Choosing War:
The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath

by Joseph J. Collins

occasional paper

The National Defense University (NDU) educates military and civilian leaders through teaching, research, and outreach in national security strategy, national military strategy, and national resource strategy; joint and multinational operations; information strategies, operations, and resource management; acquisition; and regional defense and security studies.

The Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) is a policy research and strategic gaming organization within NDU serving the Department of Defense, its components, and interagency partners. Established in 1984, the institute provides senior decisionmakers with timely, objective analysis and gaming events and supports NDU educational programs in the areas of international security affairs and defense strategy and policy. Through an active outreach program, including conferences and publications, INSS seeks to promote understanding of emerging strategic challenges and policy options.

NDU Press of INSS publishes books, monographs, reports, and occasional papers on national and international security affairs, defense policy, and military strategy, primarily the output of university research and academic programs. In addition, it produces *Joint Force Quarterly*, a professional military and security journal published for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Choosing War

Choosing War:
The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath

by Joseph J. Collins
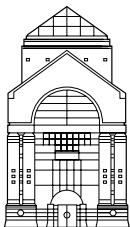
Opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Defense Department or any other agency of the Federal Government. Cleared for public release; distribution unlimited.

Portions of this work may be quoted or reprinted without permission, provided that a standard source credit line is included. NDU Press would appreciate a courtesy copy of reprints or reviews.

First printing, April 2008

Contents

Preface

Since 2006, the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) has contributed to the Project on National Security Reform's study of the interagency process. The Project's mission is "to assist national leadership in improving the U.S. Government's ability to effectively provide for the nation's security in the 21st century." This study is aimed at developing an interagency reform agenda that would parallel the historic Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. The Project on National Security Reform is a nonpartisan initiative hosted by the Center for the Study of the Presidency. As part of this cooperative effort and in furtherance of the INSS mission to inform the national defense policy debate, INSS is publishing selected analyses on national security reform. This paper is a contribution to this endeavor.

The war in Iraq reminds us of the role that uncertainty and friction play in both the planning and the execution of military operations. Uncertainty and friction also apply to writing history and analyses of decisionmaking. At this juncture, there are no final truths about the war in Iraq, only early attempts to create a record. Those who demand complete and indisputable analysis of the war should remember that in the fall of 2007, some of our best scholars are still arguing over how World War I started.

While any errors in this paper are mine alone, many people lent their time and talents to help me. I learned much from colleagues and friends in the Department of Defense and in the interagency during my service in the Pentagon from 2002 to 2004. Frank Miller, late of the National Security Council staff, Colonel John Setter, USAF, late of the Joint Staff, and Regis Matlak, a senior intelligence officer, were key planners who were most generous with their time and observations. Dr. Catherine Dale, formerly of the Department of Defense and now with the Congressional Research Service, shared important recollections of her time in Iraq. I also expanded my knowledge of the intricacies of high-level planning by reading parts of a book-length manuscript by my former boss, Under Secretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith. When published, his account will be a significant contribution to our understanding of the early war years.

Many of my National Defense University colleagues read various versions of the manuscript and contributed both general comments and observations from their particular expertise. At the National War College, Professor

MMeasured in blood and treasure, the war in Iraq has achieved the status of a major war and a major debacle. As of fall 2007, this conflict has cost the United States over 3,800 dead and over 28,000 wounded. Allied casualties accounted for another 300 dead. Iraqi civilian deaths—mostly at the hands of other Iraqis—may number as high as 82,000. Over 7,500 Iraqi soldiers and police officers have also been killed. Fifteen percent of the Iraqi population has become refugees or displaced persons. The Congressional Research Service estimates that the United States now spends over $10 billion per month on the war, and that the total, direct U.S. costs from March 2003 to July 2007 have exceeded $450 billion, all of which has been covered by deficit spending.[1] No one as yet has calculated the costs of long-term veterans' benefits or the total impact on Service personnel and materiel.

The war's political impact also has been great. Globally, U.S. standing among friends and allies has fallen.[2] Our status as a moral leader has been damaged by the war, the subsequent occupation of a Muslim nation, and various issues concerning the treatment of detainees. At the same time, operations in Iraq have had a negative impact on all other efforts in the war on terror, which must bow to the priority of Iraq when it comes to manpower, materiel, and the attention of decisionmakers. Our Armed Forces—especially the Army and Marine Corps—have been severely strained by the war in Iraq. Compounding all of these problems, our efforts there were designed to enhance U.S. national security, but they have become, at least temporarily, an incubator for terrorism and have emboldened Iran to expand its influence throughout the Middle East.

As this case study is being written, despite impressive progress in security during the surge, the outcome of the war is in doubt. Strong majorities of both Iraqis and Americans favor some sort of U.S. withdrawal. Intelligence analysts, however, remind us that the only thing worse than an Iraq with an American army may be an Iraq after the rapid withdrawal of that army. The 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq's future stability said that a rapid withdrawal "almost certainly would lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in Iraq, intensify Sunni resistance to the Iraqi government, and have adverse consequences for national reconciliation." The NIE goes on to say that neighboring countries might intervene, resulting in massive casualties and refugee flows.[3] No one has calculated the psychopolitical impact of a perceived defeat on the U.S. reputation for power or the future of the overall war on terror. For many analysts (including this one), Iraq remains a "must win," but for many others,

despite the obvious progress under General David Petraeus and the surge, it now looks like a "can't win."

To date, the war in Iraq is a classic case of failure to adopt and adapt prudent courses of action that balance ends, ways, and means. After the major combat operation, U.S. policy has been insolvent, with inadequate means for pursuing ambitious ends. It is also a case where the perceived illegitimacy of our policy has led the United States to bear a disproportionate share of the war's burden. U.S. efforts in Iraq stand in stark contrast to the war in Afghanistan, where, to the surprise of many, U.S. friends and allies have recently taken up a larger share of the burden of that conflict. Afghanistan has become the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) war, but the war in Iraq has increasingly become only a U.S. and Iraqi struggle. The British drawdown in Basra in the summer of 2007 heightened the isolation of the U.S. and Iraqi governments.

The goal of this case study is to outline how the United States chose to go to war in Iraq, how its decisionmaking process functioned, and what can be done to improve that process. The central finding of this study is that U.S. efforts in Iraq were hobbled by a set of faulty assumptions, a flawed planning effort, and a continuing inability to create security conditions in Iraq that could have fostered meaningful advances in stabilization, reconstruction, and governance. It is arguable whether the Iraqis will develop the wherewithal to create ethnic reconciliation and build a coherent national government. It is clear, however, that the United States and its partners have not done enough to create conditions in which such a development could take place. With the best of intentions, the United States toppled a vile, dangerous regime but has been unable to replace it with a stable entity. Mistakes in the Iraq operation cry out for improvements in the U.S. decisionmaking and policy execution systems. In turn, these improvements will require major changes in the legislative and executive branches, as well as in interagency processes.

A comprehensive narrative of the war is beyond the scope of this project.[4] Many key actors have not yet given their sides of the story. Given classification problems, the role played by intelligence and information operations can only be partially dissected. There is sufficient information, however, to make preliminary conclusions, especially since the focal point here is on the major decisions made at the Presidential, interagency, Cabinet department, and theater levels, all of which are areas of relatively rich documentation. The first four parts of this study will briefly analyze the context of the war and how the United States planned for it. The fifth section will analyze the decisionmaking process. The final section will

discuss potential changes to our decisionmaking, organizational, and operational systems.[5]

The Context

After favoring Saddam Hussein in his long war with Iran, the United States was shocked when the unpredictable dictator invaded Kuwait, a state to which he owed dozens of billions of dollars for its support in the struggle with Iran. In August 1990, the United States organized a vast international coalition and in the following year forced Saddam from Kuwait. Down but not out, Saddam managed to put down subsequent rebellions in the south (among the Shi'a) and the north (among the Kurds) of Iraq. Today, the coalition's failure to "finish the job" in Iraq in 1991 is often seen as a huge mistake. Critics have argued that Saddam was on the ropes and that he was ripe for not just a knockdown, but a knock-out blow. In 1991, however, President George H.W. Bush and his National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, saw it differently. Years later, President Bush and Scowcroft wrote:

> While we hoped that a popular revolt or coup would topple Saddam, neither the United States nor the countries of the region wished to see the breakup of the Iraqi state. We were concerned about the long-term balance of power at the head of the Gulf. Breaking up the Iraqi state would pose its own destabilizing problems. . . . Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq, would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in midstream, engaging in "mission creep," and would have incurred incalculable human and political costs. . . . We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad, and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed. . . . Under those circumstances, there was no viable "exit strategy" we could see, violating another of our principles. . . . Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations' mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to establish. Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still [in 1998] be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land.[6]

From 1991 to 2003, Saddam continued to rule, putting down sporadic revolts, and turning the Iraqi state into a kleptocracy, a money-making enterprise for himself and his cronies. Public and private infrastructure

decayed. The regular Iraqi army and air force declined in readiness but remained formidable by regional standards. Following a doctrine of dual containment for Iran and Iraq, the United States and coalition partners kept Saddam's regime contained and constrained by using their air forces to enforce United Nations (UN)-supported (but not explicitly authorized) no fly zones in the northern and southern thirds of the country. This required complex and continuous air operations run out of the Gulf states—especially Saudi Arabia—and Turkey. On a daily basis, enforcing the two no fly zones required up to 200 aircraft and 7,500 airmen. In all, 300,000 sorties were flown. In 2002 alone, Iraq attacked coalition aircraft on 500 occasions, 90 of which resulted in coalition airstrikes, some of which were calculated to be helpful in a potential future conflict.[7]

Saddam's regime was also subject to strict sanctions, and the UN later came to provide food and medicine for the Iraqi people in return for regulated oil exports in the oil-for-food program. Over the years, Saddam found a way to profit from the sanctions, stockpiling cash and building palaces as his people withered. After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, UN investigators exposed many people (including some foreign government and UN officials) who had taken bribes of one sort or another for cooperating with Saddam. As the 20th century came to an end, however, Saddam's propagandists had convinced many in the West that the UN-approved sanctions were hurting the people and especially the children of Iraq. The sanctions regime was on thin ice. Indeed, the steady unraveling (and outflanking) of international sanctions became a subsidiary factor in the litany of reasons to go to war with Saddam.

After Operation *Desert Storm* in 1991, UN inspectors hunting weapons of mass destruction (WMD) played a long cat-and-mouse game with Saddam's military and intelligence bureaucracies. In 1998, Saddam unilaterally ended the inspections, raising suspicion in the West and at the United Nations that he was accelerating his programs. President Bill Clinton later conducted punitive strikes on Iraq with the tacit support of many nations in the Security Council.

To the incoming Bush administration in 2001, Saddam was a tyrant, a regional bully, and a supporter of terrorism. The new administration was also composed of many veterans of the first Gulf War—including Vice President Richard Cheney and his chief of staff Lewis Libby, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and her deputy Stephen Hadley, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and National Security Council (NSC) staff member Zalmay Khalilzad[8]—who also saw Saddam Hussein as an ugly piece of unfinished business from their collective past.

