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After Saddam

Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq

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Prepared for the United States Army
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



The research described in this report was sponsored by the United States Army under Contract No. DASW01-01-C-0003.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

After Saddam : prewar planning and the occupation of Iraq / Nora Bensahel ... [et al].
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8330-4458-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Iraq War, 2003— 2. Military planning—United States. 3. Postwar reconstruction—Iraq. 4. Coalition Provisional Authority. 5. Insurgency—Iraq. 6. National security—Iraq. I. Bensahel, Nora, 1971—

DS79.76A345 2008

956.7044'3—dc22

2008025846

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Published 2008 by the RAND Corporation

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Summary

Major combat operations in Iraq lasted approximately three weeks, but stabilization efforts in that country are, as of this writing, ongoing. The U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps are increasingly taxed by the demands of the continuing insurgency, with more than 100,000 troops expected to remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future.

The evidence suggests that the United States had neither the people nor the plans in place to handle the situation that arose after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Looters took to the streets, damaging much of Iraq's infrastructure that had remained intact throughout major combat. Iraqi police and military units were nowhere to be found, having largely dispersed during combat. U.S. military forces in Baghdad and elsewhere in the country were not prepared to respond rapidly to the initial looting and subsequent large-scale public unrest. These conditions enabled the insurgency to take root, and the Army and Marine Corps have been battling the insurgents ever since.

Why was the United States so unprepared for the challenges of postwar Iraq? As part of a larger study of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), RAND Arroyo Center examined prewar planning for postwar Iraq and the subsequent occupation to seek an answer to this question and to draw lessons and recommendations from the Iraq experience.

It is not the case that no one planned for post-Saddam Iraq. On the contrary, many agencies and organizations within the U.S. government identified a range of possible postwar challenges in 2002 and early 2003, before major combat commenced, and suggested strategies for addressing them. Some of these ideas seem quite prescient in retrospect. Yet few if any made it into the serious planning process for OIF.

They were held at bay, in the most general sense, by two mutually reinforcing sets of assumptions that dominated planning for OIF at the highest levels. Although many agencies and individuals sought to plan for post-Saddam Iraq, senior policymakers throughout the government held to a set of fairly optimistic assumptions about the conditions that would emerge after major combat and what would be required thereafter. These assumptions tended to override counterarguments elsewhere

in the government. Meanwhile, senior military commanders assumed that civilian authorities would be responsible for the postwar period. Hence they focused the vast majority of their attention on preparations for and the execution of major combat operations. That both sets of assumptions proved to be invalid argues for the development of a new and broader approach to planning military operations, and perhaps a louder military voice in shaping postwar operations.

Military Planning for Phase IV

The notion of a “Phase IV” in OIF came out of the war planning process that commenced in the fall of 2001, shortly before the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan. On November 27, 2001, the Secretary of Defense directed U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) to develop a plan to remove Saddam Hussein from power. The plan that emerged for OIF, later called OPLAN 1003V, outlined four phases: establishing international support and preparing for deployment; shaping the battlespace; major combat operations; and post-combat operations. The final version of OPLAN 1003V provided guidance and responsibilities for Phase IV operations, giving CENTCOM’s land component, the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), primary responsibility for post-combat operations.

Both CENTCOM and CFLCC developed supporting OPLANs in early 2003 that focused on Phase IV operations. Elements of each of these plans appear fairly prescient in retrospect. Yet they were always a low priority at CENTCOM, which focused the vast bulk of its time, attention, and resources on major combat operations. Although CENTCOM’s commander, General Tommy Franks, refers to Phase IV frequently in his memoirs, for example, he never identifies the specific mission that U.S. forces should have had during that time. To the contrary: He expresses the strong sentiment that his civilian superiors should focus on postwar operations while he focused on the war itself.¹ He goes on to argue that civic action sets the preconditions for security rather than the other way around.² And he justifies his decision to retire right after combat ended because the mission was changing and a new commander should be there throughout Phase IV.³

¹ Franks states, “While we at CENTCOM were executing the war plan, Washington should focus on policy-level issues . . . I knew the President and Don Rumsfeld would back me up, so I felt free to pass the message along to the bureaucracy beneath them: *You pay attention to the day after and I’ll pay attention to the day of.*” Tommy Franks, *American Solider*, New York: Regan Books, 2004, p. 441. Emphasis in the original.

