam Hussein? Clearly, the dictator in Iraq was *persona non grata* from the American perspective. By executive order, assassination was not an option, but what other measures might prove fruitful in limiting the stranglehold Saddam had on his nation? By this time, Saddam Hussein was determined by the administration to be the strategic center of gravity, yet the fragility of the coalition and an existing U.S. Presidential Executive Order limited taking action directed at him personally.⁹ Ultimately, it was decided to target the Republican Guard Forces Command, the most loyal and

⁸ Bush and Scowcroft, 416.

⁹ U.S. President, Executive Order, “United States Intelligence Activities,” Code of Federal Regulations, 1981 Compilation and Parts 100 and 101 (1 January 1982), 12333. E.O. 12333 of 4 December 1981, para-

best trained of the Iraqi forces, for destruction. As the operational center of gravity, it was felt that destroying the Republican Guard forces would significantly weaken Saddam and possibly lead to his ouster without denuding Iraq of ground forces and unfavorably altering the balance of power in the region vis-à-vis Iran. Scowcroft summarized the dilemma facing the administration:

We could not make it [the ouster of Saddam] a formal goal of the coalition, since it was well beyond the bounds of the UN resolutions guiding us. It might also split the coalition. If the United States made it an objective unilaterally, and declared it as such, we would be in a difficult bind politically and operationally. We would be committing ourselves – alone – to removing one regime and installing another, and, if the Iraqis themselves did not take matters into their own hands, we would be facing an indefinite occupation of a hostile state and some dubious ‘nation-building.’¹⁰

Scowcroft’s appreciation for the situation still resonates today and is a well-founded concern of the present undertaking in Iraq.

While the first Gulf war coalition framed the problem and objectives of the upcoming conflict in nearly flawless fashion, there were some overlooked issues on the part of Central Command. Employment of theater ballistic missiles by Iraq was anticipated at all levels. While militarily SCUD missiles were of questionable significance, even if tipped with WMD warheads, politically those weapons could have unfavorably affected the unity of the coalition.¹¹ Launched into Israel, the SCUDs could have potentially broken the coalition along ethnic lines by forcing the Israelis to respond and creating an unpalatable situation domestically for many of the Arab nations. Iraq cleverly employed this tactic by provoking Israel on 18 January 1991, launching

graph 2.11. signed by President Ronald Reagan prohibits the United States Government or parties acting on behalf of the United States Government to conspire toward or conduct assassination.

¹⁰ Ibid, 432-3. Additionally National Security Directive 54 of 15 January 1991, entitled “Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf,” reserved the right for the President to “replace the current leadership of Iraq” should Iraqi forces employ WMD, support terror, or destroy Kuwait’s oil fields. This document was declassified in 1997. For whatever reason, President Bush decided not to invade Iraq and remove Saddam from power despite the destruction of the Kuwaiti oil fields.

¹¹ H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, (New York: Bantam, 1993), 484.

from five to seven conventional SCUD missiles into Israel. Only deft diplomacy by Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, Secretary of State James Baker and his deputy Lawrence Eagleburger, and the President averted an Israeli response in 1990, saving the coalition from fracture.¹² This threat continued to plague American decision makers throughout the first war and required a disproportionate amount of aviation sorties in an effort to ameliorate this threat.

The role of airpower and ground warfare and the relationship between the two in Operation *Desert Storm* posed challenges for policy makers and would ultimately have repercussions for the second Gulf War. Expectations about the effectiveness of airpower varied significantly. Secretary of State Baker, airpower advocates, and many in the coalition hoped that airpower by itself would be decisive causing Saddam to submit and leave Kuwait. While airpower was specifically tasked to destroy Iraqi aviation and air defenses, command and control and communications facilities, and to soften up Iraqi military forces, many felt that given enough time air power could achieve all the goals of the conflict and limit friendly casualties significantly.¹³

Others, including National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, the President, and Defense Secretary Cheney had their doubts. They feared that airpower would not be decisive and would only increase diplomatic options available to Iraq, potentially allowing Saddam to claim victory by standing up to the coalition and allowing him to retreat to Iraq with most of his forces intact.¹⁴ Furthermore, Saddam also used errant bombs and collateral damage to highlight the indiscriminate nature of aerial warfare, holding up the suffering of innocent Iraqi civilians as a scheme to gain international support for ceasing the hostilities short of achieving stated coalition goals. The press actively played to these concerns, underscoring any civilian casualties incidental to

¹² Bush and Scowcroft, 451-3.

