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Strategic Effects of Conflict with Iraq: Europe

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**STRATEGIC EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT
WITH IRAQ: EUROPE**

Raymond A. Millen

March 2003

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FOREWORD

War with Iraq will signal the beginning of a new era in American national security policy and alter strategic balances and relationships around the world. The specific effects of the war, though, will vary from region to region. In some, America's position will be strengthened. In others, it may degrade without serious and sustained efforts.

To assess this dynamic, the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) has developed a special series of monographs entitled *Strategic Effects of the Conflict with Iraq*. In each, the author has been asked to analyze four issues: the position that key states in their region are taking on U.S. military action against Iraq; the role of America in the region after the war with Iraq; the nature of security partnerships in the region after the war with Iraq; and the effect that war with Iraq will have on the war on terrorism in the region.

This monograph is one of the special series. SSI is pleased to offer it to assist the Department of Army and Department of Defense in crafting the most effective strategy possible for dealing with the many consequences of war with Iraq.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

RAYMOND A. MILLEN is currently assigned as the Director of European Security Studies at the Strategic Studies Institute. A lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, he graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1982, was commissioned as an infantry officer, and has held a variety of command and staff assignments in Germany and Continental United States. He commanded a light infantry company during Operation JUST CAUSE, the invasion of Panama in 1990. Lieutenant Colonel Millen has also served as the U.S. Army Infantry School Liaison Officer to the German Infantry School at Hammelburg, Germany; Battalion Executive Officer, 3-502d Infantry, Fort Campbell, Kentucky; and Chief of Intelligence Section and Balkans Team Chief, Survey Section, SHAPE, Belgium. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College, and holds an M.A. degree in National Security Studies from Georgetown University. He is a Foreign Area Officer for Western Europe. Lieutenant Colonel Millen has published articles in a number of scholarly and professional journals, including *Infantry Magazine* and the *Swiss Military Journal*. His book, *Command Legacy*, was published by Brassey's in April 2002.

STRATEGIC EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT WITH IRAQ: EUROPE

Conclusions:

The vast majority of European states will contribute to the peacekeeping mission in Iraq if asked bilaterally.

Given its proximity, the European Union can provide substantial economic and diplomatic resources for stabilizing the region.

The European Union will seize upon the opportunities of greater regional democratization to practice diplomacy and crisis resolution.

The post-Iraqi war era provides an opportunity for NATO to reorient towards the Middle East.

European active participation on the global war on terrorism is predicated on clear success in the Middle East. Failure will result in a period of European isolationism.

For all the bluster and acrimony regarding the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq, the European Union (EU) (with the exception of Germany) will strive to extract the greatest economic and political benefits in post-war Iraq. The reason is hardly profound. The EU does not wish to be placed on the margins regarding the future of the Middle East, and will seek to secure a foothold in democratized Iraq in order to increase its influence in the region while simultaneously limiting the influence of the United States.

The rift between the EU and the United States cannot be played off as a difference of opinion regarding the approach to the Iraqi problem. Rather, it represents a fundamental struggle between the EU and United States for leadership

in Europe, specifically, and in foreign affairs, generally. The EU not only seeks greater independence from the United States but also greater legitimacy and influence in the international community. Paradoxically, the EU has diminished the role of the military in its quest for relevancy. Whereas the United States regards the use of military force as fundamental to the interaction among the instruments of power, the EU views it as detrimental and dangerous to conflict resolution.

A successful conclusion to the Iraq war and consequent stability to the Middle East will not stifle EU criticism of the U.S. initiative, though. The EU will insist sullenly that its diplomatic approach would have achieved the same results at less cost and bloodshed. The eventual exposure of Iraq's cache of WMD and the suffering of the Iraqi people under Saddam Hussein will merely shift the rhetoric from anti-war to anti-imperialism with oil as the *leitmotiv*. Barbed references to the United States as an arrogant cowboy will continue, while the EU exploits the newly created stability to promote its own diplomatic and economic agenda.

