

## Editorial

# The Machiavellian imperative

The Argentines would do well to look closely at the developments in the Iran-Iraq war. Both Iraq and Argentina were goaded to act by the intolerable political-military behavior of the British oligarchy. In Iraq's case, it was by the surrogate hordes of British asset Khomeini; in Argentina's, it was, of course, the beast itself.

The Iraqis started their war with moral purpose and a hefty local military superiority, initially racking up some brilliant tactical successes. But, just as they were positioned for a drive that could have ultimately annihilated Iran's military power and toppled the Khomeini dictatorship, the Iraqis stopped their armor to entrench around the territory they had occupied. The Iraqis had fallen prey to the longtime British philosophy of "cabinet warfare": the belief that warfighting is fundamentally not military but psychological, and can be accomplished by a combination of "public opinion," trickery, and diplomatic waiting games.

In this way, the Iraqis gave the Khomeini dictatorship the time to further brainwash its subjects, who are now sorely pressuring Iraqi positions through suicidal "human-wave" attacks. Both sides are now sustaining, and can further expect, massive losses—losses far greater, perhaps, than if the Iraqis had driven on to Teheran and ended the war.

Cabinet warfare is an old game. America had a taste of it during the Revolutionary War, when the British oligarchs sent gorgeously dressed soldiers to put down the rebellion. The theory went that the British troops, firing in perfect unison from parade-ground formations, would cow the American "rabble" by their utter discipline. Such was the belief that the British leaders felt it unnecessary to equip their soldiers' rifles with sights for aiming.

The American citizen-militias, equipped with long rifles, made short work of these superprofessionals in most engagements.

Argentine military planners—and their U.S. colleagues—would also do very well to look at the foundations of that historic defeat for the British oligarchy. The U.S. citizen militia was founded by men who had

all studied the works of the Renaissance Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli.

Although he is much-maligned today (like his and Leonardo da Vinci's protégé, Cesare Borgia), the Founding Fathers correctly saw Machiavelli as the first theorist of how a republic must fight a war, and they made his ideas about the militia standard U.S. military policy. They also recognized, like Machiavelli, that in dealing with oligarchies one must never be sucked into "public opinion" games.

War is cruel by definition, stressed Machiavelli, so it is the responsibility of military leaders to make it as mercifully quick as possible. Machiavelli made the distinction: cruelties "well-committed . . . are those perpetuated once for the need of securing one's self, and which afterwards are not persisted in, but are exchanged for measures as useful to the subjects as possible. Cruelties ill-committed are those which . . . increase rather than diminish with time. . . . Cesare Borgia," noted Machiavelli, "was considered cruel but his cruelty brought order to the Romagna, united it. . . . He was really much more merciful than the Florentine people, who, to avoid the name of cruelty, allowed [the town of] Pistoia to be destroyed."

Warfighting means throwing the resources of the whole society—hence Machiavelli's demand for a universally trained citizenry—with maximum force at the enemy's ability to wage war. Diplomatic parlor games are worthless with an oligarchy: "It is impossible to satisfy the nobility by fair dealing . . . whereas it is very easy to satisfy the mass of the people in this way. For the aim of the people is more honest than that of the nobility, the latter desiring to oppress. . . ."

The Argentines have an excellent opportunity to strike before the British forces increase—ensuring greater casualties. They should examine the case of Venice, Machiavelli's most hated enemy and the oligarchical power which, to this day, is allied with the British Royal Family. "Venice," Machiavelli stated, "having obtained possession of a great part of Italy, and most of it not by war, but by means of money and fraud, when occasion came for her to give proof of her strength, she lost everything in a single battle."