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# Thirteen Years: The Causes and Consequences of the War in Iraq

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The mission of our troops is wholly defensive,” President George H. W. Bush intoned as elements of the 82d Airborne and US Air Force arrived in Saudi Arabia to defend it against an Iraqi invasion. “Hopefully, they will not be needed long.” That was 8 August 1990.

Thirteen years later, the Americans are finally withdrawing from the land of Mecca and Medina—and the long, strange war against Saddam Hussein is essentially over. When it began, no one thought it would last 13 years, that it would set the stage for a global conflict unlike any in history, that it would fracture the Atlantic Alliance and mortally wound the United Nations. But it did. As the postwar period begins, it is largely left to the United States to face these realities and brace for new challenges. To avoid making similar mistakes in the aftermath of this war, the United States should be guided by these “Three R’s”: Rebuilding, Reviewing, and Reforming.

## *The Beginning*

As others have explained elsewhere at great length, the forces of Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism seldom work together. However, in a very real sense it was Saddam Hussein—once the personified definition of Arab nationalism—that catapulted fundamentalist al Qaeda into a terror superpower and set in motion a series of events that led to the bloodiest day on American soil since the Civil War.

By invading Kuwait in the summer of 1990, Saddam left the defenseless Saudis with two options—cut a deal and surrender, or allow the Americans to dig

in. The Saudis chose the latter, hopeful that the American deployment would be short and small. Of course, those hopes weren't realized. The initial deployment of a few hundred troops swelled to some 600,000 in preparation for Operation Desert Storm. Kuwait was liberated and Saddam was weakened, but Washington declared a cease-fire before the American juggernaut could destroy key units of the Republican Guard, which were vital to Saddam's survival. Historian Derek Leebaert calls the war a "tactical success misread as strategic triumph."<sup>1</sup>

Deflecting criticisms of the war's untidy conclusion in their book *A World Transformed*, Bush and his national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, argued in 1998 that shutting down the ground war at the hundred-hour mark was the right thing to do. "The United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land," they concluded.<sup>2</sup> Of course, that's effectively what happened, at least in the eyes of Osama bin Laden and his followers.

In a sense, occupation was inevitable after the war; perhaps the United States ended up occupying the wrong country. Since a wounded Saddam could not be left unattended and an oil-rich Saudi Arabia could not be left unprotected, US troops took up permanent residence in the Saudi kingdom. The presence of foreign troops in the Muslim holy land galvanized al Qaeda, which carried out the attacks of 11 September 2001, which triggered America's global war on terror, which led inevitably back to Iraq, which is where America finds itself today. When viewed from this side of history, the events between 1990 and 2003 look like something out of a Greek tragedy—each decision fateful, each step leading inexorably to the very thing we hoped to prevent.

This is not to say that the first Bush Administration is to blame for the tragedy. The elder Bush crafted a historic diplomatic and military campaign, hewed to the UN mandate, and took a calculated risk that Saddam would fall. He wasn't the first President to make such a calculation, but like Kim, Castro, and others, Saddam survived. To finish him off, Washington waged what came to be known as "low-grade war." It consisted of sanctions, CIA operations, and weekly or even daily air attacks on targets of opportunity such as radar posts, SAM sites, and other facilities on the extreme periphery of Saddam Hussein's power.

Capitalizing on Washington's preoccupation with Iraq, al Qaeda and its partners launched a global guerilla war against the United States in 1993. Perfecting asymmetrical warfare, they hit America in unexpected places and used unexpected tactics—a van full of explosives parked under the World Trade Center, foreign-trained gangs in Mogadishu, a truck bomb outside the Khobar

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Towers, simultaneous bombings outside lightly guarded embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, a bomb-laden rubber boat alongside USS *Cole*, and of course, civilian airliners as guided missiles in Manhattan and Washington. Only then did Washington muster a real response to the enemy, smashing al Qaeda's spawning grounds in Afghanistan and ousting the medieval Taliban regime.

More connective tissue between the Gulf War's loose ends and the attacks of 9/11 was exposed on the road to Kabul: Saudi Arabia was funneling money to the Taliban—\$100 million in 1997 alone and millions more in daily oil shipments, as former CIA officer Robert Baer explained in a revealing *Atlantic Monthly* piece. In fact, Baer found that the Saudis “transferred \$500 million to al Qaeda over the past decade.”<sup>3</sup> The reason? It was a simple matter of insurance. By shoveling cash and petroleum to al Qaeda and its Taliban hosts, Riyadh struck a tacit deal with bin Laden: We'll keep the money flowing as long as you keep your jihad away from the king. Rather than attacking the kingdom, al Qaeda attacked the kingdom's defender, which leads us back to the rationale for America's deployments in Saudi Arabia—Saddam Hussein.

