

I NATIONAL Insecurity

Alumnus Richard Clarke probably knows—and cares—more about national security than anyone alive, as he proved on 9/11 and afterwards. His latest book examines the government's failures, offers remedies—and tells some stories. **BY SAMUEL HUGHES**

It's usually when Richard Clarke C'72 starts talking about terrorism, and his government's botched response to it, that the unnerving smile appears.

A couple of hours before, sitting outside Harvard's Kennedy School of Government on a sun-kissed September afternoon, he spoke openly and thoughtfully about all manner of subjects: his student-government days at Penn, his hard-charging years at the Pentagon and the State Department and the National Security Council (NSC), his riveting testimony before the 9/11 Commission, the blockbuster books he has written, his security risk-management firm, the urgent need to bring more talented, analytic people into government ... And while he did flash the occasional burst of intense, controlled passion every now and then, the enigmatic smile stayed hidden.

But now, inside a lecture hall, Clarke is quizzing the students in his Terrorism and the American Response class about the day's main event: the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, which has *al Qaeda* written all over it. The attack comes 10 years after the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, eight years after the bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole*, and seven years after 9/11,

he points out. And the United States is no closer to catching Osama bin Laden or shutting down the new, decentralized al Qaeda than it was then.

At this point, the smile starts blinking red. As I read it, it's the smile of a man who knows something very unpleasant—lots of somethings, in fact—and while he doesn't necessarily want to tell you, he has no choice.

A day or two later, I talk with one of Clarke's students, a thoughtful young Army captain named Kent Park. At first, he says he's not sure how to read that smile, either, but it's clear he knows what I'm talking about.

"It comes out in his facial expression, and also in his response to comments that students make," says Park. "If you don't know him, you might think he's a jerk, because it's almost sarcastic—very dry. But now that I know him, I don't think that.

"I think he has a love/hate relationship with the U.S. government," Park adds. "It's obvious that he loves this country. He served his country all his life. At the same time, he's been very, very disappointed and hurt by some of the things that he's experienced and seen."

It's the old story: betrayed by love. If that won't curdle your smile, nothing will.

Until 9/11, few Americans had even heard of Richard Clarke. By then he was at the pinnacle of a brilliant career in the U.S. government that began at the Pentagon in 1973, moved up through the State Department and the NSC, and peaked when President Clinton named him the first-ever national coordinator for security, infrastructure protection, and counter-terrorism. It was a cabinet-level position, one in which he had a seat at the Principals meetings (attended by the Secretaries of State and Defense, the director of the CIA, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), though in a sense it just put a fancier title on the job he had been doing for several years.

True, that position had been downgraded by incoming National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and Clarke's urgent request in January 2001 to brief President Bush on the al Qaeda threat was, famously, put off. By June of that year, concluding that the administration had little interest in terrorism, Clarke requested that he be allowed to focus on cyber-security threats instead, effective that October.

"Perhaps I have become too close to the terrorism issue," he told Rice and her deputy, Steve Hadley. "I have worked it for 10 years and to me it seems like a



very important issue, but maybe I'm becoming like Captain Ahab with bin Laden as the White Whale. Maybe you need someone less obsessive with it."

Rice agreed to his request. But when the planes knifed into the twin towers that fateful day in September, Clarke—who had chaired the interdepartmental Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG) since 1992—suddenly became the most indispensable man in the U.S. government: organizing a secure teleconference of top-ranking officials from each department, running the CSG meeting, implementing the Continuity of Government (COG) plan, ordering the evacuation of the White House—and staying there himself, virtually alone, to manage the crisis, with the very real possibility that a hijacked plane was going to crash into it.

"Dick was the nation's crisis manager that day," says Roger Cressey, who on 9/11 was working alongside Clarke as the NSC's director for transnational threats. "In some respects, he had worked and trained his whole career for that kind of moment. He brought his experience and his knowledge and his skills together to get us through that incredibly rough period that day."

Clarke soon realized, to his horror, that the administration was going to put al Qaeda on the back burner and invade Iraq;

in January 2003 he resigned. He then became, in a very different way, even more indispensable to the country—first by providing powerful, meaty testimony to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (better known as the 9/11 Commission), then by publishing his extraordinary memoir, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, which catapulted him into the limelight and blew the lid off the Bush administration's version of the events leading up to the attacks and to the invasion of Iraq. Speaking out on *60 Minutes* and in subsequent interviews, he became, in the memorable words of *The Washington Post*, *The Wonk That Roared*.