¹³ Ibid, 463.

coalition bombing and also portraying the dangers inherent in ground combat. Flame trenches, mines and Republican Guard forces were built up as insurmountable obstacles confronting coalition ground formations. Further, the time involved in a deliberate and extensive aerial operation clearly could take a toll, slowly weakening domestic public resolve and international support for the war and negating any chance of destroying the operational center of gravity, the Republican Guard, and thus lessening the concomitant effects on Saddam.

Diplomatic initiatives to end hostilities by the United Nations, France, and particularly the Soviet Union prior to the 15 January 1991 deadline and during the air phase of the operation proved problematic for the President. These initiatives could have potentially derailed coalition efforts prior to achieving the military objectives. During these periods, Soviet peace overtures became more prevalent. Gorbachev, probably under pressure from conservatives in the government and also to placate concerns by the significant Muslim population in the USSR, sent his Foreign Minister, Yevgeni Primakov, to Iraq on 9 February 1991 for a late diplomatic mission. Gorbachev also feared that the United States would change the scope of the war beyond the UN resolutions by launching a massive invasion into Iraq.¹⁵ This was a tremendously perplexing problem for a U.S. administration that wanted to be viewed as exhausting all means necessary short of force but that also understood the threat that strong Iraqi military forces posed in the region.

The concern that a diplomatic solution would hamper achieving policy goals would prove to be prescient. The ultimate failure to destroy the Republican Guard forces and other significant

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, 468. It should be noted here that Eduard Shevardnadze had just resigned as Foreign Minister and was replaced by Primakov. Secretary of State Baker and Shevardnadze had seen nearly eye-to-eye on how to handle the problem with Iraq. Primakov's approach was considerably more conservative and hardline. At this point, President Bush expressed real concerns about the sustainability and reliability of Soviet support for coalition efforts.

ground forces would confound the next two presidents and would result in the establishment of numerous measures and deployments enacted over a twelve year period in an attempt to contain Iraq. President Bush, on learning that Iraq might possibly agree to the terms of UNSC Resolution 660 on 14 February 1991 prior to a coalition ground invasion, expressed his feelings in a personal diary entry: “Instead of feeling exhilarated, my heart sank.”¹⁶ Diplomacy at this late stage was not a solution to the problem, but only served to defer any long-term prospects for regional security.

President Bush was successful in holding off these late diplomatic efforts to forestall or preclude a ground invasion. This success afforded the coalition an opportunity to destroy Iraqi forces occupying Kuwait and the Republican Guard forces bolstering the forward defenses. However, the war concluded before all Republican Guard forces were destroyed.

This premature conclusion of the war has been the source of great controversy. One of the biggest questions since the war concluded has been, “did the war end too soon?” As has been discussed, the coalition received its mandate from the UN. Reaching beyond the straightforward objectives of the prior UNSCRs would likely strain the coalition to the breaking point. However, criticism of stopping short of destruction of the Republican Guard forces is fair and warrants examination. In retrospect, the picture at the operational level regarding the destruction of committed Iraqi forces in theater was not clear.¹⁷ Additionally, the scheme of maneuver selected essentially drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait instead of trapping those forces as intended. The arguably flawed coalition scheme of maneuver coupled with the early termination of ground combat permitted the escape of the majority of conventional and Republican Guard forces in

¹⁶ Ibid, 471.

¹⁷ Schwarzkopf, 535-540.

Kuwait and Southern Iraq.¹⁸ Consequently, in hindsight, flaws to the ground scheme of maneuver are now readily apparent.

