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US-Russian Relations After Iraq

Report of a CNAC-ISKRAN Mini-Seminar, 3 October 2003

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Introduction

The CNA Corporation and the Institute for USA and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ISKRAN) met on Friday, October 3, 2003, for a mini-seminar on the changed strategic situation following the U.S. conquest and occupation of Iraq.

The Russian group was headed by Dr. Sergei Rogov, Director of ISKRAN, and included Colonel General Victor Esin (Retired; former Chief of Staff of Soviet/Russian Strategic Rocket Forces), Major General Pavel Zolotarev (Retired; also formerly of Strategic Rocket Forces), Dr. Mikhail Nosov, First Deputy Director of ISKRAN, and Dr. Irina Modnikova, Scientific Secretary of ISKRAN. CNA representation included the President of CNAC Robert Murray, Eugene Cobble, Hank Gaffney, Dmitry Gorenburg, Jim Wylie, and Peter Swartz. The non-CNA participants were Bill Hoehn of RANSAC, Capt. Bob Brannon, USN, of the National War College (former U.S. Naval Attaché in Moscow), Arnold Horelick from the Aspen Institute, Hal Sonnenfeldt from the Brookings Institution, George Fedoroff from the Department of the Navy, and Ed Pusey from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (former U.S. Army Attaché in Moscow).

Opening Remarks by Dr. Gaffney

Hank Gaffney began the discussion by setting forth the picture from the American side of the changes in the strategic situation implied by Operation Iraqi Freedom. He noted that, while Iraq meant a huge change in the strategic environment, the "strategic picture" is not the whole global picture:

- Life continues much as it has around the world;
- The economy of the advanced countries (U.S., Europe, Japan) "hangs in the balance" between recession and recovery, but this is probably not affected by the situation in Iraq;
- The greatest economic growth in the world happens to be in China, Russia, and India, and is happening because they are opening up their connections to the global economy.
- At the end of the Cold War, the United States was concerned about four principal rogues—Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea—and maybe two lesser rogues (Syria and Cuba). OIF eliminated one of them – Iraq -- and probably cowed their neighbors, Iran and Syria;

- Inter-state conflict, at least among large states, is down. The only state-on-state dyad that causes the U.S. serious concern today is India-Pakistan;
- The world is otherwise largely quiet, notably in Asia and Europe, and even much of the Middle East. That said, North Korea continues to be a concern, as does Iran, given that both appear to be on the brink of attaining nuclear capability.

Other problem-areas include:

- The failure so far of U.S. attempts to the solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem in accordance with the Roadmap;
- Afghanistan's disintegration;
- And especially Al Qaeda's persistence and ubiquity: we don't know where they will strike next.

Indeed, regarding this last point, Gaffney went on to note that the threat of terrorism is the defining feature of the Bush Administration's foreign policy, and more importantly, its rationale for regime change in Iraq—a rationale that we now know to be false. Nonetheless, the American preoccupation with Arab/Islamic terrorism is such that an outsider might wrongly conclude that Al Qaeda ruled the world. The "global war on terrorism" is the United States' main strategic driver now and will be for the indeterminate future.

While the motivation for launching the war in Iraq might be debatable, the campaign itself marks the continuation—and for the time-being, an increase—of the United States' entrenchment in the Middle East, and particularly in the Gulf region. As the Cold War matured and became "regulated"—a feature that Dr. Nosov described as the imposition of "discipline"—the United States coincidentally became more involved in the region, particularly after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and consequent oil shocks on Western economies. Over time, U.S. cooperation deepened with the Saudis, the Jordanians, the Iranians, and after Camp David in 1979, the Egyptians. The U.S. looked particularly toward the Shah of Iran to preserve regional order. His fall and the Islamic revolution in Iran led the United States to involve itself directly in the region's defense (the Carter Doctrine).

While American engagement in the Levant and the Gulf evolved and expanded over the years, its only combat engagements were in Lebanon in the early 1980s and in the Gulf in the late 1980s with the re-flagging and escorting of Kuwaiti oil tankers during the Iran-Iraq War. As a twist in Cold War politics, the United States only agreed to the re-flagging after the Soviets had made a legitimate offer to do the same. Then, with the 1990-1991 Gulf War, the U.S. became truly entwined in the Gulf and remained so throughout the remainder of the decade

thanks to the continuing containment and compellence operations against the Iraqis. These were defined by the patrolling of the no-fly-zones trisecting Iraq, the maritime interdiction operations in the Gulf, and occasional bomb and missile strikes in Iraq.

