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How did we get here? How did we get to the point, first, where military force became America's answer to what the rest of the world believed, and still believes, was an issue already on the way to being resolved: the disarmament of Iraq? Since the occupation began, no weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have yet been found. What *has* been discovered is that intelligence dossiers were sexed up to include false reports of uranium purchases from Niger, and to support assertions that Baghdad could launch a devastating chemical and biological attack at forty-five minutes notice. These discoveries should have provoked an outraged public response. But so far they have not. Why?

The short answer is that the Bush administration succeeded in using WMD to scare the nation into giving it a green light to bring down Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. UN arms inspector Hans Blix, shunted aside by the Bush administration, told Agence France-Presse that the White House "over-interpreted" the evidence. True enough, Saddam Hussein's past behavior warranted a close look. "But," Blix continued, "in the Middle Ages, when people were convinced there were witches, when they looked for them, they certainly found them." It might well have been, added Blix on Australian national radio, that Hussein pretended to have kept such weapons to deter an American attack. But was the war justified, he was then asked. "No, I don't think so."

Senator Edward Kennedy, an original supporter of the war, told the Associated Press on September 18, 2003: "There was no imminent threat. This was made up in Texas, announced in January to the Republican leadership that war was going to take place and was going to be good politically. This whole thing was a fraud."

Kennedy stopped short of saying, however, that he would oppose the president's request for an additional \$87 billion for the Iraqi front on the War on Terrorism, because "our troops . . . didn't make the decision to go there." The funds President Bush wanted Congress to appropriate were and are about a lot more than protecting American troops. They are about rebuilding a nation in America's image—and represent only the down payment on a mortgage that future generations will be paying off for years to come.

Secretary of State Colin Powell is said to have admonished Bush before the war about his responsibility for Iraq's future. Pottery Barn rules applied: "You break it, you own it." The Pottery Barn Company immediately objected that their policy was not to punish careless customers that way, but to absorb the breakage costs as part of doing business. Either way, the United States will own Iraq. The "handover" of power to an Iraqi "government" on June 30, 2004, signaled nothing more than the creation of a new-style protectorate, however much it was bally-hooed as bringing democracy to the Middle East. The American Embassy will be the largest in the world, housing more than 2,000 bureaucrats and counselors. They will simply change addresses from the "Green Zone" enclave in central Baghdad to the Embassy. The American army will stay for an undetermined time, charged with maintaining internal security and prisons to make sure law and order reign. It is fitting, also, that the original post-World War I mandatory power, Great Britain, whose "coalition" forces are located near Basra, has offered some serious criticisms about American methods—implying they could still do it better than the newcomers to empire.

Thus the real issue was never the disarmament of Iraq, but fulfilling the long-term goal of finding a "friendly" government to carry out the American global mission. From the time of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, through the 1952 Egyptian Revolution, the return of the shah to his throne the following year, and clandestine support for Saddam Hussein's war against Iran in the 1980s, the search has been a frustrating one. But once "democracy" is planted in Iraq, the mission will succeed. Or so it is believed. The enemies of the American mission are always labeled alien intruders or "foreign fighters" in the post-Cold War years, or, in the earlier Cold War, "agents of the Kremlin." Or, in general, as UN arms

inspector Hans Blix put it, when one believes in witches, one finds evidence of witches. This "agent theory of revolution" offers policymakers unlimited opportunity, moreover, to justify whatever they wish to do in the name of national security.

American policy in the Middle East before the Cold War, before World War II, began as a "simple" quest for oil concessions. "In May of 1933, King Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud, who had founded the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," reads the official website of Saudi Aramco, the largest oil company of the region, "listened attentively as the text of a draft agreement was read to him. After a pause, he turned to his Finance Minister Abdullah Sulaiman and said: 'Put your trust in God and sign.' " The first oil started coming in six years later, as the war began. And it never stopped coming. "As was demonstrated during the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 when it stepped in to make up for the loss of oil exports from Iraq and Kuwait, thus averting a catastrophic global energy shortage, Saudi Aramco is, as *Petroleum Intelligence Weekly* noted, a guarantor of the 'stability and security to world oil markets that is now the hallmark of Saudi policy.' "

During World War II, the United States took up a big stake in the Middle East for the first time, challenging British dominance that had prevailed since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. We sent forces to Iran to occupy the country along with Britain, to insure the lifeline to Russia for the duration. And we sent lend-lease aid to Saudi Arabia to insure we would not lose out in the competition for oil rights. Harry Hopkins, an aide to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, joked that he had a hard time finding a way to call "that outfit" (the Saudi royal family) a democracy as required under the Lend-Lease law, but never mind—the *idea* required us to find ways around such difficulties. And it was a good bargain, because oil would fill the tanks of a consumer democracy at home. We have been protecting Saudi Arabia (or rather its ruling monarchy and Saudi Aramco) ever since, one way or another.

With Iraq and Iran in turmoil since the 1970s, Saudi Arabia has become, with its 25 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, Washington's most important "partner" in the world. It is intensely disturbing to policymakers whenever one talks about (let alone investigates) the connections Saudi Arabia has to international terrorism and the men who flew the jetliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But it is not only oil where Saudi Arabia stands out; there are also the enormous arms purchases that help to relieve dangerous trade imbalances. From the 1970s, when Henry Kissinger set up the arms-for-oil mechanism, the Saudis have purchased upward of \$100 billion from the United States. "For years upon years," writes a former CIA counterterrorism expert, "the Saudis have been the world's number-one consumer of American armament and weapons systems."