The Bush Doctrine's principle of preemption was tailor-made for Baathist Iraq—a country with growing ties to terror, an underground unconventional weapons program, and the means and motives to mete out revenge on the United States. “As a matter of common sense and self-defense,” President George W. Bush explained in a 2002 national security document, “America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.”<sup>4</sup> The strengths and weaknesses of this doctrine could be the subject of a book (and no doubt will be the subject of many). The purpose of this article is not to dissect the Bush Doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Suffice it to say that the Bush Doctrine is idealistic, bold, even risky. However, when analysts conclude that it is too idealistic, too bold, or too risky to work, one can't help but compare it to the doctrine of nuance, realism, and stability that guided prior administrations and died a violent death on 11 September 2001.

### ***Rebuilding: Patience is a Virtue***

As US troops have learned in the months since the statues fell in Baghdad, rebuilding Iraq is no easy task—but neither is it beyond the realm of possibility. As long as the American people stay patient and focused, the American military can succeed in its important postwar mission. To doubt this is to dismiss what MacArthur and Marshall achieved in Japan and Western Europe after World War II. Yet the skeptics are quick to point out that 21st-century America is a different country than that of the 1940s. After all, Presidents are more skittish—and the American people more squeamish—today than they were after World War II. For evidence, look no further than the rapid withdrawal of US forces from Lebanon in the 1980s and Somalia and Haiti in the 1990s, when rebuilding or peacekeeping missions turned messy. As RAND international security analyst James Dobbins observed in a *Washington Post* interview, “We've done these things quickly and we've done them well, but we've never done them quickly and well.”<sup>6</sup>

However, the attacks of 9/11 have altered the way America and its leaders view open-ended military missions. Moreover, contrary to the critics, the United States is not out of practice when it comes to rebuilding failed states. The ongoing nation-building operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans illustrate that America still has the capacity to be patient.

#### *From Bosnia to Baghdad*

In 1991, Slobodan Milosevic's henchmen began a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Croatia. By 1995, their war of attrition and siege had erased 250,000 people and displaced another two million. The lopsided war haunted two Presidents and divided their administrations. Under the elder Bush, it was Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger who worried "about the shadow of Vietnam," as historian David Halberstam writes in *War in a Time of Peace*. Early in the Clinton presidency, it was Secretary of State Warren Christopher who labeled Bosnia, "the problem from hell." Defense Secretary William Perry warned of the possibility of a guerilla war in Southeast Europe. And after the nation-building debacle in Mogadishu, official Washington had little faith in America's capacity to do any good in the ethnic wars and general chaos that roiled the post-Cold War period.<sup>7</sup>

When the White House finally shook off the doom-saying and launched robust air strikes against Serbian paramilitaries in 1995 (in conjunction with Bosnian and Croat ground operations), the war came to an abrupt end. Yet the White House was extremely anxious about public support for a long-term peace-keeping operation, so anxious that the President promised to have the troops out within a year. That was in December 1995. The troops are still there, of course, and the peace is still holding. In fact, the armistice has now held longer than the war itself lasted.

A similar formula has worked in Kosovo. Less than five years ago, Milosevic's terror squads were rampaging through the tiny Albanian enclave of Serbia, purging 850,000 ethnic Albanians and killing thousands more. Defying the odds, a US-led NATO force evicted Milosevic and returned all 850,000 refugees to Kosovo—the only case in modern history where a systematic removal of ethnic groups has been reversed.

Today, Milosevic is pacing in a jail cell, awaiting his sentence for a decade of war crimes; the Kosovars are home; Serbia is a democracy; the Balkans are more stable than they have been since Tito; and, not coincidentally, there are some 7,000 US troops keeping the peace. They arrived in 1999, and it doesn't appear that they will be leaving anytime soon.

#### *A New Country*

Some have criticized America's postwar Afghan operation as half-hearted. Some even claim that Washington has abandoned Kabul. While there's much left to do, America has hardly abandoned Afghanistan.