The U.S. has now become bogged down in Iraq. On the plus side, a threat to the region has been ended and one of the three serious rogues of the Axis of Evil has been removed.

(A full text of Dr. Gaffney's remarks is attached.)

Opening Remarks by Dr. Rogov

Dr. Rogov welcomed Gaffney's use of the term "strategic" in the latter's opening remarks. Rogov noted that one feature of the Cold War was to equate the word "strategic" with military hardware, and consequently, he found Gaffney's emphasis on the political to be "interesting."

Dr. Rogov began his presentation noting that the final outcome of the American operation is far from certain. He asserted that six months ago, the Bush Administration stood upon the threshold of consolidating the United States' position as the single global superpower with the prospect of a quick victory over the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad. Today, this is no longer a possibility. To be sure, the United States achieved a decisive military victory against the Iraqis. Nonetheless, a *political victory* is not imminent, and more significantly, it is not inevitable. Indeed, Dr. Rogov stressed his uncertainty as to whether the administration even possessed a positive scenario for political victory in Iraq. He contended that one could draw parallels between the Russian experience in Chechnya and the current Iraqi morass. Furthermore, much like the former situation, he felt that some Americans were becoming willing to embrace a Russian—or rather, "Lebed-esque"—solution to their particular problem of an incomplete conquest: declare victory and leave. Such a solution, if embraced, would be troubling to Moscow. Rogov claimed that, whereas he once worried about American moves toward hegemony, he now fears the vacuum that would emerge should the United States simply pack up and abandon its new "responsibilities" in its occupation of Iraq.

Dr. Rogov thought that the war in Iraq was the product of the unchecked ideology of the Bush Administration. The failure so far to see some light at the end of the tunnel in Iraq has left many Americans doubtful of Bush's ability to juggle both foreign and domestic policy. With the U.S. economy enduring a jobless recovery and the federal budget deficit increasing, the absence of a

comprehensive win in Iraq may have imperiled Bush's reelection prospects. Dr. Rogov regarded Bush's chances of victory in 2004 as, at best, 50-50.

Dr. Rogov also noted that he and his fellow Russians had their own sources of discomfort with Bush Administration's policies, notably America's activity and that of its Western Allies in Russia's Near Abroad. He noted that many Russians objected to NATO assuming the role of de facto defender of Russia's "southern border against Islam" by its insertion in Afghanistan (notwithstanding that it is only protecting Kabul). Rogov also questioned why the United States would support NATO moving into Central Asia, but rely instead on the UN for assistance with the North Korea problem.

Despite this tension and other sources of tension, Dr. Rogov believed that the Bush-Putin relationship would survive Afghanistan and Iraq. He noted that many of his countrymen thought that, following 9/11, this partnership would be ephemeral like that shared by Clinton and Yeltsin. Whereas the Clinton-Yeltsin relationship collapsed with their disagreements over Kosovo, the ties between Bush and Putin have endured partly because of their shared interests in coping with terrorism and proliferation, albeit with notable differences on appropriate tactics and solutions. Moreover, the two leaders each have a personal stake in preserving their partnership in the near term and ensuring that it "looks good" in the popular imagination, at least through their respective elections in 2004.

While U.S.-Russia ties have endured the shocks pulsing through the international system since the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, Dr. Rogov said that one should not mistake them as strong. Indeed, the U.S.-Russian partnership is inherently fragile:

- First, the tenor of the relationship is largely dependent upon the personal chemistry of the two leaders.
- Second, the partnership lacks an economic foundation, since trade between the two states remains meager.
- Third, there is also the lack of a legal basis to the relationship as no mutual security treaty has been created.
- Fourth, the practice and mindset of mutual assured destruction remain active in the two state defense establishments.

This said, Dr. Rogov said that one cannot deny that relations between the two governments have improved considerably. "The glass is at least half full," but much work is needed to fill it more and thus create a "real partnership." For example, while the national leaderships may be sincere in their desire for better ties, their respective state bureaucracies remain mired in old-think. Neither bureaucracy believes that their leadership truly wants to improve relations, and

consequently, both are moving as slowly as possible to implement the partnership. This is unsurprising given the poisonous legacy of five decades of inter-state competition and the paucity of positive experiences with cooperation.