² Franks writes, “As I had said throughout our planning sessions, civic action and security were linked—*inextricably* linked. There was a commonly held belief that civil action would not be possible in Iraq without security. I would continue to argue that there could be no security without civic action.” Franks, p. 526. Emphasis in the original.

³ Franks, p. 530.

In short, General Franks saw major combat operations during Phase III as fundamentally distinct from Phase IV stability and reconstruction requirements, and as the military's primary task. That mindset reinforced an understandable tendency at CENTCOM to focus planning on major combat as an end in itself rather than as a component part of a broader effort to create a stable, reasonably democratic Iraq. The result, arguably, was a military operation that made the latter, larger goal more difficult to achieve.

Civilian Planning for Phase IV

General Franks was correct in seeing the need for greater civilian involvement in the stabilization of Iraq, since civilian agencies possess many of the capabilities needed for post-conflict operations. In fact, several U.S. government organizations, particularly the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the National Security Council (NSC) conducted separate studies of postwar possibilities. The problem, therefore, was not that no one in the U.S. government thought about the challenges of post-Saddam Iraq. Rather, it was the failure to coordinate and integrate these various thoughts into a coherent, actionable plan.

At the center of the interagency planning process lay the NSC, which, starting in the summer of 2002, oversaw several interagency working groups that brought together representatives from the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and other organizations. Most of these working groups focused on the conduct of the war, but the working group on Iraq Relief and Reconstruction (IR+R) focused on postwar plans. This group produced fairly detailed humanitarian relief plans, but its reconstruction plans remained vague, reflecting a sense that reconstruction would not be necessary and stabilization would be handled by the Iraqis themselves.

If the NSC staff failed to consider alternative scenarios that might pose differing requirements, neither did it provide strategic guidance on various aspects of U.S. policy during the postwar period. Repeated requests for policy guidance from CENTCOM, Task Force IV, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), and others went unanswered, leaving each agency to make its own assumptions about key aspects of the postwar period. Key questions, such as whether the U.S. postwar authority would be military or civilian in nature, went unanswered throughout the planning process. When the NSC issued strategic guidance in late March 2003 (as will be discussed in Chapter Three), the war was already under way. As a result, the various planning processes that occurred across the U.S. government were neither coordinated nor guided by a set of consistent goals and objectives.

Above all, the NSC seems not to have mediated persistent disagreement between the Defense Department and the State Department that existed throughout the planning process. Secretary of State Colin Powell influenced a few key diplomatic decisions—notably the decision to take the case for war with Iraq to the United Nations in September 2002—but the Defense Department controlled most planning decisions. State’s main postwar planning effort, the Future of Iraq project, may not have been a workable plan for post-Saddam Iraq, but it raised many of the right questions about that phase of OIF. Yet the Defense Department largely ignored this project, to the point of preventing Tom Warrick, the study’s leader, from working for ORHA in the weeks just before the war began.

The Defense Department created a new office to handle the increased workload associated with potential military operations in Iraq. It was called the Office of Special Plans (OSP), so as not to draw attention to the preparations for a possible war while President Bush simultaneously sought international support at the United Nations. OSP developed policy guidance on a wide range of issues, including the question of postwar governance, the future of the Iraqi army, and the de-Ba’athification process. Because the DoD exercised a great deal of control over planning for OIF, and ultimately took full control of the operation in January 2003, OSP exerted substantial influence over U.S. planning for Iraq.

