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## How America Lost the War

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Television news stations, along with newspapers from coast to coast, have been showing scenes of celebration in Baghdad. The dictator, Saddam Hussein, has been removed from power. News anchors have likened this event to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the liberation of Paris by Allied forces during World War II. Never mind that the joyful crowds who tore down the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad last week numbered perhaps one hundred people, or that the entire event was a staged media scam. A wide angle shot of the square where this 'celebration' took place showed a deserted, ruined city with that one small clot of people. The true feelings of the Iraqi people in the aftermath of the invasion were best summed up by a woman who screamed at a reporter for the UK Independent: "Go back to your country. Get out of here. You are not wanted here. We hated Saddam and now we are hating Bush because he is destroying our city."

The war against Iraq was proffered and pursued by the Bush administration with two clear goals on the table. 1) We were, first and foremost, there to capture and destroy any and all weapons of mass destruction; 2) We were there to 'liberate' the Iraqi people and plant a seedcorn of democracy. Enveloping this entire scenario was the Bush administration's premise that what we were doing was just and moral.

We need, first of all, to get our terms straight so as to achieve a sense of clarity regarding the issue of America's moral standing on the matter. Saddam Hussein was not defeated. He was not overthrown, bested, beaten or destroyed. Saddam Hussein was fired, relieved of his position by a nation that hired him for a dirty job way back in 1979.

When the Shah of Iran, another employee of the United States, was overthrown by fundamentalist revolutionaries controlled by the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, America lost a staunch ally against the rise of Soviet influence in the Middle East. That same year saw Saddam Hussein take



control of Iraq, and America immediately leaped into his corner so as to maintain the bulwark against the USSR. In short, he was hired. On September 22, 1980, Hussein attacked Iran ostensibly to gain strategically important territory along with the rich oil fields around Khuzestan. At bottom, however, Hussein was acting as an instrument of American policy and attempting to overthrow Khomeini, so as to dissolve a dangerous Iranian/Soviet alliance.

The relationship between Iraq and America bloomed throughout the Reagan administration in the 1980s. We provided intelligence data to Iraqi forces that described, in detail, the order of battle of Iranian forces. American government and private industry interests provided Iraq with the means to create all of the terrible weapons Hussein was so covetous of. We knew Iraq was using chemical weapons during their fight with Iran, and continued to give them this intelligence data. In fact, Iran in 1984 brought a draft resolution before the United Nations Security Council condemning Iraq's use of chemical weapons on the battlefield. Iraq petitioned the United States several times to make sure the international response to their chemical attacks was muted, and that no specific country was named regarding Iran's petition. The Iraqi/American version of the resolution carried the day.

That same year saw a public American condemnation of the use of these weapons. However, that same condemnation carried within it the following language: "The United States finds the present Iranian regime's intransigent refusal to deviate from its avowed objective of eliminating the <i>legitimate government of neighboring Iraq</i> to be inconsistent with the accepted norms of behavior among nations and the moral and religious basis which it claims." (Emphasis added)

The National Security Archive released a number of recently declassified documents in February of 2003 which further describe the intimate relationship the Reagan administration maintained with Saddam Hussein and Iraq. National Security Decision Directive 114 of November 26, 1983, "U.S. Policy toward the Iran-Iraq War," described American intentions: The ability to project military force in the Persian Gulf and to protect oil supplies. There was no reference made to chemical weapons or human rights concerns. National Security Decision Directive 139 of April 5, 1984, "Measures to Improve U.S. Posture and Readiness to Respond to Developments in the Iran-Iraq War," focused again on increased access for U.S. military forces in the Persian Gulf and enhanced intelligence-gathering capabilities. The directive ordered preparation of "a plan of action designed to avert an Iraqi collapse."

Saddam Hussein was such a valued employee that the Reagan administration sent a high level envoy to Iraq to ensure the relationship was on steady ground. That envoy was Donald Rumsfeld, who was filmed by CNN on September 20, 1983, warmly shaking hands with Hussein. Although Rumsfeld said during a September 21, 2002 CNN interview, "In that visit, I cautioned him about the use of chemical weapons, as a matter of fact, and discussed a host of other things," documents pertaining to that September

1983 meeting from the National Security Archive clearly demonstrate that there was no mention of chemical weapons between the two men.

Bush's bloviating sermons on morality in this matter fail in the face of the facts. Saddam Hussein would not have existed were it not for the energetic support of the United States. We didn't defeat Hussein. We fired him. The fact that he was a valued employee for so long, the fact that we averted our eyes as late as 1988 to his use of chemical weapons, the fact that we gave him vital intelligence data so he could more accurately and effectively use those weapons, and the fact that we gave material assistance via government and private institutions for the creation and promulgation of said weapons, all burst the bubble of righteousness the entire debate has been contained in. Bush can talk all he wants about the evil Saddam Hussein. There is little argument with the appellation of that adjective to that name. Yet it was America who allowed him to become so, and the moral arguments surrounding his firing are indelibly tainted by these sad facts. The Kurds in Halabja who were gassed to death in March of 1988 can level a damning finger of blame as much at America as at Hussein.

As for the location and destruction of these chemical weapons, it can be said at this point that the Bush administration has suffered an incredible array of embarrassments in this matter. American forces have investigated 14,000 suspected weapons sites during the Iraq invasion, and have not located so much as a teaspoon of prohibited weaponry. The Bush administration pointedly ignored the facts in this matter and whipped the American people into a fearful frenzy. According to Bush, Hussein had 25,000 liters of anthrax, 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin, 500 tons of sarin, mustard and nerve gas - all nightmares that were just waiting to be used in New York or Los Angeles. The hood ornament on this push to war has been utterly discredited thus far, as not a speck of evidence backing these claims has been located.

