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U.S. POLITICS

Running Without Shame

National Review

By Jay Nordlinger

3/24

A colleague was saying the other day, "What should Republicans run on," in '06? My answer (one of them): How about the Iraq War? Americans can be proud of what we're doing in Iraq: both for ourselves and for others. The United States is bolstering its own security and performing a great service to Iraqis (and, by extension, to the Middle East at large).

The Iraq War is nothing to be ashamed of. The media, the Democratic party, and a strand of the Right have instructed the country that we ought to be ashamed.

In my view, Republicans--Bush-supporting Republicans--should tell the country something different. They should say, "We are doing a great and necessary thing," going on to explain why. If the Democrats want to oppose that--let them. And let the electoral chips fall where they may.

America is a country that will stand up for itself, and it is a supremely idealistic country, a beacon to mankind. Self-styled "realists" have tried to make Americans ashamed of this. I'm afraid that, to a considerable extent, they have succeeded.

Push back against them, hard. Fight like hell against them.

America rescued Afghans from a beastly regime: the Taliban. America rescued Iraqis from another beastly regime: Saddam Hussein's. And now that monster faces a democratic tribunal. America is currently staving off terrorists and beheaders in both Afghanistan and Iraq. We are giving people--including ourselves--a chance: a chance for a better world.

Do not succumb to the shame-mongers! Do not internalize their unjust criticisms! Fight against them, hard, hard.

The "critics" constantly have us on the defensive. How about putting them on the defensive?

After all our bloody, grueling work of the last several years, there's no need to leave the field to the beheaders.

Is America proud of what it did in South Vietnam--to South Vietnam--in April 1975? The U.S. Congress forsook that government, after a twelve-year effort (costing more than 50,000 American lives). President Ford pleaded with Congress not to do it; Congress didn't listen.

Boat people, reeducation camps, on and on and on.

I will say once more, while in rhetorical mode: Fight hard!

* When Iraq's former prime minister, Allawi, said that his country was in civil war, everyone ate this up. All of the media applauded him, quoted him, throwing him in the administration's face. It seemed not to matter that other prominent Iraqis--equally concerned, equally patriotic--disagreed with Allawi. The former PM had said "civil war," and a great many people rejoiced (to put it bluntly).

So I was particularly pleased when President Bush, at his recent press conference, said what needed to be said: "There are other voices coming out of Iraq, by the way, other than Mr. Allawi--who I know, by the way. Like. A good fellow."

Perfectly handled. Allawi may be right about what Iraq is experiencing (and, civil war or not, it is ghastly). But he is not the final word, much as people might like him to be.

* You may have seen that the New Mexico Democratic party--officially--is calling for Bush's impeachment. Here's some of the AP report:

Party chairman John Wertheim said Tuesday that delegates to Saturday's state party convention supported a call for the president's impeachment largely because of "perceived abuses of power and corruption in the Bush administration." [Do you not love that "perceived"? This is a call for impeachment?]

He listed as examples of abuses of power, warrantless wiretapping of U.S. citizens, the misstatement of facts preceding the invasion of Iraq, and the scandal surrounding the indictment of Vice President Dick Cheney's former top aide in connection with the leak of the identity of a covert CIA operative.

It seems to me that Democrats don't pay a high enough price for their kookery--and that's because Republicans don't make them. (The media won't do it for them, obviously.) This is not Michael Moore or Cindy Sheehan babbling. These are official Democratic groups and individuals. (Howard Dean, the chairman of the party, is indistinguishable from the most freewheeling MoveOn-ist.)

Republicans are supposed to be casting around for campaign issues. Okay--the New Mexico Democrats brought up wiretapping. Let's talk about that--and let's see who has the sounder approach in counterterrorism: Bush or the New Mexico Democratic party.

Etc. The GOP need not be in constant cringe.

* While I'm on a Bush-defending tear, let me say a quick word about spending. Now, as a conservative, I'm not crazy about federal spending. And this administration has been profligate. But as a child of the Reagan '80s--irrevocably--I care most about tax rates and growth. And the 43rd president cares about tax rates and growth, too.

He also cares about Social Security. For a half a century, conservatives were griping about Social Security, begging for it to be reformed. No politician would touch it--this was "the third rail of American politics." And, in 2000, this Texas governor comes along and grabs it. He campaigns on Social Security reform in 2000. In 2004, he campaigns on it again. And then he goes all around the country, at a million dippy little stops, pushing for it--practically alone, it seemed to me.

Did he have ample conservative support on that initiative? Indeed, ample conservative gratitude? Do we realize how rare this was--a standard-bearer, a president, crusading for Social Security reform?

Conservatives, I believe, sort of yawned over this. And Republican politicians, of course, wet their pants. Now everyone scoffs, saying, "Well, Bush didn't succeed."

No, he didn't succeed--but not for lack of trying. The country, unfortunately, is not ready for Social Security reform, and neither is the Republican party. But Bush was right--is right--and we conservatives should remember this even as we cry against spending.

The liberalization of Social Security would be infinitely more consequential than this annual budget or that.

* Readers have written me to say, "What will you do, if the Afghans execute this Christian? Drop your support of that country?" It would be tempting.

* Speaking of persecution: Cuban democrats recently marked the third anniversary of Castro's brutal 2003 crackdown, which imprisoned 75 oppositionists. Sixty remain in prison. For a story on the matter, please go here.

* Friend of mine sent me the below item. I'm afraid conservative satire, today, is impossible. Indeed, conservative comment is almost impossible!

ST. PAUL, Minn.--The Easter Bunny has been sent packing at St. Paul City Hall.

A toy rabbit, pastel-colored eggs, and a sign with the words "Happy Easter" were removed from the lobby of the City Council offices, because of concerns they might offend non-Christians.

A council secretary had put up the decorations. They were not bought with city money.

St. Paul's human-rights director, Tyrone Terrill, asked that the decorations be removed, saying they

could be offensive to non-Christians.

But City Council member Dave Thune says removing the decorations went too far, and he wonders why they can't celebrate spring with "bunnies and fake grass."

Just one comment: human-rights director? This is what Tyrone Terrill is, the human-rights director? Odd--I thought I wrote about human rights when I wrote about the torture of innocents in dungeons and so on. Little did I know that the real human-rights action is . . . in City Hall, where a secretary displays pastel-colored eggs.

I'm sorry, friends--I'm as patriotic as the day is long, but this is a screwy country.

* Speaking of screwy countries: I read the other day that "Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke"--that's a rocker, I believe--"turned down the chance to discuss climate change with Tony Blair because the British prime minister has 'no environmental credentials.'"

And not long before that I'd read that Jessica Simpson--or someone--had refused to meet with President Bush, because of some dispute or other.

I have never been one to get all huffy about the rise of celebrity culture. I enjoy reading People magazine as much as the next guy, while waiting in line at the supermarket.

But, my goodness . . .

* Let's have a little music criticism, from the New York Sun. For a review of Beethoven's Fidelio at the Metropolitan Opera, please go here. For a review of the pianist Richard Goode, in concert with others, please go here. For a review of the mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe and the bass-baritone John Relyea, in joint recital, and a review of the bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff, singing Schubert's Schöne Müllerin, please go here. And for a review of the pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, in recital, please go here.

Thanks.

* Seeing Fidelio the other night reminded me of something a reader sent in, back in April 2003. This was shortly after the Allied invasion of Iraq. I wrote an item about the reader's note on 4/23/03. Let me share it, if I may:

. . . I am just back from the Easter Festival at Salzburg, which I covered for The New Criterion (account to appear in the June issue). (Bear with me--this has to do with Iraq.) The opera that concluded the festival was Beethoven's Fidelio.

A few days before leaving for Salzburg, I received a letter from a reader who had been following the news out of Iraq. It seems that Allied forces discovered an underground prison. The poor devils in there hadn't seen the light in years. As they stumbled out in their rags--shielding their eyes--their families gathered around them, to greet and embrace them.

My correspondent, of course, thought of Fidelio, whose own prisoners emerge into the light. "O welche Lust!" he quoted. "O welche Lust! In freier Luft den Atem leicht zu heben!" Yes, what joy--what joy it is to breathe free air. Anywhere, and always.

And, later, Don Fernando sings that he has "uncovered the night of crime, which black and heavy encompassed all. No longer kneel down like slaves! Tyranny, be gone! A brother seeks his brothers, and gladly helps, if he can."

Look, I'm all for Realpolitik (speaking of German). No fuzzy-headed, willy-nilly liberator, I. But: A brother should seek his brothers, and gladly help, if he can.

O welche Lust!

* I find it hard to follow that, but let me end with this: I'd like to remind you about our do in Houston. We'll be there on Wednesday, April 5. Who we? NR and NRO luminaries (plus me). Details can be found

here. If you could come, that would really be swell--and you'd be supporting a cause that has done a fair amount of good, since 1955.

Right From the Beginning

National Review

By Jonah Goldberg

3/24

The best moment of political theater at the president's news conference this week came when that thespian carbuncle of bile, Helen Thomas, hung a question mark at the end of a diatribe. The "dean" of the White House press corps all but called President Bush a lying warmonger who invaded Iraq for no legitimate reason.

Thomas lost the exchange, but the sad truth is that her side has won the larger argument. Ever since the controversy over the "16 words" in Bush's 2003 State of the Union address--in which the president alleged that Iraq was seeking uranium from Africa--the administration has been gun-shy about defending its original decision to invade. That's understandable, given the consequences of that episode: Not only did it make the White House seem inept, it made former U.S. Ambassador Joe Wilson and his very important hair a permanent fixture of the media firmament.

It is now simply taken as a given inside this White House that having an argument about why we invaded Iraq is a political loser. So the president prefers to talk democracy, not WMDs.

This might explain why the administration has been so blasé about declassifying about 50,000 boxes of captured Iraqi documents. We don't know what's in many of these boxes. But what has been released so far has been, at minimum, tantalizing, pointing to and illuminating ties between Hussein's regime and al Qaeda as well as other terrorist organizations, including Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.

There are no smoking guns so far. And we probably won't find an Iraqi equivalent of the Zimmerman telegram--which exposed Germany's hostile intent before World War I--linguishing in some government warehouse, like the Ark of the Covenant at the end of the first "Indiana Jones" movie.

But what these documents--as well as other after-action intelligence gathering--demonstrate is that given what he knew at the time, George W. Bush was right to invade Iraq. We now know that the CIA bureaucracy was simply wrong to insist that "secular" Iraq would never work with Islamist terrorist groups such as al Qaeda and Abu Sayyaf. We know that Iraq harbored and very likely supported Abdul Rahman Yasin, one of the suspected bomb makers involved in the first World Trade Center attack in 1993.

According to the Pentagon's definitive postmortem on the invasion, some of which was leaked to the New York Times, even many Iraqi generals were stunned to discover that Hussein didn't have WMDs. Hussein practiced a strategy that one Republican Guard commander called "deterrence by doubt," in which he hoped to bluff the world into believing he had WMDs in order to deter Iran and keep his rep as an Arab strongman with serious mojo.

And that's the point Thomas et al don't want to understand. For reasons that still baffle me, the WMD threat--never the sole reason to invade Iraq--not only became the only argument, it became a thoroughly legalistic one, as if foreign policy has rules of evidence and procedural due process. After 9/11, that kind of foreign policy by lawyers looked ridiculous, and rightly so.

The fact that Hussein turned out to be bluffing about WMDs isn't a mark against Bush's decision. If you're a cop and a man pulls out a gun and points it at you, you're within your rights to shoot him, particularly if the man in question is a known criminal who's shot people before. If it turns out afterward that the gun wasn't loaded, that's not the cop's fault.

Hussein had a 30-year track record of pursuing WMDs. He dealt with Islamic terrorists. The sanctions regime fell apart thanks to Iraqi bribery and 30 years of spineless U.N. accommodation.

In the 1990s, Hussein tried to kill a former U.S. president and tried to shoot down British and American planes enforcing the "no-fly" zone. The Clinton administration--not the George W. Bush administration--

-established "regime change" as our policy toward Iraq. In the years that followed, the Iraqi regime openly celebrated the 9/11 attack. And when we tried to get Hussein to come clean about a weapons program we (and his own generals!) had every reason to believe existed, he played games. After 9/11, calling that bluff wasn't a "choice," it was an obligation.

One reason Bush is down in the polls is that he's giving the impression that he's trying to change the subject from "our mistaken invasion" to "building democracy in Iraq." Building democracy in Iraq is vital--and entirely consistent with the highest aspirations of liberal foreign policy. But he would serve himself and the country better if he simply explained that he's been right all along. Swatting Helen Thomas is a start, but it will take a lot more.

Why to Stick It Out

U.S. News & World Report

By Fouad Ajami

3/27

It is hard to recall, but this effort in Iraq, now an orphan in the court of public opinion, was once a popular war. Consider the numbers: Seventy-seven percent of Americans surveyed in January 2003 favored military action to remove Saddam Hussein. Now a minority of just 29 percent think the war in Iraq is worth the cost. Buyer's remorse has settled upon this war, and in the pundit class and among the nation's congressional representatives, revisionism has taken hold as people flee positions they had taken and rewrite what they had once written. To borrow a celebrated piece of spin, they were for it before they were against it.

This isn't the war they signed up for, some of the new opponents of the war tell us. In truth, history had pampered us: There were American interventions in the Persian Gulf in 1991, Bosnia in 1995, and Kosovo in 1999; and there was that swift campaign against the Taliban launched in the shadow of 9/11. These were "virtual wars," affairs of technological mastery. It is the war after the war that frustrates us so in Iraq today. We had toppled a dictatorship, but we could not find our way to the inner recesses of the country. We could not break its code. By our lights, we had delivered the country the gift of liberty, but the ruling minority of Sunni Arabs believed that we had "stolen" the country from them and delivered it into the hands of the Shiite stepchildren of the land and the hands of the Kurds in the hill country. A foreign power good at releasing communities from the burden of the past, and from the limits and confines of narrow identity, found itself deep in the thicket of a culture defined by sectarian loyalties. An innately optimistic America was to be tested in Iraq. Patience has never been an American virtue, and our enemies in Iraq found that Achilles heel.

There was gratitude in Iraq, but it was not expressed in ways that Americans could see, and perhaps there was not enough of it given the scale and magnitude of American sacrifices. A thoughtful man of the political class, Zuhair Chalabi, minister for human rights, and a Sunni Arab from Mosul at that, assured me in Baghdad some weeks ago that his country felt deep gratitude for this American war, but he counseled that it will take time for that gratitude to come to the surface. But time is the critical commodity that this war aches for. Our enemies there have plenty of it, while the American expedition is under pressure to force history's pace.

Paying a price. The burden of this war is that its costs are so easy to see while its gains in Iraq--and in neighboring Arab lands--are infinitely harder to pin down. The truth is that a better Iraqi polity is within reach and that the American presence in Iraq has launched a wider campaign of reform in Araby. To be sure, the American presence has not rid the Arab world of its political malignancies. But there have been gains in Afghanistan and Lebanon and in the Arabian Peninsula. A notice has been served, after the abdication of the 1990s, that a price will be paid by rogues and paymasters of terrorism who run afoul of American interests. It seems like ages ago--American memory is so incredibly short--that our special forces flushed Saddam Hussein out of his "spider hole." An unmistakable message was sent to despots in Syria and Libya, and to more sly rulers nearby who winked at terrorism: America was done with appeasement.

Some eight decades ago, Winston Churchill, then colonial secretary, gave voice to his deep frustration with Iraq. It was 1922, and the British were bogged down there. They had struck into Mesopotamia in the early days of the Great War, willed the kingdom of Iraq into being, then imported a foreign monarch, the Hashemite Prince Faisal, who had never even set foot in the realm he was bequeathed.

To his prime minister, Churchill penned the following: "I am deeply concerned about Iraq. The task you have given me is becoming really impossible. Faisal is playing the fool, if not the knave ... At present we are paying eight millions a year for the privilege of living on an ungrateful volcano." Today, Churchill's lofty price tag looks paltry, but Iraq remains a magnet, as it was during his time. We can't quit Iraq quite yet. We must, instead, recall the mix of fears and interests that brought us there and the threats that had us look for an Arab setting where we could make our stand.

Them That Brung Ya

U.S. News & World Report

By Gloria Borger

3/27

There's a ritual in Washington, and it usually takes place in a president's second term--when his popularity is down and Congress is running scared and everyone needs to find someone to blame. That's when the cries come for "new blood" in the White House. After all, you're kinda stuck with the president, so all you can really do is shake up his staff. That way you can feel as if you are--to use a favorite Washington phrase--"proactive." Whatever that really means.

And so it goes with this White House. Starting with Hurricane Katrina last summer, then moving on to the short-lived Harriet Miers Supreme Court nomination, then to the warrantless wiretap controversy, and, finally, the Dubai ports deal, it's been one thing after another. And that's on top of the mess in Iraq. The White House team that once seemed almost invincible now looks as if it's huffing and puffing just to keep up.

