

Armageddon at the Door
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Chapter Two

The Western Response and the Battle of Armageddon

In the invasion of Iraq in 2003, wasn't President Bush doing exactly what Osama bin Laden expected and wanted? Wasn't he playing directly in the hands of the jihadists? Wasn't he placing young Americans in an impossible situation where they could be picked off in ones and twos? Wasn't the Iraq adventure doomed from the very start? Then why did he go there? Was it simply bad intelligence about weapons of mass destruction? Was it really all about the oil after all?

The Strategy of George W. Bush

Here is where I believe the deeper motivations behind the news have been poorly understood. The real geopolitical goals of the Iraq War have been hinted at in the media but rarely spoken out loud. The President himself has been careful never to tip his hand publically, even in the face of just criticism of the goals that were actually stated. Let's briefly go behind the scenes and unravel the deeper actions and motivations that don't always make the news.

What did the invasion of Iraq have to do with "the war on terror?" Why did Bush play

bin Laden's game? What was he hoping to gain? The usual reasons make no sense. The invasion was not really about weapons of mass destruction. While it turns out that Saddam Hussein no longer had any weapons of mass destruction, everybody, including the Europeans, believed that he had them. Yet in spite of that belief, most did not think that was a reason to invade.

The invasion was not really about Saddam Hussein either. Sure, he was a rather unsavory character. Sure, he gassed the Kurds and massacred the Shiites. Sure his secret police was killing people right and left. But such events had been occurring for the last twenty-five years and had provoked no American invasion up to that point. Why invade now?

The invasion was also not really about control of Middle Eastern oil. The oil was flowing fine before the war. The war has, in fact, driven up prices and created uncertainty. War hinders trade, it doesn't promote it. So all of the public reasons for the invasion make no real sense.

I believe the real purpose of the invasion was the dismantling of al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is not a national government. It is not a definable state with borders and institutions that can be destroyed. In order to dismantle al Qaeda you'd have to shut off its flow of funds, most of which had been coming from Saudi Arabia. To do that effectively would require co-operation from every nation in which al Qaeda operates. It requires the free flow of intelligence information. It requires people to turn in relatives and friends who are part of the conspiracy. Although al Qaeda based itself in Afghanistan, it has always been rooted in the Arab context. It cannot be defeated without projecting power into the Middle East at some point. Osama bin Laden knew that and included that into his calculations of American behavior.

Let me illustrate the problem. It is reported that Osama bin Laden had 52 brothers from

a variety of different mothers. Many of these were not sympathetic to the goals and methods of the jihadists. Many were living happily in the United States when September 11 occurred. Some, however, were sympathetic. The only way to accurately separate the “jihadists” from the “friends of democracy” in the bin Laden family itself is to be inside the family. In other words, the United States and allied governments need to be able to penetrate such families intimately and encourage brother to “rat” on brother and/or turn them in to authorities. This is kind of thing is heavily destructive in any close-knit family and will be resisted in most circumstances.

The dilemma for the rulers of Saudi Arabia after September 11 was that they had to choose between pleasing the United States, who wanted to root out every potential jihadist in Saudi Arabia, and pleasing their own people, who didn’t want such disruptive activities occurring in their own country and in their own families. Why would they choose to please the United States over their own people? After all, if they offended their own people, their own people would be motivated to overthrow them! So there was no way the Saudi rulers would fully co-operate with the United States in “the war on terror” unless they were more afraid of the United States than they were of their own people!

In a desperate attempt to distract the United States, the Saudi leadership began floating exciting proposals for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These proposals had no chance of being accepted by those who would be most affected by them, but offering the proposals set conditions for Saudi co-operation in the war on terror that the United States could never fulfill. What the United States heard in these proposals was that the Saudis had no intention of helping to destroy al Qaeda.

So how could the United States get at al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia? One option was to invade Saudi Arabia and do the job themselves. But that is exactly what bin Laden was hoping for and would likely have resulted in a mass uprising against the United States. The other option was to raise the threat of invasion to such a high level that the Saudi leadership would become more afraid of the United States than they are of their own people. To do that the United States had to find a way to effectively project power into the Middle East without inflaming the opposition of the Arab masses. The United States had to find a way to convince the average Middle Eastern Arab that the United States was overwhelmingly powerful and much to be feared. Al Qaeda could put on a big show, but it was essentially weak and could not protect its own. In other words, the United States had to create the perception that the jihadist project was doomed to failure and that casting one's lot with the United States was the more effective way to create positive change in the Middle East.

