

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM: WHAT WENT WRONG? A CLAUSEWITZIAN ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

From the flight deck of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, President Bush announced in a nationally-televised address on 1 May 2003 that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended.”¹ Operation Iraqi Freedom (O.I.F.) was immediately hailed as an historical accomplishment, an unprecedented military success. A relatively small, highly mobile and technologically advanced U.S.-led coalition force had taken minimal casualties and in just three weeks swept across hundreds of kilometers of hostile territory, captured the capital, and toppled the government of Saddam Hussein, a long-time U.S. adversary. American political and military leadership believed that accomplishing the mission’s stated political objectives, the true measure of victory, was either imminent or *fait accompli*: Saddam’s forces appeared defeated; the alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD) would soon be discovered; Al Qaeda cells operating in Iraq would be captured or killed; reconstruction and democratization would soon be underway with the assistance of the Iraqi people. The Bush administration was confident that the war’s tacit aims would also be fulfilled: Iran, Syria, and North Korea would interpret the U.S. victory as a cautioning message of American strength; national populations in the area would be motivated by the liberating power of democratic rule; and European dissenters

¹ White House Office of the Press Secretary 1 May 2003 - <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html>

like France and Germany would realign themselves behind American leadership, sending forces to share the burden of occupation.²

As it turned out, however, American hopes for a lightning victory were quickly dashed. O.I.F. marked the beginning of a bloody guerrilla campaign, an ever worsening quagmire that now has the nation teetering on the edge of full-scale civil war.³ Besides the removal of Saddam Hussein, little hope remains that the U.S. will be able to accomplish any of its stated or tacit political objectives. At home, voter dissatisfaction with the Bush administration's handling of the war recently cost the Republican Party its majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate and led the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, to resign his post in disgrace.

It is not yet possible to assess U.S. strategic decision-making in the War in Iraq from beginning to end, for the battles are still being waged, and it is always problematic to speculate about something as inherently unpredictable as a war's outcome. This essay's focus, rather, will be on the opening chapter of the war's history, which is already sufficiently documented to examine in-depth.

The purpose of this investigation will be twofold. First, it will be demonstrated that in key areas of decision making, in the planning and execution stages of O.I.F., U.S. strategists either misapplied, or disavowed altogether, those principles of strategy

² For laudatory analyses of Operation Iraqi Freedom see Gregory Fontenot *et al* [On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom](#). (Annapolis: Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2005); John Keegan, [The Iraq War](#), (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2004); Walter Boyne, [Operation Iraqi Freedom: What Went Wrong, What Went Right, and Why](#), (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2003); Tommy Franks, [American Soldier](#), (New York: Regan Books, 2004). For official sentiments that political objectives had been, or were soon to be, accomplished see O.I.F. official press briefings (May 2003), http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraqi-freedom_briefs2002-2003.htm.

³ U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated on 27 November 2006 that "I think given the developments on the ground, unless something is done drastically and urgently to arrest the deteriorating situation, we could be there. In fact, we are almost there." In "Annan: Iraq Close to Civil War", *USA Today*, 27 November 2006. At his Senate Confirmation Hearing, newly appointed Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated on 5 December 2006 that the U.S. is not winning the War in Iraq. He also stated that if the situation there is not stabilized within the next year or two it could lead to a wider "regional conflagration", see White House Office of the Press Secretary release 5 December 2006.

most recognized and esteemed in Western military academies, those codified in Carl von Clausewitz's book *On War*.⁴ Second, it will be shown that these decisions had negative consequences which undermined the U.S. war effort. Such an analysis should offer new insights into why O.I.F. ultimately failed to serve U.S. political objectives in Iraq. It will also demonstrate the relevance of Clausewitzian principles in a 21st century conflict.

WHY CLAUSEWITZ?

There is considerable debate about whether or not Clausewitz's ideas, now nearly 200 years old, are still valid.⁵ It is interesting to note that the U.S. military renewed its interest in Clausewitz after its failure to achieve victory in Vietnam. Seeking to learn from its mistakes, the American military and the faculties of the U.S. war colleges turned to the Prussian master's classical work for answers.⁶ According to the late Michael Handel, a former professor at the U.S. Naval War College:

The study of the classical works on strategy [*On War* foremost among] provided an excellent point of departure and a broader perspective from which to examine the lessons of the Vietnam War. Eventually, these collectively learned lessons – whether learned directly in the U.S. war colleges or through an osmotic process – were 'codified' in the Weinberger Doctrine, which subsequently proved its value as a guide in the highest-level political and strategic decision-making processes preceding the war against Iraq [Persian Gulf War].⁷

⁴ Considering that the Rumsfeld Doctrine, Rumsfeld's own take on the Revolution in Military affairs, was an intentional departure from key Clausewitzian precepts such as the use of overwhelming force, this fact is not entirely surprising. See Rumsfeld's article "Transforming the Military", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2002. This essay seeks to highlight the impact that the misapplication and disavowal of Clausewitzian precepts had on the outcome of O.I.F.

⁵ For examples of the debate over the relevance of Clausewitz in U.S. military planning see Bruce Fleming, "Can Clausewitz Save Us From Future Mistakes?" in *Parameters*, Spring 2004, 62-76; Anthony Sidoti, "The Relevance of Carl von Clausewitz in Operation Iraqi Freedom," in *Air and Space Power Journal*, January 2004; Tony Corn, "Clausewitz in Wonderland", in *Policy Review*, 138, September 2006.

⁶ Michael Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*. (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 9; see also Harry G. Summers, Jr. *On Strategy*. (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982)

⁷ Handel, *Masters*, 10. My words in brackets.

