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WHEN WILL WE LISTEN?

by

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Preface

The genesis of this paper occurred over 30 years ago when, as a recently discharged Vietnam veteran, I attended the University of Maryland. One of the courses I chose was a survey of revolutionary literature. The course requirements included the writings of Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevarra, Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap, etc. As a former intelligence collector, it struck me that these writings were telling any reader about the intentions and strategy of the authors and their followers to commit revolutionary acts. Significantly, in the intelligence arena, the real gold nuggets among the myriad pieces of information the analyst attempts to mine are those which indicate intent and overall strategy. These elusive nuggets can dramatically enhance an intelligence analyst's ability to forewarn decision makers rather than just reporting intelligence as a situation unfolds. Moreover, the information is an open-source "gift" by the hostile source. In 1968, I read writings from the period 1955 -1964 in which Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap detailed the strategy which was to be used against me and the rest of the United States and allied forces during my time in Vietnam in 1965-1968.

The above background caused me to wonder if there was open-source information given by Saddam Hussein and his government prior to the "surprise" invasion of Kuwait. I examined just a limited sampling of the speeches by Saddam Hussein and media pronouncements of his government to determine if warning had been available, but not reacted to by those who were surprised by the invasion. This research show that as early

as 17 July, two weeks prior to the invasion, it should have been recognized as a near certainty that Saddam Hussein was planning to invade Kuwait. Although the main purpose of this paper was to research the facts to determine if open-sources alone could have revealed intent prior to the invasion, the research also points to some potential reasons why the world community failed to accurately assess the empirical evidence that, this author asserts, unambiguously pointed to an impending invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

I am indebted to Professor Lee Dowdy of the faculty of the United States Air Force Air War College for his encouragement and guidance while I researched and wrote this paper. I also must express my appreciation to Mr. Charles Allen, who at the time of the Iraqi invasion was the Central Intelligence Agency's National Intelligence Officer for Warning. He, not only gave me a first-hand account of his involvement in analyzing the events prior to the invasion, but also provided his views on why empirical indicators of Saddam Hussein's intent to invade were missed until it was too late to do anything about the invasion.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine if there were indicators of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on 2 August 1990, that were not accurately assessed by allied decision makers in time to make a difference. Moreover, based on historical precedence, these indicators were hypothesized to be available from open (not classified) sources. Using only a small sampling of the public speeches of Saddam Hussein and the pronouncements in the Iraqi press as reported by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), this research indicates the 2 August invasion should have been assessed as a near-certainty as early as 17 July. Furthermore, research of the memoirs of some the key participants as well as books chronicling the actions of decision makers during the weeks prior to the invasion, indicate that although the information identified during the research was available, it was dismissed as rhetoric rather than being recognized as indications of intent. Moreover, the research points to a continuing tendency by both analysts and decision makers to discount open-source pronouncements, even when they are congruent with empirical evidence from classified sources, because the decision makers and analysts believe the impending action would be "unthinkable."

Chapter 1

Introduction

> *The nationalization of our masses will succeed only when, aside from all the positive struggle for the soul of our people, their international prisoners are exterminated*
>
> —Adolf Hitler referring to the Jews in *Mein Kampf*—1925

> *The value of Mein Kampf to us is inestimable….It is one of those documents that expose a self-intoxication so stupendous that only a firm grasp of all that gives life meaning for us can steady our perception of it….He really enables us, if we give him the chance, to know what this present War is about*
>
> —Frances Hackett in *What Mein Kampf Means to America*—April 1941

Hitler gave us his *Mein Kampf*, Mao Tse Tung gave us his *Little Red Books*, Che Guevarra wrote extensively about guerrilla war, Ghadaffi gave us his *Green Books,* etc. Use of the word "gave" may seem inappropriate, but if these writings or pronouncements had been reacted to more directly by intelligence analysts and government decision makers rather than dismissed as rhetoric or propaganda, perhaps responses by friendly governments would have been different, and in turn, more effective in dealing with the authors' actions. The one thing these writings and oral pronouncements have in common is that they were a source of information on the intentions of incipient adversaries that, wittingly or not, gave direct insight into the minds of these hostile leaders. Moreover, it is only through the lens of hindsight that their significance has been understood, even

though the leaders' intentions were revealed and available, sometimes years before they enacted them.

Study of the origins of wars throughout history indicates that most of them were a strategic surprise to the countries which got involved. Moreover, it is usually only through the lens of hindsight that the origins of the war can be identified with clarity. Although this historical perspective is intellectually stimulating, the real value in studying the origins of past wars for decision makers is to try to identify those indicators which enable the analyst, planner, or decision maker to avoid repeating the same miscalculations which could precipitate the next crisis or war.

The Persian Gulf War of 1990—1991 provided evidence once again of the failure by analysts and decision makers in the United States and throughout the Arab world to calculate with clarity that war was about to erupt. The thesis of this paper is that there is a particular indicator of the intentions of countries' leaders to go to war that has been largely overlooked by strategic war planners and analysts. Quite simply, the leaders of a country frequently will reveal their true intentions through speeches or publications, either advertently or inadvertently, prior to hostilities. Furthermore, history also reflects the tendency of protagonists to dismiss these indicators as rhetoric of irrational actors. Although the reasons for such characterizations are beyond the scope of this paper, it will briefly cite some historical examples in which intentions of potential adversaries were identified in advance of conflict with the United States and her allies. Then, the paper will focus on the specific indicators—mostly ignored prior to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

Intelligence analysts study numerous strategic and tactical indicators in their attempt to divine the intentions of hostile leaders. They have myriad sources, both human and

technical, to collect and analyze a frequently overwhelming amount of information prior to a conflict. This is a daunting and expensive task. It is usually dominated by indirectly gathered, empirical information and its subsequent analysis. This paper concludes that analysts/planners should also look to what an adversary is directly saying and weigh that along with the other more indirect, empirical sources of information that the analysts/planners have at their disposal. This will assist friendly country decision makers to determine the intentions of the leaders of the adversarial country. Admittedly, the granularity of this information is very coarse. However, when used in conjunction with the empirical information, it may enable the analysis of the overall situation to better reflect reality as the potential adversary sees it. It is this reality which will determine the actions of the adversary, not the interpretation of it as seen by the opposing analysts.

