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## **Strategy, Implementation, and State-Building Why Governance Failed after the Post-2011 Drawdown of US Forces From Iraq?**

Charles Allen Baxter

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Strategy, implementation, and state-building: Why governance failed after the post-2011  
drawdown of US forces from Iraq?

By

Charles Allen Baxter

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in Political Science  
in the Department of Political Science & Public Administration

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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Strategy, implementation, and state-building: Why governance failed after the post-2011  
drawdown of US forces from Iraq?

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In this thesis I argue that US Military and Civilian leadership in Iraq, while both well-trained and well-intentioned, implemented a failed strategy that sought to fill institutional gaps within various national and sub-national governmental entities. This strategy provided short-term gains by increasing the capacity and capability of Iraq's government to deliver public goods and services to its citizens thereby improving government legitimacy. Yet, in the long-term, a largely decentralized approach to development, a maladaptive transition plan, and an illusory estimate of the capacity of the security apparatus within Iraq proved detrimental to the broader US strategic objectives and state-building efforts in Iraq.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my wife, Stevie, and my parents, Randy and Debbie, for all their support over the years.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to all of the members of my committee for assisting me in this process. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Brian Shoup for working with me and providing guidance despite my status as a deployed military member and unconventional graduate student.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“An external power might be able to undermine state legitimacy, but it cannot restore it at will.”

– Andrew Flibbert

The contrast between the formation of policy objectives and the effective implementation of those stated policy objectives is highly salient in the case of the U.S intervention in Iraq in 2003 and the reconstruction efforts that followed. The operational policy objectives of the United States somewhat evolved as the war in Iraq shifted from a largely successful offensive military effort to overthrow Saddam Hussain to a haphazard attempt to install an independent, democratic, and efficacious Iraqi government in the aftermath of de-Ba’athification. While these operational objectives necessarily evolved over time to address the security and sociopolitical realities on the ground, the broader U.S. strategic foreign policy objectives remained largely unchanged throughout the course of the war—that, in the short term, there would be regime change and, later, that there would be a “new Iraq that is prosperous and free.”<sup>1</sup>

Achieving the latter goal of building a “prosperous and free” Iraq would prove to be far more difficult to implement than the former. Indeed, the Bush Administration originally believed that the installation of a new government would be far less onerous than what would actually transpire.<sup>2</sup> In the aftermath of the successful operation to overthrow Saddam Hussein, policymakers needed to determine a path for rebuilding

Iraq's infrastructure, political institutions, and its security apparatus. These efforts were complicated by the counterintuitive decision to disband the Iraqi Army and greatly constrain the pool of qualified civil servants as a result de-Ba'athification. In the following months and years, the U.S. would be forced into a largely reactionary position as a result of the ethno-sectarian and insurgent violence that would ensue. As such, the U.S. government changed course from what was expected to be a short military operation followed by a transition to a new, democratic government to a prolonged joint, international, interagency, and multinational state-building effort.

The U.S military intervention in Iraq and its attempts thereafter to rebuild and stabilize the country provides a useful case of analysis to better understand the interplay between strategy and implementation. Although the desired end state of U.S. military operations in Iraq did not evolve substantially over the course of the war, there were certainly subtle changes in U.S objectives that provided major challenges for those individuals at the tactical and operational levels responsible for implementing the stated policy objectives.<sup>3</sup> For example, it wasn't until 2007 that the United States stated that Iraq should, "...govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and [become] an ally in the war on terror (Dale, 2009)." This might have been added as a result of the growing insurgency and resultant instability that eventually necessitated the "surge" of U.S troops in early 2007. In either case, there was one objective that remained largely constant throughout the war—that Iraq should no longer harbor terrorists and become a partner in fighting the Global War on Terror. Yet, with the rise of ISIS in 2014, it became clear that the Government of Iraq was neither capable of fighting this extant terrorist threat nor securing its own population. The net effect of billions of US dollars spent on security,

economic development, and infrastructure and thousands of lives lost from 2003 until the US withdrawal in 2011 was failed governance and an ineffectual Iraqi Security Force.

While the case of Iraq presents an array of variables that span from international dynamics to internal factionalism, this thesis focuses on the relationship between institutional strength and external intervention in a post-conflict setting. More specifically, this thesis asserts that the United States implemented a variety of “programs” and supporting operations in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 that, while well-intentioned, were ultimately poorly implemented at best or counterproductive at worst. These programs and operations were intended to rebuild and stabilize Iraq in the aftermath of the invasion and the brutal insurgency that took place thereafter. In many cases these programs and operations yielded favorable short-term results; yet, a lack of a coherent, long-term plan to implement the strategic objectives set forth by policymakers in Washington, D.C. led to negative and unforeseen consequences after the U.S withdrew from Iraq in 2011.

## **Historical Context**

### **Iraq: The Precursor to Operation Iraqi Freedom**

Before the Iran-Iraq war, which began in 1980, Iraq was relatively stable and had a comparatively vigorous economy relative to other countries in the region (Amara 2012). Yet, with the onset of a protracted conflict with Iran, the economic and institutional stability of years past began to wane. Shortly after the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, Iraq invaded Kuwait which led to the eventual US and Coalition intervention in 1991 to push back Saddam Hussein. The invasion of Kuwait, coupled with a propensity to use WMD on its own population, led the U.S. to pursue a strict U.N. weapons

inspection regime which was enforced through robust economic sanctions (Dale 2009). These sanctions, and virtually a decade of conflict, had a destabilizing effect on the Iraqi economy and caused a “brain drain” within the available workforce (Amara 2012).

Despite the debilitating effects of the economic sanctions and other “containment measures” in place for roughly a decade, Iraq would face the prospect of yet another prolonged conflict beginning after September 11, 2001.<sup>4</sup> To address mounting concerns that WMD could potentially fall into the hands of terrorists, the United States rapidly shifted focus from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to Saddam Hussein in Iraq. From 2002 until the Spring of 2003, the Bush Administration pursued a policy of strict compliance with U.N. resolutions relevant to WMD related weapons inspections (Dale 2009). Beginning in the Spring of 2003 it became apparent that Saddam Hussein was not going to comply with the U.N. Security Council demands. This repeated failure to comply, and the possibility that some of the Permanent 5 Security Council members were not prepared to impose “serious consequences,” led the Bush Administration to abandon efforts through the United Nations and issue an ultimatum to the Saddam Hussein regime to leave Iraq within “48 hours” (Dale, 2009). On March 17, 2003 President Bush declared that Saddam Hussein could not “remain in power.” He further indicated that the United States would pursue a policy of regime change and that this would be achieved through forceful means (Dale, 2009).

### **The United States, September 11, 2001, and the Initial Planning Efforts for Operation Iraqi Freedom**

In the shadows of the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of the United States, the Bush Administration coined the term the Global War on Terror. This broad focus, and

a generally supportive American public, provided the impetus for strategic leaders to rapidly pivot from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Prior to Saddam Hussein's failure to comply with the U.N. Security Council's demands, and later his refusal to leave Iraq, civilian and military leadership in the Departments of State and Defense had already begun planning efforts aimed at the forceful removal of the Iraqi regime. In fact, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld directed leaders at U.S. Central Command to develop a plan to remove Hussein from power as early as 2001 (Brennan, et. al., 2013).

From 2001 until January 2003, planners at the Department of Defense presented a number of military options to strategic leaders in the Bush Administration to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Operating under the guidance and directives from Secretary Rumsfeld to utilize a "streamlined force" and "quick timeline" coupled with the prescribed end state of a "prosperous and free Iraq," these planners initially focused their efforts on a large-scale ground offensive operation preceded by a short aerial bombing campaign to take out strategic targets (Dale, 2009). The plans ranged from a slow, prolonged buildup of up to 500,000 military personnel to a rapid response force that could respond to any provocative actions by the Hussein regime. Ultimately, however, it was determined that the U.S. military would invade with two divisions commanded by one corps headquarters as the command and control element for the operation (Dale, 2009).

While the Department of Defense devoted considerable time and effort to the immediate goal of regime change in Iraq, it is reasonable to assert that post-war planning efforts were minimal and based on overly abstracted and unrealistic estimates of who

would manage the aftermath of the invasion, what resources would be required, and what the timelines for a U.S transition and withdrawal would be. Secretary Rumsfeld along with a few senior officials in the Defense Department believed that power needed to be quickly transferred from a military administration to Iraqi control in order to expedite a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.<sup>5</sup> Yet the Department of State favored a more gradual and deliberate approach to transitioning control to the Iraqi's—taking into account a fragile infrastructure, the possibility for ethnic conflict, and weakened economic, political, and security institutions. Despite these disparate assessments and related post-invasion transition plans, the United States invaded Iraq in March 2003.

### **Invasion, Immediate Aftermath, and the Insurgency**

If the primary focus of strategic-level military planning had been on offensive operations in support of deposing Saddam Hussein, then the initial phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom was an overwhelming success. In March 2003, the United States and coalition forces launched a robust ground campaign from Kuwait which included support from both the Air Force and Navy to cover major ground movements of the troops moving northward. By April 2003, US and Coalition forces had reached Baghdad and by the summer of the same year major offensive operations had ceased with the Hussein regime no longer in control of Iraq.

From January to June 2003 the task of rebuilding Iraq's political and economic institutions and infrastructure transitioned from the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (OHRA) to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) under Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. While OHRA had a limited mission to oversee the transition to Iraqi control after the invasion and oversee the reconstruction efforts

thereafter, the CPA had a much broader mandate—a mandate that provided Ambassador Bremer with sweeping powers over occupied Iraq until a new government could be formed. As a first act in his new role as head of the CPA, and quite possibly the most consequential, Ambassador Bremer ordered the removal of Ba’athists from key government positions (Brennan, et. al., 2013). This decision was shortly followed by another consequential order to dissolve the military and security forces— instantly leaving hundreds of thousands of individuals unemployed.

From the summer of 2003 through late 2007, the security situation in Iraq rapidly devolved into a highly unstable situation. Sectarian and ethnic grievances, criminal activity, extremism, and opportunistic terrorist groups like Al Qaeda in Iraq coupled with a largely weak governing apparatus throughout the country created a complex security vacuum of sorts and resulted in a vicious, multi-faceted conflict. Despite the transition of authority from the CPA to Iraqi control on June 28, 2004, some estimates exceed a combined one-hundred thousand military and civilian casualties during this period.<sup>6</sup>

By 2008, Iraq was starting to see some level of stability and a drastic reduction in violent activity due, at least partially, to a change of course in U.S. strategy which came to be known as the “surge.”<sup>7</sup> This “surge strategy” of U.S. and coalition forces involved a rapid increase of up to 30,000 troops to allay the violence which had become largely intractable until that point (Feaver, Pg. 87). While it is certainly debatable that the surge was the primary factor in reducing violence from 2008 to 2011, very few deny that it played a role in ameliorating the security dilemma that plagued Iraq until the change in strategy was implemented. Certainly, the increased troop levels changed the calculus in how Sunni insurgent groups and Shia militias viewed their respective chances of success

at imposing their will on other groups. However, some argue that the real value in the change in U.S. counterinsurgency strategy during this period was a combination of factors that included increased troop strength as well as a focus on negotiating with the Sunni Awakening Councils and Sons of Iraq (Mason, 2012).

### **The U.S. Withdrawal and its Aftermath**

With a war-weary American public and a substantive shift in momentum against the insurgency in Iraq, the Bush Administration and the Al-Maliki Government in Iraq signed a Status of Forces Agreement that set a withdrawal timeline whereby all U.S. forces in Iraq were set to depart by December 31, 2011. As the time neared for a withdrawal of forces the Obama Administration attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to renegotiate this agreement in order to provide a more gradual withdrawal and thus lessen the impact of a reduced U.S. presence in the region. By the end of 2011 all U.S. military forces had withdrawn from Iraq.

Shortly after the U.S. withdrawal, the fears of some that Iraq would become more volatile without an external stabilizing presence were fully realized. Just days after the withdrawal, Prime Minister Maliki issued an arrest warrant for the Sunni Vice President. This reignited concerns that Iraq could return to pre-surge ethnic and sectarian conflict throughout the country. Without a stabilizing force, and a reduced international commitment to continuing reconstruction efforts in Iraq, the future for Iraq remained increasingly uncertain. Indeed, between 2011 and 2014 the security situation in Iraq rapidly began to deteriorate as an Al Qaeda In Iraq (AQI) offshoot, now known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), began to gain territory in both Iraq and Syria. The civil war in Syria was now spilling over into Iraq and by the summer of 2014 ISIS had

gained vast resources and territory including the populous city of Mosul. As ISIS continued to gain territory throughout northern and western Iraq, the Iraqi army was nowhere to be found leaving countless civilians vulnerable to the indiscriminate violence routinely exhibited by its members.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**State-building and Post-conflict Reconstruction**

**Qualifying Statehood and the establishment of Governance**

Perhaps the most fundamental task in determining a starting point for post-conflict reconstruction is defining statehood. Jackson and Rosberg (1982) illuminate the complexities of this undertaking by contrasting the essential characteristics of statehood enumerated by Max Weber and Ian Brownlee—a contrast between the empirical and juridical qualities of statehood. Weber’s definition of statehood as a “corporate group that has compulsory jurisdiction, exercises continuous organization, and claims a monopoly of force over a territory and its population,” is one, Jackson and Rosberg argue, that emphasizes the empirical qualities of statehood (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982). In this view, statehood cannot be maintained in situations whereby more than one group monopolizes the use of force in a given territory. However, there are numerous examples, in Africa and elsewhere, that would not fit Weber’s definition of statehood yet are internationally recognized as sovereign states.

Ian Brownlee provides a description of statehood that is not wholly dissimilar from Weber’s but one that also somewhat allows for the existence of weak states that would otherwise not fit into the category of empirical statehood. Brownlee’s definition asserts that a state is a, “legal person, recognized by international law [that

has]: a defined territory, a permanent population, an effective government, and independence, or the right to enter into relations with other countries (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982).” This definition, which cannot completely explain the realities in weak states throughout Africa and elsewhere, at least provides a framework for understanding statehood as a juridical concept while not completely neglecting the empirical attributes to statehood as well. The contrast between juridical and empirical statehood illuminates the existential reality that there are many territories that would otherwise fit the definition of empirical statehood yet are not recognized by international society; and, conversely, that there are many states that do not exhibit the characteristics of empirical statehood but are internationally recognized as sovereign states.

If defining the characteristics of statehood is a multifaceted endeavor so too is the task of understanding the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed. Moreover, how this relationship is formed between the government and its subjects and how stable governance can be achieved is worth further analysis in the context of this study. As society has evolved from relatively simple groups of hunter-gatherers to a global amalgam of nation-states, the incentives and institutions that govern its inhabitants have necessarily changed as well. Mancur Olsen (1993) framed the development of these institutions and relevant incentives in terms of rational, self-interested elites and their ability to employ the greatest capacity for violence within a defined territory. Olsen explains that society has largely been able to avoid anarchy due to the incentives created as a result of the problem of “roving bandits.” In a society where these roving bandits exist, who move about throughout a domain extorting and pillaging from each location, there also exists the opportunity for “stationary bandits” to establish

governance over a population and provide protection from the roving bandits in exchange for power and wealth in the form of taxes. These “stationary bandits” have an incentive to maximize the economic output within their respective domains as this will result in increased tax revenues for the autocrats. Likewise, the population under the rule of the “stationary bandit” has an incentive to pay taxes in exchange for protection from the “roving bandits” while at least retaining some portion of their wages and other property. However, over the long-term, there is no guarantee that autocrats will act rationally or that individual rights will be secure.

While the incentive structures differ between autocracies and democracies, Olsen’s theory is still relevant to both forms of government. In democracies, the autocrat is replaced by the majority of a population. Whereas the autocrat has an interest in ensuring that tax revenues are maximized, the majority is focused on the market earnings of an economy and, therefore, will distribute less tax revenues to itself.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Foundations of and efficacy for Post-conflict Reconstruction**

In a post-conflict setting the empirical qualities of statehood may not be apparent at best or non-existent at worst. Therefore, a primary undertaking for any and all stakeholders is to restore the state’s ability to monopolize the use of coercive force throughout its jurisdiction (Englebert and Tull, 2008). Secondary, but nonetheless critical, objectives include restoring the gamut of political and economic institutions, establishing legitimate governance, and providing the public goods and services necessary to restore stability to the affected population (Englebert and Tull, 2008). When post-conflict reconstruction is a result of external intervention or when the reconstruction

is being led by external state actors these efforts are often times misguided by a number of fundamentally flawed principals.

Englebert and Tull highlight three “flawed assumptions” that external actors generally incorporate into their planning and associated operations when entering into a post-conflict state building effort (Englebert and Tull, 2008). Among these “flawed assumptions” are the “institutional transfer fallacy,” the idea that state reconstruction efforts somehow imply that there is an inherent desire for cooperation between donor states and their host, and, finally, the presumption that donor states will be able to obtain the necessary resources and maintain the commitment needed to ensure that the reconstruction efforts are successful over the long-term (Englebert and Tull, 2008).

Western donors often wholly neglect the reality that rebuilding existing institutions, that led to failure in the first place, can be counterproductive to any attempted reconstruction efforts. Yet it is also important to note that it is not necessarily productive for donors to begin reconstruction efforts with the idea that “transplanting” institutions will yield favorable results. Throughout Africa, and beyond, this approach has led donors to provide aid to weak or failed states with contingencies that require the recipient to implement specific policies within their respective jurisdictions (Englebert and Tull, 2008). Furthermore, many Western attempts to transplant institutions too weak or failed states frequently fails to recognize that there was never a solid preexisting foundation for these institutions in the first place.

The second flawed assumption described by Englebert and Tull is the “divergent understandings of failure and reconstruction (Englebert and Tull, 2008).” Donor states undertaking post-conflict reconstruction efforts have repeatedly demonstrated a belief

that weak or failed states result from “systemic” breakdowns within society and that post-conflict state-building is a way to ameliorate these breakdowns (Englebert and Tull, 2008).” However, it is often the case that leadership within the host state, in which the donor is operating, views reconstruction and development activities from a divergent perspective at best or a self-interested, opportunistic viewpoint at worst.

The third flawed assumption presented by Englebert and Tull is the “inconsistencies between the ends and the means (Englebert and Tull, 2008).” Donors may engage weak or failed states with admirable intentions and with the belief that there is a full commitment by all involved parties to provide all the necessary resources to reconstruction efforts. The reality, however, is that external actors rarely can provide the long-term commitment necessary to see reconstruction efforts to fruition nor can they provide the necessary resources over an extended time horizon required to get the state to self-sustenance.

### **Institutional Weakness in a Post-Conflict Environment**

There are a wide variety of institutions that contribute to the success or failure of a state and the collective well-being of its inhabitants. These political, economic, and social institutions are often intertwined and cannot be evaluated in isolation. In a post-conflict setting a primary objective is to restore order by establishing or reestablishing the state’s ability to monopolize the use of force within its jurisdiction (Englebert and Tull, 2008). Additionally, the state must possess the legitimate authority to govern, raise revenues, maintain an effective bureaucracy and other local administrative apparatuses, develop a viable security strategy, implement policies, and produce and distribute other public goods (Diamond, 2006). This can only be accomplished if the state has the

economic institutions available to extract resources for public goods and the social order necessary to allow for the formation of a legitimate government.

Restoring stability and order in a post-conflict setting can be particularly difficult because of the very nature of conflict. Either the state has been subject to internal conflict (i.e. civil war) which can necessitate a need for some mechanism for power-sharing or it has been subject to external conflict, which, just as with internal conflict, often leads to substantial degradation of resources and the state's ability to maintain order.<sup>9</sup> In either case, rebuilding state institutions in this environment requires that any external actors, as well as the host government, understands that reconstructing state institutions requires striking a careful balance of sometimes seemingly competing tasks to strengthen the state's ability to govern legitimately.

Building up a security apparatus, including both police and military forces, must be balanced with the need to maintain legitimate civilian control of the military. Developing a post-conflict administration must be weighed against the consideration that the ultimate end-state is to install a long-term, self-sustaining government (i.e. democracy) and must not compromise this goal in any way. Political parties and the requisite infrastructure to conduct free and fair elections take time to develop and resource. This is often neglected by external actors who are often planning their exit before reconstruction efforts begin. Lastly, establishing democratic and a robust civil-society requires installation of a legitimate government. The stakeholders engaged in post-conflict reconstruction should not compromise having one legitimate authority to implement the use of force over its population by allowing multiple local and independent armed groups to remain in place after a new government has been

established. Allowing such groups to remain armed can ultimately derail efforts to establish long-term order, legitimacy, and efficacy of the host government.<sup>10</sup>

### **Implementing Policies in Complex Environments**

There is often a wide gap between a political leader's stated policy objective and the bureaucracy's ability to implement that objective. Large government programs often include a multitude of stakeholders with a variety of perspectives on how to solve the problem that the policy is attempting to improve. This can greatly hinder attempts to achieve those stated goals. Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) explore this intersection between lofty policy objectives and the paths that bureaucrats take when attempting to implement those objectives. In evaluating the performance of an Economic Development Administration program in Oakland, CA aimed at poverty reduction, Pressman and Wildavsky surfaced a number of abstract observations that can be widely applied to public policy analysis.

The EDA program was termed a "massive experiment" that would attempt to solve the problem of comparatively high unemployment in Oakland (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, Eugene Foley, wanted to see if a large infusion of cash invested in a government-administered program could create long-term jobs in the area. As the program matured, the projects were selected, and the funds were allocated many officials within the EDA were initially optimistic. However, as the program progressed reports began to surface that EDA efforts to alleviate unemployment was a massive failure. After millions spent on projects and programs in the area by the EDA, some estimated that as few as 20 jobs

had been created (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). So why was the EDA program in Oakland such a colossal failure and what does this program have to do with Iraq?

It is generally the case that government programs and policies seek to address some specific problem or set of problems. In *Implementation*, the problem that Eugene Foley sought to address was high unemployment in Oakland experienced primarily by minority communities. Foley focused his efforts on Oakland because of his desire to develop and implement a successful program in order to firmly establish the EDA's role in improving the plight of the urban poor (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). This was in spite of the fact that the EDA was primarily intended to be an agency that was rurally focused. The EDA program in Oakland, referred to by Eugene Foley as a "significant experiment," was rapidly initiated and later implemented without any substantial consideration for how the program would be evaluated (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Nor was the program's initial plan analyzed for feasibility, acceptability by, and suitability for all stakeholders prior to implementation.

Bureaucrats at the EDA planned and operated the Oakland program using the "rule of minimum delay" as a primary consideration during the span of the program's implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). From the initial selection of the Port of Oakland, the business loan program, and the World Airways hangar to the multiple instances of bypassing typical bureaucratic channels the goal, at least initially, set by key leaders in the EDA was to ease the employment problem in Oakland as expeditiously as possible. It was this desire to see immediate results as rapidly as possible that led to oversimplification of a highly dynamic problem set within Oakland as well as within organization's responsible for program implementation.

In the interest of time, EDA implemented a combined grant and loan strategy consisting of recipients that they believed could effectively balance the ability to achieve the desired goals of the program with the need meet the arbitrary federal budgetary timeline constraints. It was evident early on that the success of the program would be heavily dependent on a number of stakeholders with a range of interests and goals (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). As the program progressed, however, the leaders at the EDA began to realize that their desired course of action for implementation was not necessarily creating the synergy that they desired.

As a condition for receiving funds from the EDA program in Oakland, it was initially determined that project proposals submitted by applicants would be processed in a manner that could maximize the potential for job creation for the unemployed. As such, recipients would be required to submit an employment plan indicating how the receipt of funds would create new jobs for the unemployed. This cumbersome and somewhat ambiguous requirement created concerns from some within the EDA, who felt that it might be difficult to enforce, and the recipients who understood that it's requirements could be difficult to comply with (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984).

The EDA program in Oakland focused primarily on public works construction projects that could provide potential low skilled jobs and avoid providing an unfair advantage to private sector employers using public funds.<sup>11</sup> However, there were two smaller programs implemented within the broader EDA Oakland initiative that were not initially included in the initial planning phases of the program– the business loan program and the West Oakland Health Center project.<sup>12</sup> The business loan program ultimately provided underwhelming results and would be characterized by the media as an abysmal

failure (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). However, in stark contrast to the overall EDA Oakland experience, the West Oakland Health Center project would be a positive divergence to an otherwise failing program. The Health Center was envisioned to address a health crisis that was disproportionately impacting residents of West Oakland. To address this crisis the West Oakland Health Council, Inc (WOHCI) wanted build a facility that could provide health services to the community (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Unlike the projects at the Port of Oakland, which had stalled for a variety of reasons, The West Oakland Health Center was completed nearly on time and created 150 minority jobs within eighteen months of completion. So, what were the key differences between the other projects in Oakland and the West Oakland Health Center?

First, the Health Center provided a clear solution to a well-defined and well-understood problem. A local statistician had conducted a substantive health survey which had determined there to be a variety of largely preventable health problem within the population in West Oakland. Secondly, the solution to the problem had been developed locally by members of the community who were both connected to the beneficiaries and who possessed the expertise to provide sustainable success. Lastly, the EDA acted as more of a vehicle rather than a driver of success. The problem had been defined locally, the plan to address the problem had been developed locally, members of the community were committed to resolving the problem, and the end result was to create a facility that would house jobs that had not otherwise previously existed. Meanwhile the EDA provided a feasible ratio of grants to loans to fund the facility. Additionally, the EDA allowed the project to be both designed and built by the same contractor which avoided unnecessary delays.

The implementation study conducted by Pressman and Wildavsky provides a variety of broader lessons that can be abstracted and applied to an array of complex public policy and public programming scenarios. Public programs are subject to oversight and funding by political leadership and they cannot be effectively implemented without acknowledging this reality. Political leadership, at times, can create vague policy goals that do not easily translate into tangible results. Large government programs and operations require careful planning and oversight to ensure the efficacy the program, the continuity of action, and the synchronization and unity of efforts. The most viable policy solution often stands in opposition to the political leader's desire to produce immediately visible results.

### CHAPTER III

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

U.S. policy failures in Iraq have been heavily researched by a wide range of both practitioners and academics alike from a variety of competencies. Some have applied Construal Level Theory to political leadership, specifically President George W. Bush, asserting that leaders focused on the strategic end-state will often neglect to comprehensively evaluate the operational steps required to achieve the desired outcome (Rapport, 2012). Others have focused research efforts on strategic rebalancing and regional considerations (Ashford, 2018), counterinsurgency (Burman, et. al., 2011), intelligence failures (Dahl, 2018), and a plethora of other topics related to the challenges and failures relative to the U.S. experience in Iraq. It is not the intent of this thesis to neglect the variety of complex factors and considerations that led to the failure of the Iraqi government in 2014 to maintain a monopoly of force within its jurisdiction and provide basic public services to its citizens. Rather, it attempts to frame the U.S. experience in Iraq through a new lens by applying qualitative historical analysis to the attempts by the United States at state-building in Iraq from 2003 to 2011. More specifically, this thesis seeks to understand how these state-building efforts strengthened or weakened Iraqi institutions in the long-term.

## **Research Question**

The U.S intervention in Iraq, and its attempts at post-conflict reconstruction and state-building thereafter, provides a unique case of analysis for understanding the impacts that external actors can have in developing or weakening preexisting or redesigned critical state and private institutions that have otherwise been wiped out as a result of conflict or never existed to begin with. This because of the nature and evolution of the conflict in Iraq from 2003 to 2011, the massive and largely unprecedented efforts and resources committed by the United States to rebuild Iraq after the invasion, and having the benefit of evaluating these efforts after a withdrawal of forces and reduction in resources in Iraq in 2011. Therefore, this thesis seeks to answer the following question: why did Iraqi governance ultimately fail in the aftermath of the U.S withdrawal in 2011 and to what extent was the U.S. responsible for this failure?

## **Theoretical Framework**

While there were a variety of coalition and interagency actors that played critical roles during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND), this thesis focuses primarily on the role of the Department of Defense in implementing the strategic objectives of U.S. political leadership during the course of the two previously mentioned operations in Iraq. This is due to the department's wide-reaching capabilities and vast resources that DoD committed to the operations in Iraq. The role of other U.S. government (USG) agencies and international actors cannot be wholly ignored in evaluating the overall operations in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 but they will only be evaluated, in this context, vis-a-vis their interactions with the Department of Defense in implementing the strategic objectives of political leadership during OIF and OND.

The Department of Defense’s Joint Publication 3-0 (Joint Operations) outlines three levels of warfare: strategic, operational, and tactical.<sup>13</sup> Different organizations, along with their respective leadership teams and their staffs, reside at each level of warfare but the organizations operating at each level of warfare do not do so in isolation of their higher or lower organizations’ mission and purpose. This means that strategic decisions can have tactical implications or consequences and, conversely, tactical decisions can have strategic implications or consequences. In either case, it is critical– for an operation to be successful– that objectives and operations at every level are synchronized in order to achieve a unity of effort and accomplish the overall strategic objective (see figure 1).



Figure 3.1 Relationship Between Strategy and Operational Art

Notes: Figure from U.S. Department of Defense Joint Publication 3-0

Evaluating the impact that external actors have on institutional development in a post-conflict setting is both a broad and a complex undertaking. For the purpose of this study, U.S objectives in Iraq will be grouped into three broad categories—security, governance, and economic development— in an attempt to understand the relationship between institutional strength in Iraq and the impact that the U.S. had on relevant Iraqi institutions during OIF and OND. The implementation of these policy objectives will then be evaluated in the context of the different “levels of warfare” or “domains” that are involved in policy formation and implementation.<sup>14</sup>

CHAPTER IV  
INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTH IN IRAQ FROM 2003 TO 2011

**Security**

The security challenges that Iraq faced in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion in 2003 were both nonlinear and multifaceted. In retrospect, these cannot be framed as purely an Iraqi problem with solely an Iraqi solution due to the principal role in governance that the U.S. and coalition actors played in the immediate aftermath of the invasion and the substantive supporting role that they played after the transition to Iraqi control in 2004. Indeed, the security challenges that faced Iraq were, in many cases, externally induced, and, in others, products of ineffectual Iraqi institutions. Once Saddam Hussein's internal and external security forces had been removed from power it was the dual task of Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF7) to act as a stop-gap security apparatus for the now-defunct Iraqi government and to immediately rebuild a robust Iraqi security force from the ground up. As a result of the damages sustained during the invasion, and the enactment of CPA order number 2, a security vacuum developed in Iraq which set the conditions for a civil war and follow on insurgency (Brennan, et al., 2013).

**Drivers of Instability**

As the summer of 2003 neared, it became evident that the primary threat to U.S. and coalition forces was not Saddam Hussein's now completely unorganized and overpowered army. In fact, it was the lack of any capacity to deliver public goods and

services or secure the population that shaped an environment of chaos and allowed the country to descend into a civil war rapidly. U.S. Military doctrine incorporates a concept known as “drivers of instability” within its broader planning framework to identify specific factors that contribute to instability within a complex security environment.<sup>15</sup> While these “drivers of instability” would evolve over time and, would be defined differently by different military and civilian leaders addressing location-specific challenges, the broader threats to stability remained somewhat consistent throughout the war.

First, was the internal struggle for power and resources among various ethno-sectarian groups located throughout the country (Brennan, et. al., 2013). Leaders within Saddam Hussein’s overwhelmingly Sunni regime had been placed in positions of power for more than twenty years prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. As a result, the Shi’ite majority in Iraq had been disenfranchised and largely excluded from leadership positions for the same period of time. Additionally, tensions between Iraq’s Arab and Kurdish population were fomented by Saddam Hussein’s genocidal campaign and ultimate use of chemical agents against the Kurds in 1988. These preexisting grievances, between different factions within Iraq’s population, set the stage for a dangerous environment in the absence of a robust security apparatus. It would pose complex challenges for U.S. and Iraqi forces in Iraq for more than a decade after the invasion.

A second source of instability in a post-invasion Iraq was the weak capacity for governance initially administered by the CPA and later the Government of Iraq itself (Brennan, et. al., 2013). Iraq struggled to build an adequate bureaucracy and administrative apparatus as a result of the de-Ba’athification decision initially instituted

by the CPA. This was due to the reality that the Ba'ath party occupied key positions throughout the government for most of the Hussein regime's tenure. Without the availability of existing public administration and bureaucratic expertise new, inexperienced personnel would have to fill the void.

The third source of instability, as viewed by key U.S. leadership in Iraq, was the presence of violent extremists from different sects of society and with varying goals and interests (Brennan, et. al., 2013). These groups ranged from nationalist groups that felt disaffected by new leadership within Iraq to Shia Militia Groups (SMG), such as the Promised Day Brigade, to Sunni extremist organizations like Al Qaeda in Iraq and Ansar al-Islam. This complex amalgamation of different groups with competing goals and interests posed real challenges for U.S., Coalition, and Iraqi leadership in trying to form legitimate and resilient state institutions.

The final driver of instability, as seen by U.S. leaders, was the role of external actors in furthering their own political interests (Brennan, et. al., 2013). Indeed, Iran had been involved in arming and assisting insurgent and extremist groups in Iraq since the beginning of the war and even before. Iran, in particular, sought to exploit both ethnic tensions and weaknesses in the government and had engaged in direct targeting of civilians as well as U.S., Coalition, and Iraqi Security Forces.

### **Addressing the Insurgency**

The near intractable violence that ensued shortly after the invasion from 2003 until the surge in 2007—fueled by many of the previously discussed drivers of instability—led the U.S military to shift its strategy from conventional offensive and defensive, kinetic operations to a more unconventional or irregular strategy that incorporated

stability and counterinsurgency operations.<sup>16</sup> This would require much broader efforts that relied on soft power like building infrastructure and developing relationships with the local populace. It meant that there would be an increased reliance on Iraqi institutions and interagency partners like the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

### **Violence in Iraq from 2003 – 2011**

By the time the U.S. withdrew from Iraq in 2011 countless combatant and civilian lives had been lost. Some estimate, that by the time of withdrawal, as many as one hundred thousand Iraqi civilians had lost their lives as either a direct, or at least indirect, result of the 2003 invasion (Flibbert, 2013). Shortly after major offensive operations had ceased, and with the dissolution of any organic force remotely capable of securing the Iraqi state, violence within Iraq began to rapidly intensify. The data available on civilian deaths in Iraq varies depending on the source but Multi-National Forces Iraq (MNF-I) numbers indicate that civilian deaths in Iraq reached a climax in 2006 at 1,500 deaths per month (Dale, 2009). While there may be some variance depending on the source of the data, the trends on civilian deaths in Iraq remain relatively consistent— that civilian deaths reached a peak in 2006 and 2007 followed by a sharp decline in deaths after the arrival of new forces as a result of the surge (Dale, 2009). Certainly, the security situation remained somewhat fluid as operations took place throughout the country but the situation appeared to stabilize as the U.S. shifted resources and changed its strategy in Iraq in 2007. This trend generally continued to decrease until the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011 (Betts, et. al., 2011).

## **Building a new security Apparatus: Iraqi Security Forces**

Initial training of the Iraqi Security Forces during the transition from Coalition to Iraqi control of the government was the responsibility of the CPA. In hindsight, it is apparent that there was no initial plan to deal with the chaos that resulted from the decision that the CPA made to disband all Iraqi forces. While an initial organization was established to manage police training within the CPA's "Ministry of the Interior," and with support of the Department of State, it became rapidly evident that this organization lacked the capacity to meet the time-sensitive security needs that the situation throughout Iraq would demand. Military commanders throughout Iraq recognized this need to develop local police forces and began their own individual training programs to address gaps in establishing some form of order in their respective areas of operation. This disjointed and decentralized approach irritated some leaders within the CPA but it was a decision that commanders made in the absence of a clear strategy to secure Iraq (Dale, 2009).

Similarly, the CPA led efforts to rebuild the Iraqi Army beginning in the Summer of 2003. With no Iraqi government in place, the CPA pursued a true bottom-up approach to recruiting and training Iraq security forces. Without any detailed plan for structuring a broader Iraqi Army organization and headquarters, the CPA began to fill as many as 27 battalions within one year (Dale, 2009). In an effort to address the rapidly deteriorating security situation, the CPA had to come up with a plan to mitigate deficiencies in the absence of any robust and capable security forces and, as such, directed the development of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) (Dale, 2009).

Divergent perspectives– and parallel as opposed to unified efforts– on who should be responsible for training and equipping Iraqi Security forces ultimately led to National Presidential Security Directive 36 which assigned the responsibility of developing the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to U.S. Central Command in 2004 (Dale, 2009). The military, after all, had far more established capabilities, reach, and resources to handle this responsibility. By 2009, the Iraqi Security Forces had more than 600,000 personnel assigned to their ranks.

The Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTI) embarked on a plan to embed various transition teams throughout the ISF and at various levels of command within the Ministries of Defense and Interior. As the ranks of the ISF increased, Coalition Forces often acted as a critical stopgap while these forces could be trained to execute more complex operations. As the security situation deteriorated from 2003 to 2007 timelines were “relaxed” on training the ISF while immediate security concerns could be addressed. Even as the ISF capabilities were developed and became incrementally proficient in executing tactical operations, there were major gaps in critical capabilities such as logistics, communications, close air support, and military planning among other things (Dale, 2009). Without these capabilities and their embedded coalition “advisors,” the ISF’s ability to operate completely independently was improbable at best.

As late as 2009, senior leaders within the U.S military expressed concerns that, while the ISF may have developed a level of tactical and operational competence, there were still critical institutional challenges that needed to be addressed (Dale, 2009). The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of the Interior needed to develop civilian leaders

capable to provide competent oversight over the ISF in the long-term. Additionally, there were organizational challenges such as the existence of provincial-level operational commands that reported directly to the Iraqi Prime Minister. This concerned many within Iraq and, particularly leaders at the provincial level, that this power could be misused and raised valid legitimacy concerns in the eyes of many Iraqis.

### **Governance**

The complexities and importance of building a sustainable foundation for law and order, integrating capable and competent local and national leadership into the state-building process, and developing a legitimate, democratic political system in a country with a diverse ethno-sectarian composition may not have been adequately incorporated into post-war planning in Iraq but would be quickly realized by operational and tactical leaders as the formal occupation began. Initially, the State Department took a principal role in providing leadership and oversight of the development of provincial-level institutions throughout Iraq. This was done in close coordination with military leadership through the use of military Civil Affairs personnel. However, as the conflict progressed and the security situation became increasingly dire, the military took an active and substantial role in facilitating civil discourse and coordination between Iraqi government entities as well as building governing capacity at the local and national level. In fact, immediate aftermath of the invasion, many commanders assembled local and provincial councils to fill the void created by the disestablishment of the Hussein regime's preexisting provincial governmental system (SIGIR, 2009).

The transition from CPA authority to "Iraqi Sovereignty" in 2004 was more the product of externally dictated timelines and requirements than it was about reconciliation,

autochthonous development, or unified efforts.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the CPA had eliminated the possibility of many qualified leaders serving at both the provincial and national levels of government with the enactment of CPA order number 1. This meant that many Sunni leaders from throughout Iraq would be excluded from key discussions on the transition to Iraqi Sovereignty— and the crafting of the new constitution— which effectively delegitimized the new Iraqi government in the eyes of many Sunni’s before the new government had even formed (Brennan, et. al., 2013).

Despite the transition to Iraqi Sovereignty in June of 2004 from the CPA, U.S. and coalition civil-military efforts in the country would not diminish. The authority for governance had ostensibly been transitioned to Iraqi control but the U.S. military retained occupational authorities led by the now Multi-National Forces Iraq (MNF-I) command, and the U.S embassy, who led the political and civilian efforts in the country. In fact, the U.S. military played a primary role in curbing the violence as the country spiraled out of control from 2004 until approximately 2008 when the insurgency began to lose traction. During this period, and arguably before, military leadership began to implement a new strategy focused on countering the increasingly intractable insurgency. This shift from conventional offensive and defensive operations to a stability and counterinsurgency role put U.S. tactical and operational leaders at the forefront of an unconventional approach that would focus more holistically on the intersection security, governance, and economic development.

As the U.S. shifted strategies to manage a growing insurgency in Iraq, they began to surge both civilian and military personnel throughout Iraq. This surge included personnel from the Department of State and USAID that would embed with military units

to form Enhanced Provincial Reconstruction Teams (ePRTs). Personnel from these units would assist military commanders in selecting projects and liaising with local and provincial officials to build capacity and shape the environment that these various units were operating in. As time progressed, these units would be comprised of personnel from various agencies such as: the Department of State, the Department of Justice, the Department of Agriculture, USAID, and the Department of Defense. Some PRTs were able to operate independently and others worked largely under the umbrella of their respective Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) commander. As late as August 2008, commanders believed that the U.S. needed to increase the level of PRTs operating throughout Iraq; however, the Department of State believed, at that time, that the PRT levels were rightsized (Dale, 2009). As a result, many commanders began to fill this role with their own staffs to address the deficit in capabilities.

### **Economic Development**

As with many other institutions in Iraq, the removal of the Hussein regime in 2003 had caused vast complications in the flow of resources from the national to the local level. Prior to the invasion, the Central Bank was responsible for providing financial capital to the various local and provincial governments throughout the country (SIGIR 2009). With the complete collapse of the Hussein regime, this process came to a screeching halt. As a result, the U.S. military began to provide capital through the use of the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP). This program would evolve substantially over the course of the war in terms of its funding sources, scope, and implementation. Initially, funded through seized assets of the Hussein regime, CERP quickly transitioned to a congressionally funded program. Between 2003 and 2008,

Congress allocated roughly \$46 billion in CERP funding for Iraq reconstruction (GAO, 2008).

The CERP program was originally intended to provide essential services to the public and address critical humanitarian needs. While the requirements evolved over the years in terms of how much could be spent on a specific project, the funds were expended at the discretion of operational and tactical ground commanders and, in many cases, spent without the input of other relevant government agencies such as USAID and the Department of State. As the program progressed, and the strategy in Iraq shifted toward counterinsurgency, commanders began to deviate from the program's original intent of meeting the immediate needs of the population to the use of the funds for development purposes (SIGIR, 2013). Moreover, commanders were implementing large scale projects throughout their respective areas of operation without a plan to maintain these projects in the future or to transition them to Iraqi control (SIGIR, 2013).

By 2008, civilian leaders in Baghdad and in Congress started to become concerned that this program might be counter to the goal of building an independent Iraqi government that could deliver critical public services to its own population (Dale, 2009). Commanders, in many cases, were providing public goods and services that traditionally would be accomplished by local, provincial, or even national-level leadership. It is important to note that this program, at the height of the insurgency, sought to address the problem of severing the relationship between local populations in Iraq with that of the insurgent's that operated within a commander's area of responsibility. This nexus between security, governance, and economic development forced commanders to apply unconventional methods to address the complex security problems they faced and the

gaps in available public goods and services that were ever-present in their respective areas of operation.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE  
STRATEGIC, OPERATIONAL, AND TACTICAL LEVELS OF WARFARE DURING  
OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM AND NEW DAWN

From the outset, Operation Iraqi Freedom was on a trajectory toward a prolonged and costly conflict that would require a vast amount of resources and an unrealized commitment to objectives that were not necessarily germane to the original stated goal of the operation. This was due largely to strategic-level planning failures that would put those responsible for implementing the initial policy objective— of the Bush Administration— of regime removal in a reactive position that would make the transition to a new, effective government in Iraq more complex as the conflict progressed. These failures ranged from inaccurate estimates of the complexity of rebuilding the Iraqi state— in the aftermath of the removal of Saddam Hussein from power— to civil-military organizational challenges within the U.S. government that seriously constrained the coalition’s ability to react as Iraq began to spiral out of control. Without a coherent plan to build a state in Iraq that was capable of fairly governing and protecting its citizens, the “implementors” of Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn were left with little choice but to fill the void in direction, guidance, and leadership by shaping the respective sociopolitical environments, and areas in which they operated, through any means necessary.

## Strategic-level Failures

### **Evolving Objectives: From Operations Iraqi Freedom to New Dawn**

The relationship between the strategic and operational-level policy objectives during Operation Iraqi Freedom may have been more easily delineated prior to the invasion than after the Hussein regime had been removed. With the Bush Administration's goal of regime removal and then a "free and prosperous Iraq," USCENTCOM's initial campaign plan enumerated its initial goals of Operation Iraqi Freedom as: "A stable Iraq, with its territorial integrity intact and a broad-based government that renounces WMD development and use and no longer supports terrorism or threatens its neighbors (Dale, 2009)." The goal of regime removal, and the mitigation of the threat posed by alleged WMD development and proliferation, are more evident but the means of stabilizing Iraq and who specifically would do so was less apparent. Moreover, the timeline, interagency delineation of responsibilities, and initial structure for a feasible and unified governing authority in Iraq were all lacking from the initial plan. As a result, the strategic-level objectives would necessarily evolve as the situation in Iraq descended into civil war with a lack of sufficient capacity or legitimacy in governance throughout the country.

In 2009, and with a new administration in the White House, the goals in Iraq were once again articulated by President Obama as: "...an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant; an Iraqi Government that is just, representative, and accountable; neither a safe haven for, or sponsor of, terrorism; integrated into the global economy; and a long-term partner contributing to regional peace and security (Dale, 2009)." With a stated political goal of leaving Iraq, the Obama administration took over as the insurgency had

been largely quelled and during a period of relatively less volatility than the previous years. However, just as the Bush administration pushed forward with regime removal in Iraq without a clear plan for rebuilding the Iraqi state, the Obama administration risked making a similar mistake without a clear plan to measure it's stated objective and the Iraqi government's ability to fairly and effectively govern in the absence of an external presence.

As strategic level objectives shift, those responsible for implementation necessarily have to shift their supporting goals to accommodate the new overarching priority. With large programs and operations this can be incredibly difficult or near impossible depending on the resources available or timeline allocated to accomplish the stated objectives. To be sure, operational success in Iraq was never completely dependent on the actions taken by those implementing the strategic-level objectives of U.S. policymakers. Certainly, the U.S. and coalition efforts in Iraq had a major, if not primary, impact on the ability of the Iraqi's to build a robust, legitimate, and democratic state in the aftermath of the invasion. Yet, building a "sovereign, stable, and self-reliant" government would necessitate cooperation, determination, commitment, and perseverance on the part of the Iraqi's from the highest reaches of government to the everyday citizen. At the same time, it required an understanding of existing capabilities on the part of the Iraqi's to govern and what roles and resources that they would need to maintain in the absence of the external actors that had been filling gaps in institutional capacity such as with military logistics, close air support, and the maintenance of various projects that had been previously overseen by numerous U.S. governmental agencies.

## **Organizational Challenges in Iraq**

Prior the invasion of Iraq, the United States focused planning efforts primarily on regime removal in Iraq. These efforts were led by the Department of Defense and, as such, did not include the level of participation needed from other key stakeholders throughout the U.S. government to plan for the state-building and reconstruction efforts that would take place after the regime in Iraq had been toppled. In fact, the organizations that would be responsible for reconstruction and governance in the immediate aftermath of the invasion did not even exist when planning efforts were in their final stages for Operation Iraqi Freedom. As it became evident that planning assumptions were incorrect, with respect to the Iraqi's ability to establish a robust and self-reliant government in the aftermath of the invasion, two "parallel" organizations began to take shape– the CPA and CJTF-7 (Rathmell, 2005). The former with overall oversight of policy and "institutional development" and the latter with overall responsibility for security (Rathmell, 2005). In the summer of 2004, the responsibility for governance would be transitioned to the Iraqi's where it would remain for the duration of Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.

The parallel nature of these organizations created some complications for implementation that lasted throughout the duration of OIF and OND. First, the CPA, while tasked with institutional development and policy oversight, in actuality lacked the resources and staff needed to execute its prescribed responsibilities. As a result, coalition commanders located throughout the country were routinely faced with making decisions and allocating resources against problems that likely should have been handled at the strategic level. This approach of dealing with strategic problems at the tactical level continued even as the primary responsibility for governance was transitioned to the

Iraqi's. Similarly, the CPA was making consequential policy decisions, like the first two official CPA orders, that had a major impact on the operations conducted by CJTF-7 which, in turn, forced CJTF-7 to react and attempt to stabilize the security situation.

