

# THE LEGACY

William Hogarth

The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honour. They have been tricked into it .....

**Colonel T.E. Lawrence**

15th August 1920

Those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

*Folklore alternately quoted and neglected  
by politicians as they deem appropriate*



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AMERICAN DETERMINATION tends to be much admired in London, where Washington's heuristic approach to foreign policy is confidently expected to continue resolutely until modest British suggestions guide the State Department towards the correct way forward. Accordingly, the Foreign Office mandarins have traditionally been fairly relaxed about most of the adventures initiated by their trans-Atlantic colleagues, relying on the Prime Minister of the day, or on his Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to intervene in the nick of time to rescue from disaster the alliance and the "Special Relationship" that in theory underpins it.

Then came Mr Blair.

The traditions bolstering Foreign Office confidence included assurance that the British Prime Ministers would always be briefed by those who had experience of the problems to be solved, and the comfort that their briefings would be discussed in Cabinet by mature, sensible and intelligent men and women for whom objective judgement was second nature. This was part of the British parliamentary system of government, a system admired almost universally, a system that had once governed an empire on which the sun never set, a system that worked.

But then came Mr Blair to destroy Parliament by deconstructing its Upper House, ruthlessly whipping his huge majority to neutralise its Lower House, emasculating the influence of the professional experts in the ministries by introducing politically sympathetic advisers to filter their reports, and replacing Cabinet with the small coterie of sycophants who shared his sofa with him. Such a man, untrammelled by the restraints of parliamentary democracy, then found it easy to ignore the Foreign Office advice, to evade the historic British responsibilities for the diversion of Washington away

from disaster areas, and to support enthusiastically the catastrophic designs for the imposition of democratic systems of government on peoples for whom democracy is a concept alien to their patriarchal societies and religious traditions.

All this is now well known and understood, but in those first heady days, when western righteousness decreed that one of the world's most detested dictators should be removed, the passivity of British acceptance of American strategy was unsuspected. America needed allies in the UN debates, it was said, and by providing that support Mr Blair, it was claimed, would acquire leverage which, it was supposed, would allow London's sophistication to redirect the blundering enthusiasm emanating from Washington. "How long will it take American arms to capture Baghdad?" was the question asked in Whitehall. "Well, Prime Minister, in sufficient strength and with adequate preparation, current military doctrine, developed from the work of the Soviet and German theorists of the 'thirties, and the Blitzkrieg of the 'forties, and then our own work on the Air-Land Battle followed by AirLand2000, predicts that from the crossing of the startline to the effective control of most of Baghdad should take perhaps three weeks." Wow! The excitement!! Only three weeks!!! Move over, Napoleon: Blair's here.

"But, Prime Minister, that is only the start. We shall then have to ....." But it was too late; he was gone; he and his powerful Texan friend were to democratise the world and there was no time to be lost. Certainly, there would be no delays while stuffy old mandarins and crusty old generals chuntered on about what had happened in the past. History was "so last century" — and anyway, Mr Blair's government had abolished British history so that he could create as his legacy "New Labour in a New Britain in a New Millennium". Oh, Brave New World!

(*Et solitudinem fecerunt, pacem appelunt !*) So what is this history the mandarins and generals had carefully studied, and the politicians were to ignore? Was it relevant? Is it easy to understand (bearing always in mind the reluctance of politicians to look at detail, and their preference for “the big picture”)? Who has it and where is it kept? Can it be reduced to a single sheet of paper? Well, no, regrettably, the history cannot be reduced to a single sheet of paper, but the conclusions to be drawn from its proper study can be detailed in a single paragraph with a single message — Arabs believe they have the inalienable right to govern themselves in the undemocratic way they alone fully understand, and are best left to do so.

If Mr Blair had used his leverage to insist on that, refusing to commit the British Army until it had been clearly agreed, then the invasion would have been planned on the basis that the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Civil Service would be retained, and this decision would have been broadcast to the Iraqi nation before the land battle began. The war was against the President of Iraq, so why involve the Iraqi people? They knew the power of the Americans, their Army knew the invaders would enjoy air supremacy and had superior armoured vehicles, and their officers knew they would lose the conventional land battle as easily as they had only a few years before when their equipment was in far better condition. Against an American blitzkrieg they had no chance, but in an insurgency ..... ?