Finally, a review of the shortcomings of the first Gulf War would not be complete without examining the means of influencing public perception of the war both domestically and abroad. While it was clear American support for the war was high, the expectations of the American public were also high and were misread by decision-makers. With over 500,000 American servicemen and women committed to the theater in the greatest deployment of U.S. military might since Vietnam, a clean and overwhelming victory was anticipated.¹⁹ The goals of limited war were not readily understood by the average American citizen, leaving many to ponder why the United States did not finish the job. Saddam Hussein had been so vilified by the administration that there was an expectation among the general populace that he would fall. Likewise, many of the indigenous groups within Iraq (mainly the Kurdish minority and Shia majority) were bolstered by President Bush's hope that the Iraqi people would depose Saddam. These segments of the population believed they had implicit support from the United States to stage a rebellion. Consequently, this set the stage for an unanticipated complex humanitarian relief operation in both southern and northern Iraq.²⁰ Ultimately, this oversight would result in the implementation

¹⁸ Essentially the ground scheme of maneuver called for an early attack by Marine and coalition forces into the heart of the Iraqi defenses arrayed around Kuwait. These forces, it was felt, would draw the operational reserves and operational center of gravity, the Republican Guard Forces Command, south into Kuwait. The synchronized plan then called for the coalition main effort, led by the U.S. Army VII Corps, to envelop Iraqi forces from the west cutting off the Republican Guard avenue of escape in the vicinity of Basra, south of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The Marine attack, instead of inducing an Iraqi counterattack southward, served as a piston driving Iraqi forces northward. The timing of the Marine attack relative to the main effort thus facilitated the escape of Iraqi forces. In hindsight, it can now be deduced that the committed Iraqi forces had little intention of fighting. The plan should have had the flexibility to permit the main attack simultaneous with or prior to the Marine attack.

¹⁹ Tom Curley, ed., "Despite U.S. Military Success, New War Policy Poses Risk," USA Today, (2-4 May 2003), 10A.

²⁰ John T. Fishel, Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue: War Termination and Desert Storm, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1992), ix.

of Operation *Provide Comfort* and subsequently Operations *Southern* and *Northern Watch*.²¹ (These operations, in essence, were the final phase of Operation *Desert Storm* and signified a change to a policy of containment of Iraq, which was to last until the commencement of Operation *Iraqi Freedom*).

Last, public perception among Arab nations was perhaps most critical and most disappointing. Saddam, by virtue of remaining in power, was able over a period of twelve years to portray himself as the Arab who had stood up to a vast and overwhelming coalition—a modern day Saladin. President Bush, in *A World Transformed*, described his frustration and prophetically set the stage for the battle his son would fight two administrations later:

The headlines are great – ‘We Win.’ The television accurately reflects the humiliation of Saddam Hussein and it drives the point home to the American people. But internationally, it’s not there yet, at least in the Arab world that has lined up with Saddam. He’s got to go. . .²²

Operation *Iraqi Freedom* – From the Failure of Containment to Unlimited War

The calculus and patience for the containment strategy of Iraq ebbed with the al Qaeda attacks of 11 September 2001. American presence, instead of being a stabilizing factor was increasingly viewed among many nations as a destabilizing influence and a catalyst for action by radical Islamists. A rising population of young, often unemployed males and the petroleum-based “single source” economies of most of the nations offered precariously balanced governments little margin for error in maintaining control, especially when awash with fundamentalist rhetoric denouncing the American presence. Not only was the policy of

²¹ Operation *Provide Comfort* was the complex humanitarian relief operation in northeast Iraq providing support and relief to the Kurds. *Southern/Northern Watch* were operations sponsored by the United States, Britain and France enforcing a no-fly zone with the purpose to protect persecuted portions of the Iraqi populace. Later, enforcement of the no-fly zone would facilitate the maintenance of air superiority in Iraq and permit to a degree the simultaneous air and ground effort during Operation *Iraqi Freedom*.

