

AGAINST ALL ENEMIES

Book Review

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Richard A. Clarke, former Chief of counter-terrorism, (who has served three presidents & has spent more than two decades of his professional life in combating terrorism) tells us in his: *Against All Enemies*, the inside story of how George W. Bush & his team has “squandered the opportunity to eliminate Al-Qaeda” and instead has strengthened the enemies of the United States by going off on a completely unnecessary target, that is, the invasion of Iraq. As a result, a new Al-Qaeda has emerged and is growing stronger with every passing day. In Clarke’s opinion, it is in many ways a tougher opponent than the original threat the Americans faced before Sept 11. Clarke contends that Bush & his administration are not taking appropriate steps to defend America & make it safe from these threats.

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In his stunning and sustained indictment, Clarke reveals, that initially Bush & his administration failed to listen to intelligence reports that Al-Qaeda was a serious & immediate threat to the United States. Instead, they were obsessed with Iraq – their so-called unfinished agenda. And finally when Bush did attack Al-Qaeda (after 9/11), his measures were half-hearted & his goals a regime change (in Kabul) rather than the elimination of Al-Qaeda, a world-wide terrorist organization. Moreover, when the job was barely half-done, Bush left Afghanistan to invade Iraq. This new front has over-stretched the U.S. armed forces & made them vulnerable to their enemies whereas it has tremendously strengthened the fundamentalist and radical Islamic movements all over the Muslim World. *This costly and unnecessary war has turned the entire Middle East into a boiling cauldron. It has opened a new crusade wherein the U.S. is ill-equipped to face the ideological war. We were able to counter-balance Communism by a frequent recourse to democracy and capitalism; whereas we have no counter-weight for vibrant and militant Islam. Clarke apprehends that the United States won't be able to withstand the second generation of Al-Qaeda.*

In spite of his concerns for focusing on Al-Qaeda (Clarke asked for an urgent meeting of the principals in Jan. 2001) the first-ever meeting of the principals of the Bush Administration was conducted on Sept. 4,

2001, that is, just a week before 9/11. In this meeting, it was decided – though against the wishes of the Defense Department which was inclined to go after Iraq – that all-out efforts should be made to “eliminate Al-Qaeda” and “go offensive against the Taliban” by arming the Northern Alliance and other elements opposed to the regime. After 9/11, however, the Bush Administration immediately swung back to Iraq. Rumsfeld and his deputy Wolfowitz were anxious to “exploit this human tragedy to advance their own agenda”, that is, to go after Saddam Hussain, effect the regime change, and occupy the rich oil fields of Iraq. They were of the opinion that 9/11 attacks were too complicated to be carried out by Osama bin Ladin and his Al-Qaeda alone. They might have been sponsored by Saddam Hussain & his Iraq. Hence the U.S. would be well-advised to invade Iraq, the real source of trouble. Moreover, Iraq has better targets than Afghanistan. Even the President, (instead of rejecting such ludicrous contentions out of hand), insisted that the intelligence agencies should look again and see if Saddam Hussain was somehow involved in these attacks. When all the agencies unanimously expressed their opinion that these attacks were exclusively carried out by Al-Qaeda, the President said: “well, see if there was any link between Saddam & Al-Qaeda”. Finally a compromise was struck & it was decided that the Bush Administration would go to war first with Al-Qaeda and the

Taliban in Afghanistan. And, then, in the second round of war against terrorism, they would turn to Iraq & Saddam Hussain.

Here, Clarke takes a little digression & introduces us to the genesis of Al-Qaeda, the terrorist movement. He holds that its roots could be traced back to Reagan-Bush era. Clarke observes that the world that Reagan inherited was violently shaken by two crucial events of 1979, that is, the Iranian Revolution; and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan. Both these events, as we would come to analyze them a little later, rekindled the radical movements in Islam and both drew America further into the realm of the Muslim World.