In 2002 alone, the United States poured \$620 million into Afghanistan. By the end of this year, Washington plans to invest another \$820 million there. Much of the Pentagon's Afghanistan outlays have been devoted to provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), military units which work with civilian organizations to rebuild key infrastructure beyond Kabul.<sup>8</sup> According to the Congressional Research Service, "The objective of the PRTs is to provide safe havens for international aid workers to help with reconstruction and to extend the writ of the Kabul government throughout Afghanistan." PRTs are already at work in Gardez, Bamiyan, and Konduz; another five to seven will be launched in other cites in the months ahead.<sup>9</sup>

There are just under 10,000 US troops in Afghanistan; they are joined by roughly the same number of allied troops, most of them from NATO countries. In addition to their PRT work, they are training Afghanistan's new army, hunting al Qaeda, and protecting the nascent Afghan government. US forces literally saved Afghan leader Hamid Karzai's life during an assassination attempt in September 2002.

Still, the work is far from over. Karzai warns that the police and army remain weak. Lawlessness still reigns beyond major urban areas. Not coincidentally, there has been an upsurge in Taliban activity. Many countries have failed to make good on their pledges, most notably Germany (which has 71 percent of its pledge unpaid), France (72 percent), and Japan (73 percent).<sup>10</sup>

Even though the postwar peace is not perfect, however, the operation is a success: First and foremost, al Qaeda no longer has a base of operations. The Taliban is no longer in power. Almost two million Afghan refugees have come home. And as one of those returning refugees put it, "Life is good here. . . . This is a new country."<sup>11</sup>

### *The Yardstick of Yesterday*

That former refugee understands something that the pessimists in America do not: The measure of success in the Balkans and Afghanistan is not Jeffersonian democracy or postwar Germany or Japan—and it's certainly not perfection. It's simply yesterday. For him and millions of others, yesterday in Afghanistan was so brutal, so horrific that they fled. But today, the country is new. For America, yesterday in Afghanistan was so deformed that it spawned mass murder in Manhattan. But today, the Afghan government is friendly, and the Afghan countryside is being purged of al Qaeda.

And so it is with Iraq. The measure of US success or failure is a simple comparison between today and the situation before Saddam Hussein fell: Are the American people more secure with Saddam Hussein in power or deposed; are the Iraqi people freer and better off under Saddam's heel or under interim allied stewardship; and is the region closer to stability or chaos now that Saddam is gone? We must revisit these questions often to gauge our progress. If the answer is no, then the mission is failing; but if the answer is yes, then it is succeeding.

By that yardstick, America's rebuilding mission is succeeding, some weeks faster than others, in some cities better than others. Much of it began even before the collapse of Saddam's regime. Just days after entering Iraq, the allies were repairing water-pumping stations and unloading tons of food and other supplies. Less than a week after the liberation of Baghdad, US forces hosted a job fair in the Iraqi capital. And by day seven of life after Saddam, joint US-Iraqi teams were patrolling the streets of major Iraqi cities.

The lifting of UN sanctions in May opened the gates to a steady flow of aid and dollars, especially petrodollars. The wealth generated by Iraq's oil wells is critical to the rebuilding process. Because of Saddam's cynical manipulation of sanctions, Baathist Iraq pumped only about two million barrels of oil per day. That number is sure to rise with the help of foreign investment. Indeed, before Saddam plunged Iraq into a quarter-century of war, Iraq was producing 3.5 million barrels per day.

Postwar Iraq needs every bit of the wealth generated by its oil. The rebuilding effort could cost \$20 billion per year. Iraq's modern infrastructure never recovered from the 1990-1991 war. A *New York Times* investigation found that not even Baghdad had a steady, dependable supply of electricity after the US-led liberation of Kuwait. Water purifying plants, essential in the desert nations of the modern Middle East, fell into disrepair. Saddam allowed hospitals to import less than a tenth of the supplies they imported prior to 1990.<sup>12</sup> All of this privation had more to do with Saddam's spite than with international sanctions. The UN allowed Baghdad to trade oil for food and medicine, and Saddam had plenty of wealth and annual income to rebuild postwar Iraq's electrical and water-filtration plants. Yet he shunted much of the food to the military, hid Iraq's wealth in foreign banks and underground vaults, and used black-market oil profits to build 48 new palaces.<sup>13</sup>

