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WAR WITH IRAN: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NEXT COALITION CAMPAIGN

by

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

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CAPABILITY AND WILL TO VIGOROUSLY RESIST. IT IS THEREFORE LIKELY THAT THE APPLICATION OF LIMITED MILITARY FORCE, TOGETHER WITH THE QUESTIONABLE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIPLOMATIC, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC MEASURES, WOULD RESULT IN LITTLE, IF ANY, LONG TERM CHANGE IN IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY, AND AT BEST MIGHT OFFER ONLY A SHORT TERM REDUCTION IN IRAN'S CAPABILITY TO CAUSE MISCHIEF BEYOND ITS BORDERS.

Abstract of

WAR WITH IRAN: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NEXT COALITION CAMPAIGN

Western nations and moderate Arab states view Iran's resurgent military strength with concern. Allied forces may be called upon in the future to form a coalition and conduct operations to deter Iran from interfering with the affairs of other nations. Such a coalition would face many problems similar to, and many different from, those which faced the nations participating in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Barring Iranian use of weapons of mass destruction, the coalition would likely implement a campaign plan which included political, diplomatic, economic and military measures with the limited goal of neutralizing Iran's capability to interfere in neighboring countries and adjacent air and sea space. The military sequence of events that would help achieve this end state might consist of the neutralization of key Iranian command and control nodes; the infrastructure supporting weapons of mass destruction; and offensive air, naval, and missile forces. Yet the coalition would be confronting an enemy with both the capability and will to vigorously resist. It is therefore likely that the application of limited military force, together with the questionable effectiveness of diplomatic, political and economic measures, would result in little, if any, long term change in Iranian foreign policy, and at best might offer only a short term reduction in Iran's capability to cause mischief beyond its borders.

PREFACE

This paper is an unclassified discussion of operational issues pertaining to Iran. The author did not utilize any existing operational plans in preparing this paper. All references to Iranian orders-of-battle are derived from open sources. All references to United States forces are representative in nature, and are not meant to reflect forces actually apportioned or assigned to the United States Central Command.

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WAR WITH IRAN: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NEXT COALITION CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Thesis. Coalition warfare, in the age of consensus building and multilateral solutions for international problems, will continue to be the preferred method for fighting major regional contingencies (MRC). Such a coalition achieved success against Iraqi aggression in 1990-91 with a combination of political, diplomatic, economic and military deterrent options in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The coalition's strategic goals, however, were limited in scope and fell short of unconditional surrender or total destruction of the enemy's political, economic and military infrastructure. Thus, as the goals and use of power were limited, so was the degree of success.

In the future, the United States and its allies may be called upon to form a similar coalition to deter Iranian aggression. While such a coalition would face many problems similar to those faced in 1990-91, Iran would present a unique set of challenges. This paper will (1) examine those operational challenges, (2) examine the applicability of various deterrent options and (3) propose answers to the four basic questions of operational warfare in planning and executing a campaign against Iran.¹

¹ (1) What military condition must be produced in the operational area to achieve the strategic goals, (2) what sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition, (3) how should the resources of the joint/combined forces available

CHAPTER II

IRANIAN GOALS AND CAPABILITIES

Iranian Goals. Since the fall of the Shah, Iran has institutionalized militant domestic and foreign policies. Following the conclusion of war with Iraq in 1980, Iran has expended significant resources to reconstitute and modernize its economy and military, with the goal of becoming the dominant power in Southwest Asia. Iran has a history of animosity towards its Arab neighbors and the West, and retains the potential to precipitate a MRC due to its unabated desire to (1) export radical Islamic fundamentalism to the Muslim and non-Muslim world, (2) settle long-standing disputes with Israel and several Arab neighbors and (3) reduce the influence of non-Muslim nations, particularly the United States, in Southwest Asia.

Iranian Capabilities. Iran can choose from a broad range of actions to achieve its goals, ranging from persuasion to war. As long as Iranian options remain nonviolent, the United States and its allies have an equally wide range of deterrent options with which to counter and limit Iranian gains. However, if at any stage of the competition Iran chooses violent means to achieve its aims, the United States and its allies would have to respond accordingly.

be applied to accomplish the sequence of actions and (4) what is the likely cost or risk to the force in performing that sequence of actions?

