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## Thoughts on Iraq and the War on Terrorism

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Let me say from the outset: There are disagreements I have with this Administration, disagreements in both domestic and foreign policy. For example, I do not believe that the spending increases this Administration has sought in many domestic programs—ideally for the purpose of bringing along Democratic support—are the answer to entrenched problems. The direction of reform in a number of programs is commendable, but the spending is, frankly, too high. All the spending we gave away under No Child Left Behind certainly didn't keep Ted Kennedy supportive of the program for very long. We are better when we stick to our principles; we are better when we remain strong.

I don't much like things like the tariffs on imported steel either. In the long run, it's bad policy, bad for jobs, and bad politics—and it's certainly inimical to our principles.

In one very important area where the government should be acting more, I think it is slow to act. In immigration, we see very little. We have perhaps 10 million illegal aliens in our country. (We can't say for sure because we can't document them with great accuracy.) Virtual amnesty for them, and for the many who will come across today and tomorrow, is wrong. It kicks the can down the road and, ironically, will cause more domestic spending to cover the security concerns and the domestic programs that citizens—and illegals—will require.

Abroad, I believe, we are too appeasing of countries like China. I do not support the engagement that leads to permanent normal trade relations when

### Talking Points

Iraq, while dangerous, is safer than it was, freer than it was, more humanitarian than it was. There can be no question that the regime:

- No longer officially harbors terrorists (like it did Abu Nidal and Al-Zarqawi);
- No longer exports terrorism outside of its borders;
- No longer threatens to purchase or use weapons of mass destruction from outside nations like North Korea or China;
- No longer keeps hospitals and schools closed;
- No longer murders the way it had—5,000 children per month according to UNICEF; and
- No longer subsidizes suicide bombers against Israelis.

We are turning one of the worst countries in the Middle East into one of the best countries in the Middle East. For this, we should not be humble. For this, we should not be embarrassed. For this, we should be proud.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/middleeast/iraq/hl819.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/middleeast/iraq/hl819.cfm)

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we see no reforms from that country in its civil and political system, when religion is still anathema, where children's rights are a non sequitur, where virtual slavery is de rigueur. We have also embraced Saudi Arabia too closely—giving high-level meetings to their Royals whenever they pick up the phone, treating them with kid gloves, showing a coziness that frankly leads to confusion regarding what this war against terrorism is truly about. More poisonous indoctrination flows from Saudi Arabia than from perhaps any other country, and we should be engaged in breaking, rather than strengthening, that flow. And there are other issues.

### The Overriding Issue

But let's be clear on this: In the issue that matters most—our survival, the civilized world's survival, the spread of democracy, the war against terrorism and radical Islam—this President is right and his critics wrong.

Yet while this is so, to paraphrase Yeats, many of the best lack all conviction while many of the worst are full of passionate intensity. The President's critics speak daily and nightly with furious conviction while the Administration often seems defensive, too quiet, and reticent.

We have heard from Dick Gephardt, John Kerry, and Howard Dean that our foreign policy has been "a miserable failure" and that "we've done almost everything wrong."

The truth: Following September 11, there were days of anger, doubt, and confusion. But consider what has happened since then and what we have done in the world.

- We have not been attacked again in our homeland.
- Al-Qaeda has been radically disrupted. Two-thirds of that network's leadership has been killed or arrested.
- The Taliban is finished. Afghanistan is attempting a constitutional government.
- Yasser Arafat, who taught the world the use of hijacking airplanes and the use of civilian deaths to make political points, is ostracized by the American government—this President did not put his arm around Arafat.

- Osama bin Laden is living a troglodyte existence on the run.

Much of the criticism suggesting that we have done nothing right and that we are a failure is specific to Iraq, and our critics have talked a lot about the hopelessness of the task. But recall that this is not the first time people have had doubt about our ability to make a ravaged country better.

In 1946, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article titled "How We Botched the German Occupation." In it, Demaree Bess wrote:

We have got into this German job without understanding what we were tackling or why. Not one American political leader fully realized at the outset how formidable our German commitments would prove to be. There was no idea, at the beginning, that Americans would become involved in a project to take Germany completely apart and put it together again in wholly new patterns.

Even the brilliant John Dos Passos wrote in *Life* the same year that our post-war occupation was "a tangle of snarling misery." His piece was titled "Americans Are Losing the Victory in Europe." Dos Passos continued:

Never has American prestige in Europe been lower. . . . All we have brought to Europe so far is confusion backed up by a drumhead regime of military courts. We have swept away Hitlerism, but a great many Europeans feel that the cure has been worse than the disease.

### The Truth About "Squandered Goodwill"

We have been told by Al Gore and John Kerry that we've squandered our international goodwill. We have not squandered international goodwill. In many places, we never really had it at all.

In the 1980s, much of European goodwill toward us was very low. Remember the protests in Europe over Reagan's decision to deploy missiles in Europe. Europeans protested, but Reagan stood strong and the Soviet Union cracked and crumbled, and millions more are free today because we stood on the side of those the Soviets feared the most: their people. Today, from Lithuania to Poland we see freedom

and democracy for literally tens of millions, freedom that was said would not come in our lifetimes.

