

## CHAPTER SIX



# Eight Years After 9/11: An Appraisal

Elan Journo

### **Is *This* Victory?**

During the final year of President George W. Bush's tenure, some doubters who had long ago pronounced his war policy a dismal failure, felt themselves chastened by the facts. Once untiring, the chorus of reproach softened its tone, dialed down its volume, qualified its predictions. Drowning out remnants of that chorus was the re-energized pep squad for the Bush policy. Elbowing their way to center stage, they celebrated what they deemed manifest gains in the Bush "war on terror."

Listen to Sen. John McCain: "I'm not painting to you the most rosy scenario but I am telling you, compared to a year ago, before we started this surge, and with this great general, one of the great generals in American history, General David Petraeus, that we are succeeding in Iraq." The basis for that claim? "I've seen the facts on the ground," he said upon returning from a visit to Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Lending credibility to such assertions, the head of CIA, Michael V. Hayden, told the *Washington Post* a while later that, "On balance, we are doing pretty well," and listed evidence of what he took to be major strides forward: "Near strategic defeat of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Near strategic defeat for al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. Significant setbacks for al-Qaeda globally . . . as a lot of the Islamic world pushes back on their form of Islam."<sup>2</sup> By summer, a columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* happily announced: "The Iraq war is over. We've won."<sup>3</sup>

With less than two months to go before the presidential elections, it seemed the American people were coming around to the conclusions of the

pep squad, even if they were not all beguiled by its gleeful vibe. According to one poll, reported in the *Washington Post*, “56 percent of registered voters say the United States is making significant strides toward bringing order in Iraq—the highest proportion to say so in nearly three years and nearly double the level in late 2006” (before Bush sent in a surge of U.S. troops to Iraq).<sup>4</sup> Another indicator of the same phenomenon was the staggering comeback of Sen. McCain’s bid for the presidency. McCain’s early commitment to the war, and then the surge, nearly sank his campaign, when Iraq was in the throes of a brutal civil war. But, in time, fewer Iraqis slaughtered each other; fewer Americans were blown up; some Islamists were evicted block-by-block from their strongholds in some Iraqi provinces. What was once a millstone around McCain’s neck became an asset. McCain trumpeted his backing for the war as he pulled ahead to clinch the Republican nomination and compete (albeit unsuccessfully) against Barack Obama.

The applause at how Islamists had been kicked out of Basra and Baghdad neighborhoods continued unabated despite the fact that Afghanistan was in flames. Yes, the cheerleaders assured us in soothing tones, it is worrisome that Islamists were back and wrecking havoc in that country—but hardly reason to think that the Bush policy failed. After all, now that we’ve got a handle on what fixed Iraq, that same magic can be made to work in Afghanistan, too.

Of course not everyone is willing to raise a champagne toast, or to unfurl the “Mission Accomplished” banner. But the boosters can haul out a dependably effective talking point. They can acknowledge that, yes, perhaps the Bush policy could have been more effective more quickly; more forceful or more gentle; better managed and better executed (depending on your attitude); but on balance we’re better off for it, because in eight years there has not been another 9/11.

But *are* we better off for it?

In weighing that question, remember what we are up against. The menace confronting us is larger than Al Qaeda in Iraq, larger than the network of Al Qaeda itself. We face an ideological movement: Islamic totalitarianism. Al Qaeda is one, and a relatively new, faction within that movement (see chapters 1 and 2). The movement’s origins date back to the early decades of the twentieth century with the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; its standard-bearer since 1979 has been the totalitarian regime in Iran. The Islamists wish to establish a global regime that subjugates all under sharia. There is disagreement within the movement on how to achieve that goal—terrorist attacks, revolutionary overthrow, lawful political subversion, running for elected office, or some combination of these. But whatever the means adopted, their common vision necessitates expunging the freedom of

individuals and negating the political principles of secular society. So we're in a conflict far broader than Iraq and Afghanistan.

Moreover, Islamists operate on an expansive time horizon. For Americans, the long view in politics is remarkably short. It ranges somewhere beyond the rapid pulse of the cable TV news cycle and, at the outer reaches, the four-year presidential term in office. Rare is the political venture that projects forward (or looks back) on the scale of decades. Rarer still is an administration that thinks on that scale. In the Muslim world, by contrast, people are acutely sensitive to the sweep of historical time. Sermons and political speeches, for instance, are typically laced with allusions to heroes (e.g. Saladin), wars (e.g., the Crusades), and triumphant conquests (e.g., the Muslim capture of Spain) from many hundreds of years ago. Leaders of the Islamist movement, in particular, see themselves as engaged in a war that may have to span many generations into the future before their cause is victorious. Losing a battle may entail pausing temporarily to rest, regrouping and rejoining the fray when the conditions are more auspicious—but it certainly does not mean the war is over. When Islamists talk about avenging the “tragedy” of Al-Andalus, the parts of the Iberian peninsula where Islamic rule was overthrown in 1492, they are serious.<sup>5</sup>

We should keep this context in mind when measuring the success or failure of U.S. policy. The proper benchmark derives from the basic goal of protecting American lives from the Islamist threat. Achieving that goal is our government's moral obligation in its function as defender of our rights. Victory means rendering the Islamist movement and the states that sponsor it non-threatening. (How this should be done is explored in detail in chapters 3–5 and again in chapter 7.) When assessing the results of American policy, we need to take into account the nature of the threat and the tenacity of Islamists in pursuit of their goals. To triumph, therefore, we must stamp out the threat, not merely for today, but for good.

If we take the long view, if we hold as our standard of success the protection of American lives, what should we conclude? What are the results of U.S. policy since 9/11 and since the surge of U.S. troops in Iraq, and what evaluation of them is warranted by the actual facts on the ground?

## Afghanistan

Conventional wisdom on the Afghanistan campaign, at least until recently, went like this. The Taliban regime was toppled, quickly. Thousands of Islamists were killed or captured in battle. A new Afghan state, with nominally friendly ties to the West, was founded. The war was seen as the right war, at

the right time, for the right reason—and it was acknowledged as a job well done (even if Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants escaped). Then it faded from public awareness, especially with the onset of U.S. military operations in Iraq. It was in 2006, some five years after the war began, that Afghanistan once again made front-page news. The Islamist forces, it turned out, had never really gone away. Yes, many died in combat or were hauled off to Guantanamo. But under Washington's "compassionate" war, with U.S. forces hamstrung by self-denying rules of engagement, the military operation failed to crush the Islamists. It managed only to weaken them, temporarily, and drive them out of some parts of the country (see chapters 3 and 4).

Many simply crossed into the vaguely demarcated borderlands of Pakistan. Directly across from Afghanistan is the area of Pakistan known as the tribal belt, where the government has no real authority. Many fleeing Islamists settled in those primitive, warlord-controlled wastelands. The lawlessness meant they would have little to worry about from Pakistan's military, since it avoids venturing into that area. And the local population was sympathetic, even eagerly supportive, of the Islamists (at the start of the Afghanistan War, there were fund-raising drives to send them money; many locals donated money and jewelry for the sake of jihad).

Basing themselves in the badlands of Pakistan, the Islamists built up their manpower, reconstituted their training camps, and launched their resurgence. Since 2003, they have seized power over parts of southern Afghanistan, only to lose, and then regain control of some villages. While the scope of their dominion has fluctuated, with some parts of the country changing hands several times, the trend is unmistakable: the Taliban are fighting to reassert their Islamic rule over the country.

Their military campaign has grown more aggressive with each passing year. The number of IEDs and roadside bombs climbed from 782 in 2005, to 1,931 in 2006, to 2,615 the following year. Suicide bombings, once unheard of in Afghanistan, have become a commonplace. There were thirty such attacks in the first five years of the war; in the first six months of 2008, there were more than 1,200.<sup>6</sup> And the tally of U.S. casualties has soared. In 2008, the death toll was 155—more than twelve times the number in the first year of the war and almost as many as the total for the first four years, combined. By one reckoning, most of the first 100 U.S. deaths in the war were the result of accidents or illnesses, not combat, and almost half occurred "outside the main theater, across a regional network of supply bases and refueling outposts."<sup>7</sup> But today most deaths occur in combat.

Taliban fighters and their allies have set up checkpoints on some roads, and on others they carry out regular ambushes. The Kabul-Kandahar high-

way is a critical artery bearing fuel and food trucks heading for the nation's capital. But this supply route has been choked under the heel of resurgent Islamist forces. In one brutal incident, some fifty trucks carrying supplies for the U.S. military were attacked. "The convoy was set on fire," reports the *New York Times*, while "Seven of its drivers were dragged out and beheaded"; in another attack two American soldiers died when their vehicles were hit by mines and rocket-propelled grenades.<sup>8</sup>

One measure of how daring the Islamists have become is evident in an episode that unfolded in the summer of 2008. Intent on freeing comrades who had been captured, a contingent of Taliban fighters mounted a spectacular attack on a prison in Kandahar. Outside the prison gates, one foot soldier parked a fuel tanker, fleeing the scene with a laugh amid a hail of bullets from the guards at the prison. Within moments, the Taliban fired a rocket-propelled grenade at the tanker, blowing it up. That explosion "killed the prison guards, destroyed nearby buildings, and opened a breach in the prison walls as wide as a highway."<sup>9</sup> Some 350 members of the Taliban escaped and rejoined the jihad.

Although American and NATO forces do inflict real damage on the Islamists, fighters from outside the country are enlisting to replace the fallen and to swell the ranks of holy warriors. The success of this rejuvenated and well-financed Afghan jihad has drawn recruits from the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. Recruits arrive on commercial flights to Pakistan and then travel by car or bus into the lawless tribal region on the Afghan-Pakistan border; some—it is unclear how many—go overland through Iran and then up into a different part of Pakistan's border region. These foreign jihadists can enter Afghanistan through what military officials have euphemistically called a "porous border."<sup>10</sup>

Across wide swathes of the country, Islamists are succeeding in imposing their authority by force. They are making considerable progress toward reinstating the Islamist ideal of a political order defined by sharia. Through intimidation or assassinations, Islamists have shut down courts and summarily executed police officers and judges. Schools have been bombarded with rocket fire, for daring to allow girls to attend classes. In Helmand Province, five teachers have been slaughtered and dozens of schools shut down.<sup>11</sup> There is now, writes one scholar, a "parallel Taliban state" within the country, "and locals are increasingly turning to Taliban-run" courts that implement sharia law.<sup>12</sup> The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Islamists now run some two dozen law courts; the institutions of the Taliban shadow government "now handle everything from land disputes to divorces."<sup>13</sup> Gangs of Islamist enforcers—assuming the job once done by the notorious virtue police—harass men who

shave their beards and threaten punishment of un-Islamic behavior. Some women, in self-protection, have taken to wearing a head-to-toe veil, the veil once mandated under the Taliban's theocratic regime.

We were told that the Afghan government, the one Washington helped install, would function as a bulwark against Islamists. Under the mandate of Bush's crusade for democracy, the U.S. cleared the way for the Afghans to define their own political destiny. They did. The result was supposed to reflect the popular will. It does. But instead of becoming a U.S. ally against the Islamists, Afghanistan is sliding under their dominion.

Apologists in the West tell us that the Afghan regime lacks the financial resources and expertise to combat the Islamists. Before we can count on the government in Kabul to pull its weight, so the story goes, it will need millions more in economic aid, scores of additional American police and military trainers, and several more years of "reconstruction" and nation-building. But the material weakness of the government obscures a deeper problem. U.S. policy has gone a long way toward creating a regime that is fundamentally impotent to oppose the Islamists on principle—and in fact advances their goal. The reason is that what distinguishes the current government from the Islamists ideologically is only a difference in the degree of their fidelity to the principle of rule under Islam.

With the blessing of Washington (and the United Nations), the Afghan constitution defines the regime as an Islamic Republic (Article 1). Islam is enshrined as the state religion (Article 2), and the supreme source of law: "In Afghanistan, no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam" (Article 3). The national anthem is required by law to mention Allahu Akbar—meaning "God is greatest" (Article 20). Of course there are perfunctory nods to the idea of rights and legal equality before the law (e.g. Articles 22, 33, 40), including the promise that "freedom of expression is inviolable" (Article 34).<sup>14</sup> But the operative principle in Afghanistan is Islamic law.

Notice the ominous pattern in the following incidents.

Under the country's sharia laws, blasphemy is a crime. One of the first journalists convicted on a charge of blasphemy was Ali Mohaqiq Nasab, editor of a magazine called *Women's Rights*. The prosecutor in the case demanded that Nasab receive the death penalty, but the editor was spared and instead sentenced to jail for two years.<sup>15</sup> A year later, in 2006, news filtered out that an Afghan convert to Christianity, Abdul Rahman, had been denounced as an apostate. He too was threatened with execution, the traditional punishment for those who dare abandon the Muslim faith. After an international outcry, the embarrassed government in Kabul allowed Rahman to be spirited away to

safety in Europe. Many people in Afghanistan, including the frothing mobs and clerics who demanded his execution, were cross with the government for letting him flee.<sup>16</sup>

Or consider the persecution of Parwiz Kambakhsh, a twenty-four-year-old Afghan student. In 2008 he was accused of circulating an article regarding the rights of women in Islam and for starting un-Islamic discussions in class. The council of clerics that tried his case decreed capital punishment. Afghanistan's upper house of parliament endorsed that sentence. Crowds took to the streets in support of the verdict; one cleric told the press, "He should be punished so that others can learn from him."<sup>17</sup> It was under heavy pressure from the West (again) that the sentence was reduced on appeal—to twenty years in prison.<sup>18</sup>

When Muslims across the world exploded in a (contrived) outrage over Danish cartoons of Muhammad, Afghanistan was the scene of angry protests. In theory, you might expect Hamid Karzai, the allegedly pro-freedom, pro-Western president of Afghanistan, to come out for the principle of free speech, for the right of individuals to express any ideas however distasteful some may find them. After all, the Afghan constitution does hold that specific right to be "inviolable." But instead he essentially pandered to and endorsed the violent mobs by declaring his view that any insult to Muhammad "is an insult to more than a billion Muslims."<sup>19</sup>

Observe that Karzai (and other so-called "moderates") must placate and appease more ardent proponents of sharia and the Afghan public at large—or else risk seeming to contradict the teachings of Islam. If they flout those teachings, they unavoidably strengthen the reputation of Islamists as the true idealists, the genuinely principled ones. To the extent Karzai and others may try to water down that ideal, to compromise it with talk of rights and freedom, they indict themselves as deviating from the straight path of Allah's will. This weakens whatever credibility they may have, and casts the so-called conservative factions and the Taliban as the authentically principled exponents of Islamic law.

Moreover, there's little that separates the goal of Taliban ideologues and Afghanistan's council of legal scholars, an official advisory body counseling the government. The council, for instance, has urged Karzai to stop foreign-aid groups from (alleged) missionary work for Christianity. When it was in power, the Taliban expelled such groups. The council has urged the president to reintroduce public executions. Under the former Taliban regime and today wherever the Islamists have reasserted their authority, criminals and blasphemers and others deemed un-Islamic are publicly executed (the custom is to dispatch them on Fridays, typically, after midday prayers). The council

has demanded that the president prevent local TV stations from broadcasting the enormously popular Indian soap operas and movies. These diversions, say the clerics, are rife with obscenity and scenes of immoral behavior. The Taliban, of course, were brutally effective in shutting down un-Islamic broadcasters and newspapers; in “executing” TV sets and video recorders; in forcibly shuttering video rental stores; in enforcing obedience to religious standards of modesty and propriety.<sup>20</sup>

The inestimable clout of moral legitimacy in Afghanistan lies with the proponents of sharia. So there’s no reason to think that, even if it were competent and strong enough, the government could take a principled stand against the resurgent Taliban. (News reports indicate that in at least one incident, an Afghan police chief and another district leader aided Islamist fighters in carrying out an attack on U.S. forces, in which nine Americans died.)<sup>21</sup> Karzai walks among Western leaders and presents himself as one of them, but the foundations of Afghanistan’s government rest on the ideal of Islamic law.

Recall that it was Bush’s explicit policy to endorse and help establish precisely this kind of regime in Afghanistan, in the name of serving the political conscience of Afghans (rather than U.S. interests) (see chapters 3–5). Islamist leaders (and many Afghans) may lament that the incumbents in Kabul fail to live up fully to the ideal of sharia and that the government is too friendly to the West. But whether the Taliban manage to seize full or only partial control in Afghanistan, their political ideal has already been enshrined in the existing government. And, accordingly, the likelihood is high that Afghanistan will enforce sharia even more strictly in the years to come, and that it will become a large-scale breeding ground and training base for jihadists taking aim at America and the West.

The only winners—and all the more so in the event the current regime collapses—are the Islamists. For this considerable gain, they should thank U.S. policy.

Of course no one in Washington wants to see Afghanistan continue its downward spiral. But what to do? In keeping with the prevailing mindset in U.S. policy circles, the chaos in Afghanistan has been misdiagnosed. The problem is seen not as a consequence of Bush’s “compassionate” war, a policy that renounced using all necessary force to defeat the Islamists; it is seen rather as a failure to deliver enough aid, to deploy enough troops, to be even more compassionate in combat. The cure? The common view today is to replicate the alleged success in Iraq: Let’s surge in Afghanistan.

