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**JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**

# THE EXIT THROUGH THE IVORY GATE: A STUDY OF PHASE IV/V OPERATIONAL DESIGN IN IRAQI FREEDOM

**by**

**Mark J. Hovatter**

***Colonel, US Army***

**THE EXIT THROUGH THE IVORY GATE: A STUDY OF PHASE IV/V OPERATIONAL DESIGN IN IRAQI FREEDOM**

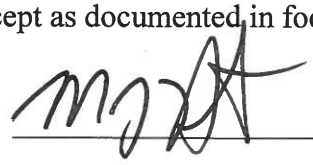
**by**

**Mark J. Hovatter**

***Colonel, United States Army***

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

Signature: 

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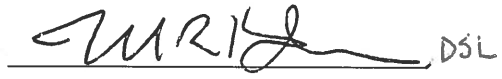
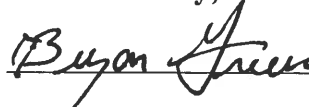
Signature: 

**Professor Fred Kienle, Thesis Advisor**

**Approved by**:

Signature:

**Col Denis Doty, Committee Member**

Signature: 

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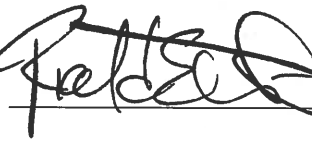
Signature: 

**Richard E. Wiersema, Colonel, USA**
**Director, Joint Advanced Warfighting School**

## ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a practical guide for planners engaged in post major combat operations campaign planning, and provides tools to evaluate the environment and operational designs before and during execution. Based on the Iraq experience, it builds on a fairly robust amount of literature and interest in the topic available today, and attempts to maintain a broad enough perspective of the events to gain insights into the planning challenges and conditions in which the key leaders made decisions that were critical to the outcomes of the campaign. The methodology chooses a detailed analysis of a single case study instead of cursory analysis of multiple case studies, and attempts to consider the full range of influences on design. Through interpretation of conceptual models used in the OIF Phase IV/V design, and relating the elements of operational design, we gain insights into the theory of action which underpinned the design. Though no cookie cutter solutions are advanced, analysis of the OIF framework will yield transferrable insights to someone who is planning or evaluating similar operations in the future. The experience gained from this analysis may be decisive in achieving future success in Phase IV sooner and, hopefully, with less loss of blood and treasure.

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## DEDICATION

**This work is dedicated to the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines of today and the Joint Force of tomorrow. May the lessons of the past inform the challenges of the future, and guide the path toward victory and peace in our children's time.**

***Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: "Peace I leave you, my peace I give you," look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will."***

***The Communion Rite, Roman Missal, 2010***

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## Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

1003V- The numbered Operation Plan (OPLAN) for Operation Iraqi Freedom

AIF-Anti-Iraqi Forces

AQI or AQIZ- Al Qaeda in Iraq; also known as "al Qaeda in Mesopotamia" or al Qaeda in the "Land of Two Rivers."

BG- Brigadier General (1-star) (US Army)

C5-Staff proponent for future plans in a Coalition Staff

CF- Coalition Forces

CFLCC- Coalition Forces Land Component Command-

CJTF- Combined Joint Task Force

COIN- Counterinsurgency

CPA-Coalition Provisional Authority

DOD-Department of Defense (United States)

DOS- Department of State (United States)

EFP- Explosive Formed Projectile- A sophisticated IED that projects an explosively formed shape charge that penetrates armored vehicles

EJK- Extra Judicial Killings

ERV- Euphrates River Valley

FOB-Forward Operating Bases

GEN- General (4-Star)(US Army)

GoI- Government of Iraq

IDF- Indirect Fire Attacks

ISF- Iraqi Security Forces (all Iraqi Army and Police)

ISSR-Iraqi Security Self-Reliance

JAM- Jaysh Al Mahdi- the militia of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al Sadr

JTF- Joint Task Force

LOC- Lines of Communication

LTG- Lieutenant General (3-Star)(US Army)

MG- Major General (US Army)

MiTT- Military Transition Team

MND-B- Multi-National Division Baghdad

MND-N- Multi-National Division North

MNF-I- Multi National Force-Iraq- The US Led 4 Star Headquarters in Iraq 2004-2009.

MNF-W- Multi-National Force-West-The primarily USMC Headquarters in Western Iraq

MNSTC-I Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq- The US led three star headquarters responsible for developing the Iraqi security forces.

NPTT-National Police Transition Team

OIF-Operation Iraqi Freedom

ORHA-Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance

PIC-Provincial Iraqi Control

RoL-Rule of Law

SCIRI- Supreme Council Islamic Revolution in Iraq

SECDEF-Secretary of Defense (United States)

SOE- State Owned Enterprise- Vestiges of the Socialized government of the Baathist regime, these are businesses that were owned by the government that produces some kind of consumer goods

SVBIED- Suicide Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device- A Car Bomb driven (willingly, or not) by a person

SVTC-Secure (Secret or above) Video Teleconference

TRV-Tigris River Valley

USCENTCOM- United States Central Command

USG- US Government

VBIED- Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device- A Car Bomb

VTC- Video Teleconference

WMD-Weapons of Mass Destruction

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

For the past several years, the joint force labored hard to analyze the American experience in Iraq and to posit specific lessons to shape and define the Joint Force concepts and structure of the future. [1] This effort is constantly challenged by emotional, ideological baggage and political liability associated with Iraq, and by a popular contemporary narrative that the event was an unmitigated disaster to be best forgotten quickly. Military school libraries are stuffed with shelves full of books about Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) that consistently claim there was no plan for the post conflict stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq.[2] This view must be challenged in the light of day in order to extract critical lessons in post conflict stabilization and enabling civil authority (Phases IV and V) campaign design, if for nothing else than possibly recognizing "what not to do."[3] This work is valuable and timely as long as it is reasonable that the United States, in pursuit of its strategic interests, will likely be involved in stability and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the future.

Despite a current "air of aversion"[4] to most stability and COIN discussions, the

[1] Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA). *Decade of War, Volume I Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations*, (Suffolk, VA: J-7 Joint Staff, 2012).

[2] Of these, consider Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006), 75-81, and Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 18.

[3] Joint doctrine divides campaigns into phases, in which "a large portion of the forces and capabilities are involved in similar or mutually supporting activities for a common purpose." U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operations (JP 3-0)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), V-5. Doctrine defines 6 phases for Joint Campaigns: Phase O(Shape), Phase I (Deter), Phase II (Seize Initiative), Phase III (Dominate), Phase IV (Stabilize), Phase V (Enable Civil Authority).

[4] U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012), 4. Specifically, the discussion on "no longer sizing active forces based on

thrust lines of multiple strategic trends seem to indicate that stability and COIN, in scales from small to large, will remain a part of the range of military operations for the foreseeable future. The combination of urbanization, food and water shortages, and increasing disruptive technology trends[5] paints a future operating environment where joint forces will operate in mega-cities with failing infrastructure and technologically hyper-empowered individuals capable of strategic effect.[6] Authoritarian regimes that are either currently equipped with or are actively pursuing weapons of mass destruction often teeter on demographic or economic collapse, thereby creating near-instantaneous, large-scale stability requirements, with little choice in involvement, and with few remaining capable partners to assist.[7] In these future strategic conditions, stability and counterinsurgency operations remain essential to secure our nation's interests, restore regional stability, and to avoid humanitarian crisis at massive scales. The need for stability and COIN will always be with us, and the current trends of technology and lethality indicate that future Phase IV/V operations will confound our current joint capabilities through anti-access and area denial approaches that impair the ability of joint forces to project, respond, and achieve decisive, enduring results.[8]

Many of these alarming future trends began to germinate on the battlefields of

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large protracted stability operations." The first question this brings out is there such a thing as small and brief stability and COIN operations.

[5] National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, (Washington, DC: Director of National Intelligence, 2012), ii.

[6] This is a synthesis of multiple future operational environment assessments, specifically Lee Howell, ed. *Global Risks 2013, 8th Edition.* Report. (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2013) and Robert A. Manning, *Envisioning 2030: US Strategy for a Post-Western World,* Strategy Paper, (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2012) and U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) *Operational Environments to 2028: The Strategic Environment for Unified Land Operations,* (Fort Eustis, VA: United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2012).

[7] The best examples of this the potential north Korea and Iran Futures. See Bruce W. Bennett and Jennifer Lind, "The Collapse of North Korea: Military Missions and Requirements," *International Security*, 36, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 84–119, for an in-depth analysis of the challenges in a north Korea collapse.

[8] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Access Concept,* Concept Paper, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012), 8.

Iraq. As memories fade and emotion subsides, reflection and learning begins to grow in the space left behind, as it has in previous experiences in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. However, based on the current real challenges of the operating environment, the riddle of how to design effective Phase IV/V operations may not wait for a decent interval of reflection. An analysis of Operation Iraqi Freedom offers practical planning lessons, transferable insights, and tools for evaluating operational design in stability and counterinsurgency operations that can guide joint planners through the challenges of the future strategic operating environment.

Why is operational design so critical to joint planners? Operational design is the foundational "big idea" to any operational plan. It establishes the context and approach for use of military force and it informs the use of the other elements of national power. According to joint doctrine, design is "the conception and construction of a framework that underpins a campaign."[9] Practitioners of operational art, in developing a concept of operations, first construct a conceptual model of all dynamic system relationships in opposition to friendly objectives, and then attempt to map interrelationships within these systems. Using this emerging mental model of the operational environment, they relate elements of operational design to develop a theory of action and a framework for synchronizing military and non-military actions to influence systems to their desired end state. This framework is so important to the success of operations that joint doctrine specifically prescribes a role for the joint force commander as the senior practitioner of operational art, assisted by his planning staff.[10] The development of the skills necessary to conduct operational design is the essence of operational art, and is critical to the

[9] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-2-3.

[10] Ibid., II-3-4.

success of joint planners and joint operations. The challenge is often closing the gap between the art and science of operational design, and providing practical "hand rails" to guide planners in a world of "wicked problems." Without operational design, campaign plans would sound like a cacophony of noise, rather than a coherent symphony of actions, led by a skilled conductor in the joint force commander, that produces unified action and prudent results.

The purpose of this study is to provide a practical guide for future joint planners engaged in post major combat operations campaign planning, and to propose tools to evaluate the environment and operational designs before and during execution. Based on the Iraq experience, this study attempts to maintain a broad enough perspective of the events to gain specific insights into the planning challenges and conditions in which the key leaders made decisions that were critical to the outcomes of the campaign. The methodology chooses a detailed analysis of a single case study instead of cursory analysis of multiple case studies, and attempts to consider the full range of influences on design.[11] Through interpreting the conceptual models used in the OIF Phase IV/V design, and relating the elements of operational design, we gain insights into the theory of action which underpinned the design. Though no sure-fire cookie-cutter solutions are advanced, analysis of the OIF framework yields readily transferrable insights to someone who is planning or evaluating similar operations in the future. The experience gained from this analysis may be decisive in achieving future success in Phase IV sooner and, hopefully, with less sacrifice in blood and treasure.

[11] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz: A New Approach to On War*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 100-105. Jon Sumida's analysis of Clausewitz's *On War* emphasizes in depth analysis of a single case vice a broader based cursory analysis of many cases.

The analysis proceeds along the following methodology: examination begins with the strategic context and pre-invasion Phase IV planning through execution to the surge of 2007; then continues with a consideration of commanders and their role in framing operational problems and how the operational approach emerges to guide follow on course of action development. The analysis then considers the "Surge" of 2007 and addresses effectiveness and transferability to other contingencies. The analysis then advances a theory for evaluating operational design using the framework established from the case. It concludes with recommendations for structural and doctrinal changes that incorporate the lessons learned from the case analysis.

This analytical approach makes a conscious decision to scope the exploration by avoiding detailed discussions of aspects of the Iraq case not fully germane to the purpose of the effort. To isolate this case study from a shift in national policy or strategy, this paper focuses on the period of the Bush Presidency. Based on the numerous differences between the environments and underlying reasons for each contingency, few comparisons are made with the Afghanistan experience as a potential alternative. Analysis of key players is deliberately brief, and there is minimal subjective evaluation of their Iraq performance through their success in follow-on appointments. Finally, there is no discussion of the inherent value of design theory and whether or not viable alternatives exist. This approach is based on the promulgation and implementation of design, as it exists in current joint doctrine.

The analytical treatment chooses as its metaphorical trope the epic *Aeneid* of Vergil for several reasons. In 29 AD, Vergil was commissioned by Augustus, a great patron of the arts, to write an epic that would indirectly restore historical Roman values to

a culture torn by civil wars and power struggle. The election of George W. Bush in 2000 somewhat reflected, albeit by slim margin, a similar American desire to return to a Reagan-like era of American exceptionalism and leadership in a world full of tyrants and bad men. Aeneas, destined to found a great civilization in Rome, survives the sacking of Troy, carrying his father, representing the past, and leading his son, representing the future, on a mule. His quest takes him at great sacrifice and in no way directly to where the gods have directed him to arrive. George W. Bush arrived in the White House carrying the legacy of his father, George H.W. Bush and looking ahead toward challenges of a post-9/11 world, where his faith and God had directed him to arrive. The emphasis of fate and timeless values harkens to the conservative idealism that underpinned both his domestic and foreign policy alike, with America as a "shining city on a hill." Vergil embeds an enigmatic scene in Book VI, the most important book of the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas journeys to the underworld beyond the river Styx in order to receive counsel from his departed father, and most importantly, learn about his future. Aeneas is presented with a pageant of heroes of his future descendants that reinforces the value of his quest, but in departing the underworld, Aeneas is forced to choose between the Gate of Horn, which provided true vision and the Ivory Gate, which yielded delusions. Vergil has Aeneas exit through the Ivory Gate, which calls into question the truth of the entire Roman culture. In the Iraq experience, the United States found itself in a similar position as Aeneas, and also chose to exit through the Ivory gate, driven by visions of a world recreated. The purpose of this exploration and analysis is to guide our steps in the future through "our" own Gate of Horn.[12]

[12] Elizabeth Vandiver, *The Aeneid of Virgil: Course Guidebook*, (Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses, 1999), 11-14, 29-37. I am greatly indebted to Professor Vandiver's lecture and guidebook on the

*Aeneid* of Virgil.

# CHAPTER 2

## Strategic Context-What strategic direction and framework underpinned U.S. actions in Iraq?

Operational Design occurs in the context of national strategic policy, which is framed in varying degrees by the prevailing theory of international relations of the President, key cabinet personalities and their relationship to the President, the strategic culture and finally, domestic consensus. U.S. joint military campaigns are planned and executed to achieve objectives which lead to military end states in cooperation with larger national strategic end states, all driven by the national strategic policy interests at stake. For an operational design to be effective, it must be consistent with policy and strategy, but it is also dependent on the coherence of the military strategic concept, and the relative balance of ends, ways means and risk.[1] Though it is difficult to prove through logical argument, shortfalls in the military strategic concept cannot be mitigated through an operational design. In order to fully understand the operational design used for Iraqi Freedom, it is necessary to understand the strategic policy context for the decisions to invade, occupy and stabilize Iraq, in terms of the broader strategic goals for the region and the world.

Iraq became a critical foreign policy issue after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, when the world emerged from its Cold War bipolar strategic relationship, and the

[1] Arthur F. Lykee, "Chapter 13: Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy," *The U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy* edited by Joseph Cerami and James F. Holcomb, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), 181-182. Lykee's article provides a comprehensive explanation of ends, ways, means and risk in this respect.

U.S. struggled to develop a new *central strategic paradigm*.[2] Dr. Steven Metz, an Army War College professor and frequent writer on strategy and policy, argues that "strategic paradigms" are a mechanism for managing security problems through "resemblance to previous or parallel ones, and what worked and did not work in the past" heavily influences policy in the present.[3] When America lacks a central strategic paradigm, it tends toward "astrategic meandering and ad hocery."[4] Metz continues his argument that post Cold-War, Iraq was elevated to a central strategic paradigm through its strategic location, the actions of its leader, Saddam Hussein, and the absence of a comparable strategic threat. American actions in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, followed by permanent patrolling of "no-fly zones," multiple return deployments, and enduring diplomatic sanctions from 1992-1998, generally elevated Iraq as a strategic successor to the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union, and the new U.S. central strategic paradigm. Ten years of diplomatic and military actions had failed to shape Iraq into a range of acceptable outcomes, and placed Iraq at the top of the list of issues for new President George W. Bush in 2001. This occurred despite the fact that Iraq policy was not an important issue during the 2000 presidential election.

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[2] Steven Metz, *Iraq & The Evolution of American Strategy*, (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008), xxi. The idea of central strategic paradigm is also remarkably consistent with Roland Paris, "Kosovo and the Metaphor War." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 199-232. This article develops an idea of "metaphor war" in which policy makers seek to explain actions through historical comparisons of "crisis." Metz's idea is also consistent with Allison's "Organizational Behavior Model" which argues that policy at the governmental level is just as much an output of standard patterns of behavior of large organizations. Graham Allison, and Phillip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. 2nd Edition. (New York, NY: Addison, Wesley, Longman, Inc., 1999), 143.

[3] Ibid., xx.

[4] Ibid., xxi. The strategic relevance of the Persian Gulf region was established in the Carter Doctrine of January 1980, which ironically was a response to the Soviet move into Afghanistan. The role of the Middle East in US foreign policy and the rising concern over the threat of Iraq in the Cold War (a Soviet aligned country) is developed in considerable detail in James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, (New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 2004), *passim*.

Presidential candidate George W. Bush campaigned on a platform that was extremely critical of the Clinton administration's *international institutionalism* approach to security, specifically of its emphasis on shaping the security environment through participation in multi-national peacekeeping.[5] Despite American reluctance to long-term peacekeeping efforts, President Clinton had initially committed to a six month, then indefinite, stabilization and peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans and in Kosovo, following the NATO Allied Force campaign against Serbia. Analysts criticized these efforts as "foreign policy social work,"[6] and warned that taking sides in complex regional struggles in poorly understood cultures was a bad idea.[7] By the election of 2000, America had been involved in Bosnia for 6 years, and in Kosovo for another 2 years. Candidate George W. Bush's criticism of Clinton policies rang clear for many American voters, expressing a strategic fatigue to nation-building policies and approaches of the Clinton administration. Governor Bush, in a 1999 speech at the Citadel, blamed Clinton for "sending our military on vague, aimless, and endless deployments."[8] As President, he pledged to "replace uncertain missions with well-defined objectives" and to "begin

[5] Ibid., 63. International Institutionalism views world politics as "a cultivable garden" in contrast to the realist view of global "jungle." Theory emphasizes both the possibility and the value of reducing the chances of war and of achieving common interests sufficiently for the international system to be one of world order. Bruce W. Jentleson, *American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century,* 2nd ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), 16-17.

[6] Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no.1 (Jan-Feb 1996), 16-32. "The seminal events of the foreign policy of the Clinton administration were three failed military interventions in its first nine months in office: the announced intention, then failure, to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia's Muslims and bomb the Bosnian Serbs in May 1993; the deaths of 18 U.S. Army rangers at the hands of a mob in Mogadishu, Somalia, on October 3; and the turning back of a ship carrying military trainers in response to demonstrations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on October 12. Together they set the tone and established much of the agenda of the foreign policy of the United States from 1993 through 1995… Polls consistently showed that the administration's foreign policy performance was held in low esteem by the American public. The same polls showed that, in the public's ranking of issues important to the country, those having to do with foreign policy were consistently at the bottom."

[7] Richard K. Betts, "The Delusion of Impartial Intervention," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 6 (November-December 1994): 78-84.

[8] George W. Bush, "A Period of Consequences" Address to the Citadel, Charleston, SC, September 23, 1999, http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/program/news99/92399_defense.htm (accessed April 22, 2014), 3.

creating the military of the next century."[9] Bush promised strategic policy adjustments and a sea change to America's approach to the world.

One of President George W. Bush's key early decisions was to nominate Donald Rumsfeld as the 21st Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). Don Rumsfeld was a successful businessman, Navy fighter pilot, diplomat, politician (serving 4 terms in the House of Representatives) and the 13th SECDEF under then President Gerald Ford. Secretary Rumsfeld's approach to his position was shaped by two consistent themes.

> First, was his solid belief in civilian control of the uniformed services, which manifested itself in a "disinclination to defer to uniformed military" on any subject. Second, was his commitment to "transformation" defined in terms of speed, agility and jointness which presumably determined battlefield success. Anything not in these lanes was not "transformational"… therefore, not funded. [10]

As President George W. Bush began his term in 2001, it was difficult to discern what his predisposition toward foreign policy would be; as a former Governor for Texas he personally had very little experience in these matters. His father, President George H.W. Bush, with a lifetime of foreign policy experience, was characterized as a realist (a school of international relations that prioritizes national interest and security over ideology). Multiple members of the new President's cabinet, some veterans of the H.W Bush cabinet, were considered realists as well, specifically; Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor; Colin Powell, Secretary of State; Donald Rumsfeld Secretary of Defense, and Vice President Dick Cheney. Perhaps the sole "idealist" (a school of international relations who believe that the U.S. should make its internal political philosophy the goal of its foreign policy) was Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul

[9] Ibid., 4.

