

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF U.S.  
ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER IN IRAQ

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## ABSTRACT

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After conducting a successful military campaign to remove the government of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, the United States remains locked in a campaign to defeat a growing insurgency. The United States' strategic objectives in Iraq have been clearly defined as providing for a stable, secure, prosperous, peaceful, and democratic nation that is a fully functioning member of the community of nations. In the months following the end of major combat operations, the United States was challenged to effectively coordinate all of the instruments of national power at its disposal to achieve these strategic objectives. As the United States moves forward, it must critically examine how effective it has been at leveraging the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power to achieve its national objectives. This analysis is critical not just to the success of current operations in Iraq but to future complex contingency operations where the national power of the United States would be required. In this paper I intend to examine how the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of power were implemented in the months following the end of major combat operations in Iraq, and will make recommendations on actions which should be taken to improve United States effectiveness in conducting complex contingency operations.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..... iii

PREFACE.....vii

EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF U.S. ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER IN IRAQ ..... 1

**BACKGROUND**.....1

**UNITED STATES STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES** .....2

**THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT** .....3

**TRANSITION TO PHASE IV (STABILITY OPERATIONS)**.....4

**THE USE OF OUR NATIONAL POWER IN IRAQ** .....5

    MILITARY ELEMENT..... 6

    DIPLOMATIC ELEMENT.....9

    INFORMATIONAL ELEMENT.....11

    ECONOMIC ELEMENT.....12

**RECOMMENDATIONS**.....12

**CONCLUSION** .....14

ENDNOTES ..... 16

BIBLIOGRAPHY .....20



## PREFACE

Spending nearly eight months in Iraq, as part of the V Corps command group during Operation Iraqi Freedom, provided me a unique perspective of the challenges faced by the military during the transition from combat to post-hostilities operations. This paper attempts to combine my personal experience with research conducted while at the Army War College to provide a useful tool for conducting complex contingency operations in the future.





## EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF U.S. ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER IN IRAQ

It has been two years since the United States led coalition toppled the government of Saddam Hussein ending his 35 year reign over the Iraqi people. Increasing numbers of coalition and Iraqi casualties and the escalating costs associated with combat operations have caused many to question their support for the war. What initially appeared to be a highly successful military campaign has left the United States locked in a campaign to defeat a growing insurgency.

Debate continues over whether the United States was justified in taking preemptive action against Iraq and whether Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction. While these are important questions worthy of continued debate, they do not explain why the United States has been unable to maintain the initiative and achieve its strategic objectives in Iraq.

To answer this question it is important to understand what the United States' strategic objectives were during the summer of 2003 as major combat operations concluded. Further, an understanding of both the operational environment and the state of civil-military relations in Iraq during that same period is essential. Once this framework has been established, an examination into how the United States was able to apply its elements of power may occur.

This paper is not intended to critique current efforts in Iraq, nor will it provide answers to the myriad of operational challenges currently facing our troops. Instead it will focus on the period immediately following the announced end of major combat operations on 1 May 2003. In doing so it will examine the effectiveness of the United States in applying its diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of national power. Further, the paper will identify how national policy decisions and processes have impacted operational objectives in Iraq. Finally it will make recommendations on how best to apply these elements in the future.

The challenges of harnessing a nation's power in order to achieve a strategic end-state are complex. General MacArthur once noted: "Power is one thing. The problem of how to administer it is another."<sup>1</sup> This insight underscores the point that although the United States possesses the national power necessary to influence actions in Iraq, it is often challenged to coordinate and apply the elements that make up that power.

### **BACKGROUND**

Coalition forces commenced offensive operations on 19 March 2003 to remove Saddam Hussein from power and free the Iraqi people. After spending just three months deploying forces into the region, coalition forces commenced their attack north from Kuwait. Attacking

along multiple axes United States and British forces overwhelmed Iraqi defenses with speed and precision and were able to defeat Saddam's military in less than six weeks.