Saddam's relationship with terrorists was always a concern. Years later, analysts would argue about whether Saddam had an operational relationship with al Qaeda, but in truth, his relationships with many terrorist groups were active and never in doubt.[9] He was among the most active supporters of Palestinian terrorism. The Mujahideen-e-Khalq, a leftist, anti-Iranian terrorist/military force, was resident in Iraq, conducted operations against Iran, and cooperated with Saddam's paramilitary and armed forces. Also, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who became al Qaeda's leader in Iraq, was resident for a time in a remote, Kurdish-controlled section of northern Iraq with his group, Ansar al-Islam, before the U.S. invasion. He had visited Baghdad and received medical treatment there.[10]

Zarqawi did not have an operational relationship with Saddam's intelligence force, but they clearly had communications and a symbiotic coexistence. Initially, Zarqawi was independent and not a subordinate of Osama bin Laden. However, the similarities between Zarqawi's and bin Laden's organizations attracted the attention of U.S. friends in Kurdistan who brought Zarqawi's group to the attention of U.S. planners. In the runup to the war, the radical Zarqawi was cooperating with both the Ba'athist regime and al Qaeda. After establishing his reputation as the most energetic Salafist terrorist leader in Iraq, he merged his group with al Qaeda and became its post-Saddam emir.[11]

Since the Republicans had last been in power, Saddam had tried to assassinate the elder President Bush. The sanctions against him were weakening. He had ignored many UN Security Council resolutions. His possession of chemical weapons and illegal missiles and his active WMD research and development (R&D) programs were widely held articles of faith among security experts. His relationship with terrorist groups was beyond question. Even the Clinton administration—after congressional pressure—had declared that regime change in Iraq was U.S. policy. Despite the now-well-known decay in his regime, "what to do about Saddam" was an important issue for the new Bush administration.

After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, Saddam's regime took on a more ominous appearance. The vast majority of Bush administration officials did not believe that Saddam had anything to do with 9/11, but they saw new reason to be concerned about Saddam and his WMD programs. While an immediate attack against al Qaeda and its Taliban allies in Afghanistan was critical, so was the prevention of new attacks on the U.S. homeland, which many feared could include al Qaeda borrowing or stealing a nuclear device from a rogue state or former nuclear power.

When terrorists can strike the U.S. homeland and cause mass casualties, terrorism ceases to be only a law enforcement issue. In the eyes of the administration and most of the American people, the struggle with terrorism had become a war, and the use of military force was one of its available instruments. The President said in his introduction to the 2002 National Security Strategy that:

> The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed.[12]

Because of the new threat from al Qaeda and the dangers of proliferation, the President embraced the doctrine of preemption—which some saw as a doctrine of preventive war—and declared Iraq (along with North Korea and Iran) a member of the "axis of evil." The doorway to war was wide open.

The War Plan

Suggestions about military operations against Iraq came from the Pentagon as early as September 12, 2001, but President Bush sidelined them during the fighting in Afghanistan. In November 2001, however, on the edge of achieving initial military success in Afghanistan, he asked Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to begin planning in secret for potential military operations against Iraq. That mission passed quickly to the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), headed by General Tommy Franks, USA.[13] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers, USAF, and Vice Chairman General Peter Pace, USMC, played a supporting role with the activist Secretary exercising his legal authority to be the direct supervisor of the combatant commanders. Most Defense secretaries before this administration chose to work with the combatant commanders mainly through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. The role Secretary Rumsfeld played in the development of the details of the battle plan and the flow of the invasion force was unique in recent memory.

Over the next 15 months, Franks and Rumsfeld remained in close and near continuous contact. Not only were there dozens of briefings and face-to-face conversations, usually with the Chairman or Vice Chairman of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff in attendance, there was a steady stream of memos (known by his staff as "snowflakes") from the energetic Secretary that posed issues for the Pentagon and Central Command staffs. In retrospect, Rumsfeld wanted to conduct a quick, lightning-like operation in Iraq, followed by a swift handover of power to the Iraqis. He did not want a large-scale, ponderous operation like *Desert Storm*, which he saw as wasteful and outmoded. He also did not want U.S. troops unnecessarily bogged down in an endless postwar peace operation.[14] Long, costly, manpower-intensive postcombat operations were anathema to Rumsfeld, who was as interested in force transformation as he was a potential war in Iraq. In some ways, the war in Afghanistan—with a small ground force (ably assisted by Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] paramilitary forces), mated to superb communications, high-tech air assets, precision guided munitions, and timely intelligence—was a conceptual model (but not a cookie cutter) for what Rumsfeld wanted to see in the new Iraq war plan.

Throughout their dialogue, and into the deployment of the force, the aggressive, hands-on Rumsfeld cajoled and pushed his way toward a small force and a lightning-fast operation. Later, he shut down the military's automated deployment system, questioning, delaying, or deleting units on the numerous deployment orders that came across his desk.[15] For his part, Franks—who shared Rumsfeld's belief in the importance of speed—was caught between trying to placate his boss and to satisfy the physical needs of his forces. On the allied front, the United States made a concerted attempt to garner support within the UN and among allies, but unlike Operation *Desert Storm* or Operation *Enduring Freedom*, the permanent members of the Security Council decided that they wanted no part in either authorizing or participating in the operation. Rubbing salt in the wound, Germany and France led the battle against the United States on this issue.

According to secondary sources, Franks may have briefed the President on his war plan as many as 10 times. He started using a modified version of the old 1003V war plan but then developed three new varieties: a generated start plan, a running start plan, and a hybrid plan. In the end, the last version, Cobra II, was strongly influenced by "edits" from the field.[16] It called for a force of about 140,000 troops—one-third the size of the force in the plan that was on the shelf when the administration came to power.

The main strike elements of the plan were a few thousand special operators and two ground divisions (one Army and one Marine), with elements of three other Army divisions and an Army parachute infantry brigade later inserted into the fray. Given the effects of previous air

operations and the need to be unpredictable, the notion of a long, pre–ground-attack air operation was discarded, which aided the element of surprise. Few U.S. allies would sign up for the initial assault. A low level of allied commitment no doubt encouraged an already reluctant Turkish government—faced with strong public opinion against the war—to disallow the use of its territory to launch a northern front in Iraq with the powerful U.S. 4th Infantry Division.

Franks never briefed either Rumsfeld or Bush on options short of war. A simple soldier, Franks took his charge to prepare a war plan as a mission to develop a full-scale, direct military approach to the overthrow of Saddam's regime. There were never plans for creating enclaves, supporting a guerrilla war, or using only special operations forces and airpower in a coercive manner. The CIA and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Policy did look at the possibility of covert action or actions short of war, but no agency believed that such actions could take out this entrenched regime and replace it with a better one. The CIA also did not have an active set of relationships with resistance movements in Iraq as it did in Afghanistan.[17] In addition, much critical intelligence about Iraq was not verifiable against sources on the ground. There were grave limits on the U.S. ability to confirm judgments that we believed were true.

For their part, the Joint Chiefs of Staff—statutory military advisors to the Secretary of Defense, the President, and the National Security Council—also met with the President twice on the war plan, the last time in January 2003—in this author's assessment, around the time that the President finally decided in his own mind to go to war. Aside from Army General Eric Shinseki's comments that the on-scene force was small and that "it would be important to keep reinforcements flowing," all of the chiefs supported the plan.[18] None of them brought up any misgivings about Phase IV, postcombat stability operations, but that issue would be raised a month later in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, discussed below.

The administration's key congressional effort, however, had already taken place. In October 2002, President Bush sought congressional approval for a prospective military operation against Iraq. Propelled by a high threat perception, the resolution passed both houses handily. The Congressmen and Senators no doubt remembered the political penalty applied to those legislators, mostly Democrats, who had voted against Operation *Desert Storm*, which passed the Senate by only 5 votes. (In a case of historical irony, many mainstream Democrats in 2007 are finding that their vote to authorize and support the war in Iraq is now very heavy political baggage.)

International Support and Weapons of Mass Destruction

On the international front, Secretary of State Colin Powell, with the strong backing of the United Kingdom and other U.S. allies, convinced the President in August 2002 to exhaust the diplomatic effort before going to war. Late in 2002, with strong U.S. support, weapons inspections began again, and, as always, Saddam's regime continued to interfere with them. After 400 inspections, however, the UN inspectors came to no firm conclusions. Their cautious on-scene report was drowned out by many other briefings about Iraqi WMD, including one by Secretary of State Powell. In all, the existence of a large stockpile of chemical weapons and missiles and, perhaps more importantly, active missile, biological, and nuclear research programs became the top reason for invading Iraq and the reason that brought together many different factions in their desire to forcibly oust Saddam Hussein and his murderous regime.

On the eve of the 2003 war, all disputes on such details as aluminum tubes and uranium oxide from Niger aside, most international intelligence agencies believed, as did former President Clinton, that Saddam still possessed a major chemical weapons stockpile, a significant missile force, and active R&D programs for biological and nuclear weapons. I find nothing in credible sources to support the notion that the WMD threat was concocted by U.S. Government officials and then sold to a gullible public, nor do I believe that any one Iraqi source tricked us into our beliefs. No special offices within OSD or cabals of neoconservatives created the dominant perception of the danger of Iraqi WMD. We now know that there were many holes in our knowledge base, but senior officials and analysts were almost universally united in their core beliefs. As the lead key judgment in the Intelligence Community's October 2002 NIE on WMD in Iraq stated:

> We judge that Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade.[19]

This perception was aided and abetted by Saddam himself, who wanted the great powers and his hostile neighbors to believe that he had WMD programs and stockpiles. His use of chemical weapons against Iran

and the Kurds—Iraqi citizens—also gave weight to the belief in the danger of Iraqi WMD programs. Saddam's complete destruction of his stockpiles and the suspension of much of his R&D work fooled the West, as well as it did his own generals.[20] In Saddam's eyes, this deception was critical to Iraqi security. According to the U.S. Joint Forces Command–Institute for Defense Analyses (USJFCOM–IDA) project on Iraqi perspectives:

> Saddam walked a tightrope with WMD because, as he often reminded his close advisors, they lived in a very dangerous global neighborhood where even the perception of weakness drew wolves. For him, there were real dividends to be gained by letting his enemies believe he possessed WMD, whether it was true or not.[21]

The Catch-22 was that he also had many reasons to convince the great powers that he had destroyed these weapons and that the UN should end the sanctions. Inside his regime, a tangled web of lies and secrecy confused even his own generals during and after the war. According to the USJFCOM–IDA study, "the idea that in a compartmentalized and secretive regime other military units or organizations might have WMD was plausible to them."[22] Saddam's record of deception was a key factor in why intelligence analysts could not bring themselves to believe that Iraqi WMD was a dead issue. His own duplicity became a factor in his undoing.

While Secretary Powell was successful in restarting weapons inspections in Iraq despite Iraqi trickery and foot dragging, he was never able to build a consensus for decisive action in the Security Council. Furthermore, Powell agreed to support the President's decision to go to war. In mid-January 2003, with CIA Director George Tenet at his side representing the power of the U.S. Intelligence Community, Powell gave a highly publicized briefing on Iraqi WMD programs to the UN Security Council. He was later embarrassed to discover that some details that he highlighted were incorrect. When in the following month UN inspections came to naught, the die was cast for war without the public blessing of most key U.S. allies or the UN Security Council. Having found Iraq in material breach of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1441 to come clean on its WMD programs, the United States decided to try for another resolution, one that might explicitly authorize the use of force. The attempt to get yet another resolution failed due to lack of support and ended up casting doubt on the legitimacy of U.S. efforts. Later, our failure to find either WMD stockpiles or active R&D

programs did still more damage to our credibility, further retarding our efforts to gain international support.