Today, however, the outlook for Saudi-American relations has clouded over a bit. The American military presence in Saudi Arabia has stirred resentments, and indeed one of the reasons for attacking Iraq, we are told, was to make it possible to reduce that presence, and thereby the threat of revolution in a country that has historically been our ally—a worst-case scenario for the managers of the new empire.

During the Cold War, the "agent theory," which posited that all revolutions were the work of the Evil Soviet Empire, operating through its agents everywhere in the world, landed us in Vietnamese swamps. The same thinking has now been resurrected to justify the creation of a world empire of righteousness—with all the hubris that self-proclaimed title implies. Thus, in asking Congress for an additional \$87 billion to wage the fight on the "central front" of the war on terrorism now located in Iraq, President Bush said on September 8, 2003:

Since America put out the fires of September the 11th and mourned our dead and went to war, history has taken a different turn. We have carried the fight to the enemy. We are rolling back the terrorist threat to civilization, not on the fringes of its influence, but at the heart of its power.

The speech passed over WMD, except for one phrase in the past tense that Hussein's regime once "possessed and used" such weapons— apparently a reference to gas attacks during the Iranian-Iraqi war in the 1980s, when the United States "tilted" toward Baghdad, in preference to the Iranian mullahs, or against the Kurdish minority in the north. In a backhanded way, however, Bush conceded

that the second Gulf War had opened the doors to "foreign terrorists, who have come to pursue their war on America and other free nations." And so the circle is complete: we created the link that closed it.

But it has already become a circle of fire. A person identified only as someone familiar with the latest intelligence on Iraq told a *New York Times* reporter without even a quiver of irony, "Iraq is now Jihad Stadium. It is the place for fundamentalists to go now, it is their Super Bowl, where you go to stick it to the West."

Asking other nations to come to America's aid in the task of reconstructing Iraq as Germany and Japan had been reconstructed after World War II, Bush declared, "The Middle East will either become a place of progress and peace, or it will be an exporter of violence and terror that takes more lives in America and in other free nations." It was not supposed to be this way, of course. Iraqis were said to be waiting for their liberation, while Baghdad's own oil production would pay for the war and reconstruction.

Noting the decrepit state of Iraq's infrastructure, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld observed on a fact-finding mission only two days after the president's speech that sending more troops was not the answer. That would make the Iraqis too dependent on America. Revenues from the reconstruction of the oil fields would not, however, pay the costs either. Iraq would have to develop industries like tourism if it was going to stand on its own feet again. The country, he said, could reap real benefits from national and historic treasures like the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon. "I don't believe it's our job to reconstruct the country," Rumsfeld said, again without any sense of irony that President Bush had used Germany and Japan as examples of what could be done. "Tourism is going to be something important to that country as soon as the security situation is resolved. ... In the last analysis, they have to create an environment that's hospitable to investment and to enterprise." The reference to Iraq's historical treasures as a foundation for its modern recovery came from the same man who had reacted with avuncular nonchalance at the looting of museums and cultural sites, as little more than the naughty exuberance of newly liberated men—a minor contradiction, but a telling one about the self-understanding of the mission. Secretary of State Colin Powell, on a quick swing through Iraq, assured friendly questioners that more progress was being made than was reported in the press:

There is just a great deal that is happening in this country, whether it's the formation of PTAs in local schools, whether it's our brigade commanders giving \$500 to each school in their district as long as that school comes up with a PTA, something unheard of here before, and uses that PTA to determine how the money will be spent. That's grassroots democracy in action.

European powers were said to have given their colonies roads and schools, and now the American empire offers the addition of PTAs. For the time being, of course, the secretary could not move outside of the tight security cordon that whisked him into and out of Baghdad to see democracy in action. And reporters attending the press conference had to walk through a quarter mile of barbed wire, and along the way encounter four checkpoints, including three body searches. Overhead Apache helicopters circled the conference center, and Bradley fighting vehicles sat outside guarding all entrances.

Inside this barricade, Powell assured listeners that the United States came not as occupiers, but "under a legal term having to do with occupation under international law. . . . We came as liberators. We have experience being liberators. Our history over the last fifty, sixty years is quite clear. We have liberated a number of countries, and we do not own one square foot of any of those countries, except where we bury our dead."

As for progress toward Iraqi self-government, the secretary said, "We're not hanging on for the sake of hanging on." Everyone had to understand that it would still take some time. Elements from the old regime, common criminals, and some number of foreign terrorists (he was not sure how many but perhaps over a thousand) had entered Iraq. Asked if he was basing his analysis of progress on official reports, a la Vietnam briefings, Powell bristled a bit. "I think I've been around long enough to

understand the things I'm being told and to see behind the things I'm being told."

Hanging on, nevertheless, is an interesting phrase in itself. In a separate interview with Wolf Blitzer of CNN, Powell dismissed critics who mentioned Vietnam as using "rather bizarre historical allusions." We ought to stop doing that, he insisted. The nation should concentrate on the facts on the ground. His job now was to help the Iraqi people "put together a government that they can be proud of, a government that will never again be called a dictatorship but rather a government that can be a model for this region and the rest of the world."

That Hussein was a tyrant of the first order has never been in doubt, but Washington's attitude toward him has varied over the years. For a long time, indeed, he was our man holding the line against Iranian radicalism. That radicalism manifested itself as the Cold War reached its first peak in Korea, and then again in the late 1970s when the shah we had restored to his throne was toppled.

