

## CHAPTER 11

### **Precise Assessments of Rivals Vital in Asymmetric War Threat Environment**

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Rogue states and terrorist organizations, some armed with weapons of mass destruction or geared to acquire them, pose a new and alarming danger to the United States, its allies and vital interests. As the late U.S. Air Force General Robert Linhard once observed, we are now entering an era where small groups or even single individuals with WMD are now capable of inflicting the kind of damage and casualties that once could only have been inflicted by large and powerful states.

A new group of states and groups of concern, all with a common unpleasant mix of traits, now face the United States as adversaries. States like Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Syria, and terror groups such as al Qaeda share a common lineage.

Each is a dictatorship or revolutionary group headed by a strong man who rules largely by fear and coercion. Each is a state sponsor of terrorism or is a terrorist group. Each is a self-professed extreme enemy of the United States. Each of the “states of concern” possess at least one form of weapon of mass destruction, and most pursue a mix of nuclear explosives, radiological weapons, biological arms, and chemical weapons for the future. There is also ample evidence of terrorist interest in acquiring mass casualty weapons.

Each of these rogue nations or terrorist organizations is prone to violent solutions to international problems and pose regional threats to their neighbors, some of which are U.S. allies such as the Republic of Korea, Israel, and the more moderate Arab states like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

## **Avoiding A Holy War**

Further, all but one of these adversary states or hostile groups are predominantly Muslim. None of the 25 Arab states in the world can be considered full fledged democracies that share a common political system with the United States. Only half of the 20 other Muslim, but non-Arab states are democracies. Much of the “Arab street” and remainder of the Muslim world is hostile to the United States. We are frequently viewed by them as from an alien culture, associated with their enemy, Israel, and partners with their former colonial masters in Europe. Further, the United States is rich where many of them are desperately poor, powerful where they are militarily weak, and are westernized infidels whose very presence is seen as an affront to their God and threat to their way of life.

One of the many challenges in confronting the Muslim rogue states and radical Islamists in terroristic groups is in finding a way of deterring, disarming, and defeating such adversaries. The problem is how to take them on without mobilizing the entire Muslim world against us.

It would be a costly mistake to make the contest one between the United States and Islam instead of differentiating among radical and moderate Muslim governments, nations, and groups.

The fight must be conducted against the radicals by separating and isolating them from the larger Muslim ranks. Every effort should be made to win or at least neutralize the majority of Muslims who remain moderate, peaceful, and who are either allies or who are willing to remain on the sidelines. Every effort must also be made to isolate the radical Islamists, clearly differentiate them from the moderates and neutral followers of Islam, and defeat and neutralize them.

The first step in that process is to more clearly understand their leaders, who they are, what they believe, the action program they have adopted, and their modus operandi.

## **Asymmetric Warfare Probable**

All these adversaries, whether they be North Korea or Iraq or al Qaeda, when faced with the overwhelming military power of the United

States, are likely to adopt asymmetrical warfare strategies in an attempt to level the playing field in conflicts with the world's military superpower.

Therefore, they may adopt such means as terrorism, guerrilla warfare and other low intensity war strategies. In a regional war, such opponents might also attempt to reduce the U.S. advantage by attacking with nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons to offset superior U.S. conventional military power.

Some might attempt counter-space strikes to neutralize U.S. overhead reconnaissance and communications. Others may use information operations to disrupt the operations of U.S. forces and to concern U.S. citizens about their own safety. Asymmetric attacks may be aimed at vulnerable U.S. and allied critical infrastructure or key targets that, when struck, create panic and may influence the U.S. public to reconsider its support for U.S. international policies.

In such dangerous, challenging and interesting times, it is important to know who you are dealing with, how they think, and ways they act and fight. The United States Government leaders need to acquire a nuanced understanding of the leadership and strategic culture of such heavily armed U.S. adversaries. Indeed, the frequency of threats arising from relatively unknown and unfamiliar sources increases our need for a rapid and sophisticated profiling and modeling of a new group of unfamiliar foes.

