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Clarke: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* with Colonel Andrew Bacevich, US Army Retired, discussing his book, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History*. I'm your host Ken Clarke. This program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago, and it's sponsored by Colonel Illinois Jennifer N. Pritzker, Illinois Army National Guard Retired. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. On January 23, 1980 President Jimmy Carter made a proclamation on national television in response to Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Carter declared that the United States would use military force to protect its national interests in the Persian Gulf. In implementing what became known as the Carter Doctrine, the United States began over thirty years of direct military intervention in the greater Middle East. From the Balkans and East Africa to the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, US forces embarked upon a series of campaigns across the Islamic world. Few achieved anything remotely like conclusive success. Instead actions undertaken with expectations of promoting peace and stability produced just the opposite. As a consequence, phrases like "permanent war" and "open-ended war" have become part of the everyday discourse. From the Beirut bombing of 1983 and the Mogadishu firefight of 1993 to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the rise of ISIS in the present decade, Bacevich's detailed analysis of this military strategy shows how American intervention in the greater Middle East often led to unintended consequences. In his thought provoking book Bacevich weaves together seemingly fragmented historical events across three decades into a single war. He also identifies the errors of judgment made by political leaders in both parties and by senior military officers who share responsibility for fundamentally changing the way we view America's engagement in the world's most volatile region. Andrew Bacevich is a professor emeritus of history and international relations at Boston University. A graduate of US Military Academy, he served for twenty-three years as a commissioned officer in the United States Army. He received his Ph.D. in American diplomatic history from Princeton. Bacevich is the author and editor of dozens of highly acclaimed books on military history and international relations such as *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*. His essays and reviews have appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, and *Foreign Affairs*, among other publications. Please join me in welcoming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library Andrew Bacevich.

(Applause)

Bacevich: Well, I appreciate the introduction. I appreciate the opportunity to spend some time with you. It's nice to be back in Chicago. I'm not a Chicagoan, but I grew up in the Calumet region of Indiana. We always consider ourselves part of Chicagoland, as Colonel McCormick described the circulation area of the Chicago Tribune. My wife is a Chicagoan, grew up on the south side. I'm grateful for the--have the chance to talk to you about my book. For well over thirty years now the United States has been intensively and extensively engaged in various quarters of the Islamic world. And you know that an end to that involvement is nowhere in sight. Tick off the countries in that region that US forces in recent decades have invaded, occupied, garrisoned, bombed, or raided, and where American soldiers have killed or been killed. Since 1980, they include Iraq and Afghanistan of course, but also Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi

Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Syria, now Niger. The list just keeps getting longer. To judge by the various official explanations coming out of Washington, mission of the troops dispatched to these various corridors has been to defend or deter or liberate, punishing the wicked and protecting the innocent while spreading liberal values and generally keeping Americans safe. What are we to make of the enterprise in which the United States has been engaged for well over three decades? What is the nature of the military struggle we are waging? What should we call it? Well, for several years after 9/11 Americans referred to it as the global war on terrorism, a misleading term that has since fallen out of favor. For a brief period during the early years of the George W. Bush administration, certain neo-conservatives promoted the term World War Four. They considered the Cold War World War Three. This never caught on however, because unlike other major conflicts in US history, this one found the American people sitting on the sidelines. With interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan dragging on inconclusively, some military officers in the middle of the last decade began referring to what they called the long war. While nicely capturing the temporal dimensions of the conflict, this title had nothing to say about purpose, adversary, or location, and as with World War Four, the long war never gained much traction. Well, I'd like to suggest another possibility. Since 1980, back when Jimmy Carter promulgated the Carter Doctrine, the United States has been engaged in what we should rightfully call America's war for the greater Middle East. The premise that underlies that war can be simply stated. With disorder dysfunction, and disarray, posing a growing threat to vital US national security interests, the adroit application of hard power ought to enable the United States to check those tendencies and thereby foster conditions conducive to our wellbeing. Choose whatever term you like--police, pacify, shape, control, dominate, transform. Back in 1980 President Carter launched the United States on a project aimed at nothing less than determining the fate and future of peoples inhabiting the arch of nations from West Africa and the Maghreb all the way across the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf to Central Asia. Now, since the end of WWII American soldiers had fought and died in Asia. And even when the wars in Korea and Vietnam ended, US troop contingents continued to garrison that region. In Europe, a major US military presence dating from the start of the Cold War had signaled Washington's willingness to fight there as well. Prior to Carter's watershed 1980 statement however, no comparable commitment toward the US--excuse me--toward the Islamist world existed. And now that was gonna change. Only in retrospect does this become clear of course. At the time when President Carter declared the Persian Gulf a vital US national security interest, he did not intend to embark upon a war, nor did Carter anticipate what course that war was going to follow-- its duration, its cost, its consequences. Much like the European statesmen who a bit one hundred years ago touched off the cataclysm we know today as WWI, Carter merely lit a fuse without knowing where it led. But he and his successors initiated a sequence of military actions-- some large, some small, some brief, some protracted-- that deserve recognition as a war. Now questions raised by this undertaking will preoccupy and, I believe, confound scholars for decades to come. In my remarks this evening I'll limit myself to four of the most fundamental of those questions. First, what motivated the United States to act as it has; second, what have the civilians responsible for formulating policy and the soldiers charged with implementing policy sought to accomplish; third regardless of their intentions what actually ensued; and fourth, with what consequences. The United States embarked upon its war of the greater Middle East in order to preserve the American way of life. The United States embarked upon its war for the greater Middle East to assure its access to Persian Gulf oil. Both of those statements are true. Back in 1980 the American way of life required bountiful supplies of cheap oil. Even today whether for good or ill,