The Iranian revolutions offer convenient book ends for a discussion of the evolution of the agent theory of revolution. When Dean Acheson undertook to write his memoirs of the early Cold War years, he chose the title *Present at the Creation*. Today we are "*Present at the Culmination*." In 1939, Acheson recalls, he went to Yale University to deliver an address on the world situation. A conservative Democrat, Acheson at first had feared the New Deal was a genuinely frightening experiment in self-containment, and as such, likely to produce fascism or socialism at home—particularly if the "closed" systems of Germany, Japan, and Russia somehow triumphed in the war.

His main audience was outside the university, for he was addressing all those who worried that greater participation in world affairs meant strengthening New Dealism. What Acheson told his audience was that they had it backwards: staying out of the war would strengthen the forces they disliked. Isolated, the United States would turn inward upon itself. And by the end of World War II his prophecy proved correct. Beginning the world anew forestalled any more thoughts of a radical policy at home.

The idea of a vast, unseen army working to subvert our democracy— whether it originates at home or requires that we go abroad to instill the blessings of the free-market consumer democracy on the world—is as American as apple pie and the Dallas Cowboys. Two great forces are in a constant state of tension in a liberal democracy, Acheson explained at Yale: the worth of man as an individual, and the unity of society. "And the ideal of liberty is going out across the world, as [Thomas] Jefferson said it would," he said, "to some parts sooner, to some later, and finally to all." In short, America could not ever feel secure in a world where the Jeffersonian idea was not moving forward at a brisk pace. The step from Dean Acheson to Ronald Reagan was not actually a very long one, either historically or intellectually. "We have every right," Reagan would say in his first inaugural address, "to dream heroic dreams. We are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams."

In between, Dean Rusk, an Assistant Secretary of State in 1950, most famously described the 1949 Chinese Revolution, for example, as creating nothing more than a Soviet puppet state. Years later, with the United States entrenched in the Vietnam War, and with evidence of the Sino-Soviet split, Rusk was loathe to surrender that article of faith— perhaps even more than he was to "lose" South Vietnam itself.

And Secretary of State John Foster Dulles used circumlocution to try to explain the agent theory of revolution to Congress in 1957, during hearings on the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine, for aid to countries threatened by such maneuvers by the Russians. The State Department had used the phrase "countries controlled by international communism," and several legislators were puzzled by what that meant. So Dulles explained:

Well, international communism is a conspiracy composed of a certain number of people, all of whose names I do not know, and many of whom I suppose are secret. They have gotten control of one government after another. They first got control of Russia after the First World War. They have gone on getting control of one country after another until finally they were stopped.

Whether the Soviet Union controlled "international communism," or whether it was the other way

around, Dulles concluded, had been the subject of many books and articles.

Secretary Rumsfeld posits a similar premise to Congress today. Doubters that Saddam Hussein was behind the 9/11 attacks are blind to the challenge, he argues. However well-intentioned, dissent only helps the enemy, Rumsfeld scolds. Asked by a senator on the Armed Services Committee what had changed in the international situation making it necessary to attack Iraq, Rumsfeld snapped back, "What's different? What's different is 3,000 people were killed." That's it, end of discussion. Thus the administration's greatest success so far was not on the battlefield, where Iraq's Republican Guard faded away like extras in a remake of *Gunga Din*, but in selling the idea that there was a direct connection between Hussein and al-Qaeda to a level where well over half the nation still believes 9/11 was fomented in Baghdad. The direct connection appears in Bush speeches, and floats around in Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz's loose-jointed interviews: "I think everyone agrees that we killed 100 or so of an al-Qaeda group in northern Iraq in this recent go-around, that we've arrested that al-Qaeda guy in Baghdad who was connected to this guy Zarqawi whom [Secretary of State Colin] Powell spoke about in his UN presentation."

In a statement releasing his updated version of this vision on September 17, 2002, President Bush declared, "Finally, the United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world. The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states."

The agent theory of revolution here updated by George W. Bush always postulates an "evil empire," as Ronald Reagan once described the Soviet Union, and makes intervention understandable to Congress and public opinion, but it essentially denies the peoples of "Third World" countries the right to make their own history.

It is well to remember that the first battle of the Cold War was fought in the Middle East, not in Europe. At the end of World War II, Russian troops remained entrenched in northern Iran, adjacent to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. Their purpose, it became clear, was to pressure Teheran for an oil concession, by threatening to support an independence movement in the area. Great Britain and the United States had shelved the Russian request, and supported Teheran's authority over the northern region. Under pressure, the Russians withdrew without gaining any share of Iran's oil, long controlled by the British.

All went well—for a time. But in 1951 the young shah we had supported found himself in trouble in the face of nationalist feelings that Iranian oil shouldn't belong to Russia, and it shouldn't belong to Britain, and it shouldn't belong to America. This discontent with the share of oil revenues Iran received from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Corporation found a powerful voice in Mohammed Mossadegh, who gained control of the Iranian parliament and proceeded to nationalize the oil company.

British efforts to undo Mossadegh's work would not have succeeded without American support. At first Mossadegh hoped that Washington would offer his regime financial support so that it might resist the British economic blockade. Secretary of State Acheson promptly disabused him of such notions with a blunt statement that the United States did not look favorably upon breaches of contract. The new Eisenhower administration promised it would aid Iran—after it came to terms with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and after the United States gained the lion's share of the oil wells.

