



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**The Keep**

## The Keep<sup>1</sup>

The Law of the Keep:  
The warrior who keeps himself in his keep will end-up with an unkempt neighborhood.

Security is the first of all liberties.<sup>2</sup>

**September 15, 2008**

At the start of what will be a debated article, I wish to make clear: The United States special warfare units do not stay in their keeps. Delta, the SEALs, and other special forces attack others' keeps.

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. While visiting Wales, I did some research on Wales' Cardiff Castle. As I studied the Romans' occupation of this part of the world, and the strategy behind living in forts and keeps, memories of the Vietnam War came to mind.<sup>3</sup> (A keep was a small fortress within a fortress. It acted as another security wall against an enemy.)

I also thought about the Romans' initial defeat in their assault on the island of Britain. In 55 BC, Caesar took on the Englanders with insufficient troops, only 10,000 men. He retreated, regrouped, and "surged" back again with 50,000 troops. For his next assault, in 0054 BC, he had enough soldiers to conquer present day England and Wales, including their keeps.

During this visit to Wales, the Cardiff Castle, and the castle keep, I also recalled:

- My training sessions while in the US Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) program. The Teams were trained to go only so far as a beach. Recognizing the limitations of this approach, UDT was transformed into the SEALs to do in-country combat: To take the fight to the enemy.
- I was reminded of the amphibious raids we conducted against the Viet Cong in 1964 and 1965. We practiced: Take the fight to the enemy with boots on the ground.
- Later, while assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency, I remembered lectures at the Army War College about counter-insurgency and how to win: Take the fight to the enemy.
- During this time, the British had been in a counter-insurgency war in Malaysia and stories were coming out about this conflict, and how the British won: By taking the fight to the enemy.

In WWII, taking the fight to the enemy meant initially, bombing the enemy and the surrounding civilian urban population into near oblivion, then cleaning up what was left with hand-to-hand street combat. The combat strategy equation was:

---

<sup>1</sup> Photo on cover courtesy of

[https://www.google.com/search?q=castle+and+moat+pictures&espv=2&biw=1255&bih=609&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjh-7N04\\_NAhVE0WMKHV2UDi8Q7AkINg#imgrc=Ae5P0ZE0hoJYsM%3A](https://www.google.com/search?q=castle+and+moat+pictures&espv=2&biw=1255&bih=609&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjh-7N04_NAhVE0WMKHV2UDi8Q7AkINg#imgrc=Ae5P0ZE0hoJYsM%3A)

<sup>2</sup> "Health is the first of all liberties," paraphrased from quote by Henri Amiel (1821-1881), *Journal*, in Leonard Roy Frank, *Quotationary* (New York: Random House, 2001), 348.

<sup>3</sup> The essays on Wales are included in the series "Traveling Europe."

First, bombs in the air + Second, boots on the ground = Securing the ground.

It was accepted that street-to-street fighting from those boots on the ground would result in huge casualties. Yet, there was no alternative. *The enemy was going to stay lodged until he was dislodged.*

### **Our “Keeps” in Iraq**

In Iraq, one variable in the equation above, massing bombing was not executed because the resultant loss of civilians was not acceptable. Thus, the WWII view of, “We had to destroy the city in order to save it,” gave way to the strategy of...no strategy at all, at least for the first part of the war.

### **Notes about this Essay.**

As you will see from my footnotes, I have relied on Bob Woodward’s recent book on the Iraq War, *The War from Within*, for many of the facts and quotes cited here. As with my practice for these essays, I have added my own thoughts about the subject.

Regarding Woodward’s book: It is an extraordinary work. It contains page after page of direct quotes, not only from extensive interviews (many with President Bush), but also from (formerly) classified meetings and documents. A number of these documents were de-classified because of Mr. Woodward’s requests.

The world of news gathering is changing: The public relies less on newspapers than on TV. Some people now find TV sound bites too detailed. If they assimilate any news at all, it is with a one-bullet item on the computer screen when they first log-on to the Internet.

Most of the Blogs, Tubes, and Faces are created through opinions, not facts. That’s fine, but I receive from my readers and friends so-called factual essays/reports/blogs that, upon research, I find inaccurate, ill-sourced, or not sourced at all. Yet, because they are “on-line,” they somehow carry an aura of authenticity.