But what exactly has happened in Iraq? How should we judge the outcome there?



## Iraq

The before-and-after portraits of Iraq reveal that a marked change has taken place in that country since the 2007 surge.

Before the surge, the situation in Iraq was verging on anarchy. During one of the lowest points, morning in Baghdad would bring with it a grisly harvest of bodies shot in the head and bearing the telltale signs of torture—drill holes in the skull, electrocution burns—and some that were desecrated beyond identification. For example, in April 2007, more than 400 unidentified bodies turned up in Baghdad; the next month, the body count climbed to 726. (These figures, it is worth noting, represented a mild *decline* from the rate of ethnic-sectarian executions which were far higher the previous year.)<sup>22</sup> Many more victims were put to death, not in secret under cover of night, but in broad daylight: they were among the thousands torn apart in routine car bombings and suicide attacks.

After the surge, a measure of calm has supplanted the chaos. In April 2008, Gen. David Petraeus reported to Congress that “security in Iraq is better than it was when Ambassador Crocker and I reported to you [in September 2007], and it is significantly better than it was 15 months ago when Iraq was on the brink of civil war and the decision was made to deploy additional US forces to Iraq.” Although Petraeus qualified his remarks carefully with an acknowledgement that the progress was “fragile and reversible,” his testimony seemed to vindicate the Bush administration’s policy.<sup>23</sup>

Statistics told a similar story. The Department of Defense, in a September 2008 report to Congress, reckoned that “security incidents” in Iraq “have remained at levels last seen in early 2004 for nearly three consecutive months.” Civilian deaths across the country declined to a level 77 percent lower than one year ago; the lowest “monthly death rate on record occurred in June 2008.” Despite a minor uptick in ethnic-sectarian killing during July and August that year, deaths in that category “remained 96 percent below the reported death rate in the same period in 2007.”<sup>24</sup>

Bombings never completely died down, but they became infrequent and typically smaller. Nor did the murders end, but they too became rarer.<sup>25</sup> By the end of Ramadan, in the fall of 2008, some Baghdad residents ventured out of their homes. They went to parks, cafes, and ice cream parlors.<sup>26</sup> The same was true in other cities. Within tightly controlled areas, fortified by armed checkpoints and blast walls that line the streets, the people in towns like Samarra could begin resuming normal life. By the week of Thanksgiving, writer Michael Yon offered an assessment that was anything but controversial: “Nobody knows what the future will bring, but the civil war [in Iraq] has completely ended.”<sup>27</sup>

But, so what?

Recall why the administration ordered the surge. The purpose was to dig ourselves out of a self-made quagmire. Even by a generous accounting of the facts, Saddam Hussein's Iraq was never a hub of Islamist activity nor a major backer of the Islamic totalitarian movement. But following the Bush crusade to bring "democracy," welfare goods, and a so-called reconstruction to that nation, it became a jihadist playground. The fantastical notion of a pro-Western, pro-freedom Iraqi regime evaporated amid the blazing wreckage of umpteen roadside bombs and the acrid stench of decaying corpses felled in the insurgency (see chapter 3). The surge of thousands of U.S. troops went to fight our way back up from a catastrophic negative, to some point closer to zero—a state of *relative* calm, for the sake of Iraqis.

That this turn of events is celebrated not merely as progress, but as a triumphant achievement, reveals just how the idea of success in war has been emptied of meaning. In 2001, Bush had vowed to "pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism." That goal, if achieved, would have brought us closer to an authentic victory. But that legitimate, if imprecisely defined goal, was shoved aside. Replacing it was the grandiose (and perverse) idea of lifting up the Middle East through U.S.-backed elections. Then the goal degraded further to a stable, then to a non-anarchic, Iraq. Now we hear the pep squad rejoicing that insurgents have been quieted, for now, in some backstreets of Baghdad. Nobody would have bought that as a vision of success, in the devastating aftermath of 9/11; nobody should buy it now.

This perniciously myopic take on the situation in Iraq fits neatly with another kind of distortion that colors people's appraisal of the Islamist threat. Recall that initially the Bush administration termed its response a "global war on terror" (giving rise, in government documents, to the unlovely acronym GWOT). The single element of truth in that designation is that the scope of the conflict extends far beyond Iraq, or even Afghanistan. But the public's initial recognition of this fact has been undone. For most of Bush's second term in office, "the war" referred exclusively to Iraq. Hence for many people, America's military response to 9/11 came to be judged according to the latest news reports from Iraq. This made it possible, for a while, to evade the problem, or at least shut out of mind the true outlines of its scale (e.g. that Afghanistan was another front).

But if we apply the proper standard of success—the long-range safeguarding of the lives of Americans—there can be only one verdict on the campaign in Iraq: It is a wretched failure.

Let's pause to identify who, exactly, gained political power in U.S.-endorsed elections.

The government of Iraq, reflecting the proclivities of the fractious population, is headed by a Shiite-Kurdish coalition. At its head is the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), an outfit that Iran helped to create during the Iran-Iraq War with the goal of establishing an Islamist theocracy to supplant the regime of Saddam Hussein. SCIRI, like another prominent pro-Iranian element in the coalition, Dawa, was based in Iran for much of its existence. SCIRI's armed "militia," the Badr Brigade, received training from Tehran's military. Since the invasion, the Badr Brigade has operated death squads from within the Iraqi police to kill undesirable Sunnis. Fighters belonging to SCIRI ran their own parallel network of secret jails where they carried out horrific tortures reminiscent of the Hussein regime. The jockeying for power and influence between rival Shiite militias has been cutthroat; their mutual hostility perhaps equals their hatred for Sunnis, whom they have worked to decimate. These are the political groups whose rise to power Washington endorsed.<sup>28</sup>

Early on, the kingmaker in government was Moktada al-Sadr, a militantly anti-American Shiite cleric. Sadr is an advocate of Islamist theocracy, and like SCIRI and Dawa, he is allied with the Islamic totalitarian regime of Iran (he threatened that, should America dare lay a finger on Iran, his forces would lash out at U.S. assets and personnel in retribution). Though for now Sadr has stepped back from politics, his ascendancy was in large measure thanks to Washington. At the time of the U.S. invasion, Sadr (or rather his minions) murdered a rival cleric and a warrant was issued for his arrest. U.S. officials decided, however, that it would be better not to arrest Sadr (lest that anger his followers) and instead bring him into the political process.

By some magic hitherto unknown to mankind, that was supposed to temper Sadr's hostility. Even after Sadr's private militia (the Mahdi Army) fought bitterly against U.S. forces, it was decided to leave his militia intact and allow Sadr's bloc to continue wielding power in government. Sadr and his jihadists escaped retribution for their aggression. Unscathed after his clashes with American forces, Sadr was able to cash in on his growing prestige as a formidable opponent of the United States. One illustration of the stature that Sadr has gained among certain sectors of the Iraqi public was on display on the morning that Saddam Hussein was hanged. Amid the jeering of the onlooking guards could be heard the martial refrain "Moktada! Moktada! Moktada!"<sup>29</sup> Exit strongman, enter the militant cleric.

The ideological pedigree of the power holders in Baghdad reflects the behind-the-scenes machinations of an *eminence grise*: the Islamic Republic of Iran. Confirmation of that was evident in a 2008 skirmish in Basra between the Shiite forces of Moktada al-Sadr and those led by the Iraqi government.

The clash dragged on, without a clear victor. That in itself is remarkable enough, but the real story is how the stalemate was resolved. The top leadership of the Iraqi parliament came to negotiate a deal with Sadr's forces. Despite all the might, blandishments, and bribes at their disposal, they got nowhere. To the rescue came Brig. Gen. Qassem Suleimani. He was instrumental to the resolution. It was he who successfully brokered the agreement between the two Iraqi factions, managing a feat no one else in Iraq was able to pull off.

Who is this Suleimani? He is little known to most Americans, and that may be because Suleimani is an officer of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. His name, according to one news report, appears "on U.S. Treasury Department and U.N. Security Council watch lists for alleged involvement in terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear and missile technology." Observe the magnitude of Iran's influence. Practically with the wave of a hand, Tehran can initiate hostilities through its many insurgent proxies in Iraq—and just as easily halt the fighting between two of the rival Islamist forces that it sponsors.<sup>30</sup>

Witness what now passes for progress in Iraq: Baghdad now has a *new* anti-American regime dominated by Islamists that are deep in Iran's pocket.

It is entirely conceivable that Iraq will become an anarchic bog of sectarian warfare when the precarious calm implodes; or an Iranian client/puppet, perhaps even a full-fledged totalitarian regime, where jihadists resume industrial-scale training; or some splintered combination of these. But no better prospect is imaginable, given the ideological-political forces that U.S. policy has loosed and nourished in Iraq.

This dismal assessment will doubtless prompt the objection that the surge has really changed things. Recall the inventory of glittering accomplishments that are attributed to the influx of American troops in Iraq. The consensus is that "Al Qaeda has been defeated," that some Islamists there are on the run or in hiding, that they have been demoralized. So it would seem to follow that in a real sense the military campaign has salvaged an authentic gain that advances our security. But that's wishful thinking.

In the mythic account of the surge, the insurgency spun out of control owing to a lack of U.S. troops (and, in a wrinkle on that, the overly aggressive conduct of troops already in Iraq). For this the remedy was thousands more soldiers, under orders to be kinder, gentler. Chapters 3–5 explored why this is an arrant misdiagnosis of the fundamental problem, a point bolstered by what actually led to the (temporary) diminution in the slaughter. Ignored in the standard account are two significant explanatory factors.

First, the Mahdi Army was a potent engine of violent attacks and murders that were classified under the umbrella term of the insurgency. Around the

time that the first battalions of the surge landed in Iraq, Sadr called a cease-fire (or *hudna*, a temporary pause in fighting, on the model of Muhammad's war strategy, to allow for rearming and resumption of fighting at a later, more opportune time). Thanks to that cease-fire, many of the killers are taking a breather, and the death toll has dipped somewhat. General Odierno, the commander of forces in Iraq, estimates that Sadr's move is responsible for 15–20 percent of the reduction.<sup>31</sup> Considering Sadr's prestige and avid following, that estimate may well be on the low end.

The second factor stems from Iraq's endemic sectarian tribalism, and the opportunism of rival factions. Before any effects of additional U.S. troops could be felt, American military leaders had begun an unusual program in the highly volatile Anbar province, the wellspring of the Sunni insurgency. The program, later dubbed the Anbar Awakening, involved bribing Sunni tribes (and a smattering of Shiite ones) to fight against Islamist militias. Tribal elders, who were complicit in the murder of so many Americans, were plied with tens of thousands of dollars in cash. Upwards of 100,000 men, called Sons of Iraq, were eventually enrolled in the program. Many of them had previously laid the roadside bombs that killed our troops and had fought in Islamists ranks, but for about \$300 a month they turned their guns against their former allies.

The Sons of Iraq program has so far cost on the order of \$250 million. Such handouts were championed by General Petraeus. When he was in charge of Mosul, Petraeus and his men spent some \$58 million; when he became commander of forces in Iraq, he encouraged the wider application of this tool. Testifying before Congress, Petraeus explained the rationale: "the salaries paid to the Sons of Iraq alone cost far less than the cost savings and vehicles not lost due to the enhanced security in local communities." (Exactly the same could be said about paying off a mafia protection racket; it certainly looks like a cost savings compared to replacing smashed shop windows and surgery for broken kneecaps; but what happens next month?)

The Awakening was accompanied by a spending spree to buy the good graces of Iraqi civilians. Under a program called the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), which has since been institutionalized across Iraq under the updated policies, soldiers

walk the streets carrying thousands of dollars to pay Iraqis for doorways battered in American raids and limbs lost during firefights. Sheiks appeal to commanders to use larger pools of money locked away in Humvees and safes at military bases for new schools, health clinics, water treatment plants and generators, knowing that the military can bypass Iraqi and U.S. bureaucratic hurdles.

Some items on this shopping spree: \$100,000 worth of dolls; \$500,000 of action figures made to look like Iraqi security forces; \$12,800 for pools to cool bears and tigers at a Baghdad zoo; \$48,000 to buy children's shoes; \$14,250 for "I Love Iraq" t-shirts.<sup>32</sup>

Witness the so-called progress in Bush's "war on terror": never mind about defeating the enemy—now we stoop to bribe people *not* to butcher Americans.

By design and in practice, the essence of the surge was not to end the Islamist threat, but to appease hostile Iraqis—to bribe them with children's shoes and wads of cash to be nice to us, and as long as the money flows, to turn against the jihadists. A scheme in which you have to pay people not to attack or kill you is extortion. The United States instigated the practice of appeasement, and now this humiliating scheme is celebrated as a stroke of consummate military genius.

What happens when the torrent of cash dries up? That future problem will sort itself out, we are told, because once stability is achieved, there will be a reconciliation among Iraq's warring ethnic and sectarian factions. The deadly gangland-style shoot-outs in the streets and ugly wrangling in parliament will cease, or so we have been promised. Washington believed that by arming and empowering the Sunni tribes, who constitute the bulk of the Sons of Iraq, it would pave the road for them to feel included in the nation's politics—which the majority Shiites now hold in a vise-grip. Ultimately, the idea is to fold these gangs of former (and current) criminals, supposedly former jihadists, and ordinary Iraqis into the nation's Shiite-dominated police force. Some of that has happened, but the deep-seated, bitter resentment between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq cannot be wished away. Many Sons of Iraq believe that their real enemy is the Shiite-run government in Baghdad, and with their American-provided arms, they await the day of reckoning.<sup>33</sup>

Washington has thrust itself into the maelstrom of primitive, sectarian conflict that dates back many centuries. The hoped-for "reconciliation" between Iraq's sects, if even possible, may well require seismic theological shifts. One upshot of the Awakening is that we have backed what is essentially the establishment of a quasi-feudal, neighborhood-level warlord society.<sup>34</sup> That social organization is at odds with the central government and the Shiite majority, and awash in money, arms, and vengeance-hungry fighters ready for a showdown. This is to say nothing of the resentment we incur from Shiites who regard our arming and backing of Sunni tribal groups as an endorsement of that sect—members of which, during Saddam Hussein's era, cruelly dominated them. We may yet witness a sectarian clash that erupts with a fury surpassing the mayhem at the peak of the insurgency.

What are we to make of the assertion that at least the jihadists, and particularly Al Qaeda, have been killed; that many have been driven into hiding or out of Iraq; that they have been demoralized?

True, some jihadists have been killed in Iraq, but to trumpet this as success is pure fantasy. It makes as much sense to trumpet the “success” of a doctor who infects his patients, lets thousands of them suffer and succumb to heinous death, until, finally, in a few cases, he palliates the symptoms of the disease he instigated. Prior to Washington’s military intervention, Islamists were a minor constituency, brutally suppressed along with other opposition groups, under Saddam Hussein’s regime. This is one reason, for example, why SCIRI based itself in neighboring Iran. Since 2003, though, Islamists have built up a larger popular following in the country, while hordes of jihadists, eager for martyrdom, flowed into Iraq to join the insurgency. (By one accounting, most of the suicide operations have been carried out by foreign fighters from Arab countries.)<sup>35</sup>

The insurgency presented holy warriors with a kind of proving ground to perfect their tactics and skills. It also offered them ample opportunity to slaughter U.S. troops; in large part due to Washington’s self-denying rules of engagement (see part 2). Empowering the killers, Iran provided financial support, training, weapons, and explosives to Shiite factions, and also backed some Sunni groups. The full extent of Iran’s culpability for U.S. deaths in Iraq may be hard to tabulate exhaustively. But it is clear that the insurgency enabled Iran, a regime that lusts after “Death to America,” to engineer the deaths of many Americans.

True, some jihadists have gone into hiding, but there’s a world of difference between a tactical retrenching (or *hudna*) and defeat. Take the case of Moktada al-Sadr. In the summer of 2008, having apparently relocated to Iran, he announced that his Mahdi Army would restructure. Following the tried and true popularity-boosting strategy of Islamist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, Sadr’s organization would divide its attention. One focus will be social service to the needy (to spruce up its image as a pious organization, following some allegations of graft); the other area of focus will be the righteous, armed “resistance” to un-Islamic and Western elements. No group that has been defeated bothers to realign its popular outreach and streamline its militant operations. To be defeated means to give up one’s goals.

Islamists like Sadr who have stepped into the shadows for now seem to be biding their time in hopes that an auspicious occasion will present itself. Perhaps they hope that anarchy will engulf Iraq. That may happen with their nudging or simply as a result of pent-up Sunni-Shiite enmity. Either way, anarchy is fertile ground for Islamists—not only because they can operate with

impunity in a lawless state, but also because they can position themselves as the only genuine advocates of social-political order. It was under essentially these conditions that in 1996 the Taliban came to rule Afghanistan; ditto for the Islamist rise to power in Somalia in 2006–07. Sharia law certainly brings order and a kind of security: it replaces mayhem with a brutally severe, totalitarian Islamic control over people's thought and action. But regardless of whether Islamists make a serious comeback in Iraq, we have a great deal to fear from those who have supposedly been demoralized and driven out of the country.