Discussion

Dr. Gaffney noted that while he presented his "strategic equation" to the group, he hadn't mentioned Russia, or U.S.-Russian relations. That is, the U.S. is so preoccupied with Iraq right now that it may neglect other relationships. It is worth mentioning, however, that the U.S., Russia, China, South Korea, and Japan have created some new and constructive relationships while working together on the problem of North Korea.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt remarked that Dr. Rogov's current position differs from his earlier stance in that he was once openly critical of Putin's unwilling to extract some side-payments from the United States for Russia's support of the global war on terror, namely the use of air corridors through Russian air space for operations in Afghanistan, and Russia support of U.S. bases in Central Asia, countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union.

Dr. Rogov argued that he had been misinterpreted: the global war on terror had been valuable to Russia in that the United States had weakened—but not annihilated—Russia's Islamist enemies along its southern frontier. He regarded this as a good thing, but lamented that there were no other benefits. Further, as he noted earlier, many other Russians did not share his positive assessment of U.S./NATO activity there and instead regarded it as hostile encirclement of their country.

Dr. Gorenburg commented that Dr. Rogov may have been too generous in his assessment of the U.S.-Russia partnership. He noted that:

- The military and economic cooperation between the two states is insignificant.
- The recurring presidential summits have been remarkably substance-free.
- The relationship, as it now stands, rests largely on political pleasantries—just words, or "blah, blah"—and as such, there is no apparent "real basis for a strategic partnership."

Consequently, where does this leave us? He also asked if Russia shares the U.S. embrace of the concept of "liberal imperialism."

Dr. Rogov noted that while many people in both countries regarded the U.S.-Russian relationship as little more than a game, it is not. It is unquestionably

tangible because of the unique cooperation between the two countries on the issue of Islamic Terror. Moreover, the cooperation that exists in the counter-proliferation area is even more substantial, though it is cursed with a lack of results. So U.S.-Russia cooperation is real, but it is unbalanced and uneven. He noted that given Russia's domestic situation—the country is still in the "early stages" of democratization and the transition to a market economy—there is no realistic possibility of quickly attaining a "deep partnership."

On the issue of "liberal imperialism," Dr. Rogov said that Russian "liberals" would certainly like to mimic their American counterparts in both domestic and foreign policy. Their perceived peers, however, are not the American left, but rather Reagan-esque conservatives. Russian "liberals" are, in fact, illiberal and have questionable democratic pedigrees. They look to the U.S. right-wing for inspiration. Fortunately, they are constrained, at least in the area of foreign policy, by Russia's economic condition. They can't copy American "liberal imperialism," because unlike the United States, Russia does not possess a power projection capability and will not have such a capability for some time. They are engaged in little more than wishful thinking.

Dr. Nosov argued that, to understand the impact of OIF, one must first discern the U.S. rationale for launching the war. He could identify six drivers:

- An American demonstration of its military might, "to show who is the master of the world."
- An expression of U.S. arrogance—a self-image of American as "the cathedral on the hill" that would be a model of democracy to the world, and, when necessary, impose democracy on the unconverted.
- The manifestation of American uneasiness and the desire for greater security following 9/11.
- Ensuring access to oil.
- (And, Dr. Gaffney interpolated, making the world safe for Israel.)

Arguments that Operation Iraqi Freedom was a blow against terrorism are hollow: the campaign didn't stop terrorism, but rather it fanned it. The incubators of terrorism still exist, and Muslims hate the United States more now than before the campaign.

The United States will find that its goal for imposing democracy on the Iraqis will be extremely difficult to achieve. The socio-political, economic, and cultural situations in Iraq are not amenable to democratization. Furthermore, in such a country, it would be impossible to advance democracy using democratic methods (a nice paradox).

Dr. Nosov contended that the Russian experience in Chechnya didn't provide a good point of comparison with Iraq because Chechnya was a purely domestic affair as Chechnya is a part of the Russian Federation. That said, both situations required strategic solutions that addressed the causes of terrorism and not just the application of military force.

