UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

How War in Iraq Strengthened America's Enemies

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Simon & Schuster

NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY

Simon & Schuster
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

First Simon & Schuster hardcover edition September 2008

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Designed by Nancy Singer

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Galbraith, Peter (Peter W.)
Unintended consequences: how war in Iraq strengthened America's enemies / Peter W. Galbraith.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Iraq War, 2003– 2. Iraq—History—2003– 3. Iraq—History—1991–2003. 4. United States—Military relations—Iraq. 5. Iraq—Military Relations—United States. 6. Iraq—Ethnic relations. I. Title.
DS79.76.G335 2008
956.7044'31—dc22 2008029889
ISBN-13: 978-1-4165-6225-2
ISBN-10: 1-4165-6225-7

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An Effective National Security Policy

In his terms in office, George W. Bush has been criticized for being too partisan, too divisive, too unilateralist, too much in the pocket of U.S. business interests, and too militaristic. While there may be merit to these charges, they miss the main point. Liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats may disagree on the specifics of U.S. foreign policy: the circumstances that justify the use of force, the role of the United Nations and other international institutions, the extent to which Washington should promote business interests. But there should be agreement on one point: U.S. national security policy should be effective.

George W. Bush's policies have been ineffective. They have not accomplished the goals Bush himself laid out with regard to Iraq, Iran, or al-Qaeda. At the end of Bush's second term,

the United States is both unpopular around the world and less secure at home. The reason George Bush has been ineffective is simple. He has substituted rhetoric and wishful thinking for strategy.

Strategy is a plan to apply available resources efficiently to accomplish set objectives. America's resources include money, our armed forces, our diplomats, the support of our allies, and our prestige in the world. Americans generally agree on our broad objectives. Living in a prosperous and powerful country, we want a stable world, which we rightly see as the best guarantee of our physical security and economic well-being. Stability is, as I have argued in the previous chapter, not the same as the status quo. And when we pursue other goals—democracy, free trade, and environmental protection—we do so in pursuit of stability.

In evaluating a particular course of action—such as the Iraq War—we do not need to reach the question of whether it is morally justified if it does not serve the national interest. Liberals and conservatives should equally oppose ineffective policies. The following are some simple steps that can contribute to a more strategic national security policy and therefore a more effective one.

Prioritize National Security Objectives

No country, even the United States, has the resources to do everything. The next president must prioritize U.S. foreign policy objectives according to importance, prospect for success, risks, and costs. In general, the more important the objective, the more resources can be applied to accomplish it and the more risks can be taken. If the most important objective is to prevent

the spread of nuclear weapons to rogue states and nonstate actors, then the focus must be on the countries most likely to behave like rogues or most likely to proliferate nuclear technology. Iran might fit into the former category, Pakistan the latter, with North Korea being both a rogue and a proliferator. In pursuing national objectives, the United States has a choice of instruments: diplomacy, foreign assistance, economic sanctions, covert action, and military force. The preferred instrument is always the least costly and least risky, which is usually diplomacy. The more critical the objective, the more justified is the use of risky and costly instruments such as armed force.

Objectives also need to be prioritized against one another. In 2002, President Bush rightly identified the greatest threat to the United States as coming from the world's most dangerous countries with the world's most dangerous weapons. He then turned his focus to a country that, thanks to sanctions and previous military defeats, was not particularly dangerous. (Even if Iraq had hidden chemical weapons, it would have posed a minor threat as compared to rogue states with nuclear programs.) By focusing on Iraq, the Bush administration effectively gave a free pass to North Korea and Iran to move forward with their nuclear programs. With the United States tied down in Iraq, North Korea detonated a nuclear bomb in 2006 and Iran enriched uranium. Preoccupied with Iraq, the administration had neither the leverage nor the attention to focus on the most dangerous proliferator, Pakistan. Furthermore, the fact that the Iraq War went badly greatly strengthened Iran's position in the region, and reduced U.S. options for dealing with the Islamic republic.

Finally, objectives need to be achievable with the resources one is prepared to commit. The flaw with Bush's ambitions for

a democratic, unified, and stable Iraq is that it is not achievable with the troops that we have in the country, or any reasonable augmentation of them.