In many ways, that's predictable: Much of this president's inner circle has been with him since Day 1. Five years into a presidency, the top staff has to be worn down by jobs that start early and never end: Vice President Dick Cheney (as low as 18 percent in national approval polls); Karl Rove, senior adviser and "architect" of the 2004 victory; Chief of Staff Andrew Card; White House counsel Miers; counselor Dan Bartlett, budget chief Josh Bolten. Even longtime adviser Karen Hughes has now returned to a top State Department job, working for presidential confidant--and secretary of state--Condi Rice.

No thanks. This president doesn't like change. And he's also stubborn: One source close to the White House tells me that the more the press and his GOP colleagues call for heads to roll in his inner circle, the more Bush digs in. "They can't change in response to public pressure," says this plugged-in Republican. "So everyone needs to stop talking about it." That's not likely to happen anytime soon. Some Republicans, like Sen. Norm Coleman of Minnesota, have gone public. "There is some question about whether those around him have served him well," he said, in a moment of candor not well received at the White House. Coleman's public venting was privately applauded by his GOP colleagues, who feel purposefully neglected. "We've taken lots of hard hits," says one senior Senate Republican. "Not only do we not get thanked; we then have to wake up in the morning and read about the Dubai port deal in the paper." That was a tipping point--and Republicans are now jumping, particularly with a president with an approval rating hovering in the mid-30 percent range. Some have tried to privately tell the White House it needs to get some new "perspective" in the inner circle. None other than former GOP Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker called Card last week and sent a clear message: How about adding some new people into the mix? His suggestion: former Tennessee Sen. Fred Thompson, now a well-paid TV star but someone who might be able to help repair the frayed relationship between the White House and congressional Republicans. Sources say the suggestion was dutifully passed up the ladder. The answer: thanks but no thanks.

Baker knows something about crisis management at the White House. In 1987, he was brought in by Ronald Reagan after the Iran-contra mess. But here's the key difference between Reagan and Bush: Reagan, historians say, considered his staff as staff. For this president, his inner circle (some of whom have been with him most of his political career) is family, and the loyalty runs both ways.

In life, that's a good thing. But in the White House, that can also lead to an insularity that works against the president. Would a newer staff have seen the port controversy coming? Or that Miers would be a debacle? Would those without long ties to the president have been more willing to have the commander in chief admit to a mistake sooner on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction? Probably. As Baker told me, there's a good middle ground here: Don't fire anyone (that will only play into the hands of critics); just add a new face or two. And give them some authority. No one can--or should even try

to--duplicate the relationship that, say, Miers or Rove (awaiting his own fate in the pending CIA leak investigation) has with the president. But they've all been living inside the same bubble for five years now--and everyone might breathe easier with a bit of fresh air.

Was It Worth It?

Time

By Nancy Gibbs

3/27

Was it worth it, of course, is only one of the questions. What were the alternatives? What could have been done differently? Are things getting better or worse? And however we got here, what do we do now?

As the Iraq war's third anniversary approached, the news fed both doubts and hopes. Saddam Hussein took the stand in his trial for the first time, reminding people of what they were missing. Meanwhile, the brand-new Iraqi parliament met in a capital under curfew to pull together some kind of future amid warnings of civil war. U.S. forces launched Operation Swarmer, the biggest air strikes since the invasion, to root out insurgents north of Baghdad. President Bush embraced realism: "We will see more images of chaos and carnage in the days and months to come," he warned as he argued why that was a price worth paying.

This war has brought division from the start, not just among but also within us. In between those who were always against the war and those who are still for it lie the shifting ambivalents who want this whole massive gamble to work but increasingly fear that it won't. Among the more ardent critics these days are pundits and policymakers who favored the strategy three years ago, even helped shape it, and are now doing a kind of public penance for their failure of foresight. Defense hawk Richard Perle, for example, has declared that the U.S. got the war right and the postwar wrong.

There has been a pattern for modern American wars going back to Korea: broad public support at the outset, growing concern as casualties rise or progress stalls and then a new resolution either do what it takes to win or get us out. In Vietnam, nine years passed after the first U.S. servicemen were killed and more than 20,000 others died before a majority of Americans concluded we were on the wrong course. Opinion swung more quickly this time, as the cost-benefit analysis changed. When the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) weren't found and the Saddam-9/11 connection was discredited, the sense of urgent threat receded. However generous and idealistic Americans may be, a half-a-trillion-dollar nation-building venture is a harder case to make.

So support for the war thickens and thins as events unfold. While polls showed that 68% of Americans were in favor of the invasion three years ago, that figure fell as what looked like a quick victory stalled, rose when Saddam was pulled from his spider hole, sank with the sickening pictures from Abu Ghraib, but then rose a bit again as Iraqis defied threats and went to the polls, setting an example for a region where free elections are about as common as leprechauns. In recent weeks the bombing of a Shi'ite shrine, the bodies dumped in shallow graves, the girls blown up on the way to school, the dwindling faith not in U.S. abilities and intentions but in Iraq's all drove down support for the war again.

So was it worth it? In a Gallup poll last week, 60% of those surveyed said no. In the pages that follow, a diverse and international group of thinkers give their opinions. Many people approached by TIME refused to answer. Perhaps they share the view expressed last week in Sydney by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice: "I think the outcome, the judgment, of all of this needs to await history."

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR. No. Emphatically no. Were we wrong to undertake what we did? The objectives were sound, but our reach proved insufficient to realize them. > Buckley is a conservative author and syndicated columnist

TOMMY FRANKS Yes. America remains very proud of and very thankful to our sons and daughters serving in Iraq and around the world in the cause of freedom. The events of 9/11 taught us a valuable lesson: ignoring terrorism will not make the problem go away. The sacrifices of our military members and their families are giving Iraqis a chance for freedom. And a free Iraq serves not only Iraqis. It will stand as a model in the Middle East, a model that represents to millions of people that there is an alternative to terrorism.

> As chief of U.S. Central Command, General Franks, now retired, oversaw the invasion of Iraq

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA I believe that the balance sheet for the war at this moment is quite negative. The war foreclosed the possibility of Saddam restarting his WMD programs and replaced his dictatorship with Iraq's new democracy--both real gains. Balanced against these gains are costs that go well beyond the direct human and financial ones. The occupation of Iraq has served as a tremendous stimulus for Arab and Muslim anti-Americanism and thus has made radical Islamist terrorism significantly worse than it would otherwise be. America's reputation around the world has taken a huge hit among ordinary people who are now more likely to associate our democracy with scenes of prisoner abuse than with the Statue of Liberty. We, of course, do not know what the future will bring, but the upside potential of Iraq's post-Saddam order looks more and more limited. The central state will remain weak for years to come, and where the Shi'ite parties have established their rule, we get not a liberal democracy but an Iranian-style rule by clerics.

> Fukuyama is a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and the author of *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*

HISHAM KASSEM Sadly, I have to say yes. It is difficult to commend such a bloody scene. But it achieved something useful. Parallel to the chaos and bloodshed, there is a political process evolving in Iraq. Bloodshed is the price of the transition from Saddam's psychopathic dictatorship. The losses would have been higher had Saddam stayed on. You could easily see that regime lasting another 30 years, under his sons and top generals. Negotiating with Iraq was not an option. There had to be a military intervention. You have a bloc of 22 countries in the Arab world dominated by authoritarianism and dictatorship. It is not a bloc you could engage politically and pressure for reform. By military intervention, the U.S. is able to pressure the region into adopting the reforms we are beginning to see across the region that might avert many countries from becoming failed states. The world cannot put up with state failure in the backyard of the world's oil fields, Israel and Europe.

> Democracy activist Kassem is vice chairman of the Egyptian daily newspaper *Al-Masry al-Youm*

BERNARD-HENRI LEVY No. Because it was the wrong target: Iran and Pakistan are infinitely more threatening. Because it was the wrong approach: the neoconservatives, who put no stock in government policy at home and thus can't do so abroad, produced no plans for democratic nation building. And, above all, because this war, which aimed to reduce the number and strength of terrorists, has instead increased them. What was needed was to break the infernal cycle of the "clash of civilizations," à la Sam Huntington and Osama bin Laden. Instead, the war breathed new life into it. In short, rarely have the famous words of Blaise Pascal rung more true: "He who would act the angel becomes the beast." What begins as a noble moral intention to bring down a tyrant becomes a political disaster and a gigantic step backward in the long, necessary war against fascism. A field of ruins!

> French philosopher Levy is author of the recently published *American Vertigo*

ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER Is the cause of freeing a people and pushing for progressive political and economic change in the most dangerous region in the world worth fighting and dying for? Undoubtedly. But has this war--with its disdain for allies and institutions, its willful blindness to any scenario other than easy victory and immediate democracy, and its planners' irresponsibility so deep as to be immoral in failing to protect the heritage, infrastructure and lives of a people who never asked for war--been worth it? Squandering lives and vast sums of money through a combination of arrogance and negligence can never be worth it. And if the Administration had been willing to make a full and honest assessment of the true costs and the uncertainty of the benefits before invading Iraq, I doubt that a majority of the American people would have supported the war.

> Slaughter is the dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University

LAWRENCE B. WILKERSON I'm principally a strategist, and from that perspective the war has been a disaster. First, the foremost winner has been Iran: it rid itself of its greatest threat, Saddam and his military, without firing a shot; won the Dec. 15 Iraq elections; owns the south, particularly Basra; and has felt the freedom to elect Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who, in turn, has felt the freedom to reclaim leadership of radical Islam, leadership Osama bin Laden claimed on 9/11. Second, the foremost loser--after Iraq itself--has been Israel, whose leaders must now fear more than ever the new strategic

maneuver room afforded Iran by the U.S.'s ineptitude. Third, the general war against global terrorists has been affected greatly by the failure in Iraq. Recruiting among Muslim ranks has been aided significantly, while America has squandered the upper hand in the world of ideas, which is the real battlefield of this conflict.

> U.S. Army Colonel Wilkerson, now retired, was chief of staff for Secretary of State Colin Powell

MICHAEL YOUNG Yes, Iraq was worth it, because it exposed more clearly than ever the brutal underpinnings of Arab nationalist rule. From an Iraqi perspective, there is much uncertainty today but also no nostalgia for the savagery of Saddam's rule. From the U.S.'s perspective, the struggle to stabilize Iraq will discourage similar endeavors in the future, but the war also highlighted how subcontracting American interests in the Middle East to supposedly stable Arab dictatorships is no longer viable. The shoddy edifice that U.S. soldiers so quickly dismantled in Iraq is no less present in countries Washington considers allies. Iraq may or may not be the pivot of a regional democratic resurgence, but it is a reminder to Americans that much can be gained by challenging the debilitating status quo if the aftermath is gotten right. Unless democracy becomes a cornerstone of Washington's efforts, its alliances will seem more than ever built on a mountain of illegitimacy.

> Young is opinion editor at Lebanon's Daily Star newspaper

BERNARD KOUCHNER No, because of the way Americans went about it. I think it was up to the international community to pull together and get rid of Saddam for the Iraqi people. I have long argued for the "right to intervene." But you have to succeed. To do that, you need the international community standing with you. Saddam had been a major assassin in his country for 35 years. What difference would a few weeks have made? They should have done as we did in Kosovo, setting up a contact group and relying on international cooperation and peacekeepers.

> Kouchner, former U.N. administrator for Kosovo, co-founded France's Médecins Sans Frontières and Médecins du Monde

CHIBLI MALLAT Yes, the U.S.-led war to get rid of the dictatorship was worth it for most Iraqis and for those who, like me, supported them against one of the most ruthless governments in modern history. But for the young Marine from Oklahoma or the child in Iraq blown up this past week or the one before, it wasn't. Better things must obtain from the demise of Iraq's dictatorship, even if it is largely accepted now that the end of Saddam's rule represents a positive precedent for Iraq and the modern Middle East. Democratic Iraq, like democratic Germany or Japan, might make all the sacrifices less painful.

> Mallat is an Arab democracy campaigner and a candidate for Lebanese President

RICHARD HAASS After three years, my answer would be no, although any judgment at this point is necessarily an interim one. The war has absorbed a tremendous amount of U.S. military capacity, the result being that the U.S. has far less spare or available capacity to use in the active sense or to exploit in the diplomatic sense. It has weakened our position against both North Korea and Iran. It has exacerbated U.S. fiscal problems. The war has also contributed to the world's alienation from the U.S. and made it more difficult to galvanize international support for U.S. policy toward other challenges. Iraq's legacy could also lead to renewed American public resistance to international involvement.

> Haass, a former aide to President George H.W. Bush, is president of the Council on Foreign Relations

KENNETH ROTH When this war started, human rights were only a very minor reason to enter Iraq. Human rights became more of an after-the-fact justification only when it turned out that there were no WMD or prewar links to international terrorism. So, no, I don't think the war should have ever been or can now be justified as a successful humanitarian intervention. The extreme measure of military invasion should be reserved for stopping ongoing or imminent mass slaughter, and that wasn't happening in Iraq in March 2003. Humanitarian intervention might have been justified to stop the Anfal genocide in 1988 against the Kurds, but there was nothing like that going on in 2003. Clearly, Saddam was an awful dictator, but there are many awful dictators in the world, and toppling an awful dictator, in my view, does not justify military intervention.

> Roth is the executive director of Human Rights Watch

DAVID M. KENNEDY From the outset, the war was a colossally bold and breathtakingly risky gamble. Unfortunately and unsurprisingly, the U.S. has failed to beat the odds. Forget about WMD and links to al-Qaeda. The real purpose for invading Iraq was the extravagant ambition to transform the political culture of the entire Middle East. The Bush Administration bet American might and good intentions against the accumulated weight of centuries of religious rivalry, tribal tensions, wanton bloodletting and authoritarian rule. Even American hyperpower has proved no match for the burden of all that sorry history.

> Kennedy is a history professor at Stanford University and a 2000 Pulitzer Prize winner *

The 'To Hell with Them' Hawks - And What's Wrong With Them

National Review

By Richard Lowry

3/27

Events have conspired to knock the supports out from under the Wilsonian aspects of President Bush's foreign policy. This is driving a nascent reaction to Bush foreign policy on the right, a growing sentiment, although one as yet without a prominent political champion. It is the rise of the "to hell with them" hawks.

These are conservatives who are comfortable using force abroad, but have little patience for a deep entanglement with the Muslim world, which they consider unredeemable, or at least not worth the strenuous effort of trying to redeem. To put their departure from Bush in terms associated with foreign-policy analyst Walter Russell Mead, they want to detach Bush's Jacksonianism (the hardheaded, somewhat bloody-minded nationalism) from his Wilsonianism (the crusading democratic idealism). Democrats are headed in this direction too. But the tendency is problematic and, in its own way, as naïve and unrealistic as Bush at his dreamiest.

The way Bush has wed conservative opinion in the wake of 9/11 to a soaringly aspirational foreign policy has been extraordinary. It was predictable in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks that conservatives would support a vigorous military response. It was not predictable that they would rally around a president who firmly maintained that "Islam is a religion of peace," who undertook a quest for democracy in the Middle East, and who supported nation-building in Afghanistan and Iraq of the sort most of the Right had rejected in the Clinton years. These positions weren't inevitable for the Right; they were almost entirely the product of Bush's priorities.

As Bush has weakened, so has the support for these priorities. Sotto voce, conservatives have often said among themselves of Islam, after some horrific terror attack, "This is a religion of peace?" And a small group of vocal right-wing experts have knocked Bush for his "Islam is peace" rhetoric from the beginning. The "cartoon riots" seemed to tip more conservatives into, or close to, this camp.

The Palestinian elections have undermined Bush's contention that all people everywhere desire freedom in their hearts. If this statement is interpreted in such a way as to make it true, it becomes non-falsifiable -- to wit, all people really do desire freedom although it might not be evinced in any practical way, e.g., election results. If Bush's belief is interpreted thus, it's not terribly comforting since it means the universal desire for freedom is limited by circumstances and buried under cultural and institutional obstacles. In other words, this supposed universal desire won't do us much good when people hold all sorts of other competing desires, including a hunger for order, power, religious purity, ethnic solidarity, national prestige, and revenge. All of which have been on display in Iraq.

It is Iraq, of course, that is discrediting the project of nation-building. It has reminded us of the enduring importance of culture. Iraq suffers from a lack of a democratic culture, and its longstanding ethnic and tribal divisions have worked against us. Iraq has also been a lesson in the delicacy of institutions and the extreme difficulty of creating them anew. Iraq's army, police, and governmental ministries collapsed after our invasion, and we obviously haven't been able to reconstitute them, at least not satisfactorily.

In light of these developments, the "to hell with them" hawks want to write off reforming Islam, since they consider it inherently unreformable. They are in favor of varying levels of frankness about this evaluation, wanting either to pass over it in silence or to be open about what they see as a clash of

civilizations, with Islam itself the enemy. They don't see any relation between spreading democracy and fighting terrorism, so want to give democracy-promotion a much lower prominence in U.S. foreign policy. They see the Iraq War as essentially lost, and want to pull up stakes either immediately or as soon as is plausible without creating further disaster. They agree on the imperative of never launching such a project again.

"To hell with them" hawks are not isolationists. Almost all of them supported the Iraq War at its inception on national-security, weapons-of-mass-destruction grounds. They began to have doubts only as the retrospective justification for the war and the war aims themselves became increasingly Wilsonian. They will support military action again -- against Iran, say, if nothing else will stop its nuclear program -- but only if there is the guarantee against any repeat of the kind of intimate on-the-ground engagement with a native population that we've seen in Iraq.

The "to hell with them" hawks are not protectionists either, although some of them might be tinged with protectionist attitudes. They are capable of existing within the Republican coalition with another of Walter Russell Mead's groupings, the commercialist Hamiltonians. But there are tensions, as has been seen in the dispute over the United Arab Emirates ports deal. "To hell with them" hawks oppose it because it gives too much influence to an Arab-government-owned company at our ports. Hamiltonians support it as an expression of an open global trading system.

Democrats might shift in the "to hell with them" direction too, and any Democratic feint this way is likely to prompt post-Bush Republicans (the emergence of whom we are witnessing already) to go farther and faster down this path. Republicans don't want to be left holding the bag of full-throated Wilsonianism as Democrats tap into anger with and suspicion of the Arab world. The important question is whether the "to hell with them" hawks support a responsible foreign policy. Although Bush has indulged Wilsonian excesses, the "to hell with them" tendency, and the assumptions behind it, can be just as flawed.

WILSON, GOOD AND BAD First, it is important to separate out the good from the bad in Wilsonianism, which is sometimes used as a swear word. What Michael Mandelbaum in his book *The Ideas That Conquered the World* calls the "Wilsonian triad" of peace, democracy, and free markets has triumphed as a kind of international norm. This has been a boon to the world and the security interests of the United States, and nearly every U.S. president since Wilson has promoted the "triad" in one form or another.

Then, there is the negative side of the ledger: Wilson's innocence when it came to cold considerations of power politics; his goal of establishing collective security through the League of Nations; his faith in international law. Bush partakes of none of these Wilsonian failings, but he directly channels Wilson's rhetoric. It was like a preview of Bush when Wilson averred, "I believe that God planted in us the vision of liberty. . . . I cannot be deprived of the hope that we are chosen, and prominently chosen, to show the way to the nations of the world how they shall walk in the paths of liberty." This sentiment can be a warrant for a global democratic crusade that is impractical and detached from considerations of U.S. interests.

Was the Iraq War such an overreaching exercise in Wilsonianism? Not necessarily. If we had found weapons of mass destruction, which we had every reason to believe we would, the invasion and occupation would be easier to justify on strict national-security grounds. If the occupation had gone more smoothly, obviously, things would look different too. As Charles Krauthammer has pointed out, no one complains that our commitment to forging a better polity in Afghanistan is overly ambitious, since it hasn't been as onerous.

But it is clear now that the Iraq War -- which I supported then and still do -- was in important respects ill conceived. Prior to the invasion, the U.S. missed the devastated state of Iraq's civil society and infrastructure. We were not properly equipped to navigate Iraq's complicated cultural landscape. Bush didn't make the various factions of his government cohere. Above all, his administration underestimated the enormous task it had set for itself. It failed to prepare appropriately, by deliberating more carefully and avoiding the creation of unrealistic expectations. All of these are historic mistakes, and will, justly, weigh against Bush's reputation.

Of course, the story of Iraq is still being written (see our editorial "Back from the Brink" at the beginning of this issue). It is possible that a political order could still take hold -- somewhat stable, pluralistic, and representative -- that represents a geopolitical departure for the Middle East. But you

can already hear people thinking "never again." Not just never again fight a war for democracy in the Middle East, but never again fight an insurgency.

This replicates almost exactly the reaction to Vietnam. The post-Vietnam Powell doctrine -- calling for simple political objectives and the mustering of overwhelming force before launching a war -- was meant to keep the U.S. from getting embroiled in another Vietnam-like insurgency. Who wouldn't prefer to avoid that? But this is where "to hell with them" hawks suffer from their own naivety. Wars rarely line up with your preferences. The first Gulf War met the specifications of the Powell doctrine. No subsequent American war has, from Somalia, to Bosnia and Kosovo, through the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"To hell with them" hawks misinterpret the Vietnam War as badly as liberals. They are inclined to conclude that, if only the U.S. had really let loose in Vietnam, bringing to bear even more firepower, the war would have been won. On the contrary, it was only near the end of the war, when the U.S. started to fashion a true counterinsurgency strategy focusing on winning hearts and minds, on holding territory, and on training Vietnamese security forces, that we began to succeed. If there hadn't been a catastrophic loss of political support for the war at home, this strategy might have held South Vietnam, and it didn't involve -- in a tactic "to hell with them" hawks tend to instinctively favor -- bombing anyone back to the Stone Age.

Insurgencies can be beaten, and it can be worth it to fight against them. To say "never again" is to give our enemies a road map to deterring us by threatening guerrilla war. It would limit unnecessarily our options in the world. Not all insurgencies look like Iraq. We defeated one by proxy in El Salvador during the Cold War. We are more than holding our own against one in Afghanistan right now.

THE LONG COUNTERINSURGENCY Whether we say "never again" is important for another reason. A key question in the political debate post-9/11 is, What kind of conflict are we in? Is it primarily a law-enforcement action, or is it a war? "To hell with them" hawks think it is a war. But there is another important question: What kind of war?

The answer is that it is most like a counterinsurgency. This doesn't mean that the War on Terror has to be the Iraq War over and over again. It is, after all, a feature of counterinsurgencies that they aren't exclusively military in nature. They require persuading people through a range of inducements -- military, but also political, economic, and ideological -- to put down their arms, or not to take them up in the first place. On a global scale, that is our task in the War on Terror.

This means we need the two qualities that we either haven't had or are rapidly losing in Iraq: an intimate knowledge of the culture we are dealing with, and patience. We will need more engagement with the Muslim world rather than less, and more perspective rather than less. To allow a month or two of sporadic rioting over the Danish cartoons -- much of it fomented and paid for by fanatics -- to make us turn our backs on the Muslim world for the long term is childish. It highlights the way our enemies and the "to hell with them" hawks exist in a somewhat symbiotic relationship. They want us to quit the Middle East, and the "to hell with them" hawks wouldn't mind quitting; our enemies say democracy is incompatible with Islam, and the "to hell with them" hawks believe them.

Bush's foreign policy has obviously needed adjustments: more of an emphasis on diplomacy and allies; a realization that creating democracy through military intervention is deeply problematic; a greater measure of prudence. Secretary of State Rice has made many of these adjustments in a neo-realist synthesis, taking the idealism of neoconservatism and leavening it with the practicality of realism. But what deserves preserving from the original Bush approach?

First, the contention that Islam is a religion of peace. Even if this seems a polite fiction, it is an important one. Influential Muslims believe it to be true, and it is crucial that they prevail in the Muslim struggle for self-definition. Rather than scorning them, we should be doing what we can to support the likes of King Abdullah of Jordan, who has launched an anti-terror initiative, and Iraq's Ayatollah Sistani, who has been consistent in condemning terrorism. Whatever the theological niceties of Islam, religious cultures take on different colorations across time. Some people wondered whether Christianity was a religion of peace 300 years ago when rival Christian princes were warring over questions of faith.

Like Christianity, Islam has within it resources that can be used both to promote liberty and peace and to repress these things. The relative strength of these dueling resources depends in part on the political and economic conditions in which they exist. We should want to do all we reasonably can to

create the conditions in which the positive elements within Islam flower.

"To hell with them" hawks tend not to see any positive elements. They will sometimes dismiss someone like Sistani by citing all his beliefs that seem bizarre to a Westerner. But is this surprising? He is a conservative Shiite cleric, not an Episcopal minister. Not to realize that someone utterly different from us can still be an ally is a flat-out failure of imagination.

THE BATTLE FOR LEGITIMACY The other major aspect of Bush's policy worth keeping is the push for democratization. Bush has done himself no favor by so baldly oversimplifying and over-promising in his democratization campaign. But the general orientation is correct.

There is no more powerful political force than legitimacy. With it, a great empire can sprawl around the world; without it, it collapses the next day. Philip Bobbitt argues in his brilliant book *The Shield of Achilles* that what he calls "epochal wars" always revolve around legitimacy, around the questions of what the state is and how it is to be governed. He calls the period from the First World War to the end of the Cold War the "Long War," a running conflict over whether the legitimate government of the nation-state was fascism, communism, or parliamentary democracy.

In the Middle East today, there is a similar struggle over legitimacy. How should Arab and surrounding states be governed -- secular fascism, religious dictatorship, or a semi-democratic parliamentarianism? This struggle is mixed up with complicated ethnic and sectarian divisions, making it particularly nettlesome, but to pretend we have no stake in it is folly. How Muslim states and populations are governed makes a difference in the expression of Islam. Witness the relative moderation of Islamic populations in Turkey, Indonesia, and India.

"To hell with them" hawks suffer from an awful case of presentism. Because for the last 30 years there has been a rising tide of Islamic radicalism, they conclude it is inevitable. But radical Islam is an ideology, and ideologies don't rise out of nothing. They exist in relation to political and state power, and to economic success, and their prestige rises or falls with these factors. In the 1960s, "to hell with them" hawks might have said, "All Arabs must be nationalists." Arab nationalism delivered political and economic stagnation, and duly declined, with Islamism taking its place.

The key moment in the advance of radical Islam was Khomeini's rise to power in Iran in 1979. The mullahs became the biggest boosters of suicide bombing. The burst of Iranian ideological energy scared the Saudis. Worried about losing leadership of the Islamic world, they began an international campaign of evangelism on behalf of Wahhabism. These two developments changed the iteration of global Islam. It wasn't inevitable that this change take place, and it needn't inevitably endure. Further, the geopolitical context of the Middle East mattered in making this change happen, and it will matter to reversing it.

The contemporary Middle East has featured a competition of radicalisms -- who can be religiously purer, and more hostile to the West? The project in Iraq is an attempt to shift the terms of the competition to who can better deliver peace, prosperity, and representation. If this shift occurs, it will be a grave blow to the legitimacy of radical Islam. The radicals realize this, which is why they hope to defeat us in Iraq and in so doing trash the legitimacy of semi-democratic parliamentarianism.

"To hell with them" hawks would say, "Fine, but since Iraq isn't capable of any sort of democracy, you are on a fool's errand." But the outcome of the conflict in Iraq is still in doubt. Confident predictions about which cultures are or are not capable of democracy have the aspect of unassailable truth -- right up to the point that they don't. Representative Arab government will be impossible until it happens.

Skeptics about the relation between political systems and terrorism in the Middle East point to the existence of homegrown terrorists in Britain to show violent extremism can exist in liberal democracies. Of course it can. But such extremism in many cases reflects the tentacles of Saudi money and propaganda. During the Cold War, there were also homegrown Communists in Western societies, but when the center of Communism, the Soviet Union, collapsed, these Communists disappeared. Similarly, if the Middle East, the heart of the Muslim world, didn't have so many players sanctioning extremism and violence, there would be fewer homegrown fanatics.

"To hell with them" hawks implicitly promise that if we deny extremists sophisticated technology, and secure ourselves at home, we can be safe. But it is the fire in the minds of men that matters most. As long as there are countless young men who want to do us harm, and are willing to die in the process, it

is going to be hard to deny them the materials or the access to the U.S. necessary to do it. The key is to try to see that the fire itself begins to die out. There is no chance of that happening without changes in the Middle East that will require calling on all aspects of our power -- economic, diplomatic, ideological, as well as military -- in a drawn-out, unconventional kind of political warfare.

HOW TO CLASH CIVILIZATIONS For believers in a clash in civilizations, the "to hell with them" hawks have an odd attitude toward their own. They want to put our civilization in a permanent posture of strategic defense. In Cold War terms, they believe in Containment rather than Rollback. Containment was a successful strategy, but especially so when Ronald Reagan invested it with aspects of Rollback, launching insurgencies against Communist states and engaging in unapologetic evangelism for the Western cause.

Like the "to hell with them" hawks, the Crusaders of old believed in a clash of civilizations. But they wanted to spread the one, true faith; the "to hell with them" hawks want to enhance port security. Perhaps it is President Bush who is most serious about engaging in a war of civilizations, seeking to translate key aspects of our civilization to theirs (while at the same time shrewdly denying that there is any clash of civilizations, to help make the medicine go down). What Islamists are attempting to do in Europe, Bush is attempting in the Middle East.

Again, to borrow from Bobbitt's analysis, this is natural in any "epochal war." The powers opposing Napoleon weren't satisfied with whatever regime might replace his once he was defeated, but saw to it that a monarchy was restored to France; the Allies didn't turn Germany back over to the Kaiser after World War I, but insisted on a (precarious) republic; and, of course, the U.S. transformed Germany and Japan after World War II. Epochal wars, like the War on Terror, have an inevitable ideological content.

Alas, there are no shortcuts, or guarantees of victory. At the moment, the wind is blowing the "to hell with them" hawks' way. If we try their approach, it won't be long until we are complaining yet again about the lack of realism in U.S. foreign policy, and yearning for something less simplistic and naïve.

FOREIGN POLICY

How to Go Global

Economist

No author given

3/25

GEORGE BUSH may be consumed at home defending his policies in Iraq against the 60% of Americans who now disagree with his handling of the war. But Europeans hoping that the hard lessons being learned daily in Baghdad and Ramadi article would force the administration to adopt a more collegial foreign policy are at last starting to see results. Why, then, are some of them fretting that the transatlantic alliance is about to drift farther apart?

Recent evidence would suggest there is more common diplomatic ground, not less. Since Mr Bush's visit to Brussels just over a year ago, in a bid both to reinvigorate NATO and to strengthen America's ties with the European Union, diplomats from both sides of the Atlantic have co-operated intensively over how to handle Iran's nuclear ambitions, Syria's meddling in Lebanon and conflicts in Africa. An earlier tiff over the Europeans' plans to lift their arms embargo on China kicked off a "strategic dialogue" on Asian security (meaning how to handle a rising China). There are more regular talks these days, too, about where Vladimir Putin's troubling Russia is heading.

There is not always agreement. But at least the most difficult issues under discussion are often the ones the two sides broadly agree on. This week, toing and froing across the Atlantic over tactics contributed to the delay at the UN Security Council in getting Russia and China to back a first rap over the knuckles for Iran.

But it is not just better conflict-management within the alliance that Mr Bush is after. There is also a quiet revolution under way both in what America expects of its own diplomats and soldiers around the world and what it will be asking of its friends.

Administration officials are urging their NATO partners and other close allies such as Australia, Japan and South Korea to think—and if need be act—more globally. Some of the Europeans, at least, are far from ready. For NATO, the crunch is likely to come at its planned summit in Riga in late November.

In the light of Iraq, Mr Bush's rethinking is not chiefly about what America should be doing in the world. It is still "at war" with international terrorism, he explained in last week's updated National Security Strategy. It will still take on the world's proliferators, such as North Korea and Iran. And despite the election victory of Hamas in Palestine, his administration makes no apologies for its support for democratic change in the Middle East and beyond. But what Mr Bush's secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, has called America's "transformational diplomacy" is about means and partners, as much as ends.

Between the lines of the new security strategy and the Pentagon's earlier Quadrennial Defence Review is a recognition that military force is not going to be the most useful means to achieve what Ms Rice has called "a balance of power that favours freedom". America fully intends to remain the world's pre-eminent military power. But the most thoughtful talk now is of more coherent diplomacy, with soldiers and diplomats working more closely both in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. And this from a team that used to insist, disparagingly, that America didn't "do windows" (or, as others would put it, nation-building).

Above all, allies are back in vogue. That is a welcome change after a period when it seemed that—at the White House and the Pentagon at least, and with Iraq partly excepted—seeking help even from friends was considered a sign of weakness. And it ought to be music to anxious European ears. Like talk of a "war" on terrorism, which always carried uncomfortable overtones to outsiders of a preference for force over diplomacy, America's apparent enthusiasm to act unilaterally had cast a chill over transatlantic relations.

Meanwhile, America is already shifting some military and diplomatic resources away from bases and diplomatic posts in Europe to where the new threats and opportunities are: in the Middle East, Asia (with the rise of a competitive China and a friendlier India) and Latin America. There will be more changes in the years ahead. Though some Europeans, notably Britain, are also taking a hard look at what is still partly a cold-war shape to their diplomatic presence and capabilities, others are anxious that America's diplomatic shifts mean it is losing interest in Europe. But the greater concern is that America will now expect too much of its allies.

