

AN END TO EVIL

How to Win the War on Terror

David Frum
Richard Perle



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RANDOM HOUSE

NEW YORK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication is available.

Random House website address: www.atrandom.com

eISBN: 978-1-58836-360-2

v3.1

*To Florence Rosberg teacher,
reader, friend, grandmother—
and for ninety years an American patriot
—D.F.*

*To the memory of my friend and
mentor Albert Wohlstetter and the many
dedicated officials and thinkers
he encouraged and inspired
—R.P.*

CONTENTS

Cover

Other Books by This Author

Title Page

Copyright

Dedication

1. What Now?
2. End of the Beginning
3. The New Axis
4. The War at Home
5. The War Abroad
6. The War of Ideas
7. Organizing for Victory
8. Friends and Foes
9. A War for Liberty

Appendix

Acknowledgments

About the Authors

1. WHAT NOW?

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.

—THOMAS PAINE, *The American Crisis*, 1780

WE TOO LIVE in trying times—and thus far our fellow Americans have passed every test. They have shown themselves, as President Bush said in his speech in the National Cathedral on September 14, 2001, “generous and kind, resourceful and brave.” They have fought and won two campaigns on the opposite side of the globe, saving millions of Afghans from famine and the nation of Iraq from tyranny. They have hunted down terrorists and killers, while respecting the rights of the innocent. And they have uncomplainingly accepted inconvenience and danger through tiresome years of lineups at airports, searches at public buildings, and exposure to further acts of terror.

Now comes the hardest test of all. The war on terror is not over. In many ways, it has barely begun. Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Hamas still plot murder, and money still flows from donors worldwide to finance them. Mullahs preach jihad from the pulpits of mosques from Bengal to Brooklyn. Iran and North Korea are working frantically to develop nuclear weapons. While our enemies plot, our allies dither and carp, and much of our own government remains ominously unready for the fight. We have much to do and scant time in which to do it.

Yet at this dangerous moment many in the American political and media elite are losing their nerve for the fight. Perhaps it is the political cycle: For some Democrats, winning the war has become a less urgent priority than winning the next election. Perhaps it is the media rediscovering its bias in favor of bad news and infecting the whole country with its own ingrown pessimism. Perhaps it is Congress, resenting the war's cost and coveting the money for its own domestic spending agendas.

Or perhaps it is just fatigue. President Bush warned Americans from the start that the war on terror would be long and difficult and expensive. But in 2001 those warnings were just words. Today they are realities. And while the American people have shouldered those realities magnificently, America's leaders too often seem to flinch from them. Even in difficulty, every casualty, every reverse seems to throw Washington, D.C., into a panic—as if there had ever been a war without difficulties, without casualties, without reverses. In the war on terror, the United States has as yet suffered no defeats, except of course for 9/11 itself. But defeats may well occur, for they too are part of war, and we shudder to think how some of our leaders in their current mood will respond.

We can feel the will to win ebbing in Washington; we sense the reversion to the bad old habits of complacency and denial.

Throughout the 1990s, thousands of terrorists received training in the al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan—and our government passively monitored the situation. Terrorists attacked and

murdered Americans in East Africa, in Yemen, in Saudi Arabia—and America responded to these acts of war as if they were ordinary crimes. Iraq flagrantly violated the terms of its 1991 armistice—and our government from time to time fired a cruise missile into Baghdad but otherwise did little. Iran defied the Monroe Doctrine and sponsored murder in our own hemisphere, killing eighty-six people and wounding some three hundred at a Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires—and our government did worse than nothing: It opened negotiations with the murderers. Mullahs and imams incited violence and slaughter against Christians and Jews—and our government failed to acknowledge that anything important was occurring.

September 11 is supposed to have changed all that. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, terrorism has become the first priority of our government. Or so it is said—but is it true? The forces and the people who lulled the United States into complacency in the 1990s remain potent today, and in the wake of the victories in Afghanistan and Iraq, they are exerting themselves ever more boldly.

With a few stalwart exceptions, such as Senator Joe Lieberman, the administration's Democratic opponents seem ready to give up the fight altogether. They want to give up on Iraq. They denounce the Patriot Act. They condemn President Bush's policies (in the words of Richard Gephardt) as a "miserable failure." Traveling to France in October 2003 to criticize her country, former secretary of state Madeleine Albright declared, "Bush and the people under him have a foreign policy that is not good for America, not good for the world." But as to what to do instead, they say nothing, leaving the impression that they wish to do nothing.

Nor is it only the president's political opponents who seem bereft of ideas. At the State Department, there is constant pressure to return to business as usual, beginning by placating offended allies and returning to the exaggerated multilateral conceit of the Clinton administration. Generals, diplomats, and lawmakers who retired and now work for the Saudi government or Saudi companies huff and puff at the damage the war on terror is doing to the U.S.-Saudi relationship. Members of Congress complain about the cost of fighting terror. On television, respected commentators intone about quagmires and overstretch. Leading journalists deplore Muslim and European anti-Americanism in a way that implies *we* are in the cause.

If you ask them, many of these respectable characters will insist that they remain keen to wage war on terrorism. But press them a little, and it quickly becomes clear that they define "terror" very narrowly. They are eager to arrest the misfits and thugs who plant bombs and carry guns. But as for the larger networks that recruit the misfits and thugs, as for the wealthy donors who pay the terrorists' bills, as for the governments that give terrorists a safe haven and sanctuary, as for the larger culture of incitement and hatred that justifies and supports terrorism: All of that they wish to leave alone. As the inevitable disappointments and difficulties of war accumulate, as weariness with war's costs and rigors spreads, as memories of 9/11 fade, the advocates of a weaker line against terror have pressed their timid case. Like rust and mildew, they make the most progress when they receive the least attention, for the desired policy coincides with the natural predilections of government.

President Bush's war on terror jerked our national security bureaucracy out of its comfortable routines. He demanded that the military fight new wars in new ways. He demanded that our intelligence services second-guess their familiar assumptions. He

demanding that the State Department speak firmly and forcefully to those who claim to be our friends. He demanded that our public diplomacy make the case for America without apology. He demanded fresh thought and strong measures and clear language—none of which come naturally to any part of the vast bureaucracy that Americans employ to protect the nation.

All of this departure from the ordinary has generated resentment and resistance. The resisters are supported by the heavy weight of inertia, by every governmental instinct toward regularity and predictability and caution, by the bureaucracy's profound aversion to innovation, controversy, and confrontation. And let us not forget that, for all the bravery of our soldiers, our military is a bureaucracy, too: It didn't like being told that cavalry had to make way for the tank, and the battleship for the aircraft carrier; it doesn't like it any better when contemporary modernizers tell it that artillery must give way to the smart missile or that conventional tactics must be reinvented for a new era. Really, it's no wonder that those few policy makers who have urged a strong policy against terror have been called a "cabal." To the enormous majority in any government who wish to continue to do things as they have always been done, the tiny minority that dares propose anything new will always look like a presumptuous, unrealistic, intriguing faction.

Taken all in all, it could well be said that we have reached the crisis point in the war on terror. The momentum of our victories has flagged. The way forward has become uncertain, and the challenges ahead of us more complex. The ranks of the faint hearts are growing, and their voices are echoing ever more loudly in our media and our politics.

Yet tomorrow could be the day that an explosive packed with radioactive material detonates in Los Angeles or that nerve gas is unleashed inside a tunnel under the Hudson River or that a terrible new disease breaks out in the United Kingdom. If the people responsible for the 9/11 attack could have killed thirty thousand Americans or three hundred thousand or three million, they would have done so. The terrorists are cruel, but they are not aimless. Their actions have a purpose. They are trying to rally the Muslim world to jihad against the planet's only superpower and the principal and most visible obstacle to their ambitions. They commit terror to persuade their potential followers that their cause is not hopeless, that jihad can destroy American power. Random killings—shootings in shopping malls, bombs in trash cans—may be emotionally satisfying to the terrorists, but they are strategically useless: Two kids at Columbine did as much, and the Republic did not totter. Only truly spectacular acts of mass murder provides the propaganda the terrorists' cause requires. They will try again—they have to.

Throughout the war, the advocates of a strong policy against terror have had one great advantage over those who prefer the weaker line: We have offered concrete recommendations equal to the seriousness of the threat, and the soft-liners have not, because we have wanted to fight, and they have not. For us, terrorism remains the great evil of our time, and the war against this evil, our generation's great cause. We do not believe that Americans are fighting this evil to minimize it or to manage it. We believe they are fighting to win—to end this evil before it kills again and on a genocidal scale. There is no middle way for Americans: It is victory or holocaust. This book is a manual for victory.

2. END OF THE BEGINNING

PESSIMISM AND DEFEATISM have provided the sound track to the war on terrorism from the beginning, first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq. Remember the “dreaded Afghan winter”? Remember how the Iraq war was “bogging down” when allied forces paused for two days to wait out a sandstorm? In Afghanistan, U.S. troops astonished the world with a whole new kind of war on land and in the air. In Iraq, U.S. forces overthrew Saddam Hussein’s entire regime with half the troops and in half the time it took merely to shove Saddam out of Kuwait in 1991.* It did not matter: The gloomsayers were unembarrassable. Having been proven wrong when they predicted the United States would sink into a forlorn quagmire in Iraq, they reappeared days later to insist that while military victory had been assured from the beginning, the United States was now losing the peace: There was looting throughout the country; the national museum had supposedly been sacked; hospitals had been stripped bare by thieves; power was blacked out; and sewage was running into the Euphrates.

Now the pessimists are quivering because the remnants of the Baath Party have launched a guerrilla war against the allied forces in Iraq. These guerrillas are former secret policemen and informers, the regime’s specially recruited enforcers, murderers, torturers, and rapists. They are men with nowhere to go. If they are found, they will be tried for their crimes unless the families of their victims kill them first. The surviving leaders of the regime, hidden by one another, have money. It is not hard for them to recruit these desperate characters into paramilitary units and terrorist cells—what other future do they have? But it is wrong to describe these paid killers as a “national resistance,” as some even normally sensible people have sometimes done. For a dozen years after Appomattox, former Confederate soldiers terrorized their neighbors, robbed trains, and killed Union soldiers. Was the Ku Klux Klan a “national resistance”? Was Jesse James?

The aftermath of war is always messy and often bloody. In the six months after the liberation of Paris in 1944, the French killed upward of ten thousand accused collaborators. A dozen years after the fall of communism, electricity and water sputter unreliably in much of the former Soviet Union. A Swedish journalist who visited Germany one and a half years after the end of World War II observed that

the electricity is still out. People are “bitter, disillusioned and hopeless.” They express fury at the Allies, especially the English, whom they believe to be “sabotaging renewal.” Many argue that things are worse than under the old dictatorship. On the streets, foreign correspondents interview barefoot orphans, who clamour for an American visa. Above all, there looms the profound hypocrisy of the occupation itself, and its “attempt to eradicate militarism by means of a military regime.”*

Post-Saddam Iraq has emerged from more than three decades of totalitarian rule and mass murder, from more than a decade of economic sanctions and systematic corruption, and finally from a month of deadly accurate bombing. Should anyone have been surprised that it took the United States a few weeks to get the lights working?

Yet a good many people who ought to have known better *did* claim to be surprised. And they have claimed more than that. They have claimed that the Iraq campaign somehow

detracted from the overall war against terror—and that Saddam’s success in concealing his weapons of mass destruction program somehow proves that he should have been left in power to build those weapons. These critics complained that President Bush weakened the case for war by offering too many different justifications for it. It never seemed to bother them that they had more than one reason for doing nothing—and that unlike the president’s other reasons, their reasons contradicted one another:

Opponents of the Iraq war like German foreign minister Joschka Fischer protested that they were “not convinced” that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction at all.* Meanwhile, former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft warned that if attacked, Saddam would retaliate with weapons of mass murder “unleashing an Armageddon in the Middle East.”†

Opponents of the war insisted that Saddam had no connections with terrorism. Then they fretted, in the words of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, that if the United States attempted to overthrow Saddam, the United States could instead “precipitate the very threat that we are intent on preventing—weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists.”‡

Like General Barry McCaffrey, they predicted a military disaster in which the United States could potentially suffer, “bluntly speaking, a couple to 3,000 casualties§.” And then they accused the United States of picking on a country too weak to pose a threat.

They insisted that action against Iran and North Korea should take priority over the defeat of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Now that Saddam’s regime has been defeated and the Bush administration stands ready to follow their advice about Iran and North Korea, their enthusiasm for action against those other rogue regimes has suddenly withered away.

