STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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THE MARCH TO BAGHDAD: DID WE STOP TOO SOON?

BY

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ABSTRACT

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On 2 August 1990, the world watched in disbelief as the Iraqi Army forcefully invaded and occupied Kuwait. Saddam Hussein's goal was to dominate the Persian Gulf region and use its vast wealth to become the greatest Arab hero of modern times and the leader of a new Arab Superpower. The United Nations immediately criticized this abhorrent behavior and called for the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait; the restoration of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait; and the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait. After continued noncompliance with United Nations demands, it was decided that the use of force was the only way to reestablish the stability to this oil-rich region. Thus came a massive buildup of coalition military might and the birth of Operation DESERT STORM. In the ground offensive that lasted 100 hours, the coalition was successful in ejecting the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, restoring the legitimate government and sovereignty of Kuwait, and weakened the offensive capability of Saddam's

forces enough to restore some stability back to the Persian Gulf region. But, the debate rages on, both in civilian and military circles, whether President Bush made the correct decision by stopping Operation DESERT STORM when he did or should he have allowed General H. Norman Schwarzkopf and the coalition forces to advance into Baghdad. This paper examines this dilemma by focusing on the objectives established by the United Nations and how they were translated from President Bush down to the troops in the sand. It shows that the execution of Operation DESERT STORM fulfilled all objectives levied by the United Nations and any further action by the coalition to eliminate the Iraqi regime or Saddam Hussein would not have been in the best interests of the international community and our coalition partnership.

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THE MARCH TO BAGHDAD:
Did we stop too soon?

> "The Middle East is an area in which the United States has a vital interest. The maintenance of peace in that area, which has so frequently seen disturbances in the past, is of significance to the world as a whole."[1]
>
> ---Franklin Delano Roosevelt (March 1944)

From the beginning of time, conflict has been a part of human nature. History documents a multitude of reasons why man has entered into warfare with his fellow man; they range from the proving of manliness, the protection of property and personal belongings, to the protection of entire nations from atrocities committed by groups of barbarians. The common thread that runs through all conflicts, regardless of the magnitude of the conflict, is purpose. There always seems to be a reason for the conflict, but what normally is left out are the consequences or the means of terminating the conflict. It is often said that our military establishment spends most of its time planning the strategies of war, while very little effort is spent on defining what will bring the conflict to a conclusion. Although most of the post-conflict negotiations are normally directed by our civilian leadership, admittedly, the military has not done an adequate job at bringing the conflicts to a clear termination

point. Much has been written about conflict termination, but much of it has remained in the academic world.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States military has become more and more involved in smaller regional conflicts, as well as military operations other than war (MOOTW)--Humanitarian Assistance, Enforcing Sanctions, Peacekeeping Operations, Peace-enforcing Operations, Counterdrug Operations, etc. It is obvious to the military leadership, that clearly defined national objectives, with a process of defining mission success and termination are necessary to accomplish the multitude of daunting tasks facing the military in today's environment of reduced force structure and greater world instability. Therefore, representatives from all services convened to layout the specifics of this doctrine in a host of joint publications.

Many critics of the military say that Operation DESERT STORM is another example of where the military failed to establish a clear game plan. The objectives were not conclusive and success was declared before a clear termination strategy was developed. A collection of writers from U.S. News and World Report published a documentary account of the action and appropriately titled it, "Triumph without Victory". It clearly recognizes that the United States military soundly defeated the army of Saddam Hussein, but

concludes, we were over zealous in terminating the conflict before we could claim a victory that met our wartime objectives. With all of the pain and suffering the Shiites and Kurds have endured at the hand of Saddam Hussein since the end of Desert Storm, plus the continuing fear of their neighbors in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, many across the world feel that we fell short in meeting our objectives, because Saddam is still in power.