What Mr Bush is after is a different, more ambitious sort of alliance altogether. Awkwardly, however, just as America is reviving its interest in Europeans as partners, the Europeans, suffering their own protectionist strains and with their confidence sagging after last year's failure to win an agreed constitution for the European Union, are not best placed—or may be downright unwilling—to respond.

Certainly, America is not turning its back on Europe, insist officials at both the State Department and the Pentagon. Far from it. But the Atlantic alliance should no longer be about defending already secure real-estate in western Europe, argues one senior State Department man. It should be about what America and Europe can do together in the wider world where the new threats come from. Hence the nascent plans for a more global alliance that America hopes will be accepted at NATO's Riga summit later in the year.

The alliance has been tiptoeing in that direction for a while. It is about to take over security duties in Afghanistan; for months the NATO Response Force, trained for mobility, impact and reach, helped bring relief to earthquake victims in Pakistan; and NATO helped lift African Union peacekeepers into Darfur and may be called on to do more if the AU force is strengthened under United Nations auspices.

But it is one thing for those NATO members with the capability and the will to take on problems far beyond Europe, as and when they can. Getting the alliance to function with that as its organising principle is a different proposition.

For one thing, it will force NATO's continental European members to confront anew their own well-known shortcomings: everything from the shortage of long-range transport aircraft to the meagre tally of truly deployable forces (still only in the tens of thousands out of a pool of well over 1m in uniform) and their lack of inter-operable radios. Another proposal for Riga is to change the way NATO finances its operations, obliging those that don't have much to contribute militarily to chip in more of the costs of those that do. Yet defence budgets in many European countries have been static or falling in recent

years. Meanwhile, countries like Australia and Japan are listening with interest as plans are floated to offer them more opportunities to work with NATO, based on common operating standards.

There are two ways for Europeans to look at all this. The traditional one is to fret about where such changes might lead and how much they might cost. There is concern, particularly, that America would rather leave intractable problems, such as instability in the Balkans or Africa's incessant wars, to the Europeans to sort out. Enthusiasts for a more globally-orientated Europe, on the other hand, see this as a moment of opportunity to rebuild a reinvigorated alliance with America, one with a purpose, not just a past. But they also worry about the consequences if European members of NATO fail to rise to the challenge.

For countries such as Britain and France, accustomed to sending their soldiers to far-flung parts, the stretch to a more fully global role is one they know they have to try to make, since the threats to Europe's security these days can come from anywhere. Others, including Germany, feel they are already stretched quite far. Some would rather do little, if anything at all. Meanwhile, France may still object to turning NATO into the place where Europeans and Americans (and others) regularly discuss broad security concerns, although Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, has publicly supported the idea.

Similarly, concerns that Asia is beyond Europe's reach, and should be beyond NATO's too, are given the lie by the recent deployment, albeit a modest one, of EU monitors to Aceh in Indonesia. Closer to home, but in a more dangerous place, the EU last year agreed to help monitor the (now mostly closed) Rafah crossing between Gaza and Israel. All these steps are far beyond the security duties most Europeans were even contemplating, let alone doing, even five years ago.

At the State Department, at least, officials are clear that, given the choice, they would prefer to have some of their European allies with them (no one expects all of NATO's 26 members to turn out together any more) in pretty much any tight spot. They are the strongest democracies, with the best capabilities: acting together, they provide a "quorum of democratic legitimacy", says one.

But with or without the Europeans, America will continue seeking partners where it finds them. Its post-tsunami relief effort early last year around the Indian Ocean was closely and effectively co-ordinated with Australia, Japan and India, and is widely seen as one model of coalitions to come. Both South Korea and Japan have contributed troops, alongside some Europeans, to reconstruction efforts in Iraq, while Japan continues its logistical support for coalition efforts in Afghanistan and beyond. Bringing these two and others closer to NATO's well-rehearsed ways of doing things would make sense.

Building capable coalitions for different purposes is the name of the game. Will NATO in future operate as the crucial hub of such a global and varied network of alliances? The Europeans have until that November summit to decide.

ISRAEL

Shutting Itself In, Hoping for the Best - Israel's New Politics

Economist

No author given

3/25

Israel looks set to vote on March 28th for unilateral withdrawal. But the determined unity of the mainstream belies deep fractures in society

This is not just any election. It is, in effect, a referendum on the most significant territorial withdrawal in Israel's history; on the future shape of its borders; and on how the country should respond to the rise to power in the Palestinian Authority (PA) of a radical Islamist party that, at least on paper, still calls for its destruction. It is an election that comes on the heels of six months of upheavals—Israel's "disengagement" from Gaza, Ariel Sharon's bolt from the Likud to form his Kadima party, his abrupt removal from political life by a massive stroke, and Hamas's election victory—that have made fools of the wisest soothsayers. Yet everyone agrees on one thing: it is one of the most boring elections they can remember.

The campaigning is simplistic and predictable. The polls are predictable and stable. The scandals, more fruitily scandalous than ever, have sunk in the public consciousness with barely a ripple. The only real uncertainty is how many people will rouse themselves from their electoral stupor and stagger out to vote.

The explanation for this paradoxical apathy is the same as for the calm after an earthquake. The internal pressures that led to the upheavals have done their work. Both the Israeli and Palestinian political systems have adjusted. All that remains is for Israel's voters to sign off on the result.

What the past half-year has done is to give form to an Israeli mainstream that had been inchoate for over five years. During the Oslo peace process of the 1990s, the mainstream could be divided into those who believed in giving up occupied land for peace (Labour) and those who didn't believe in giving it up at all (the Likud).

Then, in 2000, the Camp David peace talks between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat collapsed. The Israeli belief that Arafat had rejected Mr Barak's "generous offer" out of hand, though the reality was far more complex, made the violent outburst of the second intifada that autumn so shocking that even left-wing Israelis started losing faith in peace talks. "It generated an almost axiomatic belief that in the foreseeable future Israel will have to live as if the Arabs are not around," says Ephraim Yaar, a co-author of Tel Aviv University's monthly Peace Index poll, which has measured Israelis' attitudes for the past decade.

It was Amram Mitzna, the Labour candidate in the 2001 election, who first seriously proposed giving up land without peace talks. Mr Sharon (who had ignited the powderkeg of the intifada by entering the Haram al-Sharif, Jerusalem's holiest Muslim site) roundly defeated him by promising to do no such thing. Yet less than three years later, with hundreds of Israeli and thousands of Palestinian lives lost, he announced the Gaza withdrawal. Despite dire predictions and loud protests by the settlers and their supporters, it passed off with virtually no injuries.

This showed that the settlers could be overcome. Gaza's subsequent deterioration, as Palestinian clans, armed gangs and political factions slugged it out, convinced Israelis that the PA under Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas, would never be able to impose the order required to uphold its end of a peace deal. Mr Sharon had mapped out a third way between peace and war: unilateral withdrawal.

It is true that he himself always said that there would not be another retreat after Gaza. Many wonder how he would have reacted to Hamas's victory. But by then Mr Sharon was in a coma and his fledgling party had an untested leader and no platform—and Israelis had bought into what they believed was Mr Sharon's vision. Kadima had been slipping in the polls, but jumped earlier this month when Mr Sharon's heir apparent, Ehud Olmert (whose face is shown on the billboard above) announced a plan of unilateral withdrawal from large parts of the West Bank, loosely outlining the Israeli borders he foresees. The "centre" may have begun as a group of people united only in their trust in Mr Sharon. Now it is real.

Yet even as the Israeli mainstream has coalesced, several large fringe groups are becoming more detached. The simultaneous merging and fragmentation of Israeli society are visible in the way people say they plan to vote.

Mr Olmert now calls it not *hitnatkut*, "disengagement", but *hitkansut*, or going-into-oneself, often rendered as "convergence". A better word, if it existed in English, would be "introvergence". It is a fitting description. Israel plans to tuck itself in behind the barrier it began building four years ago in the West Bank, withdraw from the land on the other side, pull the settlers living there back over, and hunker down.

As well it might. The plan, though still vague, involves keeping three large settlement blocks that jut out into the West Bank, hindering Palestinian movement. The current gap between Maale Adumim, the largest settlement, and Jerusalem will be filled in with houses, slicing the Palestinian area into two. Almost all of Jerusalem, which is a core Palestinian as well as Israeli city, will be inaccessible to Palestinians. Israel will keep control of the border with Jordan and possibly also the sparsely populated Jordan Valley, as a security buffer. Otniel Shneller, a Kadima candidate who used to head the Yesha Council, the association of settlement mayors, says Israel could also keep its settlements in and near Hebron, arranging shared access to the tombs that are sacred to both Jews and Muslims.

A Palestinian state under such constraints would not prosper. So long as Israel controls its borders, it would not even count as sovereign. It would be much like Gaza since the disengagement. Citing intelligence reports of planned terrorist attacks, Israel has kept Gaza's main border-crossing for goods closed more often than open since the start of the year, causing serious food shortages and leaving Gazan fruit and vegetable exports worth millions of dollars to rot. Such friction between security and economics would keep the West Bank poor and angry, encouraging attacks across the border.

But if the polls are to be believed, Israelis see no other choice. Kadima will get 35-40 seats of the 120 in the parliament (see table on next page). Labour's Amir Peretz, a former union boss, was full of talk of peace when he was elected party leader last autumn, but Labour has since come across increasingly as a hopeful coalition sidekick to Kadima, campaigning mainly on socio-economic rather than security issues. In effect, it has joined the centre. The "left" that still pushes actively for peace talks is almost non-existent. The anti-withdrawal right in its various forms makes up most of the rest. But on current polls, it cannot scrape together a majority.

Which is why this election is boring. It may also be why a string of political scandals—an eyebrow-raising property deal by Mr Olmert, the conviction of Mr Sharon's son Omri for illegal campaign fund-raising, and a string of corruption cases—has made no impact on the polls. Mr Olmert's stated goal of completing "introvergence" within four years looks wildly unrealistic when it took nearly two to make a hasty job of abandoning Gaza, but even that has raised hardly a mutter of public debate. The mainstream seems resigned to whatever may be about to happen.

Or almost. There is just one anomaly: undecided voters are still some 20% of the total. Everyone tells anecdotes about lying to pollsters. It may be because, according to the Peace Index surveys, over a third of Israelis still want to leave the door open for peace talks with Hamas, though no mainstream party is seriously offering to hold such talks. That could mean surprises on election day—or a low turnout.

But if the mainstream has sunk into apathy, other groups are girding up for post-election battles. With security issues wrapped up by Kadima, the main campaign issue for most of the other parties has been poverty. When Binyamin Netanyahu, the Likud leader, was Mr Sharon's finance minister, his reforms to clear up vestiges of statism in Israel's economy included many welfare cuts. That has sparked a backlash.

Labour hopes this will help it win a strong showing as the coalition government's social conscience. But the bigger beneficiaries seem to be smaller parties representing traditionally poor Israelis—such as Shas, the party of Orthodox Sephardi Jews (those of Middle Eastern descent), and Yisrael Beiteinu ("Israel is Our Home"), a party for former Soviet immigrants. Ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi (European) Jews will also have a heavier hitter in the form of Torah and Sabbath Judaism, a union of two of their parties which have often played pivotal roles in coalitions.

But Shas and Yisrael Beiteinu are also hawkish in the extreme. Avigdor Lieberman, the latter's leader, advocates transferring Arab-Israeli towns near the West Bank, such as Umm al-Fahm, to the PA so as to increase Israel's Jewish majority. He would strip their residents of Israeli citizenship, and apply a "loyalty test" to those Arab-Israelis who remain. Two other small parties hold similar views. Such ideas, once the preserve of the Kach party that was banned from running in 1988 for inciting racism, are now "at the heart of the elections," says Issam Makhoul, an MP for Hadash, one of the three small parties that represent Arab-Israelis.

That is just one of many trends that worry the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who make up nearly a fifth of the population. Always equal citizens on paper more than in practice, since the intifada they have become more and more marginalised. A police shooting of 13 people in the Christian-Arab city of Nazareth, just after the intifada began, left deep scars. The failure to bring anyone to book, and a series of similar incidents since, has left simmering anger. On top of this, there is the West Bank barrier that separates many people from relatives and friends; chronic inequality in government funding for Jewish and Arab towns; widespread discrimination in hiring for jobs in the government and utility companies; and government plans to develop the northern Galilee and southern Negev regions, which have large Palestinian and Bedouin populations, by enticing more Jews to move there.

But the community is divided about how to vote. Some say that since governing coalitions never include Arab parties' MPs and usually ignore the bills they propose, the vote should go to mainstream parties instead, who might then start to listen to their Arab voters. The question is particularly acute

because the threshold for getting into parliament has gone up to 2% of the national vote. The three parties are so ideologically different that they cannot unite, but if Arab turnout is low, one or another might not make the 2%.

The Arab-Israelis' basic concern is whether Israel will always be a country that overtly privileges Jewishness. Another chunk of Israeli society, nearly the same size, has the same concern—for the opposite reason. These are the religious Zionists: observant but not ultra-Orthodox Jews who believe (for a mixture of historical and religious reasons) in holding on to the occupied territories. They were the pioneers of the settlements, but these days they feel as besieged and unwanted by the Israeli mainstream as the Arabs do.

Though the evacuated Gaza settlers got a lot of compensation money, a combination of hasty planning and their own refusal to take part in it meant that their communities have been thrown to the four winds. Last month, according to official figures, some 30% of the 8,000-odd Gaza evacuees were still living in hotels. Others will be in temporary housing for years. Their sympathisers were outraged by a report by the state comptroller earlier this month, which threw the book at the authorities for failing to plan and carry out the relocations properly.

At the beginning of February, the demolition of nine illegally built houses at Amona, an outpost of the Ofra settlement in the West Bank, saw worse violence between the police and young protesters than during the whole of the Gaza evacuation. Settlers say that the police used force indiscriminately against peaceful protesters, a claim now under parliamentary investigation. But the teenagers may have been emboldened by their resistance to last summer's evacuations—and disenchanted with the Yesha Council, which they see as appeasing the authorities.

Kadima has its bridge-builders to the settlers. Mr Shneller, the former Yesha Council head, and Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, a spiritual leading light of early settlers, have joined its ranks. Mr Shneller says the trouble at Amona was the work of a tiny minority within the complicated settler taxonomy: an extremist fringe (those seeking trouble) of a hardline group (those living in unauthorised outposts down the middle of the West Bank) of the ideological settler minority (fewer than 70,000 people) who live in those parts of the West Bank that Kadima wants to give up. Most settlers, he thinks, can be persuaded to swim with the tide of "introvergence" if given proper care and lots of compensation.

But the wider religious-Zionist public is still in shock. "Even moderates [among the religious Zionists] have been scared by the brutality at Amona," says Yisrael Harel, a former Yesha Council leader, "and they are taking it as an attack on them." The comments being voiced sound, in fact, much like the ones one hears from Arab-Israelis. "They treat us as one big block. We all look the same to them," says Yifat Ehrlich, who owned one of the demolished houses at Amona but had moved out months before. She notes that the talk used to be about whether Israel should negotiate with the Palestinians, but now is about whether to negotiate with the settlers.

Religious Zionism was already undergoing fragmentation, exacerbated by its internal debates over how to react to the Gaza pull-out. Ironically, had the government accepted a rather hare-brained proposal by the Yesha Council to delay the demolitions and move the houses somewhere else, says Mrs Ehrlich, "we would probably have eaten each other up. But the conflict united the community."

Like Arab-Israelis, the settlers and their sympathisers are concerned about many other things that the Israeli mainstream wants to do to their role within Israel. They warily eye proposals to cut budgets for religious education and benefits for large families, or reduce the influence of the rabbis in national affairs (for instance, by creating the institution of civil marriage).

And like Arab-Israelis, they are divided about how to vote. There is talk of abstention. There is also talk of going with the hard-right National Union and National Religious Party, which like the ultra-Orthodox parties have made themselves more attractive by merging into a single force.

As it enters its era of "introvergence", Israel looks like a parent entering middle age: more solid of body and firm of mind, but surrounded by a brood of bickering and rebellious children. Its relations with the neighbour seem beyond repair, but the house is sturdy. The path looks clear.

But less clear is how far down the path it can go. The immediate costs of what it wants to do will be enormous. The settlers' resistance may be too fierce. Even if quashed, it could do more damage to the unity of Israeli society than the Palestinian resistance to occupation ever did. And Israel's desire to

shut out the Palestinians will rebound on those Palestinians who are also Israelis, causing further tensions.

Nor will it begin to solve the conflict with non-Israeli Palestinians, whose plight after Israel's partial withdrawal from the West Bank will continue to stoke hostility in the rest of the region. But there is not much the Palestinians can do about it at this time. Though there are already dire warnings of a third intifada in the making, more such attacks will only strengthen Israel's resolve to shut itself in, close its eyes, and hope for the best.

