

A New Middle East



Commandant Rory Finegan takes a panoramic look at the Middle East and the shape of security in the years to come in this most volatile and strategic of regions.

For many people the end of the 20th Century was the “triumph of the west.” Writing in 1998, Francis Fukuyama argued that the crumbling of Soviet Communism marked the “end of history”. George Bush Senior had earlier proclaimed a New World Order. Capitalism, liberalism and democracy had emerged as the victors of the century’s protracted ideological conflicts. Yet the extreme violence of the 20th Century had been caused by much more than clashes of ideology. Ethnic conflict, economic volatility, and empires in decline: these were the factors that had generated so much conflict and cost so many millions of lives ¹.

The plans of George W. Bush in 2003 echoed this sentiment. He spoke of “a greater Middle East initiative” based on neoconservative ideology.

Their ideology intended that a domino effect would initiate a realm of new freedoms and democracy, free markets and womens rights, from Arab North Africa all the way to Afghanistan and Pakistan. A region which his ideological ally Tony Blair had referred to as “an arc of instability” was to be transformed with Iraq as the geopolitical fulcrum around which a new Middle East (ME) would mutate. As we pass the fourth anniversary of the onset of the Iraq war, it seems unlikely that history will judge the intervention or the ideas animating it kindly. More than any other group it was the neoconservatives inside and outside the Bush administration who pushed for democratising Iraq and the greater ME. Their rhetoric of some

Middle East nations acting as “Beacons of Democracy” whose example was going to undermine neighbouring regimes seems but a faint echo. Indeed from the Mediterranean to the Asian sub-continent, the entire zone that Bush sought to civilise has festered. Iran continues to defy not only the US, but also Europe, by continuing its uranium enrichment programme.

Five years after the US “liberated” Afghanistan, it is still the world’s number one opium producer and the Taliban is again resurgent. The US has shifted responsibility for southern and eastern Afghanistan, where the Taliban is strongest, to NATO. A disunited NATO is unable to muster the necessary combat troops to effectively employ anything other than “a thin red line” in Helmand Province that barely contains the Taliban. Material and weapons issued to indigenous security forces have simply disappeared. Incompetence and corruption undermine NATO attempts at “nation building”.

Pity the Nation

Meanwhile, due to Israeli military assaults and Western indifference, both the Lebanese and Palestinians are also on the verge of civil war. Iraq meanwhile, in the words of the Irish Times’ Lara Marlowe, is the recurring nightmare by which all other conflict is measured; the argument as to whether the internecine sectarian violence is, or is not, a civil war is almost pedantic. More than 100 Iraqis are murdered every day and nearly that many again are kidnapped by sectarian militia or gangsters. A UN report in September 2006 says explicitly that torture by sectarian groups and Iraqi security forces is systematic ².

Lebanon’s “Cedar Revolution” provided prized evidence that democracy was coming to the Middle East, but this unravelled in July and August 2006. Israel bombarded the country for 34 days in retaliation for the abduction of two of its soldiers by the Shia Muslim militant group Hezbollah. Some 1,200 Lebanese were killed, and more than 100 Israelis. Lebanon’s infrastructure was shattered, but an even more serious symbolic casualty was the fragile consensus amongst the country’s religious groups. The body politic was split between Christians, Sunnis and Druze on the one hand and Shia Muslims, supported by the breakaway Maronite Catholic General Michel Aoun, on the other hand ³.

Once upon a time in America

The neoconservative premise had been based on several pillars. Firstly that the “root cause” of terrorism was the Middle East; specifically in the Middle East’s lack of democracy. From an ideological point of view they sincerely believed that the US had both the wisdom and the ability to fix the problem; once the regime of Saddam had been toppled, that democracy and all its inherent benefits and by-products would come not only quickly but as a painless elixir to Iraq. This fundamental plank in their opaque view through the neoconservative geopolitical lens was firmly based on the peculiar way that the Cold War ended in two fundamental ways. First, it created an expectation that all totalitarian regimes were hollow and would crumble with a small push from the outside. This in particular helps explain the Bush administration’s failure to plan adequately for the increasingly savage insurgency that emerged. The war’s supporters seemed to

think that democracy was almost a default condition that emerged once coercive regime-change occurred, rather than being a laborious long term institution building and reform process.