True, some jihadists have lost their zeal, and a few may be truly depressed about their prospects—in Iraq. Although they have suffered a minor setback there, they persist in believing their ideal to be achievable. Many (as noted earlier) have joined the insurgency in Afghanistan, where their prospects look brighter, and the burgeoning jihadist forces menacing Pakistan's borders. Observe how, just as the notion of success in war has been degraded and defined down, so too with the idea of what it means to demoralize the enemy.

The experience of Iraq has left many with greater confidence in their ability to subjugate infidels under the sword. There's reason to question whether Islamists fully expected to get all that far in Iraq, at least in the short run. It may be that they were content to exploit the conflict as an opportunity to maximize the number of American casualties and to hone their skills for use in other theaters of combat. These modest goals they accomplished, spectacularly. In the assessment of two scholars, Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, the Iraq War

served a Darwinian function for jihadist fighters; those who survived ended up better trained, more committed, and otherwise more formidable than when they began. Unfortunately, the skills they picked up in Iraq—sniper tactics, experience in urban warfare, an improved ability to avoid enemy intelligence, and use of man-portable surface-to-air missiles—are readily transferable to other theaters. The insurgents have also learned how to get through U.S. checkpoints, which are far less formidable on U.S. borders than they are in the war zone of Iraq. The ethos that glorifies suicide bombing has spread as well. The United States and its allies are more likely to face young men and women willing to kill themselves as they kill others, making targets much harder to defend. Most important, the jihadists have learned how to use improvised explosive devices, the greatest killer of U.S. forces in Iraq, and these devices have already shown up in Kuwait.<sup>36</sup>

Suicide bombing, another tactic heavily practiced in Iraq, is now rampant in Afghanistan. The sharing of “best practices” among jihadists is potentially



unlimited in its scale and lethal impact. Although person-to-person training may be the traditional mode of transferring combat knowledge, the Web offers Islamists an inexpensive, worldwide communications platform. Through bulletin boards, online videos, and written manuals, they can recruit fighters to their cause and disseminate to them hard-won expertise in mass murder, to be deployed anywhere.

Nothing that the United States has done in Iraq or Afghanistan has given jihadists reason to abandon their desire for such mass-casualty attacks on the West. Washington's policy has in fact left them stronger than before. It has made the ideal of Islamic totalitarianism seem ever more viable—both by empowering and blessing Islamist rule, and by betraying its own timidity in the refusal to crush the jihad. The Islamist equation that fidelity to Islam is the path to existential dominance, while American secularism (read: impiety) means weakness, thus gains added plausibility in their minds.

Ayatollah Khomeini and Osama bin Laden rightly concluded that when America is pushed, it folds. To this lesson can now be added a self-humiliating innovation—outright bribery.

## The Broader Conflict

Survey other fronts of the conflict, and the same dispiriting finding emerges: the enemy stands strengthened. Sometimes through direct encouragement from Washington, sometimes by dint of its passive failure to act against them, Islamists have made military and political advances toward their ideal.

For a sober, and reliably understated, assessment of the Islamist threat, leaf through the State Department's annual *Country Reports on Terrorism*. The edition published in 2008 notes that clusters of jihadists are encamped in "parts of East Africa, particularly Somalia, where they pose a serious threat to U.S. and allied interests in the region." Meanwhile "elements of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas and the Lord's Resistance Army" are settled in nearby Sudan. Al Qaeda itself has grown stronger through a merger with two additional Islamist groups, one based in Algeria, the other in Libya.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps the most significant new Islamist operational stronghold today is in the tribal belt along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

### Pakistan

J. Michael McConnell, the U.S. National Intelligence director, told Congress in early 2008 that in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al Qaeda is gaining in strength and prepping new recruits who can blend into American society and attack domestic targets. "[T]he group has retained or regenerated key

elements of its capability, including top leadership, operational mid-level lieutenants, and de-facto safe haven in Pakistan's border area with Afghanistan." That no-man's-land, as we have seen, is "a staging area for al-Qaeda's attacks in support of the Taliban in Afghanistan as well as a location for training new terrorist operatives," but it is also a base for preparing and deploying "attacks in Pakistan, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the United States."<sup>38</sup>

Taliban factions there have organized training schools for suicide bombers (some as young as ten) and produce and distribute propaganda DVDs to recruit holy warriors.<sup>39</sup> The plot in 2006 to blow up airliners crossing the Atlantic has been linked to the Pakistan tribal belt; the ringleader of the London Underground suicide bombers had trained in the area. In the autumn of 2008, Michael V. Hayden, director of the CIA, painted a dire picture. Summing up the gravity of the situation, he noted: "Today, virtually every major terrorist threat my agency is aware of has threads back to the tribal areas."

Within Pakistan itself, Islamists "operate relatively freely in cities like Karachi," according to *Newsweek*, and "pretty much come and go as they please" in that country. Some Taliban commanders "have moved their wives and children to Pakistan, where they live in the suburbs of cities like Peshawar and Islamabad. . . . Mullah Shabir Ahmad is a member of the Taliban's 30-man ruling council, or shura. He's moved his family to a modest neighborhood of nearly identical brick and mud-brick houses in Quetta." Ahmad spends about half the year in Pakistan, "shuttling between Quetta, Karachi, Peshawar and the tribal belt to raise funds, recruit new fighters and plot strategy with other commanders."<sup>40</sup>

From this redoubt jihadists orchestrate not only the military drive to reconquer Afghanistan, but also a push to "Talibanize" large patches of Pakistan—further entrenching their operational hub. The growing imposition of sharia law has spilled over from the lawless tribal belt into the neighboring North West Frontier Province. The outer suburbs of cities like Peshawar, the capital of that province, are already under Islamist control. Jihadist forces have laid siege to the city, and may in time overpower the feckless Pakistani authorities.

Like rampant weeds, Taliban-allied groups are firmly taking root on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. This Talibanization would formalize the quasi-sovereignty of the de facto sharia ministates that serve as Islamist bases. India has already suffered at the hands of this burgeoning Islamist menace. Jihadist forces launched a devastating bomb attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul, and there is strong evidence linking jihadists operating from Pakistan to the three-day massacre in 2008 that claimed more than 170 lives in Mumbai, India.

The more political power that Islamists seize in the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands, the more easily they can plan, train for, and carry out lethal attacks on targets farther afield. The threat emanating from this area, according to one scholar at RAND Corporation, is “comparable to what [the U.S.] faced on Sept. 11, 2001” when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. The jihadists’ “base of operations has moved only a short distance, roughly the difference from New York to Philadelphia.”<sup>41</sup>

All of this has happened with the passive, and often active, complicity of the nuclear-armed Pakistani regime. In the 1990s Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) had helped bring the Taliban to power. Gen. Pervez Musharraf’s regime (1999–2008) was one of only three to formally endorse and recognize the Taliban’s Islamist rule in Afghanistan. After 9/11, Musharraf claimed to be with us, rather than with the terrorists. Telling Washington what it desperately wanted to hear, Musharraf pledged “unstinted cooperation.” But our newly anointed “major non-Nato ally” neither eradicated the Islamists nor allowed U.S. forces to do so. Instead in 2006 Musharraf reached a truce with them: in return for the Islamists’ “promise” not to attack Pakistani soldiers, not to establish their own Taliban-like rule, and not to support foreign jihadists—Pakistan backed off and released 165 captured jihadists. This appeasing “truce” collapsed soon after and served to empower the jihadists.<sup>42</sup>

Musharraf’s successor, Asif Ali Zardari, also vowed solidarity with America and promised to rid Pakistan of Islamists, who have been blamed for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, a prominent politician and Zardari’s wife. But little has changed: the regime took feeble steps against the Islamists but quickly slid back to pursuing appeasing settlements.<sup>43</sup>

The most ominous deal so far was signed into law in April 2009. In return for a cease-fire, Pakistan’s national government granted Islamists the authority to enforce sharia law in the Swat Valley, a former tourist haven in northern Pakistan. The deal endorsed and formalized the advances that Islamists had already made: they had effectively conquered much of Swat, bringing residents under the cruel dominion of sharia.<sup>44</sup> For the Taliban, this was clearly a victory. It encouraged them to continue fighting to install Islamic law nationwide. “When we achieve our goal in one place,” explained a spokesman for the Taliban, “we need to struggle for it in other areas.” The goal, after all, is to “enforce the rule of Allah on the land of Allah.” So the Taliban, of course, surged to exert their control over the nearby Buner district. They set up checkpoints, began patrolling villages, and announced the establishment of sharia courts.

The holy warriors advanced to positions within just sixty miles of Pakistan’s capital city, Islamabad.<sup>45</sup>

Panicked and facing criticism from the West, Pakistan launched a meager military operation—not to defeat, once and for all, the Islamist forces, but only to try to recapture some of the territory that had fallen under Taliban control. The Islamists were brazen; on one occasion they stopped a Pakistani army convoy heading into Swat and forced it to turn back. The convoy duly complied.<sup>46</sup>

Islamabad may somehow manage to abate, temporarily, the galloping Talibanization of Pakistan. But even that is doubtful.

The regime has not only committed itself to the (self-destructive) policy of appeasement; powerful elements within the regime have long shielded and abetted Islamists. Pakistani forces along the border with Afghanistan have reportedly tipped off jihadists of impending U.S. strikes, and at times fired back on behalf of the holy warriors. Islamabad has denied Washington permission to send troops into the region to root out the jihadists—going so far as to shoot at U.S. helicopters nearing its border. Between Pakistan's military establishment and Islamist groups there are strong bonds. When American forces went into Afghanistan in 2001, many Islamists fled the country and alongside them were Pakistani intelligence officers who had worked as trainers for the Taliban regime. Pakistan has actively fostered Islamist fighters not only in Afghanistan, but also in Kashmir (where the Mumbai attackers apparently trained).<sup>47</sup>

Whether some of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal could fall into their hands is an open question. But that possibility is suggested by the scandal concerning A.Q. Khan, a Pakistani scientist. For years Khan illicitly sold nuclear technology and equipment to buyers worldwide (including Iran). When this came to light, Islamabad was breathtakingly tender in its so-called punishment of Khan (confining him to house arrest), and refused to turn him over to its ally, the United States, for questioning. The scandal revealed that Pakistan's nuclear expertise and materials could be had for a price. Maybe the regime was not complicit in Khan's deals, and maybe it has locked down its nukes and prevents anyone from selling access to that technology; but Pakistan might simply hand out some of those weapons, gratis, to the jihadists it has nourished for so long.

The situation in Pakistan is dire. Emblematic of the festering mess is the fact that jihadist commanders not only operate with impunity, they flaunt their confidence: thus Baitullah Mehsud, a prominent Taliban warlord, has led in-person press conferences before the Western media in Pakistan.

The danger from the Islamic totalitarian movement is not just that it *could* attack us, but the fact that its leaders have grown more confident. Islamists owe a debt of gratitude to George W. Bush's foreign policy, which opened the

door for them to make political strides—by force and by electoral means. Their rising political fortunes have fueled ambitious hopes of greater advances.

That is especially true in the cases of Hamas and Hezbollah.

### **Lebanon and Palestinian Territories**

Lebanese Hezbollah, it should be remembered, is the vanguard of Iran's proxy war against America and the West. It was a pioneer of suicide bombings against U.S. targets (see chapter 1). Hezbollah is believed to have established cells in Europe, Africa, South America, North America, and Asia, and it has passed on its military expertise to groups like Hamas and various insurgents in Iraq. George Tennes, former CIA director, observed in 2003 that Hezbollah was "a notch above" Al Qaeda, widely reputed as a global force, and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage described the group as the "A Team" of terrorism. Like Al Qaeda and the rest of the Islamic totalitarian movement, the organization (whose name means "the party of Allah") is motivated by the moral-political ideal of a sharia regime.

The Islamic Resistance Movement—more commonly known by its acronym, Hamas—is a direct offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine (see chapters 1 and 7). Hamas grew enormously popular in part because it outstripped rival Palestinian terrorist groups with the ferocity of its attacks, particularly its deployment of suicide bombers. Its charter calls for the liquidation of the state of Israel as a major step in a global campaign to establish Allah's dominion.

These are enemy organizations—ones that the Bush crusade for democracy greatly bolstered. The administration insisted that Hezbollah be allowed to participate in Lebanon's 2005 elections. The Islamist group for the first time gained cabinet posts in the Lebanese government and control of several ministries. In the 2006 Palestinian elections, the White House ensured that Hamas (an avowedly murderous organization) was allowed to run. It won. The jihadists took over the reins of power in the Palestinian territories.

Facilitated by Washington, these political advances immensely boosted the confidence of both groups. By summer 2006, Hezbollah and Hamas instigated a war with Israel, and they came away with a major success.

Like so many wars that have erupted between Israel and its hostile neighbors, the conflict was in part a proxy fight. In many of the Cold War-era conflicts, Arab forces were surrogates for the Soviets, and Israel represented, and got some backing from, America (and the West). In 2006, the U.S.-aligned Israelis faced the Hamas-Hezbollah-Iran axis fighting under the banner of Islamic totalitarianism. So, it was in America's interest to do everything possible to aid Israel in crushing this common foe.

The war's outcome was stunning. Islamists battered Israel, the reputedly superior military force, and fought it to a stalemate. That accomplishment was possible because Israel renounced the military opportunity finally to destroy Hezbollah and Hamas. The clear victim of their aggression, it had the moral right to do so. It also had the capability—and, with Hezbollah missiles crashing down on cities in northern Israel, doing so was an urgent necessity. But Israel fought a self-denying war in the by-now familiar American pattern (see part 2). After years of U.S. pressure to show restraint, Israel demonstrated that it had accepted that selfless ethos, and backed down. It complied with international demands for a negotiated, appeasing settlement.

With that crumbling surrender, Israel destroyed the last remnants of its reputed military invincibility. Hard-earned in earlier clashes, that awesome stature was central to its deterrent power. Islamists now realized that Israel was a target they could plausibly hope to overpower militarily. Moreover, since Islamists (and the Arab world generally) view Israel as an American surrogate, the Israeli surrender also provided another confirmation of Washington's abject moral weakness. The United States was handed a golden opportunity to endorse Israel's eradication of two jihadist groups in the Middle East, but instead it backed off.

Hezbollah and Hamas emerged stronger. For a time, Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, eclipsed Osama bin Laden as the Muslim world's hero of the moment. Iran, the chief backer of the Islamist axis, also had cause for joy, because the war's outcome burnished its status as a potent force in the region.

Encouraged by their success, the Islamists charged on. By the close of that year, Hezbollah summoned, and got, a crowd of thousands into the streets of Beirut. The goal was to topple the government. One of their major demands was that Hezbollah be given the power to veto all cabinet decisions. Crowds blocked the streets. The protestors camped out in a makeshift tent city in the center of Beirut, for months. Armed clashes flared up a few times. And although the standoff faded from the news in the West, it kept on going. Hezbollah had every reason to believe it had the upper hand.

More than one year later, in early 2008, the beleaguered government tried to exert pressure on the Islamist group. It shut down Hezbollah's vast telecommunications network and removed a video camera that the group had placed to surveil goings-on at Beirut airport. To this Hezbollah responded by venting its indignation: the gun fights that followed looked like the pandemonium last witnessed in Lebanon's horrific civil war. By proving its superior strength, Hezbollah compelled the nominally pro-U.S. government to back down. More than simply calling off its armed forces, however, the government went on to appease Hezbollah by granting the veto it had demanded.

So the Islamist group significantly enlarged its political dominion. Its power now extended beyond a *de facto* ministate (aka Hezbollahland) in southern Lebanon, to having the final say on the policies of the national government.

During this same period, Hamas also strived to achieve political supremacy within its current purview. The group worked to uproot its chief rival, the Fatah faction, from the Gaza strip. This it achieved through a protracted civil war that annihilated hundreds of Palestinians. With Fatah loyalists killed or kicked out of Gaza, Hamas turned its sights to the West Bank, the other tract of Palestinian-controlled territory. Even as this internecine fighting went on, Islamists in Gaza fired hundreds of Qassam rockets at neighboring Israeli towns. And like Hezbollah, the Palestinian jihadists are busy rearming, training fighters, amassing rockets. The Hamas-Israel war that broke out in December 2008 revealed the extent to which Hamas had grown stronger militarily; despite heavy Israeli retaliation and a ground war, the Islamists nevertheless managed to continue their rockets attacks, penetrating even farther into Israel.

Where the United States should have worked to dismantle Islamist strongholds, it played midwife for two new terrorist ministates in the Levant. The Bush administration *has* succeeded—but only in galvanizing jihadists in Beirut, Gaza City, Tehran, and beyond.

## Iran

There is much truth in the sardonic quip that “we fought Iraq, and Iran won.”<sup>48</sup> We noted earlier in this essay (and in other chapters) that Iran fomented much of the insurgent chaos in Iraq. The war enabled it to cause the murder of untold numbers of Americans. Furthermore, Iran has gained considerable power within Iraq, through its alliance with the leading Shiite and Kurdish parties. Tehran continues to provide millions in financing, arms, and explosives, as well as training in bomb-making and terrorist tactics, to all manner of holy warriors, in Iraq and elsewhere.