Vietnam: Enemy Strategy In Plain Sight!

A careful reading of the writings of Ho Chi Minh and his able General, Vo Nguyen Giap, from the late 1950s and early 1960s would have provided our decision makers with a better understanding of what the intentions of these leaders were towards South Vietnam and America. One can even speculate that our leaders would have been able to develop a winning strategy if they had paid more attention to the strategy published by these two leaders. According to General Giap, writing in 1964, "the war of liberation now being waged by our countrymen in the South is a revolutionary war, a war by the entire people, a total war using simultaneously the two forms of struggle, regarding both as fundamental and decisive."[1]

The two forms of struggle Giap is speaking about are the armed struggle and the political struggle. In 1964, prior to the major buildup of United States forces in Vietnam, Giap published, in open source articles, North Vietnam's grand strategy. He wrote that "armed struggle has developed on the basis of political struggle brought to a higher level…; armed struggle which becomes more and more vigorous does not make political struggle decrease in intensity but, on the contrary, gives it a stronger impulse; together they pursue the aim of annihilating and dislocating enemy armed forces, striking vigorously where the enemy is basically weak, on the political ground."[2]

Much has been written about the United States' failure to identify the center of gravity of the Vietnam War. It has only been in hindsight that many analysts have concluded that the center of gravity of the Vietnam War was always the hearts and minds of the people. Again, hindsight shows us the North Vietnamese understood this and had developed a military and political strategy to combat the actions of the United States. More to the point, they published the overall strategy they were going to use to neutralize the American and allied strategy. This paper does not take the position that the planners/analysts lacked access to the writings of Giap, nor the position that they were not read. Rather, it is asserting that the intentions that were published, although they were clear, were for whatever reason not given credence by the Westmoreland strategists.

Both Ho Chi Minh and General Giap made speeches or wrote articles from before their Viet Minh days, throughout the Vietnam War, and after. Their writings were articulate, detailed, and deliberate. They analyzed not only the situation of their divided country, but its relationship to the entire world. They spent a great deal of time analyzing the strategy of their current and potential enemies. They clearly understood the strategy

of both the French and Americans, and evolved their own strategy to combat their adversaries' strengths.

Despite this wealth of information, the United States employed its own strategy which had evolved since the United States Civil War, based on the tried and true concepts of attrition of the enemy's armed forces. Seventeen years after this war, the United States was again faced with the possibility of being involved in a war. The lesson of paying attention to public announcements by adversaries of their intentions was apparently not yet learned. Despite the direct pronouncements by Saddam Hussein signaling he was going to seize Kuwait, US and Arab analysts/decision makers were surprised and thus inadequately prepared when Saddam invaded Kuwait.

Notes

[1] Vo Nguyen Giap, "The Political and Military Line of Our Party," The Military Art of People's War, ed. Russel Stetler (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 169.

[2] Ibid.

Chapter 2

Saddam Hussein's Threats Not Just Rhetoric!

> *No matter what your size and strength, you should assume you are smaller and weaker than your adversary, so as to know him. It is only through this that you can enter the minds and hearts of people as they really are, not as you suppose or wish them to be.*
>
> —Saddam Hussein to Senator Robert Dole, 12 April 1990[1]

On 2 August 1990, 100,000 battle-hardened forces of Saddam Hussein's army invaded Kuwait, quickly defeating the Kuwaitis' weak defenses and seizing total control of the country. The world was stunned. In addition to press reporting immediately after the invasion, there have been literally hundreds of official and academic studies that have documented that the invasion and takeover of Kuwait was a surprise, not just to the Americans, but to the Arab world as well. Should this surprise have been so pronounced? A careful reading of speeches by Saddam Hussein and of the official press as reported in open sources should have mitigated the total strategic surprise which occurred.

Although the exact date when Saddam Hussein began laying the foundation for an invasion of Kuwait cannot yet be determined, a review of his speeches, those of other Iraqi leaders, and the writings of the state-run press shows signs of the foundation being established as early as six months before the invasion. This foundation was based on pan-Arabism at first, which, as the months of 1990 progressed, began to settle on the real prize which was Kuwait. Furthermore, it is important to note that by July 17, sixteen

days prior to the invasion, Saddam Hussein in effect openly declared a state of war with Kuwait. The following are only some of the references that were available from open sources to analysts and decision makers during the months prior to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

The most dramatic invocation of pan-Arabism by Saddam Hussein in early 1990 was his fiery, broad-ranging speech at the opening of the fourth summit of the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) at the Royal Cultural Center in Amman, Jordan. It was broadcast live over Amman Television service on 24 February.[2] During his speech, Saddam described the new world order as he believed all Arabs should see it. He traced the history of Arab involvement with the superpowers, emphasizing that although the world situation had changed, the Zionist problem still remained. Saddam Hussein expressed it this way: "Given the relative erosion of the role of the Soviet Union as the key champion of the Arabs in the context of the Arab-Zionist conflict and globally, and given that the influence of the Zionist lobby on US policies is as powerful as ever, the Arabs must take into account that there is a real possibility that Israel might embark on new stupidities."[3]

Saddam was very concerned about the United States being the only superpower and believed that the vacuum caused by the demise of the Soviet Union had to be filled. He saw this as an opportunity for the Arabs to reassert pan-Arabism. "On the other hand, the Arabs have a plus, and that is Arab solidarity that will be effective if the Arabs work out a well-defined plan of action and devise regional policies *vis-à-vis* neighboring foreign countries, and if they forge fruitful cooperation based on strong foundations oriented toward clear goals."[4] Saddam Hussein stressed that this cooperation would have to be in

all areas of interaction including not just security but also culture, economics, and politics. Saddam also described not only his position on dealing with the United States, but how the Arab nation should conduct itself. "Realizing Arab solidarity on the basis of pan-Arab interest, correctly defining Arab interest, clearly and accurately defining everything that threatens their security and stability, and proceeding from this basis of capability, frankness, and solidarity with the United States, or other countries in general, prevents these countries from exceeding the proper bounds with the Arab nation and thus becoming a threat."[5]