Secondly, the administration and its neoconservative supporters also misunderstood the way the world would react to the use of American power. The Cold War itself was replete with instances wherein Washington acted first and sought legitimacy and support from its allies only after the fact. But in the post Cold War period, world politics changed imperceptibly in ways that made this kind of exercise of power much more problematic in the eyes of allies. After the fall of the Soviet Empire, various neoconservative authors suggested that the US would use its unassailable margin of power to exert a kind of “benevolent hegemony” over the rest of the world, fixing problems such as rogue states with a WMD threat, echoed in the “Axis of Evil” of George Bush Jnr’s first term.

Prior to the invasion of Iraq, the US argued that the strategic implications of regime change would be to precipitate a domino democratisation effect throughout the ME⁴. The “new” Middle East envisaged by Condoleezza Rice was to be characterised by a new Arab geopolitical centre that would consist of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan,

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replacing the “old Arab centre” of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria. This new Arab-Sunni centre fears the emergence of a Shia Crescent and the radicalism exemplified by Shia dominated and Iranian backed Hezbollah. It also fears a nuclear Shia-Iran and the emergence of the second Arab-Shia state in the shape of Iraq. Ipso facto this presumes a situation whereby the Shia radical group Hezbollah is broken as a military force, its political wing co-opted into the mainstream and Lebanon becomes truly sovereign in control of its territory albeit under a benign Franco/American hegemony. As a consequence, Iran is defanged, Syria weakened and boxed in and, stemming from this, intra-regional democratic and modernisation processes are accelerated.

The cradle of civilisation

A current scan of the region would suggest that this has not come to pass, what with increased violence in Iraq, the aftermath of the war in Lebanon, the ongoing Palestinian issue and Afghanistan “close to anarchy”⁵; and instead of promoting democracy and strengthening moderate voices in the region,

US soldiers in Iraq. ‘The recurring nightmare by which all other conflict is measured.’



it is difficult not to conclude that extremism, radicalism and anarchy have been on the rise. In the words of Dr. Graeme P. Herd of the Conflict Studies Research Centre, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, the US and UK in attempting to play the role of “mid-wife” in the “new Middle East” have strengthened the position of Hezbollah and Iran and exacerbated tensions between elites and society in the Sunni-Arab centre.

Arguably, the US continues to misdiagnose the root causes of instability in the region, laying all blame at the Presidential Palace doors in Damascus and Tehran respectively, while ignoring the role of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and barely acknowledging the destabilising impact of US-led policies in Iraq after 2003. Neoconservatives regard Hezbollah and Hamas as pawns of Syria and Iran. Tony Blair went along with this contention, notably on the source of the problem, which he described as an “arc of extremism” stretching through the ME and Southeast Asia. Although Prime Minister Blair has continually stated that the root cause of instability in the region is a failure to address the “road map” to peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, four years after the Iraqi debacle it is difficult not to conclude that UK support of US security policy continues to be an end in itself rather than a means to an end – influencing the US to support a viable and effective Middle East policy⁶.

However, events show there is another such arc, between US and Israeli policy, which is potentially just as extreme in its effects⁷. Israel’s declared tactical objective in its offensive in Lebanon had been to cripple or destroy Hezbollah’s military arm and secure the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south to prevent attacks on Northern Israel. Many analysts believe that hawks in both the Israeli and US administrations are signalling a wider strategic objective by pointing fingers at Tehran and Damascus. Many Arabs now describe the events of July/August 2006 in Lebanon as the sixth Israeli-Arab war – the first in which they were not decisively defeated. The fact that the 33-day war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon was a rough draw has potential far-reaching implications in the long term. One is that this outcome makes another war inevitable, whereby Israel would seek to re-establish its martial advantage and its capacity for unilateral action and that ergo military

maximalism will reverberate for years. Deep within the Israeli security agenda there lies an almost visceral fear of Iran and a determination to prevent it securing nuclear weapons. Chris Patten, former EU Commissioner for External Affairs, contends that Iran is not going to surrender what it regards as its main political assets in the region – namely its relations with Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah – nor accede to UN pressure on nuclear policy without a new serious engagement with America and Europe. Iran is being linked to 9/11 by repeated claims that it is the principle source of world terrorism. It is said to be at a point of no return in the enrichment of uranium, and is being linked to attacks on US troops in Iraq. These assertions are debateable but they highlight a policy of preparing opinion for military action if diplomacy fails⁸.

