

Why are we (still) in Iraq? (continued)

You ask what you should tell your children as to why their father is in Iraq. Here's why: Iraq War #1, which was rational and justified, ended in early 2004. That war, to destroy the regime, and to search for and destroy all major weaponry, made sense. It also made sense, though no one has argued anywhere, but as has been argued here several hundred times since early 2004, that the removal of Saddam Hussein made a Sunni-Shi'a clash inevitable, and that there was nothing to be done to keep it from happening though it might be delayed or temporarily suppressed by American forces, and that it was to be welcomed as one of the best ways to divide and demoralize and therefore weaken, the camp of Islamic jihad – a camp to which Iraq will always belong, with or without this “Iraq the Light-Unto-the-Muslim-Nations” Project that the Bush administration so obstinately clings to despite all the evidence that shows how impossible, and how undesirable from our point of view, are these attempts to make Iraq into something it cannot be are.

The reason their father is in Iraq now is because, since the beginning of April 2004, the American government, not comprehending what it set in motion by removing Saddam Hussein, has insisted on remaining for what might be called Iraq War #2. Because the enemy was never properly recognized, Iraq was not seen as the ideal place to exploit sectarian and ethnic divisions. The American government was bent not on a war of self-defense against the Jihad, but rather, a messianic campaign to transplant the Liberty Tree of democracy in the sandy or rocky soil of Iraq and of Afghanistan. For all the talk about a “tough” reaction, there was nothing “tough” about it. It was sentimentality, Rodney-King sentimentality, all the way – and on top of it, a shallow understanding both of Western democracy and of the Framers, as Bush and Rice ever more crazily made analogies between the crude Iraqis and the highly intelligent products of Western civilization who gathered in Philadelphia for the Constitutional Convention.

The inability to identify the enemy, and to substitute instead this ridiculous and dangerous phrase “war on terror,” has had consequences both for perception, and for policy. Even now it is unclear if Bush, or for that matter such Congressional loyalists as Lieberman and McCain, have at long last begun to see how wrongheaded, what a squandering of resources, the continued American presence

in Iraq is. They do not even now seem to realize how messianic are the goals of America in Iraq, or how those goals are merely one more evasion, one more way to avoid seeing Islam plain and taking the kind of measures, and employing the various instruments, that were used aside from combat during World War II and the Cold War, including economic warfare, and of course propaganda to demoralize the enemy.

Given that Lieberman is in so much trouble, wouldn't you think he would at least begin to consider the war in Iraq not from the viewpoint of those viciously opposed to him, but from the viewpoint of, say, this website, where the war is opposed, but opposed because it is ineffective, it squanders resources, it prevents the exploitation of the divisions in Islam just waiting to be exploited? He still has time, he and McCain, to figure out that they do not have to go down with the obstinate Bush policy in Iraq, do not have to sacrifice themselves. But will he?

The policy today, the policy of supporting local leaders because, while Muslim, they are not as fanatical as others, and for the moment need our aid, and of trying to "get rid of terrorists" in IraqAfghanistan, is futile. The policy includes: and

- 1) killing what are assumed to be a finite number of terrorists, identified almost exclusively with the single terrorist group Al Qaeda, when in fact the number of such groups is very large, and the membership in those constantly name-shifting groups is endlessly replenishable;

- 2) curing the conditions that supposedly cause Muslim unhappiness, since these, it was assumed, must explain "terrorism" and the hostility toward Infidels that that "terrorism" embodies. The first condition that needed to be cured was said to be "poverty." It was pointed out to no avail that terrorists tend to be better educated and better off economically than most Muslims, and that illiterate villagers untouched by modern ways were least likely to participate in the worldwide Jihad, or to be a threat beyond their own villages. It was likewise ignored that the threat of Jihad comes most from those states – Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia – that have benefited the most from oil money. That money is used to fund both the qital (combat) instrument of Jihad, but also all those other instruments of Jihad: the funding of mosques and madrasas, and of an army of Western hirelings prepared to mislead Infidels about Islam, and of campaigns of Da'wa

that identify and target the most vulnerable members of Infidel societies, the psychically and socially and economically marginal.

Those who make policy for the American government should not have been surprised that "democracy" in anything other than the most vulgar sense of head-counting, would not and could not take root in the sandy soil of Iraq. How could it? Of course, the Shi'a, who make up 60-65% of the Iraqi population, were happy to pretend to be believers in democracy, for it gave them an easy and in the eyes of the powerful, and still present, Americans, a way to take that power in a fashion that seemed, to those Americans, to be the right way to do it. What was lacking were all the other things – the enshrined rights of individuals, the location of a government's legitimacy (as a matter of principle and not of mere expediency) in the will of the people, and the protection of minority rights based on a rule of man-made law. All of these are lacking in Iraq, and are lacking precisely because of Islam.

The failure to identify Islam, or the duty of Jihad, as the threat, the menace, the enemy, and to examine honestly the immutable texts from which it is derived, rather than calling what is going on merely a "war on terror" (as if the war against the Nazis had been merely a "war on the blitzkrieg"), has helped cause the fiasco in Iraq. That fiasco increases the longer American forces remain, and the longer men's lives, war materiel, and money is squandered on a false vision, a false hope, and false messianism.