In the end, of the nations in the region, only Israel, Kuwait, and Qatar were obviously behind the coalition effort, although many other regional states privately supported the effort. Of major U.S. allies, only the United Kingdom and Australia were ready to ante up significant military formations for the fight.[23]

Military and Interagency Postwar Plans

In many of his war plan briefings to the President, Franks mentioned Phase IV stability operations, the period after the end of major combat operations. Indeed, Franks did not underestimate the work that might have to be done. On two occasions, Franks' memoirs indicate that he told first the Secretary of Defense and then the President and the entire National Security Council that Phase IV might require up to 250,000 troops, over 100,000 more combatants than were in the initial invasion force. He also noted that this phase might last for years, although he did believe that it might be done quicker with a smaller force under the right circumstances.[24]

It was ironic that the civilian Department of Defense (DOD) leadership severely criticized Army Chief of Staff General Shinseki when he mentioned a similar level of effort ("several hundred thousand") in response to questions about postcombat troop requirements in a February 2003 Senate hearing. DOD leaders should have already been aware of Franks' estimates, which were also consistent with those of USCENTCOM's land component headquarters and its Phase IV planners. While it has never been confirmed, one may suspect that the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary were worried about not spooking the Congress on the eve of the war. It is also clear that they honestly expected a relatively easy and inexpensive occupation and that they were conscious of inflated cost and casualty estimates in previous conflicts, such as Operation *Desert Storm*.

Franks' many briefings to the President did not cover critical postwar issues that were not ordinarily in the military's sphere of competence: governance, constitutions, sectarian relations, and so forth. He emphasized tasks that the military had to do in the short run: security and humanitarian assistance. Some analysts have criticized Franks—a muddy-boots general who delayed his planned retirement to plan and run the war in Iraq—for not being interested in postwar Iraq, an area where many in uniform felt that civilians should dominate decisionmaking. Critics would point out that

most war planning was handled by Franks and his staff, but most military postwar planning efforts were left to USCENTCOM's land component.

While USCENTCOM and its land components had Phase IV plans, some of the divisions making up the force—including the 3d Infantry Division, the main attack division—did not have them. Division planners wrote in their after action review that the division had not been fully and completely briefed on the highly detailed postwar plan of its higher headquarters, the land component command. All of the invading divisions and separate brigades believed that they would be sent home as soon as practicable after the fighting stopped, no doubt a legacy of predictions that Operation *Iraqi Freedom* would take much longer than it actually did (a month).[25] The Marine headquarters I Marine Expeditionary Force and its divisional element under Major General Jim Mattis did formulate plans and standard operating procedures (SOPs), but they were deployed in the south, a safer, less contested area in the immediate postcombat phase.[26] In all, the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) plan did not generate supporting division and brigade plans, and this represents a shortcoming on the part of USCENTCOM and its land component headquarters. In all, while the military did begin to plan for this issue before civilians did, the USCENTCOM and CFLCC Phase IV planning efforts were not an effective guide for immediate post–conventional combat military policy, were not shared fully with implementing units, and did not make adequate allowances for supporting civilian entities in the reconstruction and stabilization business.

Adding to the confusion, after the conventional fighting, the original headquarters for Phase IV, the large and powerful land component command headquarters, was told to return home, and the Phase IV mission was given to the newly promoted Lieutenant General Rick Sanchez, USA, and his much smaller, tactically oriented V Corps staff. Sadly, this switch in headquarters in late spring 2003 (which has never been fully explained) came at the same time that the national plan for postwar Iraq was scrapped and replaced by more than a year of formal occupation under Ambassador L. Paul (Jerry) Bremer. In one turn of the screw, plans and management schemes were disrupted on both civil and military levels.

While formal war planning was in high gear from November 2001 up to March 2003, civilian planners in the interagency world were not included in these close-hold briefings and did not begin to make meaningful independent contributions until the summer of 2002. By then, Franks had briefed the President six times on the battle plan. Thus, instead of a military plan being built to line up with a national plan, the

interagency work on Iraq generally followed in the wake of the war plan. Moreover, postwar issues were broken up and handled by different groups that sometimes worked in isolation from one another for security reasons or for bureaucratic advantage. Complicating matters, very few humanitarian planners had access to the war plan, and very few war planners cared about anything other than major combat operations.

It was also difficult for the kind of comprehensive interagency planning necessary for success to be performed while diplomatic efforts were still in train. The NSC-led Executive Steering Group did yeoman's work to break down agency barriers and pull together the strands of a postwar plan. They began their work in the summer of 2002, taking over from a Pentagon-run interagency effort. The planning efforts of the Pentagon were so powerful and the nature of war so uncertain that the President—with the concurrence of Secretary Powell, first in October and then in December 2002—put the Pentagon in charge of initial postwar operations.

Although the outline of the postwar plan was approved in October 2002, the President did not formally approve the organization that would carry out initial stabilization and reconstruction activities, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), until December, and it was not brought into existence until January 2003. This office was subordinated to the Secretary of Defense, who put it under U.S. Central Command. This action appeared to streamline the chain of command, but it also dampened interagency cooperation. The disruptive tension between clear lines of command and interagency cooperation continued when ORHA was replaced by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) led by Ambassador Bremer, who emphasized his status as the Presidential envoy and did not report consistently to or through either the Secretary of Defense or the National Security Advisor.[27]

In the end, available secondary sources indicate that the President received several major briefings that were relevant to postwar issues, all of which were arranged by the NSC-driven Executive Steering Group.

In January, based on interagency deliberations, Elliot Abrams of the NSC and Robin Cleveland of the Office of Management and Budget briefed the President on humanitarian issues during and right after the war. The work of this interagency group (of which I was a member) focused mainly on humanitarian assistance and the handling of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The group's initial estimate of reconstruction costs was only a few billion dollars.[28] In early February, the NSC staff briefed the President on postwar relationships in Iraq, and on February 24, 2003, the President was briefed on the status of the Iraqi oil industry and the oil-for-food program.[29]

On February 28, 2003, Lieutenant General Jay Garner, USA (Ret.), briefed the President and his advisors on the initial estimates of his interagency ORHA team, which reported to Franks and the Secretary of Defense and was to be the lead office in postwar operations.[30] Because Garner had only been hired in January, his briefing was not very detailed. Indeed, Garner's team was only partially formed when it deployed. Ever the loyal soldier, Garner also did not see it as his mission to seek interagency advice or to keep the other agencies informed. Although nominally a subordinate of General Franks, Garner tended to work directly with the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary of Defense. In all, his staff officers did not reach out well or consistently to the OSD or Joint Staff.

Right before the war began, the NSC staff briefed the President in two sittings on the postwar reconstruction, governance, and security plans that had been cleared by the deputies and the principals. The essence of the plan briefed to President Bush was essentially to turn over power quickly to an Iraqi entity, administer the country through the Iraqi ministries, use the existing police and military to help run the country, and pay for most reconstruction by using Iraqi funds.[31] This briefing was entirely in keeping with Garner's plans, as well as the State and Defense Department approaches. In a few weeks, however, it would be completely overcome by events and scrapped without further interagency discussions.

One final briefing deserves to be highlighted. On March 4, 2003, the President and the NSC reviewed for a final time the U.S. and coalition objectives in Iraq. Among the objectives noted were maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, having Iraq be seen as a democratic model for the region, maintaining the coalition's freedom of action in counterterrorism, capturing and destroying WMD, and putting Iraqis in charge as fast as possible. This was one of the last major briefs before the war began, and in retrospect, was an important symbol of how high our hopes were for postwar Iraq.[32]

Starting on March 19, 2003, the major combat operations went well. The Iraqis never significantly challenged our weak supply lines. The overwhelming power of U.S. and British forces quickly accomplished tactical objectives, and the major conventional fight was over by mid-April, months ahead of schedule. The only real surprise during the fighting— and a bad omen for the future—was the sporadic but vigorous resistance put up by paramilitary irregulars, such as the Fedayeen Saddam. The much-anticipated bloody battle for Baghdad and the use of WMD did not happen, nor was there a flood of refugees.

On May 1, after landing on a U.S. aircraft carrier, President Bush proclaimed "Mission Accomplished" and called for an end to major

combat operations, which was not only a public relations bonanza for the White House, but also a call (a premature one, as it turns out) to allies and the United Nations that their help was now needed and could be provided in safety. Although Franks had talked of the possible need for a long occupation, and many others warned of the complexity of postcombat events, some officials in OSD at the urging of the Secretary of Defense were soon speaking of a rapid turnover and withdrawal, with the invasion force possibly being reduced to 25,000 to 30,000 by August 2003.[33]

In May 2003, war *A* was ending, but war *B* was about to begin. We had a complex, flexible plan for war *A* but no such plan for war *B*. War *A* was a rapid, high-tech, conventional battle, war American style, but war *B* was a protracted conflict, an insurgency with high levels of criminality and sustained sectarian violence, just the sort of ambiguous, asymmetric conflict that the American public finds hard to understand and even harder to endure. The military had not prepared for insurgency and took more than a year to adjust well in the field. From 2005 on, although short of troops, our Soldiers and Marines did a much better job in dealing with the insurgency and laid the security groundwork for successful nationwide elections and the further development of Iraqi security forces. The flare in sectarian violence in 2006 cast a pall over military efforts until the start of the surge in spring 2007. Political development and progress continue to lag behind military efforts.

From 2003 to 2007, reconstruction and stabilization activities made even slower progress than military operations. Coalition efforts did not drastically improve under the CPA or the new Iraqi government in either of its forms. Indeed, many billions have been wasted, and electricity and oil production still only match prewar levels.[34] There remains to this day a very limited capacity to execute meaningful reconstruction. Many projects never left the drawing board because of lack of security or capacity. Corruption and inefficiency also complicate everything. Billions have been spent with little return. Iraqi capacity to even accept and operate and maintain completed projects has been pathetic. According to a 2007 U.S. Government report, after the United States spent nearly $6 billion and completed nearly 3,000 reconstruction projects, the new government of Iraq has agreed to take possession of just 435 of them, worth only half a billion dollars. The rest remain idle or have been turned over to weak local governments.[35] The next section will attempt to distill what went wrong in the decisionmaking and execution before and during the early months of the war and subsequent occupation.

