
14 YEARS AFTER INVASION, IRAQ WAR'S LESSONS STILL UNLEARNED

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Today, exactly 14 years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the ripple effects of that fateful decision are still being felt. The invasion is widely spoken of in damning tones as one of the most catastrophic foreign policy decisions in American history. That it is. But when it comes to today's sprawling war in the region, those in charge of the war have failed to learn the lessons of this historic failure.

The current occupant of the Oval Office claimed to be a critic of the Iraq invasion – at least once the 2016 presidential campaign began. But since taking office the Trump approach has been a muddled mix of machismo and autopilot. His taking off the gloves approach has led to loosening of the Obama era rules of engagement meant to protect civilians. Trump promised a bold new strategy to defeat ISIS, but he's offering more of the same: more troops and more bombing runs. The result of all this has been rise in civilian casualties as reported by independent monitors.

Tragically, Trump is keeping the campaign promise he made to bomb the shit out of them. It's just one more lesson that Donald Trump is capable of actually doing the outrageous and dangerous things he says he might do. The very first military action supervised by Trump was a failed raid in Yemen that reportedly killed 30 civilians including ten children. Bill Owens, the grieving father of the Navy Seal killed in the raid, showed the world that Emperor Trump has no clothes:

Why at this time did there have to be this stupid mission when it wasn't even barely a week into his administration? Why? For two years prior, there were no boots on the ground in Yemen – everything was missiles and drones – because there was not a target worth one American life. Now, all of a sudden we had to make this grand display?

More recently, in this last week, a U.S. airstrike in Syria has been described by human rights monitors as a massacre at or near a religious gathering in the Aleppo province in Syria. Local activists say that scores of civilians were killed. The strike was branded as heinous and a war crime by U.S. allies including Qatar and Turkey.

The pace of troops entering the region shows that Trump is committed to abandoning the no ground troops pretense of the Obama era. In early March, the U.S. troop presence in Syria nearly doubled when an additional 400 U.S. Army Rangers and Marines were sent to set up a base near the ISIS stronghold of Raqqa.

Looking forward, new escalations may be on the horizon. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis is preparing a recommendation for the president on Afghanistan, which could advise deploying thousands more U.S. troops. In Syria, the administration is considering sending an additional 1,000 ground troops to participate in the offensive on Raqqa. And in Iraq, it's considering lifting the cap

on troop levels that was set at about 5,000 under President Obama, foreshadowing escalation there as well.

These spikes in bombings, civilian casualties, and U.S. lives on the line, are proof positive the administration has not learned the central lesson of the Iraq War □ that protracted military interventions in today's world tend to fuel the very extremism and instability they seek to confront.

Proponents of military escalation in Iraq and elsewhere often present a fictitious binary choice: either increase military engagement until we win, or do nothing. In reality, we've been fighting a war on terror for over 15 years, and were farther from winning it than when we started. In reality, there's a spectrum of approaches to addressing conflicts, whether with governments or with terrorist groups, and down at the more effective end of the spectrum are diplomatic and humanitarian strategies that are too often overlooked.

Even in dealing with a group as terrible and as entrenched as ISIS, there are alternatives to U.S. military involvement that could better undermine the group's long-term viability. The U.S. should step up diplomatic efforts to stem the flow of weapons and foreign recruits into Iraq and Syria, to cut off ISIS's financing, and to facilitate a political solution to the Syrian civil war. We should also invest in robust humanitarian aid and welcome refugees fleeing the region.

These strategies won't bring peace and stability to the region overnight, nor will they demolish and destroy ISIS as Trump pledged to do in his address to Congress, but neither will putting more American soldiers in harm's way. Even after ISIS is driven from its strongholds, its ability to recruit new fighters and mount successful attacks will persist for a time, and continued U.S. military involvement in the region will only extend that time.

Unfortunately, alternatives to war are increasingly under threat. As President Trump doubles down on our military involvement across the Middle East, he's also seeking significant cuts to programs that focus on the diplomatic and humanitarian strategies. According to the budget overview released by the administration last week, Trump intends to cut \$25.6 billion from the State Department and the Agency for International Development (USAID), in other words 28 percent of U.S. diplomatic efforts and foreign aid.

Trump is like the class clown who missed the lesson of the day because they were too busy annoying the rest of us. Like the class clown, when asked if he was paying attention, Trump lied and said he was totally against the war in Iraq. But unlike the class clown, Trump is the commander in chief, and his failure to learn the lessons of the Iraq War could have dire consequences for U.S. troops, for the region, and for the world. It's up to the rest of the class, average Americans intent on avoiding the mistakes of the past, to demand a course correction.

IRAN LOSES THOUSANDS, 10 GENERALS IN SYRIA-IRAQ WARS

BY YONAH JEREMY BOB MARCH 19, 2017 20:38

A report released by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center assesses that Iran has lost thousands of fighters and more than 10 generals while engaging in the Syria-Iraq wars.

Iranian President

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani delivering a speech at Azadi Square in the capital of Iran ,

Tehran , during a ceremony to mark the 38th anniversary of the Islamic revolution.. (photo credit:HO / IRANIAN PRESIDENCY / AFP)

Iran has lost thousands of fighters and more than 10 generals during its engagement in the Syria-Iraq wars, the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center reported on Sunday.

The report from the Gilot-based center analyzed the different estimates of Iranian losses that have been recently announced.

Kaynak/Source: