

**ADJUSTING U.S. STRATEGY TOWARDS IRAQ:
TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH**

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THE NATURE OF WAR (5602)

&

FUNDAMENTALS OF STRATEGIC LOGIC (5601)

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“The nation which indulges towards another a habitual hatred or a habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest.”

-- George Washington



The terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington D.C. on September 11 reflected a level of brutality and ingenuity that horrified the entire world. Apart from those individuals who witnessed the destruction firsthand, many Americans continue to recall the harsh images flowing from millions of television sets that day and for weeks thereafter. These were ordinary Americans: falling out of buildings; burning to death; and running through narrow streets while being engulfed in smoke. President Bush's message soon after September 11 was understandably emotional, "You're either with us . . . or with the terrorists."¹ This Presidential threat, coupled with the palpable anger of the American people, forced many nations to quickly digest the stakes of a "global war on terrorism."

The purpose of this paper is not to argue that our nation's history requires that we "wait for threats to fully materialize, [increasing the risk that] we will have waited too long."² nor to downplay the dangers of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The objective is to review the nature of the threat posed by Iraq, the strategies and policy instruments presently employed and under consideration to address that threat, and, finally, to recommend adjustments where necessary. First, the Iraqi threat to the U.S and its allies has been grossly distorted and exaggerated. While exaggerating the nature and immediacy of the threat may regenerate homeland fears in such a way that sets in motion sympathy to oust Saddam, the *actual* commitment of American "blood and treasure" will bear out the need for a far more convincing explanation of the "why now?" issue. Second, the exhaustive failure to link Iraq directly to September 11 engendered an official yet public migration from preemption as the chief justification for an attack to an undefined strategic imperative to use force, causing international and domestic suspicion and confusion. Third, if force is necessary as a last resort, it should not fall under the auspices of the global war on terrorism, but within a framework of preventive war. Only then will remedying the threat proceed at a pace that better promotes American influence in the Middle East and throughout the world. Indeed, the complexity of the Iraq problem requires that we avoid "going it alone" in the face of significant international and domestic discord.

Before focusing on Iraq directly, it is important to take a broader look at the terrorism of September 11 and the implications of a nation absorbed by an open-ended, almost indefinable war against an elusive enemy.

Realism, Idealism, and Terrorism

At the heart of the terrorist discussion are the realists, who maintain the fairly pessimistic view that the lack of a supra-national governing authority ensures a world of instability and struggle and the idealists, who maintain that there are more progressive influences at work through the spread of democracy, increased economic

interdependence, and the use of international institutions to help curb nation-state behavior. Yet discussion over this “new terrorism” is misguided - terrorism was a significant problem before September 11. In fact, September 11 merely proved to many foreign affairs experts and intelligence officers that al Qaeda was more than “the gang that couldn't shoot straight.” This concern naturally led to fears that these terrorists might get their hands on WMD, particularly nuclear weapons. Because realism is primarily focused on the struggles among nation-states, the various perspectives reveal little thought about transnational actors and virtually no analysis as to the root causes of their terror. This seems to contribute to an over-reliance on the use of military force to deal with the specter of additional, perhaps more devastating attacks. The danger of this trend is two fold: First, terrorists are hard to find and strike using military force. Thus, a search to use the military instrument is likely to stray from the original threat and falsely balm public fears. A more creative use of national resources will better address the root causes. Second, if part of our goal is to ameliorate extremist hatred towards the U.S. in the Middle East and to try to win the hearts, minds, and *active* support of Islamic moderates, blunt military force is sure to counter such efforts and even surge extremist sentiment and recruitment among vulnerable and moderate Muslim populaces.

The Self-Defeating Characteristics of Islamic Fundamentalism

Is Islamic Fundamentalism on the rise worldwide? The fear is that Islamic fundamentalism, rather than running amok in ways that state security services can monitor and disrupt is globally organizing and starting to exhibit a new level of disciplined brutality. But there is evidence that Islamic extremism is actually losing influence worldwide. Apart from defeating the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (with U.S. assistance) and establishing an Islamic regime in Iran, Islamic fundamentalists have collected more failures than successes:

1. The “victory” in Iran is increasingly fragile; democratization and liberalization is growing;
2. The Islamic Taliban rule in Afghanistan was a disaster; Afghani celebration upon its demise showcased the underbelly of Islamic extremism - its use of brutality devastates society; Extremists tear apart rather than build up the human condition;
3. The failure to create Islamic states in Egypt, Algeria, Turkey and other places.

Osama bin Laden’s 1998 fatwa (a legal opinion based on religious reasoning) accused the U.S. and its allies of committing crimes against the Muslim people and emphasized that the justification for a “jihad” was essentially defensive in nature and rooted in Islamic teachings. The U.S. and its allies had committed the following “crimes:” First, America had “stormed” the Arabian peninsula during the Gulf War and continued “occupying the lands of

Islam in the holiest of places” (i.e., Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia). Second, it continued a war of annihilation against Iraq; and third, it supported the state of Israel and its continued occupation of Jerusalem. In effect, Muslims had the right and duty to repulse American aggression. However, “the presumption of Islamic teachings on “right conduct in war” is that individuals are innocent and therefore not subject to harm unless they demonstrate by their actions that they are a threat to the safety of Muslims. On this basis, the overwhelming majority of Muslim scholars have for centuries rejected indiscriminate killing and the terrorizing of civilian populations as a legitimate form of jihad.”³ If the basis of al Qaeda’s violence is political in nature and contrary to Islamic law, it follows that bin Laden’s method of madness is to cloak his brutality as a justified defense of Islam while portraying America’s modus operandi as an historic and illegitimate bargain with regimes who are corrupt, irreligious and callous to the worsening plight of “good Muslims.” bin Laden hypothesizes that this bargain ensures America’s ability to hoard the resources of Islamic lands in a manner that exploits the peaceful inclinations of Muslims and ensures their continued subjugation. There is enough subtlety here to obviate the dangers of relying on the most blunt and visible instrument of U.S. power - military force. First, the contention that the U.S. and its allies have supported regional governments that are corrupt and callous to the plight of their people is not without merit and, therefore, resonates with many Muslims in the region and throughout the world. Second, if manipulating the considerable reservoir of worldwide disaffection and misery is an important component of extremism, addressing the causes of this disaffection and misery is a viable approach to mitigating extremist sympathy.