The Remarkable Survival of Kadima

Economist

No author given

3/25

UNLESS the polls are wildly wrong, and they could be given the number who are undecided, something remarkable is about to take place in Israel. The Kadima party formed by Ariel Sharon just before he was felled by a stroke in January seems poised to win next week's election. By the standards of stalemated Palestine, this is good news. Mr Sharon created Kadima to break free from the national-religious settler movement, which had put a stranglehold on the Likud party. The settlers were determined to punish him for clearing Israel's settlements out of Gaza and to prevent another withdrawal from the West Bank. If Kadima wins, they will have failed. Ehud Olmert, Mr Sharon's successor, has made it plain that he will evacuate many Israeli settlements on the West Bank, in order to give Israel permanent borders and make room for a two-state solution in Palestine (see pages 23-25).

Two things make all this remarkable. Only a few months ago Kadima seemed wholly dependent on the popularity of Mr Sharon. The fact that it has prospered without him suggests that Israelis are no longer just putting their faith in a strongman but have accepted Kadima's argument that the old dream of Greater Israel is dead and that Israel must pull back towards its pre-1967 borders. No less remarkable is that Kadima has won this argument even after the Palestinians voted in January to elect Hamas, the extremist Islamist party whose trademark is the suicide bomb and whose aim, as explained out of at least one side of its mouth, is that Israel should be erased.

So the Palestinians take a step back from peace, and the Israelis take a step forward. What explains this paradox? The simple answer is that Israelis have stopped caring whether they are walking in step with the Palestinians. The two sides tried that for much of the 1990s and kept falling over. After the second intifada, the Israelis and the Americans decided that Yasser Arafat could no longer be a partner. Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians' new president, seemed—and was kept by Israel—too weak to fill the gap. Mr Sharon pulled out of Gaza without consulting the Palestinians. With Hamas in charge Mr Olmert will follow his example on the West Bank. Since the Palestinians are a shower, goes the common Israeli perception, we had better do whatever has to be done on our own.

Unilateral moves can have merits. That is to say, a movement in the right direction must be better than utter immobility. And the direction Mr Olmert promises—driving another nail into the settler movement's coffin by more withdrawals—is the right one. Nonetheless, Israelis had better understand that even if going it alone eases some of the burden of occupation for both sides, it is no substitute for a negotiated peace. The border Mr Olmert establishes by fiat along Israel's security barrier will remain unacceptable to the Palestinian side no matter how many Jewish settlers—and it could be as many as 60,000—on the far side are uprooted in the process. Besides, Israel intends to keep its army in the evacuated areas and along the Jordan valley. So this will not feel to the Palestinians like any end to the hated occupation.

Is immobility really the only alternative to Mr Olmert's unilateralism? It probably is, if the incoming Hamas government is to be taken at its word, and barring a big international peace initiative. Some Hamas leaders now say that if Israel promised to leave every inch of territory it occupied in 1967, Hamas might think again about its formal goal of rubbing out the Jewish state. That implies a degree at least of pragmatism in Hamas's thinking, which Israel and others should try to encourage—but it hardly qualifies as grown-up diplomacy of the sort that could lead to a negotiated peace. For the present, unilateral steps by Israel and the maintenance of calm by Hamas may be the best Israelis and Palestinians can hope for.

There is, however, unilateralism and unilateralism. If Mr Olmert's ultimate objective is peace, his unilateral steps must be designed to make negotiation feasible, not to block it altogether or harden the hearts of Palestinians still more. That requires moderating Israel's territorial appetite. As presently envisaged, Mr Olmert's barrier bites big lumps off the West Bank, locks the Palestinians out of Jerusalem and inflicts severe hardship on the people who live in the barrier's path. If the years of killing prove anything, it is that neither side can impose its terms on the other. Hard as it will be now that it is Hamas that is its counterpart, Israel needs to show that when negotiation comes, there will still be enough room left for an independent Palestinian state worthy of the name.

For Israelis, A Time For Something New

U.S. News & World Report

By Larry Derfner

3/27

YAVNEH, ISRAEL--Like a large plurality of the 35,000 residents in this heartland Israeli town, Mayor Zvi Gov-Ari used to be loyal to Likud, the right-wing party that led the nation for most of the past three decades. "All my life I believed in holding on to the whole [biblical] land of Israel," said Gov-Ari, 66, who joined the Likud's youth movement at 12. In the past few years, though, his outlook changed as he "began to realize that we can't keep ruling over so many Palestinians, not if we want to go on being a Jewish, democratic state."

When Ariel Sharon jettisoned Likud's ideology and ended Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip last summer, Gov-Ari, like most Israelis, applauded the move. When Sharon bolted Likud in the fall and created the Kadima (Forward) party, Gov-Ari, like most Likudniks--as well as many liberals--followed him. Nearly half the members of Yavneh's City Council did too.

In the middle. Now, with Election Day looming March 28, "Kadima, Israel!" banners dominate the muted street campaign in the town's modest, low-rise commercial square. Liran Danino, 17, explained why she was holding up one end of a large Kadima banner: "It's the sanest party," she said. "It's right in the middle." Holding up the other end of the banner, Hofit Merenstrauss, 18, said, "I'm also in the middle, but a little to the right--I'm patriotic, I believe in the [Jewish] religion, and I think we should have our country and the Arabs should have theirs."

As Yavneh goes, so goes Israel. Sadly, Sharon, lying comatose in a Jerusalem hospital since suffering a massive brain hemorrhage in early January, won't be able to appreciate it, but the new direction he divined for his country seems about to be resoundingly confirmed. For the first time in Israel's 58-year history, the national election, according to every current poll, will be won by neither Likud nor the liberal Labor Party. A new Israeli center, joining the left's dovish policy on territory to the right's hawkish policy on security, is taking over. Sharon, it turns out, was not irreplaceable; "Sharon's path," as it's called, is his living legacy. Kadima, led by his deputy, the veteran politico Ehud Olmert, is expected to outpoll Likud and Labor combined, then form the next coalition government.

Sometime afterward, a new, tumultuous passage in Israel's history will most likely begin. "I believe that in four years' time Israel will be disengaged from the vast majority of the Palestinian population, within new borders" Olmert told the newspaper Ha'aretz, repeating the central message of his campaign. By making his intentions so plain, Olmert has effectively turned the election into a referendum on the withdrawal of Israeli settlers and soldiers from most of the West Bank and the establishing of a new Israeli border around the large "settlement blocs" and Jordan Valley at the West Bank's edges. He has also signaled that the Palestinian villages and neighborhoods at the periphery of Jerusalem would be moved to the Palestinian side of the border--a violation of the Israeli taboo against "dividing" the capital that Olmert, as the hard-line Likud mayor of Jerusalem from 1993 to 2003, protected vigilantly.

Disengaging from the interior of the West Bank would require the removal of tens of thousands of radical right-wing, religious settlers. The confrontation would be on a much greater scale than last summer's withdrawal of 9,000 settlers in Gaza and part of the upper West Bank. Even if successful, though, such a move would not satisfy the territorial demands even of moderate Palestinians, who insist on 100 percent of the West Bank land as defined by the 1949 Green Line, including all of East Jerusalem and its holy places.

Neither would the pullout entirely satisfy Washington, which wants Israel to hand over somewhat more territory than Olmert has in mind, and to do it in negotiations with the Palestinians instead of unilaterally. However, with Hamas about to form the new Palestinian government, the old rules of the "peace process" don't apply anymore; since the incoming Palestinian leadership disdains negotiations with Israel, rejecting its right even to Tel Aviv, Olmert is under less international constraint, leaving him freer to draw a border in the West Bank according to Israeli specifications alone.

After Sharon became disabled early in the election campaign, the big question was whether Olmert could hold on to Kadima's huge popularity. An attorney by profession, he was seen by the public as a politician more than a leader. But Olmert showed steadiness during the transition, and he got a large initial "sympathy vote" from a shaken public. Of crucial importance in the campaign, there have been no high-profile terrorist attacks, which always push frightened voters to the right.

And, as Hebrew University elections expert Prof. Abraham Diskin noted, "Olmert benefits a lot by comparison with the other candidates for prime minister, who have a lot of negatives." Likud's Binyamin Netanyahu, a former prime minister, is widely seen as divisive and unpredictable, while Labor's Amir Peretz, a former national union leader, is inexperienced in Middle Eastern geopolitics and viewed as left wing. In recent weeks, polls showed Likud and the far-right parties chipping away at the margins of Kadima's giant lead, but after Olmert's order last week for an Army raid on a Jericho prison, which ended with the surrender of the Palestinians responsible for the 2001 murder of an Israeli cabinet minister, the erosion reversed.

The key word for voters in the new Israeli center is pragmatism, although some might call it cynicism. They've rejected not only the right's path of ruling the whole land of Israel but also the left's path of partnership with the Palestinians. Neither one had an answer to Palestinian terrorism, the public's overriding fear. "I think Olmert is going to follow Sharon's path," said Meir Azulai, 50, another lifelong Likud voter in Yavneh who is switching to Kadima. Lior Horev, the party's campaign manager, described the destination Israelis hope to reach: "They're not looking for peace; they're looking for quiet, for security, and, if possible, to make the [West Bank security] fence even higher so we won't have to see the Palestinians anymore."

Air Power: A Fight for the Last Voter

Newsweek

By Joanna Chen

3/27

Every one of the kneset's 120 seats will be crucial in Israel's March 28 elections. No single party seems likely to come even close to winning a majority, making a coalition government virtually inevitable. "Anything can happen," says Eyal Arad, a top media adviser for Kadima. "It's very unstable." Meanwhile, the battle for votes plays out every evening on Israeli television, as illustrated by these four sample campaign spots.

KADIMA

STRATEGY : Never ease up. Attack ads are targeting Likud chief Benjamin Netanyahu for his snake-oil public image.

STANDING : If trends persist, acting P.M. Ehud Olmert and his front-running centrists will crush the party they abandoned less than four months ago. Their big fear is overconfidence.

LABOR

STRATEGY : Wave the flag. Moroccan-born leader Amir Peretz may seem a bit 'quirky,' but so did David Ben-Gurion, Israel's beloved first P.M.

STANDING : Polls place Labor at No. 2, with about 20 seats and a strong chance of sharing power with Kadima. The big hurdle: to win voters' trust on security, the key issue as always.

LIKUD

STRATEGY : Sound the alarm. Netanyahu hopes to repeat his 1996 upset victory by painting Olmert as a deluded weakling.

STANDING : Struggling just to stay in third place. The breakaway Kadima Party has drained much of Likud's former strength, and--unlike 1996--terrorist acts have been minimal so far.

GREEN LEAF

STRATEGY : Fill a niche. Coalition rule has bred microparties of all sorts--e.g., the pro-marijuana, pro-gay-rights Green Leaf.

STANDING : About a dozen of the tiny contenders, Green Leaf among them, have fair odds to win at least one Knesset seat. Some could play vital roles in forming the next government.

Same As It Ever Was

National Review

By Daniel Doron

3/27

Tuesday's Israeli election was supposed to be different from other Israeli elections. It was supposed to be not only about security--which justly dominates Israeli concerns--but also about the serious social and economic problems facing the country. This had been the consensus view ever since the socialist trade-union boss, Amir Peretz, took over the Labor party a couple of months ago in a surprising upset victory over the world-famous Shimon Peres. The populist Peretz announced that his campaign would focus on the issue of the growing poverty in Israel, which he proposed to solve by raising the minimum wage and by increasing government intervention in the economy.

Since Peretz believes that social betterment also depends on a formal peace treaty with the Palestinians, he also vowed to reopen, without preconditions, peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. He would negotiate, he promised, even if the Authority failed to fulfill its former pledges to disarm the Hamas terrorist group that has vowed to destroy Israel, or for that matter its own rogue groups that are themselves waging a terrorist war on Israel.

But then, as often happens in the Middle East, reality mugged the dreamers and reshuffled the political cards. After a short respite, terrorist attacks resumed, followed by the landslide Hamas victory in the Palestinian Authority elections. Israeli politics went back to its previous focus on security. The top issue became how to deal with Hamas. Should Israel cut all ties with the Authority, now that it is governed by a group that insists on the total destruction of the Jewish state? Or must Israel--under immense pressure from the Europeans, and some from the U.S.--keep at least those relationships going that will enable the Palestinians, for humanitarian reasons, not to face the consequences of their calamitous choice of Hamas?

No one can predict with certainty how Israel will resolve this dilemma, but a look at why the landslide Hamas victory was such a surprise can provide us with significant clues about the future.

THE EXPERTS WERE WRONG In actuality, the landslide Hamas victory was quite predictable. It had won recent municipal elections, and there had been mass demonstrations celebrating Israel's unilateral withdrawal as a Hamas victory. Two decades of misrule by a dictatorial, corrupt, and dysfunctional Palestinian Authority--a regime that intentionally destroyed a prosperous Palestinian economy and plunged most of its population into grinding poverty--were provoking fury and desperation in the Palestinian electorate.

It was also predictable that the "cycle of violence" that Arafat's government kept igniting--forcing Israel to take severe measures, some appropriate but some (such as total closures that punished all of the population while not really harming the terrorists) counterproductive--would inflame even greater hatred; and that this hatred, after being redirected by the Authority against Israel, would end up benefiting Hamas. Hamas was in a better position to exploit this anger, because the Authority could not go as far as Hamas could in a no-holds-barred war against Israel, and because it was also often portrayed by Hamas followers as Israel's accomplice if not its creation. (The Oslo agreements between

Israel and the PLO had actually helped impose this criminal government on the Palestinians, and then kept propping it up.)

Growing hatred against the Arafat government's use of kidnapping, rape, violence, and blackmail, as well as its pillaging of its own citizens, made Palestinians eager to throw the corrupt rascals out. Hamas's victory came, really, by default--because the Palestinian Authority had acted maliciously and stupidly, and because short-sighted Israeli politicians had done little to stop it.

The Israeli framers of the Oslo agreements--chiefly the visionary Shimon Peres and his manipulative sidekick Yossi Beilin--improbably convinced themselves, and deluded many others, that they could exploit a cabal of secular terrorist mafias, controlled by Yasser Arafat, to fight religious terrorist fanatics, such as Hamas, and thus secure an immediate peace. They, along with their fellow believers in the "peace process" (including all European chancelleries and the U.S. State Department), chose to ignore all warning signs, even those pointing to the wider danger to the West posed by a Hamas that was rapidly becoming a proxy for Iran.

Oslo was a disaster in yet another way: It brought to an end a most promising, though non-political, process of economic collaboration that was leading to gradual reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. From the 1967 Israeli conquest of the disputed territories to the 1987 Intifada, Israel followed a laissez faire policy. It maintained open bridges with Jordan and did not interfere in Arab internal affairs. Israel's maintenance of a modicum of law and order in these territories facilitated the development of trade and rapid economic growth. Crowds of Israelis ate and shopped on weekends in Arab towns and markets. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian workers, who were freed from backbreaking drudgery on primitive Arab farms by Israeli-introduced modern farming techniques, moved from a bare-subsistence existence in the backward Palestinian economy to far more lucrative jobs in the growing Israeli economy.

The outcome was dramatic. The GDP of the Palestinians more than quadrupled. Education levels rose, and some seven universities were established where none had existed before under Jordanian rule. Health levels also rose; as a consequence, the Arab population mushroomed. There were remarkably few terrorist attacks during all this period. The few that happened were mostly perpetrated by PLO hirelings and did not express popular support. Not that the Arabs were enamored of Israeli occupation: No one likes an occupation. But they apparently found the occupation a lesser evil than Arab rule, because they realized the enormous benefits it brought to them. (This was even more evident after Oslo, when Palestinians learned first hand what PLO rule meant: When it was rumored that Arab sections of Jerusalem were to be ceded to the Palestinian Authority, real-estate prices plummeted.)

What changed so dramatically between 1967 and the recent Hamas victory? How did the consequences of Oslo and the establishment of a Palestinian Authority turn a gradual reconciliation between Palestinian Arabs and Jews into open Palestinian support for the eradication of Israel?

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL COLLAPSE In their authoritative book about the first Intifada, Ehud Yaari and Zeev Schiff cited as a major catalyst for its eruption the sharp economic decline that had preceded it. This economic downturn was initiated by a recession in the Gulf States, where many Palestinians were employed. But it was greatly accelerated by shortsighted--indeed, stupid--changes in Israeli policy. As Israeli bureaucracy strengthened its grip over the disputed territories, it abandoned the old laissez faire policies. It imposed heavy taxes and harassed businessmen with discriminatory regulation designed to protect Israeli monopolies.

These mistakes--along with the economic disruptions caused by Israel's failure to quell the Intifada, and the growing momentum of earlier social dislocations caused by contact between a permissive Israeli society and a more restrictive, tradition-bound Arab society--have exacerbated the anger of the Palestinian Arabs toward Israel.