Clausewitzian principles helped analysts identify U.S. strategic errors in Vietnam, formed the doctrinal basis of the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines, and provided a strong foundation for a successful strategy in the Persian Gulf War.⁸

These days, however, scholars such as Tony Corn attribute the U.S. military's ongoing fiasco in Iraq to the antiquated Clausewitzian mindset of U.S. military leadership.⁹ Corn believes that a Clausewitzian approach to the War in Iraq has undermined the U.S. war effort there and is calling for "a radical transformation of professional military education"¹⁰ in order to avoid making similar mistakes in future conflicts. He condemns Clausewitz's ideas as contradictory and ambiguous. He argues that Clausewitz's ideas can no longer offer actionable insights on war in the age of global jihad. As an alternative to Clausewitzian strategy, Corn contends that a thorough understanding of anthropology could help U.S. war planners prepare better for the next war.¹¹

The debate over Clausewitz's continuing relevance cannot be dealt with at sufficient length to be settled here. However, critics like Corn are not justified in attributing the fiasco in Iraq to the Clausewitzian decision-making of U.S. military leadership, for this essay will demonstrate that precisely the opposite was true. The insurgency that spiraled out of control in the immediate aftermath of O.I.F. had more to do with the flawed, anti-Clausewitzian, strategic decision-making of U.S. military

⁸ On paper, the Powell and Weinberger Doctrines are far more Clausewitzian than the Rumsfeld Doctrine. See Andreas Herberg Rothe's article, "A Prussian in the USA", in *Europäische Sicherheit*, October 2003.

⁹ see Corn, "Wonderland"; Sidoti, "Clausewitz in Operation Iraqi Freedom". Corn believes Operation Iraqi Freedom failed as a result of the U.S military's outmoded Clausewitzian approach. Sidoti believes the operation owes its success to Clausewitzian principles. This paper argues against both perspectives. U.S planning was, in fact, anti-Clausewitzian in nature and suffered as a result.

¹⁰ Corn, "Clausewitz in Wonderland", 16. John Keegan and Martin van Creveld are two other well-known scholars who, in various works, argue for the necessity of a fundamental paradigm shift away from Clausewitzian doctrine.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17

planners than with international or locally-grown terrorists promoting global jihad. While it is true that U.S. military personnel would have benefited significantly from greater cultural awareness of the Iraqi population, it is difficult to imagine how anthropology, or any other social science, would offer less contradictory or more useful guidance to war planning than Clausewitzian strategy. Anthropological methodologies and interpretations certainly would not have provided unanimous or unambiguous guidance to U.S. strategists deliberating over the invasion and occupation of Iraq.¹² Besides, many of the inconsistencies and contradictions in *On War* are attributable to Clausewitz's dialectical approach, which he employed intentionally to expose the paradoxical nature of war. Misunderstandings also arise due to the fact that Clausewitz often jumps between different levels of analysis without informing the reader. His work was, after all, incomplete and far from polished. While Clausewitzian strategy is certainly no panacea for modern military strategists, it remains the most insightful and comprehensive study of war available.

The beauty of a Clausewitzian analysis is that by employing his general principles of warfare as points of departure from which to evaluate an individual case such as the Iraq War, we arrive at findings which may be valid for more than a single case. This can help us to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future. Conversely, an anthropological analysis of the unique ethnic constellations and identities within contemporary Iraqi society before and after the war, as useful and important as that

¹² Montgomery McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship" (Department of the Army Headquarters, Mar/Apr 2005). McFate states the U.S. military's lack of anthropological understanding is partially due to the state of the discipline, "DoD yearns for cultural knowledge, but anthropologists en masse, bound by their own ethical code and sunk in a mire of postmodernism, are unlikely to contribute much of value to reshaping national security policy or practice."

may be, would likely be of little value in plotting the course for the next conflict against a totally dissimilar society like North Korea. Clausewitz made this point himself:

But war, though conditioned by the particular characteristics of states and their armed forces, must contain some more general – indeed, a universal – element with which every theorist ought above all to be concerned.¹³

Those people... [sic] who would construct all history of individual cases...[sic] never get down to the general factors that govern the matter. Consequently their findings will never be valid for more than a single case; indeed they consider a philosophy that encompasses the general run of cases as a mere dream.¹⁴

PRIMACY OF POLITICS

There is widespread, perhaps universal, agreement with Clausewitz's assertion that, "*war is a serious means to a serious end...and the political object is the goal, war the means of reaching it, and the means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.*"¹⁵

Clausewitz also warns of the dangers of approaching war with reckless zeal, "*War is no pastime; it is no mere joy in daring and winning, no place for irresponsible enthusiasts.*"¹⁶

In planning for O.I.F., the war planners at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (O.S.D.), especially Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld himself, acted like '*irresponsible enthusiasts*', spending far more time and energy considering how to implement military means than how to win the peace in the war's aftermath. Their priorities should have been reversed. This misallocation of time and resources jeopardized the mission's central purpose, the attainment of its political objective.

¹³ Michael Handel and Peter Paret, *Carl von Clausewitz: On War*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 373.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

It should have been obvious to Rumsfeld and his staff that planning for the post-war phase - civilian stabilization, reconstruction and democratization – would require at least as much attention and resources as defeating the Iraqi military.¹⁷ While ensuring success in both phases of the conflict was vital to the outcome of the mission, few doubted an American military victory, whereas the prognosis for the post-combat phase was far less certain.¹⁸ However, U.S. military planners were directed to pour nearly all of their energy and resources into planning for the combat phase while planning for post-hostility concerns was grossly inadequate.

Planning for the combat phase of O.I.F. began in late November 2001 at the direction of the Secretary of Defense.¹⁹ This planning continued for nearly a year until October 2002 and was carried out by the best and the brightest minds in the U.S. military. These people were young majors, lieutenant colonels, colonels, Navy commanders, and captains who were well-trained in strategy. Major General Victor Renuart of CENTCOM referred to this group as ‘the 50-pound brains.’²⁰

Rumsfeld’s Department of Defense (DoD) was also tasked with planning for the postwar phase of O.I.F.²¹ Planning for this phase of the war did not commence until 20 January 2003, just two months before the outbreak of hostilities.²² The office for postwar planning was called the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance

¹⁷ Rumsfeld and his staff did naively assume they had come up with a workable plan for the post-war phase. It will become apparent in the sections to follow, however, that their post-war plan was developed in an astoundingly anti-Clausewitzian manner in that it assumed ‘best-case’ scenarios.

¹⁸ See essays in Gary Rosen, ed. *The Right War? The Conservative Debate on Iraq*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); also see essays in Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, eds. *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, (New York: Touchstone, 2003) especially the section *The Country Debates Going to War*, 281-353. Few essayists questioned American military prowess, many made accurate predictions about the chaos and disorder in the post-war phase.

¹⁹ Gregory Hooker, *Shaping the Plan for Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Role of Military Intelligence Assessments*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2005), 6.