In 1979, America's greatest ally – the Shah of Iran – was overthrown by a radical Islamic movement led by Imam Khomeini. As Shah of Iran was deemed a proxy of the U.S. rule in this region, his removal was taken as a disgrace and humiliation of the U.S. as well. The Shah, it may be recalled, was blindly promoting the U.S. interests in this region. For instance, he disparagingly ignored the sentiments of the masses and helped the Americans during the Arab Oil Boycott of 1974 & spent lavishly on building his defenses, more with a view to helping the United States (in its war against the Soviets) than for protecting anything of his own. Likewise, he did his utmost to delink Iran from the rest of the

Muslim World and drive it towards the Western culture, a move vehemently opposed & condemned by the religious scholars and the intellectuals alike. In any case, when the Shah was toppled, it gave a new hope to the Islamic movements around the world. They felt that if the Iranians could do it (i.e. topple a corrupt and tyrant ruler), they could do it too. Spill-over effects of the revolution were positively felt in the entire region: monarchies were alarmed. They felt maybe their days were equally numbered. Vibrations of its ripples were also sensed in Afghanistan where the poor Afghans were battling against the Soviet invasion. It may be recalled that on the Christmas Day, the Soviets moved South in the direction of Persian Gulf by invading and occupying Afghanistan. While this move (of the Soviets) was a direct threat to the Eastern World, it was an indirect threat to the Western World as well, because they sensed, that the Soviets could easily choke the supply of oil to the industrial world. Hence Afghanistan became the focus of attention of both the East and the West. And in spite of all their differences, both were being pulled together to react against the Communist aggression.

Now Reagan was deadly opposed to Communism and its expansionist policies. He decided in principle to help the freedom fighters or Mujahideen in Afghanistan and drain out the Soviets in its mountain tops. Likewise, Pakistan was convinced that the Soviets wouldn't stop in

Afghanistan. Eventually they would move to Baluchistan & occupy Gawader and thus realize their age-old dreams of finding an access to warm waters. It was therefore deemed advisable – by the Military Rulers of Pakistan – to engage the Soviets in Afghanistan (rather than letting them cross the borders and then fight back). The Ulema declared Jihad as imperative and binding for the Muslims. The Muslim youth started pouring in from all over the world especially the Middle East. Osama bin Ladin assumed the key-role here. He was given the responsibility of recruitment, transportation, training and indoctrination of the Arab youth in collaboration with Pakistan's ISI. Further, Reagan took two steps both aimed at accelerating the total collapse of the Soviets. First, he raised his own defense budget, which impelled the Soviets to match-up and maintain the parity. This misguided effort inflicted a serious blow to the already frail and staggering Soviet economy. Secondly, he, in collaboration with the Saudis, decided to sponsor the resistance movement in Afghanistan and help them with all sorts of portable arms and ammunition through Pakistan. This substantial help made the Soviets to bleed heavily. Soon the stingers were also introduced and that tilted the balance of war in favour of the Afghans. Within months, they were able to shoot down 270 Soviet aircrafts. These losses brought the Soviets

to their knees and forced them to look for a negotiated withdrawal of their Red Army from Afghanistan.

Clarke raises some fundamental questions here: Were we [the U.S.] right to have armed the Afghans with stingers and other weapons? Was it a misjudgment to have involved the Saudis [in the war against Communism]? Clarke holds that many people may believe that these were mistaken Cold War policies and they might have laid the seeds of Al-Qaeda. But, he for one, even with a hind-sight, is convinced that the Reagan Administration was perfectly right to assist the Afghans in the elimination of Communism as a global threat. However, the Administration might have failed to anticipate and prevent the emergence of militant Islam, the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime. In other words his policies, in general were perfectly all right. In the process of implementing these policies though his administration might have made some fatal mistakes of long-range implications, such as: -

1. The U.S was wrong to allow Pakistan's ISI to handle the Afghan war all by itself. The CIA was denied any direct role in the war – an arrangement which ruled out the possibilities of developing direct contacts & durable relations with the Afghans. Subsequently, the absence of these relations reduced the chances of killing Osama bin Ladin by sending CIA's own manpower.

