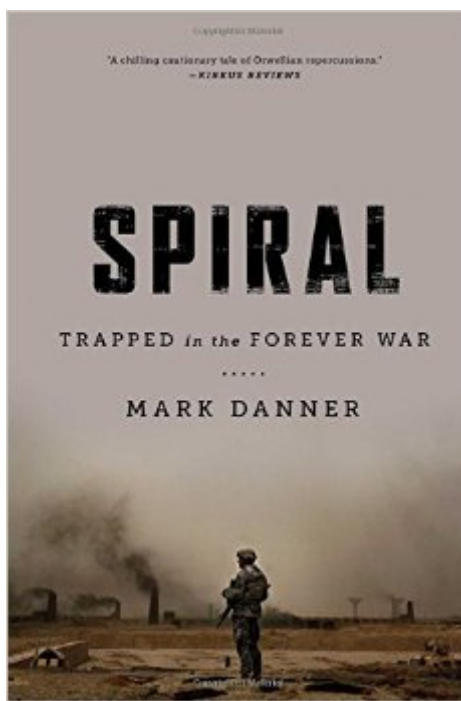


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Spiral: Trapped In The Forever War



Synopsis

“A chilling cautionary tale of Orwellian repercussions.” —Kirkus Reviews
Trapped in a forever war by 9/11, in *Spiral* Mark Danner describes a nation that has been altered in fundamental ways. President Bush declared a war of choice and without an exit plan, and President Obama has proven unable to take the country off what he has called its “permanent war footing.” The War on Terror has led to fourteen years of armed conflict, the longest war in America’s history. Al Qaeda, the organization that attacked us on 9/11, has been “decimated” (the word is Obama’s) but replaced by multiple jihadist and terror organizations, including the most notorious—ISIS. *Spiral* is what we can call a perpetual and continuously widening war that has put the country in a “state of exception.” Bush’s promise that we have “taken the gloves off” and Obama’s inability to define an end game have had a profound effect on us even though the actual combat is fought by a tiny percentage of our citizens. In the name of security, some of our accustomed rights and freedoms are circumscribed. Guantanamo, indefinite detention, drone warfare, enhanced interrogation, torture, and warrantless wiretapping are all words that have become familiar and tolerated. And yet the war goes badly as the Middle East drowns in civil wars and the Caliphate expands and brutalized populations flee and seek asylum in Europe. In defining the War on Terror as boundless, apocalyptic, and unceasing, we have, Danner concludes, “let it define us as ideological crusaders caught in an endless war.”

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Customer Reviews

Heard Mark Danner on NPR talking about "Spiral" and said, this will be a book to read, like the awesome "Drift" by Rachel Maddow. BUT, Mark is no Rachel and his thesis (at least in the first 115 pages) can be summed up as "torture is bad and illegal and the US shouldn't have done it but we couldn't help ourselves" and saved a few trees. If you enjoy repetition, multi-syllabism, and 90 pages of notes and index, you will enjoy this, otherwise, just find his interview on NPR or go buy Rachel's book!