We are supposed to forget about that now, because according to the new spin, the war was never about these weapons. It was about freeing the Iraqi people. It is clear by now that Iraq is no longer ruled by Saddam Hussein, but let us take a step further and analyze the newfound 'freedom' of the Iraqi people.

At this moment, the city of Baghdad is in utter chaos. The Museum of Antiquities in Baghdad, repository of over 5,000 years worth of cultural and regional history, has been utterly destroyed. Mesopotamia and its people have lost an immeasurable portion of their history with this terrible act, one that could have been stopped by a few Marines outside the museum. That simple precaution never happened. Beyond that, the looting has had a darker social edge. The strata of society in Iraq has seen for years the minority Sunnis – who claim Saddam Hussein as their own – ruling over the majority Shia. The orgy of looting that has broken out in Iraq is, basically, the Shia robbing the Sunni. An ever-rising boil of gunplay between these two groups is putting a match to the fuse of religiously-based civil war, and the American troops have done nothing to stop it except recruit members of

Hussein's feared police force to try and restore order. So much for regime change.

This is exactly the scenario that led to the attacks of September 11. America dared the Soviets to invade Afghanistan by sending mujheddin guerillas against the communist Afghan government. The USSR did invade, falling into Zbignew Brzezinski's "Afghan Trap," and smashed the country to flinders. In the devastated aftermath, America did absolutely nothing to heal that shattered nation, and the vacuum was eventually filled by the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. The rest is a history that seems destined to be repeated as we pointedly ignore the rising tide of lawlessness and anarchy, caused directly by our actions, in yet another country.

Further exacerbating the tensions is the hard talk coming out of Washington regarding a coming attack on Syria. Baghdad has not yet stopped bleeding, and the hawks want to take on Damascus. Syria has its own downtrodden Shia segment within the society, and the Shia in Iraq will not take kindly to their kin across the border coming under siege. In the end, though, the Shia do not matter. Despite all the happy talk about democracy in Iraq, no such birth will take place there if the Bush administration has anything to say about it. Democracy, or majority rules in the western sense, would create a Shia fundamentalist regime rule. The Shia share cultural allegiance not only with a segment of Syria, but with the mullahs who rule Iran. A Shia Iraq would ally with Iran, creating a strategically untenable situation. The Bush administration knows this all too well, and has been lying with its bare face hanging out every time it speaks of democracy in that bruised country.

Instead of democracy, the Bush administration has a two-pronged leadership thrust in mind for Iraq. The first stage will see Iraq ruled by an American named Jay Garner, former weapons manufacturer and avowed proponent of the failed 'Star Wars' missile defense shield. Garner, a unilateralist hawk who shares a brain with Dick Cheney, Don Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, is also on record as supporting a number of the harsher measures Israel has taken against the Palestinians. Opinions on this matter vary, of course. It is all too clear, however one may feel on that matter, that in a part of the world where the Palestinians are seen as martyred victims, having a man like Garner running the show in Iraq gives the appearance that America believes the best way to deal with the Palestinians is with bulldozers and helicopter gunships. This will not sell in the Mideast marketplace.

After Garner will come Ahmed Chalabi, head of the Iraqi national Congress and Rumsfeld's first choice for final ruler of Iraq. Chalabi is an interesting pick. His Shia background makes a great many people in the State Department, the CIA and the Middle East nervous. The degree to which Chalabi will kowtow to American interests at the expense of the Iraqi people is also of concern; Chalabi, Rumsfeld, Perle and Wolfowitz have been brothers in arms for years, and Chalabi seems all too likely to do their bidding instead of tending to the needs of Iraqis. Finally, there is Chalabi's dubious Enronesqe background. He was convicted of 31 counts of bank fraud in a

Jordanian court and sentenced in absentia to 22 years in prison. Chalabi has not set foot in Iraq since 1956.

Raise your hand if you see democracy and liberation in all of this. There is little to see. To be sure, the murderous tyrant has been removed. In his absence, however, there is the complete breakdown of social order; there is the beginnings of a civil war; there is no thought whatsoever to instituting any form of representative government; there is not even the pretense of an attempt by American forces to do anything about the social catastrophes that are unfolding, except hire back the 'thugs' who were supposedly the cause of the war in the first place; there are thousands and thousands of Iraqis who are now dead or maimed, all of whom have families and friends, all of whom see this war for what it truly was. This is not freedom by any standard.

We lost the war.

We defeated the Iraqi military, to be sure, and we fired Saddam Hussein. We have lost the real war, the important war, the war against those who attacked us on September 11. We lost the war because we betrayed the international community, whose help we desperately need in this wider war, by lying to them about Iraq's weapons and by disregarding their legitimate concerns. We have lost the war because our actions have given aid and succor to Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, whose agents were and are nowhere to be found in Iraq despite the avowed words of the Bush administration. We have lost the war because the Iraqi people themselves already understand that the 'liberation' they were promised is as false as the evidence we used to invade their country. We lost the war because our moral standing to make it in the first place was utterly bereft of substance. We lost the war because the rest of the world sees the American government for what it is – a mob of hyperactive right-wing extremists with an army to play with and a dream of global dominance glowing like coals in their eyes.

There is no victory here. We lost the war before the first shot was fired.

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