Be Knowledgeable

Bush's approach to Iraq was striking in how indifferent he was to the realities in the country. It is hard to apply resources to a problem or place you do not understand. Political campaigns poll every conceivable demographic subgroup—for example, soccer moms or security dads—and tailor messages aimed at winning that particular demographic. Yet the Bush administration aimed to win in Iraq by treating the place as if it were inhabited by a single people sharing common goals. Many of the administration's critics make the same mistake. When I hear generalizations about Iraqi opinion—for example, that Iraqis resent the presence of U.S. troops—I always ask, Which Iraqis?

Intelligence Is Not the Same As Knowledge

American policy makers rely on intelligence as if it were the gospel. As a government official, I have sat in countless meetings where the phrase "the Agency believes" was used to stop further discussion. However, while the CIA has impressive resources and many good people, intelligence is, by its nature, often partial and subject to different interpretations. Intelligence community judgments are just that: the collective and considered opinion of some smart people. They are not necessarily right.

Secret information is not always better than public information or even ordinary observation. In May 1998, India caught the CIA by surprise when it tested three nuclear weapons. The

CIA had no secret source in the office of India's newly elected prime minister, A. B. Vajpayee, to tell them a test was imminent. But everyone knew that India could make nuclear weapons (it had tested what it called a peaceful nuclear explosive device in 1974) and that it had a test site ready. Vajpayee's party had been in power for thirteen days in 1996, and during that brief period in office, it had been preparing to conduct a nuclear test. Finally, senior officials in Vajpayee's government had said publicly during the election campaign that they would conduct a nuclear test. While the failure to anticipate the India nuclear test is criticized as an intelligence failure, I see it as a failure by our diplomats and other senior officials, who deferred to the CIA on a matter about which they themselves ought to have made judgments.

Obviously, the CIA's assertion that Iraq had WMD was an intelligence failure. But even if Iraq had chemical weapons and a rudimentary biological weapons program—as the CIA asserted—it does not follow that it was the same level of threat as Iran, North Korea, or Pakistan, or that war was the correct strategy for dealing with the supposed WMD. Indeed, once Iraq agreed in 2002 to readmit U.N. inspectors—under threat of war—the United States could be reasonably assured that Iraq did not have a nuclear program or a significant ongoing program to manufacture chemical or biological weapons. (The risk that inspectors would uncover ongoing programs would be too high, even if the Iraqis could conceal some preexisting stocks of chemical weapons, which many, myself included, thought they had.)

Beware of the Herd Mentality

My late friend, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, used to say of the CIA: "They told us everything about the Soviet Union except that it was falling apart."* This was no small point. We spent trillions of dollars combating an adversary that was far less powerful than we imagined. Yet, both in government and among the foreign policy experts, the commonly shared view was that the Soviet Union was an existential threat to the United States.

Conservatives, in a view coherently argued by Reagan's U.N. ambassador, Jeane Kirkpatrick, saw communism as so powerful that, once a country slipped into its grip, the country would never emerge. For this reason, Kirkpatrick urged that the United States strongly support right-wing regimes—such as Chile's Pinochet and South Africa's apartheid regime—because, as bad as they were, the alternative was worse. As a seventeen-year-old high school student studying Russian, I spent eleven weeks traveling around the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in a VW minibus, staying in campgrounds mostly with Russians. The weaknesses of the Soviet system were apparent, including the poor quality of everything from housing to aircraft to food and consumer goods. And I never met an Eastern European who believed in the communist ideology. What the conservatives saw as evil and threatening, I saw as evil, ineffective, and doomed to fail.

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* Senator Moynihan did predict the demise of the Soviet Union. Writing in 1980 for a *Newsweek* series on what to expect in the coming decade, Moynihan said the Soviet Union would disintegrate and that the problem would be accounting for its nuclear weapons.

I came away with one other conclusion from my trip to the Soviet Union: that it is impossible to understand a country without being there. In the buildup to the Iraq War, Middle East experts provided the administration and Congress with authoritative advice on a country they had never visited. Not surprisingly, they reinforced one another's preconceptions: that Iraq was among the more secular of the Arab countries; that Iran could not influence Iraq's Shiites because the ethnic differences between Arabs and Persians were far more important than the shared Shiite faith; and that Iraq's Kurds felt a loyalty to Iraq, even as they fought Saddam Hussein. Although some of these experts had studied Iraq far more systematically than I ever did, these conclusions did not match what I had observed in a country that I visited many times.

