

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM: A LEGITIMACY FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

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Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) provides a superb opportunity to assess the degree of success the U.S. leadership attained in employing the Elements of National Power. Our military emphasizes the importance of identifying the enemy's center of gravity (COG) to focus planning and employment of military power. The theory originates in the writings of Carl von Clausewitz who proposed that if a leader identifies an enemy's COG and focuses his objectives, strategy and resources in an effort to influence that center of gravity; he will most effectively achieve success. Although the major combat phase of OIF was highly successful, our nation's leaders have received harsh criticism from the international community, the Arab States, U.S. media and much of the U.S. population for perceived failings in the post war reconstruction of Iraq. Our leadership never formally identified a strategic COG but established Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party as the strategic COG in numerous speeches regarding OIF. This paper will present the argument that if legitimacy were identified as the Strategic COG and all planning, preparation, and actions were focused on enhancing Coalition legitimacy and eradicating Hussein and Baath legitimacy, the Coalition would have realized greater success in all phases of OIF.

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OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM: A LEGITIMACY FOCUS

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) provides an excellent opportunity to assess the effectiveness the United States military's performance and our civilian leadership's employment of the Elements of National Power in a very complex and demanding scenario. In the decade following Operation Desert Storm, Iraq continually challenged its regional neighbors and the United Nations (UN). Saddam Hussein's noncompliance with UN weapons inspections directives and defiance in the face of economic sanctions caused Iraq to be a significant destabilizing force on both the Middle Eastern and international stages. Economic sanctions did not force a positive change in the Iraqi leadership nor did they force UN resolution compliance, in fact, the sanctions only created a greater strain on the Iraqi economy as the ruling elite continued to amass their wealth at the expense of the populace. With the relentless Israeli-Palestine unrest in the region and growing anti-American sentiment among factions originating from and operating in the Middle East, any United States activity in the region must be handled with great care.

The international community and the American public generally embraced the United States attack into Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), as a justified action in the War on Terrorism and an appropriate response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. OEF continues today but receives little attention in the either the American or the European press. The U.S. led invasion into Iraq in OIF, however, is a different story and was so from its very beginning. Militarily, the major combat phase of OIF was highly successful: an entire population of violently oppressed people have been liberated, infrastructure has been rebuilt to a better condition than prior to the invasion, the Iraqi Governing Council is slowly but surely establishing governance of a democratic nation, and Saddam Hussein is in captivity and facing trial.

It would seem that everything is going well for OIF, however, the situation is quite the contrary. Daily attacks against Coalition members and innocent Iraqis have abated very little, hundreds of innocent Iraqis and Coalition members providing security, expertise, and financial support have lost their lives in the time frame following the major combat phase of OIF, Phase III. Our nation's civilian and military leaders continue to receive scathingly harsh criticism from the international community, the Arab States, the United States media and much of the American population for the decision to invade and our perceived failings in the post war reconstruction of Iraq or "Phase IV." Our nation's leaders attempted to portray OIF in much the same manner as OEF, but the situations are not similar and a different approach was required for OIF.

So what is the problem? Why are President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair's actions regarding OIF viewed so negatively? Why does the United States continue to be the object of such international disdain in our "War on Terror?" Did we use military force too early in OIF without international support? Would we ever have attained such support? Did we make hasty, faulty assumptions that are now manifesting themselves as severe problems?¹ Was our intelligence inaccurate or ignored? Did we fail to plan adequately or did we ignore our own planning for Phase IV?² Was our emphasis on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) too great and now detrimental to our effort? Is our new doctrine of preventive war to blame?³

The answers may be yes or no to any or all of the above questions. Consider instead, that we may have gotten the biggest piece of the puzzle wrong: the allied and enemy centers of gravity, though not clearly expressed, were none-the-less misidentified or not addressed at all in planning and that error has been evident in actions in the major combat phase of OIF (Phase III) that may have hampered our efforts in post combat nation-building phase of OIF (Phase IV) and our overall struggles in Phase IV. Consider how differently this entire scenario may have played out had we clearly established *LEGITIMACY* as THE strategic center of gravity (COG) for the entire operation – the legitimacy of all players, the allies as well as the Baath Party and our Terrorist enemies. This proposes a significant departure from the lock-step approach of identifying and attacking an enemy COG and protecting our COG, but consider that some present-day situations may lend themselves to the argument that there is but one overarching strategic COG and whichever side most successfully influences that COG fairs better in the big picture.

