STUDY PROJECT

CLAUSEWITZ AND THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RONALD F. ROKOSZ

6 MARCH 1989

DTIC
ELECTE
MAY 0 1 1989
S H
D

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050

AD-A207 262

089 5 01 019

DISCLAIMER NOTICE

**THIS DOCUMENT IS BEST QUALITY
PRACTICABLE. THE COPY FURNISHED
TO DTIC CONTAINED A SIGNIFICANT
NUMBER OF PAGES WHICH DO NOT
REPRODUCE LEGIBLY.**

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. A2C7262	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Clausewitz and the Iran-Iraq War		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Study Project
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC Ronald Rokosz		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Same		12. REPORT DATE March 6, 1989
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 62
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS(If different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE

16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)

18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)

During the 1980's there has been a resurgence of interest in On War, Clausewitz's famous study of warfare. His work has been used extensively in the developing study of operational art. At the same time, the longest mid-intensity war in modern history has raged between Iran and Iraq. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the conduct of the Iran-Iraq conflict using concepts found in On War, and, in so doing, to assess the continuing validity of using Clausewitz as a conceptual framework for the study of warfare. The paper provides a brief

DD , FORM 1473 EDITION OF 1 NOV 65 IS OBSOLETE

overview of the conflict, to include discussion of its causes and the manner in which the land, sea, and air campaigns were fought. It then presents an analysis using Clausewitzian principles related to intelligence, culminating points, political-military relations, concentration of force, primacy of the defense, center of gravity, and role of the commander and the military. The paper discusses how failure of both sides to apply the concepts effected the course of events and unnecessarily prolonged the conflict. Finally, the paper discusses lessons learned from the Iran-Iraq war which the U.S. Army must consider if called upon to fight in the Middle East.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

CLAUSEWITZ AND THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

LTC Ronald F. Rokosz, Inf

Dr. Stephen Pelletiere
Project Adviser

U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
6 March 1989

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Ronald F. Rokosz, LTC, Inf

TITLE: Clausewitz and the Iran-Iraq War

FORMAT: Individual Study Project

DATE: 6 Mar 1989 PAGES: 59 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

During the 1980's there has been a resurgence of interest in On War, Clausewitz's famous study of warfare. His work has been used extensively in the developing study of operational art. At the same time, the longest mid-intensity war in modern history has raged between Iran and Iraq. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the conduct of the Iran-Iraq conflict using concepts found in On War, and, in so doing, to assess the continuing validity of using Clausewitz as a conceptual framework for the study of warfare. The paper provides a brief overview of the conflict, to include discussion of its causes and the manner in which the land, sea, and air campaigns were fought. It then presents an analysis using Clausewitzian principles related to intelligence, culminating points, political-military relations, concentration of force, primacy of the defense, center of gravity, and role of the commander and the military. The paper discusses how failure of both sides to apply the concepts effected the course of events and unnecessarily prolonged the conflict. Finally, the paper discusses lessons learned from the Iran-Iraq war which the U.S. Army must consider if called upon to fight in the Middle East. (FR)

Accession For		
NTIS GRA&I	✓	
DTIC TAB	☐	
Unannounced	☐	
Justification		
By		
Distribution/		
Availability Codes		
Dist	Avail and/or Special	
A-1		

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CLAUSEWITZ AND THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the 1980's there has been a resurgence of interest in
On War, the classic work of Carl von Clausewitz. Numerous
articles have reviewed and analyzed the tenets of what has
become known as the only true classic on the subject of
warfare. Many of the principles contained in On War now
serve as the cornerstone for the current doctrinal efforts
in the study of operational art.

During the same period, the longest and bloodiest
mid-intensity war in recent history raged between the Middle
East powers of Iran and Iraq. The war which commenced with
an Iraqi invasion in 1980 went from initial Iraqi gains, to
Iranian counteroffensives, to see-saw campaigns of
attrition. The number of casualties are unknown, with
estimates ranging from 500,000 to over a million deaths out
of a combined population of approximately sixty-five million
- figures proportionately equivalent to the losses suffered
by the major combatants in World War I. 1 In the end, the
war proved to be a no-win contest that drained the
economies, manpower, and moral fiber of both nations.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relevance of principles contained in On War to modern day warfare and, using those principles, to explain why the Iran-Iraq war unfolded as it did into such a costly stalemate.

Chapter II provides a brief overview of the Iran-Iraq conflict - its causes and the general conduct of the war. Chapter III is an analysis of that war using precepts contained in On War. Chapter IV discusses lessons learned and issues from the Iran-Iraq war which the U.S. Army must consider if called upon to fight in the Middle East.

ENDNOTES

1. John Graham, "The Iran-Iraq War - Eight Years On", Nato's Sixteen Nations, 32, November 1987, p. 18.

2

CHAPTER II.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONFLICT

ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT

The origins of the conflict go back centuries in history and are rooted in strong ethnic, religious, and geopolitical differences. Iraq, part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire from the 1500's until it gained its independence after World War I, has been Arabic in temperament, culture, and traditions. Iran, known as Persia until 1935, retained not only its independence over the last four centuries, but also its own unique Persian culture and traditions. There has been a deeply ingrained mistrust and hostility between both sides which goes back literally centuries to AD 637 when Arabs first invaded Persia to spread the word of Islam. 1

The geographical focal point of the conflict has been the Shaat-al-Arab waterway, which runs from the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south. That 72 mile stretch of waterway has generally formed the southern boundary between Iran and Iraq and has been the source of border disputes between the two countries for centuries. The waterway was controlled for

several centuries (roughly 1600-1924) by Arabs who peopled its eastern bank in what was known as Arabistan. Though culturally aligned with its Arab brothers to the West, Arabistan tried to maintain its independence from both Persia and the Ottoman Empire. 2 At the same time, both parties in the region sought to gain control over the waterway, recognizing its critical role in providing sea access to the Persian Gulf. Both the Ottoman Empire and Persia launched military invasions into Arabistan in the 1800's, with Great Britain and Russia mediating temporary fixes to the problem. A series of treaties and protocols between the Ottoman Empire and Persia followed, culminating with the Constantinople Protocol of 1913 which gave total sovereignty over the waterway to the Ottoman Empire. 3

With the onset of World War I, things changed relatively quickly. Iraq gained its independence in 1920 through the Treaty of Sevres. Persia annexed the weakened Arabistan in 1924, changing the name of that territory to Khuzistan. As border disputes continued, Iraq and Iran (its name was changed from Persia in 1935) concluded another border treaty in 1937 which basically reaffirmed Iraq's control of both banks of the waterway in accordance with the 1913 Protocol.

Conflict and border disputes between Iran and Iraq continued. Kurds who lived in the northern portions of both countries began to play prominently. The Shah of Iran

4

began to provide support to Iraqi Kurds who were rebelling against the Iraqi government in the 1960's. The Iraqi military found it increasingly difficult to pacify the Kurds and this eventually led to the Algiers Agreement of 1975 wherein Iraq agreed to give up total sovereignty of the waterway in return for Iran's promise to discontinue aid to the Kurds. 4 Per that agreement, the border between the two countries was to run down the middle of the waterway, rather than the east bank. Saddam Hussein himself participated in the official signing of that agreement and writers have speculated that he was personally humiliated by his role in surrendering sovereignty of the waterway. 5

The overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979 and the foundation of the Islamic Republic in Iran further exacerbated relations. Saddam Hussein headed a secular Ba'athist government who ruled over a population that was sixty percent Shi'a. Per the Algiers Agreement, Iran had agreed to end interference in the internal affairs of Iraq. On the contrary, the Khomeini regime sought to export their Islamic fervor and began to wage a propaganda campaign targeted at Iraq's Shi'a population, urging them to rise up and overthrow their secular leaders. It became a stated policy of Iran to overthrow the Hussein government. 6 The situation worsened and in 1980 Iraq expelled 200,000 Shi'as and executed Baqr Sadr, the Iraqi Shi'a leader. It further

5

retaliated by waging its own propaganda campaign, urging
Arabs in Khuzistan to revolt against the Teheran regime.