[10] Steven Metz, *Iraq & The Evolution of American Strategy*, (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008), 88. See also David Cloud and Greg Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2009), 108-109.

Wolfowitz.[11] The events of 9/11 shook this core group and shocked the President, convincing him that conservative realism was inadequate for confronting the threat posed by Al Qaeda.[12] Literally overnight, President Bush's disposition and policies shifted to a "conservative idealism," or neo-conservatism; a political philosophy which supports using American economic and military power to bring liberalism, democracy and human rights to other countries. Neo-conservatives framed events in such a way that the United States was called again in a battle of good against evil, liberty versus tyranny and similar to the words of Ronald Reagan, "freedom will eventually triumph over tyranny…the beacon of freedom shines here for all who will see."[13] This was the platform to appeal to the American audience who understood these terms, and the narrative resounded deeply in most Americans who had lived through the Cold War and witnessed America emerge victorious. The President's moral arguments resounded poorly in Islamic cultures, who did not share the same cultural perspective and experience. These prevailing views of the key decision-makers in the Bush White House would frame the ideas and conditions in which planners would develop a military campaign for Iraq.

Dr. Steven Metz summarized President George W. Bush's understanding of the strategic picture and approach:

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[11] Ibid., 79. Metz's assertion on the ideological underpinnings of key Bush cabinet members is challenged in James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet,* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 2004), 38-51. Mann's analysis draws a more comprehensive picture of Cheney and Rumsfeld, asserting that viewing them as realists by their association with the Nixon presidency misses the point that Rumsfeld and Cheney through active and passive measures, brought about the Kissinger decline in political power that he had amassed under Nixon. Wolfowitz's credentials in the neoconservative/idealist camp are impeccable, having studied under the icons of the movement in Leo Strauss, Albert Wohlstetter and Fred Ikle.

[12] Ibid., 80.

[13] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Bicentennial Observance of the Battle of Yorktown" Presidential address at Yorktown, VA, October 19, 1981, http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1981/101981a.htm (accessed April 22, 2014). This line of argument is also consistent with Roland Paris, "Kosovo and the Metaphor War." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (Autumn 2002), 199-232, specifically in the idea of "metaphor war."

> Bush's strategy for defeating the threat of terrorism sought to undercut the factors that allowed the evil to misguide others into supporting them. In a free market of political ideas, the Bush administration assumed that most people would opt for peaceful solutions and moderate policies not violence and extremism. Terrorism emerged from dysfunctional markets-from the absence of political freedom…America's role as promoter of freedom legitimizes its exercise of power. After September 11, his America was unbound.[14]

The second big policy innovation was the melding of terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The events of 9/11 amplified Americans concerns for security, and when the specter of WMD was imagined in the context of the 9/11 attacks, a genuine fear resonated in the hearts of many Americans. These were genuine concerns that required action. Furthermore, the concept of *preemptive action*, was now, for many Americans, completely justified.[15] It was generally assumed that Al Qaeda would not be able to operate, nor attain WMD, without state sponsors. State sponsors could use transnational terrorism, equipped with WMD, to counterbalance American military strength and render it irrelevant, especially when no actions were taken.[16]

It was in this context that the eyes turned toward the "central strategic paradigm" of Iraq, where a case had to be made to the American people, and the United Nations, that Iraq was a clear case of evil tyrannizing the good and decent people of Iraq. The threat of this "evil" armed with WMD, represented a clear and present danger to the "People of the United States" and therefore, preemptive action was justified. Saddam Hussein, the "evil" had to be deposed in order for a new Iraq to emerge, where terrorism would not

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[14] Steven Metz, *Iraq & The Evolution of American Strategy,* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008), 84. The use of the word "unbound" is a bridge to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, "By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded, " as well as the Aeschylus tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, in its character's commitment to resist tyranny.

[15] Preemptive Attacks are based on the belief that the adversary is about to attack, and that striking first will be better than allowing the enemy to do so. See Karl P. Mueller, Jasen J Castillo, Forrest E Morgan, Negeen Pegahi, and Brian Rosen. *Striking First: Premptive and Preventive Attack in US National Security Policy,* Project Air Force Study, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), xi.

[16] Ibid., 85. See also Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism,* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008), 181-212 for Feith's detailed argument for US action in Iraq.

flower, and a beacon of democracy could shine in a region. Once the Taliban were defeated in Afghanistan, opportunity to act on Iraq came into view. It was this opportunity and the emboldening experience of the "Afghan model" that contributed to the President's directive to Secretary Rumsfeld to prepare plans for seizing Iraq's southern oil fields in the fall of 2001. These plans were later expanded under the direction of the President and Secretary Rumsfeld to enact regime change in Iraq. General Tommy Franks presented an initial Commander's Estimate in late November of 2001 heavily influenced by the off the shelf 1003-98 OPLAN. Iterations of plans would continue through 2002 until early 2003, when a final plan (1003V) was completed for Operation Iraqi Freedom. These plans were the direct military "operationalization" of the policy direction established by the National Security Strategy to eliminate the threat represented by Saddam Hussein.

The strategic guidance for the Iraq design contained numerous stated and unstated assumptions that rationalized the strategy for the invasion and post conflict stabilization. First, containment and deterrence already ran their course and would not solve the Iraq problem, so preemptive invasion became the only option available.[17] Today, in retrospect, it may be easy to argue that the American decision to invade Iraq was ill-advised, but far less substantive argument over what should have been done given that years of containment and deterrence had netted little strategic success, and had only strengthened Saddam Hussein's hold on power. Dr. Metz's assessment of the 1990s US and Iraq relationship is compelling when he argues that the techniques employed in

[17] Ibid., 87. It is also important to consider the influence of key emerging concepts of "Rapid Decisive Operations," U.S. Joint Forces Command J9 Joint Futures Lab, *Coordinating Draft A Concept for Rapid Decisive Operations*, (Suffolk, VA: U.S. Joint Forces Command, 2002) and the enormous investments of the services in network capability in providing the "means" for such an endeavor.

coercing Slobodan Milosevic did not work against the determined and ruthless Saddam Hussein, as "force only acts as a multiplier to diplomacy when the United States is willing to surpass the pain tolerance of its opponent."[18] The same containment dilemma which presented itself to the United States at the close of the 1990-91 Gulf War, still presented itself in 2002. The strategic methodology that represented the *deus ex machina* was a lightning invasion, rapid and decisive, which bridged to a new world order, in which the introduction of Iraqi democracy would be the long term fix.[19] The flaws of this approach are obvious in hindsight, but near impossible to argue prior to the invasion, especially in light of the apparent successful Afghanistan experience at that time. No transitional military government rushed to replace the Taliban deposed by the actions of Operation Enduring Freedom, and this emboldened the administration to use the theory to resolve the Iraq dilemma.

The second assumption was that removal of the Saddam Hussein regime would open the door to a "broad based, credible provisional government." This provisional government would emerge without a great exertion from the US, and would rapidly provide the Iraqi governance, security and rule of law capacity necessary for success in post-invasion Iraq.[20] Today, the assessment of the validity of this assumption being true is extremely low, but this assumption so dominated Phase IV/V operational design that it

[18] Ibid., 72. In exploring this line of argument of the limits of containment, it is relevant to consider John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of National Security Policy During the Cold War,* Revised and Updated Edition, (New York, NY: Oxford, 2005), 81. Specifically in Gaddis' work on defining conditions when containment begins to break down.

[19] Consider Natan Sharansky and Ron Dermer, *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004) 96-143. This book lays out the model argument for the philosophical underpinnings to this approach. A *deus ex machina* (Latin: "god from the machine") is a person or thing (as in fiction or drama) that appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly and provides an artificial, contrived solution to an apparently insoluble difficulty.

[20] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq,* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006), 503-04.

makes objective evaluation of the effort very difficult. The key conclusion that we draw from the analysis is the merit of an operational design can be found in its durability to rapidly adapt when framing assumptions prove invalid. In doctrine, planners use branches, which "add flexibility to plans by anticipating situations that could alter the basic plan,"[21] and sequels which "represent a transition from one solution to an operational problem to another.[22] An effective operational design must have a robust framework to manage situations which lie outside the original assumption frame if it is to remain viable in the fog and friction of war. This issue will be expanded in the next section.

In summary, the strategic direction and framework which underpinned the US actions in Iraq was dominated by the search for a long term solution to the Iraq central strategic paradigm through the promise of conservative idealism leveraging man's fundamental desire for freedom. The threat of an Iraq armed with WMD and with the desire to pass this on to terrorists in light of 9/11 made the case for US preemptive action, or invasion. The extension of the Afghan model of broad-based provisional government further justified the case for action by removing the onerous threat of long term stabilization tasks. The analysis of the strategic framework drives conclusions that durable operational designs address the full range of stated and unstated assumptions, and provide adequate branches and sequels for options. Greater understanding of the Phase IV Iraq effort is necessary to further understand and evaluate the operational design and approaches that were used.

[21] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-36-37.

[22]James J. Schneider, *The Theory of Operational Art.* Theoretical Paper. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College School for Advanced Military Studies, 1988), 44.

# CHAPTER 3

## Phase IV Planning and Execution: What went wrong with Phase IV?

Three fundamental conditions underpinned the Phase IV planning prior to OIF that confounded efforts and obscured the primary issues to be solved: ill-fitting, insufficient, dated joint doctrine; ambiguous post-conflict responsibility within the U.S. Government and iterative planning fatigue. In 2001, joint doctrine divided campaigns into four phases: Phase I-Deter/Engage, Phase II-Seize the Initiative, Phase III-Decisive Operations and Phase IV-Transition. The 2001 version of JP 3-0 defined Phase IV:

> …critical to military campaigns because it is during this period that military success is used to finalize the achievement of the national goals that serve as the overall objectives of the campaigns. This meant that Phase IV often focused on the establishment of law and order, economic reconstruction, and civilian self-government, and redeployment of most or all of military forces out of the area of operations.[1]

The planning efforts for OIF Phase IV were generally consistent with a doctrine that was overly fixated on the Desert Storm post-conflict experience. USCENTCOM struggled to develop a viable post conflict plan in 1990, and would face many of the same conditions in 2002, but in 1991, things had worked

[1] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operations (JP 3-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2001), III-1-21. It is interesting to consider how influential the US experience in Desert Storm drove Joint doctrine to consider that all future conflict would terminate under the same types of conditions. Consider the United States Army's official history of post conflict Kuwait, Janet A. McDonnell, *After the Storm: The US Army and Reconstruction of Kuwait,* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1999), as a logical foundation for the Joint doctrine of the era. It is also interesting to consider the differences in brute force political objectives and coercive political objectives in their post conflict consequences. See Patricia L. Sullivan, "War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 3 (June 2007), 504-509.

out in the afterglow of Desert Storm success.[2] The conclusion of Desert Storm was dominated by very visible rapid redeployment and victory parades. Far less visible were the security issues associated with Saddam Hussein's reprisals for the Shia and Kurd uprisings, no-fly zones implementation and reconstruction efforts led by a country with enormous cash reserves and no question of who was in charge. The conditions of post-conflict OIF Iraq would not resemble the Kuwait experience, and planners had to seek analogies in the more frightening and remote post World War II occupation conditions of Germany and Japan.

The ambiguity of responsibility was layered on top of this doctrinal shortfall. General Franks told his component commanders in August of 2002, seven months before the invasion, that the US Department of State (DOS) would take the lead in planning post-conflict Iraq.[3] Today this seems quixotic, but there is some historical precedent to underpin General Frank's assertion. The occupation of Germany after World War II (Operation ECLIPSE) assumed that the DOS would take over the responsibility and planning required for civil government, with military government as a temporary expedient.[4] The challenge

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[2] Janet A. McDonnell, *After the Storm: The US Army and Reconstruction of Kuwait,* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1999), 47-48.

[3]Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq,* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006), 138. See also declassified briefing products from POLO STEP at National Security Archive, "TOP SECRET POLO STEP" *The National Security Archive,* http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/index.htm (accessed April 22, 2014).

[4] Kenneth O. McCreedy, *Waging Peace: Operations Eclipse I and II-Some Implications for Future Operations,* Monograph, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004), 4. This brief monograph builds off of significant earlier work done by McCreedy on ECLIPSE. Use of the term "occupation" will almost always bring forward the metaphor of occupation of Germany in post World War II. "When the shooting ended, the divisions in the field became the occupation troops, charged with maintaining law and order and establishing the Allied military presence in the defeated nation…its object was to control the population and stifle resistance by putting troops in every nook and cranny." Earl F. Ziemke, *The US Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-1946,* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1975), 320.

of wrestling with a post-Saddam Hussein world had confounded USCENTCOM since the end of DESERT STORM, when coalition objectives had been deliberately scaled back to avoid the problem.[5] In 1999, General Anthony Zinni, Frank's predecessor, conducted a classified wargame (DESERT CROSSING) that considered a sudden collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime and its immediate humanitarian crisis, but not the creation of a new Iraqi government.[6] In the fall of 2002, the Joint Staff conducted its own post-conflict wargame, (PROMINENT HAMMER II) which identified the immense challenge of planning Phase III and IV simultaneously and recommended the creation of a new headquarters responsible for Iraq after Saddam's removal. These insights were consolidated in a Joint Staff concept plan that recommended a US Ambassador in Iraq and a three star US General, with interagency and subject matter expert support, to lead a transition to an interim Iraqi government.[7] This headquarters was a means to relieve USCENTCOM planners from some of the post-war burden, and offset USCENTCOM's exclusive fixation on Phase III. In October of 2002, the Joint Staff briefed Secretary Rumsfeld, who directed the following changes:

- DOD would lead all postwar efforts (References to the State Department were deleted from organizational charts.)

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[5] Steven Metz, *Iraq & The Evolution of American Strategy*, (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008), 41. See also Gideon Rose, *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 216-219 for an analysis of decision process for avoiding regime change in 1991.

[6] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006), 139. General Zinni's efforts were largely unused during the post invasion planning, based on GEN Zinni's comments in the text, and confirmed in discussions with General Zinni concluding the Society for Military History Conference, April 2014. General Zinni's commented that work done during his tenure was essentially off limits and he was not to be consulted during the pre-invasion planning. The briefing slides for the after action review of the DESERT CROSSING Seminar of 22 July 1999 are available online at http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB207/index.htm.

[7] Ibid., 140.

- New headquarters would consist of two entities a civilian administrator to oversee reconstruction and governance (initially designated as Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance-ORHA)[8] and a US military commander responsible for security and retraining the Iraqi military.[9]

President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 24, in January of 2003, formally tasking DOD with primacy in the post-invasion efforts in Iraq, consistent with Secretary Rumsfeld's recommendations. This document also created ORHA, under retired Army Lieutenant General (LTG) Jay Garner, to serve as a Pentagon lead for managing post conflict Iraq and to deploy to Iraq once the invasion began.[10] Later that month USCENTCOM created Joint Task Force IV (JTF IV), under Brigadier General (BG) Steve Hawkins, to help design and provide the nucleus of a new follow-on headquarters, Combined Joint Task Force Iraq (CJTF-I), and eventually fill the US Military Commander responsibility. JTF IV never gained the traction necessary to relieve USCENTCOM of the responsibility for planning and executing Phase IV, based on its relatively small size, and general unwillingness to question post conflict conditions established by USCENTCOM. JTF IV was disbanded by USCENTCOM based on later decisions of post-conflict responsibilities, and its duties absorbed by Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) and

[8] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 294. ORHA's goals were to ensure law and order and restoration of basic services, and to begin the process of putting Iraq back on the road to political and socioeconomic rehabilitation. Since ORHA was formed on 20 January 2003 and the invasion took place in March 2003, planning for postwar Iraq was nothing compared to the 2 ½ years of planning for European and Pacific occupations in World War II.

[9] Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 141.

[10] Catherine Dale, *Operation Iraq Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress,* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 39. Dale's work provides the most in depth factual laydown of ORHA's effort to prepare for the invasion and post conflict.

eventually CJTF-7, the follow on headquarters once the CFLCC redeployed. LTG David McKiernan, the CFLCC Commander in Kuwait responsible for all land forces in Iraq once the invasion began, understood that for at least a time period, he was the military governor of Iraq and directed his planning staff to develop robust Phase IV operations for the CFLCC's supporting plan for 1003V, called COBRA II.[11] The ambiguity of direct responsibility for the post conflict reconstruction was a multiplier to the short-sighted doctrine and, at a crucial point in preparation, marginalized the necessary work toward Phase IV.

The iterative concepts for Phases I-III generated planner fatigue and frustration, which confounded and further marginalized planning efforts for Phase IV. The invasion plan evolved through four iterations starting in September 2001 and continuing through March 2003, each plan had markedly different approaches ranging from a small scale attack to secure the southern oil fields, through the "generated start" option, and finally to two "running start" options.[12] The primary differentiation in these planning efforts was in how much force structure was in

[11] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, *U.S. Army Stability Operations Field Manual (FM 3-07)*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), 2-13. This reference is *ex post facto*, but reflects the understanding in current Army doctrine of a responsibility for "…transitional military authority" as an interim solution until a new sovereign authority emerges. A transitional military authority is a temporary military government exercising the functions of civil administration in the absence of a legitimate civil authority." (para 5-8). International law…determines whether a state is an occupying power triggering the occupation rights and responsibilities. Occupation occurs when territory is actually under the authority of a power, and generally follows the cessation of hostilities in the occupied territory. Occupation is a question of fact based on the ability of the occupying power to render the occupied government incapable of exercising public authority or, in the absence of a local government, an ungoverned area U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Civil Military Operations (JP 3-57)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2008), I-4. Colonel Benson detailed the direction received from LTG McKiernan in his *Military Review* article, Kevin C.M. Benson, "OIF Phase IV: A Planners Reply to Brigadier Aylwin-Foster," *Military Review* (March-April 2006): 65-66.

[12] Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese. *On Point II Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom May 2003-January 2005*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 69. See also Gregory Fontenot, E.J Degen, and David Tohn. *On Point The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom through May 2003,* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 44 for a discussion of plan iterations.

place when combat operations began. Phase IV planning that nested to the "generated start" plan presented the most options to execute in the post invasion, based on the amount of force structure that would be in position in theater at the start of the invasion. The running start plan accepted the most risk for Phase IV and presented the least number of options for follow on stabilization. As each major change in the invasion plan was adapted, Phase IV planning efforts often started over with "clean white paper."[13]

In summary, despite all the post conflict lessons learned from World War II, the Gulf War of 1990-91, and the decade of experience in the Balkans, USCENTCOM was never capable of the same level of effort in planning Phase IV as they devoted to planning Phases I-III. Very similar to Aeneid, the planning enterprise had "lost its way in Carthage" before addressing the real issues, or specifically, the three challenges that must be addressed in order to execute a coherent phase IV plan. The first challenge is defining what the world looks like at the end of Phase III. The second challenge is transitioning the Phase IV plan to execution. Finally, the third challenge is deciding when to change the plan based on the conditions that emerge in the environment. Only in the quality of their responses to these challenges could USCENTCOM avoid disaster.

***Challenge #1. What does the world look like at the end of Phase III? Establishing and Evaluating Phase IV assumptions.***

[13] This is a synthesis of Kevin C.M. Benson, "OIF Phase IV: A Planners Reply to Brigadier Aylwin-Foster," *Military Review* (March-April 2006): 65-66, and the author's personal experience at the CFLCC Headquarters from November 2001, through March 2003.

The first of the three main challenges of planning Phase IV is adequately projecting the end conditions established by Phase III. Planners traditionally seek to quantify critical variables through framing assumptions, and this is true in the case of the CFLCC for OIF Phase IV. COL Kevin Benson, the CFLCC C5, developed the assumptions for the CFLCC Phase IV plan (named ECLIPSE II in honor of the stabilization plan for Nazi Germany ECLIPSE) based on the planning team's projections of Phase III conditions and the USCENTCOM assumptions, viewed as facts, from the CFLCC's view, as USCENTCOM subordinates:[14]

- There will be asymmetric threats to CFLCC Stability operations (Saddam Loyalists, etc but overall risk of insurgency was considered low)[15]
- Other elements of US Government (Dept of Energy, Justice) would reinforce military efforts
- US forces committed to OIF 1003V plan would continue to flow after major combat operations ceased
- The bulk of the Iraqi Army would be recalled to duty at some point[16]

[14] USCENTCOM's assumptions for the Generated Start planning effort are available at National Security Archive, "TOP SECRET POLO STEP" *The National Security Archive,* http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/index.htm (accessed April 22, 2014). The practice of accepting a higher headquarters' assumptions as facts (in absence of direct contradicting evidence) is fairly controversial. Skepticism of the higher headquarters' assumptions can be viewed in one extreme as disloyalty and insubordination; in the other, merely as prudent, necessary planning for viable possibilities. In the case of OIF, USCENTCOM assumptions were to be taken as fact, and questioning them fell to the latter. It can be safely stated that requests for resources (joint capabilities) to hedge the failure of USCENTCOM assumptions would have been denied. The burden of proof was laid upon the subordinate, and the argument would have to extend beyond the shadow of a doubt, in a situation where direct access to the intelligence sources necessary was much closer to USCENTCOM than its subordinates. This is summary of the author's experience while assigned to the CFLCC from November 2001-March 2003.

