

Samuel Bell – 1st Place

The selection of the World Trade Center as one of the targets for the 9/11 attacks indicates the true nature of the plot; this was not just an attack on the American people, it was an attempt to eradicate the system of economic deprivation centered at the twin towers of the World Trade Center and in effect throughout the globe. While devastated in the immediate aftermath, our thoughts were naturally led to retaliation by an all too eager administration that waged its war on terror only to find out terror is an ambiguous target that moves easily in and out of the containment of foreign borders and cannot be eliminated by military force alone. The United States must reassess its military strategy and set realistic goals in the attempt to maintain order, focus resources on repositioning itself at the forefront of information technology and information exchange, and attempt to amend the reputation it has come to have as result of both its own gross misconduct and propaganda from opposing factions and governments.

If the U.S. is to succeed in assisting to establish a system of democracy in Iraq, the objective of the military needs to be one of maintenance and not of control, claims John Davis (Davis 150). Identify

the areas with allies and help keep order in them. To pull out entirely would not only result in quite a waste of lives and resources expended by the U.S., but would also leave many Iraqi civilians helpless to the insurgency that would ensue from militant and terrorist organizations in their regions. This is already the case, according to Ali Allawi, in many Iraqi provinces where unexpected terrorist and fundamentalist parties moved in and took control when the Iraqi military forces were defeated and the appointed leaders and administrations put in place by the Democratic Alliance quickly disbanded (Allawi 47).

Although some of the tribes do support efforts to draft a national constitution, many of the leaders seem to really want theocratic rule to continue to be in power. This will sustain the current economic system and keep the disparity between classes intact (84). This disappointing reality must be accepted and certain only the areas that truly want our assistance should be helped.

Unfortunately, Iraq is only one nation and the threat of terrorism can come from anywhere. In fact, Iraq is not the main threat. British Intelligence has investigated the possibility of al-Qaeda cells in Great Britain, and will have provided \$1.2 billion on security and counterterrorism by 2010 (Gifford 2). Iran is attempting to work its way

up in the hierarchy of nuclear weaponry, as are China and North Korea (Galbraith, 2009). This type of threat, nuclear terrorism, creates the need to expand the parameters of surveillance to literally global proportions. The progressive technologies necessary to accommodate such a task will require a rejuvenation of the domestic information technology industry. Whatever systems are utilized they will no doubt need to be protected at with highly effective network security. Not only is there a need to protect U.S. information, but also a need to monitor the flow of information from other nations as well, in particular nations containing or harboring terrorist activity. Due to the lack of a central point of Internet control, other countries have progressed and leveled the playing field in the telecommunications and information industry. According to Markoff in an article for the New York Times, American companies such as Verizon, AT & T, Cogent, and AboveNet have all slipped in the Renesys rankings, a firm in New Hampshire that monitors the connections between Internet providers. Over the past three years, Tiscali from Italy, China Telecom, and Japan's KDDI have experienced the most growth. And since the passing of the Patriot Act, many countries formerly forced to utilize American information networks are choosing to bypass the U.S. and route their traffic through other nations'

systems (Markoff 1). The increasing volume of Internet traffic leaving the United States not only makes it more difficult to monitor, but is also raising concern amongst other nations that the U.S. will try to acquire such information without legal process. Such disrespect in the economic context provides justification for hostility towards the U.S. Elizabeth Becker reported in 2003 that “80% of terrorist attacks against the United States overseas in the past 30 years were aimed at American businesses...” (Becker 1). The next presidential administration must make it a priority to respectfully stimulate the telecommunication industry to remain competitive and at least keep from slipping further down the rankings and monitor international data respectfully. There is no room for trudging around cyberspace like Iraq looking for unfound weapons of mass destruction.

Economic expansion and excessive culture can be justified as simple realities in a world of finite resources and moral diversity. But justifying our military objectives and tactics is not so easy. “It seems that wherever the U.S. Military goes..., so go sexual perversion, torture, human rights-violating prison guards, and suspicious deaths.” (Hartnett 24). The despicable photographic evidence of American military prison guards committing atrocities of sexually torturous nature on Iraqi

prisoners did little to amend this reputation. It did, however, provide fuel for the propaganda of hostile Islamic factions, as did the memo by George W. Bush on February 7, 2002 in which he announced “none of the provisions of Geneva apply to our conflict with Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere in the world” (25). The words that a president speaks while addressing the public or his or her administration are vital, for they set the tone for how the rest of the world perceives our government and how many of our own citizens will shape their feelings on the issues. If our politicians seem arrogant and military conduct does not improve, then the fundamentalists will continue to feed the fires of hatred

which their followers blindly throw themselves into.

By setting realistic goals for the military in the Middle East of containment and maintenance rather than conquest and control, by maximizing the development of telecommunication technology and access to international economic data, and by taking it upon itself as well as the citizens of the United States to repair and improve their image abroad, the next administration will stand a good chance of preventing future terrorist attacks. The United States may not have the military strength and financial resources of generations past, but it still

has a great deal of influence. It needs to begin using it more beneficially.

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