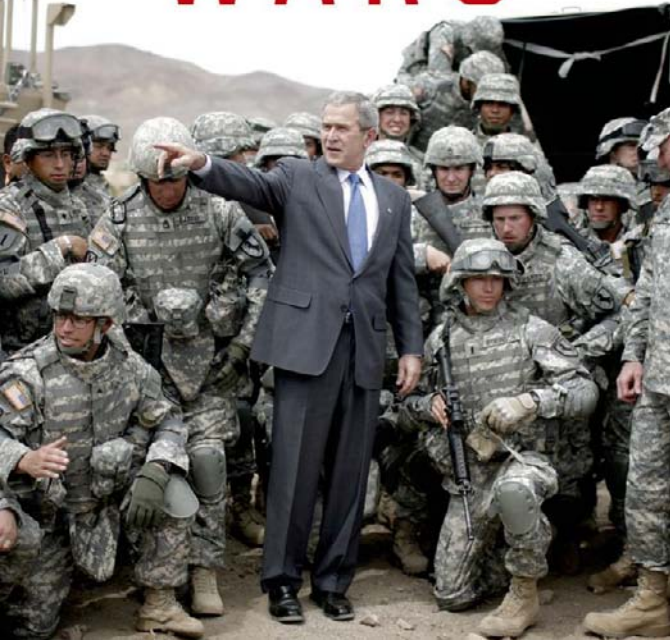


TERRY H. ANDERSON

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# BUSH'S WARS



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# Bush's Wars

TERRY H. ANDERSON

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*To veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq,  
and to my veteran, Rose*

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## Preface

“You can’t possibly figure out the history of the Bush presidency—until I’m dead.”

—George W. Bush to his biographer Robert Draper,  
December 12, 2006

On September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists commandeered four passenger airplanes, slammed into the World Trade Center and Pentagon, killing over 2,700, and changed the future of the United States. Shortly after those attacks, President George W. Bush turned to his political adviser Karl Rove and said, “I am here for a reason, and this is how we’re going to be judged.” During the next 20 months the president declared his “War on Terror,” ordered the attack on Afghanistan, and invaded Iraq.

*Bush’s Wars* examines the administration’s approach toward terrorism, Afghanistan, and especially Iraq—the most significant event of the first decade of the third millennium.

“Bush misled the nation into an unnecessary war,” stated one of my Democratic colleagues as civil war raged in that country in 2006. “No,” a Republican friend stated, “Iraq was noble intentions gone wrong.” The conversation reflects the two basic interpretations of how and why the United States

became involved in a war in Iraq. Critics have claimed that President Bush was interested in deposing Saddam as soon as he came into office, and he and his subordinates misled, even lied to, the American people in order to initiate a war in Iraq. This side argues that the tragedy of September 11, 2001, simply opened the door for the president to claim that Saddam Hussein was involved in the attack and was manufacturing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) for himself and terrorists to use against the United States and the West. The president's supporters and policymakers in the administration disagree. The "president had an honest, well-grounded rationale, one that was not undermined by our failure to find WMD stockpiles in Iraq," wrote the former undersecretary of defense Douglas Feith. "President Bush ultimately decided that the risks of getting drawn into a renewed war on Saddam's terms were unacceptable. Weighing America's vulnerabilities against Saddam's record of aggression, he decided that it would be too dangerous to allow Saddam to choose the time and place of his next war with us."<sup>1</sup>

Many have written books on aspects of the War on Terror, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Many insiders in Baghdad and Washington, along with former administration officials, have published volumes, including Ali Allawi, Hans Blix, L. Paul Bremer, Richard Clarke, Larry Diamond, Michael DeLong, Tyler Drumheller, Charles Duelfer, Douglas Feith, Tommy Franks, Bob Graham, Chuck Hagel, Scott McClellan, Karl Rove, Ricardo Sanchez, James Stephenson, George Tenet, Joseph Wilson, and Valerie Plame Wilson. Journalists have interviewed thousands in America, Afghanistan, and Iraq, resulting in books by James Bamford, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, David Corn, James Fallows, Dexter Filkins, David Finkel, Michael Gordon, Seymour Hersh, Michael Isikoff, Sandra Mackey, James Mann, Jane Mayer, George Packer, Martha Raddatz, Thomas Ricks, Nir Rosen, Ron Suskind, Bob Woodward, and Michael Yon. Furthermore, the U.S. government has produced *The 9/11 Report* on the attack, the Duefler and Kay Reports on Iraq's WMDs, the Robb-Silberman Report on intelligence, while an increasing number of veterans have penned their accounts of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, including Gary Berntsen, Colby Buzzell, Donovan Campbell, John Crawford, Andrew Exum, Paul Rieckhoff, Rob Schultheis, and Gary Schroen.