They swore that nobody deplored Saddam’s crimes more than they. As House minority leader Nancy Pelosi said in March 2003, “Those who [suggest] that there is any sympathy for Saddam Hussein in the world do a grave disservice to the debate.” Yet when U.S. forces uncovered what may prove to be more than a hundred mass graves containing upwards of three hundred thousand victims, they showed virtually zero interest.

They were shocked and offended whenever anyone questioned their patriotism or good faith. And since the war ended, they have followed the example of former vice president Gore and accused President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair of “bending our entire national security policy to fit their political designs.”*

So let’s go back to the beginning, to where we were after 9/11 and to the reasons that guided President Bush to his decision to pursue the war on terror to the ancient battlefields of Mesopotamia.

“Weakness is provocative”: That’s one of Donald Rumsfeld’s famous rules, and a decade of weakness in the Middle East had proved Rumsfeld right.

In 1991, President George H. W. Bush called on the people of Iraq to rise up against Saddam Hussein. In Shiite southern Iraq, the people did as the president asked—and they were mowed down in the thousands by the Republican Guard units we had allowed to escape from Desert Storm and by the helicopter gunships General Norman Schwarzkopf had foolishly permitted Saddam to fly. The United States could have grounded those helicopters. We could have supplied weapons to the Iraqi people. We could have cut roads and communications between the rebellion in southern Iraq and Saddam’s armed forces in the north. We could have warned that commanders who massacred civilians would be held accountable for their crimes—and we could have moved our forces forward a few miles deeper into Iraq to give that warning extra meaning.

We did none of those things. The rebellion was crushed as we stood by. Nobody should have been surprised that when we returned to Iraq a dozen years later, many Iraqis had not forgotten—or forgiven.

The first Bush administration had its reasons for holding back in 1991. When it had called for an uprising, it had something very different in mind: a coup in Baghdad by one of Saddam's Sunni henchmen. This was and remained the remedy for Saddam recommended by the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA contended that the mass uprising in the south might bring to power Shiite extremists who would then tilt toward Shiite Iran. The Agency feared that a Shiite victory in Iraq might spread troublesome ideas among the oppressed Shiites of our client Saudi Arabia. The CIA's hesitations were seconded by Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, who wanted no responsibility for governing a post-Saddam Iraq, and by Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who believed that expelling Saddam from Kuwait was more than enough heavy lifting for the armed forces of the United States. And the president? He believed Saddam was finished anyway after the catastrophic defeat inflicted by the coalition—there was no need for the United States to do anything more. (Colin Powell still believed it ten years later. At the famous Camp David meetings on September 15 and 16, 2001, Powell sought to end any discussion of Iraq by saying curtly, "But we won.")

These calculations, sophisticated, subtle, and wrong, persuaded the first President Bush in 1991. But what Iraqis and others in the Middle East saw was Saddam's tanks crushing American-backed insurgents. Saddam had survived; therefore we had lost. And over the next eight years the people of the region would see us lose again and again. So bewildered were the region's people by America's failure to support the 1991 uprising that the idea took hold that the United States actually wanted Saddam to remain in power. Confusion about the true desires of the United States made it almost impossible to rally Saddam's neighbors against his regime—and in 2003 the memory of this confusion aided the Baathist remnants, who started a whispering campaign warning Iraqis to be careful not to condemn Saddam, for the Americans themselves would soon restore the Baathists to power.

In April 1993, Saddam Hussein plotted to assassinate former president George H. W. Bush during a visit to Kuwait.*

The new Clinton administration responded to this extreme provocation by firing cruise missiles into the headquarters of Saddam's secret police—at midnight, when the torturers and murderers who worked there had gone home and nobody but hapless janitors could be expected to be found on the premises. Lest even this feeble retaliation seem too aggressive, Clinton spokesman actually announced that the strike had been timed to minimize Iraqi casualties.

In 1995 and 1996, the Clinton administration gave its support to an anti-Saddam military coup, disregarding warnings from the Iraqi resistance that the coup had been compromised. In July 1996, Saddam's agents arrested more than two hundred senior officers and executed eighty of them. The Iraqis even captured the communications equipment the CIA had provided the plotters, a fact that was learned when the CIA station at Amman, Jordan, picked up an incoming call—and heard the cackles of Saddam's killers on the other end of the line.

A month after the botched coup, Saddam struck at the main Iraqi resistance movement, the Iraqi National Congress, by invading the INC's bases in the U.S.-guaranteed Kurdish safe haven in northern Iraq. The Clinton administration did nothing to help the Kurds it had promised to protect: Instead it fired off another round of cruise missiles at targets in Baghdad and the south.

In 1998, Saddam Hussein at last succeeded in forcing the United Nations weapons inspectors to leave Iraq. Although Saddam had agreed to inspections as a condition of peace at the end of the Gulf War, he never cooperated with them. In June 1991, Iraqi troops fired at the very first inspection mission, when the inspectors approached too close to an Iraqi nuclear site. For the next seven years, Saddam harassed, wiretapped, infiltrated, and threatened the inspectors. By 1998, he had made their work so difficult and futile that they withdrew from the country. President Clinton had described the work of the inspectors as “vital” to American national security. But when this supposedly vital interest was jeopardized, Clinton merely ordered yet another barrage of air strikes. These December 1998 strikes, code-named Operation Desert Fox, have to be reckoned as one of Saddam’s greatest triumphs. Saddam shrugged them off, and Clinton gave up. Saddam had taken the measure of the American administration he faced. At the price of a few smashed-up buildings, Saddam escaped inspections seemingly forever.

“When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse.” Whether or not this observation of Osama bin Laden’s is universally true, it certainly applies in much of the Arab world—and two American administrations had together persuaded many in that world that Saddam Hussein was a stronger horse than the United States.

And getting stronger. After ridding himself of the UN arms inspectors, Saddam next sought to escape the economic sanctions and arms embargo the UN had imposed on him back in 1990. For eight years, these sanctions had restricted Iraq’s ability to sell oil, and though they were circumvented through a variety of schemes and dodges, they operated well enough to squeeze Saddam’s ability to purchase costly weapons. But by 1998, the sanctions regime was falling apart. Iraq was smuggling billions of dollars’ worth of oil out of the country, much of it through Syria and Iran. And Saddam was acquiring technologies like secure fiber-optic communications networks, which served important military purposes but could be described as “nonmilitary” because they could also be used by civilian customers, if any had existed in impoverished, state-controlled Iraq.