In brief, CIA was condemned to rely mostly on such sources which were neither dependable nor up to the mark.

2. Massive manpower was brought in from all over the Arab world. The Reagan Administration could never realize as to what would happen to this manpower when Soviets were defeated / gone. [Probably they could never visualize that Muslims, especially the Afghans, would be able to drown the Soviet Empire in their own blood]. In this process Osama bin Ladin assumed the key-role. He was mainly responsible for the selection and training of the Arab Mujahideen in Afghanistan. Many of those recruited were misfit in their own societies. Most of them had connection with Muslim Brotherhood, a fundamentalist group that had threatened Egypt and Syria. Many of these Mujahideen were later absorbed in Al-Qaeda network.
3. Early pull-out of the American assets & resources, following the Soviet defeat, also left us with little influence over or understanding of what happened next in the area. Our budget for Afghanistan was drastically reduced, and the country was abandoned largely to its own fate. Subsequent scramble for power in Kabul led to a civil war that further destroyed

whatever infra-structure was left intact during the Soviet occupation. This civil war also created a tremendous influx of fresh refugees to Pakistan – putting additional stress & strain on its poor and delicate economy. Pakistan's ISI felt constrained to exercise its influence upon the Afghans in order to bring some semblance of order in this chaotic situation & they patronized a new religious faction, the Taliban. Arab-Afghan war Veterans also helped the Taliban to consolidate their position in Afghanistan. It further added to the value and significance of Osama bin Ladin.

4. The U.S. didn't help Pakistan to overcome its problems caused by the influx of refugees and Arab Veterans of war. Instead, being irritated by Pakistan's nuclear programme, the U.S. felt obliged to suspend its aid to the country. Of course, this hostile move couldn't cap or stop the nuclear programme. Rather, it tilted the country towards fundamentalism and made Pakistan more sympathetic to the Taliban regime.
5. The Soviet Union and its Red Army were rocked by the war in Afghanistan. Their image of invincibility was badly shattered and its economy totally paralyzed. Communism itself lost its

glamour and cementing force, which eventually led to the fall of the Soviet Empire.

- The Arabs had brought in, the men, the money and the Quran. As they sat together in Kabul and other Afghan cities, these Mujahideen mused on what was happening to the Soviet Union. Among them were Saudi Osama bin Ladin and other key leaders of Al-Qaeda. In the wake of their defeat in Afghanistan (& the Arabs believed because of that defeat) the Soviet Union was now unraveling. Some Afghan and some Arab fighters pondered what they could do with money, the Quran and a few good weapons. They could overthrow an infidel government. More important, they could destroy a super power. They just had. It was now 1990.
- [No wonder that now Bush & his Administration are busy in demolishing all these elements of our presumed strength. Bush has frozen the accounts of the Islamic movements so that he could rob them of the resources needed for keeping these movements alive. He is busy in harassing the charity organizations all over the world accusing them of sponsoring the terrorist activities so much so that even the

daughter of late Shah Faisal (wife of Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S.) was harassed for offering Zakat / Charity – the money the U.S. agencies claimed ultimately went to Al-Qaeda net-work. Likewise Bush is busy in bombing, killing, disgracing & humiliating Muslim men, women, children including doctors & scientists, labeling them as extremists & terrorists. Of course, he is busy in snatching the Quran from our future generations by forcing our puppet regimes to “reform” the Madrassa & remove the Quranic Suras for the text-books of school children. Bush and his administration feel that so long as the Muslims are associated with the Quran and are seeking inspiration from its vibrant teachings, they couldn’t be condemned to slavery and servitude. You can see that all the elements of our presumed strength are systematically attacked. Unfortunately, Clarke has failed to acknowledge, though it seems implicit in his statement, that the Afghans are traditionally Muslims. So the Quran was not something new to them. What the Arabs brought in was a new spirit of the Quran, the spirit of Jihad in order to defend the territorial integrity, natural and human resources of an Islamic state