Accusations of border violations and artillery shelling
along the Shaat-al-Arab by both sides followed. Finally, in
1980 the Iraqis abrogated the Algiers Agreement shortly
before the commencement of hostilities.

COMBATANTS

At the onset of the war Iraq held a significant advantage in
military hardware and organizational structure, while Iran
was vastly superior in its pool of available manpower. Iran
had approximately 6 million men fit for military service out
of a total population of around 45 million, while Iraq had
about two million men available out of a population of 15
million.

During the two decades preceding the war, the Shah of Iran
had embarked on an aggressive military buildup to make Iran
the dominant power in the Gulf region. He acquired
sophisticated hardware from both the United States and the
Soviet Union. Accordingly, prior to the revolution, Iran
had an armed force of over 400,000 well equipped men. Its
army consisted of six divisions and four separate brigades,
with a total manpower force of over 285,000 men. A two-year
conscription period was in effect which provided an

6

additional 300,000 man reserve. Its air force had close to
500 combat aircraft and over 160 helicopters. Iran's navy
was the largest and most sophisticated in the region with 11
destroyers, frigates and corvettes, as well as 23 other
surface craft. A total of almost 40,000 foreign military
advisors and technicians, most of them from the United
States and Great Britain, assisted the armed forces in the
integration and maintenance of its modern equipment. 7

With the Islamic revolution and the Iranian hostage crisis,
the Iranian armed forces fell into disarray. The military
were viewed as the power behind the Shah and were
immediately attacked by the fundamentalists. The new regime
conducted one of the most massive military purges since
Stalin. Hundreds of officers were executed and thousands
dismissed. It is estimated that the army alone lost half of
its officers in the rank of major to colonel and that its
air force lost half of its pilots. 8   Desertions soared and
the strength of the armed forces quickly fell as
conscription was not enforced. Divisions were manned at the
equivalency of brigades. To further counter the established
military, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, known as
Pasdaran, was formed as a "religious militia", and the two
began to conflict for both manning and equipment.

Iran's vast military hardware faired no better. Foreign
advisors and technicians were withdrawn and with them went

7

the expertise to maintain the equipment. The flow of replacement end items and spare parts dried up as the United States discontinued its contractual arrangements with Iran. At the time the war began, half of Iran's military hardware was nonoperational. 9

Iraq, on the other hand, had continued to make great strides in modernizing its forces to counter the buildup of Iranian forces by the Shah in the 1960's-70's. Its army totalled nearly 200,000 men organized into 12 divisions (4 armored, 2 mechanized, 4 infantry, and 2 mountain) and one separate armored brigade. In addition, Iraq had over 250,000 reservists and a paramilitary Popular Army of roughly 75,000. At the time the war began, Iraq held nearly a 4 to 1 advantage in tanks, and a 2 to 1 advantage in other armored fighting vehicles, artillery pieces, and combat aircraft. Only in naval forces did Iran hold a significant advantage as its navy was relatively untouched by the purges. Iraq, on the other hand, had only minor naval forces, with no large surface combatant ships. 10

THE LAND WAR

While the world considered the Iraqi invasion on 22 September 1981 as the start of the war, Iran and Iraq were actually fighting on a much smaller scale for several weeks

8

prior to that date. Iraqi forces had crossed into Iran, ostensibly to seize territory owed them under the Algiers Agreement. Iraqi forces occupied up to 140 square kilometers within Iran prior to 22 September. Both sides engaged in artillery exchanges and sporadic air engagements.

However on 22 September Iraq launched its major offensive, attacking with five divisions across a 450 mile front. The attack used four axes, with the main attacks in the south and supporting attacks to the north. The supporting attacks were intended to protect Iraq from counterattacks which would threaten Baghdad or cut the principle north-south road networks necessary to maintain lines of communications to its forces in the south.

In the south, four divisions, three armored and one mechanized, crossed the Shaat-al-Arab and drove into Iran. Their apparent objectives were to "liberate" Khuzistan province and to seize the Abadan island oil-rich area.

Iran had only one armored division positioned forward in Khuzistan province, with the rest of its active forces deeper into the interior. Other forces consisted of border police and Pasdaran units which were quickly organized and deployed into the border area to stem the Iraqi tide.

Accordingly Iraqi forces met little organized resistance and quickly gained a sizeable foothold within Iran. They did

9

encounter relatively stiff resistance as they approached built-up areas and in most cases halted short of those areas. This was due in part to a lack of infantry forces, but was also politically motivated by a decision to hold down casualties.

The major exception was in the battle for the city of Khorramshahr which the Iraqis secured after almost a month of the bloodiest fighting in the initial phase of the war. Iraqi armor took heavy casualties as it tried to seize the city. The Iranians rushed Pasdaran companies forward to stiffen its defense. The Iraqis, recognizing it could not take the city without infantry support for its armor, hurriedly trained its Special Forces Regiment in house-to-house fighting and deployed it to support its armored formations fighting for Khorramshahr. It was not until 24 October that the Iraqis held the entire city. Estimates stated that both sides had suffered approximately 7,000 casualties, and the Iraqis had lost over 100 tanks and other armored vehicles. 11

Occupying a line from Khorramshahr to Ahvaz, Susangerd, and Musian, and with Abadan almost completely encircled, the Iraqis halted their offensive and established hasty defensive positions. The conflict quickly became static in nature as Iran began to deploy its forces forward toward the front and Iraq attempted to solidify its positions. The

situation remained relatively unchanged over the next nine months as both sides launched minor spoiling attacks and engaged in artillery duels. The most notable exception occurred in January of 81 when an Iranian armored division attempted to break through the Iraqi lines. This effort ended in total disaster, with Iran losing upwards of 250 tanks against an estimated loss of 50 Iraqi tanks. 12

With Iraqi forces now entrenched within Iran, there followed almost eight years of mayhem, characterized principally by massed Iranian assaults, Iraqi spoiling attacks, static warfare rivaling that found in World War 1, and finally an Iraqi counteroffensive that brought both sides back to almost their original positions.

Motivated by defense of homeland, Iran first launched a series of major offensives in May 81 to dislodge the invaders. These were multi-division and even corps-level offensives, some involving upwards of 200,000 men. The Iranians used human wave frontal assaults to achieve initial breakthroughs, relying on overall strength in numbers to achieve success. Though casualties were horrendous, these offensives were successful over time and began to attrit the Iraqi forces. By June of 1982, the Iraqis had withdrawn across the front and prepared for a static defense within their own borders.

Though there was internal dissension over the decision, the Iranians carried the war into Iraq itself and continued their offensives. However, things began to change and the war became much more costly for Iran. The Iraqis built their Army up to a total of 20 divisions. They received a huge influx of Russian military equipment to replace war losses. As the Iraqis refitted their forces, they adjusted their tactics and began to keep mobile armored reserves behind their fixed positions which quickly blunted any limited penetrations made by the Iranians. And, probably most important, Iraqi soldiers were fighting in well-prepared defenses to protect their homeland. The following excerpt from _The Gulf War_ by O'Ballance indicates the extent to which the Iraqis prepared those positions:

As it developed, this Iraqi defensive trench system came to be studded with bunkers, weapon emplacements and dugout shelters for infantry ever-ready to repel an enemy attack. The objectives were to hold on to every square inch of Iraqi territory and to prevent being outflanked. Behind this strong frontal trench were communication trenches leading back to large underground shelters used for sleeping, feeding and resting, in which troops manning the forward sector had comforts such as air conditioning, cooking facilities, television and access to telephones enabling them to speak direct to their families at home.
In front of the main defensive trench were jumbles and lines of barbed wire fencing and entanglements, fitted with booby-traps, sensors and other surveillance equipment. In front again were wide, deep minefields, usually with misleading dummy markers, designed to entice approaching enemy into 'killing zones', covered by artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire. The Iranians claimed the Iraqis had set over 800,000 mines, which may have been a correct figure at that time. 13

12

The initial zeal of the religiously motivated Iranians gave way to weariness as casualties mounted. Iran gradually shifted away from the human wave assaults in favor of more conventional use of combined arms assaults, coupled with infiltration techniques. Employing such tactics they achieved their greatest success of the war when they launched a multi-division offensive and seized the Fao peninsula in February, 1986. Iraqi counterattacks were repulsed and analysts seriously discussed the possibility of an Iranian victory as their war of attrition began to produce significant results. This continued through 1987 when the Iranians launched what proved to be a series of disastrous offensives to seize the Iraqi city of Basra. Throughout the conflict, Iran had tended to confine its operations to the south in order to avoid possible confrontation with the Turks. 14 Basra, a key southern crossroads and the second largest city in Iraq, had become a major Iranian operational objective. "Much of the Army's ardor may have evaporated in early 1987 during a four-month assault on Basra,...by Iraqi accounts, the Iranians deployed 200,000 men to charge along a two-mile-wide front. The result was a massacre, as wave after wave of Iranians ran into concentrated enemy fire." 15 There were reports of 50-70,000 Iranian casualties from that offensive alone. These excessive casualties added to the already existing

unrest within Iran. Desertions rose and it became harder and harder to get volunteers to rush to the front.