²² Bush and Scowcroft, 486-7.

containment difficult because of the demands placed on the host nations, but also containment was costly in terms of the forces employed. Containment required committed forces, an ongoing rotation schedule, a degradation in training, and a drain on finite resources.²³

The policy of containment in Iraq was an outgrowth of the shortcomings of Operation *Desert Storm*. Colonel Richard Witherspoon, the Director of the Strategic Studies Institute, in the foreword of Stephen Pelletiere's monograph entitled, *Managing Strains in the Coalition: What to do about Saddam?*, describes the contest of wills between Iraq and the nations representing the remnants of the 1991 coalition. He notes that the international community and, specifically, the coalition partners imposed onerous measures to contain and modify Iraq's behavior, attempting to coerce compliance with the agreement signed at the end of the Gulf War.²⁴ Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath regime simply opted to outlast the coalition. This "test of wills" pitted the "discipline" of the Ba'ath party, a regime unconcerned with the welfare of its people, squarely against the frail nature of a coalition dwindling in influence amidst a world environment of waning interest. Witherspoon also describes a "tightrope of objectives" surrounding the policy of containing Iraq. On the one hand the U.S. sought to undermine Saddam's regime, while the other hand it used Iraq as a foil to suppress Iran's regional interests and influence. Likewise, U.S. policy sought to protect the Kurds from Iraq, while at the same time assuaging Turkey's concern for an independent Kurdish state.²⁵

The difficulty in breaking the will of the Iraqi government and its people is difficult for non-Iraqis to comprehend. Pelletiere describes this phenomenon. He makes an analogy with the

²³ Anthony C. Zinni, "United States Policy in the Gulf," *RUSI*, 144, no. 4 (August 1999), 47-8.

²⁴ Richard Witherspoon, foreword to *Managing Strains in the Coalition: What to do about Saddam*, by Stephen Pelletiere (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1996), iii. Those measures have included economic sanctions, an oil embargo, a northern and southern no-fly zone and a Kurdish protectorate in the northeast corner of the nation.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

state of Iraq being a living vertebrate, with the “flesh” being the state itself. Saddam and the sadistic Ba’ath regime were the “skeleton” and sinew holding the flesh together. Further, he outlines the cultural differences (Kurds, Sunnis, and Shia) resident in the society of Iraq and the predatory nature of its neighbors, notably Iran. He infers that a strong hand is required to hold the country together. Iraqis intrinsically know and accept this situation.

Despite Saddam’s death grip on his country, breaking the will of the leader was possible; but in this particular instance, the effort fell short. Militarily, with the exception of failing to destroy the Republican Guard, Operation *Desert Storm* was executed to near perfection. Other components of power failed to adequately complement the military effort. Wojdakowski described the relationship of the military to other elements of power in conflict termination:

. . . clearly terminating the military conflict does not equate to achieving all strategic aims. There seems to be an unfinished political, economic, and diplomatic situation [in the Iraq conflict]. Conflict termination can only set the stage for the post-conflict activities when other forms of power must once again be used. When other means have failed, military power is exerted to ‘control’ the situation, and then other means are again tried.²⁶

Over the period of twelve years when containment was the policy goal of the coalition, the will to support the sanctions imposed by the UN diminished. Nations previously supporting the coalition willfully undercut the integrity of the sanctions to better their positions in the region. China stands out in this regard.²⁷ Moreover, French and German corporations are suspected of having transferred advanced technology to Iraq facilitating the construction of WMD. Clearly

²⁶ Walter Wojdakowski, “Conflict Termination: Integrating the Elements of Power in Today’s Changing World,” (unpublished thesis, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1993), 9.