This paper will closely examine the tenets of conflict termination and analyze the objectives levied on the United States military by the United Nations Security Council, and the National Security Objectives of the United States government. Finally, it will compare the above mentioned objectives against the stated and executed objectives of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf and his United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Staff. This analysis will show that the United States military fulfilled all National Security Objectives and United Nations Objectives in the execution of Operation DESERT STORM, and had no authority to proceed beyond these clearly stated objectives.

CONFLICT TERMINATION

It is a commonly accepted fact that perhaps the least understood, and certainly the least studied, aspect of conflicts/wars is how they end. Because of the very lethality of today's modern weaponry, the primary focus of politicians and military personnel is on the catalyst of war and how best to prevent the synthesis of conflict. Military men, while skillfully planning their intricate operations and coordinating complicated maneuvers, remain curiously blind in failing to perceive that it is the outcome of the war, not the outcome of the campaigns within it, that determines how well their plans serve the nation's interests.[2] History is full of examples where one party engaged in a conflict with another party without having the vaguest idea of what objectives needed to be met in order to declare success and terminate the war. Stuart Albert and Edward Luck are noted scholars on war and its termination and they believe that, "it is conceivable that a better comprehension of the ending process would also contribute to our understanding of the causes of war."[3] Although the idea of warfighting and subsequently ending the conflict traditionally fall on the

shoulders of the armed forces, this topic also spawns domestic debate among politicians as well.

> "Government leaders and bureaucrats introduce other distortions in opposing each other in deciding how a war should end. Those who govern a country must choose among basic national goals. The more unfavorable the outcome of the war, the more deeply these choices cut into fundamental values and threaten to create paralyzing divisions in domestic politics."[4]

The voting public will not support elected government leaders that get our nation into conflicts that are not in our countries' best interest, are costly, or are poorly thought out and executed. In the case of Vietnam, we entered a war in which we couldn't extract ourselves, even though it was increasingly recognized that victory was not achievable. The public expects more from its military and government leadership. They expect it to have a plan from start to finish and every step in between.

Military doctrine has evolved over the years; a byproduct of this evolution are joint publications (applies to all services) that specify in great detail the procedures and methodology to guide our military members in planning and executing a host of operations. Joint Pub 3-0 clearly requires that, "conflict termination should be considered from the <u>outset of planning</u> and should be refined as the conflict moves toward advantageous termination."[5] Whether the planning is for a MOOTW; or for a

military power on military power conflict, the objective must be clearly defined. Once defined, the ends-ways-means analysis of the conflict termination criteria must be presented to our government leaders for their validation and concurrence.

> "Properly conceived conflict termination criteria are key to ensuring that victories achieved with military force endure. To facilitate conception of effective termination criteria, United States forces must be dominant in the final stages of an armed conflict by achieving the leverage sufficient to impose a lasting solution."[6]

Our doctrine continues to specify that, the desired end state should be clearly described by the National Command Authorities (NCA) before Armed Forces of the United States are committed to an action. An end state is the set of required conditions that achieve the strategic objectives.[7] Therefore, commanders at all levels should have a common understanding of the conditions that define success before the initiation of the operation. This understanding helps everyone to focus on the objective and, in the course of executing the operation, will allow modifications to campaigns without being distracted from the main objective. Once all the conditions are met to satisfy the objective, then a transformation can take place which allows the military instrument of national power to seamlessly transfer the reins to other institutions to carry out economic, or political-diplomatic instruments of power.