Tehran’s relationship with Al Qaeda began before 9/11 and continues still. As the State Department euphemistically explains:

Iran [has] remained unwilling to bring to justice senior al-Qaeda (AQ) members it has detained, and has refused to publicly identify those senior members in its custody. Iran has repeatedly resisted numerous calls to transfer custody of its AQ detainees to their countries of origin or third countries for interrogation or trial. Iran [has] also continued to fail to control the activities of some AQ members who fled to Iran following the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.<sup>49</sup>

Translation: Taliban and Al Qaeda forces who fled Afghanistan found a refuge in Iran, where they are continuing to orchestrate their jihad.

But Iran's most malignant enterprise, the one that induces a cold sweat in Jerusalem, Paris, London, and Washington, is its avid quest to master nuclear technology. Even by conservative estimates, it may be just a matter of years before Iran could arm itself with a nuclear weapon—or put a doomsday device into the hands of its proxies. Of course, there have been attempts by the United States and its allies to prevent that outcome. In the last seven years, since conclusive evidence of the Iranian nuclear program came to light, the regime has toyed with Western diplomats. Rightly believing its adversaries to be weak, Iran has stonewalled and defied the feeble United Nations sanctions imposed upon it. The Europeans, with American backing, try again and again to coax the Iranians with all manner of bribes, but the Islamists unflinchingly maintain that there's one “red line” that no deal can ever cross: that is, they will not give up nuclear technology. After the breakdown of each round of talks, Iran is offered yet another second chance—thereby highlighting the West's weakness.

It is quite clear why Tehran can set the terms of negotiations; Iran's leaders feel themselves to be in a position of strength. And indeed they are. The headline story of the last eight years is that, amid a so-called “war on terror,” we have witnessed the ascendancy of Tehran—the Islamist regime our State Department routinely designates as the most active state-sponsor of terrorism. Tehran relishes its new position. The regime's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, underscored why Iran feels invulnerable. When the regime opened its uranium conversion facility at Isfahan, he observed, the West threatened military action, but “now, we are operating over 3,000 centrifuges, and every week [another] new [centrifuge] system is installed.” Darting a finger of rebuke at the West, he drew an apt conclusion: “you are making fools of yourselves—for you cannot harm Iran in the slightest.”<sup>50</sup>

The ideological movement led by Iran has grown far stronger than it was pre-9/11. From Afghanistan to Iraq; from Pakistan to northern and eastern Africa, Islamists are succeeding in implementing, to varying degrees, their political-cultural vision of sharia rule. They stand vitalized by these inroads and further inspired by Iran's unbending—and undefeated—militancy.

### **Within the West**

Washington's failure to identify and defeat Islamic totalitarianism—indeed, the active U.S. encouragement of it—has spurred a preexisting insidious trend in the cradle of Western civilization.

Within Europe, Islamists are carrying out a multiform jihad to elevate sharia as the supreme principle of society and government. Seeing their



ideal ascendant across the globe, they feel entitled to arrogate to themselves greater political power wherever they reside. Their efforts constitute nothing less than a comprehensive thrust to Islamize the continent of Europe (and perhaps eventually North America). They do so not only by familiar violent means, but also by exploiting the West's intellectual self-doubt and weakness. European (and American) accommodation of this campaign has served only to intensify it.

The openly coercive and violent form of this campaign was on display in the rush-hour bombing of commuter trains in Madrid; the suicide bombings on London's underground; the attempted car bombing of nightclubs in London's West End, followed up by a desperate bid to blow up a crowded terminal building at Glasgow airport. Jihadist plots have been uncovered in Germany, Denmark, and across Europe. The point of such attacks is to punish unbelievers for deviation from Islamic precepts—and thus assert what the Islamists hold as the correct social principle.

That was the rationale behind the assault on the film director Theo Van Gogh. One morning in 2004, he was set upon while riding his bicycle to work in postcard-perfect Amsterdam. The attacker, Muhammad Bouyeri, a self-appointed Islamist enforcer, shot him point-blank and slit his throat, almost to the point of decapitation. A lengthy note pinned to Van Gogh's body with two kitchen knives spelled out why he had been executed. His "crime" was to make a critical film about Islam. The note also promised to visit the same punishment upon other "blasphemers" involved in the film, including the Dutch parliamentarian Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

At the trial, Bouyeri was proudly candid about the religious character of his deed: "I did what I did purely out of my beliefs. I want you to know that I acted out of conviction and not that I took his life because he was Dutch or because I was Moroccan and felt insulted." Unrepentant to the last, he spurned the opportunity to seek the mercy of the court, explaining that "If I ever get free, I would do it again."<sup>51</sup>

Bouyeri took it upon himself to silence, forever, a filmmaker who had dared impugn the religion of Islam. This ritual slaying brought to the Netherlands the same kind of religious censorship that characterizes the Arab-Islamic world, where governments censor the press, books, broadcast media, the Internet, and brutally punish "blasphemers." There is no freedom of speech under such regimes; the import of Van Gogh's murder was that there must not be any in Europe, either.

The Islamist assault on free speech began in earnest with Ayatollah Khomeini's 1989 fatwa enjoining "zealous Muslims" worldwide to murder the novelist Salman Rushdie, whose book, *The Satanic Verses*, supposedly

blasphemed against Muhammad (see chapter 1). By demanding that free speech be nullified in the West, Khomeini presumptuously asserted that sharia must have global jurisdiction. Decades later that presumption lives on, with added force, among Islamists in Europe.

This was eloquently demonstrated, on a massive scale, in the uproar over the Danish cartoons of Muhammad (see chapter 2). Notice how this crisis was calculated to elevate sharia precepts above—indeed, to negate—the West’s principle of free speech. The twists and turns of the backstory have been diligently recorded by Pernille Ammitzbøll and Lorenzo Vidino in the journal *Middle East Quarterly*. From that account it is clear how the Danish clerics who helped instigate the crisis sought to intimidate the Danish government and people into obedience. “We are not threatening anybody,” one of the clerics wrote, early on, in a press release, “but when you see what happened in Holland and then still print the cartoons, that’s quite stupid”—a threatening allusion to the fate of Theo Van Gogh.<sup>52</sup>

The instigators of the crisis ratcheted up the pressure by soliciting the help of regimes in the Muslim world. With their support and prompting, the riots exploded. The raging of mobs, the burning of flags, the firebombing of embassies—all this was meant to coerce the nations of Europe and North America to bow down to the dictates of sharia. Practically all of them did. In unison.

The U.S. State Department criticized the publication of the cartoons as “offensive to the beliefs of Muslims.” With a perfunctory nod to free speech, Washington went on to betray that principle by indicating that perhaps the cartoons were better left unpublished. Leaders in Europe kneeled down and prostrated themselves. President Jacques Chirac of France said that “overt provocations” (i.e. the publication of those cartoons) should be “avoided.” “I condemn all obvious provocations which could dangerously fuel passions,” he groveled. E.U. foreign minister Javier Solana pleaded that the European Union shared the “anguish” of Muslims “offended” by the cartoons. The E.U.’s justice minister, Franco Frattini, said that the union would establish a “media code” to encourage “prudence.” He told the *Daily Telegraph* of London: “The press will give the Muslim world the message: we are aware of the consequences of exercising the right of free expression. . . . We can and are ready to self-regulate that right.”<sup>53</sup>

By appeasing Muslim intimidation and outright aggression, leaders of the West handed another victory to the Islamist cause. Since the Van Gogh incident and especially so after the cartoons crisis, Islamists have capitalized on the fear that they have instilled in European hearts. When necessary, the Islamists (like the virtue police in Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia) still resort to violence, but it is staggering how far they get without lifting a finger.

It is often enough for them merely to hint at reprisals, or simply to express their displeasure, to compel a gallery to shut down an exhibit, to induce an opera company to call off a performance, to intimidate publishers into self-censorship. Take the Dutch film “*Fitna*,” which suggests a causal link between the Koran’s teachings and terrorism. In the months prior to its release, the Netherlands was in turmoil. The Grand Mufti of Syria, speaking before the European parliament in Strasbourg, warned that “If there is unrest, bloodshed and violence after the broadcast of the Koran film, [the filmmaker Geert] Wilders will be responsible.”<sup>54</sup> So pervasive were the fears of Muslim violence, that Wilders could not find a venue willing to screen it. The Dutch government denounced the film, sight unseen.

The holy war against free speech is the most salient, but hardly the only, manifestation of the quest to Islamize Europe. A growing number of books—such as Bat Ye’or’s *Eurabia*, Bruce Bawer’s *While Europe Slept*, Melanie Phillips’s *Londonistan*, and Robert Spencer’s *Stealth Jihad*—have documented this trend in Europe as well as its spread to North America. In the cities of Europe, for example, we find Muslims self-segregating in their own communities and demanding official recognition for the sovereign authority of sharia law in their areas. France has officially designated about 750 areas as “no-go” zones, many of them Muslim-dominated neighborhoods, where police lack authority.<sup>55</sup>

The ambition behind all this is voiced openly. One Belgian imam, for instance, helpfully explained that “Soon we will take power in this country. Those who criticize us now, will regret it. They will have to serve us. Prepare, for the hour is near.”<sup>56</sup> A cleric in the United Kingdom expressed his fervent desire that Britain become an Islamic state, with the flag of Islam raised above 10 Downing Street.<sup>57</sup> That may seem fanciful, but it is an option for which the door has been opened. Note the trial balloon sent up in 2008 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the established Anglican Church: in a lecture at the Royal Courts of Justice, he suggested that elements of sharia should be officially accommodated within British law.<sup>58</sup> Although his comments elicited a tepid backlash, the fact remains that so prominent a figure would even contemplate such a possibility, much less advocate for it publicly. It captures perfectly the direction in which Europe is heading.

Many Muslim demands are accommodated under the prevailing doctrine of multiculturalism, which ostensibly repudiates judgment of values while scorning and negating Western principles. The institutionalized embrace of multiculturalism reflects a self-doubt about the worth of Western values and the principles of secular society. The same self-doubt, married with fear, underlies other forms of capitulation to Islamist demands. Many in the

West recognize, even if they evade the knowledge, that the Islamist assault on freedom and Western values is backed by the threat of violence. Putting this into words, Osama bin Laden warned Europeans against reprinting the Danish cartoons of Muhammad: “If there is no check on the freedom of your words, then let your hearts be open to the freedom of our actions.”<sup>59</sup> Thus we are called upon to “respect” Islamic values and accede to their demands—with the understanding that if we comply and demonstrate our submission, the holy warriors will refrain from punishing us. (The bombing of the Danish Embassy in Pakistan, shortly after bin Laden’s message, demonstrated the lesson: the Danish media dared reprint the cartoons, and so here was the penalty.)

This fits the model of jihadist conquest in history. Conquered peoples were given the option of conversion, death, or, sometimes, the status of *dhimmi*—humiliated subject-peoples living as second-class citizens at the mercy of Islamic overlords (see chapter 2). Europeans, to an astounding extent, are rapidly selling themselves into dhimmitude.

While the situation in Europe is particularly acute, the craven submission to Islamist coercion is spreading across the West. It is a measure of the power Islamists wield that the chilling effect on free speech applies even to books that aim to *propitiate* Muslims. For example: *The Jewel of Medina*, a historical novel, offers a calculatedly (and, some say, tendentiously) flattering portrayal of the life of Aisha, one of the wives of the prophet Muhammad. Random House, the American publisher, had paid the author a hefty advance for the novel and was about to publish the book, when it got wind of a hint of trouble. One reviewer of the galleys, an American professor who teaches Islamic history, took a dislike to the book. She in turn alerted a Muslim friend, who runs an online message board. A day later, there was much sanctimonious talk on blogs and forums about instigating a campaign against the novel and its publisher. A sense of foreboding, and then utter panic, swept over the executives at Random House. Citing “fear of a possible terrorist threat from extremist Muslims,” the publisher scrapped plans to bring out the book.<sup>60</sup>

It is hard to blame Random House for its capitulation. With governments urging people to keep their heads down and their mouths shut—or else they are on their own—many see no alternative but to censor themselves and preemptively submit. Thus we also hear of moves in Australia to ban topless sunbathing—lest Muslim passersby be offended at the sight of the unclothed human form. Or gyms in American cities and universities that mandate women-only hours—to accommodate the sex-segregation demanded by some Muslims. And though the particular steps may seem innocuous in themselves, they signify a piecemeal advance for Islamists.

Part of what has prevented honest people from grasping the nature of this trend is the widespread failure properly to define the enemy. The focus on one particular means (“terrorism”), rather than the fundamental end actuating the Islamist movement, has prevented many people from recognizing the essential commonality between the events unfolding within the West and the terror-war led by Tehran, bin Laden, and their passionate followers. Contributing greatly to the confusion (and evasion) has been the Bush administration’s insistence that we’re in a “war on terror”—and its refusal to name and defeat the actual enemy.

Whether or not Islamists can attain a worldwide sharia regime, the shameful truth is that they remain undefeated and strengthening. Many of their victims in the West, meanwhile, tremble and placatingly unroll the red carpet for the advance of the conquest-seeking Islamist movement.

The only party in this conflict that has achieved real success is not Washington, but the Islamists.

### Disarming Ourselves

The ruinous effects of Bush’s policy will be felt for years to come, but not only because it facilitated and empowered the enemy. It is also because that policy has left Americans demoralized and disarmed.

Even before Barack Obama’s tenure began, the legacy of Bush’s foreign policy had already circumscribed the options believed to be open to us. For many people, the fiasco of Iraq and Afghanistan discredited the use of military power, per se, to advance U.S. security. In other words: we tried war, war failed, so forget war. That option has been swept off the table.

Take the urgent issue of what to do about Iran. There is a shrinking minority of voices calling for a military attack on Iran, but they timidly focus exclusively on the regime’s nuclear facilities—while exempting the Islamists in power, who would remain intact to carry on the jihad by existing means. The idea of taking out Iran’s nuclear program commands little support in foreign policy circles, and even then only as a distant, undesirable last resort, an implied threat we would rather never carry out. To many minds, the far more congenial approach is to manage the crisis using diplomatic “carrots and sticks.”

The mainstream debate today (if it can be called a debate) concerns not whether, but only how, to engage Iran.

This is how Vali Nasr and Ray Takeyh, two advocates of engaging Iran, believe it should play out: America would begin by backing off from our supposedly “provocative naval deployments in the Persian Gulf, easing its efforts

to get European and Asian Banks to divest from Iran and inviting Iranian representatives to all regional and international conferences dealing with the Middle East." As part of this process,

the language of American diplomacy would also have to alter. The administration cannot propose negotiations while castigating Iran as part of an "axis of evil" or the "central banker of terrorism" and forming a regional alliance to roll back Iranian influence.

Once a more suitable environment has been created, the United States should propose dialogue without conditions with the aim of normalizing relations. For too long, proposed talks with Iran have focused on areas of American concern: nuclear proliferation and Iraq. A more comprehensive platform would involve the totality of disagreements between the two countries and also address Iran's regional interests.

The thought is that "just as Iran will meet confrontation with confrontation, it will respond to what it perceives as flexibility with pragmatism."<sup>61</sup> Bill Richardson, a former U.N. ambassador, also favors this approach. In an op-ed for the *Washington Post*, he asserted that "The Iranians will not end their nuclear program because we threaten them and call them names." But, he claims, "They will renounce nukes because we convince them that they will be safer and more prosperous if they do that than if they don't."<sup>62</sup>

How precisely we should package and present the deal depends on whom you listen to. Some stress the importance of signaling our willingness to impose economic sanctions with real bite, preferably through the United Nations; others, such as the conservative Heritage Foundation, urge bypassing the U.N. (where allies of Iran have neutered already weak sanctions) and opting for "sanctions of the willing" that rely on the cooperation of Western nations.

The manner in which America should petition Iran is also debated. When CNN invited five former secretaries of state to offer their advice to the soon-to-be elected 44th president of the United States, they disagreed only on a minor detail—at what level of government to engage Iran—while unanimously endorsing the conclusion that U.S.-Iranian negotiations are the only way forward.<sup>63</sup> Some months later, Joe Biden explained the viewpoint of the Obama team on how to proceed: "We should make it very clear to Iran what it risks in terms of isolation if it continues to pursue a dangerous nuclear program but also what it stands to gain if it does the right thing." Amplifying that point, in his inauguration speech Barack Obama assured Iran "that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."<sup>64</sup>

Through some diplomatic channel and (per Obama) "without preconditions," we would offer Iran juicy incentives ("carrots")—money, aid, trade

agreements, diplomatic prestige—that would dissuade it from pursuing a nuclear program. We just have to be creative in concocting an appetizing enough package. Key to this exercise is that we make Iran an offer too good to refuse. “Just talking about better relations is clearly not enough to get Tehran’s attention,” argues an editorial in the *New York Times*. “What is needed is a credible grand gesture, like sending a high-level envoy to Tehran with a concrete list of diplomatic and economic rewards, including a timetable for restoring full diplomatic relations with the United States—if Tehran is ready to deal.”<sup>65</sup> But if Iran balks, we hint at the proverbial “stick” of punishment: for example, economic sanctions and the vaporous threat of military action that in reality we’ve already shelved.

