

Lessons of Iraq

Strategic & Joint Implications

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1. Inept Enemies Offer Unclear Lessons

- **Since the end of the Cold War, America has faced weak, incompetent adversaries.**
 - Noriega (1990)
 - Saddam (1991)
 - Milosevic (1999)
 - Taliban (2001)
- **In OIF, Saddam's forces didn't seem to have learned much from Desert Storm.**
 - Failed to preempt allied buildup in Kuwait
 - Failed to exploit absence of northern front
 - Failed to ignite oilfields
 - Failed to interdict extended supply lines
 - Failed to blow up dams & bridges
 - Failed to leverage urban defenses
 - Failed to employ WMD
- **How much can be learned from fighting such fools?**

2. Iraq Part of a Larger Plan

- **OIF was one step in a broader security blueprint laid out by candidate Bush at the Citadel on 9/23/99.**
- **Bush said today's security challenges are different from those of the Cold War.**
 - **Proliferating chem-bio-nuclear technology**
 - **Dangerous regimes: Iran, Iraq, N.Korea**
 - **Global terrorism**
- **Bush complained U.S. military underpaid & postured for "industrial-age operations" rather than information age.**
- **Bush called for "a new architecture of American defense."**
 - **Strategic preemption of emerging threats**
 - **Active & passive protection of homeland**
 - **Military transformation leveraging information technology**
- **9-11 provided a popular mandate to implement those ideas.**

3. Era of Peer Competitors Is Over

- **During the 20th Century, U.S. was challenged by three waves of industrialized adversaries seeking global power.**
 - Imperialism (1900-1918)
 - Fascism (1930-1945)
 - Communism (1950-199)
- **Despite overheated rhetoric about terrorism, the Bush Adm. recognizes today's danger is more modest.**
 - Opposes increases in force structure
 - Opposes delaying transformation
 - Opposes rolling back tax cuts
- **Irony of the terrorist challenge is that it tends to unify great powers against a common enemy.**
- **With Russia, China, India & America sharing the same security concerns and likely enemies looking weak, defense spending increases could be hard to sustain.**

4. Coalition Warfare a Waning Concept

- **During the Cold War, U.S. planned to fight major conflicts in concert with allies.**
 - NATO the centerpiece of U.S. strategy
 - Desert Storm seemed to signal a future for coalition ops
- **But later operations revealed big weaknesses in allied capability & will.**
 - Europeans performed poorly in Balkan air war
 - Alliance politics impeded U.S. effectiveness
 - In Afghan war, allies lacked force projection to play a role
- **OIF opened a deep rift within NATO.**
 - France & Germany challenged U.S. legitimacy
 - Turkey refused to provide basing
 - Even the willing were ill-equipped to participate
- **Coalition warfare has lost its central role in U.S. plans.**

5. Technology Enables Joint Action

- **U.S. military services traditionally have valued autonomy over cooperation.**
 - Divergent doctrines
 - Distinctive cultures
 - Redundant capabilities
- **Until recently, autonomy was necessary: weak communications undercut cooperative action in wartime.**
- **But new information technologies are making interdependence more feasible & cost-effective.**
 - Orbital transponders
 - Mobile wireless
 - Internet-style networks
- **OIF and OEF demonstrated how new technology & doctrine facilitate interservice cooperation in wartime.**

6. Jointness Generates Real Synergies

- **OIF produced quick & decisive results using a relatively small force.**
- **A key factor in early success was the increased scope of interservice cooperation.**
 - **Integrated command & control**
 - **Air-ground coordination of fire support**
 - **Fusion of multisource intelligence**
 - **Interservice logistics support**
 - **Multiservice special operations**
- **Increased jointness produced impressive results.**
 - **Pace of operations**
 - **Economy of force**
 - **Responsiveness to changing circumstances**
 - **Prevention of fratricide & collateral damage**
- **However, increased jointness hinges on integrity of networks.**

7. Air Superiority is Indispensable

- **Iraqi forces had major advantages in OIF.**
 - Superior numbers
 - Superior (defensive) positioning
 - Superior knowledge of battlespace
 - Concentration & predictability of allied advance
 - Fragility of allied supply lines
- **All of these advantages were negated by overwhelming U.S. airpower.**
- **But the benefits of air power depend upon first establishing “command of the air.”**
 - Destruction of enemy fighters & missiles
 - Suppression of enemy radar
 - Dis-integration of enemy command network
- **The most neglected lesson of OIF: air superiority made every other facet of U.S. warfighting feasible.**

8. Air Power Enables Network Warfare

- **Once air dominance was assured in OIF, other aspects of air power could be exercised.**
 - **Close air support of surface forces**
 - **Intratheater airlift & tanking**
 - **Tactical surveillance & reconnaissance**
 - **Collection of signals intelligence**
 - **Information warfare**
- **These other components of air power were critical to implementing network-centric warfare.**
 - **Airspace surveillance by AWACS and Hawkeye**
 - **Surface surveillance by JSTARS & Global Hawk**
 - **Intelligence collection by EP-3 & RC-135**
 - **Information warfare by EA-6B & EC-130**
 - **Communications relay throughout JTIDS/MIDS network**
- **Without Navy & USAF electronic aircraft, network-centric warfare would have been unworkable.**