Enter Saddam Hussein. If there was one ruler in the Middle East who was widely despised in the Arab world and whose demise would cause few tears to be shed, it was Saddam Hussein, the oppressive, secular president of Iraq. President Bush gambled that taking out Saddam Hussein would not inflame the Arab street. There would be anger at the presence of foreign occupiers, but it would be a manageable anger. And if Saddam could be replaced by a government "of the people" there might even be some gratitude for American intervention.

The Invasion of Iraq

What did the invasion of Iraq have to do with "the war on terror?" At least three things.

1) It enabled America to project power into the very heart of the Middle East. 2) It exploited the fundamental fault line in the Islamic world, the division between Sunni and Shiite. 3) It distracted the jihadists away from direct action against the United States. And there was a high likelihood that all three things would occur without the specter of mass uprisings across the Middle East. As with September 11, the real reasons for the invasion of Iraq were quite different than the reasons generally given in the news media. The “liberation” of Iraq was not the primary goal, but the consequences of that liberation would deeply impact the war on terror. Let me unpack each of these three reasons briefly, because they may not make sense on the surface.

1) Projecting American Power. When it comes to the Islamic world, the United States has had more military failures on its record than successes (the failed hostage rescue in 1980, Lebanon, Somalia, weak responses to earlier al Qaeda attacks). As impressive as the 2001 defeat of the Taliban was, it was still done with the help of others and left the country relatively unpacified. So the United States, in spite of its massive power, had the reputation of a military and political weakling in the Middle East. It had to find a way to convince all players that this time it really meant business.

In order for a nation to truly project power, it cannot simply threaten from afar. It has to be able to put troops on the ground and threaten a nation’s intimate interests directly. The invasion of Iraq put massive American power in the very heart of the Middle East. From the center of the Middle East, American power could threaten Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, all three reluctant players in the battle against al Qaeda, but absolutely critical to its success. The

“elephant next door” would have to be taken into account in every word and action the neighboring nations took from then on. In actual fact, shortly after the invasion in March of 2003, all three neighboring countries began to co-operate with the United States in back channel ways. The co-operation was usually covert, the public rhetoric (for the people’s consumption) remained resistant to American interests.

This is why Germany, France and Russia were so opposed to the Iraq War. They too disliked Saddam and believed that he had weapons of mass destruction. They too believed that he could pose a threat to civilization. But the Middle East had been their back yard for two hundred years. The last thing they wanted was the American elephant in their back yard! So they resisted the invasion in public ways that seemed inexplicable, but it was all about power and who would wield it where. Everyone knew the real issue was projection of American power into the Middle East, and no one wanted to talk about it. That is why the whole debate over the Iraq War was so surreal.

2) *The Differences Between Sunni and Shiite.* The biggest barrier to Osama bin Laden’s dream of an islamic empire is not American power, but a fundamental fault line in the islamic world itself, the differences between the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam. This division between Sunni and Shiite makes little sense to the average Westerner. It basically has to do with which of Muhammad’s original followers he intended would succeed him after his death. But this “fault line” is very real to Muslims and can raise even greater passions at times than the divide between Catholic and Protestant in the Christian world. The Sunni side of the debate is by far the stronger. In fact, the only two islamic countries in which Shiites are in the majority

are Iraq and Iran.

Osama bin Laden is a Sunni, so the Shiites would naturally be opposed to his agenda. Saddam Hussein was a Sunni (although there is little evidence he took his “faith” seriously), so he had seized power in Iraq against the will of the majority of his people (Shiites). A major war strategy of the United States has always been to divide and conquer. In 1941 it succeeded in separating Stalin from Hitler in order to win World War II. In 1974 President Nixon split the Communist world by befriending China at the expense of the Soviet Union. By invading Iraq the United States exploited Shiite opposition to Sunni ambitions, thus splitting the Islamic world in two and securing Iran’s back-channel co-operation in the war on terror. It also terrified the Saudis, who have always feared Iraq and Iran, in part because of a restive Shiite minority of their own.

By invading Iraq President Bush has created an unintended consequence for both himself and for Osama bin Laden. By enabling a Shiite majority government in Iraq, the American invasion has empowered the Shia and made Iran the leading beacon of jihadist opposition to American power. Bin Laden’s actions and the nature of Bush’s response have unintentionally succeeded in marginalizing bin Laden’s role within the worldwide jihadist network. Iran has positioned itself as the primary obstacle to the American and Israeli agendas in the Middle East.