²⁷ Shibley Telhami and Fiona Hill, “Does Saudi Arabia Still Matter?” *Foreign Affairs*, (November-December 2002), 167. China currently imports 60 percent of its oil from the Persian Gulf. It is anticipated this figure will increase to 90 percent by 2020. China has embarked on several initiatives to secure adequate petroleum resources to fuel its growth and development in the future. Several projects stand out. The first is an investment in Iran to support energy exploration. This has also been coupled with attempts to secure the rights of oil resources in Iraq. From a regional perspective, China has partnered with Russia and four Central Asian states forming the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with a goal to gain access to Caspian Basin energy resources.

without the support of the other elements of power—economic, political, informational, and diplomatic—the military was unlikely to achieve the policy goals in this or any conflict.

Diplomatic efforts were attempted before *Iraqi Freedom* began, and coalition members actively solicited support for regime change in Iraq. Citing the failure of Saddam to fully live up to the cease-fire agreement following Operation *Desert Storm*, the coalition strove to again garner support from the UN. On 8 November 2002, the UNSC passed resolution 1441 strengthening the weapons inspection process and offering Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with disarmament obligations.”²⁸ Support for enforcing the resolution floundered in a diplomatic morass leading to the use of force to ensure compliance.

Saddam’s unwillingness to fully account for the destruction of WMD and ballistic missiles and the failure of containment to achieve policy goals left few choices for the United States. Regime change seemed the only logical remaining option for dealing with a recalcitrant government in Iraq. However, regime change comes with a certain risk, as Pelletiere is quick to remind his readers. He warns that the United States’ apparent successor regime to the Ba’ath party, the Iraqi National Congress, is most likely not up to the challenge, lacking both the ruthless hand and the credibility necessary to gain and maintain control and will very likely be viewed with skepticism among an intensely nationalistic and proud people.²⁹

Since major combat operations in Iraq have only just been completed, detailed analyses of “lessons learned” are only now being written.³⁰ Several newspaper editorials have offered opinions regarding the overwhelming success of the “shock and awe” campaign in Iraq. Among

²⁸ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1441, Iraqi Disarmament Regime, S.C. res. 1441, 57 U.N. SCOR at 19, U.N. Doc.S/RES/1441 (2002), passed 8 November 2002. The resolution passed by a vote of 15-0.

²⁹ Stephen C. Pelletiere, *Managing Strains in the Coalition: What to do about Saddam*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1996), 17-8.

³⁰ Anthony Cordesman at CSIS has begun formulating lessons learned at http://www.csis.org/features/iraq_instantlessons.pdf Accessed 14 May 2003.

those editorials was a piece appearing in *USA Today* on 2 May 2003. The newspaper compared some aspects of the 1991 war with the present conflict. Several positive lessons were cited, including the planning effort, the flexibility of the plan, the incorporation of a new “Rumsfield Doctrine,” and the media handling effort called “transparency.”³¹

Improvements in planning centered on the desire to limit both the duration of the conflict and the amount of friendly and innocent casualties. In both instances, the coalition was successful. While fratricide was still a concern, casualties, to date, have been amazingly light, with only 137 U.S. military deaths and between 2000-3000 civilian deaths. Contrasted to the 1991 war with 293 military deaths and between 2500-3000 civilian deaths, modest improvement was evident.³² Likewise, the current war toppled a regime and covered some 400 miles of vast desert in around three weeks time. Compared to the first war, with significantly shorter lines of operation and only four days of ground combat, the achievement of Operation *Iraqi Freedom* was all the more laudatory.

The sequencing of the operation also reflected a significant change in planning. Air and ground attacks were nearly simultaneous. This was operationally significant in that it saved time and also facilitated deception. The Iraqis were caught off guard and were clearly unprepared for the ground attack. Likely anticipating a repeat of *Desert Storm*, Iraqi leadership expected time to further work diplomatic initiatives. Given the vocal international and domestic clamor, the coalition could have been under extreme pressure to find a diplomatic solution short of regime change if a sustained aerial phase similar to the first war had been implemented.

The flexibility of the plan was also touted. In particular, much has been made about the planned attack from the north by the Army’s 4th Infantry Division and the inability of the

³¹ Curley, 10A.

