Iraq As A Lab:
A Critique of the New American Way Of War

Iraque como laboratório: uma crítica do novo
modo americano de fazer a guerra

MARCELA FISCHER FRIEDMAN
SILVIA REGINA FERABOLLI

INTRODUCTION

A country's force structure can be understood as the organizational framework and doctrine of the Armed Forces, including the size of military units, the variant composition of its main combat arms and the social stratification of force (Finer 1975, 90). Studying force structure of allows us to see, in practical terms, how war is an important political tool to achieve national goals through non-diplomatic means. Using Clausewitz's words, "war is a simple continuation of politics by other means" (2003, 27).

We argue that a country's force structure should be based on foreign policy considerations. When analyzing the works of Clausewitz (2003) and Mearsheimer (1981) as an ensemble, we understand war as a tool to achieve political goals – therefore, war should be waged around the pursual of these goals. Politics must be the guiding principle for the national forces and the effort required to meet their strategic objectives.

Indeed, until the Vietnam War, foreign policy guided the development of the American force structure. The military defeat in the Indochina War (1975) was traumatic to the point of initiating a period of increasing social fragmentation, loss of domestic confidence in the Armed Forces and questioning the way the US had thought about war so far. Hence, a major reform of the force structure was put into motion in the 1980s,

_____

Marcela Fischer Friedman — Mestra em Estudos Estratégicos Internacionais (UFRGS). Bachalera em Relações Internacionais (UFRGS).
Silvia Regina Ferabolli — PhD Politics and International Studies, SOAS. Professora Adjunta, Departamento de Economia e Relações Internacionais. Coordenadora do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Estratégicos Internacionais. Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, UFRGS.

a reform that emphasized the soldiers' professionalization, continuous training, constant technological modernization and development of a new military doctrine. The idea was to build a combat force capable of fighting short and intense wars, with minimal American casualties. For this reason, a reform was carried out under the scope of the Air-Land Battle doctrine (ALB).

However, these reforms were inadequate, as they were oriented towards operational and tactical issues of combat rather than long-term political objectives. Avoiding American casualties became the *raison d'etre* of military transformation. In this way, wars were no longer thought of as part of a long-term political effort, which involves not only the combat itself, but its aftermath, the reconstruction of the opposing state and the possible impact that military activity can have on the country's international image. Wars started to be thought of as a sequence of battles, in which quick and absolute victories must be obtained (Echevarria II 2004, vi). This deviated from the theoretical propositions of Clausewitz and Mearsheimer, generating harmful practical effects for the US.

In this paper, we aim to analyze the Iraq Wars (1991-2003) as "labs" for the New American Way of War, as they were the first empirical applications of the ALB doctrine. We argue that despite the fact that the US quickly obtained victories in combat against Iraq, due to the operational focus of the new American force structure, it was not possible for the U.S. to achieve its political objectives, which included peacefully changing the Iraqi regime and enlisting the country as an ally in the Middle East. Moreover, the counterinsurgency effort needed in Iraq after the war forced prolonged U.S. involvement that was damaging to the country's international image. This disregard for post war planning was costly on an economic and political level and would be felt well into the 21st century.

In order to support this argument, this paper is organized into four sections. First, we begin with the literature review, which understands warfare as a political tool. Second, we try to demonstrate how the critical junctures method suits the objective of this paper, by allowing for a holistic analysis of the US military evolution. Third, we explore the main flaws of the reform of the American force profile — reform motivated by the defeat in Vietnam — and its consequences in the international political sphere. Additionally, in this section, we strive to criticize the dehumanization of the New American Way of War. Finally, we discuss how the mistakes made during these reforms were the result of a theoretical subversion. The reason for the failure of the transformation of the US force structure post-1975 is that it was not guided by foreign policy issues.

CLAUSEWITZ, MEARSHEIMER AND WARFARE AS A POLITICAL TOOL

In "On War" (2003), Carl von Clausewitz states that war is a group phenomenon, which surpasses the trinity – people, Army and government — but converges on the same point: the survival of the State. Therefore, theory (political-strategic sphere) and practice (operational and tactical spheres) cannot contradict each other, as they belong to this one trinity. Meaning, war is a tool to achieve political goals and must be organized around them. That is, decisions about which wars to wage and how to use war to make it possible to achieve one — or more than one — national objective are political considerations. From them, operational issues must be decided, such as the structure and amount of force that must be directed to each confrontation, in order to produce results that enable success in war and with that, it is hoped, the achievement of the political objective.

In "The British Generals Talk: a Review Essay", John J. Mearsheimer (1981) poses the argument that force structure must be based on foreign policy considerations; more precisely, the external threats perceived by the national decision-makers determine what type of military structure the country will develop. While analyzing the British Armed Forces' internal debate, on the eve of World War II, Mearsheimer comes to two central conclusions. First, he stresses the importance of knowing the force structure adopted by a country, since it determines the type of mission that the Armed Forces are capable of conducting — long-range power projection, defense of the territory or small-scale interventions in diverse areas. While the ideal scenario is the maintenance of a military structure capable of carrying out a variety of missions, the human and material financial costs make this unfeasible, and it is necessary to choose which projects take priority. Second, the main factor determining the priority projects and the main characteristics of the force structure should be strategic foreign policy considerations; otherwise, the country can sacrifice its long-term goals or even its own survival.