The final stage of the war began in the spring of 1988 as Iraq surged forward and recaptured the Fao peninsula with apparent ease. Western analysts asserted that Iraq had been secretly preparing this offensive for some time, even rehearsing the operation on similar terrain in its central plain. 16 Thousands of Iranians were captured and huge stores of equipment taken. This was followed shortly by a series of offensive thrusts which "reclaimed virtually all Iraqi territory still in Iranian hands, including...staging areas east of Basra, and the oil-rich Majnoun islands at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers." 17

Faced with possible military defeat, Iran accepted UN Resolution 598 calling for a cease fire to the conflict. After eight full years of fighting, the participants found their forces in almost the same geographical locations they had been when the conflict began.

THE AIR WAR

The air war on both sides was marked by a lack of coordination, integration and effective employment of air assets.

14

Following the pattern established by the Israelis in the Mideast wars, the Iraqis attempted to preface their invasion with preemptive airstrikes to destroy the Iranian air force on the ground. The attempt was a failure primarily due to alleged Iranian prior intelligence, poor targeting, and ineffective bombing. This operation was the precursor of things to come.

Throughout the war airpower seemed to be used in a sporadic manner, with emphasis on countervalue rather than counterforce targets. 18   Combat aircraft were not used to provide any meaningful close air support for ground forces. As the war dragged on, both sides did use helicopter gunships to support ground operations with relative effectiveness. However, the use of combat aircraft in a close support role was consistently the exception, rather than the rule.

Even against countervalue targets, airpower was not massed or employed effectively against any well thought out target array. When both sides did attempt large scale air offensives in 1983, they both suffered serious losses. Strikes tended to be retaliatory in nature and target selection was haphazard, vacillating back and forth from industrial and economic targets to population centers. "Wars of the Cities" were on-again, off-again affairs from

1985 onwards as both sides launched both combat aircraft and
missile strikes against population centers.

Pilot proficiency and strike accuracy was marginal on both
sides. Early Iraqi attacks on the Kharg Island oil terminal
illustrates this point. That complex processed nearly 90%
of the crude oil shipped from Iran. Yet, Iraq's
"...approximately 40 sorties against Iran's oil terminal in
Kharg Island in spring 1982 and autumn 1984 failed to put
the large and complex facility out of action." 19

Iraq did eventually achieve a marked superiority in the
skies for several reasons. First, with the shutoff of
American equipment and the problems Iran had obtaining
military equipment, Iran could not replace its combat losses
nor could it adequately maintain its combat aircraft. Iraq,
on the other hand began to receive French Mirage and Super
Etendard aircraft. Of perhaps even greater impact, the
Iranian air force was rocked by a whole series of purges
during the war. In 1981 President Bani-Sadr escaped from
Iran in an air force aircraft flown by air force pilots.
The Islamic regime immediately began another purge in which
more officers were dismissed, some executed. The religious
leadership imposed rigid controls over the air force, such
as restricting the fuel available to that absolutely
required to fly missions, issueing flight plans at the
latest possible moment, etc. Defections and desertions

followed so that the air force was virtually grounded for large periods of the war.

Iraq's air force did begin to play a significant role in the later years of the war as Iraq intensified both its attacks on population centers and in the "war of the Tankers" began in 1983. In that year Iraq declared a Naval Exclusion Zone in the Persian Gulf and began to hit oil tankers and other vessels in an effort to strangle Iran's economy. In reality, Iraq's air force was "standing in" for its nonexistent navy. Armed with the French Super Etendard aircraft and the exocet missiles, it attacked and hit nearly 100 vessels in 1983-85 alone. While it's difficult to assess the overall impact of this effort, it certainly complicated matters for Iran which reacted with attacks on shipping of its own and with threats to close the Straits of Hormuz. Eventually it had to divert much of its energy and resources to dealing with the United States naval presence in the Persian Gulf.

Iraq's strikes on Iranian population centers late in the war apparently had devastating effects. While initial strikes were made in a sporadic fashion, Iraq intensified those attacks in the later stages of the conflict. In March and April of 1988 alone, it struck Tehran with over 160 missiles. 20 Using principally Soviet Scud-B missiles, the

Iraqi attacks had a major impact in weakening Iranian resolve to continue the conflict.

THE WAR AT SEA

In reality there was no real naval war at sea. The only significant naval engagement occurred at the very beginning of the war when the Iranian navy attacked the ports of Basra and Fao. Both sides claimed they had inflicted heavy losses on the other. However, the net effect was that the Iraqi navy stayed close to shore to avoid further engagements. As discussed earlier, Iraq's air force waged the "War of the Tankers" in lieu of naval forces in the Gulf.

The Iranian navy, on the other hand, immediately imposed a naval embargo on Iraq and tried to enforce it. Information is too sketchy to determine its effectiveness. They did close off the Shaat-al-Arab access to the Gulf, trapping 62 tankers and other vessels in the waterway. They began to stop and search and in some cases turn back ships headed for Iraqi ports. When Iraq began to hit shipping in the Gulf, the Iranian navy became involved in making retaliatory strikes against tankers and ships headed for Iraq or for Kuwait which provided support to Iraq. Later, it became embroiled with sparring with the U.S. navy when that force began to escort reflagged tankers through the Gulf.

18

Accordingly, aside from the impact which the Iranian navy had on raising tensions in the Gulf and from making sporadic hits on Iraqi and Kuwait bound vessels, naval action in the war was nonexistent.

ENDNOTES

1. Edgar O'Ballance, The Gulf War. New York: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988, p. 1.

2. Mustafa al-Najjar and Najdat Fathi Satwat, "Arab Sovereignty Over the Shaat Al-Arab During the Ka'Bide Period", in The Iran-Iraq War, ed. by M.S. El Aznary, p. 20.

3. Peter Hunseier, "The Historical Antecedents of the Shaat-al-Arab Dispute", in The Iran-Iraq War, ed. by M.S. El Aznary, pp. 12-13.

4. Joseph P. Lorenz, Ending the Iran-Iraq War. The Pre-Negotiation Phase, Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, Occasional Paper Series, 1986, p. 4.

5. Graham, p. 17.

6. Nita M. Renfrew, "Who Started the War", Foreign Policy, No. 66, Spring 1987, p. 102.

7. O'Ballance, pp. 14-15.

8. Efraim Karsh, The Iran-Iraq War: A Military Analysis. Adelphi Papers. The International Institute for Strategic Studies. Great Britain, 1987.