and if perchance any country is occupied by foreign forces, to liberate it from their control. Also, Clarke has forgotten to mention that the U.S. agencies too brought in the Bible in thousands translated in Pashto and Darri while there wasn't a single Christian family in Afghanistan prior to the Soviet invasion. The whole situation boils down to a strange equation: if the U.S. brings Bible to a Muslim country, it is her birth-right. But if a Muslim brings the Quran, not to a Christian, but to a Muslim country, he is guilty of spreading extremism, fundamentalism, and terrorism. Strange logic indeed!

- Of course, these Mujahideen also lamented the absence of far-sighted, visionary, upright and honest leadership among the Muslims who could help them reclaim their lost glory after a massive sacrifice of this nature. They were deeply saddened because they could see no homework done in the Muslim World for filling the vacuum caused by the fall of the Soviets. On the contrary, their sacrifices were providing the West with a new lease of life by elevating it to a unipolar world power. Thanks to the sacrifices of the Muslims, the United States could claim that she has won “victory without

a war” against her arch enemy, the Soviet Union. The Islamists, we presume won’t be able to dismiss this criticism as misplaced and irrelevant. On the contrary, they have to acknowledge that by eliminating the Soviets, they have pushed out that cushion which was separating the Muslims and the Christians. They are now confronting each other where the U.S. spurred by its supremacy in technology and its crusading zeal, is restless to *seize the moment* and extend its victory to the East as well and thereby establish an unrivaled imperialism. Whilst the Muslims are hard-pressed for sheer survival. Probably they couldn’t anticipate that a friend & ally of yesterday would turn into an enemy of today and be anxious to stab them from the back. Muslims may take a while to overcome the shock. But as their cause is just and fair (i.e. the liberation of their homelands from foreign occupation), they are likely to spring back to their feet and take full command of their destiny.]

Another event that shocked the Muslim world and brought the U.S. & its allies to their cities and streets was Saddam Hussain’s assumption of office as a President of Iraq. He assumed the office in 1979 and invaded Iran in 1980. For the next eight years, both Iran & Iraq suffered nearly

one million each in terms of human lives besides suffering staggering losses of billions of dollars to their economies. This fratricidal war ended in draw without any marked edge of the one over the other. But throughout those years of Iraq-Iran war the U.S. was fully and actively involved. Particularly she was helping the Iraqis to save themselves from an out-right defeat. While its close ally Israel was busy selling its arms to Iran. This tragedy was hardly over when Saddam Hussain again pounced upon Kuwait, a poor neighbour and took possession of its oil fields. This invasion provided the U.S. and its allies the much-needed pretext to jump into the Persian Gulf & the Arab lands. Their rationale was that Saddam could easily march on to Saudi Arabia & take-over its oil fields and thus be in a position to dictate its terms to the entire world including the U.S. *Hence their decision to protect / defend the oil fields with or without the prior permission of the Arab States.* Just to cover up their ulterior motives (i.e. to ensure the flow of oil to the industrial world) the U.S. did send a mission to Saudi Arabia for seeking a formal consent of the King for offering their defense of his kingdom. The mission was led by Dick Cheney. He assured the King that their aim was simply to offer their services for the defense of the Saudi Kingdom & that they have had no other objective in mind. They would withdraw their forces the moment this mission was accomplished or when it was so-desired by the King.

