

Reasons for War

In the post Cold War order the military areas of responsibility had to be partly redefined. The US began to act immediately in attacking Iraq and permanently stationing troops in the Middle East. Their domination in military affairs should be fully exploited to ensure their role as the leading world power. Russia followed with the war in the Caucasus. And Europe has its war in Yugoslavia.

Limits to Intervention

The decolonization wars and both Vietnam and Afghanistan made clear, that interventions of the Great Powers are limited. Intensive terror and destruction, or even occupation with high numbers of ground forces, didn't succeed in maintaining or regaining control over domestic affairs. An occupying power will have only few local supporters and has to fight almost the entire population. This will drive costs of intervention up and results in long-term involvement with destabilizing effects.

An enemy fighting on a low level of warfare (subconventional), with mass mobilizations, guerrilla actions, bombings and terror, and small unit raids, cannot be defeated by means of conventional warfare.

Guerrilla and US counter-insurgency

The Cold War provided mechanisms for managing regional rebellions through Superpower-involvement and ideologization along the communist/capitalist propaganda. After the Cold War splitting people along racist and cultural lines remained as main means to group people against each other.

Outside their core regions the main task for the Great Powers is to limit the effects of regional unconventional wars on the adjacent regions. Sometimes escalation from the regional to interstate level and to conventional war occur.

War is always a means of repression, destruction and extermination. The Great Powers control over large regions isn't possible without wars. Although capability, credibility and therefore realization of military interventions or at least punitive strikes are necessary to maintain control, direct involvement in internal conflicts is avoided.

After the Cold War

Without the communist threat the military faced a serious legitimization problem. If the greatest threat is gone, why not enjoy peace and cut on military spending? It was expected that the role of the MIC would be reduced.

Since Vietnam internal approval to military interventions has been problematic. There remained a strong sense in the US, that military intervention is wrong or at least unwise. Nevertheless, military interventions in Grenada and Panama and the raids upon Libya enjoyed widespread support.

The SDI programme revealed serious difficulties in the development of an effective ABM system. The proliferation of ballistic missiles and warheads among second-order states could provide some level of deterrence to US aggressions. The main problem for the US is timing. Proliferation of mid and long-range missiles and atomic bombs has to be slowed down and limited as long as there is no safe missile defence.

Questions between the Great Powers concerning the responsibility for interventions in different regions and theatres of conflict had to be solved. The US had to make sure to everyone, that they were willing and able to use its military superiority in the fighting for influence and control.

Technology has a decisive influence on military strategy. The real battlefield strength of military capabilities of countries isn't primarily determined by numbers of weapons and personnel. Even if a country bought technically advanced equipment, this doesn't say much about the strength of its forces. If new weapons are simply used as replacement for older ones, their effect may be very limited. To realize the whole potential new technologies offer may depend on adopting a new military strategy. Intensive training of personnel is required and relations between different parts of forces must be redefined and rebalanced. A technology might depend on related technologies to realize its full potential.

Some regional powers have acquired large equipment inventories from the world arms market and thus have weapons only one or two development steps behind. "Second-order states lack the command, control, reconnaissance, and related resources necessary to exploit fully the capabilities of their weapons. Their view of the battlefield lacks depth ... and they may not have weapons able to engage accurately targets at extended ranges. ... they may also suffer tactical, doctrinal, and training deficiencies that limit the effectiveness of their forces." [1]

Bombing the Cities

The US strategy is explicitly one of deterrence. The question of limits to deterrence is therefore essential and has a strong influence on the requirements for deterrent and war-fighting forces. A certain degree of deterrence of potential aggressors depends on angst to suffer possibly highly negative consequences.

Masses of victims are an essential part of US-Allied strategy. Deterrence is not concentrated on rulers but populations. Bend to the major interests of the trilateral order. Resistance or independence will not pay off. No mercy and no hope. There will be no compromise or face-saving. The only offer provided is total capitulation. Pain und death will determine life for many years to come.

To be successful, the war had to be fast and highly destructive. The declared war aim is designed to ensure quick victory. Direct military involvement in internal affairs is only intended insofar as the engagement produces very few casualties on the own side. Until significant public resistance can be build, fighting must be finished.

Like the counter-terror of subconventional wars, bombing countries from a position of air supremacy aimed directly against civil population. The own military infrastructure for intervention is beyond the reach of the defending country. Ground forces are only marginally involved until the fighting power of the defender is nearly eliminated.

The avoidance of conventional fighting on the battlefield means destruction of industrial infrastructure. Telecommunications, power plants, factories, water installations, bridges, roads, airfields, transports to name some of the targets. These installations are generally located in heavily populated areas. Only a small portion total bombs are high-precision targeting bombs used to destroy central strategic aims. The rest are

free falling bombs brought about in high tonnage with high flying bombers and combat aircraft.

Operation Desert Storm: the air war.

The best Enemy

An enemy had to be and was found. Iraq was an enemy, which was known well. During the Iraq-Iran war, Iraqi military capabilities and tactics could be analyzed in detail. It was clear, that the Iraqi forces are weak in both navy and air force. Their information system was highly vulnerable. The only strength of Iraqi forces was their army.

Air and naval superiority were gained after the first days of fighting. Only few battles between army forces are known. After months of bombing the US-Allied army forces faced no resistance. Their task was, to eliminate as many of the fleeing troops as possible, especially the Republican Army brigades.

The bombings were organized to destroy the infrastructure and industrial capacities of Iraq. Most bombings had only one aim: to destroy the basic installations of energy and water and industrial capacities for the Iraqi consumer markets. The targets only make sense if we accept, that systematically killing Iraqi people was in the center of military planning. The clear intention of the bombings was to destroy water, food, energy, health, communication systems and other important infrastructure.

From the early beginning, the war's aim was a symbolic punishment of Iraq through genocide and re-underdevelopment (the destruction of essential infrastructure and production-capacities of Iraq). The extermination of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people was realized as intended.

After Iraqi capitulation the war was continued with no-fly zones, Cruise Missiles and aircraft bombings, cutting of Iraqi territory in favor of Kuwait, aggressive espionage and trade restrictions. The already high foreign debt obligations were increased by large reparation claims. Even after sanctions Iraq will not be able to finance an independent re-development. It will be heavily dependent from foreign capital. It has limited production capacities and even less distribution channels.

Control over Development

Who will suffer and prosper, control over development is the essential question.

It's very important to note, that the U.S.-Allied war against Iraq aimed not against President Hussain or the Ba'ath regime but the Iraqi people. The regime survived and enjoys considerable stability. This is no failure of U.S.-politics but the basis of that confrontation. The Iraqi government would have avoided the war if they analysed it as a danger for their power in Iraq. The Iraqi people, confronted with intensive U.S.-efforts to exterminate as many of them as possible, would loose their dignity collaborating with the U.S.A.

Externally the Iraqi regime stands as the main and most honest of the Arab states against the U.S.-Israeli domination and destruction. This is important not only regionally but globally. In a world full of fear and submission under the rules of the hegemonial powers around the U.S.A., Iraq as the most prominent of the pariahs of the international order (like, for example, Cuba, Lybia, North Korea and Yugoslavia) can be sure to gain status and respect as long as they don't give up against the U.S.-allied aggressions.

References:

[1] "The U.S. Military", "Global Politics and Influences for Change", , page 28

Abbreviations:

ABM: Anti Ballistic Missile

MIC: Military Industrial Complex

SDI: Stategic Defence Initiative