But the strongest impetus for the festering pool of pathological Jew-hatred was given by Arafat's own Palestinian Authority, which devoted huge amounts of money--from donations from Europe and the U.S.--and great effort to mounting a relentless hate campaign against Israel and against Jews. Israeli leaders, under the spell of Oslo, have almost totally ignored this vicious campaign.

The PA exploited the hate it generated to stoke the fires of its low-level terror war against Israel. But this "low intensity" war has incited a level of bitter hatred and thirst for revenge that it doesn't have the ability to quench. The Authority has thus become the victim of its own hate campaign, as an

extremely radical and murderous Hamas offered a far better outlet for this hatred than the Authority ever could or dared.

The Israeli leadership, too, facilitated the Hamas victory--by failing to fight terrorism effectively, and by bowing to U.S. and European pressures to let Hamas participate in the recent PA elections. Instead of going after Hamas's self-proclaimed terrorist leadership in one fell swoop--in a determined and relentless fashion, the only way such a war can be won--they fought intermittently and ineffectively. This slow-drip approach, whereby Israel would impose ineffective closures and try to assassinate two or four Hamas terrorist leaders a month, allowed Hamas to reorganize after each attack, often with covert and overt Egyptian help. This made Hamas seem invincible, while imposing hardships on the Arab population. The closures made worse the economic misery intentionally caused by the PA--and a growing part of the population was pushed further into the lap of Hamas.

The major divide in the present election campaign is between Kadima--the party established by Ariel Sharon, and now led by Ehud Olmert--and the Likud, led by Benjamin Netanyahu. Polls predict that Kadima, a hodgepodge collection of Likud and Labor politicians, will garner between 33 and 37 seats to the Likud's 15 to 19 seats (there is a huge swing vote in these elections). It therefore seems likely that Kadima will be the party that will form the next government. Ehud Olmert recently stated that he will continue unilateral withdrawals in the West Bank, and cede most of the area to the Palestinians. Olmert apparently believes--and the polls indicate that about 40 percent of an exhausted Israeli public wants to believe with him--that once Israel withdraws and hunkers down behind its security wall, Israel could become, as he has put it, "a fun place to live in."

Writing in the left-wing Ha'aretz, Ari Shavit--one of Israel's most respected pundits and a fervent supporter of withdrawal--termed Olmert's proposal "a mortal danger to Israel." Ceding territories to the Arabs without prior agreement that they will be strictly demilitarized, he argues, will only help establish an irredentist Hamas state that can gradually wear Israel down by a prolonged war of attrition supported by Iran and Syria.

So it seems that Oslo-style fantasies persist, to the effect that a terrorist organization would be willing to grant Israel peace once Israel extended its legitimacy and independence. Indeed, there is already talk about recognizing a Hamas government if it "renounces terrorism" (a verbal exercise they are good at) and of offering a Hamas government "humanitarian aid"--which, like former humanitarian aid given to the PA, will be used to release funding for vicious propaganda and an intensified campaign of terrorism that can easily deteriorate into an all-out war.

Netanyahu and his Likud party keep reiterating that Hamas is a mortal danger that must be confronted, sooner rather than later. But Israeli politicians, like politicians everywhere, and alas much of the Israeli public too, do not like to bite the bullet. The rest of the West--which does not seem to realize the broader danger that Hamas poses, both as a proxy for Iran and as a model for other fundamentalists' takeover of regimes through democratic elections--is not encouraging Israel to face the tough facts. It is unlikely that Israel will start fighting Hamas effectively before Hamas consolidates its power and threatens Israel more seriously. Hamas's deadly determination to act on its convictions may be what will finally wake up the Israeli leadership to the harsh realities created by the Hamas victory. The awakening will come--at the cost of innocent blood, unnecessarily shed.

--Daniel Doron is the president of the Israel Center for Social and Economic Progress, a private think tank in Jerusalem

Apathy & Inconclusiveness

National Review

By Emanuele Ottolenghi

3/29

For Israel, this could have been a new dawn. Though not, admittedly, of the Age of Aquarius.

By 2006, voters had grown tired of the two visions that for decades vied for dominance in Israel, and the parties that embodied them. The Peace Now vision lay moribund, since the Intifada broke the Oslo illusion, and managed to survive only thanks to the often unwelcome and unwise interference of the international community. And the Greater Israel vision had become a pipe dream, in the face of the

unbearable price of keeping millions of unwilling Palestinians under Israeli rule. Before long, Israelis understood, an international community with little patience for Jewish rights and little understanding for Jewish concerns would have forced Israel to withdraw to the 1967 lines and face civil war or keep the post-1967 lines and become a Jewish minority in an Arab state set in its stead.

Today Israel could have woken up to a new political reality. Instead, it chose the old confused and checkered landscape of twelve parties, and no clear mandate. There are winners and losers of course. Israel Beteinu, with 12 projected seats, has humbled Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud. And with a combined force of 32 seats, the nationalist camp and its vision of a Greater Israel is forever lost. Labour's Amir Peretz claims to be a winner, and demands already the finance and the education ministries. But his only strength is Ehud Olmert's weakness: After all, Labour won 19 seats last time around and 20 this time. It held its ground no doubt, unlike Likud, but with its Meretz ally down to four seats and the Arab parties beyond the pale of consensus, the Left's victory would not cause envy even to Pyrrhus. Olmert controls 28 seats, a far cry from what the polls suggested and his supporters hoped. It will not be easy to form a government that can both last and make fateful, controversial decisions without sparring a coalition meltdown or sowing the seeds of civil war.

The real losers are the Israelis and judging by their apathy, they probably deserve it: By not voting, they brought it upon themselves. Like their fallen hero, Ariel Sharon, who is in a deep coma in a hospital, they sleepwalked through an election where they had a chance to shape their destiny but instead gave their new and untested leaders an inconclusive verdict.

Still, a clear message emerged from this vote. Israelis are ready to partition the land, though they cannot trust the Palestinian give-and-take.

History offers its ironies, and it is remarkable that on the day Israelis voted to seal their willingness to endorse the partition of the land, a Hamas government won an easy majority in the Palestinian parliament and renewed its militant vision. While Israelis are prepared to endorse a two-state solution, Palestinians, through their Hamas-led Palestinian entity, are ready for a final solution only.

The new dawn therefore was not about making peace with old enemies. It was about seeking an ideal point of equilibrium on the map that could help Israel redeploy to defensible boundaries ahead of the long war of attrition with the Arab world and the Palestinians, while ensuring that this new line would be met with national consensus, not with the kind of deep division and national trauma that the Oslo accords caused.

The Kadima Gamble When Ariel Sharon established Kadima in November 2005, he knew that a tectonic shift had occurred in Israeli public opinion. Israelis were prepared to make "painful concessions" and were willing to trust his judgment on their nature and extent. But they could not be led to believe, after five years of Palestinian terror, that their enemies were prepared to recognize, once and for all, Israel's legitimacy as a sovereign Jewish state. He toiled for three long years, trying to persuade his Likud party that a journey to the center was necessary if the party wished to survive. Its victory in 2003 after all had been thanks to Sharon and his newly invented image of a centrist statesman. His party thought otherwise: It felt that disengaging from the territories would only enhance terror's capabilities and relinquishing historic Jewish rights in exchange for nothing would only reward violence and embolden its advocates. That's why Sharon parted from Likud, though that is not why Likud lost the elections.

Sharon's new political gamble, at 77, signaled a new season of Israeli politics and a chance for the public to turn the tables both on Likud and Labour, once and for all. With a charismatic leader at its helm--a farmer-warrior, a visionary and a man who embodied, for better or worse, the Zionist century of the Jewish people--Kadima could have been the new dawn, a new political chapter in Israel's history, leading the country into the uncharted waters of the Islamist decade under the guidance of a seasoned leader, who could be both ruthless and prudent, and knew when was the right time for the former and not the latter.

But history, politics and biology rarely intersect. Ten minutes to midnight, Sharon walked out on history, and left a party whose very *raison-d'etre* was Sharon himself, without its greatest asset and the last gift the founding generation could offer to Israel--a vision and a hope where no vision was left and no hope had survived.

Now Kadima, a political project in its infancy, had to follow in the footsteps of Sharon without knowing

what Sharon would do, with Hamas in power and the Iranian threat at Israel's doorstep. Perhaps even Sharon himself did not know what demons he had awakened, what opportunities he had created, when he left Gaza to Hamas, and what steps he should next take. What we know now is that once Sharon left Kadima, the Israeli public lost its appetite for change.

Asked last week about what he considered a success for Kadima, Sharon's successor, Ehud Olmert, said in an interview to the Israeli Internet daily, Y-net, that less than 36 seats would be 'a disappointment'. On election night, he got barely 28.

Kadima was quick to claim victory, and Olmert was just as quick to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City. All the right messages were heard on election night: there is a left-of-center majority, Olmert has all the coalition options in the world; it is possible to form a stable and broad coalition with 70-80 Knesset members supporting it.

Katyusha's Election-Day Message But Olmert would do well to pause and think. Only 63.2 percent of Israel's voters bothered to show up on a day when fateful decisions should have drawn the entire country to the ballot booth. Many who did bother to turn up, preferred the Pensioners' list--winners of an astonishing 7 seats according to preliminary results--to Olmert and his talented team. At 28 seats, his party can hardly claim a blank check for its vision. And Israel's coalitions have never been both broad and stable, unless their policy is no policy at all. In the last 20 years, only two leaders were gifted with the political power to change the map: One was Rabin, who in 1992 controlled 44 seats in the Knesset and could form a narrow leftist coalition and sign the Oslo accords. But with a narrow majority in parliament and a nation divided, he paid the ultimate price for pushing a vision that lacked Israel's consensus and left the nation traumatized and ultimately exposed to its enemies' vicious rage. The other one was Sharon, who in 2003, strong of his 40 Likud seats, could clubber the Palestinians on the headfirst and his former political allies on the right later. In between, there were two youthful prime ministers who controlled a number of seats similar to what Olmert has today, who formed broad coalitions, and whose ability to govern and deliver was quickly shipwrecked by the strict arithmetical logic of Israel's fragmented political landscape.

Olmert wants to redraw Israel's boundaries today. He will have to avoid the nightmarish scenario of a civil war that a narrow center-left coalition would no doubt usher in and will have to negotiate the consensus with the right. That, even in ideal conditions, would take longer than the time it took Rabin's far more stable coalition to sign Oslo and it would cost infinitely more than the Disengagement did: this time, it would evict tens of thousands of settlers from their homes, and it is the heartland of Biblical Israel that they would be asked to abandon for an uncertain future.

But conditions are not ideal. While Israelis were busy voting (or not voting), a Katyusha rocket landed in southern Israel, killing two Beduin shepherds. No doubt, now commentators will bend over backward to say that it was not Hamas, but some "militant" group that "rejects" the "peace process." Whoever pulled the trigger, Gaza today is closer to Tel Aviv than ever before. And the presence of much more efficient, elusive, and sophisticated weaponry in Gaza seven months only after the disengagement shows how frail and fragile the Kadima vision was, how unreliable the international community who should be monitoring the borders is, and how ineffectual (not to say worse) are the Egyptians in Sinai when it comes to weapons' smuggling into Gaza. And that withdrawal does not a peace make.

With Israel now encircled by Iran's proxies and Islamist fanatics, the last thing the country needed was an inconclusive result. It got just that. It will reap the whirlwinds of its apathy.

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Israel Concedes

National Review
Editorial
3/29

The elections in Israel reveal the peace process as the fig leaf it always was. Roll up the legendary Road Map. Send home the famous Quartet. Since apparently nobody else can help, Israel is busy with its own peace process, consisting in drawing borders and taking its fate into its own hands. Palestinian leaders, whether Fatah or Hamas, are dedicated to violence and terror, and their people must pay the

price for it; that is their tragedy. Ariel Sharon decided that separation is the only strategy available, and so he built the security fence dividing Israelis from Palestinians and he pulled settlements out of the Gaza Strip. The fact that this election validates his vision while he lies in a coma has its tragic element too.

Kadima, the party Sharon founded four short months ago, won with a much smaller share of the vote than polls had forecast. In order to form a government under the country's Byzantine system of proportional representation, Ehud Olmert, Sharon's successor, has to persuade at least three minority parties to join Kadima in coalition. It shouldn't be too hard. Sharon dropped hints that the next step was to incorporate the main blocs of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and dismantle the remainder, in effect creating national borders for Israelis and Palestinians. Olmert says explicitly that this is his program. Likud, the conservative party, argued against it on the grounds that it is unwise to pull out of the West Bank without receiving reciprocal concessions from the Palestinians. The collapse of the Likud vote shows that Israelis were not convinced that any such deal is possible, and in the absence of an alternative they are willing unilaterally to break the murderous stalemate between themselves and the Palestinians.

That means re-housing an estimated 70,000 West Bank settlers. Does Kadima, do the putative coalition parties, really have the stomach for what would be a sort of ethnic cleansing of one's own kind? Ehud Olmert does not command trust as Sharon did. Ari Shavit, one of Israel's most respected commentators, and a left-winger, is not alone in warning that Kadima's program, if fulfilled, may not be the end of Zionism but it would be the beginning of the end. On the far side of the security fence Hamas is promising to return the whole of former Palestine--that means Israel--to Muslim hands, and over the horizon Iran is busy with its nuclear weaponry. Fortress Israel is taking shape, but life within it looks set to be as fraught as ever.

HAMAS

Poll Warning

National Review
By Peter Brookes
3/27

"Lies, damned lies and polls," goes the old chestnut. But regardless of what you think of political polling, the results often bring about an instinctive, chin-rubbing reaction. That was my response when I read a new poll on Palestinian public opinion, sponsored by the nonpartisan Terror Free Tomorrow that concludes that the recent Palestinian elections were more a vote for Hamas than a vote against Fatah.

The poll results are especially significant in light of today's confidence vote on the new Hamas-dominated government by the Palestinian Legislative Council--which will be followed on Tuesday by Israel's general elections, and a near-certain Kadima victory. Israel says it won't do business with any Hamas-led Palestinian government unless the group gives up its militancy and recognizes Israeli statehood. If the new poll is correct, those changes may not come anytime soon--if ever.

In the aftermath of Hamas's stunning victory in the recent Palestinian parliamentary elections, conventional wisdom held that Hamas outpaced Fatah due to Fatah's inability to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people. In other words, votes weren't cast for Hamas and its radical/terrorist agenda (e.g., suicide bombing attacks or destroying Israel), rather it was more a vote against Fatah's years of failed leadership. This sort of voter behavior in open elections--namely "We want anyone but the current leadership"--isn't uncommon. Moreover, many pundits and Middle East analysts seemed comfortable with the conclusion that the elections were more about Fatah than Hamas.

This conclusion isn't necessarily so. Terror Free Tomorrow's mid-February poll seems to take issue with this widely accepted assumption--or at least part of it. The poll infers that it wasn't just dissatisfaction with Fatah that led to Hamas's victory. According to the poll: "popular support for Hamas's radical views is overwhelming among Hamas voters themselves."

"The poll found that the Palestinian people as a whole are almost evenly divided on whether Hamas should retain its aim of the elimination of Israel or pursue peace based on a two-state solution. Nearly

half agree with the Hamas Charter calling for the complete elimination of Israel, while a little more than half favor peace based on a two-state solution," according to Terror Free Tomorrow's press release on their findings.

Some of the polls other findings are equally shaking:

* Almost 75 percent of Hamas voters agree with the Hamas Charter calling for the elimination of Israel, while only 25 percent favor peace and recognition of the Jewish state;

* Among Fatah voters, the numbers are just the opposite, with Fatah voters favoring peace and Israeli recognition by over 75 percent;

* Similarly, Hamas voters are against changing any part of the Charter, including the elimination of Israel by jihad, by a 3 to 1 margin. Similarly, by 3 to 1 spread, Fatah voters would change the Charter.

If the survey is accurate, it would seem there is strong agreement with Hamas's radical Islamic agenda among its supporters, leaving the group no motivation at all to moderate its political platform, as some have speculated it would. It goes without saying that if Hamas keeps the reins of power, it doesn't bode well for advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace. Iran and Syria's support and meddling won't help the situation, either.

It's also curious that, according to the poll, among all Palestinians--even Hamas voters--there is a strong desire for more American engagement. In fact, nearly 50 percent of Hamas supporters want more U.S. involvement in the Middle East peace process, while almost three quarters of Fatah voters feel that way. This despite the fact that Palestinians widely believe the U.S. is anti-Islam.

Sure, we all know that political polls have their shortcomings. They can employ leading questions and often use a statistically limited sampling, giving only a political snap shot of prevailing public opinion. Moreover, their real value may be more in showing trends in public opinion than detailing general public opinion itself.

Nevertheless, polls, especially ones that go against the grain of conventional wisdom, are worth considering. And as we wrestle to formulate policies for dealing with a Hamas-led Palestinian government, which is scheduled to be sworn-in on Wednesday, this new Terror Free Tomorrow poll should at least be given a once over.