While the future that never happened (the Iraqi Army making only a symbolic gesture and the Ba’athist civil service continuing to work) is a tempting target for speculation about where the Coalition would be today (and how many lives would not have been lost, and how many dollars would have remained unspent, if the British Prime Minister had been guided by the old hands), of greater interest, and of much greater relevance to the current débâcle, is the information

that was so readily available when the Coalition’s invasion was first planned. The British had faced these problems before, during the period immediately following the Great War, when the defeat of the Turkish Army and the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire left a Mesopotamia ungovernable and riven by disputes between its tribes – and between the Sunni and Shia creeds. At that time (June 1920) the Marquess of Crewe said —

“I cannot help feeling that in undertaking the responsibility for the whole of **this vast area** we are doing too much. After all, the time is past when the people of this country will be prepared to play the fairy godmother to all undeveloped parts of the world, and to hold themselves responsible for introducing a higher standard of administration in uncivilised countries. We simply cannot afford it.”

— and there are doubtless many who would consider this view accurate today. The emphasis applied to the words “**this vast area**” is that of this writer, not of the noble lord, and those three words encapsulate the problems understood by the old hands.

On 15th August 1920 Colonel T.E. Lawrence wrote in a Sunday newspaper —

“The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honour. They have been tricked into it by a steady withholding of information ..... **Things have been far worse than we have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than the public knows** .....

— and “Lawrence of Arabia” (as he is still remembered) understood “**this vast area**” better than most politicians, then and today. Here is his thesis:

“Rebellion must have an unassailable base, something guarded not merely from attack, but from the fear of it: such a base as the Arab Revolt had in the Red Sea ports, the desert, or in the minds of men converted to its creed. It must have a sophisticated alien enemy in the form of a disciplined army of occupation too small to fulfil the doctrine of acreage, too few to adjust number to space in order to dominate the whole area effectively from fortified posts. It must have a friendly population, not actively friendly, but sympathetic to the point of not betraying rebel movements to the enemy. Rebellions can be made by 2% active in a striking force, and 98% passively sympathetic. The few active rebels must have the qualities of speed and endurance, ubiquity and independence of arteries of supply. They must have the technical equipment to destroy or paralyze the enemy’s organised communications, for irregular war is fairly Willisen’s definition of strategy “the study of communication,” in its extreme degree, of attack where the enemy is not. In 50 words: Granted mobility, security (in the form of denying targets to the enemy), time and doctrine (the idea to convert every subject to friendliness), victory will rest with the insurgents, for **the algebraical factors** are in the end decisive, and against them the perfections of means and spirit struggle quite in vain.” [emphasis added]

This succinct précis of his long pre-war study of strategy and his leadership of the Arab Revolt illustrates immediately the extent

of the gap between the generals and mandarins on the one side and the politicians on the other. “Rebellion must have an unassailable base ..... [such as] in the minds of men converted to its creed.” Ninety years on and that, together with Sun Tzu’s “unascertainable shape”, remains the crucially underestimated factor in the control of Mesopotamia the politicians ignored, the generals feared, and the Arabs understood well.

“It must have a sophisticated alien enemy in the form of a disciplined army of occupation too small to fulfil the doctrine of acreage ..... ” The Coalition forces met this condition perfectly. “It must have a friendly population ..... Rebellions can be made by 2% active in a striking force, and 98% passively sympathetic.” Passively sympathetic Sunni and constructively apathetic Shia were the best that could be hoped — democracy-loving crowds struggling to throw flowers at the invading troops figured in the dreams only of those seeking a legacy — and as the new year of 2007 dawns, substantial numbers of the Shia community are as hostile to their democratic saviours as the Sunni devotees of their “martyred” leader.

“The few active rebels must have the qualities of speed and endurance, ubiquity and independence of arteries of supply.” What measures were considered capable of countering the speed and endurance of insurgents operating within a friendly population? How effectively could the borders with Iran and Syria be sealed? To whom did the Prime Minister turn when he wanted the answers to these questions? What was planned, and indeed what is being done now, to deny the insurgents the night? Where was the essential local air reconnaissance? Where is the essential local air reconnaissance?

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every subject to friendliness), victory will rest with the insurgents, for **the algebraical factors are in the end decisive**, and against them the perfections of means and spirit struggle quite in vain.” It is worth repeating here in full, it is worth remembering, for its understanding could have protected so many lives, prevented so much misery, saved so many dollars.