that remains the case. But back in 1980 unlike today the approaching depletion of once plentiful American fossil fuel reserves appear to be an irreversible fact of life. The implications of that apparent fact driven home to the American consumer by the successive oil shocks of the 1970s vaulted the Persian Gulf into the first tier of US geopolitical interests. So just as the American Civil War was about slavery, America's war for the greater Middle East was from the outset about oil. Of course, slavery alone does not define all that divided north and south. At stake was not simply whether people of color should be held in bondage, but which political, economic, and social arrangements were to shape the American future. Similarly, even from the outset oil alone does not explain what drew the United States militarily into the greater Middle East. At stake were the expectations of limitlessness that many Americans take to be part of their birthright. Recall that during the 1960s and 1970s America had seemingly run headlong into limits. In Vietnam it encountered a war that it could not win. At home the golden age of post-war prosperity sputtered to an end. Americans confronted low growth, high inflation, and industrial decline. The oil shocks were the icing on an unwelcomed and unpalatable cake. The war for the greater Middle East was one expression of a collective determination to affirm the singularity of the United States as a nation not bound by the constraints that others were obliged to respect. In December 2001 as this conflict was entering its third decade, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld took it upon himself to make explicit the rationale for war that until that moment had been largely implicit. "We have a choice," Rumsfeld explained, "either to change the way we live, which is unacceptable, or to change the way that they live, and we choose the latter." So just as prior victories, most notably in 1865 and 1945, had enabled Americans to create that way of life, so to victory in the greater Middle East would enable them to preserve it, thereby affirming the status of the United States as exceptional and indispensable. Now the resulting war for the greater Middle East divides into four phases--that is, four phases so far. Phase one began in 1980 with the failed Iran hostage mission, rescue mission, known as Operation Eagle Claw. And phase one ended in 1991 with Operation Provide Comfort, the US-led effort to assist the Iraqi Kurds, evidence that the extensible victory achieved earlier that year in Operation Desert Storm was serving chiefly to draw the US military more deeply into the greater Middle East. In the interim, that is between 1980 and 1991, an ill-conceived peacekeeping enterprise in Lebanon had ended with the disastrous Beirut bombing of October 1983, 241 Americans killed in a single day, and inconsequential jousting with Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi that culminated with the terrorist attack that destroyed Pan Am flight 103, killing all on board. Meanwhile during the first Gulf War of 1980-1988, pitting Iraq against Iran, the United States had intervened both covertly and overtly on behalf of Saddam Hussein, even as the Reagan Administration was secretly and illegally providing weapons to Iran. Go figure. In Afghanistan, covert US support for Jihadist attempting to oust Soviet occupiers ended in a celebrated Cold War victory and thereby wrecked Afghanistan. Thus did victory there create conditions leading to the rise of the Taliban while encouraging radical Islamists like Osama Bin Laden in the belief that super powers could be had. When Saddam Hussein responded to the end of his war with Iran by invading and annexing neighborhood Kuwait in 1990, Reagan's successor George Herbert Walker Bush assembled a massive coalition that restored Kuwaiti sovereignty in a campaign that seemed for a time to be a military masterpiece. Appearances deceived, however. This second Gulf War left many loose ends. Among the troops--although the troops were treated to homecoming parades, the truth was that they weren't going to come home any time soon. Things were just warming up. The principle legacy of the second Gulf War was to loosen any remaining constraints on Washington's inclination to use military power. So by the time phase one ended in 1991, the US had committed