9. Joint Force Depends On Space

- **OIF saw unprecedented integration of space systems with the rest of the joint force.**
 - “Space tasking order” appended to daily ATO
 - Heavy use of national assets to support tactical ops
- **Most important space contribution was high-volume, secure, long-distance communication links.**
 - Four DSCS satellites carried 80% of theater traffic (8300 voice channels on latest version)
 - Milstar was a star: secure, dependable links supported special ops, Tomahawk retarget, etc.
 - Milstar II medium-data-rate transmits ATO in six seconds versus an hour on Milstar I
- **Burgeoning bandwidth needs bolster case for next-gen SATCOM’s.**
 - Wideband Gapfiller will have 16X DSCS traffic capacity
 - Advanced EHF satellite 5X Milstar II capacity & 6X number of terminals per satellite

10. Space Provides Unique Leverage

- **Intelligence satellites provided critical reconnaissance & cueing of other collectors.**
 - All six NIMA imagery satellites (3 EO/3 radar)
 - NSA electronic eavesdropping satellites
 - But age of constellations demands near-term replacement
- **GPS satellites critical to network-centric warfare.**
 - Pinpoint targeting of precision munitions
 - Blue Force tracking & synchronization
 - But susceptibility to jamming & interception dictate transition to GPS IIF, GPS III
- **Sandstorms underscored importance of NPOESS successor to existing weather satellites.**
- **Proliferation of ballistic missiles underscores urgency of SBIRS-High replacement for Defense Support Program.**

11. Special Ops Has Gone Mainstream

- JFCOM quick look at lessons of OIF found special operations “reached new levels of performance” that “need to be sustained.”
- OIF was the biggest special-ops campaign ever undertaken by the U.S.
 - About 10,000 personnel from all services & CIA
 - Unconventional warfare carefully integrated with conventional warfighting plans
- Special forces conducted a diverse range of missions.
 - Intelligence collection
 - Preparation of battlespace
 - Suppression of scuds
 - Neutralization of WMD
 - Securing oilfields
 - Decapitation of command structure
- Rumsfeld says value of special ops a key lesson of OIF.

12. Role of Sea Power Needs Reflection

- **Sea services made important contributions in OIF.**
 - Carrier-based strike aircraft
 - Marine expeditionary forces
 - Airborne surveillance, SIGINT & electronic warfare
- **Precision, range & coverage of sea-based aircraft prove “revolution in strike warfare” is real -- and carrier JSF will grow capabilities further.**
- **Marines prove light expeditionary forces can go deeper and longer against numerically superior enemies -- as long as air cover is available.**
- **However, subs & surface combatants marginal players.**
 - Naval guns couldn't hit Iraqis (or Afghans, or Serbs)
 - Cruise missiles costly & limited to fixed targets
 - Submarine intel missions being usurped by air-breathers

13. “Boots on the Ground” Vindicated

- **Army encountered its usual problems with deployment & logistics in OIF.**
 - **Protracted buildup in Kuwait created vulnerabilities**
 - **Lack of base access precluded robust northern front**
 - **Supplies moved slowly within war zone**
- **Without continuous support of USAF & Navy strike aircraft, ground forces would have been hobbled.**
- **However, OIF proved that final victory often cannot be achieved without occupation & pacification.**
 - **Some tactical situations hard to influence from air**
 - **Urban operations require urban warriors**
 - **Air power poorly postured to counter guerrillas**
- **Despite setbacks (such as attack-helicopter losses), Army demonstrated that it has indispensable skills & unique staying power.**

14. Good Intelligence Needs to be Better

- **OIF demonstrated (again) the value of detailed, timely, multisource intelligence.**
 - **National agencies & assets increasingly integrated with, responsive to warfighter needs**
 - **Joint & organic intel flows being fused faster, disseminated more widely via networks like Link-16**
- **However, numerous examples of faulty or incomplete intel.**
 - **Iraqi military capabilities overestimated**
 - **WMD assessments apparently inaccurate**
 - **Decapitation strikes repeatedly missed key leaders**
 - **Can't find Saddam (or Osama, or Omar)**
 - **Difficulty in identifying, targeting postwar resistance**
- **Timeliness and completeness of intelligence still compromised by obsolete organizational barriers & cultures.**
- **U.S. excels at technical intelligence collection but chronically underperforms in human intel.**

15. Logistics System Still Too Slow

- **OIF presented major logistics challenges.**
 - Opposite side of world from U.S.
 - Nearly landlocked, with interior center of gravity
 - Antiwestern countries to east & west (no basing)
 - Key allies (Turkey, Saudi Arabia) uncooperative
- **However, U.S. also had important logistical advantages.**
 - Numerous overt & covert allies
 - Extensive basing options in Kuwait, UAE, Oman
 - Prepositioned stocks on land and at sea
 - Twelve years of preparation & planning
- **Against this backdrop, U.S. logistical performance not good.**
 - Too long to buildup & reposition forces
 - Uneven mobility of supplies within theater
 - Tanking assets stretched by requirements & aging fleet
 - Airlift potential under-utilized on northern front
- **Still can't support fast, flexible deployment of large forces.**

Summary Assessment

- **Operation Iraqi Freedom an impressive success, but enemy too incompetent to truly test new concepts.**
- **As era of peer competitors has waned, so has U.S. capacity to hold allies together.**
- **New technology & doctrine enable closer coordination of joint forces, generating real synergies.**
- **Most neglected lesson of OIF is that air power (sea-based & land-based) made everything else possible.**
- **Space continues to increase in importance, particularly in supporting network-centric operations.**
- **Role of ground forces in securing victory vindicated, with special forces adding new dimension to land power.**