The Context of a Nation at War: Deterrence and Terrorism

It did not take long for U.S. intelligence to convincingly link the attacks to al Qaeda, to connect al Qaeda to the Taliban, and to make the case for an invasion of Afghanistan. U.S.-led forces managed to wrest Afghanistan from the Taliban within weeks and initiate operations to disrupt al Qaeda through an impressive orchestration of long-range airpower, tactical intelligence and highly mobile, independent ground forces (packing sufficient firepower and electronic support systems to prevent ambushes). In the diplomatic arena, the apparent smoothness of the operation locked-in an intimidating credibility to the President’s sweeping declaration.* But any expectations to

* Consider the case of Syria: President Assad’s lack of experience and correlated dependence on Syria’s manipulative “Old Guard” for advice led him to believe that the U.S. faced a Soviet-like quagmire in Afghanistan. To the contrary, success came so quickly and indisputably that the Old Guard’s spin only served to shake-up the leader and force him to hurriedly reevaluate the consequences of Syrian WMD production facilities and tacit support for the Hizballah. The SARG quietly reined-in the Hizballah and opted to provide the U.S. government with useful information on al Qaeda. There are other examples of “rogue” states choosing to cooperate with the USG due to fear over the direction and scope of the emerging “global war on terrorism.”

replicate the relatively trouble-free attribution of the September 11 attacks and the swift operations in Afghanistan, requires a look at the problematic link between deterrence and terrorism.

Deterrence is “a conditional commitment to retaliate, or to exact retribution if another party fails to behave in a desired, compliant manner...It is possible to identify this relationship [as] an Imposer and a Target. [T]he Imposer seeks to deter the Target from behaving in an unacceptable fashion by threatening punishment.”⁴ But in order for deterrence to succeed, such a relationship must be 1) definable and 2) contained by rational behavior. In other words, deterrence requires a “Target” that is identifiable and moderates its behavior based on a concept of rational choice.⁵ The problem of deterring terrorism then, is the difficulty of identifying the “Target” (i.e., the terrorist) which, in turn, complicates the capability of the “Imposer” (i.e., the nation state) to effectively punish the “Target.” If the terrorist thinks he can avoid being blamed and punished for an act of terror, he will moderate his behavior based on calculated risks. These calculated risks are based on a rational fusion of how the terrorist views his own asymmetric skill to carry-out a specific act of terror and the nation state’s skill and resolve to 1) swiftly identify him and 2) severely punish him. For example, although the U.S. identified al Qaeda as the culprit for the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, its use of hard power softly (cruise missile strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan) not only failed to deter al Qaeda but may have emboldened its leaders.

While the impressive speed and conduct of the Afghanistan operation demonstrated our own tactical flexibility (despite alarmist warnings that the U.S. military was failing to transform itself in the post-Cold War security environment⁶), “the biggest mistake...came in December [of 2001], when [U.S. decision-makers] used air power to bomb the caves at Tora Bora...[instead of U.S. ground troops]...to block the escape routes into Pakistan -- and hundreds of al Qaeda fighters...got away.”⁷ Technology provides advantages in the conduct of military operations, but the consistent nature of employing violence as either a means or an end requires ingenuity and a willingness to master risks on the part of the “Imposer” “to persevere through the last final push that breaks the enemies will.”⁸ Identifying the perpetrators and sponsors of terror is hard; punishing transnational terrorists who slither in and out of nation-states, assemble and disassemble, and frequently lie in wait is harder still. But how do we measure and accept risks as a means to help counter terrorism?

Risk: Intentions, Capabilities and Time

Given the plausibility of unconventional attacks in the U.S., policymakers are struggling with how to modify the way we measure the intentions, capabilities, and vulnerabilities of friends and foes alike. Where Risk =

R, Intentions = I (within which *will* is a subset), Capabilities = C, and Vulnerabilities = V (within which *risk & capability* are subsets), the calculus is thus:

$$R = I \times C \times V$$

While a “foe” who possesses both intentions and capabilities to harm us potentially poses a *direct* threat, a “friend” who lacks the political will or an internal capability to control terrorist elements can pose an *indirect* threat. The variable nature of this problem set is debated among the policy, intelligence, law enforcement, and military communities. As assumptions come and go and the basis of integrating political and military strategies changes accordingly, decisions are then taken and executed with outcomes providing new inputs for consideration, decision, and implementation. But sometimes the players in risk assessment distort the process by over-playing a hand, seeking an institutional advantage, groping for a budgetary edge, or succumbing to exogenous political and economic pressure and opportunism. Often the limitation of intelligence assets and methods make the calculus of risk an imprecise, contentious, and yet imperative art.