There is an important scholarship that praised the military reforms carried out by the US in the period post-Vietnam, and we disagree with it. One of its exponents is Max Boot, author of the term New American Way of War. In his paper, Boot (2003) praises the new American military orientation, as it aims for a quick operational victory with minimal casualties on both sides. He praised the fact that its main marks were attacks in depth, at high speed, making use of maneuver, flexibility and the surprise element, replacing friction with a concise force, with fire support. Authors supporting this argument are Perry (1996), Krepinevitch (1994), Evans (2008), among others. In addition to disagreeing with this literature, we

make important reflections on the relationship between force structure transformations and foreign policy in the USA, a topic that should receive more attention from academic circles.

By combining the thoughts of Clausewitz – of war as the continuation of politics through non-diplomatic means – and Mearsheimer – of how the structure of the armed forces affects the type of military objective that can be achieved –, we propose that politics should be the guiding element of changes in force structures and not the other way around. It should be noted that this is our theoretical inference, since Clausewitz never worked with the term force structure, but with the relationship between politics and the armed forces. Thus, the derivation that politics should guide military reforms is not obvious, hence the relevance of the present work. The work will explain that the US, during a traumatic period of its military history, made the mistake of letting operational objectives guide the transformation of its strength profile. These reforms would eclipse the political character that the war should have had, with serious consequences in the 2003 Iraq War.

We acknowledge that this theoretical framework is not consensual. Kugler (2006, 5) believes foreign policy, defense strategy and military forces, technologies and budgets should not be treated as separate domains. He calls for multidisciplinary analysis, similar to the many reports published by the RAND Corporation in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They focus on modular capabilities and emphasize mission-system analysis and hierarchical portfolio methods for integration and tradeoffs in an economic framework. It emphasizes the importance of operating units as the key to improving strategic analysis – the units would be translating it into operating objectives and in turn expressing demand for capabilities to achieve those objectives, thus allowing strategy and resources to be linked. It is suggested to be one of the best approaches to planning, due to the "uncertainty" the US would face in a post-Cold War world. Policymakers should demand analysis that aids them in finding strategies that lead to flexibility, adaptiveness, and robustness (Davis 1999; Davis 2012; Devar, 1993; Gompert; et al, 2008). Similar arguments could also be found in the works of Michael O'Hanlon, Sean Edwards, Krepinevich, among others advocates of the RMA.

However, we believe that focusing in operations to draw strategic conclusions would lead to incorrect assessments about the future of warfare – we stand by the theoretical framework of Clausewitz and Mearsheimer. Besides the political implications of deriving strategy from operations, which will be explored in length throughout this paper, we find the general dismissal of the future military challenges posed by China and Russia

somewhat cavalier. Relying in flexible strategies may not be an option in a war involving competitors of technological-qualitative capacity similar to America's – in a situation of parity, in the current tripolar world[1], numbers matter.

VIETNAM WAR AS A CRITICAL JUNCTURE

In "Shaping the political arena", Ruth and David Collier (1991) explain that the study of critical junctures seeks to understand how a critical event initiates a distinct path dependent pattern. Hence, this methodology explores important political results by going back to a key moment in history, capable of interrupting long periods of path dependent stability, establishing a moment of institutional flexibility, during which drastic changes can occur (Mahoney; Rueschemeyer 2003, 6). Wars are often critical moments for key powerful institutions and their impact is determined by the characteristics of the confrontation itself, such as duration, cost, level of resource extraction by the state and extent of social sacrifice (Capoccia 2016, 118-140).

The critical juncture method was chosen to structure this work, as it provides a holistic analysis of American military evolution, by integrating different conflicts into a single path dependent timeline. It can be achieved throughout four methodological steps. First, the analysis of the historical background; in this paper, it is identified as the Traditional American Way of War, whose zenith occurred during the two Great Wars. Second, the assessment of the rupture or crisis; here outlined as the trauma of the defeat of Vietnam, which would motivate the changes in the military-military institutions of the 1970s and 1980s. Third, the study of the distinct legacy generated by the critical juncture; in this scenario, it refers to the New American Way of War. Finally, the analysis of a possible legacy crisis; this paper identifies it as the main failures of the reform and their consequences for international politics (Capoccia; Kelemen 2007, 347).

Contingent events frequently diverge from what theory predicts, initiating a different path dependent logic (Mahoney 2000). In the case of the evolution of the US forces after 1975, the defeat in Vietnam had such an impact on the country's military thought that it would reverse the theoretical argument proposed by us – foreign policy should be the main driver of military reforms. Subsequent changes would be almost immediate, without a previous reformulation of the national political thinking. From this critical moment, all changes in the force structure would be due to operational considerations, reactive to the country's warfare past (see changes between 1991 and 2003, to be explored in the next sections).

This paper will not be dedicated to the study of the critical juncture itself, but its results, its legacy (and a possible legacy crisis), and the consequences for American foreign policy. It will therefore focus on the third and fourth stages of the analysis. We will explore what are the failures of the reform and its consequences for international politics, in addition to criticizing the dehumanization of the New American Way of War.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE AIR-LAND BATTLE DOCTRINE: IRAQ AS A LAB

The resentment that built up in the US over Vietnam due to a high number of casualties is crucial for understanding the priority placed by US Army in obtaining public support after the war (Dicicco; Fordham 2018, 13). This trauma shaped the thinking of the leaders who guided the reforms of the next decade, starting them before the country could reorganize itself politically; the reconstruction of the Army focused more on remaking its identity, rather than accumulating lessons about the combat itself and how to fight counterinsurgencies in the future. (Lock-Pullan 2005, 43). In practical terms, it would be centered on abandoning the friction strategy (avoiding casualties) and eliminating conscription, which was suffering its most powerful attack in history. This last item would transfer combat responsibility to a professional force, implying, in a Clausewitzian interpretation, that the Army's identity and configuration changed from a social identity as a nation at war to professionalization in combat, interrupting the national triad.