Dr. Horelick said that Dr. Rogov was wrong to imply that the U.S. did not have an optimistic scenario for an Iraqi end-state. It did have one: the creation of a democratic polity that would be a model for other Arab societies. The existence of a liberal and functioning Iraq would compel moderate Arab governments to hasten their reforms and would scare the radical regimes toward better behavior. It would also advance the peace process with Israel.

Unfortunately, given the messiness of the situation on the ground in Iraq, the Bush Administration has become fixated on shorter-term scenarios, such as the faster restoration of Iraqi autonomy than might be wise as a means of deepening international support.

He noted that Dr. Rogov is indeed more optimistic than most Russians on U.S.-Russian relations. He agreed that there was a gap between the views of the two presidents and those of their state bureaucracies on this issue. He disagreed with Dr. Rogov's contention that the leaders were eager to allow inertia to carry the partnership forward until after their respective elections. He asked how either man could be truly constrained by electoral systems.

Dr. Rogov noted that the presidents could at the very least sign a treaty and give the relationship a legal foundation. They could order their respective militaries to end mutual assured destruction-thinking and to embrace strategic reduction treaties. They could also force their militaries to stop conducting exercises that imply hostile intent toward one another. These things have not been done. Similarly, the presidents could do more on counter-proliferation and even "close the Iran chapter" by bribing MINATOM to get it out of Tehran. They could also embrace ballistic missile defense cooperation and work with China to lock down North Korea. All of these things are possible, but they are not done.

He contended that the United States suffered from an "arrogance of power." Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, like many in the administration and the rest of the Republican Party, are ideologically driven and were winning the policy arguments until the last few months when the situation in Iraq began to go bad. The once beleaguered *realpolitik* faction within the government is only now ascending because of the ideologists' failure in Iraq.

He said that a good argument could be made for the United States to launch a strategic partnership with Russia as it could use Moscow to help contain Islamic terror and North Korea.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt noted that Russia and China alone could correct North Korea.

Dr. Gaffney said that U.S. cooperation with the other four countries on the North Korea issue is a new and probably fruitful expression of multilateralism. It points out how cooperation on a concrete problem builds new relationships.

Dr. Fedoroff asked if deficiencies in Russian domestic institutions hampered Moscow's ability to pursue its external relationships. He also asked who the opinion formers in Russia were.

General Esin remarked that domestic stabilization in Russia has been achieved. Nonetheless, Russian institutions don't always work very effectively. Compounding this issue has been the nature of the U.S.-Russian interaction:

- Summits only focus on intentions, which are slowly implemented, if at all.
- When institutional mechanisms exist to advance some defined end-state, progress is limited because the leadership rarely sets time-lines and intermediate goals.

For example, the Strategic Reduction Treaty deadline for a 2,200 warhead cap is 2012. There has never been guidance on how to move toward that goal. Moreover, no steps have been taken to push cooperation in this area, such as an exchange of military delegates. A one-year look-ahead program has become inactive due to a lack of interest.

Dr. Nosov said that the U.S.-Russian partnership lacked a roadmap—there was "no beef"—for further cooperation. He asserted that significant, top-level pressure is required to pressure the state bureaucracies in both countries to behave better.

General Esin commented on the question of Russian public opinion. He said that the ideational legacies of the Cold War are "alive and well." 30- to 40-percent of all Russians still regard the United States as an enemy. Regrettably most opinion formers in Russia also fall into this group. These anti-Americanists regard the frequent leadership summits as opportunities for the leaders to play "politics for themselves." [Editors' comment: We think he meant that the encounters suited their own political ends back home, but were short on substantive cooperative actions.]

He expressed dismay at the recent statement from the Russian General Staff accusing NATO of having an offensive military capability against Russia. He said

that this was simply incomprehensible, as there should be harmonization between the NATO states and Russia.

Dr. Rogov noted that the national psychology of Russians is unquestionably in a poor state. That said, both the Russian and American publics are misinformed and apathetic. Their detachment gives the bureaucracies in each countries a free hand to do what they want regarding U.S.-Russian cooperation—in other words, to do nothing.

Dr. Pusey remarked about a shift he perceived in Rogov's answer to the poverty of U.S.-Russia relations. Whereas Dr. Rogov once emphasized what Washington must do to embrace Moscow, he had more recently advocated a more balanced position suggesting that both sides had work to do in order to improve their ties.

