

Breeding Terror

The intelligence community analyzes a counterproductive war.

By James Bamford

"MARCO CONTACTED ME already. It's going to be difficult." On his small, hand-held computer, the arms dealer was being deliberately cryptic in his message to a business associate. Marco, his buyer, was possibly a terrorist interested in acquiring nuclear technology.

"Too many eyes on me," he warned. "But the Yanks are doing us a favor. Their military threats got my client's attention. He can't wait now for things to happen. The more talk of military action, the better, I say. And I have other buyers who are interested. Let's say more shady types.... [T]hey really got the superpower on the run. Even when it isn't WMD, they think it is."

Decrypted, the message reads: America's paranoia over terrorism is driving an increasingly belligerent foreign policy around the world that, in the end, is creating ever more terrorists. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the only winners are the terrorists and the arms dealers.

The troubling computer message was not the product of an intercept by the National Security Agency or a wiretap by the FBI. Instead, it was invented by the CIA as an example of what might happen over the next decade and a half if internal fear and external force continue to dominate American policies at home and abroad.

The scenario, labeled "Cycle of Fear," was one of four hypothesized in the recently released report, "Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project." The

119-page document was produced by the National Intelligence Council (NIC), the intelligence community's think tank. Every five years, the organization interviews a thousand or more outside experts from around the world and takes a close look at global trends and how they might develop over the upcoming 15 years. The open and unclassified process is in stark contrast to the methods used to produce the NIC's most famous recent document, the top secret October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on the threat posed by Iraq. "We believe," warned that study, "that Iraq has intensified its efforts in recent years to develop technologies that could support a nuclear weapons program." It then cited reports about "the existence of secret nuclear projects at Tuwaitha and elsewhere." It also raised the alarm about chemical weapons and drones loaded with biological agents ready to

decline in power, China and India's strength will increase, and there will be "pervasive insecurity." "Weak governments, lagging economies, religious extremism, and youth bulges will align to create a perfect storm for internal conflict in certain regions," according to the report. It adds, "At their most extreme, internal conflicts can result in failing or failed states, with expanses of territory and populations devoid of effective governmental control. Such territories can become sanctuaries for transnational terrorists (such as al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan) or for criminals and drug cartels (such as in Colombia)." On a positive note, while regional conflicts will likely increase, "the likelihood of great power conflict escalating into total war in the next 15 years is lower than at any time in the past century, unlike during previous centuries when local conflicts sparked world wars."

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attack the east coast of the United States. All of these warnings turned out to be completely false. It demonstrates what happens when the NIC seeks to tell the White House what it wants to hear.

By contrast, the results of "Mapping the Global Future" are definitely not what this White House would like to hear. The landscape the report paints is one in which the United States will

As the report suggests in its "Cycle of Fear" scenario, the Bush administration's military actions in the Middle East, especially its invasion of Iraq, have provided terrorists with "a training ground, a recruitment ground, the opportunity for enhancing technical skills," according to David B. Low, the NIC officer responsible for transnational threats. Forced out of Afghanistan, "professionalized" terrorists

have now turned Iraq into their new boot camp. NIC Chairman Robert L. Hutchings, the former assistant dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, summed up the problem: “At the moment [Iraq] is a magnet for international terrorist activity.”

Worse, many of these newly minted terrorists will eventually disperse back to their home countries or other locations and spread their skills like a contagious infection. According to the report, “The al-Qa’ida membership that was distinguished by having trained in Afghanistan will gradually dissipate, to be replaced in part by the dispersion of the experienced survivors of the conflict in Iraq We expect that by 2020 al-Qa’ida will have been superseded by similarly inspired but more diffuse Islamic extremist groups, all of which will oppose the spread of many aspects of globalization into traditional Islamic societies.” Over the next decade and a

Around the world, the United States continues to decline in prestige. At home it is constantly losing financial strength as the Treasury pays out more than \$2 billion a week to fund the wars in Iraq and on terrorism, adding to a nearly half a trillion dollar budget deficit and digging the U.S. trade deficit ever deeper—now past \$3 trillion, in large part as a result of the constant inward flow of Chinese-made products. Sitting quietly on the side, China and India patiently watch and wait. In the Washington of 2020, these two economic powerhouses “will be the most challenging of all” says the report. And in the area of technological advances, the United States “may lose its edge” to Asia in some areas. The report warns, “US preoccupation with the war on terrorism is largely irrelevant to the security concerns of most Asians.” Rather than focus on Middle East conflicts, the report says U.S. policymakers must “offer Asian states an appealing vision of

economic Forum to a former US Federal Reserve chairman on the eve of the annual Davos meeting in 2020.” As the letter makes clear, it is Asia that the world now admires. “At the turn of the century,” says the fictional letter, “we equated globalization with Americanization. America was the model. Now globalization has more of an Asian face and, to be frank, America is no longer quite the engine it used to be. Instead the markets are now oriented eastwards.”

Despite the significance of the NIC’s findings, it is unlikely that the report ever fell under the president’s gaze. During his State of the Union address, George W. Bush never made a single mention of China. Rather, the speech was chockablock with how the U.S. should impose democracy throughout the world—a perfect recruiting pitch for terrorists around the globe. As the report notes, throughout Asia “present and future leaders are agnostic on the issue of democracy and are more interested in developing what they perceive to be the most effective model of governance.”