A military confrontation with Iran could develop from various stimuli. but would most likely stem from (1) aggressive Iranian interference in the internal affairs of moderate Arab neighbors by sponsoring religious and political unrest, (2) occupation of disputed territory along its western border or in the Persian Gulf, and/or (3) interference with the flow of military or commercial shipping/air traffic in adjacent water/airspace.

Iran possesses rugged terrain, an inhospitable environment, and a large inventory of modern weapons. Unlike Iraq, Iran probably has both the capability and will to use those weapons. A number of essential elements of information (EEIs) would need to be answered regarding the effectiveness of Iran's weapon systems, beginning with Iran's capabilities regarding weapons of mass destruction. Also important are EEIs regarding command and control of their national command authority and air defense network: where are the key sites located, how are they linked, what kind of equipment is used, and what are their capabilities?

With purchases from the former Soviet Union and the windfall from Iraq during Desert Storm, Iran now possesses a modern and diverse mix of combat aircraft. Coalition planners would need to know the capabilities and operational status of each type, where they are located in peace, where they might disperse to in war, and the tactics used by each type of aircrew.

In a similar vein, Iran has a variety of offensive missiles that represent threats to shipping, aircraft, population centers and military targets ashore, including extended range surface-to-

surface missiles. Naval threats include a former Soviet diesel submarine, various midget submarines, and amphibious vessels capable of ferrying troops to raid littoral nations or occupy contested territory. Perhaps the most potent threat is Iran's mine warfare capability, which threatens not only the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, but sea lines of communication throughout the region.² The EEIs required are similar to those listed earlier regarding the capabilities, sustainability, maintainability and tactics of each type of weapon system.

The potential employment of Iranian regular and Revolutionary Guard ground forces range from amphibious raids to an offensive sweep through Iraq into Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The level of zeal and dedication of these forces is as important an EEI as their ability to use modern weapons and employ effective tactics.

How would Iran react to an armed response to their aggression? Would Iran, like the coalition, approach such a confrontation with limited goals? Such was not the case in 1981 in the war with Iraq, when Iran responded to the Iraqi attack with revolutionary fervor, unlimited goals (the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist regime), and a "total disregard for casualties".³ Therefore, the most important EEI regards the Iranian will to utilize the weapons at its disposal. What

² During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran threatened to mine Bab el Mandeb, and has the capability to do so with a variety of merchant vessels and amphibious craft.

³ John F. Antal, "The Iraqi Army Forged in the (Other) Gulf War", Military Review, February 1991, p. 66.

restraints would Iran place on the use of weapons of mass destruction? Would they withhold the use of such weapons in fear of retaliation in kind? Or would zeal overcome rationality, especially in the face of defeat?⁴ These will be the hardest EEIs to answer.

⁴ Phillip Sabin postulates that vertical escalation, i.e., the introduction of new weapons systems and powers of destruction, are likely with the prospect of imminent defeat. This propensity would likely be enhanced by a zealous political culture and national command authority. Phillip A.G. Sabin, "Escalation in the Iran-Iraq War", The Iran/Iraq War: Impact and Implications (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 280-291.

CHAPTER III

COALITION GOALS AND DETERRENT OPTIONS

Coalition Strategic Goals. If Iran committed aggression in Southwest Asia, the United States and its allies would likely utilize a combination of diplomatic, political, economic and military responses. Unless the aggression included weapons of mass destruction, probable coalition goals would be (1) cessation of Iranian aggression, (2) the reduction of Iranian capability to conduct further aggression, (3) restoration of regional stability and (4) uninterrupted access to resources and markets.⁵

The coalition goals would therefore likely fall short of calling for Iran's unconditional surrender, replacement of Iran's government, or the destruction of Iran's political, economic or military infrastructure. The coalition could thus risk of a repeat of the "defeat" of Iraq in 1991: a limited victory which temporarily stemmed aggression but did little to alter the aggressor's policies or leadership.⁶

⁵ These goals are consistent with U.S. strategic goals, which aim to "deter any aggression that could threaten the security of the United States and its allies", "ensure access to foreign markets, energy [and] mineral resources", and "maintain stable regional military balances to deter those powers that might seek regional dominance". The White House, National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1991), pp. 3-4. The 1993 version of the document echoes the same themes (pp. 3, 5-7).

⁶ The thesis of limited returns from limited applications of power is found in Frank Cable's Gunboat Diplomacy, 1914-1979 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).