Now, after churning out two novels about terrorism—*The Scorpion's Gate* (2005) and last year's *Breakpoint*, both thrillers that pack massive doses of inside information (the former set in the Persian Gulf in 2010, the latter about cyber-terroristic attacks in 2012)—he has written an important and compelling "wonk book" (his phrase) about government. *Your Government Failed You: Breaking the Cycle of National Security Disasters*, published this past May by HarperCollins, examines the promise, betrayals, failures, and blind spots of that government, and offers inside stories about some of the individuals who run it. It makes more

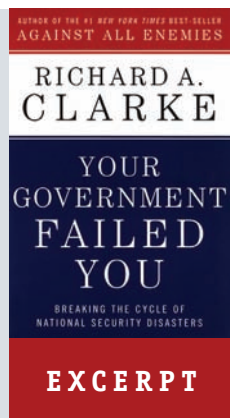
than 200 specific critiques and recommendations for the military and intelligence communities and other national-security departments, all of which he knows intimately.

The book gets its name from Clarke's now-famous apology to the families of the 9/11 victims—which he alone made, despite the fact that by virtually all accounts he had tried harder than anybody in government to prevent the al Qaeda attack.

"Your government failed you," he said in his opening statement to the 9/11 Commission, looking right at the families. "Those entrusted with protecting you failed you. And I failed you. We tried hard, but that doesn't matter because we failed. And for that failure I would ask, once all the facts are out, for your understanding and for your forgiveness."

In the opening pages of *Your Government Failed You*, he writes:

On that horrific day in September, while trying to make the machinery of government work in the minutes and hours after the attack, I suppressed my anger at al Qaeda, at the U.S. government, at myself. There was an urgent job to be done that day. But in one brief moment of catching my breath, I was consoled by my colleague Roger Cressey, who noted that now, finally, all of our plans to destroy al



Your Government Needs to Get Its Act Together

Dick Clarke on ... military planning:

The Army leadership's arrogance was to believe that because they did not wish to fight an insurgency ever again after Vietnam, that the nation would never need them to do so, or the nation's leaders would never order them into such a war. Not wanting to do it, they did not prepare for it ...

It is one thing not to prepare for counterinsurgency in the hope that America

will never have to fight one. It is quite another thing not to tell the President that you have little or no counterinsurgency capability when he directs you to conduct a war where an insurgency is likely. The point of not having a counterinsurgency capability was, presumably, so we would never have to fight one again. However, the strategy works only if you tell the Secretary of Defense or the President or the Congress the dirty little secret that you are not prepared for such a war. Then, if you are lucky, they will decide not to run the risk of going into a war that could result in a counterinsurgency. That strategy does not work if you remain silent.

... outsourcing intelligence:

A drive around northern Virginia reveals the many newly constructed high-rises in which private companies employ intelligence analysts to do the work that was formerly done only by government employees. Inside the buildings, in highly secured suites, analysts with top secret clearances write intelligence analyses for the CIA, DIA, and other agencies. Often the analyses are only slightly edited by government employees before being sent off to policy makers ... When an analysis is done by a contractor, the corporate logo is usually replaced by CIA letterhead and the policy maker is often unaware that the CIA did not really produce the analysis; a for-profit corporation did ... Between 50 and 60 percent of the workforce of the CIA's most important directorate, the National Clandestine Service (NCS), responsible for the gathering of human intelligence, is composed of employees of for-profit corporations ...

The hefty bonuses given senior officials in the contractor firms, along with the publicly reported profitability, are costs that would not have been accrued had the jobs been done in-house, in the government agencies. Cost, however, is not the determining factor in the outsourcing boom. Ease of execu-

Qaeda and its network of organizations would be implemented. The nation would deal seriously and competently with the problem. I assumed he was right and got back to work. It turned out he was wrong. Incredibly, after 9/11 our government failed us even more, much more.

The call for public service first came at Boston Latin. There, in the mid-1960s, his headmaster pointed to alumni like John Hancock, Paul Revere, Benjamin Franklin, and Joseph Kennedy (father of the president), and told the students that they followed in a tradition of service to country.