Errors in Decisionmaking and Execution

Problems in planning on the ground and in Washington contributed to serious shortcomings in U.S. performance in Operation *Iraqi Freedom*. With 4½ years of hindsight, it is clear that these shortcomings included:

- underestimation of the problems of occupying a fractious Muslim country the size of California
- ineffective civil and military plans for stability operations and reconstruction
- inadequate on-scene manpower and poor military reaction to rioting and looting in the immediate postconflict environment, which further encouraged lawlessness and insurgency
- provision of inadequate forces to occupy and secure Iraq, which encouraged the initiation and continuation of an insurgency
- slow civil and military reaction to the growing insurgency
- problematic funding and contracting mechanisms that slowed services and basic reconstruction, both of which were a partial antidote to insurgency
- failure to make effective use of former Iraqi military forces, which, when coupled with de-Ba'athification, alienated the Sunni minority
- slow and often ineffective development of new Iraqi security forces
- continuing inability to provide enough trained civilian officials, diplomats, and aid workers to conduct effective stabilization and reconstruction activities
- slow creation of an interim Iraqi authority that could have minimized the perception of occupation and enhanced the perception of liberation.

Of all of these mistakes, a series of faulty assumptions was one of the most significant factors in our postwar policy. These initial assumptions were a thread that ran through many missteps, and thus it is important to ask where assumptions come from. In every case, assumptions are affected by wishful thinking, stress, predispositions of the key actors, uncertainty, and the process used to arrive at decisions. For example, the policy preference of key players for no or very short postwar occupations or peace operations is just the sort of predisposition that can affect planning priorities. In complex national security operations, intelligence estimates also play a vital role. In the case of Iraq, intelligence was faulty on WMD, the state of Iraqi infrastructure, and the usefulness of Iraqi police

and military. This incorrect or dated intelligence contributed in large measure to the "rosy scenario" assumptions that infected Iraq planning.

Policy queuing was also a problem. Not all policies can be seamlessly started or terminated with optimal timing. One reason for problems in postwar planning had to do with diplomacy. The tentative scheme to manage postwar Iraq was approved in October 2002, but little could be done as diplomats attempted in vain to solve the problem without recourse to arms. One can plan war in secret, but to do postwar planning and programming, diplomacy must be winding down and war must be nearly inevitable. The salience of prewar diplomacy retarded postwar planning and activities.

The core assumption held by many leaders in the national security establishment was that the war would be difficult, the peace relatively easy, and the occupation short and inexpensive.[36] This assumption—as implicit as it was powerful—was reflected in many leadership statements, actions, and planning priorities. Right up until the start of operations, the amount of time and effort spent on the major combat operation war plan was impressive; the amount of time and effort placed on postwar planning was relatively slight in comparison. Battle plans had branches and sequels, and combat troops were prepared for eventualities. The postwar plans had little such flexibility built into them.

The supporting assumptions were five in number. First, the war was expected to include tough fighting and end in a climactic battle. Most senior national security officials expected (and realistically so) that *Iraqi Freedom* would be a bloody fight that could include the use of chemical or biological weapons. The battle for Baghdad in particular was seen as the logically bloody end to a multi-month war of maneuver. Every DOD, State Department, and CIA expert expected battle-related refugees and IDPs to be a major complicating factor in the war and its aftermath. These judgments were prudent, plausible, and consistent with previous conflicts, but none of them came to pass.

Second, our leaders were repeatedly told by exiles that the United States would be seen as liberators, welcomed with "sweets and flowers," as renowned scholar Kanan Makiya told President Bush.[37] Our most senior leaders apparently believed this and frequently said so, and many of our troops experienced heartfelt welcomes. No one estimated the time that it would take for humiliation and impatience to turn respected liberators into hated occupiers. It proved to be a painfully short interval.

While wiser heads had predicted a short honeymoon,[38] and many officials like General John Abizaid, USA, Under Secretary of Defense

Douglas Feith, the NSC staff's Zalmay Khalilzad, and ORHA's Jay Garner wanted a quick turnover of authority to Iraqis, that policy was not executed. There were situational difficulties in Iraq. There was no Iraqi equivalent of Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan. An international conference to legitimize an appointed government, as the UN-sponsored Bonn Conference did with Afghanistan, would have been very difficult to organize in the prevailing international climate. Many Iraqis were wary of a rapid turnover becoming Ba'athism without Saddam. Others worried about Shi'ite domination. The Kurds worried about both of these scenarios and also kept one eye on Turkey.[39] In a similar vein, the few hundred Iraqi National Congress exiles, led by Ahmed Chalabi, were not well or widely employed and accomplished little when they were brought into theater to help put an Iraqi face on coalition efforts. By mid-May, any sense that Western-based Iraqi exiles—strongly distrusted in any event by the CIA and the Department of State—might come to lead that country had evaporated in the pre-summer heat.

Still, psychologically, a rapid, even if partial, turnover of power to an Iraqi entity would have helped to preserve the coalition's image as a liberator and made it harder for insurgents and al Qaeda terrorists to win over adherents. In Afghanistan, the presence of an interim government from the start and the absence of a foreign occupation have made a huge difference on the ground in that nation's foreign affairs and in the perceived international legitimacy of the enterprise. The cases of Iraq and Afghanistan were different, but judging from Afghanistan, some sort of Iraqi authority could have been useful and would probably have greatly helped our policy.

For many in OSD and on the Joint Staff, getting Iraqis in charge as soon as possible was an article of faith, one that had been briefed to and approved by the President. The rapid turnover of power to Iraqis was key to the U.S. postwar plan, but it could not be arranged in advance or imposed by fiat. Khalilzad and Garner wanted to start it off by holding a nationwide meeting of notables on May 15, 2003, a followup to three previous regional conferences in February and April 2003. Bremer, who had supplanted both of these officials, thought that such a meeting would be risky and cancelled it, as well as the move to turn over elements of governmental authority rapidly to some sort of interim Iraqi body. He also asked the President to end Zalmay Khalilzad's status as a Presidential envoy, thus removing the administration's de facto representative to all elements of Iraqi society. Khalilzad's popularity in Iraq and his status as an empathetic Muslim-American were impossible to duplicate. Rumsfeld,

Powell, Rice, and Khalilzad were all surprised by this personnel shift, which was engineered by Bremer and approved by the President without benefit of interagency deliberation. The fact that Bremer did not favor a rapid turnover of power to an interim authority was not entirely clear, even in the Pentagon, until the end of the summer of 2003.[40]

Pursuant to UNSCR 1483, from May 2003 to June 2004, the United States and its coalition partners became the legal occupiers of Iraq, a fact that became more intolerable to the Iraqis as the days wore on and the dreams of reconstruction failed to come true. As Bremer settled into the headquarters—quickly canceling the nationwide meeting to prepare for an interim government, instituting de-Ba'athification, and disbanding the old Iraqi army—every major element of the plan briefed to President Bush had been abandoned because of changes on the ground, apparently without comprehensive reconsideration by the interagency or comprehensive rebriefing to the President.

In his back-brief to Rumsfeld, Jay Garner—who had complained to Bremer in Baghdad about these three policy initiatives—referred to them as the "three tragic decisions."[41] In place of a quick turnover to Iraqis, we now had a full-scale occupation of Iraq without the requisite increase in resources to carry it off. The imbalance between our aspirations and on-hand assets would continue through 2007. The President approved these changes to postwar policy, and he bears direct responsibility for not calling in all hands to create a new, well-balanced policy toward Iraq.

A third supporting assumption was that the Iraqi people hungered for democracy and human rights and that this hunger would suppress the urge to settle scores or to think in narrow tribal or sectarian terms. This presupposition undoubtedly was enhanced by Iraqi exiles, many of whom had not been home in decades. This assumption had some validity, but it came to live side-by-side with a sense that the United States and its partners were foreign occupiers and that democratic forms of government were another crusader imposition on Islamic Iraq.

As no interim Iraqi authority materialized under the CPA, the presence of a Christian-dominated coalition occupying a Muslim country became humiliating to the people of the region. Instead of being an example for the region, Iraq became an icon of perceived imperialism, a warning for all concerned not to get too close to a clumsy American leviathan that had lost much of its will and finesse. In the end, few Iraqis understood that democracy, in addition to majority rule, meant tolerance of and respect for minority rights. Ba'athists and al Qaeda–affiliated terrorists were able

to create, magnify, and exploit sectarian tensions faster than we were able to imbue Iraqis with the true spirit of democracy. This was doubly tragic because after the failure to find WMD, the White House—against Pentagon advice—pounded the democracy drum so loudly that in the minds of many, creating a democracy in Iraq rather than bolstering U.S. national security became the centerpiece of our policy.[42]

A fourth assumption was that Iraq without Saddam could manage and fund its own reconstruction. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq had not been devastated by over 20 years of war, and its middle-class, educated population was mostly intact, unlike that of Afghanistan. Oil could pay for its modest reconstruction, a process that would be made easier by a small invading force and a highly successful effort to avoid collateral damage.

In truth, unknown to policy planners and our intelligence agencies, the country's prewar infrastructure was in disastrous shape. It was further devastated by the conventional battle, the looting, and the insurgency that followed the conventional combat operations. Disorder and instability later caused a brain drain, with millions of middle-class Iraqis fleeing into exile. Billions for reconstruction were required and were later provided, but any progress made has been degraded by a lack of security, inadequate capacity, and the ill effects of the insurgency. Compounding all of this, neither ORHA nor CPA had the right people or the assets to make their presence felt throughout the country. Despite great personal sacrifices on the parts of hundreds of Americans and their allies, both organizations were ineffective, and left the vast new U.S. Embassy with "mission impossible."[43]

Finally, based on the best available U.S. intelligence, as Defense and NSC officials had briefed the President, U.S. officials assumed that they would receive great help from the Iraqi police, the army, and the ministries, all of which were seen by many experts as salvageable, malleable, and professional. None of those things turned out to be true. The police were corrupt, ill trained, and not at all concerned with the rule of law. The virtual evaporation of the army during the war and its formal disbanding by Bremer (which surprised many outside the Pentagon), and even the modest de-Ba'athification that was ordered (and then expanded by Iraqis on the ground), did nothing to replace a system where all national leadership had flowed from the Ba'ath party.[44] The Sunni minority—dominant in the army and the party—was alienated and became fodder for the insurgency. The ministries, deserted by cadres and looted repeatedly, did not continue to function effectively as had been hoped, especially since for a year, the coalition asked those ministries to report not to Iraqi authorities but to the CPA. On top of

all this, the urge for sectarian score-settling that was encouraged by al Qaeda in Iraq was strong. Elected Iraqi officials are now in charge but have proven to be generally slow to act and less than effective in most cases. The coalition rests on this two-legged stool, 5 years after the first shots were fired.

Sadly, much of the postinvasion state of affairs had been predicted. Many government and civilian experts had spoken well and loudly about the dangers of postwar Iraq, but their warnings were not heeded. Many analysts believed that the war and the subsequent peace would both be difficult. Planners and senior decisionmakers could have made better use of the report of the Department of State Future of Iraq Project, the 2002 National Defense University workshop "Iraq: Looking Beyond Saddam's Rule,"[45] or the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute report, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario*, all of which were U.S. Government–sponsored efforts. This Army study, previewed at a conference in December 2002, concluded that:

> Iraq presents far from ideal conditions for achieving strategic goals. Saddam Hussein is the culmination of a violent political culture that is rooted in a tortured history. Ethnic, tribal, and religious schisms could produce civil war or fracture the state after Saddam is deposed. The Iraqi Army may be useful as a symbol of national unity, but it will take extensive reeducation and reorganization to operate in a more democratic state. Years of sanctions have debilitated the economy and created a society dependent on the UN Oil for Food Program. Rebuilding Iraq will require a considerable commitment of American resources, but the longer U.S. presence is maintained, the more likely violent resistance will develop.[46]

The study went on to recommend that the U.S. military prepare in detail for 135 postwar tasks. Senior NSC staff officials tried to get this study briefed in the interagency to no avail.[47] A recently discovered study by planners in OSD Policy, completed right before the war, further highlighted the potential for widespread lawlessness in postwar Iraq.[48] The OSD Policy leadership passed this study to the Pentagon's uniformed leadership and asked them to send it to USCENTCOM. The command either was not able to respond to the analysis or did not have enough troops, as discussed below, to solve the problems that arose after the completion of conventional operations.