CENTER OF GRAVITY

United States military doctrine emphasizes the importance of accurately identifying the enemy's center of gravity enabling us to focus our planning, military power, and logistics and transportation assets. The theory originates in the writings of German military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz,⁴ who proposed that if a leader successfully identifies an enemy's COG and focuses his objectives, strategy and resources in an effort to attack that center of gravity; that leader will most effectively and efficiently achieve success.⁵ This paper proposes that if legitimacy were identified as the Strategic COG and all strategic planning, preparation, and actions taken were focused on achieving or enhancing Coalition legitimacy while simultaneously diminishing Hussein/Baath Party *AND* insurgent/terrorist legitimacy, the Coalition would have realized and would now be realizing much greater success in all phases of OIF, especially Phase IV, Nation Building. In fairness to Clausewitz, he may not have understood the concept of Phase IV,

because in his time, once a nation was defeated, it was not nearly as important to the military leader what actually occurred in the defeated nation and Clausewitz was militarily focused. He did, however, state that the completion of one war only set the stage for the next war.⁶

Joint Publication (Pub) 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, defines centers of gravity as those "characteristics, capabilities, or locations from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight."⁷ Joint Pub 5-00.1, *Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning*, defines COGs in much the same way but adds that COGs are "those aspects of the adversary's *overall capability* that, theoretically, if attacked and neutralized or destroyed will lead either to the adversary's inevitable defeat or force opponents to abandon aims or change behavior."⁸ Clausewitz simplifies the concept by averring that the COG is the source of all power.⁹

Clausewitz, stresses the importance of focusing on a *singular* center of gravity and subsequently directing all actions toward that point:

"The first principle is that the ultimate substance of enemy strength must be traced back to the fewest possible sources, and ideally to one alone. The attack on these sources must be compressed in the fewest possible actions – again, ideally, into one."¹⁰

This ideal should originate at the strategic level and be worked at every level below: operational and tactical. The strategic COG can often be more difficult to correctly identify because the COG may or may not be military and could be something as abstruse as the will of the people. At the operational level, sources of power are often military forces which emanate from a central focal point or points and are often more readily apparent. Accurate identification of the enemy's center of gravity enables the leadership to develop objectives that most directly influence that center of gravity. At the operational level, great leaders develop operational plans for employment of military power focused on achieving the COG-oriented objective(s) and resource that plan for success. The strategic level is much the same: the goal is to correctly identify the enemy's strategic center of gravity then plan and employ all four elements of national power (diplomatic, information, military, and economic) toward clearly defined objectives that most directly influence the strategic center of gravity.

It is important to note that there may be an operational center of gravity for each phase of a campaign or war. There may also be a different operational center of gravity for different battles of a war. Unless there is more than one theater, there would normally be one strategic center of gravity¹¹.

ATTACK VERSUS INFLUENCE

To successfully make the argument for legitimacy as the Center of Gravity for the entire operation requires a slight paradigm shift. We will need to depart from Clausewitz's theory that success is derived from "attacking" the enemy center of gravity and instead focus all effort on "influencing" the center of gravity in the direction that best serves the political cause. As mentioned earlier that the strategic center of gravity may be abstruse like the will of the people, or a significant diplomatic advantage, it may be implausible to "attack" the COG. Additionally, a strategic center of gravity may need to survive and be influenced to change direction as opposed to be destroyed or defeated. The enemy's source of power may need to remain in place, but that power may need only to be wielded by better leadership. One point to ponder in support of this theory: was completely eradicating the Baath Party the most prudent decision or could Phase IV have fared much better if some Baath Party leaders were selectively allowed to continue to serve in leadership roles.

"... in war the best policy is to take a state intact."¹²

—Sun Tzu

SADDAM OR WMD AS THE STRATEGIC CENTER OF GRAVITY

From the very onset of talks addressing a potential invasion of Iraq, President Bush and PM Blair repeatedly stressed the criminality of Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party arguably establishing them as the strategic COGs.¹³ The fact that Saddam and the Baath party did, in fact, rule Iraq in a criminally and violently oppressive fashion is not in question. But was Saddam truly the strategic COG for Operation Iraqi Freedom? Was he the COG for all phases of OIF? Though there may be a different operational COG for each phase of an operation, there should be only one strategic COG for the entire operation or campaign and successfully influencing that COG should be most assuredly manifested at the completion of the operation (Phase IV). The Coalition destroyed Saddam's Baath Party, sent him into hiding, and routed the Republican Guards Units in Phase III, yet we continue to struggle extensively in OIF Phase IV. In fact, Saddam's capture in December 2003 has had little to no impact on the amount and the intensity of the insurgent and terrorist actions in Iraq.