³² Ibid.

coalition to work out with Turkey a suitable solution to their concerns about using Turkish bases to stage and support the war.³³ Undeterred, coalition planners found appropriate means to threaten the northern portions of Iraq, forcing Iraqi planners to maintain a presence in the north. These efforts included the late decision to move the 4th Infantry Division to the southern avenue of approach. Further, Iraqi forces in the north were held in check by Special Operations Forces and elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. These elements combined with air supremacy and the specter of a Kurdish revolt denied Iraq any opportunity for reinforcement to the south.

The simultaneous air and ground attack also limited the destruction Iraqi forces could impart to the environment, oil fields, and oil production facilities. The fallout from the first war, from both an environmental standpoint and lost oil revenues to Kuwait, was significant. During the present conflict, securing these facilities was the first order of business. As a result the southern fields were captured nearly intact; and the northern fields, although secured later than desired, where ultimately in coalition hands suffering no damage.

Similarly, the combined air and ground attacks perhaps precluded the Iraqi use of WMD and limited the employment of ballistic missiles. Reports at present indicate that none of the longer-range missiles were used. No SCUDs have been found to date, and the missiles that were fired were short-range tactical variants or “jury-rigged” anti-ship cruise missiles modified for surface-to-surface attack. Iraqi missiles only impacted in Kuwait and Iraq. None were successfully launched against Israel, Turkey, or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia precluding a diplomatic flap over spreading the war to nations wary of the coalition prosecution of the war.

The new so called “Rumsfeld Doctrine,” avoiding futile diplomacy, was also a significant departure from the past.³⁴ Despite the efforts of long-time allies France and Germany to check

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

any coalition invasion and the failure of the U.S. and Britain to garner UN support for war, the coalition pressed ahead with great fortitude armed with a policy of preemption. It is too early at this point to fully judge the wisdom of disregarding international consensus, but it is also difficult to argue with the military success achieved thus far. The advantages of ignoring international and domestic rancor are readily apparent. No doubt this is a lesson learned by the first President Bush and not lost on the current administration. However, the long-term effects of working outside of the sanction of the international community remain to be seen.

“Transparency,” or an improved media plan, was also a key component of the Iraq war and a lesson learned from Operations *Desert Shield and Desert Storm*.³⁵ In the aftermath of the first war, many in the media decried the military’s handling of the press. It was argued that the “pooling” of the media lent itself to manipulation by the military. Compounding this perception was the failure to positively influence of the world population beyond the borders of the United States and its key allies, most notably the Middle Eastern nations. As a consequence, the decision was made to “embed” reporters with military units and have those journalists report real-time to the world. Initial information indicates some success with this undertaking. The media was able to relay first-hand the valiant efforts, frustration, professionalism, and sense of mission of the coalition forces. More importantly, it was readily evident the care the service men and women took to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties and collateral damage. Yet, what is not apparent is how the world population will view the motives of the coalition. The “proof will be in the pudding,” and the actions of the coalition governments in garnering a lasting and meaningful peace in the region will be the litmus test in the eyes of the world.

Challenges and Options for the Future

With major military operations declared complete by President George W. Bush on 1 May 2003, Operation *Iraqi Freedom* entered a new phase—a phase of nation-building in the short-term and a search for regional security in the long-term.³⁶ The position of the United States in the region offers unique opportunity for realizing both of these goals. Yet, there is also great anxiety. Nations in the Middle East wonder about America’s staying power. How will the disposition and basing of coalition forces affect regional security? Other nations, particularly long-time allies, worry about American hegemony. Potential competitors worry about the United States being in control of the vast natural resources in the Persian Gulf. States ruled by despots in search of equalizing weapons of mass destruction speculate if they are next in the line of march of President Bush. Will this worry cause these nations to abandon the development of WMD, or will it cause those nations to accelerate their efforts? The actions of the United States and its coalition partners in the future will answer many of these questions.