And what makes it particularly maddening is that Bush and all his advisors begin from the unsupported and unsupportable premise that Islam is not, and cannot be, the enemy (it can be, and it is, but one can do it cleverly, through the synecdoche of calling for a "war of self-defense against those who promote Jihad" which is a mouthful, but much better than "war on terror"). They have not been able, starting from this false premise, to understand the nature of Iraq, or the appearance and growth of sectarian and ethnic divisions over economic and political power, which were inevitable once the iron regime of Saddam's Sunni-run despotism was undone. Instead of recognizing or even deliberately welcoming such divisions, the Administration has for nearly three years been doing whatever it can to prate about "the Iraqi people" (no such thing) and the "model of Iraq." What model? Of what? And why would anyone in his right mind think that Sunni Arab states would delightedly take as their model of anything the land of Iraq, in which power had just been transferred from the Sunnis to the despised Shi'a? Who

could possibly have thought that? The Administration has opposed the breakup of this fictional nation, and has done all it could to prevent those very divisions within Iraq that nevertheless cannot be healed – for there is no way to give the Sunnis what they demand, there is no way to give the Kurds what they require, short of full independence. And that independent Kurdistan could be of great benefit to American policy, rightly conceived, as an example to other non-Arab Muslims, such as the Berbers of Algeria, of what they too might achieve – not to mention its electrifying effect on Kurds in Iran, and therefore on Baluchis, Arabs, and even Azeris in Iran, who together make up nearly 50% of the population of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Anyone now in Iraq who is still working manfully to create an “Iraqi” police force or an “Iraqi” army must, at some point, have had his doubts. And he is right to have his doubts. The policy is wrong. The “Iraqis” do not exist. A few brave Arabs working or fighting beside the Americans, and who perhaps have earned their trust or even admiration, should not be mistaken for such statements as “these guys are great” or “this is going to work out” and other naïve conclusions based on the slimmest of anecdotal evidence. The real, non-anecdotal evidence suggests that aside from the Kurds and Christians who have furnished so many of the drivers, cooks, other staff (and not only in the Green Zone) as well as interpreters, there are very few among either the Shi’a or the Sunni Arabs who view the Americans with any real, and permanent, gratitude and friendship. Their interest is in using those Americans either to protect them or to fight for them, in what is clearly inter-communal strife of no business or interest of ours – except insofar as such strife, should it attract outside volunteers, money, and materiel, might usefully help to divide and demoralize and weaken the general camp of Jihad and, what’s more, might spread Sunni-Shi’a hostilities to other places. And that would be a result to be welcomed, not deplored.

The Administration cannot coherently defend an incoherent policy. So it just keeps on parroting phrases about a “new Middle East,” or attacks others for not “staying the course.” They look sillier and sillier with each passing day and each passing billion that is wasted in Iraq – which if applied to alternative energy programs, might ultimately do much to deprive the worldwide Jihad of the money that has, for its existence and spread, made all the difference.

The Administration’s messianic mission has been toned down, but it still remains. It remains because to openly wish for the ethnic and sectarian divisions to widen

and spread is something that the sentimentalists in the Pentagon and elsewhere apparently cannot bring themselves to do. They cannot accept these divisions as the gift that they are, a gift just waiting to be exploited.

That failure, that unwillingness to see dissension sown in the enemy camp, is partly a result of not identifying Islam as the Enemy Camp. But it is. It is because Islam itself divides the world uncompromisingly between Believers and Infidels, a fact that will not be diminished by the Administration's determination to create Iraq the Model, Iraq the Light Unto the Muslim Nations. And whether or not Al-Maliki "thanks us" or not, whether or not he praises, or takes back his praise (under obvious prodding) of Hizballah, he remains a true Muslim. His attempt to pretend that Islam has nothing to do with "terrorism," and his further inability – how could he, really? – to admit to the split between Believer and Infidel, and the duty of the former to end all barriers to the dominance of Islam in all the Bilad al-kufr, the Lands of the Infidels, and to make sure that ultimately, Muslims rule, does not change what is written in the immutable texts.

Time is short. NATO is not paying attention to what is happening in Europe – and the lumbering giant is stuck to tarbaby Iraq. The longer it sticks, the more it is coming to resemble a mammoth, or what remains of him, in the La Brea Tar Pits.

That is why your husband, and their father, is still in Iraq. That is why the American electorate may, in a dangerous reaction, vote in not those who want to fight the war of self-defense against the Jihad more cleverly and much more variously, but rather vote in those who see no need to fight such a war of self-defense at all.

That is perhaps the worst effect of this fiasco. Yet, every day there is a reason offered up on a platter for the Americans to announce, plausibly, the need for them to depart. It could be Al-Maliki praising Hizballah. It could be the behavior of the Mahdi Army. It could be the latest mutual atrocities of Shi'a and Sunnis in Baghdad or outside Baghdad. It could be anything at all. But the decision to get out of Iraq should be based on the recognition that we have won, we have set in motion something that cannot be easily undone, and that ensures that the Sunnis and Shi'a will be fighting over the economic and political spoils left free for the grabbing when Saddam Hussein was overthrown. It is a Metternich, a Mahan, a Mackinder in reverse who would not only not see the

advantage of this course, but do everything to prevent it.

But that's what, for the moment, we have, and not only in the Executive branch, but in Congress as well. You asked what to tell your children. I'm not sure what, of the above, you can tell them. Perhaps you should just say: mistakes are being made, and soon they will have to be corrected, and then their father will come home. Not exactly a satisfactory answer, for them, for you, for him, for any of us.