Dr. Pusey also stressed that one should not dismiss the progress that has been made in advancing U.S.-Russian cooperation. The platitudes and leadership summits may not offer hard results, but they still represent progress in the relations between the two countries. As there are no major reversals in this "partnership"—"as long as nothing bad happens"—then people on both sides may one day no longer presume hostile intent between them, and more importantly, they may even acknowledge common interests. For now, we must endure an evolutionary shift in thought and action, and not attempt to force the issue. Indeed, resistance to deepening ties is simply a function of unchallenged prejudice, but can also be rational in some situations. For example, military establishments are loathe to undermine their own corporate interests. Disarmament agreements that threaten force structures will not easily find favor in such bureaucracies. He asserted that another 10 to 15 years should be sufficient to allow common interests to compel cooperation and override such obstacles.

Mr. Murray agreed with Dr. Rogov's contention that neither Bush or Putin wanted the relationship to worsen, but also neither has made improving their ties a priority, thus to push to fix the gaps. Only hands-on leadership from the top will force the state bureaucracies into action. For now, conversation is the easy side of the relationship. Prioritization and execution are the hard side of it.

He foresaw no improvement in ties in the next year, despite the growing pragmatism within the Bush Administration. He also agreed with Dr. Rogov that the administration would be wise not to cut-and-run from Iraq, but instead stay the course in order to establish some form of representative government there.

Dr. Modnikova noted that Bush's domestic position has weakened and he needs a foreign policy win to bolster his sagging political fortunes. She asserted that advancing U.S.-Russia cooperation in Iraq might offer such a success. If this is to

be done, the Russians must receive some tangible benefit from the partnership, notably the safeguarding of Saddam-era Russian economic contracts in the country. Also, Moscow would insist that UN authorities manage the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty.

Dr. Gaffney said that The United States does not expect any significant international financial support for Iraq reconstruction. Further, those countries with competent military forces, i.e., the Rich North, don't have the forces to employ in Iraq. One issue that has yet to be determined is how third countries can win contracts in the reconstruction process.

Dr. Nosov remarked that Russia should be given preferential consideration for contracts in Iraq because this would show American seriousness on the question of internationalizing the occupation.

Dr. Hoehn noted that one enduring component of the U.S.-Russia relationship has been the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Programs. Unfortunately, these programs have met with increased resistance and apathy of late, partly on the Russian side over U.S. access to Russian facilities. Neither side, however, has any strong political commitment to remedy this situation. He asked whether the bureaucracy in Russia could be forced to embrace a fix and whether the Russian leadership continued to value the programs.

General Esin stated firmly that Moscow was "objectively interested" in the programs, having allocated $2 billion to them (against the $10 billion invested by the United States and the $8 billion by third countries in the G-8 following a recent G-8 summit). He argued that the absence of clear state responsibilities was the main stumbling block in the CTR program. At no time has the Russian government discussed the implementation of the program. This lack of push at the leadership level has meant that there has been no hammer to force good behavior at the grassroots.

He also noted that the general absence of will has also meant that nothing significant has been implemented in the Strategic Reduction Treaty (SORTS) in the 18 months since the treaty was enacted. Nonetheless, there has been some progress regarding chemical weapons, though considerably less with other weapon types.

Dr. Nosov thought that some additional progress may be possible following the 2004 elections.

Mr. Wylie noted the somewhat depressing tone of the conversation to this point and asked if anything could be done to advance the U.S.-Russia naval relationship in the near-term (prior to 2005), in light of the earlier assertions that U.S.-Russian relations would be stalled until after both the U.S. and Russian

presidential elections. In the meantime, he feared that near-term changes in NATO, including adding candidate countries and interest in forward basing arrangements by the U.S. unified command-----targeting those countries-----could provoke even more misunderstandings and make closing the partnership "gap" only more difficult. There could be a perception of conflict between Alliance assurances or guarantees offered Russia which cleared the way for adding former bloc countries and the OSD/Rumsfeld-driven strategy for security cooperation and transformation. The transformation of the U.S. European Command in particular seems to be a factor which could be misinterpreted. Therefore, couldn't something be done in 2004 in terms of military-to military and other defense sorts of exchanges to keep momentum going? He noted that proposed and ongoing changes in NATO may only increase Russian misperceptions.

Dr. Nosov noted that good channels of communications existed between the two Navies. In particular, the series of Track II seminars that CNAC and ISKRAN had conducted for many years, including visits to the respective naval bases and commanders in each country, had advanced relations and should be continued.