The Mirage of Empire

The US is still grasping with the realisation that wars can no longer be waged effectively only by conventional combat forces employed by modern militaries. Since the start of the

policy failed since it did not anticipate the several different ways in which each of these groups would respond to the occupation and tended to lump them all under the one insurgent or terrorist rubric. In addition, the insurgency in Iraq remains robust; it has staying power and a fragmented constellation-type structure that maximises its potential for longevity. The US army has been engaged in Iraq for longer than it was in the Second World War, in the longest conflict it has fought with an all-volunteer force since the American Revolution. In February 2007 the US army Chief of Staff General Peter J. Schoomaker warned that the pace of deployments now meant that units were spending one out of every two years in Iraq⁴⁰.

Richard Holbrooke, Clinton’s former national security advisor, has alluded to the danger that these linkages are accumulating into a pattern resembling Europe’s in July-August 1914. However, a radically different conclusion can be reached that draws on such criticism of the Bush approach and raises once again the idea of a grand bargain in which mutual security



Above: Afghan Soldiers of the nation’s fledgling army. (pic courtesy of UN Pictures)

21st century, they have been dominated by irregular and unconventional ways of fighting; asymmetric warfare has now come to the fore⁹. In Iraq those forces include a complex mix of Sunni tribal militia, former regime members, foreign and domestic jihadists, Shia militias and criminal gangs. Each has different motivations and ways of fighting, so that tackling them requires specific customised strategies. This was where US

between Israel, the Palestinians and the wider Middle East region is copperfastened into an overarching regional security arrangement. The ‘arrangement’ has been used by some analysts to define an overarching deal between the West and Iran, including security, political and economic guarantees in return for its cooperation. Francis Fukuyama argues that now that the neoconservative moment seems to have

passed, the US needs to re-conceptualise its foreign policy. He contends that there needs to be a demilitarisation of what has been heretofore called the war on terror (WOT) and a shift to other policy instruments; and that 'war' is the wrong metaphor for the wider struggle.

Ultra Montane¹¹

The Iraq Study Group [ISG]¹² report published in December 2006 was perhaps one of the most eagerly awaited reports of recent times; it concluded that events as they unfurl and develop in Iraq will have a linkage with the wider Middle East, including the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and the stability or descent into the abyss for Lebanon. Therefore, high international stakes are involved, particularly for Israel in its apparent role as a proxy of US policy against Iran. The fact that the 33-day war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon was a rough draw is momentous in the longer term. It means that Israel can no longer rely solely on force of arms alone to deter attacks and preserve previous gains, which in turn has major implications not only for US policy but also for European policy. Once again, two contrasting alternatives are encompassed within the cross-hairs.

One is that another war is inevitable whereby Israel would seek to re-establish its traditional martial advantage and its capacity for unilateral action; but herein lies the potential appalling vista that this could more easily become a regional war affecting the uncertain future of authoritarian regimes in Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. There is little doubt that the continued development of the Iranian nuclear programme constitutes a serious risk to stability within the region. But the Iranian view is sometimes overlooked. The

“A military confrontation would arguably rally Iranians around an authoritarian regime, further inflame anti-US anger in the Middle East and ultimately accelerate the Iranian nuclear programme”

Above right: James Baker and Lee Hamilton, authors of the Baker-Hamilton Report.

Below: Tehran, the fulcrum of the region's unease according to the US.



stated Holocaust Denial policy of the regime is rightly abhorred and condemned internationally even though, historically, they see themselves as having been a stomping ground for successive imperial adventures throughout the 20th Century. A self-fulfilling prophecy now seems to be at play whereby the more intense the US pressure is on Iran, the more intransigent Iran's response becomes.

Equally the country is surrounded by nuclear weapons – in India, Pakistan, China, Russia and, most notably in the current debate, Israel. A military confrontation or pre-emptive strike would arguably rally Iranians around an authoritarian regime, further inflame anti-US anger in the Middle East and ultimately accelerate the Iranian nuclear programme. Additionally, the control of Tehran over both Hamas and Hezbollah is perhaps sometimes exaggerated; both organisations have their own agendas and indeed are not 'puppets' of either Tehran or Damascus.