This small library of books has been very helpful, but this volume is different—it is the first history of Bush’s Wars.

In order to understand how and why the Bush administration became involved in the War on Terror, the conflict in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq, the reader needs sufficient background. Thus, I have included two introductory chapters. Introduction East, “The Improbable Country and the Graveyard of Empires,” briefly traces the origins and problems of establishing the nations of Iraq and Afghanistan. It examines the rise of Islam, the British origins of modern Iraq, and the problems Sunni kings had governing a mostly Shiite nation, which the author Sandra Mackey labeled “The Improbable Country.” It surveys main themes and events in Iraq up to the Baathist regime in the 1970s, and it also examines the origins and development of Afghanistan, various conquests of that region, which for centuries has been labeled the “Graveyard of Empires.” Finally, it discusses the evolving British and Russian influence in Afghanistan into the 1970s.

The Introduction West, “The United States, Saddam, and al Qaeda, 1970s–2000,” is more detailed. It introduces Saddam Hussein, his rise to and consolidation of power, and it surveys his attacks first on Iran in 1980 and then on Kuwait a decade later, along with the American response, Desert Storm. The chapter also inspects U.S. relations with Iran and the American response to the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan during the 1980s. The next decade the United States witnessed a new threat—Islamic terrorism and the rise of al Qaeda—and the chapter examines President Bill Clinton’s response.

The book then focuses on the main topic—the Bush administration. Chapter 1 examines the president’s first eleven months in office. “Bush, bin Laden, and the Pinnacle of World Sympathy” begins with the 2000 presidential campaign and shifts to the new administration’s interest in Saddam as the threat from al Qaeda grew. It describes the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and the administration’s response—the War on Terror and Operation Enduring Freedom against the Taliban in Afghanistan. It ends with U.S. and Northern Alliance troops routing the Taliban government in Afghanistan during the long, traumatic autumn of 2001, a time that was the pinnacle of world sympathy and support for the stricken United States. Chapter 2 begins with the president’s “Axis of Evil” speech in January 2002 and traces the administration’s rush to

war with Iraq until the beginning of combat operations in March 2003. It focuses on how the administration attempted to convince a wary nation that a conflict in Iraq was in the national interest. Chapter 3, “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” examines the quick “victory” of U.S. forces and the postwar problems faced by the American administrators Jay Garner and L. Paul Bremer. It investigates Bremer’s Coalition Provisional Authority and its attempts to rule a nation while Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez and the U.S. military were facing a rising insurgency, one that was beginning to rage by autumn 2003. The next chapter, “Bush’s War,” investigates the conflict from the Ramadan Offensive in autumn 2003 to the end of the Bush administration. It examines how Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his generals tried to fight the insurgency and why they failed as Iraq plunged toward civil war. The next secretary of defense, Robert Gates, along with Lieutenant General David Petraeus and his colleagues, changed the strategy, resulting in the 2007–08 “surge” and counterinsurgency, which significantly decreased the violence in Iraq. All the while, and as the administration concentrated on securing the Improbable Country, the Taliban reemerged in the Graveyard of Empires.

I end the book with two short chapters: the Epilogue, which briefly investigates the War on Terror, Afghanistan, and Iraq during the administration of President Barack Obama, up to August 2010, when the last combat troops left Iraq, and “Concluding Remarks and Legacies.”

As I wrote this book, I continued teaching and assigned an article I published about how the nation became involved in the war in Iraq. Most of my students were shocked that they lived through this era yet knew so little about the conflict. They are not alone; surveys reveal that citizens in this electronic age are unaware of the facts or often are inaccurate in their assumptions about the War on Terror and conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In that sense, as a colleague said to me, “by writing this book you are doing a public service.” I hope so, for now is time to examine the origins, developments, main events, and legacies of Bush’s Wars.

Finally, a statement on style and a caveat to readers. Over the years, Western authors have spelled Islamic names many ways, and I have tried to use the most common usage. Also, in a book this size, I have had to focus on the narrative and delete many connecting but peripheral

topics. Thus, this book excludes interesting topics such as the Pentagon's involvement in the stories of Jessica Lynch and Pat Tillman, the former New York City police commissioner Bernard Kerik's failed attempts to train Iraqi police, Patrick Fitzgerald's inquiry into the outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson and the judicial proceedings of I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the relatives of the September 11 victims and the development of the 9/11 Commission, many government commissions that investigated the Bush administration and Iraq after the invasion, and many military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, authors have written large books on many of these topics, so this volume would have had to be many times its size. The aim of this volume is not to be encyclopedic but to efficiently examine the history of Bush's Wars.