“For six formative years in that school,” Clarke recalls in his new book, “the lesson was repeated that public service was both demanding and a duty.” It made a deep impression on the precocious factory-worker’s kid, whose grandfather and father both served in the U.S. military and whose family would often attend open houses at the nearby military base.

As a 14-year-old in the 1964 presidential election, Clarke says, he supported Barry Goldwater. According to an article in *The Boston Globe*, classmates from those days also recalled that his politics leaned “to the conservative side.”

“He was fiercely conservative at a time

when just about everyone in Boston was a Democrat,” said Larry DiCara, who graduated from Boston Latin a year before Clarke. “In a city and at a school where most everyone thought of themselves as a Democrat, he didn’t.”

But Clarke was a wonkish conservative even then.

“He was the only kid on the MBTA reading *Foreign Affairs* and the *Congressional Record*,” Peter Kadzis, editor of the *Boston Phoenix*, told the *Globe*. “He was obsessed with politics, fascinated with foreign affairs, and deeply interested in history. But he struck me as more interested in policy specifics than ideology.”

And though Clarke identified himself as a Republican, he also, in the Boston Latin yearbook, used a (loosely translated) line from Dante that President John F. Kennedy had spoken not long before his death: “The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in great moral crises maintain their neutrality.”

Clarke arrived at Penn in the fall of 1968, when assassinations, riots, and the Vietnam War were threatening to rip apart the fabric of American society.

“It’s very hard to convey to students today the palpable sense of revolution that was in the air,” he says now. “Penn itself was changing, very significantly

and very rapidly, and we were part of that. And then the world was changing, very significantly, very rapidly—and very negatively. Because it was such a tumultuous experience, it was hard, frankly, to have a calm academic experience. I had a good time, even a great time at Penn, but I frankly think I learned more from my fellow students than I did from the professors.”

His fellow freshmen elected him to the University of Pennsylvania Student Government (UPSG) not long after he and several hundred others got a nasty case of food poisoning from the fare in Houston Hall.

“I got up the next morning and went to City Hall and filed a complaint with the public-health office, which immediately came to campus,” he recalls. “They found that, in fact, the University was serving up rancid meat. Being identified as the guy that did that gave me a certain amount of popularity among the freshman class.”

In one of his first UPSG meetings, Clarke listened to a speech given by an upperclassman named Steve Marmon C’71 WG’81 excoriating the UPSG treasurer, who had proposed a cut in funding to *The Daily Pennsylvanian*. In order to drive his point home, Marmon borrowed a speech by a well-known orator that began: “How long, O [name redacted]

tion is probably the driving consideration. After 9/11, when money flowed quickly and in large sums to intelligence agencies, it was the path of least resistance to simply sign contracts rather than to rebuild the intelligence community in a thoughtful way with a long-term strategic plan.

... ordinary and extraordinary rendition:

The word *rendition* has become associated with kidnapping people and throwing them into some third-country jail cell, torturing them, and never giving them a trial or due process. Yet before 9/11, I orchestrated renditions (overseas arrests and subsequent movement out of the country) and extraordinary renditions (those where we acted without the knowledge of the country in which the suspect was captured) without throwing out the U.S. legal system. Terrorist subjects who were subject to these renditions were almost all returned to the United States, read their rights, given defense counsel, prosecuted in criminal courts, and convicted. The United States could have handled cases of rendition after 9/11 as we had done earlier. It would have been burdensome, cumbersome, slow. It would have required an infusion of new resources into the justice system. But it would have been consistent with our principles and laws. We would have been acting in the way Americans used to act, morally, leading the world by example, in a way that differentiates us.

... cyber-terrorism:

We have to plan for the possibility that a concerted attack on the internet by a nation-state or a sophisticated nonstate actor could cause significant outages, with the result that power grids, financial networks, energy systems, transportation, and government and national security systems would be severely degraded. The government needs to develop a plan and a system in conjunction with the private sector to respond to that new kind of disaster, rapidly restoring order to cyberspace, prioritizing service restoration, and fighting off sustained attacks, including on privately owned and operated networks.

Finally, we need to think about what all of this means for our national defense. Ten years ago the U.S.S. *Yorktown*, a Navy cruiser, had to be towed back to port by a tug because the ship’s main computer, controlling all of its vital systems, crashed while using a version of a widely adopted computer operating system ... We are building a 21st-century military that is completely dependent upon that net. Take it away, and most units will be about as useful as the French at Agincourt, as vulnerable as Achilles’ heel.