The Bush administration’s twin obsessions—a war in the Middle East and a war against terrorism—are hardly the “model of governance” sought by nations as they progress toward 2020. As the NIC report makes clear, they only cause more terrorism and bring on economic ruin as well. If the administration is determined to wage an expensive war, it would be far more useful to disengage from the Middle East and focus on an enemy that affects the entire planet, such as AIDS or cancer or heart disease. ■

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half, the NIC predicts, while the terrorists will continue to express a strong interest in acquiring chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons, “terrorist attacks will continue to primarily employ conventional weapons, incorporating new twists and constantly adapting to counterterrorist efforts. Terrorists probably will be most original not in the technologies or weapons they use but rather in their operational concepts—i.e., the scope, design, or support arrangements for attacks.” Thus, according to the best analysis of the CIA and the rest of the intelligence community, the Bush administration’s much ballyhooed War on Terror will be worse 15 years from now than it is today.

regional security and order that will rival and perhaps exceed that offered by China.” If it doesn’t, “US disengagement from what matters to US Asian allies would increase the likelihood that they will climb on Beijing’s bandwagon and allow China to create its own regional security that excludes the United States.” Beijing will likely turn to the European Union, instead of the United States, as “a model of global and regional governance.”

The NIC again makes use of a hypothetical scenario—this one called “Davos World”—to illustrate. But instead of furtive e-mails between arms dealers, this situation involves “a hypothetical letter from the head of the World Eco-

Bush's Napoleon Complex

What the French experience in Spain could teach us about Iraq

By Gregory Cochran

NO TWO WARS are ever the same any more than you can step on the same banana peel twice. That said, Napoleon's invasion and occupation of Spain, from 1808 to 1814—the war that gave us the word “guerrilla” and was immortalized in Goya's “Third of May,” the war that drained France's army, smashed Napoleon's reputation for invincibility, and left Spain thrashing like a broken-backed snake for decades—has striking similarities to our invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Both wars started under the influence of similar delusions. Napoleon thought that the Spanish would roll over and play dead as so many other European states had; he thought marching to Madrid and placing his brother Joseph on the throne would complete the subjugation of Spain. We pretty much thought the same: crushing Saddam's army would be easy; we would then install a pro-American government (Ahmad the Thief) and have most of our Army home by fall.

The invasions went well, as expected, but in each case a tiresome guerrilla war broke out. The French eventually lost over a quarter of a million men in “the Spanish ulcer,” as Napoleon called it, while Iraq has tied down half of the Army and is costing us more than \$75 billion a year. What went wrong? As it turns out, Boney and Bush made some of the same mistakes.

Despite his tremendous organizational skills, Napoleon never managed to establish authority in Spain. He smashed the Bourbon state without ever

being able to replace it with his own. We've done the same in Iraq. We have been much more systematic about it, sacking the Iraqi army and banning most of the top layer of Ba'athist civil servants from government employment. The French made their mistakes rather casually: “Who wouldn't want to have my big brother as king?” Napoleon seems to have thought. On the other hand, our administration seems to have tried to fail, going out of its way to alienate and radicalize the entire Iraqi ruling class.

Like the French, we've managed not to have much of a side in Iraq: few Iraqis seem eager to wage war in our interest. Some of them are against us, while for the most part the others just watch as if it's not their fight. We hear a lot about how Iraqi National Guard units need more training. The true problem is that they're short on motivation. The insurgents manage to fight without years of professional training. The French too had some Spanish troops, who usually deserted at the first opportunity. They didn't make up fantasies about a training deficiency to explain it.

Both Spain and Iraq had notoriously inefficient armies, and that must have made the idea of invasion seem more plausible. The Spanish were certainly weaker and easier to beat (in conventional battles) than the Prussians or Austrians, while the Iraqis—some of the worst soldiers the world has ever seen—have been known to surrender to a film crew in an unarmed helicopter back in 1991. Compared to them, the

Italians of World War II were unkillable demons of battle.

The odd thing is that the same qualities that make an army fight well—strong central control, discipline, and a grassroots inclination to co-operate and obey orders—also allow it to surrender completely, rather like a CEO and his dominatrix. According to historian John Tone in *The Fatal Knot*, the French in Napoleon's time found the “Germans and Austrians, conditioned by militarism and centralization, unable or unwilling to act without the permission of their superiors.” We've seen it too, more recently: the Germans fought all too well in World War II but once defeated were quiet as mice under Allied occupation. The Japanese went further in that direction: willing, even eager, to die for the Emperor, more fanatical than any other army in history, they were utterly peaceful after surrender. Of course, Donald Rumsfeld seems to think that those post-World War II occupations were plagued by guerrilla resistance—but then, he also thinks that Iraq is a lot like colonial America: you know, prosperous, bourgeois, literate, British, Protestant, used to self-government and rule of law. Most likely he's from some other dimension. If only we could get him to say his name backwards.

The general disorganization in Spain and Iraq seems paradoxical. The Bourbons were autocratic by the standards of the day, while Saddam's Iraq was a