The recently declassified January 2003 Intelligence Community Assessment—a document of lesser stature than a full National Intelligence Estimate—on postwar Iraq also concluded that "an Iraqi democracy would be a long, difficult, and probably turbulent process, with potential for backsliding into Iraq's tradition of authoritarianism." It went on to highlight postwar Iraq as an environment offering opportunity to al Qaeda and to note the high probability of sectarian violence, "score settling," and Iranian meddling.[49] Warnings on various aspects of the postwar plan were also made by Representative Ike Skelton (D–MO), General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.), Senator Joseph Biden (D–DE), and others.

Why senior decisionmakers did not fully integrate these warnings into postwar planning is puzzling. Full awareness of these potential problems and the inadequate preparations to deal with them might have resulted in creating branches and sequels to existing plans, delaying the start of the invasion, or providing a larger force that could control more effectively terrain and population.

Again, many participants have not spoken on this issue. Perhaps the most senior officials were concerned that too much overt attention to the postwar phase might dampen congressional ardor for the war. Perhaps they were too busy, or the details of these studies or estimates were lost in the cloud of static that surrounds them. Perhaps, having other future operations on their mind, they did not want to maintain a major troop presence in Iraq. In the end, whether due to faulty intelligence or personal preferences, most senior national security officials behaved as if they had internalized the core assumption: the war would be hard, the peace relatively easy, and the occupation short and inexpensive.

In addition to a complex set of sensitive, inaccurate assumptions, another problem has been the inability of the coalition and the United States to put enough security forces—U.S., allied, or Iraqi—on the ground to control the country and create the security needed for governance and reconstruction. The small initial combat force pushed by Rumsfeld and designed by Franks accepted significant risk in its rear area, but it accomplished its mission. The forces adequate to win the war, however, were neither sufficient for occupation duty or for enabling reconstruction to move forward, nor were they able to deter or defeat the insurgents and protect the population.

Sadly, while the looters were demonstrating the inadequacy of the force on hand and implicitly encouraging insurgents, senior defense officials "off ramped" the 1st Cavalry Division, leaving the in-country troops without additional reinforcements.[50] Civilian DOD leaders did

not want to admit—perhaps for public relations or possible legal reasons—that by mid-summer 2003, there was an insurgency or guerrilla war going on.[51] The August 2003 bombing by insurgents of the Jordanian embassy and the UN headquarters in Baghdad, as well as the assassination of the Shi'ite faction leader Ayatollah Hakim, left little doubt that a new war had started.

Any number of close observers, civilian or former military, told the President or the Secretary of Defense that the coalition needed more troops in Iraq. Colin Powell, a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told British Prime Minister Tony Blair in November 2004 that "we don't have enough troops. We don't control the terrain."[52] According to his memoirs, Bremer also told President Bush or his key deputies on a few occasions that security was poor and more troops were needed. Bremer concluded that the United States had become the worst of all things: an ineffective occupier. He asked Rumsfeld in spring 2004 for one or two more divisions; he did not receive a reply.[53] Recent scholarship has also indicated that the Vice President was among those who were concerned over our level of effort in creating security in Iraq and wondered whether DOD and CIA were doing enough for the war effort.[54]

It is fair to ask: how many forces should be necessary to combat an insurgency in a country the size of California with a population of around 25 million people? The new Army and Marine Corps manual on counterinsurgency provides a generic guideline. The appropriate number of counterinsurgents is not the number of troops needed for tactical combat operations, but the number needed to protect the population. The manual suggests that rarely have counterinsurgencies succeeded unless there were 20 counterinsurgents for every 1,000 in the population. That means that U.S., coalition, and Iraqi forces (including policemen) should number about 500,000 reliable, trained personnel.[55] With minimal allied help, the Iraqi army dissolved, and the police in tatters, we were not at all close to that number in 2003. We have improved over time with the development of the Iraqi security forces, but the insurgents, terrorists, and advocates of sectarian violence have cut into the effectiveness of that force.

Four years after the start of the insurgency, the United States still does not have the ground troops in its base force to support the kind of troop rotations and in-country force levels necessary to create an appropriate level of security that, in turn, could help to move us in the direction of political success in the insurgency. Did this systematic failure to respond to an environmental requirement occur because Secretary Rumsfeld vetoed it to keep the overall force small; or because key generals did not think the

added troops were necessary; or because the generals knew that there were insufficient reinforcements at home and thus, more troops could not be forthcoming? More historical research is needed to explain this failure to respond to what most believe was an obvious requirement.

In 2007, the new Pentagon leadership has begun to build up the overall size of the Army and Marine Corps, but this effort is not likely to provide much relief in Iraq. Ironically, the surge is clearly proving that even another 30,000 troops on the ground could have a positive effect on population protection and counterterrorism. We still await political progress—the ultimate goal, and one that is entirely in Iraqi hands.

Three factors—independently or together—might have compensated for the low level of U.S. troops. First, additional U.S. troops would have been unnecessary if the anticipated allied forces had been forthcoming. Unfortunately, this did not happen. In the eyes of our allies and the United Nations, U.S. operations in Iraq never escaped the fact that they were viewed as illegitimate from the start, a perception enhanced by Abu Ghraib and war crimes, both real and imagined. Even after the elected Iraqi government asked for and received a UN Security Council Resolution that legitimized its status and that of coalition forces,[56] major U.S. allies have hung back, usually making only token contributions. Only the British have made a significant contribution, and even that has been greatly diminished in 2007. Other allies—Spain and Japan, to name two—contributed forces but with such stringent national employment restrictions that they were not useful for a wide range of military activities.

A second potential replacement for U.S. troops was Iraqi forces. Building a new police force and army has been expensive, painstaking, and problematic. Coalition trainers started slowly, underestimated the complexity of the task at hand, emphasized quantity over quality, became caught up in sectarian strife, and never gave the effort the priority that we give our own forces. Today, Iraqi security forces are becoming a key part of the solution, but they also remain part of the problem. Some are not well trained or equipped, although those problems are being rectified over time. Others are involved in sectarian violence or criminal behavior. Today, we are approaching the canonical 500,000 counterinsurgents, but quality, reliability, and force management remain issues, as does the specter of a civil war.

Finally, U.S. troops were (and are still) very much in the reconstruction and governance businesses. Experienced civilian officials could have taken on more of this burden, but to this day, we do not have sufficient State, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and

other civilian government experts in country. Our diplomats have done a lot with what they have, but there remains a larger issue: why do State and USAID lack the wherewithal to do their job in complex contingencies? In the absence of civil specialists, military commanders (and civilian contractors) have had to adopt governance, reconstruction, and stabilization responsibilities in their areas of operation, further taxing military manpower. In Iraq, 10 State Department–run provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) and 10 embedded PRTs are helping to take pressure off the military and provide advice to local commanders, but we are still short of the right people in appropriate quantities for reconstruction work.

U.S. problems in Iraq highlight an issue that is a perennial favorite of pundits and political scientists. Are the problems the result of people or process? Does the secret of decoding the problems of Iraq lie in understanding Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Bush, or is it all about dysfunctional interagency decisionmaking and execution processes? While there are gaps in our knowledge, there appears to be some truth in both of these different perspectives.

One can trace decisions through the actions and psychology of the main actors. There is no understanding what happened in Iraq without understanding the players, their philosophies, and their associations. The tight link between Vice President Cheney and Secretary Rumsfeld was a key association and one peculiar to this administration. One expert talked about the dominance of the Cheney-Rumsfeld viewpoint as a "thumb on the scales" of the national security decisionmaking process.[57] Secretary Rumsfeld's penchant for dealing one-on-one with the combatant commanders and diving into the details of war plans and unit deployments was also unprecedented in the postwar era. This is not to say that President Bush was manipulated by his powerful subordinates. He was very much in command and has demonstrated that he is fully capable of making decisions that run counter to the recommendations of his closest advisors. Still, in this case, the power wielded by Rumsfeld and Cheney was both considerable and unique.

Many have also commented on how the alliance of Cheney and Rumsfeld worked against the State Department under Powell. There is some apparent truth to this assertion, even if its effects are hard to assess. Pentagon bureaucrats were tightly controlled and often pushed issues to the Principals Committee, where the power of Bush and Cheney was strongest, often at the expense of the State Department. One key observer noted that many issues were later decided in private by the President and Vice President—a normal occurrence, but one that complicates our ability to account

for decisions.[58] Private talks between Presidents and Vice Presidents are not unusual, but such a close relationship between the two elected officials has seldom been combined with an unprecedentedly high level of Vice Presidential activism in the national security policy development process.

State-Defense relations, however, were a more complex issue than the relationship between their principals or the intramural to-and-fro of interagency meetings. Many State Department officers were against going to war. They favored slow rolling issues, hoping that the idea of war would go away. Others were concerned that war planning would derail diplomacy. Others knew that when it came to planning, they could not stand up to the Pentagon's capabilities. Others hated the notion that the closer war came to starting, the more the Pentagon was in the driver's seat. When the Pentagon, with Powell's acquiescence, was given the initial lead for postconflict management, many at State and USAID grumbled loudly. Still, Powell and his deputy, Richard Armitage, supported the decision to go to war, a fact that in all likelihood did not sit well with many at State. Strife and leaks followed this significant level of dissonance at State and, to a lesser degree, CIA.

Dov Zakheim, the comptroller of the Defense Department and an early supporter of President Bush, noted:

> A country that has its major agencies at war is not going to fight a war well. . . . And State and Defense were at war—don't let anyone tell you different. Within policy circles, it was knee-jerk venom, on both sides. Neither side was prepared to give the other a break. It began in 2001, got exacerbated during the buildup to Iraq, and stayed on.

He concluded that "people who had to work with and trust each other" did not do so.[59] Can there be effective policy without such trust?

Some inside-the-Beltway cynics would say that State-Defense fighting has been a constant in national security decisionmaking, but that is not true. The interagency in the first Gulf War worked well and harmoniously. Indeed, the person who ran Middle East policy issues at that time for the Pentagon was a Senior Foreign Service officer. In the 1990s, many senior Pentagon officials, like Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis Libby, came to the Pentagon having made their reputations in the State Department in the Reagan administration. Competition between ideas is essential, but significant bureaucratic conflict between State and Defense is not an organic or necessary part of our system.