Our leaders also made numerous overtures about Iraqi WMD proliferation and alleged links to Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. OIF was justified in that we had to "get Saddam before he got us." This claim speaks to the imminence of the threat against our national security and legitimizes the invasion. However, at the end of the day, we have very

little evidence to show the world, the regional Arab nations and our own people that there truly was a threat to the U.S. and that there was much, if any, WMD proliferation. Many questioned the “imminence” of the threat then and certainly do so now. They present U.S. and U.K. aggression as an issue and allege that we set out on a vindictive crusade of “disarming Saddam Hussein” and forcing a regime change in Iraq for goals other than national security.¹⁴

Now with Saddam captured and the Baath party completely defunct and assurance of no Iraqi WMD threat, we face a skeptical world and a persistently violent Iraq in spite of our noblest accomplishments. But Iraq is a nation of partitioned diversity with tribes and ethnic groups interacting very little and possessing a limited desire to become integrated into a singular, overarching society. To succeed in Phase IV, we will need to positively influence the Kurd, Shi’ite, and Sunni populations and gain their support.

If OIF needed to occur, the administration likely have fared much better had they identified a more accurate strategic COG that spanned the entire campaign and focused all energy and resources against objectives that influenced that COG – a COG that was influenced by the victory in Phase III, the capture of Saddam, the destruction of the Baath Regime, and the eradication of WMD, but not solely influenced by those achievements.

THE BAATH PARTY AND THE REPUBLICAN GUARDS FORCES AS THE OPERATIONAL CENTER OF GRAVITY

The Coalition targeting of Saddam, key Baath Party facilities and leaders, and the elite Republican Guards was a highly successful application of combat power that led to our rapid victory in Phase III. The Coalition conducted a campaign against the conventional forces and successfully defeated or destroyed the Republican Guards units within weeks of launching the attack. The Republican Guards units were effective and accurate *operational* COGs for Phase III (Major Combat Operations). Once these elite forces began to crumble, the Iraqi defense became completely ineffective. We, in fact, may have been too successful:

“... the culture of Iraq had such an overwhelming belief in their own government’s omnipotence that when their government collapsed so quickly that it caused “societal trauma” that directly conflicted with our efforts for stability and regime rebuilding.”

- LTG Scott Wallace, V Corps CDR OIF¹⁵

Targeting Baathist leadership and command and control (C2) also contributed immeasurably to the overwhelmingly quick operational and tactical success and unquestionably forced a regime change. Although, the decision to unseat every Baathist without exception proved effective in attaining Phase III operational objectives, that decision has not remotely

proven to be strategically prudent strategically during our effort to rebuild the nation of Iraq as rebuilding forces have come to find there is little expertise, leadership, or organizational talent outside of the Baath Party.

The nation of Iraq does desire to punish Saddam Hussein for his atrocities, and his capture eased the concerns of many reluctant Iraqis, but his death or imprisonment will not have a great impact on the consistent and persistent attacks in Iraq. It will require the capabilities and support of an entire populace that has a history of diversion amongst the various factions. As we continue to be engaged in significant combat and security in the country remains unhealthy, Iraq is nowhere near capable of assuming self governance as this summer's deadline nears, Operation Iraqi Freedom is no where near complete, and skepticism runs rampant in the eyes of the Iraqi people. The strategic COG should address a solution to a successful exit strategy that is based on successes in both Phase III and Phase IV of OIF.

LEGITIMACY

The American Heritage Dictionary defines legitimacy as the state of being "in compliance with the law; in accordance with traditional or established patterns and standards."¹⁶

The entire world watched in horror as terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Days after the attack, President Bush announced that we were at war, a war on terror. Very few disagreed with that assertion or questioned U.S. legitimacy in aggressively seeking to bring the perpetrators of the attacks to justice and striving to secure the innocent people of our nation and throughout the world. Shortly after the terrorist attack, the U.S. conducted Operation Enduring Freedom into Afghanistan to oust the Taliban and eliminate al Qaeda personnel, facilities, and operations in that country. OEF received the support of the U.S. population, our congress, the vast majority in the international community, and the United Nations. That consensus brought legitimacy; that legitimacy brought favorable media, international support and offers to provide troops, equipment, and financial support.