But what is the EU? It has yet to reach the stage of representative government if it ever will, and remains a deliberative body with common security policy aspirations. In security matters, Europe does not speak with one voice. Individual European states still matter, and as has become apparent in the wake of the recent French-German attempt to dominate the EU, the smaller European countries will resist any attempts of a few ministers to speak for the rest. European states adamantly retain control of their own foreign policy and regard relations with the United States as more important than promoting the political agenda of the EU. Behind the backdrop of EU rhetoric, individual European countries will be profoundly grateful for American leadership and perseverance in the war against terror and its strategy branch, the war against Iraq and subsequent stabilization of the Middle East.

European Interests.

Regardless of the reluctance to wage a war with Iraq, participation in the coalition will be critical for European countries seeking to reap the political benefits of a successful campaign and the economic opportunities of a revitalized Iraq. Once the peace is assured, European governments will descend upon post-war Iraq to secure economic agreements and enduring treaties with the new government. Specifically, France, Russia, and Turkey, each with substantial investments in Iraq as well as Iraqi promissory notes, will want their just returns. Moreover, once the coalition secures Iraq, the EU will want an equal hand in stabilizing and reforming the Middle East.

The United Kingdom will staunchly support the peacekeeping effort, but because of its troubled history with Iraq will likely seek a low profile or maintain a token force in the Middle East so as not to excite the passions of the populace. The British people are unlikely to view a victory in Iraq with anything greater than mild approval. Given its loyal support during the events leading to the war and the political penalty that Prime Minister Blair may suffer as a result, the United Kingdom may limit its long-term engagement in the region.

Russia's reluctance is likely posturing rather than a firm opposition. Although conflicted over the loss of oil revenues once Iraqi oil re-enters the market in force, Russia will not hesitate to send peacekeepers into the region. The logistical link between the Chechen rebels and Persian Gulf Islamic radicals provides a powerful incentive to support any initiative that strangles the Chechen rebels and helps Russia end this festering conflict. Domestically, after a decade of frustrations in Chechnya, Russia needs an unequivocal success it can point to. Additionally, maintaining access to the Middle East and recovering some of the Iraqi debt demand active participation in the post-war Iraq.

Despite France's vociferous objections regarding the possible war with Iraq, it will readily abandon its alliance with Germany and join the coalition once it feels it has extracted the maximum political capital from its position. Several factors weigh in this decision. France routinely serves as a counterweight to U.S. leadership in Europe. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), it can use the threat of veto to ensure France's views are duly considered. Concerning the Iraqi crisis, France will not overplay its hand though. If the United States perceives the UNSC is unreasonably obstructing its foreign policy, the United States will act unilaterally, thereby damaging the credibility of the UNSC. France seeks European prestige by resisting the United States, but does not want to create another League of Nations in the process.

France has likely calculated that the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq will be a decisive victory and will want to share in the victory. Non-participation in the coalition and post-conflict operations would endanger France's status as a relevant security partner with the United States and perhaps negatively impact on its standing as a preeminent continental power. Prestige and influence aside, France has substantial commercial interests in Iraq and participation in the war and subsequent peacekeeping operations will guarantee those interests are safeguarded.

France has a substantial political investment in the EU. As the EU's Praetorian Guard, France does not want to embark on any course that will weaken the relevance of the EU. The recent French-German alliance was probably a power-play for preeminence in the EU, while ostensibly attempting to enhance the moral authority of the EU at the expense of NATO and the United States. For France, an unintended but welcome consequence of the alliance was a further erosion of U.S.-German relations and, hence, Germany's political standing in Europe. In contrast to Germany, France has plenty of political maneuver room and can join the coalition without any political consequences. Germany, on the other hand, has painted itself into a corner.

The French-German coup failed, but France can rebound from it. France is pragmatic if nothing else.