Fred Ikle, in his book on conflict termination, described three valuable lessons learned in the Vietnam War. It further illustrates how a poorly contrived foreign policy, coupled with a lack of clearly defined objectives or end state, nearly destroyed this country. This combined with the military planning and executing a war that had no obvious termination point resulted in costly lessons learned:

> "-American forces must not be committed to combat without a clear military strategy, whether for defeating the enemy or for expelling the aggressor's forces and restoring the peace.
> "-Forces should not be sent into combat merely for the purpose of demonstrating America's resolve and commitment.
> "-US should not enter a war based on a strategy of inflicting "punishment" on the enemy by bombing on shelling targets whose destruction will not serve to defeat the enemy's forces militarily.
> "-Democracies must avoid wanton damage, not only to maintain public support for the war effort, but also to conduct the war in a way that is consonant with the nation's basic values."[8]

The points Ikle makes would make a valuable template to validate potential conflicts before sending in the troops. The United States is not the only nation that uses the current short-sighted approach when dealing with conflicts. Another case in point: "Brezhnev's decision to send forces into Afghanistan was thoughtlessly taken, with no plan for ending the adventure and little attention to the political goals of the invasion."[9]

Again, had the planning been taken to a logical conclusion, Brezhnev may have elected to pursue an alternate instrument of power rather than employing the military.

> "Each war produces widely held lessons concerning how the next war should be avoided or fought. From these lessons, military strategies can be developed and force structure justified. In this way, the ending of one war may help shape the beginning of the next or better yet, prevent the next."[10]

Therefore, we must learn from our mistakes and not continue to perpetuate the same mistakes for every conflict. Operation DESERT STORM is a case study on how to take these learned lessons and turn them into one of the greatest successes in the last half of this century.

UNITED NATIONS' OBJECTIVES

> "The purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace...."[11]
>
> ---United Nations Charter, Article 1

On 2 August 1990, Iraq forcefully invaded and occupied Kuwait. Much of the world, including most Arab nations, unified in condemnation of this action. Saddam's actions to dominate most of the world's oil reserves and much of current world

production, gave him the ability to literally disrupt the world oil supply and hence the economies of the advanced industrial nations. "Saddam's goal was to dominate the Persian Gulf region and use its vast wealth to become the greatest Arab hero of modern times, and the leader of a new Arab Superpower."[12]

Deeply alarmed by the egregious violations of the United Nations Charter, the United Nations Security Council determined that, "there was a breach of international peace and security as regards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait."[13] On 2 August 1990, the Security Council voted and passed Resolution 660, which:

> "-Condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait
> "-Demanded that Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces to the positions in which they were located on 1 August 1990."[14]

After continued noncompliance with the United Nations Resolution 660 and the subsequent declaration by Iraq of a complete and eternal merger with the country of Kuwait, the Security Council passed Resolution 662 on 9 August 1990, which was determined to:

> "-Bring the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq to an end and to restore the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait.
> "-Restore the legitimate Government of Kuwait."[15]

The United Nations was determined to further demonstrate its resolve in bringing an expeditious end to the Iraqi occupation of

Kuwait. The United Nations pledged to restore the legitimate government as well as reestablish the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of this battered country. Therefore, on 25 August 1990, the United Nations Security Council voted to give the navies of the United States and other countries the right to use force to stop trade with Iraq. It was the first time in the U.N.'s 45-year history that individual countries outside an umbrella U.N. command were authorized to enforce an international blockade.[16] Resolution 665 was an indirect use of force to pressure the Iraqi government to comply with the demands of the United Nations.

The Security Council passed a number of resolutions which continued the condemnation of Iraq, clarified what items were affected by the blockade, condemned the imprisonment of diplomats and third-country nationals, condemned the treatment of Kuwaitis and their property, and restricted flight over Iraq or Kuwait. These resolutions ultimately led to the formulation of Resolution 678.

Secretary Baker went on a "road show" to see how many of the five permanent members of the Security Council (United States, France, China, Great Britain, and the Russian Republic) would support an offensive action against Iraq. Great Britain totally

supported the use of force, while China committed not to use their vote to veto. France on the otherhand needed a great deal of persuasion before they were convinced to support the offensive, but the Russians were the major stumbling block. The Russian people were still dealing with the memories of the war in Afghanistan and would not support a United Nations vote for war. President Gorbachev was sympathetic to their feeling, therefore, Secretary Baker met with the Russian Foreign Minister Shevardnadze to work out the wording of the resolution. "Shevardnadze required that the wording be written where it could allow force but also encompass all other possible measures--diplomacy, sanctions, and anything that might work."[17] It was finally agreed that the words "all necessary means" be use in the text of the resolution. Baker understood that the administration could not afford to have a domestic debate over the meaning of a vague United Nations resolution. Therefore, as the temporary president of the Security Council during the vote, Baker closed the session by stating, for the permanent record, that the resolution "directly authorized the use of force".