However, restoring water, oil, and electricity service is only part of the rebuilding mission. Under the umbrella of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraq's political, religious, and ethnic groups are meeting regularly to create a post-Baathist government. They already agree on the fundamentals—a federal system, representative democracy, a secular state. But as one delegate sighed at a post-Saddam planning conference, "We are not ready to handle this yet."<sup>14</sup>

To understand why, consider how deformed Iraqi society is after a quarter-century of Saddam Hussein: Hundreds of thousands of children were orphaned by Saddam's wars. Tens of thousands were orphaned by death squads, which carried out an internal genocide. Saddam became their father and god, his eyes watching them everywhere: "With our souls and our blood," they pledged each morning at school, "we sacrifice for Saddam. We will sacrifice ourselves for you, O Saddam."<sup>15</sup> Children who refused to join Saddam's youth paramilitary gangs were locked up by the hundreds in jails. It was the US military that set them free.

The deformities are not just figurative. After the Gulf War rout, many Iraqi men lost their zeal for military service. In one episode of retribution, Saddam ordered his secret police and surgeons to remove the ears of all deserters. For three



days in 1994, surgeons worked around the clock slicing off ears.<sup>16</sup> Other examples of mass-torture are too brutal to discuss here.

Simply put, it should come as no surprise that pockets of Iraq are violent or unstable or enraged. A quarter-century of anger is being released by an oppressed people. At the same time, the remnants of Saddam's regime are doing the only thing they know: terrorizing and killing. Keeping this in perspective seems more difficult for American journalists than Iraqi citizens. As an Iraqi cab driver told *The New York Times*, "It may be a little chaotic, but it's our chaos."<sup>17</sup>

It will take time, money, and patience to transform this disfigured country, to stabilize Ramadi, Fallujah, and Iraq's other hotspots, to smother the Baathist leftovers and their imported jihadis. The American people must be prepared to maintain a presence in Iraq for at least as long as the troops have been in Bosnia and perhaps as long as they were in Saudi Arabia. And they must be prepared for what lies ahead in these years of rebuilding: guerilla attacks, suicide bombings, Mogadishu-style shootouts, assassination attempts against post-Saddam government officials, foreign interference. As Lieutenant General David McKiernan warned during a flurry of US counter-guerilla operations in June, "Iraq will be a combat zone for some time."<sup>18</sup>

Even so, by the yardstick of yesterday, Iraq is slowly getting better. And it appears that the vast majority of the Iraqi people, beleaguered though they may be, would rather live in a combat zone for a while than in a torture chamber forever.

### ***Reviewing Stand***

It will also take allies to repair Iraq, which brings us to a second critical ingredient for postwar success—reviewing and reevaluating America's role in international institutions.

Soon after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the world came together to isolate Saddam Hussein. The Soviet Union and the United States stood together. Arab states stood up against a fellow Arab regime. Seemingly the entire world agreed that Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait should be reversed. In a word, the United Nations was, well, united. Thirteen years later, the opposite is true.

As it was throughout the Cold War, the United Nations is again divided. But unlike before, the divisions aren't a function of superpower standoff. In fact, they are the byproduct of tensions within the transatlantic community.

Last November, the UN Security Council unanimously agreed that Iraq had failed to provide accurate and full disclosure of its nuclear, chemical, and biological programs, had repeatedly obstructed access to weapon sites, and was in material breach of UN disarmament demands. But resolving only to be unresolved, as Churchill once said, the Security Council refused to explicitly authorize the military action to bring Iraq into compliance. Worried that Washington would use the UN "to legitimize the unilateral and preemptive use of force," French President Jacques Chirac blocked any such language.<sup>19</sup>



So for five months, UN inspectors haplessly asked Iraq to account for its known caches of “special weapons,” which included 10,000 liters of anthrax, 80 tons of mustard gas, thousands of mustard bombs, and uncounted amounts of sarin and VX nerve agent. Baghdad never came clean. (Thankfully and mysteriously, it never used its WMD arsenal, either. The fact that these stocks have not yet been found in the war’s aftermath may be troubling, but it does not prove that they were imagined.) In mid-March 2003, when Britain and the United States called the question and returned to the UN for authorization, France and Germany organized an opposition against their erstwhile allies, and the rest of the Security Council shrugged.