A “flashpoint” - a point where someone or something bursts suddenly into action or being - has the potential to shudder this process by discrediting assumptions and paradigms. What caused the “flashpoint” on September 11? Has it changed our calculation of risk as well as our assumptions with respect to state-sponsored versus transnational terrorism? How has the ease of transportation, or the vulnerabilities of population movements, or the advent of harmful technologies affected our ability to calculate and respond to these risks? What is the potential of unleashing unintended consequences or flashpoints in executing various instruments of power? One observer sees action in the midst of uncertainty as a necessary evil: “Two factors are brand-new over the last year. We know that people out there have a vicious hatred towards America. And number two, weapons of mass destruction mean that if they hit us, we could have not 3,000 deaths, but 300,000 or three million. Retaliation against this [type of attack] would be totally ineffective.”⁹ Yet another observer acknowledges the right of self-defense but asks “[D]on’t we want a set of international institutions? Don’t we want international law? Don’t we want trust among nations? Don’t we want respect for national sovereignty?”¹⁰

September 11 failed to cause an enduring harm to the nation. But the difficulties of preventing the spread of WMD, coupled with accompanying risks that a rogue nation and/or terrorist organization may acquire the means to employ WMD to blackmail or harm us, appears to be setting in motion the concept that “pure capability with a smarmy attitude”¹¹ constitutes a *casus belli*. Historically, American’s require a moral compass and legitimate reason

before resorting to bloodshed. In this context, if and when we invade Iraq, “we should do so not because we deem it justifiable but because we can show that it is just.”¹² The new National Security Strategy avows that “We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries...[E]ven if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack...to forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.”¹³ Unlike the movement of a conventional force, the possible use of WMD inserts more surprise, less accountability, and significantly more devastation than the attacks of September 11. But as one observer notes, “It’s tempting to go after the state rather than the non-state actor. The problem is that there are many state actors who have access to weapons of mass destruction and it’s not just Iraq -- it is Syria, it is Libya. It’s also Iran -- in fact, Iran is probably closer than Iraq.”¹⁴

Power & Influence

The basic elements of power are military (to defend; compel; take; & destroy), economic (to buy & deny), informational (to assess & convey threats & opportunities), and political (the ability to marshal these elements). In essence, power is something a nation uses to keep what it has and to get what it wants. This is done through the use of persuasion, threats, and force. According to Joe Nye, “a country may obtain the outcomes it wants...because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness.”¹⁵ Conversely, hard power relies on military and economic carrots and sticks to induce others to change their behavior. Finally, soft-hard power involves the use of hard power softly, i.e., the limited use of “smart” bombs.

But arrogance can squander a nation’s influence. If the goal is to attract friendly nations to and hostile nations from our national interests, it follows that our use of power must be sufficiently judicious to promote rather than to undermine our worldwide influence. If the hard use of power undermines soft power, it also follows that an ambiguously justified use of hard power has the potential of uprooting the positive influences of soft power. Significantly, the reversal of this influence can extend to many areas of interest: advancing US economic prosperity (opening markets, advancing the principles of the free market, stemming financial crises abroad, etc.), promoting democratic values (freedom, individual rights, the rule of law, and democratic institutions), promoting basic human rights (freedom from starvation and genocide, religious freedom, and freedom of political expression), and protecting the health and welfare of Americans. How a state uses power internally affects its moral authority abroad as well. If preempting domestic terror leads to a diminution of civil liberties, America’s moral credibility and soft

influence in curbing human rights abuses worldwide could suffer. The irony is that if we are perceived to be a “monster pursuing monsters,” we may actually do more harm to ourselves and to our ability to project power and to positively influence other nations in a manner that feeds into stated terrorist goals.

Deciding on the Instruments of Power

The key political instruments are negotiations, public diplomacy, international law and organization, and alliances. Economic instruments include foreign aid, financial and trade policy, and sanctions. Finally, the military instrument can be used as a persuasive threat or to actually force an outcome.¹⁶ The difficulty of adopting a more effective strategy towards Iraq has to do with the fact that the U.S. has essentially run the gambit of these instruments with Iraq, yet Saddam remains as defiant as ever and seemingly impervious to both their positive and negative as well as actual and proscriptive use.¹⁷ In the Iraq case, President Bush recently asserted that Iraq poses an imminent threat to the U.S. and “could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists,” and that such an “alliance with terrorists could allow the Iraq regime to attack America without leaving any fingerprints.”¹⁸ At the same time, the Director of Central Intelligence concludes that “Baghdad for now appears to be drawing a line short of conducting terrorist attacks with conventional or C.B.W. against the United States. Should Saddam conclude that a U.S.-led attack could no longer be deterred, he probably would become much less constrained in adopting terrorist actions.”¹⁹

Preemption vs. Preventive War

Preemption and preventive war are two distinct strategic concepts. Preemption is basically a quick draw. Upon detecting evidence that an opponent is about to attack, one beats the opponent to the punch and attacks first to blunt the impending strike. Preemption or launch-under-attack are strategies that can be adopted by states that fear preventive war (Israel). The present debate seeks to expand that definition given: The inability to deter a potential attacker; the immediacy of today’s threats; and the magnitude of potential harm.²⁰ But while Saddam is a daily nightmare to his own people, he poses more of a long-term, although potentially an irremediable threat, to U.S. interests in the Gulf.²¹ One observer notes that present U.S. policy is “problematic because, first of all, it confuses preemption and prevention, which is a fundamental distinction. But, secondly, in a sense it preempts the right to make these decisions to the United States in a very unilateral way. If we’re going to move into this area about the use of force and have it contribute to order and not disorder there, we have to deal with this question of authority and legitimacy.”²² If the U.S. adopts a case-by-case approach, the unintended consequences of our actions may generate

more disorder than order. “[Russian President Vladimir] Putin is already saying me, too, for Georgia. It’s just a matter of time till India or Pakistan says me, too. Sharon’s been saying it a lot.”²³