From a geopolitical standpoint, the coalition is in a strong position. With the current force levels deployed, the rebuilding of Iraq, an already well developed and cosmopolitan nation, should be accomplished relatively quickly. Additionally, this rebuilding effort can be accomplished on the Iraqi “dime,” using that nation’s own vast energy resources to pay a preponderance of the costs. More importantly though, the current coalition occupation of Iraq drives a wedge between Syria and Iran and is a juggernaut aimed squarely at the Central Asian area. Already, evidence is apparent that Syria is “cowing” to coalition demands; and Iran, although a more difficult problem, is for the time being isolated. Moreover, recent changes in

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ George W. Bush, “Presidential Address Given to the Crew of the USS *Abraham Lincoln*,” Speech, afloat off the coast of Southern California: 1 May 2003.

the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, coupled with the bold action of the coalition, show promise in enhancing negotiations between Israel and Palestine.³⁷

Former National Security Advisor “Sandy” Berger, in testimony before Congress on 7 February 2002, advocated a strong presence of U.S. Forces in the region. He viewed the greatest threat to regional security as being the impact of radical Islamic fundamentalists. Further, he indicated that not only was the United States the victim of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, but that it was the instrument of a greater attack levied on the moderate and friendly governments of the Western-leaning Middle Eastern states. In essence, violence on the part of the radicals is being used to extort political reforms in the region’s pro-Western nations. Berger proposed a policy of continued presence in Southwest Asia offering to “show as much staying power as firepower.”³⁸ Although Berger was not clear on exactly what staying power means, he implied that continued forward presence of military forces in the region is critical. Interestingly he also supported democratic reforms and a slow move toward a more diversified economy with Western nations assisting with the change.

Contrasting with this point of view would be those who would abandon presence in the area, at least within certain states, and continue to contain regional threats. Already there is evidence of this because U.S. forces are moving from bases in Saudi Arabia to Qatar. This less active approach has some merit. Certainly it would for a time diffuse the arguments of the radical Islamists that Western culture is an insidious homogenizing blot slowing spreading its infectious ideas. Likewise, quality of life for deployed forces would be less of an issue. With the current

³⁷ William Kristol, Testimony before the U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, What’s Next in the War on Terrorism: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 107th Congress, 2nd Session, 7 February 2002, 12-3.

³⁸ Samuel R. Berger, Testimony before the U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, What’s Next in the War on Terrorism: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 107th Congress, 2nd Session, 7 February 2002, 1.

emphasis of deployed forces rightfully focused on force protection, the individual service member's life in the region resembles that of a minimum-security criminal. Although accommodations are lavish in some instances, freedom is severely curtailed because members in the armed forces are forced to live in near fortresses allowing little interaction with the locals.³⁹ Over time, this breeds discontentment on the part of the deployed servicemen and suspicion on the part of the citizens of the host nation. Michael Ignatieff highlights the tension between the continued presence of coalition forces in the region with the strain imposed on the host nations:

The cost, however, is that reducing base presence in these places [the Middle East in general, but particularly those nations most affected by fundamentalist elements] also reduces influence and potentially increases alienation. This is the well-known downside to reducing exposure to terrorist attack. Americans come to be regarded as a mysterious offshore presence, focused on weapons and discipline, not on making friends, not on making alliances, not on making local contact.⁴⁰

This leaves several choices for the United States and its coalition partners to adopt in an effort to secure lasting regional stability. The first option is for the United States to use its current strong position to insist on lasting reforms in the area. The military, in conjunction with other elements of power, could assist in building a region that is self-sustaining politically, economically and militarily. Democratic reforms are necessary throughout the region. Likewise, the dependence on a single source economy has made the House of Saud a "house of cards." The same is true for many of its neighbors. Building an independent and strong pro-Western region not only undercuts the rhetoric of the radical Islamists but also creates less demand on coalition forces, reduces costs associated with presence, and fosters a sense that the United States is a "team player" in the world community. General Anthony Zinni, former

³⁹ Sami G. Hajjar, U.S. Military Presence in the Gulf: Challenges and Prospects, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 29.

⁴⁰ Michael Ignatieff, "The Challenges of American Imperial Power," Naval War College Review 56, no. 2 (Spring 2003), 58.