I do not question how effective and useful some of the blogs are. But we must be wary of many of them. Some are no more accurate than the recent AIG insurance company ads about the greatness of the company (shortly before the company went under). Before we completely adapt to the Blogosphere of Innuendos and Fatuous Opinions, let’s hope our society can nurture more Bob Woodwards.

Other than attacking Iraq, we learn our leaders had no strategy for the operation except nebulous quotes from the administration about bringing freedom and democracy to its citizens. Bush said, “...people, if just given a chance, will choose free societies.”<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Bush, your statement is admirable, but where was your strategy to “give the people a chance”? Only this: Get rid of Saddam. That is not a strategy. That is another goal. Eventually, and in fairness, a strategy was formulated, one we examine shortly.

<sup>4</sup> Bob Woodward, *The War Within* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 433.

### **Security for the Populace Outweighs Democracy for the Populace**

I'm a big fan of democracy and a die-hard for republicanism. I've been around enough places where these institutions do not flourish. Take my word, unless you are in charge, you would not want to live in these habitats.

Notwithstanding my political bent, I believe any effort to liberate a non-democratic country (such as Iraq) and make it a democracy (which is problematic unto itself) cannot succeed if the citizens are not secure. I'm stating the obvious here, but for the past several years, this truism has been ignored.

How can an Iraqi father care about the results of a vote when he and his family are in danger of being killed? Let's get our priorities straight. We assume the Iraqi society, after centuries of tribal governance (interspersed with short spans of Ottoman Empire influence, British administration, and Saddam's dictatorship) wishes to be converted to democracy. Given this assumption: First comes liberation. Second comes security. Third comes democracy. Until recently, our approach has been: First comes liberation. Second comes democracy. Third comes security.

We've had the cart before the horse. Even worse, the attempt to "build" democracy has been predicated on persuading the Iraqis to write a constitution and hold elections. All well and good, except for one minor point. Without the Rule of Law in practice, the Rule of Law in theory is pointless. If the elected Iraq officials, working under a constitution, cannot provide its citizens security, the exercise is moot.

Here's what happened in Iraq:

- America invaded Iraq and handily won the initial attack.
- The managers of the invasion provided no means to keep Iraq's infrastructure intact. To the contrary, Iraq's Sunni-dominated infrastructure was dissolved, without any substitution to provide: (a) constabulary, (b) military, (c) judicial, (d), and many other services, even garbage collection.
- Such a void was accepted by the Bush administration because Iraq's civil servants and military were tainted by their association with Saddam Hussein. They were not ideologically pure enough.
- Without pay, the disbanded and now disenfranchised (but well-armed) former Sunni cops and soldiers took up arms against the newly installed Shia government and American forces. I wager they will be an everlasting and effective military thorn in the side of the Shia government. The Sunnis and the Shias are pre-ordained to kill each other off.

- Against this rising tide of violence, al Qaeda entered the picture, forming associations with the out-of-power Sunnis and their Sunni Sheiks.<sup>5</sup> America and Iraq's new Shia government found itself at battle with al Qaeda, Sunni insurgents...and even Shias who did not want to be part of the "government."
- Sectarian conflicts began. The Sunni and Shia factions began fighting.
- The elected Shia administration was known to countenance death squads against the Sunnis. The Shia Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, went so far as to forbid (!) American troops from going after these death squads.<sup>6</sup> So, America's primary job became one of training (creating) Iraqi police and military forces...the very forces we disbanded when entering the country. Yet, because we did not trust these men, we would not arm them sufficiently to do their jobs. They were denied the very weapons the Americans were using and became targets for the insurgents.
- Yet the Shia-based police became a repressive force against Sunni citizens.
- The violence escalated. More bombings. More killings. Sunni against Shia. Shia against Shia. And all essentially pissed-off at America. So much for George W.'s bringing peace and freedom to Iraq.
- The warring factions eventually gained control of the neighborhoods of towns and parts of the country sides. The result was an exercise in ethnic cleansing.

At the risk of resorting to profanity, which I use sparingly in my writings, and therefore ask the indulgence of the reader, I cannot hold my tongue. What fucking arrogance on the part of the Bush administration. What fucking hubris. What fucking ignorance. All in the name of untold miseries that were laid upon untold numbers of people. This writer, one inured to human's stupidity and callowness, still shudders at the thought of Bush Jr. tranquilly painting his life away, during his retirement, secure in thinking he did the right thing because his God so-foreordained and sanctioned his actions.