Mr. Murray asserted that both sides must be willing to move beyond dialogue and change their behavior if substantial change is to happen. The least that can be done at present is try to increase the level of dialogue.

Dr. Nosov remarked that meetings and discussions such as this one were steps in that direction and had done much to erode the "Cold War mentality" within the admittedly small defense analysis communities in the two countries. The main achievement in the CNA-ISKRAN relationship, for example, was that participants had reached a comfort-level where they could exchange self-criticism.

Dr. Fedoroff agreed with these comments, noting that "some dialogue was better than no dialogue," and without meetings such as those held between CNAC and ISKRAN, there would be practically no dialogues.

Notes by Eugene Cobble, as edited by H. H. Gaffney and Dmitry Gorenburg

Appendix: The global strategic picture after the U.S. conquest and occupation of Iraq

H. H. Gaffney, The CNA Corporation

Remarks at a mini-seminar with Dr. Sergey Rogov and his group from the Institute for USA and Canada Affairs, Russian Academy of Sciences

Introduction

There is no question that what the U.S. has done in Iraq represents a huge change in the strategic picture of the world.

But the "strategic picture" is not the whole global picture. It is only a subset.

- Life goes on as usual in much of the world.
- The world economy has hardly been affected by the U.S. action. Oil still flows, though the flow of oil from Iraq was temporarily disrupted and now must be reconstituted despite the decrepitude of Iraqi facilities, looting, lack of power, and sabotage. This current situation contradicts some of the fears that oil prices would drop precipitously once UN sanctions on Iraq were lifted—a possibility that might have posed severe economic difficulties for Russia, at least. Iraqi oil had continued to flow during Saddam's rule despite UN sanctions.
- The American, European, and Japanese economies have been stagnant, on the edge of recession, but also on the edge of regrowth. The turnabout is as yet unclear, but depends little on Iraq. (The long-term budget deficit and the current accounts imbalances that the U.S. is accumulating have not yet had effects on the growth situation.)
- The greatest economic growth in the world is in Russia, China, and India—as they join the global economy. Their growth depends on the global connections and is measured in external economic terms. It is also not affected by Iraq.
- Africa remains in awful shape.
- Whether the failure in Cancun of the global trade talks turns out to be a real setback to the global economy and global economic growth remains to be seen—working these deals takes years, with setbacks along the way.

The strategic picture as a subset concerns conflicts—conflicts that could disrupt economies and relations among countries. Conflicts are mostly about people killing people.

- Confrontations among big states have practically vanished. Europe is very secure, especially now that conflicts in the former Yugoslavia are under control. Russia and the U.S. are no longer enemies. We worry a lot about the confrontations between India and Pakistan (and the possibility of Pakistan being a failed state), but the two countries have had ways of working things out. There is the special case of Taiwan, which China sees as solely an internal matter, but the U.S. doesn't.
- After the Cold War ended, the U.S. had been mostly concerned with the upsetting of international order by the four (or possibly six) rogues.
  - — The four—Libya, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—have tended (in varying degrees per country) to threaten their neighbors, support terrorism, and aspire to acquire weapons of mass destruction and the missiles with which to deliver them.
  - — Now Iraq has been removed from that set, which is the largest strategic effect of the U.S. action. Libya—Qaddafi—seems to be behaving better these days; one can never trust him, but Libya altogether is a rather weak country.
  - — That leaves Iran and North Korea. The immediate problem with both of these countries is their nuclear weapons programs and the longer-term strategically destabilizing effects those programs may have. Iran's missiles come from North Korea, and may benefit from some technical help from Russians (not necessarily the Russian government). Let us remember, though, that nuclear weapons are basically unusable—Iran and North Korea are trying to establish some kind of new deterrence for themselves. Whether it would make either country more aggressive is not clear.
  - — (Syria and Cuba were the other candidates as rogues, but have tended to be neutralized and helpless. Milosevic was a rogue of his own kind, but has been removed from office and Serbia.)
- Other state-on-state confrontations are few and minor—Ethiopia-Eritrea was the last we have worried about.
- Internal conflicts are at about a constant or declining level, though some continue to be of great intensity (e.g. Colombia, Congo).

That takes us to Al Qaeda, to the global terrorist threat.