3) Distracting Jihadists Away From the Homeland. By projecting American power into the Middle East, the invasion of Iraq presented the jihadists with a multitude of Western targets close to home. Attacking the American homeland from hideouts in southwestern Asia is

a very difficult and expensive business. Sending a lone suicide bomber into a crowded restaurant next door is a lot less tricky and still makes a statement, especially if an American soldier or two is killed in the process. So an almost perverse goal of the invasion was to take the war on terror to the enemy, thereby distracting him from the more difficult, yet more effective approach of threatening the American homeland. As President Bush said more than once, "I'd rather fight them over there than in our homes and communities here."

The invasion of Iraq was like a magnet, drawing jihadists and their sympathizers from all over the Middle East (and even Europe and Africa) to the "decisive battle." From both Osama bin Laden's viewpoint and that of the American government, the invasion of Iraq centered the war on terror in the Middle East instead of New York. That war would be won or lost on Iraqi soil, a location both sides preferred.

And from the American perspective, this shift occurred without the collateral result of a general uprising of the Arab street. There has been a significant insurgency in Iraq, but it has been largely limited to the Sunni sectors of Iraq. The vast majority of the Iraqi people have opposed the insurgency from the beginning. So in terms of Osama bin Laden's grand strategy, the Iraq War started out as a victory for the American president, who gambled that the Arab street would tolerate the action and, on the whole, that turned out to be the case.

There were a number of things about Iraq, however, that President Bush does not seem to have anticipated. He did not anticipate that Saddam Hussein would hold back his most-skilled troops in order to wage a long-term guerilla war in the streets of central and western Iraq. He did not anticipate that such a tactic would be successful enough to be a major drain on

American energy. He did not anticipate that Iraq would become a drawing card for jihadist “volunteers” from all over the Islamic world and that they would become the formidable opponents they have been. He did not anticipate that democracy would be so challenging in an environment where everyone’s first loyalty is to the local tribe, not the country as a whole. He did not anticipate that Sunnis would use bombings and suicide missions as negotiating tools to gain a stronger place at the democratic table. He did not anticipate that the average Iraqi would be more resentful of occupation than grateful for “liberation.”

What Americans and the American government do not seem to understand is that any time you intervene in the sovereign affairs of another country, you upset the balance of that society. After the fall of the Soviet Union the first George Bush proclaimed a New World Order, in which politics would take a back seat to economic prosperity. Under the Bushes and Bill Clinton, America has seemed to think that Middle Eastern peoples wouldn’t mind a little American intervention as long as their lives were freer and more prosperous. But in fact American intervention always advantages one political group over another in the countries involved. In Iraq, the Shiites and Kurds benefitted more than the Sunnis from American intervention. In Afghanistan, minorities benefitted more than the majority Pashtuns. In Kosovo, the majority Albanians benefitted more than the minority Serbs. Therefore, while well-intended, American intervention inevitably tends to destabilize the local situation, creating unintended consequences in every case.

So the invasion of Iraq did not prove to be the clean, overwhelming victory that President Bush and his advisors had hoped. While American troops in Iraq have certainly gotten

the attention of the Saudis, the Syrians and the Iranians, they have been so occupied with the insurgency in Iraq they have not been the truly effective threat that was intended. In fact, the Saudis themselves have covertly supported the Sunni insurgency in Iraq to keep the Americans occupied and to undercut the Shiites politically. The American media and the Congress have also provided a constant negative drumbeat in the background, which has unintentionally encouraged the jihadist movement just when everything seemed to be lost.

On the other hand, there was no immediate repeat of September 11 on American soil. While there were a number of smaller bombings in places like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Spain, the American homeland itself seemed increasingly secure. The power of al Qaeda to launch brilliant and complicated attacks anywhere in the world seems to have been seriously degraded. Al Qaeda's leadership seems to have become more obsessed with survival than with planning for future attacks.

At the time of writing this, I sense that America's power has generally succeeded in diverting al Qaeda from major attacks on American soil. The jihadists still have plenty of bark, but that their "bite" is more akin to pinpricks than to serious challenges to the world order. While the US and allied countries have taken serious casualties in Iraq, they are nowhere near the level of Vietnam and the bombings are not a serious military threat to overthrow the occupation. In military terms, the insurgency is an annoyance but not a threat. The "Arab street" is also annoyed at the occupation but a long way from rising up to provide a serious obstacle to it. If this analysis is anywhere close to correct, the greatest danger to the American strategy could well be war-weariness at home rather than the actual course of the war on the

ground.

