

Maliki, say that a small force of American soldiers working in non-combat roles—would have provided a crucial stabilizing factor that is now missing from Iraq. Sami al-Askari, a Maliki confidant, told me for my article this spring, “If you had a few hundred here, not even a few thousand, they would be coöperating with you, and they would become your partners.” President Obama wanted the Americans to come home, and Maliki didn’t particularly want them to stay.

The trouble is, as the events of this week show, what the Americans left behind was an Iraqi state that was not able to stand on its own. What we built is now coming apart. This is the real legacy of America’s war in Iraq.

[From the Washington Post]

THE IRAQ ‘SUCCESS’

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION NEEDS A STRATEGY AS DANGERS MOUNT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

For years, President Obama has been claiming credit for “ending wars,” when, in fact, he was pulling the United States out of wars that were far from over. Now the pretense is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

On Monday, a loathsome offshoot of al-Qaeda, the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, captured Mosul, one of Iraq’s most important cities, seizing large caches of modern weaponry and sending half a million civilians fleeing in terror. ISIS, which can make the original al-Qaeda look moderate, controls large swaths of territory stretching from northern Syria into Iraq. On Tuesday, militants advanced toward Baghdad, capturing Tikrit and other cities.

If Iraq joins Syria in full-fledged civil war, the danger to U.S. allies in Israel, Turkey, Jordan and the Kurdish region of Iraq is immense. These terrorist safe havens also pose a direct threat to the United States, according to U.S. officials. “We know individuals from the U.S., Canada and Europe are traveling to Syria to fight in the conflict,” Jeh Johnson, secretary of homeland security, said earlier this year. “At the same time, extremists are actively trying to recruit Westerners, indoctrinate them, and see them return to their home countries with an extremist mission.”

When Mr. Obama defended his foreign policy in a speech at West Point two weeks ago, he triggered some interesting debate about the relative merits of engagement and restraint. But the question of whether Mr. Obama more closely resembles Dwight D. Eisenhower or Jimmy Carter is less relevant than the results of his policy, which are increasingly worrisome.

In Syria, where for three years Mr. Obama has assiduously avoided meaningful engagement, civil war has given rise to “the most catastrophic humanitarian crisis any of us have seen in a generation,” Mr. Obama’s United Nations ambassador Samantha Power said in February.

In Libya, Mr. Obama joined in a bombing campaign to topple dictator Moammar Gaddafi and then declined to provide security assistance to help the nation right itself. It, too, is on the verge of civil war.

In Iraq, Mr. Obama chose not to leave a residual force that might have helped keep the nation’s politics on track, even as the White House insisted there was no reason to worry. Denis McDonough, then deputy national security adviser and now White House chief of staff, told reporters in 2011 that Mr. Obama “said what we’re looking for is an Iraq that’s secure, stable and self-reliant, and that’s exactly what we got here. So there’s no question this is a success.”

Now Mr. Obama is applying the same recipe to Afghanistan: total withdrawal of U.S. troops by 2016, regardless of conditions.

At West Point, the president stressed that “not every problem has a military solution.” That is obviously true. In fact, a goal of U.S. policy should be to help shape events so that military solutions do not have to be considered. The presence of U.S. troops in South Korea, for example, has helped keep the peace for more than a half century.

Total withdrawal can instead lead to challenges like that posed by Iraq today, where every option—from staying aloof to more actively helping Iraqi forces—carries risks. The administration needs to accept the reality of the mounting danger in the Middle East and craft a strategy that goes beyond the slogan of “ending war responsibly.”

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 10 minutes to 15 minutes, as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We have an order to go to executive session at 11:30.

Mr. GRAHAM. I ask unanimous consent to speak until 11:30.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. GRAHAM. Senator MCCAIN was on the floor, and I am sorry I missed him. I was in a briefing.

To the American people, the situation in Iraq is dire. Syria has become a launching pad for attacks against the Iraqi people.

The ISIS—we don’t know who these people are, but we are going to get to know them—are Islamic jihadists based in Syria and Iraq. They are an army, and they are not a bunch of hoodlums.