Saddam Hussein also used this ACC meeting as a forum to discuss the importance of gulf oil to the Arab nation. At the time of this speech, the price of oil was less than $20 per barrel. The OPEC oil ministers, including the Iraqi oil minister, were involved in frequent discussions about how to prop up the price of oil. A major concern was the need for each country to limit its production to keep prices higher. As events continued to unfold in the summer of 1990, the oil issue became a key reason the Iraqis cited for going to war with Kuwait. At the ACC, Saddam Hussein stated the reason the United States refused to remove its fleet from the Persian Gulf, even after the threat against Kuwait had been eliminated with the end of the Gulf war (Iraq vs. Iran), was because of the strategic importance of the region's oil reserves. He also stated that "the country that will have the greatest influence in the region through the Arab Gulf and its oil will maintain its superiority as a superpower without an equal to compete with it. This means that if the Gulf people, along with all Arabs, are not careful, the Arab Gulf region will be governed by the US will."[6] To conclude his speech, Saddam reminded his fellow Arabs that their problems were caused not just by sources external to the Gulf region, but by Arab

countries as well. He stated it this way: "Our purported weakness does not lie in our ideological and hereditary characteristics….Our purported weakness lies in a lack of mutual trust among ourselves, our failure to concentrate on the components of our strength, and our failure to focus on our weaknesses with a view to right them."[7]

Throughout February and March, Saddam Hussein continued to beat the drum of pan-Arabism but, during his 3 April speech honoring senior Iraqi officials, he dropped the bombshell of confirming Iraq had binary chemical weapons. Citing pan-Arabism throughout his speech, Saddam Hussein criticized what he termed an increasingly direct conspiracy led by the United States and Israel to undermine and humiliate the Arab state. He also accused the United States and Israel of deliberately prolonging the Iran-Iraq war to weaken Iraq. However, he asserted that with the defeat of Iran, the United States/ Israeli strategy had to be changed. "The main players in the past during the war used to play the game through Iran, but now, after the great result that has been realized, they find they have no choice but to play the game themselves."[8]

Even more alarming than his revelation about Iraq possessing binary chemical weapons was his statement of intent to use them against Israel if it repeated the bombing of Iraqi territory as in its preemptive strike against an Iraqi nuclear production facility in 1981. Saddam Hussein expressed this position graphically stating "by God, we will make fire eat up half of Israel if it tried [a similar attack] against Iraq."[9] Once this provocative speech was given, the Iraqi press reinforced its message with daily repeats and elaboration of their leader's position. Ironically, the Kuwaiti press also supported Saddam's position, charging that .."a long-term and carefully planned anti-Iraq campaign

has been hatched to pave [the way] for an aggression against Iraq similar to Israel's raid on Iraq's peaceful nuclear reactor in June 1981."[10]

Saddam Hussein also revealed his feeling of betrayal by some of the Arab nations for their failure to stop what he termed was Iranian aggression (although it is widely accepted that Iraq invaded Iran first). It was this belief of a betrayal that he cited specifically three months later when he condemned Kuwait for its long standing aggression against the beleaguered people of Iraq. Saddam expressed it this way: "Would Iran have committed aggression, at the beginning of the friction between Iran and the Arabs in the wake of its slogan that it would export the revolution to the Arab homeland, if 10, four, or five Arab countries told Iran: 'Beware of attacking Iraq.' Would Iran have committed its aggression on Iraq, forced it to defend its dignity, security, and land, and prolonged the war for eight years had it felt a serious warning or deterrence from five, six, or four Arab countries?"[11] Saddam continued with his feelings of being undermined by Arab disunity, citing the fact that Iraq had to bear a tremendous economic and personnel burden to maintain 50 infantry and armored divisions. He believed that if there was truly pan-Arab security, where all Arab nations agreed an attack on one would be considered an attack on all, the need for his military forces could be cut in half.

Saddam Hussein and his press continued to inflame the region about pan-Arabism throughout April and May 1990. He fanned the flames vociferously during his address to the Arab Parliamentary Union on 19 April. He particularly emphasized the theme that Jerusalem had been usurped from the Arab land. Use of the work "usurp" is significant because it was also used by the Iraqis when, in July, they denounced the Kuwaitis, accusing them of, among other things, usurping their land. Iraq hosted several

conferences during which pan-Arabism and the alleged conspiracy by the United States, Britain, and Israel to undermine Iraq and the rest of the Arab nation, including a likely air strike by Israel on Iraqi production facilities, were discussed. The success of this rhetoric was evident in the final statement released over Baghdad radio from the Arab Popular Conference on Solidarity With Iraq. The statement denounced the United States, Britain, and Israel, denounced the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, supported the Intifada, and announced a five-point plan to develop pan Arab solidarity.

May activities culminated with an Arab Summit in Baghdad on 28 May 1990. Its purpose was to gather all the Arab nations together to agree on common goals and policies. Saddam Hussein expressed it this way: "As 21 states, we must present a solid front against whomever deviates from pan-Arab security within our ranks so that we can contain his whims and policies."[12] It is interesting that before this summit, the majority of Saddam Hussein's comments were directed to external sources of problems; however, in this speech, he continually referred to weakness and disunity in the Arab ranks, and the inherent danger this caused to Iraq and to the Arab nation as a whole. In light of the allegations against Kuwait that it only supported Iraq in war against Iran due to self-interest, the comments that Saddam Hussein made seem in retrospect to have been directed to nations such as Kuwait. He continued: "Only then will we view pan-Arab security from a better perspective than the narrow one considered by the traditionalists in the technocratic bodies. These technocrats regard this security as a technical matter, based on close links in terms of the personal security, available information, state organizations, and their local activity, to achieve only local aims, by preventing hostile forces from penetrating it. Thus, they take a narrow view of matters."[13]

Other more ominous words for those nations which disagreed with Iraq were also pronounced. "Wherever weakness develops, it must respond to any offer of help from the more powerful Arab states in order to rid itself of its weakness, especially when weakness would undermine our status *vis-à-vis* foreign powers, and could manifest itself in the granting of facilities to these foreign powers out of fear, thus compromising the Arab nation and its pan-Arab security."[14] Throughout June, the rhetoric continued about a western powers and Israeli conspiracy against Iraq and the Arab nation. In a major speech on 18 June to the International Popular Islamic Conference for Solidarity With Iraq, Saddam Hussein endeavored to put the cloak of Islam on the pan-Arab policies he had been proselytizing. An example was his comments to justify his "burn half of Israel" comments from February. He said, "furthermore, everyone knows, both Arabs and Muslims and also the whole of mankind, what Iraq's capabilities are. If Iraq does not use them, what would it mean? It would only mean cowardice or collusion, God forbid."[15]