The chances of Iran taking our carrots and stopping its nuclear program? Slim, according to proponents. Some claim that unless we try, we won’t know—and even if we fail, at least we may win some friends. Ambassador Mitchell Reiss, a former senior State Department official under a Republican president, suggested that “Even if [such talks] are a nonstarter for Tehran, I think we score points in the region for trying.”<sup>66</sup>

The track record of economic sanctions on Iran—through the U.N. and via U.S. alliances with foreign nations—should offer no solace to the would-be appeasers. Although multi-layered restrictions on U.S. trade with Iran have been on the books for years, such trade goes on nonetheless.<sup>67</sup> More damning still is that, despite all the existing sanctions and its membership in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Iran has bought and developed what it needs to run 3,000-plus centrifuges that could produce weapons-grade fuel.

But for the sake of argument, suppose that such measures could buy Iran’s agreement to halt its nuclear program. Could this do more than buy us the illusion of security? Iran would have every incentive to go through the motions of compliance, while using the bribes as a revenue stream and talks as a cover for clandestine nuclear operations—repeating the extortion cycle at will. North Korea exploited the same kind of arrangement to stave off economic ruin and arm itself with a nuclear weapon. Evidence from the horse’s mouth suggests that Iran is already using this ploy. In a closed-door meeting with the leading clerics, one of Iran’s chief negotiators explained to his audience that “When we were negotiating with the Europeans in Tehran we were still installing some of the equipment at the Isfahan [nuclear facility] site. . . . In reality, by creating a tame situation [with talks], we could finish Isfahan.”<sup>68</sup>

The popular agitation for a diplomatic deal would in fact have us resign ourselves to a nuclear Iran, while we perform as cash cow and moral cover

for its militant ambitions. When all of this blows up in our face—or in downtown Manhattan—we can console ourselves that, well, maybe we scored some points in the region. How comforting.

To say that this policy of appeasing bribery projects timidity is much too charitable; it actively encourages Iran and the legions of jihadists around the world. Pinning our hopes for security on the practice of appeasement makes as much sense as trying to put out a house fire by dousing the flames with gasoline.

The popularity of this idea reflects how far America has sunk in the years since 9/11. In the weeks following these attacks, people were (properly) keen to see their government assert its military power in the service of our lives and freedom. But now, it is the weakest, avowedly self-denying, proposal that America embraces as a rational option for dealing with the enemy. Even if we have yet to admit it to ourselves, we are in retreat.

Eight years after 9/11, and two wars later, this is where Washington's policy has brought us. We find ourselves repeating the destructive pattern that marked the period leading up the attacks on that Tuesday morning (see chapter 1).

For decades prior to 9/11 the United States had evidence, piling up from many sources, of an escalating threat from the Islamist movement. The alarms wailed, the attacks increased, but America remained oblivious.

Today the jihadist threat (as we saw earlier in this chapter) is growing worse: we noted ominous developments—from Afghanistan and Pakistan, to Iran and Europe—that speak for themselves; we heard the dire warnings from the head of the CIA, the National Intelligence Director, and others. And yet Americans fail to take these alarms seriously. Many prefer not to think about the problem and evasively find solace in the so-called successes in Iraq and the non-recurrence of another 9/11—even as Islamists rally and Iran builds nukes.

For decades since our first clash with Islamic totalitarianism, in the 1979 Embassy crisis, Washington's dominant response to Islamist aggression was a multiform policy of appeasement. American reliance on passivity, negligible pro forma retaliation, and outright bribery had the effect of fueling a spiral of Islamist hostility.

Today our leaders have taken the horrendous experience of the Bush wars as grounds to rule out any thought of a self-assertive foreign policy entailing military force. Instead, we find a broad-based cultural drift toward the self-destructive, myopic policy of appeasement.

The return of this pattern should provoke outrage. Americans should demand of their government a genuine alternative—a policy that will in fact



protect our freedom and our lives for decades into the future. But no such outrage can be expected from a nation that, like its leaders, has been dispirited. Nor can we expect from Washington a fundamentally different kind of policy. Our leaders look, but refuse to recognize the severity of the problem. They make and implement policy, but drift toward appeasement and evade its inescapably calamitous future results. For, at root, the return of this policy orientation reveals an intellectual-moral bankruptcy.

We desperately need new thinking in our foreign policy, if we are to achieve our security.



## CHAPTER SEVEN



# The Road to Victory: A Radical Change in U.S. Mideast Policy

Elan Journo

### The Precondition for Victory

Although Islamic totalitarianism grows stronger, although jihadists continue to threaten America and the West, although the situation appears hopeless—in fact, we *can* defeat the enemy. We *can* achieve an unqualified victory—a genuine victory, as final and unquestionable as we did in World War II against Japan. We *can* achieve lasting security in the face of the threats emanating from the volatile Middle East. And while it may sound strange, what holds us back is not at root any lack of material strength or resources. Our gravest weakness lies in our foreign policy.

It is ultimately U.S. foreign policy that brought us here. It exposed us to jihadist predations prior to 9/11 (part 1) and mired us in “no-win” wars since then (chapters 3–6). We cannot overcome the problem simply by changing the personnel at the State Department or even the Oval Office. The problem transcends party politics, because it is rooted in the prevailing approaches to foreign policy.

On one side is the so-called realism of pursuing myopic, range-of-the-moment “practicality,” an unprincipled approach that leads to appeasing an enemy we refuse to identify. We saw in earlier chapters that this was the pattern of U.S. policy in the decades leading up to 9/11—and that it is returning under the Obama administration. On the other side is the putatively long-range, principled policy exemplified in the Bush administration’s response to 9/11. Part 2 of this book showed how this orientation to foreign policy mandates altruistic wars and the empowerment of our enemies. If we

take a macroperspective, the options presented to us are these: a principled, idealistic policy that entails sacrificing our security—or a supposedly practical policy that likewise subverts our security.

Let us finally jettison the selfless moral ideas and anti-principled pseudo-practicality that have shaped our Mideast policy, because it is these intellectual underpinnings that have crippled our security in practice. To formulate and implement a principled policy that achieves our actual self-interest, we must begin with an entirely different intellectual framework.

That framework must rest on the moral ideal of rational self-interest. This moral principle, championed by the philosopher Ayn Rand, entails a new conception of what constitutes our self-interest. A foreign policy informed by the principle of egoism, in Rand's words, would be "explicitly and proudly dedicated to the defense of America's rights and national self-interests."<sup>1</sup> Such a policy puts the goal of protecting American lives first—as its exclusive concern and as an inviolable moral principle (see also the discussion in part 2). The vision we uphold is that of the United States living up to its full moral stature: a nation exhibiting the earned confidence that we have the moral right to defend ourselves and to assert our own interests in the Middle East.

What would such a policy look like? In confronting the Islamist movement, what policy is truly in our self-interest—and how would that play out in practice?

The recommendations laid out in this chapter illustrate what it would mean to adopt a foreign policy in the Middle East premised on the ideal of rational egoism. Specifically, we look at the immediate question of how to defeat Islamic totalitarianism, and the ongoing issue of defining and securing America's self-interest in the region.

## Defeating the Standard-Bearer

Seven years ago, the People's Mojahedin, a group opposed to Tehran's regime, brought to light evidence that Iran was building a clandestine nuclear plant at Natanz. Officials with the atomic energy agency of the United Nations were sent to investigate. Iran, it turned out, had made significant progress—far more so than previously suspected in what some regarded as exaggerated U.S. intelligence assessments. Michael Rubin and Patrick Clawson, scholars of Iran, describe the foreboding situation.

[Iran had] 164 centrifuges completed, 1,000 more being built, and a facility being completed to house 50,000 more. In addition, Iran acknowledged that it had not declared more than a ton of uranium of various types it had imported from China in 1991, including some processed uranium, now missing, which

was suitable as feedstock for the centrifuges. [Iran] also announced that it was building a heavy water reactor at Arak, that it was preparing to mine uranium ore, and that it had produced “yellowcake” (the first stage in the transformation from natural uranium to centrifuge feedstock).<sup>2</sup>

The years since then have brought further Iranian advances. By late 2008, the regime boasted that it had put online some 3,000 centrifuges, and it continued stridently to reject demands from Washington and its allies to halt the program. Iran routinely scoffs at attempts to block its progress through U.N. sanctions and other instruments of diplomatic pressure. All of this has dialed up the panic in capitals throughout the Western world. But there is something bizarre and dangerously parochial in the escalating fears about a nuclear-armed Iran.

Of course, we should worry about that ominous prospect. But there’s much more going on than Iran’s violation of the terms of the (laughably impotent) Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Many people sense, even if few will say it openly, that Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear weapon—despite its destructive power—is not the whole story. Notice that other countries, such as France and Britain, have nukes, and that no one in the West worries about it. Fears about Iran going nuclear stem from what we believe the regime is capable of doing.

Let us then widen the artificially narrow, crisis-bound context in which our policy is commonly thought about and formulated. Viewed in a broader context, Tehran’s quest for mastery of nuclear technology is one element in a long campaign. This campaign of aggression—sometimes direct, usually through proxies—began with the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and the captivity of American hostages in Iran for 444 days. The regime’s subcontracting forces in Lebanon carried out the car bombing of the embassy in Beirut in 1983. Months later, Islamist forces working hand in glove with Tehran dispatched a suicide bomber, driving a large explosive-filled truck, to attack the barracks where American servicemen were stationed in the Lebanese capital. The U.S. death toll—241 souls—made it “the single deadliest attack for U.S. Marines since the Battle of Iwo Jima” and among the worst post-World War II attacks on Americans.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the 1980s in Lebanon, Islamists took more than 100 Westerners hostage, including twenty-five Americans, torturing some of them to death (see chapter 1).

And on it went. FBI investigations into the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers, in which seventeen U.S. servicemen lost their lives, found that Iran was pulling the strings behind that attack. Al Qaeda carried out the simultaneous bombings of embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998; the group gained important technical and logistical training vital to carrying out the

attacks from the Iranian subcontractor Hezbollah. There's more: the 9/11 Commission found that "senior Al Qaeda operatives and trainers traveled to Iran to receive training in explosives," and that eight to ten of the fourteen Saudi "muscle hijackers" had "traveled into or out of Iran between October 2000 and February 2001."<sup>4</sup>

Data on Iran's concerted aggression is not a secret confined only to those privileged with top-secret clearances. It has been reported in newspapers and magazines and books, in open sources that laymen and policymakers can readily consult. Yet the prevailing attitude toward the regime holds that these past violent acts are unrelated crises, like so many dots that need not be connected. Hence Iran's channeling of explosives and arms and trainers to anti-American insurgents in Iraq—another mode of aggression—is regarded as an independent point of friction, another crisis to be viewed in isolation. Hence the regime's nuclear quest is to be dealt with as a separate, unlinked issue. The splintered approach of hatching ad hoc responses—now to this crisis, now to that one—in the absence of any long-range perspective on the problem does not a policy make. Its main result is to multiply and worsen crises (see chapter 1). Witness, for example, how American policy has so far succeeded only in facilitating Iran's burgeoning (military and political) influence in the region (see chapter 6).

A commitment to defining a policy that flows from the facts and that serves U.S. self-interest requires an integrated perspective. Its starting point is to understand, and keep in mind, the sweep of Iran's past actions and the ideological goals informing its behavior. That is necessary for objectively evaluating the threat from Iran—and defining steps we should take to assure our security across many years and arenas.

### **Iran's Centrality to the Islamist Movement**

Even a highly abbreviated record of Iran's violent acts must be summed up as nothing less than an outright proxy war against us. And this war is integral to the global jihad. Iran aims to advance a goal shared by the many adherents of Islamic totalitarianism: to smite down the infidel West—and principally the "Great Satan"—that stands in the way of fulfilling the vision of a global sharia regime (see chapter 2). For decades the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the jihad's standard-bearer.

A standard-bearer leads the charge and, by virtue of keeping the flag aloft, signals to all who follow him that the battle is advancing. The sight of that flag nourishes hope of victory. It reinvigorates hope amid setbacks and daunting odds. It inspires fighters to redouble their effort and it attracts new recruits to a winning cause. A glimpse of that fluttering banner during the tumult of

a clash fires up the serried ranks, tells them to dream big and to march on confident in the eventual triumph of the cause. The role of standard-bearer thus entails something far more than leading the charge at the front line; fundamentally, it serves as an ideological inspiration to the cause.

Consider the prospects and mood of the Islamist movement prior to the Iranian revolution in 1979.

Though groups within the Islamist movement argued about the optimal means to achieve their goal, they agreed on the basic nature of that goal: supplanting existing regimes with new ones in which sharia is the supreme law of the land. The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, sought to overthrow what it saw as the impious rule of man-made, secular law and impose all-encompassing rule under Islamic laws. The path to making religion the supreme principle of politics was jihad, which would be undertaken by the masses, whom the Brotherhood would prepare and educate. (Islamists elsewhere, e.g., Pakistan, came up with essentially the same analysis.) In 1936 there were in Egypt some 150 branches of the Brotherhood; eight years later, 1,500. Membership in those early years has been estimated to fall somewhere between 100,000 and 500,000. With time the number of members and sympathizers burgeoned to the millions. From its base in Egypt, the Brotherhood sent out envoys to set up local chapters in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco (among others).<sup>5</sup> In Palestine, for example, the first of many local chapters opened in 1945; two years later, there were some 12,000 to 20,000 active members.<sup>6</sup>

Members of the Brotherhood hatched numerous plots to assassinate political figures in Egypt, hoping thereby to start a popular uprising for Islamic rule. Some plots went nowhere, others were foiled. Five decades after its founding, the Brotherhood had hardly come close to accomplishing its goal. Nor had any of its offshoots, splinter cells, or ideologically allied groups in other countries. Allah's obedient slaves, longing to foist theocratic government upon all mankind, failed even to change the regime under which they lived. Was it Allah's will that they failed? Perhaps. Was there any hope of realizing their ideal? Little to none, apparently, given the brutal government crackdown aimed at crushing the movement in Egypt (when thousands of members were imprisoned).

Everything changed after 1979.

The Iranian revolution sent shock waves across the Muslim world. It proved to followers of the movement that their ideal was achievable. The truly pious could, in fact, prevail over the materially more powerful infidels and apostates. Pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini, the intellectual founder of the new Islamist state, appeared in Cairo and other cities in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> At the time Ayman al-Zawahiri, who went on to become the number two of Al

Qaeda, headed a militant Egyptian organization called Al-Jihad. Inspired by the accomplishments of the faithful in Iran, the organization backed the revolution with leaflets and cassette tapes encouraging other Islamic groups to model themselves after Iran.<sup>8</sup> (Al-Jihad has since merged with Al Qaeda.) One researcher has observed that the

Iranian revolution contributed to a revival of the political role of mosques in the mobilization of politically-oriented Islamic elements throughout the Islamic world. Some Islamic actors in Egypt were impressed by the proposed Iranian project of Islamic renaissance with its extranational dimensions. For those actors, the Iranian revolution represented a new reality to which all Muslims could relate their history, ideals and the objective of reviving the Islamic Umma [community of believers].<sup>9</sup>

For the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, this was a world-historic event. Members “frequently cited the Iranian revolution as evidence of the eventual victory of those who followed the path of God.” The transformation of Iran’s political system “gave the Muslim Brotherhood greater self-confidence.” Some Islamist groups urged followers to study (and copy) the revolution’s political and organizational tools, such as the use of mass-produced speeches distributed on cassette tapes.<sup>10</sup>

The tumult in Iran reignited the Palestinian cause, which was losing momentum, and transmuted it from a quasi-secular, nationalist struggle to an emphatically religious one (see chapter 2). Within the Palestinian territories, the strategy of the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood held that the time for jihad was years off in the future. In preparation for that day, the important work was to recruit believers and instill in them a love of jihad and religious rule. And so it went for decades. Khomeini’s triumph in Iran, however, quickened the desire of Islamists in Palestine (as elsewhere) to pursue their ideal—not tomorrow, but *now*. Clearly the time for jihad was at hand. That conviction led some members of the Brotherhood to splinter off and launch Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a group explicitly following Khomeini’s path. In justifying its enmity toward Israel, the group cited a fatwa from Khomeini indicating that destroying the “‘Zionist entity’ is a religious duty.”<sup>11</sup> Eventually, the Muslim Brotherhood spun off its own jihadist outfit— Hamas—to lead the revived campaign against Israel.