One consistent problem demonstrated by George W. Bush's administration has been a failure to partner successfully, and this can be laid at the feet of the President and the people who dominated the national security apparatus. In the interagency, with the Congress, and with our allies, senior U.S. national security officials exhibited in many instances an imperious attitude, exerting power and pressure where diplomacy and bargaining might have had a better effect. In war planning, in managing the detainee issues with Congress, in routine discourse with allies, and in building international coalitions, the United States executive branch was often seen as trying to be lord and master, instead of primus inter pares. In the end, the failure to partner successfully increased friction among Defense, State, and CIA, increased partisan bickering with an already fractious Congress, complicated the detainee policy, lowered allied participation in Iraq, and hurt U.S. standing abroad.

An effective interagency decisionmaking process can partly blunt the effects of ego or hubris and make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Bad actors, to some degree, can be reined in by good process. Tough "horizontal managers" can push the vertically stovepiped agencies to work better together. In all, many of the problems associated with the invasion of Iraq had happened before but in less critical situations. U.S. decisionmaking problems in Iraq have much in common with problems present in other complex contingencies, such as Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. All of these cases have demonstrated the limitations of our interagency decisionmaking and policy execution processes.

The United States needs to do better in planning and executing complex contingencies, where all the elements of power must be applied simultaneously. To come full circle, though, no matter how the decisionmaking process is designed, it will be strongly affected by the beliefs and experience of the officials involved, especially the President who will set the tone for his or her administration. Sound national security decisions will require great people and effective and efficient processes. Both of these will require an engaged President attuned to both policy and process.

Future Presidents will have to adapt our decisionmaking and execution systems to a new, dynamic, challenging security environment. Not only will they have to do better in midrange interagency planning, but they will also have to develop and refine new capabilities to deal with the nonmilitary aspects of contingencies. In turn, this will require changes in the organizational cultures of the Armed Forces and the Department of State. The U.S. Government already has made many meaningful changes, but true reform will require concerted effort by the executive and legislative branches.

Improving the National Security Decisionmaking and Execution Systems

While some strategists believe that the United States should downplay irregular warfare and stability operations,[60] the future is likely to present complex contingencies that will require significant capabilities in which the power of the entire government will be needed to make plans to solve multifaceted problems overseas. In the next decade, the United States, in addition to maintaining readiness for large-scale conventional wars, must:

- continue stability operations, as well as stabilization and reconstruction activities, in Afghanistan and Iraq, even if the size and shape of those commitments are modified
- help partners and allies resist subversion through training, advisory elements, and security assistance
- execute coordinated counterterrorist operations activities in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia
- support future peace and stability operations in the Middle East and Africa
- be ready to manage system shocks from regime failure or radical changes in some hostile regional powers, such as Cuba or North Korea
- deter or manage traditional threats or future peer competitors and deal with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- improve homeland defense against terrorist groups, including those who might use weapons of mass destruction.

In the next decade, the need for effective joint, combined, and interagency policy planning and execution will remain significant. Major institutional planning changes will require complementary changes in training, resource allocation, and organizational cultures.

The U.S. Government has already begun to improve midrange planning. The aftermath of 9/11 saw the creation of a Department of Homeland Security, a Homeland Security Council, and a National Counterterrorism Center, as well as a set of Intelligence Community reforms. There are joint interagency coordination groups in many combatant command headquarters, and the Department of State—thanks to a push by Condoleezza Rice when she was the National Security Advisor—now has a senior Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). State

also has changed assignment patterns to better support national priorities, interagency activities, and the war on terror. USAID has created an Office of Military Affairs to improve its connectivity with the Pentagon and its various field commands. State and USAID are paying more attention to harmonizing all foreign assistance spending.

Among senior civilian DOD leaders in 2004, there was enthusiastic support for establishing S/CRS and even sharing DOD appropriations with the new State office. Inside DOD, pushed hard by Under Secretary Feith and supervised by Deputy Secretary Gordon England, a new directive and action plan on stability operations is being implemented. Preparation for stability operations has been put on par with preparation for combat. A new State-Defense center for complex contingencies has been stood up. Stability operations and preparation for irregular warfare were emphasized in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), and Special Operations Forces will be dramatically increased.[61] In Iraq and Afghanistan, amidst all the strife and bad news, there have been great improvements in counter-insurgency capabilities—including a new, joint Army and Marine Corps manual—and advisory training. Military, diplomatic, and USAID teams in both Afghanistan and Iraq are working together much more closely than they did even a year ago. In the fullness of history, however, these recent improvements will be recorded as the first steps toward improving our national decisionmaking and execution capabilities to deal with failed states and complex contingency operations. The following eight recommendations will build on these improvements and help planning in the future.

Develop New Planning Charter

First, we need a new charter for complex contingency planning. The Clinton administration's oft-ignored bible on political-military planning for complex contingencies, Presidential Decision Directive 56, was headed in the right direction. Early in the first term of President George W. Bush, the Pentagon blocked an NSC staff draft of a new contingency planning policy, all in the name of preserving the freedom of action of Cabinet officers and keeping civilians out of the contingency planning business. More input into contingency planning from civilians, of course, is not the problem; it will be a key part of the solution. While war plan security is paramount, we need to strive for more integration in policy formulation and execution.

Improve Interagency Planning

War plans are rarely briefed outside military channels. Inside the Pentagon, only a handful of civilians have access to them. This prohibition may

make sense for major conventional war plans, and it certainly makes sense for security purposes. However, since most conflicts do not end when the last hill is taken and will include stabilization and reconstruction activities that we want civilians to lead, there must be a broader sharing of contingency planning responsibilities.

The 2006 QDR's recommendation for a new interagency document called the National Security Planning Guidance is a step in the right direction.[62] The QDR calls on this new document to: "direct the development of both military and non-military plans and institutional capabilities. . . . [It] would set priorities and clarify national security roles and responsibilities to reduce capability gaps and eliminate redundancies." Complex contingency planning will require a strong NSC staff, but it also will require savvy, clear-thinking Cabinet officers who put their egos and prerogatives in check to create good policy. Who will run such a system? Clearly, the overall director must be an engaged President who is well aware of how the recommendations made to him or her were developed.

The first step to improve interagency planning would be to improve the quality of agency personnel across the board and increase the number of the best and brightest who have lived and worked in the interagency world. The U.S. Government should also follow through on its plans to create a corps of civilian and military National Security Officers who will become the masters of interagency work. Plans are also in train to create a consortium among the Government's higher learning institutions to ensure a better focus on the needs of interagency work.[63] In all, this will mean a modest increase in personnel slots in the national security–sensitive departments to cover increased interagency manning as well as training.

In addition, every executive department should insist on interagency experience for its most senior civilians and make it mandatory for promotion to the Senior Executive Service or Senior Foreign Service. Interagency experience should count as the equivalent of joint experience for military officers. Too often, the best and brightest avoid interagency assignments, where the hours are terrible and the rewards are less than those at the home agency. Too many inexperienced junior personnel have occupied the positions in some NSC staff directorates in the last two administrations. National Security Council personnel at the director level should optimally be members of the Senior Executive Service or at least colonel- or GS-15–level personnel.

It is often said that we need a Goldwater-Nichols reform for the interagency community.[64] This is a worthy ideal, but one must ask whether this landmark legislation for the Defense Department sets the

bar too high. The Goldwater-Nichols reforms of 1986 were stewing for many years and were only enacted after a series of disappointing operations in which the obvious national failure was military in nature or effect. Moreover, Goldwater-Nichols involved a department that is firmly under the command of one powerful secretary and a relatively small number of congressional committees. A full Goldwater-Nichols reform for the interagency would concern a wide array of departments and agencies and dozens of congressional committees, each of which is as resistant to changes in its power as any Cabinet department is. Finally, if one takes the thought of a Goldwater-Nichols reform literally, there would be a shift of power from the Cabinet departments to "the interagency," which would, in some instances, mean shifting power away from confirmable Cabinet officers to NSC staff personnel, who are loyal to the President and his or her agenda but not accountable to Congress. If these staff officers were made confirmable, they might be pressured to testify to their very confidential deliberations with the President. Such a shift of power to the NSC staff would undermine hundreds of laws that empower Cabinet officers and ensure that many bucks stop before they get to the President's desk.

While a full "Goldwater-Nichols for the interagency" has the right spirit and would create the maximum effect, it would be difficult to get through the Congress as a package. On the other hand, incremental changes can be watered down and might not create the right effects. In all, however, improving interagency policy decisionmaking and execution is clearly within our capability, whether we can achieve systemic change or a phased series of step-by-step improvements.

Strengthen Interagency Execution

Third, and in a similar vein, the U.S. Government needs a better system for exporting interagency efforts to the field. We often have good interagency policy decisions, but execution is usually done by stovepiped agencies. In the field during complex contingencies, the U.S. Government habitually has either a system in which one Cabinet department is nominally in charge, such as the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance or the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, or a more cooperative system, such as we have today in Kabul and Baghdad. This cooperative system features a senior military officer and a senior diplomat working together, with neither having overall charge of U.S. policy, and both answering to their respective superiors.

Today, in both Kabul and Baghdad, the arrangements are working fairly well, but that has not always been the case. Other, better

arrangements may be possible. For example, civil-military tension in Baghdad was high during the CPA period. Jerry Bremer believed that he could issue direct orders to the military commander there, whom he treated as his subordinate. Bremer—whom many saw as a world-class micromanager—also exercised uncomfortably close supervision over military activities, according to some military staffers.[65] CPA even cancelled or curtailed planned or ongoing military operations. Tensions between CPA and the military command were high.[66] Neither ORHA nor CPA had a clear chain of command. ORHA allegedly worked for USCENTCOM but reported directly to the Secretary of Defense. CPA was designed to report to the President through the Pentagon, but by fall 2003, Bremer was nominally reporting through the National Security Advisor, but sometimes directly to the President.[67]

The United States may never have a viceroy system, but more effective, efficient, and predictable arrangements that offer more unity of command are possible than the current situation. Witness, for example, the close working relationship (2004–2005) between Lieutenant General Dave Barno, USA, the former U.S. commander in Baghdad, and the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, an arrangement pushed strongly by Feith and Rumsfeld and strongly endorsed by Powell. To ensure seamless cooperation, Barno moved his office into the Embassy to be next to the Ambassador. Military staff worked closely and directly with the Embassy counterparts. Uniformed officers were even seconded to the USAID mission in the Embassy to ensure closer communication. This is the type of cooperation we should aim for in the future.[68]

We cannot afford situations where difficult personalities or ad hoc arrangements on the ground or in Washington stand in the way of effective national policy. While all potential solutions to this problem are subject to criticism, there is no excuse for avoiding and not talking about this critical issue. Getting it right in the future should be the subject of wargames and experiments conducted by cooperating agencies and supervised by U.S. Joint Forces Command and the S/CRS. Experiments and scholarly investigation may well lead to new SOPs or at least a set of common expectations.

For its part, S/CRS, which will have the national lead in reconstruction and stabilization operations, must have an active and a reserve response corps, full of volunteer interagency and civil specialists, whose contingency deployment is guaranteed ahead of time. This will take hundreds of millions of dollars per year, which—despite strong support at State and Defense—Congress has thus far been unwilling to appropriate.

In the future, S/CRS should be able to draw on the entire government as well as on the private sector to build a tailored multifunctional team for any specific mission. If the U.S Government fails to build this capability, there is little reason to maintain S/CRS and the entire conceptual system that has been built up around it.