²⁰ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, (Toronto: Simon and Shuster, 2004), 76.

²¹ Keegan, *The Iraq War*, 209

²² Peter W. Galbraith, *The End of Iraq*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2006), 95

(O.R.H.A). Headed up by retired Army Lieutenant General Jay Garner, a man with little Middle East experience and no background in nation-building, it was staffed at the last minute from a pool of retired foreign-service officers and those without current diplomatic responsibilities. Those government professionals who were the most qualified to assist the O.R.H.A., the State Department's professional Arabists, were intentionally excluded. According to Ambassador Tim Carney, who served on the O.R.H.A, professional Arabists "weren't welcome because they didn't think Iraq could be democratic."²³ Decisions made by the DoD ensured that postwar planning, unlike planning for the combat phase, was done under serious time constraints by under-qualified people.

But is it fair to characterize those at the helm of DoD as *'irresponsible enthusiasts'*? Beyond the evidence already presented, the *'irresponsible enthusiasts'* argument is further reinforced by sources inside the Pentagon who reported that in the lead up to war senior defense officials were so eager to launch the military phase of O.I.F. that they actually opposed the idea of planning for the post-hostility phase, worried that such concerns might lead to arguments against execution of the plan.²⁴ The credibility of this claim was reinforced by the senior intelligence analyst for Iraq at CENTCOM, Gregory Hooker. He reiterated these sentiments as a possible explanation for why "unlike the situation for military operations, planning for civilian stabilization and reconstruction lacked unity of effort and purpose..."²⁵

²³ quoted in Galbraith, *The End of Iraq*, 95.

²⁴ James Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad," in *Atlantic Monthly*, (Jan/Feb 2004)

²⁵ Hooker, *Shaping the Plan*, 37.

Clausewitz stressed that in order for a state to achieve its political objectives in a war it is utterly essential that its leaders' understand the war's nature, because all wars are unique:

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test [viewing war as an act of policy] the kind of war on which they are embarking: neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.²⁶

Michael Handel observed that this concept is deceptively simple, making it easy to ignore or misunderstand.²⁷ In the remainder of this essay, it will be demonstrated that Rumsfeld and the strategic architects of O.I.F. were guilty of exactly this. Ignoring or misunderstanding the character of the war they were embarking on in Iraq led to grand miscalculations in the planning and implementation process of O.I.F. The problem was compounded by a misapplication of various other Clausewitzian principles which were crucial for sealing the victory.

SHOCK AND AWE

As shown in Iraq, shock and awe – and its current incarnation, Rapid Decisive Operations – promises startling effects with light forces and few casualties. But if it ignores the fact that the difficulties of 'old' warfare have not disappeared, it risks future operations.²⁸

Rumsfeld and the war planners of O.I.F. did not pursue a decisive force approach along the lines of Clausewitzian recommendations. Instead, they placed their faith in a 'shock and awe'-oriented strategy. This novel approach to strategy was not what was required in Iraq. To make matters worse, the application and execution of the 'shock and awe'

²⁶ Howard and Paret, *On War*, 88-89

²⁷ Handel, *Masters of War*, 13.

²⁸ Christopher Ankersen and Losel Lethong, "Rapid Decisive Ops are Risky Business," (U.S. Naval Institute, 2006), 1

strategy were counter to what the original architects of the strategy envisioned. These miscalculations of strategy and execution had negative consequences for the U.S. war effort.

Rumsfeld introduced the idea of 'shock and awe' early in the planning for O.I.F.²⁹ The concept was developed in 1996 by Harlan Ullman and James Wade of the National Defense University.³⁰ Technically known as 'rapid dominance', the purpose of this military doctrine is to:

...impose this overwhelming level of Shock and Awe against an adversary on an immediate or sufficiently timely basis to paralyze its will to carry on . . . [to] seize control of the environment and paralyze or so overload an adversary's perceptions and understanding of events that the enemy would be incapable of resistance at the tactical and strategic level.³¹

Ullman and Wade claim that while 'shock and awe' departs from the central Clausewitzian approach of 'decisive force' it is, in fact, based on the Clausewitzian concepts of fog, friction, and fear, in that it seeks to magnify the damaging effects of these factors against an opponent.³² 'Shock and awe' is not, however, conceived by its designers as an alternative to a decisive force approach in general. Rather, the new doctrine is offered as a substitute for decisive force only when there is little time to mobilize *en masse* and when such tactics are certain to overwhelm an opponent psychologically. Ullman and Wade offer a strong caution to military planners contemplating such an approach:

We note for the record that should a rapid dominance force actually be fielded with the requisite operational capabilities this force would neither be a silver bullet nor a panacea and certainly not an antidote or preventative for a major policy blunder, miscalculation or mistake. It should also be fully appreciated that situations will

²⁹ Hooker, *Shaping the Plan*, 22.

³⁰ Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, "Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance", (National Defense University, 1996)

³¹ *Ibid.*, xxv.

³² *Ibid.*, xxviii.

exist in which Rapid Dominance or any other doctrine may not work or apply because of other political, strategic, or other limiting factors.³³

Furthermore, the authors stress that their doctrine should not be applied half-heartedly, that it will only stand a chance of success if it is attempted with a full-on effort.

The special preconditions and full-on execution proscribed by the architects of shock and awe were neither present nor fulfilled for O.I.F. First, time was not of the essence. The U.S. had plenty of time to mobilize a much larger force. The initiative for launching the preemptive war belonged entirely to the U.S. military. Intelligence reports did not indicate that Saddam was planning to strike preemptively U.S. assets in the region or use WMD before the outbreak of war.³⁴ Had Rumsfeld decided on a decisive force strategy from the outset, the U.S. military could have mobilized an extra 110,000 troops in just 11 extra days.³⁵ Second, U.S. intelligence planners doubted shock and awe tactics would be effective psychologically against Iraq's military or civilian population:

Given the high level of continuous military pressure [over a decade of enforcing the U.S. containment policy], the Iraqi military and populace were inured, to a degree, to coalition capabilities, making it difficult to actually create shock and awe. Even new capabilities in the U.S. inventory would have been 'previewed' in operations against Iraq, gradually allowing Iraq's military to adjust expectations...[sic] Iraqi civilians became inured to the harsh conditions of the interwar period...³⁶

Finally, Ullman criticized the U.S. military's execution of his tactics in O.I.F. as 'shock and awe lite', saying that they were far less shocking and less awesome than

³³ Ibid., 13.