The unprecedented rise in Iran of a new, purely Islamic state galvanized Muslims throughout the Middle East, in Morocco, in Algeria, in Nigeria, in South Africa, in Bangladesh, in Indonesia, across wide swathes of Europe, and behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>12</sup> In an editorial titled “A Thumping Yes to the Islamic Republic,” one London-based periodical argued at the time that,



Very early on in the agitation it had become manifest that the Iranian movement was not just a negative movement protesting against the tyrannies of the Pahlavi monarchy. It represented a profound and vehement assertion of the long denied Islamic urges of the Iranian people.<sup>13</sup>

Tehran fed that excitement. The regime pumped out propaganda trumpeting its accomplishments, and made good its promise to export the revolution.<sup>14</sup> Lebanese Hezbollah was its most notable foreign enterprise, with outposts in South America, Europe, and the Far East. Its attacks on American interests in Lebanon, described in chapter 1, succeeded in driving out U.S. troops from the country. Here was another confirmation that devotion to Allah empowers the faithful to vanquish stronger infidel forces. They had done it in the streets of Tehran, against the impious rule of the Shah, and now they were humiliating the most powerful infidel nation on earth. “The governments of the world,” Khomeini had announced, “should know that Islam cannot be defeated. Islam will be victorious in all the countries of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Koran will prevail all over the world.”<sup>15</sup> For Muslims witnessing Iran’s striving in the path of Allah, this boast had teeth.

By uniting words with violent action, the totalitarian Islamic regime in Iran distinguished itself as the genuine vanguard for the cause. Domestically, using radio, billboards, posters, school textbooks, postage stamps, currency—through every medium—the clerics worked to reshape the society according to Islamic dictates.<sup>16</sup> Internationally, the regime marched forward to expand the dominion of Allah’s reign on earth (engaging itself, to varying degrees, in the Bosnian conflict and also the Algerian civil war of 1991, among others).<sup>17</sup> When compared with the monarchies, quasi-secular, nationalist, and socialist regimes in the Middle East—regimes that invoked Islamic themes for populist ends—Iran stood out for its authentic devotion and embodiment of the Islamist ideal. Not only was it a booming ideological voice, it was also an activist in the service of that ideology.

This contrasted with Saudi Arabia, guardian of two of Islam’s sacred places, Medina and Mecca, and thus the presumptive leader of worldwide Muslims. The Saudi regime was put on the defensive. It actively sought to propagate and proselytize for its own brand of Islamic totalitarianism (Wahhabism) abroad, and impose sharia law domestically. Yet the regime fell short of equaling Iran’s crusading spirit and orchestration of murderous attacks in the name of God. Elements within the Saudi regime finance Islamic terrorism, and the regime may well outspend Iran in missionary work. But this relative passivity serves to highlight Iran’s militancy. The Saudis bankroll thousands of the *madrassas* (religious schools) and mosques where future jihadists are educated. But Iran energizes and glorifies jihadists. Whereas the Saudi

regime elicits contempt from Islamists, because of its ties to Washington and its Westernized (read: impious) royal family; Iran inspires them.

For the Islamist movement, the theocracy of Iran redefined what's possible. Islamists would go on to chalk up what, to them, were further successes. In 1981 an Egyptian jihadist group assassinated the country's president, Anwar Sadat. By 1989 holy warriors (mujahideen) in Afghanistan had bloodied the invading Soviet army, which eventually pulled out ignominiously. That withdrawal was arguably the result of U.S. and Saudi assistance to the mujahideen; nonetheless, Islamists distilled from that episode another demonstration of the existential power of piety. Later there came the formation of Al Qaeda, bringing together a number of separate Islamist organizations. The Taliban, with Saudi and Pakistani assistance, wrested control of Kabul in 1996 and established its infamous totalitarian regime. Later there came a string of lethal attacks in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States.

What's significant about these developments is not that Iran pulled the strings behind each and every one; it did not. But it was Iran as exemplar, as a functioning, aggressive Islamist state, that has been fundamental to the daring and confidence of jihadists worldwide. Years after its revolution, Tehran's regime continued to be an inspiration (to Sunni and Shiite Muslims) for "upholding Islam against the power of the West."<sup>18</sup> Were it not for the enduring inspirational power of Iran, were it not for the regime's fidelity to the cause of jihad, were it not for its prosecution of that campaign with impunity across decades, the Islamist movement today would be little more than a sulky anti-Western pamphleteering society. (See chapter 1 on the role of the Western appeasement in encouraging Islamists since 1979.)

There's no question, either, that Iran's stature has grown since 9/11 because of Washington's refusal to target the regime as the primary enemy. Tehran's successful expansion of its proxy war to post-invasion Iraq, its military strengthening of Hamas and Hezbollah, its unbending commitment to developing nuclear technology—all serve to strengthen its reputation as the nation that can humiliate and inflict considerable harm upon the mighty United States.

For these reasons, therefore, it is imperative that we recognize the full extent of Iran's threat to our lives and freedom. To put an end to the Islamist movement, to eliminate the immediate threats emanating from the Middle East, we need to begin with Iran. How?

### **The Way Forward, Informed by History**

Considering the corpse-strewn history of Iranian aggression, we must reject the proposal of sitting down with the regime at the negotiating table. Underlying that proposal is the assumption that Tehran could be persuaded to

change its behavior out of a desire for peace and prosperity for its people. But in reality this is a regime that during the Iran-Iraq War sent children and teenagers to march across battlefields: they had to “move continuously forward in perfectly straight rows. It did not matter whether they fell as cannon fodder to enemy fire or detonated the mines with their bodies: the important thing was that [they] continued to move toward the enemy over the torn and mutilated remains of their fallen comrades, going to their deaths in wave after wave.” This ghastly practice is today the source not of “national shame, but of growing pride.”<sup>19</sup>

Iranian leaders and official media foster and encourage reverence for “martyrdom” operations (suicide attacks). “Today, more than ever,” Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in January 2008, “we must inculcate in the younger generation the culture of *shahada* [martyrdom]. This is a mission of supreme ideological [importance] . . . One who treads the path of martyrdom and brings himself to this extreme attains the pinnacle of human [achievement]. It is a duty incumbent upon [each member of] the public to bring himself, as well as others, to this pinnacle.” And there is a movement afoot in Iran today to recruit and train future “martyrs.”<sup>20</sup>

Tehran’s regime has proven its monumental contempt for the irreplaceable value of human lives. Contrary to the make-believe of Western diplomats, Tehran cannot be dealt with through persuasion. Any attempt at bribery only feeds the belief of Islamists that America is morally bankrupt and defeatable.

Nor would it be in our long-range self-interest to launch a military operation exclusively targeting Iran’s nuclear facilities (see chapter 6). Even if that half-hearted measure were successful, it would merely deprive the regime of a potential weapon, for a while. Our problem is not the weapon, but those driven to acquire and use it. Such an operation would do nothing meaningful to halt Iran’s backing of Islamist warriors in the proxy war. At best this operation would cause Iran some annoyance, but not deter other forms of the regime’s aggression.

Nor could such a meek jab at Iran snuff out the fervor of Islamists. Far from conveying our disgust and contempt for Iran’s regime, far from broadcasting our judgment that it is perverse, a limited strike on its nuclear facilities would imply an endorsement of our enemy’s right to remain in power and its right to harm us using conventional tactics and arms. What else could it mean that, after years of tolerating Iranian aggression, we bestir ourselves to act *only* in order to pluck from its hands one particular instrument of destruction, leaving the unbowed regime to deploy whatever other instruments it can find to continue its jihad? To the victims of Iran it is irrelevant whether they die from the blast of a conventional or nuclear device; either way, they’re dead.

The only practical way forward requires that we recognize Iran's role as the ideological motor of the Islamist movement—and then proceed to crush it.

This is a twofold job. Breaking totally with our policy of timidity, inaction, and appeasement, we must demonstrate an indefatigable commitment to defending the lives of Americans. Fundamentally, that begins with declaring—publicly and proudly—our moral condemnation of Iran and of the Islamist movement that it leads. We need to lay out the facts underlying our reasoning and pronounce the verdict: that the ideology of Islamic totalitarianism is vicious and depraved. In doing so, we project a righteous dedication to our values of individual rights and political freedom and affirm that we will tolerate no threat to the lives and freedom of Americans.

The second element, which presupposes the first, is to live up to that dedication in practice by unleashing all necessary military force to put an end to the Iranian regime and demoralize the Islamist movement. To eliminate the threat from Iran, at minimum our forces should bring down the regime, neutralize its military power, and capture or kill its leadership. Throughout the process, the United States must resolutely affirm the propriety of its own retaliatory action and denounce the ideology at the heart of Iran's regime and its jihad. The regime must be defeated in fact and it must accept and internalize that reality. It must be made to realize that, if Iran ever dares to threaten or take up arms against us, we will again meet that aggression with a crushing military onslaught.<sup>21</sup>

Does this mean another military nightmare like Iraq and Afghanistan? No. In those campaigns, the goal of Washington was not defeating whatever threat we faced from those countries, but to “liberate” Afghans and Iraqis and give them the vote (see part 2). That selfless goal went hand in hand with the altruistic rules of engagement that hamstrung our military. Consider the needlessly brutal ordeal of U.S. combat troops in Iraq. Iraqis throw Molotov cocktails (i.e., flaming gasoline-filled bottles) at your vehicle—but you are prohibited from responding with force. Iraqis, to quote a Pentagon study, “drop large chunks of concrete blocks from second story buildings or overpasses” as you drive by—but you are not allowed to respond. “Every group of Soldiers and Marines interviewed,” the study summarizes, “reported that they felt the existing ROE [rules of engagement] tied their hands, preventing them from doing what needed to be done to win the war.”<sup>22</sup> It is self-effacing policies like these that encourage insurgents and enable them to flourish, while sinking our troops into quagmires.

We need to unshackle America's brave and capable warriors from the perverse battlefield restrictions that put the lives of enemy fighters and civilians above those of our troops. It is imperative that Washington allow our

military tacticians to deploy (or threaten to deploy) any weapon—including nuclear weapons—that they deem necessary to destroy the enemy rapidly and with minimum cost in American lives. Culpability for the regrettable loss of civilian lives belongs entirely to the aggressor. Washington’s practice of apologizing for such casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq—like the offer to pay to rebuild mosques destroyed by sectarian infighting—is shameful, and has no place in the prosecution of a war in self-defense<sup>23</sup> (see chapter 4).

By pulling out Iran’s military fangs and utterly humiliating it, we would eliminate an existential threat to our security and deal a massive blow to the ideal of Islamic totalitarianism. We should then proceed to drive home the lesson of Iran with the comprehensive demoralization of the movement’s followers. What they must understand is that their cause is discredited, that anyone who fights to advance it will be similarly crushed, that the jihad is over. The followers must be made to repudiate the goal of implementing their political-cultural ideal of total sharia rule.

But, it may be asked, might an American strike in fact achieve the opposite result? Would it not further antagonize Muslims across the region, and would it not spur Iranians in particular to “rally round the flag”—and against us? Would it not simply generate more enemies?

No, so long as we demonstrate a resolute drive to crush the enemy and discredit its goals. That’s how we achieved victory over Japan in World War II. We devastated that country. The historian John David Lewis has observed:

By the end of 1945 . . . the Japanese had lost it all. Surrounded by an impregnable armada, they lay prostrate before merciless American bombers. The best of their youth had killed themselves in suicide attacks. Their fleet was sunk. More than sixty cities had been firebombed. Two cities had been atom-bombed. They were militarily defeated and psychologically shattered, and they faced the possibility of a famine that could kill millions.

Yet the result was not to inflame, but to extinguish the Japanese desire for war. With “a zeal as great as that with which they had once armed for battle, the Japanese reformed their nation.”

They adopted a new constitution, purged their schools of religious and military indoctrination, and abandoned aggressive warfare. Imperial subjects became citizens; “divine” decrees were replaced with rights-respecting laws; rulers became administrators; feudal cartels became corporations; propaganda organs became newspapers; women achieved suffrage; and students learned the principles of self-reliance and self-government. Hiroshima, formerly the headquarters of a fanatical military force, became a world center for nonvio-

lence. Those who had once marched feverishly for war now marched passionately for peace.<sup>24</sup>

Key to the sixty-plus years of peace that have followed the U.S. victory over Japan was that nation's abandonment of its religious-military ideology, the creed that fueled its all-consuming hunger for supremacy. The same kind of ideological repudiation can, and must be, effected in the strongholds of Islamic totalitarianism.

There is nothing uniquely intractable about the pervasive support for Islamic totalitarianism. Followers of this—and every—creed accept it by choice; it is not implanted before birth, and it can be uprooted. Remember, too, that its emergence as a dominant view in the Muslim world occurred only in the latter half of the twentieth century. Prior to that, a different ideology captivated millions of Muslim minds: pan-Arab nationalism. But that entrenched ideology was utterly discredited, and dislodged from the minds of its followers, through a military defeat.

In its heyday, pan-Arab nationalism was the most potent force in Arab-Muslim politics. A woolly blend of tribalism and statism, it demanded subordination of individuals to an expansive, supra-national quasi-socialist regime. Egypt's military dictator, Gamal Abdel Nasser, famously championed the cause and sought to make his regime the vanguard of the pan-Arabist movement. It was under this banner that Nasser justified the seizure and nationalization of Western assets such as the Suez Canal in 1956; and it was also the battle cry rallying Egypt and its allies to fight against Israel, hoping to clear the way for Arab regional supremacy. Arguably the movement's first, and unequivocal, triumph came in 1958 with the political combination of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic (UAR).

To the news of this political union, Arabs throughout the Middle East reacted with "stunned amazement, which quickly turned into uncontrolled euphoria." The announcement of the UAR, in the words of one journalist at the time, was "the greatest hour in the history of the Arabs since the . . . victories of Salah al-Din [al-Ayubi]," the legendary conqueror fighting under the banner of Islam. In Syria, the new political union drew huge crowds from across the country, who flooded into the streets and public squares of Damascus. "Unable to contain their joy, they sang, listened to impromptu patriotic orations, danced the *dabka* (Syrian folk dance), and made up instant poetic slogans that were rhythmically sung and repeated by all."<sup>25</sup>

The rapture across the Arab world strengthened the belief that pan-Arabism was the unstoppable wave of the future, an eminently realizable ideal. Leaders in neighboring countries witnessed the elation of their people, and feared that

this movement would rise up within—or without—their borders to challenge their hold on power (though the UAR was a fragile, short-lived union).

Popular and potent though it was, pan-Arabism no longer commands passionate support. The movement faded, losing its grip on the Arab-Muslim world, because it was discredited. The tipping point was the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, also called the Six Day War.

With that offensive, Egypt and its Arab allies intended to expunge the Zionist “cancer” from the region. Vilifying Israel as an obstacle to the fulfillment of Arab unity, they geared up for a climactic showdown. Military superiority lay on the side of the Arab forces, whose combined resources dwarfed those of Israel. The Arab nations poised themselves finally to re-conquer that minuscule, though highly symbolic, tract of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Hopes were running high. The Israelis, it was boasted, would be fed to the fish in the sea.

But within the first hours of the clash Israeli bombing raids demolished Egypt’s fleet of bombers while the Egyptian aircraft were still on the tarmac. Destroyed also were hundreds of Egyptian and Jordanian tanks and thousands of military vehicles. Egypt’s military hardware was decimated (only 15 percent remained). The casualty rates were more than 20-to-1 in Israel’s favor; among the Arab forces, Egypt suffered the largest numerical hit, between 10,000–15,000 men, among them 1,500 officers.<sup>26</sup> It is said that retreating Egyptian soldiers in the Sinai Desert fled with such despairing haste that many abandoned their boots in the sand dunes, and scampered away. In just 132 hours—roughly six days—the Arabs were trounced.

What followed the military defeat, though, was a profound rethinking of the prevailing ideology. Fouad Ajami, a political scientist, observes that “No sooner had the Six Day War ended than a war of a different sort erupted in the Arab world: a conflict over the defeat. Who was responsible for it? What did the defeat say about the basis of Arab society, the quality of the Arab as an individual? How should the Arab world be organized to cope with the defeat and its consequences?”<sup>27</sup>

The search for answers gave rise to a flurry of articles, pamphlets, and books offering explanations of the “disaster.” The quantity and range of accounts led one scholar to classify the analyses into five categories; another researcher, a former prime minister of Iraq, saw fit to define twice as many distinct schools of thought on the issue.<sup>28</sup> The answers covered the spectrum—from secularists denouncing the current regimes as insufficiently committed to the revolutionary pan-Arabist ideal; to operational accounts blaming incompetent military leadership; to the all-purpose Islamist account blaming any failure on a lack of piety.

From this ideological ferment, one conclusion bubbled up with dazzling clarity. “While Arabs, in whatever state they lived, continued to recognize their membership in the cultural space called ‘the Arab world,’ . . . they no longer truly believed in the viability of organic political unity.”<sup>29</sup> The event that overthrew that ideal was the 1967 war.

And what stamped on it this sense of fatality was the fact that it was Egypt under [Nasser] that lost. Egypt’s devastating defeat was Arab nationalism’s mortal loss, for . . . the fate of Arab nationalism during the struggles, triumphs and reversals of the 1950s and 1960s was inexorably linked to Egypt and its charismatic president. Had it just been Syria or Jordan, or even both, who lost the war, it would not have been the unmitigated disaster for Arab nationalism that the June war turned out to be. But Arab nationalism could not survive the abject humiliation inflicted on its acknowledged prophet, who, through his shrill and overzealous propoganda machine, had promised a fabled triumph in this *al-Ma’raka al-Masiriya*, the battle of destiny.<sup>30</sup>

Evidently the people of the Arab-Islamic world are just as susceptible to having their cherished ideal overthrown and discredited as were the people of imperialist Japan in the 1940s. So there is every reason to expect that America’s defeat of the self-assured Islamic Republic of Iran would similarly rob the Islamist movement of its glamour and potency.