- It has driven the Bush Administration foreign policy almost entirely since 9/11. (Before that, the Bush Administration seemed to be focusing mostly on abrogating international agreements, including the ABM Treaty—from which they could legally withdraw—and building missile defense. There had also been talk, at least in the U.S. Defense Department, of an East Asia strategy, with China as "strategic competitor."
- Sometimes you would think that al Qaeda ruled the world, drove everything happening in the world, and threatened to bring down the global economy—which almost seemed like a possibility after 9/11 and its disruptions of international air traffic. In any case, al Qaeda seemed to be able to move all over the world with ease—the most ubiquitous terror group we've known.
- The threat of al Qaeda terror was made even greater by their interest in Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), coupled with the presumption of easier availability of WMD after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fear that rogue states would provide them to al Qaeda.
- The terror threat—claims that Saddam had somehow been connected to 9/11—and the possibility of Saddam's transferring the WMD the U.S. still believed he had to terrorists were the most constant rationales offered by the Bush Administration for the attack on Iraq and ensuing regime change.
- But there was no connection. I had predicted that al Qaeda would be just as worrisome after Saddam fell as before. This has proved to be true, but with the twist that some al Qaeda terrorists are flowing into Iraq, not out of it.
- In any case, the global war on terror continues and has become the major strategic driver for U.S. military involvement in the world. The U.S. found it had lost the buffer of the two oceans, from behind which it had been able to reach out to the world at its own discretion.
- It helps in the global war on terror that the U.S. has removed Saddam from the scene. Once Iraq has been stabilized and is self-governing in the new mode (democracy and free market), and assuming the Iran, North Korea, and Taiwan situations do not require military action, the U.S. can turn fully to the war on al Qaeda.

The strategic importance of the Middle East, and especially the Gulf, for the U.S. had grown for the last 30 years

The most significant element of the course of strategic history is that, as the Cold War was regularized, wound down, and finally disappeared, the Middle East and the Gulf coincidentally grew in importance at the same time.

- This trend started with the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 (which also coincidentally happened after the U.S. had withdrawn its forces from Vietnam).
- Upon the 1973 war, the Arabs embargoed oil and the prices shot up. This had a huge effect on the economies of the Western world. The U.S. realized it had to repair relations with the Arab countries, so it undertook pretty large military sales programs with Saudi Arabia and Jordan.
- Especially important was the huge military sales program to the Shah of Iran. The Shah was to be the protector of the Gulf against Soviet attack—and a Persian/Shia counterbalance to the Sunni Arabs, thus to distract them from their confrontation with Israel.
- When Sadat went to Jerusalem and when later the Camp David peace accord between Egypt and Israel was concluded, the U.S. also got in deep with Egypt. The U.S. replaced the Soviet Union as the prime military supplier to Egypt. Better relations with Egypt also had the long-term benefit of relatively assured passage for U.S. warships through the Suez Canal.

An even more decisive event happened at about the same time, in 1979, when the Shah fell and an increasingly hostile bunch of revolutionary clerics took over Iran. There was also another rise in oil prices as a result, with consequent effects on the world economy. Strategically, the U.S. had to take on the defense of the Gulf against the Soviet Union itself—the so-called Carter Doctrine.

- I'm sure that the Soviets must have found this fantastic. I'm not sure that the Soviet Union had any such aspirations, though military establishments always tend to cook up plans for this kind of thing. People in the West used to talk about the Russian/Soviet search for a warm-water port for their navy, but, in our discussions with former Soviet naval officers after the end of the Cold War, we found that they wanted a warm-water port in order to stay warm. That's why they so regretted the loss of the Black Sea to Ukraine. They would have to retire in Severomorsk instead. In any case, the divisions in the North Caucasus and Transcaucasus Military Districts weren't very good.

- Moreover, later in 1979, the Soviet Union got bogged down in Afghanistan—though even then some Americans were saying that the Soviets had moved in there for geostrategic reasons, to be closer to the Gulf.
- Nonetheless, the responsibility for the Gulf and the fear of Soviet attack there drove U.S. strategic scenarios. The U.S. set up the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), which later became CENTCOM.
- Saddam invaded Iran in October 1980, and the U.S. deployed forces to the Gulf and to Saudi Arabia to contain the war. Later on, in 1987-88, the U.S. decided to escort reflagged Kuwaiti tankers. It is amusing that the U.S. made its final decision to do so in some panic that the legitimate offer of the Soviet Union to do the escorting might be accepted instead. This was a twist on the usual Cold War confrontation.
- After the fall of the Shah, the U.S. started to deploy aircraft carriers into the Indian Ocean more regularly. But we still didn't sail them into the Gulf.