## **The Rise Of Rogue Leaders And International Outlaws**

The end of the Cold War has been destabilizing, producing not a "peace dividend" but an unpredictable international climate in which major political crises frequently have been precipitated by rogue leaders of outlaw nations. The relatively stable and predictable superpower rivalry has been replaced by a series of regional conflicts often precipitated by the actions of previously unknown or poorly understood leaders. There has been a proliferation of destructive power, with more destructive power in the hands of small, independent leadership with hostile agendas toward the United States. The most worrisome nations—Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Syria—are ruled by unpredictable dictatorships. The headlines of the past few years have been dominated by such names as Saddam

Hussein, Kim Chong-il, Mohammad Farah Aideed, Radovan Karadzic, and Slobodan Milosevic.

Several of these leaders either already have or are actively seeking weapons of mass destruction. During the 1990-91 Gulf Crisis, a nuclear-armed Saddam Hussein would have entirely changed the dynamics of the conflict. Former Secretary of Defense Perry has referred to the “nightmare scenario” of a nuclear-armed North Korea. And just a few short years ago, an extremist nationalist contended for the presidency of Russia, a possibility at the time that was not entirely out of the question given Yeltsin’s failing health and his tenuous hold on power. The prospect of a future Vladimir Zhirinovskiy-like figure with his finger on the nuclear button would be truly terrifying. The same could be said if leaders like Muammar Qaddafi of Libya or Ayotollah Khamenei of Iran were to acquire WMD capabilities mated with effective delivery means.

### **Avoiding Deadly Conflict**

Earlier in this volume, in addressing the challenge of conducting effective coercive diplomacy, Dr. Alexander George stressed the importance of having clear models of the psychology of our adversaries. As with information campaigns, effective diplomacy in conflict situations cannot proceed effectively without clear and accurate understanding of leadership psychology.<sup>1</sup> International analysts have stressed the critical role of leadership, both in promoting deadly conflict and in avoiding it. In order to effectively counter leaders such as Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic as they promote deadly conflict, clear actor-specific models of their psychology and decision-making is an absolute requisite.

Precise adversary leader assessments are helpful, particularly when confronting unique rogue state and terrorist group leaders. To be effective against them, the U.S. should tailor a deterrence package that maximizes the influence it can wield against a particular leader and his group of associated sub-leaders.

## **Profiling – A Sound Investment**

Assembling expert interdisciplinary teams that combine to give a clearer view of the personality and strategic views of rival political leaders is relatively inexpensive and can yield dividends far beyond the moderate cost of bringing a group of profilers together on common studies. Such multi-disciplinary intelligence groups, used properly and heeded, may well provide a “much greater bang for the proverbial buck” than adding an additional jet aircraft or other similar military force improvements. Such profiles can help U.S. decision-makers make more intelligent policy and strategic choices in times of crisis or war, helping them to anticipate and influence the behavior of adversaries. Such profiling helps U.S. Presidents to have a nuanced understanding of a rival leader like Saddam Hussein.

For example, a political and psychological analysis of Saddam’s personality and operating methods described him as a rational calculator, a power maximizer who brooks absolutely no rivals and entertains very little contrary opinion. His profilers simultaneously describe him by a myriad of adjectives: calculating, Machiavellian, cunning, secretive and violent. He has been identified as highly suspicious, fearful of opposition, sadistic, and thuggish. He is seen as a survivor, vindictive, filled with murderous hate, guarded, and secretive, possessing a messiah complex, and totalitarian. He is understood to be extremely dangerous, lethal, callous, manipulative, and very egocentric. He was mistreated as a child, was poor and abused, and as a consequence, possesses a “wounded self” that protects itself by a search for even more acclaim and who eliminates all potential rivals whether they are forming against him or not at the time. He either kills, jails, tortures or exiles them. Having executed literally tens of thousands of his own countrymen, Saddam, of necessity, has become acutely aware of possible coups, assassins, and plots and uses extreme security measures, employing food tasters at all meals to avoid being poisoned. According to reports, he does not sleep in the same bed on consecutive nights, constantly moving around to present less of a target to his perceived enemies. He surrounds himself with bodyguards and doubles, and never advertises his schedule in advance.<sup>2</sup> He has created a terroristic police state and a cult of personality and his reward is to be

constantly having to protect his back against the families and friends of his legions of victims.