The opening quote in this book is "We must define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else it will define us." Obama 2013 Danner has defined the nature and scope of this struggle as a war on terror. He says that our presence in Iraq and Afghanistan is a Republican attempt to replace "being tough on communism as a defining cause in their political identity" with a war on terrorism. To make the case for a war on terror as our reason for being there, Danner needs to state why we are NOT there for the 1980 Carter doctrine, which states "the overwhelming dependence of the Western democracies on oil supplies from the Middle East [any] attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." Or the the Reagan Corollary to the Carter Doctrine, in which the U.S. guarantees both the territorial integrity and internal stability of Saudi Arabia. Since then we've invaded, occupied, or bombed Iran (1980, 1987-1988); Libya (1981, 1986, 1989, 2011); Lebanon (1983); Kuwait (1991); Iraq (1991-2011, 2014-present); Somalia (1992-1993, 2007-present); Saudi Arabia (1991, 1996); Afghanistan (1998, 2001-present); Sudan (1998); Yemen (2000; 2002-present); Pakistan (2004-present); and now Syria. The reason Carter said this is because many Americans, Europeans, and Chinese would die if the oil stopped flowing, but especially Americans since no other nation on earth is as dependent on oil as we are (why we have to be the world's unpaid policeman is another topic). Just consider a few of the things that what would happen if trucks stopped running: by day 6 grocery stores would be out of food, restaurants, pharmacies, and factories closed, ATMS out of cash, sewage treatment sludge and slime storage tanks full, gas stations closed, 685,000 tons of trash piling up every day, livestock suffering from lack of feed deliveries. Within 2 weeks clean water would be gone since purification chemicals couldn't be delivered. Within 1 to 2 months coal power plants would shut down due to lack of coal, and much natural gas is pumped through pipelines electrically, so natural gas power plants would shut down too. And there goes the financial system "our energy, electricity, and other 16 vital infrastructures are inter-dependent, which

makes us incredibly vulnerable, since many of them can pull each other down (see "When Trucks Stop Running: Energy and the Future of Transportation" (SpringerBriefs in Energy) for details) Michal Breen, of the Truman National Security Project, explained at THE 2012 U.S. House of Representatives hearing "The American energy initiative part 23: A focus on Alternative Fuels and vehicles" why we're doomed to continue to fight wars in the Middle East. He said: "Our dependence on oil as a single source of transportation fuel poses a clear national security threat to the nation. As things now stand, our modern military cannot operate without access to vast quantities of oil. A lack of alternatives means that oil has ceased to be a mere commodity. Oil is a vital strategic commodity, a substance without which our national security and prosperity cannot be sustained. The United States has no choice but to do whatever it takes in order to obtain a sufficient supply of oil. We share that sad and dangerous predicament with virtually every other nation on earth" The word "oil" appears just once in the book as an adjective for Iraq (secular, middle-class, urbanized, rich with oil), and the words petroleum, gasoline, and diesel don't appear at all. But the words torture, terror, terrorist, and terrorism each appear about 90 times. If we want to get out of the middle east, and stop risking that our ghastly activities on citizens of the Middle East aren't turned on our own citizens in the U.S. someday, then the President needs to educate the public about the need for energy conservation. Right now, Americans rush out to buy gas guzzling cars every time the price of gasoline goes down. In fact, the New York Times reported today (June 24, 2016) that people are turning in their electric vehicles for gas guzzlers (see "American Drivers Regain Appetite for Gas Guzzlers"). CAFE standards were supposed to go up to 54 mpg, but they've dropped to 24 mpg since gasoline prices began dropping in 2014. Former President Carter was invited to a 2009 Senate Hearing "Energy Security: Historical perspectives and modern challenges" to advise the Senate. He said the president has a responsibility to educate the American public about energy, like he did over his four years in office. Memorably, one of his speeches in 1977 began: "Tonight I want to have an unpleasant talk with you about a problem unprecedented in our history. With the exception of preventing war, this is the greatest challenge our country will face during our lifetimes. The energy crisis has not yet overwhelmed us, but it will if we do not act quickly. It is a problem we will not solve in the next few years, and it is likely to get progressively worse through the rest of this century. We must not be selfish or timid if we hope to have a decent world for our children and grandchildren. We simply must balance our demand for energy with our rapidly shrinking resources. By acting now, we can control our future instead of letting the future control us." This was unpleasant dinner conversation. President Carter was not invited back to serve a second term. Energy and

transportation policy, diesel engines, and the trucking companies need to focus on energy efficiency, not endless growth. Conventional oil peaked in 2005 and has been on a plateau since then. That's why our economy isn't growing either. " try to think of a business that doesn't use energy. We need to reduce our consumption. Alternatives to Just-in-time delivery where trucks arrive half empty with just what's needed and return empty has to stop. We've traded away energy to gain time. We've traded away energy security to get stuff ASAP. Do we really have to have it RIGHT NOW?

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