The next big strategic change came with Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Saddam had been lulled by both the U.S. and the Soviet Union playing up to him during his war with Iran. But by 1990, the Berlin Wall had been opened and the Soviet Union had given up its Eastern European satellites. It was a different Soviet Union under Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. I don't think Saddam ever recognized that, lulled as he was by Primakov, who actually reappeared in Iraq one last time in 2002.

- Just a year before 1990, the U.S. had shifted its plan for the defense of the Gulf off the possibility of a Soviet invasion onto the possibility of an Iraqi invasion.
- With Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the U.S. was firmly ensconced as the defender of the Gulf. U.S. forces were stationed there (and in Turkey) rather than the U.S. just helping other countries to defend themselves. We finally operated carriers in the Gulf on a continuous basis, as part of maintaining the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. We also maintained Northern Watch over northern Iraq, out of Turkey. These two no-fly zone operations forced the U.S. Air Force to devise an expeditionary rotation scheme for their squadrons. The U.S. also conducted strikes on Iraq from time to time.

But the business with Saddam was unfinished. The U.S. was not convinced that he had purged his WMD programs. 9/11 gave the Bush Administration the excuse to "finish the business" with Saddam.

The current strategic center for the U.S.

Now the U.S. has truly removed a big threat to Iraq's neighbors and has dealt the final blow to Saddam's WMD aspirations. We have also saved the Iraqi people from one of the most awful dictators the world has seen. We haven't found any WMD as such (just paper and one vial of botulinium).

In the Middle East and Gulf, the U.S. victory and its continuing presence must have certainly cowed Syria and Iran, as well as reassuring Israel. Syria has been warned, but the U.S. does not have relations with Iran. Iran continues to develop nuclear weapons and probably is even more resolute in doing so after witnessing the success of U.S. conventional forces against Iraq.

With the end of the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Iraq, the U.S. was able to pull its operating forces out of Saudi Arabia. Although our military training mission remains there, one of Osama bin Laden's big reasons for his aggression against the U.S. and Americans has been removed, though that is not the reason we removed the operating forces. The Saudis have been attacked, too, and are cracking down on terror cells in their country. Whether they do it well and break the system of charity-giving that tends to finance terrorists remain to be seen.

But the U.S. is also bogged down in Iraq, with 16 of 33 active Army brigades maintaining security there. It also has responsibility for security in Afghanistan. This would make it hard for U.S. forces to carry out the Bush Administration's preemption strategy elsewhere.

While the conquest of Iraq permitted the U.S. and the other three countries to finally propose the Road Map for Middle East peace and an independent Palestine, the Middle East peace effort seems also to have bogged down. Sharon may have only been encouraged in his initiatives.

The great strategic dream of the U.S. to bring democracy to the Arab countries is not something that is automatically occurring, and it is not clear how it will.

And in the rest of the world...

In addition to the Gulf being quiet now, militarily, Europe is quiet and East Asia is quiet—although there may be a real shift of al Qaeda attacks toward Southeast Asia, except for:

- Al Qaeda still threatening around the world.
- Those damned nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea. These situations are being handled right now by diplomatic means, with cooperation among the U.S., Russia, the IAEA, and other countries. In fact, the five countries that are negotiating with North Korea (to the extent North Korea can be negotiated with)—China, Russia, South Korea, Japan, and the U.S.—have formed a de facto coalition and may be getting used to dialoguing with one another. It had been hard to imagine Japan and China at the table together (except for economic meetings like APEC).
- And Afghanistan may be disintegrating again.

Altogether, the change of regime in Iraq means that profound strategic change has taken place. The U.S. is even examining the posture of its forces overseas to see whether they might be based elsewhere, or even brought back to the U.S.

One footnote for the Russians: We can only be delighted that Generals Achalov and Maltsev went to Iraq to advise Saddam. Before the U.S. preempts somewhere else, maybe we can arrange for the two generals to visit the target country first so that they can screw up the local defenses as they did in Iraq.