itself militarily to the greater Middle East on multiple occasions in multiple places, yet neither Carter nor Reagan nor the elder Bush had devised anything remotely like a strategy to guide policy. In Washington a coherent vision of what exactly the United States was trying to do did not exist. Phase two of America's war for the greater Middle East began in 1992 when the elder Bush ordered US forces to intervene in Somalia, and phase two ended a decade later in 2002 when his son prematurely abandoned Afghanistan, assuming that overthrowing the Taliban meant that the United States had finished with that country. In the interim, that is between 1992 and 2002, what had begun as a humanitarian intervention on behalf of starving Somalis morphed into an urban insurgency culminating in humiliating withdrawal when the notorious Blackhawk Down incident persuaded President Bill Clinton to cut his losses. Clinton fared somewhat better in two successive Balkan interventions on behalf of besieged Muslim minorities, first in Bosnia then in Kosovo. US-led air campaign followed by US-led occupations enabled the Bosnians and then the Kosovars to achieve their political aims but without improving Washington's standing in the broader Islamic world. Of greater significance than these Balkan campaigns were the unintended consequences of the so-called Dual Containment Policy inaugurated by the elder Bush and then sustained by Clinton, containing both Iraq and Iran in the 1990s required the permanent stationing of substantial US forces near the Persian Gulf, notably in Saudi Arabia. Low-level hostilities with Iraq continued throughout the decade. In other words, with few Americans taking notice, the second Gulf War continued. Bin Laden took offense and declared war on the United States. Sporadic attacks on US assets ensued in Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Yemen. Clinton response in desultory fashion, with a handful of air strikes. The ineffectiveness of this preliminary US campaign against Al Qaeda then became fully manifest in September 2001 with the devastating attacks on New York and Washington. George W. Bush responded by immediately declaring a global war on terrorism, yet what followed began less as a global war than as an effort to punish Afghans for having given sanctuary to Al Qaeda. The preliminary stages of Operation Enduring Freedom were dramatic and daring but ultimately inconclusive, but by the time phase two ended, US military intervention in the greater Middle East had become routine. Now for the first time since the war for the greater Middle East begun, Washington devised a strategy, which it marketed under the label Freedom Agenda. The third gulf war, begun in 2003 and lasting until 2011 was meant to jump start the process of transforming those countries that served as breeding grounds of anti-American violence. Here the United States set out to change the way they live, a war aim qualifying as either noble or preposterous, depending on one's point of view. This however was the vision that animated US actions during phase three of America's war for the greater Middle East. Now, as a venue to begin implementing a strategy that aimed to change the way they live, Saddam Hussein's Iraq appeared uniquely attractive. True, Iraq had had nothing to do with 9/11, but Saddam had made his country an international pariah, virtually without allies or even sympathizers. The Iraq army was not likely to pose significant opposition, having amply demonstrated its incompetence. Even before taking into account the effects of periodic US bombing along with a decade of crippling US sanctions. That the Iraqi people were largely secular, upwardly mobile, and united in their yearning for liberation--a fanciful image nursed within the upper reaches of the Bush Administration--all of that figured as a bonus. In other words, what made it imperative to invade Iraq was not the danger it posed but the opportunity it presented. Yet although the invaders quickly got to Baghdad and over through the Saddam Hussein regime, they proved unable to assert control of the country. Instead by their very presence, US forces incited and then found themselves enveloped by a complex, multisided conflict that was part civil war, part ancient sectarian squabble, and part anti-western Jihad. We may argue about when to