Foster a Climate of Change

Fourth, all improvements to interagency advice and policy implementation will require cultural and organizational change. To start with, the military establishment needs to focus its planning and training more on victory in war, and not just on success in climactic battles. It is often folly to pretend that success in a final battle will lead directly to victory. Particularly in cases of regime change or failed states, postcombat stability operations will be the key to victory. They are every bit as important as the ability to move, shoot, and communicate in battle, the normal preoccupations of the soldier.

Occupation, stabilization, reconstruction, and other issues associated with state building must be better integrated into the curriculum of staff and war colleges. Language and cultural studies are already becoming more important for military officers. Wargames and experiments also need to focus more on stability operations. None of this is meant to imply that the military should take over critical postcombat activities from the State Department and USAID. The opposite is the case: State and USAID need to be resourced, organized, and directed so that they can fulfill the awesome responsibilities that they have been assigned.

Operationalize the State Department and USAID

Fifth, the Department of State and USAID personnel and organizations need to become more operational—that is, able to lead the management of grand enterprises in unsafe and austere environments. General Tommy Franks' memoirs contain the right thought: after the battle, you need lots of "boots" and lots of "wingtips" on the ground.[69] Absent the wingtips, the boots in Iraq have had to do much more than they should under optimal circumstances. This problem continues to the present day, where, for lack of civil presence in the field, there is still too much military supervision of reconstruction and governance issues. In Afghanistan (and now in Iraq), the provincial reconstruction teams, which include military, diplomatic, and USAID personnel, have mitigated the military/civilian imbalance that hampers coalition operations in Iraq.[70] The personnel strength of State and USAID is clearly inadequate to meet

their expanded roles in the war on terror. These critical assets should be expanded by adding permanent personnel, developing reserves, and using contractors and retirees.

At the national level, the Bush administration is grappling with this problem and has established State's S/CRS to be the national lead. It must now follow through and ensure that this good idea becomes a powerful center of excellence. This office should also become the centerpiece for interagency planning and exercises throughout the Government. Interagency staffing has begun and should be increased. It needs a healthy budget, which will be a problem in a poorly funded department that is usually focused on current policy, not midrange contingency planning. S/CRS is a toddler. This administration and its successor must ensure that it becomes an adult.

There is a danger here in encouraging all of the Cabinet departments to get involved in postconflict stabilization and reconstruction activities. At times, this has represented real value added. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, long focused on projects at home and on bases abroad, has done superb work in Afghanistan and Iraq. Other departments, however, have not been so productive. Many of them are not manned to do these tasks and have fewer useable assets than one might imagine. Others are likely to lack cultural or historical perspective and may rush in to try to do things American-style. Others have and will continue to fall victim to standard departmental routines, reflecting the old saw, "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail."

In Iraq and Afghanistan, participation by departments and agencies with a domestic focus—such as Health and Human Services and the Drug Enforcement Administration—has been a mixed blessing. Many well-intentioned efforts have ended up poorly coordinated or out of synch with cultural conditions. Better coordination by State and USAID and better peacetime preparation are needed before agencies that do not have overseas missions are ready to accept them. Stabilization and reconstruction operations should not become an interdepartmental pick-up game.

Increase Funding

Sixth, for the State Department and USAID to become more operational, they must be better funded across the board. Today, State and USAID spend (on all of their functions, including security assistance) less than one-tenth of what the Pentagon does on its many missions. There are fewer than 8,000 Foreign Service Officers in both State and USAID combined. With this small force, our diplomats and

development specialists have to cover their extensive Washington headquarters, as well as over 120 countries and 265 diplomatic and consular locations. The systematic underfunding of State and USAID is the single greatest impediment to the effective planning and execution of developmental assistance, reconstruction, and stabilization. State cannot be equipped only with good ideas while Defense has all the money and most of the deployable assets. This is a prescription for an unbalanced national security policy, one in which State will not be a mature player or will have to savage its worldwide diplomacy to keep up with operations in conflict areas.

If we want to fix planning and execution for complex contingencies, we must fund State and USAID as major players and not poor relations of the Pentagon. At a minimum, over the next 5 years, the Foreign Service personnel strength of State and USAID should be raised by 50 percent and the entire budget of State and USAID should be doubled across the board.[71] Priorities for new spending should be given to public diplomacy, stabilization and reconstruction activities, and development assistance focused on preventing state failure. The transfer of monies from Defense to State should be loosened, but we may well need to spend more money on defense and foreign operations at the same time. Foggy Bottom should not overly rely on drawing-down money appropriated to the Pentagon. Congress too will have to play its part and overcome its aversion to funding nonmilitary operations overseas and to the creation of peacetime contingency funds at State.

Simplify Legal and Regulatory Regimes

Seventh, to get better at planning and executing complex contingencies, we will have to untangle the legal and regulatory authorities that hobble the Departments of State and Defense. This will be especially important if State begins to operate in the field on large-scale postconflict stabilization and reconstruction problems. Many of these legal provisions serve only to protect congressional committee prerogatives. Still others are meant to prevent human rights abuses or some other valid purpose. How else can you explain that a group at State proper is in charge of refugee affairs, but USAID is charged with looking after internally displaced people? Why, given the importance of law and order to development, is USAID—our principal development agency—forbidden from funding and managing police development programs, a major element in restoring stability in failed states? Again, another office in State was created to cover this problem, but it too is

small and weak and relies mainly on contracting to get the job done. It is tempting to say that these dysfunctional legal or regulatory provisions should be waived or eliminated. This should only be done, however, after a full assessment of the rationale behind each of them and their continuing utility.

Turn Allies into Partners

Eighth, to gain legitimacy and promote better burdensharing, the United States should make its most powerful allies full partners in complex operations. Our European allies will become increasingly important for stability operations. Many of them have in large measure developed their forces for peace operations, and some have carabinieri/gendarme-type forces ideal for police work in postwar situations.

The United States has run two operations in which many allies were brought into the plan *after* the action began. This did no great damage in Afghanistan, where the perception of legitimacy has been high. Indeed, NATO has moved into the lead in Afghanistan and has now had a year where it has moved from peace operations into combat. In Iraq, however, the United States continues to pay a stiff price for its decisive, nearly unilateral action in 2003. History will judge the wisdom of these decisions, but in the future, bringing the allies in before the takeoff may make for a more complicated flight but a smoother landing.

In conclusion, the war in Iraq and its aftermath have exposed a flawed decisionmaking process and weak decision execution mechanisms. In planning for and executing operations in Iraq, basic organizations, organizational cultures, operational procedures, and legislative support systems all have been found wanting and in need of fundamental reform. Our National Security Council staff, Cabinet departments, and especially our Congress have not yet adapted to the demanding requirements of 21st-century complex contingencies. One hopes that, for all of its problems, the decision to invade Iraq and subsequent operations there may point the way to national security reform.

While the focus of this project has been on policy decisions and process, it is important to add a final word on the decision to go to war. The U.S. reputation for power rests heavily on the outstanding performance of its Armed Forces in wars of necessity—the wars that follow an attack on the United States or one of its key allies or partners. The U.S. record in wars of choice—such as Vietnam and Operation *Iraqi Freedom*—contains more than a few defeats or Pyrrhic victories. In the greater war on terror,

the United States cannot forswear wars of choice or disregard conflicts that might require postcombat stability operations or extended peace enforcement activities. Before the United States enters into wars, however, its leaders should remember the prophetic words of Winston Churchill:

> Let us learn our lessons. Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The Statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events. Antiquated War Offices, weak, incompetent or arrogant Commanders, untrustworthy allies, hostile neutrals, malignant Fortune, ugly surprises, awful miscalculations—all take their seats at the Council Board on the morrow of a declaration of war. Always remember, however sure you are that you can easily win, that there would not be a war if the other man did not think that he also had a chance.[72]

Notes

[1] The best sources on casualties of all types are <www.defenselink.mil/> and <http://icasualties.org/oif/>. Iraq civilian casualties are hardest to track; estimates run from 38,000 to over 600,000. Most sources tied to actual incident-related counts show a maximum of 82,000. The U.S. Government does not keep statistics on these losses, which is a significant mistake. If counterinsurgency depends on protecting the population, Iraqi civilian casualties are a critical metric. For an up-to-date digest of financial costs, see Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations since 9/11* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, July 16, 2007), 1–4.

[2] Dana Milbank, "Opinion of U.S. Abroad Is Falling, Survey Finds," *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2004, A22; and the summary of the Pew poll of 47 nations at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/524/global-unease-with-major-world-powers-and-leaders>.

[3] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *National Intelligence Estimate: Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead*, January 2007, 8. The quotation is taken from the NIE's key judgments. The full text of what was publicly released can be found at <www.dni.gov/press_releases>.

[4] A set of new books has informed my research on Iraq: Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004); Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); and Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006). For the much-neglected Iraqi leadership perspective, see Kevin M. Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation* Iraqi Freedom *from Saddam's Senior Leadership* (Norfolk: U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Center for Operational Analysis and the Institute for Defense Analyses, 2007), especially vii–xi and 175–184. This project was based on 700 captured documents and interviews with over 25 top Iraqi national security officials. Another important book is Thomas G. Mahnken and Thomas A. Keaney, eds., *War in Iraq: Planning and Execution* (New York: Routledge, 2007). In that volume, war planning is discussed in detail in Isaiah Wilson, "America's Anabasis," 9–21. A seminal work on postwar planning can be found in Nora Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished: What Went Wrong with Iraqi Reconstruction," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (June 2006), 453–473.

[5] This study on Iraq has been influenced by personal observations from my assignment as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations (2001–2004), where I played a modest role in the initial humanitarian and reconstruction planning before the conflict. The analysis here borrows much from two of my previous papers: "Planning Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq," *Joint Force Quarterly* 41 (2d quarter, 2006); and "The Perils of Planning: Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq," presented in April 2007 at a conference at the Bush School at Texas A&M University. I have drawn freely on these papers without detailed citation.

[6] George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 489.

[7] Suzanne Chapman, "The War before the War," *Air Force Magazine* (February 2004), available at <www.afa.org/magazine/Feb2004/0204war.asp>.

[8] A number of these officials were behind a movement for regime change as U.S. policy, and some had even publicly opined about military options against Iraq. For example, see the series of articles in the *Weekly Standard* of December 1, 1997, that were bannered on the cover page as "Saddam Must Go: A How-to Guide," with individual pieces by Paul D. Wolfowitz, Peter Rodman, and Zalmay Khalilzad, all of whom served as administration officials in the runup to the 2003 war.

[9] While most analysts reject the Saddam–al Qaeda connection, the best counterarguments can be found at Stephen Hayes, *The Connection: How al Qaeda's Collaboration with Saddam Hussein Has Endangered America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004).

[10] In his memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, George Tenet confirms the activities of Zarqawi in Iraq and his relationship with Saddam's regime. See the extensive excerpts from the memoir in William Kristol, "Inadvertent Truths: George Tenet's Revealing Memoir," *Weekly Standard*, May 14, 2007, available at <www.weeklystandard.com/content/public/articles/000/000/013/615cglnt.asp>. On terrorist affiliations with Saddam, see also Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 295–296.