Propaganda in the Arab world and elsewhere successfully misrepresented the sanctions as the cause of death and suffering in Iraq. In his famous fatwa of February 1998, Osama bin Laden cited sanctions as one of his three justifications for waging holy war against Jews and “crusaders”: “Despite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by the crusader-Zionist alliance, and despite the huge number of those killed, which has exceeded one million ... despite all this, the Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation.”

The UN-administered oil-for-food program could have delivered all essential food, medicine, and other necessities to the people of Iraq. But it could not do so without the cooperation of the Iraqi government, and Saddam personally ensured that his people’s needs went unmet in order to lend credence to his regime’s propaganda. On the very day that Iraq was liberated, \$13 billion in oil-for-food funds sat unexpended in the program’s escrow account in Paris. Saddam perverted the oil-for-food program to his own benefit. There is good reason to believe that many of the transactions that the UN approved—transactions that were labeled as purchases of cooking oil, or grain, or hospital equipment—were fraudulent.

whole or in part and that billions of dollars from them were redirected or stolen. The program could more accurately have been called oil-for-palaces. It must be said, however, that Saddam could never have gotten away with his thefts without the tacit acquiescence of the UN itself. The UN helped itself to a 1.5 percent commission on all the money that flowed through the secretive program. This rake-off earned the UN many hundreds of millions of dollars a year—a valuable income source to an organization whose own accounting was anything but a model of transparency. Oil-for-food, in other words, was an institutionalized conflict of interest, and it swiftly degenerated into a corrupt deal that benefited Saddam's elite, the UN bureaucracy, and the program's French bankers—and only last and least the people of Iraq.

Osama bin Laden's one million casualty figure was bogus. Nevertheless, the sufferings of the people of Iraq were very real. Real too were the economic opportunities that beckoned Saddam's trading partners if the sanctions should be dropped. Pressure to abandon sanctions mounted on the Clinton administration. The governments of France and Russia demanded that sanctions be scrapped. So did the Arab and third world lobbies at the UN. So too did a gathering international protest movement. Former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser signed a petition calling for the immediate abolition of Iraq sanctions. U.S. senator Pat Murray, U.S. representative Tom Campbell, two United Nations humanitarian coordinators for Iraq, and the official spokesman for the Vatican—among many others—denounced the sanctions as well.

The Clinton administration, characteristically, wavered. On the one hand, the administration lacked the strength of character to resist these pressures. On the other, the sanctions were all that remained of the administration's crumbling claim to have "contained" Saddam. ("He's in a box" was the phrase favored by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger.) So, again characteristically, the Clinton administration began looking for some form of words that would allow them to surrender while pretending to themselves and to others that they had held firm. They began looking for ways to relax the sanctions without formally abrogating them.

The 2000 election intervened before the Clinton administration could put its new policy into place. The incoming Bush administration inherited—and Secretary of State Colin Powell quickly adopted—the Clinton plan, now renamed "smart sanctions." But France (Iraq's largest trading partner) and Russia (Iraq's largest creditor) used their power in the Security Council to defeat "smart sanctions." Rather than mitigate the sanctions regime, France and Russia preferred to leave the existing sanctions in place until they collapsed altogether.

Thus, by the summer of 2001, we were confronting an Iraq that stood a good chance of escaping the controls that had been placed on it in 1990 and 1991. The inspectors were gone. Maintaining the sanctions required a new UN vote every six months. We knew that the UN inspectors had found and destroyed only some of the weapons that Iraq itself had declared back in 1991. We knew that Iraq had almost certainly built additional weapons, weapon components, and weapons materials in the 1990s. We knew that Iraq retained the skills and knowledge to build biological and nuclear weapons. We knew that Saddam Hussein desperately wanted these weapons. We knew that it was only a matter of time before he would regain the resources to acquire them.

And we knew one thing more: We knew that our own best information had consistent

underestimated the danger from Iraq. In the 1980s, the national security agencies and the intelligence community concluded that the Israeli strike that destroyed Iraq's French-made Osirak nuclear reactor just before it could be loaded with nuclear fuel had set back the Iraq bomb program for a generation or longer. But when we got hold of the Iraqi defense records after the Gulf War in 1991, we discovered that the Iraqis had immediately started work on a separate, clandestine nuclear weapons program of their own.

A footnote to history: The man who headed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1990 was Hans Blix, the Swedish bureaucrat who would lead the UN inspection mission to Iraq in 2002–2003. Saddam's past success in carrying out a secret nuclear program under Blix's nose may explain why Saddam insisted (through his UN mouthpieces France and Russia) that Blix be chosen in place of more effective inspectors, such as Australia's Richard Butler, Sweden's Rolf Ekeus, or America's David Kay.

Likewise, our intelligence services could find no evidence to contradict the Iraqis when they told us after Desert Storm that they had halted their biological weapons program—until Saddam Hussein's son-in-law Hussein Kamel defected in 1995, and we learned of Iraq continuing attempts to weaponize anthrax, plague, botulism, and smallpox.

So when we caught the Iraqis in the late 1990s importing the raw materials for chemical weapons, and other parts and components that could be necessary to the making of a nuclear bomb, it seemed like basic common sense to assume the worst. Our easygoing intelligence analysts had got Saddam wrong again and again. Now we had to consider: Where would Saddam be in 2004, 2005, and 2006? Would he obtain nuclear material from North Korea or from the Russian mafia? To what projects would he assign his team of nuclear experts? Would he develop ballistic missiles? Bioweapons? How would he use his new weapons if he got them? Directly against us? Indirectly through terrorism? Would he try again to conquer Kuwait to seize its oil wealth—and this time learn from his 1990 mistake and threaten major casualties in the United States if we intervened to stop him? Or would he seek glory in the Arab world by attacking Israel, possibly triggering a nuclear confrontation?

The failure to find stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction has led some Bush (and Blair) administration critics to charge that the president and prime minister deliberately “hyped” or “sexed up” or otherwise exaggerated the danger posed by Saddam Hussein in order to justify a war to remove his regime. Others have demanded investigations into the intelligence bases for the two leaders' conclusion that it would have been risky and imprudent to leave Saddam in place.