Despite volumes of published reports critiquing American military efforts during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), most military experts have praised its performance. Anthony Cordesman, a leading military scholar and analyst with ABC news, described American military actions as follows: "The regime clearly was never able to respond coherently to the coalition attack—the shock of U.S. air power led many Iraqi units to disintegrate or largely avoid combat, and the shock of the land advance and initial U.S. land operations in the greater Baghdad area helped lead to the collapse of any last efforts at urban warfare."<sup>2</sup>

OIF demonstrated tremendous advancements in both weapons technology and joint and combined operations doctrine. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 has been credited with many of these successes, and has been instrumental in enabling combatant commanders to maximize the effectiveness of their combat systems to achieve integrated joint effects. In this regard, the military has made great strides in overcoming many of the shortcomings discovered during operations in Granada, Panama, and the first Gulf War.<sup>3</sup>

On 1 May 2003, President Bush, speaking from the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, declared "major combat operations" in Iraq had ended.<sup>4</sup> This signaled the date at which coalition forces began the transition from Phase III (decisive offensive operations) to Phase IV (stability operations). It was hoped that declaring an end to combat operations would encourage other countries to increase their participation during Phase IV. However, 22 months later, many would argue that we are still in the midst of a transition.

## **UNITED STATES STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

During his State of the Union address in January 2003, President Bush outlined his intent to take action should Hussein fail to comply with United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions. Although the President discussed the dangers imposed by Iraq's weapons programs, his message to the Iraqi people was clear: "Your enemy is not surrounding your country – your enemy is ruling your country. And the day he and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation."<sup>5</sup> These remarks are significant because they form the centerpiece of what would become the United States' enduring strategic objectives for Iraq.

The objectives outlined by the President called for a stable, secure, prosperous, peaceful, and democratic Iraq that is a fully functioning member of a community of nations.<sup>6</sup> These objectives by their very nature imply that all elements of national power would be required to achieve them. President Bush emphasized this point as follows:

The United States upholds these principals of security and freedom in many ways – with all the tools of democracy, law enforcement, intelligence, and finance. We're working with a broad coalition of nations that understand the threat and our shared responsibility to meet it. The use of force has been –and remains- our last resort.<sup>7</sup>

The military's presence in Iraq and the threatening security environment have dictated its central role in achieving United States strategic objectives. However, the President's remarks above demonstrate his intent to use all the elements at his disposal to accomplish them.

#### **THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

In the months that followed, the security situation continued to erode, and coalition forces found themselves at the center of a growing insurgency. The inability of the coalition to provide security and restore essential Iraqi infrastructure enabled insurgents to capitalize on the public's growing lack of confidence. Support from the international community was also declining. An attack on the UN Headquarters in Baghdad, which killed 22 people including Sergio Vieira de Mello, the head of the mission, prompted the UN to withdraw its personnel in October 2003.<sup>8</sup>

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 4 March 2004, General John Abizaid, the Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander described the security situation as follows:

CENTCOM expects that violence will increase as Iraq moves to sovereignty. Mus'ab al-Zarqawi explains in his letter to Bin Laden that he thinks "zero hour must be at least four months before the new government gets into place. We are racing time." It is clear that Zarqawi and others see the Iraqi elections as a danger and intend to surge against it. The enemy fears a network of credible security forces deployed against them and has stepped up their targeting of police stations, recruiting centers, and key security leaders. The enemy will certainly target critical infrastructure in its bid to undermine Iraqi legitimacy. Some of our adversaries will attempt to exacerbate ethnic tensions with the intent of sparking civil war by attacking important ethnic and religious leaders with a goal of causing mass casualties and media vents to highlight their carnage.<sup>9</sup>

General Abizaid's comments were pointed; he believed attacks would target United States and coalition resolve. He further argued that attacks on the Iraqi people and critical infrastructure were designed to erode support for the coalition and prevent plans for free elections.

The United States' inability to provide a safe and secure environment permitted the insurgency to grow. As it grew, insurgents became more sophisticated in their efforts to disrupt coalition plans. The Iraqi people were left with a choice; support the coalition or join the growing insurgency. Unfortunately, inadvertent mistakes by coalition forces alienated large numbers of Iraqis, which further fueled the insurgency.

## **TRANSITION TO PHASE IV (STABILITY OPERATIONS)**

President Bush tasked the Department of Defense (DoD) with the responsibility for reconstruction in National Security Presidential Directive 24 (NSPD 24), on January 20, 2003.<sup>10</sup> The Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld appointed Lieutenant General (LTG) (retired) Jay M. Garner to lead the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). Garner possessed a great deal of experience gained working in Northern Iraq with the Kurds following the first gulf war during Operation Provide Comfort.<sup>11</sup>