Preventive war is motivated by the perception that one’s military and potential are declining relative that of a rising adversary and by the fear of the consequences of that decline. The fear is that relative decline leads to the deterioration of the status quo, the erosion of one’s bargaining power, and the risk of a war under worse circumstances later.²⁴ In the Iraq case, the use of the term “preemption” as justification for invading Iraq, coupled with a manifest inability to link Iraq to September 11 or even an Iraqi modus operandi connecting Saddam to “September 11-like” terrorism, has brought undue but remediable harm to the case that Saddam’s WMD programs must be stopped, eventually, and through whatever means necessary. If Iraq managed secretly to achieve even a limited nuclear capability, there should be no question as to Saddam’s likely intentions in this regard - he will use nuclear blackmail to seize as much control over the region and its oil as possible. Ironically, the Israeli preventive strike at Osiraq (1981) had the impact of changing the political nature and urgency of the Iraqi nuclear program for the worse - having failed to find a replacement reactor, Iraq turned to uranium enrichment programs to acquire weapons grade nuclear material. The natural uranium Iraq had already acquired (250 tons in 1981) and all further uranium it could acquire on the open market could be enriched on Iraqi soil and developed into nuclear weapons. Although United Nations weapons inspections following the Gulf War of 1991 did find evidence of a nuclear weapons program, they found no evidence that this program pre-dated 1981.²⁵ But perhaps the Israeli strike in the Sinai (1956) is a better example of a democratic state initiating a war due to reverse a relative decline in military power (1955 Czech arms deal and the integration of Soviet arms into the Egyptian military) as a means of preventing substantial, perhaps intolerable, casualties (to include the civilian populace) in an expected “second round” of fighting with and increasingly hostile neighbor. Given Egypt’s increasing military capabilities and its intensifying hostility towards Israel’s continued existence, Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion opted to launch a preventive war to offset what he viewed as unacceptable deterioration in the balance of power.

How have the September 11 attacks changed America’s national security? Is our conventional military dominance powerless in the face of such threats? How should we reassemble or reassert the instruments of our power or their jurisdiction or combination (both internally and externally) in a way that harnesses the “thickness of globalism - the density of the networks of interdependence”²⁶ in a manner that promotes our national security and influence without tarnishing the greatness of an open, democratic society? If the UN Charter stipulates that a nation

must “wait and take a significant chance of having the first hit. Or, depending on [available] intelligence...until the moment before the first hit,” is Elihu Root’s insistence on “the right of every sovereign state to protect itself by *preventing* a condition of affairs in which it will be too late to protect itself”²⁷ a more appropriate posture? Writers like Richard Betts argue that preemption is easier to justify politically than preventive war but that the latter may be more viable militarily.

The Dangers of Doctrine: The Israel Case

The “insistence that those who harbor terrorists or have any links to terrorists...be treated as terrorists themselves: subject to military action and excluded from negotiations” presented policy-makers with a considerable dilemma beyond the straight forward scope of Afghanistan.²⁸ In the case of Israel and Palestine, the Israeli government regionally aggrandized the Bush doctrine so effectively, “it essentially require[d] the United States to support Sharon’s attacks against Palestinian institutions and his refusal to engage in Peace talks. The Bush doctrine, however, not only fails to address the problem of the far greater civilian casualties inflicted by the Israeli occupation troops; it also ignores the structural violence, such as the U.S.-backed military occupation, that results in the terrorists backlash. American officials are therefore in a weak position to condemn Palestinian terrorism as long as the United States provides much of the weaponry used in carrying out the even more destructive Israeli acts of violence.”²⁹ In effect, the Bush doctrine smoothed a path for Prime Minister Sharon to pigeon hole U.S. policy in the Middle East and pilot its direction away from the judgment of the American people,³⁰ towards a collision course with virtually the entire Middle East populace,³¹ and decisively against prevailing views in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.³² U.S. surrender to Prime Minister Sharon’s shrewd regurgitation of the Bush doctrine is inconsistent with U.S. national security interests and dooms the Israeli people “to the fate of South Africa: a Jewish minority hopelessly intertwined territorially with an Arab majority over which it rules with increasingly apartheid-like tactics...when more and more Israeli’s, right and left, are focusing on the demographic threat to Israel’s long term identity and security.”³³

A Grand Strategy for Iraq

Regional Political Setting and Objectives

The stated and implied U.S. objectives for Iraq must be consistent with and fall under a holistic political-military Middle East strategy that seeks to promote democratization, economic reform and inter-state political negotiation as the critical pillars of regional stability and economic security. In this respect, the U.S. must be willing

to assume some risk as pressuring these autocratic regimes will not be easy nor without consequence, but the attacks of September 11 provide sufficient evidence that U.S. policy must focus on and urgently address the root causes of the Middle East's other export: transnational extremism focused primarily at the U.S. The specter of this extremism and the prospect of their use of WMD requires that all the instruments of power (diplomatic, economic {aid and sanction,} security assistance, public diplomacy and the use of the media) be used in concert and applied equally in the region. The real danger of extremist use of technology to indiscriminately kill thousands if not millions of U.S. citizens renders concerns over the Arab street pedantic if not irresponsible.

1) Adopt more aggressive strategies to reform Arab regimes (--political--negotiations, public diplomacy, international law and organization, alliances, i.e. EU, --economic--foreign aid, financial and trade policy, sanctions). There are essentially two vital U.S. interests in the Gulf: 1) maintaining a regional status quo as the least costly method of promoting regional security and 2) through this security, U.S. access to regional oil. During the Cold War, Moscow's successful efforts to woo Egypt, Syria, and later Iraq in the 1950's nudged U.S. policy into adopting a placatory, pro-Arab approach to stem Soviet advances and ensure regional access. Indeed, America's parallel decision to support Israel's right to exist percolated enough Arab animus to pitch any concerns over democratic governance into the dustbin of history. But history has a way of shaping the future, and September 11 seemed to unveil the limitations of U.S. policy in the Gulf and whether or not bolstering the status quo to ensure U.S. access to oil is the least costly method of ensuring that access. This is not to say that September 11 is a direct result of failed U.S. policies in the Gulf, however, it follows rather logically that nurturing both corrupt and insecure regimes would eventually lead to cycles of internal dissent necessitating U.S. security assistance to re-impose internal and regional security. In general, these regimes have raised the costs of continued U.S. support by ignoring internal poverty so egregiously that it is easily exploited for political ends by extremists of many stripes and inoculating the more virulent extremism by exporting it, thus contributing to the growth of transnational terrorism. The new national security strategy states that America must stand for the "non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property."³⁴ Yet as recently as August 2002, the Egyptian government sentenced the leading pro-democracy voice in Egypt, Saad Ibrahim, to hard labor, eliciting a tepid response from the U.S. "This ties in with a larger concern that human rights activists share toward America today - a concern that post-9/11 America is not interested anymore in law and order, just order, and it's not interested

in peace and quiet, but just quiet.”³⁵ But when democratic alternatives are quashed, the only route left in many of these countries for expressing discontent is in the Mosque and through religious fundamentalism. If we fail to protect democratic voices, we invite more violence. The consequences of America’s failure to be an active, persistent advocate for democratic change throughout the world are more than symbolic.