date the demise of the freedom agenda--certainly by 2006, it had collapsed. Rather than a springboard, Iraq had become a dead end. Phase three of America's war for the greater Middle East thereby ended, phase four commenced, but once more without any unifying sense of purpose. To affect the salvage operations, Bush fired Rumsfeld and hired a new field commander. This yielded the so-called surge, which created the conditions for the United States to withdraw from Iraq without having to acknowledge outright defeat. And this it did in December 2011, President Barack Obama keeping to a schedule that his predecessor George W. Bush had established. Turning his attention back to the much-slighted war in Afghanistan, Obama sought to apply there the very methods that he had faulted Bush for employing in Iraq. He organized an Afghanistan surge, applying the very same counterinsurgency techniques that had supposedly made the Iraq surge such a success. The results however proved to be a bit of a bust. In June of 2011 while announcing US troops withdrawals from Afghanistan, President Obama said, "We take comfort in knowing that the tide of war is receding." In fact however, the tide was not receding. Even as Obama was struggling to extricate the United States from Iraq and from Afghanistan, US military activities in other quarters of the Islamic world were actually expanding. The Obama Administration's chief contribution to the ongoing war for the greater Middle East was to enlarge it. Prior to 9/11 the abiding defect of US military policy in the Islamic world had been naiveté. After 9/11 it became hubris. Now during phase four the problem was one of diffusion. The principle beneficiaries of phase four of the global--of America's war for the greater Middle East were special operations force, and anyone able to carve out a piece of the action associated with unmanned aerial vehicles or drones. For policymakers seeking to punish without the complications associated with wholesale invasion and occupation, commandos and drones offered a host of benefits. So these now emerged as the clear weapons of choice. Varying according to purpose, the Obama-era campaigns fell into three distinct categories. In some of them the aim was to depose, in others it was to suppress, in others still simply to retard. All shared a common determination to minimize risks, keep down costs, and above all avoid anything approximating a quagmire. Including in that first category, depose, was direct intervention in Libya and indirect intervention in Syria. The Second category, suppress, included recurring military actions in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. The third category, retard, expanded America's war for the greater Middle East into Africa, the Pentagon calculating that a modest US military presence there could nip violent Jihad in the bud. Regardless of intended purpose, little of this activity produced the desired effect. Yet overall, the number of active fronts in America's war for the greater Middle East multiplied. This was President Obama's principle contribution to that war. Providing a quasi thread of continuity linking these various operations with a theory of decapitation, targeting leaders seemed to offer some prospect of keeping at bay threats to the United States that flourished in the more disordered parts of the greater middle east. But what if US drone strikes and special operations raids were actually creating more anti-American jihadists than they were eliminating? What if the leaders replacing those that US forces killed turned out to be more vicious than their predecessors? A Darwinian process serving to strengthen the species. These questions defied easy answers. Transcending insignificance, the Obama Administration's pension for raids and assassinations was a fourth Gulf War, dating from 2013 which rendered a definitive verdict on the third Gulf War. Because when tested the new US-created Iraqi order proved itself unable to stand on its own. With its manifest shortcomings drawing the United States into yet another round of fighting, further complicating the situation was the evolving situation in neighboring Syria, there an ongoing civil war morphed into a multisided affair involving a new entity bent on carving out of Syria and Iraq the beginnings of a new pan-Islamic caliphate. This new entity variously referred to as ISIS,