Saddam Hussein has spent his entire life pursuing and clinging onto political power. While capable of tactical retreats to preserve that power, he has never been faced with the choice of sure death or exile, but all his tendencies would likely incline him to fight to the last rather than surrender - a bunker mentality. Exile is probably not a psychologically viable option and any subordinate who might suggest that he give up power and flee is likely to meet an untimely end. Saddam has not been reluctant to use chemical weapons on the Kurds and Iranians and is thought likely to elect to use all remaining Iraqi mass casualty weapons to defend or avenge himself in a military end game. Compromise, surrender, or withdrawal from Iraq are not likely decisions by Saddam Hussein even if the opponent's vise is closing on him.

Profiles such as the one on Saddam Hussein help us understand who we are dealing with. They help get us inside the mind of a dictator.<sup>3</sup> They, at least, shed more light on answers to questions about whether or not he could be deterred from use of his weapons of mass destruction during a crisis or war. Profiling might help answer whether or not he could, in impending defeat, be persuaded to go quietly into the night if allowed to survive and go into exile or whether he would instead choose to go out in a blaze of biological and chemical attacks on his enemies as they closed in upon him.

Leadership profiling and the understanding of terrorist and rogue state strategic cultures also gives us insights that can help guide U.S. and allied PSYOPs or psychological operations.

## **The Requirement to Counter Low-Intensity Conflict**

Psychological operations doctrine, developed and applied in conventional warfare, has an important role to play in countering terrorism, but its powerful techniques have not been adapted to the changing battlefield of low intensity conflict such as insurgencies and terrorism. In order to apply psychological operations effectively to terrorism, the attributes of the target must be specified, particularly the attributes of specific leaders and their pattern of decision-making. One

cannot effectively target and influence a group without a clear understanding of its leaders and decision structures, which vary widely from group to group.

Understanding the enemy commander and his supreme leader can provide decisive advantages to the United States if it allows us to anticipate and counter their decisions and tendencies. This should be part of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield or the counter-terrorism campaign.

This is an age of the information revolution and technological innovations have fueled a new revolution in military affairs (RMA).<sup>4</sup> In the U.S. military's Joint Vision 2010 information superiority is the key enabler in allowing forces to achieve dominant maneuver, precision engagement, focused logistics, and full-spectrum protection.<sup>5</sup> However, perhaps the most important thing to understand is the mind of the enemy supreme leader. It is also useful to know how to use information to influence the perceptions and actions of others, including potential allies and adversaries.

Information is also a tool of psychological or information warfare. Until very recently, the battle for control of the information battlefield, vis-à-vis Iraq's non-compliance with U.N. Resolutions, was largely left uncontested as Saddam Hussein effectively re-framed the conflict for his radical Arab constituents and enhanced his reputation and leadership standing. Similarly, by his control of the information environment, for a time Slobodan Milosevic effectively countered the military superiority of the NATO air campaign to reframe the contest in such a manner as to increase his support and steel the will of the Serbian people. The ability of Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic to manipulate the information environment so adroitly and successfully caused serious problems for the United States and its allies.

Further, consider how rapidly the support of the American public changed concerning support for the intervention into Somalia. Initially, the televised spectacle of starving Somali children deeply touched the heart strings of the American public, which strongly supported the humanitarian intervention. But later, the sight of American soldiers' bodies being hauled behind the Somali warlord's jeeps rapidly led to pressure to withdraw to prevent further loss of American life. Whether purposeful or not, this assuredly was a highly effective psychological operation by the Somali warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed.

As major resources are being devoted to information warfare and psychological operations, it is crucial to incorporate state of the art techniques for specifying the behavioral attributes of the adversary's leadership. One cannot intelligently influence an adversary one does not understand. What deters one opponent may be an incitement for another. Actions must be taken and messages delivered that influence the perceptions, thoughts, and decisions of the adversary leadership. To achieve maximum results, such verbal and non-verbal communications must be based on a correct understanding of how they will influence the minds of the rival leaders. This requires the ability rapidly and accurately to model psychologically the adversary's leadership.