[15] The logic of this assumption was thoroughly questioned in Richard H. Shultz Jr. & Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias The Warriors of Contemporary Combat,* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 199-256 and convincingly invalidated through detailed analysis of Iraq/Bedouin history and culture.

- Coalition would be able to recall the Iraqi Governmental bureaucracy
- Removal of Ba'ath party members would be limited to senior-level bureaucrats and officers.[17]

The quality of the plan's framing assumptions could be found in simply evaluating how the plan unfolded, then judging the assumptions based on how close they were to fact. This method is not helpful for operational planners, who are far more concerned with what will happen versus what did happen. A methodology for *establishing* and *evaluating* assumptions is essential to justify Phase III ending conditions, and enable Phase IV planning to begin without waiting for Phase III planning to end. The key is recognizing the fundamental change of operational problems, from defeat of a conventional force/regime change to establishing the stability necessary for Phase IV.

The first task in establishing assumptions for Phase IV begins with the understanding that there is a difference between termination, the end of Phase III, and conflict resolution, which defines the end of Phases IV-V.[18] Termination represents the "cessation of hostilities between two or more warring parties and

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[16] Wright and Reese. *On Point II*, 72-76.

[17] Benson, "OIF Phase IV: A Planners Reply to Brigadier Aylwin-Foster," 62. The last two assumptions appear in COL Benson's *Military Review* article, but not in the *On Point II* text. COL Benson's footnote describes a 26 March 2003 video teleconference session where he learned that the "policy of the US Government is de-Baathification" emphasized by USD-Policy Douglas Feith. Planners up to this point had assumed that "middle and lower tier Baathists" would be able to work with the Coalition. Despite then LTG Abizaid's protest, Feith belittled the military participants and reiterated the policy. For a complete account of this VTC, see David Cloud and Greg Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2009), 110-114. Feith does not make specific mention of the VTC in his account Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008).

[18] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-18-19. Termination criteria are the specified standards approved by the President or SECDEF that must be met before a joint operation can be concluded, and provide required leverage for enduring strategic advantage. Termination criteria will, in turn, drive the military end state and military strategic objectives. Previous Joint Doctrine (US Department of Defense 2007, I-18-19) recognized three approaches to termination; current JP 1 does not discuss termination approach.

signifies a *military*, but not necessarily *political* victory."[19] Conflict resolution, represents "the end of a conflict, or the process of resolving the root causes."[20] Under a *negotiated settlement* approach, the scope of post conflict environment will likely be framed by a cease fire and peace agreement, such as the Dayton Accords in the case of Bosnia. Phase IV planning can start by asserting termination criteria that produce required leverage for negotiations as starting assumptions, such as an internationally monitored security zone or buffer, and associated no fly zones, as was the case in Gulf War 1990-91. Phase IV planning can then analyze the stability requirements in order to build/restore governance capacity to pre-crisis levels of adequacy.

In OIF, Phase IV was defined by regime change, or an imposed settlement termination, similar to the "unconditional surrender" requirement for Axis powers in World War II; but no one was available to sign a surrender document. Under these conditions, a brand new environment emerged with historical root causes of conflict that were previously held in check by the brutally authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein. Once he was displaced, no recognizable civil authority existed and the problems quickly multiplied, increasing the distance between the end of major combat operations and full conflict resolution. This condition manifested itself initially in chaotic looting, criminal behavior and a near Hobbesian "state of nature," that quickly evolved to emerging centers of power fighting for political and economic influence in the vacuum left behind Saddam Hussein. Violence was predictable, but assumed by the planners to be manageable with the coalition

[19] Milan N.Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice*, (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2009), IX-174-176.

[20] Ibid., IX-176.

force structure in transit or notified for deployment, augmenting recalled Iraqi Army and Police forces.

Army doctrine and recent conflict assessment efforts by USAID both provide conceptual frameworks to help planners establish assumptions in Phase IV conditions when countries will transition through the challenges of conflict resolution to sustained stability.[21] The Army's framework is entitled the essential stability task matrix, and divides tasks conducted during stability operations across five broad stability sectors; security, justice and reconciliation, humanitarian assistance and social well-being, governance and participation, economic stabilization and infrastructure.[22] The USAID causes of conflict overview (see extract in Appendix 1) provides yet a second series of lenses to analyze a society and determine its propensity for civil conflict in windows of vulnerability.

[21] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, *U.S. Army Stability Operations Field Manual (FM 3-07)*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), Appendix D and (Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation 2004).

[22] Ibid., 2-7 and figure 2-2.

**Figure 1-FM 3-07, An Integrated Approach to Stability Operations**

These tools give the planner a series of lenses to observe the environment and map start points for each of the stability sectors, and posit assertions on relative societal stability that can establish the necessary detailed Phase IV assumptions. Some of these areas were considered in CFLCC assumptions but with significant shortfalls in foundational unstated assumptions. The assumption of the recall of Iraqi Governmental Bureaucracy contains at least two unstated assumptions: capability of critical infrastructure and that police remain in civil control despite De-Baathification. The bulk of the Iraqi Army being recalled rested on the unstated assumption that a viable army could be fielded despite De-Baathification and the cumulative effect of 10 years of sanctions combined with the damage sustained from the initial invasion. These miscalculations manifested themselves in a perfect storm of civil conflict in the summer of 2003.

The answer is not found in making more and more assumptions, but rather in making the necessary ones to guide planning. Too many assumptions brings its own set of problems, and a discussion of the process for evaluating and ranking

the relative importance of assumptions to the plan comes next. These tools provide lenses necessary to help visualize the operational environment and interpret the emerging problem sets with greater accuracy. This visualization helps planners establish detailed assumptions about the Phase IV environment. A useful and durable design requires a methodology to evaluate the relative importance and validity of our assumptions, which is the second key task to addressing this Phase IV challenge.

In the early 1990s, researchers at the RAND Corporation were faced with the challenge of addressing U.S. Army strategic implications for the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their research resulted in the concept of Assumption Based Planning (ABP), a tool designed for planning in great uncertainty. Though not designed for establishing assumptions, as discussed above, it is very useful in identifying the criticality and vulnerability of assumptions upon which the plan depends. As discussed earlier, branches and sequels offset assumptions and create both plan adaptability and durability. The problem lies in determining which of the assumptions merit the investment toward developing branches and sequels in a time constrained environment. ABP addresses this challenge through the five step process, shown below.[23]

[23] James A. Dewar, Carl H. Builder, William M. Hix, and Morlie H. Levin. *Assumption Based Planning A Planning Tool for Very Uncertain Times,* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1993), xii-xiii and James A. Dewar, *Assumption Based Planning: A Tool for Reducing Avoidable Surprises,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2-4.

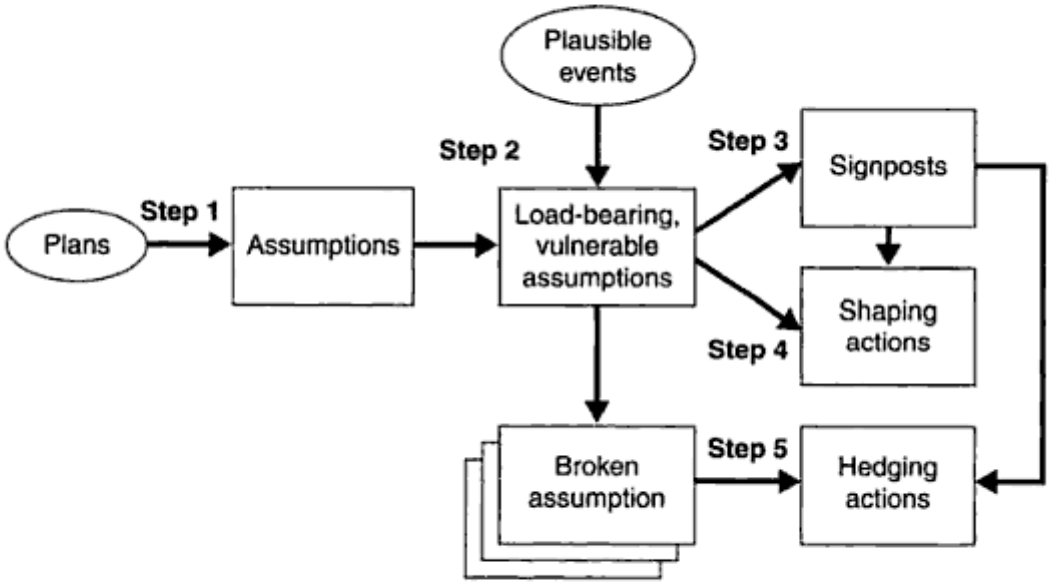


**Figure 2- Assumption Based Planning Process**

Dr. James Dewar, lead for the RAND project and founder of the RAND Pardee Center for Long-Term Policy Analysis, asserts that determining the load bearing or "critical assumptions" requires detailed considerations of the planning time horizon.

> An assumption's likelihood of being negated, its vulnerability to change at some point in the future, depends on the length of time to that point, or the planning time horizon. Without a planning time horizon, every assumption is vulnerable. With the horizon, only those assumptions that could plausibly change within that horizon are vulnerable. A planning time horizon is thus a crucial component in Assumption Based Planning.[24]

To apply these ideas to the OIF Phase IV case and address the issue of evaluating assumptions, an understanding of USCENTCOM's "planning time horizon," for Phase IV in OIF is essential. The USCENTCOM event horizon for Phase IV visualized an end state (conflict resolution) achieved at the Presidential

[24] Dewar, Builder, Hix, and Levin. *Assumption Based Planning A Planning Tool for Very Uncertain Times*, 17.

decision to terminate hostilities plus 3-4 years, and further divided into a 2-3 month Phase IVa "Stabilization," an 18-24 month Phase IVb "Recovery," and a 12-18 month Phase IVc "Transition to Security Cooperation."[25] When examining the CFLCC's asymmetrical threats assumption against a two-three month Phase IVa horizon (roughly June of 2003), this approaches validity based on the conditions that emerged. But as the event horizon continues from 3 to 12 months and beyond, the vulnerability of the assumption emerges, and its validity declines. Dr. Dewar argues that assumption validity is determined through analysis of *elements of change*, those events that could plausibly happen within the horizon and satisfy three conditions: they represent *change* from today; are *plausible* within the planning time horizon; and are *related* to the organization and its plans.[26] When planners consider the "causes of conflict framework" previously discussed in the Iraq environment, and a planning horizon of two years, the high likelihood of an Iraqi insurgency highlights vulnerability in the asymmetric threats assumption. The error is not necessarily in the *weakness* of the assumption, but in its *vulnerability* over time. Dr. Dewar uses the term "signpost," such as the rising violence of June-July 2003, to describe events that

[25] National Security Archive, "TOP SECRET POLO STEP" *The National Security Archive,* http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/index.htm (accessed April 22, 2014), Tab L. "Phase IV Actions." The bigger question of "Why three years?" is tougher to answer. Analysis of the World War II European Theater as an analogous case to provide a possible answer to the two-three year estimate yields some insight. Initial planning estimates for the ECLIPSE plan for post-conflict stabilization in Europe assumed an approximate one year transition to civilian control. In execution, it took from May of 1945 to 1949 to hand over control from military to civilians, approximately 4 years. Kenneth O. McCreedy, *Waging Peace: Operations Eclipse I and II-Some Implications for Future Operations,* Monograph, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004), 4 and Kenneth O. McCreedy, "Planning the Peace: Operation Eclipse and the Occupation of Germany," *The Journal of Military History* 65, no. 3, (July 2001), 417-429.

[26] Dewar, Builder, Hix, and Levin. *Assumption Based Planning A Planning Tool for Very Uncertain Times*, 18.

clearly indicated the increasing vulnerability of the assumption.[27] Shaping actions, or what can be done to avert the failure of a vulnerable assumption, are discussed later during transitioning the plan to execution.

The asymmetric threat assumption was, in Dr. Dewar's terms, "*load bearing,"* and essential to the continued planning of Phase IV; the planners allocated 20 Maneuver Brigade equivalents of US (or coalition) force structure to *hedge* this threat.[28] We can evaluate the plan's assumption on asymmetric threats as being reasonably sound, likely short sighted, and dangerously vulnerable in light of the threat environment. This situation may have been manageable, but execution decisions fatally undercut the hedging actions put in place, a second order effect of the bifurcated Phase III and IV planning. Critical to the transition to execution was a full understanding of the reasons *why* these hedging actions had been established in order to frame decisions for strategic leaders. This aspect or challenge requires further exploration.

***Challenge #2-How does a Phase IV plan transition to execution?***

The second broad challenge is "connecting" the Phase IV planning framework to Phase III as it evolved from planning through execution based on strategic and operational decisions. COL Benson struggled with the challenges of adapting a Phase IV plan based on sensitive initial assumptions of force structure.

[27] Ibid., 25.

[28] Wright and Reese. *On Point II*, 74-75. Dewar and Builder use the term load bearing in Dewar, Builder, Hix, Levin. *Assumption Based Planning A Planning Tool for Very Uncertain Times*, in its engineering definition, in that a *load-bearing* wall (or bearing wall) is a wall that bears a load resting upon it by conducting its weight to a foundation structure. The materials most often used to construct load-bearing walls in large buildings are concrete, block, or brick. By contrast, a *curtain wall* provides no significant structural support beyond what is necessary to bear its own materials or conduct such loads to a load-bearing wall. 20 Maneuver Brigades of U.S. combat power represented nearly 2/3rds of the deployable active Army.

He viewed the Phase IV operations as a sequel to COBRA II, with its own base plan, thereafter named ECLIPSE II,[29] consistent with the methodology used in World War II (both European and Pacific theaters). The ECLIPSE II plan contained directives that essentially established a combined Coalition and Iraqi Army presence in key Iraqi cities based on troop to task analysis for requirements, force flow availability, and an assumption of Iraqi Army capability.[30] Once the invasion was successful, the transition to ECLIPSE was disrupted by three key strategic decisions that undercut the majority of the planning efforts done on Phase IV, thereby negating the embedded shaping and hedging actions of the ECLIPSE plan.

The first decision was the replacement of ORHA by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in May of 2003, and formal acknowledgement that the US *would* conduct an occupation of Iraq for some period of time.[31] ORHA

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[29] Benson, "OIF Phase IV: A Planners Reply to Brigadier Aylwin-Foster," 62. Interestingly the original ECLIPSE plan struggled with the exact same issue of adapting the plan's framework to an evolving continuum resulting from the OVERLORD plan. Key decisions required for the ECLIPSE plan to start were not taken, and GEN Eisenhower never formally declared "A"-Day, or the official transition to ECLIPSE. See Kenneth O. McCreedy, "Planning the Peace: Operation Eclipse and the Occupation of Germany," *The Journal of Military History* 65, no. 3, (July 2001): 417-429 for an eerily disturbing ECLIPSE account as a forerunner of the Iraq experience.

[30] Wright and Reese. *On Point II*, 75 The mechanics of troop to task density for stability operations is well covered in later works likely influenced by the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences. John C. McGrath, *Boots on the Ground: Troop Density in Contingency Operations, GWOT Occasional Paper 16,* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006) provides historical examples and posits approximate formulas as a start point for consideration. Specific to a COIN environment, Steven M. Goode, "A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency," *Parameters* 39, no.4 (Winter 2009-2010): 21-25 work is very useful.

[31] Gordon and Trainor, *The Endgame*, 13. The broad mandate given to L Paul Bremer far exceeded the authority given to ORHA, and was more analogous to GTA Douglas MacArthur in Japan. "…instead of a temporary Iraqi sovereign body, the CPA would continue to serve as the chief political authority and the Coalition armed forces as the military arm of that authority…the decision transformed the intent of UN Resolution 1483..formalizing the sense that the Coalition powers were acting like occupiers rather than liberators…." Wright and Reese. *On Point II*, 27. Bremer discusses the historical analogies with MacArthur in his book, Bremer and McConnell, *My Year in Iraq*, 36-38.

was designed as a facilitator of an "Iraqi solution" that the administration believed would emerge quickly once the Hussein regime ended. The CPA occupation became necessary when no Iraqi government quickly emerged. CPA's mandate was to exercise executive, legislative, and judicial powers while rebuilding the state's infrastructure and beginning the job of reconstruction.[32] Prior to the decision to terminate ORHA and establish the CPA in May 2003, there were no substantive plans for an *occupation* course of action in Iraq, and now this was the only way ahead.[33] The execution of a legal military occupation in May of 2003 was not a *fait accompli* to unraveling of the ECLIPSE II design. The disintegration of the Iraqi Civil control and Iraqi Security forces could have been offset by the arrival of additional forces early on, when security and civil control problems were still manageable by historical stability planning ratios.[34] Inexplicably, the realization that a military occupation was necessary was immediately preceded by a decision by Secretary Rumsfeld, and agreed to by General Franks, to halt the follow-on flow of US Forces in late April.[35]

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[32] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 18. Hashim also lays out the reasons for ORHA's failure in detail, pages 292-94. See also Bremer's assessment in Bremer and McConnell. *My Year in Iraq*, 24-27.

[33] Author's experience as CFLCC planner attending an April 2002 Phase IV planning conference at USCENTCOM HQs in Tampa, Florida. Ambassador Bremer reflects on the difference in the environment encountered versus planned for in Bremer and McConnell. *My Year in Iraq*, 24-26.

[34] Goode, "A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency," 52-3. Key follow on elements were the 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood Texas and all of its associated division enablers. Consider the interview with General (UK) Sir Michael Rose assessment, Michael Rose, Interview by Charlie Rose, "A conversation with retired British Army General, Michael Rose," *Charlie Rose*, PBS, May 14, 2008, who argues that in stabilization forces a "a large force will terrify and engage people to your side, a middling force will raise resistance and you will win no friends." Stability rarely comes at bargain prices for troop structure.

[35] Catherine Dale, *Operation Iraq Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 44.

The second decision was the issue of CPA orders Number 1 (De-Baathification of Iraqi Society) on 16 May 2003, and Number 2 (Dissolution of Entities) on 23 May 2003 that directed the De-Baathification of Iraqi Society and directed the disbanding of the Iraqi Army.[36] These actions combined with the decision to halt the flow of additional US forces,[37] created an immediate shortfall in troops available to stabilize Iraq, and invalidated the critical CFLCC planning assumptions for ECLIPSE II. It also removed the assumption hedges of ECLIPSE II, rendering options to respond to an emerging Iraqi insurgency as inadequate. This caused a loss of strategic initiative in the campaign, the impact of which would not be fully felt until later in 2003-04.

The third decision was actually two compounding and interlocking decisions. First was GEN Franks' decision in mid-May to replace the V Corps commander, LTG Wallace with MG Sanchez and then the decision that V Corps would relieve the CFLCC, establish CJTF-7 by June, and directly report to USCENTCOM with a "direct support" mission to the CPA.[38] GEN Franks also directed that both LTG Wallace and LTG McKiernan were to depart theater in as little as 10 days.[39] LTG McKiernan and his CFLCC Headquarters, the most significant planners of Phase IV of any of the participants, devoting the better part of 18 months to the planning effort, handed off the entire mission to a commander and a headquarters that had *never* envisioned a Phase IV role, and were told to

[36] Wright and Reese. *On Point II,* 26, 593-599. Full text of the both directives is included in Appendixes A and B of *On Point II*. Full discussion of the process of development is in Bremer and McConnell. *My Year in Iraq*, 40-59.

[37] Dale, *Operation Iraq Freedom*, 44.

[38] Ibid., 48.