Saddam Hussein continued to zero in on those in the Arab ranks he thought were weak. Although he had not yet identified them by name, he continued to develop his rationale for interference in a sister Arab state's affairs. During an interview on 26 June he spoke of "lost opportunities" for the Arabs due to disunity. "To date, whenever there has been a divergence in the respective outlooks of Arab regimes and leaders, more often than not, the result was confrontation leading to a mutual drain on their resources. It is now imperative that we make every effort to head off such confrontations. But whoever of us fails to meet the minimum of common ground, we are duty-bound to be in confrontation with him."[16]

He got even more specific about the failure of those who stood by while Iraq fought a war when he said, "if country 'X' says God has relieved the believers of the evil of war…, let us live on our billions, and leave things as they are, it will be wasting the Arab nation's resources because these resources will not be used correctly in promoting national and pan-Arab security."[17] This is also significant given Saddam Hussein's later specific allegations against Kuwait for standing by and selfishly exploiting Iraqi oil and territory while Iraq was bled white by the war with Iran. Saddam goes on to say that "such a stand will only serve the foreigner because the Arab people will not accept it. And when the Arabs reject this stand, those concerned in this state and that regime will feel that they are strangers in their own surrounding and will seek protection under the shadow of the foreigners in or outside the region."[18]

Also on 26 June, in addition to the above ambiguous references to "this state and that regime," the Iraqis specifically launched their rhetorical attack on both Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates for failing to limit oil production to boost prices. This was more than thirty days prior to the invasion. In response, the oil ministers of all of the gulf nations began shuttle diplomacy amongst themselves to try to resolve the increasing crisis. The other gulf nations believed they had appeased Saddam Hussein by publicly agreeing to hold down production and to raise the price of oil by two dollars a barrel. Despite these appeasing efforts, Saddam was still not satisfied. He ended the ambiguity about which countries he was alleging were causing the greatest harm to Iraq in a vitriolic speech to his nation on 17 July 1990.

Notes

[1] Offra Bengio, *Saddam Speaks on The Gulf Crisis: A Collection of Documents (*Tel Aviv, Israel: Tel Aviv University Press, 1992), 64.
[2] Ibid., 41.
[3] Ibid., 42.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 44.
[6] Ibid., 47.
[7] Ibid., 49.
[8] FBIS-NES-90-064, 3 April 1990, 32.
[9] Ibid., 35.
[10] Ibid., 38.
[11] FBIS-NES-90-068, 9 April 1990, 21.
[12] Bengio, *Saddams Speaks on the Gulf Crisis*, 87.
[13] Ibid., 90.
[14] Ibid., 93.
[15] FBIS-NES-90-118, 19 June 1990, 21.
[16] Ibid.
[17] FBIS-NES-90-124, 27 June 1990, 24.
[18] Ibid.

Chapter 3

Focus On Kuwait

The occasion for the 17 July 1990 speech was the 22nd anniversary of the coup which had brought Saddam Hussein to power. In view of the increasingly specific allegations which he had been developing for the previous six months, Kuwait should have been very concerned about the words he was using. He essentially stated that Iraq and Kuwait were already in a state of war. This was over two weeks prior to the "surprise" invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. In the beginning of his speech, before identifying his specific adversaries, Saddam Hussein spoke ambiguously about disunity in the Arab nation.

> In their recent campaign, the imperialist and Zionist forces have not used weapons to kill the sons of the nation, nor have they threatened to use their fleets and air bases in this region and elsewhere in the world, as often done by the usurpers of the land and violators of Arab dignity and sovereignty who the Baghdad summit confronted. Rather, they started to weaken and kill the capability that protects Arab dignity and sovereignty by other tools and methods suited to them. This new method produces results that are more dangerous than those produced by the old direct methods. This new method, which happened within the ranks of the Arabs, seeks to cut off [words missed] while the old method, which has already been contained, sought to cut off necks.[1]

Saddam Hussein then overcame any ambiguity about what he was referring to as his speech progressed.."…They hope to achieve their aim by this new method and through the Arabs themselves, both individuals and even states, in this region. I mean by that, the

new oil policy which certain rulers of the Gulf states have been pursuing intentionally for some time to reduce oil prices without any economic justification and against the wish of the majority of OPEC producers, and also against the interest of the Arab nation."[2]

Saddam Hussein then provided specific details on how the low cost of oil was destroying the Iraqi economy. He continued to develop this theme, but also added that it was the United States which was reaping the benefits of this artificially low price because it was able to buy strategic oil reserves that enabled it to retain its superpower status. He continued to lambaste "certain Arab oil ministers and some of whom are at a higher level,"[3] for participating in this alleged United States/Zionist-hatched conspiracy. He became more pointed, saying this was a threat to the Arab nation as whole because it would lead to instability throughout the region. He directly blamed some Arab states for this situation. "The Arabs would thus be in a constant maelstrom and state of instability. Hence the policies pursued by certain Arab rulers are American-inspired and detrimental to the interests of the Arab nation. …Indeed, such policies are anti-Arab because, having stripped the Arab nation of its vital resources and allowed the covetous enemies to control them, these policies strike at pan-Arab security and interests."[4]

Saddam Hussein not only felt it was necessary to expose this "conspiracy," he exhorted his fellow Arabs to oppose it with more than just speeches. "Honorable Arabs, such policies are much too dangerous for us to condone; they have done us and the Arab nation considerable damage."[5] With this prelude, Saddam Hussein went on to tell the "certain country" that Iraq would take action. "Since the Iraqis, who have been at the receiving end of this premeditated injustice, are sufficiently motivated to stand up for their rights, they will always be mindful of the Arab adage that one would be better off

dead than having one's livelihood cut off. If words fail to afford us protection, then we will have no choice but to resort to effective action to put things right and ensure the restitution of our rights."[6] In addition to the pretense of the United States/Zionist/Arab traitorous conspiracy, Saddam also set the stage for allegations against an Arab nation not sufficiently grateful for the Iraqi sacrifices in the Gulf war with Iran. "They should have rewarded Iraq, which, for their sake, sacrificed the cream of its youth so their coffers would remain full of abundant and treasured wealth. Had it not been for Iraq, these coffers would have now been in other hands. But instead, they have inflicted excessive harm on Iraq."[7] To end his speech, Saddam Hussein used the most inflammatory language yet, stating: "Instead of rewarding Iraq for its fraternal principles, they have misunderstood these sincere principles and have thrust their poisoned dagger into our back at a time when Iraq is facing external enemies and trying to defend the nation and avert any further stabs against the nation and Iraq."[8] He ended his speech ominously saying, "O God, be my witness that I have conveyed the message."[9]