All excerpts from *Your Government Failed You: Breaking the Cycle of National Security Disasters*, by Richard A. Clarke. Reprinted by arrangement with Ecco, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Copyright © 2008 by Richard A. Clarke.

ed], will you abuse our patience?"

The words sounded awfully familiar to Clarke, who buttonholed Marmon as soon as he had finished.

"I said, 'You ripped off Cicero's First Address Against Catiline!'" Clarke recalls. "Steve said something like, 'Wow! You know that—that's great! Let's go have a beer!'"

It would not be the last time Clarke would see through a politician's rhetoric, but in this case it was the beginning of an enduring friendship: Clarke was best man at Marmon's wedding, and is godfather to Marmon's daughter.

It was also the beginning of a powerful troika—Marmon, Clarke, and William Tortu C'72—that virtually ruled the UPSG. During his years in student government, Clarke served on the steering committee of University Council, and co-authored, with Marmon, the Student Committee on Undergraduate Education (SCUE) Report in 1971, which led to some important reforms in the curriculum. Clarke was elected to Sphinx his junior year.

"He really was one of the outstanding people on campus," says Marmon. "You saw his leadership ability at a very early stage."

As war loomed over the nation's campuses, Clarke became a leader in Penn's anti-war movement. "By 1969 the Vietnam War had radicalized me," he says. Things came to a head on April 30, 1970, when President Nixon announced that the U.S. had invaded Cambodia.

"Nixon surprised everyone by announcing the invasion of Cambodia," says Clarke. "We didn't really know what we wanted to do, but we knew that we wanted to have a rally. Somebody had a bullhorn, so we went around that night telling people to hold a rally on College Green."

At one point they went to Irvine Auditorium, where a certain soft-porn movie was being screened.

"*I Am Curious, Yellow* or something was showing in Irvine Auditorium," Clarke says with a hint of a smile. "I remember standing up on the stage, and the movie being projected onto me, and I had this bullhorn yelling at people that they all had to leave the movie and go rally out on College Green. Which they did." After some impassioned speeches on the Green, Clarke and the other students and professors marched to Independence Hall,

where speaker after speaker denounced the president, the invasion of Cambodia, and the war.

Unlike most protesters, Clarke's response after graduating from Penn in 1972 was not to shun the military but to try to find a way to help it—and the civilian leadership—get back on the right track and "stop stupid wars."

"I'd wanted to go into government since high school, but the war experience was so disturbing to us all that I asked myself, 'How do I make a small contribution to preventing that kind of thing from happening again?'" he says now. "And the place you'd have the most effect was the Pentagon. Everyone's reaction was, 'They'll never hire you.'"

Everyone was wrong. Clarke was hired as a management-trainee in the office of the Secretary of Defense. It was the beginning of a long association with the military: In his early years in government he reported to officers; later on, they reported to him. Some became his friends, including John Gordon and the late Wayne Downing, both majors when he met them who went on to become four-star generals.

Having seen the military in many crisis situations over the years, he found it to be a "remarkably capable organization when used effectively, when it can channel the strength of its great people," Clarke writes in *Your Government Failed You*. "The years of watching our top officers created a deep respect in me for our military leaders, but I also know that they are like civilians in one important respect: They are not infallible."

What he tried to do at the Pentagon, and later in the State Department and the NSC, he explains, was to "make sure that decisions were the result of really good, open-minded analysis, and all the information you could possibly get, rather than preconceived notions."

During his Pentagon years he also learned about the diplomatic side, at one point serving with John F. Lehman Jr. Gr'74, future secretary of the Navy, in the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction negotiations with the Soviet Union. Lehman remembers Clarke as a "highly intelligent and competent professional" during their plenary sessions with the Warsaw Pact in Vienna, where there was "plenty of time to socialize" in diplomatic circles.

"Dick was very effective in the social scene—I mean that in a professional way, finding out what was going on," says Lehman. "I thought he was a very fine diplomat." The two would cross paths again three decades later during the 9/11 Commission hearings.

By 1979 Clarke had moved to the State Department as a senior analyst for European arms control. There he met Rand Beers, a former Marine who had recently joined the Foreign Service and later served on the NSC with Clarke. Beers remembers the sense of dread that filled the office when Clarke went on vacation.