After some initial discussion and discomfort the King allowed the U.S mission to send its forces & defend the Kingdom. The U.S. with all its allied forces (which were over-crowded) attacked Saddam's forces in Kuwait. Saddam felt constrained to withdraw his forces from Kuwait under heavy losses. The allied forces, however, kept themselves limited to the liberation of Kuwait. They didn't enter Baghdad nor did they strike for a regime change. They were expecting that as an after-math of war(s), a local coup might take place ending with the elimination of Saddam Hussain. Their hopes / expectations, however, were not materialized. Instead Saddam Hussain did survive post-war period and was further able to crush the Kurdish & Shia revolts by using even the chemical weapons. Since Saddam Hussain remained in office, the United States found full justification for its forces to stay on, on Saudi soil in order to prevent any renewed attacks by Saddam Hussain. Although the weapons of mass destruction never figured out so significantly during the war, in the post-war period, however, they received maximum attention of the U.S. Administration. She whipped the U.N to establish UN Special Commission for inspecting and disarming Iraq from these WMD. This commission remained intermittently busy for quite some years. Of course, Hans Blix & others couldn't find any of these WMD, but they

did serve as a pretext for the second round of attack on Iraq by the U.S. and its allies.

Osama bin Ladin who was opposed to the decision of the King and the royal family to allow the U.S. forces to land in Saudi Arabia for the defense of the kingdom but didn't break away, now came in the open to criticize the royal family for this wrong decision. His contentions were that if Soviet occupation of Afghanistan could call for Jihad, the U.S. occupation of holy land is no less heinous a crime; it too calls for Jihad. The royal family, therefore, would be well-advised to ask their "friends" to withdraw their forces from the Saudi soil and stop exploiting our resources. Osama, it may be underlined, didn't "hate" Americans because they "love freedom". He hates them because they want to condemn the Muslims to slavery and servitude. His mission is quite straightforward & simple. He wants to see the Muslims as free, sovereign and independent nations. His persistent attacks on the policies of the royal family, infuriated the Saudi rulers who eventually decided to revoke his citizenship rights in 1994 and asked him to leave the country.

He decided to move to Sudan where he found a soul-mate in the form of Hassan Turabi – equally committed to the establishment of an Islamic State or a Caliphate free from foreign interference & domination. Osama

spent considerable amount of his resources for the development of social sector in Sudan & was getting respect from the masses. Soon he started sending his Al-Qaeda warriors to help the oppressed Muslims in other countries, such as, Somalia, Bosnia, the Philippines, Chechnya & other trouble-spots. His fighters killed eighteen U.S. soldiers in Somalia & forced the Clinton Administration to withdraw its forces immediately. Likewise, when his Al-Qaeda fighters out-gunned the Serbs in Bosnia, the U.S. who previously adopted a criminal indifference to the plight of the Muslims in Bosnia and the issue was left entirely to the Europeans, felt obliged to help the Serbs. Clinton pressurized the Bosnian President to ask the militants to leave the country. In any case, Al-Qaeda did help the Bosnians to establish some sort of a Muslim State in Bosnia. Now the U.S. started pressuring the Sudanese government – imposed sanctions on the poor country & declared it a terrorist state. They forced the Military regime in Sudan to ask Osama bin Ladin to leave the country. Eventually Osama felt impelled to oblige his hosts and leave for Afghanistan. During this transition, Clarke reports, that Clinton did try to eliminate Osama but the armed forces somehow declined to oblige the President under one pretext or the other & still blamed the politicians for inaction. In any case, Osama came to Afghanistan in 1996 and in the next 5 years, that is, upto Sept. 2001, he remained a defacto power in Afghanistan

helping the Taliban with his men & his money. When the Taliban regime refused to obey the U.S. in its plans to exploit the oil, gas and other natural resources of the Central Asian Muslim States it turned the U.S. against them & they started planning for a regime change in Kubal.

Now the U.S. runs into 9/11. This tragic incident divided the Bush Administration. Intelligence agencies were pointing their finger to Al-Qaeda as their prime culprit & were recommending an all-out invasion of Al-Qaeda & the Taliban regime in Afghanistan while Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld and others were anxious to include Iraq in the first round of their war against terrorism. The President himself was anxious to find a link between 9/11 and Saddam Hussain or failing that between Saddam Hussain and Al-Qaeda. He was pleading that Saddam Hussain has WMD & could transfer these weapons to Al-Qaeda and get our children killed in our streets without leaving his finger-prints on the guns. Eventually a compromise was struck that the U.S. would first attack Al-Qaeda and the Taliban (i.e. Afghanistan) and then move on to Iraq.