[11] An Arab expert's account of the inner workings of Zarqawi and al Qaeda can be found in Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 179–206.

[12] *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002).

[13] Tommy Franks with Malcolm McConnell, *American Soldier* (New York: Regan Books, 2004). The best complete examination of planning is in Gordon and Trainor, 75–117.

[14] One of the most developed arguments about how transformation ideas affected the war plan can be found in James Kitfield, *War and Destiny: How the Bush Revolution in Foreign and Military Affairs Redefined American Power* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005). Rumsfeld's clearest presentation on his postwar strategic concept—light footprint, quick occupation, avoid long-term presence—can be found in his "Beyond Nation Building" speech at the *Intrepid* Museum, New York, February 14, 2003.

[15] For an example of Army shortages connected to interrupted or curtailed deployments, see Kitfield, 146.

[16] The only book to cover the critical inputs to the plan made by LTG McKiernan and his staff at the land component command is Gordon and Trainor, 75–117.

[17] Interview with a former National Security Council staff official, August 15, 2007.

[18] Gordon and Trainor, 101.

[19] The declassified key judgments of the 90-page National Intelligence Estimate can be found at <http://fas.org/irp/cia/product/iraq-wmd.html>. It should be noted that the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the State Department objected to the timing and criticality of the Intelligence Community's judgment about Iraq's nuclear program. While this author maintains that we went to war on agreed-upon intelligence, some at CIA felt that analysts there had been pressured. See, for example, Paul Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2006).

[20] For a readily available summary of the USJFCOM–Institute for Defense Analyses study referred to in note 4 above, see Kevin Woods, James Lacey, and Williamson Murray, "Saddam's Delusions: The View From the Inside," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2006), 2–26.

[21] Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project,* 91.

[22] Ibid., 92.

[23] A former senior NSC official told the author in October 2007 that he believed that the Pentagon was not eager to have combat forces from allies other than Australia and the United Kingdom but wanted maximum allied participation in Phase IV operations.

[24] Franks, 366, 393.

[25] The 3ᵈ Infantry Division after action review can be found at <www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/3id-aar-jul03.pdf>.

[26] For a précis of the Marine Phase IV planning effort, see Nicholas Reynolds, *Basrah, Baghdad, and Beyond: The U.S. Marine Corps in the Second Iraq War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 42–46, 145–156.

[27] Conversations and correspondence with a senior Joint Staff planner and a former senior NSC official, September 2007.

[28] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 276–277.

[29] Correspondence with a former senior NSC official in September 2007; and, on the oil briefing, Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 322–323.

[30] Woodward, *State of Denial*, 131–133.

[31] Gordon and Trainor, 161–163.

[32] Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 328–329.

[33] On plans for rapid drawdown, see Gordon and Trainor, 98, 103, 464; and Woodward, *State of Denial*, 162. Many in OSD continued to argue for a rapid turnover well into the CPA period. See L. Paul Bremer with Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 168–170, 188, 205–206.

[34] The monthly U.S. Government statistics are promulgated in a comprehensive PowerPoint briefing. See, for example, *The Iraq Weekly Status Report*, compiled from various sources by the Department of State, Bureau of Near East Affairs, October 17, 2007, available at <www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/iraqstatus/>.

[35] For a mid-2007 report, see Dana Hedgpeth, "Report Says Iraq Lags on Rebuilding: Special Inspector Derides Iraqi Government's Lack of Responsibility," *The Washington Post*, July 29, 2007, A19.

[36] These assumptions were reflected in numerous statements by Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz. They were also reflected by actions taken by various members of the national security team. For example, reaction by civilian leaders to the accurate judgments by General Shinseki (and USCENTCOM planners) as to the need for a large postwar force; the rush to begin postcombat withdrawal planning in the midst of looting; and the insistence that the Iraqis could pay for much of their own reconstruction all suggested that many leaders expected the peace to be easy relative to the

war and that reconstruction would not be expensive. For many other DOD and NSC officials, these assumptions remained unspoken, but no less powerful. As noted in the text, the sources for these assumptions included poor intelligence, the opinions of Iraqi exiles, and the policy predispositions of the members of the national security team.

[37] Accounts of Kanan Makiya's meeting with the President and the Vice President's subsequent public declaration that we would be met as liberators can be found in George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 97–98. An Iraqi émigré who lived in the United States for many years, Makiya wrote *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, Updated Edition, 1998), which was a guide to the horrors of Saddam's regime.

[38] In the author's personal conversations with him in 2003 and thereafter, General Abizaid has been a continuing supporter of a rapid turnover to Iraqi control and broadening international participation. See also Gordon and Trainor, 163, 314. Khalilzad, Wolfowitz, Feith, and Garner were all dedicated proponents of rapid turnover. Many in the Department of State, as well as Ambassador Bremer, saw that up to 2 years of occupation would be a necessary phase in the operation. State had even floated a paper to that effect in the months before the war. However, a rapid turnover of power to some sort of Iraqi authority had been approved by the NSC and the President in the runup to the war but was abandoned in the aftermath of the fighting.

[39] On the issue of why rapid turnover to an unelected Iraqi government was problematic, see Bremer, 162–167. There remained adherents of rapid turnover to Iraqis in the Pentagon and NSC well into the year of occupation.

[40] For new revelations on this surprise decision, see Roger Cohen, "The MacArthur Lunch," *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2007, 17. This article recounts Khalilzad's and Powell's surprise that the quick turnover concept had been abandoned and that Khalilzad had been ousted as a Presidential envoy to Iraq by Bremer, who received the go-ahead from Bush, not at an NSC meeting, but at a luncheon with the President. The Pentagon's confusion over Bremer's intentions concerning the development of an interim authority was communicated to the author by a former senior DOD official in September 2007 and again in October 2007.

[41] Woodward, *State of Denial*, 219.

[42] Conversation with senior DOD official, October 2007.

[43] For a précis on organizational and personnel problems, see Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished," 460–466.

[44] Ironically, some psychological operations and counter–command and control activities encouraged the Iraqi army to dissolve and for the soldiers to desert, while other plans were relying on Iraqi army units to remain intact to be used for reconstruction. See for example, Gordon and Trainor, 145–146; and interview, former NSC official, August 15, 2007.

[45] The National Defense University report of its November 2002 workshop "Iraq: Looking Beyond Saddam's Rule" highlighted the complexities of the postwar era and recommended a strong emphasis on postwar security. Copies of this report were provided directly to selected offices of OSD and Joint Staff leadership by memorandum on December 16, 2002.

[46] Conrad C. Crane and W. Andrew Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, February 2003), v–vi.

[47] Discussions with former senior NSC staff official in September and October, 2007.

[48] This was confirmed by the author in a recent conversation with a former senior OSD official who was the lead on the project that highlighted the possibility of lawlessness in postwar Iraq, June 2007.

[49] *Intelligence Community Assessment: Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq*, January 2003, as summarized in an unpublished document of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) and in *The Washington Post*, May 20, 2007, A6. The SSCI draft can be found at <http://intelligence.senate.gov/prewar.pdf>.

[50] Gordon and Trainor, 462.

[51] See for example, the transcript of Secretary Rumsfeld's July 13, 2003, appearance on ABC's *This Week* at <www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2842>. Compare that to the transcript of Abizaid's remarks at the Pentagon on July 16, soon after he assumed command, on the nature of the guerrilla war at <www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2845>.

[52] Ricks, 407.

[53] According to Bremer, his complaints to Cabinet officers or the President on poor security and/or the lack of troops started before he entered the theater and continued throughout his tenure.

See Bremer, 12, 14, 71, 106, 170, 221, 228. The report of Bremer's 2004 memorandum requesting more troops can be found on 357–358.

[54] See, for example, Stephen Hayes, "Cheney Speaks," *Weekly Standard*, July 23, 2007, 30.

[55] Army Field Manual FM 3–24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication MCWP 3–33.5, *Counterinsurgency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), para. 1–67, 23.

[56] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1723 (November 28, 2006) legitimizes coalition forces and their support of the sovereign government of Iraq.

[57] David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 389–441.

[58] Discussion with former senior NSC official, October 20, 2007.

[59] Ricks, 102–103.

[60] One example of this "never again" thinking can be found in Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "America's Asymmetric Advantage," *Armed Forces Journal* (September 2006), 20–27. See also my reply arguing for a full-spectrum force, "From the Ground Up: We Need a Balanced Total Force," *Armed Forces Journal* (October 2006), 44–47. Dunlap's brief response to my piece appears on page 48 of the same issue.

[61] Department of Defense, *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), 1–26, 43–45, 75–91.

[62] Ibid., 85.

[63] See Executive Order 13434, "National Security Professional Development," May 17, 2007, in the *Federal Register* 72, no. 98 (May 22, 2007); and the unpublished document, *National Strategy for the Development of Security Professionals*, July 2007.

[64] See the ongoing study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era*, "Phase 1 Report" and "Phase 2 Report" (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2005), available at <csis.org/isp/bgn/index.php?option=com_csis_pubs&task=view&id=62> and <csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,1849/>.

[65] Conversations in September 2007 with two staffers, one military and one civilian, associated with CPA and Combined Joint Task Force–7 in the 2003–2004 timeframe.

[66] Interviews with numerous on-scene sources; also, Bensahel, "Mission Not Accomplished," 466.

[67] Bremer, 186–188, 245. This ambiguity in who was Bremer's boss was seen in a very negative light in correspondence from a senior NSC official, September 2007. A senior DOD official told me in September 2007 that Bremer reported to so many people that in reality he reported to no one at all.

[68] For an excellent account of this cooperation, see David Barno, "Fighting the 'Other War:' Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003–2005," *Military Review* (September/October 2007), 32–44.

[69] Franks, 422.

[70] On PRTs in Afghanistan, see Michael J. McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?" *Parameters* (Winter 2005/2006), 32–46; and Robert M. Perito, *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan*, United States Institute of Peace Special Report no. 152, October 2005, 1–16. Recent student and faculty veterans at the National War College nearly all agree that the 20 State Department–run PRTs in Iraq are beginning to make a difference.

[71] Other estimates include those by former House speaker Newt Gingrich in his remarks to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on transforming the State Department. At an open meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations on April 26, 2007, Gingrich recommended a 50 percent increase in its budget and a substantial increase in the diplomatic work force. See <www.cfr.org/publication/13210/21st_century_state_department.html>.

[72] Winston Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (New York: Scribner's 1958 edition of original 1930 book), 232.

About the Author

Dr. Joseph J. Collins has been Professor of National Security Strategy at the National War College since 2004. Prior to this assignment, he served for 3 years as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations. From 1998 to 2001, Dr. Collins was a Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, where he researched economic sanctions, national security policy, and homeland security. In 1998, after nearly 28 years of military service, Dr. Collins retired from the U.S. Army as a colonel. His many publications include books and articles on war in Afghanistan, Operation *Desert Storm*, military culture, defense transformation, homeland defense, and the way ahead in Iraq.

Dr. Collins holds a bachelor's degree from Fordham University and two master's degrees and a doctorate in political science from Columbia University. In 2004, he was awarded the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service, its highest civilian award.

O T H E R   T I T L E S   I N   T H E   S E R I E S