The main organizational framework for promoting these changes was the establishment of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) in 1973, by Gen. DePuy. Simply put, TRADOC's mission under DePuy was to rethink how the Army was organized and trained, and what the emphasis of the reforms should be. The conclusion reached was that the focus should be on the professionalization of soldiers, continuous training, constant technological modernization and the development of a new and bold doctrine. The goal was to create a force capable of fighting a short and intense war, with minimal casualties. The emphasis was no longer on strategy, but on tactics; in fact, that's why at least 40 "how to fight" manuals were written that would instruct all combatants on the modern battlefield (Lock-Pullan 2005, 54-65). DePuy intended to organize the Army to employ and maintain modern weapons that can drive rapid and absolute results on the battlefield. To this end, he counted on the assistance of Gen. Starry for the development of the new doctrine: the Air-Land Battle (Dunstan; Gerrard 2003, 50-67).

Gen. Starry established two starting points for the development of his doctrine: (i) the general correlation of forces does not matter and (ii) initiative is the main defining element. His objective was to formulate a doctrine that replaced the role of friction by airpower, fire support and mobility, combining the concept of active defense with successive attacks in depth in the same battle space. The idea was to use advanced technology to carry out an efficient air campaign which would destroy the command and control system of the adversary, cutting off communications between the committed forces and the rear military forces to weaken the enemy and facilitate the advance on the ground. This, in turn, could neutralize the enemy's forces and achieve the quick gain control of the opponent's territory without great sacrifices or costs (Lock-Pullan 2005, 682-684; Salminem 1992, 33-36; Toffler; Toffler,1993).

Starry's lessons (2002, 220-227) accentuated the trend towards a more professionalized force, with strategic mobility and an emphasis on technology. The seductive idea of a war that would soon achieve absolute victory with a low number of casualties had the approval of all American society and led to the restructuration of the American force structure (Lock-Pullan 2006, 71-98).

However, victory here was thought of in operational terms — winning battles. Long-term political goals were disregarded, even though they should be the main rationale behind wars, force structures and military modernization. The path chosen by the US-is criticized in this paper. This reform initiated before a reformulation of the national political thinking, whose first milestone would come with the Carter Doctrine, in 1980. Therefore, such a reform would prove inadequate in a short period of time, due to the decision to sacrifice the mass of soldiers by technology, as we will see next.

This set of reforms weighed on the defense budget and, hence, it became necessary to choose: there was a trade-off between investing in technology or maintaining the mass of soldiers (Dunnigan 2003). As the Department of Defense prioritized the technological aspect, they would than focus on building compact and professionalized forces that could expertly use new weapons (Evans 2008, 381-385). With reduced manpower, the importance of ground offensives would be reduced, and the new goal would be to increase the preparedness to carry out external interventions led by air campaigns (Krepinevitch 1992, 12-19; Perry 1996, 83-86; Wolfowitz 1992).

According to the critical juncture method, the ALB and the New American Way of War constitute the legacy left by Vietnam. The reforms initiated after 1975 and the resulting force structure would have their first

empirical application in the Iraq War of 1991, our first lab. At first, however, the reforms of the US Army were still underway, as this is a long process. For this reason, US forces still presented a hybrid character: in 1991, the Army combined the intensive use of technology with the mass of soldiers. Consequently, the American mistakes — resulting from having guided the reform for operational, non-political-strategic questions — would not be felt as strongly at first.

There was already a qualitative advantage regarding military equipment, but it was not yet possible to give up mass or friction, characteristic of the wars of the 20th century (Weigley 1984). Hence, Operation Desert Storm was marked by operations coordinated by air, land and sea, with significant time and function dedicated to the ground offensive of coalition troops. The operation was divided into two moments: the first one corresponds to the air raid, Instant Thunder, which lasted about 40 days, characterized by intense use of technology; the second corresponds to the ground offensive phase, Desert Saber, in which the hybrid model becomes clearer (Chant 2001; Taylor and Blackwell 1991, 236).

During the air campaign, efforts were made to eliminate future resistance to the US advance through land over Kuwait and southern Iraq. As the new doctrine predicted, in-depth attacks were carried out on Iraqi territories, even seeking to reach the rear of Iraqi forces, interrupting their lines of communication, supplies and command and control system, thereby isolating troops and hampering Iraqi decision-making (Chant, 2001). Finally, they sought to establish an automated form of situation awareness, command and control, through network-centered warfare — a process carried out through cutting-edge technology (Mankhen 1997, 151-152; 161).

In the second stage, the ground offensive took place, still relying on a mass of soldiers. The coalition counted with more than eight land divisions with fire support. The US contingent aggregated more than 530,000 people at its peak (Finlan 2003, 57-59; Press 2001, 7-8; Taylor; Blackwell 1991, 233-240; Tucker-Jones 2014, 156). These large numbers, together with the speed of the advance of the troops on the ground, made it impossible to deny the importance of having a contingent of soldiers for the American victory. Although much of the speed of the ground offensive was a direct result of the efficiency of the air campaign (which decimated several units in Kuwait's theater of operations, neutralized the country's air defenses and destroyed much of Iraq's artillery), this was not the sole reason for the success of the coalition; the ground offensive was responsible for the seizure of Iraqi territory and the liberation of the Kuwaiti capital.