As British Prime Minister Tony Blair warned at the time, the consequences could range from “paralysis of the UN” to “a world in which there are rival poles of power—the US and its allies in one corner; France, Germany, and Russia in the other.” In Blair’s view, the prewar behavior of Paris and Berlin will trigger “the biggest impulse to [American] unilateralism there could ever be.”<sup>20</sup> And his prediction appears to be accurate: A year ago, Washington was excoriated for contemplating military action against Iraq without seeking UN approval. Yet when Secretary of State Colin Powell went to the UN for that approval, he was excoriated for daring to ask. It seems unlikely that this Administration will go through such a charade again, at least not on a matter of grave importance. As President Bush soberly explained before the bombs began to fall on Baghdad, “When it comes to our security, we don’t need anybody’s permission.” That does not bode well for the UN or proponents of multilateralism, most of whom seem to reside in France and Germany.

Of course, this transatlantic disconnect is nothing new. As Alexis de Tocqueville observed more than 170 years ago, “An American leaves his country with a heart swollen with pride; on arriving in Europe he at once finds out that we are not so engrossed by the United States and the great people which inhabits them as he had supposed, and this begins to annoy him.”<sup>21</sup>

Europeans began to appreciate their cousins across the Atlantic in the 20th century, although they continued to perceive Americans as proud, if not arrogant. Still, they recognized that US power was a force for good during the World Wars and a source of stability and security during the Cold War. What is different today is that Western Europe’s largest countries believe that US power is a destabilizing, destructive force.

What triggered this transformation? In his landmark essay on the subject in *Policy Review*, Robert Kagan of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded that it’s a simple matter of power and weakness. “When the United States was weak, it practiced the strategies of indirection, the strategies of weakness; now that the United States is powerful, it behaves as powerful nations do,” according to Kagan. “When the European great powers were strong, they believed in strength and martial glory. Now, they see the world through the eyes of weaker powers.”<sup>22</sup>

Still others, from US senators to academics, argue that the French and Germans were simply using Iraq to send the Bush Administration a message. Citing everything from the Kyoto Treaty and landmines to the International Criminal Court and the lack of cooperation in Afghanistan, they rationalize the Franco-German blocking maneuver as a natural, even appropriate, reaction to the Bush Administration's independent bent. Upon closer examination, it seems that both their timing and their aim were off the mark.

Simply put, America's independent streak wasn't born when the Bush Administration came into office. After all, Kyoto was pronounced dead on arrival by the US Senate in the 1990s. In 1998, the United States (governed not by George W. Bush, but by Bill Clinton) was one of just seven countries to oppose the ICC. Clinton reversed himself at the eleventh hour of his presidency, but the US Senate wouldn't budge. The fact that Bush ended the charade was just a reflection of the will of Congress.

In 1997, it was President Clinton who opposed the Landmine Treaty by arguing, rightly, "There is a line that I simply cannot cross, and that line is the safety and security of our men and women in uniform."<sup>23</sup> Unlike their French and German counterparts, American troops stand guard in places like the 38th Parallel, where landmines are a matter of life and death.

If Paris used the Iraq crisis to express its frustration with American arrogance, one can't help but recall the prewar behavior of the French. It was Chirac who threatened the East Europeans for daring to side with Bush rather than him on Iraq. "These countries are very rude and rather reckless of the danger of aligning themselves too quickly with the Americans," he snarled. "Their situation is very delicate. If they wanted to diminish their chances of joining the [European Union], they couldn't have chosen a better way."<sup>24</sup> If nothing else, Chirac's tirade makes it clear that America doesn't have a monopoly on arrogance.

Finally, if the French and German governments waited until March 2003 to express their hurt feelings for being included in Afghanistan after Kabul had fallen, one has to look no further than Kosovo to understand why. A study by *The Economist* conducted during the Kosovo War revealed that only ten percent of NATO's European combat aircraft were capable of precision bombing.<sup>25</sup> As Lieutenant General Michael Short, USAF, who helped plan the Kosovo air campaign, bluntly concluded, "We've got an A Team and a B Team now."<sup>26</sup>

However, the important thing to remember is at least we have a team. It may be handicapped by infighting and a poor division of labor, but NATO is still a team—and it is an important tool of US power. President Bush and his advisors must keep that in mind as they remove the postwar wreckage. As Churchill counseled, "in victory, magnanimity."

