

## In These Pages

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by James Kurth

**T**he central focus of American foreign policy since 2001 has been the Muslim world. The 9/11 attacks detonated a series of U.S. military and political actions that by now have greatly transformed America's international role. The first of these was the U.S.-led war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001. That war was widely approved at the time, both within the United States and around the world. Even today, with Afghanistan still beset by political disorder, a significant insurgency, and major drug trafficking, the Afghan War is largely seen as a success.

Second, an ensemble of new military agreements was reached from late 2001 through 2002 with a variety of Muslim countries, ranging from sheikdoms in the Persian Gulf to dictatorships in Central Asia. Although rarely discussed among the wider American public, these agreements—particularly those with Uzbekistan—have been the object of considerable criticism by Western organizations concerned about human rights.

A third initiative was the promulgation in 2002 of the new *National Security Strategy*, often

referred to as “the Bush Doctrine.” With its emphasis on unilateral U.S. military action and preemptive (really preventive) war, the Bush doctrine immediately became an object of criticism and controversy, both within the United States and around the world, and this continues to be the case today. The *NSS* also pointed toward a new and problematic political project for the United States, which was to bring democracy to the Muslim world.

The fourth and most important U.S. military action, begun in 2003, has been the war in Iraq. One of the official justifications for the war was that it would establish democracy in Iraq, thereby encouraging democracy in other Muslim countries. This war was widely criticized from the beginning, once again both within the United States and around the world. Now, with Iraq beset by a massive insurgency and an incipient civil war, this initiative is increasingly seen, even by past promoters of the war among neoconservative writers and Republican members of Congress, as a major failure.

The consequences of this series of U.S. actions, as well as

the lessons that Americans and the rest of the world will learn from them, will likely shape U.S. foreign policy for years to come. This issue of *Orbis* focuses upon America's political and military role in the Muslim world. What are the prospects for the American democratization project, most immediately and importantly in Iraq but also with respect to a variety of other Muslim societies? How should the United States use its military forces to implement its foreign policy and political projects in the Muslim world? And, most fundamentally, what are the local, often intractable, realities of different Muslim countries, which inevitably will impose constraints on any U.S. policy and project in the region?

Today, many observers believe that the grand visions and dramatic departures from past policy expressed by the Bush Doctrine have been largely damaged and discredited by the Iraq War. Donald Daniel, Peter Dombrowski, and Rodger Payne, three experienced analysts of foreign and military policy, provide a lucid analysis of both the strengths and weaknesses of the original doctrine. They show how, with a thoughtful synthesis of multilateralism and preemption, it can be reformed and resurrected to provide a sound and realistic basis for U.S. policy in the future.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had his own special project, that of military transformation, and some observers think that this too has been largely damaged and discredited by the Iraq War. One

particular issue involves the role of the National Guard and the Reserves (together, the Reserve Component). Beginning in the late 1970s, U.S. military forces were designed to incorporate this Reserve Component as an essential element in any major military operation. The Guard and the Reserves were not set up, however, to fight a long and grueling counter-insurgency war, and the Iraq War has highlighted deficiencies in Rumsfeld's understanding of these and other military realities. Frank Hoffman provides an informed and comprehensive exposition of the traditional roles of the Reserve Component, the new conditions and challenges of our times, and potential ways to redesign and reconstruct these essential pillars of the U.S. military, so that they can best carry out the missions of the future.

Iraq, of course, presents the most urgent challenges for U.S. foreign and military policy. Eric Davis argues that a fuller understanding of Iraq's past shows that there is a solid historical foundation for building an authentic and viable democratic political system within a unified Iraqi nation-state. Prof. Davis has spent three decades studying Iraq, has often traveled there, and is widely respected as one of America's leading experts on the country. His optimistic analysis of this troubled and troubling land therefore has substantial credibility.

In contrast to the now-familiar Iraq, Central Asia remains the part of the Muslim world that is probably least familiar to most Americans. The most populous country in that

region, and historically its most central country, as well, is Uzbekistan. Chris Seiple and Laurence Jarvik each have substantial experience working in Uzbekistan, and their articles help us to understand this important country. Both note that U.S. government officials and Western NGOs have tended to support the Islamist groups that oppose the authoritarian regime, and both believe that these Islamists, who are often also extremists, provide an unsound basis for U.S. policy. Seiple argues that the United States can work best with the country's traditional clans and moderate Muslims, which together compose a viable, if non-American, version of civil society. Conversely, Jarvik argues that the United States can work best with the educated, secular, and professional sectors, which were originally created during the Soviet era and which together compose a viable, if non-American, version of modern society. Both agree that American relations with the moderate and modern sectors of Uzbekistan can provide a model for American relations with other Muslim countries in Central Asia.

Immediately to the south of Central Asia lies the highly unstable and dangerous "Golden Crescent" of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. James Medler's assessment of the political economy of heroin trafficking in, and out of, Afghanistan shows how difficult it will be for the United States to establish any kind of authentic and viable democracy in that country, or even to establish any kind of effective control over this center of production

for the global heroin economy. Rollie Lal demonstrates how the heroin economy of the Golden Crescent, along with that of the "Golden Triangle" of Burma, Laos, and Thailand, contributes to organized crime and terrorism in India and Pakistan, thus having serious implications for U.S. national security. The highly developed organized crime syndicates of South Asia, which are often engaged in heroin trafficking, have now linked up with Islamist terrorist networks in a mutually beneficial relationship that is becoming a substantial threat to Western countries.

In my own article, I present another analysis of the American democratization project in Iraq and in the wider Muslim world. Readers are warned that my view of the prospects for success is rather dark and pessimistic, and might even be seen as un-American.

This issue of *Orbis* also includes several articles focusing on Europe. Erich Weede, a German sociologist, discusses the now-familiar gulf between European and American societies and provides a systematic and sobering account of several factors that will steadily work to widen the gulf in the future.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Britain—America's predecessor in world power—had a vast empire that rested upon the legendary Royal Navy. Arthur Herman, an American historian, provides a provocative account of this that evokes the tension between the Royal Navy's roles in Europe's great-power competition and in maintaining the empire.

Jeremy Black, a British historian, brings us up to date with a discussion of the current role of the Royal Navy. Even today, its navy enables Britain to engage in power projection to a degree that is only exceeded by the United States. In this sense, as well as in several others, Britain continues to be a kind of imperial power.

Finally, William Anthony Hay's review essay discusses several recent and important books on that great topic, the Great War. It was World War I that brought an end to the greatness of Europe and marked the beginning of "the American century."

The Allied victory in the Great War was decided on the Western front, certainly not in the Middle East and the Muslim world. Yet that victory determined, for almost a cen-

tury, the fate of a good part of that region and world. The defeat and collapse of the Ottoman empire and the consequent Allied redrawing of international frontiers created several of the Middle Eastern states that so absorb our attention today: most obviously Iraq, but also Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and, in a way and at a delay, even Israel and Palestine. The collapse of the Ottoman empire and its caliphate also meant the end of the only Muslim great power, a shock that continues to haunt the Muslim world today and one that some Islamist movements, particularly radical Sunni ones, seek to redeem with the establishment of a new Muslim great power and caliphate. The Great War, it seems, was so great that it still continues to produce wars in our own time.