Although Saddam Hussein did not specifically identify the country or countries he was referring to, given the previous condemnation by Iraq for its oil policy, the Kuwaiti government could not have missed the fact that his remarks were targeted against it. Moreover, any doubt would surely have been dispelled since the Iraqis sent a letter to the Arab League on 16 July, the day before Saddam's speech, which specifically identified Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the culprits who were undermining Iraqi sovereignty with their oil policies. Although the letter contained limited censure against the UAE, the majority of it was a diatribe of offenses that Iraq alleged Kuwait had committed against it, and yes, the entire Arab nation.

The letter was ostensibly an elaboration of the points raised in the speech by Saddam Hussein, but in reality it was a continuation of the rationale and foundation for further action against Kuwait by Iraq. The message became not only more specific, but more vitriolic. "Kuwaiti Government officials have encroached on Iraq and systematically, deliberately, and continuously harmed it."[10] The letter then provided information that the dispute with Kuwait over the borders extended back to the time when the "colonialists" demarcated the borders. Citing Iraqi-initiated discussions in the sixties and seventies, the Iraqis accused the Kuwaitis of deliberately stonewalling resolution of the border issue.

Adding insult to this injury, the Iraqis asserted the Kuwaitis took advantage of the situation during Iraq's war with Iran. "During the long years of war when the brave Iraqis were shedding their blood on the front in defense of Arab territories, including Kuwait, and in defense of the Arab sovereignty and dignity, including that of Kuwait, the Kuwaiti Government exploited Iraq's engagement in war and its genuine Arab principles,…and implemented a plot to escalate the pace of gradual, systematic advance toward Iraqi territory."[11] The Iraqi letter to the Arab League provided additional specific information on Kuwait's alleged encroachment citing it for installing new military establishments, police posts, oil installations, and farms on Iraqi territory.

Iraq also averred that as if the above situation was not bad enough, the Kuwaiti scheme had "taken a serious turn that was impossible to tolerate."[12] This was the letter's lead-in to the second major alleged transgression—Kuwaitis depriving Iraq and the entire Arab nation of oil profits due to their failure to support higher prices and lower production rates. Again, the Iraqis tried to portray this transgression as not just against their country but as an insult to pan-Arabism as a whole. Alleging a loss by the Arabs of

$500 billion, of which Iraq alone suffered an $89 billion loss due to unfair oil prices, the letter cited both Kuwait and the UAE as the primary conspirators causing this weakening of Iraq and the entire Arab nation. "Had the Arabs not lost this tremendous amount of money and had we allotted half of it for national development and assisting poor Arab states, we would have seen great advances in pan-Arab development, made the poor Arabs happy, and the Arab nation would have been more prosperous than now."[13]

Continuing its allegations, the letter also accused Kuwait of adding further insult to injury by stealing oil from Iraq. "Since 1980, Kuwait has set up oil installations in the southern section of the Iraqi al-Rumaylah oil fields and extracted oil from it. In light of this, it becomes clear that part of the surplus oil Kuwait was dumping on the world oil market was stolen from the Iraqi al-Rumaylah oil fields. Thus it has deliberately harmed Iraq twice, once by weakening its economy when it is in a dire need of funds and again by stealing its wealth."[14] The continuing deliberate setup for action by Iraq was again revealed in the following words. "We put on record before the Arab League and all the Arab states that Iraq has every right to retrieve the funds stolen from it and to ask those concerned to rectify the harm done to it."[15]

Given the tone of these allegations, as early as 17 July, the Kuwaiti government should have been deeply concerned; however, as the letter progressed, their concern should have risen to a state of alarm. The letter continued to expand on the conspiracy allegations, including collusion between the Kuwaitis and the United States. "There is no room left for ruling out the deduction that what the Kuwaiti and UAE Governments did in this regard was a premeditated policy that seeks to achieve hidden objectives. We have no choice but to deduce that he who deliberately, directly, and openly adopts this policy, or

he who supports or instigates it, is implementing part of the imperialist-Zionist plan against Iraq and the Arab nation, especially at this particular time when serious Israeli-imperialist dangers are threatening the Arab homeland in general and Iraq in particular."[16] The letter also stated that Iraq had spoken to both Kuwait and the UAE before, during, and after the Arab summit, to no avail. It also condemned Kuwait and the UAE for "aggression against Iraq and the Arab nation."[17]

However, it went further with its condemnation of Kuwait. "Regarding the Kuwait Government, we can say that its aggression against Iraq is a twofold one. On the one hand, it has committed aggression against Iraq and its rights by encroaching on our territories and oil-fields and by stealing our national wealth. Such behavior amounts to a military aggression."[18] Kuwait should already have probably have understood this to be Iraq announcing it was in a state of war with Kuwait. However, the second part of the allegation should have left little room for doubt. "On the other hand, the Kuwaiti Government wants to destroy the Iraqi economy at a time when it is being exposed to fierce imperialist-Zionist threats. It is an aggression that is no less effective than military aggression."[19]

Even after this grave admonishment, the Iraqis did not end their letter. They continued it with ridicule of the financial support that Kuwait gave them during the war, bitterly complaining about how Kuwait, the UAE, and others were now saying their support was in the form of loans rather than gifts.