Bush & his Administration asked the Taliban regime to hand-over Osama bin Ladin and his Al-Qaeda leadership – a demand that couldn't be made unless the aircrafts were ready to unload themselves on a poor country. When the Taliban didn't or just couldn't oblige, Bush declared

in his typical Texsan way: he would get Osama dead or alive. Colin Powell used his stick & carrot policy to intimidate Musharraf and directed him to take a U-turn on Afghanistan and abandon the Taliban regime. Instead, Musharraf was asked to provide a free access to his air-space and his air-bases, alongwith the seaports & the intelligence information, besides ensuring all sorts of logistical facilities. Further, he was asked to assist the U.S. in every way possible to destroy Osama bin Ladin & his Al-Qaeda. Musharraf was also directed to cut off all sorts of supplies including food to Afghanistan. In addition, he was asked to sever diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime if need be. Gen. Tommy Franks in his CENTCOM report revealed that nearly 58,000 sorties (on Afghanistan) were made from Pakistan. The U.S. received 400,000 liters of oil daily and have had a free access to 5 of its air-bases. The U.S. also used Pakistan's sea-ports to unload thousands of tons of war materials besides putting their marine forces on the ground. In this process, Gen. Franks admits, Pakistan was made to suffer \$ 10 billion. Taliban regime is gone but U.S. couldn't capture Osama bin Ladin (or his top leadership) or account for his whereabouts. This could happen because Bush and his war-cabinet couldn't place enough U.S. forces on the ground – they were holding them back for Iraq – to seal the borders. As the borders were wide-open, the Al-Qaeda leadership could freely

move-out to some other destination of their choice. The U.S. simply relied on its air-power and used the Northern Alliance to advance on the ground. Since the U.S. forces are terribly limited (4500 in all) they are unable to move out of Kabul. As Hillary Clinton has observed that the U.S. forces could move only to Northern areas while they are required in the Southern parts. Being so limited, they are virtually unable to offer much of an assistance to the Karzai government. The fact is that Bush could hardly achieve anything in Afghanistan except a regime change. The Taliban are regrouping themselves and are likely to strike at a time and place of their Choice. The writ of the government is limited to Kabul only. The rural areas are mostly controlled by different war-lords. Law & order is conspicuous by its absence. Money is slow to come and so is the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda might be hurt but is far from finished. In spite of such ground realities, once again, Afghanistan was left to its own fate as Bush rushed to invade Iraq. What are their war-objectives in Iraq? Well, these objectives are: -

There is seldom in history a single reason why two nations go to war against each other. The reason given by the Bush Administration for its war with Iraq have shifted from terrorism to weapons of mass destruction and eventually to the suffering of Iraqi people. In addition to those

publicly articulated rationales, there were others reportedly discussed in Washington's bureaucracy.

Five rationales are attributed to three senior advisors (Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz) and to the President Bush:

- To clean up the mess left by the first Bush Administration when, in 1991, it let Saddam Hussain consolidate power and slaughter opponents after the first U.S.-Iraq war;
- To improve Israel's strategic position by eliminating a large, hostile military;
- To create an Arab democracy that could serve a model for other friendly Arab states now threatened with internal dissent, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia;
- To permit the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Saudi Arabia (after twelve years), where they were stationed to counter the Iraqi military and was a source of anti-Americanism threatening to the regime;
- To create another friendly source of oil for the U.S. market and reduce dependency upon oil from Saudi Arabia, which might suffer overthrow someday.

We believe all of these motives are at work. But the most overriding objective was / is the establishment of U.S. Imperialism: Ultimate purpose is to subjugate the Muslim World and exploit its natural resources. When once this objective is realized the U.S. would have adequate financial strength, besides its technology, to turn to the rest of the world and extend the frontiers of its Imperialism.