Two particular sets of assumptions guided U.S. prewar planning for the postwar period. First, administration officials assumed that the military campaign would have a decisive end, and would produce a stable security situation. They intended to shrink the U.S. military presence down to two divisions—between 30,000 and 40,000 troops—by the fall of 2003. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz succinctly expressed this assumption during congressional testimony on February 27, 2003, when he stated, “It’s hard to conceive that it would take more forces to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq than it would take to conduct the war itself and to secure the surrender of Saddam’s security forces and his army.”⁴ Second, they assumed that the Iraqi population would welcome U.S. forces. Three days before the war, Vice President Richard Cheney clearly articulated this view by stating, “My belief is we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators.”⁵ Iraqi exiles supported this belief by emphasizing that the Iraqis would greet U.S. forces with “sweets and flowers.”⁶

The one post-Saddam challenge for which the U.S. government actually planned was that of a possible humanitarian emergency brought on by the possibly massive flow of refugees, combined with shortages of food, water, and medicine. An interagency planning team started meeting in the fall of 2002 and worked with in-

⁴ Paul Wolfowitz, testimony to the House Budget Committee, February 27, 2003.

⁵ Vice President Richard Cheney, remarks to *Meet the Press*, March 16, 2003.

⁶ Kanan Makiya, as quoted in Joel Brinkley and Eric Schmitt, “Iraqi Leaders Say U.S. Was Warned of Disorder After Hussein, but Little Was Done,” *New York Times*, November 30, 2003.

ternational organizations (IOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to generate detailed humanitarian relief plans across a range of possible scenarios. As it turned out, because of the speed of military operations, which left supply networks largely intact, the war in Iraq did not generate significant humanitarian requirements.

Task Force IV

Significantly, observers at CENTCOM's Internal Look exercise, held in December 2002, noted that the warplans for Iraq did not include detailed planning for the postwar period. Later that month, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered Joint Forces Command to create a new organization, based on the Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) concept, that would plan for Phase IV and form the nucleus of a postwar military headquarters in Iraq. This new organization, called Task Force IV (TFIV), was placed under CENTCOM's operational control and started assembling in Tampa in January 2003.

Although the Joint Staff had identified an extremely important problem with the existing warplans, Task Force IV proved to be an unworkable solution to it. Having been created very late in the planning process, and coming from outside CENTCOM, it had little influence. The fact that the task force's director was a one-star general, outranked by key players in CENTCOM's planning process, only compounded the problem. By March 2003, it was clear that Task Force IV would not become the nucleus of a postwar military headquarters, and it was officially disbanded by the end of the month.

The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)

On January 20, 2003, the National Security Council issued NSPD-24, which gave the Department of Defense primary responsibility for postwar Iraq and tasked DoD to form a new office to take charge of planning. Retired Army Lieutenant General Jay Garner was named to lead this new office, which became known as ORHA. Many of ORHA's early staff members were military personnel because U.S. agencies proved reluctant to provide staff for ORHA, though its composition grew more balanced over time.

ORHA personnel soon discovered that the many administrative issues involved in setting up their organization left little time to deal with substantive issues and long-term planning. ORHA did plan for possible humanitarian relief operations, drawing on interagency relief plans prepared elsewhere. It also developed the concept of Ministerial Advisory Teams to ensure that Iraqi ministries continued to function

between the fall of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of a new permanent government. These concepts were discussed at a meeting held at the National Defense University on February 21 and 22, 2003, which included representatives from every U.S. government agency that would have a role in reconstruction. The meeting revealed several serious shortcomings in preparations for dealing with postwar Iraq: U.S. agencies were reluctant to provide personnel for the ministerial teams, and the question of who would provide postwar security in Iraq remained unaddressed. Both of these issues would later pose significant problems for both ORHA and its successor, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

ORHA deployed to Kuwait in mid-March 2003, although many staff members would have preferred to remain in Washington longer to continue developing working relationships with their counterparts throughout the U.S. government. Once in Kuwait, ORHA learned that, for security reasons, the CFLCC commander did not want ORHA collocated with his forces at Camp Doha. ORHA thus set up its headquarters at the Kuwait Hilton, approximately 45 minutes away from Camp Doha and lacking rudimentary communications and infrastructure.

Significantly, ORHA's personnel were not privy to the warplans until shortly before the war started. ORHA had planned to enter Basra and start reconstruction efforts as soon as coalition military forces secured that city, but during the second week of March, Garner learned that the warplans called for most military forces to go straight to Baghdad instead of remaining in rear areas to provide security, thus rendering many of ORHA's plans obsolete. CFLCC directed ORHA to remain in Kuwait while major combat operations were conducted throughout Iraq. Not only did this render its plans ineffective, but once Baghdad fell and the looting started, it exposed ORHA to charges that it was doing nothing to stop destruction around the country.