> And despite the fact that all the assistance which Iraq obtained from its brothers constituted only a small portion of the great cost borne by the Iraqi economy and people, who offered rivers of blood in defense of pan Arab sovereignty and dignity, Iraq's leadership expressed its deep gratitude for all the brothers who offered assistance….However, the bitter

> truth that every Arab should know is that the basic part of the assistance we have mentioned is still recorded as debts, including what Kuwait and the UAE offered. More than a year ago we approached those concerned in a brotherly manner to cancel these debts but they evaded the issue.[20]

In a truly ironic and even bizarre analogy, the Iraqis compared their prevailing situation to that of Europe and the United States after World War II. "Taking the U.S. precedent into consideration, does not the logic of regional security make it incumbent on these states not only to cancel these debts but also organize an Arab plan similar to the Marshall Plan to compensate Iraq for some of the losses during the war?"[21] The letter ended with a repeat of the allegations against Kuwait and the UAE but again emphasized the transgressions of Kuwait. .."The Kuwaiti government is trespassing on Iraqi territory and stealing the wealth of those who protected Kuwait's territory, honor, and wealth."[22]

The above comments should have been very alarming to the Arab states, and Kuwait in particular. The allegations of aggression and strong admonishments that this behavior was intolerable and would not stand were unmistakable even to a neutral reader from the West. The allegation that Kuwait was involved in a conspiracy with the hated western imperialists and Israel was especially damning. This, coupled with allegations of violating Iraqi territory and stealing its wealth, should have indicated how serious Iraq was about these issues.

In addition to the release of the letter which had been sent by Iraq to the Arab League, the Iraqis published a therefore unreleased speech by Saddam Hussein that had occurred during the Baghdad Summit which had been held on 30 May 1990. This letter is very significant because it shows that three months before the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq was using the term "war" to describe the situation in the Gulf:

> With the same frankness, fraternity, and simplicity, we say that war is fought with soldiers and much harm is done by explosions, killing, and coup attempts—but it is also done by economic means. Therefore, we would ask our brothers who do not mean to wage war—I am now speaking only as far as Iraqi sovereignty is concerned—I say to those who do not mean to wage war on Iraq. This is in fact a kind of war against Iraq. Were it possible we could have endured….But I say we have reached a point where we can no longer withstand pressure.[23]

Note, this strong admonition was given to the Kuwaitis three months prior to the invasion.

In the state-run Iraqi press during the days immediately following the allegations included in Saddam Hussein's speech and elaborated in the letter to the Arab League, the drums of war began to be hammered at an increasing pace. One editorial that appeared the same day as the publication of the letter stated that "Iraq, which has resisted direct military war and emerged victorious, cannot stand idle against an economic war imposed on it."[24] Playing on the "poisoned dagger" message as the Iraqis began referring to Saddam's 17 July speech, an Iraqi paper accused the Kuwaitis of implementing "American oil policy," and then added its own barely veiled threats against Kuwait. "While receiving the poisonous dagger in their back as a reward for their pan-Arab positions, we will always be mindful of the proverb: One would be better off dead than having one's livelihood cut off. If words fail to afford us protection, we will have no choice but to resort to effective action to put things right and ensure the restitution of our rights."[25] Other editorials and statements by Iraqi senior officials continued to build on the allegations of a conspiracy and the poisoned dagger in the back. The state-run paper specifically identified Kuwait for policy inimical to the survival of Iraq's economy, indicating that negotiations would not resolve the situation. "After all of that, do they

want us to remain silent or hold consultations. If frank talk and revealing the facts about what has taken place is not enough to make the wrongdoers return to the right path, then action will be able to make even a stone understand."[26]

Of course during this period Kuwait and the rest of the Arab states were reacting to these allegations. Kuwait sent a letter to the Arab League refuting each allegation made by the Iraqis. It also participated in the increasing shuttle-diplomacy by the senior ministers and leaders from the majority of the Arab states in the Gulf who reportedly had meetings with all the key players in the increasing crisis. Saudi Arabia in particular was playing a major role in attempting to mediate the crisis. Kuwait and the UAE agreed to scale down their production, and all the Arab OPEC states agreed to raise the price of oil by two dollars a barrel. All of this action was to no avail. The Iraqi leaders and press continued to build the case against Kuwait. They turned every Kuwaiti action into a further insult to either Iraq, or to the Arab nation as a whole. When the Kuwaiti Government sent a message requesting support from the United Nations, Saddam Hussein harangued it for bringing foreigners into the crisis. Also significantly, the alleged encroachment on Iraqi territory was now being called "usurpation" a term predominantly used before only to describe Israel's actions in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Tariq `Aziz, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iraq, gives credence to this analysis that the word "usurpation" was deliberately used to incite the Arabs in his remarks when he quoted Saddam Hussein as saying:

> We are forced to say this. And this causes us heartrending pain. It saddens us a great deal. We did not wish to speak of usurped rights when the usurpers are Arabs. We wished to focus in our speech, as has always been our habit, on the rights exclusively usurped by foreigners. However, the evildoers are the only ones responsible before God and the nation for

> the consequences of their bad deeds, in which they have demonstrated things we have never seen before."[27]

These threads of conspiracy which had only been alluded to before, as early as 22 July were now being directly attributed to Kuwait. Saddam Hussein was also quoted as saying that "if words fail to provide protection, effective action must be taken to restore matters to their normal course and to restore the usurped right to their owners."[28] The article warned: "In defending its national rights and the rights of its Arab nation, Iraq cannot be blamed."[29] Throughout the rest of the month of July, the drum of conspiracy continued to be banged in various foray.

The same themes of Kuwaiti treachery continued to be elaborated, but Iraq had a very serious problem to overcome. It was the religious and political prohibition among all Arab states not to interfere in internal operations of another Arab state, and, more particularly, the strong taboo against one Arab state attacking another. In light of this proscription, the Iraqis had to portray the Kuwaitis as traitors to pan-Arabism to have any chance of justifying attacking Kuwait. Unwittingly, the Kuwaitis played into Iraqi hands by seeking mediation of the crisis from the United Nations. Even the nations in the region that supported Kuwait thought the crisis should be handled internal to the region by Arabs. American efforts to try to influence the situation were not sensitive to this concern. The Congress only made Iraq's case look stronger when it passed a bill for sanctions against Iraq. This unwittingly helped Iraq to play on the long-standing biases and distrust of most Arab nations of American intentions. The final subterfuge used by the Iraqis was to justify their invasion with the flimsy excuse that they were entreated to support the "right thinking" Arabs in Kuwait.