In addition, having soldiers on Iraqi territory was crucial in allowing the US to achieve its strategic objectives, maintaining the order in civilian territories and restructuring of the defeated country once major combats were over. Nevertheless, the importance of the ground offensive in 1991 was ignored, interpreting the operational victory as a demonstration of the benefits of using a volunteer force and the need to deepen the process of military modernization that had begun in the late 1970s. The new technology was interpreted as the reason for a very low casualty rate, 1 out of 3,000 American soldiers, making the Gulf War the model event for the defense planning of the following decades (Biddle 2004, 133). At the time, the impression of decision makers was that the US was on the verge of a military revolution caused by the impact of the new technology on war, making it necessary to rethink the way the country equipped and operated its forces, as well as the conditions under which these forces should be committed to fight (Biddle 1996, 174-175). This perception would accentuate the distortions in the reform efforts – which still did not take foreign policy aspects as a guiding principle – in the beginning of the 21st century.

During the 1990s, the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) would take place. The pillar of the RMA was the belief that technological innovations brought about important improvements in military doctrine and practices: the Gulf War was seen as an indication of the revolutionary prospects of emerging technologies and new military systems (Krepinevitch 1994, 12; Rosen 2010, 480). Hence, the modernization of the Armed Forces in the post-Gulf period focused on building a US-based force structure capable of global projection, highly mobile and focused on the air offensive. This required intensive use of technology, particularly airborne logistics, synthetic theater of war, preponderance of air and naval power, information warfare and effects-based operations. In addition, there was a widespread digitalization of platforms, actuators, logistical tasks, training and maintenance of geopositioning devices to coordinate the different dimensions of war (Neves Júnior 2015, 26; 39).

The last aspect of RMA we would like to emphasize is the goal of reducing personnel. The development of so many high-tech technological capabilities would continue to limit the defense budget, which would bring with it an even more compact force structure, focused on training and intensive use of new equipment. Therefore, the brigade would become the Army's central military unit, smaller, more specialized, agile and adapted to the volunteer recruitment model (Neves Júnior 2015, 26; 39). This new form of war was no longer based on numbers and conventional means of combat, but on the effectiveness of flexible forces and emerging technol-

ogy: a key part to the strategy was to use the technological advantage of the USA to offset the quantitative advantage that an opponent might have. The compensation strategy was based on the need to give these combat arms a significant competitive advantage over their opposing counterparts, supporting them on the battlefield with newly developed equipment that multiplied their combat effectiveness (Perry 1991, 68-69).

However, the contingent reduction would be contradictory to the US long-term political objectives: it would eliminate the social role played by the Army, the maintenance of order in civilian territories and the restructuring of the defeated country. National reconstruction would be pushed into the background in future wars, which would have negative consequences for the country. Here the American mistake of not having organized its military reforms around foreign policy considerations is reiterated. War activity is seen in this paper as a tool to achieve political ends – therefore, war should be waged around the pursuit of these goals. By focusing solely on operational aspects, military victories in battles become fragile, as they are not converted into long-term strategic results.

This can be seen by looking at the second laboratory war — Iraq 2003. The extent of the contingent reduction can be perceived in one figure: the troops committed to the ground offensive in 1991 (260,000 out of a total of 530,000 troops at peak deployment) outnumbered all forces of any kind deployed by the coalition in 2003 (only 250,000 total deployment). Because of this distribution of forces, the conflict in 2003 operated distinctly: a plan was drawn up centered on the success of an extensive initial air campaign (marked by "shock and awe" operations), followed by a brief land campaign, led by CENTCOM.

The launch of the offensive took place with the bombing of Bagdad. This war tactic aimed at physical and moral destruction of the troops in order to eliminate their cohesion and, in fact, their will to fight (Dale 2008, 20). With Iraqi forces already devastated, the second phase of the conventional campaign, the ground offensive, would be marked by a march on two fronts towards the outskirts of Baghdad, led by the 5th Army Corps, west of the Euphrates River, and by the First Marine Expeditionary Force, east of the river. These troops would continue to count on the support of the air campaign, which had started to concentrate on destroying the armored brigades of the Republican Guard (Donnelly 2004, 58).

The general option for planning the land campaign was to move quickly, center on airborne logistics, avoid urban combat and distance from the best protected cities. The focus would be on taking the peripheries of cities to establish advanced refueling points — the main force would not seek control of large cities. The US had a smaller number of troops and,

if units were dedicated to urban combat, it is possible that the rest of the troops could not complete the siege of Baghdad. Here, it is already possible to observe an apparent disregard concerning the planning of the day after the major confrontations, in which population control would become key to maintaining order in Iraq (Fontenot; Degen; Tohn 2004, 209; Donnelly 2004, 58-67).

The advance of the coalition troops was of great speed, as the disorganized Iraqi forces were unable to offer real resistance. They had suffered a decade of economic sanctions and had faced two wars in the previous decades (Iran-Iraq and the First Gulf Wars), with a significant part of their forces and resources destroyed. The effective end of the military intervention in Iraq would take place on April 14, 2003, with the takeover of Saddam Hussein's hometown, Tikrit, just 21 days after the fighting began.

With regard to the operational aspects of combat, the speed of the American victory suggests that Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) was extremely well executed. The personnel cuts did not affect the operational performance of the Coalition Forces, formed by the US, UK, Australia, Spain, and Poland. The lessons that were immediately learned regarding the OIF denoted the technological success of the operation, tending to minimize the role of the ground apparatus and emphasize the role of technology and combat systems without direct engagement. In this sense, the land force saw its role diminished in the later doctrinal formulations and, consequently, much of the related logistics; the brigade process was further expanded.