Eventually the CIA took a hand, and the shah, who had gone off to exile, was returned to power as the result of a "popular uprising." The successful coup d'etat in Iran was considered a great success—until it was undone by the ayatollahs twenty-five years later. The American who engineered the coup assured Secretary of State John Foster Dulles that it had been successful because the agency had correctly assessed the situation. If we were to try something like this again, however, warned the CIA's Kermit Roosevelt, we would have to be sure that the "people and army want what we want."

"If not," he said, "you had better give the job to the Marines."

Jimmy Carter gave the job to the newly created Delta Force instead. After the shah's dethronement in 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini presided over a harsh theocracy, and smiled benovently upon the students who charged the American Embassy and made hostages of the diplomats. In the spring of 1980, all diplomatic efforts unavailing, Carter sent in the Delta Force to rescue the hostages. The failure of the helicopters in the desert marked the beginning of the end of his presidency.

It was enough, some said, to make one wish "Old Mossy" (Mossadegh) was still in power. But back in 1953, Mossadegh was seen as a forerunner of Communist, and hence Russian, dominance over the entire area. The fear that Iranian nationalization would set off a chain reaction that would affect oil wells around the world was not unlike Eisenhower's famous Domino Theory.

From another angle, but a related one, Ike explained America's purpose to Congressional leaders:

In simple terms, we are establishing international outposts where people can develop their strength to defend themselves. Here we are sitting in the center, and with high mobility and destructive forces we can swiftly respond when our vital interests are affected. ... As we get these other countries strengthened economically, to do their part to provide the ground forces to police and hold their own land, we come closer to the realization of our hopes. . . . We cannot publicly call our Allies outposts . . . [but] we are trying to get that result.

From 1970 to 1979, following Ike's prescription, we relied upon Iran and Saudi Arabia as the twin pillars that would uphold American interests in the Middle East. President Carter even called the shah a rock of stability, whose Savak (secret police) presumably upheld our values as well as the shah's. When the Ayatollah Khomeini threatened to undo our work in Iran, some thought was given to encouraging a military coup. But the shah's army was unreliable, and faltered before the religious fervor of the ayatollah—as he predicted it would. He also succeeded in bringing down Carter himself, as conservative critics made the case that the Democrats had subverted a friendly ruler with all the misguided claptrap about Human Rights.

Carter was stuck on the horns of his own dilemma. When the Soviets moved to intervene in neighboring Afghanistan, his response was twofold. First, he created the Rapid Deployment force, charged with protecting the Persian Gulf from the Soviet Union, and then he authorized military aid to the Taliban forces—who, when they later gained power, made the ayatollah's regime seem the essence of moderation. While Carter could not carry out a rescue operation in Iran to free American hostages, he could send aid to the Taliban and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to the Khyber Pass brandishing a captured Russian AK-47.

It was not enough, and the search went on for an ally. It was time for a new look at an old enemy, one who had been accused of supporting international terrorism. Brzezinski declared, "We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq." Saddam Hussein's regime was a dubious choice—but what was there left to do? Hussein's attitude toward Israel did not make things any easier. While perhaps not the most radical of the anti-Israel leaders, he had declared himself a champion of the Palestinians in his own bid for recognition as the Arab champion. He had ties with the Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal. This was always a sore spot for American policymakers, who had their own problems trying to present themselves as both "even-handed" and yet a staunch supporter of Israel.

Nevertheless, when Iran failed us, Reagan tilted farther toward Iraq. A recent publication by the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., includes minutes of Reagan's emissary's meetings with Hussein in December 1983. The emissary who assured Hussein of the administration's desire to reestablish diplomatic relations and provide all the help it could to the Iraqi war effort against Iran was Donald Rumsfeld.

When the Cold War ended in an American victory, the new pretender in the Middle East, Saddam Hussein, really had no counterpoise to the United States—that is, he could not get away with everything like he had before. When he moved against Kuwait in 1990, it was almost as if he had heard George I's prayers. A colorless president after the thrills of Ronald Reagan's stirring "It's

Morning Again in America," George H. W. Bush had succeeded in getting to the presidency largely from inertia. But his administration had one great fear: that what they called the "unipolar moment" might not last. With the Soviet Evil Empire in ashes, now was the time to secure the victory. The campaign for a New World Order began with the assertion that it had not been containment that had caused the Soviet downfall, but Reagan's moral offensive labeling of the Soviet Union as an "Evil Empire." In fact Bush and his aides were not a little upset that Reagan had set some bad precedents at times when he talked about nuclear disarmament with Mikhail Gorbachev. And when he stopped talking about the "Evil Empire," neocons got a real case of heart nutters.

But when Hussein attacked Kuwait, the future started to look bright again. Here was the opportunity, as George I rejoiced, to kick the Vietnam Syndrome. No jungles here. Just open targets on the roads, and a clear path up to Baghdad—if you wanted to take it all the way there. In a sense, Hussein could claim that he had been sucked into the war by American Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie's statements just weeks before he attacked that it was Washington's policy not to become involved. "We have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts, such as your dispute with Kuwait," she told him face-to-face.