### **A Recipe of Failure**

Returning from my denunciation, how did we react to this increasingly religious civil war and war against infidel inhabitants? Many years ago, I came across a saying. It goes something like this: *A ship is safe in its harbor, but that is not where the ship is supposed to be.*

We reacted by staying safe in our harbor.

I promise I will not make this a red or blue diatribe. But these facts put America at a disadvantage in fighting this war:

---

<sup>5</sup> Some pre-invasion comments by the Administration made reference to al Qaeda's possible presence in Iraq and working with the Sunnis. I was astounded by these statements, because it was well known that Osama considered Sadaam Hussein an apostate. It turns out that this assertion had no basis in fact and was flat-out wrong.

<sup>6</sup> Woodward, 306.

- We Americans are unwilling (as a population) to accept casualties in a war that is “distant” from our local shopping malls. Time and again, we’ve learned our premium on life is not the same as that in many other cultures (especially the lives of our youth). Thus, our focus on keeping everyone alive is admirable, but it is unrealistic and counter-productive to practice this idea during combat.
- Street-to-street and village-to-village fighting inevitably lead to large numbers of soldiers being killed or wounded. Even more, mingling with the citizenry on an ongoing basis is hazardous. Living in secure bases and returning to them after patrols is safer than staying in the neighborhood.
- Armored vehicles, offer more protection, but “cruising” streets does not provide “boots on the ground.” One can’t take the fight to the enemy by what General Petraeus described as *commuting to combat*.
- In the end, engaging the population and winning them over is the only way to win an insurgency war. The population must be isolated from the enemy, then “weaned-away” from that enemy.

Yet our forces purposely kept themselves in a commuting mode for conducting the war. They took over a neighborhood for a while, and then left it...only to be re-occupied by the enemy. Thousands of buildings were “cleared-out” only to be abandoned for later re-occupation by both enemy and the ordinary citizen.

The revised strategy of the surge was not just the surge itself, but what was done with the extra troops. The main place to start was in Baghdad. These soldiers would leave their secure keeps and live “among the Iraqi population instead of returning to big bases after patrols and operations.”<sup>7</sup>

One of the best of America’s warriors, who played an instrumental role in turning around the initial strategy, was (is) retired General Jack Keane. He had this to say, “One of the most significant things that we have learned is that security is a necessary precondition for political and economic progress”<sup>8</sup>

I have the greatest respect for this man, but his utterance is astounding. “We” have known about this aspect of insurgent warfare for over fifty years, yet we did not practice it until 2007. See sidebar below for one example.

### **Echoes of the Past.<sup>9</sup>**

In April of 1969, the commander in chief of American Forces in the Pacific, Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., sent a cable to General Earle Wheeler, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and to General Creighton Abrams, the commander of American forces in Vietnam, with a pressing message. It is past time, Admiral McCain advised, for American units in Vietnam to overhaul their mission: the goal of the military effort in Vietnam should be to protect Vietnamese citizens from Communist insurgents, he wrote, rather than merely to hunt guerrillas in the countryside and then withdraw to the safety of permanent bases.

<sup>7</sup> Bob Woodward, 280.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>9</sup> Jeffery Goldberg, “The Wars of John McCain,” *The Atlantic*, October 2008, 40. The contents of this sidebar are direct quotes from this article.

“The war has had from the outset major political as well as military overtones, Admiral McCain wrote. “All agencies recognize that this is the time to put emphasis on protection of population and special enhancement of civilian security.”

### **Shooting themselves in the Foot**

Some of my readers have taken me to task about my assertions that, in the long run, our way of life travels better than the alternatives espoused by Muslim fanatics, notably al Qaeda. I still hold the view that Osama’s misguided zealots are too far gone for even themselves to recognize they are becoming their own worst enemy. Their attacks in Jordon and Saudi Arabia were not exactly public relations coups.

They came to Iraq where they began bullying the local leaders and taking over the turf. As a Foreign Service officer described to President Bush:<sup>10</sup>

“You know, Mr. President, I can’t tell you exactly what it is, but something’s going on out here in Anbar (a province in Iraq). Things are starting to turn.” He talked about how local citizens were starting to come to the Americans with their problems and how al Qaeda’s brutal intimidation tactics were making the terrorist network more and more unpopular.