Another approach is that whereby European officials talk of a “constructive dialogue” with Tehran that involves recognising Iran as an important regional power while maintaining the right to sanction it if it breaks the nuclear rules.

Talk to your enemies not just your friends!

The Baker-Hamilton report is seminal within American policy initiatives in that it takes a broader approach to the current Middle East crisis, in that for the first time there is an acknowledged linkage



between the conflict in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian issue¹³. The central nostrums of the neoconservative Bush doctrine would advocate the proposal that a comprehensive Middle East peace will flow from US military victory in Iraq: this will

allow the US to set terms for regime change in Iran, consequently removing the threat of Islamic subversion from Israel and the rest of the world; the logical deduction arising is that there is no point in talking to Iran or Syria directly.

The ISG's main proposals are the diametric opposite. There is a realistic acceptance that military victory is not attainable in Iraq. Baker implicitly stated that “staying the course” is not an option; he called for talks with both Syria and Iran and proposed that the remit for such talks should be broadened to include the European Union and the United Nations. Indeed it will be a huge test of the EU's slow but significant progress towards a common foreign policy to see if this can be accomplished without it being sacrificed to Blair or Chirac's desire for peacemaking kudos in the autumn of their respective political careers. The most revolutionary recommendation is that negotiations be based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 & 338, which demand, inter alia, that Israel withdraw from Arab land occupied in the 1967 war, namely the West Bank, Gaza Strip (Israel has unilaterally pulled out) and the Golan Heights. Ominously the authors of the report clearly state there is no guarantee that the ongoing bloodbath in Iraq and the threat of a wider regional conflict can necessarily be stopped¹⁴. Indeed the Baker-Hamilton report is, above all, a frightening avowal of US failure in Iraq.

A Long War?

Now that the neoconservative moment appears to have passed, the US needs to reconceptualise its foreign policy; in particular, there



Ban-Ki-Moon the UN Secretary General, charged with reinvigorating the organisation's global standing.

and role of primarily foreign, mainly US armed forces in Iraq is cited as justification for terrorist bombings, kidnappings and executions. The talk of 'winning' and 'victories' suggests a decisive result. Yet such a result is seldom encountered in counter-terrorist struggles, the Irish example being a valid case in point. As the Israeli General Ido Nehustan posited on the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in South Lebanon; "We have to recognise that we will be dealing with new definitions of victory – there will be no white flags being raised on this battlefield." The processes, some of them deeply flawed, by which terrorist campaigns end are far more complex than is suggested by the language of the "war on terror."

Francis Fukuyama

argues for the promotion of a "multi-multinational world" of overlapping and indeed occasionally competing international institutions organised on regional lines. He also cautions that the worst possible legacy from the Iraqi adventure would be an anti-neoconservative backlash that harnessed a sharp turn towards isolation with a cynical realist policy aligning the US with friendly authoritarians.²⁰ The historian Paul Schroeder has argued persuasively that the United States can legitimately and sensibly aim to exercise hegemony; but it is ill advised to lunge, on the basis of historical ignorance, into the mirage of empire. His conclusion is that America's leaders, because they are ignorant of the past, are actually stumbling backwards into it: this is why the "war on terror" risks becoming an exercise in latter day imperialism.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was National Security adviser to Jimmy Carter, has been an influential strategic theorist throughout the years on American imperialism or superpower-dom. He has argued that the

Iraq war was undertaken on false pretences and driven by imperial hubris and it has undermined US global legitimacy, especially in Europe, where years of patient effort will be required to restore US credibility. While America is undoubtedly the world's military hegemon, the country's capacity to inspire, mobilise, point in a shared direction and thus shape global realities has significantly declined. He explicitly states that "fifteen years after its coronation as global leader, America is becoming a fearful and lonely democracy in a politically antagonistic world... culminating in a 'defensive' US military action against Iran that plunges a lonely America into a spreading and deepening quagmire eventually ranging across Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan."²¹ He advocates EU and NATO enlargement to consolidate the end of the Cold War and create a new relationship with Russia, and that the US-European relationship should be complimentary rather than competitive, allowing the US to be globally preponderant, but not omnipotent, by harnessing the EU's soft power without provoking it into a dangerous strategic rivalry.