They have a very specific game plan. They want to create an Islamic caliphate and basically dominate Iraq and Syria. Some want to go to Lebanon and want to create an Islamic state that will be ruled under the most extreme version of Islamic law one could imagine—hell on earth for women, not good for us, the end of modern thought in that part of the world. The people of Iraq and Syria are not by their nature radical Islamists. The people who are beginning to win the day on the battlefield come from all over, and they truly are radical Islamists who would put the world in darkness if they could.

The next 9/11 is in the making as I speak. These people are using Syria and now Iraq as a training ground for international jihad. There are European jihadists and American jihadists over in the Syria as I speak. Over 2 weeks ago, the largest truck bomb explosion by a suicide bomber in Syria was by an American citizen. And, I hate to say it, but there are more over there today.

The question for the United States is: Does it really matter if the ISIS dominates Syria and Iraq or any part thereof? I think it does. I think it is a very bad scenario for us. I think it directly impacts our security here at home, and it will throw the region into chaos.

It is clear to me, after the briefing, there is no scenario by which the Iraqi Security Forces can stop the advancement of this group toward Baghdad. I don’t think they go much beyond Baghdad, because then they get into the Shia areas of Iraq. That would be one hell of a fight. But Mosul has fallen, Tikrit has fallen, Fallujah has fallen. Now they are marching to Baghdad. Unless something changes, they will be successful.

They are sending the military equipment they are seizing into Syria to help their cause there. This is a very dangerous situation.

I urge President Obama to go on national television, explain what is going on in Iraq and Syria, and make the case to the American people why we should stay out or why we should do something.

I think American air power is the only hope to change the battlefield equation in Iraq. I know no American wants to set boots on the ground, and I don’t feel that is a solution worthy of consideration at this point. But I have been told by our military commanders the Iraqi army is in shambles, and without some kind of intervention, Baghdad is definitely in jeopardy, most of the Sunni areas of Iraq will be run by ISIS, and they will join forces with their colleagues over in Syria.

I worry about the King of Jordan. I worry about Lebanon being next. God knows, if we lose the King of Jordan, the last moderate force in the Middle East surrounding Israel, what a calamity that would be.

I end with this thought. I remember discussing Iraq with President Bush as if it was yesterday. I went over on numerous occasions with Senator MCCAIN early on after the fall of Baghdad and every trip it was worse.

I remember the Bush administration telling us: These are just a few dead-enders. Everything is fine. The media is hyping all the problems because they don’t like President Bush.

The soldiers on the ground were telling us: I am driving around every day. I don’t know why I am driving around, but I am getting my ass shot off—pardon my French here—with purpose.

I remember sitting down with President Bush, his administration and his team, and Senator MCCAIN, and we candidly told President Bush: If you don’t adjust your strategy, if you don’t reinforce Iraq, we are going to lose.

To his credit, he did, and the surge actually worked. We left Iraq in a very good spot. The security forces had won the day. We had driven out Al Qaeda. Politics was beginning to take over. Violence had been reduced tremendously. The surge worked. Our military did their job, fighting alongside their Iraqi counterparts.

But the decision to withdraw from Iraq created a crisis of confidence, a capability crisis. When there is a vacuum in the Middle East, people go back to their corners—and that is exactly what has happened in Iraq with the lack of an American presence.

Here is what is so heartbreaking. Some 10,000 or 15,000 U.S. soldiers strategically placed would have held this together and politics would have taken over. But it is hard to do political agreements when you are subject to being killed by people on the other side. You need a certain level of security to advance society.

That security has completely been lost in Iraq, and Syria is a contagion for the entire region.

Our indecision and indecisive action in Syria—it was bipartisan, by the way. Plenty of Republicans said: Stay out of Syria; it is none of our concern. What Senator MCCAIN and I have been worried about in Syria for about 3 or 4 years is that Iran and Russia were behind Assad. It is not in our interest for Iranians to be in Syria because it is very hard to get them to abandon their nuclear program if they think we are weak in Syria, and it is in our national security interest for Syria not to become an Islamic state.

About 3 years ago there were 500 foreign fighters. Today there are 26,000. So to those Republicans and Democrats who said stay out of Syria, don't use airstrikes or air power, I am sad to say that I think you were wrong. I think Syria has become an absolute breeding ground for radical Islamists, and the next attack against our country could very well originate from the people who are fighting in Syria today. And I have never been more worried about another 9/11 than I am right now.