"He would come back with a long *To Do* list for everybody who worked for him," says Beers, who now co-teaches the Terrorism and the American Response class with Clarke at Harvard and is the founding president of the nonprofit National Security Network. "He always hated to be away from the action. He was on vacation when Anwar Sadat was assassinated, and he kept calling from vacation to find out what was going on." The joke around the office, Beers adds, was: "We can't afford to have you go on vacation because it might lead to some crisis we haven't even thought about."

By 1983 Clarke was working out of the State Department's "Little Pentagon," the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. "Thrown into both the Beirut and Grenada operations to plan and coordinate, I was amazed at the ease with which the decision was made to deploy our military and what little precision there was on what it was to do," he writes. "More frightening was the obvious lack of planning for the kind of operation the forces were being asked to conduct."

As he powered himself through the ranks to become deputy assistant secretary of state for intelligence under Ronald Reagan and assistant secretary of state under George H. W. Bush, Clarke combined a fierce intelligence with a willingness to "break china."

"Strong opinions are the norm when it comes to Dick Clarke," wrote Dan Eggen and Walter Pincus in *The Washington Post* four years ago, noting that during the Clinton years, then-National Security Advisor Sandy Berger "regularly had to turn down demands from colleagues that Clarke be fired."

R.P. Eddy, the founder and executive

director of the Center for Policing Terrorism and CEO of Ergo, a policy advisory firm, worked under Clarke for half a dozen years in the NSC as director of counterterrorism and other posts.

“Dick is famous or infamous, depending on which side of the argument you sit, in the U.S. government for not suffering fools, and being absolutely laser-focused on results,” says Eddy. “And that meant that there are lots of people who have Dick Clarke’s tread-marks on their foreheads.” But those who bad-mouth him, Eddy adds, “are generally the less competent people in government.”

Over the years Clarke’s bosses “have given him their confidence, because when he is given tasks he not only carries them out effectively; he carries them out creatively as well,” says Beers. “It certainly gave him a reputation for having sharp elbows when he was displeased with the way that somebody was performing. But that was generally with his peers. He’s incredibly loyal to the people who work for him, in terms of mentoring and fostering their careers.”

“He’s extraordinarily decent to the people on his team,” agrees Eddy. “One expression that I’ve heard about Dick is: He’s the only person I’ve ever met who pisses up and kisses down.”

Clarke’s growing obsession with terrorism in the last decade of the millennium has been well documented, including by Clarke himself in *Against All Enemies*. Though he already had a portfolio of incredibly complex projects since being appointed to the NSC in 1992 (ranging from creating a Presidential Decision Directive that laid out the guidelines for engaging in peace-keeping missions, to coordinating the invasion of Haiti), he became increasingly concerned about the threat posed by a broad range of terrorist groups, which soon included al Qaeda.

Unfortunately, the government agencies in charge of monitoring it were not as obsessed—or as informed—as they should have been. Though al Qaeda emerged from bin Laden’s Afghan Services Bureau network in 1988-89, Clarke notes, it wasn’t until 1996 that the U.S. government learned from a “walk-in” (an unannounced volunteer informant) that there was such a group and what its name was. (Far more

shocking is the fact that some 60 CIA personnel knew that al Qaeda members Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar had been in the U.S. for months before 9/11 but didn’t bother to tell the FBI—or Clarke—until after the two had helped hijack the planes. The FBI, for its part, failed to inform Clarke and the CSG of its arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui on August 16, 2001.) No wonder that Clarke devotes some 60 pages of *Your Government Failed You* to the nation’s intelligence problems.

By 1993, the year of the first World Trade Center bombing, Clarke and National Security Advisor Anthony Lake had concluded that some new confederation of terrorists had taken shape—and that Osama bin Laden was a key player in it.

“At that point in U.S. foreign-policy/national-security fields, terrorism was not a sexy issue,” says R.P. Eddy. “In ’94, ’95, we have a bunch of other things going on. We’re finishing the Cold War; we’re trying to figure out what the U.S.’s place is going to be in the world going forward. And at this time Dick starts realizing that what most people consider to be a nuisance, a pebble in our shoe—terrorism—is actually going to be something that could be an existential threat to the country. He was the one guy saying, ‘Look, this really matters. We need budgets for this; we need real professionals working on this; we need to get beyond the ’70s view on terrorism.’”