³⁴ Hooker, *Shaping the Plan*, 48-97.

³⁵ Compare the original plan for the invasion of Iraq, OPLAN1003-98, with the final plan for Operation Iraqi Freedom, 1003-V Hybrid. OPLAN 1003-98 required 114 days to mobilize just over 250,000 troops prior to decisive combat(see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oplan-1003.htm>), while the final plan for O.I.F. required 103 days to mobilize 140,000 troops prior to decisive combat (see Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 287); For the proposed timeline of the two operational plans see, Hooker, *Shaping the Plan*, 33.

³⁶ Ibid., 25.

they needed to be in order to be effective.³⁷ According to Ullman, the U.S. did not strike as rapidly or as hard as required. For a variety of reasons, U.S. military leadership decided to lower the severity of the attack:

Over 500 high-value targets within the confines of Baghdad were off limits to air strike. Some of these targets were removed from the initial list because of overconfidence that the massive attack would lead to the immediate collapse of the regime... some significant targets were off limits to attack because of pervasive fear of civilian casualties.³⁸

It was wise for the U.S. military to attempt to reduce civilian casualties. However, too many high-value targets were removed from the target list for 'shock and awe' to have any chance of success. For example, Iraqi television and radio stations, and the electrical grid, were left untouched. This enabled Saddam's government to continue to broadcast propaganda into Iraqi homes throughout the U.S. bombing campaign. Also, Baghdad remained fully lit and operational. Both of these occurrences undermined the intended psychological effects of 'shock and awe' on the Iraqi population. After several days of bombing, most Iraqis continued with their daily lives, working and shopping, as bombs fell around them. Furthermore, the Iraqi military did not capitulate *en masse*, and Baghdad was captured only after close combat on the city's outskirts.³⁹

What were the consequences of employing a shock and awe strategy? First, 'shock and awe' accomplished the opposite of its intended affect on the Iraqi population. Iraqis were aware of worldwide media reports that the Americans were going to 'shock and awe' them and, according to reporters on the ground, they were amazed that the

³⁷ Timothy Noah, "Meet Mr. 'Shock and Awe', Harlan Ullman Says They're Doing it All Wrong", *Washington Post*, 1 April 2003.

³⁸ Williamson Murray and Robert Scaler, *The Iraq War: A Military History*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 167-168

³⁹ Bijal Tivedi, "Inside Shock and Awe", *National Geographic.com* (February 2005)

strike was not more impressive.⁴⁰ Iraqi insurgents obviously shared these sentiments. The Iraqi resistance actually strengthened in the aftermath of 'shock and awe'.⁴¹

Second, the Achilles heel of relying solely on a shock and awe strategy was that U.S. forces were wedded to their technological superiority as the only means of maintaining a decisive edge in combat. If Iraqi resistance forces could figure out how to overcome their technological disadvantage, the undermanned U.S. forces would be hard pressed to reassert their supremacy. As it turned out, this is exactly what happened. Iraqi soldiers adapted successfully by taking refuge in the cities where American airpower could not reach them without inflicting unacceptably high levels of civilian casualties. Iraqi soldiers shed their uniforms and began using irregular tactics such as roadside bombs, car bombs, and suicide bombings, forcing the Americans to treat every encounter with Iraqi civilians as potentially hostile, and effectively undercutting the U.S. military's ability to build rapport with the local populace. U.S. forces were obliged to engage their opponents on their opponent's terms, forced to fight in close quarters, in unfamiliar urban landscapes where sheer numbers mattered and sustaining higher casualties was unavoidable.⁴²

⁴⁰ Murray and Scales, The Iraq War, 168; also see, Paul Rutherford, Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Marketing the War Against Iraq, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 52-55.

⁴¹ The U.S. administration had also hoped that the success of shock and awe would send a cautioning message of strength to North Korea, Syria and Iran. Given the failure of these tactics against the Iraqis, it is unlikely that this was accomplished. See Gordon and Trainor, Cobra II, 506-507

⁴² for an excellent account of insurgent tactics in Iraq see Ahmed Hashim, Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 188-200; also see Wesley, K. Clark, Winning Modern Wars, (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), 64-65

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Superiority of numbers admittedly is the most important factor in the outcome of an engagement...It thus follows that as many troops as possible should be brought into the engagement...This is the first principle of strategy.⁴³

The first rule, therefore, should be: put the largest possible army into the field. This may sound like a platitude, but in reality it is not.⁴⁴

Relying exclusively on 'shock and awe' tactics and rapid decisive warfare, U.S. war planners disavowed what Clausewitz considered the first principle of strategy, fielding the largest army that the situation permits. The consequences were disastrous. The decision not to send more troops to Iraq has been cited by many strategic analysts as the most serious error committed.⁴⁵

The decision to invade Iraq was made shortly after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. At the time, the standing U.S. war plan for Iraq, known officially as OPLAN 1003-98, called for as many as 500,000 troops in total, with 250,000 to be mobilized before commencing combat operations.⁴⁶ In the lead up to the Iraq War, the plan was recast at least six times, with each new version calling for fewer 'boots on the ground'. In the end, O.I.F. was executed with a much smaller force than originally conceived, 140,000 in the region including 78,000 ground forces.⁴⁷

Why did the U.S. military leadership decide to go ahead with the rapid decisive warfare, 'shock and awe', approach and invade with fewer troops?⁴⁸ In the lead up to

⁴³ Ibid., 195.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: the Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*, (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2004), 285-286; Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, (New York: Times Books, 2005), 281-282; Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad"

⁴⁶ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 4

⁴⁷ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 287

⁴⁸ see Clark, *Winning Modern Wars*, 18-19. The commonly offered explanation in the media that U.S. forces were under pressure to commence operations as early as possible in 2003, before seasonal temperatures in Iraq became unbearably hot, has no basis in reality. Clark states this explanation was "an absurd proposition...it ignored both recent experience and common

the invasion of Iraq, there was a well-documented debate over the viability of this new approach to warfare and the appropriate U.S. force size.⁴⁹ The debate occurred primarily between senior civilian leaders within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (O.S.D.) and the senior military leadership at CENTCOM. While the latter group argued for an adherence to the traditional and time-tested approach of overwhelming mass and larger troop deployments, such as that which had proven successful in the Persian Gulf War, the former group advocated jointness of services with an emphasis on high technology combat systems, air forces, and small, nimble ground forces. According to CENTCOM officials, "O.S.D. leadership strongly believed in this principle, and pushed hard for [it]"⁵⁰