While Glaspie and her superiors strenuously denied giving Hussein a green light, and while it is also likely that the Iraqi leader thought he could discount a strong American reaction in any event, the episode revealed contradictions in Middle East policy that would not serve the empire's interests well. In the short run, Bush was probably surprised at how easy it was to put together a coalition of the willing. Russia even joined in. (And why not? With possibly the largest oil reserves next to Iraq, why support a competitor?) Around Bush were a lot of people who felt that seizing Baghdad could be the only proper way to insure the unipolar moment would become Greenwich mean time. It was, after all, the time of the grand pronouncement; it was "The End of History," as one conservative foreign-policy intellectual insisted; or as neo-con Charles Krauthammer declared in *Foreign Affairs*, the elite journal all policymakers read, the unpopular moment:

Our best hope for safety in such times, as in difficult times past, is in American strength and will—the strength and will to lead a unipolar world, unashamedly laying down the rules of world order and being prepared to enforce them. Compared to the task of defeating fascism and communism, averting chaos is a rather subtle call to greatness. It is not a task we are any more eager to undertake than the great twilight struggle just concluded. But it is just as noble and just as necessary.

To make sure everyone saw how noble it was, and how necessary, the Kuwaiti government hired a New York public relations firm and paraded a fifteen-year-old girl (daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States) to claim before Congress that she had seen Iraqi soldiers toss premature babies onto hospital cement floors; and the administration falsely insisted that Hussein was close to gaining nuclear weapons in his quest to become the dominant force in the Middle East. President Bush compared him to Hitler, a comparison that, as critics pointed out, trivialized Hitler, exaggerated Hussein, and did little credit to the president.

Meanwhile, the Arab-Israeli issue confounded policymakers. Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the United States has tried hard to finesse the situation, but it's like trying to ride two horses going in opposite directions. Powerful currents of guilt feelings from World War II—the inability or failure to do anything about the Holocaust until it had killed six million European Jews—deeply colored American thinking about the Middle East. The Arabs, on the other hand, took the position that the West, now led by the United States, was imposing a "colonialist" solution to the problem of refugees. Every question about Israel had become a contested issue, with the Palestinians in the middle. It spilled over into the Vietnam War in 1967 at the time of the Six-Day War. In his struggles to sustain support for the war in Southeast Asia, President Lyndon Johnson needed a lot of friends. He was perturbed that many American Jews opposed his policy. With the Six-Day War, however, his appeals to Israeli officials, citing American support for Tel Aviv, met with some success. The Six-Day War thus marked a turning point in the Middle Eastern situation, with its heritage of bitter feelings at Israeli annexation of territories.

For many neocons, the removal of Hussein was supposed to make the road safe for Middle Eastern democracy and an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Such a vision was perfectly compatible, therefore, with other American interests in securing a firm grip on Iraqi oil resources, so that it would have a strong counterforce to either Russian moves or Saudi Arabian resources should further upheavals occur across the region. It has, of course, done nothing of the kind. The continued state of near chaos forces the administration to couple its boasts that the leadership of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan has been destroyed and the "remnants" of Hussein's government are on the run, with statements that the danger to the United States and to Israel has not declined. Israel, meanwhile, has found no respite from suicide bombing attacks.

Paul Wolfowitz, who has served in both Bush administrations, was quick to seize upon the Iraq invasion of Kuwait as a turning point for American interests in the Middle East, not least because it solidified relations with Saudi Arabia and offered an opportunity for a permanent presence that would complete the transfer of power from Europe to America:

There are two basic factors behind the Saudi decision to let American forces on their soil. One is a clear understanding of the threat they face; they realized that temporizing with an enemy as ruthless and determined as Saddam is not likely to work for long. But that conclusion by itself would not have led them to change unless there were an alternative and the alternative required somebody who could counter Saddam's military power.

The Saudis have greatly changed their view of the United States over the last ten years. The very resolve we showed during the Iran-Iraq war—our policy of containing Iran—persuaded them that the United States had staying power, that we would not simply leave when the first casualties began to come in and that we had a fundamental understanding of the magnitude of our interests.

Wolfowitz also pointed out in this 1990 speech at the Wye Plantation Policy Conference that the sanctions against Hussein would weaken him over the long haul, in case military action became necessary. How things turn around in the world of the neocon Utopia! If the first Gulf War was fought to convince Saudi Arabia we would always be there, Gulf War II has the opposite goal—to withdraw our military to save the Saudi regime from the anger of its own people, and the United States from new terrorist recruits.

"In late February 2003," writes Christopher Preble of the CATO Institute, "before the start of the war, Wolfowitz admitted that the price paid to keep forces in the region had been 'far more than money.' Anger at American pressure on Iraq, and resentment over the stationing of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia, Wolfowitz conceded, had 'been Osama bin Laden's principal recruiting device.' Looking ahead to the post-Hussein period, Wolfowitz implied that the removal of Hussein would enable the United States to withdraw troops from the region. 'I can't imagine anyone here wanting to ... be there for another 12 years to continue helping recruit terrorists.' "

Wolfowitz might not have been able to foresee such a situation in 2003, but the road out of Saudi Arabia is not nearly so free of dust storms as it may have appeared in the flush of victory. Going back to Afghanistan for a moment, the Taliban's role in bringing down the Soviet Union was much appreciated in Washington. But the hero of the day to Taliban fighters became a wealthy member of a Saudi elite family, Osama bin Laden.

Returning to Saudi Arabia from that front in his war on the Russians, he was ready to take on Hussein himself—so that an American "occupation" of his native country would not occur. His offer was scoffed at and he returned to the caves of Afghanistan to launch his jihad against the Saudi-American alliance—a series of attacks beginning in 1995 that culminated in 9/11.