LEGITIMACY: POWER DERIVED FROM OTHERS

Some theorists say legitimacy *is* power or is *the* source of power. A legitimate cause normally brings support. As mentioned, that support can be economic, diplomatic, military, expertise, manpower, or even moral support depending on the resources of a specific population perceiving the legitimacy. Legitimacy in the eyes of the American people is critical especially for a drawn-out campaign. Without the support of the American public, Congress

would feel their constituents' pressure and eventually stop funding the military action.

Legitimacy in the international arena relieves the burden from a single nation as other nations step up to the plate often even becoming active members of a coalition. International legitimacy also provides access to sea ports, air bases, refuel resources and facilities, shipping lanes, airspace and more. Legitimacy enables the invader to be viewed as a liberator versus occupier, bolsters the confidence of the liberated in believing they will not be further oppressed, opens doors for human intelligence (HUMINT), increases security and quells overall dissension.

Legitimacy as a source of power is not an absolute status. With regards to legitimacy, perceptions are definitely more important than truth. In fact, for legitimacy to be accepted as a source or origin of power, one would have to acknowledge that the power is derived from the populations sitting in judgment of the legitimacy. In the OIF scenario, there are four populations judging Coalition and Baath Party legitimacy: the international community of nations represented most overtly by the United Nations, the regional nations (the Arab States), the American people and their government, and the Iraqi people.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF NATIONS.

Attaining legitimacy amongst the international community is likely the most important effort in prosecuting wars in current times. With international legitimacy, a country finds an easier path to achieving both national and regional (local) legitimacy. The end of the Cold War and the new non-state enemies on the world scene have caused enormous changes in the international community. No longer does a bipolar world align into two sides regardless of the issue. Regional hotspots and terrorists that ignore state boundaries present myriads of complex issues that all countries now must struggle. Given a world of divergent cultures, economic challenges, and budding alliances, it is no surprise that longtime allies are now strategically aligning opposite each other. Many European powers desire to build a counter to United States hegemony. Their pursuit of this goal can often overshadow the noblest U.S. intention. Perceptions internationally about U.S. ability to project military force anywhere in the world is seen as a threat in many second and third world countries. Ignoble perceptions of oil being the basis for most of our aggression are rampant internationally. It is therefore very important to stress that international organizations like the United Nations play an increasingly greater role in legitimizing a nation's actions.

The United Nations.

Operation Iraqi Freedom has widespread antagonists in the international community. The United States and Great Britain never gained the degree of international consensus or vital coalition support desired to undertake an operation of this magnitude and regional significance. The United Nations wrestled at length with the justifications for and the timing of employing military force into Iraq. Consequently, the U.N. Security Council never produced a resolution subsequent to Resolution 1441 expressing U.N. support for the use of military force in Iraq. President Bush and Prime Minister Blair, frustrated at the lack of U.N. Security Council support stated that 1441 gave "...us the authority to move without a second resolution."¹⁷ Multitudes of U.N. nations supported the US/UK effort, but key nations did not agree most notably permanent UN Security Council members France and Russia and their strong ally, Germany.

Just as a nation strives for legitimacy internationally, the U.N. must strive to foster its *own* legitimacy – a legitimacy often questioned over the past few decades due to poor leadership, inaction, and little inherent power to enforce mandates. U.N. credibility was severely tested by the U.S. and U.K. when our countries invaded Iraq without a second U.N. resolution endorsing our invasion. The U.N. has many internal issues that it needs to resolve like the outdated and stagnant composition of the Security Council, but that is not a focus for discussion in this study. However, given that our most powerful international diplomatic antagonists, France and Russia, are two of the five members of the Security Council, it very well may have been that no matter what the U.S. did or how we played our cards, there is no way we could have attained U.N. sanction for OIF because both countries are increasingly aligning against us on the world stage. However, the greater the population of nations that view OIF as legitimate, the greater pressure there would be on the UNSC to support the operation.

Of unparalleled significance to the international community is the new and contentious convention of preemptive use of force against terrorists and countries that harbor terrorists and the heated disagreements regarding the measure of "imminence" of the perceived threat. The situation in Iraq was magnified considerably because it had become a closed nation and allied intelligence within the country was very limited. A lack of intelligence creates a springboard for dissent when determining the imminence of a threat to our security.

Other transnational or regional organizations played significant rolls in the decisions made regarding OIF: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) currently under the firm control of France and Germany. The fairly young EU is an economic counter to U.S. hegemony and its goals do not necessarily align with NATO. Many of the Eastern European countries are vying for membership in both NATO and in the EU. Western

European Kingpins of the EU like Germany and France, wield EU membership as a carrot in coercing other nations to their “side” versus allowing them to arrive at their own conclusions on the international scene. This dichotomy on the European Continent creates an enormous challenge from within as many of these ex-Warsaw Pact countries attempt to strengthen economic and diplomatic ties the U.S. while the more powerful EU countries attempt to limit U.S. economic and diplomatic influence on the continent. This places the U.S. in a difficult situation when striving to attain legitimacy in the eyes of a highly influential European group of nations especially when the merits of legitimacy are actually victims of an entirely disassociated political agenda.