In May 1998, at Berger’s insistence, President Clinton created a new position—national coordinator for security, infrastructure protection, and counter-terrorism—and named Clarke to fill it. The title was “largely to reassure the public that there was in fact somebody doing it,” Clarke says. “I had preferred to do the job in the quiet, anonymous secrecy of the bureaucracy.” Though he only had a staff of 12, it was a cabinet-level position, and the media quickly dubbed him the “counter-terrorism czar.” (Clarke wasn’t crazy about the title; the last czar and his family had been shot to death. But in principle he believes that cross-departmental czars are often the only ones who can get things done.) In February 1999, *The New York Times* reported that Clarke had created at least four classified Presidential Decision Directives on terrorism, which “expand the government’s counter-terrorism cad-

res into the \$11 billion-a-year enterprise he now coordinates.”

As 2000 approached, Clarke drew up a “Pol-Mil Plan” for the Millennium Alert and helped coordinate the national-security response, which is probably worth a book in itself. “We had al Qaeda attempts to blow up things in the United States during the millennium period, attempts to blow up embassies around the world, attempts to take over Bosnia,” Clarke told Tim Russert. “And all of those attempts were thwarted.”

But al Qaeda was still slouching toward 9/11, and the fact that the government didn’t stop it still sticks in Clarke’s craw. Two U.S. embassies in East Africa were bombed in August 1998, prompting a cruise-missile strike on the al Qaeda facility in Afghanistan. (Bin Laden was tipped off, probably by Pakistani intelligence, and the missiles missed their human targets.) After the *U.S.S. Cole* was attacked by a suicide boat-bomber in October 2000, killing 17 American sailors, Clarke wanted to retaliate by bombing al Qaeda’s Afghanistan sanctuary. The request was turned down in the Principals meeting, largely because the CIA—gun-shy after being criticized for the bombing of a Sudanese chemical plant and the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade—refused to say that al Qaeda was behind the *Cole* attack, despite the fact that, in Clarke’s words, “the intelligence evidence was clear within 24 hours.”

By the time of the 2000 election, Clarke was still a registered Republican who had voted for John McCain in the primary.

“As a civil servant from 1973 to 2003, I remained nonpartisan,” he says. He could handle the downgrading of his position when the new administration came in, though he didn’t agree with it. Besides, he writes in *Your Government Failed You*: “I did not want to walk away from dealing with al Qaeda without having gotten the U.S. government to do more to stop it. So I agreed to stay on.”

In retrospect, “that too was a mistake,” he adds. Had the Bush administration appointed “one of their own” to coordinate counterterrorism, “it might have believed him” when he said in January 2001 that there was an urgent

need for a cabinet-level meeting to approve an offensive strategy.

That meeting was put off until September 4, 2001. A few hours before the meeting, in an impassioned memo to Condoleezza Rice, Clarke criticized the Defense Department for its reluctance to use force against al Qaeda and the CIA for impeding the deployment of unmanned Predator drones to hunt for bin Laden. According to *The Washington Post*, he urged officials to “imagine a day when hundreds of Americans lay dead from a terrorist attack and ask themselves what more they could have done.”

The morning after the worst terrorist attacks in U.S. history, Clarke went back to the White House, expecting a “round of meetings examining what the next attacks could be, what our vulnerabilities were, what we could do about them in the short term,” he writes in *Against All Enemies*. “Instead, I walked into a series of discussions about Iraq.” At first, he was “incredulous that we were talking about something other than getting al Qaeda. Then I realized with almost a sharp physical pain that [Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld and [Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul] Wolfowitz were going to try to take advantage of this national tragedy to promote their agenda about Iraq.”

Clarke told General Colin Powell: “Having been attacked by al Qaeda, for us now to go bombing Iraq in response would be like our invading Mexico after the Japanese attacked us at Pearl Harbor.”

Over the next 15 months his anger simmered, and in January 2003, after 30 years in government, he resigned to write his first book. Two months later, Operation Iraqi Freedom began. Afghanistan, al Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden were back-burnered.

For Clarke, it was Vietnam all over again. “Like the Vietnam War, the Iraq War caused me to choose political sides,” he says. “It was more appalling than anything I’d ever seen the government do, and I’d seen some pretty appalling things. It was even more appalling than Vietnam, because you could sort of understand how Vietnam wasn’t a single decision but an accretion of decisions over three adminis-

trations. Iraq was just a single sort of plot—a plot by a handful of people to get us to do something that on no level made any sense—and on lots of levels caused enormous consequences, hardships, agony, suffering, financial cost.”