But the collapse of pan-Arab nationalism also provides a cautionary lesson on the peril of half-measures. The ’67 war, unlike the defeat of Japan in World War II, was at best an equivocal success for the victims of the pan-Arab movement, Israel and the West. With the rumbling of cannons echoing in the air, Israel rushed to negotiate an appeasing settlement with the Arabs. Acting at the behest of Washington and the U.N., Israel thus repudiated the hard-fought-for fruit of victory: the moral right to demand surrender from, and dictate terms to, the defeated aggressors. That fateful decision prolonged the conflict, because the initiators of the war were not compelled to renounce their militancy. Consequently, though pan-Arabism was waning, Arab nations rearmed and took up the fight again in 1973.

And the ambiguous defeat in ’67 created an opening for Islamists to fill the void left by Arab nationalism. The nationalists had offered their own tribalist justification for liquidating Israel, and they failed. But that goal was never renounced. Enter the Islamists. They took up and championed that wildly popular goal and recast it as a religious-moral struggle. This theme has lost none of its resonance today, when Iran’s leadership vows to “wipe Israel off the map.”

For the United States, the broader lesson is that our military campaign must achieve an unambiguous and righteous discrediting of the Islamist



movement's goal. In targeting Iran, we must repudiate all outcomes that entail compromise or that otherwise leave any glimmer of hope, in any mind, that the Islamist ideal is achievable.

An important means of accomplishing that is through the deliberate and vocal propagation of our moral justification for the war.

### **Demoralizing the Enemy**

During the military operations, we can use so-called public diplomacy to drive into the minds in the Islamic world that we know our cause is right, that theirs is wrong, and that we will not stop until they give up. Of course, we subvert our objective if we practice the Bush administration's version of public diplomacy. It is worse than useless to set up a U.S.-backed Arab language television network, Al Hurra, and open it up (as Washington did) to serve as a forum for speeches by Islamists such as Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah, and Iran's president Ahmadinejad.<sup>31</sup> What's needed is not more touchy-feely programming and pamphlets about how America embraces all cultural values, regardless of how corrupt they are; or fulsome pledges committing the United States to perpetual, selfless service to the needs of Iraqis and Afghans.

We would need, instead, a campaign of leafleting, television and radio broadcasts, and public statements in all available media explaining that Iran is suffering our wrath precisely because of its role as the leader of the jihad. The message we should convey is that the pain and death suffered in that country is a direct result of the regime's commitment to and efforts to advance the Islamist ideal. We can connect in people's minds the devastation of our war with the creed that they hear enunciated at Friday sermons and that they see glorified in jihadist propaganda videos of Westerners getting beheaded and blown up. Through our messaging, we should identify our stature as superiors who fight for moral ideals that are objectively beneficial to human life. To all who hear and read our messaging, we should convey that from now on they will have to make room for and accommodate our value system, our way of dealing with the world.

The demoralization campaign should continue even after the toppling of the regime. Our primary concern is to render Iran non-threatening. It is up to the people in the defeated regime to rebuild; we bear no moral obligation to help them in any way. It is conceivable that occupying the country and directing the establishment of a non-threatening regime (as we did in Japan) may be in our interest, if doing so entails no sacrifice of U.S. wealth or lives (see chapters 3 and 5). Whoever wishes to build up a new regime, can listen to our broadcasts and take them as a lead for what political ideals are truly worth

embracing. The crucial point that should be explained and underlined repeatedly—during and after combat—is that we will return with an overwhelming military response if whatever regime arises postwar decides to become threatening. The audience for this point—which cannot be overstated—is the entire Arab-Islamic world.

We would have no further reason to be concerned with Iran, if it were not a source of oil (ranking among the world's top three holders of proven oil and natural gas reserves). But oil is the lifeblood that courses through the industrial organs of the U.S. economy. American households, businesses, offices, and factories consumed 20.7 million barrels per day in 2007—twenty-four percent of the global petroleum supply—making us the largest consumers of the commodity. More than half (58 percent) of the petroleum we consume is imported.<sup>32</sup> Since oil is so important to the American economy, what policy should we adopt toward the oil reserves buried under the Iranian soil and ocean floor? What policy would be in our self-interest?

In a defeated Iran, the new regime that comes to power may or may not be capitalistic; it may or may not be pro-Western. It is quite possible, indeed more than likely given the region's political culture, that some form of strongman rule takes hold. Obviously it would be preferable if the regime modeled itself on our system of government as a protector of individual rights. But it would be absurd and self-destructive for the United States to fight a war to remove one belligerent regime in Iran, only to allow another one to use profits from the sale of oil to become a new threat. Nor can we allow our access to oil to fall to the whim of whatever regime takes over postwar.

Our policy should be to demand that the regime ensure the free trade in oil, and that not one penny from that trade be used to finance Islamists. This demand we must back with an ultimatum: unless our twin demands are satisfied, the United States will return with force to open up the flow of oil and to strangle off funding of aggression against us. Morally, this would be within our rights to do—both for the sake of assuring our security and our supply of much-needed oil.

Putting out of reach the petro-dollars that have empowered the Islamists would further demoralize the remaining followers of the movement (not to mention existing tyrants). Starkly and emphatically, this policy signals that America recognizes and proudly pursues its own interests; that we brook no attempt to harm the lives of Americans; that we protect ourselves and the free trade of goods necessary for our prosperity. Islamists and sundry despots will see their unearned source of wealth vanish. Those who hate and wish to destroy our society will see America as a righteous colossus that none dare affront—for the reality of its retaliatory wrath is all too real. And all too frightening.

With the resounding defeat of Iran, we can expect a widespread crumbling of the jihadist movement. Holy warriors will find themselves bereft of their inspiring standard-bearer, deprived of financial means, in despair of realizing their ideal. America—the country they used to believe was an easy mark, a lamb to be handily slaughtered by followers of Allah—will stand on the world stage as a formidable adversary. An implacable force committed on moral principle to its own self-defense and values.

### Putting out the Embers of the Jihad

Beyond the necessary first step of confronting Iran, our policy toward the Middle East may require further use (or the threat of) military force. There are two major factors for why this is so.

- (1) Many Islamists and the leaders of existing regimes may regard America's new policy as just another flip-flop, the latest fad—albeit a terrifying one—emanating from a country with a record of inconsistency and self-contradictory policies. For them the conclusion may be to keep their heads down, and wait it out until a new policy comes into play, or a new administration comes to power (bringing with it a new policy). To be fully effective, then, our policy must be consistently implemented, as a matter of principle, over time and in different arenas.
- (2) The other factor has to do with the results of the Bush crusade for democracy. That policy, as noted in earlier chapters, turned a weak threat into a greater one. Remember that the Islamist movement was never militarily superior, nor ever a tightly regimented force. Note, for example, the multi-year incubation time for the 9/11 plot, and the fact that it depended parasitically on using Western technology, embodied by airliners that were hijacked, to harm us. The movement is also riven by infighting and tactical quarrels. Observe the endless subdivision of cells into new groups, and the splintering disputes among them. That's true also of the Al Qaeda network; for example, the organization's number two, Zawahiri, demurred at its Iraqi lieutenant's tactic of fomenting ethno-sectarian strife. But the so-called "war on terror" left jihadists to augment their military capabilities and empowered them morally and politically through elections. Washington's response to 9/11 emboldened a movement that might otherwise have disintegrated or lost steam.

With Iran defeated, however, we can expect to see lingering pockets of the Islamist movement and pro-jihadist regimes like Saudi Arabia quake in

fear and retreat. How long it takes for the material and spiritual discrediting of the Islamist ideal to sink in across the board is hard to predict. We could simply stand by and wait for Islamists to hang up their suicide vests, tear up plans for 9/11-scale attacks, and kill each other off through infighting. But it better serves our goal of protecting American lives to hasten the end of this conflict. Doing that may entail confronting the Islamist movement's lesser, but still dangerous, remnants.

We turn now to a number of flashpoints—Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian territories—and explore what a policy committed to America's rational self-interest would counsel.

In these contexts as in the case of Iran, the same principles apply. Specifically, we need to judge the situation objectively, and then proceed to define our response by reference to the facts on the ground and our overarching purpose of emasculating the jihadist movement. The steps outlined here encompass two kinds of recommendations: (1) how to clear out any vestiges of the Islamist movement, and (2) what approach we should adopt in the long run toward the region. Regarding the first category, how many of these steps prove necessary will depend on what's left of the Islamist movement post-Iran; it may be the case that we need to implement a few, some, or (improbably) all of these suggestions.

### **Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia enjoys an undeserved standing as a loyal U.S. ally. Members of the sprawling al Saud royal family hobnob with Washington's elite, some have vacationed at President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, and we sell the regime advanced military hardware (practically arming its puny military). From the end of the 1991 Gulf War through 2003, American forces stationed in the kingdom shielded it from a neighboring predator, Saddam Hussein. Though this U.S.-Saudi relationship goes back decades, the basis for it is an unscrupulous and thus self-defeating American desire to secure access to Saudi oil. Unscrupulous, because it legitimizes the theocratic kingdom and treats it as if it were squeaky-clean, despite the vitriolic jihadist incitement emanating from the regime. Self-defeating, because in turning a blind eye to the character of Saudi Arabia, Washington has allowed that state's ill-gotten petro-dollars to fund and facilitate the spread of Islamist ideology (if not also the actual arming of jihadists).

Within its borders, the Saudi regime governs by reference to sharia. Youngsters are inculcated, in schools, through state-controlled media, and mosques, with an abiding hatred for Western values such as political

freedom. State-endorsed religious leaders regularly deliver anti-American diatribes at Friday sermons. Preachers in mosques, on the Internet, and on television incite Saudis to engage in jihad. And it works.

Saad Ibrahim Saad al Bidna was among the holy warriors swept up by U.S. forces and held at Guantanamo for four years. After his release, he explained to an interviewer what set him off on his religious struggle:

Many may find it difficult to believe, but I was not very devout, though I did pray regularly. But enthusiasm and zeal filled the hearts of many young people, and unfortunately, I followed certain fatwas that were posted on the Internet. [These fatwas] call upon young people to wage jihad in certain regions. They tempt them [by describing] the great reward [they will receive], the status of the martyrs in Paradise and the virgins that await them [there].<sup>33</sup>

It would be a mistake to think that such fatwas are exceptions to the prevailing ideas in the country. Far from it. Listen to the advice offered by Sheik Saleh al-Luhaidan, the chief justice of Saudi Arabia's Supreme Judicial Council: "If someone knows that he is capable of entering Iraq in order to join the fight, and if his intention is to raise up the word of God, then he is free to do so." Going to fight Americans, he said, is religiously permissible. "The lawfulness of his action is in fighting an enemy who is fighting Muslims."<sup>34</sup>

Such pronouncements have the clout of revered authority figures, and reinforce the propaganda of various Islamist outfits recruiting holy warriors. During a 2007 raid on an insurgent human-smuggling cell in Iraq, American forces found stacks of documents and computers with some five terabytes of data. Contained in that data was detailed biographical information on hundreds of recruited fighters. The analysis of the origins of the 700-plus recruits was eye-opening. The largest number by far—305, or forty-one percent—were Saudis. (The second-largest group, amounting to 137, came from Libya.)<sup>35</sup> The regime is fast becoming famous for exporting not just oil, but also jihadists. Evidently these holy warriors are carrying on the tradition established by the 9/11 hijackers, fifteen of whom were Saudis.

Billions of dollars from Saudi Arabia are piped across the world to proselytize for the regime's Wahhabist strain of totalitarian Islam. The Finsbury Park Mosque in London, for example, came into being through the patronage of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. He gave more than 1.25 million pounds sterling to fund the building. One preacher at that mosque, Abu Hamza, evidently had ties to the Islamist group that claimed credit for attacking the USS *Cole* in 2000. He also bragged of his ties with the Taliban government. In the late 1990s, while Hamza was still preaching at the mosque,

[w]orshippers then began noticing groups of young men staying overnight at the mosque. These included Richard Reid, the “shoe bomber”; a Tunisian, Nizar Trabelsi, who was told to drive a truck loaded with explosives into the U.S. Embassy in Paris; Zacarias Moussaoui, the 9/11 planner; Ahmed Ressam, who was arrested attempting to bomb the Los Angeles airport at the millennium; Anas al-Liby, now on the FBI’s most-wanted list and in whose Manchester flat police found al-Qaeda’s terror manual in 1998; Abu Doha, wanted in the United States and France for plotting bombings; and others.<sup>36</sup>

Now turn to one Saudi-funded mosque in Birmingham, in the north of England. This is but a flavor of the sermons dished out: “Muslims shouldn’t [be] satisfied with living in other than the total Islamic state” explains a preacher at the Green Lane Mosque who calls himself Abu Usamah. How this abstract goal should be realized is concretely spelled out: “We ask Allah to bring about the means and the ways in which the Muslims will get the power and the honour of repelling the . . . [unbelievers], where we can go out and perform the jihad. We ask Allah to bring that time, so we can be participants in that.” Preachers at Green Lane Mosque studied at religious seminaries in Saudi Arabia; periodically worshippers listen to the religious teachings of a notable cleric in Saudi Arabia, through a live video hookup that is projected onto the wall of the mosque.<sup>37</sup>

According to the estimate of one expert, Saudi charitable donations range between \$3 billion and \$4 billion annually, and as much as twenty percent goes abroad.<sup>38</sup> There is ambiguity—conveniently so for the Saudi regime—about the dividing line between government sanctioned “charitable” contributions to the spread of Islamist ideas, and money supplied by private benefactors. Many of the Saudi charities and missionary organizations, which build mosques and *madrassas* and distribute religious books around the world, enjoy the patronage of members of the ruling royal family. The U.S. Treasury Department identified Al Haramain, a major Saudi charitable organization, as “one of the principal Islamic NGOs providing support for the Al Qaida network and promoting militant Islamic doctrine worldwide.”<sup>39</sup> One study reports that “U.S. investigators have linked a former Al Haramain employee to the 1998 U.S. embassy bombing in Tanzania.”<sup>40</sup> Nor is it plausible that any organization can be truly private, without government involvement or winking indulgence, in a religious monarchy where there is no political freedom.

Of course, the Saudis promised—and to a modest extent carried out—investigations into the financial workings of Islamic charities. They imposed some restrictions on the financial activities of some charities. And a joint Saudi-U.S. task force has apparently investigated some 1,098 Saudi bank

accounts for suspected involvement in terrorist financing, if the regime's claims are to be believed.<sup>41</sup> But these and other perfunctory measures, such as arresting some members of Islamist cells, fall far short of what we should expect from a genuine ally.

Let us, once and for all, sweep aside the delusion that Saudi Arabia is a friend. It is openly hostile. While the regime is not itself a considerable military threat, it is a formidable ideological and financial engine of the jihad.

The Saudis may stop these activities on their own out of fear, or we may have to coerce them into it—but either way, the regime's backing of the jihad must end.

Our policy toward the kingdom should reflect an objective judgment of the regime's moral stature. A vicious, brutal state, it is beneath contempt and spectacularly unworthy of the endorsement implied in being designated an ally of the United States of America. We should therefore put the Saudis in their place, formally denouncing their political system and the pernicious ideas on which it is based. That resounding step alone may well be enough to intimidate the regime to capitulate voluntarily (if only so that the Saudi royal family can cling to power).

Unless Saudi Arabia ceases to proselytize and finance jihadists, Washington has every right to demand that the regime do so, immediately—and then watch for signs of backsliding. To compel its compliance, we would make clear that the regime's defiance will render it subject to our standing ultimatum: dare to threaten us, and suffer ruin. We should present the Saudis with a further non-negotiable demand: like Iran and for the same reasons, the Saudi regime must ensure the free trade of oil and must renounce (and prohibit its subjects from) funding the Islamist cause.

Having shut down the ideological and financial engines of the jihad—Iran and Saudi Arabia—Washington will face an increasingly demoralized movement. Whatever die-hard Islamists remain at this point will be waiting with bated breath for any sign of American weakness, any inconsistency, any exception to our policy of defeating their cause, any iota that can fuel their propaganda theme that the pious Muslim warriors can yet vanquish mightier infidels. But remaining principled in our policy, we should give them no such opening.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration has sullied the notion of a foreign policy shaped by moral principle. In its conception, that meant following a corrupt ideal (namely, the duty to serve others, rather than U.S. self-interest [see part 2]) and the practice of arbitrary, out of context judgments that ignore inconvenient facts. Only our enemies benefit from that so-called moralistic policy.

The point of sticking to our principles is not that we must, in the name of some duty, serve some abstract ideas. The point is that with the right moral principle as our guide to action, we can achieve our self-interested goal of protecting Americans. Resting at the foundation of our foreign policy should be the principle that recognizes our moral right to self-defense. That in turn leads to the requirement that we judge other nations objectively. Without properly evaluating other nations, we cannot distinguish between friends and foes, nor deal with them accordingly. That's essential not only for stamping out the remnants of the Islamist movement, but also for our long-term policy toward to the region.