And “... **the algebraical factors are in the end decisive ...**” expounds the theme which ought to have dominated the strategic planning before even the bombing campaign began to destroy the infrastructure the invaders would have to rebuild. (“If you break it you have to mend it,” one general said, but perhaps the Prime Minister did not hear him.) Lawrence spelt it out thus —

“In the Arab case **the algebraic factor** would take first account of the area to be conquered. A casual calculation indicated perhaps 140,000\* square miles. How would the Turks defend all that? No doubt by a trench line across the bottom, if the Arabs were an army attacking with banners displayed . . . but suppose they were an influence, a thing invulnerable, intangible, without front or back, just drifting about like a gas? Armies were like plants, immobile as a whole, firm-rooted, nourished through long stems to the head. The Arabs might be a vapour, blowing where they listed. It seemed that a regular soldier might be helpless without a target. He would own the ground he sat on, and what he could poke his rifle at. The next step was to estimate how many posts they would need to contain this attack in depth, sedition putting up her head in every unoccupied one of these 140,000 square miles. They would have need of a fortified post every four square miles, and a post could not be

\* Iraq today has 168,000sq.m. – the area of England and Wales is 35% of that.

less than 20 men. The Turks would need 600,000 [more] men to meet the combined ill wills of all the local Arab



people. They had 100,000 men available. It seemed that the assets in this sphere were with the Arabs, and climate, railways, deserts, technical weapons could also be attached to their interests. The Turk was stupid and would believe that rebellion was absolute, like war, and deal with it on the analogy of absolute warfare.”

To what degree the politicians who launched the Coalition forces into Iraq may now be seen as Lawrence’s Turks is largely subjective, for not all believe the British Prime Minister to be stupid, but nevertheless the question which was not asked before the invasion must now be asked and answered. What sort of war can be prosecuted successfully against this sort of insurrection? It is certainly not the “Shock and Awe” of the predictably successful blitzkrieg that preceded it. History stated that quite clearly, and the generals consequently foresaw it as indisputable. The blitzkrieg battles had identifiable *points* to attack; the counter-insurgency campaign has “**a vast area**” to cover. In contrast, now it is the insurgency which has the identifiable *points* to attack (and also the vulnerable lines of communication), and the insurgents have **a vast area** into which they easily escape and conceal themselves. **So what is to be done to counter the insurgents’ area advantage?**

The principal feature of true desert is not the sand, the heat, or the thirst: it is the space, the silence, the emptiness. To soldiers it is **area**; it gives tactical freedom, as do the sea and the air to sailors and airmen. The benefits of **area** were exploited by the SAS in World War II as easily as by Lawrence’s Arabs in the earlier war, and as easily as by Iraq’s insurgents now. To counter the exploitation today in Iraq the Coalition needs large numbers, even larger than the numbers refused by the politicians when the invasion was planned, its aftermath ignored. The Coalition needs also extensive air cover

operational **at all times**. Unfortunately, large numbers of soldiers and large numbers of aircraft require large numbers of dollars, leading to ill-advised politicians blindly cutting key resources to make a bad situation worse, and yet the availability of the right type of aircraft at exactly the right time is a force multiplier that saves both lives and money. The British suffer from a Chancellor who cannot understand this (and reserves, also, he fails to understand).

Some good aircraft are flying in Iraq today, but they are not the most cost-effective aircraft for the work they are asked to do, and because they are expensive there are far too few of them. Moreover, many are exhausted. The average age of the USAF aircraft is close to 25 years according to recent reports, and stress limits are being modified to keep them flying. In the RAF the situation on aircraft serviceability is even worse (in truth, disastrous), owed in part to the additional problems created by MoD procurement policies reducing the availability of spare parts. What is needed, and needed quickly, are new aircraft in large numbers. What are these to be?

“**Quantity has a quality all of its own**,” Stalin is claimed to have decreed, which may mean he was aware of Lanchester’s work and respected it, but British military procurement decisions during this last half-century have demonstrated a political belief that small numbers are beautiful, exchanging Lanchester for the hugely expensive multi-rôle systems armaments our profitable factories prefer to supply. The RAF thus acquired an inventory of extremely clever aircraft that could do almost anything — anything, that is, except to be in ten different places at the same time, and anything, that is, for which the necessary components were left in place and not stripped out (as was the Eurofighter’s gun) to save a very small proportion of the money already spent designing, developing, manufacturing and installing those components.