ISIL, or simply the Islamic State aimed to demolish the state system created by early twentieth century Europeans who had reconfigured the greater Middle East to suit their own imperial purposes. But by President Obama's second term however, Americans had pretty much exhausted their enthusiasm for rescuing Iraq. Furthermore it was not self evident that ISIS posed an immediate danger to the United States itself. In December 2013 ISIS seized Fallujah and emerged from Al Qaeda's shadows. Early the following month the organization's supreme leader declared the following of new caliphate and pronounced himself Caliph. Worse was still to come. In June 2014 fewer than a thousand ISIS fighters captured Mosul, Iraq's second largest city with Iraqi defenders, two whole divisions, offering alarmingly little resistance. In Washington, something akin to panic set in. On August 7th of 2014 President Obama announced the beginnings of a new US air campaign against the Islamic state even as he assured Americans that, quote, "I will not allow the United States to be dragged into fighting another war in Iraq." Well, in the American military lexicon mission creep is a term of opprobrium, redolent, with connotations similar to Vietnam's gradual escalation. It suggests action without clearly defined purpose. Well, when it came to ISIS by 2014 the mission was unquestionably creeping. ISIS enjoyed some military success early on, not because ISIS was strong but because the Iraqi army created by the United States as ill trained and poorly led. ISIS fighters were enthusiastic and willing to die for their cause, but ISIS had no weapons of mass destruction, no air force, no navy, few heavy weapons, and only the most precarious and rudimentary resource base. That is to say as a conventional force ISIS was very weak. This became evident late in Obama's second term when the United States orchestrated a counteroffensive led by US special forces amply supported by American air power but allowing Iraqis and Kurds to do most of the actual fighting on the ground. That counteroffensive slowly reduced the territory controlled by the Islamic state so that by the end of 2017 the state as a state had virtually ceased to exist. The movement however still survives. In the meantime US forces had entered Syria, which was being ripped apart by a vicious multisided civil war that was already engaging the attention of Iran, of Turkey, of Russia, and of Israel as well as the United States. Now why the United States would have any interest in the Syrian civil war is unclear. What does seem increasingly clear is that US forces will remain in Syria in some capacity of the foreseeable future. Just in the last, what, thirty-six hours the president of the United States announced that he had intended to pull US forces out of Syria, and then within about six hours reversed himself. So thirty-eight years after Jimmy Carter signed off on the Carter Doctrine, the prospects of the United States actually prevailing in the war for the greater Middle East do not look especially bright. And indeed in the presidential election campaign of 2016 Donald Trump was the one candidate who dared to say that out loud. As president however, Trump has chosen to perpetuate that war on a slightly larger scale everywhere from the horn of Africa to Afghanistan. So where does that leave us? By almost any measure the greater Middle East is less stable and more dangerous than it was in 1980. Not only are American purposes unfulfilled, they are becoming increasingly difficult to define with any sort of specificity. How then shall we assess America's war for the greater Middle East? Well, we have not won it, we are not winning it, and to expect that simply pressing on will produce more positive results next year or the year after is simply to ignore all that has occurred over the last three decades. Regarding America's war for the greater Middle East, we can say only one thing with certainty: it will not end any time soon. It has become self-perpetuating. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

1: Why do we keep screwing up here? Because those of us who served in the 70s often found ourselves serving with Iranian officers from the shah's forces. Then of course you

had the revolution. And then of course we had Lebanon which, unless my information is bad, was basically done by Iran against us, the marine barracks. And as we've gone forward we continue to misread the impact of keeping in place secular societies, and letting these religious societies of radicals come forward, and even in some instances--
Bacevich: But your question is, why do we keep screwing up?

1: Yes.

Bacevich: Okay. So that's a good question. It's a question that does not have an easy answer, but I think some of the factors that have contributed to that reality that we keep screwing up would include the following. Number one, remarkable inattention to context, particularly with regard to history, religion, and culture. One of the things that when I was writing my book is, I tried to examine the early planning done within the United States Central Command. Central Command was the regional command created basically in response to the promulgation of the Carter Doctrine. The planners treated the possibility of war in that region basically as a mathematical exercise relating to time and distance. If we have to move so many thousands of tons of equipment very long distances, how would we do that? The planners were oblivious to religion, history, and culture. So I think that's part of the problem. A second problem relates to the response in particular of our political leaders to the end of the Cold War and how they interpreted the Cold War. And the interpretation was that we had won. In retrospect I think that that was a deeply dangerous sort of way to look at the outcome. Not only had we won, they believed, but we had won because we had come to possess unstoppable military power. That is to say that as we waded into this region of the world militarily, we did--we did, our leaders did, both military and civilian, with expectations that we had the instrument at hand that was gonna solve the problem. That turned out to be wrong. I think a third contributing factor is the inattention of the American people. This is a hobbyhorse of mine. It's a hobbyhorse that relates directly to the creation of the all-volunteer force after Vietnam, which seemed like a hell of a good idea at the time. Get rid of the draft. I mean, if you were serving at the time, you were getting volunteers who were relatively well motivated. But what we've discovered is that the reliance on the all-volunteer forces, meaning the abandonment of the citizen soldier, has resulted in a great gap between the military and society. There is this going through the motions of supporting the troops, applauding them. You know, halftime flyovers. That kind of stuff. But there's no serious support for the troops. Serious support for the troops by the American people would begin with Americans collectively saying, "What the hell are they doing? Where is this leading? How much is this costing?" It's astonishing how little those questions figure in our sort of general public discourse. So there's at least three answers to your question, but I can probably come up with several more.