It must be emphasized at this point, that the sources cited so far were only a tiny sampling of the rhetoric and actions by Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi government, and the state-run press available from unclassified sources over the six months prior to the invasion of Kuwait. Of course our analysts and decision makers, and particularly the Arab countries' analysts and decision makers, had access to much more information than this very limited sample. It is interesting to note that the world still seemed stunned that Saddam Hussein invaded, despite his clear warning that he was about to take action. Although this paper will not address the broader sociological and psychological reasons for this faulty perception, it will now review what some of the key participants have written about the buildup to the invasion to determine if the rhetoric of Saddam Hussein was factored into the decisions about what action the Iraqis might take.

Notes

[1] FBIS-NES-090-137, 17 July 1990, 22.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 23.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 22.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 23.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

Notes

[22] Ibid.
[23] FBIS-NES-90-139, 19 July 1990, 21.
[24] Ibid., 22.
[25] Ibid.
[26] FBIS-NES-90-140, 20 July 1990, 18.
[27] FBIS-NES-90-142, 24 July 1990, 24.
[28] FBIS-NES-90-141, 23 July 1990, 28.
[29] Ibid.

Chapter 4

Warnings Ignored!

Even in face of the above (limited) sample of the pronouncements of Saddam Hussein and his government, the United States and the Arab world have documented that they were surprised by the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. In hindsight, given the information that was available from open sources such as delineated above, and the known fact that there were significant empirical indications of Iraq's intentions, including pictures of deployment of forces in sufficient numbers postured for an invasion, it is interesting and disturbing that the surprise of the invasion was reportedly so pronounced. It is fortunate that many of the principal decision makers and analysts have published their memoirs about this period. This paper will now review some of these sources to attempt to determine if such decision makers were cognizant of Saddam Hussein's rhetoric and factored it into their assessment of Iraq's intentions to invade Kuwait.

The level of United States government officials' surprise as well as their failure to heed the words of Saddam Hussein, were directly addressed by the then Secretary of State, James A. Baker III in his book, *Politics and Diplomacy.* "Simply put, the reason why nobody believed Saddam would attack is because no realistic calculation of his interests could have foreseen a full-scale invasion of Kuwait."[1] Interestingly, Baker also attributed this level of surprise to the Russians as well, writing, "Shevardnaze had put it

correctly in Moscow on the third day following the invasion: this was an irrational act that made no sense."[2] Secretary Baker supports the thesis of this paper that the United States did not pay attention to the very clear early warning by Saddam Hussein: "As Saddam himself told April Glaspie a week before the invasion, 'Do not push us to [war]. Do not make it the only option left with which we can protect our dignity. If Iraq is publicly humiliated by the United States, it will have no choice but to respond, however illogical and self-destructive that would prove.' Unfortunately, Saddam was true to his words."[3]

Further discussion about other nations included the Israeli intelligence organization's deduction that Saddam Hussein's words were just rhetoric. "Israel's intelligence service, the Mossad, told U.S. intelligence counterparts that Saddam's rhetoric was designed to deter an Israeli attack, not threaten one of his own."[4] Secretary Baker also reveals the level of consultation on this issue that occurred and how all parties were incorrect in their analysis. "As late as July 31, King Hussein and President Mubarak reassured us that Saddam was engaged in verbal bluster, not literal threats. Ironically, most of our allies privately worried throughout the spring and summer of 1990 that the United States might overreact to Saddam's new aggressiveness!"[5]

A principal argument that colored the assessment of the threat by all of the countries involved was the precept that Arab nations do not attack other Arab nations. This idea was so embedded in most everyone's mind that they used it to disregard all of the other statements by Saddam Hussein and even the incontrovertible evidence that Iraq had deployed its forces in position to invade.

It is significant that Mr. Charles Allen, the then National Intelligence Officer for Warning, had assessed that Iraq was going to invade Kuwait a week before the invasion.[6] However, he was not successful in convincing the decision makers and other analysts in the intelligence and security community that the threat was not only real, but imminent. According to Mr. Allen, he was unable to convince the national command authorities that Iraqi intentions were not just to bluff the Kuwaitis into paying economic tribute to Iraq. He also felt that the troop build-up was "much more than was necessary for a limited seizure of the Kuwaiti share of the Rumaylah oil field."[7] Despite this information, he was not able to dissuade the Bush administration's national security team from relying on the personal assessments of the leaders of the Arab nations that Saddam Hussein was bluffing.

For the purpose of this paper though, it must be emphasized that Mr. Allen was reacting to the sources that were described earlier as empirical information. Primarily, these were images of Iraqi preparations, the locations of the deployments, and the numbers of troops. During an interview with this author, Mr. Allen stated the pronouncements of Saddam Hussein were not a defining element of his analysis of the crisis.[8] Speaking about the need for analysts to identify discontinuities in policy that could provide warning, Mr. Allen said there is a tendency for analysts to miss the discontinuities because they explain them away. They do this either by describing the discontinuities as irrational acts, or miss them entirely because the analysts are looking through the prism of their expectations based on the friendly country's perspective and policy.[9]

Significantly though, it was not just the analysts from the United States that missed the true meaning of the discontinuities exhibited by Iraq. Arabists throughout the region also miscalculated the perfidy of Saddam Hussein. Alan Munro, the British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the crisis, reveals in his book, *An Embassy at War*, the depth of surprise by not just the British diplomatic and security community, but also by the leaders in the Gulf. "Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, in the small hours of 2 August, caught everyone off balance; Kuwaitis, Saudis and their Gulf partners, Iranians, Egyptians, to say nothing of the USA, Britain, France, and the rest of the Western World. Even Iraq's closest outside associate in terms of military support, the USSR, appears to have had no insight into Iraq's plans to attack."[10] The British have been involved in the Middle and Near-East for a long time and had excellent diplomatic and even deep friendship ties with the leaders and senior ministers of many of the countries. Yet, they also misread the signs they were seeing.