In the end, one man's personality played a decisive role in settling the debate. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was incredibly obstinate and could not be dissuaded from using the war as a testing ground for his pet theory. He steadfastly rejected the operational plans put forward by senior Pentagon planners on the Joint Staff. He was presented with three different plans, yet each time he insisted that the number of troops be reduced even further. He was ruthlessly critical of anyone who did not share his views. He eventually ensured that the debate would be resolved in his favor by replacing all officers in the Joint Staff who disagreed with him.⁵¹

Clausewitz considers the role of personalities in war, cautioning that "*Strength of character can degenerate into obstinacy, [which] comes from reluctance to admit one is*

sense. In 1990, the first deployments had occurred in extremely hot weather in Saudi Arabia... [and] the troops remained effective...Even Secretary of State Powell remarked there was no deadline for the operation."

⁴⁹ Anthony Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2003), 148-159; see also Tommy Franks, *American Soldier*, (New York: Regan Books, 2004), 373.

⁵⁰ Hooker, *Shaping the Plan*, 22.

⁵¹ Hersh, *Chain of Command*, 251-253.

*wrong, [and] is a fault of temperament.*⁵² Rumsfeld personified this character flaw and U.S. war planning suffered accordingly.

What were the consequences of going in with so few troops? In the initial combat phase of O.I.F., it appeared as though Rumsfeld would prove his critics wrong. Iraqi forces were caught off guard by the U.S. military's decision to invade with such a small force before carrying out a protracted air campaign. The element of surprise and the small force's rapid mobility enabled U.S. soldiers and marines to secure critical bridges before the Iraqis could destroy them. The Secretary of Defense was correct in his predictions that superior technology in the form of improved reconnaissance, surveillance, and precision-guided munitions would give U.S. forces a decisive edge against the main forces of the Iraqi Army. Republican Guard units proved no match for U.S. forces in conventional warfare. Rumsfeld's emphasis on 'jointness' among the military services also paid off by adding to the efficiency of the effort. For example, the establishment of an allied land war headquarters in Kuwait provided for vastly superior command and control capabilities than CENTCOM's arrangements during the Persian Gulf War - Army and Marine units were able to coordinate their attacks with unprecedented efficiency. With breathtaking speed, U.S. forces traversed over a thousand kilometers of desert and stormed the capital.⁵³

After the fall of Baghdad, however, mass, not speed and technology, was required for securing the victory. The army required more soldiers to occupy Iraq than to achieve its conventional victories. There were simply not enough troops to perform

⁵² Howard and Paret, *On War*, 117.

⁵³ For an in-depth account of the U.S. Army's march to Baghdad see Gregory Fontenot and E.J. Degen, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2005), especially see the 'March Up-Country' section, 141-241.

the myriad duties necessary to restore law and order and seal the victory. The gravity of the situation was depicted as follows:

As a result of a deficit of forces, Anbar Province in western Iraq, the heartland of Sunnism and Baathist support, was treated as an 'economy of force' operation and only sparsely covered by American troops. There were not sufficient troops to seal the borders, guard the copious arms caches, and dominate the terrain, all of which allowed the province to become a sanctuary for insurgents.⁵⁴

Lacking the necessary manpower to suppress the nascent insurgency in the Sunni Triangle, U.S. forces were powerless to prevent resistance fighters from pouring across the borders from Iran and Syria. The paramilitary Fedayeen and local insurgents were able to avail themselves of the numerous arms caches left unguarded by U.S. forces. The Americans were too few to maintain even a semblance of law and order. Chaos reigned supreme. Eventually, the situation manifested into a full-scale guerilla insurgency.

FRICION, CHANCE AND INTERACTION

Plans need to consider the appearance of friction of many kinds: bad weather, mechanical breakdown, unexpectedly unfriendly terrain, harassing efforts of enemy...it is surprising how many otherwise impressive examples of military planning betray a pervasive failure to recognize friction and the enemy's will.⁵⁵

War takes place in a realm of chance and uncertainty...No other human activity is so continuously or universally bound up with chance.⁵⁶

The very nature of interaction is bound to make it unpredictable.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 500

⁵⁵ Howard and Paret, *On War*, 49

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 85

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

According to Clausewitz, the omnipresent variables of friction, chance and interaction must be considered seriously in any realistic war plan. Because no one can predict future outcomes in war with certainty, it is best to assume, and prepare for, worst case scenarios. Basing a war plan on the emergence of best case scenarios is pure folly. This sound advice stands in stark contrast to the decisions made by U.S. strategists, who devised a war plan of striking optimism and naivety.

The Bush administration was convinced that American troops would be “greeted with flowers” by a grateful Iraqi population after the overthrow of Saddam’s regime.⁵⁸ It anticipated, and prepared for, only best-case scenarios: Iraq’s oil production would be brought up to prewar levels (2.5 to 3 million barrels per day) within weeks or months after toppling Saddam and revenues from oil production would almost entirely cover the costs of reconstruction⁵⁹; Iraqi security forces would be trained and deployed to patrol the streets and ensure public order within less than a year and U.S. forces, no longer required, would quickly begin to pull out of the country⁶⁰; political authority would be handed over to an interim government dominated by pro-U.S. Iraqi exiles; Iraq’s ex-Ba’athist technocrats would transfer their loyalties to a new administration and Iraq would continue to function more or less as before⁶¹. When none of these optimistic predictions came true, senior U.S. leaders responsible for pre-war planning admitted that they were caught completely unprepared.⁶²

⁵⁸ Galbraith, The End of Iraq, 84.