If Germany and France don't always behave like friends, the challenge is to make sure they don't behave like enemies. With that objective in mind, Bush is following Churchill's counsel. "We welcome and we need the help, advice, and wisdom of friends and allies," Bush said during his postwar trip to Europe. Even

so, he couldn't resist the opportunity to offer a rejoinder to Chirac's prewar pressuring of Eastern Europe: "You have not come all this way, through occupations and tyranny and brave uprisings," he explained during a speech in Poland, "only to be told that you must now choose between Europe and America."<sup>27</sup>

The Bush Administration has proven it can carry and wield a big stick; now it must learn to speak softly, especially across the Atlantic. As Kagan observes, "The world's sole superpower doesn't need to hold grudges."<sup>28</sup> Instead, Washington should emphasize the positive, downplay the negative, and perhaps avoid situations and venues where differences can force a test of wills—all of which means US coalition-building will increasingly be conducted outside the UN Security Council and other places where the French hold sway. The Americans are quick learners in this regard: Recall their deft use of NATO's Defense Planning Committee (DPC) to approve the deployment of AWACS aircraft, Patriot missiles, and anti-chemical weapons gear to Turkey. Paris had blocked the request in NATO's North Atlantic Council, but since the French do not participate in NATO's military committees, the Alliance was able to answer Turkey's call for help without tearing itself apart. Shifting the decision to the DPC enabled the US-led majority to assist Turkey, while not forcing France to compromise its position.

NATO has never been a rubber stamp, but unlike the UN it is a ready-made structure where Washington can round up a posse. These alliances within the alliance automatically transform any US operation from a unilateral action into a combined endeavor, giving Washington diplomatic cover and the sort of logistical cooperation that is often critical to speed, surprise, and success in the battlespace.

After 9/11, NATO nations were among the first to rally around Washington. Likewise, before the Iraq War, Washington relied on decades of cooperation, interoperability, and training with key NATO partners to prepare the battlefield. While Germany, France, Belgium, and Turkey equivocated, Spain, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, and the Czech Republic fought on the diplomatic front. (Recall the Azores Summit on the very eve of war.) Poland and Britain did that and much more, sending thousands of troops to fight alongside the Americans and Australians. During the war, Turkey opened its airspace and overland routes to US forces.

When the guns fell silent, the German government offered to repair key Iraqi infrastructure and even the French agreed that NATO should play a role in postwar Iraq. Built around a NATO core, troops and technical experts from 39 nations are now helping to rehabilitate Iraq. Britain is overseeing a zone in southern Iraq. Poland is heading up peacekeeping duties in northern Iraq. Italy is sending 3,000 peacekeepers and policemen, the Netherlands 1,100, Denmark 400. Other peacekeeping troops are coming from future NATO members Romania, Bulgaria, and Estonia, and NATO aspirants Ukraine, Albania, and Muslim Azerbaijan.

Likewise, President Bush has turned to NATO to form the core of his Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which will give Washington and its allies the diplomatic and military means needed to intercept weapons of mass destruc-

tion and their precursors while in transit. The United States, Poland, Spain, other key NATO allies, and Australia are already refining the specifics of the landmark PSI. “Over time,” according to Bush, “we will extend this partnership as broadly as possible to keep the world’s most destructive weapons away from our shores and out of the hands of our common enemies.”<sup>29</sup>

### *The Reformation*

Baathist Iraq and Taliban Afghanistan were two such enemies, but many others live and breed in a troubled swath of earth that stretches from Pakistan’s lawless mountains to Libya’s terrorist-infested deserts. Waging and winning a war on terror means that the regimes in this arc of crisis must be reformed. However, there are different tools of reform. Simply put, just as regimes come in many forms, so too do the tools of regime change.

Regardless of one’s view on the justification or rationale for the Pentagon’s post-9/11 campaign of campaigns, the use of military force has been effective. Operations against al Qaeda have netted hundreds of prisoners, killed uncounted operatives, and remarkably foiled any follow-on attacks against the US homeland. The Taliban regime is gone, as is Saddam Hussein’s regime; both were cooperating to varying degrees with the architects of the global guerilla war against America.

In the Philippines, teams of US troops are conducting what the diplomats call “counterterrorism training missions” with the Philippine army. But if it’s training, it’s on-the-job training. As in Afghanistan, the US-backed force has smashed and scattered the enemy. Likewise, in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and other former Soviet republics, US troops are training local forces to clean out al Qaeda and its kindred movements, while constructing “lily pad” bases that will extend America’s reach.