Mr. Munro reveals that the Saudis, in particular, were concerned about the radical accusations of Saddam Hussein, and spent the months of 1990 prior to the crisis attempting to mediate between Kuwait and Iraq, and to tone down Iraq's invective against the Western world. However, they still missed the signs, detailed in Chapter Three, in which Saddam Hussein told the world he was going to act, rather than negotiate, to solve his disputes with Kuwait. Mr. Munro writes that when, three uears after the war, he and Margaret Thatcher discussed the reason for the failure of the world to see Saddam's intent, her comment was, "it was not so much a failure of intelligence gathering as of intelligence assessment. But perhaps in our appreciation of the situation we also to some extent allowed the wish to become father to the thought."[11]

This appears to have been the overriding failure of all participants in the process. The Arabs believed that actual invasion of Kuwait, an Arab state, by fellow-Arab state Iraq was unthinkable. Ambassador Munro cites Saudi Arabia's and Egypt's unwavering belief in that idea resulted in his government not sounding the alarm until too late. Despite the increasing evidence of Iraqi deployment of overwhelming force, the governments in the region stuck to this principle rather than to the facts. Munro gives the Iraqis credit for an elaborate deception. But, it is this writer's opinion that it was not so much a deception plan by Saddam Hussein, as the self-deception by his adversaries that led to the course of events. In addition to the rhetoric of Iraq, one other fact should have gone into the calculus, especially for the British, in determining whether or not Iraq would attack another Arab state. The reason for this statement is because Britain had faced the same situation between Iraq and Kuwait in 1961. The difference then was that the British correctly assessed the threat and promptly deployed their forces into Kuwait before Iraq could invade.[12]At that time, the unthinkable was thinkable!

Notes

[1] James A. Baker, III, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1995), 274.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 4.

[7] Phone Interview with Mr. Charles Allen. 20 Nov 1996.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Alan Munro, *An Embassy At War* (London: Brassey's, Inc., 1996), 38.

[11] Ibid., 39.

[12] Adel Darwish and Gregory Alexander, *Unholy Babylon* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 32.

Chapter 5

Conclusions The Unthinkable Must Become Thinkable!

Many books, articles, and official analyses have been produced to determine why the world's most sophisticated and knowledgeable analysts and decision makers so badly miscalculated the intentions of Saddam Hussein prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in early August 1990. This paper has taken just small sample of the data that were available to try to help analyze this process. The information used in this study was available to anyone without any security access limitation. It was, as stated in the introduction to this paper, a gift from the Iraqis whose value was not understood.

Sadly, this was not the first time in our history of crises that the gift of foreknowledge of enemy intentions was not recognized. By way of introduction to the main focus of the paper, this paper cited only a few examples of the pronouncements by the North Vietnamese leadership that were available in open publications in the early 1960s. In hindsight, it is likely that had our senior strategists paid more attention to these writings, they could have developed a more effective strategy for the Vietnam War. One can also postulate that if the allies had paid more attention to *Mien Kampf* in the early thirties, perhaps they would have taken earlier actions that would have avoided the war, or at least let them see the depths the holocaust could take. It may seem idle speculation, because these possibilities cannot be proven. However, a study of the history of crises,

including our most recent war in the Persian Gulf, seems to show a pattern of failure by analysts to understand the value of the gift they have in their hands.

Furthermore, we have seen that during the buildup to many of the crises/wars, there is strong tendency for the analysts and decision makers to view statements of intent as rhetoric of an irrational actor. Hindsight shows that, in fact, this rhetoric was a well-reasoned (though abhorrent) scheme to justify the impending actions of an adversary. Moreover, for our analysts and leaders to be able to justify their failure to identify the hostile intent, there is also the tendency to attribute such failure to the success of the hostile party's deception.

The surprise of the Iraqi invasion has all of these tendencies. Clearly, using just the small sample this paper included, it can be seen that Saddam Hussein was building a case for invasion of Kuwait at least six months prior to the act. It is true that the actual target was obscured by focusing rhetoric against the United States and Israel during the early months of 1990. However, given the context of the previous rhetoric, the speech by Saddam Hussein with the coincidental letter to the Arab League accusing Kuwait of committing economic warfare and the deployment of 30,000 troops from armored and mechanized Republican Guard Divisions to the Kuwaiti border, analysts should have been able to determine that Iraq was preparing for an invasion at least two weeks prior to the actual attack. When you add the facts that were available from empirical open and classified sources, plus take into account the long-standing claims on Kuwait's territory by Iraq, and add in the incidents, such as 1961, when the Arab Iraqis were preparing to invade the Arab Kuwaitis, the evidence should have been preponderant to determine Iraq was not bluffing.

So, given all of this evidence which has been documented in numerous official studies of the crisis, why did the Western and Arab nations fail to see what, in hindsight, appears to be obvious? The answer is in the unthinkable.

The Arabs were convinced that Arab Iraq would not invade Arab Kuwait because it was unthinkable. Quite simply, despite historical precedence of Iraqi intentions, Arab leaders and Western analysts and decision makers were blinded to the facts by the one precept Arab nations do not fight other Arabs. Because of this one precept, as late as one day before the invasion, Saudi Arabia was able to convince the most knowledgeable Arabists in the United States and Great Britain that Saddam Hussein was only bluffing to get economic sanctions from Kuwait. This occurred, despite the empirical evidence of 100,000 battle-hardened troops poised on the Kuwait border. The analysts in both the Arab world and the Western world even discussed the fact that this was a far larger force than would be needed to seize the Rumayhla oil fields, yet they still could not believe the unthinkable.

Mr. Allen provided some insight into this problem in his discussion about the failure of analysts and decision makers to see the discontinuities that could provide the warning. As we have seen, in some cases the reasons for these discontinuities are given to us, wittingly or not, by potential adversaries. Too often, we have failed to recognize their significance because we are looking at the world through our own prism, using it to determine what is rational, and discounting as mere rhetoric the clear signals that do not align with the world as seen through our prism. Even President Clinton has frequently said in press conferences for us to not pay attention to what Saddam Hussein says, but to pay attention to what he does.

Beyond the original thesis of this paper that potentially hostile nations often tell us what they are going to do before they do it is another most critical lesson that we apparently have failed to learn throughout our history of coping with crises. That is, we tend to discount something because to us it is unthinkable. Hitler's holocaust was unthinkable. For the North Vietnamese to attack the ancient capital of Hue was unthinkable. Russians deploying ICBMs on an island 90 miles from the United States was unthinkable. And, most recently, Arabs attacking other Arabs was unthinkable.

There are numerous sources of information for any analyst or decision maker to wade through to get to the truth. This paper highlights a source that has been overlooked to our detriment in the past. It is important for analysts and decision makers to carefully assess information, no matter whether the source is open or covert, based on the facts as they are, not as they wish them to be. We have squandered the gift of revealed intent in the past. We should add open source pronouncements to our analysis and decision making tool bag in the future.

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