[39] Wright and Reese. *On Point II,* 147.

leave as soon as possible. Despite the efforts of both the CFLCC staff and CJTF-7 staffs, this change jeopardized situational understanding of Phase IV conditions and signposts, and created a blind spot for an emerging Iraqi insurgency. From this point forward, whatever alignment existed between the pre-invasion Phase IV to the Phase III plan was forever lost. LTG Sanchez's understanding of the environment was reflected in these comments he made on the period:

> "The war was not over. It wasn't as benign an operating environment as everybody thought. We were continuing to have attacks, even though at a low rate, but we recognized very early on, by the first couple of weeks of July 2003, that we were in a continuation of Phase III (of OPLAN COBRA II). We were still fighting and all indications were that we probably had an insurgency on our hands. We weren't quite sure at this point. We figured it was elements of Saddam's regime but we did not know yet exactly what this thing looked like."[40]

***Challenge #3-Interpreting the Environment and Deciding When to Change Approach***

The final challenge is interpreting the stability problem areas in the post-conflict physical and social environments, and convincing decision-makers in a political landscape that critical changes must be made. Given Secretary Rumsfeld's natural aversion to troop intensive, expensive and drawn out stability and support operations, military leaders were hesitant to present problems outside of "politically acceptable" boxes. Based on the disenfranchising actions of the CPA toward the Sunni population of Iraq, violence directed at Coalition forces began to grow but no one was willing to use the term "insurgency," until General

[40] Ricardo S. Sanchez, Interview by Wright and Reese. "Written comments to the Contemporary Operations Study Team," *On Point II*. See also Ricardo S. Sanchez and Donald T. Phillips, *Wiser in Battle A Soldier's Story* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008), 173-177 for LTG Sanchez's assessment of the environment of May-June 2003.

(GEN) John Abizaid, the new USCENTCOM Commander, in July of 2003.[41] In this politically charged landscape, it was politically safer to use the term "terrorists" and "former regime elements" when describing the actions associated with violence from June 2003 into early 2004.[42] Terrorists, by and large, are handled doctrinally through counterterrorism measures, network analysis, and capture/kill methodologies, missions normally associated with special operations forces and thereby consistent with the Rumsfeld's views on transformation.[43] Defining the problem in Iraq as an *insurgency* immediately raised the specter of a necessary counterinsurgency, which is troop intensive,[44] and revisits the Vietnam stigma of "quagmire."[45] Facing a Presidential election in November of 2004, these terms with negative connotations had to be avoided and nearly impossible to

[41] Peter Grier and Ann S. Tyson, "A Search for Patterns as Iraq Unrest Spreads." *The Christian Science Monitor*, (June 26, 2003), 24-26. This quote comes from GEN Abizaid's comments during assumption of command at USCENTCOM and directly contradicted the statement of Secretary Rumsfeld two weeks earlier. See David Cloud and Greg Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2009), 127. See also Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2008), 77. on reluctance to use the terms insurgency/counterinsurgency.

[42] Brian Knowlton, "Top US General Sees 'Classical Guerrilla-Type' War." *International Herald Tribune (Paris)*, (July 16, 2003), 1. Consider Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz comments on 28 August 2003 in Rowan Scarborough, "US Miscalculated Security for Iraq," *Washington Times*, August 28, 2003, 1 which only grudgingly, and almost mockingly, refers to the violence as "guerrillas."

[43] U.S. Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (JP 1-02)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2006). **counterterrorism —** Operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism. See also JP 3-05.

[44] Wright and Reese. *On Point II*, 163. The CJTF-7 campaign plan did not use the term counterinsurgency in its mission statement. "Conduct offensive operations to defeat remaining noncompliant forces and neutralize destabilizing influences in the AO in order to create a secure environment in direct support of the Coalition Provisional Authority. Concurrently conduct stability operations to support the establishment of government and economic development in order to set the conditions for a transfer of operations to designated follow-on military or civilian authorities." For specifics on troop requirements for counterinsurgency, see Goode, "A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency," 45-47.

[45] The US Army's cultural aversion to counterinsurgency is detailed in John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 205-208. On the stigmatizing issue of quagmire and Vietnam analogies, see Roland Paris, "Kosovo and the Metaphor War." *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 199-232.

fit through the wickets of Rumsfeld's views on transformation. It can be safely argued that CJTF-7 was never able to win the argument on counterinsurgency during its tenure,[46] and it was the arrival of GEN George Casey and establishment of Multi-National Force Iraq from spring through summer of 2004[47] that began to officially address this challenge.[48] Prior to traveling to Iraq to assume command, GEN Casey's discussions with Secretary Rumsfeld cautioned him to "figure out a way to bring American troops home and don't do too much."[49] This guidance imposed significant limitations on the conduct of any counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq, which General Casey had correctly discerned as the necessary way forward. Once in Iraq, Casey was confronted with the lack of COIN knowledge in his headquarters.

> "Okay, who's my counterinsurgency expert?" asked General George Casey, sounding impatient. It was his first day in

[46] Wright and Reese. *On Point II*, 118-120. CJTF-7 produced its campaign plan in January of 2004, and was authoritative until replaced by the MNF-I plan of August 2004.

[47] Ibid., 176-7. MNF-I was officially established on 15 May 2004, General Casey assumed command on 1 July 2004, two days after the CPA was dissolved and Iraq technically became a sovereign state.

[48] George W. Casey, "Hearing Schedule June 2004," *Senate Committee on Armed Services.* June 24, 2004. http://armed-services.senate.gov/e_witnesslist.cfm?id=1244 (accessed April 24, 2014), 5. "Broadly, I will focus on: leading the MNF counterinsurgency effort…"GEN Casey's Senate Armed Services Committee Hearings, June 2004. In GEN Casey's confirmation hearings, he listed as his major challenges: "implementing an effective transition from occupation to partnership with the IIG; defeating anti-Iraqi and anti-coalition forces alongside the IIG and ISF; assisting the IIG in efficiently rebuilding the ISF; with the ISF, providing a secure environment to permit elections in December 2004 or January 2005. George W. Casey, *Strategic Reflections: Operation Iraqi Freedom July 2004-February 2007.* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2012), 17.

[49] Cloud and Jaffe. *The Fourth Star,* 169. See also Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 13 for GEN Casey's discussions with Sec Rumsfeld in preparation for assuming the MNF-I post. Secretary Rumsfeld highlighted his 27 April 2004 guidance to USCENTCOM that planners should "maximize the use of ISF, international forces, and contractors before resorting to US Forces."The Cloud and Jaffe account also asserts that GEN Casey had recently read Dr John A. Nagl's book *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, his ***first*** book he had read on guerrilla war, days before his Senate confirmation hearings. (pg 168). In his 16 pages of advance question answers for Senate confirmation, GEN Casey had no specific questions about counterinsurgency, but he did receive 4 questions about policy on sexual assault and 3 questions on force protection. George W. Casey, "Hearing Schedule June 2004," *Senate Committee on Armed Services.* June 24, 2004. http://armed-services.senate.gov/e_witnesslist.cfm?id=1244 (accessed April 24, 2014).

> command and his first meeting with the staff he had inherited from LTG Sanchez…Finally Air Force Major General Steve Sargeant spoke up. He had spent his career flying jets, an experience that was largely irrelevant to a fight against low-tech Iraqi guerillas. "I guess that must be me, sir," said the general, who was in charge of strategic plans at headquarters. The Air Force officer's hesitant answer drove home to Casey how little progress the military had made during its first year in coming to grips with the kind of war it was fighting.[50]

By August of 2004, the Coalition had acquiesced to using the term "counterinsurgency," but its approach would best be described as "counterinsurgency light," or "counter-terrorism plus."[51] The use of the terms "former regime extremists" and "foreign terrorists" is more specific to a counterterrorism problem set, and these terms were neutered to the non-specific Anti-Iraqi Forces or AIF which, it could be argued, was a way to approach issues from a non-partisan perspective and appease the Secretary of Defense who refused to acknowledge an organized insurgency in Iraq, despite what his generals were telling him. This "enemy-centric" model, coupled with the training of Iraqi Security Forces (per the SECDEF's guidance), would emerge as the predominant operational approach from July 2004-January of 2005.[52] The MNF-I mission statement as of August 5, 2004 captures this enemy centric model:

> In partnership with the Iraqi Government, MNF-I conducts full spectrum counter-insurgency operations to **isolate and neutralize former regime**

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[50] Cloud and Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, 161.

[51] On 29 November 2005, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld corrected the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace for using the term "insurgents" in a DOD Press Briefing, saying that "using the word insurgent gives them greater legitimacy than they seem to merit." See Dale, *Operation Iraq Freedom*, 61. This is despite the 14 separate references to the term "insurgent" in the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, released the next day on November 30, 2005.

[52] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 129. Kilcullen notes that these are general approaches and that there are numerous tactical exceptions in the period 2005-2006, specifically the COL H.R. McMaster Tal Afar experience. Dale, *Operation Iraq Freedom*, 65-67.

> **extremists and foreign terrorists**, and **organizes, trains and equips Iraqi security forces** in order to create a security environment that permits the completion of the UNSCR 1546 process on schedule.[53]

Following the election of Iraqi constitutional delegates in January of 2005, the MNF-I operational approach would shift to emphasize the generation of Iraqi Security Forces, and metrics of success were driven by how fast "battlespace" could be turned over to Iraqis and conditions set for the Iraqi Constitutional Referendum in October and General Elections in December of 2005. Responsibility for population security for all Iraqis would fall to the Iraqi Security Forces.[54] Despite the combined efforts of the NSC and MNF-I to weave the security, political and economic aspects of the Iraq strategic problem set, the approach was entirely dependent on the conceptual foundation of Iraqi Security Forces as the primary means for providing security to the Iraqi people. This approach was unable to adapt to the communal/sectarian problem set, and failed to explain the cycle of violence that occurred after the al-Askari Mosque incident in Samarra on 22 February 2006. It was the poor showing of Republicans in the mid-term elections of November 2006 that forced consideration of previously unpalatable policy options in Iraq. These strategic approaches and resulting conditions are generally the background to the Presidential decision in January of 2007 to change strategy and key personnel in Iraq

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[53] Wright and Reese. *On Point II*, 177.

[54] United States National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, Strategy Report. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005) ,1. This critical document released in late November of 2005 describes a methodology of short, medium and long term stages for victory in Iraq, and the medium term captures the goal of "Iraq in the lead defeating terrorists and providing its own security." GEN Casey comments that the NSVI did not "provide any new direction…its end state was almost the same as the one that Ambassador Negroponte and I had crafted 18 months prior…" Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 77.

It is important to emphasize that the joint force of today is not the one that entered the Global War on Terror, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, which is an unfortunate pitfall of the analysis. Comparing the level of granularity of doctrine in 2001, with the doctrinal approaches to Phases IV and V of our current editions of joint doctrine reveals striking differences in detail. This dichotomy partially reflects the organizational learning and the lessons from a military at war for a decade. The 1990's experience in the Balkans and Kosovo may have partially prepared planners for the conceptual complexity of stability and support operations, but the ability to adapt organizationally and operationally came, unfortunately, too slow and often at the cost of surrendering the initiative. This strategic and operational initiative would have to be bought back at an extremely expensive price. The question which remains is how to develop the cognitive flexibility to recognize when to adapt and the wherewithal to implement this change quickly. The answer to this question is found in the leaders who are charged with making these decisions.

# CHAPTER 4

## The Critical Players: What roles do Commanders, and their experience, play in framing the problems?

> *"The commander is the central figure in operational design, due not only to education and experience, but also because the commander's judgment and decisions are required to guide the staff through the process."*[1]
>
> *Joint Operational Planning (JP 5-0)*

Operational Design is an inherently personal process, each unique to the commander and his position as the senior practitioner of operational art for his organization. The premier doctrinal publication for campaign planning, Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0) emphasizes the role of the commander as paramount in operational art and design.[2] The nature of "wicked problems" places the commander in the difficult position of arbiter when experts disagree, no fixed solutions apply, no stopping rule is in place and they have no right to be wrong.[3] Based on the commander's importance to the process of campaign design, and the degree of complexity associated with the events that preceded the surge in Iraq 2007-08, it is important to discuss briefly the backgrounds of the men involved, and how the comparison of similarities in their current situation with previous experiences framed the aspects of the campaigns during their tenures. This

[1] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-2.

[2] Ibid., III-6-7.

[3] Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command. *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 The US Army Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design*, (Fort Monroe, VA: Training and Doctrine Command, 2008), 9-11. This TRADOC pamphlet, prepared in 2008, was one of the first doctrinal publications which addressed the "design" movement in planning.

analysis is helpful in conceptually understanding design, and the effects of the seemingly ubiquitous confirmation bias when framing problems at the strategic and operational levels.[4] It is also important to emphasize that operational design is conceptually sensitive to initial conditions and in this way is partially chaotic, meaning precise forecasts of progress are not predictable, but patterns potentially are. Within these conditions are nuanced trends that will emerge that become operational opportunities, that if exploited lead to success, or failure at the operational level. Perhaps conspicuous by his absence is any additional analysis of General Tommy Franks. The shortfalls in Phase IV and V design and execution have been covered in depth in prior chapters, and the departure of GEN Franks in July of 2003 so early in the Phase IV fight, made analysis of his career less germane to the case.

### *General John P. Abizaid, Commander US Central Command, 7 July 2003-16 March 2007*

In July of 2003 when GEN John Abizaid succeeded GEN Tommy Franks as the Combatant Commander of US Central Command it appeared that the Army had exactly the right man to lead USCENTCOM.[5] GEN Abizaid pursued a very non-traditional path to combatant command.[6] His outlook on the Iraq

[4] Confirmation Bias is a tendency for people to prefer information that confirms their preconceptions or hypothesis, independently of whether they are true. Definition retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confirmation_bias last accessed on 3 October, 2013.

[5] Sydney J. Freedberg, "Abizaid of Arabia," *The Atlantic*, (December 2003), 1-2 Freedberg also asserts that Abizaid was one of Rumsfeld's favorite officers.

[6] A Graduate of both West Point and Harvard, and an Olmsted scholar at the University of Jordan, he was one of the very few officers in 2003 that was fluent in Arabic, had lived in the Middle East, and was as close to an expert on the Arab culture as the US Army had. His operational assignments included leading a Ranger company during the 1983 Grenada invasion and battalion command during Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in Northern Iraq, where his language and cultural skill, coupled with his style of intuitive improvisation were essential

stabilization was greatly shaped by two key events in his military career. The first was during his tenure as a United Nations Observer in southern Lebanon 1985, when he was eyewitness to the Israeli occupation and witnessed a grim preview of the Coalition's trials in Iraq, which illustrated the complexity and difficulty of a third party (Israel) inserted into a violent sectarian crisis. After he had witnessed the aftermath of suicide bombers, rocket attacks and the grisly torture of civilians he would write in 1986:

> War in southern Lebanon is difficult to imagine by common standards of reference. It was neither guerrilla war of Vietnam style nor was it the urban battle of Beirut. It was low-intensity conflict where UN sources routinely recorded over 100 violent incidents per month, ranging from ambushes and kidnappings to suicide car bombs.[7]

The critical lesson Abizaid drew from this experience was that the indiscriminate and severe measures of third party occupiers directly contributed to radicalization of the population, manifested by suicide attacks, cruel reciprocity, and a death spiral for stability.[8]

Second, was Abizaid's experience as a battalion commander in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, Northern Iraq, 1991. Abizaid recalled a conversation with a Kurdish *Peshmerga* commander after seeing three Iraqi corpses, their bodies covered with burns and their eyes gouged out.

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components of the coalition's success. During his meteoric career, GEN Abizaid would command at the Brigade and Division level, as well as serve as the director of the Joint Staff, and held the distinction for awhile of being the youngest General in the United States Army.

[7] John P. Abizaid, *In Defense of the Northern Border: Israel's Security Zone in Southern Lebanon*. Unpublished Monograph, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1986)

[8] Cloud and Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, 51. Abizaid's thesis closely parallels Kilcullen's in *The Accidental Guerilla*, but Kilcullen theorizes that some of these people are acting out of duty and outrage and not necessarily "radicalized" in their thoughts, making them potentially reconcilable.

> "Why do you torture everybody, why not just kill them?" asked LTC Abizaid. "Nobody here fears death," replied the commander….the survivors…. needed to see the mutilated bodies of their fellow soldiers so that they understood what could happen to them if they fought the Kurds.[9]

Abizaid's first-hand experience drove home to him the suppressed hatreds of the people of Iraq, where violence seemingly knew no limits by western standards, and caused him to emerge skeptical of any occupier's ability to impose his will on Iraq.[10] In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, GEN Abizaid constantly visited Iraq, attempting to prove or disprove his theory, and these visits reinforced his skepticism on success. In Fall of 2002, he told DEPSECDEF Paul Wolfowitz that "Iraq has three very distinct minority groups that will be at each other's throats immediately."[11] Prior to assumption of command of USCENTCOM, in a conversation with Colonel Mike Fitzgerald, lead planner for invasion, Abizaid remarked "We have got about a year to make a difference in Iraq and then we have got to think about getting out. After a year, the population would begin to turn on them."[12]

GEN Abizaid's experience qualified him as an expert and his view of US presence as "an anti-body in their (Iraqi) culture" made him skeptical of any measures that increased this "anti-body."[13] Reducing the average Iraqi's exposure to the "anti-body" seemed logical, and led to the consolidation of US troops on

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[9] Ibid., 88. Author was a subordinate of then LTC Abizaid's unit during PROVIDE COMFORT and was present during recapitulation of this vignette to the battalion staff, May, 1991.

[10] Ibid., 86.

[11] Ibid., 125. Conversation between GEN Abizaid and DSECDEF Paul Wolfowitz.

[12] Ibid., 123.

[13] Frederick W. Kagan, *Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq*, Phase I Report, (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2007), 44. Kagan's work disputes the Abizaid thesis on American Presence as the problem. It is important to note that Kagan's work in early 2007 reflects the sectarian conflict in 2006.

"super-Forward Operating Bases (FOBs)" with intense emphasis on preparing Iraqi Security Forces to assume responsibility. The security environment would determine if the average Iraqi saw *the Americans as less of a threat than the other sectarian groups, and extremist factions of their own*. This environment materialized during the period of 2005-06 and represented a brief moment of opportunity for the Americans, in a "confluence of factors."[14]

***General George Casey Jr. Commander, Multi-National Forces Iraq 29 June 2004-10 February 2007.***

On 1 July of 2004, GEN George Casey succeeded LTG Ricardo Sanchez as Commander of the newly formed Multi-National Force-Iraq. GEN Casey represented a "compromise" choice in the political environment of 2004, in that no one had any particular strong feelings against him. In fact, during his confirmation hearings Senator Hillary Clinton pronounced him "boring…which is good, and I applaud you on that."[15] GEN Casey was confirmed in a unanimous vote.[16] It was during his deployment to Bosnia in 1996 GEN Casey's viewpoint on stabilization operations solidified:

[14] Steven Metz, *Decisionmaking in Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Strategic Shift of 2007,* Monograph. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), vi.

[15] Cloud and Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, 168. See also GEN Casey's responses to Advanced Questions for his confirmation hearings, George W. Casey, "Hearing Schedule June 2004," *Senate Committee on Armed Services.* June 24, 2004. http://armed-services.senate.gov/e_witnesslist.cfm?id=1244 (accessed April 24, 2014), 4, which lays out GEN Casey's qualifications for the MNF-I job.

[16] Ibid., 168. A graduate of Georgetown's ROTC program in 1970, Casey was an eyewitness to the damage the Vietnam experience had done to the American Army. From his front row seat as a junior officer Casey witnessed the dramatic shift to doctrinally and cathartically expunge the Vietnam event from the corporate memory through rapid refocus on the Soviet threat. Casey embraced this shift spending the majority of his early career focused on the National Training Center in California. Casey was successful, often being chosen early for promotion, completing a Master's degree in International Relations at University of Denver, and commanding at the Battalion, Brigade and Division levels, as well as experience serving on the Army Staff.

> "George, never forget it's their country." It was MG Nash's (Commander of the Multinational Force-Bosnia) way of saying that even a force as powerful as the US Army couldn't resolve centuries-old sectarian and ethnic hatreds and shouldn't try. US troops could separate the Serbs and Muslims and provide basic security, but they should leave the lengthy job of building a functioning country to the civilian experts or the Bosnians themselves. No one could force these people to get along, certainly not the US military. It was a lesson Casey never forgot, and the one the entire Army would take with it to Iraq.[17]

General Casey's experience in Bosnia made him a valuable asset during Kosovo where he worked as the deputy director for political military affairs on the Joint Staff, working directly with the Deputy Secretary of State, and he earned the reputation of a "model Pentagon general: steady, apolitical, and hardworking."[18] General Casey received his fourth star when he became the Vice Chief of Staff of the US Army. From his perspective, Iraq in 2004 looked a lot like Bosnia in the mid-1990s. When Secretary Rumsfeld decided to form MNF-I, Casey was a logical choice and was supported by Abizaid, the USCENTCOM Commander. His operational approach to the problem in Iraq came in August of 2004:

> "I came at it a little differently," Casey recalled. "I said, Yeah, it's the people, but the way we're going to get to the people is through a legitimate Iraqi Government." And the key to producing a legitimate government, he assumed, was the national elections scheduled for January (2005). The voting would channel the insurgents into politics; every effort should be made to ensure they happen on time, he insisted. The assumption that fair elections would blunt the insurgency was widely held among senior US officials at the time."[19]

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[17] Ibid., 104. Incident details were confirmed at Public Affairs Office for Implementation Force AFSOUTH, "IFOR AFSOUTH Transcript." *Operation Joint Endeavor (IFOR)*, http://www.nato.int/ifor/trans/t961010a.htm (accessed April 22, 2014)

[18] Ibid., 162.