This article's central tenet has been to explore and inform on the current situation in the ME but in particular to demonstrate the linkage between the various conflicts and potential flashpoints. A recurring theme within this has been the suggestion of a "grand bargain" that will encompass all actors and interests within the region in order to achieve a sustainable peace and stability in which mutual security between Israel, the Palestinians and the wider Middle East region, including Iran, would be sought with the help of outside guarantors; this raises the question of facilitator and agency.

Wherefore Europe?

The UN obviously would be a contender; but the US-UN relationship has been particularly fraught since George Bush took over the White House and the genesis of the Iraq adventure began. It should be remembered that the Security Council split over the war; the price the US paid for this was even greater isolation in the General Assembly.

One of the key recommendations of the ISG (the Baker-Hamilton report) was for opening of a channel of communications to both the Syrians and Iranians in the hope that they could help extricate the US from the Iraqi quagmire. One school of thought

needs to be a demilitarisation of what has been called the Global War on Terror (WOT). General Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the US Armed Forces Joint Chief's of Staff, claims that what the current Bush administration is "doing with our [America's] diplomatic capabilities is criminal." By "slashing them the US government is forcing itself to solve tasks set by itself through purely military means."¹⁵

Major General Shelton, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and successor to General Shalikashvili in that appointment, also states "the military understands very well that we are the hammer in the toolkit, but not every problem is a nail. There are other instruments."¹⁶ The wars being fought in both Afghanistan and Iraq are counter-insurgency wars against an international jihadist movement; Michael Howard has stated that "we cannot be at war with an abstract noun."¹⁸

Overall the Iraq war has arguably done more harm than good to both the US and UK efforts to combat terrorism¹⁹. The presence



Architects of Chaos? US President GW Bush, former Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney.

paints a haunting spectre, that refuses to evaporate; which proposes that the US President should secure his place in history by bombing Iran's nuclear facilities. The UN itself has much to do to put its house in order. The much heralded Human Rights Council, which took over from the discredited Commission on Human Rights, is failing to live up to its initial promise. Outgoing UN Secretary Kofi Annan, now succeeded by South Korea's Ban-Ki-Moon expressed concern that there was an overemphasis on Israeli human rights failings while playing down other conflicts such as Darfur.

Perhaps even more so the soft power of Europe presents an opportunity which if channelled and focused on the region might bear fruit. Europe both historically and culturally has had more in common with the region than the US. After the 1990's debacle of the Balkans, Europe's leaders agreed to a new strategic imperative: act early; this is summed up in the European Security Strategy's talk of 'preventive engagement,' a European answer to the Bush doctrine of 'preventive war.' The contrast between the two doctrines is stark. The Bush doctrine attempts to justify action to remove a 'threat' before it has the chance of being employed against the United States – a focus on physical kinetic assets, necessarily swift in action and therefore short-term in conception. The European doctrine of pre-emption, in contrast, is predicated on a long term involvement, with the military just one strand of activity, aimed at building the political and institutional bases of stability, rather than simply removing the immediate source of threat. The difference in nuances has been clearly played out in

Iraq; in Baghdad the US counter insurgency operation mobilized the whole civilian population against the occupation, while the British approach in Basra was driven by an attempt to separate the insurgents from the local population. Europeans are better at this than Americans, because their main military experience is peace-keeping and crisis management rather than conventional warfare.

As Anthony Lieven points out, the challenge in these situations is not more firepower, but less. Mark Leonard in his book "Why Europe will run the 21st Century,"²² posits that American hegemony contains the seeds of its own destruction, and is already driving its own retreat. But Europe can only help lay out a template for a new world order, if it can work in partnership with America to create an alliance that goes beyond the two continents, enlisting new allies in a quest to solve global problems including the ME. Whatever world emerges from the Iraq tragedy will be centred around not the United States, Europe nor the United Nations, but on a community of interdependent regional clubs, as alluded to by Fukuyama's "multi-multinational world" model. We as Europeans can offer Ireland's peace process as a model for dealing with conflict, achieved only through a long and arduous negotiating process involving concessions by all sides underpinned by the knowledge that this will always be a work in progress.