Seemingly unbeatable in 1992, meanwhile, the Bush administration was done in by an old Republican nemesis—the economy. As George I said ruefully at a conference at Texas A&M University celebrating his handling of the endgame of the Cold War, for all his troubles in bringing the Cold War to a successful conclusion and winning Gulf War I, what he got was the "Order of the Boot."

The interloper Bill Clinton moved the Democratic Party to the right, but he could have taken it all the way to pre-New Deal days without satisfying Reagan/Bush firebrands. They bided their time and

developed a plan for what they called a Project for a New American Century (PNAC). Now the campaign to make sure the unipolar moment did not expire had a platform and a program of action: Saddam Hussein was the enemy of choice, but certainly not the only one.

As the PNAC manifesto declared, the object of American policy should be to gain dominance in the Middle East:

The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

To get to the point where the neocons wanted to take the United States, the road led through Baghdad. As many people have said, toward this end, Saddam Hussein was a poster boy for the role assigned to him. A despot who has not hesitated to use the worst repressive methods on anyone who dared to oppose him, who had a series of projects to develop WMDs, and who has at times claimed to be the sword of Islam against Israel, he was a perfect target for the unipolars.

George II had soft-pedaled foreign policy in the millennial election campaign, but once in office he made it clear that he was a much more colorful president than his father had been. He liked to read about Andrew Jackson, it was reported, whose raid into Spanish Florida showed who was boss in the New World, and who acted unilaterally to get the Indians out of the white man's way down there in Georgia, despite treaties with the Cherokee Nation. George could go him one better, tossing aside the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and getting rid of the Kyoto Treaty in the same year.

The PNAC manifesto declared that to make the "American Peace" permanent, the United States would have to engage in a whole series of constabulary actions. "They demand American political leadership rather than that of the United Nations. . . . American power is so great and its global interests so wide that it cannot pretend to be indifferent to the political outcome in the Balkans, the Persian Gulf or even when it deploys forces in Africa."

"The stakes for America are never small," George W. Bush added in his inaugural address. "If our country does not lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led." A few days after 9/11, Bush met with his aides at Camp David. Present were Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, along with various others. Wolfowitz argued for attacking Iraq. Powell warned that this would cause the nation's allies to back away, but agreed that undermining the Iraqi regime was an important goal of policy.

Bill Clinton had pursued a similar policy towards Iraq, trying to tighten the noose around Hussein's neck. But that was not showing the results that neocons argued would be needed to change the whole picture in the Middle East.

Attacking Afghanistan, Wolfowitz argued, might lead to an inconclusive struggle tying down 100,000 troops in mountains and caves. If the War on Terrorism was to be taken seriously, we had to go after Hussein. "He estimated," wrote Bob Woodward in *Bush at War*, "that there was a 10 to 50 percent chance Saddam was involved in the September 11 terrorist attacks."

Bush turned down the Iraq option—for the moment—but he told the group, according to Woodward, "At some point we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me. We are America."

Paul Wolfowitz, the number-two man in the Pentagon but considered by most to be the number-one theoretician of the neoconservative phalanx driving the administration's foreign policies, gave an interview to a *Vanity Fair* reporter in May 2003, in which he averred: "If you had to pick the ten most important foreign policy things for the United States over the last 100 years, it [the shock and awe attacks on Iraq] would surely rank in the top ten if not number one. It's the reason why so much has changed, and people who refuse to look at that, for whatever reason, or are unwilling to face up to the implications of that then go around and look for some nefarious explanation."

Wolfowitz has also been quoted elsewhere as saying that the question of finding WMDs was a rallying point in intra-administration debates, but only one of several considerations. Diplomacy

doesn't help under such circumstances: "It's just words [and] is rarely going to get you much unless you're dealing with people who basically share your values and your interests. . . . Sometimes it does help just to have a better understanding."

Saddam Hussein shared neither values nor interests—not anymore, at least. And so Baghdad had to be liberated. "I'm not blind to the uncertainties of this situation," Wolfowitz insisted at the beginning of the "postwar" turmoil, "but [critics] just seem to be blind to the instability that that son of a bitch was causing." Wolfowitz calls himself a practical idealist. You can't go around trying to change the whole world, in a caricature of Woodrow Wilson, but you can't ignore the nature of the Hussein regime, either. Or the regimes in North Korea or Iran—the "Axis of Evil."

Therefore, says Wolfowitz, President Bush asks the right question when he first wants to know how brutal a country's leaders are before he knows whether he can do business with them. "It's really important to keep in mind what this country is about. It's a lot more than just physical security or economic health." It's here, however, that the neocons get themselves in a twist. Are we involved in Iraq to liberate the people there for the sake of our immortal souls, or are we there simply to take down a regime to protect homeland security over here?

Echoing Wolfowitz in a spontaneous display of bipartisanship, President Clinton's former CIA chief, James Woolsey, declared soon after Gulf War II began that Iraq was only the first objective. We are in World War IV, he told college students in California in April 2003. It will no doubt last longer than World War I or II, but hopefully not so long as the Cold War. There were three enemies to overcome in the Middle East: the religious rulers of Iran, the "fascists" in Iraq and Syria, and al-Qaeda.

They had been attacking us for several years, but the United States only took notice with 9/11, he went on. Victory over those foes would only be the beginning. Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and the Saudi Arabian potentates on the periphery had better watch out. "We want you nervous," Woolsey continued, hitting full stride. "We want you to realize now, for the fourth time in a hundred years, this country and its allies are on the march and that we are on the side of those whom you—the Mubaraks, the Saudi Royal family—most fear: We're on the side of your own people."