With just three months to assemble his team, Garner focused ORHA's initial efforts on planning for a humanitarian crisis that never developed.<sup>12</sup> Although a skilled professional he lacked the resources and diplomatic experience required to deal with the complex political and economic challenges in Iraq. In May 2003, after spending less than a month in Iraq, Garner was replaced by Ambassador J. Paul Bremer. Bremer was appointed to lead the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which replaced ORHA and assumed the role of Iraq's temporary governing body. It is worth mentioning that General Tommy Franks, Commander of CENTCOM during the war, spoke of Garner's contributions as follows: "Jay had done a hell of a job getting ORHA up and running—now it was time to raise the ante to the level of ambassador. We need money—and we need clout."<sup>13</sup>

Upon his arrival in Baghdad, Ambassador Bremer began the process of establishing his headquarters. This was a daunting challenge because while some personnel moved from ORHA to CPA, most did not. CPA was forced to begin the process of manning its organization by recruiting personnel from within DoD and the Department of State (DOS) to fill its critical requirements. While key positions were often filled quickly, the process of filling the remaining positions continued through the summer of 2003.

As the transition to Phase IV began, General Franks commanded CENTCOM; LTG David McKiernan, commanded all coalition forces in Iraq under Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7); and LTG William Wallace commanded the U.S. Army's V Corps, which comprised the majority of the military's combat capability in Iraq at that time.

In June 2003, LTG Wallace assumed command of CJTF-7 from LTG McKiernan and subsequently turned the command of both CJTF-7 and V Corps over to LTG Ricardo Sanchez (former 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division Commander in Baghdad). This was followed by General Franks relinquishing command on 7 July 2003 to General Abizaid, who had previously served as the Deputy CENTCOM Commander. Within just two months the top three commanders responsible for ground combat in Iraq were replaced. As commanders were replaced, numerous other personnel changes occurred throughout the organization. The rotation of key personnel led to a

perception that the war had been won, and that troops would soon go home. Recognizing the impact these changes were having on the force, the Army halted all changes of command in theater beginning in 2004.<sup>14</sup>

#### **THE USE OF OUR NATIONAL POWER IN IRAQ**

Often the strength of a nation is measured by its ability to influence foreign policy in order to achieve its own strategic objectives. The United States has many tools that can be leveraged to achieve its strategic objectives. These tools are most effective when used in conjunction with one another toward a common purpose. They can be divided into four broad categories, which comprise the elements of national power. These categories include the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of national power.

During OIF there are numerous examples of how the military attempted to apply diplomatic, informational, and economic tools in order to achieve desired effects at the operational level. It is more difficult to find examples of how these elements were synchronized at the strategic level as part of a grand strategy. A complicated command and control structure contributed to this challenge, while Ambassador Bremer reported directly to the President, CJTF-7 continued to report to the CENTCOM Commander. The result was two separate chains of command, CPA leading the reconstruction effort and CJTF-7 responsible for security. Unfortunately, this often led to routine coordination taking place in Washington instead of Iraq.

Adding to this challenge was a lack of resources and technical expertise in Iraq at that time. This led to an over reliance on the military to perform tasks from all elements of national power. This proved to be an inefficient means to apply all the capabilities available to the United States.

General Franks recognized the need to synchronize the military element of power with other United States capabilities. He developed a tool, which he described as the “Lines and Slices” matrix. The matrix incorporated all four elements of power and attempted to match coalition capabilities against Iraqi centers of gravity. Although the matrix was useful in synchronizing deliberate planning and targeting efforts, it was strictly a military solution to a larger problem.<sup>15</sup>

Recognizing this challenge, Army senior leaders made the following point: “America is a nation at war. To win this war, we must meld all elements of our national power in a determined and relentless campaign to defeat enemies who challenge our way of life.”<sup>16</sup> This statement underscores the necessity for all elements of national power to be used in conjunction with one another towards a common objective.

## MILITARY ELEMENT

There is no question that the military element of national power has been the centerpiece of the United States' strategy for achieving its national objectives in Iraq. As mentioned previously, the performance of Coalition military forces during the decisive combat phase of OIF was exceptional.<sup>17</sup> However, success achieved during Phase III, would contribute to the military's lack of preparedness to execute Phase IV.

Prior to OIF, no one questioned the decision to make the DoD responsible for leading the stability and reconstruction effort.<sup>18</sup> It was generally accepted that only the military would be in a position to accept responsibility for stability operations. However this decision and the subsequent execution of Phase IV operations ignored the capabilities of other agencies within the government.