Projecting the Outcome

As I write, the outcome of the war on terror is still in doubt. America remains mired in the Middle East. Various factions in Iraq are still more divided than united. The insurgency continues. Al Qaeda remains on the run, but is still alive in some fashion. Young men (and sometimes women) are still lining up in large numbers to blow themselves up for the cause. The world has become accustomed to intrusive security measures at airports and hotels. Everyone is more on edge than they used to be. The war on terror is far from over and its final outcome is hard to predict. But I would like to close with a few lines to outline some indicators by which you can measure how the war on terror is going in the future.

Signs of American Success

Which way are things heading in the war on terror and how can you know? It is difficult to project, but the following signs would indicate that the war on terror is going better for the West than the negative drumbeat of the media might indicate.

1) *More years go by without a significant jihadist attack on the American homeland.* The longer the time without a significant attack, the more certain it becomes that al Qaeda and related organizations have been disrupted to the point of strategic ineffectiveness. Small attacks in Europe and the Middle East are becoming almost business as usual, but they do not threaten the world political order to a significant degree. If Al Qaeda cannot order a repeat of

September 11, its goals are in danger of non-fulfillment.

Al Qaeda's method of operation is to stage infrequent but spectacular attacks. Nevertheless, a total absence of attacks in the US mainland for six years or more is out of character. It raises doubts whether the terrorist operation is capable anymore of a September 11 size attack on America. The longer that period continues, the greater the likelihood that the lull is not by choice on al Qaeda's part.

I remember someone asking me on September 11, as we were watching CNN coverage of the Trade Towers disaster, "Do you think there will be more attacks like this?" I responded, "No, I think they just blew up twenty years of assets." In other words, the kind of covert operation that can assembled twenty people willing to die, yet smart enough to get into the US and elude American security for as long as necessary, might take twenty years to put together. My sense then was that it was a one-shot event that would not soon be duplicated. Subsequent events seem to support that gut feeling.

Having said this, however, it might not be necessary to co-ordinate twenty people in order to sneak a rudimentary nuclear device into the United States. A "satchel-sized" nuclear device could kill tens of thousands without the operational complexity of September 11. So even if al Qaeda's operational capabilities are severely degraded, it may still retain the capability of significantly hurting the United States.

2) *The "Arab Street" remains generally quiet and accepting of the American presence in the Middle East.* Osama bin Laden's strategy centered on provoking a massive popular reaction against American empire building all over the islamic world. That has clearly not happened up

to this point and seems increasingly unlikely, barring some additional provocation beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ability to “manage the news” in the Middle East and to win hearts and minds on the street will probably be a crucial factor, although America has never been very good at that. As of this writing, al Qaeda has not yet found a way to incite the Arab street. As long as that continues, al Qaeda’s ultimate goals remain dreams.

3) *Iraq is able to form a unity government in which all major sides play a role and minority rights are protected.* Such a government would divide the Iraqi insurgency, bringing the secular insurgents to see politics rather than violence as the way to best benefit their constituency. The foreign jihadists sent in by al Qaeda would then be marginalized and exposed to capture and would probably leave the country looking for easier pickings. This would be Bush’s best-case scenario.

But developing a unity government will require a deft hand. The American challenge in Iraq is to find a way to please all the warring factions to the place where a central government can keep the peace and allow the American forces to go home or to do what they were placed their to do in the first place; be a strategic threat to al Qaeda sympathizers in Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran. But this is a nearly impossible balancing act. There are four main political groups in Iraq. There are the Shiite religious parties, which want islamic law (their style). There are the Sunni religious parties, which want a different style of islamic law. There are the Kurds, who are Sunni in profession but are generally secular in orientation. And there are the Sunni and Shiite secularists, for whom a religious government is anathema.

In a Western setting it would seem that there is plenty of room for compromise and

team-building. Why can't Sunni and Shiite religious parties get along? Shouldn't the Sunni Kurds and the Sunni Arabs be able to find common cause? Shouldn't the Kurds and the secular Arabs be able to work together? Yet a history of oppression and revenge killings leaves all sides taking the position of "My way or no way!" So the idea of an Iraqi unity government would be nearly impossible to create and extremely challenging to maintain.