ORHA began entering Baghdad on April 21, after Garner personally asked for and received permission to do so from General Franks. ORHA quickly discovered that conditions in Iraq were markedly different from those originally anticipated. The expected humanitarian crisis never materialized, while extensive looting damaged much of the infrastructure that the military campaign had deliberately left intact. Furthermore, the unsettled security situation significantly hindered ORHA's reconstruction efforts.

ORHA's planning problems quickly became irrelevant, however, as on April 24, three days after Garner arrived in Baghdad, the Secretary of Defense informed him that President Bush intended to appoint L. Paul Bremer as his permanent envoy to Iraq. U.S. officials announced Bremer's appointment on May 6, and he arrived in Baghdad on May 12 with a mandate to create a new Coalition Provisional Authority. Unlike ORHA, CPA would possess all the powers of an occupation authority. ORHA's staff shrank as CPA's grew, with few ORHA personnel choosing to stay on

and work for CPA. Garner left Iraq on June 1, almost two weeks after ORHA had been superseded by CPA.

The Coalition Provisional Authority

In May 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority took over from ORHA, and L. Paul Bremer became the administrator of Iraq. From then until Bremer handed power over to the Iraqis on June 28, 2004, the United States and the United Kingdom were the legal occupiers of Iraq. They had two simultaneous and sometimes competing missions: to run the country and to build up Iraqi institutions that would enable self-rule. The November 2003 decision to accelerate the handover of power by July 1, 2004, exacerbated the tension between the two missions.

Although CPA was the governing body of occupied Iraq, it was not the only coalition structure in country, and it did not have authority over all other structures. Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7), the military command, which reported to CENTCOM, functioned separately, as did various intelligence agencies (including the CIA), and the Iraq Survey Group, which continued its hunt for weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In the absence of a detailed plan, these groups had to work out relations on the spot. While personal relations were often good, failures of coordination and information sharing sometimes created significant tensions, most commonly between the civilian and the military arms of the occupation.

This problem was further exacerbated by the structural weaknesses of the CPA. It remained limited throughout its existence by the fact that the United States had never planned to be an occupying authority, and that it was quickly assembled on an ad hoc basis. It was staffed at half its authorized level, and many on its staff lacked government experience and only served short rotations. The lack of personnel, combined with the deteriorating security situation, also meant that CPA had a negligible presence outside Baghdad, leaving military forces throughout the rest of the country to fill the gap left by the lack of civilian authority and reconstruction capacity. The Army and Marine Corps thus carried the major share of the stability and reconstruction missions outside Baghdad.

Building governance structures. CPA worked hard to build governance structures under the tremendous strain of a deteriorating security situation that did not welcome exiles. At the same time, the CPA staff's lack of access to other Iraqis resulted in continued reliance on exiles in the building of a new Iraq. The CPA appointed the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC)—a multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian, and exile/Kurdish-dominated body—on July 13, 2003, after considerable debate and discussion about what form the new Iraqi government should take. While it was never popular with Iraqis, this 25-person body became over time an increasingly independent actor and CPA's primary Iraqi interlocutor.

The IGC and CPA jointly issued the November 15 agreement, promising that the CPA would transfer authority to an interim Iraqi government by July 1, 2004, and requiring that a “basic law” or interim constitution be drafted by February 28, 2004. The process of drafting the basic law, or Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), as it came to be called, took place largely in the first two months of 2004. A variety of issues surfaced during the TAL discussions, which kept the IGC from reaching full agreement on the TAL by the deadline. Ambassador Bremer and his staff pushed the drafters to continue work on the document into the early hours of March 1, 2004, when agreement was finally reached.

On June 1, 2004, the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) was formed, with Iyad Allawi, formerly chair of the IGC security committee, as prime minister and Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawer as president. Two deputy presidents, as prescribed in the TAL, and a new cabinet were also selected. This new government then worked with CPA, the United Nations, and coalition capitals to facilitate the transfer of authority, which took place on June 28.