9. Karsh, pp. 14-15.

10. O'Ballance, pp. 28-29.

11. O'Ballance, pp. 37-38.

12. Karsh, p. 22.

13. O'Ballance, p. 101

14. Thomas L. McNaugher, "The Iran-Iraq War: Slouching Toward Catastrophe?", _Middle East Review_, Summer 1987, p. 5.

15. More Deadly Than Poison", _Newsweek_, 1 August 1988, p. 29.

16. Alan Cowell, "Iraq's Dark Victory", _New York Times Magazine_, 25 September 1988, p. 34.

17. On the Brink of Peace", _Time_, 1 August 1988, p. 27.

18. Karsn, p. 37.

19. Karsn, p. 37.

20. James A. Bill, "Why Tehran Finally Wants a Gulf Peace", _Washington Post_, 28 August 1988, p. B1.

ANALYSIS

Professor Michael J. Handel of the U.S. Army's War College recently concluded a course entitled "Clausewitz and Modern Strategy" by providing his students with a one-page synopsis of _On War_ labeled appropriately "Clausewitz in a Nutshell". That synopsis read:

War must be governed exclusively by political considerations. In theory it aspires to extremes but in reality it is moderated by uncertainty, friction, and lack of intelligence. War cannot be reduced to a science: therefore, manuals or rigid doctrines on how to fight wars are useless. This is why there is no substitute for the experience and intuition of the military genius. While war can often be won indirectly more often than not it can only be won by a decisive success on the battlefield, obtainable only at a heavy cost in blood. The key to victory on the battlefield is to be very strong at the decisive moment and place. Every attack eventually exhausts itself: therefore, it is important to stop attacking and to move over to the defensive while still having the upper hand. In such a way the political and military leaders can make the most of the inherent advantages of the defense over the attack, and war can best be used to achieve the goals set by the political authorities as dictated by the national interest.

Professor Handel's brief summation provides the reader with both the flavor and the thrust of _On War_, and serves as an appropriate background with which to begin our analysis.

we will analyze the Iran-Iraq war using the issues and concepts discussed in On War as listed below:

Role of Intelligence in planning

The Culminating Point of Attack/Victory

War as an instrument of the political

Concentration of forces and effort

Center of gravity

Primacy of the defense

Role of the military and the commander

ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN PLANNING

when addressing the subject of intelligence, one normally focuses at the tactical level and thinks in terms of the immediate disposition of forces on the battlefield. Our intent is to look at a much broader level and comment on the validity of the assumptions made by Iraq in launching the initial invasion and how the problems associated with those assumptions effected the conduct of the war. Clausewitz's definition of intelligence supports that level of analysis as ne sees intelligence as "...every sort of information about the enemy and his country - the basis, in short, of our own plans and operations." [1]   Here Clausewitz is speaking of what we know as strategic intelligence, "...the

assessment of the opponent's capabilities and the evaluation of his intentions." 2

Iraq made two erroneous assumptions from the start. It drastically underestimated the ability of Iran to respond militarily to the invasion. Secondly, it assumed that Arabs in Khuzistan would rise up against Iran and actively support Iraqi forces.

Iraq knew that Iran's military had gone through a series of purges, that its equipment was in a state of disrepair, and that Iran faced significant problems with consolidating its internal power base for the revolution. Hussein had been "...misled by media reports of a disintegrating Shahist army, military plots, military discontent, deserting technicians and soldiers, and of rusting, decaying and neglected tanks, weapons, and vehicles." 3 He grasped at what he considered to be the optimum moment to strike. Aside from regaining total sovereingty over the Shaat-al-Arab, Hussein thought that his thrust into Iran could seriously weaken or even topple Khomeini from power. 4 From the onset, that assumption proved totally false as Iran surprised the world with the ferocity of its response. Iraq had assumed that it must defeat an already weakened Iranian army. What it encountered on the battlefield was much more than that - a nation pulled together by religious and nationalistic fervor to wage a people's war against the

invader. Clausewitz foretold the importance of the "people's war" and the fervor it engenders when he wrote that "...like smoldering embers, it consumes the basic foundation of the enemy forces." 5 There was no shortage of volunteers to rush to the front as Iran used manpower to overcome its inferiority in equipment. Far from toppling Khomeini, the invasion galvanized the Iranian people behind Khomeini and the need for action to repel the invader and protect the revolution.

Iraq also assumed that they would be supported and assisted by the Arab population within Khuzistan. Iraq had actively encouraged insurrection by Arabs within Khuzistan prior to the war. 6 Given the historical friction between the Arabs and Persians, this may have been a reasonable assumption. However, that support never materialized. Rather, the Arabs along the east bank of the Shaat-al-Arab viewed the Iraqis incursion as an invasion of their homeland.

Clausewitz foresaw the difficulty of accurate strategic intelligence, calling the problem "...one of the great chasms between planning and execution." 7 Yet assumptions are the bedrock of all operational plans. Proponents of operational art stress the need for accurate assumptions, acknowledging that "...false assumptions about what will win can lead to bloody, inconclusive fighting." 8 - an

incredibly prophetic statement as it relates to the manner
in which the war between Iran-Iraq progressed.

THE CULMINATING POINT OF ATTACK/VICTORY

Clausewitz wrote in separate parts of On War about the
culminating point of the attack, then the culminating point
of victory. Both address the same concept. In the offense,
there is some optimum point at which to stop and assume a
defensive posture. It is that point at which one has gained
the most one could gain from the offensive without weakening
oneself to the point where the defender achieves a
significant advantage. Clausewitz wrote that attacks
"...lead up to the point where their remaining strength is
just enough to maintain a defense and wait for peace.
Beyond that point the scale turns and the reaction follows
with a force that is usually much stronger than that of the
original attack." [9]

What is the difference between a culminating point of attack
(CPA) and a culminating point of victory (CPV)? In
discussing CPA, Clausewitz speaks within the limited realm
of military operations, to what we know as the tactical,
perhaps to the operational level. When he addresses CPV, he
rises to the strategic, encompassing all aspects of the

nation involved in war - the military, the political, the economic, and the like.

An obvious criticism of Clausewitz is that his concept of CPA and CPV is an easy one to grasp, but far more difficult to operationalize. Clausewitz provides no insight as to how to determine that optimum point at which the offensive should be discontinued. Operational art today addresses this problem in terms of lines of communications, analysis of ends versus means, as well as of less tangible but equally important concepts as political climate and national will.

Here we suggest that Iraq never reached the culminating point of the attack in its initial invasion, while Iraq erred by going well beyond the culminating point of victory as the war progressed.

Campaign objectives are determined in the planning phase of military operations. Here, the composition and posture of Iraqi formations suggest an imbalance between operational objectives and the resources devoted to them to accomplish the desired end. Iraq attacked with only five of its estimated twelve divisions. In not committing infantry forward to support the armored formations, Iraq halted short of major built-up areas to avoid fighting in the cities, Khorramshahr being the costly exception. In its execution,

the Iraqi army was consistently criticized for "lack of exploitation", failing to push attacks to their logical and most advantageous conclusion. Efraim Karsh, in his analysis of the war, addresses the point when he postulates that it was not "...the fervour of the Pasdaran that halted Iraq's initial offensive but rather Iraq's self-imposed restraint." 10 In failing to drive deeper, by exploiting its advantage in quick moving armored formations, Iraq gave Iran the opportunity to blunt the attack with hastily committed forces while it reorganized and moved larger formations into the battle area.

We apply our analysis to Iran, on the other hand, at the strategic level - the culminating point of victory. Once it reacted to the Iraqi invasion, Iran was able to turn the tide. While costly, its offensives began to grind down the Iraqis by sheer force of numbers.

We suggest that Iran reached its culminating point of victory somewhere around the beginning of 1985. Past that point, a combination of factors led to the weakening of its position and to a "peace" much less advantageous than it could have obtained had it halted its offensives in 1985.

From 1982-84, the pendulum definitely swung in Iran's favor and it was winning the land war. Iraq had withdrawn within its own borders and its "...military situation was

27

desperate..." as it was "...forced into a "hold-at-all

costs" policy of static defense." 11 Iraq was losing what

had become a war of attrition as it could not continue to

sustain the casualties that Iran could absorb, given its

vastly larger population. Iraq was eager to end the

conflict and sought negotiations. It was at this point when

Iran probably reached its culminating point of victory.