However, this was a misinterpretation since none of the laboratory wars could be considered as political-strategic victories. In the next section, we will discuss in detail why the victory of coalition forces in these conflicts was at best temporary and illusory; we argue that, for a country that was looking for quick and absolute victories, by remaining involved in a costly 10-year war that would not achieve the proposed political objectives, the US did not achieve their ideal goal. The Army's reduced performance in 2003 ended up hampering the maintenance of order in civilian territories. The gradual withdrawal of the human component from the American Way of War would eventually create a power vacuum and chaos in Iraq, forcing the US to remain in the country until 2011.

This period would incur several spillover effects, such as the weakening of the American image in the International System and the beginning of a more unilateral course of action by the country in its international relations. By forgetting that a country's force structure must be based on its foreign policy considerations, the US made one of its most serious mistakes in its military history. Therefore, when thinking about the 2003

Iraq War, we may be entering the fourth phase of analysis of the critical juncture method — the legacy crisis.

WINNING BATTLES *VS.* ACHIEVING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

As seen in the previous section, the restructuring of the US force structure was centered on transferring the combat responsibility to a professional and reduced force. For TRADOC, the professionalization of the Armed Forces would make it possible to fight short and intense wars, with minimal casualties. This came alongside the development of a new doctrine, the ALB, by Gen. Starry.

ALB aspired to replace attrition by airpower, fire support and mobility, combining the concept of active defense with successive deep attacks in the same battle (Malkasian 2014, 115-116). The idea was to use advanced technology to carry out an efficient air campaign, which would destabilize the enemy, facilitating the advance of the ground offensive (Lock-Pullan 2005; Salminem 1992, 33-36). In this formulation, it is already possible to observe a reduction in the theoretical role of the ground campaign. Moreover, the development of technological capabilities during this period would weigh on the defense budget, forcing a gradual reduction in the mass of soldiers. With the decrease in personnel, it is natural that the importance of ground offensives would be reduced in practice as well.

However, such questions tackled merely operational and tactical issues — political and strategic issues were pushed onto the background. In more detail, wars are no longer thought of as part of a long-term political effort, which involves not only the combat itself, but its aftermath, the reconstruction of the opposing state. The development of the Army in the 1970s and 1980s, therefore, contradicted what was proposed by theory: the changes in the American force structure were not guided by foreign policy issues. In fact, the next major foreign policy framework — the Carter Doctrine (1980) — would be formulated after the beginning of TRADOC's reform efforts. The new Doctrine predicted that the US would use all the means necessary to defend its interests around the world, particularly in the Middle East, and provided reasoning for extra-continental engagement of forces, highlighting unilateral and interventionist positions by the US. This new foreign policy guideline would only intensify the tendency of the reform program to build a concise, professionalized military capability, equipped with the latest technologies and ready to be distributed over the globe immediately (Brzezisnki 1987, 191; Lock-Pullan 2006, 71-98). This inversion of theoretical logic would create a syndromic foreign policy framework, inadequate in the long term, as it came to

merely validate previous efforts instead of guiding them. It emphasized securitization, a trait that would characterize future American doctrines, especially the Bush Doctrine, stimulating an even stronger emphasis in tactical victories.

In practical terms, having such a concise force would eventually empty the Army's social role: maintaining order in civilian territories and restructuring the defeated country (Dale 2008, 14-18; 35-38). As a consequence, power vacuum and chaos would force the US to remain in prolonged and costly conflicts in the not-so-distant future, just as it happened in Iraq in 2003. The gradual withdrawal of the human component from the American Way of War would end up being one of the main reasons for the US to remain in the country.

Rather, it means saying that the force structure went through a transitional moment, between the model of mass army of the twentieth century and the force profile used in 2003, with greater importance of the ground offensive. However, there have already been significant flaws in this way of thinking about war. Apparently, strategic questions were never adequately answered in the Gulf War, as the events in the region in the following decades bear witness. The war did not make Saddam's regime disappear, it unleashed two civil wars, caused a collapse of Iraq's infrastructure facilities, and ruined the country's political life, causing economic and human indicators to deteriorate to levels of social calamity (Mueller 1995, 42-43).

Nonetheless, the 1991 War was misinterpreted as a demonstration of the benefits of using a volunteer force and of the need to deepen the process of military modernization that began in the late 1970s. After this conflagration, certain characteristics of the ALB started to be exacerbated, all of them lying on the support of the technological vanguard: quick and fulminating victories; airborne logistics; synthetic war theater; aerial supremacy; information warfare and effects-based operations. Technology, therefore, is no longer seen as a mere instrument, but interpreted as the very reason for victories. For this reason, the 1990s were marked by a movement among military commanders to revise their doctrines and tactics to take advantage of modernization: the Revolution in Military Affairs.

It could be argued that this would be the normal flow of military modernization, in view of the technological advances of the 1990s. There is no question here that the technological transition has impacted the structure of different national forces. What we do question is that in the 1992 Military Affairs Revolution, technology ceased to be an instrument of combat and became the center of war thinking. We criticize the fact that the RMA was defined around greater military effectiveness. Technological advances should not alter the structure of war (way of thinking and plan-

ning it), since they only change the form of war, not its nature. The evolution of RMA's information and communication technologies should simply expand immediacy and reduce uncertainty on the battlefield (Echevarria 1996, 3-6). However, this was not the case for the US.

The focus of the Army's reorganization was no longer on improving the soldier, but on equipment, airborne logistics, synthetic war theater, air supremacy, information warfare and effects-based operations. By defining RMA around technological, organizational, and doctrinal changes, a situation was created in which analysts disregarded strategic considerations while searching magical combinations of technology, doctrine and organization to guarantee success; there combinations were, however, blind for what should be the central objective of military changes — to make the armed forces more suitable for the achievement of political and strategic goals (Sterner 1999, 299-302).