2: As to the question of what are we doing in a coherent military strategy, the most recent efforts in Syria--I think they're labeling that Operation Inherent Resolve if I'm not mistaken--that seems solely focused on building partner-capacity initiatives, and I see--
Bacevich: That's a euphemism for nation building, by the way--

2: Sure, of course, but they seem to try to be articulating it more, like you were sort of lamenting the lack of--

Bacevich: We were doing that in--what do you think we were doing in Iraq from about 2004 until 2011? We were building capacity.

2: So this is no different? They're not trying to--

Bacevich: Not in my judgment.

2: --hone in? Okay.

Bacevich: Not in my judgment. I mean, this is why this little back and forth with the president and his advisor is so amusing. As usual he got up in the morning and decided we were gonna do something decisive. In this case, we were coming home; the troops

were coming home. We're done. Mission accomplished. And it would appear rather quickly that his senior advisors said, "Mr. President, you can't do that." And it's fascinating. I believe it was in this morning's Times in the article talking about this episode, a fairly long quote from General Votel, who is the current commander of Central Command making the argument for why we can't leave. And the argument is essentially an argument for nation--we must bring stability first. In order to bring stability we must do the following fifteen tasks. Now as I understand it the president has said--this is gonna be fun to watch how this plays out--the president has said, "Okay, my guys told me just a few more months, and then it's gonna be over." Yeah, well, wait and see. I mean, if Votel's definition of the mission is the correct definition, it ain't gonna be done in a few more months, at least in my judgment. But we'll see. You know, the other thing that plays here of course is, we've got off-year elections coming up. The president was elected by people who at least to some degree believed that he was gonna be a president who would get us out of this morass. He said that rather clearly. And can he afford to have the 2018 off-year elections occur when there is no evidence of having made any movements to get out of the morass. I mean, he was rather definitive on Afghanistan. He has escalated the war in Afghanistan. So I mean, who knows if he even has an ability to rationally calculate about political matters, but if he has that capacity, one would think that he would begin to be worried about the extent to which he has failed to deliver on lowering our military profile.

3: With the premise that all of this begins with oil, begins in fact with the United States perceiving itself as a needy and necessary importer of oil, in the last few years we have stopped being an importer; we're on the verge of being an exporter of oil. Has this made any difference at all in the policy decisions that you're talking about?

Bacevich: I ask you, madam.

(Laughter)

Bacevich: I mean, I'm not--I am pulling your leg. I'm joking, but I do believe your question answers itself. And it is one of those contradictions. You're right. Hey, wait a second, if you don't care about climate change, if what you care about is by golly sustaining this post-WWII lifestyle--ever more --if that's what we want, then you could say there was a need to initiate this war back in 1980. But if that's your mindset, that need has vanished. And again it's remarkable--you did not reveal any secrets when you just noted that the production of oil and natural gas in this country has skyrocketed, probably through methods that are rather doubtful in terms of their environmental impact, but nonetheless it's skyrocketed. We all know that. And yet that does not translate into serious discussion of how that fact might lead us to reevaluate our interests in the greater Middle East. We just keep on--we just keep on doing what we're doing, regardless of how much it costs and regardless of whether it's working or not. It's really quite astonishing, I think.

4: Would you care to venture, I guess, what the Middle East would look like today if there had not been the Carter Doctrine and mission creep? I mean, would the cork have ever stayed in the bottle, or--

Bacevich: No, and the answer to your question, no, I would not care to guess. I have no idea.