THE MIDDLE EAST.

The Middle East continues to be a hotbed of unrest as the Palestinian-Israeli situation continues to fester with no true resolution in sight. Again the U.S. is limited in our quest for legitimacy among Middle Easterners regardless of the merits of our intentions due to our historical ties to Israel – another disassociated political agenda. There are also a growing number of anti-American factions that originate in the Middle East who perceive our entire culture to be the threat, they will go to any lengths to destroy us and our efforts no matter how benevolent our intentions in that region. For many of them, this is their Jihad, or Holy War.

Although a more economically healthy and politically moderate Iraq would be in the best interest to the stable governments within the Middle East, a weak Iraq is as dangerous to regional stability as a strong, over aggressive Iraq. The Arab nations see a healthy Suuni-dominated Iraq as a counter to a strong Israel and a radical Shiite Iran. Many of the Arab nations are not comfortable with the idea of a democratic Iraq with a Shiite majority. If the society opens and the region observes a successful democratic Iraq, many local countries may begin to feel pressure from disgruntled citizens and underrepresented tribes or sects within their countries. And finally, many traditional Muslims see capitalism, Christianity, and even hedonism as the westernization versus the modernization of their countries and unwelcome forces they associate with democracy.

In fairness, the support of the majority of Muslim countries in the region was sufficient for a successful Phase III, though Turkey’s decision to deny access made life interesting. Interestingly, it is Turkey’s democratic process that caused that nation to arrive at the decision to deny access to the US – an access that would have reaped significant monetary dividends for Turkey. OIF Phase III would have been almost impossible had Kuwait not provided vital access to Iraq. The Kuwaiti support certainly demonstrates how a view of legitimacy can be a source of

power. However, the bigger question is, whether a higher sense of perceived legitimacy among the Arab/Muslim countries would be resulting in a greater degree of success in Phase IV. Had Turkey viewed the operation as legitimate, they would likely have authorized access in the north thus providing considerable more options for the operation.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND ITS GOVERNMENT.

As mentioned, the international community can sway legitimacy in the eyes of the American public to some degree, however, not in all cases. The American people are eager to believe that our cause is right and very quick to attack a cause if we believe it is unjust. Freedom of speech is alive and well in the U.S. and this country's leaders are assured that no matter what they do or say, there will be dissenters. However, the American people have bought into the War on Terrorism with the horrors of 9/11 remaining vivid in our minds. Americans are also ready to lend a helping hand when a humanitarian injustice comes to light. Americans are averse to high casualties when the cause is not evident and long duration affairs that impact on our wallets and our patience. We also do not want to be lied to. Although our presidents have employed troops to countless combat scenarios, Congress did and does hold the purse strings. At the end of the Vietnam War, Congress demonstrated that it would cease funding deployments that are completely unpopular with its constituents.

The American public was skeptical but rallied behind the troops during OIF's actual attack. Prior to and after the attack, however are different stories. The American press presented the impassioned views of a fairly robust anti-war faction before and after the attack. The U.S. legislative leaders were split regarding support for the operation though few spoke out against it up to and during the attack, but multitudes (bipartisan) of representatives are now condemning the decision to attack and the method OIF was conducted.

THE IRAQI PEOPLE.

“Before, we couldn't talk freely but we could walk, and now we can talk freely but we can't walk.

– A female university student¹⁸

Iraq is a nation of people who have been violently oppressed and have lived in fear of Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party government for decades. They saw rule with an iron hand as friends, relatives, and fellow countrymen were physically taken from their homes and families never to return. They saw Saddam stand up to the U.S. hegemon in Desert Storm and survive. They heard Saddam's propaganda and only Saddam's propaganda as innocent victims

of a closed society. They became a nation of followers unless they were in the favor of the Baathists elite. The very idea that Saddam could be removed from power so quickly and so easily was more of a shock than a relief for the majority of the Iraqis. When it happened so easily and so quickly, they were stunned.

The Coalition's post conflict reconstruction has been under attack for months as Saddam supporters, terrorists, and radical anti-American factions operating in the country have conducted daily attacks against coalition forces, Iraqi personnel and infrastructure, and other innocents. Phase IV has cost the U.S. more lives, resources and money than remotely expected.