Lesson? Give them enough rope and they’ll hang themselves, *as long as the citizens have an alternative and can be made safe.*

America’s revised strategy has been to arm and fund these Sunnis to dislodge al Qaeda, which they have (thus far) done with success. Irony in action, we are now funding the very folks who, in the past, were killing our soldiers and Marines. Is there an alternative? Not if we want to keep al Qaeda out of Iraq.

### **Potent Patience**

In previous essays, I’ve suggested a strategy of “Potent Patience.” Stay armed, protect our interests, but adapt to reality. This reality is simple: America is not going to win 21<sup>st</sup> century wars with a 20<sup>th</sup> century mentality. With our might, we are not going to lose a tactical military battle. But until we alter our (short-range) view about how to combat insurgents, we are not going to win the long-range war against them.

### **A Model for Success**

We read that the Iraqi war is slowly turning around. We know the violence is down, and American troop casualties are down as well. This welcome trend may still come undone if the Sunnis and Shias can’t reach an accommodation. But for now, here’s what happened upon General Petraeus becoming the Commanding General, Multi-National Force, Iraq.

He immediately told his staff and troops he was going to implement a new approach: The mission ... “was to protect the population and do it by living among the people.” He laid-out the strategy in a three-page guide titled, “Multi-National Force---Iraq Commander’s Counterinsurgency

---

<sup>10</sup> Woodward, 282.

Guidance.”<sup>11</sup> Below is a summary of this document. It essentially says, “We’re leaving our keeps and attacking theirs.”

1. **Secure and serve the population.** The Iraqi people are the decisive “terrain.”
2. **Live among the people.** You can’t commute to this fight.
3. **Hold areas that have been secured.** The people need to know we and our Iraqi partners will not abandon their neighborhoods.
4. **Pursue enemy relentlessly.** Do not let them retain support areas or sanctuaries. Force the enemy to respond to us.
5. **Generate unity of effort.** Coordinate operations (with other groups) to ensure all are working to achieve a common purpose.
6. **Promote reconciliation.** We cannot kill our way out of this endeavor.
7. **Defeat the network, not just the attack.** Focus assets to identify the network behind the attack, and go after its leaders, financiers, suppliers, and operators.
8. **Foster Iraqi legitimacy.** Legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqi people is essential to overall success.
9. **Employ all assets to isolate and defeat the terrorists and insurgents.** Counter-terrorist forces alone cannot defeat al Qaeda and other extremists.
10. **Employ money as a weapon system.** [Reporter’s note: My equivalent to the “Beans” part of my Bombs, Beans, and Bombast concept.]
11. **Fight for intelligence.** A nuanced understanding of the situation is everything.
12. **Walk.** Move mounted, work dismounted. Stop by, don’t drive by. Patrol on foot and engage the population. Situational awareness can only be gained by interfacing with the people face-to-face.
13. **Understand the neighborhood.** Understand local culture and history. Learn about the tribes, formal and informal leaders, governmental structures, and local security forces.
14. **Build relationships.** Together with our Iraqi counterparts, strive to establish productive links with local leaders, tribal sheikhs, governmental officials, religious leaders, and interagency partners.
15. **Look for sustainable solutions.**
16. **Maintain continuity and tempo through transitions.**
17. **Manage expectations.**
18. **Be first with the truth.** Integrity is critical to this fight. Don’t put lipstick on pigs. [Reporter’s note: My equivalent to the “Bombast” part of my Bombs, Beans, and Bombast concept.]
19. **Fight the information war relentlessly.** Realize that we are in a struggle for legitimacy and in the end will be won or lost in the perception of the Iraqi people. [Reporter’s note: More “bombast.”]
20. **Live our values.** Do not hesitate to kill or capture the enemy, but stay true to the values we hold dear. This is what distinguishes us from our enemies.
21. **Exercise initiative.**
22. **Prepare for and exploit opportunities.**
23. **Learn and adapt.** [Reporter note: Petraeus himself has discarded some of his own ideas.]

---

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages)

As of this writing, Prime Minister Maliki is adapting a more neutral stance of his treatment of the Sunnis. He has not yet turned-down a Petraeus request to kill or capture a Shia militant.