The challenges experienced by the military during the transition to Phase IV are the result of a number of complex circumstances, each impacting the military's ability to successfully achieve its objectives. For ease of discussion these challenges have been grouped into broad categories as follows: Category 1: Chain of Command; Category 2: Phase IV Planning; Category 3: Nation Building; Category 4: Civil Military Operations.

**Category 1: Military Chain of Command.** As described earlier, the Chain of Command that planned and fought the decisive phase of OIF was not in position to execute the stability phase. The turnover of key leaders during this turbulent and complex period challenged those remaining in Iraq. The chaos generated by the loss of key leadership during the transition to Phase IV reinforced for many that the war had ended and that stability operations would be much simpler.

The most glaring evidence of this was the vacuum created by the departure of LTG McKiernan and his staff from Iraq, following the transfer of authority to V Corps of the CJTF-7 mission. At the time of the transfer LTG Wallace and V Corps were fully engaged expanding the security environment in Iraq. Upon designation as the CJTF, the Corps accepted responsibility for all stability and reconstruction tasks in Iraq, including those previously performed by LTG McKiernan and his staff. Unfortunately, the additional workload was not accompanied by a commensurate increase in manning.

In an effort to overcome critical personnel shortages, LTG Wallace requested and received several temporary (90 day) replacements. Although helpful at the time, 90 day replacements did not provide the necessary continuity required during complex contingency operations. Over the next three months every primary staff position in CJTF-7 was changed, and in some cases more than once. Further LTG Wallace's departure and the subsequent

promotion and assumption of command by LTG Sanchez contributed to the organization's already steep learning curve.

**Category 2: Phase IV Planning.** The lack of a credible plan for conducting Phase IV operations had serious repercussions for those attempting to execute the reconstruction and stability operations mission. United States experience in conflicts as far back as World War II, had highlighted the challenges of planning for post-hostilities operations.<sup>19</sup> One leading foreign affairs scholar described this failure as follows:

The failure to plan better for the restoration of order and the repair of infrastructure gave opportunities to Saddam's loyalists-who initially were stunned by the speed and completeness of the regime's collapse-to build a resistance to the occupation. These failures cost the United States considerable good will among ordinary Iraqi and throughout the wider Arab world.<sup>20</sup>

At the highest levels within DoD, no one envisioned that the Iraqi military would melt away and victory would come so suddenly. It quickly became apparent that many of the assumptions made during the planning for stability operations proved to be invalid.<sup>21</sup> Assumptions on the ability to conduct operations through Turkey, that Iraqi's would cooperate with coalition forces, that local law enforcement would remain intact, and that critical infrastructure, primarily electrical and water services would remain operational were inaccurate. These challenges became magnified as the security situation within Iraq worsened; the need for additional troops became apparent. As one author wrote in the New York Post on 15 April 2003:

Our inability to guard hospitals and the inability to protect Baghdad's National Museum of Antiquities from looters are undeniable stains on an otherwise unblemished record. We needed more troops on the ground to establish a presence throughout Baghdad and elsewhere. Out of sight, our troops were out of mind.<sup>22</sup>

Making bad assumptions had other consequences for military leaders. In addition to having fewer troops than were required, the units that were required (i.e., military police, civil affairs, explosive ordinance, and logistics units) were not available. While it is not reasonable to expect assumptions always to be accurate, it is imperative that they are continually challenged and matched with intelligence to confirm they are still relevant to the plan. If they are not, plans must be updated.

**Category 3: Nation Building.** Many have argued that the military has a history of failing to plan effectively for conflict termination.<sup>23</sup> A view that is reflected in Major General (retired) Scales' historical account taken from the First Gulf War, where he states:

Wars never end cleanly and this one was no exception. The cease-fire occurred more quickly than anyone had expected. The postwar process that had existed only in concept was now imminent. Literally overnight, the army found itself

flexing an entirely different set of operational muscles. Staff members still exhausted from 100 hours of combat were suddenly inundated with the details of enforcing the cease-fire provisions.<sup>24</sup>

Scales' comments could just as easily describe the transition to Phase IV in May of 2003. The military was not prepared to execute the complex tasks associated with nation building. While some limited planning for post conflict operations had occurred at the highest levels, plans were not executable at the operational level. As Scales noted above, units moved directly from combat to executing the complex tasks associated with stability operations. One Battalion Commander in Iraq made the following observation: "Peace enforcement is wearing everybody out.... This is much harder [than combat]."<sup>25</sup>

Contributing to the military's lack of preparedness was DoDs reluctance to take on the task of nation building. Nation building denoted a long-term investment in both time and resources which DoD passionately hoped to avoid. This was further articulated by Scales as follows:

The current U.S. administration and its military advisors could have been better prepared to handle the intractable problems raised by victory. To a great extent, that failure reflected a reluctance to involve America's military in nation building and peacekeeping. Insistence on this point closely mirrored the inclination of some in the military services to believe that they should avoid the messy business that lies beyond clear-cut, decisive military operations.<sup>26</sup>

While the Goldwater-Nichols legislation significantly enhanced the military's joint operations capabilities, it had little impact on its ability to conduct stability operations. For more than fifty years the military has struggled with the challenges of conducting reconstruction and stability operations. Finally, Cordesman described the military's approach toward post conflict operations as follows:

The U.S. military culture has failed to look beyond war fighting in defining the role and responsibility of the U.S. military. The subordination of the military to civilian control in the United States leads to a natural reluctance by the military to become involved in planning for "political" activities like conflict termination, peacemaking, and nation building or to challenge civilian policymakers in these areas. Soldiers naturally focus on war rather than conflict termination.<sup>27</sup>

**Category 4: Civil Military Operations.** To say tensions existed between military and civilian leaders during the transition to Phase IV is an understatement. At the highest levels within the DoD and DOS, there was a general feeling of mistrust. This perception was allowed to permeate both departments.

The last minute appointment of Garner to lead the reconstruction effort, left little time to synchronize plans at either the operational or tactical levels. In fact, when he arrived in Kuwait



in March of 2003, commander's were conducting final preparations for the decisive operations phase of OIF, leaving no time to focus on stability operations. Cordesman summarized the challenges in this regard as follows:

The fact remains that many of the problems and limitations in military resources the coalition faced during and after the war, and certainly its lack of a coordinated military-civilian effort, were the result of U.S. failures before the war to plan properly for conflict termination and to then provide the proper resources.<sup>28</sup>

The inability of civilian and military Leaders to coordinate plans prior to the transition to Phase IV resulted in an overall lack of unity of effort in conducting stability operations. Most of the ORHA staff remained in Kuwait during the decisive operations phase, despite LTG McKiernan's request that they move forward and begin coordination for the transition.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately the situation continued to decline following Ambassador Bremer's designation to lead the CPA. Although a skilled diplomat, Ambassador Bremer was behind the power curve from the day he arrived in Iraq. Operating with a skeleton staff, in a fast paced, complex environment he lacked the time to train and build his organization. Further his inability to communicate effectively with the many organizations operating in Iraq led to numerous miscommunications; this included his relationship with the military. His failure to work effectively with the military prevented him from achieving the unity of effort, which the United States desperately required.

#### DIPLOMATIC ELEMENT

It is logical to suggest that the diplomatic element of power is used most effectively when coordinated through the DOS. As such, in October 2001 the DOS established a working group designed to plan for the transition to a post-Saddam Iraq. The work done by this group and its findings came to be known as the "Future of Iraq" project. The project examined the requirements for rebuilding the political and economic infrastructure in Iraq.<sup>30</sup> The group identified many of the potential challenges that would result from a regime change; among the groups findings are the following:

The removal of Saddam's regime will provide a power vacuum and create popular anxieties about the viability of all Iraqi institutions.

The traumatic and disruptive events attendant to the regime change will affect all Iraqis, both Saddam conspirators and the general populace.

The period immediately after regime change might offer these criminals the opportunity to engage in acts of killing, plundering and looting.<sup>31</sup>

In retrospect, it is clear that many of the group's findings accurately portrayed the conditions in Iraq following Phase III. It demonstrates that post war planning was conducted. However, it was not shared or at least not considered in Phase IV planning by DoD. In fact, little coordination was done between the DOS and DoD in the year leading up to OIF.

The reasons for this lack of coordination can be traced back to differences in the way each department viewed Iraq. The DOS supported a conservative approach, wanting to give weapons inspections and sanctions every opportunity to succeed before using force. In a meeting with the President in August of 2002, Secretary Powell made the case that war should remain the last option. He argued: "You are going to be the proud owner of 25 million people. You will own all their hopes, aspirations, and problems. You'll own it all."<sup>32</sup> This came to be known within the press as the pottery barn rule: You break it, you own it.

Conversely, the leadership within the DoD believed that United Nations sanctions had run their course and had been ineffective in dealing with Saddam Hussein. Leadership within the Office of the Secretary of Defense believed the time for action had come. After DoD was designated as the lead for the reconstruction effort, the DOS role was further diminished.