So, Mr. President, if you are willing to adjust your policies, we will sit down with you. If you are willing to sit down with your generals and get some good, sound military advice, we will stand with you because what happens in Iraq and Syria does matter. I don't think we need boots on the ground. I don't think that is an option for consideration. But if our military leaders say that we need to stop ISIS because it is in our national security interests through the use of our air power, count me in if that is what our generals say.

I will stand with you, Mr. President, if you correct your policies. If you continue to be delusional about the world, I will be your worst critic.

With that, I yield back.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair thanks the distinguished Senator from South Carolina for yielding the floor.

Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CRYSTAL NIX-HINES FOR THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR DURING HER TENURE OF SERVICE AS THE UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination as follows:

Nomination of Crystal Nix-Hines, of California, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes of debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form.

Who yields time?

No one having yielded time, the time will be charged equally to both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the nomination of Crystal Nix-Hines to be the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, otherwise called UNESCO. I wanted to speak on this nomination and once again express my firm opposition to the administration's stated intention to circumvent U.S. law—the law that was passed by this body regarding funding of UNESCO—and an intention repeated by Ms. Nix-Hines at her hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year.

I have nothing personal against this individual. I have not met her. I am sure she is a woman of good character and qualified for the job. But nevertheless I think it is important that we understand before we take this vote what we are doing here and why we shouldn't be doing it and that Ms. Nix-Hines's previous statement is relevant to her confirmation to this organization.

If confirmed, this nomination will result in the administration sending a representative to an organization which we do not fund and in which we have no vote. That is right. We will be sending a confirmed U.S. Ambassador to an organization which we do not support and in which we have no vote. That contradiction can only mean the administration is still attempting to change those circumstances by seeking waiver authority, and that is the reason why I am speaking today and why I am opposing this nomination.

Let me provide some context. In late 2011 UNESCO offered membership to the Palestinian Authority. This was a consequence of a Palestinian campaign

to achieve recognition as a state by appealing unilaterally and directly to the United Nations and its agencies. UNESCO's decision to admit Palestine as a full member has further dimmed prospects for negotiated peace in the Middle East.

My fear is that this step—which the Palestinians regard as a success—will encourage them to press for membership in other U.N. bodies as well, achieving a legitimacy through the U.N. that they don't deserve as a state and that they need to understand presents major obstacles to ever achieving some type of reconciliation between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This will harm Israel, it will harm the Palestinians' own interests, harm the U.N. agencies involved, and damage our own national interests.

To prevent this sort of unilateral maneuver by the Palestinians, U.S. law—it is the law—has long prohibited funding to any U.N. agency that admits Palestine as a member. The purpose of this termination and the will of Congress regarding it was to discourage such reckless behavior by the U.N. and by the Palestinians.

Let me repeat that. The harm that is done through this has caused us—brought us to a point where we passed a law signed by the President that said we will not support any agency that acknowledges and admits Palestine as a recognized state. That is our policy. So funding UNESCO or even providing a waiver for that would be a clear violation of U.S. law.

We have seen the administration try to work around Congress in a number of ways, neglecting to check the law in terms of what they are required to do. We are currently in an embroiled situation here with this detainee release from Guantanamo of five of the top leaders of the Taliban—a blatant violation of the law that exists on the books in terms of consultation with Congress before this is done. Nevertheless, that is not what I am here for today. That is another issue.

Our laws require the United States to cut off budget support to UNESCO, and we will do the same to other agencies that also circumvent the correct path to negotiated settlement. I think that is good policy.

When some administration officials spoke publicly soon after the UNESCO vote about finding a "work-around" or seeking a waiver, I introduced legislation not to tolerate such alternatives and said I would not support the waiver. I repeated those efforts in subsequent State and Foreign Operations appropriations bills when the administration included appropriations for UNESCO in its budget request and Secretary Kerry said in his testimony that they would be "seeking to change or repeal the law."

In his comments on the subject, Secretary Kerry spoke about the value he saw in this U.N. agency but said nothing about the value of discouraging Palestinian efforts to circumvent negotiations and change its status at the