### **An Unnecessary War, but is it Necessary to Win it?**

At the risk of sounding like the score from *Bohemia*, I've repeatedly written the invasion of Iraq was not only unnecessary, but the action would underscore our efforts in Afghanistan. As the last part of this essay will claim, that is what happened.

I read and hear that now we are in Iraq, we can't afford to lose because it would lead to an *unstable* Middle East, and the encouragement of militant Islamic extremists to do yet more damage.

I am not wise enough, nor privy to enough intelligence, to know if this claim is true. However, the comments of some in the Bush Administration about this matter are not only inaccurate, they are dishonest and downright pathetic. Example? Secretary of State Rice. Read on folks. It will make your blood boil. During interviews with Woodward, Rice claims:

- Iraq and the surrounding area had been anything but stable before the invasion. She cites Yassar Arafat stealing the Palestinian people blind, and Syrian forces in Lebanon, which have nothing to do with Iraq.
- The topper: malignant forces at the radical mosques had helped produce al Qaeda. Sure, but these events occurred *after* the American invasion! Before Saddam was toppled, al Qaeda had no presence in Iraq *whatsoever*. What is more, al Qaeda considered Saddam not pure enough for their tastes.
- She was not responsible for the tragic misconduct of the war during its first couple years. After all, she was only Bush's national security advisor. As she says, "It wasn't my responsibility to manage Iraq." No, but it was her responsibility to help her boss manage it. Granted, she had no control over the Generals' catastrophic "keep" mentality. Nonetheless, her denial of culpability is, at best, disingenuous. After all, Rice had been delegated (by Bush) to do a "strategy review," from which nothing occurred.
- She claims a strong Iraq is going to be Iran's worst nightmare. Madame Secretary, Saddam's Iraq was *already* Iran's worst nightmare. You and I had better hope the new Shia leaders in Iraq will forget their centuries-old ties to their Shia brothers in Iran. Your statement is incredible, showing a naiveté that is astounding. Yet, you are likely now sitting on boards of directors, and lecturing to spellbound audiences about your perspicacity.

### **Our "Keeps" in Afghanistan**

I wish I could close this report now. I wish we could conclude that the counter insurgency strategy in Iraq is working (which it is), and America was using the same strategy in Afghanistan. Sadly, we are not. Will we ever learn?

Our operations in Afghanistan are...yep, based on residing in safe "keeps" from which the soldiers commute to the fight.

America, like the unsuccessful Soviets who were there a few decades ago, holds the large cities and provincial capitals. The insurgency is occurring in the rural areas. These rural villages are not being protected from the Taliban. In the meantime, the United States concentrates efforts on extending the reach and power of the central government into the parts of the country that have been governed by single clans or tribes, districts called the *woleswali*.<sup>12</sup> That is where things happen, not in the capital.

The Afghanistan government leaders themselves are hostages in their own secure compounds. They leave their keeps at the risk of death.

General Petraeus would have our troops knocking on the doors and staying in the houses at these places. To do so would require another “surge” and the changing of strategies. It would likely entail the deployment of thousands of troops and supporting “win hearts and minds” teams into roughly 200 of these areas. It would require enough resources to provide permanent security to the people, an immense task.

The casualties would probably be high, as they were during the initial surge in Iraq. And it is not assured that the strategy will work. But what is the alternative?

### **Bush: The Bantam Rooster Cowboy**

Not so long ago, I was in Bush’s corner. I attended the 2005 inauguration ceremonies in Washington, DC to help celebrate his victory. (See “Presidential Inauguration, 2005.”) It was not because of any preconceived bias that I came to be his critic. Permit me a short diversion back to my childhood and teenage years in the Southwest to explain why I began to have doubts about this man.

First, other than his declared approach to problem solving (his “instinctive reactions,” and “I’m a gut player,” which came later in his presidency), I noticed he had a swagger about him. I’d seen this swagger in some men who lived where I was reared: West Texas and Southeast New Mexico. They wore boots and western belt buckles, but never rode a horse. They walked with a gait as if they were acting the part of John Wayne. Their strides were accentuated by keeping their arms slightly away from their bodies, as if a pistol belt might be in the way of a natural arm swing.

And they exhibited an assuredness about everything in life. There were no doubts. Everything was binary; good or bad, yes or no, black or white. They seemed to operate on the principle of never being in error, of being cocksure about everything. They seemed to be immune to counter-opinions.