If you look at U.N. votes over the past 40 years, we've never been loved by the anti-democratic world, which is well represented in the U.N., because we threatened its leadership. We are a great country that stands in its way.

When was there goodwill? Well, we are told, goodwill was there under President Clinton. I would say that during that supposed era of goodwill, bin Laden was building al-Qaeda, declaring war on us, watching us do nothing about terrorism. In addition, during that presidency, we were appeasing North Korea and building up and coddling Arafat. If that was the era of goodwill, let there be no more of it.

Whether other countries love us or not makes no difference. The U.S. will continue to do the right thing, usually—it will be blamed or resented, but it will do it nonetheless. That's what has happened before, that is what is happening now, and that is what will happen in the future. That's who they are, that's who we are, and that's what we do.

Governor Dean says the minute he is President Dean, he will hand over peacekeeping in Iraq to the U.N. Right now, we have our Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines; our Special Ops, our Delta Force—our best fighting men and women. They are involved in a tough war, in a tough rebuilding. Do we really believe that U.N. men in pale blue hats from Kenya and Holland will do it better?

“We have squandered goodwill.” Just what is meant by “squandering goodwill?” What is meant is that we defy the U.N. The U.N. on whose Security Council sits Syria and whose Human Rights Commission was chaired by Libya this year—these are the people whose goodwill we squandered. So be it!

### **The Truth About “Unilateral Arrogance”**

It is said by Wesley Clark that we are acting unilaterally and arrogantly. John Kerry claimed we did not do the hard coalition work of President George H. W. Bush. This is an empty complaint. That President Bush's coalition in 1991 had 34 countries. This President Bush's coalition has 31—the complaint rests on a factor of three countries.

We've forgotten—I should say, John Kerry and Wesley Clark have forgotten—the letter written by

eight European leaders earlier this year, including “the conscience of Europe,” Vaclav Havel. The letter supported our efforts regarding Iraq and said:

We in Europe have a relationship with the U.S. which has stood the test of time. Thanks in large part to American bravery, generosity and farsightedness, Europe was set free from the two forms of tyranny that devastated our continent in the 20th century: Nazism and communism.... The Iraqi regime and its weapons of mass destruction represent a clear threat to world security.

The letter was signed by Spain, Portugal, Italy, the U.K., Hungary, Poland, Denmark, and the Czech Republic. These are countries that know the face of tyranny and the meaning and favor of America.

It is said that we have trumped up charges of weapons of mass destruction about Iraq. That charge is made by people who did not care that Saddam Hussein banned inspectors since 1998—and by people who forget things the previous Administration said. It is Bill Clinton who said this:

What if Saddam Hussein fails to comply, and we fail to act, or we take some ambiguous third route which gives him yet more opportunities to develop his program of weapons of mass destruction and continue to press for the release of the sanctions and continue to ignore the solemn commitments that he made? Well, he will conclude that the international community has lost its will. He will then conclude that he can go right on and do more to rebuild an arsenal of devastating destruction. If we fail to respond today, Saddam and all those who would follow in his footsteps will be emboldened tomorrow. Some day, some way, I guarantee you, he'll use the arsenal.

Clinton, acting on that information, sent missiles into Iraq in Operation Desert Fox. He did this, by the way, without seeking U.N. approval.

That was Clinton, and it is said that Republicans, conservatives, trumped this up?

For the first time in five years, we now have inspectors in Iraq. They have been there for seven months, and David Kay is still in the preliminary stages of his investigation—yet he has already reported “a complex concealment program of long range missiles well beyond legal ranges, intimidation of scientists, and the incubation of deadly biological toxins.”

### **The Truth About Why We Went to War in Iraq**

It is said that we change or have changed the justification for war with Iraq. But weapons of mass destruction was never our entire indictment. The truth is, we always made our case on several grounds, and it was the opposition who wanted just one. We charged all of the following: human rights abuses; history of aggression (invading two countries, bombing a third); hiding terrorists; funding terrorists; building WMDs—all were justifications. In fact, President Bush’s first case to the U.N. in his September address last year began an indictment of Hussein for “repression of [his] own people.”

It is said we have brought about the animus of the Muslim world. But let this be said loudly and clearly—and let it be heard all over the world. The last seven times the U.S. has used its military, it has been on behalf of Muslims: First, to save Afghans from the Soviets; second, to save Kuwaitis from Saddam; third, fourth, and fifth, to save Kosovars, Bosnians, and Somalis from their own petty dictators and warlords; sixth, to save Afghans a second time; and seventh, now the Iraqis. The American military is the peaceful Islamic peoples’ best friend.

Some skeptics say Israel explains it all, that it is our support for Israel that led to all this trouble. Wrong. All wrong. Bin Laden did not focus his indictment on us over Israel. Our support for Israel simply can’t explain why Syria swallowed Lebanon, why Hussein unleashed a bloodbath against Iran, why Hussein invaded Kuwait, why Kuwait expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, why the Taliban destroyed the Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan, why the Sudan slaughters Christians, why the bombings in Bali killed 202 people, why there are church bombings in Pakistan, or why the U.N. and Red Cross are considered targets in Iraq now.