The extremely clever aircraft flown by the Coalition forces in Iraq are often wasteful choices for the prevailing insurgency warfare. An *Apache* is not the best weapon to take out a suicide bomber; a *Harrier* is not the most efficient detector of roadside bombs; an *A-10* is not economic air cover for a reconnaissance patrol. These three aircraft and many more can all perform splendidly in other counter-insurgency (COIN) battles, but in Iraq, where their use at high density can no longer be afforded financially, much of their work should be allocated to dedicated close-air-support (CAS) aircraft designed for scenarios more relevant to Iraq.

The need is for high numbers, low acquisition cost and low operating cost. Inexpensive UAVs are required as platforms for missiles and for cameras; gunships such as the *DC3/C-47* powered with turboprop engines must be available for serious firefights; CAS could be provided by redesigned *Spitfires*, *Mustangs*, *Typhoons* very cheaply (even the *Harvard/Texan* could do a great job in Iraq); and a simple optionally-piloted vehicle (OPV) operated at company level must be deployed to ensure every convoy passing through the wire has organic air cover. The first three ideas are discussed continually wherever pilots and soldiers meet, are continually passed up the line, and then become bogged in, and eventually killed by, the need to goldplate the platform and to Christmas-tree its accessories to delude the politicians into believing they are getting their money's worth. The fourth proposal is every patrol leader's dream, yet no one can explain why it remains unfulfilled when the numbers of troops killed on the roads (in Afghanistan, too) mount steadily.

Twenty years ago such an aircraft was designed specifically for the present scenario in Iraq and Afghanistan. It could be flown by one or two soldiers, or remotely from the ground or water or another aircraft. It could carry up to four anti-tank missiles or a gyro-

stabilised platform carrying a video/infra-red twin camera installation. It could take off from a simple rope deck mounted on the top of almost any military wheeled or tracked vehicle, from a road or from a hundred yards of reasonably flat land, and it could land anywhere that allowed a thirty-yard ground run. After six months' testing by the Aircraft & Armament Experimental Establishment of the MoD, which examined also the feasibility of teaching soldiers to fly it, the very favourable official report included these comments —

1. For visual reconnaissance the aircraft could hardly be equalled.
2. Flight using Night Vision Goggles [NVG] demonstrated that night operations could be conducted without difficulty.
3. [With reference to a mine detection trial] Whilst the exact location of the mines was not always obvious it was possible to note the effects on the immediate surface caused by both human and vehicular activity. Whilst visual reconnaissance for such munitions was less successful with exactly half being plotted from the air, suitable sensors should make this form of survey both quick and efficient.

This aircraft was designed to be flown by an infantryman with 15 hours' experience and a fair degree of intelligence. The basic model at 2005 prices would have been US\$ 45,000 at which price the spares package was included, and for one F-16 with spares and maintenance perhaps US\$ 45,000,000 would secure a similar deal. In the Iraq scenario, the “vast area”, a patrol leader would far prefer to have under his control one of the thousand simple platforms

bought for the cost of one F-16 than have the faint possibility of seeing a fly-by from a single multi-rôle supersonic miracle. So why doesn't he have one? The MoD's report ended —

The type demonstrated convincingly that in its current form it would be capable of conducting a wide variety of missions at a fraction of the cost associated with other air vehicles in the spectrum from parachutes through helicopters to remotely piloted vehicles. At the heart of these capabilities was its *outstanding aptitude as a detailed reconnaissance platform both by day and by night*, its near immediate availability and its complete autonomy once provided with fuel. Furthermore, the type promises considerable potential *at an unmatched degree of economy* for improvement in the future where the constraints imposed by Civil Regulations could be relaxed for military, operational purposes.

[the italics are of this author]

Experience of the Iraq insurgency to date (together with preliminary analysis of reports from Afghanistan) confirms the need for very large numbers of a CAS aircraft to be issued to companies for use down to platoon level, and as the MoD report confirmed the practicality of the submitted design there appears to be no reason why such platforms should not be issued for the continued operations in Iraq (five more years?) and, as the same decisive algebraical factors apply in Helmand Province, in Afghanistan (ten more years?).

