

The Collapsing Obama Doctrine

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As the terrorists of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) threaten Baghdad, thousands of slaughtered Iraqis in their wake, it is worth recalling a few of President Obama's past statements about ISIS and al Qaeda. "If a J.V. team puts on Lakers' uniforms that doesn't make them Kobe Bryant" (January 2014). "[C]ore al Qaeda is on its heels, has been decimated" (August 2013). "So, let there be no doubt: The tide of war is receding" (September 2011).

Rarely has a U.S. president been so wrong about so much at the expense of so many. Too many times to count, Mr. Obama has told us he is "ending" the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—as though wishing made it so. His rhetoric has now come crashing into reality. Watching the black-clad ISIS jihadists take territory once secured by American blood is final proof, if any were needed, that America's enemies are not "decimated." They are emboldened and on the march.



An Iraqi soldier in Baghdad with volunteers to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, June 17. *Reuters*

The fall of the Iraqi cities of Fallujah, Tikrit, Mosul and Tel Afar, and the establishment of terrorist safe havens across a large swath of the Arab world, present a strategic threat to the security of the United States. Mr. Obama's actions—before and after ISIS's recent advances in Iraq—have the effect of increasing that threat.

On a trip to the Middle East this spring, we heard a constant refrain in capitals from the Persian Gulf to Israel, "Can you please explain what your president is doing?" "Why is he walking away?" "Why is he so blithely sacrificing the hard fought gains you secured in Iraq?" "Why is he abandoning your friends?" "Why is he doing deals with your enemies?"

In one Arab capital, a senior official pulled out a map of Syria and Iraq. Drawing an arc with his finger from Raqqa province in northern Syria to Anbar province in western Iraq, he said, "They

will control this territory. Al Qaeda is building safe havens and training camps here. Don't the Americans care?"

Our president doesn't seem to. Iraq is at risk of falling to a radical Islamic terror group and Mr. Obama is talking climate change. Terrorists take control of more territory and resources than ever before in history, and he goes golfing. He seems blithely unaware, or indifferent to the fact, that a resurgent al Qaeda presents a clear and present danger to the United States of America.

When Mr. Obama and his team came into office in 2009, al Qaeda in Iraq had been largely defeated, thanks primarily to the heroic efforts of U.S. armed forces during the surge. Mr. Obama had only to negotiate an agreement to leave behind some residual American forces, training and intelligence capabilities to help secure the peace. Instead, he abandoned Iraq and we are watching American defeat snatched from the jaws of victory.

The tragedy unfolding in Iraq today is only part of the story. Al Qaeda and its affiliates are resurgent across the globe. According to a recent Rand study, between 2010 and 2013, there was a 58% increase in the number of Salafi-jihadist terror groups around the world. During that same period, the number of terrorists doubled.

In the face of this threat, Mr. Obama is busy ushering America's adversaries into positions of power in the Middle East. First it was the Russians in Syria. Now, in a move that defies credulity, he toys with the idea of ushering Iran into Iraq. Only a fool would believe American policy in Iraq should be ceded to Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terror.

This president is willfully blind to the impact of his policies. Despite the threat to America unfolding across the Middle East, aided by his abandonment of Iraq, he has announced he intends to follow the same policy in Afghanistan.

Despite clear evidence of the dire need for American leadership around the world, the desperation of our allies and the glee of our enemies, President Obama seems determined to leave office ensuring he has taken America down a notch. Indeed, the speed of the terrorists' takeover of territory in Iraq has been matched only by the speed of American decline on his watch.

The president explained his view in his Sept. 23, 2009, speech before the United Nations General Assembly. "Any world order," he said, "that elevates one nation above others cannot long survive." Tragically, he is quickly proving the opposite—through one dangerous policy after another—that without American pre-eminence, there can be no world order.

It is time the president and his allies faced some hard truths: America remains at war, and withdrawing troops from the field of battle while our enemies stay in the fight does not "end" wars. Weakness and retreat are provocative. U.S. withdrawal from the world is disastrous and puts our own security at risk.

Al Qaeda and its affiliates are resurgent and they present a security threat not seen since the Cold War. Defeating them will require a strategy—not a fantasy. It will require sustained difficult military, intelligence and diplomatic efforts—not empty misleading rhetoric. It will require rebuilding America's military capacity—reversing the Obama policies that have weakened our armed forces and reduced our ability to influence events around the world.

American freedom will not be secured by empty threats, meaningless red lines, leading from behind, appeasing our enemies, abandoning our allies, or apologizing for our great nation—all hallmarks to date of the Obama doctrine. Our security, and the security of our friends around the world, can only be guaranteed with a fundamental reversal of the policies of the past six years.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan said, "If history teaches anything, it teaches that simple-minded appeasement or wishful thinking about our adversaries is folly. It means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom." President Obama is on track to securing his legacy as the man who betrayed our past and squandered our freedom.

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