Creating security forces and institutions. One of the greatest challenges faced by CPA and CJTF-7 was the creation of new Iraqi security forces. Prewar planning assumptions—that the old Iraqi military could undergo a process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) while helping ensure security during the interim period, and that police forces would remain largely intact and ensure law and order—proved deeply flawed. CPA was soon rebuilding both a military and a police force.

CPA Order Number 2, issued on May 23, 2003, formally dissolved Iraq’s armed forces and its defense ministry, along with a number of other Saddam-era security-related structures. The Iraqi police service, historically a powerless and corrupt structure, was suddenly expected to be the front line for internal security—in a deteriorating security situation. CPA’s advisors to the interior ministry, which had responsibility for police, were short-staffed and constantly torn between the effort to build effective structures and the need to get police on the streets and patrolling. This tension was exacerbated by a failure on the part of coalition capitals to recognize the crucial nature of the police mission and allocate sufficient resources to it.

Military training was better structured, since there was less immediate need for Iraqi military forces and more prewar planning existed (CENTCOM had always planned on a new military for Iraq, but had expected to be able to rely more on the structures of the old one). Military personnel could readily be hired, trained, and then deployed. In addition to the Iraqi armed forces, coalition troops also developed the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC), which served as an Iraqi auxiliary of various sorts to coalition troops.

Several problems plagued the building of Iraqi defense ministry forces. Crucial was the question of mission—whether such forces should be built for defense against external threats, or to help in the current conflict. Early efforts to use units domesti-

cally led to refusals to fight and desertions. Militias also posed ongoing challenges for the CPA, since they had to be either disbanded or somehow brought under the control of the new Iraqi government. Although discussed for many months, efforts in this area did not begin in earnest until February 2004. Critical to these efforts was the adoption of the TAL, which would make all armed forces and militias not under federal control illegal in the new Iraq, except as provided by law. However, the implementation of this process had barely begun at the time the IIG took power, and its future remained in doubt.

Economic policy and reconstruction. Economic policy was another area for which there was little planning prior to the war. Under the CPA, coalition advisors sought to create an economic structure that would foster entrepreneurship and foreign investment. They faced opposition in some of these efforts from the IGC, which tended to prefer the status quo.

The CPA was successful in reviving the Central Bank of Iraq, implementing a new currency and exchanging it for the old. It declared a tax holiday and lifted tariffs and import restrictions for 2003, and it issued a law on foreign direct investment. CPA also defined a budget for the second half of 2003 and for 2004: the first in dollars, the second in dinars. More problematic were efforts to liberalize prices, particularly for gasoline and fuel, to reform the food rationing system fully, and to restructure state-owned companies so that they could function in a modern economy. Plans to downsize and close such structures encountered stiff opposition from the Iraqi Governing Council. CPA's failures to reform Iraq in these areas led to both continued economic waste and potentially slowed reconstruction.

CPA also had the task of restoring essential services. It hoped to improve provision of services to about what it had been under Saddam Hussein, but soon found that the best it could do was to focus on the basic provision of water, oil, and electricity. Iraqi infrastructure was damaged both by the 1991 Persian Gulf War and by years of sanctions and neglect afterward. OIF and particularly the looting that ensued did additional damage to the capacity to produce electricity, oil, and water. This was a surprise to coalition forces, who expected to provide food and water to refugees and to protect the oil sector. They did not, however, expect to carry out large-scale reconstruction.

Reconstruction was mostly pursued through contracting mechanisms. Because there was some expectation of work in this area, USAID awarded a number of contracts early on. Kellogg, Brown and Root (a Halliburton subsidiary), Bechtel, and other contractors were awarded large contracts to work on the oil fields, electricity, government buildings, ports, airports, and so forth. Other contracts were let throughout 2003. These were funded through a variety of mechanisms, including U.S. appropriations; Iraqi oil export earnings, deposited in the Development Fund for Iraq; accrued assets, including seized assets of Saddam or the Ba'ath party; funds from the UN Oil for Food account; and promises of assistance from other donors.

The success of reconstruction during the occupation period was mixed. At the time CPA handed over power to the IIG, electric power generation was near prewar levels, while oil production was below its preconflict peak and hampered by sabotage. Water provision, however, had improved, and mobile telephone service helped compensate for lagging fixed-line provision.