4) *Some or all of the remaining "big four" jihadist leaders (Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahri, Mullah Omar and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi— Zarqawi was killed in 2006) are killed or captured.* These have great symbolic value to jihadists around the world. They are protected by networks of sympathizers in the places where they hide. To be able to capture or kill them signals a breakdown in their sympathy and support network, a further indication that their organizations are being seriously degraded. It would lead to a perception of weakness in the jihadist movement, which could lead young people to choose other outlets for excitement besides resistance to the world order.

5) *Democracy takes full root in the Middle East.* This would mean that many Islamic fundamentalists have decided that the ballot box is better than the bomb to achieve political and religious goals in the Islamic world. Islamic fundamentalism does not have to be at war with the West. Guerilla wars are not usually put down by military means. They tend to end when everyone decides that the fighting is counter-productive and goes back to negotiation and diplomacy as the best ways to safeguard people's various interests.

Signs of Jihadist Success

The followings signs, on the other hand, would be indications that the war on terror is going badly for America and its allies.

1) *Al Qaeda and/or related organizations demonstrate that they still have the ability to stage a major attack like September 11 in America or in the heart of Europe.* An escalating level of attacks around the world, not just in the Middle East would be a sign of increasing jihadist strength and success. But it is also possible that the relentless Western assault on all levels of the jihadist movement has caused the jihadists to go underground and take a longer-range view of the conflict. Jihadists and their sympathizers have long memories and a lot of patience. The war on terror is very likely to outlast the presidencies of George Bush and at least one or two of his successors. But al Qaeda will attack America again if it is able to and if such an attack would serve a strategic purpose.

Jihadists look for soft targets. These are becoming harder and harder to find in a world of obsessive security. But people cannot put up with obsessive security forever. At some point, people and their governments will relax their vigil and life will attempt to return to something a bit more “normal.” At that point it will be seen whether the jihadists were able to maintain their focus in hiding and whether they will be able to rebuild the networks that seem to have been shattered for several years since September 11.

Oddly enough, the softest American target may be the border with Mexico. It is known that individuals from countries that harbor or even sponsor terrorists have been captured along the southern US border. Many are likely to have passed through. On the other hand, it is extremely difficult for people of Middle Eastern appearance to get hold of explosives in the

United States, so Iraqi-style bombings would be hard to pull off, even if “sleeper” agents are already in the country.

My guess right now is that the war on terror will go on for decades (if time should last that long), but at a lower level of hostilities than was the case in 2007. Since the goal of the jihadists was political change in the islamic world, many jihadists may follow the lead of some Sunnis in Iraq and give the political process a try. The jihadists may find that the rising level of democracy in the Middle East is an excellent way to achieve at least some of their political and religious goals.

2) *The “Arab street” becomes increasingly anti-American and anti-Western.* If the average Muslim begins to think like the jihadists, it would be an ominous sign. Should women and children and ordinary Iraqis begin confronting American soldiers in large numbers (people power), you can know that the Vietnam syndrome is kicking in and the Western militaries will soon be withdrawing from the streets into bases. This will not result in a more stable situation, but the opposite.

The reality is that while the Americans were blind-sided by the insurgency in Iraq, the situation in the first years after the invasion was not nearly as serious in military terms as it sounded in the media. Things would have to get worse than 2007 before the war would be in serious trouble from a purely military perspective. Internal memos among the jihadists about Iraq have been largely pessimistic. In terms of the big picture, the Iraq War, painful as it has been for the Americans, has not been a plus for the jihadist side.

An outside power, however, cannot shut down a guerilla war by itself. It needs

significant allies in the local situation. Total loss of Iraqi support, for any reason, would be a sign that the American project in Iraq is doomed. It doesn't matter what causes the loss of support (whether prisoner abuse, the killing of women and children, offensive cartoons), what matters is the outcome. At the time of writing, Iraqis seem more concerned with internal differences than with the presence of "occupiers." But this could change rapidly. This is a key area that bears watching as time goes on.

3) *Attempts to create a stable government in Iraq completely fail.* Should Iraq break into several de-facto pieces, the Kurdish north, the Shiite south, the Sunni northwest, things could quickly get out of control. In that situation it would be very hard for the Americans to know who to fight. Turkey would feel threatened by an independent Kurdish state and would be tempted to intervene, which would put the Americans at odds with a close and vital ally. Iran would feel threatened by the ascendancy of either the jihadists or a rebirth of Saddam's Baath Party and would likely intervene covertly in the south and middle of Iraq. The Syrians would take advantage of the instability to further destabilize the situation and get the heat off themselves. The Saudis would no longer feel the need to support the war on terror and jihadists everywhere could hide out in an unstable Middle East. All sides would be tempted to use oil as a hostage to their own ambitions, which would destabilize the world economy. So a destabilized Iraq and Middle East is not in the interests of a calm and peaceful civilization.