⁵⁹ David L. Phillips, Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco, (New York: Westview Press, 2005), 203.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶² Michael Gordon, “The Strategy to Secure Iraq Did not Foresee a 2nd War”, (The New York Times, 19 October 2004), In his article, Gordon quotes Condoleezza Rice stating that, after the Iraqi Army was defeated, the White House expected, “the institutions would hold, everything from ministries to police forces.”; in his book Squandered Victory, Larry Diamond cites Paul Wolfowitz’s testimony before Congress where he admitted that the Pentagon was not expecting tenacious resistance in Iraq; in

What accounts for these excessively optimistic pre-war forecasts? Again, as mentioned previously, Rumsfeld and his staff were anxious for the invasion to commence and frowned upon negative post-war assessments. Another reason cited by analysts was the fact that influential neo-conservatives such as Richard Perle, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and aides in Vice-President Cheney's office took at face value the unrealistic views of dubious Iraqi émigré groups such as the Iraqi National Congress (I.N.C.). Led by a notorious fraudster, Ahmed Chalabi, the evidence is now clear that the I.N.C. conveyed incredibly optimistic assessments of the combat and post-combat phase to the Bush administration, telling officials what they wanted to hear in order to win their favor and continue receiving major amounts of funding and assistance from them.⁶³ Finally, several prominent analysts have attributed some of the blame to unrealistic and inaccurate CIA intelligence reports. Not only was the spy agency incorrect about the existence of WMD before the war, it also failed to predict the magnitude and intensity of the resistance. It was unaware of the tons of arms that had been cached by the Fedayeen throughout the southern area of the country. In fact, the CIA provided U.S. war planners with false assurances that the Iraqi military would surrender unconditionally and that coalition forces would be embraced as liberating heroes by the Iraqi populace. These reports were accepted by U.S. war planners who assumed that the transition to the post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction process would proceed easily with full Iraqi cooperation.⁶⁴

his article, "Blind into Baghdad", James Fallows demonstrates that the administration was not expecting the resistance encountered in the post-war phase.

⁶³ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 18, 71, 315

⁶⁴ Hooker, *Shaping the Plan*, 37-38; Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 498-499

Clausewitz cautioned strategists against putting too much faith in intelligence reports: *...intelligence...how unreliable and transient it is. Many intelligence reports...are contradictory; even more false, and most are uncertain. This is true of all intelligence...In short, most intelligence is false...*⁶⁵ Had the Pentagon paid less heed to both the CIA's alarmist reports about WMD and its overly optimistic reports about the welcoming Iraqi population, they may have been less determined to initiate a war in the first place, or at least gone in with more realistic expectations.

U.S. war planners should have known better than to go into Iraq depending on a rosy post-combat outcome and should have prepared more for worst-case scenarios. Before the war, the State Department-sponsored Future of Iraq Project, the Iraqi Democratic Principles Working Group, the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, independent American experts, and Iraqi exiles all provided the Pentagon with detailed examinations of the real and serious possibility of the U.S. winning the war and losing the peace in Iraq.⁶⁶ Many of these studies were well-funded and well-researched and offered a much less optimistic picture of postwar Iraq. The Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, for example, anticipated the following: suspicion of U.S. motives would be acute amongst the Iraqi population; reconstruction would be extremely difficult without the assistance of an international force; many Iraqis would perceive U.S. occupation as imperial domination by the Judeo-Christian West and be compelled to resist; ethnic conflict and the widespread presence of private, armed militias would be almost certain; terrorist tactics such as suicide bombings would likely be carried out; the exiled Iraqi opposition were extremely unpopular in Iraq and would

⁶⁵ Howard and Paret, *On War*, 117

⁶⁶ Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad"

not be welcomed back; members of the Iraqi Army would affiliate with violent elements in the Iraqi population if disbanded; and the longer the U.S. occupation persisted, the more the Iraqis would resort to terrorism to force them out.⁶⁷ In hindsight, these predictions were incredibly accurate. Overall, these reports stressed how difficult and important securing the peace in the post-combat phase would be and the importance of focusing on this effort before the first shot was fired.

What was the outcome of underestimating the pernicious effects of friction, chance and interaction? Primarily, it resulted in U.S. forces resorting to ineffective last-minute responses. For instance, the U.S. was ill-equipped to deal with the pervasive lawlessness and vandalism that emerged because it had not set up a constabulary force before the war.⁶⁸ Iraqi police unexpectedly stopped reporting for duty and U.S. regular soldiers were sent in to fill the void. However, with their heavy-handed militaristic approach, and without the proper linguistic and cultural-sensitivity training, U.S. soldiers only exacerbated the already poor relationship between them and the civilian population and were ineffective in restoring order.⁶⁹

Furthermore, U.S. leadership did not ensure the protection of valuable targets against potential acts of sabotage in the immediate post-combat phase. This meant that vital services and government ministries such as the Ministry of Irrigation were left wide open for attack. After U.S. forces occupied Baghdad, the Ministry was burned to the ground by insurgents. Most of the technical information required for the operation of

⁶⁷ Diamond, *Squandered Victory*, 281-283

⁶⁸ Raphael Israeli, *The Iraq War: Hidden Agendas and Babylonian Intrigue*, (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 126-127; Philips, *Losing Iraq*, 229

⁶⁹ Richard Engel, *A Fist in the Hornet's Nest*, (New York: Hyperion, 2004), 180-181; Joseph F. Coates, "No Aftermath to Iraq Yet", in *Defeating Terrorism. Developing Dreams: Beyond 9/11 and the Iraq War Volume 5 - Turning Point: The Rocky Road to Peace and Reconstruction*, Arthur B. Shostak, ed. (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2005), 56-58

Iraq's dams, barrages, and pumping stations was lost in the fire. The Americans were suddenly at risk of not being able to supply the Iraqis with water. The U.S. had enough troops in Baghdad to secure the Ministry and over twenty others in the city, yet failed to do so because they failed to anticipate such acts of sabotage.⁷⁰

Contrary to Clausewitzian wisdom, the planners of O.I.F. failed to properly prepare for worst case scenarios in Iraq. This impeded America's ability to respond to the omnipresent variables of friction, chance and interaction.

CENTER OF GRAVITY

What the theorist has to say here is this: one must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies must be directed...⁷¹

Rumsfeld and his generals misidentified Iraq's center of gravity from the war's outset. They incorrectly believed that the outcome of the war hinged on defeating Saddam's Republican Guard units and victory would be sealed with the occupation of Baghdad. As it turned out, however, the paramilitary Fedayeen and various other insurgent groups were the greatest military challenge and what was required to seal the victory was the support of the Iraqi people themselves, especially in the Sunni Triangle.

