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## ALEXANDER'S ESSAY

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### WARFIGHTING 101

“A universal peace ... is in the catalogue of events, which will never exist but in the imaginations of visionary philosophers, or in the breasts of benevolent enthusiasts.”  
--James Madison

I spent much of the last week participating in a national security forum organized by the Air War College and hosted by the Twelfth Air Force and the 355th Fighter Wing at Davis-Monthan AFB.

Discussing the challenges of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and the surge for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan with command personnel makes for lively debate, but the best part of these forums is incidental -- the opportunity to meet many enlisted airmen and those flying the planes they make ready.

I have been on military bases across the nation, and without fail I am most impressed by the young uniformed Patriots who are the foundation of our military might. Simply put, their dedication, talent and spirit are second to none.

In a nation where most young people are devoted, first and foremost, to themselves, our young airmen, sailors, soldiers, coast guardsmen and Marines serve a much higher calling, true to their oaths to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic...” If only their civilian political leaders were true to the same.

Among other operations around the world, these young people, and those in their chain of command, have made enormous progress toward establishing a functional democracy in the heart of the Middle East, Iraq. And despite what Vice President Joe Biden may believe, this remarkable achievement is *theirs*, not his.

After launching military operations against Iraq in 2003, our enemies were greatly emboldened by traitors on the Left and their Leftmedia minions, especially those running cover stories such as Newsweek's “We're losing...” proclamation.

In a debate some years ago with a professor from MIT who had written many policy papers on why we should not have prosecuted OIF, I asked him how many papers he had written on the consequences had we not prosecuted OIF. That query returned a classic “deer in the headlights” gaze.

My point, of course, was that it's easy to criticize anything past or under way. Hindsight can be 20/20, but military battle plans rarely withstand the first shots fired, which is to say that you start where your boots are, and fight on from there.

All those Leftist talking points notwithstanding, Iraq is now well on the way to restoring its once great Mesopotamian heritage.

To the east of Iraq, on the far side of another Islamic trouble spot, Iran, our military forces now face a daunting task in Afghanistan, a very different battlefield.

I was in the region shortly after the Soviets retreated in 1989, and I can tell you that this vast, desolate moonscape offers little more than a meager subsistence for even the most seasoned tribal people.

Consequently, Afghanistan has two -- and only two -- exports: heroin and terrorism, and not necessarily in that order.

Since we first launched strikes in Afghanistan shortly after 9/11, our objective has been to kill or capture al-Qa'ida terrorists and dislodge their Taliban hosts. That mission was, and remains, quite different from our mission in Iraq, which is a mix of war-fighting, peacekeeping and nation building.

Most recently, U.S. and Afghan warriors, supported by other allies, launched Operation Moshtarak (a Dari word meaning “together”) in the center of Afghanistan's southern Helmand province and the town of Marjah.

There is very little chance that a functioning democracy, or much else, can be established in Afghanistan. The internal regional conflicts, with or without the Taliban mixing things up, preclude such establishment.

Our objective is to prevent the Taliban from occupying uncontrolled regions there long enough for us to support and build up the Afghan military to a sustainable level. Once this is accomplished, the Afghan military will endeavor to rid the countryside of Taliban extremists, and keep them out, even if it invites eradication efforts across the southeastern border with Pakistan. (Pakistan is much more concerned with its neighbor, India, than its border with Afghanistan.)

Why prosecute the Taliban?

Because their presence in Afghanistan serves as a launch pad for jihadi attacks around the world.

On 10 September 2001, after eight years of Clinton administration national security malfeasance, and eight months of the newly installed Bush administration's efforts to reorder national security priorities, most Americans were unaware that a deadly enemy had set up shop on our turf.

On 11 September, that enemy attacked us, leaving a hole in a Pennsylvania field and collapsing not only our World Trade Center towers and one fifth of the Pentagon, but also the U.S. economy, which was its ultimate objective. That attack was organized by Sheik Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network, al-Qa'ida, from Taliban-occupied territory in Afghanistan.