Turkey remains concerned with the effect the war will have on its Kurdish conflict as well as the sensibilities of its own Muslim citizens. Turkey has every incentive to insure that Iraq remains whole to prevent an independent Kurdistan and to prevent a repeat of the 1991 flood of Kurdish refugees into Turkey. To these ends, Turkey will contribute peacekeepers. Re-establishing economic agreements with Iraq permits Turkey to recoup the enormous losses in revenue as a result of the first Gulf War and the subsequent sanctions against Iraq. Turkey must contend with the wrath of the EU though. Siding with the United States in this war will bring EU retribution regarding EU membership. Since the EU views Turkey with xenophobic lens and is unlikely to accelerate EU membership even if Turkey rejects the war, Turkey is better off seeking economic prospects in the Middle East than the continued courting of the EU. Although Turkey probably does not realize it yet, the opportunities in post-war Iraq can propel Turkey to prominence in the Middle East, and make it indispensable to Europe. As the land bridge between Europe and the Middle East, Turkey can parlay its influence with both regions as the power broker. Certainly, the lure of greater prestige and economic returns in the Middle East is far greater than as a second-class citizen in the EU. To secure this position, Turkey must portray its role as a war against the Iraqi autocracy and not a war against fellow Muslims. The United States must remain sensitive to this position or risk losing a coalition partner.

Germany may prove the exception to the U.S.-led enterprise, but its self-imposed isolation is not pre-ordained. The Schroeder government has consigned Germany to the political wasteland and will likely find itself frozen out of Iraq, and possibly the Middle East, due to its militant opposition to the war. Certainly the liberated Iraqi people and neighbors of the Iraqi regime will not welcome German emissaries and businessmen with open arms. If

Germany is against the war purely as a matter of principle, then it will eventually recover its standing in Iraq. If evidence reveals significant collusion between German companies and Iraq's pursuit of WMD, then Germany will suffer enormous political and economic consequences.

Nevertheless, the German elections in Hesse and Lower Saxony on February 2 may result in a regime change in Berlin since the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) swept both *Laender* from Schroeder's Social Democrats (SPD). At a minimum, Chancellor Schroeder's government is significantly weakened enough to permit the CDU/CSU to push its political agenda. The German government is not likely to participate in the war actively, but it might reconcile enough with the United States to permit a contribution to the subsequent peacekeeping operations. As a reliable and modern military partner, the *Bundeswehr* contribution can pave over the cracks in U.S.-German relations, so the United States should not discount a German contribution later on.

Of all the Alliance members, the new NATO members, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia (although mercurial), Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Rumania, and Bulgaria, will be the most supportive of the war against Iraq and will remain as peacekeepers. As new members, their respect and gratitude to the United States override any hesitancy they have over a war with Iraq. Although they lack sufficient air- and sealift, they can move the bulk of their forces via rail through Rumania, Bulgaria, and Turkey to staging areas in Iraq and beyond. Despite limited military capabilities and interoperability with NATO, their manpower contribution alone will pay big dividends to the peacekeeping operation. All have experience in peacekeeping and most have operated with the United States in the Balkans, so cooperation will be practically seamless.

The United States will likely receive a favorable response from Partnership for Peace (PfP) and non-NATO EU countries as well. The United States will need to secure

agreements bilaterally for peacekeeping contributions rather than sending a blanket request through the EU or PfP though. Given U.S. superb relations with PfP countries, securing sufficient volunteers for long-term peacekeeping operations should not be a significant problem.

Allaying European Fears through Action, Not Talk.

European demilitarization appears inexplicable to the United States, which views the military as integral to national security and admonishes Europe for reneging on burden sharing obligations. The extreme reluctance to use military force, not to mention waging a war in the Middle East, reflects a deeply rooted fear that permeates European politics. Both world wars and the period of de-colonization eviscerated Europe of self-confidence and trust in its own moral rectitude. The failures of the past century have convinced many Europeans that the use of force solves nothing and that the best course for conflict resolution is solely through diplomacy and addressing the roots of conflict (e.g., poverty, religious friction, ethnic strife, government oppression, and so forth). All the high-minded rhetoric about war reflecting a failure of diplomacy and personifying war as evil rather than holding state and non-state actors accountable for their heinous activities is merely a cover for their fear and provides an excuse to ignore their armed forces.