(Laughter)

Bacevich: That said, at some point, hopefully before we reach the point of utter exhaustion, we ought to examine the possibility that people can solve their own problems better than we can solve them ourselves. Our ambitions, and our ambitions are reflected in the military footprint, global military footprint--how those ambitions just keep getting greater and greater and greater. This notion that's so prevalent in Washington that we have to exercise global leadership, that anything bad that happens anywhere is somehow our problem. And I say to myself, well, if indeed American global

eldership is necessary, and if it can be effective, then when do we get to say with regard to any of these adventures that we've undertaken, "Ah, mission accomplished. We can go home." And where and when could we have declared mission accomplished? Not in the greater Middle East. In Europe. I mean, we intervened in Europe in 1941, beginning in 1941, in order to participate with our great ally Joseph Stalin in defeating Nazi Germany. We accomplished that. Then when the great alliance--the Grand Alliance split apart leading to the Cold War, we sustained the commitment to Europe because we said Europe is weak, we've got to protect them. We've got to help them get back on their feet. We have to restore prosperity. We have to sustain these fragile democracies, and we maintain that commitment for almost four decades, and it ended in success. Berlin Wall went down, Soviet empire collapsed, leaving the western part of Europe in what condition? They were affluent, confident, firmly democratic. Why the heck couldn't we have said at that point, mission accomplished. We're going home. You guys--you Brits, you Germans, you French people—you can handle your own problems now. But Washington couldn't permit itself to do that. Couldn't permit itself to declare victory and therefore begin to shrink ever so slightly this global role that we think is so essential. Huge missed opportunity. And of course now the opportunity's gone because the Russian problem, which I think should not be exaggerated, but nonetheless the Russian problem has once again appeared. So the basic question-- why can't we ever say, "Okay, the job's done?"

5: Sir, was the Pentagon aware of the fact that there are two religions, the Shiites and the Sunnis, when they started to liberate Iraq?

Bacevich: Well, I don't know for sure. I--I'm quite confident that there were Middle East specialists in the state department and no doubt also in the defense department who understood all that, had studied that, had a level of expertise. I would say with some level of confidence that Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and President Bush could care less. You know, they--again that statement, the quote I gave you from Rumsfeld to me is so revealing. Revealing of the ambition, revealing of the confidence. We're not gonna change our way of life. We're gonna change their way of life. So maybe they knew about it, but I don't think it factored significantly into policy.

6: I'd like to come back to what you referred to as your hobbyhorse before. So you made a compelling argument in your *Breach of Trust* book about various reasons why the draft army broke down in Vietnam, and then now the various reasons why the inequities in a breaking point of the all-volunteer force have been reached. So if we reach a point where we need to redesign how we bring people into the military and what kind of service we want to include, maybe even national service, how would you recommend that we change--

Bacevich: I'm a national service guy. I mean, I--to be clear, national service means that at, lets say, eighteen when young people graduate from high school or so, that everyone serves a period of service to the country or to their community in some capacity. There would be a menu of opportunities. One of those menus would be join the United States Marine Corps and carry an assault rifle, but other opportunities would be Teach for America, Peace Corps, participate in some new version of the Civilian Conservation Corps, etcetera, etcetera. Why do I like that? Two reasons: number one, from the point of view of the relationship between military and society, I think, done right, that approach would give us a military that was more representative of society as a whole, which therefore might lead us collectively to pay more attention as to what our soldiers are being sent to do. And secondly, this kind of gets off in a different topic, but it seems to me the prevailing concept of citizenship in our country has come to be so thin that that itself is a problem. So how can we enrich our common shared understanding of citizenship? How can we help people understand that citizenship is not merely rights

conferred but obligations met? I think a program of national service would contribute to that as well. Now having given you the pitch, let us acknowledge that this would be an enormously complex and expensive program--something like four million eighteen-year-olds in an annual cohort. So you've got to find four million useful things for them to do. You've got to create a bureaucracy to oversee this thing. Not for a second would I suggest that that would all be simple, but I would merely make the point that that's the sort of thing that ought to be on our political plate, that republicans and democrats could argue about. And they're not likely to do so. I can't tell you how much I have enjoyed spending this time with you. I really appreciate it, and I thank you for your excellent questions. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

Clarke: Thank you to Andrew Bacevich for an outstanding discussion, and to Colonel Jennifer Pritzker for sponsoring this program. The book is *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History*, and it's published by Random House. To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.

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(Theme music)

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(Theme music)

Voiceover: The preceding program was produced by the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.