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The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq

Preston C. Rodrigue

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bombers, arsenal planes, and long-range, high-speed strike craft.

Concluding strategic recommendations include maintaining open lines of communication with as many parties in Asia as possible, maintaining U.S. transparency so that U.S. objectives are clearly understood, and expanding the net of U.S. security partners.

This RAND outline of a comprehensive, realistic, flexible U.S. strategy in Asia, with appropriate military reconfiguration, is an important contribution to our search for continued stability in this part of the world.

GRANT F. RHODE
Brookline, Massachusetts



Pollack, Kenneth M. *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*. New York: Random House, 2002. 384pp. \$25.95

The United States and its allies once more stand on the brink of war with Iraq. What makes this war different, however, is that its primary goal is to replace the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein with a democratic form of government. In the opinion of the Bush administration, removal of Saddam and his weapons of mass destruction will bring stability to the Middle East and the world. While there is consensus to remove Saddam and destroy his weapons, there is disagreement among the experts as to how to accomplish it. Kenneth Pollack is a specialist on Iraq whose experience as an analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council gives him a unique vantage point from which to comment on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. In

The Threatening Storm, Pollack posits that a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq is the only logical means to end Saddam's regime. This argument results from a thorough discussion of the rise of the current regime and of Iraq's relationships with its neighbors and the West, followed by a painstaking analysis of the several options available.

In the case of Iraq, says Pollack, our vital national interest, as well as that of the entire world, clearly lies in the economic stability of the region based on ability to export crude oil without interference. Following the Gulf War of 1990–91, the United Nations implemented a number of measures to contain Iraqi ambitions. A short time later, teams of weapons experts entered the country to locate and destroy chemical and biological weapons stockpiles and production facilities. In 1998 Iraq threw out the inspection teams, and for the past four years, notes Pollack, the Iraqis have allegedly been reacquiring chemical and biological weapons and have reenergized their research programs to develop nuclear weapons. Some world leaders and strategists have proposed five options for dealing with what they claim is a clear and present danger to their vital national interest in the Persian Gulf. These options are containment, deterrence, covert action, the "Afghan" approach, and invasion.

Containment has been the policy since the end of the Gulf War. Originally, it had two key components: weapons inspections and economic sanctions. With the eviction of the weapons inspectors, economic sanctions became the sole functioning component of the policy. The oil-for-food program and smuggling, as well as reluctance on the part of some allies, notably France and

Russia, to abide by the terms of the United Nations resolutions have served to undermine the sanctions effort. Consequently, Saddam has been able to acquire continuing funding for his weapons of mass destruction programs. Pollack maintains, therefore, that neither reimposition of sanctions nor unilateral imposition of sanctions by the United States will work, because they either do not have meaningful support from the international community or will place the United States in conflict with its allies. In addition, sanctions would not be the most effective way of quickly overthrowing Saddam's regime.

If the United States accepts the view that Iraq should occupy a lower priority in American policy, says Pollack, it must choose a policy of deterrence. Pollack explains that deterrence relies on the *threat* of American military action against Iraq to ensure regional stability, which assumes that the one deterred is concerned about the consequences of continuing to act uncooperatively. In Saddam's case, that is not a part of his psychological profile. Pollack, therefore, rules out deterrence as a viable option, because it would leave Saddam "free to acquire nuclear weapons" and would be a hope against the odds that American use of power would be sufficient to keep him in his pen. This scenario, says Pollack, is very risky and very dangerous.

The United States has tried covert actions before with little success. Covert actions, such as assassinations and coups, are extremely complicated operations, and the risk of failure is high. However, short of actually removing Saddam from power, covert actions can set the stage in terms of intelligence

gathering, communications, and liaison work for a successful change in government. However, this approach, though useful, would also not meet the stated objective of quickly overthrowing Saddam's regime.

The fourth option, the "Afghan approach," limits the use of force to special operations troops and precision aerial bombing. In addition, there is the issue of using opposition forces to accomplish the overthrow and reestablishment of government. Unfortunately, Iraq's opposition forces are much weaker than, and not as well organized as, those in Afghanistan. This option too represents a lengthy engagement without guarantee of success.

Each of these four options has loopholes that could leave Saddam Hussein in power. Pollack believes that the only real solution is an invasion of Iraq by conventional ground and air forces.

Pollack argues his case well, going beyond the vituperative pronouncements of the administration to link operational objectives to national strategy, but he does not spend much time on the reconstruction of the country, which is, after all, the reason for invasion in the first place. He does make two noteworthy points, however: the removal of Saddam would allow for withdrawal of most of U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf region; and second, with its wealth in oil, Iraq can pay for its own reconstruction. Naturally, there are advantages and disadvantages to each option, and critics abound, but for Pollack the question is "not whether [we invade], but when."

Public opinion polls may show general support for a war in Iraq, but many people remain doubtful of the need for

war or for U.S. involvement. Though this book is out to sell a policy option, Pollack's detailed analyses provide readers with an excellent basis for understanding the situation in the Middle East.

PRESTON C. RODRIGUE

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army



Cohen, Eliot A. *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*. New York: Free Press, 2002. 288pp. \$25

This is an extraordinarily timely work, published when the United States may be about to conduct large-scale combat operations in the Middle East. It examines the relationship in a democracy between military and political leadership, “or more precisely, . . . the tension between two kinds of leadership, civil and military,” especially in time of war.

Two themes run implicitly throughout the book. First, war is about more than purely military considerations (Clausewitzians, rejoice!), and consequently “war statesmanship . . . focuses at the apex of government an array of considerations and calculations that even those one rung down could not fully fathom.” The resultant differing imperatives at each level explain much of the inherent tension between civilian and military leaders over strategy.

Second, the essence of successful wartime leadership depends crucially on the civilian leadership's receiving constant, reliable “truth” from its military commanders. The hierarchical military structure militates against delivery of harsh facts or unpleasant news; as per Winston Churchill, “the whole habit of mind of a military staff is based on

subordination of opinion.” Hence the importance of civilian leaders constantly asking questions, forcing military leaders to lay bare their assumptions and explain their reasoning, because nothing else will force the harsh but vital intellectual debate about whether military plans actually will achieve the desired strategic ends. Military expertise is not decisive here; as David Ben-Gurion noted, “In military matters, as in all other matters of substance, experts knowledgeable in technique don't decide, even though their advice and guidance is vital; rather an open mind and a common sense are essential. And these qualities are possessed—to a greater or lesser degree—by any normal man.”

Citing Samuel Huntington's classic *The Soldier and the State*, Cohen describes the “normal” theory of civil-military relations, “which holds that the healthiest and most effective form of civilian control of the military is that which maximizes professionalism by isolating soldiers from politics, and giving them as free a hand as possible in military matters.” This idea is widely and often unquestioningly accepted by serving military officers, reinforced by the apparent lessons of Vietnam, when such tenets were held to be violated, in contrast with the successes of DESERT STORM, when the military was ostensibly properly left alone to win the war. Indeed, for civilians to “ask too many questions (let alone give orders) about tactics, particular pieces of hardware, the design of a campaign, measures of success, or to press too closely for the promotion or dismissal of anything other than the most senior officers is meddling and interference, which is inappropriate and downright dangerous.”