

so, isn't this blasphemy? In the second, God's Covenant with Abraham, which promised his descendants Palestine, is declared "obsolete" ("by calling this covenant [with the followers of Christ] 'new,' he has made the first obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear"). Nevertheless, the author has done the world a service by explaining why so many Americans today are predisposed to support Israel, often blindly and against the interests of their fellow Christians in Palestine.

The British nonconformists, to their credit, had some of the scales removed from their eyes early on. The vicious murders of British officials, soldiers and civilians in Palestine in the wake of the Mandate began the process. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin declared at the time that "it was a dreadful thing that Jews should be killing British soldiers who had fought their battles for them against Germany" (p. 91). Today there is little support for Israel from British public opinion, and the rapid decline in Church membership and attendance in England since World War II has probably contributed to this. In the United States, half the population still attends church regularly and, according to Anderson, 66 percent of Americans believe that Christ will return to earth at some time, 36 percent, as mentioned above, in their own lifetime (p. 104).

Surprisingly absent from Anderson's study is the Pollard spy case, which could be cited as an example of the blind American Evangelical Christian support for Israel in the face of blatant provocations. Anderson makes no mention of this celebrated act of treason or of the fact that Congress, to its rare credit, passed two resolutions in January 1999 calling for his sentence not to be shortened or for him to be pardoned (see *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, January/February 2006, p. 6). Apart from this oversight, I have only one minor criticism: the figure given for religious membership in "England, Scotland and Wales" in 1900 (p. 36, fn. 22, text on p. 146), and his conclusion that more people in these areas of the British Isles belonged to nonconformist churches than the Established Church of England. Most of those listed as Presbyterian would have been members of the Established Church of Scotland, therefore, not nonconformist (the Queen becomes a Presbyterian when she visits Balmoral). English nonconformist Presbyterians were always few. Also, given the large numbers of Roman Catholics listed, these figures must include Ireland, which in 1900 was still part of Great Britain.

Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq, by Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E Trainor. Pantheon 2006. 640 pages. \$17.61, hardcover.

Iraqi Perspectives Report, report for the Institute for Defense Analyses, 2006.

Patrick Lang, former defense intelligence officer for the Middle East.

It is unusual to find two works of history published at roughly the same time that clearly should be reviewed together, but these two pieces of research on the 2003 Gulf War and its aftermath are inextricably linked. They study the same historic events but they focus on the different viewpoints of the two combatant "sides."

Cobra II is a massively detailed account of what happened on the American and coalition side of the hill before, during and after Operation Iraqi Freedom. The *Iraqi Perspectives Report* was written by a team of scholars at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) in Washington for the United States Joint Forces Command (JFCOM). It is the other side of the *Cobra II* coin, recounting the events and personalities on the Iraqi side of the hill. Michael Gordon and Lieutenant General (ret.) Bernard Trainor had a copy of the classified version of the *Iraqi Perspectives Project Report*, and it informed their view of events within the Iraqi government. This use of the IDA paper as source material binds the two documents even closer together than they might have been otherwise. The commercially available version of the IDA paper is what is reviewed here rather than the classified edition. This is probably not a major issue in judging the value of the work, as classified supplements to government documents rarely contain anything of crucial significance. They usually exist because the sourcing of some available material is such that it cannot be declassified; for completeness the authors choose to write supplementary chapters that can identify the sources specifically.

The IDA team traveled extensively in Iraq, interviewed prisoners and other Iraqis who were former senior officials, both military and civilian, in the Saddam government, and examined mountains of captured documentation. Their mission was to learn what the real situation had been in Iraq before the U.S.-led coalition invaded and occupied the country in March 2003. What they learned is most disquieting:

- Saddam Hussein had ended his Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programs in the 1990s under the pressure of UN inspectors and economic sanctions.
- Saddam had informed his general staff of the nonexistence of these weapons only at a very late date in the progress toward war with the United States.
- Saddam was convinced that the United States did not want the burden of the occupation of Iraq and for that reason would not go to war “on the ground” against him.
- He believed Iraq could “shrug off” any degree of precision-weapons attack by the United States.
- Saddam’s priorities in defense had little to do with the United States.
- He was primarily concerned with the possibility of a renewal of hostilities with Iran and therefore positioned the bulk of his conventional forces to defend against attack from the east.
- Saddam’s second most serious concern was the threat to internal security and a renewal of the Shia revolt that had occurred in the south of Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. To that end, he fostered the creation of party and personal militias during the decade of the '90s. The most prominent of these was the Saddam Fedayeen organization, which existed everywhere but most strongly in the Shia majority areas of the south.
- Fear of both the regular Iraqi army and the conventional Republican Guard led Saddam to starve these military forces of equipment and funds throughout the '90s. As a result, the conventional forces of Iraq did not train or conduct command-post exercises during that decade. This caused a steady degeneration in combat capability tending toward zero after 2000.

- No significant operational planning occurred during the period under discussion, and plans that had been written previously by the military were scuttled for reasons of internal security. For example, the idea of defending Baghdad in depth inside the city was abandoned for fear of the Iraqi army.

- Saddam never had any intention of damaging Iraqi infrastructure, especially the oilfields in the north or south. He thought of himself as the guardian of these assets.

- There were no preparations by the government to conduct widespread guerrilla resistance in the event of the occupation of Iraq.

In short, Iraq had prepared no adequate defense of its territory and was incapable of resistance to coalition forces except through the medium of irregular and improvised attacks on coalition forces' supply lines.

It is manifestly clear from the Gordon and Trainor book that the Bush administration already had as a goal, when it took office in January 2000, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. A number of major and minor figures in the new administration had been involved in neoconservative initiatives against the Iraqi government, often in cooperation with members of the Israeli Likud party. These had culminated in several now famous policy papers that were proposed for implementation against the Iraqi government. These were often abetted by fantasist military and paramilitary figures like General Wayne Downing and Duane Claridge, who during the '90s advocated an invasion of Iraq with a small force of mercenaries and anti-Saddam Iraqis in the hope that the masses would rise against the regime. The neoconservatives and their uninformed allies in Congress wrote the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 for the specific purpose of funding such schemes with U.S. government money. Much of it found its way into the hands of the Iraqi National Congress, an exile group headed by Ahmad Chalabi, a facile advocate for the notion that Iraq was a basically secular and homogeneous state inhabited by a population that waited only for liberation from the dictator to flower as an outpost of Western civilization and a U.S. ally in the heart of the Arab world. It was confidently expected that the resulting democracy would make peace with Israel and thus start a chain reaction of modernization and peace making that would revolutionize the East. This flight of imagination was accompanied by a naïve belief that Muslims were not inhabitants of another cultural realm, with which most were content, but would happily fall in with neoconservative dreams and abandon all but the picturesque and culinarily inventive aspects of their own culture. Gordon and Trainor imply that this view may have been overly optimistic.

In the absence of a specific stimulus for the implementation of these schemes, there would probably have been little opportunity for the historic experimentation with cultural modification that has taken place since the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. The jihadi assault on the United States on 9/11 provided that stimulus. Within a day or two, the more vocal "clergy" in the neoconservative "church" (notably Paul Wolfowitz) began to urge an invasion of Iraq upon the president of the United States. He rejected that advice in favor of a direct attack on the al-Qaeda base area in Afghanistan, but, as Gordon and Trainor demonstrate, returned to the subject of Iraq well before the job of eradicating the Taliban and al-Qaeda were finished there. The job is still unfinished and going badly.

Planning guidance was given to the uniformed military by the president and the secretary of defense: They were told to plan for the invasion and liberation of Iraq. The planning would be carried out by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) under General Tommy Franks. Gordon and Trainor make it clear that, at this point, many of the threads that have led to the present discomfort in Iraq began to unravel:

- There had been a much-revised, updated and approved Operational Plan (OPLAN) for Iraq for many years. It envisioned the employment of a force of several hundred thousand troops for the task of conquering and subduing Iraq.