Therefore, on 29 November 1990, the United Nations Security Council met to vote on an authorization to use force to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. "Resolution 678 authorized member

states cooperating with the Government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before 15 Jan 1991 fully implements the conditions set forth in Resolution 660, to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area."[18] This resolution would be the broadest authority for war it had granted since Korea in 1950.

Although Resolution 678 appears to be written very vaguely, this paper shows that this was intentionally written this way to appease public opinion in the Russian Republic. Everyone that voted for this resolution clearly understood that "use all necessary means" really stood for the "use of force". The use of force was never implied/directed to be used to abolish the current ruling Iraqi regime nor to single out Saddam for assassination. Therefore, the principal objectives of the United Nations were fourfold: 1) to deter further aggression by the Iraqis, 2) to use force to expel Iraq from Kuwait, 3) restore the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Kuwait, and 4) restore international peace and stability to the region. Were these objectives clear enough for the United States civilian leadership? Were they correctly interpreted in the plan for the United States military and its coalition partners during

Operation DESERT STORM? To help answer these questions, one must examine how well these objectives were comprehended by the civilian leadership within the United States and how they were transmitted down to the foreign policy executors--the United States military.

UNITED STATES NATIONAL SECURITY OBJECTIVES

> "If Saddam is not stopped now, if his aggressive designs are not frustrated, peacefully if possible or, if necessary, by force, we will all pay a higher price later."[19]
>
> ---Secretary of State James A. Baker

Since the onset of the Cold War, the United States has had four National Security Objectives in the Middle Eastern region:

> "-Contain Soviet expansionism.
> "-Prevent any local Middle East power from achieving hegemony over its neighbors.
> "-Secure the uninterrupted supply of oil at a reasonable price.
> "-Strengthening the foundations of world order."[20]

The United States policies toward the Middle East were recognized as the Carter Doctrine, and were further reinforced by President Reagan during his administration. The Carter Doctrine warned that, "any attempt by any outside force to gain control of

the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the US, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[21] When Saddam forcefully seized Kuwait and threatened the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its vast oil resources, he immediately captured the attention of the international community. From the United States perspective, Saddam's seizure, if left unanswered, posed a great threat to its friends in Saudi Arabia. The evidence was clear; the ruthlessness demonstrated by Saddam against his neighbors constituted a threat to the stability of the region and its oil resources, and was therefore a direct threat to vital interests of the United States.[22]

In response to this threat to vital interests in the region, on 5 August 1990, President Bush directed the deployment of 250,000 troops and equipment to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the objective of deterring the Iraqi advance into the Kingdom and maintaining a visible defense of the border. General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, predicted that General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command, would complete this deployment by early December 1990. However, General Powell was extremely frustrated with this mission of "deter and defend" because there was no clear follow-

on objective nor obvious way to measure mission success and termination. Having served in Vietnam and shared the pains associated with that war, General Powell was not willing to allow the same situation to occur in the Persian Gulf. In mid-October 1990, General Powell visited the troops in Saudi Arabia and the questions most commonly repeated were, what were we going to do, and when will we get to go home. General Powell's response was that he couldn't answer those questions, but that our political leaders were working the solution. General Powell believed that, "troops would fight for each other and for certain core values: national survival, the lives of American citizens, and the military/political leadership; provided the reasoning was presented clearly and honestly."[23] Whether they would fight for another country like Kuwait, would depend on how well the objectives were presented, what defined success, and what results were required to get them back to their families. The challenge General Powell faced was how to convince the political leadership into making an appropriate decision, while not losing the trust of the troops, and appearing not to be pushing for a particular option. Although consensus was never reached within Congress, the President's staff, or key military leadership; President Bush

gave the final approval, on 2 November 1990, to commence planning for the offensive.