[19] Ibid., 170. See also the GEN Casey answers to Advance Questions for confirmation, George W. Casey, "Hearing Schedule June 2004," *Senate Committee on Armed Services.* June 24, 2004. http://armed-services.senate.gov/e_witnesslist.cfm?id=1244 (accessed April 24, 2014), 5 which lays out GEN Casey's thoughts to "What are the major challenges confronting the MNF-I Commander?"

A MNF-I dedicated to setting conditions for elections and development of Shia-dominated Iraqi Security Forces was agreeable to Rumsfeld and the political leadership in the U.S., and was completely agreeable to the Shiite dominated Government of Iraq.[20] The problem was that the election approach didn't generate stability in Iraq and sectarian violence exploded with the Al-askari Mosque incident in February 2006.[21] This setback drove President Bush to commission a bipartisan committee (the Iraq Study Group) to assess the situation, draw conclusions and provide recommendations. They concluded that Iraq was rapidly descending into chaos, clearly signaling that the 2005 elections were not the strategic closure that had been hoped.[22]

***General David Petraeus Commander, Multi-National Forces Iraq 10 February 2007-16 September 2008.***

GEN David Petraeus followed a unique path that took him to the Al Faw Palace in February of 2007 to assume command of MNF-I, but arguably,

[20] This prioritization is consistent with President Bush's 24 May 2004 speech at the Army War College, which lays out 5 steps for Iraq: hand over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government; help establish stability and security; continue building Iraq's infrastructure; encourage more international support; hold free, national elections that will bring forward new leaders empowered by the Iraqi people. George W. Bush, "Remarks on Iraq at Army War College." Presidential address in Carlisle, PA, May 24, 2004, http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/05.24.04.html (accessed April 24, 2014). The emphasis on the elections and the Iraqi Security Forces assumption of "battlespace" were first and foremost the greatest strategic themes during author's tenure in MultiNational Division-Baghdad (MND-B) during 2005. During the 3rd Infantry Division's tenure, only two plans were briefed from the division to MNF-I, our plan for elections in October and December of 2005, and our plan for handoff of battlespace to Iraqis and subsequent downsizing of American forces.

[21] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 82. Despite the seating of the Iraq government in May 2006, violence in Iraq continued to escalate. "At this point the strategy could not explain what was happening."-Fred Kagan, AEI.

[22] Iraq Study Group, *The Iraq Study Group Report*, Group Report, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 1-2. See also the Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 79 for GEN Casey's assessment that the UN timeline and elections were "not going to be enough to bring the country together." Secretary Rumsfeld defended his Iraq approach until the bitter end, see Ricks, *The Gamble*, 58 and 83.

prepared him for this moment better than any other. He began his military career at West Point and after troop assignments and a tour as aide-de-camp, attended Princeton University where he earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration in 1985 and a doctorate in International Relations in 1987 while teaching at the social sciences department at West Point.

> His research focused on leadership and decision-making as they pertained to the major conflicts of his time, and his doctoral dissertation, "The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era," examined whether the Vietnam War had made the current generation of senior military leaders overly cautious regarding the use of force. The answer was a carefully nuanced yes.[23]

The analysis of Petraeus finds a lifetime commitment to studying and understanding the phenomena of counterinsurgency warfare. His early interest began with studying the French experience in Algeria, and continued with the academic analysis of the US Vietnam experience for his PhD. This academic work was augmented with extensive practical field study in a variety of conditions, travelling to Central American in 1985 to view the COIN efforts of the US in El Salvador, Peru, and Columbia; as well as nation-building efforts in Haiti, 1995; peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia, 2001, and direct experience in Iraq 2003-2005. The synthesis of his studies of COIN is found in this Petraeus quote:

> What you relearn really, because that is something we should know from our COIN experience in the past, is that every (COIN) situation is unique, what is required of the counterinsurgent is a very nuanced understanding of each specific situation."[24]

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[23] Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2008), 57.

[24] Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge:The Untold Story*, Directed by Jason Killian Meath. Produced by Ashley O'Connor. (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2009). GEN Petraeus quote captured from the documentary film.

His skills in analysis, writing and communication placed Petraeus in a series of billets that gave him first-hand experiences to the inner workings of the Army, and the process of decision-making at the four-star level. Intermixed with these were command assignments at the Battalion and Brigade as well as command of the 101st Airborne Division during the invasion phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Petraeus' success in the stability phase in post-conflict built from his academics, practical application experiences, and loose interpretation of the limiting policies of the CPA.[25] Few dispute Petraeus' accomplishments leading the 101st Airborne Division in Northern Iraq through March of 2004.[26] Unfortunately, based on a rapid decrease in troop presence, continued Sunni alienation based on de-Baathification, excessive coalition emphasis on Fallujah in the Fall of 2004, and targeted assassinations of key leaders in Mosul, the success was not enduring. All of these led to violence in Mosul within months of the 101st departure.

Following an assignment as the Commander of MultiNational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), LTG Petraeus would command the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth and be personally involved in writing

[25] Cloud and Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, 90-91. Petraeus used "local reconciliation" methods and "renunciation ceremonies" in order to maintain critical intelligentsia in Mosul, (with the permission of Amb Bremmer see David Petraeus, Interview by Charlie Rose, "A conversation about Iraq," *Charlie Rose.* PBS. April 26, 2007, but these ran counter to the de-Baathification efforts of Deputy SECDEF Paul Wolfowitz, USECDEF(P) Douglas Feith and the chair of the Iraqi commission on de-Baathification Ahmed Chalabi, who would eventually undercut Petraeus's authority on this issue. Improvisation and loose interpretation of limiting policies were a theme in the Petraeus career, see Cloud and Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, 99-100 for a similar Haiti vignette.

[26] David Petraeus, Interview by Charlie Rose, "A conversation about Iraq with military expert David Petraeus," *Charlie Rose.* PBS. March 1, 2004. The Petraeus interview on *Charlie Rose* in March 2004 reflects this aura of success, and focuses on what made the 101st successful, while others were less so. See also Cloud and Jaffe. *The Fourth Star*, 194.

the Counterinsurgency (FM 3-24) manual, which influenced his selection to succeed GEN Casey as the commander of MNF-I in 2007.[27] The combination of the dismal Republican performance in the 2006 Mid Term Elections, extreme criticism from both ends of the political spectrum, and sagging public support for the war drove the President to make drastic changes. The resignation of Secretary Rumsfeld, imminent retirement of General Abizaid, and need for new direction in Iraq led the President to nominate Petraeus for the commander of MNF-I.

In summary, Abizaid, Casey, and Petraeus, if judged solely by their positions achieved and previous success, were exceptional and talented men. Each worked within limitations established by their civilian chain of command. The tenures of Generals Abizaid and Casey were dominated by the extremely restrictive policies of Secretary Rumsfeld. It is difficult to assert what the outcome of the campaign would have been if both Abizaid and Casey were given the same resources, and freedom of action, that Petraeus was given by 2007. It is equally difficult to assert how Petraeus would have done if he suffered the same limitations as Abizaid and Casey. It is safe to assert that operational design can seldom offset weakness in strategic approach and ends, ways, means mismatch.[28]

[27] Petraeus was nominated to establish and lead the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, a three-star billet focused on training and equipping the Iraqi Army and Police. The US Government and the Army were institutionally and cognitively not prepared for the challenge of rebuilding a foreign military from the ground up, quickly, while engaged in a life and death struggle with well-armed insurgents or terrorists. The problems lay in that Petraeus' organization was in a seam of the US Army culture, with few command billets, meaning he would receive no command selected personnel from the active component of the US Army, and would largely manned by reserve component soldiers. Saddled with these herculean tasks and immense pressure from above, his tenure was slow progress overshadowed by moments of great setback, as an insurgency coalesced around defeating his efforts. Petraeus persevered, but it was difficult to discern if the tenure was a success in the immediate outcome of his command.

[28] Steven Metz, *Decisionmaking in Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Strategic Shift of 2007,* Monograph. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), vii. This passage is very similar to Metz's conclusions.

It is the duty of the commander to recognize this mismatch, and his responsibility to adapt when it occurs.[29] Commanders are promoted based on their success as an indicator of potential to solve bigger problems, with more consequences, in the future. Were Abizaid and Casey able to look past their previous experiences, and recognize the opportunity available based on the changed perspective of the average Iraqi towards Americans based on the violence and chaos of 2006? The facts are inconclusive. Recognizing this opportunity gave Petraeus the strategic opportunity to stabilize Iraq in Fall of 2007. Operational design relies on the commander's interpretation of the environment and opportunities; one of the key reasons why the commander's role is heavily emphasized in today's joint doctrine and essential to unlocking the challenges the joint force faces in the future.

No participant in the process of operational design exerts more influence on how problems are framed, how approaches are developed, and how progress is measured than the joint force commander. Operational design in Phase IV and V requires a joint force commander with the intellectual curiosity to constantly question his assumptions, challenge his methods, and guide the intellectual journey of his staff in the same way. Without this intellectual curiosity, operational design is potentially subverted to a mere rationalization of platitudes and sycophancy. The ability to maintain this curiosity of critical and creative

[29] H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1997),323-334. The McMaster thesis hovers around the idea of what it is the duty of the commander when presented with flawed strategy. McMaster's epilogue to Dereliction of Duty is a comprehensive analysis of the systematic marginalization, and exploitation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Johnson administration, and an assessment of their complicity. The full attention to this Vietnam/OIF JCS/Combatant Commander analogy would merit a book of its own.

thinking through the challenges of Phase IV and V design and execution, culls the genius from those who are very smart.

## CHAPTER 5

# The Operational Design and developing the Operational Approach

> *"Dealing with ill-structured problems has been at the core of a multi-year "design" initiative spearheaded by the Army and USMC…The work has focused on improving commander's and staff's abilities to use critical and creative thinking to help them understand the fundamental nature of a complex military problem; to design a broad approach to achieve objectives and accomplish the mission; and to determine if, when and how to change that approach when circumstances change."*[1]
>
> *Joint Planner's Handbook for Operational Design*

Today's complex joint operational environment led to a great interest in the concepts of design as a methodology for defining problems and developing approaches in a systematic way that is useful to the practitioner of operational art.[2] Design offered the opportunity to evolve military thinking beyond the threat-based models of previous generations to a more sophisticated plane applicable to "wars among the people."[3] General (Retired) Rupert Smith (UK) argued that for force to have utility requires a deep understanding of context, and an understanding that adversaries are adapting as they learn from your actions, so you need a framework that enables the commander to adapt and understand quicker than the adversary. Design methodology was the conceptual answer to this challenge.

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[1] Joint Staff, J-7 Joint and Combined Warfighting, *Planner's Handbook for Operational Design*, (Suffolk, VA: J-7 Joint Staff, 2011), I-1

[2] Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command, *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 The US Army Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design*, (Fort Monroe, VA: Training and Doctrine Command, 2008), 8-9.

[3] Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force The Art of War in the Modern World,* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 6. General (UK) Smith's thesis asserts that the paradigm of interstate industrial war is over and that modern warfare will be dominated by the ***people as the battlefield,*** the targets, objectives to be won as much as the opposing force. This is also consistent with the Irregular Warfare JOC, U.S. Joint Forces Command and US Special Operations Command, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept,* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010).

Joint Doctrine today builds on the Smith thesis by establishing operational design as a methodology that facilitates the development of theories and models relevant to the operational environment under consideration, in which commanders can gain the perspective to adapt and learn about the answers to three broad questions:

1. What is the context in which the campaign will be conducted?- (Describe the operational environment.)
2. What problem is the campaign intended to solve? (Define the Problem to be solved)
3. What broad, general approach for the campaign will solve the problem? (Describe the operational approach)[4]

The next section applies joint doctrine, the elements of operational design, historical analogy, and the ideas of complexity theory in order to create an understanding of the operational environment, the problem to be solved, and the creation of operational approach to act as a guide to planners when confronting difficult phase IV and V operational design challenges. Through applying these tools, planners derive examples of practical application of key ideas in operational design.

[4] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-16. This framework is encapsulated in Joint doctrine through the components of the Commander's Planning Guidance

***Establishing the Context for the Campaign***

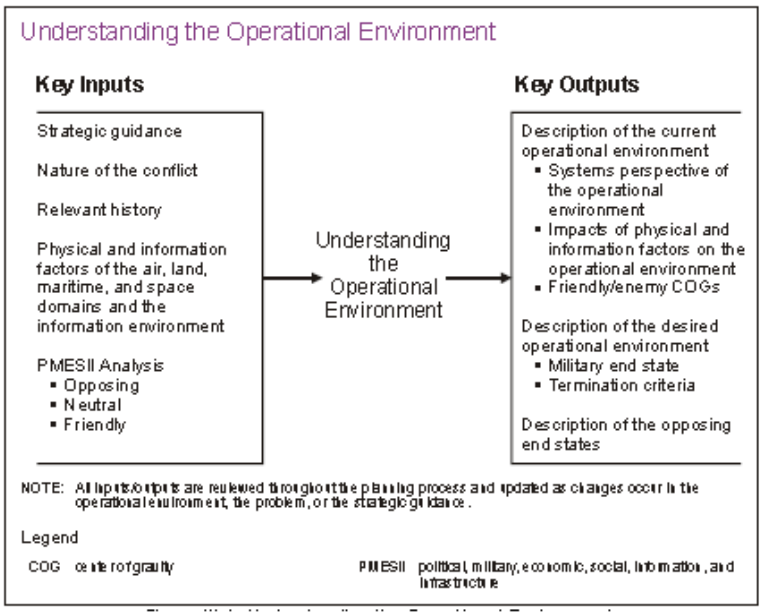


**Figure 3- Understanding the Operational Environment-JP 5-0**[5]

This step of the design process is extremely challenging based on the nature of "wicked problems," in that *professionals, or experts, will not agree on problem definition and structure*. To further confound the efforts, certain terminology may be politically off limits based on sensitivities, and the majority of the conflict, debate and decisions will play out in a political realm influenced by 24/7 full spectrum media. The essence of interpreting this point in the Iraq campaign requires understanding of, and the conditions necessary for, *reframing* a campaign.

The relationships within the Bush administration and the parallels with the Johnson administration of 1964-1968 are helpful in discerning the strategic context. In the Johnson administration, myopic focus on the Great Society marginalized security issues and the advice of military advisors. This combined with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's contempt for military advice based on his "experience" in the Cuban

[5] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-8.

Missile Crisis.[6] In the Bush administration, Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his group of advisors instituted a culture of contempt for military advice that did not directly conform to their agendas.[7] Three factors contributed to the President's deference to the Secretary of Defense on issues of defense. First, was the strength of the personality and personal political capital of Donald Rumsfeld. Second, was the perception of *partial* success based on the early Afghanistan experience, where it would appear that the Rumsfeld approach was correct and conventional military advice was wrong, analogous to the Cuban Missile Crisis for McNamara.[8] Third was a conscious decision to resist the urge to over control his military officers the way he perceived Johnson had done in Vietnam. This deference resulted in the empowerment of the "Rumsfeld approach" until it could no longer explain the events, and its failure could not be denied.

It was a combination of the efforts of retired GEN Jack Keane and Dr. Fred Kagan, among a group of other academics and historians, and the disastrous elections of 2006 for the Republicans, that forced change.[9] The crisis of confidence had opened the door for a new interpretation of the events, a *reframing*, in design terminology. Reframing is defined by Colonel Stefan Banach, the Director of the US Army's School for Advanced Military Studies, as:

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[6] H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1997), 328.

[7] James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, (New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 2004), 79. Mann's work asserts that the contempt for alternative ideas was traceable to Rumsfeld's style of leadership, a man caricatured in a Saturday Night Live skit as so intimidating a group of reporters that none would dare ask a question. His style of intimidation carried forward to his assistants, emboldening them to very brusquely and publicly dismiss dissenting opinions as "wildly off the mark."

[8] Interestingly, the assessment of Operation ANACONDA had done little to question the choices on footprint size and relative risk acceptance by GEN Franks and Secretary Rumsfeld. The interpretation of ANACONDA's significance came long after the key decisions by Secretary Rumsfeld on Iraq had already being taken.

[9] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 74-104.

> …intellectual activity to identify new opportunities and overcome obstacles to progress when interactions with the real world situation or new sources of information reveal issues with a current problem…Reframing shifts attention away from trying to solve the current problem right to asking whether the right problem is being solved.[10]

Fundamental to reframing is reconsideration of context, in the form of assumptions and objectives which framed the strategic perspective for Iraq. This reconsideration, as mentioned before, was *forced upon the Bush administration*. In most cases, *reframing is forced upon the players* as a function of a *lack of success or abject failure*. Civilian strategic leaders may rarely choose to reframe without clear, active indicators of failure.[11] When considering multiple cases of the relief of strategic general officers, it most likely occurs in the context of a reframing event that was driven by either failed assumption and/or clear lack of success. [12] Numerous cases of relief of general officers since the American Civil War can be better understood through the lens of reframing. The eventual nomination of U.S. Grant represented the correct strategic framework for then President Abraham Lincoln, reflecting lack of necessary success in winning the war by previous efforts. The relief of MacArthur by President Truman represented the reframing of the Korean War based on the clear failure of an assumption that the Chinese would not enter into the conflict. The reassignment of General

[10] Stefan J. Banach, "The Art of Design: A Design Methodology" *Military Review* (March-April 2009), 107. See also The U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, *Art of Design Student Text, Version 2.0*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2010), 141-142.

[11] The barriers to change and why organizations fail to adapt as a phenomena is well-studied and theorized in the business world. John P. Kotter, *Leading Change,* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 4 asserts that complacency is an incredible force to overcome in large organizations. Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization,* (New York, NY: Currency Doubleday, 2006), 58 posits lack of systems thinking and compensating feedback.

[12] This is a potential topic for a future monograph, and a draft thesis for this effort would argue that "Commanders are fundamentally incapable of reframing a campaign on their own accord. The historical methodology for reframing is in the form of relief/retirement/reassignment of current commander and insertion of a new commander with new operational frame."

Westmoreland from Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) in June of 1968 was based partially on the reframing of the Vietnam War based on the failure of the assumption that success was close at hand manifested in the strategic results of the Tet Offensive of January-February 1968.[13] Reframing events usually correlate to a reconsideration of objectives, and often the reduction from broad and idealistic objectives to more conservative ones. In the case of Korea, objectives of a reunified Korean peninsula are scaled back to status quo antebellum. In the case of Vietnam, a democratic and viable Republic of Vietnam is scaled back to potential negotiated compromise.

This reframing of Iraq policy was captured in the National Security Council's Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review of January 2007 (See figures 4 and 5). Two key aspects of this reframing are a review and comparison of current assumptions (figure 4) and reconsideration of Strategic Goals and Objectives (figure 5). A strategic reframe shifts the entire context of the campaign through the resetting of failed assumptions and redefining objectives no longer deemed relevant. The elements of operational design offer necessary tools for interpreting the dynamics of the emerging environment, defining the new or real problem, and developing a new campaign with a new operational approach.

[13] Austin Hoyt, *Vietnam: A Television History-Part 6 Tet 1968*, DVD, (WGBH Boston Video, PBS 1983, 1997, 2004). The discussion of restructure of Vietnam War objectives and approaches after the Tet Offensive and the decision by LBJ not to run for President in 1968 from this series is a useful case. The decision to engage in peace talks post-Tet without clear military leverage represents the scaling back of objectives.