From their perch in Djibouti, US intelligence agents and military taskforces are conducting operations in and around Yemen (recall the Predator strike on al Qaeda commanders in November 2002), monitoring terrorist activity in the lawless lands of eastern Africa, and intercepting suspicious ships transiting the vital waterways around the Horn of Africa (recall the US-Spanish operation that tracked and briefly impounded a Yemen-bound North Korean vessel, serving as the PSI’s template).

But there is more happening than military campaigns and mini-wars. In Pakistan, for instance, Washington’s coercive diplomacy has converted President Pervez Musharraf from the Taliban’s only friend into a dependable ally in the war on terror. That was a lot to ask of the government that created the Taliban, but Musharraf’s choice was simple: He could agree to Washington’s demands and reap the financial and political benefits, or he could reject them and reap the whirlwind. He chose wisely. Today, US forces roam freely along the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier, conducting search and destroy missions on both sides of the border—sometimes deep inside Pakistani territory, and sometimes with the

assistance of Pakistani troops—while Pakistani peacekeepers prepare to join the stabilization effort in Iraq.

Washington is putting just as much pressure on Syria. We now know that Syria provided safe haven to Saddam's henchmen and quite possibly to his weapons of mass destruction. The Syrians sent military supplies and volunteers to fight for Saddam's dying regime. Damascus could send far more and far worse in the months ahead. Syria controls Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, which is a training ground for Hezbollah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. And according to US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control John Bolton, Syria has stockpiled VX nerve agent and sarin gas.<sup>30</sup>

"They should review their actions and their behavior, not only with respect to who gets haven in Syria and weapons of mass destruction, but especially the support of terrorist activity," Secretary Powell said of Syria's rulers after the liberation of Iraq.<sup>31</sup> Still other warning shots came from the White House and Pentagon, and Damascus is showing the first signs of reforming: During a recent meeting with Syrian leader Bashar Assad in Damascus, US Representative Darrell Issa reported that Assad "will not harbor any war criminals and will expel any that are here."<sup>32</sup> Even so, the terror camps are still open. Moreover, firefights have broken out between US forces and Syrian border guards as the Americans scour western Iraq for Baathist guerillas and Saddam's inner circle. Like Pakistan's Musharraf in 2001, Assad must either change his behavior or face the end of his regime. In neighboring Iraq, he has a sobering example of what the latter would look like.

Coercive diplomacy is also bearing fruit with the Palestinians and Israelis. For the first time since the collapse of the 1998 Wye River agreements, both sides seem to be compromising and the spasmodic violence is ebbing, if not ending. A new Palestinian Prime Minister—who probably wouldn't have been chosen were it not for Bush's decision in 2002 to call on the Palestinian people "to elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror"<sup>33</sup>—is guaranteeing what Arafat said was beyond his power, an end to terror attacks. And after agreeing to Palestinian statehood, Israel's hawkish government is dismantling the settlements that so inflame Palestinian anger.

Washington is playing hardball with Saudi Arabia as well, as evidenced by the abrupt withdrawal of US forces from the kingdom. Even so, unlike Pakistan, Riyadh cannot to be cajoled with cash. And its oil reserves guarantee that it won't be pushed around by blustery words.

Saudi Arabia accounts for the largest percentage of US oil imports from the Persian Gulf, but fully 75 percent of America's oil imports come from somewhere other than the Gulf, which means the United States can adjust. However, 36 percent of Western Europe's and 76 percent of Japan's oil imports originate in the Gulf—and the Saudis are the prime source.<sup>34</sup> "If Saudi Arabia's contribution to the world's oil supply were cut off," according to Baer, "crude petroleum could quite realistically rise from around \$40 a barrel today to as much as \$150 a barrel."<sup>35</sup> Hence, even if the United States were to forgo Saudi oil, global depend-

ence on Riyadh would not change. That presents a long-term problem for America's interdependent and interconnected economy.

Saudi Arabia may not be America's enemy, but given its actions and inaction over the last 13 years, it is certainly not America's friend. At best, Riyadh and Washington are independent actors brought together by self-interest and the invisible, if inexorable, hand of the market. At worst, one is a pusher and the other is an addict. Either way, the withdrawal of US forces from the kingdom serves America's interests in the Gulf—and so does the stationing of troops and bases on Saudi Arabia's borders.