The implied political goals that President Bush wanted planned into the offensive strategy were as follows: ending Kuwait's agony as soon as possible, while minimizing American casualties, restoring regional stability, and preventing Saddam Hussein from adding nuclear weapons to his already formidable arsenal of mass destruction.[24]

The clearly defined United States Objectives, as stated by the President, in the prosecution of the Persian Gulf War were:

> "-Immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait
> "-Restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty
> "-Destruction of Iraqi capability to produce and employ weapons of mass destruction
> "-Destruction of Iraq's offensive capability."[25]

According to Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, in his final report to Congress on the Conduct of the Persian Gulf War, he stated that;

> "the geostrategic objectives set by the President were achieved. Kuwait was liberated, and the security of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf was enhanced. Saddam Hussein's plan to dominate the oil-rich Persian Gulf, an ambition on which he squandered his country's resources, was frustrated."[26]

The Secretary's assessment was correct, but for different reasons. The initial United States Policy of "deter and

defend", the President used in directing the deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia, had the potential of reenacting the mistakes of Vietnam. The policy lacked a clear set of objectives and never defined an end state. However, when the policy of the United States shifted to the offensive, it was directly synchronized with the objectives stated in the United Nation's Resolution 678. The objectives the United States military were tasked to accomplish were clear and unambiguously defined the military end state. Therefore, mission success was easy to define and logically led the conflict to a termination point. As Vice President Quayle put it in his address to Seton Hall University, "...adverse economic impact on Iraq is not the way to measure success. Success is the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait."[27]

But how were the instructions of the president interpreted by the military forces charged with the execution of these objectives? The proof resides in the men and women assigned to Tampa, Florida and whether they, as members of the United States Central Command felt the objectives were unambiguous and clearly gave them the means to terminate the conflict.

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND OBJECTIVES

The United States Central Command is one of five combatant commands in the United States military command structure. It is the unified command responsible for United States security interests in 20 nations that stretch from the Horn of Africa through the Arabian Gulf region and into Southern Asia. Prior to the Iraqi invasion, Central Command had generically planned for a contingency of this nature. During the initial deployment of troops to fulfill the "deter and defend" policy of the civilian leadership; planning for the possibility of an offensive operation continued at a feverish pace. Once the national and multinational decision was made to conduct a counteroffensive, the United States Central Command was ready to further develop a concept for the land campaign and provide the leadership with the specifics of the campaign plan.

"The objectives of the campaign plan by CINCCENT and the Commander, Joint Force/Theater of Operations were designed to counter Iraqi aggression, secure Kuwait, and provide for the establishment of a legitimate government in Kuwait."[28] While the end state was defined wherein, "success would be achieved through

the destruction of the Republican Guard Forces in the Kuwait Theater of Operations, preservation of the offensive capability of the combined forces, and restoration of the sovereignty of Kuwait."[29]

With the clear guidance that came from the National Command Authorities, the Central Command planners were able to further delineate this guidance to their assigned forces in the CINCCENT Mission Statement which outlined the way to conduct the offensive operations:

> "-Neutralize Iraqi National Command Authority
> "-Eject Iraqi Armed Forces from Kuwait
> "-Destroy the Republican Guard
> "-As early as possible, Destroy Iraq's Ballistic Missile, Weapons of Mass Destruction Capability
> "-Assist in the Restoration of the Legitimate Government of Kuwait."[30]

Given the objectives of the campaign plan and the subsequent end state, the Central Command planners produced the Concept of Operations. The concept of operations was a broad outline to give its assigned forces an overall picture of the operation. It was as follows:

> "-Conduct a Coordinated, Multi-National, Multi-Axis Air, Naval and Ground Attack.
> "-Strategic Air Campaign focused on Enemy Centers of Gravity
> "--Iraqi National Command Authority
> "--Weapons of Mass Destruction Capability
> "--Republican Guard Forces Command

"-Progressively Shift Air Operations to; and Conduct Ground Operations in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO) to:

"--Isolate KTO-Sever Iraqi Supply Lines
"--Destroy Republican Guard Forces
"--Liberate Kuwait City with Arab Forces."[31]

Coalition political leaders and commanders planned to use a combination of airpower and ground combat power to eject Iraq's forces from Kuwait. The coalition also sought to destroy Iraqi ability to threaten regional peace and stability further. The coalition would accomplish this by attacking carefully selected targets, but leave most of the basic economic infrastructure of the country intact. Collectively, these actions would weaken Saddam Hussein's regime and set the stage for a stable regional military balance.[32] Removing Saddam and his political regime was never an objective during this operation.

The epilogue of Operation DESERT STORM can be summarized by the fact that the ground offensive lasted 100 hours and categorically achieved all of Central Command's objectives. The United States and Coalition Forces were successful in ejecting the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, restoring the legitimate government and sovereignty of Kuwait, weakened the offensive capability of Saddam's forces enough to restore some stability back to the Persian Gulf region, and curtailing Saddam's hopes of becoming the Gulf's leading producer of weapons of mass destruction.

Operation DESERT STORM did accomplish the objectives established by the United Nations Security Council, but only because the objectives were clear from the start and were adequately interpreted down to the mission executors by all levels the of government and military establishments. The military members knew, without a doubt, what constituted mission success, and this aided immeasurably to the timely termination of this conflict.

CONCLUSION

> "We never had the objective of destroying Saddam's regime during Desert Storm. Had we continued the war and overthrown Saddam, we might be worse off today."[33]
>
> ---National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft

As defined by the United Nations, the United States and her coalition partners had a crucial but <u>limited</u> objective in the gulf war: to bring the occupation of Kuwait to an end; to restore the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait; and to restore the legitimate Government of Kuwait. Although not specified, reducing Saddam's offensive military capabilities, to include his production and storage facilities

for weapons of mass destruction were implied objectives. The international coalition that President Bush put together to fight the gulf war was based on this carefully defined goal. We certainly hoped that Iraq's defeat would lead to Saddam's collapse, but we viewed this as a potentially beneficial byproduct of our victory.

If we had made Saddam's overthrow part of the objective, there would have been no international coalition: even during Desert Storm, our Arab allies stopped their troops at Iraq's border because they wanted no part of an attack on Iraqi territory. If we had continued to prosecute the Gulf War after we achieved our stated objectives, we would have destroyed the coalition and squandered much of what our victory had achieved.[34] The objectives from the United Nations down through every echelon of command were clear and concise. This made the execution of this international policy relatively easy for the military. If this operation is examined against the tenets that must be considered before employing the military instrument of power, one would conclude that this operation had the potential to fail. President Bush deployed the troops to Saudi Arabia initially without a clear military strategy, but merely to demonstrate America's resolve and commitment to a policy of "deter and

defend". Fortunately these policies were reviewed and subsequently changed to reflect the desires of the United Nations and the international community. Because of the clarity of the objectives, the military was able to formulate a logical end state and a seamless transfer into conflict termination.

Therefore, it is clear that the execution of Operation DESERT STORM fulfilled all the objectives of the United Nations and the National Security Objectives of the United States. The manner in which this operation was terminated was clearly in the best interests of the international community and our coalition partnership.

> "Even though Saddam Hussein remains in power today, his political prestige has been crippled and his future prospects are uncertain. He is an international pariah whose hopes of leading an anti-Western coalition of Arab and Islamic peoples have been exposed as dangerous, but ultimately, empty boasts."[35]
>
> ---Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney,

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