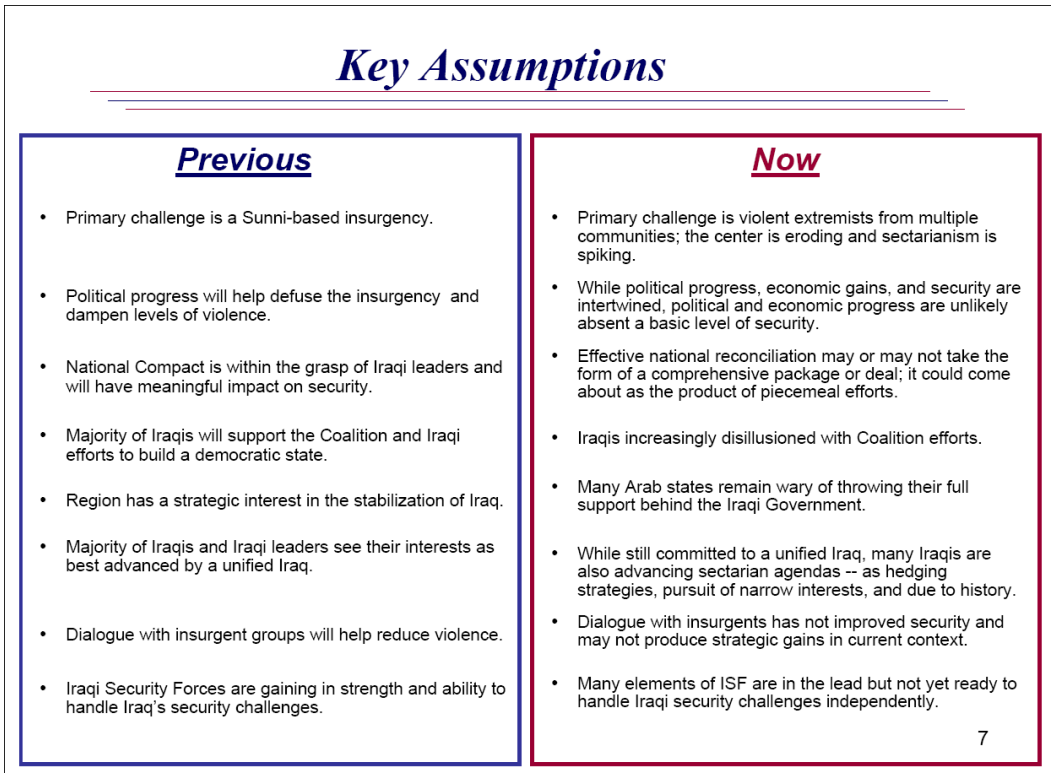


**Figure 4 Key Assumptions-Iraq Strategy Review, National Security Council**

**Figure 5 Strategic Goals and Objectives- Iraq Strategy Review, National Security Council**

***Using the Elements of Operational Design as the Tools for Interpretation.***

A COIN campaign conforms to the doctrinal approach to campaign planning used for other forms of campaigns because it begins with a consideration of termination, as discussed earlier, with a clear set of conditions that must exist to end military operations.[14] Two key themes emerge from the consideration of termination in a COIN environment. First, the termination conditions are deeply intertwined with the political discourse, as the military is less able to solve the problem alone as in conventional, symmetrical cases, so classic considerations of termination as the "fixed" leverage point to set up a negotiated or imposed settlement are not as straightforward. This also means that all parties, such as host nation and other coalition partners, must be involved in the discussion. Second, consideration must be made to the root causes of the insurgency being primarily interest-based, or values-based.[15] In general terms, interest-based insurgencies can be negotiated under the right conditions, values-based insurgencies are not easily negotiated with, and in many cases are irreconcilable.

Termination emerges as another lens through which to view the environment and make distinctions between competitors, adversaries and neutrals. In the operational environment of Iraq in early 2007, LTG Raymond Odierno, the MultiNational Corps Iraq (MNC-I) Commander, identified five distinct categories of threat groups to the security of Iraq; Sunni Extremists, such as Al Qaeda in Iraq; Sunni Resistance; Shi'a (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq-SCIRI); Shi'a (Office of the Martyr Sadr-

[14] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), IV-5.

[15] U.S. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency Operations (JP 3-24),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2009), IX-4.

OMS/Jaysh al Madi JAM); and the Kurds.[16] First, these groups are analyzed in terms of interest and values based threats. Sunni Extremists and components of the Shi'a groups can safely be categorized as values-based, and therefore, difficult to reconcile. But the Sunni resistance, Kurds, and other components of the Shi'as were fundamentally interest-based and possibly accommodated in a political agreement that protected their constituencies. The termination criteria had to include conditions that created a security environment that would allow a dialogue over time, not in one package agreement. The immediate backlash of extremist violence created conditions that made previously intractable positions malleable, if security could stop the cycle of violence. Military operations could shape termination conditions that would incentivize interest-based groups to talk and reach accommodation through aggressive and coordinated political action that leveraged the opportunities created.

Termination analysis produces a consideration of end state and objectives. In COIN, this contains some specific nuance. When considering the traditional symmetrical warfare model, military end states and objectives can be framed and clearly derived from the national end state and objectives. For example, in Desert Storm, the military end state was withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the seizure of southern Iraq in order to shape the negotiated settlement, framed also by the diplomatic and economic efforts to isolate Iraq, and force conclusion of the Gulf War of 1990-91. In the COIN environment of Iraq 2007-08, the military end state appears identical to the national end state, framed in Iraq Strategy Review (see Figure 4 Key Assumptions-Iraq Strategy Review, National Security Council). As the political and military conditions are deeply intertwined, no

[16] CJ5 Plans section, Multinational Corps Iraq. *Operation AL AMAN AL AN Security Now*. (MNCI/CJ5 briefing at Baghdad, Iraq, January 02, 2007), 3.

clear separate military end state is practical, or useful.[17] This is a fundamental, foundational truth to COIN that bears repeating. The problems presented by COIN cannot be solved exclusively through military means, so military and political tools must work in concert to achieve success.

Consideration of the objectives of Iraqi Freedom from 2004-2007 reflects a clear mismatch in strategic ends, ways and means, where the shortfalls of US capability were offset by overreliance on the sectarian agenda of Shia powerbrokers. The goal of a "beacon of democracy" in the Middle East reflected a very high bar in a range of potential acceptable outcomes in Iraq, and was not balanced with appropriate means to accomplish, if such a means were even possible in a politically acceptable time frame. The insights of regional experts and security analysts such as Council on Foreign Relations member and author David Fromkin, and the Director of the International Security Studies Program at Tufts, Professor Richard H. Shultz Jr., were skeptical of the possibility of western style democracy working in the history, culture and demographics of Iraq at all, but especially in any accelerated timelines.[18] A reframing of strategy based on the events of 2006 reveals that the objectives were scaled back based on the fortunes of war up to this point in the campaign.[19] In April of 2008, General Petraeus gave this

[17] U.S. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency Operations (JP 3-24),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2009), IX-4.

[18] See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace,* (New York, NY: Owl Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2001), 563-567, work on the Post World War I establishment of the Middle East as we know it today, and Richard H. Shultz Jr. & Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias The Warriors of Contemporary Combat,* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 250-252 for an excellent summary of the problems to be faced in establishing an Iraqi democracy in the Middle East. See also Michael Rose, Interview by Charlie Rose, "A conversation with retired British Army General, Michael Rose," *Charlie Rose,* PBS, May 14, 2008 this interview with UK General Rose is particularly critical of this goal.

[19] Ricks, *The Gamble,* 164 and Thomas E. Ricks, Interview by Charlie Rose, "A conversation with author Tom Ricks," *Charlie Rose,* PBS, February 13, 2009 as well as a more specific addressing of this is the Roosevelt Island Blog at Michael Rose, *The Oxford Note,* July 9, 2009, http://www.roosevelt-island.net/2009/07/oxford-note-general-sir-michael-rose.html (accessed April 22, 2014).

summation to the House Foreign Affairs Committee: "In terms of what it is we are trying to achieve, I think simply it is a country that is at peace with itself and its neighbors..can defend itself…government that is reasonably representative and broadly responsive to its citizens…involved and engaged in the global economy."[20] The modification of the terms *democratic* to *reasonably representative and broadly responsive* may, on the surface, seem to be largely semantic. But the new objectives defined an acceptable outcome that did not require Iraq to be a reasonable facsimile of Wisconsin, and from a Sunni perspective, a Shia dominated majority rule. This shift was one of the reframing initiatives that brought the Iraq strategic approach closer to balance. This also opened the doors to the emerging Sunni Tribes who had grown weary of Al Qaeda, but were not enamored with the Shi'a dominated central government which had been empowered by the UN timeline-fixated Americans. The scaling back of objectives had created a conservation of enemies and bridged the gap to interest-based insurgent groups who were committed to maintaining their traditional social power structures in the new Iraq.

Another tool to help interpret and relate the operational environment within the elements of operational design is the center of gravity or COG. Joint doctrine describes the COG as "…a source of power or strength, inherently complex and dynamic and can change over time."[21] The COG can be a contentious issue in operational design, as analysts and professionals do not agree on its precise meaning and application.[22] In order to understand COGs, imagine a giant room in which representatives of all of the

[20] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 164. General Petraeus direct quote.
[21] U.S. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency Operations (JP 3-24)*, VIII-20-21.
[22] Debate over the precise meaning of COG can be found in; Antulio J. Echevarria, *Clausewitz's Center of Gravity: Changing Our Warfighting Doctrine-Again!* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), Milan N.Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice,* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2009), VII-29-35, and Joe Strange, *Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities,* Monograph. (Quantico, VA: Marine Corp University, 2001).

concerned parties at war in Iraq are present. A man steps up to a platform and makes the following announcement, "the following represent the objectives of the US in Iraq," and reads the contents of Figure 5 Strategic Goals and Objectives- Iraq Strategy Review, National Security Council. He then states, "would all those who oppose these objectives please place your hands in the air." Clearly the representatives of all of the extremist groups, Al Qaeda, and Jaysh Al Mahdi would likely put their hands up, if they were honest about their group's goals, being in opposition to most if not all the objectives. (See Figure 6 Al Qaeda in Iraq- A COG structured theory.) These individuals would then be handed a sign that says "emerging" or "potential" COG. Some of the individuals will object to some, but not all of the objectives. Coalitions may emerge out of these, which could become COGs. The sticking point is the *objective* itself. If one was willing to concede on objectives, COGs could dissipate in the wind, like revising a "free and democratic Iraq" to a "broadly representative Iraq" reduces the potential COG of a Sunni Tribal structure concerned about a Shia dominated "elected" government.

***Al Qaeda in Iraq (Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fil Bilad al-Rafidayn)***
***A COG Analysis Theory***

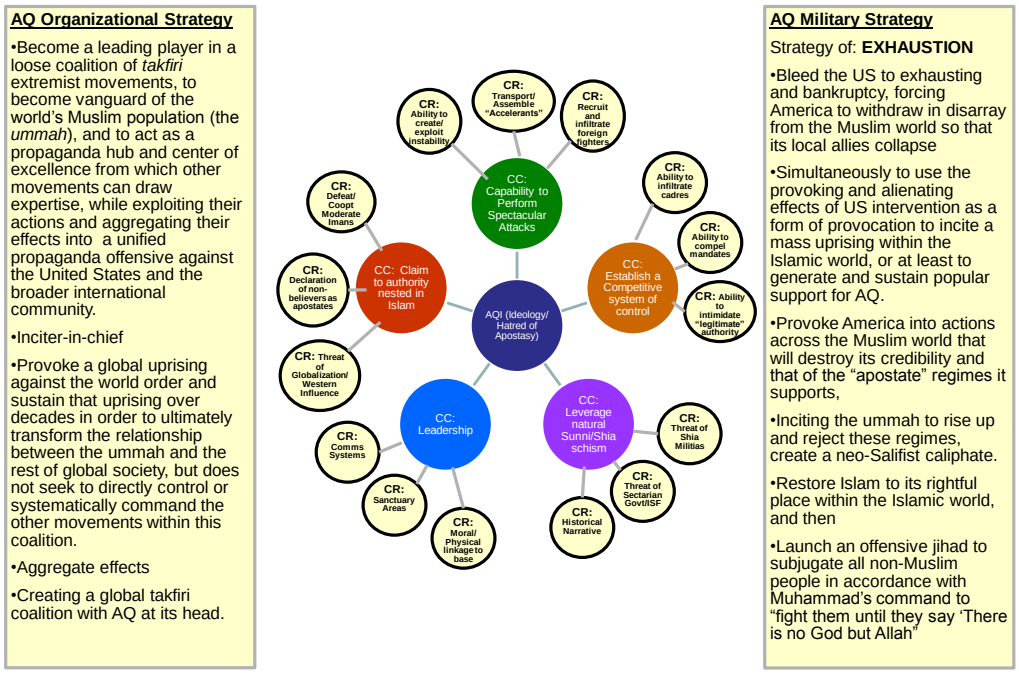


**Figure 6 Al Qaeda in Iraq- A COG structured theory**

In the environment of stability operations and irregular warfare, COGs markedly exhibit the characteristics of *complexity*, in that they reflect the ideas of emergence, resilience and self organization.[23] Briefly, *complexity theory* is a field of study, that began in the 1960s, that views behaviors as "constantly changing interdependent actions" that resist "traditional reductionist methodologies." [24] For a system to be categorized as complex, it reflects emergence, or an "idea" or "force" that causes numerous agents to act in concert, each with a concept of individual fulfillment. It also reflects resilience, which is the ability of a system to "absorb or recuperate" from attacks on its parts. Finally, complex systems reflect self-organization, a phenomena in which components constantly

[23] M. Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (New York, NY: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1992), 9-13.

[24] Michael F. Beech, "Observing Al Qaeda Through The Lens of Complexity Theory: Recommendations for the National Strategy to Defeat Terrorism," Monograph, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2004), 3. See also M. Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity*, 12-13, for the explanation of Complexity theory as an answer to linear reduction methods of classical science.

balance the nature of their interrelationships to enhance their performance.[25] Complexity theory provides higher granularity to analyze adversarial systems, and through this make more nuanced COG theories that accommodate agent realignment with the application of force. The rapid realignment of Sunni based insurgent groups against Al Qaeda in 2006-7 reflects emergence and the reorganization of a complex system as an opportunity for MNF-I. A complexity-refined COG theory opens the door to the understanding necessary to address problems to be solved and to construct a viable theory of action.

***What problem is the campaign intended to solve?***

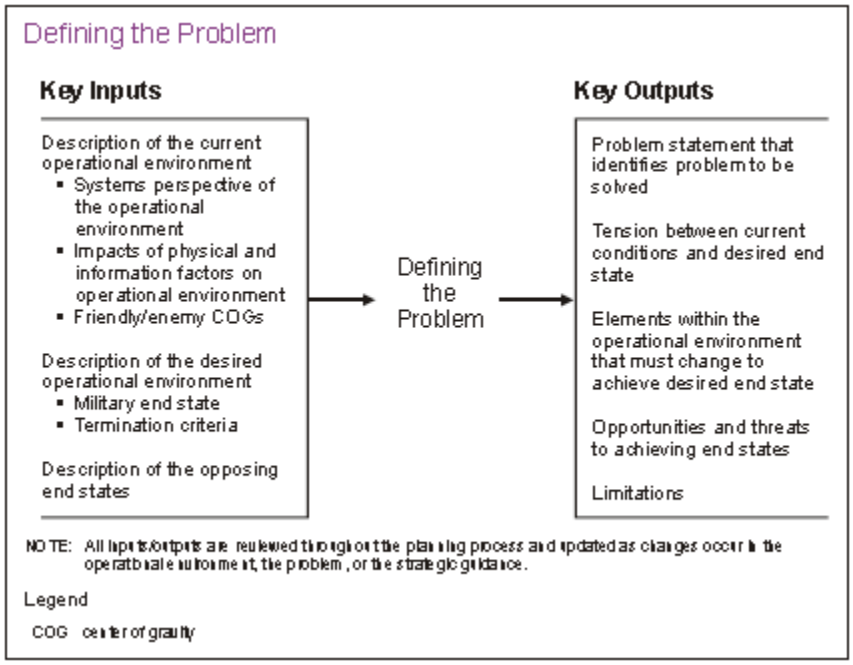


**Figure 7 Defining the Problem (JP 5-0)**

The challenges to the previous design that drove reframing called for a new interpretation of the operational problems in play. Weeks before General Petraeus would appear for confirmation hearings in January of 2007, Lieutenant General Ray Odierno had his MNC-I staff wrestle with a new approach to the problems in Iraq. He started with

[25] Beech, "Observing Al Qaeda", 4-5.

an idea that the real problem in Iraq was the battle for the population of Iraq to fill the gap between the needs and desires of the individual and the capability of the Iraqi government. Four competitors had arisen to fill this gap of capacity: the Shi'a militias (Badr, JAM), Shia Parties (SCIRI/OMS), the Iraqi Sunni Resistance, and Al Qaeda in Iraq, each one appealing to a part within this vulnerable population, and with vastly different end states in mind. A fifth potential threat was the Kurds in northern Iraq.[26] Sectarian violence was a manifestation of competing factions, and the introduction of "accelerants," (e.g. foreign fighters, arms and munitions from Iran) raised the violence in Iraq to politically unacceptable levels.[27] The result of this violent competition was lethality that approached civil war, and from many perspectives, "grim ethnic cleansing."[28] In design analysis, these threat groups emerge as the five plus one COGs, with the sixth representing the US led coalition and the will to continue the fight (See Figure 8: Iraq Threat Environment 2006-07 (5+1 COG Model).

[26] These conclusions that framed the operational environment were not "new." GEN Casey had come to the conclusion on the basic operational problem post Samarra in March-April 2006, and a basic approach, but implementation of the Together Forward plans were too dependent on cooperation of the Shia militia dominated security forces. Casey, *Strategic Reflections*, 93-95 lays out Casey's operational design work, and page 130 discusses the issues with TOGETHER FORWARD.

[27] Ricks, *The Gamble*, 344. A slide with this depiction was included in the inbrief for General Petraeus as he arrived in Iraq February 2007. This product had been in works for weeks in Baghdad.

[28] Steven Simon, "The Price of the Surge" *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (May/June 2008): 21-25. Steven Simons article in *Foreign Affairs* was critical of the success of the Surge and posited that the reasons for the drop in violence were more about the ethnic cleansing being completed, "tactical quiescence of the Shiite militias, and deals between US Forces and Sunni tribes."

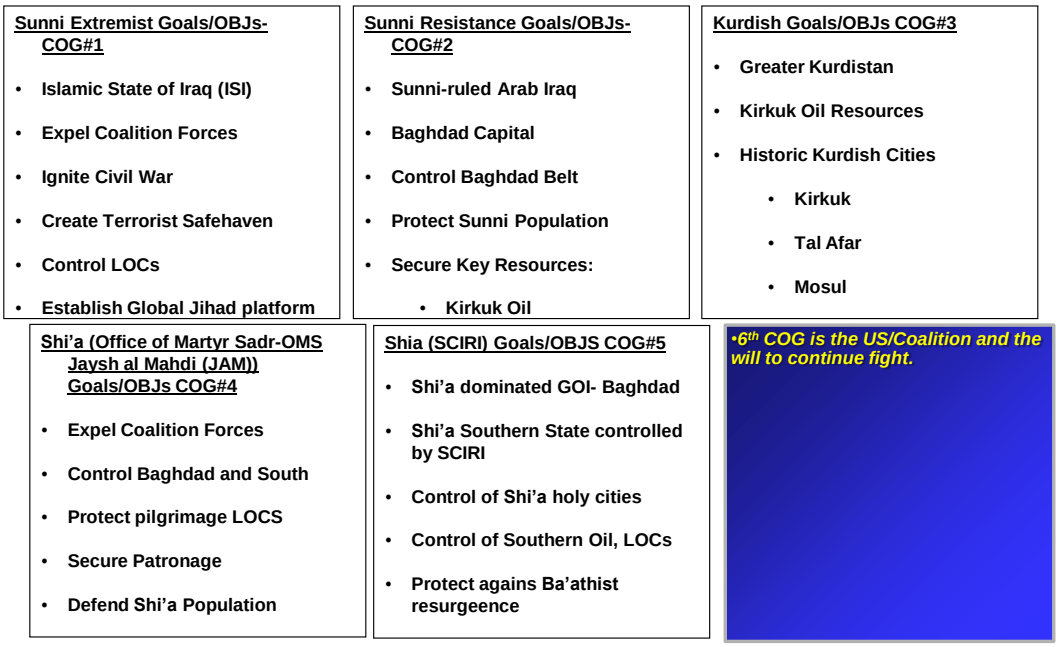


**Figure 8: Iraq Threat Environment 2006-07 (5+1 COG Model)**

Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, emerged as the geographic and ideological center stage of the fight to fill the gap in civil control in Iraq.[29] In January 2007 (with the exception of the Kurds) *all competing groups* identified control of Baghdad as essential to their visualized end states.[30] Control of Baghdad meant control of Iraq, just as it was in the time of Saddam Hussein, and in the Abbasid dynasty.[31] Saddam was fairly sophisticated in establishing a series of belts around Baghdad that would provide

[29] Aparisim Ghosh, "Life in Hell: A Baghdad Diary," *Time Magazine*, August 06, 2006. Ghosh's *Time* article is a harsh view of life in Baghdad in late 2006. This is partially in response to the Gian P. Gentile, "The dogmas of war: A rigid counterinsurgency doctrine obscures Iraq's realities." *Armed Forces Journal* 145, (November 2007), 64-69, article that disputes the pre-surge criticism of COIN approaches. Ghosh specifically discusses conditions in the Baghdad district of Amariyah, which Gentile argues was a success story.