- Secretary Rumsfeld rejected that plan. He had been for many years a leading figure in a circle of former junior officers, defense academics and political figures who, like him, had long contemplated the inefficiencies and ineptitudes of the senior officers of the armed forces, especially those of the army. This group considered themselves to be prophets without honor in the Pentagon, and Rumsfeld's accession to the ministerial chair there was seen as a great opportunity to affect the public good. The reformist group believed that large ground forces with their ponderous artillery, numbers, logistics and associated “dinosaur” generals were a thing of the past. They envisioned a future for warfare that would be dominated by small ground forces, minimal armor and artillery supports, and a concomitant small logistical requirement. They especially believed that this would be true in a world that operated on the basis of the sort of “carefully crafted” and perfectly executed plans that featured in the academic seminars and war games that they frequented. The traditional military habit of building in redundancy and sufficient force to deal with unforeseen events was viewed by them as evidence of a lack of sophistication and inferior intellect. In any bureaucracy one can always find allies for radical change who ridicule leaders at the top. Such junior officers, who were found in the army, assured the White House and Rumsfeld that Iraq could be dealt with by means of two or three brigades of armor. This is less than 20,000 men. They should be ashamed.

- As Gordon and Trainor make clear, Rumsfeld interfered in operational planning for Iraq to an unprecedented extent and pursued his vision of an expeditionary army — an army that would be virtually a constabulary army — at the expense of the planning for the Iraq campaign. Over the last 40 years, the armed forces have worked out a computer-assisted planning system for preparing for large operations overseas: the Joint Operational Planning System (JOPS). It systematically prepares the logistical and deployment plans needed to execute any approved operational scheme. It produces a variety of documents. Arguably, the most important is called the Time-Phased Force Deployment List (TPFDL). This computer-generated list depicts all the forces need for the operation and the order and dates for their movement to the theater of war for the use of the commander on the ground. It is the guts of the plan. The old saw that amateurs want to talk about operations in war, and professionals talk about logistics, is especially true in the matter of this document.

- Rumsfeld rejected not just the existing plan for Iraq. He also rejected JOPS as the basis of planning. He insisted that his wisdom was superior to any plan written by Colonel Blimp types and that JOPS “tied his hands” in the exercise of his role as generalissimo.

He insisted that the CENTCOM planners could tell him what units they wanted and when, and he would decide what they would get and when. Additionally, he reserved to himself the right to delete from deployment parts of units that did not suit him. This is an interesting exercise of power for someone who has no experience of ground warfare and, in fact, little experience of military affairs other than his two stints as secretary of defense, isolated in the ivory tower of his Pentagon offices.

- Rumsfeld was capricious in the exercise of his legal power to insert himself into operational planning, giving and withholding assets and authorities on the basis of whim. As a result, detailed planning at CENTCOM was reduced to a “hit or miss” shambles in which nothing could be predicted with any assurance. General Franks accepted this. His ground-force commander, Lieutenant General David D. McKiernan, did not, and Trainor and Gordon make it abundantly clear that he and his staff fought every day for the forces needed for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). They are the real heroes in this story. They stood up to an arrogant and malevolent bully in defense of American interests and the American soldier.

There have now been a vast number of American casualties in Iraq. The ideologues and vapid academics who were the real planners of OIF are responsible for the misery of many of our people. These two books make that clear.

Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia, by Rachel Bronson. Oxford University Press/Council on Foreign Relations 2006. 353 pages, including photos, notes, bibliography, and index. \$28.00, hardcover.

Brooks Wrampelmeier, former U.S. consul general, Dhahran, 1987-89

“Few relationships are as vital, under as much pressure, and as poorly understood as that between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.” With this observation, Rachel Bronson, senior fellow and director of Middle East studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, introduces her important and timely examination of the extraordinary 60-year partnership between the world's leading democracy and a desert kingdom with political, religious and cultural characteristics totally alien to those of most Americans. Yet, as Dr. Bronson notes, every U.S. administration since that of Franklin Delano Roosevelt has sought to maintain close ties with the kingdom, despite deep differences over such issues as the price of oil, the Arab-Israel conflict and, most recently, the role played by Saudi citizens in the events of 9/11 and its aftermath. This book probes the incentives for this historical relationship from both the U.S. and the Saudi perspectives. The author discusses reasons that it has lately gone sour and offers suggestions for how the damage could be undone if only the United States and Saudi Arabia were “to realign their foreign policies to more effectively address current challenges” (p. 11).

Unlike many writers on this subject, Dr. Bronson disagrees with the notion that the U.S.-Saudi relationship is based primarily on a simplistic bargain of access to Saudi oil at