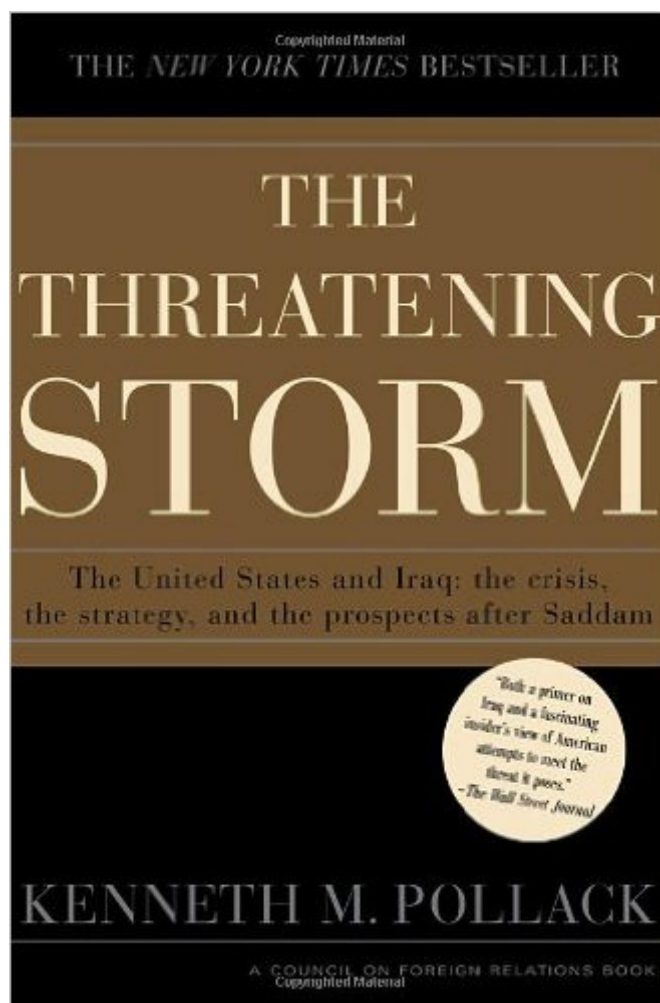


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The Threatening Storm: The Case For Invading Iraq



Synopsis

In *The Threatening Storm*, Kenneth M. Pollack, one of the world's leading experts on Iraq, provides a masterly insider's perspective on the crucial issues facing the United States as it moves toward a new confrontation with Saddam Hussein. For the past fifteen years, as an analyst on Iraq for the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council, Kenneth Pollack has studied Saddam as closely as anyone else in the United States. In 1990, he was one of only three CIA analysts to predict the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. As the principal author of the CIA's history of Iraqi military strategy and operations during the Gulf War, Pollack gained rare insight into the methods and workings of what he believes to be the most brutal regime since Stalinist Russia. Examining all sides of the debate and bringing a keen eye to the military and geopolitical forces at work, Pollack ultimately comes to this controversial conclusion: through our own mistakes, the perfidy of others, and Saddam's cunning, the United States is left with few good policy options regarding Iraq. Increasingly, the option that makes the most sense is for the United States to launch a full-scale invasion, eradicate Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, and rebuild Iraq as a prosperous and stable society "for the good of the United States, the Iraqi people, and the entire region. Pollack believed for many years that the United States could prevent Saddam from threatening the stability of the Persian Gulf and the world through containment—a combination of sanctions and limited military operations. Here, Pollack explains why containment is no longer effective, and why other policies intended to deter Saddam ultimately pose a greater risk than confronting him now, before he gains possession of nuclear weapons and returns to his stated goal of dominating the Gulf region. "It is often said that war should be employed only in the last resort," Pollack writes. "I reluctantly believe that in the case of the threat from Iraq, we have come to the last resort." Offering a view of the region that has the authority and force of an intelligence report, Pollack outlines what the leaders of neighboring Arab countries are thinking, what is necessary to gain their support for an invasion, how a successful U.S. operation would be mounted, what the likely costs would be, and how Saddam might react. He examines the state of Iraq today—its economy, its armed forces, its political system, the status of its weapons of mass destruction as best we understand them, and the terrifying security apparatus that keeps Saddam in power. Pollack also analyzes the last twenty years of relations between the United States and Iraq to explain how the two countries reached the unhappy standoff that currently prevails. Commanding in its insights and full of detailed information about how leaders on both sides will make their decisions, *The Threatening Storm* is an essential guide to understanding what may be the crucial foreign policy challenge of our time.

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Customer Reviews

I was opposed to an invasion of Iraq prior to reading this book, and I still am--barely. Dr. Pollack makes an excellent case for invasion, much better than the Bush administration or Congress has been able to do. He certainly disagrees with a number of things that our leadership wants us to believe. For instance, that Iraq has anything to do with 9/11. Pollack's argument is that no policy except invasion will keep Saddam Hussein from acquiring nuclear weapons. He contends that Hussein is a uniquely dangerous person to have access to nuclear weapons, moreso even than other totalitarian leaders. He's got good reasons for both, and while I have a few reservations with some of the details, on the whole it's quite sound. Pollack should definitely have spent more time on some topics. For instance, I don't think he adequately addresses the effect of world-wide opposition to Iraqi invasion and how that compromises our standing in the world and specifically the Middle-East. He also constantly refers to the "perfidy" of China, France and Russia, and I don't think he makes a strong enough case that these countries are wholly corrupt. Sure, they're acting in their own interests, but the US does this all the time. I think in this case he is speaking from the point of view as a policy analyst who has been frustrated for a decade, and has written these countries off. I don't think we should ever do that, and I don't think we've exhausted our diplomatic options. His case for invasion is very well thought out, and as such he is cognizant of many potential traps and pitfalls. So he writes a prescription for invasion that is extremely specific, and admits that straying could well lead to disaster.

Kenneth Pollack has provided essential background reading for every member of the public who wants to have an intelligent opinion on the question of what we should do about Iraq. If you're like me, you have a hard time remembering who did what to whom when and why it matters -- and the first section of "The Threatening Storm" is devoted to a brief (100 pages) summary of Iraqi history, from colonial government through Saddam's rise to power, US relations with Iraq, the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf War and the tortured history of the UN sanctions. If you read only this much, you will at least understand why the containment/sanctions regime has failed (and has no realistic chance of being revived in any productive form). The second section of the book (another 100 pages) gives an overview of the situation today -- the massive police state run by Saddam, the nature of the threat he poses, and what other Persian Gulf states (and others in the area and in Europe) think of his regime. The description of Saddam's repressive policies and the threat he poses are both chilling (both more realistic and more scary than anything I have heard from our current Administration). The country-by-country overview of current attitudes toward Iraq and what US policy should be was particularly fascinating. Pollack carefully proceeds through each country, explaining their own particular interests in and policies toward Iraq, and how they wish the US to act. This section provides some very interesting perspectives that I have not seen elsewhere in the popular media, particularly on Jordanian, Syrian and Turkish interests. In the final 200 pages, Pollack turns to an analysis of US policy options.

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