The problem is actually not the U.S. or Israel; the problem is radical Islam. Not terrorism, radical Islam. Let’s get it exactly right: radical Islam, of which there is too much. Moderate Islam—where and if it exists—must raise its voice against that radical call.

### **The Truth About Civil Liberties**

As to the criticism of the war at home, the ACLU—with continued support from Al Gore—claims the Administration is using war as a pretext to curb civil liberties. This month, Gore said, “They have taken us much farther down the road toward an intrusive, ‘big brother’-style government—toward the dangers prophesied by George Orwell in his book *1984*—than anyone ever thought would be possible in the United States of America.” What illiteracy. What bad reading.

The truth: Senator Joe Biden recently said attacks on the Patriot Act are “ill-informed and overblown.” Senator Dianne Feinstein recently said, “I have never had a single abuse of the Patriot Act reported to me.” And when Senator Feinstein asked the ACLU for examples of civil liberty abuses, she reported, “they had none.”

Gore and Dean and the Democrats who rail against the Patriot Act forget that it passed the Senate by 99 votes.

### **Before and After in Iraq**

With all the passion by the Democratic contenders for President right now, we should clear our throats and start ratcheting up our own passion about the following brief facts on the war in Iraq, facts that look at the conditions before and the conditions now.

Iraq is demonstrably better than it was six months ago, six years ago, or 16 years ago. Of this there can be no question. Iraq, while dangerous, is safer than it was, freer than it was, more humanitarian than it was. While we rightfully lament the challenge of internal terrorism there—and our men and women being part of that—there can be no question that the regime:

- No longer officially harbors terrorists (like it did Abu Nidal and Al-Zarqawi);
- No longer exports terrorism outside of its borders;

- No longer threatens to purchase or use weapons of mass destruction from outside nations like North Korea or China;
- No longer keeps hospitals and schools closed;
- No longer murders the way it had—5,000 children per month according to UNICEF; and
- No longer subsidizes suicide bombers against Israelis.

The Middle East has one less thug leading one less thuggish state, and the threats from Iraq are exclusively internal to Iraq and no longer external to other nations and allies. With Iraq, now, it is easier to quell a cauldron than it was to prevent a volcano. We are helping to create the first democracy in the Arab world—and someday, some way, we may even receive a letter from Muslim nations thanking us for defeating their tyranny the way we received a letter from Havel and the European Eight.

Our efforts in Iraq rank among the crowning achievements of our nation, of our democratic will against tyranny, and of our goodwill for human rights. We are turning one of the worst countries in the Middle East into one of the best countries in the Middle East. For this, we should not be humble. For this, we should not be embarrassed. For this, we should be proud.

### The Way Not to Forget

The Holocaust Museum in Washington just celebrated its tenth anniversary. The Holocaust Museum is a profound place based on a simple premise: We should never forget man's inhumanity to man. Remembering and seeing with our eyes and imagination is the way not to forget. And as with Germany, so it is with Iraq—we should see and remember.

We should see and remember the videos former NYC Police Chief Bernard Kerik saw in Baghdad:

Interrogations of Iraqis whose lives ended with the detonation of a grenade that was tied to the neck or stuffed in the shirt pocket of the victim...living bodies disintegrate at the pull of the pin...a tape of Saddam sitting and watching one of his military generals being eaten alive by

Dobermans because the general's loyalty was in question.

We should see and remember the plastic shredding devices left-wing Parliamentarian Ann Clwyd brought to the world's attention, with the following witness-testimony:

There was a machine designed for shredding plastic. Men were dropped into it and we were again made to watch. Sometimes they went in head first and died quickly. Sometimes they went in feet first and died screaming... Their remains would be placed in plastic bags and we were told they would be used as fish food.

We should read testimony from the survivors of the chemical attack on Halabja that killed a minimum of 5,000 people; we should see the torture chambers and the rape rooms. We should see mass graves like the one near al-Hilla that Christopher Hitchens described: "The remains of 3,000 individuals were brought to the surface... Eyewitnesses from the horrific repression of 1991 report having seen three truckloads of prisoners three times a day, for a month, being unloaded there."

We need to have these images again, for too many seem to have forgotten them.

When I attended human rights rallies in my youth, I used to hear the quote from Tom Paine, that "we have it in our power to begin the world over again." In the Middle East—the cradle of dictatorship and terrorism—we are beginning the world again. This is what such work looks like. Yet many have forgotten that all beginnings are difficult. If it succeeds, we will see more democracy, less war, and less torture.

Someday, we may even have the luxury of saying about this, and other memorials to horror, that we do not remember the world that brought them about. In the meantime, let us be mindful that it is in that desert in Iraq that civilization and barbarism are now at war. It has fallen to us to be the arm, the conscience, and the will of civilization.

And so to our critics we say, with passion and conviction, that we are proud of our country; we are proud of our fighting men and women in Iraq; and, yes, we are proud of our President.

—William J. Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education, is Distinguished Fellow in Cultural Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation. These remarks were deliv-

ered at a meeting of The Heritage Foundation President's Club, held at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington, D.C.