Diplomatic Options and Considerations. What diplomatic options might be adopted by the coalition to accomplish the goals stated above? Such measures might include the withdrawal of embassy personnel (already accomplished for the United States), strengthening of the existing partnership with and among moderate Arab nations, strengthening of regional/international public opinion against Iran, and using regional/international organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the United Nations to diplomatically isolate Iran. The coalition would likely attempt to have the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) pass strong measures to condemn Iran and permit a forceful response to Iranian aggressions. Yet the passage of such measures cannot be assured beforehand. China, which abstained from UNSC votes against Iraq in 1990, might oppose sanctions against Iran, which has become a significant trading partner. Russia has served notice that their votes on such matters in the future will not automatically follow the lead of the United States. The coalition might therefore have to act without the formidable weight of "unanimous" world opinion which supported the anti-Iraqi coalition of 1990-91.

Another problem would be a degree of anti-coalition sentiment in the Islamic world, which repeatedly criticizes the West for uneven responses to violations of current UNSC resolutions involving Muslims. Many Muslims perceive the West as acting with vigor against Iraq, yet cautiously against Israel and Serbia. Thus many Islamic nations which supported strong sanctions

against Iraq in 1990 may not support similar measures against Iran. Iran would certainly portray itself as the victim of religious discrimination - an argument which might find receptive ears among the Shi'ite faithful and others.

Thus the most important diplomatic considerations would be which countries would join the coalition, which would abstain, and which would align themselves with Iran. Iran's Islamic neighbors to the north and east would have a significant impact on the coalition's options and constraints, particularly Turkey and newly independent Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, which, along with Afghanistan and Pakistan, could serve as coalition allies, neutrals, or sources of supply and support for Iran.

Political Options and Considerations. As a corollary to diplomatic measures, what political steps might the coalition adopt? Each member state would need to build strong domestic support for measures that might include the use of armed force. However, problems might arise from perceptions of previous impotency to check the power of Saddam Hussein following Desert Storm. Thus many nations may not support a tough response to Iranian aggression, unless that aggression involved unusual cruelty or the use of weapons of mass destruction (both within Iran's potential capability). Public opinion in many coalition nations may fear the limited results of a limited coalition response, and therefore may be less willing to support the spilling of their nation's blood in confronting Iran.

Economic Options and Considerations. Economic measures such as sanctions and the freezing of monetary assets may appear to be the easiest deterrent options to implement, but may become the most sensitive due to perceptions of the ineffectiveness of similar measures against Iraq, the need for allies such as Japan to continue importing Iranian oil, and the market represented by Iranian purchases from abroad. Thus what may seem possible to implement may be politically unacceptable, and what may have appeared viable against Iraq may appear inadequate or ineffective against Iran.

Military Options and Considerations. What military options might be adopted to help accomplish coalition strategic goals? The coalition would first have to identify its military goal and mission, which might be (1) the demonstration of resolve sufficient to deter further Iranian aggression, and, if deterrence failed, (2) the swift and decisive neutralization of Iran's capability to interfere with the national interests of coalition member states.⁷

A full range of deterrent options are available to fulfill the above military goals, including the movement of prepositioned and out-of-theater forces to the area of operations (AOA), demonstrations of force (which may not impress the Iranians, who

⁷ "... a resort to force is more likely to meet with acquiescence if it is immediate in its application, instantaneous in its effect and appropriate in its nature". Frank Cable, p. 66.

have seen coalition military power in action), quarantine or blockade of Iranian points of entry, and direct action by air, sea, land and special warfare (SPECWARFARE) forces.

The scope and nature of the coalition's military response will depend on (1) the scope and nature of Iranian aggression, (2) the composition and constraints on the coalition, and (3) the forces available, which will in turn depend on the coalition's ability to deploy and sustain, and the time available to do so. The coalition may have to respond to a quick response, "come as you are" war, with no chance to assemble the overwhelming firepower available during Desert Storm. If such a counter-attack/deploy-to-fight response were required, only in-theater, prepositioned, and rapidly deployable forces would be immediately available to the coalition.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAMPAIGN

Operational Goal/Criteria for Success. If a military option was required, what military condition must be produced to achieve the strategic goals of the coalition? A desired end state might be the neutralization of Iran's offensive military capability to project power beyond her borders. An immediate measure of success could be the neutralization or destruction of at least 40 percent of Iran's offensive military capability, with the exception of destroying as much of the infrastructure for weapons of mass destruction as possible. A longer term measure of success would be Iranian acquiescence to the coalition goal of non-interference with the affairs of other states.

