The only constants in Iraq's war-ravaged history are change, uncertainty

University of Texas law professor Philip Bobbitt advises us that we should think about war with Iraq by comparing imaginable alternative futures (March 12 essay, "Today's war is against tomorrow's Iraq"), and he then argues for one. Still, Bobbitt's book "The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History" encourages us to explore the past. Let's then use history to consider alternative futures in Iraq.

First, what has the Bush administration accomplished for us in 18 months of lone-lawman rhetoric? We have bullied, bribed and alienated allies. We denied Turkish leaders their request for time that could have worked to our strategic advantage. We native future is clear: Osama bin Laden wants us to attack Iraq so that more Islamic extremists will see America as an imperialist Satan.

Today's good war we fought and completely "peace" we impose and the magical word was oil. When we contemplate the heritage of Hammurabi, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Muhammad, and Genghis Khan, is it any wonder Saddam Hussein wants us to attack Iraq so that more Islamic extremists will see America as an imperialist Satan?

What are the chances that the Bush administration will be stable? A look back does not inspire confidence, but it explains why President Bush believes he is acting in close concert with God. In the long view, Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols and Ottomans have all taken turns at dominating Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia). The world powers thought they could do so when they created Iraq after World War I. In its beginning was the word, and the word was oil.

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