The urgent need for more aircraft in Iraq is so obvious that the British Prime Minister was recently forced to promise them even though he knew they would not be delivered. For the Americans the need is just as serious. Unfortunately, as the insurgency, principally

the child of the initial invasion planning committee, was unforeseen, the money necessary for the continuation of operations is unbudgetted and has to be siphoned from other projects. For a full programme to produce exactly what is necessary for effective and continuously available CAS, the British government's MoD will require the Chancellor to raid other ministries, but in the United States sufficient funds could be produced from a delay in the JSF programme. However, of course, the financial problem is one for the politicians. The battlefield problem is for the generals to solve, even when they did not create it, and their solution calls for more aviation assets (and, in the British situation, for the unarmoured vehicles to be replaced immediately by the best available, not in a few months from now by the second-best which the European Union bureaucrats, militarily unqualified and inexperienced, insist should be bought, and at a higher price too.) It is an **area** problem. The politicians did not appreciate its ramifications at the start of the invasion planning — now they must, and they must allow the soldiers all the resources they need to minimise the effects of the catastrophe the politicians have created.

This informal and unstructured survey has outlined in brief the fundamental problem, **the area problem**, underlying the difficulties created for the Coalition forces by the politicians who ignored both history and the experience of the military experts. It calls for immediate action for improved CAS.

This survey has mentioned also the legacy of the British Prime Minister. It is this. His influence over the conflict in Iraq has conclusively demonstrated to the British electorate the folly of allowing politicians with no military knowledge or experience to declare war, and of allowing prime ministers to evade democratic control by castrating the power of Parliament.



## POSTSCRIPT

Readers of the first draft of this paper have urged that it include a comment on the nature of the Arab peoples to whom the Coalition governments wished to bring democracy, suggesting a lack of understanding of them may have contributed to the disastrous policies adopted by the invasion's planners. Certainly, the perspective from Washington, and indeed from the Prime Minister's offices in Downing Street, does appear to differ significantly from that of the old Arab hands and will doubtless continue to prompt speculation as to the extent this discrepancy defines the fundamental cause of the current problems.

To many in the West the Arabs are "the ragheads"; the name itself, as in "street arab", is perceived as pejorative. The Arab race in general is considered inferior and since the first Gulf War quite definitely militarily inferior. Iraq was thus a suitable stage for a demonstration of western blitzkrieg, an ability to remove dictators, and the power to impose democracy on "lesser breeds without the law". It was to be a salutary warning to other Arab countries that any dereliction in their duty to suppress terrorism could bring not only dire punishment but also a change of government, and it might help to spread the new religion of democracy (despite democracy's incompatibility with Islam).

The Arabs have a different perspective. For many the fact that they are Muslims gives them superiority over Christians, nominal or practising; their currently inadequate weaponry is an accident that will, *d.v.*, be reversed; that part of their history they choose to remember gives them great pride; and their patriarchal system of government is natural, traditional and based on reverence for an aristocracy that is itself based on Islam. The Hashimite dynasty still

reigning in Jordan, and reigning in Iraq until King Faisal II was assassinated in 1958, is descended from the Prophet Muhammad himself (Faisal, an anglophile old Harrovian and an Honorary Air Vice Marshal in the Royal Air Force, being 43rd in descent). The crushing victory of the Coalition forces over Saddam Hussein's regiments is not seen by any as the sort of disgrace that requires surrender, and what the analysts describe correctly as insurrection is for most of the Iraqi people, whether or not they participate in it, a natural and traditional way of fighting a war.

David George Hogarth, Lawrence's mentor and Chief of the Arab Bureau during the Great War, having noted "the unquestioning and frank acceptance of one race as born to power, which was conceded to the Arab from Persia to Spain" in past centuries, continued with perceptions of striking relevance to the terrorist threat today —

"It is not only that Arabs were installed and treated as God's noblemen, but that all sorts and conditions of men from other races Arabised themselves in name and speech. History tell us that, in fact, Ahmad the Tulun was a Turk and that Saladin was a Kurd; but except to the credit of the Turkish or the Kurdish blood neither fact matters at all. What does matter is that the Tulunids and Eyubids wished and ultimately believed themselves (as their remote descendants still believe) to be Arabs. Though some of the earlier leaders ..... were conspicuously able men, the mass of those Arab aristocrats of the world do not strike us as superior persons. They were imposed on society by a combination of influences – by the prestige of **a whirlwind of conquests which made fighting men wish to be Arabs**, as Napoleon's deeds once made many wish to be Frenchmen; by **the Arabs'**

valuation of themselves as a Chosen People, and perhaps, most of all, by that desire for a national link with an exclusive God which has made earlier men deify their Kings and later men live and die for a principle of Legitimacy, however ignobly personified by the contemporary claimant of divine right.” [emphasis added]