Command and Control. Before a campaign plan can be developed, command relationships must be resolved. Due to Arab sensitivities, a likely arrangement would be a split command similar to Desert Storm, with United States and non-Arab forces subordinate to the supported U.S. unified commander, the Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command (USCINCCENT), and Arab forces operating in close coordination under their own leadership. Given the gravity of war with Iran, the CINC would likely serve as the commander of a Joint/Combined Task Force and coalition coordinator. In a similar vein, air, ground, naval and SPECWARFARE command relationships would likely resemble those

during Desert Storm, with U.S. Air Forces, Central Command (CENTAF) serving as Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC); U.S. Army Forces, Central Command (ARCENT) or U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Central Command (MARCENT) serving as ground component commander; and U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command (NAVCENT) and Special Operations Command, Central Command (SOCCENT) commanding naval and SPECWARFARE forces respectively.⁸

Campaign Plan. The coalition staff would then need to prepare a campaign plan based on their commanders' concept of how to bring about the desired end state. Given the coalition's military goal, what sequence of events would most likely produce the desired end state? Such a campaign would need to focus on neutralizing important segments of Iran's operational center of gravity - the regular and Revolutionary Guard military forces that can project significant offensive power beyond Iran's borders. The staff would need to design and implement a phased campaign that concentrated rapid and overwhelming firepower on such decisive points as (1) national command authority and air defense command and control nodes, (2) production, storage and support facilities for weapons of mass destruction, and (3)

⁸ If the coalition ground component were small and/or an immediate response to Iranian aggression were necessary, MARCENT could function as ground forces commander. In a similar vein, the JFACC could embark in the CV, or use the embarked carrier battle group staff as the JFACC. Of note, host nation support for shore basing of commands cannot be ensured in a war with Iran. If a shore site were unavailable, the JTF headquarters could embark in the NAVCENT, CVBG or MEU/ARG flagship.

offensive air, naval and missile forces, including amphibious and mine warfare platforms.

Missing from the list of decisive points of Iranian offensive power are the regular and Revolutionary Guard ground forces. Due to (1) restrictions of geography (Iran shares a common land border with only one likely coalition member, Turkey, which has significant ground forces in the border area and (2) the planned destruction of Iran's amphibious capability to transport ground forces to foreign shores, it is likely that the campaign need not include the engagement of large enemy troop concentrations. However, given the possibility of an Iranian incursion into Kuwait or Saudi Arabia via Iraq, campaign planners would need to account for the potential for large scale ground warfare, and would need to include significant anti-armor capability in its phased deployment of forces to the region. This need represents one of the major alternative courses of action, or branches and sequels, that campaign planners should consider in planning and executing their sequence of events.

Other significant factors will shape the campaign. As with Iraq during Desert Storm, the coalition may not want to hurt Iran "too badly" in order to leave a regional counter balance to Baghdad. Or Western nations might judge the risk to captured aircrews unacceptable, forcing the allies to rely on unmanned weapons such as Tomahawk, which would in turn limit the types of targets struck and amount of damage inflicted.

Forces Application. Having identified the desired military end state and most likely sequence of events, how would the resources available to friendly forces be applied to accomplish that sequence of events? Such a sequence of events and combat capabilities required might be:⁹

Phase One. The suppression/neutralization of Iranian command and control nodes for the national command authority and key air defense components, including missile and radar sites and defensive counter air (DCA) aircraft. Combat capabilities required: strike aircraft and missiles (STW), offensive counter air (OCA), suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD), and SPECWARFARE.¹⁰

Phase Two. The destruction of Iranian production, launch and storage facilities for weapons of mass destruction and land attack/ship attack surface-to-surface missiles, including SCUD and Silkworm. Combat capabilities required: STW, naval gunfire support (NGFS)¹¹ and SPECWARFARE.

⁹ Due to its conceptual nature, this paper does not address specific force levels which might be available to the coalition at the initiation of hostilities. As will be addressed in the section on synchronization, force availability and sustainability will be scenario dependent and will drive the pace and phasing of the coalition's response.

¹⁰ Combat capabilities inherent in defending friendly units, such as defensive counter air (DCA), are not listed.

¹¹ For use against Silkworm storage and "launch" sites (which would bring NGFS platforms inside the Silkworm's envelope, as occurred with U.S. and British NGFS ships during Desert Storm).