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Footnotes:

1. In his work "The War of the World's: History's Age of Hatred" Niall Ferguson homes in on three essential things: economic volatility, the decline of empires, and ethnic conflict. Economic factors he suggests cause the conditions in which the politicians are more likely to choose violent and belligerent policies (as in the case of Hitler destroying Jewish businesses, or demanding 'Lebensraum'), and more able to persuade the public to support them.

2. Factionalism & sectarianism in Iraq are exemplified by Shia control of the key Ministry of the Interior. Elite

Commando units have become sectarian forces of revenge and reprisal, rather than national structures that uphold state stability. Badr organizations supporters who infiltrated the Ministry ran parallel death squads and created and operated a network of secret prisons fed by extrajudicial arrests. Muqtada al-Sadr created the largest militia in Iraq. His Magdi army has a military capability that moonlights as a political party, rather in the mould of Hezbollah.

3. The destruction and dislocation in Lebanon as a result of the Israel Hezbollah conflict that erupted in July 2006 is described by US President George W. Bush as "a moment of opportunity" and by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as "the birth pangs of a new Middle East."

4. The "Cedar Revolution" in Lebanon, women's rights in Gulf States (the appointment of a cabinet minister in Kuwait in June 2005), reforms in Egypt under President Mubarak, the February-April 2005 municipal elections in Saudi Arabia, and Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005 is all cited in support of this contention.

5. Lt. Gen David Richards, head of NATO's international security force in Afghanistan and the most senior British Commander there, quoted in the Guardian newspaper 21 July 2006.

6. Chris Patten, now Lord Patten & former EU Commissioner for External Affairs in an article in the FT (Reprinted in the Irish Times of Jan 13th 2007), argues that Blair's total identification of the British national interest with what Patten sees as the "implacable folly" of White House policy weakens moderate opposition in America to Mr. Bush. He cites in particular the crucial period of 2002 & 2003 when Blair's uncritical support for US policy 'hamstrung' those in and outside the administration like Colin Powell, who were trying to restrain the neoconservative hawks.

7. The crisis has revived the fierce policy debate in the US provoked by the publication in 2006 of a paper by the international relations scholars Prof Stephen Walt (Dean at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard), and Prof John Meirshheimer (University of Chicago) who argued that the Bush administration has endangered

US national security interests by becoming so closely and unconditionally tied in with Israeli policy. America's relationship with Israel, Walt and Mearsheimer argue, is characterised by a US willingness "to set aside its own security and that of its allies in order to advance the interests of another state": the alliance say, "Has no equal in American political history."

They further contend that the argument that the US and Israel are close allies because they share terrorist foes is false: "The US has a terrorist problem in good part," they write, "because it is so closely allied with Israel not the other way round," while "Israel's nuclear arsenal is one reason some of its neighbors want nuclear weapons." The explanation for America's "extraordinary generosity" is not that Israel is a vital strategic asset or that there is a compelling moral case to give support, but because of the "unmatched power of the Israeli lobby." Without that powerful lobby, the US would be much more even-handed between Israeli's and Palestinians, much less prone to terrorist attack and less feared throughout the world as a destabilizing power. There has been a huge furore about the paper. Its authors are accused of bias, bigotry and lying. See Harvard University website.

8. There are uncanny parallels with the rhetoric emanating from the White House that have an echo of the period before the invasion of Iraq. Then and now the Bush administration's doctrine is based on a fear that newly emerging powers will eventually threaten US hegemony and must be prevented from doing so. Iraq was presented as the first test case of this. Paul Gillespie of the Irish Times quoted Bismarck that "Preventive war is like committing suicide from fear of death." As in the case of Iraq a preventive strike against Iran may provoke the very action it is designed to prevent.