The critics' emphasis on *stockpiles* of chemical or biological weapons as the central issue seems to us seriously misplaced. As David Kay has reported, there is overwhelming evidence that Saddam had extensive chemical and biological weapons *programs*, that he went to great lengths to conceal from inspectors a range of activity—all in violation of numerous UN resolutions—that would have enabled him to produce such weapons in the future, that facilities were built and maintained for that purpose, that the necessary skilled manpower had been secretly and deceptively organized, and that this broad effort included work on unmanned aircraft and missiles with ranges sufficient to attack well beyond Iraqi territory. Even in the absence of stockpiles of weapons Saddam was known to have created, the threat from his programs was undeniable.

In these matters, presidents and prime ministers must make judgments based on the best

available evidence, and they must weigh that evidence carefully, always mindful of the consequences of acting under conditions of uncertainty. A failure to act on the available intelligence by taking the risk that Saddam did not possess weapons of mass destruction and therefore leaving him in place could have catastrophic consequences. Action to remove him, even though the evidence of his weapons of mass destruction was uncertain, would involve the dangers and costs of war, but these would entail far less risk, far less danger, than discovering too late that he did indeed have the chemical and biological weapons he was known to have produced.

President Bush had to ask himself: "If I remove Saddam and learn later that he did not have weapons of mass destruction after all, how would that compare to leaving him in place—and learning only after he used them, or enabled terrorists to use them, that he *did* in fact possess the chemical and biological weapons that all Western intelligence organizations as well as United Nations inspectors believed him to have hidden away?" Where intelligence is uncertain, prudent leaders will inevitably minimize risk by erring on the side of the worst plausible assumption. And rightly so.

Saddam Hussein's ambitions were dangerous enough before 9/11; afterward, they had to be regarded as a clear and present danger to the United States. The war on terror was certain to create all kinds of new opportunities for Saddam to exploit. He published magazine editions cheering the destruction of the World Trade Center: Bin Laden had struck home, Saddam expected to share in his success.

The threat presented by Saddam was global, for his mischief making limited our options for dealing with other regional threats, such as Iran or North Korea. In the spring and summer of 1994, North Korea triggered an international crisis by threatening to remove plutonium from its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon and process it into nuclear weapons. In the fall of that same year, while the Clinton administration was trying to decide what to do about North Korea, Saddam moved troops and tanks southward to the Kuwait border. President Clinton issued a stern statement: "Saddam Hussein," he said, "should be under no illusions; the United States is not otherwise occupied...." But the United States was occupied enough. The Clinton administration was reluctant to confront two large foreign crises at the same time. In October 1994, the United States rushed troops to Kuwait to deter Saddam—but in that very same month it also signed a nuclear agreement with North Korea that rewarded the North Koreans with hundreds of millions of dollars for fuel and food. The agreement even committed the United States to build the North Koreans two American-style nuclear reactors. The North Koreans, of course, promptly reneged on the deal and commenced a separate, secret uranium enrichment program. From this painful experience, the incoming George W. Bush administration drew the conclusion that if it wished ever to be able to deal forcefully with North Korea or anybody else, it had better eliminate Saddam first.

Even if Saddam Hussein refrained from waging or threatening war on us and our allies, his looming triumph over the inspectors and the sanctions would have emboldened and inspired terrorists around the world. Suicide bombers do not join a terrorist movement in order to die a futile death. Killers need hope, too. The disinclination of the Clinton administration to respond forcefully to the escalating terror attacks of the 1990s encouraged the terrorists to plan the spectacular attacks of 9/11. Had 9/11 been followed by a resurgence of Saddam's power, the United States would have broadcast to the world an even more lethal message.

The Americans are weakening. The future belongs to America's enemies.

So we had to strike back and hard after 9/11, to prove that terrorism was *not* winning. Had we fought only in Afghanistan and then stopped, we would have conveyed the message that we were willing to accept the easy missions in the war on terror, but not the hard ones. We would have projected trepidation and uncertainty when we needed more than ever to show confidence and strength. For all those reasons, we had to continue from Afghanistan on to Iraq.

“O mujahideen brothers in Iraq,” said a tape purportedly recorded by Osama bin Laden in a broadcast in February 2003, “do not be afraid of what the United States is propagating in terms of their lies about their power and their smart, laser-guided missiles.” By clutching Saddam Hussein’s regime by the throat and throwing it against the wall, the United States demonstrated that bin Laden’s boasts were false—that the United States was overwhelmingly strong, that the terrorists’ hopes of somehow toppling the American government were delusions, and that attacks upon the United States would bring nothing but destruction upon the attackers.

Many in the Arab and Muslim world expected that Saddam would bloody the coalition forces arrayed against him. Some in Europe seem to have hoped so, too. When asked at a press conference in London whether he wished for the United States to win in Iraq, French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin declined to answer. In the event, Saddam’s army collapsed in less than three weeks, and Saddam himself fled for safety. The historian Niall Ferguson has aptly called the overthrow of Saddam “the mother of all wake-up calls.” “When five Arab leaders met Mr. Bush on [June 3, 2003],” Ferguson observed, “they pledged, with manifest penitence, that they would henceforth actively fight ‘the culture of extremism and violence.’ Not just al Qaeda: Hamas and Hezbollah too.”*

Saddam’s rule had been justified by one claim: his strength. He may have been a homicidal tyrant, but in the eyes of many of those Arab and Muslim people who did not themselves have to live in Iraq, every crime was excused by Saddam’s stature as the one Arab who seemed to inspire genuine fear in the West. In the words of Rami Khouri, the influential editor of the *Jordan Times*: “Saddam Hussein’s fearlessness in standing up to our enemies ... appeals to the new spirit of the Arab world—a spirit that says we’d rather die on our feet than live groveling on the ground.”*

Khouri is generally regarded as an Arab moderate.

But what if Saddam’s cruelty had accomplished nothing, had contributed in no way to Arab strength and dignity? What then? Might Arab intellectuals *then* speak out against his crimes? Indeed, that is exactly what has happened since the overthrow of Saddam’s regime.

“We all saw the film of the execution and murder [of victims by] blowing them up by remote control with explosives stuffed into their pockets,” wrote Rajah al-Khuri in the Lebanese newspaper *al-Nahar* on May 20, 2003, referring to a video broadcast of some of Saddam’s atrocities. “Later, we saw the [executioners] applauding as the victims flew into the air, their limbs torn apart and covered with dust. We felt something precious within our human dignity blown up [with these sights].... We felt that we, in some way or another, shared partly in the guilt, because murderers who came from our Arab world perpetrated this kind of savageness.