James Fallows noted in his article "Blind into Baghdad," "...detailed planning for the postwar situation meant facing costs and potential problems, it weakened the case for a "war choice," and was seen by the war's proponents as an "antiwar" undertaking."<sup>33</sup> It was into this category that DoD placed much of the information contained in the Future of Iraq project's report. Many of the experts sent by the DOS to assist in Phase IV planning, including Thomas Warrick, the individual responsible for the Future of Iraq project, were dismissed by DoD.<sup>34</sup>

In April 2003, after successfully removing Saddam Hussein from power, diplomatic efforts to reunite rival parties in Iraq were slow and ineffective. As stated earlier, the challenges faced by Garner in April 2003 were largely the result of his lack of preparedness to handle the vast diplomatic challenges confronting Iraq. Although Garner had been briefed on the work done by the "Future of Iraq" group, he had been told by senior officials within the DoD not to waste his time reading it.<sup>35</sup>

No one understood the challenges of nation building more than the DOS and Secretary Powell. In comments made in March 2003 before the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute, Secretary Powell stated:

The work of diplomats and others in a postwar environment is inherently hard work, but it is crucial. We knew such labors would lie before us in Afghanistan and Iraq. Years of war in Afghanistan, and an avaricious tyranny in Iraq, destroyed far more than did the Coalition's use of force on either country. Worse, both societies were wounded in their spirits as well as their bodies, their national cohesion brought low by despots who manipulated internal divisions to

advance their own ends. From the start, we resolved to stay the course until we achieved not only physical reconstruction but also decent representation governments in both countries - in other words, until we turned our military victories into lasting political accomplishments.<sup>36</sup>

The failure to effectively delineate areas of responsibility and share information across the interagency in the rapidly changing Phase IV environment in Iraq exacerbated the challenges during Phase IV. These failures led Secretary Powell and the DOS to appear out of synch with on-going efforts in Iraq. Cordesman noted that: "The success of U.S. arms has not been matched by the success of U.S. diplomacy. Nation building is not only not a science; it is not yet an art form."<sup>37</sup>

#### INFORMATIONAL ELEMENT

The informational element of national power was both the least understood and least effectively used instrument of power in Iraq. The United States continues to be challenged to effectively communicate a consistent message to the international community and the Iraqi people. Complicating the problem for military and civilian leadership is an overall lack of understanding of the cultures within the region. This causes the United States to view problems through a lens shaped by American values. General Abizaid highlighted this problem in his 2004 Posture Statement, where he argued for greater culturally literate human intelligence capabilities. This included investments across the services in linguists, civil affairs experts and psychological operations specialists.<sup>38</sup>

Further, an inability to synchronize the informational element of national power with the other elements is perhaps the greatest challenge to achieving information superiority. While the diplomatic, military and economic instruments each exercise specific aspects of information operations, no one agency is responsible for ensuring a consistent message is being delivered.

Finally, as Frank Jones points out, "the information element of power should be understood as a psychological dimension of warfare." He further states; "that for the U.S. Government, the informational element of power is its ability to employ its information capabilities to influence the attitudes and behaviors of foreign elites and publics."<sup>39</sup> The ability to influence the perceptions of the international community as indicated in Jones' article requires a strategic information campaign that can produce a message that can be transmitted across all instruments of power.

## ECONOMIC ELEMENT

The United States possesses the world's largest economy, which enables it to impact the global economy through its policies and actions. The ability of the United States to use its economic element of national power to achieve strategic objectives is an essential tool element of its foreign policy. The economic element of power enables the United States to add greater weight to its other elements of power.

It is difficult to recognize the effects of the economic element of power. Only after U.S. troops reached Baghdad in April 2003 did the impact of the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq's economy become clear. Iraq's infrastructure was in near-crisis condition. The impact of 15 years of economic sanctions on all aspects of Iraq's economic and social programs was devastating. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in May of 2004 characterized the problems in Iraq as follows:

Within weeks after the fighting ended, life began returning to its normal patterns. But another pattern soon became evident: The neglect that characterized Saddam Hussein's rule had permeated every aspect of Iraqi life. Although Iraqis had among the highest levels of education and medical care in the Arab world before Saddam Hussein began his wars, Iraq's oil wealth had been diverted to palaces and to the huge military he used to attack his neighbors and intimidate his people.<sup>40</sup>

USAID's work in Iraq has contributed significantly to the progress being made on the ground. The ability of the organization to quickly bring emergency supplies and humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people avoided a potential humanitarian disaster. It also has revealed the devastating impact economic sanctions had on the majority of the population in Iraq. The sanctions did not have the same impact on Iraq elites who were able to find loopholes in the economic sanctions.