The liberated Iraqis have been excited, happy and expectant; but also often disillusioned, distrusting, frustrated and, even antagonistic at times – some to the point of stating that they believe they were better off under Saddam. Though quality of life improves in many ways, the personal safety continues to be dicey. The Coalition appears to be under-resourced and receiving much less international support than anticipated while terrorist attacks maintain an intolerable level of intensity. Also, Coalition forces are in a lose-lose situation in that they must remain in country to fight for stability and security and the longer they stay in country, the more they appear to be occupiers and the less they appear to be liberators.¹⁹

THE ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER TOWARD A LEGITIMACY COG

A nation as strong as the United States has significant power to influence countries and situations throughout the world. The U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy identifies four elements of a nation's power as diplomacy, information, economic and military.²⁰ Recognized as the world's only Superpower, the U.S. has an unmatched ability to influence positive change by effective and efficient employment of all four elements in the appropriate manner at the appropriate time. In an effort to express how these four elements of power would have been employed differently had legitimacy been identified as the strategic center of gravity and objectives to influence that legitimacy were clearly established, we will begin with diplomacy, one of the prominent sources of power that can achieve a nation's ends without going to war.

DIPLOMATIC

“We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.”

—President George W. Bush²¹

"... until now it has been understood that when states go beyond that and decide to use force to deal with broader threats to international peace and security, they need the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations ... Now some say this understanding is no longer tenable since an 'armed attack' with weapons of mass destruction could be launched at any time ... This logic represents a fundamental challenge to the principles, on which, however imperfectly, world peace and stability have rested for the last 58 years"

—Kofi Anan, UN Secretary General²²

International legitimacy resides in the United Nations. As mentioned, members of the Security Council are postured for adversity to United States influence internationally. The most critical challenge to achieve international legitimacy would have been to achieve a higher degree of international support and ultimately a subsequent UN resolution authorizing the invasion of Iraq. From the very beginnings of political discussions regarding Iraq's noncompliance with weapons inspections directives and WMD proliferation, President Bush and PM Blair took a very firm stand. This posture is justified outwardly as a reaction to the focus on security of our nation in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. President Bush's resolve can be seen in his oft-repeated statement that "America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our people" and a National Strategic Strategy that embraces "Preventive War" as a tenet of national security. A firm stance was not necessarily a misstep but preventive war prior to a better intelligent build up may or may not have been. Many Europeans were, however, not pleased with President Bush's "style" and believed his approach to be defiant and aggressive. Some of his comments were perceived to alienate many in the UN especially members of the UNSC actually questioning the power of the UN. An effort to be more inclusive regarding the UN with the levity of being able to forestall the invasion would possibly have afforded more UN support and enabled better intelligence.

Preventive war is legitimized internationally by the threat's degree of imminence – or, "if we do not attack, we will be attacked." Evidence mounts showing that Saddam had not been fostering ties to the Al Qaeda nor supported the 9/11 attacks. An absence of evidence establishes little proof of Iraqi WMD proliferation, programs or technology. Though Iraq and Saddam would certainly have been happy to see the U.S. under attack, evidence that Iraq was involved in a plot to attack the U.S. or U.K. has yet to emerge. So the firm stand that Iraq posed a security threat to the U.S. or U.K. has, at present, very little merit internationally or nationally. Saddam was likely proliferating WMD and involved in supporting terrorism in some fashion. Our preemptive war doctrine and firm stance is not to blame for OIF shortcomings. The failing was *legitimizing* a preemptive strike on *suspect* evidence of imminent threat. An effort to assure legitimacy for preemption in the diplomatic arena dictates an enormous burden of proof, which

means that intelligence actions must be energized dramatically. As mentioned previously, Iraq was a closed society and has not necessarily been a top priority for intelligence over the past 5-10 years.²³ So our first step should have been to find more solid evidence of our allegations. But this could take months or years and we may not have had months or years. Perhaps we should have taken a slightly different route. We may well have been more successful if we went in as liberators from an oppressive dictator and severe human rights violations as opposed to conquerors.

Liberators versus conquerors

There are three legitimate conditions to employ force under the Charter of the U.N.:

- If a nation is attacked.
- If a nation is asked to help defend another nation.
- If otherwise allowed under U.N. sanction.²⁴

To be otherwise allowed under U.N. sanctions would require that the attack be an option of “last resort” due to the imminent threat of the rogue nation. The U.N. may also sanction an action under the purview of human rights. France and Germany, two nations occupying permanent seats on Security Council, were the most outspoken dissenters against an invasion into Iraq. They argued that the use of military force in OIF was not a “last resort” and they posed the most significant question regarding legitimacy of OIF – whether the Iraqi threat was or was not “imminent.”²⁵ The imminence of the Iraqi threat is the predominant question of the day.