“[These murderers] had sold [the Arab world] the slogans of nationalism and

progressiveness while riding on the back of the ideology of Arabism, which they prostituted ... This barbarism, unprecedented in human history, was committed by Arab hands, by hands that found such delight in death and murder that the death squads would send the heads of the victims to Saddam Hussein's two sons in cardboard boxes....

“These plastic bags in the mass graves contained bullet-riddled skulls, [bodies] wrapped in rags, [tied] in ropes, [or] dressed in worn pieces of clothing.... Ropes still tied a mother's bones to her infant's and a father's to his son's....”*

As Arab anger gathered against the horrors of Saddam's rule, that anger extended next to Saddam's apologists.

“Many Arabs sinned ... against the Iraqi people when they stood by its executioners. I charged the journalist Ahmed al-Rab'i in a London Arabic newspaper, “when they underestimated the savagery with which the [Iraqi] regime treated its own people, when they opened up their media to anyone defending this ghoulish regime, and when they refused to treat others' opinions tolerantly. It is about time that some of them stand, with a minimum of self-respect, and apologize to the Iraqis.”†

Finally, and most boldly, came the insight that the horror of Iraq indicted not merely Saddam's tyranny and its supporters, but all Arab tyrannies and all of their supporters.

“While the late [Baathist] regime slaughtered its own people for decades,” observed the writer Salem Mashkur also in *al-Nahar*, “all these ‘Jihad warriors’ and the various Arab ‘fighters,’ secular and religious, held their tongues. Some even welcomed this slaughter. Others justified their silence [by claiming] it was a foreign conspiracy ...!”

“All these arguments [reflect] the ... official and general Arab discourse: the negligible nothingness of the individual, and disparagement of his liberties, dignity, and even his bones in the mass graves....”*

BY TOPPLING Saddam Hussein, we achieved at least seven great objectives.

1. We put an end to the threat from whatever weapons of mass destruction Saddam actually possessed as of 2003—and, far more important, from those weapons he *would* have possessed had he been left in place.
2. We won a great victory over terrorism by eliminating a Middle Eastern regime that has for thirty years been one of the leading sponsors of terrorism in the region. When Saddam reached out to Osama bin Laden in the early 1990s, he was continuing a tradition that extended back to the days when Iraqi intelligence cooperated with Eastern bloc intelligence services to provide false passports, sanctuary, and instructions in murder to Abu Nidal and Black September.
3. We denied our enemies in the Middle East the huge victory *they* would have won had Saddam been able to claim that he had survived and triumphed over us.
4. We have learned valuable lessons about how to fight wars in the region and how to rebuild afterward. Nobody will pretend that mistakes were not made in the Iraq campaign and the subsequent occupation. But we have learned from those mistakes and they will not be repeated. The United States will continue to become more and more capable and effective in the fight against terror.
5. We gave other potential enemies a vivid and compelling demonstration of America's

ability to win swift and total victory over significant enemy forces with minimal U.S. casualties. The overwhelming American victory in the battle of Baghdad surely stamped a powerful impression upon the minds of the rulers of Teheran and Pyongyang.

6. We aided the forces of democracy throughout the region by demonstrating that even the most fearsome local dictatorships are far more fragile than they look.
7. We eliminated the Arab world's cruelest and most tyrannical ruler. We liberated an entire nation, opening the way to a humane, decent civil society in Iraq—and a reform of the ideological and moral climate of the whole Middle East.

These are great accomplishments—yet according to the war's many critics, they are still not enough. Opponents of the Bush administration in Congress and the press sometimes suggest that it was overcautious and unnecessary to worry today about Saddam's weapons of tomorrow. The threat, they say, wasn't "imminent." It was never quite clear how "imminent" would have been imminent enough to suit these critics. Should we have waited until one month before Saddam got a nuclear bomb or weaponized smallpox? One week? Until the stuff actually rolled out of the lab? Until we knew he was preparing to use it? American intelligence is not the all-knowing, all-seeing spy service of the movies: "No need to strike yet, Mr. President, our agents tell us that we have ninety-seven days and thirteen hours before Iraq's new superviruses become usable...." The intelligence services are very human, very imperfect institutions. If we wait to protect ourselves until the CIA determines that it is five minutes to midnight, we will run the ugly risk of discovering that we have waited too long. Certainly we waited too long in the case of Osama bin Laden. We threw away many opportunities to finish him off. In 1996, when bin Laden was expelled from Sudan, the Clinton administration actually concluded that it did not want to take custody of him. It feared it could not convict him in an American criminal court, and it could not think of any way to deal with him *other* than a criminal trial. Today, it is hard to understand this lack of urgency. But if President Bush's critics are correct, President Clinton did exactly the right thing in 1996. The threat from bin Laden was not then "imminent": It would be two who years before bin Laden's men blew up the embassies in East Africa and five before they killed three thousand people in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania.

As the bin Laden episode proves, the responsible thing to do when confronted by a foreign threat is to act when we *can*, and the earlier the better. Everything we did after 9/11 to destroy the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the bin Laden terrorist organization could have been done before 9/11, with two important differences: Three thousand of our citizens might be alive today, and we might well have surprised much of the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan. Instead, we allowed al-Qaeda to strike first, condemning ourselves to chase its leaders from one prepared hiding place to the next, all around the world.

Even if we could predict dangers more accurately than we can, what benefit do we gain from waiting for a threat to become *more* imminent? Why let an enemy grow stronger unhindered? By waiting until the last minute, we forfeit the initiative. We cast away the opportunity to act at a time and place of our choosing and gamble our security on future circumstances that may or may not be favorable to us. Quite frequently, the real motive of those who advocate delay is the hope that if we postpone action, somehow the threat will disappear on its own. This isn't policy. It's fantasy.

Iraq was a test of American seriousness about the war on terror. It tested whether we truly intended to wage war against our enemies—or whether we would revert to the pinprick tactics of the past. It tested whether we would open our eyes to the danger of Middle Eastern radicalism of all varieties—or whether we would continue to shut our eyes and wish our problems away. It tested whether those flags we flew in the autumn of 2001 attested to our resolve—or merely to a passing flutter of emotion.