As currently structured, the foreign policy community—both in government and on the outside—has a strong bias toward the conventional wisdom. Outliers are not appreciated in a system where there is no penalty for being wrong. In the 1980s, government intelligence analysts and foreign policy professionals did not consider whether the Soviet Union was a potential failed state. It was accepted that the Soviet Union was a powerful and enduring superpower, and everything was interpreted through that lens. Looking for evidence of Soviet power, analysts found it. At one point, the CIA even concluded that East Germany's per capita GNP exceeded that of West Germany's, overlooking the fact that there were not many Germans trying to cross the wall west to east. To suggest that the Soviet Union was not a threat because it would soon fall apart might not have been a firing offense but it was certain to ensure irrelevance, which for most professionals was a far worse fate.

Being wrong is costly. In the 1980s, we went nearly two

trillion dollars into debt to finance a defense build-up to combat an adversary that was on the verge of collapse. We also besmirched our ideals in search of allies against the Soviet Union, supporting apartheid South Africa, South American dictators, Afghan fundamentalists, and Saddam Hussein. The Afghan fundamentalists facilitated the deadliest attack ever on American soil, and the United States ended fighting two wars against erstwhile cold-war ally, Saddam Hussein. While many foreign policy experts had reservations about the 2003 Iraq War, few dared challenge the conventional wisdom that Iraq was a nation, and those who did were mostly dismissed until proven right.

Being conventional is the path to respectability in U.S. foreign policy circles both inside government and outside. But, what we need are keen observers who reach common sense conclusions that they are not afraid to articulate.

Diplomancy Is Worth Several Divisions

For the last four decades, the United States has generously funded the military while usually starving the State Department and foreign assistance programs. In the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. Congress even refused to pay the full U.S. assessments to the United Nations, even though the United States made more use of the U.N. than any other country. Funding for all U.S. government international operations—the State Department, foreign assistance, U.N. contributions, and international broadcasting—is less than 10 percent of the Pentagon budget, yet these programs are almost always the first cut in the name of budgetary austerity.

The U.S. military pays a steep price for this misallocation

of resources. In Iraq, soldiers undertake tasks that more appropriately should be done by qualified diplomats simply because there are not enough diplomats available. If the Coalition Provisional Authority had been more professionally staffed, the occupation would have been more competently managed and the military mission in Iraq might today be less costly and less perilous. (Of course, the ideologues running CPA would have had to have listened to the professionals.)

The United Nations is the tooth to most conflict prevention, peace-making and nation-building exercises. The U.N. staff includes the people on the ground who interact with the warring factions, negotiate agreements large and small, and facilitate most international movement from the delivery of humanitarian supplies to the movement of diplomats. During the Croatia and Bosnia wars, the United Nations deployed more than 30,000 troops to police cease fires, protect safe areas, and deliver humanitarian supplies. In many aspects, the mission was a disaster. Dutch peacekeepers stood aside as Serb forces overran the Srebrenica safe area and massacred more than 8,000 men and boys. Most of the U.N.-negotiated cease-fires crumbled, some within minutes of being signed. In the end, it took American military intervention in the form of NATO bombing and robust U.S. diplomacy to bring peace. And yet, we could not have negotiated the Dayton or Erdut peace agreements (the treaties that ended the Bosnia and Croatia wars) without the United Nations. As the Croatia peace negotiator, I physically could not have reached rebel Serb territory without U.N. logistical support to cross the front lines. But, the United Nations did much more. U.N. personnel knew the actors and the issues and were able to provide essential support to the negotiations. In the early days of the Bosnia peace shuttle, the Holbrooke

team needed U.N. support to get into besieged Sarajevo. And, for its multiple shortcomings, U.N. humanitarian operations kept Sarajevo alive through a siege of more than 1,000 days, ensuring there were people still alive who might benefit from the peace.

The U.N. Security Council often sends U.N. missions into conflict zones because Council members, including the United States, are unwilling or unable to take more decisive action and yet feel they need to do something. Not surprisingly, a large number of these missions fail to produce results. But, almost invariably, if and when there is a prospect for peace, the United Nations will be part of it. In Iraq today, the United Nations is at the forefront of the diplomatic effort to resolve the status of Kirkuk and the other disputed areas.

At the beginning of the decade, I taught national security strategy at the National War College in Washington, D.C. My military students were colonels or lt. colonels, or their equivalents, from all services. Many had served in the Balkans in the 1990s and would go on to serve in Iraq. When presented with a strategic problem, they would invariably call for diplomacy, more foreign assistance, and a greater U.N. role. When asked where to get the money to pay for these activities, they would invariably point to the Pentagon budget. These men and women serving on the ground in combat situations understood that the military needs more than the best hardware and training. So, why don't decision makers in Congress and the administration understand this as well?

When I worked for the State Department and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the standard explanation was that there is no domestic constituency for foreign programs.

Retired diplomats tried to create such a constituency by telling their congressman that they existed and by explaining the important work diplomats did. Predictably, these efforts fell flat.

The real reason that U.S. diplomacy is underfunded is that neither presidents nor secretaries of state fight for more resources. When the secretary of state goes to Capitol Hill, senators and representatives want to talk about U.S. foreign policy and not budgets. When she meets with the president, they talk about foreign policy, not resources. By contrast, both within the administration and on Capitol Hill, secretaries of defense focus significantly on budgets, weapons systems, and personnel. To their credit, Secretary of State Colin Powell and President Bush used 9/11 to secure a major augmentation in diplomatic resources to go along with the military build-up. The next president and secretary of state must make diplomatic resources a major priority, along with the content of foreign policy. It might help if the president and the secretaries of state and defense presented a unified national security budget rather than continue the outdated and now artificial distinction between diplomatic and military resources.

If U.S. diplomats are to be effective in conflict zones, they need to be able to do their jobs. The Bush administration has trumpeted the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq as a key component of its reconstruction and reconciliation strategy. With a team for each of Iraq's eighteen provinces, the PRTs are meant to coordinate with local officials to ensure the effective spending of U.S. reconstruction funds, to report on the local scene, and to make diplomatic representations. They are, however, so burdened by security regulations that they can rarely leave their compounds and are, for the most part,

ineffective. In January 2007, I visited the PRT in Erbil. It was locked up in a one-block compound. The PRT officer responsible for Suleimani Governorate had been in Iraq nearly a year and had been to her province just twice. Suleimani is one of the safest places in Iraq (I usually travel there just with a driver), and the Kurds had offered to provide security. The State Department's office of diplomatic security, however, insisted on the same rules for all PRTs (regardless of danger) and applied the same rules to safe Kurdistan as to then very dangerous Anbar.

In recent years, every diplomat serving in a war zone (Croatia and Bosnia in the 1990s, Iraq and Afghanistan today) volunteered to go. They are well aware of the dangers but willing to take the risk because these are the places where diplomats can accomplish something. Almost all diplomats I met serving with the PRTs were willing to take greater risks to do their jobs. During the Croatia and Bosnia wars, I sent embassy staff into combat zones in Croatia and Bosnia on a regular basis. The embassy staff uncovered atrocities and gained access to Bosnian Croat–run prison camps. Using this information, I was able to get the Croats to release more than 5,000 Muslim prisoners from inhumane confinement and to push for an end to the atrocities, setting the stage for a peace agreement between the Muslims and the Croats. Everyone who went into Bosnia volunteered to go (and very much wanted to go), and before each trip, I carefully reviewed the security situation. We were prudent, and perhaps lucky. No one got hurt, and we accomplished important U.S. government goals. If we had operated under the rules applied to U.S. diplomats in peaceful Kurdistan, we would have accomplished nothing.

We routinely ask our military to put their lives on the line in pursuit of national security objectives. It is absurd to stop U.S.

diplomats from voluntarily taking a fraction of the military's risk to accomplish the same goals.

Public Diplomacy Is a Tool of Limited Value

All administrations complain that they are misunderstood abroad. This has led to an enormous investment in what is called public diplomacy: Voice of America broadcasts, surrogate radio and TV stations,* press activities, tours for foreign opinion leaders, and educational exchanges. In its early years, the Bush administration hired an advertising agency to produce Arabic language commercials showing Muslim families living contented lives in the United States. And, in Iraq, the U.S. government spent millions trying to persuade Iraqis as to how much the CPA was doing for them and of the glories of the American-written interim Iraqi constitution.

The premise of these activities is that the more foreign-

* Surrogate radio and TV stations employ nationals from a country to broadcast into the country. It is the surrogate for the free media that the country does not have. During the Cold War, the U.S. government funded Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty to broadcast into communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They proved so popular that when the iron curtain fell, the Czech Republic invited the stations to set up shop in the parliament building for the defunct Czechoslovakia on Wenceslas Square in Prague. Today the United States does surrogate broadcasting to Cuba, Iran, and the Arab world. The Arab language broadcasts include a satellite television channel, TV Hurra ("the free one"), and Radio Sawa, which broadcasts pop music and news with a pro-American slant. TV Hurra has to compete with scores of state and private Arab language channels, is not considered interesting, and has a small audience. Radio Sawa does somewhat better, perhaps because there is less competition on the FM band.

ers know about us, the more they will like us. But, most foreigners—including in the Middle East—know a lot about the United States and its policies already. Middle Eastern elites frequently visit America and/or have relatives in the country. Many ordinary Middle Easterners do see the United States as a violence-prone, promiscuous land, an image America created for itself through its export of Hollywood movies and television programs.