2) Adopt a more aggressive strategy to decrease the use of the Israeli military to eviscerate the Palestinian authority (--political--negotiations, public Diplomacy, international law and organization, alliances, i.e., EU --Economic--foreign aid, financial and trade policy, sanctions). The daily optic of U.S. military hardware being used in an increasingly indiscriminate manner by the Israeli military directly contravenes the immediate, mid-term, and long-term interests of both the U.S. and the state of Israel. While present Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith has advocated the re-occupation of the “areas under Palestinian Authority” despite the fact that “the cost in blood would be high,”³⁶ Clausewitz warns that “if the superior strength of the attack - which diminishes day by day - leads to peace, the object will have been attained. There are strategic attacks that have led directly to peace, but these are the minority.”³⁷

While the objectives of Desert Storm did not explicitly spell-out the ouster of Saddam Hussein, it was hoped that his regime might topple through simultaneous popular uprisings assisted in part by external covert action. Saddam’s determination to produce WMD, matched by his long track record of aggression against his own people and several of his neighbors, including Iran, Israel, and Kuwait, provided sufficient reason to believe that leaving him in power would eventually negate the impressive gains achieved under by the US-led UN forces during the summer of 1990. But Saddam managed to crush dissent in the wake of Desert Storm, leaving the international community no choice but to cobble together a policy of containment to curb Saddam’s regional revival. This included: (1) implementing a multilateral embargo on Iraqi oil sales and most of the country’s imports and exports; (2) implementing no-fly zones to curb Saddam’s ability to persecute the Kurds in the north and the Shi’ites in the south; and (3) until December 1998, participating in an international weapons inspections regime in the form of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), overseeing the elimination of Iraq’s obligations to eliminate WMD.

3) Continue economic sanctions against Iraq; continue to use persuasive use of force to resume United Nations Monitoring, Observation, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) inspections; continue troop movements into the regional theater of operations; use coercive diplomacy to signal one of two

outcomes - unfettered inspections equate to WMD certification or token inspections equate to an eventual preventive war to destroy WMD capabilities. While there is little contention that Saddam systematically flouts UN Security Council Resolutions and economic sanctions, the contention that Saddam actively supports international terrorism lacks circumstantial³⁸ much less empirical evidence, despite extensive U.S. intelligence efforts. Further, containment has not failed. Iraq's military is significantly weaker than a decade ago and its military forces pose little immediate threat to U.S. allies in the region. But due to the fragility of the Jordanian economy, the UN Security Council ignored illegal oil sales which soon led to Turkish smuggling, maritime traffic along Iran's territorial waters, and so on. "Today, the sanctions are hemorrhaging. Whereas as recently as 1999, Saddam's regime netted only about \$350 million, in 2002 it will rake in \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion, representing 15 to 22 percent of all Iraqi revenue. The greatest problem is Syrian trade...[which is] at least \$1 billion and possibly as much as \$2 billion per year..."³⁹ Diplomatically, France, Russia, and China have also worked to champion the cause of Iraq and water down the sanctions regime. Further, even though great care and effort in designing the "oil-for-food" scheme and the most recent "smart sanctions" program to contain the Iraqi military threat without generating humanitarian concerns, Saddam managed to turn the sanctions into a political weapon by diverting proceeds and causing widespread disease through poor sanitation and malnutrition. In the Middle East, the war of perceptions is important and Saddam has proven his ability to survive and thrive under the weight of fairly stringent international political, economic, and military pressure. Nonetheless, Saddam's objectives are limited: First, to survive; second, to salami-slice regional and international support for sanctions; issue as a means of gaining greater regional popularity, and to reconstitute the Iraqi military, including WMD development as a means of reasserting his regional position. Clearly, Saddam's rhetoric surrounding ongoing Israeli-Palestinian hostilities and the provision of blood money to martyred suicide bombers has helped incite the Middle East as a means to distract international focus from Iraqi sanctions and any erosions therein.

U.S. allies remain skeptical of our intentions, particularly given the failed U.S. effort to link Saddam to expansionist, politically motivated transnational terror. As such, the U.S. presently lacks sufficient political and moral backing to launch a preventive war. Other regional complexities include: Turkey's hostility to any increase in Kurdish identity or autonomy; Saudi Arabia's contradictory insistence that hostilities end quickly but without the benefit of Saudi bases to expedite such an attack; and, finally, Iran's firmness that the follow-on regime be friendly or at least not pro-American. This regional political opposition and attendant operational constraints are further

complicated by the possibility that Turkey and Iran may intervene to protect their interests vis-à-vis the Kurdish and Shi'ite populaces.

Containment can no longer drive U.S. policy towards Iraq. Numerous allies have diluted the objectives of containing Iraq for present or potential economic gain. Further, Saddam has successfully portrayed targeted UN sanctions as an American ruse to brutalize the Iraqi people and regain control of Iraqi oil. As a result, **WMD destruction, particularly the preventive destruction of nuclear capabilities, should be our stated political objective. Regime change, on the other hand, must not be a stated political objective, but rather an implied objective.** Should force become necessary, regime change as a stated political objective poses obvious and at least one reckless danger: Saddam may disappear (Iraq is as big as California). With no escape, he is likely to authorize the use of chemical and biological agents against approaching U.S. forces. Finally, defining regime change is a potential stumbling block because thousands of individuals, from Tikrit and throughout the Ba'ath administrative and security apparatus, are likely to view themselves as part of the "regime" and opt to hang (with the regime) rather than be hung (upon its collapse). Indeed, even if Ba'ath elements recognize the carrot of regime change, fears of local reprisal are likely to have a dampening influence. While a stated policy of regime change may be consistent with a holistic democratization strategy in the Middle East, operational considerations should be paramount in the event that force becomes necessary.