Critics of the Iraq war insist that the United States ought to have concentrated all its effort on al-Qaeda. Well, the Bush administration has acted against al-Qaeda, and it has succeeded. In the two years after 9/11, some two-thirds of the known leadership of al-Qaeda were captured or killed. Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the planner of the 9/11 attacks, is an American prisoner. So is Abu Anas Liby, who masterminded the 1998 East African embassy bombings. So too is Abu Zubayda, chief administrator of al-Qaeda's Afghan training camps. Information from these men and from other sources has thwarted terrorist operations from Paris to Singapore. That is a triumphant record of success in national self-defense.

The implicit argument of those who opposed the Iraq campaign was that the United States should have stopped after Afghanistan, because going further was too hazardous, too likely to offend Middle Eastern opinion. This is the same fear-haunted counsel that guided the policies of the United States in the decade before 9/11. It was bad advice then; it is worse advice now.

The critics are right about one thing: President Bush took an enormous risk in Iraq. The risk could well have gone wrong—and it could still go wrong. But wars are not won by leaders who think only about avoiding failure. Wars are won by leaders who dare to fight, and President Bush has dared and as his would-be successors evidently do not.

Nobody would claim that the United States made no mistakes in Iraq. When have we ever fought a war without mistakes?

Our defense planners expected that there would be a flood of hungry refugees from Iraq and prepared accordingly. Happily, they got that wrong. Our planners expected that Saddam's forces would surrender rather than run away. They got that wrong too, with rather worse effect, for the planners had hoped that those surrendered soldiers without human-rights offenses in their past could swiftly be formed into the nucleus of a new Iraqi police.

But of all our mistakes, probably the most serious was our unwillingness to allow the Iraqi National Congress, Iraq's leading anti-Saddam resistance movement, to form a provisional government after the fall of Baghdad. In 1944, we took care to let French troops enter Paris before U.S. or British forces. We should have shown equal tact in 2003. The INC offered us troops willing to fight and security forces ready to help keep order. We rebuffed the offer, in large part because the State Department and the CIA disliked Ahmed Chalabi, the INC leader, and because the INC terrified the Saudis and therefore terrified those in our government who wished to placate the Saudis.

The State Department/CIA argument that Chalabi had no following in Iraq was wholly disingenuous. During Saddam's long reign of terror his opponents were exiled, murdered, or silent. Moreover, both State and the Agency had their preferred candidates—Adnan Pachachi in the case of State, Iyad Alawi in the case of the CIA—men who, like Chalabi, had lived outside Iraq for many years. But Chalabi had spent long periods in northern Iraq, something the others had not done. And when he was abroad, rallying support for Saddam's overthrow

Chalabi lived with a price on his head, to which he was coolly, courageously indifferent. No, it was not the lack of support among Iraqis that led to bureaucratic disparagement of Ahmad Chalabi; the sad truth is that for the pettiest of reasons neither State nor the CIA liked Chalabi, despite his tireless and remarkably effective effort to organize and encourage opposition to Saddam's regime. In part they didn't like the fact that he was not a puppet they could easily control. In part they resented his many admirers among members of Congress of both parties. In part they disliked his low tolerance for bureaucrats who were largely ignorant of the situation in Iraq and the potential contribution that Saddam's opponents could make to Iraq's liberation. In part they were humiliated by the frequency with which Chalabi had been right and they had been wrong. One result of this disparagement was to limit the role of the Iraqi opposition in the liberation and postwar administration of Iraq, leaving the responsibility, and risks, disproportionately in the hands of Americans. Seldom has the foreign policy bureaucracy inflicted such shameful damage on American interests than in its opposition to working with Saddam's Iraqi opponents.

Without local allies, we were left to keep order in the cities and villages of Iraq with American soldiers. Our military is the best-equipped, best-trained fighting force in the history of the world. But our soldiers are not police: They do not speak the language, they do not know the customs, and they do not know which communal leaders can be trusted and which cannot.

Nobody who advocated the removal of Saddam Hussein imagined that Iraq would transform itself from brutal tyranny into a humane civil society overnight. It was anticipated that there would be lawlessness and worse. But what was *not* anticipated was that our State Department and CIA would extend their hostility to the Iraqi National Congress to the point where their bureaucratic dislikes deprived our forces in the field of crucial assistance.

Self-criticism is valuable, even essential. And yet we would be making an even more severe mistake of our own if we allowed necessary self-criticism to blind us to the steady flow of positive events in Iraq. A free press has been born. Schools have reopened, and the high school class of 2003 graduated on time. Electricity is being generated and distributed more reliably than at any time in Iraq's recent history. Oil is being produced and exported for the benefit of all Iraqis, not just a single dictator and his family. Town and village councils are being elected. A stable currency has been issued. A new judiciary is being recruited that will enforce and apply the rule of law. Soon Iraq will have a constitution and an elected leadership.

The struggle against extremism inside Iraq has not ended. Neither has the larger war on terror. We have come nowhere near the end of the war on terror, nowhere near the beginning of the end. At most, we have come (to borrow a phrase of Winston Churchill's) to the end of the beginning. Americans can take heart from what has been accomplished so far. They certainly deserve better than the disinformation and even calumny they hear from some critics of the Iraq war. But they will continue to need perseverance and courage for the struggles ahead—and those critics of the Iraq war who exhausted their stockpiles of perseverance and courage before the shooting even started have disqualified themselves from leadership in those struggles.

* Specifically: 250,000 U.S. and U.K. forces in 2003 vs. 660,000 coalition forces in 1991; forty-eight vs. twenty-six days of air and ground operations. Max Boot, "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs* (July–August 2003): 41–58, at p. 43.

* Amity Shlaes, “Iraqi Echoes of Postwar Germany,” *Financial Times*, July 28, 2003, p. 18. Shlaes is paraphrasing and quoting the Swedish journalist Stig Dagerman, whose *German Autumn* was originally published in 1947.

* news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2740777.stm.

† *The Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2002, p. A12.

‡ “Eliminating the Threat: The Right Course of Action for Disarming Iraq, Combating Terrorism, Protecting the Homeland, and Stabilizing the Middle East,” remarks at the School of Advanced International Studies,” September 27, 2002, www.kennedy/senate/gov.

§ Rory McCarthy and Julian Borger, “Battle for Baghdad Begins,” *The Guardian*, March 25, 2003, www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,921387,00.html.