A particular element to keep an eye on is America's relationship with Iran. The Iranians have many agents in the Shiite south and a great deal of influence. If they wanted to, they could turn the south of Iraq into an insurgent war zone overnight. The Iraqi insurgency of 2003-2007

was almost entirely confined to Baghdad and areas to the north and west, the so-called Sunni Triangle. The insurgency affected no more than 20% of the country. The relative quiet of the Shiite south suggested a strong back-channel relationship between the United States and Iran. Iran would keep the Shiites quiet in exchange for Shiite religious dominance of the resulting Iraqi democracy. This would still seem to be the best path to resolution.

Except that the Saudis also have a stake in the situation. The last thing they want is a Shiite Iraq allied with Iran. They have been covertly supplying jihadists in Iraq with money and turning a blind eye to the large number of Saudis who have gone to Iraq to join the fight against the Americans and their Shiite allies. On one thing the Saudis and the Americans agree in Iraq. They do not want to leave Iraq in the hands of the Iranians. So any kind of settlement in Iraq would be complicated, and things could further disintegrate at any time.

4) *The American "Heartland" Turns Against the War.* No American president has ever had 100% support for any war. Even the American Revolution was opposed by a significant minority of the people, who were called Tories. It is not even necessary for a majority of the people to support a war that the administration feels is vital to the national interest. Vigorous debate is part of the democratic process. And while congressional debate over a war can be discouraging to troops in the field and somewhat encouraging to the enemy, it does not have a massively negative effect on the outcome of a war.

No president, however, can prosecute a war after losing his own base of support. So even if a pro-war Republican is elected to replace President Bush, he can only continue the war as long as the vast majority of the Republican base supports it. Significant defections from "red-

state” Republicans would be an ominous sign for a Republican president. At the time of writing the national consensus was teetering on the brink of a move toward withdrawal from Iraq. Osama bin Laden knew from the beginning that the American public has little patience for drawn-out and inconclusive wars. Whether withdrawal from Iraq would play directly into his hands would need to be carefully considered. America’s power to continue is great, its will is in question.

5) *The Implosion of Pakistan*. There is one scenario in the war on terror that is perhaps the greatest nightmare of all for American leaders. And that would be the disintegration of Pakistan along the lines of what has happened in Iraq. Large parts of the country are relatively lawless already. Many feel that al Qaeda’s leadership is hiding in those ungovernable regions along the Afghan border. As I write stability seems to be breaking down elsewhere in the country as well.

What makes Pakistan worth watching is the fact that it is a nuclear power. The government there controls a considerable arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. To my knowledge such an arsenal has never, in the history of the world, ever gotten out of the hands of stable, governmental control. What happens to those weapons if Pakistan disintegrates into civil war? What if the government is taken over by allies of al Qaeda? What if some of these weapons fall into jihadist hands? The civilized world would then be in a position far more precarious than anything we know now. Pakistan definitely bears watching as the future unfolds.

Conclusion

My sense at the time of writing is that the jihadists' political goals are likely to fail in the short run in the face of massive Western security measures. This will result in a lower level of jihadist activity but not its total disappearance. What the West calls terrorism will be an ongoing reality for the rest of our lives to some degree, and perhaps also the lives of our children, should time last that long.

At some point, worldwide weariness could cause disillusionment with democracy and a rebirth of autocratic governments. Those governments would gain their legitimacy from the public need for peace and safety. Saddam Hussein was an evil man in many ways, but he did succeed in keeping a lid on Iraq's many warring factions. People may eventually feel a nostalgia for the "good old days," when strong leaders kept evil at bay and people were able to walk the streets in safety. Such a scenario is reminiscent of the kind of situation described in the Battle of Armageddon.

We turn now to a careful study of what Revelation has to say about the final battle of earth's history. When we have completed this study we will take a brief look at the scenario of *Great Controversy*, which is based to a large degree on the same evidence. Then in the last chapter of this book we will revisit the war on terror and the above projections in light of what we learn about the Battle of Armageddon in Bible prophecy. So fasten your seat belts, put your tray tables in locked and upright position, and join me in this journey through the end-time scenario of Revelation.