He pauses for a moment, then adds: “It’s almost criminal.”

Asked if he regrets not having left government sooner to blow the whistle, Clarke points out that few people outside the small national-security circle in Washington even knew who he was, and even fewer cared about his opinions.

“My criticism wouldn’t have mattered as much as Brent Scowcroft’s,” he says, referring to the National Security Advisor under presidents Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush. “He had publicly dissented from the war, but no one seemed to notice or care at that point. I did tell anyone who would listen that it would be a disaster, but no one paid much attention until my book came out.”

By nearly all accounts, Clarke was the 9/11 Commission’s star witness.

“He was perhaps the most impressive witness that we had in the closed meetings,” says John Lehman, a Republican member of the commission. “We spent two full days with him, with the commissioners and staff, and he was very forthright—very critical of the Clinton administration, very critical of the Bush administration, of the decisions that were made and not made in both administrations. He put us on to a lot of things, and virtually all of it was corroborated” by other sources.

Lehman was less thrilled by Clarke’s public testimony, which in his view left out the private-testimony criticism of the Clinton administration.

“He didn’t say anything different in public than he did in private; he just didn’t include any criticism of the Clinton administration in his public testimony. He clearly seemed to have chosen sides by then. The record shows that both administrations made huge mistakes.”

Clarke sees it a bit differently.

“Partially what you say in a hearing is a product of the questions you’re asked,” he says. “John was the only one, at least the first one, in the public hearing that asked me about Iraq. If nobody had asked me about Iraq, I probably wouldn’t have

had the chance to talk about it.

“In those days, being critical of the decision to go into Iraq when we had just done it was extremely unpopular,” he adds. “I got a lot of negative feedback for being critical in that hearing of the war in Iraq.”

More to the point, the Clinton administration “did a much better job on terrorism—and gets insufficient credit for it,” he says. “To some people at the time, including the incoming Bush administration, the Clinton administration’s response to terrorism seemed like an unnatural fixation, an unjustified obsession. They’ll never admit that, but when they came into office in January of 2001, that’s what they were saying: ‘Why did you guys create this big counterterrorism bureaucracy? Why did you guys raise the budget to deal with counterterrorism so much? Why were so many of your high-level meetings on counterterrorism? Why weren’t you talking about Iraq or China or Russia?’”

“Did the Clinton administration do everything I wanted them to?” he asks rhetorically. “No. It didn’t bomb—repeatedly bomb, to the point of complete destruction—the al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. When it did do it once, it got criticized.” But while the Bush administration “got off to a good start” after 9/11, it “lost its way” after that—“which is why we’re still fighting al Qaeda, and why, seven years later, they’re still around.”

On the eve of the hearings, the publication of *Against All Enemies* hit Washington like a tsunami.

“The timing is classic Clarke,” wrote Pincus and Eggen in *The Washington Post*. “Former colleagues say Clarke is a wily tactician in the political world of Washington and would be well aware of the firestorm he would cause by the release of his book during a presidential campaign.”

He was certainly ready for the “buzz-saw” that awaited him. “This is Dick Clarke’s ‘American Grandstand’—he just keeps changing the tune,” said then-White House spokesman Scott McClellan. “Clearly this is more about politics and a book promotion than it is about policy.” McClellan, who has since resigned and written a critical memoir of his own, recently apologized to Clarke for the smear and asked for his forgiveness.

"I know this administration and the way they act, and I expected them to do what they did," Clarke told the *Gazette* four years ago. "Which, by the way, I think was counterproductive from their perspective."

When Vice President Dick Cheney suggested that Clarke had been "out of the loop" on 9/11, the comment was greeted with howls of derision: Clarke wasn't just in the loop; he *was* the loop. Even Condoleezza Rice publicly acknowledged Clarke's pivotal role that day.

"It's about as ridiculous a comment as saying Eli Manning was 'out of the loop' for the Giants' Super Bowl victory," says R. P. Eddy. But, he adds, Clarke came out of the whole ordeal "smelling like a rose—as he should have."

While his 15 minutes of megafame may have passed, *Your Government Failed You* brought him back into the spotlight this year. In the book, Clarke examines our past national-security disasters and argues that we need to make major, systemic changes in our government institutions to prevent future catastrophes.