Despite horrendous casualties, Iranians had continued to

show their fanatical zeal in launching mass attacks and had

been able to hold their own against vastly superior

armaments. The world had begun to accept that an Iranian

victory was in fact possible. It's likely that Iran could

have obtained a peace settlement even more favorable in

terms of the Shaat-al-Arab than the Algiers Agreement had

been. At a minimum, any settlement at that point would

certainly have reinforced Khomeini's position as the

dominant power in the region and would have added renewed

impetus to the Islamic revolution.

Past that point a series of factors began to interact to

shift the pendulum back toward true stalemate. Clausewitz

predicted some of these when he stated that "...the danger

threatening the defender will bring allies to his aid." 12

The USSR, which had cut off military assistance to Iraq at

the beginning of the war, resumed that assistance in 1981.

However, it was in 1984 that they really provided a massive

influx of equipment to the Iraqis. 13 The United States, also fearing the regional instability which an Iranian victory could produce, in 1983 launched "Operation Staunch", a series of diplomatic maneuvers designed to cut off arms supplies to Iran. Over the next few years this effort had significant impact. 14 At the same time it began to provide sophisticated intelligence on Iranian troop movements to aide Iraqi operational plans 15.

Oil has for decades been known as the economic cornerstone of the Middle East nations. While the Iranian revolution had brought oil production in that country to a virtual standstill in 1979, Iran had recovered and raised its production levels by 1982. 16 But overproduction by OPEC, alternative sources, and western mistrust of total reliance on Mideast oil caused serious declines in oil prices from 1982-86 and resources from oil exports began to drop significantly.

The increased costs of obtaining black market weaponry coupled with the decrease in oil revenues found Iran experiencing an approximate $7 billion annual deficit by the time the war finally ended. 17

Iran's eventual confrontation with the United States in the Persian Gulf certainly impacted negatively on the eventual outcome. Relating that to our discussion of CPA, its

interesting to note that Iraq began to exert serious efforts to attack shipping headed for Iranian ports in 1984. 18 The chain of events which followed forced Iran to divert its resources and attention to dealing with the U.S. naval presence in the Gulf.

Lastly, the first serious signs of war weariness began to appear within Iran after 1984. In April 1985 there were massive demonstrations against the continuation of the war in Iranian cities. 19 Excessive casualties started to have an effect as Iran began to have difficultly getting volunteers to man the Pasdaran units headed for the front.

From the very beginning, Iran had demanded the end of the Hussein regime as a precondition for any kind of settlement. It stubbornly maintained that position almost to the very cessation of hostilities. If Iran had recognized the concept of a culminating point of victory, it could have ended the conflict on favorable terms much earlier.

WAR AS AN INSTRUMENT OF THE POLITICAL

Clausewitz's assertion that war is an extension of politics by other means is surely the most well known concept from On War. The actual quoted phrases on the subject are that "...the only source of war is politics..." and that "...war

is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means." 20

It s relevant here to note the relationship between "ends" and "means" as currently understood in operational art. "ends" refer to the strategic objectives, those desired outcomes considered essential to the nation that drives it to war. "Means" are the resources needed and applied to achieve those ends. Logically, the nation that goes to war must correctly determine the means required and must be willing to expend those resources to achieve the desired outcome. A third component, "ways", identifies the manner in which means will be applied to achieve the desired ends.

"No one starts a war...without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it." 21 Clausewitz implies that there should be a natural harmony of interaction between war and politics - one closely related to the concept of ends, ways, and means. The political determines the "ends". It assesses that it possesses sufficient natural and material resources ("means") to achieve those "ends" and commits to providing those resources. Lastly, it deliberately chooses war as the "way" in which to achieve the desired "ends".

Two points are relevant here. First neither Iran nor Iraq achieved that natural harmony between war and politics -

between ends, ways, and means. Secondly, as Clausewitz clearly predicted, the political objectives are not immovable, but must adjust to the manner in which war progresses.

We have already briefly discussed the possible strategic objectives of Iraq. Opinions vary on Hussein's intentions from simply seizure of the Shaat-al-Arab to trying to topple Khomeini and halt the Islamic revolution. For purposes of our analysis, we will assume that his "ends" were limited to rolling back the Algiers Agreement of 1975 and regaining total control of the Shaat-al-Arab. Given that, he did not correctly assess the "means" required to achieve that, or if he did, he was unwilling to commit them. As we noted earlier, he launched the initial invasion with only five of twelve available army divisions. He did not commit infantry forces in an attempt to hold down casualties. On a broader scale, Hussein was not willing to marshall the total resources of the nation to support the war effort. John Townsend, in an analysis of the economic effects of the war, noted that "...the government of Iraq made it clear...that the war was not going to impede the nation's development...and went to considerable lengths in the first year of the war to ensure that the average Iraqi citizen would not suffer economically because of the war." 22 This of course supports the position that Hussein assumed his

32

task would be an easy one, that he could basically fight a short, limited war, with Iran accepting a quick peace settlement which ceded total control of the Shaat-al-Arab back to Iraq. Only after the initial invasion had obviously failed to achieve the desired objectives and Iraq was losing ground did Hussein impose wartime restrictions at home to support the effort.

The conclusion drawn is that Iraq had not properly assessed the resources required to achieve its strategic objectives, or had deliberately gambled on achieving them with significantly less than the level required. Again, the eventual course of events adds validity to this conclusion.

Iran made similar miscalculations as the war progressed. Once it reacted to the Iraqi invasion, it pursued a policy which was intransigent - peace could only come with the removal of the Hussein regime. As they moved forward into Iraq, they did so with cries of "On to Karbala", i.e. calling for the total collapse of the Iraqi forces. Yet, they simply did not have the means necessary to achieve that end. Losses in manpower, its richest resource, eventually took their tool in morale and national fervor. Economic resources began to dry up as discussed above. Had Iran's initial objectives been tempered by a correct analysis of resources, they undoubtedly could have achieved them.

Clausewitz notes that political primacy "...does not imply that the political aim is a tyrant...it must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process which can radically change it... 23 In other words, nations must recognize the limits of what they can accomplish given the means available. They must modify strategic objectives accordingly. "Since war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for its magnitude and also its duration. Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow." 24 Later Clausewitz acknowledges not just the cost-benefit analysis of the political objective, but also the likelihood of achieving it. "...if one side cannot completely disarm the other, the desire for peace on either side will rise and fall with the probability of further successes and the amount of effort these would require." 25

Iraq recognized early on that it could not achieve its objectives and modified them accordingly, seeking to preserve its national integrity and seek a settlement that came as close as possible to reestablishing the status quo as it existed before the invasion. Operationally, it came to realize it could not win a war of attrition against Iran,

and eventually turned to a successful final offensive to force Iran to accept a cessation of hostilities.

Khomeini eventually came to a similar realization as he began to see his revolution shatter from within, his country suffering economically, and the superpowers exerting great pressure for a settlement.

The conflict was a classic example that "...the original political objects can greatly alter during the course of the war and may finally change entirely since they are influenced by events and their probable consequences." 26

CONCENTRATION OF FORCES AND EFFORT

In discussing concentration of forces, Clausewitz first distinguishes between relative and absolute superiority in numbers. "Surprise becomes effective when we suddenly face the enemy at one point with far more troops than he expected. This type of numerical superiority is quite distinct from numerical superiority in general; it is the most powerful medium in the art of war." 27   Iran had a marked advantage in terms of absolute superiority in numbers throughout the war. It could accept higher casualty rates and replace those casualties from a much larger manpower pool. Yet Iraq, with its vastly superior mobile formations, had the ability to quickly concentrate forces at the

decisive point in accordance with Clausewitz's dictum. It failed to do so.

In the initial invasion, the characteristics of the area of operations should have led the Iraqis to a concentration of forces at some decisive point. Yet it apparently failed to grasp that they were operating in a relatively "cramped theater of operations" where the "great opportunities for quick operational decisions...occur early..." 28 Of the 750 mile front, only a third, the central front, was suitable for armored and mechanized forces. The northern sector was too mountainous, while the southern front was generally marshy and restricted mechanized movement. 29 At the onset of hostilities, Iraq enjoyed a significant superiority of 4 to 1 in tanks. Yet it chose to spread its armor and attack across the entire front against relatively shallow objectives, rather than concentrating its strength in the central region and driving deep initially, exploiting the advantages of armored warfare. Iraqi attacks across such a broad front were designed to prevent Iran from countering by cutting critical north-south supply lines. However, they could have accomplished that with both regular and reserve forces not committed to the invasion phase itself.