--Peter Brookes is senior fellow for national-security affairs and director of the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation. He is author of *A Devil's Triangle: Terrorism, WMD and Rogue States*.

IRAN

Iran Is at War with Us

National Review

By Michael Ledeen

3/28

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, is dying of cancer. But he is convinced that his legacy will be glorious. He believes that thousands of his Revolutionary Guards intelligence officers effectively control southern Iraq, and that the rest of the country is at his mercy, since we present no challenge to them--even along the Iraq/Iran border, where they operate with impunity. They calmly plan their next major assault without having to worry about American retribution. The mullahs have thousands of intelligence officers all over Iraq, as well as a hard core of Hezbollah terrorists--including the infamous Imadh Mughniyah, arguably the region's most dangerous killer--and they control the major actors, from Zarqawi to Sadr to the Badr Brigades.

Khamenei and his top cronies believe they have effectively won. They think the U.S. is politically paralyzed, thanks to the relentless attacks of President Bush's opponents and the five-year long internal debate about Iran policy, and thus there is no chance of an armed attack, even one limited to nuclear sites. They think Israel is similarly paralyzed by Sharon's sudden departure and the triumph of their surrogate force, Hamas, in the Palestinian elections. They despise the Europeans, and hardly

even bother to pretend to negotiate with them any more. They believe they have a strong strategic alliance with the Russians and they think they have the Chinese over a barrel, since the Chinese are so heavily dependent on Iranian oil. Recent statements from Beijing and Moscow regarding the chance of U.N. sanctions will have reinforced the Supreme Leader's convictions.

Hapless in the Beltway Above all, Khamenei believes he has broken the American will, for which he sees two pieces of evidence. The first is that there seems to be very little American resolve to do anything about punishing Iran for the enormous traffic of weapons, poisons, and terrorists into Iraq from Iran. Khamenei must inclined to believe that the Bush administration has no stomach for confrontation.

We have done nothing to make the mullahs' lives more difficult, even though there is abundant evidence for Iranian involvement in Iraq, most including their relentless efforts to kill American soldiers. The evidence consists of first-hand information, not intelligence reports. Scores of Iranian intelligence officers have been arrested, and some have confessed. Documentary evidence of intimate Iranian involvement with Iraqi terrorists has been found all over Iraq, notably in Fallujah and Hilla. But the "intelligence" folks at the Pentagon, led by the hapless Secretary Stephen Cambone, seem to have no curiosity, as if they were afraid of following the facts to their logical conclusion: Iran is at war with us.

In early March, to take one recent example, several vehicles crossed from Iranian Kurdistan into Iraqi Kurdistan. The Iraqis stopped them. There was a firefight. The leader of the intruding group was captured and is now in prison, held by one of the Kurdish factions. The Kurds say that the vehicles contained poison gas, which they have in their possession. They say they informed the Turks, who said they did not want to know anything about it (the Turks don't want anything to do with the Kurds, period, and they shrink from confrontation with the mullahs).

The Kurds holding this man say that he confessed to working for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Apparently they have his confession. They say they are willing to make him available to U.S. military personnel. But the Pentagon, which has all this information, has not pursued the matter. This is just one of many cases in which the Iranians believe they see the Americans running away from confrontation.

The second encouraging sign for Khamenei is the barely concealed delight in Washington, including Secretary Rice's recent statement at a press conference, that we will soon be negotiating with Iran about Iraq. This mission has been entrusted to Ambassador Khalilzad, who previously worked with the Iranians when he represented us in Kabul. It is a bad decision, and it is very hard to explain. The best one can say is that Khalilzad speaks Farsi, so he will know what they are saying, and it is probably better to have public dealings than the secret contacts this administration has been conducting all along. But those small bright spots do not compensate for the terrible costs the very announcement of negotiations produces for us, for the Iranian people, and for the region as a whole.

Talk Does Not ThwartIran has been at war with us for 27 years, and we have discussed every imaginable subject with them. We have gained nothing, because there is nothing to be gained by talking with an enemy who thinks he is winning. From Khamenei's standpoint, the only thing to be negotiated is the terms of the American surrender, and he is certainly not the only Middle Eastern leader to take this view; most of the leaders in the region dread the power of the mullahs--now on the doorstep of nuclear military weapons--and they see the same picture as Khamenei: America does nothing to thwart Iran, and is now publicly willing to talk. In like manner, many Iranians will conclude that Bush is going to make a deal with Khamenei instead of giving them the support they want and need to challenge the regime.

If this administration were true to its announced principles, we would be actively supporting democratic revolution in Iran, but we do not seem to be serious about doing that. Yes, Secretary Rice went to Congress to ask for an extra \$75 million to "support democracy" in Iran, but the small print shows that the first \$50 million will go to the toothless tigers at the Voice of America and other official American broadcasters, which is to say to State Department employees. The Foreign Service does not often drive revolutionary movements; its business is negotiating with foreign governments, not subverting them. There were whispers that we were supporting trade unions in Iran, which would be very good news, but such efforts should be handled by private-sector organizations, not by the American government per se.

Yet this seems a particularly good moment to rally to the side of the Iranian people, who are known to loathe the regime of Ayatollah Khamenei, and who are showing their will to resist in very dramatic fashion. About ten days ago, seventy-eight regime officials were killed or captured in Baluchistan when a convoy (including the chief of the region's Revolutionary Guards Corps and the regional governor) was attacked. Some of the captives have been shown on al-Jazeera, pleading for cooperation from the regime, and supporting their captors' demands that five Baluchi prisoners be freed. The regime has responded by accusing the United States and Britain of masterminding the operation, which is the second such strike in the past six months. In addition to calling for the release of Baluchi prisoners, the insurgents are calling for the toleration of Baluchi Sunnis, the appointment of locals (instead of Persian Shiites) to govern the region, and the use of local radio and television.

Caring about Carnage The situation in Kurdistan is likewise extremely tense. The city of Mahabad is now surrounded by the regime's military and paramilitary forces, following the eruption of anti-regime demonstrations on the occasion of Persian New Year's celebrations on March 20. It is impossible to get precise figures--Western journalists don't seem to be able to cover such events--but dozens of Kurds were arrested and many more were beaten up in the streets.

Worst of all is the ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing directed against the Ahwaz Arabs in Khuzestan, where up to three divisions of the army, the Revolutionary Guards, and the infamous thugs of the Basij have been deployed, following the sabotage of a major oil pipeline by anti-regime dissidents. Radio Farda, our official Farsi-language station, quoted a local journalist, Mr. Mojtaba Gehestani, who says that 28,000 Ahwazi Arabs have been jailed in the past ten months, hundreds have been summarily executed, and many corpses have been fished out of the Karoon River, with telltale marks of torture.

Nonetheless, the regime's interior minister recently announced that there is no "ethnic problem or issue" in Iran today. But he has quite clearly failed to convince President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that all is well. The president cancelled trips to the region four times in the past few months.

He and his cronies have a lot to worry about, because the Iranian people, in the face of a vicious wave of repression that recalls the worst moments of this dreadful regime, are showing themselves prepared to stand against it, and to move to remove it. Lacking a full picture, we should base our judgment at least in part on the behavior of the mullahs, and their dispatch of so many armed forces to three different regions suggests they are profoundly worried. This is not a good time to throw the mullahs a diplomatic lifeline. We should instead show them and their democratic enemies that the tide of history is running against them.

It's time to take action against Iran and its half-brother Syria, for the carnage they have unleashed against us and the Iraqis. We know in detail the location of terrorist training camps run by the Iranian and Syrian terror masters; we should strike at them, and at the bases run by Hezbollah and the Revolutionary Guards as staging points for terrorist sorties into Iraq. No doubt the Iraqi armed forces would be delighted to participate, instead of constantly playing defense in their own half of the battlefield. And there are potent democratic forces among the Syrian people as well, as worthy of our support as the Iranians.

Once the mullahs and their terrorist allies see that we have understood the nature of this war, that we are determined to promote regime change in Tehran and Damascus, and will not give them a pass on their murderous activities in Iraq, then it might make sense to talk to Khamenei's representatives. We could even expand the agenda from Iraqi matters to the real issue: we could negotiate their departure, and then turn to the organization of national referenda on the form of free governments, and elections to empower the former victims of a murderous and fanatical tyranny that has deluded itself into believing that it is invincible.

--Michael Ledeen, an NRO contributing editor, is most recently the author of *The War Against the Terror Masters*. He is resident scholar in the Freedom Chair at the American Enterprise Institute.

The Osirak Fallacy

The National Interest

By Richard K. Betts

3/2006

AS PRESSURE mounts to reckon with Iran's nascent nuclear program, some strategists are arguing that the United States has run out of alternatives to military action. Many of them are pointing to Israel's 1981 air attack on Iraq's Osirak reactor as a model for action--a bold stroke flying in the face of all international opinion that nipped Iraq's nuclear capability in the bud or at least postponed a day of reckoning. This reflects widespread misunderstanding of what that strike accomplished. Contrary to prevalent mythology, there is no evidence that Israel's destruction of Osirak delayed Iraq's nuclear weapons program. The attack may actually have accelerated it.

Osirak is not applicable to Iran anyway, since an air strike on a single reactor is not a model for the comprehensive campaign that would be required to deal, even unsatisfactorily, with the extensive, concealed and protected program that Iran is probably developing. As the United States crafts non-proliferation policy, it should soberly consider the actual effect of the Osirak attack and the limitations of even stronger air action.

In contrast to a ground war, air power has the allure of quick, clean, decisive action without messy entanglement. Smash today, gone tomorrow. Iraq's nuclear program demonstrates how unsuccessful air strikes can be even when undertaken on a massive scale. Recall the surprising discoveries after the Iraq War. In 1991 coalition air forces destroyed the known nuclear installations in Iraq, but when UN inspectors went into the country after the war, they unearthed a huge infrastructure for nuclear weapons development that had been completely unknown to Western intelligence before the war. Obliterating the Osirak reactor did not put the brakes on Saddam's nuclear weapons program because the reactor that was destroyed could not have produced a bomb on its own and was not even necessary for producing a bomb. Nine years after Israel's attack on Osirak, Iraq was very close to producing a nuclear weapon. Had Saddam been smart enough in 1990 to wait a year longer, he might have been able to have a nuclear weapon in his holster when he invaded Kuwait.

There are two methods for developing fissionable material for a nuclear weapon. One is to reprocess spent fuel from a nuclear reactor like Osirak into fissionable plutonium. In order to reprocess the fuel from Osirak on a significant scale, the Iraqis would have needed to construct a separate plutonium reprocessing plant. Many laymen commonly assume the effectiveness of the Israeli strike because they mistakenly believe that a nuclear reactor alone can produce explosive material for a bomb. Iraq had made no move toward building the necessary reprocessing facility at the time the Israelis struck the reactor. Without such a separate plant, the destruction of the reactor was practically superfluous. In fact, a reactor is not even essential for developing a weapon--it is simply one building block for one option. Destruction of Osirak did nothing to impede the separate development project that brought Iraq to the brink of weapons capability less than a decade later. Iraq went on to a fast-paced weapon-development effort by choosing the route toward the enrichment of natural uranium. This is the route that Iran now appears to be taking. Western intelligence did not detect Iraq's enrichment facilities when Saddam Hussein was actively developing a nuclear capability during the 1980s.

If anything, the destruction of the reactor probably increased Saddam's incentive to rush the program via the second route. It is unlikely that Saddam would have been able to develop nuclear weapons much faster through the Osirak reactor--given that he would have had to plan, construct and operate a reprocessing plant--than through enrichment. Israel's preventive strike was not an example of effective delay.

The Israelis' thinking was certainly not mindless. They may have believed that Iraq's building of a reprocessing plant was just a matter of time. It was sensible to assume that Saddam wanted a nuclear weapon and that he intended to use Osirak's output to build one, after a reprocessing capability would have made it possible to extract the plutonium at some point years later. If so, the reprocessing plant, rather than the reactor, would have been the appropriate target.

Israel's strike on Osirak did not pre-empt an imminent threat. The Israelis understood in 1981 that Osirak's threat lay in the future. If the reactor was ever to be bombed, however, it made sense to do so before its construction was complete, since once it was in operation its destruction would have spread radioactivity to the surrounding area. But the strike strategy entailed a provocative action before it was certain that plutonium reprocessing was in fact going to be developed. After the strike, Prime Minister Menachem Begin made a gaffe, for which he later had to apologize, when he claimed the Israeli planes had destroyed a secret underground laboratory in the reactor, forty meters beneath the earth. Had the Iraqis actually constructed such an underground chamber, its existence would have made a case for the attack, since it might have hidden a small-scale reprocessing capability. Some

analysts speculated that Begin had suffered a "senior moment", confusing Osirak with Israel's own secret underground facility, which it had constructed long before at the Dimona reactor site to conceal its nuclear weapons program.

IRAQ'S OSIRAK-era capabilities were not remotely comparable to Iran's current nuclear program, which is far more advanced. Today's Iran has also been on notice for a long time that it is in the crosshairs of American military planners. It would be surprising if strategists in Tehran have failed to disperse and conceal important facilities in the interests of frustrating U.S. intelligence collection. An American air campaign could easily destroy all identified or suspected nuclear facilities--at least any not located in very deeply buried bunkers--but attack planners could not be sure that all crucial facilities had been hit, because they could not be confident that all had been found.

Desperation or bravado has led some strategists to question that reality. While they recognize that an air campaign would not guarantee full destruction of Iran's nuclear capability or even prevent Iran from rebuilding, they reason that it could at least delay the program. The question remains, then, would a strike that was successful in wiping out a big chunk of Iran's program be more effective than Israel's venture in 1981?

With more to destroy than in Iraq back then, the evolving Iranian program might be more disrupted, but by the same token more hidden capabilities might survive. When it comes to nuclear weapons, the key is not how much capability a preventive attack eliminates, but how much it does not. Unless the Iranians have been extremely negligent, they have not left all of their enrichment capacity in locations accessible to American intelligence collectors and Air Force targeters.

Advocates of an air assault tend to take comfort in the proposition that the destruction of a major portion of Iran's nuclear establishment would set back acquisition of weapons by many years. When asked what to do when Iran picks up the pieces and starts over again, they echo the argument of General Curtis LeMay, who advocated the preventive destruction of China's industry in the early 1960s. When Ambassador Averell Harriman asked LeMay what the United States should do when China rebuilt its capability, he said, "Hit 'em again."

Political, diplomatic and military obstacles to taking action in Iran have been well recognized. Strategists who think of themselves as stalwart, steely-eyed and far-seeing regard these obstacles as challenges to be simply overcome or disregarded in order to do what is necessary, even if it is less than a perfect solution. But if bombing known nuclear sites were to mean that Tehran could only produce a dozen weapons in 15 years rather than, say, two dozen in ten years, would the value of the delay outweigh the high costs? The costs would not be just political and diplomatic, but strategic as well. Provoking further alienation of non-Western governments and Islamic populations around the world would undermine the global War on Terror. Inflaming Iranian nationalism would turn a populace that is currently divided in its attitudes toward the West into a united front against the United States. Rage within Tehran's government would probably trigger retaliation via more state-sponsored terrorist actions by Hizballah or other Iranian agents.

The military option that is possible would be ineffective, while the one that would be effective is not possible. The military action that would work--an invasion of Iran--cannot be done, since America's volunteer army has already reached the breaking point in handling missions less challenging than subduing Iran would be. The only means of definitively preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons would be occupying the country forever. This would ensure that the regime we install remains compliant with American judgments about what the country does or does not need for its own security in a dangerous neighborhood. One might note in passing that there is no reason to assume that the reformed Iraqi government the United States is struggling to stand up will not revive a nuclear weapons program if U.S. forces were ever to allow it genuine independence.

What else should Washington do? There is no good answer. The crusade to keep all second-rate powers from acquiring a nuclear weapon--which, we should remember, is now sixty-year-old technology--can succeed in some cases for some time, but it is ultimately a rear-guard action. Regarding both Iran and North Korea--which is probably more dangerous than Iran yet somehow has slipped into second place in proclamations of alarm--the two answers may be unsatisfactory but are less unsatisfactory than other conceivable options.

One answer is the prosaic, two-track strategy of political and economic carrots and sticks. Tehran should be offered diplomatic concessions if it comes back into full compliance with requirements of the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), including the more intrusive inspections mandated under the Additional Protocol. Concessions would be a difficult choice, since they would compromise the War on Terror, given Iran's bad record as a state sponsor. But limiting the nuclear threat is a higher priority. It is also true that this approach is no foolproof guarantee of non-proliferation. Iran could presumably cheat and maintain clandestine weapon-development programs. Still, it would provide the only incentive for Iranian restraint, and inspections would at least complicate and impede concealment of illicit activity.