As a consequence of the RMA, the Army would be increasingly alienated from the societies in which it intervened (given the lack of men on the ground, interacting with the locals), it would adopt a more dehumanized way of waging war — increasingly resorting to remote attacks, unmanned aerial vehicles and violent air campaigns — and would weaken strategic war considerations. This would result in massive negative future consequences, mainly in the Second Iraq War. We saw earlier that the intense use of technology and the use of lean forces were the hallmarks of the campaign in 2003. We also saw that the rapid operational success achieved was not sustained in the long run. This occurred for two central reasons: first, there was a disregard for post-war planning, due to the lack of strategic considerations; second, given the less significant role of the army, maintaining order in civilian territories and rebuilding the defeated country were hampered, leading the country to a long period of counterinsurgency, which would not allow the US to leave Iraq before 2011.

CONCLUSION

The disregard for post-war planning would be felt for the several years after the 2003 invasion. There was a discrepancy between the intention of the ALB — short, fast and decisive wars — and the results: a prolonged, costly (economically and politically) involvement that ultimately caused countless American's casualties. In part, one of the mistakes in planning was the lack of clarity to all parties regarding their functions after the end of the conflict, nor on who would rule Iraq afterwards. Even the material reconstruction of the country was secondary to the counterinsurgency operations that took place (Dale 2008, 14-18).

All mistakes trace back to TRADOC's decision to initiate reform efforts before restructuring American political thought — when purely operational objectives guide a force structure reorientation, long-term political-strategic goals are bound to be missed. Thus, of the central objectives of the campaign — (i) to overthrow the Saddam regime, (ii) to establish a democratic and self-sustaining government in Iraq and (iii) to enlist the country as an American ally in the War on Terror — only the first was achieved.

The reconstruction of the Iraqi state was a failure, both in terms of infrastructure and of forming a consistent bureaucracy. Most importantly, the US failed to promote a peaceful democratic transition to an allied government. "Pacification" implies, as a minimum condition, the absence of war and domestic violence, stabilization of the political order and normalization of social life. This was not achieved in the immediate post-war period (Deflem; Sutphin 2006, 277-278). In more details, the destruction of the Iraqi State led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis — due to lack of essential items and to collateral damage caused to the civilian infrastructure – giving way to terrorism to spread in the region. The growth of transnational terrorism was a direct effect of this war (Bassil 2011, 38). Thus, the US would find itself involved in a long period of counter-insurgency in the Middle East. As a result, the US suffered in two ways: through a loss of legitimacy in its international image and the negative domestic impacts on its economy. It is clear that the New American Way of War combined with the absence of a long-term foreign policy strategy were weakening factors in the US global political performance.

The damage to the US image is linked to its predisposition towards unilateral action. The intensive use of advanced technological capabilities made it unnecessary for the US to turn to allies for support; for example, airborne logistics allowed for the immediate deployment of troops to any place on the globe. Thus, it could act unilaterally to defend its international interests. In addition, it is possible that the cost of these new technologies has made it inefficient for the US to equip its traditional partners in armed conflicts, forcing the country to act more unilaterally. Such a predisposition to act alone leads to disrespect for international institutions — as occurred in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which took place in total contempt for the authority of the UNSC — and for international agreements (support from the international community was no longer needed).

The burden on the budget came as a result of the prolonged duration of the conflict and the subsequent indirect costs of the war. Here it is customary to work with the combined weight of campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, given that they took place in a very similar window of time.

The US spent more than $2 billion in expenses directly related to combat — particularly planning and carrying out Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Enduring Freedom (OEF) and New Dawn (OND). However, this represents only a fraction of the total cost of the war, which totals something close to US $1 trillion (Bilmes 2013, 4-9; 19-21).

Due to these costs the USA accumulated a debt of US $9 trillion dollars during the 2000s with a significant amount dedicated to the continuous financing of its activities in the Middle East. Stiglitz (2009, 334-336) interprets this as one of the guiding threads of the economic crisis of 2008. At the time, the Federal Reserve, in order to maintain the strength of the economy, was compelled to compensate for the negative effect through higher spending on conflict and oil. Therefore, the Fed maintained lower interest rates to reduce the tax burden in order to stimulate the national economy. Temporarily, this had the desired effect; however, artificially maintaining low interest rates resulted in inflating the real estate market, which had become one of the safest and most durable investments for ordinary Americans. The real estate bubble would be primarily responsible for the 2008 economic crash. In more detail, with higher consumption in this sector, house prices rose, but the real income of most Americans stagnated; this forced a portion of the population to take out mortgages or variable rate loans when interest rates were at historically low levels. However, such interest rates could not be kept low indefinitely and with the return of market fluctuation, the bubble would eventually burst.

The US's failure to achieve its strategic objectives in Iraq, accompanied by damage to the country's image in the international system[2] and an economic crisis — led the US military leadership to rethink its previous decisions. We already know that the 1990s and 2000s were marked by a tendency to minimize the role of the ground apparatus and emphasize the use of technology and combat systems without direct engagement. Even in doctrinal formulations after the ALB, such as the Air-Sea Battle (ASB). However, the protracted period of counterinsurgency and the related long-term political consequences forced the Armed Forces to question whether they had made the right decision.