Now, that was going a bit too far; in fact much too far. A little Woodrow Wilson goes a long way for the neocons and their admirers on Fox News, and like-minded "news" broadcasters who fill the cable channels with respectful elaborations of Bush's worldview. The last thing in the world the United States wants is for the Iraq War to turn into a general revolution, until we are sure how to insure the outcome will not be revolutionary anti-Americanism. There is even talk about deconstructing the old mandate-sized Iraq into three states so as to avoid a civil war, to prevent such a Kosovo-like outcome. If the already perilous situation in Saudi Arabia were to become incendiary as well, the Iraq war would become a total disaster. And Hosni Mubarak is the least of America's troubles in the Middle East.

As Cold War Secretary of State Dean Acheson once said, what America wants is a world where those who think the way we do are free to create the kind of life they wish to live. Today the United States is no longer the empire that dare not speak its name. And it is no longer even a question about whether we are an empire. That matter is settled. Writers once too afraid to speak about empire, except as Victorians once spoke about sexual matters, through euphemism and opaque reference, now openly embrace the idea across the narrow spectrum of American politics.

There is no sense at all, as in 1900, that it could be explained as an aberration when we took Cuba and the Philippines. The historical references are clear—and direct. Thomas Paine wrote in 1776 that we had it in our power to make the world anew. For the next two hundred years and more we were not the imitators of the empires of old, but embodied an entirely new phenomenon—an empire of righteousness without frontiers. Bush put it this way in his inaugural address:

Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations.

Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along. And even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel.

As befitting this "mission," there will have to be sacrifices—for some. "Old Europe" may be upset, but things will right themselves once it is recognized what the outcome will be, not only for Iraqis, but for other places where the seed in the wind takes root. The monetary costs will perhaps exceed what had been anticipated by a few hundred billion dollars, but there are places in the budget where one can economize, such as for schools and medical care. Those who wrongly believe that the mission itself might create more terrorists and less security at home will understand that the PATRIOT Acts will protect them, while we preempt and root out the wannabe Osamas in Syria, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, and anyplace else.

There are only a few stubborn holdouts against the new empire. Senator Robert Byrd, for example, speaking in opposition to Senate Joint Resolution 46, which gave George II carte blanche to use force against Iraq, said to a nearly empty Senate chamber:

No one supports Saddam Hussein. If he were to disappear tomorrow, no one would shed a tear around the world. I would not. My handkerchief would remain dry. But the principle of one government deciding to eliminate another government, using force to do so, and taking that action in spite of world disapproval, is a very disquieting thing. I am concerned that it has the effect of destabilizing the world community of nations. I am concerned that it fosters a climate of suspicion and mistrust in U.S. relations with other nations. The United States is not a rogue nation, given to unilateral action in the face of worldwide opprobrium.

Standing in the "liberated" city of Baghdad on the second anniversary of the attacks, the commander of the American forces in Iraq, Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez, stood foursquare behind the president. "There is no doubt in my mind that the American people are committed to winning this war." There was no early exit in sight. "It is a very difficult issue," he said, and again like the president, he called upon the "international community" to focus on eliminating the threat in Iraq, the battleground for the worldwide struggle against terrorism.

Reporters asked if there was any connection between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden?

"It is very possible." Oops! Sanchez realized right away that might not sound quite right. So he added, "That was the fundamental assumption we had as we came in here, and that is what we are going on." In the agent theory of revolution, there can be no missing links. Otherwise it comes apart.

The Romans famously divided the world between civilization and the barbarians, a word derived from a Greek term to describe the strange speech of foreigners, apparently without distinction between them. Barbarians lived outside the empire, like the blue-faced rabble on the other side of Hadrian's Wall. The way Americans talk today, however, no one lives outside the reach of the empire's power. Nothing on the scale of the American empire has ever existed before. Accordingly, our first strikes at Iraq were given the apocalyptic code name "Shock and Awe." Little wonder that the empire's boosters incorporate a millennial motif in their pronouncements, a theological tone not confined to the Christian Right, although the events since the end of the Cold War have enhanced their once-marginal position into a potent force in the nation's political life.

The American Revolution, once identified as a triumph of the Age of Reason, has been taken over by ideologues with an agenda that tolerates no dissent—no doubts, no second thoughts. A decent respect for world opinion is considered wimpish if not disloyal. It is fair to punish dissenters outside the country—those who sign the treaty creating a world court to try war criminals—by denying them military aid from the Pentagon; and it is even fair to rebuke critics inside the country, for example, by revealing the identity of a family member who served in the Central Intelligence Agency.

This ideology is married to a political economy that simply ignores—at its peril, we are discovering—any limits on the sacrifice of its own citizenry to be able to place high-tech centurions around the globe. It was all going to be so easy. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld promised a new military, one able to strike quickly with shock and awe anyplace in the world. Moving with lightning speed, we were to keep an eye on all conflicts, and move to preempt all potential barbarian assaults. Journalist Robert Kaplan, interviewing a captain at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, heard this comforting declaration: "We know more about Honduras than Kansas during the Indian Wars. The intelligence is more *dense*. Honduras is closer in time than western Kansas was, a few hours by plane rather than

days on horseback." Kaplan concluded, "The Third World has become like the Old West. For the army, continental frontiers—of the kind that led to the building of Fort Leavenworth and of the nation—have grown dim."