Phase Three. The destruction of Iranian OCA and STW aircraft. Combat capabilities required: STW and OCA.

Phase Four. The destruction of Iranian offensive naval forces (including submarine, surface-to-surface capable, mine warfare and amphibious craft). Combat capabilities required: STW, NGFS, anti-surface warfare (ASUW), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and SPECWARFARE.

CHAPTER V

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Synchronization. There will need to be significant overlap between each of these phases, with the emphasis on suppressing enemy defenses as quickly as possible and neutralizing enemy offensive weapons based on their (1) lethality, (2) reaction time and (3) dispersibility. Therefore, the first offensive weapons to be targeted would be weapons of mass destruction and SCUD missiles. As the campaign developed, the coalition would need to evaluate tactical developments (degrees of success, consumption of resources) and strategic developments (changes in policy, strengthening/weakening of the coalition/enemy's will to fight) and make adjustments in the plan. For example, if Iran responded with weapons of mass destruction or international terrorism, both theater and strategic goals might need to be modified, as well as military objectives and targets. This represents another potential alternative course of events, or branch and sequel, that must be incorporated in campaign planning and subsequent execution.

The pace of the campaign would be a direct function of the pace of logistical support. Therefore, the phases listed above represent intermediate objectives, allowing the neutralization of the highest priority targets while awaiting the additional capability to complete the campaign.

Central to the plan is the quick establishment of air and

maritime superiority as necessary to accomplish the mission. In a quick reaction scenario, the forces to accomplish these missions would be limited to those already in theater either afloat or ashore, with no guarantees that host nation support or access through the Strait of Hormuz would be uninterrupted. Unless the coalition were granted lead time similar to Desert Shield, the campaign might have to rely even more than Desert Storm on the multiplier effect of asymmetrical application of force, such as Tomahawks against concentrations of ground forces or SPECWARFARE against air defense nodes. Unlike Desert Storm, mass and economy of force may mean the careful selection of targets, vice the destruction of all available sites in a particular target category. It may also mean that strategic agility will be demonstrated by the sustainment of forces already in theater, vice the movement of large numbers of additional forces into the AOA.

Deception. Deception is most effective when it attempts to reinforce an enemy's previously-held perceptions.¹² Desert Storm's amphibious feint and flanking run to the west created significant enemy dislocation and dramatically contributed to that campaign's success. In the case of Iran, if allied amphibious forces were not needed for actual landings, a similar

¹² William J. Bolt and David Jablonsky, "Tactics and the Operational Level of War." The Operational Art of Warfare Across the Spectrum of Conflict (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1987), pp. 44-45.

diversion could be attempted, with highly publicized exercises in nearby littoral states (time and access permitting). Yet Iran would likely be harder to deceive, with the memories of Desert Storm still fresh. The coalition would need to reinforce Iranian perceptions, as will be discussed below.

Law of Armed Conflict/Rules of Engagement. A coalition against Iran should look to Desert Shield and Desert Storm for lessons in international law and rules of engagement, particularly during the pre-hostilities phase. For example, during Desert Shield, political and operational considerations resulted in coalition restraint against Iraqi minelaying in international waters east of Kuwait, which violated international law.¹³ This restraint placed severe restrictions on subsequent coalition naval and amphibious options. In retrospect, immediate and aggressive mine counter measures by the coalition might not have "started the war too early", nor been viewed as overly aggressive in the eyes of world opinion. In the case of Iran, rigorous mine counter measures would serve notice that mine-

¹³ Contrary to the Hague Convention of 1907, Iraq laid armed mines in international waters without proper notification or on-scene presence to warn shipping. Even if this action were interpreted as occurring after commencement of hostilities, Iraq still was charged with proper notification "as soon as military exigencies permit". Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval Warfare Publication 9 (Rev. A), The Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations. (Washington: Department of the Navy, 1989), pp. 9-2 to 9-3. Due to the unclassified nature of this paper, a judgement will not be made whether such action constituted a hostile act, or indicated hostile intent.

laying in any waters other than Iran's territorial waters, or which interfered with the right of transit passage through an international strait, was unacceptable and would not be tolerated. And not only would such action preserve freedom of movement for coalition forces, it might also reinforce Iran's anticipation of an amphibious attack - thus serving to reinforce a coalition plan for deception.