Despite this pride in the Arab nation, the duration of the Arab Empire was notably short if it is to be defined as the period during which Arab ruled Arab. Turks, Iranians, Circassians, Egyptians, Berbers and Kurds created a cosmopolitan Caliphate whose centre moved from Mecca to Damascus to Baghdad, but the brevity of the purely Arab Empire owed less to this mixture of races than to the innate inability of the Arabs themselves to develop an imperial government any more competent than in the simple patriarchal form. Inevitably the Turks conquered, and just as inevitably ruled for four centuries, and those four centuries of subjection stunted the flowering of Arab culture. The defeat of the Turks in the Great War returned to them their potential, now enhanced by the economic benefits of rich oilfields, but the basic weakness remained – the Arabs of Mesopotamia, today Iraq, can govern themselves in their traditional manner, but they need help to create the administrative machinery of government.

After the Great War the Hashimite Faisal was given the Iraqi throne while the country was rebuilt under a British administration controlled from India and supported by a large force of *very unpopular Indian troops*, a force described by the Rt Hon<sup>ble</sup> William Ormsby-Gore M.P. (later the 4th Baron Harlech, K.G.), the Minister responsible in London, as “*the main cause of the political difficulties in that country today.*” His policy accepted the “moral duty to create an Arab civilisation and an Arab state” in Mesopotamia, and he

insisted that for this one action was essential: Anglo-Indian ideals of efficient administration must be abandoned and the inhabitants left to their own devices ..... [italics added]

“then we shall see once more springing up from the soil of Mesopotamia a civilisation that will attract all the best elements in Arabia, and we shall once more bring forward that civilisation which Baghdad possessed before the Turks came there and which made it a centre of culture, wealth and political development to a degree which was remarkable in the history of even Eastern countries.”

In identifying areas of British experience in Iraq, formerly Mesopotamia, that appear to have been ignored during the Coalition’s planning of the invasion and its aftermath, it was not the intention merely to condemn but rather, of more importance, to indicate both what might be done now to ameliorate the situation and to point the way forward. Additionally, this postscript, by adding emphasis to the quotation from David George Hogarth, suggests a serious and significant relationship between the irresistible moral attraction of Arab imperialism at the height of its success and the moral attraction of religious terrorism today. This, surely, is worth detailed examination, for until the motivation of young, healthy, educated, comparatively wealthy, successful and cheerful suicide bombers is understood by the West, religious terrorism will not be defeated.

Ormsby-Gore’s optimism might have been well-founded, but the brutal regicide and the bestial mutilation of the King’s ministers on which the Iraqi republic was founded aborted the dreams. They will not be reborn until Sunni-Shia enmity is muted, but this is most unlikely while it remains a key factor in the Iranian game plan.



Regrettably then, Arabia's future appears to be again in the hands of a non-Arab Muslim country, one governed by ambitious men who believe it to have the destiny, and soon the weaponry, to reestablish the ancient Persian Empire from the Mediterranean to the Indus.

Paradoxically, the threat of the development of Iranian-Israeli tension to a limited strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, and then of escalation to the use of small nuclear weapons, will offer a rare opportunity for Kuwait, the Gulf States, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Turkey and Israel to identify a common cause that only the threat of nuclear war could force them to recognise. If this threat persuades the governments of these countries to form a secular Regional Stability Alliance (RSA), discreetly supported by the United States and the United Kingdom, Iraq's Sunni dissidents should be more inclined to cooperate with the government in Baghdad, and Iran might find reasons to resist the temptation offered by the Iraqi Shias as a route to conquest. The RSA as an umbrella would allow its members to cooperate in the suppression of terrorism within its own extended frontiers and, more relevant to the themes of



this paper, as an umbrella it would allow a dignified withdrawal of Coalition forces from Iraq while encouraging the creation and successful operation in Baghdad of its traditional form of government uncontaminated by the western democracy the invasion planners had intended to impose. Intelligent liberation of Arab pride based on the memories of Baghdad's history as a great cultural centre, and fostered by moderate Muslim leaders based intellectually in Mecca, would offer for those in Iraq whose passions are currently drawn towards the extremism of militant Islam an alternative future focused on their Arab identity. It could be attractive to those living in Iran who venerate their Arab roots, as also to the many non-Persian groups whose political influence in Iran has yet to coalesce around a single issue that would give them leverage, and when these less belligerent forces are drawn towards a new bipolar Arabic-Islamism centered on a Baghdad-Mecca axis, the echoes of the Teheran rants heard throughout the Muslim world will appear less persuasive, less enticing.

Such a Regional Stability Alliance would be a great legacy.