Iran erred in the same manner. They tended to rely on their absolute numerical superiority with offensives characterized by broad frontages, normally employing frontal

36

assaults. Its disastrous attempts to take Basra in 1987 illustrate the point. Clausewitz wrote of using "surprise" to concentrate forces at the decisive point. Iran certainly massed its forces as it launched wave after wave of frontal assaults against that city. Yet it had telegraphed its intent to the extent that Iraqi forces defending the city eventually equalled, and perhaps even surpassed, the number of attackers. 30

While Clausewitz, limited by the experiences of his time, spoke only of the land battle, his concepts can be applied to the total concentrated application of military forces at the decisive point. Our current doctrine addresses this in emphasizing joint concepts of warfare, especially air-ground coordination. As discussed earlier, both sides failed to use its air assets in any coordinated or concentrated manner in support of the land battle. Close air support was sporadic throughout, as aircraft were normally committed to countervalue targets.

"Relative superiority, that is, the skillful concentration of superior strength at the decisive point, is much more frequently based on the correct appraisal of this decisive point, on suitable planning from the start..." 31 From the beginning, a concentrated Iraqi armored assault, closely supported by fighter and bomber aircraft, might have created

a vastly different situation and turned the course of events.

PRIMACY OF THE DEFENSE

Clausewitz's assertion that defense is the stronger form of warfare needs amplification as there are nuances which must be understood. His initial definition of the defense provides insight into his intent. "What is the concept of defense? The parrying of a blow...But if we are really waging war, we must return the enemy's blow;...a defensive campaign can be fought with offensive battles...so the defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed blows." 32 So, the classic defense is not static in nature. It may be defensive at the operational or strategic level, consisting of offensive thrusts at lower levels. The above definition is similar to the concept of mobile defense where forward deployed forces are supported by extremely mobile reserves, able to thrust forward to blunt attacks or to counterattack into enemy formations.

Clausewitz sees the defender having the "...advantages of waiting and the advantages of position." 33 He chooses the terrain on which to make his stand, and can use available time to prepare positions to his advantage.

The attacker, on the other hand, weakens himself as he tries to breach the defense. He "...moves away from his sources of supply, while the defender moves closer to his own." As we noted earlier "...the danger threatening the defender will bring allies to his aid". Clausewitz noted that "the nature of the operational theatre changes" for the invader. "It becomes hostile...and must be garrisoned, for the invader can control it only to the extent that he has done so..." And finally, "the defender, being in real danger, makes the greater effort, whereas the efforts of the victor slacken off." 34

Clausewitz certainly does not imply that one can win a war fighting defensively. Rather he sees the defense as a way to buy time, to gather strength, prior to launching the offensive which will bring about the end of hostilities. "If defense is the stronger form of war...it follows that it should be used only so long as weakness compels, and be abandoned as soon as we are strong enough to pursue a positive object. When one has used defensive measures successfully, a more favorable balance of strength is usually created; thus, the natural course in war is to begin defensively and end by attacking." 35

The Iran-Iraq war becomes the classic case study of all of the above and more.

Advantages of position and preparation do not apply to the Iranians in the initial invasion. They did not expect a major Iraqi offensive and had not prepared. However, the invasion did ignite nationalistic fervor and Iranians responded accordingly, "making the greater effort". Iraq was stretched from its supply bases and had problems supplying its forward forces. It now was forced to operate in a "hostile" environment as the Khuzistan Arabs failed to support the "invaders".

Iraq assumed a defensive posture once its initial offensive had ground to a halt. Here again, Clausewitz provides insight as he differentiated between a deliberate defense and one "...that follows directly the exhaustion of an offensive..." 36 He asserts that an invader who assumes a hasty defensive posture retains only the advantage of terrain, losing the advantage of an organized theatre, a friendly population, and the advantage of time.

When Iran went beyond its own borders and carried their counteroffensive into Iraq itself, Clausewitz's primacy of the defensive clearly proved itself.

As the war went from offensive campaigns to significant lulls, Iraq gained and used the advantage of time, preparing extensive positions and rebuilding its forces. As would be predicted, Iraqi forces fought with increasing tenacity in

defense of their homeland. 37 By 1986 Iraq was believed to

have increased its initial 12-division force to

approximately 20 divisions. 38 Given Clausewitz's concept

of a "parrying defense", Iraq used the influx of Soviet

equipment in 1984 to form mobile armored formations which

began to react quickly to blunt Iranian attacks. 39.

Iran, on the other hand, began to weaken on the offense.

National will began to falter as casualties mounted and

soldiers were called on to fight in the role of invader,

rather than in defense of homeland. Its lines of supply

were extremely stretched, and, with Iraq holding supremacy

in the skies, it became increasingly difficult to keep front

line units resupplied. 40 It began to feel the outside

pressures as "Operation Staunch" took effect and arms and

equipment became harder to obtain. As noted earlier, as oil

prices dropped, its ability to finance the offensive war

deteriorated. Iran's oil revenues in 1985 were estimated at

$1.2 billion per month. Within the next twelve months, that

monthly average had dropped to an estimated $400 million. 41

By 1988 we saw an Iran which was seriously weakened by years

on the offensive. We saw an Iraq which had used inherent

advantages in the defense to rearm, refit, and retrain its

forces. The final Iraqi offensives which forced Iran to

accept U.N. Resolution 598 fit perfectly the Clausewitzian

concept of using the defense "...so long as weakness

compels... and resuming the offense "...as soon as we are strong enough to pursue a positive object." 42

CENTER OF GRAVITY

Clausewitz stated that "...a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed." 43 A center of gravity can be many things: the enemy's military formations, its economic or industrial heartland, its political center, or even more intangible forces as a nation's will or commitment. Clausewitz acknowledged the dynamic nature of centers of gravity when he wrote that "...for Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great, the center of gravity was their army. If the army had been destroyed, they would all have gone down in history as failures. In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of gravity is generally the capital. In small countries that rely on large ones, it is usually the army of their protector. Among alliances, it lies in the community of interest, and in popular uprisings it is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion. It is against these that our energies should be directed." 44 The key is to identify an enemy's center of gravity and to focus one's energies on destroying that critical source of power.

Iraq failed to identify early on what was Iran's center of gravity and to focus its resources on it.

Iraq was vastly superior in combat aircraft, yet the air war was sporadic, with objectives constantly vacillating from close air support to economic targets within Iran, to population centers, to oil tankers and platforms in the Gulf. Emphasis and targeting seemed to be constantly shifting, as Iraq tended to back off its strikes on countervalue targets when Iran retaliated in kind. We've already discussed how Iraq failed to concentrate and integrate its combat power to strike at the decisive point on the battlefield. Iraq's early setbacks on the battlefield showed they could not decisively defeat the Iranians militarily. If anything, as time passed, it became apparent that Iran's manpower advantage could never be overcome. The center of gravity had to be economic or political in terms of national will and morale.

Clausewitz's assertion cited above that "...in countries subject to domestic strike, the center of gravity is generally the capital..." should have been used by Iraq from the initial phases of the war in breaking the will of the Iranian people. While their soldiers fought with fanaticism on the battlefield, the Islamic regime was torn within by incredible dissension. Khomeini"s early repressive measures led to factional feuds which caused near continuous strife.

43

In 1981, President Bani Sadr was impeached and his successor and 73 other Islamic leaders were killed by terrorist bombs. In 1982 Sadeq Ghotbzadeh, the ex-Foreign Minister, was executed for plotting to assasinate Khomeini. In 1983, Khomeini outlawed the communist Tuden party and executed many of its leaders. 45 Periodic upheavals within Iran's leadership structure continued throughout the war.