The U.S. policy toward Pakistan provides an object lesson on the need for objectively judging other regimes.

### **Pakistan and Afghanistan**

The entrenchment of Islamist strongholds along the Afghan-Pakistan border, and increasingly within Pakistan itself, is the result of Washington's unprincipled foreign policy. We saw in chapter 6 that Pakistan was a patron of Islamist groups, notably the Taliban, and that despite Islamabad's pledge that it was an ally of the United States, a mountain of evidence contradicts that claim. Yet for years the Bush administration continued to channel billions of dollars in aid to Pakistan, ostensibly to combat the jihadists, even as the regime openly bribed them and at times abetted their resurgence in Afghanistan. Washington continued to insist that Pakistan was a valued ally, that it was making valiant efforts, that its appeasement of jihadists was a sensible policy.

The mess in Pakistan has come about and festered because, fundamentally, Washington deluded itself about the Pakistan alliance. Eschewing the actual practice of moral judgment, we timidly treated the regime as if it were some angelic, unimpeachably loyal friend that deserved our respect and billions—solely because it said so. Shutting out of mind its true character, we then slathered on a coat of whitewash to obscure its corrupt actions. For its part, Pakistan could safely get away with its racket by doing just enough to give the appearance of being an ally, but no more. There was little to fear, considering the weakness Washington displayed in every aspect of the “war on terror.”

But a proper approach then, and now, entails facing the truth. We undercut our long-range goal if we fail to judge, or evade our conclusions about, Pakistan (or any regime). Could we have had a profitable alliance with Pakistan? Quite possibly, but only if we dealt with this purported lesser of two evils as, indeed, evil. That would mean acknowledging the immorality



of Pakistan's past and demanding that it vigorously combat the Islamic totalitarians as proof of repudiating them. We would have to be frank: the regime should be kept at arm's length, and we should explain openly that we would welcome and support new, pro-American leaders in Pakistan who actually embrace freedom.

The meaningful threat of U.S. military force may well be enough to instill fear in Pakistan, so that it will indeed combat the jihadists within its purview. We would be morally entitled to issue, and if necessary fulfill, that threat—but we could equally decide to bypass the regime altogether, and do the job ourselves.

We cannot allow Pakistan to have its borders and eat them too: on the one hand, it claims territorial sovereignty as the reason for denying U.S. forces access to Islamists in its tribal borderlands; on the other hand, the regime patently lacks exclusive legal sovereignty in those areas, as witness the growing Talibanization there. Unless Pakistan tamps down the dregs of the jihad in those areas, Washington should not forsake that goal in the name of respecting Pakistan's nonexistent sovereignty in those areas.

With the Islamists' stronghold in the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands destroyed, the United States should tell the government of Pakistan that it, like the defeated Iran, is subject to our standing ultimatum in that part of the world. Its passive or active support for Islamists will result in the fate that we inflicted on Iran. That ultimatum—which our actions contra Iran and Saudi Arabia will have made tangibly credible—should deter Pakistan.

Clearing out the jihadist training camps and operational centers in the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands will make it easier to squash whatever remains of the Taliban-Al Qaeda insurgency in Afghanistan. Here the task is to finish the job begun in 2001 (see chapters 4 and 6).

Flooding the country with many more U.S. troops is probably unnecessary and indeed would not get us far, unless we unburden our troops from the absurd, self-destructive rules of engagement that prevent them from using all necessary force to do their job. Washington's so-called battlefield ethics were tightened even more in recent years in Afghanistan, and not coincidentally, the Islamist insurgency grew stronger. For example, "Air Force lawyers vet all the air strikes approved by the operational air commanders," while "[v]ast numbers of public, religious and historic sites make up a computer database of no-strike zones."<sup>42</sup>

Under current policies, bombing raids often have to be canceled, sacrificing the opportunity to kill Islamist fighters, for fear of civilian casualties. The Islamists are aware of these policies, and exploit them to their advantage. But "the beauty of what we do is we will get them eventually," claims

Lt. Gen. Gary L. North, who favors this approach. “Eventually, we will get to the point where we can achieve—within the constraints of which we operate, which by the way the enemy does not operate under—and we will get them.”<sup>43</sup>

Eventually.

It is past time to repudiate “eventually” and embrace “now.” As part of underscoring our commitment to wipe out all traces of the Islamist movement, we should suspend these irrational, self-denying rules that protect enemy forces and needlessly prolong the fighting and increase the risks to our troops. Our rules of engagement must put the lives of Americans, and specifically of our own troops, above all else. Morally, if we send men into battle, we are obliged to let them fight to win; sending them onto a battlefield to become cannon fodder is utterly wicked.

As for Afghanistan’s regime, it should be brought under Washington’s standing policy that promises thorough retaliation to any nation in the region that threatens us. This, not hundreds of millions of dollars in reconstruction aid, is the proper incentive to ensure that the regime restrains itself and the people living within its borders.

## Iraq

When a line of domino pieces fall, the first upon the second, the second upon the third, each pushing down the next, the cascade begins to feel inescapable. And indeed Washington should broadcast that point. Seeing America bring down their inspiration, the Islamist regime of Iran, and uproot other jihadist strongholds, such as those in Pakistan and Afghanistan, any holy warrior left within Iraq cannot but feel despondent.

With pro-Islamist elements in the Muslim world feeling hopeless and depressed, jihadists will find it harder to secure safe houses, if they can find any; harder to orchestrate and keep secret whatever plots they hope to carry out, if they still believe they stand a chance of executing such plans. But here again, we should not wait for the appeal and the support networks of the Islamist movement simply to dissolve on their own time frame.

With Iran’s Islamist regime gone, gone also will be its meddling in Iraq. Jihadists would no longer have access to Iranian mortars, arms, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs); the Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hezbollah trainers, and tacticians; the piles of Iranian-supplied cash to bankroll operations, recruitment, ammunition, safe houses. Militia groups—whether Sunni or Shiite—who enjoyed Iranian backing in the past will find themselves bereft of the means and confidence to fight Americans. The pro-Iranian Shiite parties in Iraq’s governing coalition will find themselves politically orphaned. The ab-

sence of Iran's tentacles in Iraq could lead to a fizzling out of the insurgency—something that U.S. forces should accelerate by force of arms, unrestricted by current rules of engagement. But the ending of Iran's influence could also precipitate an outright resumption of the simmering sectarian civil war.

What, then, should we aim to accomplish in Iraq? In the Bush administration's original vision of the war, "success" would mean an outcome that bestows aid and the good life on Iraqis—regardless of what that costs in U.S. lives and regardless of how that affects our security. This is a selfless, and corrupt, goal (see chapters 3 and 5). It behooves us to repudiate Washington's promise to bring Iraq up from third-world-level poverty; that was an improper promise that our leaders have no business committing Americans to.

Nor is it in our self-interest to aim at "stabilizing" Iraq in the sense of shepherding its layers of clans, tribes, sects, and factions to some improbable reconciliation. Nor are we in any position to sit in tribunal and favor one faction over another, to reward one gang of warlords while spurning another (as recent policy has done; see chapter 6). Washington has embroiled itself, willy-nilly, in the convoluted web of Iraq's internal quarrels, and there's no straightforward solution to such a messy situation. A rational foreign policy would never put us in the position of having to extricate ourselves from this kind of impossible morass.

The U.S. priority should be leaving behind a regime that is non-threatening, and in doing so, minimize the cost to Americans and the risk to the lives of U.S. troops. In the name of avenging fallen American soldiers, we should stamp out the remaining traces of the insurgency, and, in the name of protecting all Americans, put Iraq on notice that our region-wide ultimatum applies to it as well; like the declawed regimes of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, it will face military action if it dares to become a threat to us.

Regarding the oil in Iraq, here again our policy should be to demand that trade in that commodity be left unobstructed. That the puny Iraqi regime would refuse is conceivable, but highly improbable, in view of America's newfound reputation for robust and proud self-assertion. If there were no regime, if anarchy prevailed, it would be morally proper for Washington to liberate the oil fields, but only if that is done expressly for the sake of restarting the trade in oil for our own benefit.

### **The Levant**

Witnessing the United States rise to its full stature as a morally confident giant asserting its interests in the Middle East, the Islamist forces in Lebanon (e.g., Hezbollah) and in the Palestinian territories (e.g. Hamas) will shrivel,

financially and ideologically. Without a stream of dollars from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other regimes—which have been cowed by American intimidation and/or force—any remaining jihadists in the Levant will have suffered a thorough humiliation, and will have to go scrounging. Syria has facilitated and backed Hamas and Hezbollah (allowing top leaders of Hamas to operate freely and run a headquarters in Damascus). The dawn of the new era in the Middle East will find Syria retreating from its past sponsorship of terrorists. By that point it will be common knowledge that whoever dares to back them will thereby single himself out as a potential target of American wrath.

Remember, too, that the United States has an ally in the area that likewise faces a common foe in the shape of the Islamist movement. No, contrary to the propaganda from the White House, that ally is not the Lebanese government. Washington has morally and financially bolstered Lebanon's government, but this is a regime that allows Hezbollah to run an Islamist state-within-a-state and to launch rocket attacks on Israel. In 2008 Lebanon granted that jihadist group a veto on cabinet decisions. Nor is our ally the fledgling Palestinian Authority, once run by the Palestinian Liberation Organization and now by Hamas. Perversely, Washington has injected billions of dollars into the Palestinian Authority, legitimating its murderous campaign against Israel. No, in reality our only genuine ally in that area is Israel.

We should forthrightly acknowledge the nature and scope of this bond. It is in our interest to extend to Israel our moral endorsement of any retaliatory steps it decides to take to uproot and destroy whatever is left of the Islamist terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian territories and in Lebanon. That includes selling Israel the bombs and military hardware that it needs to defend itself—and, by extension, our interests. And when it is called upon to use those weapons in retaliation, Washington should signal its moral approval, rather than imploring Israel to pull its punches and blackmailing the regime with threats to cut off trade in weapons (as many U.S. administrations have done for years).

By extending our hand in solidarity to Israel, we stress the fact that our intimidating ultimatum toward potential enemies has a positive flip side: if you share our values and desire peaceful coexistence with the United States, you have nothing to fear and stand to gain from our friendship (if deserved). Just as we deploy public diplomacy to broadcast our moral justification for the war against the Islamist movement, so, equally, we should publicly name the standard by which we judge Israel (and other allies) and explain the nature and depth of our alliance.

It is fundamentally by projecting our moral strength and clarity of vision that Washington can successfully advance our national self-interest in the region.

## U.S. Security through Principled Policy

If we are to set off on the road to victory, we need to abandon the bankrupt policies that weakened us and strengthened our enemies, and instead properly define and consistently pursue our actual self-interest in the Middle East. The fundamental challenge before us, then, is not strategic or even tactical; it has to do with the basic strata of ideas underlying our foreign policy. We need, in other words, to base our Mideast policy on a new moral foundation; the necessary underpinning for all the practical steps outlined above is the moral ideal of egoism. Unless we make that principle the intellectual framework of our policy, none of these steps is possible.

We need, moreover, to begin formulating our foreign policy with a frank recognition of what we confront in the Middle East. Emphasizing our willingness to resort to military force to assert our interests is necessary in dealing with the region. It is the one language best understood by all political actors. Sad to say, the “politics” within and between states in the region consists of continual struggles to assert domination, or escape submission. A brief taste of the internecine conflicts that have wracked the Arab-Islamic world (not including the series of wars against Israel, or the recent sectarian bloodbath in Iraq):

Morocco and Algeria have fought, and for years Algeria has financed a proxy, the Polisario movement, to continue its feuding against Morocco. Libya has raided across the Egyptian and Tunisian borders and interfered militarily in Sudan. Syria has twice invaded neighboring Lebanon, and once neighboring Jordan, and it has mobilized against neighboring Iraq. Iraq has threatened Kuwait and Syria and has twice sent forces into Jordan, and under Saddam Hussein has fought one of the longest wars of the [20th] century against neighboring Iran. Jordan, North Yemen and South, and Oman have experienced civil war.<sup>44</sup>

Recall the seemingly routine assassinations of political figures in Lebanon (among the latest of which was Rafik Hariri), and the commonplace state-orchestrated violence against citizens (notably Syria’s 1982 massacre of tens of thousands of residents in the city of Hama).<sup>45</sup> By one reckoning (again excluding the conflicts with Israel), “in the past six decades, this region has witnessed no fewer than 22 full-scale wars over territory and resources,” a gruesome record that only begins to sketch the contours of the region’s politics. A fuller picture would fill in the details of “the uninterrupted string of domestic clashes, military coups, acts of sectarian and ethnic vengeance, factional terrorism, and other internal conflicts that have characterized the greater Middle East, not infrequently attaining impressive heights of cruelty and despoliation.”<sup>46</sup>

Islamists are, in this respect, one subgroup within the barbaric political culture of the region. In crushing the Islamist movement and convincing its many followers that the cause is hopeless, we are carrying out the only applicable remedy. In proudly asserting our self-interest and wielding the credible threat of devastating retaliation against aggressors, the United States positions itself in the minds of the Arab-Islamic world as a force that cannot be assailed with impunity, not ever. Our policy must require force with force—to as ferocious a degree as necessary to deter future assailants. This will buy us the robust shield of credible deterrence, far more desirable than having to draw our military weapons.

What we will accomplish is the emasculation of the current threat—the Islamist movement—and of would-be attackers. Maintaining this policy toward the region, particularly by ensuring the uninterrupted free trade in oil, will keep out of reach the loot necessary to carry out attacks against us. In all likelihood, given the tribalism and authoritarian culture of the region, it will continue to be roiled by armed conflicts and wars between and within states. Washington's policy toward this should be: *Let them fight each other all they want, so long as they leave us alone.* If the Arab-Islamic world is to rescue itself from this primitivism, that day will come when the people of the region embrace the necessary life-enriching values of political and economic freedom (which the vision of America's moral strength and prosperity may incidentally inspire them to do).

We will accomplish another significant goal by our confident assertion of military strength. The meaning of such action is that we cherish (egoistically) our lives and cultural institutions, that we will go to war to defend ourselves and what we value. The moral strength to do that is precisely the same strength needed to oppose the subversive Islamist campaign within the West seeking to impose sharia rule, which we considered in chapter 6. By crushing the movement in the Middle East and demoralizing its followers, we will achieve the same effect on its followers everywhere. No one could thereafter seriously believe that we will allow the supplanting of our cultural values with sharia. What if there are die-hards bent on this cause? Such activists will find themselves up against Westerners who are resolutely unwilling to sacrifice their own freedom.

The recommendations outlined in this chapter are not meant to be, indeed cannot be, exhaustive. They are meant as illustrations of how the principle of egoism would apply to our Mideast policy. By its nature, that principle encompasses many possible applications to many particular contexts—obviously including situations that lie in the future. That's what makes it so enormously valuable as a guide to action: its advice applies to

innumerable specific situations. And in a given case, it may endorse several different, equally valid courses of action (for example, in seeking to defeat the enemy militarily, there may be multiple morally valid options concerning which weapons to deploy and in what configuration). Consequently, it takes thought and a great deal of knowledge of a given situation to draw the practical guidance of this principled foreign policy.

For that advice to be profitable, we cannot pick up a few random tips or how-tos, and apply that advice, or not, as the fancy takes us. Unless we implement our policy as a matter of principle—in different contexts and across time—we derive no value from it. To conduct U.S. foreign policy by means of a splintered, moment-by-moment, diplomatic square dance—as we did before 9/11 and as the new administration promises to do again—is to subvert our national interest, now and in the long term. It cannot fail to inspire contempt among our enemies, and on occasion, it will mean that (as we've done in the past) we strengthen them and put weapons into their hands, weapons that eventually they turn against us.

So it is wrenchingly ironic that America's reputation in the world today is that of an ogre that ruthlessly bludgeons anyone who stands in the way of his self-interest. On this perspective, Washington somehow operates, robot-like, on an undeviating script calculated to attain its desires (regardless of how shrilly our presidents, in all sincerity and honesty, avow that our aim is selfless service to the world's needy). But the facts of the matter belie this reputation. If there is one motif that runs through the last decades of our erratic foreign policy, it is an overriding failure properly to conceptualize our self-interest and to pursue it as the morally right thing to do.

Up until now, we have trudged onward, from one crisis to a worse one, under self-imposed chains that have hobbled our policymaking and, consequently, our national security. Those chains, by our own choice, defined a narrow range of motion: self-assertive action for our own sake was seen as morally tainted; serving others, a noble ideal. Defeating our enemies was reviled as folly and (contrary to the evidence) as somehow self-defeating. Subordinating our security to the whims of that den of international reprobates, the United Nations, on the other hand, was somehow good.

Up until now, we have renounced the self-interested goal of defeating Islamic totalitarianism, because our leaders—and so many Americans—do not believe we are morally entitled to annihilate those who would annihilate us.

Up until now, we have deployed policies that implicitly or explicitly negate our absolute moral right to self-defense.

But no longer.

The policy outlined here constitutes a new starting point for America's dealings with the Middle East. Implementing it requires that we embrace the moral propriety of defending our freedom and our lives—and that we do so not apologetically, but rather with our heads held high.