Why did U.S. war planners initially misidentify Iraq's center of gravity? Critics, such as Tony Corn, attribute this failure to an over-reliance on Clausewitzian doctrine.⁷² They argue that U.S. military leaders were inculcated with the misguided Clausewitzian

⁷⁰ Galbraith, *The End of Iraq*, 113; Karrin von Hippel, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Iraq: Lessons Unlearned," in *The Conflict in Iraq, 2003*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 202-203

⁷¹ Howard and Paret, *On War*, 595-596.

⁷² see Corn, "Clausewitz in Wonderland"

notion that the opponent's main conventional forces are always to be seen as the primary center of gravity.

Such critiques, however, belie an ignorance of Clausewitzian precepts. In fact, Clausewitz emphasized that decisive battle with the enemy's main force was only to be considered the enemy's center of gravity if that force was "*significant*".⁷³ Furthermore, the opponent's main conventional force was only one of the possible centers of gravity that Clausewitz identified.⁷⁴ For Clausewitz, choosing the correct center of gravity is of paramount importance: "*...it is a major act of strategic judgment to distinguish these centers of gravity in the enemy's forces and to identify their spheres of effectiveness.*"⁷⁵

The U.S. military leadership's failure to identify the correct center of gravity was due to the mistaken belief in the Pentagon that the invasion of Iraq would essentially be a continuation of the Persian Gulf War where Saddam's Republican Guard had been the best equipped and most resilient force.⁷⁶ Additionally, as demonstrated earlier, Rumsfeld and the planners in the O.S.D. were eager to put 'shock and awe' and rapid decisive warfare tactics to the test. Going forward with this approach would only have made sense if the center of gravity were identified as Saddam's main conventional forces. If the likelihood of an insurgency were acknowledged by the O.S.D., CENTCOM would probably have won the argument for a more traditional approach relying on overwhelming mass. Based on the O.S.D.'s aforementioned hostility towards unfavorable scenarios being discussed in the planning stages, it is reasonable to

⁷³ Howard and Paret, *On War*, 596.

⁷⁴ see Howard and Paret, *On War*, 595-600. The section entitled "Closer Definition of the Military Objective: The Defeat of the Enemy," considers other centers of gravity besides the enemy's main force, for example, disrupting the community of interest among alliances, or the personalities of leaders and public opinion.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 486.

⁷⁶ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 498

assume that Rumsfeld and his staff were unwilling to consider any other centers of gravity as possibilities.

The fact is that U.S. military leadership would have been better prepared for the insurgency had they paid more, not less, heed to Clausewitz. First of all, in the section of *On War* dedicated to the topic of popular insurgencies, entitled 'The People in Arms', Clausewitz states that no matter how decisively a country may appear to be defeated:

...there is always the possibility that a turn of fortune can be brought about by developing new sources of internal strength or through the natural decimation all offensives suffer in the long run or by means of help from abroad.⁷⁷

Indeed, in hindsight, the U.S. military now knows that while Bush was declaring victory aboard an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf, the Fedayeen was busy mustering up a full-fledged insurgency in Anbar province, and foreign jihadists from all over the Arab world were streaming across the Iraqi border.

But how likely is a popular insurgency in a defeated country according to Clausewitz? Not only is it likely, it is to be expected "...*no matter how small and weak a state may be in comparison with its enemy...*"⁷⁸ Clausewitz uses a colorful analogy to drive home this point:

...like a drowning man who will clutch instinctively to a straw, it is the natural law of the moral world that a nation that finds itself on the brink of an abyss will try to save itself by any means [insurgency].⁷⁹

What is the correct center of gravity in an insurgency according to Clausewitz? He is explicit about this, stating: *In popular uprisings it [the center of gravity] is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion. It is against these that our energies*

⁷⁷ Howard and Paret, *On War*, 483

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

*should be directed.*⁸⁰ Following this line of reasoning, as soon as the U.S. recognized that they faced a popular uprising in Iraq, they should have focused their efforts on building relationships with key Iraqi figures and the country's people.

From the outset of the invasion, there was abundant evidence of a strengthening insurgency. In towns and cities throughout southern Iraq, coalition forces were welcomed with determined resistance, not flowers. For instance, in the first weeks of the combat phase, insurgent resistance in Nasiriyah and Samawah was bloody and fierce.⁸¹ U.S. troops were being killed by primitive roadside bombs, guerrilla-style ambushes, and suicide car bombs, not by Republican Guard units in tanks.⁸²

Rumsfeld and General Franks refused to acknowledge, or have U.S. forces respond to, the insurgency for several weeks.⁸³ When they finally did recalibrate U.S. tactics to deal with the insurgency, they did not, as Clausewitz suggests, direct their energies towards the personalities of Iraq's leaders and the country's public opinion. In fact, they did very much the opposite. Despite the abundance of evidence to the contrary, they naively assumed U.S. forces were already viewed as welcomed liberators in Iraq and steadfastly refused to ascribe the causes of the revolt to domestic discontent with foreign occupation. The U.S. administration blamed the revolt entirely on outside forces – Al Qaeda infiltrators, Iranian and Syrian operatives, and foreign jihadists from throughout the Arab world.⁸⁴ U.S. leadership labeled all insurgents as terrorists and sought to bring an end to the insurrection with brute force. A respected counter-

⁸⁰ Howard and Paret, *On War*, 595-596

⁸¹ Keegan, *The Iraq War*, 148-153, 157-161

⁸² Boyne, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 44-45, 91.

⁸³ Phillips, *Losing Iraq*, 201; It is interesting to note that Rumsfeld, in a speech before the National Defense University on 31 January 2002, stressed the importance of being responsive and adaptable to asymmetrical tactics.