I watched them in action at Rodeo dances (dances held after the conclusion of a rodeo). Usually, it was only a matter of time before they were “insulted” and got into a fight. They looked for confrontations. If they could not come across an argument, they created their own.

---

<sup>12</sup> Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “All Counterinsurgency is Local,” *The Atlantic*, 2008, 36 and 38.

The men who especially stick in my mind were not physically imposing. In fact, most of the big “cowboys” I knew back in those days fit a profile the very opposite of the men I am now describing. They were gentle men.

I imagine a psychologist would have a take on the behavior of these arrogant men. Maybe the shrink would conclude their demeanor was an over-reaction to being stubby.

Anyway, among other creatures, we raised chickens on our ranch. Some of our roosters were huge and as child, I kept clear of them. But one rooster was quite small. Nonetheless, like all roosters, he maintained a cocksure air about himself. Even more, this chicken was very aggressive, often attacking others who were three or four times his size. I later learned this small rooster is called the Bantam cock and comes in at about 20 ounces, in comparison to the Brama cock, who might weight 12 pounds.

For short-hand, we nick-named this strutting midget the Banty Rooster, but I’ll stay with the name Bantam for this story.

As I grew up, and as I reflected about my life and times in the southwest, I drew comparisons to those silly insecure drugstore cowboys---those who made their way with bullying bravado---to the Bantam Rooster. I nicknamed them, “Bantam Rooster Cowboys,” and to this day, they hold my pity. And I must admit, for some of them, those I saw do damage to others, they hold my contempt.

I am sad to say that, ever so slowly, I began to associate Bush’s behavior to that of the Bantam Rooster Cowboy. I realize I may be guilty of stereotyping. Even worse, I may be stereotyping the American President to that of a small rooster. I’m sorry if my comparison offends you, but just read his comments and proclamations. Watch his movements, at least his demeanor in his first five or six years in office. I trust you will see my point. He’s a flippant, insecure Bantam Rooster Cowboy.

It’s not really funny. It’s too tragic for comedy. And to his credit, Bush has altered some of his Bantam Rooster Cowboy traits. Yet, he remains so cocksure, at least on the surface. He continues to self-deprecate himself, all the while his actions have resulted in deprecating most of the Middle East.

Let’s close this part of the report with Woodward’s views:<sup>13</sup>

For years, time and again, President Bush has displayed impatience; bravado...the result has too often been impulsiveness and carelessness and, perhaps most troubling, a delayed reaction to realities and advice that run counter to his gut.”

Mr. Woodward’s take on President Bush seems to fit the traits of the Bantam Rooster Cowboy.

### **Other Character Deficiencies**

---

<sup>13</sup> Woodward, 433.

Let's lighten the load a bit. The real reason I've come to view Bush with skepticism? The man can't dance the Texas Two Step. Any self-respecting Bantam Rooster Cowboy should at least be able to demonstrate Texas' state dance. During the 2005 inauguration, I watched him on the dance floor, and thought, "Strange. here's a wearer of Texas boots, Texas belt buckles, and the owner of the Texas Rangers who can't do the Texas Two Step. Something's amiss." It was only later that his behavior brought back memories of those macho, strutting Bantam Rooster Cowboys who lived in my hometown.

### **Thoughts from the Past for Future Consideration**

As I was reading Mr. Woodward's book, it became evident that part of the problem of changing course in Iraq dealt with the approach of managing the war by committee. I have read that General Petraeus does indeed work with staffs and seeks consensus on his plans and actions. *But he also acts.*

Many years ago, I recorded these thoughts about this subject. They were written by Henry Kissinger (my apologies; I failed to note the publication source and date, but they came from his essay titled, "The Necessity of Choice."):

The committee system not only has a tendency to ask the wrong questions, it also puts a premium on the wrong qualities. The committee process is geared to the pace of the conversation. Even where the agenda is composed of memoranda, these are prepared primarily as a background for discussion, and they stand or fall on the skill with which they are presented. Hence, quickness of comprehension is more important than reflectiveness, fluency more useful than creativeness. The ideal "committeeman" does not make his associates uncomfortable. He does not operate with ideas too far from outside of what is generally accepted. Thus, the thrust of committees is toward a standard of average performance. Since a complicated idea cannot be absorbed easily by ear---particularly when it is new---committees lean toward what fits it with the most familiar experience of their members. They therefore produce great pressure in favor of the status quo. Committees are consumers and sometimes sterilizers of ideas, rarely creators of them.