Military Strategic Setting & Objectives

Several months ago, U.S. Military planners were instructed to scrap the two main operational concepts under consideration. One concept called for a small scale campaign employing air-strikes and support to opposition forces on the ground (the so-called Downing Plan - intense air strikes, SOF support to indigenous opposition groups à la Afghanistan, and regime collapse). The other concept, Operation Plan 1003, involved an overwhelming invasion of U.S. troops (à la Dessert Storm 1991). Concerned over the viability of the former and costs of the latter, civilian leaders at the Pentagon needed a plan that was both rapid and decisive. A new concept emerged combining air and sea power with a force of between 50 thousand and 75 thousand ground troops. Whereas the concept in 1991 honed-in on the destruction of Iraq's military assets and troops, the chief focus of recent planning is on the decapitation of the Iraqi regime through surgical air-strikes (bombers, cruise missiles, and fighter aircraft) followed by a rapid ground maneuvers from Kuwait and possibly Turkey with the objective to encircle Baghdad. The imprecise calculus is that devastating Iraq's institutional power base, to include presidential palaces, military and

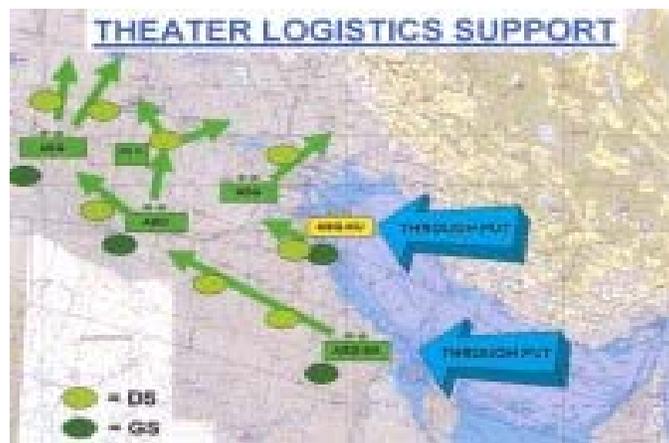
security police facilities, bases and even leadership elements in Saddam's home town of Tikrit, will ostensibly cripple Saddam's command and control, augur widespread disaffection among Iraqi military and political elites and lead to regime collapse.

At present, this concept of military operations will fail to achieve the stated and implied political objectives given the current and anticipated strategic setting. There are numerous reasons as to why this is the case, but here are the key strategic limitations:

- Hope is not a Plan: While the degradation of Saddam's command and control capabilities is tenable and his forces are measurably weaker than 1991, the assumption that both official and unofficial animus towards Baghdad will transition into a force multiplier is dubious. What if Saddam and his key leaders use an operational pause or pauses to reconstitute capabilities, maneuver forces, set traps, and otherwise improve Iraqi situational awareness in a manner that was prohibited by the unrelenting assault of Desert Storm? What if Saddam uses the opportunity to communicate concessions with Kurd and Shi'ite opposition groups to enlist their passive or active support? Further, it seems rather obvious that pausing operations will provide opportunities for Kurdish and Shi'ite groups that might disappear once Saddam is ousted and U.S. forces move quickly to consolidate the ground environment.
- Chemical and Biological Attacks: Because bombing shallow bunkers housing chemical or biological weapons could release these agents and kill thousands of civilians, the alternative is to monitor these sights through reconnaissance assets, but to leave them alone until after hostilities. Monitoring these sites may provide real-time capability to destroy a site if it appears that the Iraqi's are preparing to use WMD, but that assumes that there are enough reconnaissance assets available to cover these sites. More importantly, such an approach presumes that we have complete knowledge as to the location of all WMD sites - which is definitely not the case. Insisting that regime change remain a stated political objective, offering Saddam little incentive of restraint, generates unnecessary operational risks for our soldiers. These dangers extend to the state of Israel. Given Iraqi SCUD attacks on Israel during the Gulf War without the dynamic of regime change, coupled with Prime Minister Sharon's rather inflexible views on military credibility, an Iraqi-Israeli exchange is a greater risk. While the U.S. may adapt by using more assets to SCUD hunt, and the U.S. may successfully restrain Israel in the wake of a conventional Iraqi attack (you cannot do anything we're not already doing and the additional risk to U.S. forces is unacceptable), an unconventional Iraqi attack would almost surely exact Israeli

retaliation. This is an enormous danger that has the potential of escalating into a regional crisis that will quickly divert attention from the mission at hand - a key consideration for Saddam to weigh.

- Operational constraints: Logistics are critical to successful war fighting -- providing the resources of combat power, positioning those resources in the battle space, and sustaining them throughout the operations. And while logistics do not determine the shape that operations take, it sets limits that restrict the options available to commanders. In other words, the more flexible and far-reaching the logistics, the greater the possibility for bold, decisive, and imaginative action. At present, Saudi Arabia and numerous other regional countries have ham-strung potential U.S. operations in such a way as to cast serious doubt on whether these operational constraints allow for the maintenance of thousands of U.S. soldiers somewhere south of Baghdad. The dangerous dilemma is that the emerging plan rests on imaginative action, even though regional logistical constraints continue to impede it. The map below depicts the complexity of logistical support under Operation Plan 1003 and presumes open-ended Saudi political authority. Such authority does not presently exist for the conduct of any operations against Iraq with the possible exception of small scale movements at remote locations. Additionally, apart from British participation, no other nation has offered to partake in the military option.