Iraq finally began to seriously target Iran's internal structure beginning in 1986. It intensified its attacks on shipping in the Gulf as well as on Iranian population centers. The former was intended to force the superpowers into pressuring for a cessation of hostilities, while the latter was designed to destroy Iranian resolve to continue the fight. The combination of the two did eventually break the will of Iran to continue the struggle.

Iraq doubled the number of attacks on shipping in the Gulf in 1986 over 1985. 46 The chain of events which followed - Iran's threat to close the Straits of Hormuz, the U.S. decision to reflag and escort Kuwaiti tankers, the confrontations at sea between Iran and the U.S. - all led to the political isolation of Iran and its drain of resources to deal with the situation in the Gulf.

Other analysts place greater emphasis on the effects of Iraqi strikes against Iranian population centers.

44

Apparently Iraq had been able to modify its Scud - B missiles, adding an additional booster which gave it the needed range to reach Tehreran. 47   The morale and resolve of the Iranian people finally shattered under the barrage of missiles which fell on the cities. 48

Iraq's "shotgun" approach in applying its resources throughout most of the war only weakened the effect and prolonged the conflict. Earlier recognition of the Iranian homeland and its economic base as centers of gravity and concentrated, coordinated attacks against them could have achieved an earlier settlement.

ROLE OF THE MILITARY AND THE COMMANDER

Clausewitz recognizes the importance of the morale of the army and the need for quality commanders to lead it. He states there are three principle moral elements critical in warfare. "They are the skill of the commander, the experience and courage of the troops, and their patriotic spirit." 49 Clausewitz is very clear on the effect which morale of the army can have on the outcome of war. "An army's efficiency gains life and spirit from enthusiasm for the cause for which it fights..." Later he notes that "...it would be a serious mistake to underrate professional pride (esprit de corps). Professional pride is the bond

between the various natural forces that activate the
military virtues...Military spirit, then, is one of the most
important moral elements in war..." 50 Clearly the outcome
of war is effected by the attitudes of the army – its
morale, cohesion, and belief in the cause for which it must
fight.

As to the leadership of the army, Clausewitz emphasizes the
need for commanders who possess qualities of genius. He
sees the commander as a special breed of individual, whose
profession demands the highest standards of excellence.
"The knowledge needed by a senior commander is distinguished
by the fact that it can only be attained by a special
talent, through the medium of reflection, study and
thought...in addition to study and reflection, life itself
serves as a source." 51 Wars must be fought by
professionals, men who have studied their art and are
prepared through a lifetime of practical experience.

The relative qualities of the armies and their commanders
certainly effected the course of the Iran-Iraq war.

Iran's forces were most effected. As to its leadership, the
impact of the purges was horrendous and caused a serious
shortfall in military experience and expertise. The senior
leadership was decimated and the armed forces were closely
controlled by the religious leadership of the country.

"Spiritual guidance officers" oversaw operations similar to the political commissars in the post-purge period of the Red Army. 52 There was serious infighting between the regular forces and the Pasdaran, leading to confusion and a general lack of coordinated effort. 53 Those appointed to senior leadership positions in the Pasdaran were selected for their religious zeal and political reliability rather than military expertise. 54 It took literally years for them to gain the battlefield experience needed to properly employ forces. In the interim, thousands died in human wave assaults against Iraqi positions.

The Iranian command and control structure was initially totally at odds, with the Army under the command of President Bani Sadr, and the Pasdaran responding to the religious mullahs. Shortly after the invasion, Iran sought to correct this by creating a Supreme Defense Council, ostensibly controlled by the president. However, political and religious influence continued to play a dominant role in determining the flow of military operations throughout the conflict. 55

There must have existed a curious mixture of conflicting sentiments and emotions within Iran's fighting forces. The religious zeal and fanaticism of the Iranians, especially Pasdaran forces, was apparent. However, that fervor was based on nationalistic and religious grounds. The armed

47

forces as a whole must have lacked cohesion with the infighting between regular units and the Pasdaran and the struggle for control between the nation's civilian leaders, its religious hierarchy, and the military and pseudo-military command structures. The regular army, racked by purges, distrusted by the religious leadership, and looked down upon by the nation as a whole, must have lacked pride in themselves and in the army as an institution - qualities which Clausewitz rated as essential to the nation at war.

Iraq's situation was somewhat better. While Hussein was concerned about possible unrest among the large Shi'a population, the armed forces retained pride in themselves, their units and their country." 56 Those forces had the advantage of prior combat experience based on their limited involvement in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, as well as nearly a decade of fighting against the Kurds along its northern border. Accordingly, the morale and fighting spirit of the armed forces remained relatively high throughout the conflict, especially when fighting on its own soil in defense of the homeland.

Iraq's principal problem was with its senior military leadership and the degree of control exercised by Saddam Hussein.

Hussein personally appointed the senior leaders of the armed
forces, and those appointments were based more on political
reliability than military expertise. Most officers above
the rank of colonel were political appointees and they
comprised the High Command and General, Operational and
Planning Staffs - that level of leadership which had primary
responsibility for coordinating the strategic direction of
the war. 57 Hussein appointed his half brother Bazran
Ibrahim as Chief of Internal Security Services and his
cousin General Adman Khayrallah Talfah as Minister of
Defence and Head of the Army. 58 Hussein exercised
centralized control over the armed forces through a
Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in which all three of
its services were represented. 59

The combination of poor senior leadership and centralized
control at the national level was reflected in the results
of the initial phases of the war. Iraqi operations were
characterized by a lack of flexibility, initiative and
imagination. Senior leaders were incapable of coordinating
and integrating the operations of the separate services as
each performed as a separate entity.

Though information is sketchy, Hussein apparently recognized
the problems with his senior leadership and took stern
action to partially correct it following the fall of
Khorramshahr in 1982. Stories began to filter out of Iraq

or court martials of senior officers, with many given prison sentences and at least two General Officers executed. He also reduced the size of the RCC from seventeen to nine members. 60

Yet Hussein continued to retain tight centralized control at the national level. Dissatisfaction within the mid-ranks of the officer corps with this policy began to mount as Iraq suffered severe setbacks on the battlefield through 1984.

A significant change apparently occurred in 1986 after Iran shocked the world with its successful seizure of the Fao Peninsula. Threatened with military defeat, Hussein acknowledged that "...excessive interference of political leaders...in operational decisions on military matters has seriously undermined military effectiveness." 61 In effect, he relinquished control over the conduct of the war to his military leaders. Given free rein to prosecute the war, the senior military leaders began planning and preparation for Iraq's final offensive in the spring of 1988 which proved to be so successful and forced Iran to end hostilities.

In the final analysis, Iran suffered from a lack of continuity and experience in its military leadership, from excessive control by the religious leadership, from the infighting between the regular armed forces and the Pasdaran, and from the negative effects of its purges on the

morale and esprit of its regular forces. Iraq, on the other hand, initially lacked the senior leadership with the breath of experience and the qualities which Clausewitz would have described as necessary to properly wage war.

ENDNOTES

1.   Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, p. 117.

2.   Karsh, p. 51.

3.   O'Ballance, p. 48.

4.   Ibid., p. 30.

5.   Clausewitz, p. 480.

6.   Graham, p. 17.

7.   Clausewitz, p. 118.

8.   L. D. Holder, "A New Day for Operational Art", Army, March 1985, p. 25.

9.   Clausewitz, p. 528.

10.   Karsh, p. 54.

11.   David Segal, "The Iran-Iraq War: A Military Analysis", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1988, p. 955.

12.   Clausewitz, p. 567.

13.   Segal, p. 956.

14.   James Lederman, "'Operation Staunch' Forced Khomeini's Hand", Wall Street Journal (New York), 22 July 1988, p. 4.

15.   Stephanie G. Neuman, "Arms, Aid and the Superpowers", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1988, p. 1052.

16. John Townsend, "Economic and Political Implications of the War: The Economic Consequences for the Participants", in The Iran-Iraq War, ed. by M.S. El Azhary, p. 52.