Fear of provoking a terrorist backlash petrifies Europe. Europeans worry that a war with Iraq may cause further instability in the Middle East, ignite a regional conflict, and thereby unleash a wave of terrorism against European states. Due to its proximity and accessibility, European fears of Middle East and North Africa terrorism are not unfounded. With 15 million Muslims living in Europe, the risk of terrorism emanating from or through its Muslim community is daunting. Unlike the United States, which has a tradition of assimilating emigrants, European countries maintain tacit segregation of their émigrés.

Consequently, ethnic groups feel little national affiliation or patriotism to their host countries. Contrast this situation with the United States where an uprising among its Muslim community would be unheard of. European states could defuse this potential powder keg if they regarded their émigrés as citizens and not guest workers, but current domestic politics hinders naturalization reforms.

The United States cannot allay many of these fears by explaining how the dynamics in the Middle East will change in the post-Saddam Hussein era. Only through action and success will the Europeans conclude that stability in the Middle East and consequent eradication of the regional terrorism was the proper course of action. Anxiety over sparking a firestorm of terrorist retribution within Iraq in the form of car and human bombs, ambushes, and raids is overblown. The threat situation in post-war Iraq will be far different than what the Israelis must combat daily or even the conditions which led to the attack on the Marine Beirut compound in October 1983. Force protection, intelligence, and law enforcement measures by peacekeeping forces and the new government will hamstring terrorist activities. Peacekeeping troops in conjunction with reformed Iraqi law enforcement agencies will exercise sufficient control in Iraq to thwart, root out, and destroy residual terrorist cells. Terrorist acts will occur, just as they occurred in Bosnia and Kosovo, but the vigilance of the peacekeepers will soon create a stable environment for diplomatic, social, economic, and *informational* initiatives to take effect.

The informational initiatives are the most important factor in securing gains in the Middle East. The EU and the United States must make a concerted effort to counter the rhetoric of the radical firebrands and instigators of violence. Overwhelming resources must be devoted to exposing the lies of the fanatics and enlightening the citizenry. The EU and United States must also support the regional governments when they arrest religious leaders for sedition and other criminal activities. Alone, these governments cannot risk a domestic backlash, but they can punish these

radicals if they are permitted to fob off the responsibility on the EU and the United States.

Once the core terrorist organizations in the Middle East are eradicated, the domestic terrorist threat in Europe will diminish. Without funding, host nation support, or access to arms, terrorists will find it more difficult to retaliate in Europe. Certainly, terrorist organizations can relocate to another country if they can find one, but their level of sophistication will plummet. Europeans understand that WMD is what makes terrorism so dangerous to them, and if the global war on terror can maintain the pressure, the level of sophistication can be kept to primitive levels.

To bolster the peacekeeping operations, the United States can serve notice to Middle East countries that providing sanctuary to terrorists will be grounds for swift military action. Terrorist organizations will find themselves *persona non grata* in the Middle East within a matter of weeks since neighboring countries will be anxious not to incur the wrath of the United States. Additionally, the extensive use of ground, air, and naval assets to strangle the arms trade to terrorist organizations can only have a positive effect.

Activating the European Forte.

The EU may loath war but it is enchanted with diplomacy and nation building. The United States can use this strength towards stabilizing the region rather than focusing solely on European military capabilities. Given the series of failed EU initiatives in the past decade, the EU will seek a success in Iraq and the Middle East to enhance its image. The EU will regard post-war Iraq as a test bed for EU diplomacy by focusing its efforts on the roots of discontent and instability. The Europeans are fond of asserting that humanitarian aid, as well as economic, social, and political reforms, creates fallow ground for Islamic radicals and terrorists, and rightly so. Prosperous free people with a hopeful future pay little heed to the rants of fanatics. The

Europeans excel at these activities, and with the U.S. military to bolster diplomatic efforts, these initiatives have a superb chance of succeeding.

European and American statesmen will find fertile ground for the revitalization of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians as well. The Europeans will find the Palestinian leadership, politically isolated from its benefactors and without access to funds and arms, more amenable to the peace process. Working in tandem, the United States will also be in a better position to force the Israelis to abandon their West Bank settlements and withdraw to the pre-1967 borders. The Israelis and the Palestinians will not like the solution, and the agreement will likely require peacekeepers; however, breaking the cycle of violence and injecting substantive economic incentives will soon return this troubled land to normalcy. Perhaps this solution more than any other will convince the Europeans that the war against Iraq was worth the risk.