Finally, in addition to questioning these decisions in direct relation to the outcome of the conflict, we must analyze whether this would have been an intelligent strategy against a more powerful enemy. In 1991, the USA found itself without a major opponent in the international system, and Iraq could hardly fight a conflict on equal terms. The Arab country was not yet fully recovered from the war with Iran and was facing a serious economic crisis, with a GDP decline of 60%. The US enjoyed technological and training superiority and its soldiers were not worn out by

eight years of international confrontation (Press 1997, 139). This disparity would become even more evident in 2003, after Operation Desert Storm and a decade of economic sanctions on Iraq. Conversely, it is important to highlight that the main American opponents in the international arena today — Russia and China — are in a more advantageous situation than Iraq ever was, particularly in 1991. We reiterate, contingent reduction may not be an option in a war involving competitors of technological-qualitative capacity similar to America's – in a situation of parity, numbers matter.

REFERENCES

Bassil, Y. 2012. "The 2003 Iraq War: Operations, Causes, and Consequences". *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4, 5, no. 1 (November): 29-47.

Biddle, Stephen, and Ivan Oelrich. 2016. "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U. S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia." *International Security* 1, 41, no. 1 (July): 7–48.

Biddle, S. 1996. "Victory Misunderstood: What the Gulf War Tells Us about the Future of Conflict." *International Security*, 1, 21, no. 2: 139–79.

Biddle, S. 2004. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bilmes, L. 2013. "The Financial Legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan: How Wartime Spending Decisions Will Constrain Future National Security Budgets." *SSRN Electronic Journal*: 1–21.

Boot, M. 2003. "The New American Way of War." *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4: 41–58.

Brzezinski, Z. *EUA-URSS: o Grande Desafio.* Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Nórdica, 1987.

Capoccia, Giovanni, and R. Daniel Kelemen. 2007. "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism." *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (April): 341–69.

Capoccia, G. 2016. "Critical Junctures." *Oxford Handbooks Online* 1 (May): 118–40.

Cepik, M. 2011. "A política da cooperação espacial chinesa: contexto estratégico e alcance regional". *Revista de Sociologia e Política* 19: 81-104.

Chant, C. 2001. *Air War in the Gulf 1991.* Oxford: Osprey.

Clausewitz, Carl von., and Maria Teresa. Ramos. 2003. *Da Guerra*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.

Collier, Ruth Berins, and David Collier. 1991. *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin American*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Dale, M., 2008. *Operation Iraqi Freedom:* strategies, approaches, results, and issues for Congress. United States: Congressional Research Service.

Davis, P. 1999. *Analytic Architecture for Capabilities-Based Planning, Misison-System Analysis, and Transformation*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

_____. 2012. *Lessons form RAND's Work on Planning Under Uncertainty for National Security*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

Deflem, Mathieu, and Suzanne Sutphin. 2006. "Policing Post-War Iraq: Insurgency, Civilian Police, and the Reconstruction of Society." *Sociological Focus* 1, 39, no. 4 (November): 265–83.

DeVar, J. et al. 1993. *Assumption-Based Planning*: A planning tool for very uncertaint times. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

Dicicco, Jonathan M, and Benjamin O. Fordham. 2018. "The Things They Carried: Generational Effects of the Vietnam War on Elite Opinion." *International Studies Quarterly* 1, 62, no. 1 (January): 131–44.

Dubik, James M. 1999. *Building a Strategy-Based Force Structure*. Arlington County.

Dunnigan, J. 2003. *How to Make War:* a Comprehensive Guide to Modern Warfare in the Twenty-First Century. New York: Quill.

Dunstan, Simon, and Howard Gerrard. 2003. *The Yom Kippur War 1973 (1):* the Golan Heights. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd.

Echevarria, A. 2004. *Toward An American Way Of War*. Washington D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute.

_____. 1996. *War, Politics, and RMA: The Legacy of Clausewitz*. Washington, DC: JFQ Forum,

Finlan, A. 2003. *The Gulf War 1991*. New York: Routledge.

Fontenot, Gregory, E. J. Degen, and David Tohn. 2005. *On Point: the United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press.

Gessert, R. 1984. "The AirLand Battle and NATO's New Doctrinal Debate." *The RUSI Journal* 129, no. 2 (June): 52–60.

Gompert, D. et al. 2008. *Analysis of Strategy and Strategies of Analysis*. Santa Monica (CA), Rand Corporation.

Kohut, Andrew (Ed.). 2020. *Global Public Opinion in the Bush Years (2001-2008)*. Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. Pew Research Center, July 24.

Krepinevich, A. 1994. "Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions." *National Interest* 1 (September).

_____. 2002. *The Military-Technical Revolution: a Preliminary Assessment*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

Kugler, R. 2006. *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs:* New Methods for a New Era. Washington DC, National Defense University Press.

Lock-Pullan, R. 2005. "How to Rethink War: Conceptual Innovation and AirLand Battle Doctrine1." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (August): 679–702.

Lock-Pullan, R. 2006. *US Intervention Policy and Army Innovation: from Vietnam to Iraq*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mahnken, T. 2003. "The Future of Strategic Studies." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 1: x–xviii.

Mahnken, T. 1997. "What the Gulf War Can (and Cannot) Tell Us about the Future of Warfare." *International Security* 1, 22, no. 2: 151–62. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2539371.

Mahnken, T., Joseph A. Maiolo, and Michael Evans. 2014. "From Kadesh to Kandahar." Essay. In *Strategic Studies: a Reader*, 375–90. London: Routledge,

Mahoney, J., and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. 2003. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mahoney, J. 2000 "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology." *Theory and Society* 1, 29, no. 4: 507–48.

Malkasian, C. 2014. "International Forum in War History." In *AirLand Battle and Modern Warfare*, 13th ed.: 115–20. Tokyo: The National Institute For Defense Studies.

Mearsheimer, John J., and Brian Bond. 1981. "The British Generals Talk: A Review Essay." *International Security* 6, no. 1: 165.