9. A combination of US spending power, great advances in military technologies, and associated developments in training and tactics led to what has been called a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). The ability of the US military to support itself in almost any theatre, to observe and understand the battlefield, to coordinate its forces, and to strike precisely at targets, has given the US forces unrivalled destructive powers on the conventional battlefield. The current mode of 21st century military intervention presupposes not only the destruction of the enemy but also the reconstruction of the affected/attacked areas or states. This model provided the framework for Western interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo, but it was largely ignored during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF, 2001) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF, 2003). OEF and OIF demonstrated that under the aegis of the Rumsfeld vision (so called 'transformational' war), new strategies and methods had been successfully been adopted by a military which for the last two decades had relied on using overwhelming force to defeat uniformed adversaries. However, in the post conflict phase the limits of the ongoing process of transformation were also evident. Lack of attention to this phase in Iraq and Afghanistan has led to paradoxical strategies, which seem to have been constructed

haphazardly. Rumsfeld's vision for change and the Bush administration as a whole have failed to pay attention to working with allies in operations which require hard assets provided by those allies, as well as the reservoir of international legitimacy attached to such support. This should be one of the core components of a doctrine that has been designed to deal with irregular challenges and uncertainty. The result of following this half way approach has been devastating and a key reason for much of the anarchy that has subsequently engulfed Iraq. The current 'surge' is an attempt to reverse this.

10. The strain on US forces is evident. The Pentagon's own Inspector General reported in late 2006 that many units had to deploy without the necessary logistics to "effectively complete their missions." The so called 10-30-30 approach has been turned upside down. This meant that US forces should be ready to deploy within 10 days, should complete their missions within 30 days and be ready to undertake a different operation within another 30 days. Tony Kinsella ("Bush's war on cheap straining army to Breaking." Irish Times 3rd March 2007), likens this: "in athletic terms, this is a sprinter's approach, but Iraq is a marathon." The implicit political compact was that Washington would build a large conscript force should the US decide to engage in a protracted war. The army has had to deal with significant equipment shortages. It has met these by stripping equipment from units based in the US – about 40 per cent of US army equipment is now in Iraq.

11. Latin "Beyond the Mountain," phrase used by the citizens of ancient Rome to try and comprehend the world beyond their city walls.

12. Also known as the Baker-Hamilton Report.

13. "I guess you heard from some people before the war commenced that the road to Arab-Israeli peace ran through Baghdad...The road to Arab-Israeli peace runs through Jerusalem." James Baker co-report author quoted at a Congressional committee in Washington on the launch of the ISG recommendations that there should be a linkage between the two conflicts. See Gillespie, Paul "Iraq report takes broader approach to ME crisis." (Irish Times 9th Dec 2006.) p.10

14. "You are going to be the proud owner of 25 million people," then Secretary of State Colin Powell told Bush, as related in Bob Woodward's book Plan of Attack. "You own all their hopes, aspirations and problems...It's (i.e. occupation), is going to suck the oxygen out of everything."

15. Priest Dana, 2003. *The Mission*, New York-London, W.W. Norton & Co. P.54

16. Ibid P. 37

17. Michael Howard is President Emeritus of the International Institute for Strategic Studies based in London. He also points out that while the current White House administration still uses the term "global war on terror," the Pentagon now talks in terms of a "long war."

18. "There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq, to the insurgency of Iraq." US Gen. David Petraeus, Ground Commander in Iraq, stating that politics, not military intervention, will bring peace to Iraq. Quoted in "This Week They Said," Irish Times (Sat March 10 2007) p.14

19. The Bush administration's own counter-terror experts and agencies have concluded that the war in Iraq has made the problem worse, not better. Two of the "key judgments" from the National Intelligence estimate, state "We also assess that the global jihadist movement – which includes al-Qaeda, affiliated and independent terrorist networks and cells – is spreading and adapting to counter-terrorist efforts," additionally "we assess that the Iraq jihad is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives...the Iraqi conflict has become the cause celebre for jihadists." (Irish Times 28th Sept 2006.)

20. Fukuyama, Francis "After the Neocons: America at the Crossroads"

21. Gillespie, Paul. "Calamity of Iraq war may push isolated US into wider conflict." Irish Times (Sat. March 10th 2007.) p.13

22. Leonard, Mark "Why Europe will run the 21st Century." Fourth Estate-Harper Collins (2005).

23. Irish diplomatic and political experience in the Northern Ireland peace process is to be applied in other trouble-spots around the world through a new Conflict Research Unit (CRU) established in the Dept. of Foreign Affairs. Liaison has taken place with Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. See De Breadun, Deaglan "New Irish unit to help in foreign conflicts." Irish Times (Sat. March 17th 2007) p.5