There is a good chance that neighboring countries to democratic Iraq, particularly Syria and Saudi Arabia, will feel compelled to institute deep reforms or face domestic turmoil. With an established foothold in the Middle East, the EU will be in a position to render assistance with progressive democratic reforms. Building on success ensures Europe remains engaged in the Middle East and undercuts the isolationist tendencies that pervade Europe.

As a corollary to diplomacy, the Europeans are very comfortable with peacekeeping operations. Any expectations that the war with Iraq will convince EU countries to devote more funds for defense is forlorn in the foreseeable future. The decline of military capabilities is not just a reflection of a loss of national will. Focusing national resources to shore up flagging social welfare systems, staunch growing deficits, and spur economic growth to the detriment of military readiness has accrued significant advantages for these states. Without the capability to project power, Western Europe has not had to worry about

becoming embroiled in a war outside of its borders. Except for France and Great Britain, Western European defense expenditures are declining to 1.5 percent and below of GDP. Germany is the worse offender and, as the largest power in Europe, its example radiates outwardly to the rest. As long as this trend continues, *and the Western Europeans do not appear willing to reverse course*, such initiatives as the ESDP Rapid Reaction Corps are moribund or will remain paper tigers at best. Nevertheless, the Middle East will be more in need of peacekeepers, perhaps many more than are now anticipated, than war fighters and the Europeans are in a greater position to fill that void than the United Nations.

Perhaps subconsciously, European diplomats will use the “good cop, bad cop” dynamic as a part of their new diplomatic initiatives. European statesmen can sympathize with the grievances of regional factions or states but can add that they cannot control the United States, which is quite willing to use force if they do not fall into line. So in this sense, the Europeans can put their diplomatic skills to work, providing the carrot while pointing out that the U.S. stick is poised if negotiations fail.

A successful conclusion to the war with Iraq and the possible, subsequent stabilization of the Middle East will have a significant impact on Europe’s active participation in the war on terror (WOT). More to the point, European willingness to engage in future coalitions is predicated on clear success. Europe’s natural tendency is not to take action, but success will embolden it to exercise military force more readily in the future.

For Europe to recognize the benefits, success must bring distinct resolutions to many of Europe’s problems emanating from the Middle East and North Africa. The stabilization of the Middle East and eradication of the major terrorist organizations must result in fewer cases of terrorism, criminal acts in support of terrorism, and the flow of refugees and asylum seekers. The spread of

democracy and open markets must raise the standard of living, and increase human rights and individual freedoms of the Arab people. Autocracy and oppression must disappear. Success means that Europe's émigré population will stabilize and even decline as job opportunities and living conditions in the home countries improve. With such concrete benefits resulting from this coalition in the Middle East, Europe will continue to contribute to the WOT. Hence, a secondary goal of the United States is to use this enterprise in the Middle East to bring back Europe's self-confidence and make it an active partner in global security matters.

The European Hedge.

The resistance to the war against Iraq serves a very practical purpose for the EU in case of failure. If the war against Iraq drags on with substantial casualties and collateral damage or the Middle East erupts into regional conflict, the EU will be quick to condemn the United States, and a failure of this magnitude in the Middle East will extinguish European participation in subsequent WOT coalitions.

Pointing to its earlier resistance to war, the EU will seek to insulate Europe from Middle East retribution. It will initiate immediate diplomatic overtures to mend fences with Middle East countries, falling back on soothing words, increased funding, and appeasement. Given the parliamentary style of European governments, American allies may melt away as governments fall through lack of confidence votes.

The media backlash from Western Europe will be swift and vociferous. Encouraged, opposition parties within each country will attempt to force their governments to withdraw support from the U.S. initiative in the Middle East and perhaps from the WOT. Acts of civil disobedience, such as blockading U.S. bases and casernes, demonstrations, and disrupting activities, are highly likely to occur. Terrorist

acts within Europe will add fuel to the fire to oppose the United States and brand it as an arrogant, irresponsible power. The odds of failure are remote, but the United States should suffer no illusions regarding the capriciousness of Europe during a crisis.

