



Written by on December 30, 2011

Was the Iraq War Worth it?

The Council on Foreign Relations recently asked the above question of some of its favorite commentators. One of the answers sent to this seat of the Eastern Liberal Establishment likely surprised whoever received it.

Andrew Bacevich is a professor of International Relations at Boston University. He happens to be a fairly new member of the CFR. But he is also the father of an Iraq War victim; his U.S. Army lieutenant son perished during the fighting.

In his uninvited response to the query posed by the CFR, Professor Bacevich scoffed at the customarily cited benefit — the capture and death of Saddam Hussein. Then, without mentioning the loss of his son, he added:



[The] tally includes well over four thousand U.S. dead along with several tens of thousands wounded and otherwise bearing the scars of wars; the vastly larger numbers of Iraqi civilians killed, maimed, and displaced; and at least a trillion dollars expended — probably several times that by the time the last bill comes due decades from now.... Seldom in the course of human history have so many sacrificed so dearly to achieve so little.

But the professor didn't stop there. He pointed to the war's "disastrous legacy" that includes "Washington's decisive and seemingly irrevocable abandonment of any semblance of self-restraint regarding the use of violence as an instrument of statecraft." And he offered a harsh assessment of the work of President Bush and his chief "militarists"— Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz whom he claims have been handed "an unearned victory" by President Obama's. The Bush team members, of course, were those who so loudly informed the world that Saddam Hussein had to be toppled because he possessed and would likely use "weapons of mass destruction" that never existed.

Beyond what Professor Bacevich noted, the claim that the Iraq War is something of a triumph for our forces manages to ignore the 8,000 U.S. service personnel still in the Kurdish portion of northern Iraq. Nor are we to consider the many thousands of American troops who simply moved across Iraq's border into Kuwait and are not coming home. Then, there are American forces left to guard the enormous U.S. embassy in Baghdad where more than 10,000 American "diplomats" will be stationed for unknown reasons. All of this plus more troops in Jordan and in other Mideast nations who weren't there when the war started in March 2003.

Another cost that should never be overlooked is the increased animosity toward America among worldwide Muslims who believe that the invasion of Muslim-dominated lands was actually a war against Islam. Will terrorism continue to threaten America because of this war? The question answers itself. Also, does anyone seem to care that most of 1.5 million Christians in Iraq have either fled, been



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murdered by rogue Islamists, or are living their daily lives in abject terror? Under Saddam, they were full citizens living at peace among Muslim neighbors. Today, they are targets.

The Iraq War was indeed costly. One final casualty is the harm done to the U.S. Constitution that bars preemptive wars and wars that Congress has not declared. The Iraq War's probable hidden goal has always been moving the world, especially the United States, toward a world government. That cost, long the goal of the Council on Foreign Relations, must never be borne.

Photo: U.S. servicemen fold the American flag after it was lowered during the handover ceremony of a military base in Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, on Dec. 1, 2011: AP Images



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