On the other side of Iraq—and the other end of the Islamic spectrum—sits Shiite Iran, which a recent State Department report called “the most active state sponsor of terrorism” on earth.<sup>36</sup> Tehran provides Hezbollah and a host of others with funding, training, and weapons. Contrary to the critics, Hezbollah isn't just “Israel's problem.” In fact, a full year before the attacks on Manhattan and Washington, the FBI arrested 23 members and supporters of Hezbollah in suburban North Carolina, of all places. Prior to 9/11, Hezbollah had killed more Americans than any other terrorist group.<sup>37</sup>

Inside Iran, the mullahs are racing to build a nuclear bomb. A year ago, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld concluded, ominously, “The nexus between weapons of mass destruction and terrorist states that have those weapons—and that have relationships with terrorist networks—is a particularly dangerous circumstance for the world.”<sup>38</sup> We may soon see just how dangerous. After all, Tehran's newest partner in the terror trade is al Qaeda. According to Rumsfeld, “There's no question but that there have been—and are today—senior al Qaeda leaders in Iran. And they're busy.”<sup>39</sup> Intelligence officials believe al Qaeda operatives inside Iran planned the May 2003 attacks against US targets in Saudi Arabia. Their methods and practices may be different, but their goals and enemies are the same.

Even so, there are signs that elements inside Iran's two-headed government are trying to expunge al Qaeda. Of course, still other elements are working to destabilize Iraq and hence derail the postwar peace. Hashemi Rafsanjani, who previously held the post of President and is now chairman of the country's so-called “Expediency Board,” recently concluded that “the US presence in the Middle East is worse than Saddam's weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>40</sup> And he's right. For those elements that preach jihad and teach terror inside Iran, the deployment of US troops in neighboring Iraq poses nothing short of an existential threat, which is why they are working so hard to undermine the postwar rebuilding process.

During the war, Tehran slipped thousands of members of its Badr Brigade across the border. Together with Iranian agents, these guerilla fighters hope to transplant Iran's Islamic revolution into Iraq. Telltale signs of their handiwork were on display in the springtime demonstrations that erupted “spontaneously” throughout southern Iraq. What major media outlets and Middle East experts failed to mention (or grasp), as Lawrence Kaplan observed in *The New Republic*, was that the “anti-American demonstrations in Najaf and Baghdad were orches-



trated by the Tehran-based Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, an organization that seeks exactly what its title suggests.” In fact, the evidence was literally written all over the demonstrators. “Many of the placards the protestors waved were written in Farsi, not Arabic,” Kaplan explained.<sup>41</sup> Iraqis—including Shiite Iraqis—are Arabs and speak Arabic. Iranians are Persian and speak Farsi. Similar evidence of Iranian involvement was found in Karbala and elsewhere.

Of course, two can play this game. In late May, *The Washington Post* reported that the Bush Administration had begun exploring ways to support a popular uprising that would bring down the Iranian government.<sup>42</sup> By June, Tehran was blaming the United States for a wave of pro-democracy protests and strikes across the country. Given the deep divisions in Iran’s government, growing resentment among the Iranian people, and the track record of the Bush Administration, the smart money would be with Washington when it comes to replacing governments. According to Rumsfeld, “A vocal minority clamoring to transform Iraq in Iran’s image will not be permitted to do so.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the mullahs could end up controlling a mayor’s office in Najaf and losing everything in Iran.

### ***Tomorrow***

In all of this—from the carrots and sticks in Pakistan and Syria, to the ongoing hunt for al Qaeda in Afghanistan, to the proxy war with Iran, to the transformation of Iraq, to the chess game with Saudi Arabia—we catch a glimpse of the next phase in the war on terror. Blending the surprise and lethality of traditional warfare with the tension and stalemate of the Cold War, what lies ahead is something altogether different—a colder, harsher strain of conflict.

The United States is well suited for this “colder war.” Since 12 September 2001, America has been on guard, alternately showing restraint and resolve, the clenched fist of war and the open hand of friendship. Nor is this the first time the American people have called on their political and military leaders to be ambidextrous: Recall the long test of wills with Moscow which began with a humanitarian airlift into a divided Berlin, spawned a war in Korea that still hasn’t ended, cracked open the door to doomsday in Cuba, taught us hard lessons in Southeast Asia, and ended with celebrations in a united Berlin.

It took longer than 13 years for us to arrive at the crossroads embodied by postwar Iraq, and it may take longer than 13 years to move beyond it. “It is,” as Churchill intoned in 1946, “a solemn moment for the American democracy. For with primacy in power is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future.”<sup>44</sup>

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