Commander of the U.S. Central Command, favors a sub-regional collective security approach. He states: “There cannot be a reliance on us [the United States and its allies] to come in every situation and for us to handle every aspect of security.”⁴¹

The second option would be to continue to remain active in the region with military forces and to care take a vast and uncooperative “empire.” This unilateral approach may be successful in the short-term, but ultimately it would be exceedingly expensive and would place the United States at odds with many of its traditional allies. In the first Gulf War, the United States and its supporting coalition had broad support for its efforts. Friendly nations stood side-by-side with the United States in the conflict or actively provided needed financial support. The second Iraq war has been opposed diplomatically and over time may increasingly lead to the isolation of the United States in the world community. This isolation only invites competition to “balance” the perceived hegemonic leanings of the United States.

The first choice is preferable. The collective security option leaves the United States with the moral high ground and represents the founding principles of the nation. Less expensive, this option promotes a collective responsibility for the regional order, particularly since access to the world’s richest energy resource is not only a matter of U.S. interest but also a matter of world interest. More importantly though, by pursuing a collective security arrangement, the United States can remove any misconceptions about its ultimate intentions. Instead of being perceived as a rogue power, the United States can begin to re-form a new relationship with the UN. Undoubtedly, friction will continue to persist between the UN and the United States, but this friction can be useful. As long as the UN can serve as a forum and it can be perceived to moderate to a degree the actions of the United States, the chance of a peer competitor reaching

⁴¹ Zinni, 48. Regional security would consist of a formal alliance structure. Alliances would be sub-regional based on culture and geography. He sees specific sub-regions as nations bordering the Red Sea,

military parity with the United States can be lessened. Continuing to approach international problems without UN support will only lead to increased military and economic competition between the United States and other nations.

Common to both courses of action would be the need to implement an agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. In the past, the United States has attempted to de-link this concern from its policy in the Gulf with little success. According to Telhami and Hill, sixty-three percent of Saudi citizens rate the Arab-Israeli conflict as the number one issue affecting their lives.⁴² This concern is common with other Arab states and is a prime catalyst for continued instability in the region. The United States can show good faith with its Arab partners by turning up the pressure both on the Israelis to retreat from their expansion in the West Bank and by insisting the Palestinians abandon terror and seek a meaningful peace. Indications are that this is the intention of the current administration.⁴³

Finally the United States must embark on a “public diplomacy” effort to get its message across domestically and internationally, but most importantly to the nations of the Middle East. Unarguably the United States has had domestic support for pursuing the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Nation-building in Iraq will be a long and arduous task and the patience of the American populace will be tested before it is over. The Bush administration has already prepared the American public for this eventuality. Similarly the administration must redouble its efforts at convincing the Muslim world of its intentions in the region. Alternatives to the al-Jazeera network must be found. Arabs must come to expect that the United States’ interests are for the common good of all. Any success in the Arab-Israeli peace process must be exploited fully. Work should commence with moderate and influential American and Arab Muslim clerics

the Persian Gulf, the Horn of Africa, and South Asia and Central Asia states.

⁴² Telhami and Hill, 167.

to counter the hate speech of the radical clerics. As Middle Eastern nations move toward governmental reform, the benefit to the region and its people must be put forward and illuminated brightly. Incentives should be offered to American corporations willing to establish business ties in the area, expanding the economic base. Each of these measures is a step in the right direction and over time can alter the perception of America in the region.

The invasion of Iraq is an opportunity for change in the region. Removing Saddam from power has altered the strategic complexion of Southwest Asia considerably. The United States should create a near-term the environment conducive to a lasting peace in the area. The post-colonial days of the Middle East are in the past. It is time for these nations to mature as capitalistic and autonomous democracies fully embraced and assisted by a benevolent United States. To do otherwise would be to break faith with a people who deserve better.

⁴³ With Saddam out of power in Iraq, a source of revenue to the Palestinians terrorists has been eliminated.

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