- Time: If the Iraqis resist and retreat into major urban zones, the conflict could drag on. The Special Republican Guard is likely to use population density to its advantage, where U.S. military advantages, i.e., airpower and aerial reconnaissance are less effective. In effect, the Iraqi's will lure U.S. forces into messy counter-insurgency operations, and use time as a means of challenging American, regional, and international resolve

(political and economic). Certainly, Saddam realizes that a prolonged conflict could take a “huge economic toll,” pushing oil prices “well above \$30 dollars a barrel,” and depressing consumer and business spending.⁴⁰

The longer the operation, the greater the possibility of U.S. domestic political fallout.

Military objectives must be developed in conjunction with other essential instruments of national power - diplomatic, economic and informational. Further, military planning often delves beyond the limited scope of achieving combat objectives to a supportive role for military operations other than war. For example, if the sanctions against Iraq are deteriorating and certain members of the UN Security Council refuse to correct the situation, initiating unilateral military planning and movement is an effective means (and an expensive but very credible way) of prodding international decision-makers into making tangible compromises that help achieve U.S. ends. Simply put, credibly orchestrated yet implied military objectives have the potential to lock-in important political objectives. In the case of Iraq, locking-in UNMOVIC inspections cannot be considered an end but a problematic means of containment due to considerable internal UNMOVIC limitations and likely Iraqi obstruction. But the advantages of UNMOVIC operations may prove to be more political than technical, if its operations serve to highlight continued Iraqi intransigence towards UN Security Council Resolution 687, which calls for a verifiable end to Iraqi WMD programs. “Even though the Bush administration considers inspections a waste of time, it is stuck with going through the motions. Before inspections begin, the U.S. has to negotiate a sufficiently rigorous program. In the wake of Saddam’s sudden pliancy, French diplomats pushed a plan to send the U.N.’s inspection team into Iraq under Security Council 1284, a somewhat watered down version of inspection rules passed in 1999 after Saddam sent the eight-year-old inspections program packing.”⁴¹ The challenge is to ensure that renewed inspections are managed in a way that highlights the dangers of Saddam’s non-compliance.

The stated U.S. military objective is to promote regional stability by using unilateral, preemptive force if necessary to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 687 as well as to carry out “regime change.” In addition to the complexities of executing “regime change,” a Sunni-led coup before or during a U.S. invasion could potentially empower an equally repressive and obstructionist regime, requiring expanded U.S. military objectives to re-impose stability, WMD compliance, and greater vigilance in preserving Iraq as a unitary state. Eliminating the present regime puts the U.S. on the hook to act as kingmaker - dramatically expanding the duration and tasks associated with the U.S. mission. “Regime change,” is an amorphous concept that is much harder to define than the mere

acquisition of territory due to the attendant risks of executing a linear mission in the hopes of securing non-linear outcomes.

A military center of gravity is defined as the “hub of all power and movement upon which everything depends. It is that characteristic, capability, or location from which enemy forces derive their freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight.”⁴² The most grave danger involves DCI Tenet’s observation that once the U.S. initiates operations, Saddam may give the go ahead to provide WMD to transnational terrorists with reach to the U.S. homeland. Part of such a strategy would surely include Saddam’s “disappearance.” While additional methods of interference (attacking Israel) are implemented with the intent to bog-down U.S. decision makers or force a re-prioritization of U.S. objectives long enough to rip open the battle space in hopes of revealing opportunities and dooming “regime change.” Attacking the Kurdish or Shi’ite population centers may unleash enough mayhem that some regional neighbors threaten intervention (Iran), while others demand a cessation of hostilities for fear of uncontrollable regional instability (Saudi Arabia). In essence, stirring internal and regional mayhem could serve to redirect U.S. focus away from its primary mission long enough that exploitable weaknesses emerge. By seeking ways to prolong, complicate, and exploit U.S. weaknesses in densely populated cities, Saddam may draw out internal and regional consequences that overwhelm the perceived “goodness” of “regime change.”

Military Capabilities and Vulnerabilities:

The International Institute of Strategic Studies “estimates that the Iraqi army still can deploy some 375,000 men, organized into seven corps, with two Republican Guard corps and five regular army corps. These forces include six Republican divisions (3 armored, 1 mechanized, and 2 infantry) plus four Special Republican Guards brigades. The regular army has some 16 divisions, and while 11 are relatively low grade infantry divisions, 3 are armored divisions and 3 are mechanized divisions. The regular army also have five commando and two special forces brigades. While these units lack modern training and the regular army units are heavily dependent on conscripts, over one third are full time regulars or long-service reservists.⁴³ The Iraqi Air Force includes 30,000 men, 316 combat aircraft, of which only 50-50% are serviceable.⁴⁴ Due to the devastation suffered during the Gulf War, the Iraqi Navy tactically irrelevant. Importantly, UN sanctions have had the effect of severely restricting Iraqi war fighting capabilities - spare part and the lack of funding continue to hinder modernization.

On the U.S. side, “the military requirements on an invasion of Iraq [are] considerable but not onerous. In terms of ground troops (Army and Marines), the United States should be prepared to commit four to six divisions

plus additional supporting units, such as armored cavalry regiments (ACRs), independent aviation (helicopter) brigades, and possibly additional infantry brigades. As for air forces, an invasion would probably necessitate 700 to 1,000 aircraft from the Air Force, Navy, and Marines, The more ground forces we bring, the fewer aircraft would be necessary. Altogether, this force would probably number anywhere from 200,000 to 300,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen.”⁴⁵

At present, the stated military objectives cannot be achieved with planned capabilities or with capabilities brought online in the short-term. However, ongoing U.S. muscle movements will suffice to force a resumption of UN weapons inspections in the near-term and allow for effective U.S. coercive diplomacy - at least within a limited scope. Because the stakes are higher than during the Gulf War, the U.S. must not err on the side of sending fewer resources than required. And without over estimating Iraqi capabilities, it is fair to assume that Saddam is, at the very least, a ruthless survivor, who will not necessarily replicate his almost passive reaction to the U.S.-led invasion in 1991. Nonetheless, Iraqi forces are weaker and even more prone to command and control vulnerabilities as a result of U.S. leaps in precision guided technologies and overall military modernization as juxtaposed against Iraq’s corresponding atrophy due to sanctions.