Diplomatically, the U.S. and Great Britain may have fared much better negotiating a bit longer with the other nations of the Security Council and developing the intelligence in more detail. Dr. Jane Holl Lute, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the United Nations Foundation identified Three Legitimate Usages of Military Force:

- Uphold the law.
- Clearly block unaccepted behavior.
- Destruction of evil is the only option.²⁶

Legitimacy may well have been garnered much earlier if our focus for justification was focused on these three legitimate uses of military force. Weapons of mass destruction and the facilities to produce such weapons can be buried rather easily. Links to terrorists are easily covered or severed and proof is not always clearly understood. The average Iraqi would not be aware of such activities and may not care. However, mass murders and mass burial sites, torture chambers, disintegrated infrastructure, and severe oppression are less easily covered up. The average citizen *does* care and is willing to participate in “getting to the bottom of” such

atrocities. The world would have more readily legitimized an operation to save the people of Iraq from Saddam's brutal regime than for us to "smite them before they smited us."

As for the WMD, billing the effort as a liberation of brutalized Iraqi citizens could include the added benefit of being able for the first time in twelve years, to verify that the country was, in fact, disarming WMD. If the Security Council remained incapable of achieving consensus, we could have entered Iraq to liberate people who have suffered horribly under the tyrannical regime of Saddam and international sanctions **and** to ensure that they are disarming WMD.

Exiled, tribal, and inexperienced Iraqis

Legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqis is a considerable challenge because of the multitudes of different factions within that country and the lifestyle and culture in which they have become accustomed. Placing exiles in positions of responsibility and heeding the advice of exiles like Ahmad Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress reduced our legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqis from the very start of this operation.²⁷ The Iraqis predominantly care about their quality of life. Factions in every section of the country want a voice in their own governance. Achieving legitimacy in the eyes of these diverse populations may be the most difficult effort in rebuilding Iraq. However, the support of these separate groups within Iraq would help reduce the terrorist threat if they are willing to step forward and notify authorities of the locations of the terrorists in their areas.

Phase IV

Finally, there is a view that planning for Phase IV did not occur and that civilian and military leaders focused solely on the invasion. There is evidence of detailed studies of issues that were likely to confront an invading force that unseated the Saddam/Baathist Regime.²⁸ The studies identified most of the problems we confronted in Phase IV and are continuing to confront. The study proposed significant requirements for a successful rebuilding of Iraq focusing on infrastructure problems, the certainty of resistance, the problem with ejecting all Baathist and eradicating military personnel and equipment, challenges with self-governance, security challenges and much more. The problem was that such studies were, by-in-large, ignored. If legitimacy were the COG and the success of Phase IV was more critical than the prosecution of Phase III, the Coalition would have been much better prepared to conduct Phase IV operations and enjoying a much greater degree of success at present.

A United Nations lead role in Phase IV equals legitimacy. As quickly as possibly following the attacking Coalition's advance, a Phase IV Coalition of nation builders should have rolled into Iraq. U.S. players on this New Coalition should be under the control of the National Security

Council and/or the State Department and de-emphasized the involvement of the Secretary of Defense. The Coalition needed to include an international robust police force, and qualified experts required to build a nation quickly, experts in: government, agriculture, commerce, food and drugs, medicine, facilities construction and maintenance, education, and much more.

INFORMATIONAL

The environment is very difficult for successful employment of information power, but gains are being made every day. The problem in Iraq is that, just like everything else, their media facilities are antiquated and very sparse. With a focus on legitimacy, the Coalition could have benefited a great deal by setting up a radio station prior to the invasion and airing the world's concerns, invasion intentions, and reconstruction efforts in Arabic. This type of effort would allow the Iraqis to receive some positive media to represent what is going well as a counter to force fed Baathist propaganda they had been forced to absorb.

A well-informed Iraqi population is better than a closed population living by the ideals put forth by Baathist propaganda. The sooner the populace of Iraq is aware that the Coalition is not interested in occupation, is interested in helping Iraqis achieve self governance, and is working to make life safer and better for the average Iraqi, the sooner they will rally. A campaign to issue radios, stand up television studios, air public service announcements, provide evidence of free press and get the good word out to the population would reap significant dividends.