Thus, this book is an attempt to "figure out," in Bush's words, the history of the defining policies of his presidency—and to do it years before his death.

TA  
College Station, Texas  
December 8, 2010

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# Acknowledgments

Many journalists and war correspondents have held thousands of interviews that have been published or have resulted in many fine books about a certain aspect of Bush's Wars. Although I cite them in endnotes, they deserve a special thanks for providing interviews that helped me write this book: Tom Bullock, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, David Corn, James Fallows, David Finkel, Dexter Filkins, Anne Garrels, Michael Isikoff, Sandra Mackey, Nil Rosen, George Packer, and especially Tom Ricks. I also want to thank NPR and PBS. Their fine journalists have interviewed thousands of participants and have aired them in programs and posted full interviews on their website. For military operations, I would like to thank the U.S. Army Combat Studies Institute, the Combined Arms Center, and the Contemporary Operations Study Team, who held extensive interviews with military personnel and published them in many books, including *On Point* and *A Different Kind of War*.

At Texas A&M I have the pleasure of working with fine colleagues who have discussed parts of this project: Dale Baum, Troy Bickham, Jim Bradford, Chip Dawson, Chester Dunning, Jeff Engel, Andy Kirkendall, John Lenihan, Jason Parker, and Brian Linn, who along with Arnie Krammer, suggested the title.



The Texas A&M University Association of Former Students again generously funded a semester leave, which allowed me to finish the manuscript on time.

The Oxford University Press team was superb. Dave McBride listened to my plans, encouraged me, supplied a fine contract, and sent the manuscript to readers. Dave also edited the manuscript, asked tough questions, and forced many positive changes. Alexandra Dauler kept the process moving smoothly and Sylvia Cannizzaro performed thoughtful copyediting.

I would also like to thank other readers. George Herring read the first half of the manuscript, supplying his usual valuable comments. Leor Halevi tried to keep me accurate concerning the Islamic world (his specialty), and Peter L. Hahn saved me from some errors in the first chapters. Two USMC combat vets at Texas A&M read chapters and supplied comments that helped keep me, a USN Vietnam vet, in line with the land-based military. Vietnam vet Colonel Bill Collopy (ret.) read chapter 3, and Iraq and Afghanistan vet Colonel Gerald “Jerry” L. Smith read chapters 3 and 4. I also was fortunate that the former ambassador to Iraq, and current dean of the Bush School at Texas A&M, Ryan Crocker, read chapter 3 and saved me from errors concerning the initial occupation.

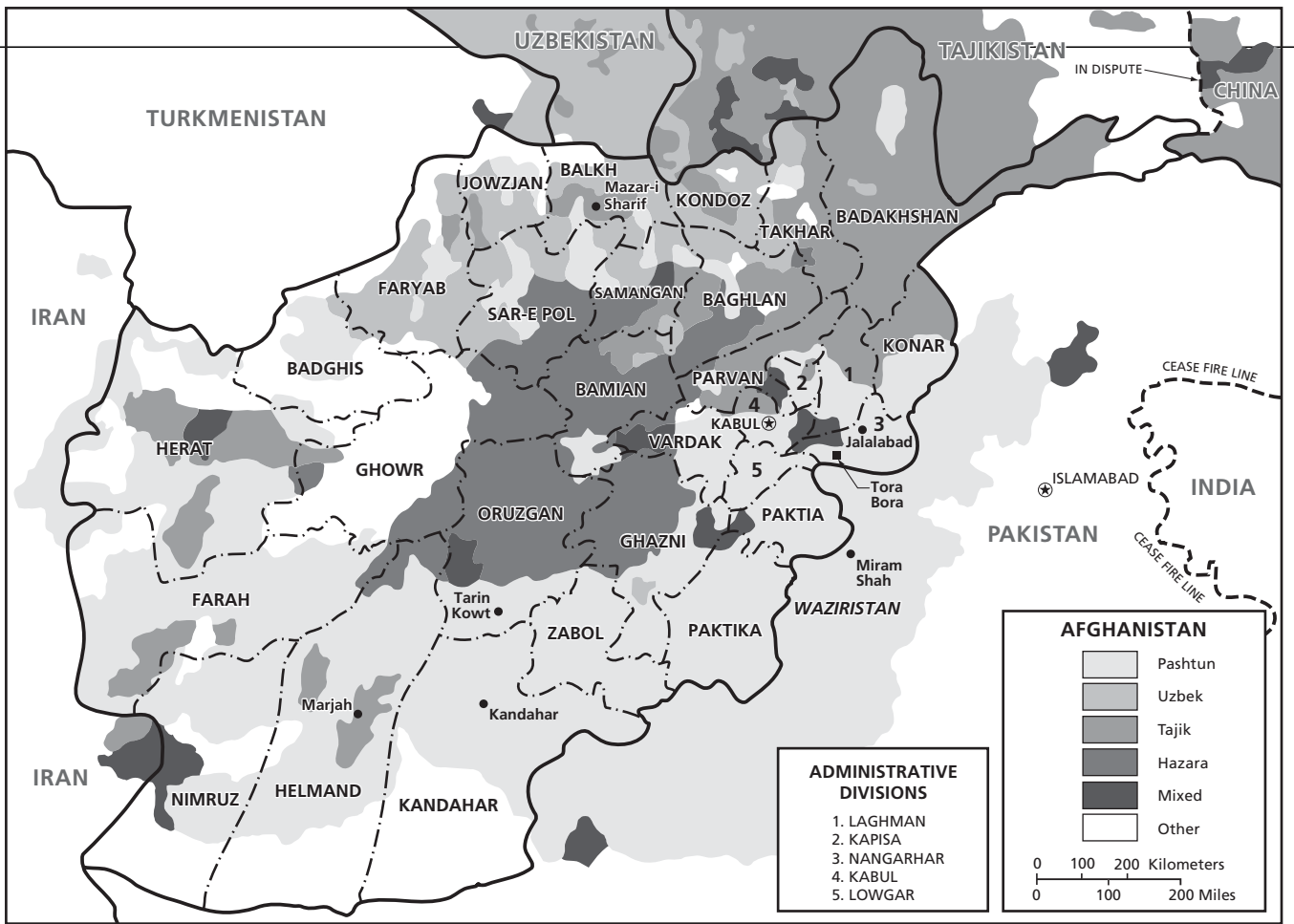
Two favorite people read the entire manuscript and edited it before submission. In spring 2009, Alex Gandy was the finest senior in my undergraduate course *U.S. 1945 to the Present*—I hired her. She was a delight to work with, giving me her generation’s perspective and asking probing questions, forcing numerous changes that improved this manuscript. My wife Rose Eder reads everything that I publish, and while working on this book she was my companion climbing Kilimanjaro, scuba diving with whale sharks in the Galapagos, watching leatherbacks lay eggs in Raja Ampat, exploring steaks and wines in Argentina, and catching trout and salmon in Alaska. She’s ready for the next adventure.

Two friends helped me in other important ways. After months of straining over the computer, Janet Jones, *masseuse extraordinaire*, soothed my neck and back, released nerve aggravation, and put a smile back on my face. My “bro” Dan Eder provided continual commentary on my project and tried unsuccessfully to have me name this book “Between Iraq and a Hard Place.”

In the acknowledgments it is customary to inform the reader that the author takes full responsibility for any and all errors. Normally, I would do that, but in an astonishing act of unparalleled generosity my brothers SK and JD, my tennis partners David Ogden and Joe Golsan, and the incredible poetry girls Kathi Appelt, Dinny Linn, and Rose, all have offered to be the “fall guys.” They will answer for all mistakes—at least that’s what I remember after a few cold brews. What buddies!

Finally, this book is dedicated to the veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to my wife—she knows why.





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## Bush's Wars

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## Introduction East

### *The Improbable Country and the Graveyard of Empires*

Alexander the Great conquered the area in 334 BC, and his men named it Mesopotamia, the land “between rivers.” The waters of the Tigris and Euphrates made a fertile valley that had been home to ancient kingdoms—Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, Assyria. Alexander died the next year in Babylon, and over the next two centuries the Greek presence in the area declined as they were confronted by the Persians, who in turn were challenged by the Romans. For over 500 years the area was the battleground between the imperial armies of Rome and Persia, and the heirs to the conflict were Byzantium, or the Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, and the Persian Sasanid Empire in Ctesiphon on the Tigris River. Eventually, years of fighting weakened both the Byzantines and Persians, and in 632 they were confronted in the land between rivers by the armies of Islam.

Those armies had spread out from Medina and Mecca and had conquered the Arabian Peninsula by that year, the date when the Prophet Muhammad died. His followers looked for a caliph, a successor to lead the emerging Islam community. “No event in history has divided Islam more profoundly and durably than the succession to Muhammad,” wrote one scholar, for during the next decades it resulted in a great schism between two main groups of Muslims: the Shiites (or Shia) and Sunnis.



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