### **Operational and Tactical Challenges**

At the operational and tactical levels, leaders were forced to deal with the consequences of insufficient planning and any real clarity of purpose after the Hussein regime had been removed from power. To the disdain of CPA leadership and in the absence of any clearly articulated overarching strategy for establishing a new Iraqi government, many commanders—like Major General David Petraeus, who commanded forces in Northern Iraq, and Lieutenant General James Conway, who oversaw Marine forces in An Najaf—began to schedule provincial-level elections and install local councils in their areas of operation (SIGIR, 2009). Ultimately, in the Case of General Conway, some of these elections were canceled at the request of CPA leadership but nonetheless are demonstrative of a lack of any clear delineation of responsibility or clarity of how Iraqi institutions would be rebuilt even as late as July of 2003.

As Iraq descended into a state of civil war, ground commanders became caught in the middle of a complicated and dire security situation caused by an array of variables that ranged from ethno-sectarian grievances to a lack of access to essential public goods like water or any extant law enforcement apparatus. This forced commanders to use the application of military force through decisive targeting and the employment of the vast lethal resources that the U.S. military had at its disposal; through the more unconventional use of non-lethal methods like engagement with political leadership at the local, provincial, and national level; and also, through employing resources like CERP.

With the addition of forces provided through the new surge strategy and the ever-increasing allocation of funds by Congress for the CERP program, these methods proved to be successful in stabilizing the security situation that spiraled out of control from 2004 until late 2007. Ironically, this approach likely institutionalized a mentality within the U.S. military that may have negated the intent of strengthening Iraqi institutions and transitioning the complete responsibility of security to the ISF and Government of Iraq.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

As of the writing of this thesis, there has been vast amounts of research into the U.S. experience in Iraq and the numerous failures that occurred as a result of the 2003 invasion. In January of 2019, the U.S. Army released a comprehensive study of this experience that came to a number of conclusions relevant to this study. The study, among other conclusions, affirms the observations of many academics and practitioners alike—that the United States operated under the constant assumption that the operations in Iraq would be coming to a quick end. This “short war assumption” drove many operational and strategic-level decisions throughout the entire course of the war. It concluded, like many others before it, that the force levels in Iraq were never sufficient to support the overall mission and operations in Iraq from 2003 to 2011. The study asserted that “ad hoc” organizations limited the potential effectiveness of U.S. forces in Iraq due to high turnovers in personnel and a lack of doctrinal foundation for its utilization. It determined that operational leadership in Iraq were persistently “overly optimistic” in their planning (Rayburn, 2019). With the exception of the civil war, that spiraled out of control from shortly after the invasion until 2007, planners at the operational level in Iraq always believed that success was right around the corner. That the Iraqi government would achieve a state of legitimacy and therefore stabilize the otherwise complex security situation within Iraq. And, finally, the study asserted that there was a “lack of

understanding” throughout the U.S. government, both military and civilian agencies, of the environment in which they were operating. In many cases, this failure to understand the complex dynamics within the Iraqi sociopolitical realm, led U.S. leadership to inadvertently “exacerbate” preexistent tensions (Rayburn, 2019).

This thesis does not seek to minimize the many complex factors that ultimately led to an effective collapse of governance in 2014 when ISIS took over large swaths of territory in Northern and Western Iraq. Many scholars and practitioners have come to overlapping conclusions with respect to U.S. failures in Iraq from 2003 to 2011. Whereas other studies have focused largely on strategic planning failures, faulty premises for the invasion, internal dynamics, or regional considerations this thesis differs in that it focuses on the extent to which external intervention and state-building efforts in Iraq limited the natural development of critical institutions in governance. In the aftermath of the invasion, critical Iraqi administrative and security institutions were immediately incapacitated as a result of the first two orders by Paul Bremer’s CPA and the military operations that preceded them. As the country spiraled out of control, the U.S. and coalition forces were the only capable organization to monopolize the use of force throughout the country. When the strategy shifted to a counterinsurgency and stability focus, the U.S. military began to focus on governance, with the use of PRT’s, and economic development using tools like CERP that were initially intended to be limited to immediate reconstruction needs or to repair coalition-imposed battle damage.

The optimistic attitudes of military leadership and “short war assumption” was promulgated by leaders at the strategic level, across multiple U.S. administrations, and necessarily filtered down to the operational and tactical levels. This short time horizon

assumption coupled with a resultant deteriorating security situation required those on the ground to deal with planning failures at the strategic level. Commanders, with the substantial tools provided to them by the Department of Defense and Congress, used a multi-faceted approach that included the application of both military force and “soft” power to mitigate a growing insurgency. Yet, in the process, they effectively continued to provide many of the public goods and services that otherwise should have been filled by the host government. As one government official pointed out in 2008, the problem was that the U.S. military was “not giving the Iraqis the freedom to fail (Dale, 2009).”

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Catherine Dell, “Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, April 2009: 31.

<sup>2</sup> See SIGIR, *Hard Lessons*: 3.

<sup>3</sup> See Catherine Dell, “Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, April 2009: 31.

<sup>4</sup> See Catherine Dell, “Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, April 2009: 29.

<sup>5</sup> See Catherine Dell, “Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, April 2009: 34; and, SIGIR, “Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience,” U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009: 3.

<sup>6</sup> See SIGIR, “Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience,” U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009: 277; and Andrew Flibbert, “The Consequences of Forced State Failure in Iraq,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 2013: 67 – 68.

<sup>7</sup> See David T. Mason, “Ending the War in Iraq: The Third Option,” *Civil Wars*, 2012: 209.

<sup>8</sup> See Mancur Olsen, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” *American Political Science Review*, 1993: 567- 576.

<sup>9</sup> See Larry Diamond, “Promoting Democracy in Post-conflict and Failed States,” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 2006: 94 – 95.

<sup>10</sup> See Larry Diamond, “Promoting Democracy in Post-conflict and Failed States,” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 2006: 97 – 101.

<sup>11</sup> See Jeffery L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, “Implementation,” University of California Press, 1984: 74 – 75.

<sup>12</sup> See Jeffery L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, “Implementation,” University of California Press, 1984: 73 – 86.

<sup>13</sup> See Joint Publication 3-0,

[https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_0ch1.pdf?ver=2018-11-27-160457-910](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_0ch1.pdf?ver=2018-11-27-160457-910): I-12

<sup>14</sup> See Jeffery L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, “Implementation,” University of California Press, 1984: 219.

<sup>15</sup> See Army Field Manual (FM) 3-57, 2011; 3-27.

<sup>16</sup> See U.S. Army and Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24 and U.S. Department of Defense Joint Publication 3-07.

<sup>17</sup> See Richard Brennan, et. al., *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The first Six Years*,” RAND Corporation, 2011: 49.