Our old Cold War allies, except for Bush's poodle, Tony Blair, have substantial doubts about participating in the crusades we have launched, although presumably prepared to reap any benefits that can be garnered around the edges whether it succeeds or fails. To police the empire, Bush has to turn to "New" Europe for help, calling in troops from Poland and staging pompous ceremonies to mark the transfer of "power" in a small area of Iraq. He has also had to reemploy intelligence agents from the Baathist regime, presumably after they have undergone a political dry-cleaning process to make them forerunners of the new democratic state that will emerge to provide a beacon light to those still sitting in darkness in fundamentalist Islamic schools and mountain caves between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

At home, meanwhile, the PATRIOT Act will allow us to uncover those in our midst dedicated to our destruction, the tax cuts will stimulate the economy once again into performances that will make the 1990s go-go years seem an idle stroll beside a quiet stream, and the development of the Alaskan oil resources will power our SUVs speedily onto the new highways of the global economy. Of course, as President Bush said, it was the duty of all civilized nations to pay their fair share of the costs involved in keeping the barbarians at bay. They made a mistake in opposing the war, WMDs or no WMDs, but all is forgiven if they will now recognize their duty. If not, well, the deficit be damned. "At some point we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me. We are America."

Not a flicker of doubt crosses Bush's Marlboro Man stare as he vows that anybody who wants to do harm to American troops will be brought to justice. He flies to a navy aircraft carrier, the champion of the world, and declares the war over. "Bring 'em on." American troops are "plenty tough" to deal with any security threats. This remark brought a chorus of protest from Democratic hopefuls, none of whom, however, went beyond criticizing macho one-liners and saying we needed a "plan" for protecting our military personnel.

Bush's courage seems to falter, however, when it comes to standing up to the American Farm Bureau and its allies who managed to squeeze an additional \$40 billion in farm subsidies out of this administration. The costs of that failure showed up first at the Cancun meeting of the World Trade Organization, which collapsed when the United States and the European Union suffered defeat on all fronts. The usual protestors against "globalization" were there in large numbers, but it was inside the conference halls where the Group of 21, representing mainly Third World countries, walked out in protest over the American refusal to move seriously to reduce domestic agriculture subsidies that now total \$300 billion worldwide and that distort the "free market" to the disadvantage of the poorest farmers in Africa and elsewhere, as well as efforts to introduce an "investment treaty" that would allow corporations to override local laws to gain an extraterritorial position. Speaking of the American delegate's performance, the head of the Farm Bureau Federation said, "The ambassador has done an excellent job."

Making the world safe for democracy and the free market will enable the "holding company" for the new empire, the Carlyle Group, to improve the profits of its famous investors and officials, which include George H. W. Bush and former British prime minister John Major (and a host of former political leaders from around the world), and the institutions and pension funds that it serves in the United States. Established in 1987, the Carlyle Group, under its dynamic leader, the former Reagan secretary of defense Frank Carlucci, moved to extend its influence and power in truly global fashion. The largest shareholder in United Defense Industries, the Carlyle Group does business with the Pentagon simultaneously on the level of advice and sales. It is the first time in American history that a former president sits in an official position in a company that sells to the Department of Defense.

"Carlyle is a unique model," writes Eric Leser in *Le Monde*, "assembled at the planetary level on the capitalism of relationships or 'capitalism of access' to use the 1993 expression of the American magazine *New Republic*. Today, in spite of its denials, the group incarnates the 'military-industrial complex' against which Republican President Dwight Eisenhower warned the American people when he left office in 1961."

On May 1, 2003, the current President Bush announced on the deck of an aircraft carrier, where he had just hopped out of a jet fighter, that the mission was accomplished—Iraq liberated in World War II-style, by American arms. The next day he traveled to Santa Clara, California, notes Leser, where he made another martial speech in a United Defense Industries' weapons factory. On board the U.S.S. *Lincoln* he had lauded the men on the front lines; at the United Defense Industries factory he brought it all together, including the true "author" of the American mission:

The world witnessed one of the swiftest advances of heavy arms in the history of warfare—a 350-mile charge from south to north in Iraq, through hostile enemy territory. We were able to do so not only because of the good strategy, great courage and skill, but because of the Bradleys and Abramses with which our soldiers were equipped. You're making a good product here.

One of the things that people learned about your company, as well, is how useful the HERCULES tank recovery system can be. (Applause.) The guy with the sledgehammer on the statue needed a little help. (Laughter.) Thankfully, there was a HERCULES close by. (Laughter.) A HERCULES which pulled that statue of Saddam Hussein to the ground.

That meant more to the Iraqi people than you can possibly imagine. It was a symbol of their future. A future based upon something that we hold dear to our hearts; a future based upon something that is not America's gift to the world, but the Almighty God's gift to each and every individual—a future based upon freedom. (Applause.)

So would the United States ever really walk alone on the paths of righteousness, even as the coalition of the willing began to shred? Carlyle will be there. Yet the conflicts at Cancun are likely to multiply, perhaps faster (and probably more permanently) than restoring a temporary new order in the Middle East. These conflicts pit not only the United States, but Europe as well, against the rest of the world. Managing the new empire, balancing off the needs of American farmers against the goal of creating a free marketplace, making good on the promise to protect the homeland beyond displaying a confusing panoply of colored warning lights, all the while ignoring the opinions of all but the loyalist inner circle, may soon prove too much even for its founding fathers. The point where we are the only ones left may come sooner than Bush thinks. But, then, there is nothing to worry about, is there? "We are America."