* *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*, December 8, 2002. It should be noted that Gore prefaced his accusation by piously disclaiming any intention to accuse anybody. Read in full, however, Gore’s true meaning is manifest: Well, again, you know, the reason I don’t want to accuse them of bending our entire national security policy to fit their political designs is it’s such a serious charge, you don’t know what’s inside their hearts. The very fact that they’ve left that out there for people to suspect is not good for our country, and, and of course, you know we had this high-level resignation in the White House from John DiIulio, who told one of the nation’s magazines that all of the decisions in the White House now are driven by political motivations.

* Future First Lady Laura Bush accompanied the former president and might well have become a casualty herself.

* Niall Ferguson, “The ‘E’ Word,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2003, p. A10.

* Quoted in Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence* (Norton, 1993), p. 244.

* www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD51903#_edn3.

† Ibid.

* Ibid.

3. THE NEW AXIS

THERE IS NOTHING NEW about terrorism. What is new since 9/11 is the chilling realization that the terrorist threat we thought we had contained within tolerable boundaries was not contained at all, menacing our well-being as a people, even our survival as a nation.

This realization stems, first, from the scale of 9/11, and beyond that, from the apocalyptic vision of the terrorists themselves. The chill comes from knowing that there are, among the terrorists, hundreds and perhaps thousands who are ready to die in order to kill. They cannot be deterred. They cannot be appeased. The terrorists kill and will accept death for a cause with which no accommodation is possible.

That cause is militant Islam. Of the thirty-six organizations the U.S. Department of State designates as “foreign terrorist organizations,” seventeen purport to act in the name of Islam and six more are predominantly Muslim in membership.*

Yet for many reasons our leaders, and the leaders of other nations, have found it difficult to say so. Like the wizards in *Harry Potter*, they dread pronouncing out loud the enemy name. We sometimes wonder how the war on terror escaped being called “the war against You-know-who.”

President Bush was right to insist that the United States has no quarrel with Islam. But while Americans have no proper quarrel with Islam, a radical strain within Islam has declared war on us. This strain seeks to overthrow our civilization and remake the nations of the West into Islamic societies, imposing on the whole world its religion and its law. To achieve these cosmic ambitions, Islamic terrorists wish—and are preparing—to commit murder on a horrific scale. On 9/11, al-Qaeda killed in a single day more people than the Irish Republican Army has killed in thirty-five years. Al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist groups feverishly seek chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons to kill on a yet larger scale. If they get them, they will use them.

And though it is comforting to deny it, all the available evidence indicates that militant Islam commands wide support, and even wider sympathy, among Muslims worldwide, including Muslim minorities in the West. A major opinion survey of nine Middle Eastern countries in early 2002 found that one-third of the population—even more in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—refused to condemn the 9/11 attacks.*

In militant Islam, we face an aggressive ideology of world domination. Like communism, this ideology perverts the language of justice and equality to justify oppression and murder. Like Nazism, it exploits the injured pride of once-mighty nations. Like both communism and Nazism, militant Islam is opportunistic—it works willingly with all manner of unlikely allies, as the communists and Nazis worked with each other against the democratic West.

Item: On June 2 and 3, 2002, the leaders of four major terrorist organizations, Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine general command (PFLPGC), convened in Teheran. Much analysis of the Middle East would suggest that this meeting could never have happened. Hezbollah, after all, is a Shiite extremist organization

backed by Iran; Hamas is a Sunni terrorist group that draws its financial support from donors in Saudi Arabia and North America; Islamic Jihad is an even more fanatical Sunni group; and the PFLPGC is a Marxist-Leninist faction sponsored by the secular Baathists of Syria. Yet here they were, meeting in an Iranian conference center, discussing how to work together to annihilate Israel. Shortly afterward, President Clinton's former Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross, warned in a newspaper column that Iran was successfully pressuring Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah to coordinate their attacks on the Jewish state, confirming reports that Israeli intelligence had been issuing since 1999.*

Item: When U.S. forces overthrew the Taliban in November 2001, Iran granted refuge to more than 250 senior al-Qaeda and Taliban figures, reportedly including Saad bin Laden, one of Osama's eldest sons, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Egyptian doctor who is widely believed to be the group's governing intelligence. (In June 2003, the Iranian government confirmed the presence of al-Qaeda figures in Iran but insisted that they had been "detained."*) They are in fact operating in complete liberty.)

This too was something we were told could never happen. Iran and the Taliban were supposedly deadly enemies. In 1998, Iran and Afghanistan had nearly gone to war over the murder of nine Iranian diplomats and the Taliban's maltreatment of Afghan Shiites. The Bureau of Near East Affairs at the Department of State even promised that we could expect help from Iran in countering the Taliban regime. As for al-Qaeda, it is connected to the terrorist groups in Pakistan that intersperse their attacks on Kashmir with anti-Shiite atrocities like the July 2003 massacre of forty-seven worshippers at a mosque in Quetta. Yet as soon as the United States attacked the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the Iranians rushed to support them.

Item: The Baathists of Syria and Iraq have been rivals since the late 1960s. Syria even joined the anti-Iraq coalition in 1991. Yet Syria sold supplies to Saddam's armies to prepare for the 2003 war, gave shelter to Saddam's officials and members of his family after the war, and has allowed its territory to be traversed by pro-Saddam guerrillas recruited by several terrorist organizations on their way to fight U.S. forces rebuilding Iraq. Syria is a secular dictatorship—but it hosts Hezbollah in Lebanon and permits it to maintain offices in Damascus.

Item: North Korea is one of the world's last remaining Marxist-Leninist states, militant and atheistic. Iran is an Islamic theocracy. Yet these two supposedly antipathetic regimes are sharing nuclear and missile technology. As recently as March, April, and May 2000, representatives of the Iranian government visited North Korea to seek assistance for the nuclear program.* In December 2002, Spanish warships on patrol in the Indian Ocean stopped a freighter carrying North Korean missiles to Yemen under a falsified cargo manifest. At the inexplicable urging of the State Department, the missiles were released for delivery.

It is now often claimed that President Bush has repudiated any connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. This is simply false. President Bush did tell reporters on September 17, 2003, that there was "no evidence" that Saddam was involved with the 9/11 attacks. If "evidence" means "proof," then the president was right: The clues and hints were

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