17. Neuman, p. 1048.

18. Graham, p. 19.

19. Karsh, p. 50.

20. Clausewitz, p. 605.

21. Ibid., p. 579.

22. Townsend, p. 58.

23. Clausewitz, p. 87.

24. Ibid., p. 92.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 360.

28. Holder, p. 4.

29. Segal, p. 947.

30. McNaugher, p. 8.

31. Clausewitz, p. 197.

32. Ibid., p. 357.

33. Ibid., p. 358.

34. Ibid., p. 567.

35. Ibid., p. 358.

36. Ibid., p. 571.

37. O'Ballance, p. 210.

38. Frederick W. Axelgard, "Iraq and the War with Iran", Current History, February 1987, p. 58.

39. Segal, p. 956.

40. _Ibid._, p. 952.

41. Axelgard, p. 59.

42. Clausewitz, p. 358.

43. _Ibid._, p. 595-596.

44. _Ibid._, p. 596.

45. O'Ballance, pp. 66, 89, 130.

46. Michael H. Armacost, _Statement of the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee_, p. 78.

47. Segal, p. 959.

48. Bill, p. 81.

49. Clausewitz, 186.

50. _Ibid._, p. 187.

51. _Ibid._, p. 146.

52. Segal, p. 953.

53. Karsh, p. 41.

54. Segal, p. 954.

55. Karsh, pp. 41-42.

56. O'Ballance, p. 29.

57. O'Ballance, p. 49.

58. Karsh, p. 15.

59. Karsh, p. 17.

60. O'Ballance, p. 91.

61. Axelgard, p. 59.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Iran-Iraq war has provided us a unique opportunity to
assess modern warfare in terms of the principles contained
in On war. Perhaps, more importantly, it has provided us
with some insight to warfare in the Middle East and what we
could expect to encounter should we be required to commit
land forces to that region.

The notion of Mideast armies being second rate in terms of
arms and equipment is certainly outdated. We can expect
potential adversaries in the Middle East to be armed with
weaponry that rivals our own in sophistication and
lethality. The world will continue to be dependent on
Mideast oil, and that dependence will provide Arab nations
with sufficient funds to purchase the instruments of modern
warfare. The Soviet Union, despite glasnost, will likely
continue to arm its allies in the region with modern
equipment and weapons. The proliferation of ballistic
missiles in the region, coupled with the spread of chemical
and biological warfare capabilities, is already of grave
concern and indicates that many Arab nations will be capable
of waging war on a devastating level.

The U.S. Army has always used the application of overwhelming firepower to achieve success on the battlefield. Arab sophistication in weaponry, coupled with their ability to purchase and stockpile ammunition and their shorter lines of communication, requires us to rethink the extent to which we could rely on firepower in a Middle East scenario. We could easily find ourselves outgunned in land conflicts in that region and success may depend more on superior maneuver and integration of effort rather than firepower alone.

Arab military capabilities will continue to be diminished by weaknesses in command and control and in their inability to integrate their armed forces. Most Arab leaders have traditionally feared their armed forces and have deliberately prevented the different services from becoming too closely aligned. Accordingly, they tend to fight as separate entities, unable to coordinate and integrate their efforts in a manner which would result in efficient joint operations.

We can expect that other Arab armies will have similar weaknesses at the operational and tactical levels as those seen in the Iran-Iraq conflict. Unit commanders lack experience and expertise in combined arms warfare. They will have difficulties in integrating infantry and armor forces with the artillery and aerial fire support systems.

55

we should assume, however, that both Iran and Iraq have
gained much in battlefield experience over the last eight
years and have overcome many of the weaknesses shown in the
early stages of the war. Iraq, especially, now has a
formidable army of 20 combat hardened divisions capable of
assuming a dominant military role in the region.

The Iran-Iraq war showed that Arab nations will go to
extremes to protect their national interests. Iran's use of
human wave assaults and Iraq's willingness to employ
chemical weapons indicate that we cannot expect Arab nations
to be bound by normal conventions of warfare. When
seriously threatened, they will use whatever means are
available to ensure their national survival.

Most importantly, we should expect to encounter armies
motivated and driven by value systems alien to our own.
While our intelligence apparatus can count hardware and
calculate troop ratios, it will be difficult to assess the
will and the intentions of an adversary driven by religious
and ideological motivations which we cannot comprehend.

As a first step in coming to grips with possible military
involvement in the Middle East, we as a nation must begin to
understand the culture and value system of the Arab world.
Such understanding must come from more open dialogue with
Arab nations on all levels - political, diplomatic,

56

cultural, and social. Short of such understanding, we could easily miscalculate the intentions and commitment of potential adversaries.

The military must continue to refine its doctrine of operational art. We must be able to compensate for what we may lack in numbers with our ability to achieve integration of effort in the application of military force. Continued emphasis on joint planning and operations is essential.

Of paramount importance, the leadership of the military must insist that our national military strategy in the region be formulated on an accurate assessment of ends, ways and means. The Carter Doctrine remains operative and we will continue to consider access to the region in our vital interests. However, any commitment of ground forces in the region must be backed up with a capability and a willingness to commit the resources to sustain those forces. That must include the moral commitment of the nation to support military intervention in the region.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Segal, David, "The Iran-Iraq War: A Military Analysis", _Foreign Affairs_, Summer 1988, pp. 946-963.

2. Graham, John, "The Iran-Iraq War - Eight Years On", _Nato's Sixteen Nations_, 32, November 1987, pp. 16-20.

3. Neuman, Stephanie G., "Arms, Aid and the Superpowers", _Foreign Affairs_, Summer 1988, pp. 1044-1066.

4. El Azhary, M.S., ed. _The Iran-Iraq War_. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984. Pp. 8-19: "The Historical Antecedents of the Shaat-al-Arab Dispute", by Peter Hunseler.

5. El Azhary, M.S., ed. _The Iran-Iraq War_. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984. Pp. 20-37: "Arab Sovereignty Over the Shaat-al-Arab During the Ka'Bide Period", by Mustafa al-Najjar and Najaat Fathi Safwat.

6. O'Ballance, Edgar. _The Gulf War_. New York: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988.

7. Lorenz, Joseph P. _Ending the Iran-Iraq War. The Pre-Negotiation Phase_. Center For the Study of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, Occasional Paper Series, 1986.

8. Karsh, Efraim. _The Iran-Iraq War: A Military Analysis_. Adelphi Papers. The International Institute for Strategic Studies. Great Britain, 1987.

9. "More Deadly Than Poison", _Newsweeks_, 1 August 1988, pp. 28-31.

10. "On the Brink of Peace", _Time_, 1 August 1988, pp. 26-29.

11. McNaugher, Thomas L. "The Iran-Iraq War: Slouching Toward Catastrophe?", _Middle East Review_, Summer 1987, pp. 5-15.

12. Bill, James A. "Why Tehran Finally Wants a Gulf Peace", _Washington Post_, 18 August 1988, p. B1.

13. Cowell, Alan. "Iraq's Dark Victory", _New York Times Magazine_, 25 September 1988, pp. 34-37.

14. Renfrew, Nita M. "Who Started the War", Foreign Policy. No. 66, Spring 1987, pp. 98-107.

15. Howard, Michael and Paret, Peter, ed. and trans. On War. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.

16. Holder, L. D. "A New Day for Operational Art", Army, March 1985, pp. 22-28, 32.

17. Lederman, James. "'Operation Staunch' Forced Khomeini's Hand", Wall Street Journal (New York), 22 July 1988, p. 4.

18. El Aznary, M.S., ed. The Iran-Iraq War. New York : St. Martin's Press, 1984. Pp. 51-65: "Economic and Political Implications of the War: The Economic Consequences For the Participants", by John Townsend.

19. Heller, Mark A. "The War Strategy of Iran", Middle East Review, Summer 1987, pp. 17-23.

20. Axelgard, Frederick W. "Iraq and the War with Iran", Current History, Vol. 86, No. 517, February 1987, pp. 57-60, 82, 90-91.

21. Armacost, Michael H. Statement of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Department of State Bulletin, August 1987, pp. 78-81.