Media Relations. The power of the media in shaping international opinion on both sides of a modern conflict cannot be overstated. Valuable lessons were learned in Operations Urgent Fury, Just Cause and Desert Shield/Storm in how to balance the world's need to know with operational concerns. These lessons were forgotten during the opening phase of Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, with the resultant compromise of tactical operations and embarrassment for both the press and military. A return to the structure of media relations developed during Desert Shield and Desert Storm appears to be the best compromise between freedom of the press and operational security.

Risk Assessment. Given the coalition's goals and proposed campaign plan, what is the likely cost to the coalition in performing the sequence of actions? In regard to casualties, the campaign would not likely incur unacceptable friendly casualties unless there were a large ground component to the operation. Even with a major ground component, losses would still likely be

acceptable unless weapons of mass destruction were introduced. Therefore, despite Iran's military strength, the coalition would have the capability to eventually prevail on the battlefield, given unlimited public support. The benchmark for measuring risk, therefore, would likely be the degree to which coalition public opinion continued to support the campaign. Even without high loss rates for coalition forces, public support might rapidly wane if Iran mistreated coalition prisoners of war, or if operations did not produce a quick and decisive "victory" ala Desert Storm. While Americans have a historical, ingrained desire for rapid military success, the international public may now also be accustomed to rapid success, thanks to quick battlefield victories such as Desert Storm.¹⁴

An additional dimension of acceptability, impacting both public opinion and military operations, is the risk to major allied weapon systems, such as expensive bomber aircraft and capital ships. For example, it can be argued that the British would have had to abandon the Falklands had the Argentines sunk the British aircraft carrier. While perhaps not as crucial to military success against Iran, the loss of a U.S., British or French carrier would have a major impact on public opinion and support for the war, to say nothing of future weapon system procurement and service roles and missions.

The biggest risk regards Iran's use of weapons of mass

¹⁴ The American desire for quick and decisive victories is documented by several authors, including Geoffrey Perret, A Country Made by War (New York: Vantage Books, 1990).

destruction, which would dramatically impact public opinion, host nation support, and military operations. If Iran used such weapons, the coalition could well respond in kind. A savage struggle against an Islamic nation, with weapons of mass destruction used by one or both sides, could result in dramatic realignments of world opinion and alliances, and forever alter perceptions of modern warfare. As Fred Charles Ikle noted, the outcome of war, particularly prolonged war, is unknown: countries may lose while fighting for peace, may be weaker after winning, and may face new enemies after their "victory".¹⁵

Thus a military campaign against Iran could incur unacceptable risks, with the potential for results unforeseeable at the outset. Iran may have the capacity and will to inflict significant damage on coalition forces. Even with a coalition military victory, there would be no guarantees of anything beyond short term changes in Iranian capabilities. Such a campaign may only fuel the fervor for revenge, retaliation, and an all-out effort to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Ikle stated that it is the outcome of the war, not the campaign, that determines how well a plan supports a nation's (or a coalition's) interests.¹⁶ Short of unrestricted warfare, even a balanced combination of economic, political, diplomatic and military measures may be unsuccessful in producing long term

¹⁵ Fred Charles Ikle, Every War Must End (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp 11-12.

¹⁶ Ikle, p. 2.

behavioral changes in a country determined to "have it their way". In this instance, perhaps the best course of action is to continue developing the broadest possible relations with Iran to increase their economic and diplomatic interdependence with other nations, and create vested Iranian interests to cooperate and not resort to force to achieve their national goals. While flexible deterrent options tend to focus on actions that apply negative pressure on an adversary, in the interim it is in the best interest of the United States and its allies to actively encourage as many ties with Iran as possible, with the goal of sublimating Iran's revolutionary fervor beneath a national interest of peaceful coexistence. In this regard, the lessons of Cold War relations between the United States and the Soviet Union are directly applicable.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The alternative to peaceful cooperation with Iran may be a military campaign that is limited in the range of force that can be applied under non-nuclear circumstances. The best that can be hoped for with such an option is a definitive use of force which presents Iran with a fait accompli that temporarily reduces her capacity for mischief, but produces no long term moderation in her goals or policies.

The dilemma for the coalition is that while a military campaign would not guarantee success in achieving long term strategic goals, the lack of a response to Iranian aggression would certainly guarantee the coalition's failure. With the short term (and unpredictable) achievements of such a campaign in mind, the best approach appears to be to continue enticing Iran to join the mainstream of nations with a combination of economic and diplomatic incentives, forward presence, firm resolve, and the strategic agility to deploy to fight if the need arose.

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