"When I said 'Your government failed you,' I was talking about 9/11 and the al Qaeda crisis," Clarke said on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*. "If you look at not only what's gone on in the last eight years, but earlier as well, there's a pattern of the U.S. government not being successful on national-security crises and long-term issues. So whether it's Iraq or global warming, there's a whole series of issues where the U.S. government doesn't do well—despite the fact that we spend a trillion dollars on national security.

"You've got to do things like raise the level of professionalization in national security," he added. The Department of Homeland Security "gets more political appointees as a percentage than any other department. That's incredible. Maybe you should have said, 'Hey, this is an important issue—we've just been attacked; we're establishing a security department; let's get professionals; let's get experts.' Instead they filled it with political hacks, and then they started doing pork-barrel grants."

"I'm trying to think of something I disagree with in the book," says R. P. Eddy. (He can't.) "It's insights from a guy who knows. He has a fluency and a kind

of a preternatural awareness of how government and the national-security apparatus works in a way that I don't think anyone else does. And it comes from being around at very high levels for a very long time, being very smart, and being very passionate about it."

"Whether you agree or disagree with him, you would be foolish to ignore him," says Roger Cressey. "He brings a very unique skill-set to these issues. He served Republicans and Democrats, and he knows these issues in the government better than just about anybody else."

"Clarke reinforces the big lesson of September 11: the need to connect the dots," says Donald Kettl, the Fox Leadership Professor, professor of political science, and former director of the Fels School of Government. "Coordination is key, and coordination requires a coordinator. The idea of having a coordination czar often gets hooted down, and the lives of White House czars have often not been happy ones. But having someone close to the president who can pull disparate ideas together, and who can make sure the president hears what the president must hear, is critical."

Clarke has been advising Barack Obama since the summer of 2007. But he has no interest in taking a job in anybody's administration.

"I did that for 30 years," he says. "I think that's enough. You probably shouldn't do something for as long as 30 years, but definitely not more than that."

And yet, his interviewer notes, if he hadn't been doing that job for nearly 30 years on September 11 ... Clarke nods. "That day I probably made a difference."

He makes a difference in other ways now. Adamant about the need to bring talented young people into government, he gets high marks from students and colleagues for his work at the Kennedy School of Government.

Eric Rosenbach, a former military-intelligence officer who now serves as executive director for research at the Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, describes Clarke as someone who "makes a very conscious effort to try to build young leaders for the next generation."

"He's really passionate about this," says Kent Park, who's working on his

master's of public policy degree. "That comes out in terms of his teaching style and how he interacts with students. He's doing this because he really wants to, and because he's really passionate about the national security of the United States. For a lot of other classes, it feels like the professors are doing it because it's their job. That's not the case with Professor Clarke."

Most of Clarke's time is taken up with his duties as chairman of a security risk-management firm in Arlington, Virginia: Good Harbor Consulting. Founded by his old NSC colleague Roger Cressey, Good Harbor provides strategic advice and counsel to a broad range of clients—from the government of a "major U.S. ally in the Middle East," to energy companies and pharmaceutical firms, to the new Louvre in Abu Dhabi—on matters of homeland security, cyber security, infrastructure protection, and counter-terrorism.

Clarke carries in his head a staggering amount of information about all manner of deadly threats, some of which are only just being imagined. (He has personally received some very credible death threats over the years, though for obvious reasons declines to talk about them.) To get a sense of the high-tech horrors out there, check out *Breakpoint*, his cyber-thriller, which depicts the U.S. as under attack by shadowy terrorists employing real emerging technologies. It's Clarke's way of reaching people who might not want to wade through his "wonk books." But a sunny beach reading it isn't.

Which brings me back to that sardonic smile. When I mention it to R.P. Eddy, he thinks for a moment, then says: "You know in *Clear and Present Danger*, when Jack Ryan—Harrison Ford's character—walks into the Oval Office at the end of the movie? He yells at the president, and the president says, 'Don't you come barking at me like a junkyard dog!' And Harrison Ford stops, straightens his jacket, and says: 'It gives me no pleasure.'

"I think of Dick in that way. It pains him that this is the case. He certainly didn't get any pleasure out of 9/11. He didn't take any pleasure in saying that the team he had served with—and it's not just the Bush administration—had failed. *It gives him no pleasure*, and when he talks about these things ... God, the stuff that this guy had his finger on." ♦