### **The Importance of Effective Methods for Profiling Political Leaders**

Profiling techniques chart a pathway to this end. They have been used to assess the personalities of foreign political and military leaders to assist in summit meetings and other high-level negotiations, in crisis situations, and in estimative intelligence. These methods have been employed to evaluate the intentions of foreign political and military leaders, to evaluate the impact of foreign policy events on their psychological state and political attitudes, and to analyze changes in their threat potential.

The rapidity with which international conflicts can "go critical" and the catastrophic consequences of miscalculation make it imperative that accurate evaluations of rival leader psychology be developed swiftly and be monitored closely during crises. Encouraging progress is being made by some experts in this field in utilizing computer-assisted content analysis, so that the capacity to evaluate on-line key leader psychological states is considered attainable in the near future.

In a complex politico-military crisis, such as the crisis in the Gulf precipitated by Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the capacity to closely monitor fluctuations in the leader's mental state can valuably inform crisis managers.

Similarly, in a terrorist hostage and barricade crisis, rapid changes in integrative cognitive complexity could signal a sharp increase in hazard to the hostages' lives, suggesting a shift from hostage negotiations to a SWAT team intervention. This and other measures could also be

employed to identify crucial moments in international negotiations, predicting the negotiating adversary's readiness to compromise.

And, most importantly, the President and cabinet level officials, who see people as the essence of politics, are strongly interested in what makes their adversaries and allies tick. A better-informed leadership will better negotiate the treacherous shoals of national and international waters, and sound methods of evaluating the psychology of political leaders can assist in that important task.

This collection of studies has focused on the states of concern and terrorist groups that appear to offer the most immediate threat to the United States and its allies and vital interests. In late 2002, these appear to be the rivals in Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria, the parts of Pakistan not under central control, among radical terrorist groups like al Qaeda and inside organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood that breed such radicals who later join terrorist/revolutionary movements.

There is no claim here that we have exhausted the list of all the international rivals to the United States and its allies. There are others that bear close scrutiny including China, Cuba, Sudan, and dozens of terrorist organizations. Other new rivals will confront us that we are not expecting. Indeed, the unanticipated enemy has become the norm. Before the events, how many U.S. leaders or international affairs analysts predicted we would be at war with Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, Mohammad Farah Aideed in Somalia, Osama bin Laden of al Qaeda, or Shoko Ashahara of the Aum Shinrikyo prior to their attacks on U.S. and allied targets? Who would have predicted a year before the 2001 attack on the World Trade Centers that the United States would prosecute a war in Afghanistan in 2002? Or that we would decisively win such a war in a few short months?

And who would have predicted how far the United States and Russia have come to being allies rather than adversaries in the decade following the demise of the former Soviet Union? Lord Palmerson once noted that states have no permanent allies, just permanent interests. Today's rival may become tomorrow's ally, and vice versa. However, given the enormous stakes involved in an era of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorist organizations capable of inflicting immense physical and economic harm, we are compelled to better understand our adversaries and their strategic cultures in order to anticipate them, deter the worst

attacks, influence them, and if necessary, defeat them on the battlefields of the present and future.

### Notes

1. This theme was carried forward in the work of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, of which Alexander George was a member, 1994-1999 (Hamburg, Germany: George & Ballentine 1999).

2. See Ibrahim Al-Marashi, "Saddam's Security and Intelligence Network," CNS, Monterey Institute of International Studies, October 21, 2002. See on Internet: <http://cns.miis.edu/research/iraq/iraqint.htm>.

3. See Sonni Efron and Sebastian Rotella, "Inside the Mind of a Dictator," *London Times*, October 12, 2002. They conclude that Saddam Hussein "is ruthless but afraid, cunning but error prone. And he's eerily unpredictable."

4. For a comprehensive list of previous RMA's in military history see Andrew F. Krepinevich, "Cavalry to the Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions," *The National Interest*, Fall 1994, 30-42.

5. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Vision 2010, (Washington, D.C.: Joint Staff, Pentagon, 2000), 19.