Implications on the U.S. Military in Europe.

Clearly, the focus of NATO is shifting to the Middle East and North Africa rather than the East. Because of the greater threat from terrorism and the festering instability of the Middle East, the new orientation is inevitable. With the change in the regional security environment, the necessity to maintain U.S. ground forces in Germany is no longer imperative, and a shift eastward provides significant advantages. The stationing of ground forces in Bulgaria and Romania permits quick access to the Middle East via seafight (Black Sea) and rail. The United States can contract for modern new division-sized casernes (or cluster casernes) contiguous to large maneuver training areas. In terms of energy and maintenance, the casernes will be more cost effective in the long term than any renovations in Germany, where the facilities are pre-World War II vintage and generally in very poor condition. The proximity of maneuver training areas precludes rail-head and convoy requirements, which are an unnecessary drain on the annual budget. Additionally, the United States can conclude a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that permits greater exercise freedom and more reasonable maneuver damage penalties as well as anti-noise and environmental regulations than currently are enjoyed in Germany. Germany will view the move as a retaliation for its anti-war stance, so the United States can assuage Germany's sensibilities by keeping the U.S. Air Force in place. Besides, the ease with which the Air Force can deploy obviates any reason to relocate. Shifting European Command to Hungary and proposing a shift of SHAPE to the Czech Republic would complement the reorientation and signal that a new era for NATO has arrived.

Recommendations.

To extract the greatest benefit from the war with Iraq and to win the peace in the Middle East, the United States must set a bold agenda that goes beyond the immediate war aims:

Inform all European states that their participation in the coalition and subsequent peacekeeping operations is absolutely essential to success and highly sought by the United States.

Develop an information campaign to overwhelm the rhetoric of the religious and political ideologues throughout the Middle East. If the West loses the war on information, peace in the Middle East will be threatened.

Prepare a roadmap for stabilizing the Middle East to include resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, developing measures and incentives that encourage democratic reforms in Middle East countries, and establishing a robust rapid reaction force in Iraq to respond to major acts of terrorism.

Use this opportunity of success in the Middle East to bring back Europe's self-confidence and make it an active partner in global security matters.

Build on the success in the Middle East to encourage European countries to tailor and modernize their armed forces for expeditionary operations.

Reorient NATO towards the Middle East and shift U.S. forces and headquarters to Eastern Europe in response.

Conclusions.

The tone of this analysis is positive for two reasons. First, optimism is contagious and fuels success. The European contagion of pessimism has done nothing to resolve the conflicts in the Middle East or to curb the growth of regional terrorists. Europe has already predicted disaster and failure. Only American leadership can shake its European allies from their defeatist attitude. Second, action is preferred to inaction. Again, European inattention and appeasement of Middle East violence have brought the international community to this predicament. As long as Europe takes counsel of its fears, it will shrink from action. The EU will never admit this, but this makes it no less true. Inaction has never brought success to any human enterprise. Action incurs risk, but it also presents enormous opportunities. Again, through leadership, America can energize Europe to action and restore its self-confidence and belief in its moral rectitude.

The American-led war against Iraq and post-war initiatives will provide the catalyst for Europe to break out of its continental-centric doldrums. Iraq will serve as a platform for the Europeans to practice their style of diplomacy and conflict resolution. The EU will not thank the United States let alone admit the U.S. approach was correct, nor will it hesitate to promote its agenda while denigrating the efforts of the United States.

This is how the EU behaves, and its demeanor supports the self-delusion of European relevancy in international affairs. Behind the scenes, the prestige and admiration of the United States will remain unchallenged. More importantly, success in Iraq and the Middle East will provide enormous capital for future security initiatives against the WOT between the United States and Europe.

The EU will not create an expeditionary force as touted. At best, the ESPD rapid reaction corps will *eventually* become a formalized peacekeeping force. Success in the

Middle East will require nothing greater than a peace-keeping force, so the issue becomes academic. As in the past, the United States will need to rely on bilateral agreements when building coalitions, but with the stability in the Middle East, the world will be a safer place.

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