

Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror. By Richard A. Clarke. New York: Free Press, 2004, pp. 304. ISBN 0-7432-6024-4.

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Political memoirs are a problematic genre. They give readers rare and intimate behind-the-scene views of politics. They offer insider accounts of newspaper headlines and rare glimpses of political machinations. But political memoirs also tend to be intensely personal and subjective. They represent one person's view and interpretation of events which he or she partook in and probably shaped. Memoirs are not the place to look for a dispassionate analysis. *Against All Enemies* exhibits both of these qualities: it gives an exciting look at American foreign policy from the inside and it is a subjective analysis of America's policy on terrorism.

Richard Clarke by admission is a reluctant memoirist, he would have preferred to keep his peace, but moral principles and patriotism have spurred him to speak out. His mission is simple: to set the record straight. His main thesis is simple enough: the Bush administration has made a major mistake in responding to 9/11 by invading Iraq. This action was not only misguided but it also endangered American national security.

Clarke follows a tripartite chronological division in his analysis of the war on terror: what happened during, before and after September 11, 2001. He starts with his description of the events of 9/11 and the role he played as America's crisis manager during the attacks. His account is nothing short of a Tom Clancy novel: fast paced, explosive and richly detailed. During the crisis, Clarke has played a crucial role in ensuring that the crisis is managed effectively and all necessary measure are taken to mitigate the disaster and prevent further attacks. One has to admire his presence of mind, professionalism and courage during such tiring times. He continues his reminiscence by reviewing the development of American involvement in the Muslim world, highlighting milestones which saw the seeds of terror. US support for Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war, support of Mujahidīn in Afghanistan against the Soviets, closer

strategic allegiance with Israel were all steps taken which later backfired in foreign policy terms. Clarke interweaves the analysis of these events with his personal involvement in them as a career member of the senior executive service. We learn, for instance, that he was instrumental in persuading the US administration to sell Stinger rocket launchers to the Mujahidīn in Afghanistan. These hand held rocket-launchers played a major part in ensuring the defeat of the Red Army. He makes it amply clear that American foreign policy in the 1970's and 80's was dictated by the real politik of the Cold War.

The first hot war of the post-Cold war era was the first Gulf War. Clarke does not take position on whether Bush senior should have finished Saddam off there and then. He, however, strongly condemns that the American army stood by while Kurds and Shī'ites who rose against Saddam partly due to American instigation were massacred by the Republican Guard. This nightmare will come back to haunt the US and has dealt a real blow to their credibility amongst Iraqis. This is followed by a detailed account of the Clinton years where he served as the administration's national coordinator for counter-terrorism, which effectively made him the highest federal official in charge of terrorism. His description of the Clinton years reads like a tale of lost innocence.

The Clinton administration initially did not consider terrorism an issue of priority but several terrorist attacks against American targets such as the 1993 WTC attacks, the 1996 Khobar Tower attacks, the 1998 African embassy bombings and the bombing of USS Cole woke America up to the threat of terrorism. Clinton has declared his own war on terror in 1996 and has allocated more funding and personnel to fight terror. Clarke feels that Clinton was not asleep at the wheel but rather made significant progress in protecting America from terror attacks. He admits there were some missed opportunities like a missed chance to snatch Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan, but overall Clinton left America a more secure place than what it was at the beginning of his tenure.

Situations changed with the coming of the second Bush administration. Clarke spends most of early 2001 trying to highlight the threats of *al-Qā'idah* and Osama bin Laden to the new administration. His pleas fell on deaf ears. He never got to brief the

President on issues of terrorism. The neo-cons told him that he gave too much credit to Osama bin Laden, the real threat was Iraq, Iraq and Iraq. Then 9/11 happened. Clarke believed his moment had finally arrived. Surely, they would listen to him now, after *al-Qā'idah* had massacred 3,000 American civilians. Surely, fighting terror would become number one priority. His hopes quickly evaporated.

The war of terror was declared for a second time rhetorically but substantially nothing was done. An old obsession returned, Iraq needed to be invaded, there had to be a link between Saddam and 9/11. There wasn't any. It did not matter. The US invaded Iraq anyway under the false pretext of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Clarke considers the invasion a cardinal mistake. He was no friend of Saddam but Clarke argues that essential resources were diverted from the real war on terror. The real war which, according to him, should have focused on the following: strengthening homeland security, a global effort to counter *al-Qā'idah's* vicious ideology and work with partner countries to apprehend terrorists, close down safe havens and dry up terrorist funds. The Bush administration clearly chose a different strategy. They bombarded Afghanistan and installed a puppet regime in the name of democracy. The same story was repeated in Iraq and again in the name of democracy. Clarke resigned in disgust and wrote this book.

The main virtue of this book is that it gives privileged access to the innards of the US foreign policy establishment. The questions which nag the reader throughout are these: are we being fed an apologia? Are we being offered a white-wash of the Clinton years? Is Clarke trying to self-justify and with the benefit of hindsight show us how 9/11 could have been averted? In fact, he asks this question in the book and answers in the negative but one is confronted by the moral weight of countless "what ifs" Clarke contemplates: What if they caught Bin Laden in Sudan, what if we snatched him from Afghanistan, what if he had the chance to brief the President Bush on terrorism? This is the conscience of a patriot who dedicated his life to protecting Americans. It is hard to doubt Clarke's sincerity and dedication. One might disagree with his conclusions but one has to admire his integrity.