The military's decision to imbed media with the attacking forces was an enormously effective informational tool and did serve to enhance Coalition legitimacy in the eyes of the U.S. public. A concerted effort to imbed media in the Phase IV Coalition rebuilding efforts would have reaped an equal high dividend. The public would better view the positive accomplishments occurring in the country versus the current "body count" style of reporting.

ECONOMIC

A decade of economic sanctions against Iraq did not work. In fact, the sanctions may have only served to isolate the country even more than without the sanctions and resulted in even less intelligence regarding WMD, terrorism, infrastructure, population loyalties, etc.²⁹³⁰ The Baathist leadership elite of Iraq continued to live in luxury further exacerbating the economic drain on society and infrastructure. Invading a country costs a great deal. Successfully rebuilding a country after an invasion and establishing a new regime is even more expensive. But to successfully rebuild a nation after an invasion after forcing a regime change when that nation's infrastructure has been devastated for over a decade is very, very expensive.

A more focused effort to achieve legitimacy for OIF on the international front may have resulted in much greater support for the coalition's efforts financially. Our planning and preparation for Phase IV could well have predicted the enormous costs of rebuilding Iraq. Conducting a Phase IV operation on the cheap reduces legitimacy considerably. The Iraqi population's most urgent concerns following the invasion were security and basic human needs (electricity, water, sewage, food, etc). Had a Phase IV Coalition been formed, rolled into Iraq early, and began refurbishing the basic infrastructure from the very beginning immediate financing would have been required. A Phase IV monetary plan would be required and if funded adequately, been very beneficial.

MILITARY

Major Combat Operations

During the conduct of the attack, a focus on legitimacy would have billed this as a liberation to all populations especially the Iraqis and our mission would have been to defeat versus destroy the enemy's military. The Coalition forces would preserve infrastructure when at all possible and preserve military and police personnel, facilities, and equipment. They would have rigidly forbid looting of any fashion, hoisted the Iraqi flag in conjunction with a UN flag versus U.S. flags, and obviously minimizing innocent casualties as much as possible. This did not occur, LTC Terry Ferrell, Commander, 3-7 Cavalry Squadron, stated that his Division Commander, LTG Wallace stressed that the Coalition was a "Conquering Force" in an address to the leadership prior to launching the attack. LTC Ferrell further added that as the war was ending, his units were under orders to drive their M1s around and destroy any vacated military vehicles still intact. This contributed to an Iraq with very little military resources to provide security for their country and made them more dependent on the Coalition Forces.³¹

Post Conflict Reconstruction

The Post Conflict Phase would look drastically different with a focus on a legitimacy based on liberation from evil. First, a Post Conflict Coalition and force (different from the attacking force) should have been formed, resourced and prepared to step in and replace the warfighting unit that just completed the Attack Phase. As mentioned, a separate Coalition to conduct Phase IV would have better legitimized our efforts in OIF. LTC Ferrell said that he was tasked with working to reestablish stability in his area of operations by dealing diplomatically with people he had been engaging with weapons days prior. The attacking forces would still be required and

would be the force to hostile and the military force to seek out down terrorists and insurgents and train the Iraqi military.

CONCLUSION

"After more than three decades of despotic rule, without the basic elements of the rule of law, a ruined economy, a devastated country, the collapse of state institutions, low political will for reconciliation and distrust among some Iraqis, conditions in Iraq are daunting."

—Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Envoy to UN Security General February 23, 2004³²

Legitimacy in a preemptive strike is directly related to the perceived degree of imminence associated with an "imminent threat." That perceived degree of imminence is dependent on the intelligence available. Intelligence is difficult to acquire and analyze in closed, antagonistic nations and even more difficult against our enemies in the War on Terror that have no sovereign boundaries or conventional morals. Achieving universal consensus concerning the "imminence" is impossible, but we must make that our absolute priority. We must also emphasize planning for Phase IV at least as much as we plan for Phase III. Planning accurately for the vast array of challenges of a regime reconstruction is dauntingly ominous. These are challenging times.

To be successful in the face of such enormous challenges, leaders must fight the correct fight and align appropriate actions to achieve their goals. The Center of Gravity concept remains relevant and merits strategic emphasis in every future campaign-planning endeavor especially when time and resources are in short supply and the consequences of failing may be traumatic. As the U.S. embraces the preventive use of military force as a principal tenet for success in the War on Terror, legitimacy may be our most significant ally and consequently the Strategic Center of Gravity in many conflicts on the horizon.

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