Mueller, J. 1995. "The Perfect Enemy: Assessing the Gulf War." *Security Studies* 1, 5, n. 1 (September): 77–117.

Neves, E. 2015. "A Modernização Militar Da Índia: as Virtudes Do Modelo Híbrido." Thesis — Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Estratégicos Internacionais, Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Perry, W. 1991. "Desert Storm and Deterrence." *Foreign Affairs* 1, 70, no. 4: 66–82.

_____. 1996. Report of the Secretary of Defense to the President and the Congress.

Press, D. 1997. "Lessons from Ground Combat in the Gulf: The Impact of Training and Technology." *International Security*, 1, 22, no. 2 (October): 37–46.

_____. 2001. "The Myth of Air Power in the Persian Gulf War and the Future of Warfare." *International Security* 26, no. 2 (October): 5–44.

Rosen, S. 2010. "The Impact of the Office of Net Assessment on the American Military in the Matter of the Revolution in Military Affairs." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 1, 33, no. 4 (August): 469–82.

Salminen, P. 1992. *The Impact of Arms Technology on Military Doctrines: Documentation.* Helsinki: War College.

Starry, D. 1978. *Mounted Combat in Vietnam.* Washington, D.C.: Dept. of the Army.

Sterner, E. 1999. "You Say You Want a Revolution (in Military Affairs)?" *Comparative Strategy* 1, 18, no. 4 (October): 297–308.

Stiglitz, J. 2009. "The Anatomy Of A Murder: Who Killed America's Economy?" *Critical Review* 1, 21, no. 2-3 (January): 329–39.

Taylor, William J., and James Blackwell. 1991. "The Ground War in the Gulf." *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 33, no. 3 (May): 230–45.

Tilly, Charles, Gabriel Ardant, and Samuel Finer. 1975. "State and Nation-Building in Europe." Essay. In *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, 84–163. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

Toffler, Alvin, and Heidi Toffler. 1995. *War and Anti-War: Making Sense of Today's Global Chaos.* London: Warner Books.

Tucker-Jones, A. 2014. *The Gulf War: Operation Desert Storm 1990-1991.* Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military.

United States. 2016. *The U.S. Military's Force Structure:* A Primer. Congressional Budget Office.

Weigley, R. 1984. *History of the United States Army.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wolfowitz, P. 1992. Defense Planning Guidance FY 1994-99.

NOTAS

1. According to the concept of Asymmetrical Tripolarity (Cepik 2011), based on second strike nuclear capability, space command and conventional military power.

2. This can be empirically observed in opinion polls conducted by the Office of Research of the US Department of State. When measuring favorable views of the US across the globe, this variable declined in 26 of the 33 countries in both 2002 and 2007. In addition, pollings by the Pew Institute illustrated a growing perception that the U.S. acts unilaterally. In 2005, only 18% of the French, 19% of the Spanish, and 21% of Russians said that the U.S. takes into account the interests of countries like theirs when making policy (KOHUT, 2000).

IRAQ AS A LAB: A CRITIQUE OF THE NEW AMERICAN WAY OF WAR

ABSTRACT

This paper analysis the evolution of the US force structure after 1975 in two core aspects: foreign policy and military modernization. Building on the works of Clausewitz (2003) and Mearsheimer (1981), we argue that a country's force structure should be based on foreign policy considerations. US Army evolution followed this logic until its defeat in Vietnam, but this traumatic event precipitated reforms in US military force before a proper reformulation of the country's foreign policy objectives had been achieved. Therefore, these reforms created a "syndrome" that would deform and reform the US strategic culture inadequately. The new military doctrine, the Air-Land Battle (ALB) was not oriented towards long-term political objectives, but rather by purely operational and tactical issues of combat, which proved harmful for US interests in the long-run. By employing the method of critical juncture analysis, we analyzed the Iraq Wars (1991-2003) as labs for this New American Way of War, as they were the first empirical applications of the ALB. We conclude by demonstrating that the disregard for post-war planning ended up forcing a prolonged and costly American involvement in the Middle East and damaging the country's international image.

Keywords: Force Structure, Foreign Policy, US Army, Iraq Wars.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa a evolução do perfil de força dos EUA após 1975 em dois eixos centrais: política externa e modernização militar. Com base nos trabalhos de Clausewitz (2003) e Mearsheimer (1981), argumentamos que a estrutura de força de um país deve ser baseada em considerações de política externa. A evolução do Exército dos EUA seguiu essa lógica até sua derrota no Vietnã, mas esse evento traumático precipitou reformas nas forças militares estadunidenses antes de uma reformulação adequada dos objetivos da política externa do país. Portanto, essas reformas criaram uma "síndrome" que deformaria e reformaria inadequadamente a cultura estratégica dos EUA. A nova doutrina militar, Batalha Ar-Terra (da sigla em inglês, ALB), não estava orientada para objetivos políticos de longo prazo, mas para questões puramente operacionais e táticas de combate, que se mostraram prejudiciais para os interesses dos EUA no longo prazo. Através do método da análise de conjunturas críticas, examinamos as Guerras do Iraque (1991-2003) como laboratórios para esse Novo Modo Americano de Fazer a Guerra, na medida em que elas são consideradas por nós como as primeiras aplicações empíricas do ALB. Concluímos demonstrando que a desconsideração do planejamento pós-guerra acabou forçando um envolvimento americano prolongado e custoso no Oriente Médio e prejudicando a imagem internacional do país.

Palavras-chave: Perfil de Força, Política Externa, Exército dos EUA, Guerras do Iraque.