



Why We Fight

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In the *Christian Science Monitor* this week, Lt. Col. Chris Brady argues that America should “keep fighting for progress” in Iraq where he is currently serving a tour of duty. “America's forefathers had help from other nations when the United States was born,” he writes. “Allow us to continue to help Iraq be re-born.”

I admire Brady and thank him for his service. But I disagree with him on a crucial point: His life and those of other brave Americans in uniform are too precious to risk for such an altruistic goal. If U.S. troops are to keep fighting in Iraq, the primary reason must not be to further the Iraqi national interest -- it must be to further the American national interest. Nothing else will do.

Brady does note as well that “regional security may hang in the balance if we don't stay and help” Iraqis repair their broken country. But even that would not justify continuing to send Americans into harm's way – if it were possible to decouple security in the Middle East from America's security. In fact, that is not possible as I suspect Brady knows.

For almost 30 years, the Middle East has seethed with movements dedicated to a clearly articulated goal: “Death to America!” With rare exceptions, elected leaders in Washington have responded fecklessly. Their excuse: However hostile the intentions of these self-proclaimed enemies of the U.S., they haven't the capabilities to deliver more than glancing blows.

After the devastating attacks carried out on American soil six years ago this month, Americans began to recognize that those who hate us are diligently and creatively developing the means necessary to achieve the ends they seek.

Saddam Hussein was the weakest of America's Middle Eastern enemies. Perhaps to camouflage that he made it appear --to all the world's major intelligence agencies -- that he retained dangerous stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Toppling Saddam turned out to be a relatively easy mission to accomplish. But the Bush Administration's strategic planning for what would come next was obviously -- and sorely -- deficient.

The U.S. is now being challenged militarily in Iraq by both al-Qaeda and Iran. Does anyone really believe it is not in the U.S. interest to win these battles? Does anyone honestly think it would not be a significant defeat for the U.S. to be driven from Iraq by al-Qaeda suicide car-bombers and militias armed, trained and directed by Iran?

A year ago, al-Qaeda was beating America in Iraq. Now, with Gen. David Petraeus implementing a new strategy, al-Qaeda is on the run. But even as Osama bin Laden's troops have lost ground, Iran has surged men and increasingly advanced weapons across the border. American military spokesmen now say the Iranian-supported militias are responsible for many if not most of the attacks that kill or wound American troops.

At the same time, Tehran continues its program to develop nuclear weapons. And it is intent on extending its regional domination. With assistance from Syria, its client state, and Hezbollah, its proxy terrorist organization, Iran is undermining the government of Lebanon. The list of Lebanese politicians who have been assassinated for daring to stand up for their nation's independence has been growing.

The United Nations can't bring itself to take any serious action. On the contrary, the organization this week welcomed Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, blithely ignoring his regime's crimes in Iraq and Lebanon, its domestic oppression, and its genocidal threats against Israel, a fellow U.N. member.

A few Congressmen -- from both parties -- are responding. Senators Joseph Lieberman and Jon Kyl have offered an amendment calling on the U.S. to "combat, contain and stop" Iranian aggression in Iraq. It also would designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization, providing a way to economically pressure Iran's elites.

And the House this week approved the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act. Authored by Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos and ranking member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the legislation aims to strengthen U.S. tools to cut off funds to Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Toward the end of his op-ed, Lt. Col. Brady writes that he sees "first-

hand the human face of longing for a better life. That is all the Iraqis I interact with want: peace, security, and a future for their children." We should hope Iraqis achieve these goals. But let's stay focused on

America's vital interest: to crush al-Qaeda in Iraq and to thwart the grand ambitions of the aggressive, malevolent, Islamist regime ruling Iran.

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