[30] CJ5 Plans section, Multinational Corps Iraq. *Operation AL AMAN AL AN Security Now*. (MNCI/CJ5 briefing at Baghdad, Iraq, January 02, 2007)

[31] See Hugh Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty*, (Cambridge, MA: De Capo, 2006), xix-xxi for the explanation of the Abbasid dynasty which consolidated power of Islamic world in Baghdad from 750-940, the heir to the universal caliphate of Abu Bakr immediately after the death of Muhammad in 632. Kennedy's narrative lays out the establishment of Baghdad and its influence on par with the establishment of Rome for Western culture. Control of Baghdad in this context implies control of a muslim caliphate in abstract terms.

counterbalancing force to any coup attempt.[32] Saddam positioned loyal Baath party members on the strategic corridor between the capital region in central Baghdad and the airport. In each of the 9 provinces that make up the city of Baghdad, Saddam carefully isolated majority Shi'a neighborhoods with middle class and upper middle class Sunni neighborhoods. This methodology created significant ethnic fault lines in the post-Saddam Baghdad, which were extremely vulnerable to sectarian violence.

- **AQI Objectives**
  - Maintain Lines of Communication-Northern (1) Tigris River Valley and (2) Anbar Province (Euphrates River Valley)
  - Transfer "*accelerants*" to violence (VBIED, suicide bombers) into BAGHDAD
- **AQI Approach**
  - Converge on Baghdad from provinces IOT establish and retain (3) strongholds in the capital.
  - Set conditions to restore Sunni political power and AQI to gain such power in the first place
  - Control BAGDHAD through safe-havens outside of it. (The Baghdad Belts) (4)

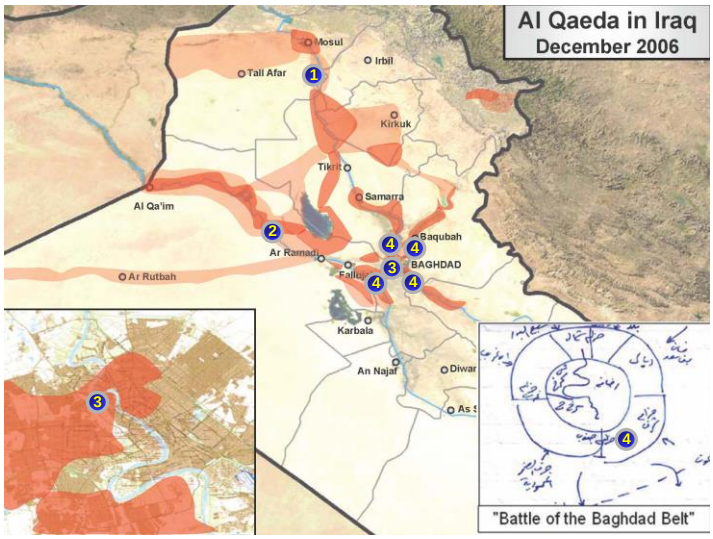


**Figure 9 Adversary Objectives and Approach Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)[33]**

What emerges from this analysis is a realization that the geographic approaches to Baghdad, and key Baghdad neighborhoods along sectarian fault lines emerge as doctrinal

[32] Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq.* 2d Edition. (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, Perseus Books, 2004), 250-251, lays out the geographic positioning of Baghdad and highlights the highest population density in Iraq is the area around Baghdad. It also highlights the cumulative efforts of Saddam Hussein to "coup-proof" Baghdad effectiveness in the post Desert Storm Intifada efforts to overthrow Saddam Hussein in 1991.

[33] Institute for the Study of War, "Presence of Al Qaeda in Iraq-December 2006," *Understanding War*. http://www.understandingwar.org/map/presence-al-qaeda-iraq-december-2006 (accessed April 22, 2014) (Map product only).

*decisive points*.[34] Whichever agent *controls* these pieces of key terrain gains a marked advantage in the battle for civil control in Iraq.[35] The approaches to Baghdad were critical to both Al Qaeda and Shia Extremist groups as both of these agents required lines of communication with Syria, and Iran (more or less respectively). These lines of communication allowed the passage of foreign fighters, and arms and munitions (accelerants) in order to feed the violence in Baghdad (See Figure 10 Adversary Objectives and Approach Jaysh Al Mahdi (JAM) Special Groups.) These same approaches were also critical to the coalition operating in Baghdad in order to sustain their own operations. Within Baghdad, the most vulnerable populations were those in proximity to rival sectarian groups. If there is no relative proximity to violence, the insurgent's message is far less compelling. But when a Sunni neighborhood must live with Shia Death Squads, the message of Al Qaeda as the only thing standing between them and extinction, the message is far more compelling. Decisive points will generally align to a critical vulnerability of the COGs, and in this case multiple COGs, and will likely become a task or objective to one, or all of the adversaries. Securing these fault line neighborhoods also places the insurgents in a position to have to fight or be marginalized as irrelevant. This was the thought process at the tactical and operational levels, behind the population-centric security, and the driver to most of the combat operations in support of the Surge of 2007-2008.

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[34] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0) Revision First Draft (RFD),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010), III-14. JP 5-0 Revision First Draft described decisive points as "those operational variables within the OE which are critical for action and which will be decisive in transforming the current OE to the desired end state." Current JP 5-0 of August 2011 eliminated this reference U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-26.

[35] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-26. A decisive point is a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows a commander to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contributes materially to achieving success.

- **JAM (Special Groups) Objectives**
  - Maintain lines of communication
  - Create buffer zone between the Sunni population concentrations by expanding the territory they controlled within Baghdad and pushing into important areas outside the city.
  - Push Sunni Population out of small cities, such as MAHMUDIYAH (1) that effectively controlled the routes to KARBALA (2) and NAJAF (3) the Shia holy cities south of Baghdad
- **JAM Approach- Multiple, simultaneous and successive operations to control BAGHDAD, using kinetic and a wide array of economic, social and religious instruments**
- **First Priority is controlling East Baghdad through non-kinetic means, then expand into West Baghdad, through kinetic/non-kinetic means.**

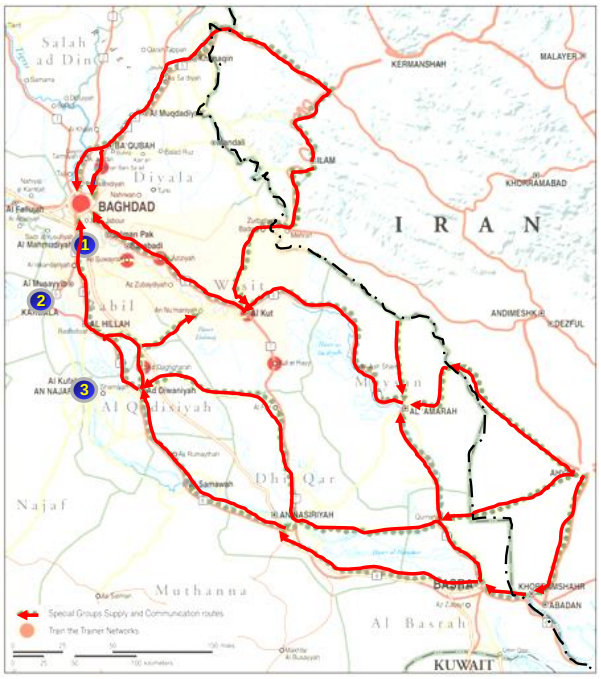



**Figure 10 Adversary Objectives and Approach Jaysh Al Mahdi (JAM) Special Groups**[36]

Geographic approaches and fault line neighborhoods are helpful in partially understanding the security situation, but COIN has more than just security components. As earlier discussed in the "Causes of Conflict framework" (See appendix 1), economic, control of natural resources, and political power structures must also have decisive points as well. In the case of Iraq 2006-07, control of banking, utilities and health care became integral to the Shi'a militias (OMS) approach to removing Sunnis from fault line neighborhoods, and controlling the approaches to Baghdad.[37] By denying utilities, closing banks and denying health care through both violent and non-violent means, JAM was able to force the departure of Sunnis from long time Sunni neighborhoods. For the

[36] Institute for the Study of War, "Special Groups Communication, Supply and Training Networks Map." *Understanding War.*http://www.understandingwar.org/map/special-groups-communication-supply-and-training-networks-2007 (accessed April 22, 2014) (Map product only)

[37] Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History,* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2009), 16-17 describes the OMS/JAM efforts to control Mahmudiyah, a predominately Sunni city, south of Baghdad, which dominated a key route to Karbala and Najaf.

coalition, countering the infiltration and disruption of these essential services was critical to the economic lines of operation. Approaches to addressing these kinds of issues came largely through the political system. Through systems of patronage, key leadership positions in these essential services were assigned to personnel with either complicity or coordination with OMS/JAM. Political pressure from above combined with security operations on the ground combined to offset this destabilizing threat, as well as to move forward on larger legislative issues such as the equitable distribution of natural resources, national budget, and addressing issues of amnesty.[38]

GEN Petraeus identified four critical challenges to the Iraq situation; population security, development of Iraqi Security forces free of sectarian bias, integration of the interagency effort to enhance efforts on the non-security lines of effort, and finally the lack of capacity of the Iraqi government.[39] This is a manifestation of the *reframing event* in the US operational approach to Iraq. Previously, the problems were always framed from the perspective that the Iraqi Security Forces were the main focal point; other problems were second and third order effects of this. GEN Petraeus's testimony reflected that the frame was being reset to population security as the means to defuse the sectarian violence, which was a *sine qua non* to getting at the more strategic issues of reconciliation, and achieving the "stability threshold."[40] David Rothkopf, international security and economic analyst and author of the book *Running the World*, defined the

[38] Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge:The Untold Story*, Directed by Jason Killian Meath. Produced by Ashley O'Connor. (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2009). Quote from General Petraeus discussing the importance of the February 2008 legislative actions of the Iraqi Parliament to address these critical issues. "This is democracy, or to some sense Iraqocracy."

[39] David Petraeus, "Hearing Schedule January 2007," *Senate Committee on Armed Services*, http://armed-services.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?wit_id=5995&id=2497 (accessed April 22, 2014), 3-4.

[40] David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2005), 42.

*stability threshold* which represents the strategic end game for any long term success in Iraq.

> The stability threshold in any political system, from your local community to the emerging global system, turns on whether the majority of the key players within that system-those with the power to make the system work or to disrupt it-believe that working within the system is more likely to produce a better future for themselves, their families, or the units of society they represent than working outside of the system. Even if there are some stragglers or those who resist the system, if the majorities are thus invested in it, it will work, and it will resist attempts to upset it-provided the system also has effective mechanisms for dealing with such attempts and for avoiding the pitfalls of "tyranny of the majority.[41]

Dr. David Kilcullen, noted COIN expert and the author of *The Accidental Guerrilla*, provides a four point strategic problem set approach to the Iraq situation, as well as assessment that the problems are intertwined, and cannot be solved sequentially.

1. An underlying capacity-building problem, resulting from the fact that Iraq is a weak and fragile state;

2. Terrorism-that is the presence of terrorist entities including (but not limited to) AQI, who seek to exploit the situation and manipulate the population to further extremist or transnational aims.

3. Insurgency- the Sunni Rebellion against the new post-Saddam order in Iraq, including rebellion against Coalition presence and the new Iraqi government, as well as the Shi'a radical rebellion against established authority, which is more in the nature of social revolution.

4. Communal conflict- including sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shi'a elements of the Iraqi population, and ethnic conflict between Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and other ethnic groups.[42]

[41] Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 42-43.

[42] Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 149-150. This exact construct is also represented in JP 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* pg I-15, with the inexplicable shortfall of not including underlying governance capacity problem.

Any problem statement which omits one of the problem areas puts the likelihood of success completely in the chance department, and is more likely to compound other problems. Earlier efforts at problem definition which refused to address communal conflict produced solutions that invariably led to increasing efforts to build Iraqi Security Forces, which in turn, were viewed by the Sunni population as agents of the Shi'a government to exact revenge on a Sunni minority.

These problems, ranging from the tactical to operational level, belie a higher strategic problem, which stated generally is *what system of government for Iraqis achieves the stability threshold on a long term basis?* In Iraq's past, as well as in much of the Arab world, authoritarian dictatorships dominated by a ruling upper class were the norms. The actions of the US in Iraqi Freedom unseated Saddam Hussein, but all of the efforts from 2003-2007 in developing a top down political reconciliation were largely ineffective. No solution set, couched in elections or otherwise, were broadly accepted by all Iraqis, and the Government of Iraq under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was seen by the Sunnis as merely Shi'a vengeance writ large. Political reconciliation, the keystone to the whole process, could perhaps be bought through stabilized security for all Iraqis, but not exclusively. It was clear that without ground up initiatives to bring the Sunnis into the process, violence would likely continue. If the Sunni tribes could be brought in by the US, steps toward success were possible, but not guaranteed. In retrospect, the surge approach focused on the immediate security problem, which could be addressed by military means, in order to buy time for the larger strategic problem to be addressed via the political process, and nothing more. It remains to be seen in the long term if it was successful on that front. This analysis reinforces the earlier assertions of joint doctrine

that termination in COIN is deeply intertwined with political discourse, and the strategic problems are not solvable by purely military means.

***What broad, general Approach for the Campaign will solve the problem?***

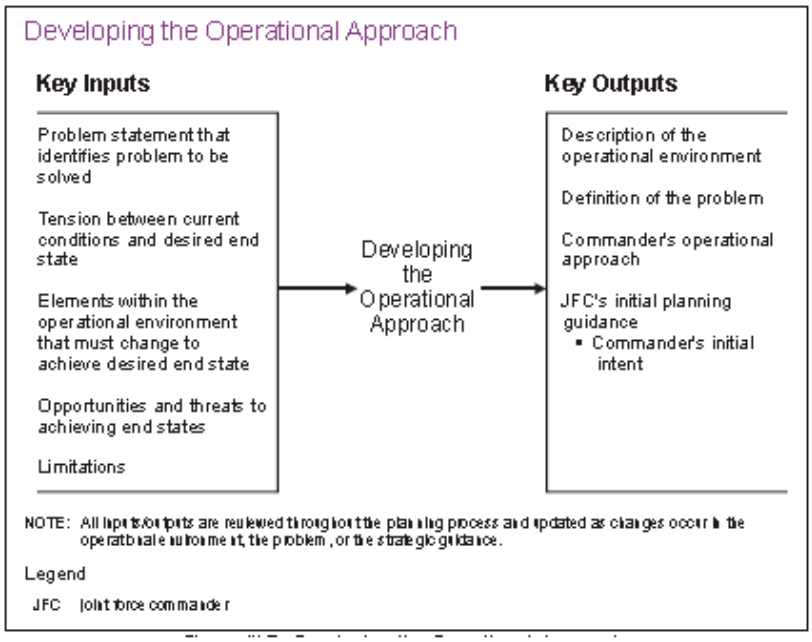



**Figure 11- Developing the Approach**

Joint Doctrine describes a method of strategic and operational approaches to COIN environments, which help planners in the design process.[43] The recommended Strategic Approach for COIN situations by JP 3-24 is *disaggregation*. Insurgencies tend to be coalitions of the willing and coerced. Evaluating an insurgency to recognize critical fissures in objectives, approaches and values reveals opportunities for the counterinsurgent. This strategy is based on the inherent vulnerabilities of a composite and coalition insurgency approach using a largely urban warfare strategy. Strategic activities that support disaggregation include: containment, isolation, disruption,

[43] U.S. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency Operations (JP 3-24)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2009), III-6-8.

resolution of core grievances, and neutralization in detail.[44] In the case of 2006-07 Iraq, a general strategy of disaggregation manifests itself initially in the discontinuation of the generic term, Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF), which was a common euphemism amongst the coalition prior to 2007. This term mistakenly guides thinking to view the insurgency in Iraq as one coherent whole, and made approaches to the problem homogenized. This type of thinking also partially rationalized the thinking that building the Iraqi Security Forces was the logical answer to the problem, if the insurgency was "one" problem. David Kilcullen, the noted COIN theorist, describes this separation of the "accidental guerilla" from the hard core who prove to be irreconcilable, as critical to any long term chances of success. Heavy handed efforts focused exclusively on capture and killing of insurgents in the "war amongst the people" invariably generated people sympathetic to the insurgent cause. A full coherent approach to the operational and strategic problems in play required a more variegated method. By approaching the strategy as a combination of political efforts to accommodate some of the actors, especially those who are interest-based, with relentless pursuit of the extremist fringe, who are values-based, the process of disaggregation can be accelerated.

> The Operational Approach, or theory of action, is a hypothesis-the broad approach to resolving the problem. The operational approach is not a course of action, but instead a broad approach that provides insight into how to solve the problem. The operational approach should address the problem statement in two ways: first, to reinforce the positive actions that support the desired end state; and second, to suggest actions to counter negative actions to overcome anticipated resistance to the desired end state. The operational approach (theory of action) should provide broad conceptual coherence to unify the environmental frame, the problem frame and the design concept.[45]

[44] U.S. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency Operations (JP 3-24),* III-6-8.

[45] Jack D. Kem, *Design: Tools of the Trade 2d Edition,* Monograph, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2009) 48-49.

The influence of the design movement, reflected in Joint doctrine, seeks a methodology toward greater level of resolution to "apply critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe complex, ill-structured problems and develop approaches to solve them."[46] Joint Doctrine for design moved to align with Army doctrine in its inclusion and consideration of ***defeat*** and ***stability mechanisms*** as tools for developing the operational approach. Defeat mechanisms apply combat operations against an active enemy force, while stability mechanisms are primary method which friendly forces affect civilians.[47] Given the strategy of disaggregation, and an understanding of the actors in play, the use of defeat and stability mechanisms provide a mechanism to develop broad approaches that lead to Logical Lines of Operation (or LLOs), or Lines of Effort (LOE.)

The four problems sets, discussed much earlier, combined with the macro competing COGs and initial decisive point analysis, provide the framework to consider the defeat and stability mechanisms necessary to move the Iraq system toward the desired end state. In macro terms, extremist COGs (JAM/AQI) would most likely be approached via defeat mechanisms, specifically destroy, in the case of AQI, and disintegration/isolation in the case of JAM.[48] In each case, it is helpful to consider the *elements* of an insurgency to avoid seeing even the amalgamation of JAM as one

[46] The U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, *Art of Design Student Text, Version 2.0,* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2010), 120.

[47] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, *U.S. Army Stability Operations Field Manual (FM 3-07),* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), 4-12-14.

[48] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, *Operations (FM 3-0),* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2008), 6-9-10. **Destroy** means to apply lethal combat power on an enemy capability so that it can no longer perform any function and cannot be restored to a usable condition without being entirely rebuilt. **Disintegrate** means to disrupt the enemy's command and control system, degrading the ability to conduct operations while leading to a rapid collapse of the enemy's capabilities or will to fight. **Isolate** means to deny an enemy or adversary access to capabilities that enable the exercise of coercion, influence, potential advantage and freedom of action.

coherent whole. FM 3-24 describes the common attributes of an insurgency in terms of five key elements: movement leaders, combatants, political cadre, auxiliaries, and the mass base.[49] When we break down the JAM into components we find that the disintegration/isolation of the JAM does not require the capture or killing of all its members, but rather merely separating the most extreme elements from the less extreme base. In an environment where a population does not require JAM's protection in order to survive in a fight against AQI extremism, fault lines appear within groups of JAM, and their message of being the protectors of Shia Islam becomes vulnerable, especially in cases of JAM excesses. In some cases, these groups begin to fight each other. In each case, the counterinsurgent must use multiple lenses to analyze the threat and develop a unique approach accordingly, within the strategy of disaggregation. Within the Sunni Resistance COG, which was primarily interest-based, stability mechanisms of influence and control were dominant. By extending opportunity to them, tribal leadership could be co-opted toward the goal of population security, and eventually toward the strategic objective of reconciliation and participation.[50]

Defeat and stability mechanisms make up direct approaches and are combined with indirect approaches that emphasize development and diplomacy.[51] The general flow of operational approach from a doctrinal perspective is to begin the campaign with direct approaches predominating and slowly work toward indirect approaches as the counterinsurgent gains success. Any effective overall approach must have both

[49] U.S. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency Operations (JP 3-24)*, II-17-18

[50] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, *U.S. Army Stability Operations Field Manual (FM 3-07)*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), 4-12-14. **Influence** involves altering the opinions and attitudes of the host-nation population through information engagement, presence, and conduct. **Control** involves establishing public order and safety; securing borders, routes, sensitive sites, population centers, and individuals; and physically occupying key terrain and facilities. As a stability mechanism, control closely relates to the primary stability task, establish civil control.

[51] U.S. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency Operations (JP 3-24)*, III-6-7.

components, direct and indirect, to be a viable operational approach, as insurgencies will not be resolved by purely military means. Whereas direct approaches are essential to establish workable conditions on the ground, there is still the requirement for long term diplomatic and developmental actions to make any security situation enduring. In the case of Iraq, direct approaches against the main groups created the time required to develop indirect approaches for long term success. All of the security efforts were a means to an end, to get the key parties necessary for a long term peace to agree on reconciliation. This had to be shaped through economic, social and cultural means that solidified the security gains. The operational approach reflects an ability to foresee predictable transitions and make decisions. Forces utilized for the direct approach in an area that are successful in moving toward a more balanced or indirect approach will need to be shifted to other areas in need of direct approaches as the counterinsurgent consolidates gains, and increases the government's control.