Strategic Concept

The strategic concept of focusing less on the destruction of one’s military assets and capabilities and more on one’s nodes of leadership as a means of spurring a popular revolt is too arbitrary. Given the inherent dangers of the operation, we should assemble enough force to leave no doubt about the outcome. The amount of force must be sufficient to move hastily to containing Kurdish and Shi’ite designs that may run contrary to internal and external stability in the post-hostilities environment. “Iraq would become America’s problem, for practical and political reasons. Because we would have destroyed the political order and done physical damage in the process, the claims on American resources and attention would be comparable to those of any U.S. state. Conquered Iraqis would turn to the U.S. government for emergency relief, civil order, economic reconstruction, and protection for their borders.”⁴⁶

The U.S. should redirect the public debate over Iraq towards the importance of preventing Saddam from developing a nuclear capacity in a region already wracked by violence, poverty, and political instability. But this effort should be part of an overarching Middle East strategy, to include the use all the instruments of American power (negotiations, public diplomacy, international law and organization, alliances, foreign aid, financial and trade

policy, and sanctions) to press the entire region towards democracy, economic reform and inter-state political negotiation. Launching a unilateral, preemptive strike in the near future would unduly place U.S. soldiers at risk, lead to regional instability, and possibly unleash terrorist attacks inside the U.S. at a time when America's consequence management capability is virtually non-existent. Short of a clear and present danger, U.S. policymakers handling Iraq must adjust to a pace that is deliberate and deliberative, thus allowing diplomatic negotiations and Iraqi intransigence to help solidify international and regional resolve. Even though U.S. forces would likely prevail against Iraqi forces unilaterally, the present political-military situation will unreasonably burden U.S. forces and finances and further complicate the post-hostilities environment.

Potential Results

The potential outcome for the proposed military strategy is difficult to assess. While U.S. forces are the most talented and technologically advanced in the world, there is considerable fog in attacking a foe who realizes that his own survival is at stake, possesses WMD and has used it in the past, calculates that he must use asymmetric tactics in densely populated areas to prolong and paralyze a superior foe, and uses WMD against the state of Israel or provides WMD to terrorists capable of reaching U.S. interests or even the U.S. homeland. When facing such an unpredictable foe, it is easy to underestimate our vulnerabilities. Therefore, it is important to err on the side of bringing more - not less - resources to the fight. For this reason too, the near total lack of support from both regional and international allies makes the present approach onerous. A clearer policy on the costs and benefits of federalism (more autonomy for indigenous groups) and a stronger central government (no autonomy and possible disenfranchisement) must be adopted in advance of the transition to peace-enforcement. The duration of a U.S.-led transitional government must come to grips with likelihood of messy, intra-tribal skirmishes and vengeance-killings, warlordism, as well as other critical tasks requiring the protection of vulnerable populaces and internally displaced persons, the provision of essential services, etc.

Conclusion

Despite considerable U.S. diplomatic effort to revive and maintain UN sanctions as the primary means to contain Saddam's appetite for WMD, numerous international actors continue to expand illicit trade with Iraq. Still other international actors champion the Iraqi cause politically, in hopes of future economic gain. As a result, containment can no longer be the driving force of U.S. policy towards Iraq. Nonetheless, unilateral military planning and movement, in conjunction with U.S. diplomatic pressure at the United Nations, will likely serve to

reestablish the UNMOVIC mission in Iraq. While the reestablishment of an *internationally authorized inspection regime* is merely a means rather than an end, the critical outcome must be a legitimate even if imperfect record of Saddam's capabilities and intentions. No doubt, the UNMOVIC mission is a huge challenge. Given that UNMOVIC will surely face Iraqi obstruction, its political significance will be to provide the U.S. an opportunity to make a more genuine and forceful case against Saddam, build international resolve, and generate a regionally based, international coalition of forces if necessary.

The risk is to underestimate the dangers of Iraqi WMD programs. In the wake of Desert Storm, for example, the International Atomic Energy Agency concluded that Iraqi nuclear capabilities were far more developed than earlier estimates.⁴⁷ Predictably, official efforts to exaggerate Iraqi motives proved counter-productive diplomatically. Policymakers should take heed of Secretary Rumsfeld's Memorandum "Guidelines To Be Considered When Committing U.S. Forces," which asserts that "arguments of convenience... can be useful at the outset to gain support... [but they can also] be deadly later."⁴⁸ The U.S. should redirect the public debate over Iraq towards the importance of preventing Saddam from developing a nuclear capacity in a region already wracked by violence, poverty, and political instability. Yet the focus should not be on Saddam alone, but as an integral part of a more comprehensive strategy that seeks to use all the instruments of American power (negotiations, public diplomacy, international law and organization, alliances, foreign aid, financial and trade policy, and sanctions) to press the entire region towards political and economic reform and inter-state political negotiation. In this context, the U.S. must simultaneously work to restrain the present Israeli government's misguided use of its military as the only means to address Palestinian grievances. Overall, there should be no doubt that launching a unilateral, preemptive strike in the near future would unduly place U.S. soldiers at considerable risk, lead to regional instability, and possibly unleash terrorist attacks inside the U.S. at a time when America's consequence management capability is virtually inoperative. Short of a clear and present danger, U.S. policymakers handling Iraq must adjust to a pace that is deliberate and deliberative, thus allowing diplomatic negotiations and Iraqi intransigence to help solidify international and regional resolve. Even though U.S. forces would likely prevail against Iraqi forces unilaterally, launching a strike under the present political-military conditions holds an unacceptable potential of unleashing more disorder than order – both in the context of stability in the Middle East and more broadly worldwide.

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