Al-Qa'ida was, and remains, part of an increasingly unified and asymmetric Islamist terror network supported by nation states including Iran, Syria and extremist factions in Saudi Arabia, and previously by Iraq.

Unlike symmetric threats emanating from clearly defined nation states such as Russia and China -- those with unambiguous political, economic and geographical interests -- asymmetric enemies defy nation-state status, thus presenting new and daunting national-security challenges for the executive branch and U.S. military planners.

The strategy to-date in Afghanistan has been somewhat modeled after our strategy in Iraq. The operational blueprint has been "shape, clear, hold and build": Shape the conditions to secure population centers; clear insurgents; hold the region so that insurgents can't regain tactical advantage; and build, which includes the provision of humanitarian and reconstruction efforts until such control can be transferred to national authorities.

However, as noted, there remain serious questions about whether any such national authority can be established in Afghanistan, or if the best we can hope for is the development of a military authority, heavily underwritten by the U.S. and NATO, and sufficient to contain the Taliban and its terrorist campaigns against the West.

Afghanistan remains an ideal breeding ground for the active cadres of "Jihadistan," a borderless nation of Islamic extremists comprising al-Qa'ida and other Muslim terrorist groups around the world.

A borderless nation, indeed. The "Islamic World" of the Quran recognizes no political borders. Though orthodox Muslims (those who subscribe to the teachings of the "pre-Medina" Quran) do not support acts of terrorism or mass murder, large, well-funded sects within the Islamic world subscribe to the "post-Mecca" Quran and Hadiths (Mohammed's teachings). It is this latter group which calls for jihad, or "holy war," against all "the enemies of God."

For the record, these "enemies," or infidels, are all non-Muslims.

Are you a non-Muslim?

Jihadists, then, are characterized by the toxic Wahhabism of Osama bin Laden and his heretical ilk -- those who would remake the Muslim world in their own image of hatred, intolerance, death and destruction. In the words of bin Laden himself: "We love death. The U.S. loves life. That is the big difference between us."

Does Barack Hussein Obama get the message?

Given his penchant for appeasement and for ill-advised withdrawal timelines from Iraq and Afghanistan, one would think not.

Moreover, the Obama administration's newly released quadrennial outline for national and homeland defense makes no mention of "Islam," "Islamic" or "Islamist," preferring instead to reference "violent extremism."

Obama's "Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism," John Brennan (a.k.a. "Terrorist Czar"), has deflected criticism of the quadrennial reports, and of Obama's re-warming of the Clinton model for treating terrorists as "criminals" rather than "enemy combatants."

“Politics should never get in the way of national security,” says Brennan, who insists that Obama’s detractors are “misrepresenting the facts to score political points, instead of coming together to keep us safe.” The thin-skinned Brennan has also charged that “politically motivated criticism and unfounded fear-mongering only serve the goals of al-Qa’ida.”

Obama’s foreign policy is driven by nothing if not politics, and this includes his Afghanistan strategy. It’s a strategy necessitated by his phony bravado during the 2008 presidential campaign -- a strategy with the ultimate aim of an easy political out.

Carnegie Endowment policy analyst Robert Kagan observes, “The new doctrine that seems to enjoy enormous cachet among the smart foreign policy set is: Fight wars until they get hard, then quit.”

I prefer John Stuart Mill’s assessment: “War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things: the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks

that nothing is worth a war, is much worse. ... A man who has nothing which he is willing to fight for, nothing which he cares more about than he does about his personal safety, is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.”

Semper Vigilo, Fortis, Paratus et Fidelis!

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Veritas vos Liberabit -- Semper Vigilo, Fortis, Paratus, et Fidelis! Mark Alexander, Publisher, for *The Patriot Post*’s editors and staff. Read online at <http://patriotpost.us>

(Please pray for our Armed Forces standing in harm’s way around the world, and for their families -- especially families of those fallen Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, who granted their lives in defense of American liberty.)