For the most part, people in the Middle East—and much the rest of the world—take a dim view of the United States because of our policies. This is not because they do not understand our policies but rather because they *do*. Arabs see the United States as pro-Israeli and as indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinians because it is pro-Israeli and because the Bush administration—in sharp contrast to its predecessors—has made no effort to advance the Middle East peace process. The Iraq War has done incalculable damage to the U.S. reputation around the world not because foreigners don't understand our reasons for invading but because they see—completely accurately—that we invaded Iraq to eliminate WMD that we insisted were there but that did not exist.

Good public diplomacy is not primarily a matter of explaining America and its policies better; it is a matter of having better policies. U.S. prestige in the Islamic world was at an all-time high during Bill Clinton's presidency. Partly this is because the Palestinian-Israeli issue was less prominent after the signing of the Oslo Accords (on the White House lawn in 1993) and significantly because the United States was seen as the champion of the Bosnians at a time when the Europeans (who are traditionally seen as less pro-Israel) appeared unwilling to help a

Muslim people. When the Palestinian uprising started in 2000, President Clinton did not sit on the sidelines but actively pursued a comprehensive peace deal that almost worked.

The Less Said About the Freedom Agenda the Better

George W. Bush began his second term in office by declaring, in the opening paragraphs of his inaugural address, that "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." While the United States has been promoting democratic movements at least since the end of World War II, Bush has carried the rhetoric of freedom, rule of law, and diversity to a new level in presidential discourse. And, since 2001, the United States has spent $7 billion on democracy programs, not including money spent in Iraq.

It is time to cool the rhetoric. The United States is, of course, a great democracy, but it is not necessary to proclaim this all over the world. Non-Americans do not imagine that they are so deficient as to need an American lecture on freedom. Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib have hurt the American brand abroad, but so have the internal shortcomings of American democracy. For many foreigners, the 2000 election was a real shock. The American political system produced an outcome where the candidate with fewer votes became president and where election officials in Florida operated not as neutral arbiters of the balloting but as partisans. But the greatest damage was done by the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Bush v. Gore*. It is hard to

take seriously American lectures on rule of law when Supreme Court justices decide a presidential election on the basis of their personal partisan preferences. Rule of law exists when laws are applied impartially. Foreigners do not believe the five justices who selected Bush would have reached the same conclusion if the roles of Bush and Gore had been reversed.

In 1983, the Congress created the National Endowment for Democracy and international institutes associated with the Democratic and Republican parties. When they run programs in foreign countries, these institutions use experts and politicians from all over the world. The United States will be more effective in promoting democracy if it does not always do so with an American—or even western—voice. And, it will help to acknowledge and fix some of the deficiencies of the American democratic system.

Negotiation Is Not Appeasement

On the occasion of Israel's sixtieth anniversary, George W. Bush used a speech to the Knesset to interject himself into the U.S. presidential campaign. Without naming the Democratic presidential nominee, he compared Barack Obama's willingness to negotiate with Iran to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy toward Hitler. And, in case anyone missed the comparison, he quoted a U.S. senator (Republican William Borah of Idaho) who said, following Hitler's invasion of Poland, "If only I had had a chance to talk to him." The speech was remarkable in many ways. First, it went against a long tradition of presidents not using foreign venues for partisan purposes. Second, the speech continued the Bush White House tradition

of getting its World War II history wrong.* Chamberlain did not appease Hitler by negotiating with him, but rather by forcing Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudetenland to Germany. Indeed, had Chamberlain been tough in his negotiations with Hitler, he might have stopped the German leader from attacking Czechoslovakia since Hitler in March 1938 was not yet ready for war.

Negotiation is not a benefit conferred on a negotiating partner, but a tool to achieve an end. Whether to use the tool should depend on the prospects for success and alternatives, not moral judgments about the negotiating partner. In chapter 3, I argued that the United States should negotiate with Iran. This is not because I take a benign view of that regime—indeed a principal theme of this book is to criticize George W. Bush for having turned Iraq over to Iran—but because I don't see any good alternative for dealing with Iran's nuclear program. The Bush strategy of doing nothing is clearly not working and military action has potentially disastrous consequences.