For over three years, assorted committees grappled with how to change the "keep" strategy of the Iraq War. During that time, documentation about the counter insurgent wars in Malaysia and Vietnam lay before them.

We close with another quote from an eminent foreign policy expert:

No one has the wit to foretell how soon or by what means we may work our way out of the Iraq gluepot. But it is clear that, whatever the outcome, our world will never be the same again...Now, Iraq is forcing a reaction...Never again, I suspect, will the U.S. involve itself in a conflict so far away from our shores and relating only marginally to our interests. We are near the end of our role as the lonely world policeman...

I took a bit of license with this quote. To make it accurate, substitute the word "Iraq" with "Vietnam." It was written in the late 1970s by George Ball.

That past seems myopic now. Pandora's Box is open. Like it or not, regardless of whom to blame for the present state of affairs, America can no longer be assured of remaining safe. America's formerly sacrosanct "keep" was breeched on 9/11. Mr. Ball was correct in saying, "...our world will never be the same again."

But he was wrong in his conclusions. Since those 1970s, we have been involving ourselves in conflicts "far away from our shores" as if we were the world policeman. We are distributing lots of bombs, but not enough beans and bombast (aid and propaganda respectively). Will this role prove effective? Time will tell. My opinion is that, in the long run, policing functions unto themselves will not make America safe. Please re-read General Petraeus' 23-point strategy. What does it contain that we have not adequately practiced in over 50 years of conducting counter-insurgency wars? It contains a healthy mixture of "Beans, Bombs, and Bombast."

To conclude, the consequences of the "keep" mentality have been disastrous. We have no idea if we can recover in Iraq, but after huge losses, we are on the right track. In Afghanistan, instead of taking out the Taliban and al Qaeda, the source of 9/11, we've let them off the hook. Why? Because we have not put sufficient boots on the ground. We've not left our keeps and moved into the *woleswali*.

So, what to do? As I stated at the beginning of this essay: Take the fight to the enemy. But not just with force. With modifications, the Petraeus 23-Points is a good place to start. The Petraeus 23-Points is not only a plan for defeating the insurgents in Iraq, it is a good overall approach for winning the war on Islamic militant terrorism.

### **Get Ready for a Long One**

If we do commit massive troops into Afghanistan, it will be a different kind of war than the Iraq conflict. The "country" is ruled by village elders, who have zero interest in democracy. The people have been rejecting foreigners for centuries.

How to secure thousands of villages consisting of farmers, goat herders, and opium sellers? How to tell the difference between a Taliban man and a non-combatant? How can our troops on the ground protect themselves from harm while walking a mountain trail, yet not be court-martialed by firing at a suspicious person? Who shoots first?

It will be a much more difficult task than the Iraq war. Unlike the Iraq war, I do not think America has a choice in Afghanistan. We were attacked by people who were given sanctuary in this country.

In addition, I don't see how we are going to inculcate capitalism, Christianity, and the Electoral College into this country. As unattractive as it may be, the only option may be to keep the Taliban (and al Qaeda) sufficiently off-guard to prevent them from organizing attacks in other places. There are going to be a lot of casualties...on both sides.

One cannot negotiate with ideological insanity. Regardless of the lofty religious claims of al Qaeda, the 9/11 assaults were on a par with the holocaust in their depravity and disregard for the

lives of completely innocent people. Attacking a war ship is one thing; attacking a building of civilian workers is another.

Given a choice, most people will choose security over any political or religious dogma. Let's strive to find a way to give security to those goat herders and:

We had better tighten our belts and prepare for a long period of leaving our keeps and assaulting theirs.<sup>14</sup>

If we do not attack their physical and mental infrastructures, they will be free to attack ours. Stated another way, those who control other's keeps, control those within.

---

<sup>14</sup> Give no quarter. I believe our technology is sufficient to use highly-trained ground forces (such as SEALs) to find enclaves of Taliban and order-in the big stuff. Unlike the initial assault into Afghanistan, when the enemy was not prepared, this second thrust is going to be far more difficult and dangerous. But, as stated, what are the alternatives.