As with the other instruments of national power, the economic element has the greatest impact when executed in conjunction with the other tools. Additionally, it offers the United States the greatest flexibility in dealing with the many challenges currently facing Iraq. The ability of the United States to leverage the economic instrument of power to gain coalition support has also proved to be extremely beneficial.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The above discussion points identify a need to correct problems associated with the conduct of stability and reconstruction operations. Following the President's declaration that major combat operations had concluded, reconstruction efforts were ineffective in achieving United States strategic objectives. The following section contains five specific

recommendations that should be adopted to ensure reconstruction and stabilization efforts are conducted more effectively in the future.

**Provide for Effective Oversight:** Consistent with recommendations contained in the Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Phase I report, the National Security Counsel (NSC) must be empowered to ensure effective coordination takes place between the DoD, DOS and other departments within the government.<sup>41</sup> An office within the NSC should be established and charged with ensuring unity of effort among government agencies. The inability of the DoD and DOS to work together as described by General Franks earlier cannot be tolerated. The lack of consistent strategic policy guidance jeopardized the United States' ability to achieve its strategic objectives. The NSC must ensure differences are debated and executable courses of action developed and disseminated to every government agency.

**Improve Civil Military Operations:** The DOS must develop a more robust capability to work stability and reconstruction operations. As outlined within the Defense Science Board's "2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities," success in stability and reconstruction operations depends on strong civil military cooperation.<sup>42</sup> The DOS's recent efforts to establish the Office of the State Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) is certainly a step in the right direction. However much work remains to be done, the office currently lacks the personnel and resources necessary to effectively integrate civilian and military operations. Efforts must be made to establish joint plans across the interagency, which will ensure future cooperation during stability and reconstruction operations.

**Nation Building:** Nation building involves long term commitments and consistently requires more personnel and resources than original estimates have called for. It has become apparent that stability and reconstruction tasks cannot be separated from the broader category of nation building. While reconstruction tasks—which include repairing damage caused by war and neglect—are important, critical to nation building are the tasks associated with rebuilding both the political and economic infrastructure of the nation. In Iraq, it is clear that the United States underestimated the requirements of nation building. Poor planning and inaccurate assumptions led officials to believe nation building efforts would be swift and accepted by both Iraqis and the international community. These failures led to a loss in momentum and enabled insurgents to gain the initiative. Future United States' involvement in complex contingency operations must include detailed plans for stability and reconstruction efforts.

**Military Support to Stability Operations:** The DoD must embrace post-hostilities operations and do a better job of preparing leaders to deal with the complex challenges associated with Phase IV operations. The military can no longer afford to focus its planning and

training on decisive combat operations. It must put equal emphasis on how it will deal with the challenges of post-hostilities. As suggested by MG (retired) Scales, the military's failure to properly plan for post-hostility operations left it ill prepared to execute the more difficult operations associated with nation building.<sup>43</sup> Future United States' involvement in complex contingency operations will no doubt find the military in the best position to assume the lead as Phase IV operations begin. As such, military leaders must be familiar with the capabilities of all elements of national power and how each must be integrated into Phase IV planning and execution.

**Improved Information Operations Campaign:** The United States must invest in the informational element of national power. In order to integrate the informational element of national power across all elements of national power, resources across all departments within the inter-agency must be dedicated to this critical effort. Each must contribute to the development of a consistent message which then can be approved by the NSC and communicated to all those involved in stability and reconstruction operations. This is essential and one of the most critical elements in ensuring unity of effort toward achieving national strategic objectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Failures by the United States to properly plan for and conduct timely stability and reconstruction operations within Iraq have prevented the accomplishment of its strategic national objectives. Momentum gained during the decisive operations phase of OIF was lost during the transition to Phase IV operations, and a window of opportunity was closed as the insurgency within Iraq continued to grow.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Dr. John Hamre, the President and CEO of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) observed the following:

Our Military forces can win the combat phase of wars decisively, but military operations themselves are rarely, if ever, sufficient to achieving the U.S.'s overall strategic objectives. To decisively win the peace, we need an immediate and sharper focus on developing and institutionalizing the civilian and military capabilities the United States requires for complex operations.<sup>44</sup>

As Dr. Hamre implies, we must ensure that military capabilities are backed up by all other instruments of national power necessary to win the peace during complex contingency operations. While Iraq provides the latest example of this, it will certainly not be the last.

WORD COUNT=5,999

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) p.281.
- <sup>2</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003), 218.
- <sup>3</sup> Gregory Fontenot, E.J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point – The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, (Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), XXI.
- <sup>4</sup> Remarks by President Bush from the USS Abraham Lincoln on 1 May 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/iraq/20030501-15.html>.
- <sup>5</sup> George W. Bush, State of the Union Address before Congress, 28 January 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>
- <sup>6</sup> Remarks by President George W. Bush from the “Address to the American Enterprise Institute” 26 Feb 2003, accessed from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/iraq/20030226-11.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> Remarks by President Bush from the USS Abraham Lincoln on 1 May 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/iraq/20030501-15.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> Warren Hoge, New York Times , *Annan Rules Out Quick Return of a U. N. Presence in Iraq*, December 11, 2003.
- <sup>9</sup> General John P. Abizaid, Commander United States Central Command, Written Testimony submitted before Senate Armed Services Posture Hearing Testimony, 4 March 2004, 15-16.
- <sup>10</sup> Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 282-283.
- <sup>11</sup> Adam Curtis, Iraq's Interim Administrator, British Broadcasting Corporation News, 7 April 2003.
- <sup>12</sup> Cordesman, 499.
- <sup>13</sup> Tommy Franks, General, *American Soldier*, (Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 2003), 531.
- <sup>14</sup> MILPER MESSAGE: 04-049, Delegation of Authority by Chief of Staff, Army to Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, for approval of Command Selection List (CSL) Tour Extensions and Deferments, Department of the Army, 20 December, 2003.
- <sup>15</sup> Franks, 338-341.
- <sup>16</sup> Acting Secretary of the Army, Les Brownlee and Chief of Staff of the Army, General Peter Schoomaker, *Serving a Nation at War: A Campaign Quality Army with Joint and Expeditionary Capabilities*; Parameters Summer 2004, 5.



<sup>17</sup> Williamson Murray and Robert H. Scales, Jr., *The Iraq War: A Military History*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, and London, England, 2003, 233.

<sup>18</sup> Woodward, 282

<sup>19</sup> Michael J. Baranick, *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*, (Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University Press, Washington, D.C., 2004), 1-14.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Russell Mead, *Power, Terror, Peace, and War: America's Grand Strategy in a World at Risk*, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2004), 152.

<sup>21</sup> Charlie Coon, European Stars and Stripes, *General: U.S. Didn't Note Post-Invasion Iraq power Shift Quickly Enough*, September 30, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Ralph Peters, *Beyond Baghdad: Postmodern War and Peace* (Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2003), 299.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Record, "The Bush Doctrine and the War with Iraq," *Parameters* 33 (Spring 2003): 15.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Scales, Jr., *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington: Brassey's, 1994), p. 323.

<sup>25</sup> Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, 427.

<sup>26</sup> Murray and Scales, Jr., 2003, 252.

<sup>27</sup> Cordesman, 491.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 496-497.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 500.

<sup>30</sup> James Fellows, "Blind into Baghdad," *The Atlantic*, Volume 293 NO. 1, (January/February 2004): 56-57.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>32</sup> Woodward, 150.

<sup>33</sup> Fellows, 58-60.

<sup>34</sup> Woodward, 282-283.

<sup>35</sup> Fellows, 72.

<sup>36</sup> Colin L. Powell, *The Craft of Diplomacy*, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Summer 2004, 63.

<sup>37</sup> Cordesman, 491.

<sup>38</sup> General John P. Abizaid, Commander United States Central Command, Written Testimony submitted before Senate Armed Services Posture Hearing Testimony, 4 March 2004, 35-36.

<sup>39</sup> Frank L. Jones, *Information: The Psychological Instrument*, U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security and Strategy, Chapter 15, 212.

<sup>40</sup> United States Agency for International Development Annual Report on Iraq, May 2004,

<sup>41</sup> Beyond Goldwater-Nichols (BG-N): Defense Reform for a new strategic era, Phase I report, March 2004, Chapter 8, 60-63.

<sup>42</sup> Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities, December 2004 Report, Chapter 3, 38-66.

<sup>43</sup> Murray and Scales, Jr., 252.

<sup>44</sup> John J. Hamre, Post-Conflict Nation Building, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 3 March 2004



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