

POLITICS & POLICY

Iraq War Regrets?

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Refugees fleeing advancing ISIS forces near Khazair. (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

Reflections on the present state of affairs

As Christians and other religious minorities are persecuted and forced to flee from Iraq, NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE asked a variety of veterans, theologians, academics, historians, and writers for their analysis: *Should those who made the case for war in Iraq feel remorse, given the current situation there? How should we think about the recent past and future there and our involvement? Should people of religious faith who made the case for war feel a particular responsibility?*

Robert Destro

All American politicians *and pundits* should feel remorse for the current situation in Iraq. By going into Iraq with no real sense of the ethno-cultural, religious, and political dynamics of the region, we unleashed forces that we *still* do not understand. *We* created — and our withdrawal guarantees — a power vacuum that hobbles the Kurds, disenfranchises the Sunni tribes, and treats the religious leaders of the Shia *and* the Sunni as if their views are irrelevant to the creation and maintenance of a pluralistic democracy. Small wonder that an Iraqi priest visiting Washington recently remarked: “Thank you, Mr. Bush and Mr. Obama, for destroying my country.”

Speaking privately in late May, a high-ranking Iranian politician observed that the United States does not think strategically. “The United States is dealing with terrorism tactically,” he said, and “the failure of your efforts can be measured empirically. Has terrorism increased or decreased?” The Islamic State–led genocide answers that question in blood.

What now? There is a war going on for the soul of Islam. Groups like the Islamic State and Boko Haram are the result. People of religious faith on both sides need to think strategically about one overarching question: What does a good outcome in Iraq look like? Actively engaging the religiously motivated actors in the region — especially Iran — should be our first priority.

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