The Army and Postwar Planning

Looking back, we can see that the failure to plan for and adequately resource stability operations had serious repercussions that affected the United States throughout the occupation period and continue to affect U.S. military forces in Iraq. Because U.S. forces were not directed to establish law and order—and may not have had enough forces for this mission anyway—they stood aside while looters ravaged Iraq’s infrastructure and destroyed the facilities that the military campaign had taken great pains to ensure remained intact. Because Iraq’s own police and military evaporated shortly after Saddam fell, ordinary Iraqis lived in a basically lawless society for months, during which, among other things, insurgents, terrorists, and criminal gangs assembled with impunity. And because U.S. forces have had to focus on providing security for their own personnel (both military and civilian) as much as for Iraqis, the buildup of coalition forces did not bring the degree of safety and security it might have brought had order been imposed from the start.

The situation has only gotten worse since the insurgency began. U.S. forces have had to assume that ordinary citizens may be potential belligerents, often leaving Iraqi civilians in the crossfire. A consistent majority of the Iraqi population identified security and safety as the most urgent issue facing Iraq throughout the occupation period.⁷ The failure to stabilize and secure Iraq has therefore had the inadvertent effect of strengthening the insurgency, as Iraqis witness many of the negative effects of the U.S. military presence without seeing positive progress on the issues that matter to them most. The insurgency has also been aided by the failure of U.S. military forces to emphasize the mission of sealing the country’s borders—a mission that still ranks relatively low on the list of important coalition missions—enabling critical foreign support to flow into Iraq.

⁷ This trend continued after the June 28, 2004 transfer of authority. Results do vary somewhat by city. Between January and August 2004, the percentage of the population identifying safety and security as the most urgent issue averaged 63 percent in Baquba; 60 percent in Mosul; 53 percent in Baghdad; 47 percent in Najaf; and 30 percent in Basra. When asked “How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?” the number of respondents who answered “not very safe” or “not safe at all” averaged 63 percent in Basra; 58 percent in Baquba; 57 percent in Baghdad and Najaf; 46 percent in Mosul; and 33 percent in Karbala. See “Opinion Analysis,” U.S. Department of State Office of Research, M-106-04, September 16, 2004, Appendix 6A.

This is not to say that stability and order would rule in Iraq today had U.S. planners only spent more time planning for post-Saddam operations. Counterfactuals like this lie beyond proof. Still, a strong inference can be drawn that, had security been imposed across Iraq from the moment Saddam fell, the insurgency that so afflicts Iraq today would not have had the political “space” in which to take root. And the Iraqi people themselves, however resentful they might have been of occupation forces, could have at least thanked those forces for enforcing law and order and thus a degree of public safety. In terms of its status with ordinary Iraqis, after all, U.S. forces were in the worst possible situation: there in numbers sufficient to be resented as occupiers but insufficient to impose order. It seems highly likely that the situation in Iraq today would be more manageable had U.S. planners spent more time thinking through post-Saddam scenarios and planning for both combat and post-combat with the worst of those scenarios in mind.

Instead, U.S. government planning was based on a set of optimistic assumptions that was never seriously challenged: that the military campaign would have a decisive end and would produce a stable security environment; that U.S. forces would be greeted as liberators; that Iraq’s government ministries would remain intact and continue to administer the country; and that local forces, particularly the police and the regular army, would be capable of providing law and order. Those assumptions channeled the interagency planning process, such as it was, into a focus on humanitarian relief, on the assumption that reconstruction and stabilization would not be required. And they made it very difficult—because they made it seem unnecessary—to assign responsibility and resources for providing security in the immediate aftermath of major combat operations, perhaps the single most important failure of the prewar planning process.

In a very real sense, key officials predicted the future with sufficient confidence to rule out alternative plans. In fact, of course, the future is always unpredictable, which is why planners routinely explore alternative scenarios in search of the “worst cases” that can pose the greatest challenges to their plans. Their plans then reflect actions that either cover or hedge against those possibilities. This is in some sense the basis for the standard military planning and decision process.