As ambassador to Croatia during the Croatia and Bosnia wars, I negotiated frequently with evil men. Human rights advocates criticized our negotiating team for talking with war criminals, and some urged us to include civil society at the negotiating table. Indeed, I would have much preferred to deal

* In his January 2002 State of the Union speech, Bush compared Iraq, Iran, and North Korea to the World War II Berlin-Rome axis, calling the three countries an axis of evil. His speech was both geometrically and historically challenged. An axis runs between two points and not three (Japan was a nominal ally of Italy and Germany but not part of the Axis). And Germany and Italy were allies in the Second World War while, in 2002, Iran and Iraq were bitter enemies. Ironically, Bush's Iraq War resulted in a Tehran-Baghdad axis, as the two Shiite countries became close allies.

with the human-rights organizations and with civil society. After all, I shared their values, and we could have quickly reached agreement. But, to reach a peace agreement, we needed to negotiate with the men who had the guns. By negotiating with evil men, the United States achieved peace in Croatia and Bosnia. I have since seen some of my negotiating partners—when I testified in their war crimes trials!

Idealism and Pragmatism Are Compatible

The Dayton Peace Accords that formally ended the Bosnia War on November 21, 1995, followed massive U.S.-led NATO airstrikes on Bosnian Serb targets in August and September 1995. As U.S. peace negotiator Richard Holbrooke has written, the airstrikes and a simultaneous Croatian and Bosnian ground campaign inflicted enough damage on the war's architects that they were, at last, prepared to make peace. In retrospect, the U.S. intervention was a great success, but before it happened, it was very controversial. Both within the Clinton administration and outside, many argued that the United States had no vital interest in that part of the Balkans, and the suffering of the Bosnian people was insufficient justification for taking the risk of a prolonged involvement in a murky Balkan war. Others, myself included, argued strongly in favor of intervention. While we dressed up our arguments with a strategic rationale, the case for intervention was a moral one. At the end of the 20th century, we considered it intolerable that the United States should do nothing as civilians were deported from their homes in cattle cars, when men were starved in concentration camps, while artillery pounded undefended civilians in a European capital, and when men and boys were massacred by the thousands.

In the 1990s, Bosnia was not the only intervention that the United States made for moral or humanitarian reasons. In April 1991, President George H. W. Bush sent troops into northern Iraq to protect the Kurds from Saddam's retribution after a failed uprising (which he had encouraged), and in December 1992, he sent troops into Somalia to help deliver humanitarian assistance. And, in 1999, President Clinton fought an eighty-four-day air war against Serbia to prevent genocide against the Kosovo Albanians.

These interventions broke new ground. For the first time, the United States, along with others in the international community, were intervening in the internal affairs of a sovereign state where that state's government was unable or unwilling to protect its own citizens.

These interventions differed significantly from what George W. Bush has done in Iraq. Except for Kosovo, they were authorized or endorsed by the United Nations Security Council (and thirteen of the fifteen members supported the Kosovo intervention, which was not authorized because of a Russian veto). The United States led the interventions but had allies that provided significant military support and most of the funding. The peacekeeping missions that followed the Bosnia and Kosovo interventions were planned, professionally staffed, and adequately resourced. And, in all cases, U.S. goals were limited: to protect the Kurds, to feed Somalis, to end the Bosnia war, and to save the Kosovars. There was no thought that the United States should remake any of these countries into model democracies.*

* *Some criticized the Dayton Accords for not recreating a unified multi*ethnic state, but we kept our focus on the narrower—and achievable—task of ending the war.

George W. Bush's ill-considered Iraq War may make Americans less likely to support these more narrow interventions that have saved hundreds of thousands of lives at a relatively low cost.

George W. Bush's many liberal critics often portray him as a shallow, self-centered man in the pocket of the special interests. At least in foreign affairs, I think this criticism is off the mark. I think Bush actually believes what he says about promoting democracy, eliminating tyranny, and not compromising with evil. Bush is an idealist, but he is not pragmatic. The combination of grand ambition with ignorance and weak leadership has, over the last eight years, done incalculable harm to U.S. national security. We are less secure than at any time since the Cold War and less liked and less effective than at any time in our modern history. The damage will not easily be repaired. But the greater damage will be if Bush's presidency is followed by a period of introspection and retrenchment in which manageable challenges go unaddressed. George W. Bush has given idealism a bad name, and this may be the greatest unintended consequence of all.