This approach of direct "ways", utilizing defeat and stability mechanisms, and indirect "ways," utilizing development and diplomacy, represents a theory of action, or hypothesis of how to get to a pre-determined end state. The operational concept is the methodology of displaying this and coordinating the actions in time and space. It also helps the designer understand and communicate priorities, and make informed changes accordingly. The operational concept will, if done correctly, answer the question of "are we winning?" For an operational approach or concept to be complete, it must be able to address the critical question of "are we winning?" Utilizing the operational concept, a coherent combination of approach, decisive points organized on lines of operation and effort and clear recognitions of transitions, a commander is better able to visualize

success and make decisions about the future. One of the tools the operational commander uses to clearly communicate priorities and offset potential culmination is phasing. The operational concept will identify a series of decisive points to be acted on, within the capability of the joint force, in the pursuit of objectives. When too many objectives are pursued simultaneously, or operational reach is exceeded, culmination may occur.[52] This condition presented itself in the dilemma of establishing security in Baghdad in 2006-07, with a shortage of troops and a strategic clock running to make a clear difference in Iraq security.

LTG Odierno, the commander of MNC-I understood the dynamics involved in troop availability as his primary risk in culmination, and saw two approaches for securing Baghdad. The first approach was to maintain the current level of effort and surge capability to dominating the approaches (or belts) outside of Baghdad (See Figure 9 Adversary Objectives and Approach Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Adversary Objectives and Approach Jaysh Al Mahdi (JAM) Special Groups). The second approach was to surge all capability to securing Baghdad proper, and defer the battle of the belts to when the surge forces arrived. LTG Odierno decided early to accept more risk in northern Iraq in order to get the combat power necessary to commence the clearance operations required for the battle of Baghdad. As surge forces began to arrive in February of 2007, additional forces were applied to Baghdad proper and to the Baghdad belts at approximately equal rates, allowing the clearance of neighborhoods and simultaneously interdicting belts where accelerants entered into Baghdad. Eventually, the focus of

[52] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), III-34. **Culmination**, during stability operations may result from the erosion of national will, decline of popular support, questions concerning legitimacy or restraint or lapses in protection leading to excessive casualties.

MNC-I would continue concentrically out to interdict the main routes into Baghdad and control more terrain. This series of events is a manifestation of how the use of phasing prevents culmination and recognize transitions in the operational design.

The establishment of direct coalition presence 24/7 in fault line neighborhoods, combined with tactics of restricting access to these neighborhoods through "gated communities" or the establishment of walls of concrete barriers that surrounded neighborhoods and manned checkpoints that controlled access in and out began a series of difficult fights within Baghdad. The persistent coalition presence undercut insurgent group's inroads to the population, and forced the extremist groups to fight or be marginalized. The months of May-July 2007 represented some of the most lethal in regards to coalition casualties, but were also the light at the end of the tunnel. Whether the approach of MNF-I was the proximate cause of the improvement in security is a matter of dispute, but the results of improved security in Iraq and the air of optimism that emerged through fall of 2007 decisively changed the tone of the Iraq war.

This journey through the reframing events of the Surge of 2007 is the connection between the ethereal concepts of design and their practical application in the Iraq case, using the elements of operational design to interpret the environment, define the problems, develop an approach and construct a design for a Phase IV and V campaign. The challenges of reframing are inherently strategic in nature, and require the dramatic shifts in viewpoints (and often personnel) to revise the assumptions and objectives on which the campaign is based. The Iraq case provides a rich example of how this happens in reality, and how this shift generates new perspective on problems, and opens doors to new approaches and ideas which can lead to rapid, positive change. The next chapter

explores the success of the Surge, and how it helps joint planners explore similar situations in planning.

# CHAPTER 6

## Operational Approach and Concepts: Was the Surge successful and how does this help us in other problems?

There is little doubt that the general opinion of most Americans is that the Iraq Surge of 2007-08 was a success. But what can we discern from the Iraq case that is, at some level, enduring and transcends to other cases? To answer this, we must have some means of evaluating operational designs to determine the quality of the design and associated concept, without necessarily waiting to see if it works. Within the analysis of this case, we can determine at least eight evaluation criteria that determine a "good" versus a "less than good" operational concept.

First and foremost in the evaluation of an operational design and concept is the consistency and quality of the national strategy it is intended to operate within. From the analysis of the Iraq experience, we discerned that earlier approaches which were couched completely in ideologies and arbitrary timelines, refusing to address conditions on the ground and mismatch in ends, ways and means, were likely doomed to failure regardless of operational approach used. This point clearly resides at the policy and civilian leadership level and the conclusions for this thesis will recommend potential structural changes to the IPR process within contingency planning to address this issue. For an operational concept to be effective, an overarching balance of ends, ways, means and risk must be present. As we consider ends, in terms of end states or objectives, it may be more realistic if these terms were presented in a "range of acceptable outcomes." Setting high bars for the end state and objectives with low end resource expenditure is analogous to attempting pole vaulting Olympic heights with junior varsity sized poles, or in some

cases no pole. An operational design and concept that can relatively communicate the "height of the bar" would be more helpful in expressing the size of the task for civilian leadership, especially those with little connection to, or experience in, military matters. The precise wording of objectives has direct correlation to the enemies you create, and in low resource events, a conservation of enemies may be the best approach.

Second, the operational concept must clearly be a manifestation of the strategic approach. In the case of Iraq, we generally see a strategic approach of disaggregation, and the operational concepts were consistent with this approach. If we analyzed each of the lines of operation or effort from Iraq 2007-08, we would see clear coordination of the lines to achieve this strategic effect. Clearly, disaggregation is not the only strategic approach available, and others may be useful. Whatever concept is used, the operational approaches employed must manifest this strategic approach.

Third, the operational concept for a stability and counterinsurgency environment must reflect a clear mixture of direct and indirect approaches, and clear coordination between these entities. The Iraq case reflected the direct approaches of security operations and security force assistance lines combined with the indirect approaches of diplomacy focused on long term legislative reforms. The solutions to the Iraq problem set would not be achieved through purely military means for the long term. It could be argued that military means could constrict the problems to such a level as to be unnoticeable, but only if the agent is willing to enact draconian policies of suppression, as was accomplished Saddam Hussein. The efforts of Ambassador Ryan Crocker may not have been the most noticeable based on media, but were nonetheless essential to long term solutions in Iraq.

Fourth, the assumptions which underpin an operational concept must be clearly stated, and event horizons, guideposts and hedging actions assigned to those deemed to be "load bearing." Hedging actions can take the form of force structure decisions and, in some cases, branches to the base operational concept. Critical to this is the understanding of this framework during transitions, when decisions could possibly be made completely out of context, which undercut the operational concept, as occurred in Iraq of 2003.

Fifth, is that for an operational concept to be good it must be sufficiently dynamic to accommodate challenges to the framing assumptions and be sufficiently predictive to guide decision-making. Branches and sequels to the plan are essential to these criteria as well as informing a decision-maker that the design may require reframes before catastrophic failure occurs.

Sixth, the operational concept must clearly coordinate actions through priorities. There is an old adage that says, you are either a main effort, supporting effort or a wasted effort, and if the operational concept does not communicate a main effort or critical path, then it doesn't help the operational commander achieve focus, and make decisions in terms of resources. In the Iraq case, LTG Odierno understood the relative importance of Baghdad security and made decisions to surge combat power, scarce at the time, to that area. An operational concept with no discernable critical path doesn't achieve this.

Seventh, an operational concept should be able to tell a commander the answer to the question "Are we winning?" By establishing clear objectives and associated decisive points, a commander is able to discern if he is achieving relative operational advantage. But if the operational concept is not capable of communicating progress in general terms, then it is less useful. In the case of Iraq 2007-2008, the progress of the campaign was

communicated to the US Senate on September 10-11 of 2007, through the decline of attacks, downward trends of ethno-sectarian violence, and overall violence trends in Iraq.[1] Through these terms, GEN Petraeus was able to recommend a glide path of force reduction and mission shift, informed by the operational concept that guided the Surge.

Lastly, the operational concept should be able to discern opportunities in a complex and chaotic environment that warrant the acceptance of risk. In the case of Iraq, opportunities to negotiate with Sunni Tribal leaders on a broad basis as well as recognize local Sunni groups that were participants in the process of establishing security was a significant risk, or, in some cases, a gamble. The operational concept informed leadership to consider the potential advantages and provide lower tactical commanders the flexibility to pursue these opportunities. The essence of the operational design supporting the surge of 2007-08 recognized the opportunities developing in the situation and supported GEN Petraeus's decisions to accept more risk in reaching out to the Sunni community.

All of these insights offer the opportunity for the future joint force commander and his supporting planning staff to avoid the mistakes that occurred in the Iraq case. It is critical to reemphasize the point of chapter four, and joint doctrine, that it is essential for the joint force commander to maintain the intellectual curiosity, discipline and engagement to guide the planners through the operational design, as the senior practitioner of operational art. This responsibility he cannot delegate, and will contribute more to the success of the campaign than anything else.

[1] David Petraeus, Interview by Senate Armed Services Committee, *Multi-National Force Iraq-Charts to Accompany the Testimony of GEN David H. Petraeus*, September 10-11, 2007.

## CHAPTER 7

# Conclusions and Recommendations

The American experience in Iraq draws to a close and in the words of Ambassador Ryan Crocker, "What the world ultimately thinks about us and what we think about ourselves, I think is going to be determined much more by what happens from now on than what has happened up to now."[1] It is reasonable that mistakes were made in the planning process and in execution that were identified and discussed up to this point. The campaign occurred in the same fog and friction that defines all war in Clausewitzian terms. What is more critical is what can we do to avoid similar mistakes in the future? Are there doctrinal and procedural methodologies that may prevent making these same mistakes in the future? The answer is a nuanced "yes."

Joint operational planning generally occurs within the frameworks of the Adaptive Planning and Execution System (APEX), which is the successor to the Joint Operational Planning and Execution System (JOPES).[2] Somewhat ironically, the APEX process initiated by Secretary Rumsfeld includes a series of required procedural events during the planning process where a combatant commander must brief their progress to the Secretary of Defense or alternately the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, known as In-Progress Reviews or IPRs. The APEX process directs four of these IPRs, generally aligned to the Joint Operational Planning Process. Originally, these IPRs where viewed by Secretary Rumsfeld as a way to directly oversee the direction that combatant

[1] Thomas E. Ricks, Interview by Charlie Rose, "A conversation with author Tom Ricks," *Charlie Rose*, PBS, February 13, 2009, and Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble,* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2009), 325.

[2] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operation Planning (JP 5-0),* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), I-3-4.

commanders were taking, and evaluate the consistency of their approaches with his "themes." It is possible that these IPRs could work in the other direction as well by providing a platform for avoiding some of the key problems that underpinned the front end of the American Iraq experience. By requiring structured Phase IV and V assumptions at any IPR A and C discussion (the earliest IPRs where framing assumptions and concept are approved), the Department of Defense could culturally begin to move past the exclusive operational fixation on Phases II and III. It is questionable, in the light of the events that occurred in OIF, that any argument presented by General Tommy Franks about the state of Phase IV in Iraq would have swayed Secretary Rumsfeld; they likely would have only lead to his relief, but the *requirement* to address the Phase IV assumption topic in IPR A and C would go a long way to broadening our approach to contingency plans, and require uncomfortable realities to be stated in public forums.

Second, and tied to the first, is reconsideration of how we approach operations in deliberate planning. Despite the fact that the approach to planning is teleological, or end state driven, we generally approach the planning process from the start of a campaign to the finish, rather than from the end state backward. The sequence of planning should shift from planning Phase 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 to a Phase 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. This, conceptually, is easy to say and hard to do. Army doctrine for years has generally recommended the planning of all tactical operations beginning with "actions on the objective," and working your way backward to the beginning.[3] However, in application, few units are able to use this approach because of the complexity involved. The challenges of backward planning are surmountable and would lead to a broader understanding of future problems that arise

[3] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, *The Operations Process (FM 5-0)*, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2010), Appendix B.

from early decisions, as was specifically manifested in the OIF decision to turn off force flow once there was success in Phase III. Traditional planning procedure is to define the conditions established by each phase that are necessary for a later phase to begin. By beginning our process of developing phase conditions starting with the termination criteria and working backward through each previous phase, it is possible to frame the campaign in a manageable way. This also reinforces the recommendation to force discussion of Phase IV/V parameters early in the planning process. These ideas are recommendations for deliberate planning, as opposed to crisis action planning, where an immediate concern for vital interest is in play. But in the case where campaigns are developed under deliberate planning methodologies, the backward approach would address many of the problems.

Third, is the incorporation into both Joint and Service doctrine, the ideas of Assumption Based Planning (ABP) and formalizing this into our APEX procedures. Placing more intense rigor on the framework assumptions will serve two interlocked purposes. First, it adds a structure to the development of assumptions that is woefully short in our current joint doctrine. Beyond understanding the definitions of assumptions and some discussion of the relationships between assumptions and our Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIR), our current doctrine provides no substantive process for developing and evaluating assumptions, and ABP would go a long way to correcting this deficiency. Second, the integration of ABP procedures into APEX would provide civilian leaders a better understanding of the underpinnings of a joint campaign plan, and perhaps avoid disastrous decisions. Perhaps understanding the magnitude of the risk associated with the "load bearing assumptions" regarding Phase IV in the

beginning of the campaign would have made decisions made in haste seem more risky, and possibly avoided the events of late 2003-04.

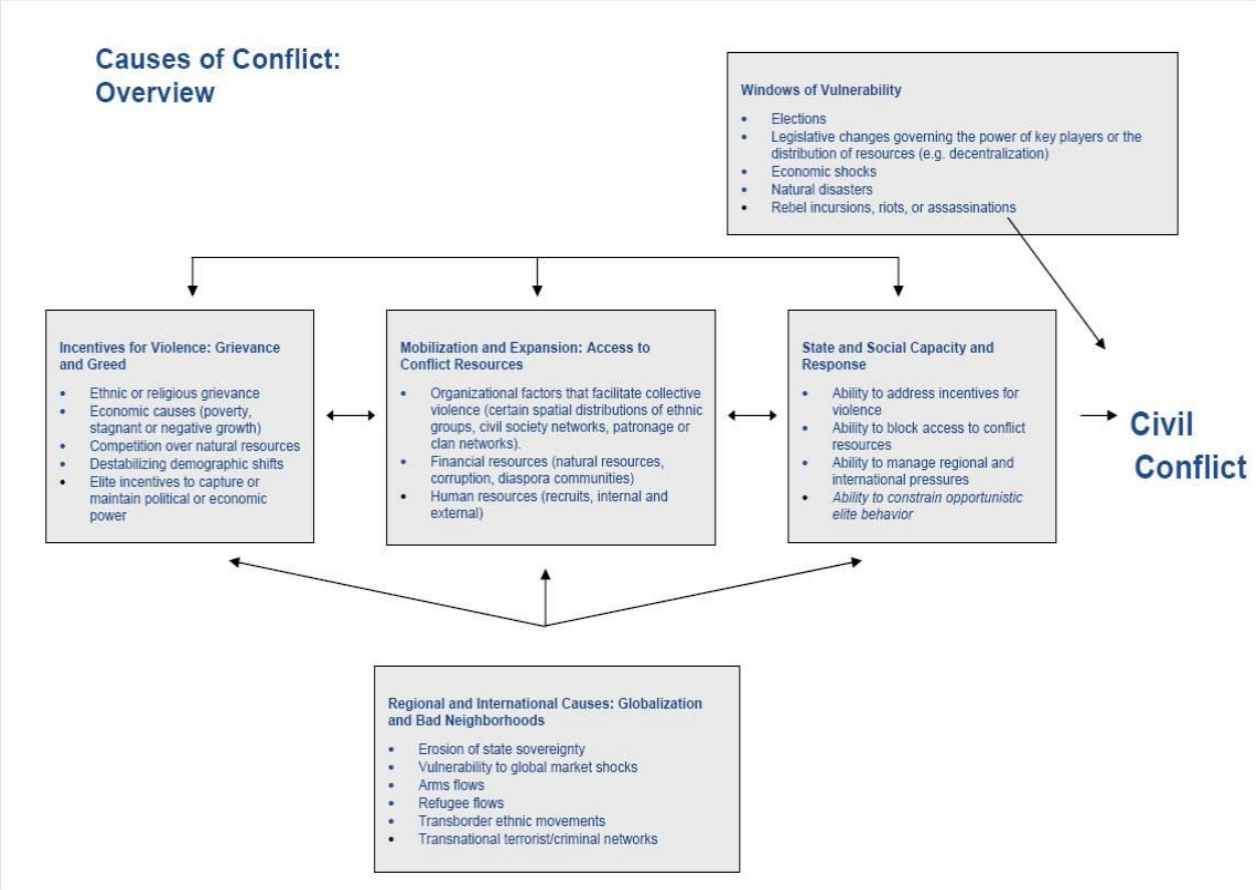
The final conclusion is the termination of the arc associated with the analysis of the three Generals in position to "change" the dynamics in the Iraq case. "Policy is fact to the deliberate plan," according to Dr. Gregor, a Professor at the US Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, "in absence of direct contradicting evidence."[4] During the development of the plan for Operation Iraqi Freedom, our analysis reveals numerous points where policy probably undercut any substantive discussion of strategic assumptions. The sidelining of Chief of Staff of the Army and firing of the Secretary of the Army over the formers' professional judgment on the requirements of the stability phase calls to light a particular problem when policy was judged to be unrealistic. Dr. Elliot Cohen's recommendation to President Bush to press the seams between General Officers and find where they disagree in order to make hard decisions came too late in the Iraq case. In a major deliberate plan, such as the Operation Iraqi Freedom plan, APEX should require dissenting opinions, similar to the Supreme Court, to be presented to the President upon any decision for execution. Granted, the military culture is challenged to present "dissenting" opinions, and personalities matter in these cases, but if procedures *require a*n IPR of possible different interpretations, it may be enough to avert disaster.

The purpose of this analysis was to describe and deconstruct the context and events of Phase IV/V of Operation Iraqi Freedom in order to understand the process of operational design for a Phase IV/V campaign, and to develop methodologies for evaluating a design that enables the understanding necessary for success. The Iraq case

[4] William J. Gregor, "Thoughts on Joint Military Planning: The Proper Role of Assumptions in Military Planning." Monograph. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, School for Advanced Military Studies, 2008), 17.

represents an opportunity to learn and glean insights for the nature of conflict for the next generation. To be successful in the future operating environment our defense forces must constantly be seeking ways to understand the environment and design campaigns quickly and adapt faster than an adversary through constant evaluation of our construct. History will judge the American experience in Iraq and determine whether the event was a success or qualified failure. Our American journey began through the Gate of Ivory, and by so doing, we chose to delude ourselves about the reality of the challenge. Only after major setbacks in 2006 did we choose to change our path. If the efforts of the US and its allies result in a "reasonably democratic" Iraq that is stable and not a threat to its neighbors in the long term, then consideration of the contrast between what Iraq would have looked like under the continued rule of Saddam Hussein and his sons becomes more dramatic. Regardless of the direct outcome, the Iraq experience is a powerful medium to understand operational design for Phases IV-V and a great platform to improve our approach to deliberate planning in the future, and perhaps, guide our own steps in the future through the Gate of Horn.

## APPENDIX 1 EXTRACT FROM USAID CONDUCTING A CONFLICT ASSESSMENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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## VITA

COL Hovatter**,** Army Strategist (FA59) entered service in 1985 where he enlisted in the United States Army Reserve, serving as a Cannon Crewman. He attended ROTC at The Ohio State University, receiving his commission and completing his BA in Political Science in 1989. He entered active service in July of 1990 as an Engineer Officer. His operational deployments include Operation Provide Comfort in 1991 as a platoon leader, Operation Enduring Freedom 2001-2003, as a plans officer for the Coalition Forces Land Component Command, Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 3rd Infantry Division as Multi-National Division Baghdad (2005) and Multi-National Division Center (2007), serving as the Assistant Chief of Staff (G5) Plans, and Operation Enduring Freedom (2008) where he served in the USFOR-A plans section. He attended US Army Command and General Staff College (2004), and the School for Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth (2005). His most recent assignments include Division Chief, Science and Technology Division, Army Capabilities Integration Center (TRADOC), Branch Chief, Conflict Assessment Branch, Future Warfare Division (ARCIC), and Military Faculty/Course Developer at the Joint Forces Staff College in Joint and Combined Warfighting School. COL Hovatter is married to the former Amie Bolduc since 2000, and they have two children Benjamin (10) and Gabriella (8), and live in Chesapeake, Virginia.