⁸⁴ Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency In Iraq*, 324-329.

insurgency expert, Ahmed Hashim of Cambridge University, characterized the U.S. approach as follows:

The U.S. counter-insurgency approach can be characterized as one of coercion and enforcement rather than a hearts and minds policy. The former focuses on collectively punishing those who deign to rise up in revolt. The latter seeks to address the rebels' grievances, figuring out which are legitimate and which are not, and slowly but surely looks to incorporate the disgruntled community into the political process.⁸⁵

Expert observers, including America's British and Polish allies in the region, expressed considerable alarm, believing that America's 'baseball bat' strategy was merely enlarging the "circles of alienation within the populace." Indeed, as the majority of Iraqi citizens clamored for basic police protection, clean water, electricity, and other essential services, U.S. forces were caught off guard, responding with excessive force, further alienating the population and exacerbating the vicious cycle of the insurgency. The harder U.S. forces hit, the more alienated the Iraqis became, and the more willing they were to support the insurgency with new recruits and other forms of support.⁸⁶ U.S. forces did not make a concerted effort to build trust and improve their relationships with the Iraqi populace until early 2004, but by that time it was too late. The nascent insurgency had spiraled out of control. American efforts to reach out to the Iraqi population did not last long. "There was simply not enough manpower, and the chasm between the locals and the U.S. military was too deep."⁸⁷

America's leaders did not understand the nature of the war they were involved in. As a result, they either misapplied or neglected Clausewitz's advice regarding insurgent warfare, or 'people's war'. They were slow to acknowledge the insurgency which they

⁸⁵ Ibid., 323

⁸⁶ Ibid., 326.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 327.

should have been prepared for and which, at any rate, had been apparent from the outset of the campaign. When they finally did take steps to deal with the problem, they opted for a policy of coercion and enforcement rather than focusing on the personalities of Iraqi leaders and the country's public opinion, as Clausewitz clearly suggested. Relying on coercion merely served to fan the flames of the insurgency, denying the Americans any hope of securing the peace and achieving their political objectives.

CONCLUSION

It has been demonstrated that senior U.S. military leadership, especially Donald Rumsfeld and the strategists in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, did not understand the nature of the war they embarked upon. Furthermore, they either misapplied or disavowed several of Clausewitz's central principles of strategy in overseeing the planning and execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The negative consequences of their faulty conceptions and poor decision making have been illustrated.

Before the war began, Rumsfeld and his staff committed the preponderance of the Defense Department's time and resources into planning for the combat-phase, whereas they hastily produced a post-combat plan based on naively optimistic forecasts. The consequences of this unfortunate reversal of priorities threatened the attainment of U.S. political objectives from the outset and reverberated throughout the entire planning process.

Abandoning a Clausewitzian decisive force approach in favour of the novel concept of 'shock and awe' was a mistake. Clausewitzian doctrine – as it was reflected

in the Powell Doctrine - had served the U.S. well in the Persian Gulf War and could have been reused in the Iraq War. Even the architects of 'shock and awe' believe that their doctrine was misapplied in Iraq. Time was not of the essence, the U.S. had more than enough of it to mobilize a decisive force. Also, the Iraqi people were not suitable candidates for such an approach, having been inured to the psychological effects of such tactics throughout the interwar period. The execution of 'shock and awe lite', contrary to the advice of Ullman and Wade, merely ensured that the novel approach would not be successful. The fizzle of the much anticipated 'shock and awe' attack buoyed Iraqi resistance fighters by convincing them that the Americans were beatable. The Achilles heel of 'shock and awe' was that the U.S. military was over-reliant on its technological superiority. When the Iraqis responded asymmetrically, effectively negating this advantage, the U.S. had not mobilized enough manpower to fall back on a decisive force strategy.

The U.S. paid a hefty price for disavowing the Clausewitzian principle of fielding the largest possible army that circumstances will permit. As a result of Rumsfeld's obstinacy, a flaw of character according to Clausewitz, the U.S. invaded Iraq with a fraction of the troop strength originally envisioned. Initially, based on the incredible speed of the American advance into Baghdad, Rumsfeld's gamble looked to have paid off. After the fall of Baghdad, however, the U.S. lacked sufficient manpower to perform the myriad duties required to restore law and order and prevent the nascent insurgency from spreading. Iraqi paramilitary groups armed and equipped themselves from the unprotected arms caches. They received eager recruits from the Iraqi population who were incensed at the U.S. military's apparent unwillingness to restore law and order.

Displaying a great deal of naivety, and demonstrating that they did not understand the nature of the war they were embarking upon, Rumsfeld and his staff at the O.S.D. assumed best-case scenarios in the planning process for O.I.F, and were not prepared for the pernicious effects of friction, chance, and interaction. Placing too much faith in the assessments of dubious Iraqi émigrés and intelligence reports, which Clausewitz also warned against, U.S. decision makers believed American forces would be welcomed as liberators. U.S. planners mistakenly thought the transition to the post-combat rehabilitation and reconstruction process would be a straightforward affair. Iraqi institutions would continue functioning as per usual and the Iraqi population would organize most of the effort on its own. Iraqi oil revenues would ensure there was enough money to pay for it. The U.S. attempted to find *ad hoc* solutions to the mounting problems as they arose, only to find that it was too little, too late. U.S. soldiers, incapable of comprehending Iraqi culture and language, were unable to fill the void of absentee Iraqi police officers and alienated the population further with their muscular approach. U.S. forces neglected to secure vital facilities and infrastructure in Baghdad despite having enough personnel there to do so, setting reconstruction, and the U.S. military's relationship with the Iraqi population, back even further.

Misidentifying the center of gravity in Iraq from the outset, U.S. leaders ignored the insurgent resistance evident from the outset of the invasion. Focusing instead on destroying Saddam's conventional forces, U.S. forces did not recalibrate their tactics in a timely manner. When the U.S. did finally refocus its efforts on combating the insurgency, it again misidentified the center of gravity. In an insurgency, Clausewitz identified the center of gravity as the personalities of leaders and public opinion. The

Americans, however, attempted to overcome the resistance with brute force. This was counterproductive and merely fanned the flames of the growing insurgency.

In this essay, Clausewitzian principles have been used as departure points for analysis in order to highlight new perspectives on what went wrong for the Americans in the early stages of the Iraq War. It has been demonstrated that U.S. planners did not understand the nature of the war in which they had become embroiled and, at key junctures, either misapplied or neglected Clausewitzian logic. Where Clausewitz's teachings and U.S. strategy diverged, things did not turn out well for the American war effort. It seems safe to conclude that 21st century military educators and war planners would be ill-advised to disregard the teachings of Clausewitz as critics have suggested.

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