Yet in this case, few military voices besides that of Army Chief of Staff General Eric K. Shinseki called attention to the possibility of a major, long-term security challenge in post-Saddam Iraq. One reason other military voices remained muted was that the military operated within the prevailing assumptions set by senior civilian officials, which did not identify security as a problem. Also, as General Franks makes clear in his memoirs, the senior Army planner for OIF was reluctant to take responsibility for security and stabilization missions in the aftermath of major combat. This was not seen as the military’s role or mission.

Yet it is precisely through General Franks that the military could have voiced its concerns, since it is the combatant commander, far more than the “institutional”

services, who plays a strong role in the interagency planning process. Yet the institutional services are not irrelevant, since it is from them that the combatant commanders are drawn. And those commanders reflect a view of war and stabilization that can only be taught in service schools and other institutions. What Franks lacked was a complete view of what his forces were about to undertake. A more holistic view would be informed by three key assumptions:

- First, it should be clear from U.S. interventions not just in Iraq, but in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia, that wars do not end when major conflict ends. Wars emerge from an unsatisfactory set of political circumstances, and they end with the successful creation of new and more favorable political circumstances—in this case, circumstances more favorable to U.S. interests. Creating those new circumstances may not involve continuing conflict, and even if conflict is present, it may not be as intense as the counterinsurgency operations confronting U.S. forces in Iraq today. But given the likely security vacuum following major conflict, planners cannot avoid considering a variety of forms of conflict.
- Second, these post-conflict missions will almost unavoidably fall to forces present on the ground at the time. To some extent the security missions that follow major conflict are legitimate tasks for ground forces that, by virtue of their possession of the instruments of violence, can impose security in such situations. But the absence of security makes it unlikely that the civilian organizations that would normally handle reconstruction tasks will be available quickly to take on those roles. In the immediate aftermath of major conflict, and perhaps for a good deal longer, “civilian” as well as “military” missions will fall to forces on the ground.
- Finally, it should be clear that the way the actual conflict unfolds exerts enormous influence over the situation that emerges and evolves after the major conflict ends. To provide security in the aftermath of Saddam’s fall, the invading force needed more troops. A larger force might also have been able to force Saddam’s military to surrender rather than simply melt away, weapons in hand. These observations testify to the dangerous artificiality of the distinction between Phase IV, on the one hand, and the phases that preceded it. They are not distinct phases; planning for each in sequence can produce unhappy outcomes.

These lessons have significance for the U.S. Army’s Title 10 role of organizing, training, and equipping forces for use by combatant commanders in major conflicts. The Army must put real meaning into the phrase “full spectrum force.” It must be able to fight and dominate an adversary in major conflict. But as we can see in Iraq, Army forces must also be prepared to provide security to a civilian populace, reconstruct infrastructure as necessary, escort children safely to school, perhaps even help clear raw sewage from the streets. They will usually do so in a cultural environment

foreign to them, yet those missions will require them to have at least enough cultural awareness to avoid undermining the mission.

But the more crucial significance of these basic lessons comes at the level of military and strategic planning. Clearly these lessons produce a very different view of the military planning process than the one for OIF. Military planners must start with a view of the desired outcome of the war—not the outcome of major conflict, but the creation of the desired political circumstances that signal the real end of the war. They must do so both because their forces, and especially forces on the ground, will be intimately involved in creating those circumstances, and because the way in which military action unfolds will heavily shape the way the rest of the war unfolds.

One way to capture this lesson is to say that military planners must “start with Phase IV.” But a more accurate solution is to dispense with phases, which inevitably produce sequenced plans that risk missing crucial connections from phase to phase. Planners must start with strategic guidance from the civilian leadership on where they want to be, strategically, when the war ends. They can then work backward to points of major conflict, shaping plans for those in ways that contribute to the larger and longer-term strategic goal.

Starting planning this way will ensure that “Phase IV” will not be ignored or underplayed in the planning process. But as planning for OIF makes clear, it is essential that planners entertain a full array of possible scenarios for getting to that strategic end point. Even the most reasonable assumptions must be challenged, and hedging actions must be an integral part of the plan. Recognizing that military forces—largely U.S. Army forces—will play a role in these activities should give the combatant commander good reason to force this conversation into the planning process.