If, on the other hand, Tehran fully disengages from the obligations of the NPT, the United States should promote multilateral tightening and extension of economic sanctions. Unfortunately, the self-inflicted wound of the invasion of Iraq poisoned the well for convincing fence-sitters in other countries to sign on to such measures. America's credibility regarding the threat posed by Iran has been weakened by its unsubstantiated claims of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

THE SECOND component--which is unsatisfactory but better than the alternatives--is to replicate the Cold War strategy of containment and deterrence until such time that the regime in Tehran mellows or is replaced from within. Many today forget that Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao Zedong's China were seen as more threatening in both capabilities and intentions than are today's mullahs in Tehran. For reasons remarkably similar to those proclaimed today, alarmed American strategists discussed the option of preventive war against the USSR in the 1950s and against China in the 1960s. Fortunately, the U.S. government rejected those ideas. Then as now, it was risky to tilt towards the hope that steady defensive resistance--rather than aggressive military action--would hold the line until enemies eventually reformed or stood down. Now as then, that risk is uncomfortable but remains the best among bad options.

To some in the Bush Administration, this reasoning smacks of defeatism. Which way will the president tilt? Will the born politician in George Bush guess that another military adventure in the midst of the Iraq fiasco would devastate his standing, given that he is already on the ropes; or will the born-again crusader in Bush wager on bold and decisive use of American muscle, in the belief it would restore public confidence?

Neoconservative zealotry has fallen from grace in the second Bush Administration, and a prudent State Department has risen in influence under Condoleezza Rice. Still, the rationale for military action could appeal to some of the stalwart staffers around Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld. Many of these men's faith in force was annealed in the crucible of September 11 and remains unshaken by the Iraq experience. They confuse caution as a cover for timidity and believe that disregarding liberal conventional wisdom is a mark of Churchillian courage.

Reliance on containment, deterrence and pressure short of force remains unsettling to Americans who seek closure in conflict and suspect that restraint betrays fecklessness. Force has the allure of apparent decisiveness. But the greatest military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz, warned, "In war the result is never final." Unless victor and vanquished come to agreement on a peacetime order, peace will not endure. Military action might at best suppress Iran's nuclear ambitions temporarily; at worst, and no less probably, an attack could make them more intense and more dangerous.

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A Profile in Defiance

The National Interest

By Ray Takeyh

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IN JUNE the hard-line mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, walked across American and Israeli flags painted on the pavement of a mosque and voted in Iran's ninth presidential election. After all the ballots were counted, the results stunned the international community--an unreconstructed ideologue had emerged triumphant, confounding all predictions that Iran's youthful populace and sophisticated middle class would somehow press its politics in a reformist, even liberal direction. In the intervening months, Ahmadinejad has gone on to perplex and outrage the international community through his

denials of the Holocaust, incendiary denunciations of America and a marked indifference to global opinion.

As Iran's nuclear program crosses successive thresholds and edges closer to a military capability, the Western capitals are struggling to understand the man at the helm of power in Tehran. Is Iran's president as irrational as his rhetoric would suggest? Is Ahmadinejad driven by a messianic religious fervor that makes him immune to practical considerations? What are the political and ideological determinants of Ahmadinejad's policies? Before contemplating measures to arrest Iran's impetuous impulses, it is important to have a better appreciation of the ideology that animates the new president and the new cohort of hardliners that are leading the Islamic Republic.

The War Generation Comes to Power

AFTER 27 years, the complexion of the Iranian regime is changing. An ascetic "war generation" is assuming power with a determination to rekindle revolutionary fires long extinguished.

For Ahmadinejad and his allies, the 1980-88 war with Iraq defined their experiences, and it conditions their political assumptions. The Iran-Iraq War was unusual in many respects, as it was not merely an interstate conflict designed to achieve specific territorial or even political objectives. This was a war waged for the triumph of ideas, with Ba'athi secular pan-Arabism contesting Iran's Islamic fundamentalism. As such, for those who went to the front, the war came to embody their revolutionary identity. Themes of solidarity, sacrifice, self-reliance and commitment not only allowed the regime to consolidate its power, they also made the defeat of Saddam the ultimate test of theocratic legitimacy. War and revolution had somehow fused in the clerical cosmology. To wage a determined war was to validate one's revolutionary ardor and spiritual fidelity--the notions of compromise and a "ceasefire" were anathema to this point of view.

Suddenly, in August 1988, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini declared the conflict to be over. After eight years of brutal struggle and clerical exhortations of the inevitability of the triumph of the armies of God, the war ended without achieving any of its pledged objectives. For veterans like Ahmadinejad, not unlike post-World War I German veterans, there was a ready explanation for this turn of events. It was not the inadequacy of Iran's military planning or the miscalculations of its commanders, but the West's machinations and its tolerance of Saddam's use of chemical weapons that had turned the tide of the battle.

And although many Iranians wanted to forget the war, for people like Ahmadinejad the war, its struggles and its lessons are far from being a faded memory: They are constantly invoked. In his much-discussed speech in front of the UN General Assembly in September, Iran's new president used the platform offered to him to pointedly admonish the gathered heads of state for their shortcomings:

For eight years, Saddam's regime imposed a massive war of aggression against my people. It employed the most heinous weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, against Iranians and Iraqis alike. Who, in fact, armed Saddam with those weapons? What was the reaction of those who claim to fight against WMDs regarding the use of chemical weapons then?

A pronounced suspicion of the United States and the international community would come to characterize Ahmadinejad's perspective. After all, neither America's human rights commitments nor the many treaties prohibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction saved Iran's civilians and combatants from Saddam's wrath. The lesson that the veterans drew from the war was that Iran's independence and territorial integrity could only be safeguarded by its own initiatives and not by international legal compacts and Western benevolence.

The postwar direction of the Iranian society also disturbed the returning veterans. Despite its duration, Iran waged the war largely with volunteers; only in the latter stages of the conflict did it have to rely on conscripts. As such, the war touched only a narrow segment of the populace, usually religiously zealous young men from traditional, lower-class families. As with America's own current war in Iraq, vast numbers of young men from affluent families were unaffected by the carnage of the conflict and unharmed by the vicious nature of the war. Even more disturbing, the postwar society treated the returning veterans with a degree of indifference and seemed determined to discard the revolution and its exalted values. The lure of Western culture, the focus on accumulating wealth and calls for cultural

freedom preoccupied Iran's youth. For those who suffered the war and took its religious claims seriously, such callous disregard was contemptible. While much of Iran had moved on in the 1990s, the austere veterans nursed their grievances and, more ominously, assumed important positions in the security services and the Revolutionary Guards. The move to political office was natural, even inevitable.

"We must return to the roots of the revolution", proclaimed Ahmadinejad during his many campaign stops. It seemed like yet another empty slogan by yet another politician brandishing retrogressive shibboleths in the hope of mobilizing his constituents. A theocratic state that is riddled with corruption and a clerical elite that has long abandoned sublime pursuits of faith for temptations of power have generated a degree of popular cynicism. Even genuine expressions of revolutionary convictions are treated with skepticism. Ahmadinejad in many ways seemed an anachronism, as he genuinely believed that the "government of God" still had relevance. And he was earnest in his perception that somehow all the problems could be resolved if only Iran went back to the roots of the revolution.

As with his presidency, Ahmadinejad's candidacy was a rebuke of the establishment and a challenge to the elders of the revolution who had grown cautious and complacent. For Iran to be revitalized and reawakened, its leaders had to capture the moral cohesion and the stern discipline of those who bravely confronted Saddam's war machine. The instrument of Iran's redemption had to be Islam--not the passive, indifferent, establishment Islam, but the revolutionary, politicized and uncompromising devotion that launched the initial Islamic Republic under the leadership of Grand Ayatollah Khomeini. A united Iranian populace would once more redeem its faith from the transgressions of the West and the stagnation of a corrupt ruling class. By appropriating Islam's sacred symbols and invoking the history of struggle against foreign infidels and their domestic enablers, Ahmadinejad sought to transform religion once more into a revolutionary ideology. Such a faith would galvanize the masses to reclaim their lost republic and defend their patrimony.

Iran, a country of contradictions and paradoxes, elected to the presidency a politician that pledged to turn back the clock. "Today we should define our economic, cultural and political policies based on the policies of the imam's return. We should avoid copying the West's political systems", he announced. Ahmadinejad's vision for Iran constituted a mixture of statist economic policies, the reimposition of Islamic cultural strictures and the reversal of the limited political freedoms that Iranians had come to enjoy during the reformist interlude. A populace struggling with persistent economic dislocation and offended by the rampant corruption of the men of God seemed to have hoped that a humble politician with limited taste for material wealth would somehow bring about the revolution's pledge of social justice and economic equality. However, it would be on the international stage that Ahmadinejad would garner the greatest attention and cause considerable alarm and anxiety among both his countrymen and his larger global audience.

Ahmadinejad's Foreign Devils

AS THE face of Iran changes and the elders of the revolution recede from the scene, a new international orientation is gradually beginning to surface. A combustible mixture of Islamist ideology, strident nationalism and a deep suspicion of the international order comprise Ahmadinejad's global perspective. As an uncompromising nationalist, Ahmadinejad is unusually sensitive of Iran's national prerogatives and sovereign rights. As a committed Islamist, he continues to see the Middle East as a battleground between forces of sinister secularism and Islamic authenticity. As a suspicious ruler, he perceives Western conspiracies and imagined plots where none may in fact exist.

Nowhere has this new ideological determinism been more evident than in perceptions of America. For the aging mullahs such as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the more pragmatic head of the Expediency Council, Hashemi Rafsanjani, America remained the dominant actor in Iran's melodrama. For the those hardliners, the United States was the source of all of Iran's problems, while for the older generation of more pragmatist conservatives it was the solution to the theocracy's mounting dilemmas. In either depiction, America was central to Iran's affairs. Given that this cohort came into political maturity during the reign of the shah and his close alliance with the United States, was engaged in a revolutionary struggle that was defined by its opposition to America, and then led a state often in conflict with Washington, it was natural that they were obsessed with the United States.

In terms of their international perspective, Ahmadinejad's generation of conservatives does not share its elders' preoccupation with America. Their insularity and their ideology-laden assumptions about

America as a pernicious, imperial power lessen their enthusiasm for coming to terms with a country long depicted as the "Great Satan." Even a cursory examination of the younger hardliners' speeches reveals much about their view of international relations: that power in the international system is flowing eastward. As Ali Larijani, the head of the Supreme National Security Council, noted, "There are certain big states in the Eastern Hemisphere such as Russia, China and India. These states can play a balancing role in today's world." In a similar vein, another stalwart of the new conservatives, the current mayor of Tehran, Muhammad Qalibaf, declared, "In the current international arena we see the emergence of South Asia. And if we do not take advantage of that, we will lose." From the perspective of the new Right, globalization does not imply capitulating to the United States but cultivating relations with emerging power centers on the global landscape. It is hoped that such an "eastern orientation" might just obviate the need to come to terms with the United States.

In a stark contrast to their elders, the war generation displays a unique degree of indifference and passivity toward America. Ahmadinejad emphasized this point, stressing, "Our nation is continuing in path of progress and on this path has no significant need for the United States." The notion that Iran should offer concessions on important national priorities for the sake of American benevolence has a limited appeal to Iran's new leaders. After a quarter of a century of hostility, war and sanctions, Iran's emerging leadership class is looking east, where its human rights record and proliferation tendencies are not particularly disturbing to its commercial partners.

In Ahmadinejad's pantheon of angels and devils, Israel maintains an important position. During one of the usual gatherings of radicals, reactionaries and militants from across the Middle East (which are all too familiar to observers of the Islamic Republic), Ahmadinejad issued his infamous call for the eradication of Israel. Far from being chastened by the international outcry, he followed up his outrageous remarks by calling the Holocaust a "myth." For a politician that had advocated the pan-Islamic dimension of Khomeini's revolution, the flagrant attack on Israel was a natural, even routine affair. After all, one of the core pillars of Khomeini's vision was the notion that Israel was an illegitimate entity and an imperial infringement on the Islamic realm.

However, beyond the glare of publicity and international condemnation, what was missed about Ahmadinejad's speech was his attempt to reverse the reformist policy adjustment on Israel. Under the Khatami regime, Iran had gradually moved beyond some of its pathologies about Israel and stressed that it would be willing to countenance a peace compact acceptable to the Palestinians. As I noted in a previous article for *The National Interest*, the Iranian pragmatists were not going to be "more Palestinian than the Palestinians."

In contrast, Ahmadinejad declared, "Anybody who takes a step toward Israel will burn in the fire of the Islamic nations' fury." In essence, Iran's president was suggesting that the Islamic Republic, on behalf of the entire Islamic community, would no longer be prepared to accept a peace treaty that was endorsed by the Palestinian officials and the Arab states. Indeed, Iran would not just continue its assistance to radical Palestinian groups determined to scuttle any peace treaty, but would potentially renew its earlier policy of seeking to subvert Arab regimes that normalized ties with the Jewish state.

At a time when the Middle East peace process appeared in tatters, Ahmadinejad may have perceived a unique opportunity to exploit the Palestinian cause to assert his influence on larger regional deliberations. Iran could use its opposition to the peace process to burnish its Islamist credentials and gain popularity with the Arab street, in turn allowing Iran to have an impact on regional issues. By embracing an inflammatory posture toward Israel, Ahmadinejad sought to press the theocratic regime, with its increasing penchant for diplomacy rather than confrontation, toward a more defiant international outlook.

A similar mixture of wariness and nationalism is driving the new regime's approach to the nuclear issue. The bitter experience of the war has led to cries of "never again", uniting the veterans-turned-politicians behind a desire to achieve not just a credible posture of deterrence but potentially a convincing retaliatory capability. After decades of tensions with America, Iran's reactionaries perceive that conflict with the United States is inevitable and that the only manner by which America can be deterred is through possession of the strategic weapon. Although today the United States may seem entangled in an Iraqi quagmire that tempers its ambitions, for Iran's rulers it is still an aggressive state whose power cannot be discounted and whose intentions must not be trusted.

Given their suspicions and paranoia, the hardliners insist that American objections to Iran's nuclear program do not stem from its concerns about proliferation, but its opposition to the character of the regime. They argue that should Iran acquiesce on the nuclear portfolio, the perfidious Americans would only search for another issue with which to coerce Iran. "The West opposes the nature of the Islamic rule. If this issue [the nuclear standoff] is resolved, then they will bring up human rights. If we solve that, they will bring up animal rights", emphasized Ahmadinejad. Given such views, there appears no sufficient incentive to compromise on such critical national issues, since acquiescence will not measurably relieve American antagonism.

America's Strategy

UNFORTUNATELY, BOTH American rhetoric and strategy have implicitly validated such perceptions. In the aftermath of September 11, Washington quickly forgave Pakistan its pervasive nuclear sins because of its tentative cooperation on the war on terrorism. In yet another gesture of power politics, the desire to buttress the evolving strategic relationship with India led the Bush Administration to absolve New Delhi of its persistent snubbing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It is difficult to make the case that counter-proliferation is an important American priority when the Bush Administration is busy absolving serial nuclear proliferators of any responsibility.

Moreover, the Iranian hardliners find an unusual source for validating their suspicions: the American hawks. Too often, America's vigilant conservatives muse that a more democratic Iran could be permitted to have an advanced nuclear infrastructure, if not an actual weapon. Robert Kagan captured this flawed reasoning best by recently claiming, "Were Iran ruled by a democratic government, even an imperfect one, we would be much less concerned about its weaponry." Such arguments are dangerous, for they implicitly affirm Ahmadinejad's claims that it is the regime, not its nuclear program, that the United States finds objectionable. In essence, the American hawks indulge in an inept argument that under a different regime, Iran should be permitted to violate its treaty obligations. When American conservatives say that a democratic Iran should be permitted to have nuclear weapons, then in essence they concede that a pluralistic Iran should be allowed to violate the NPT, but not an Islamic Iran. As a result, neither the Bush Administration's discursive counter-proliferation policies nor its allies' preposterous assertions contribute to a conclusive resolution of Iran's nuclear impasse.

As Iran plots its nuclear strategy, the American demands that it relinquish its fuel-cycle rights granted to it by the NPT have aroused an intense nationalistic uproar. Larijani emphasized this point, stressing, "Access to nuclear technology is our right and [we] will insist on it." As a country that has historically been the subject of foreign intervention and the imposition of various capitulation treaties, Iran is inordinately sensitive of its national prerogatives and sovereign rights. The new rulers of Iran believe they are being challenged not because of their provocations and previous treaty violations, but because of superpower bullying. In a peculiar manner, the nuclear program and Iran's national identity have become fused in the imagination of the hardliners. To stand against an impudent America is to validate one's revolutionary ardor and sense of nationalism. Thus, the notion of compromise and acquiescence has limited utility to Iran's aggrieved nationalists.

It is still too early to suggest that Iran is re-entering the dark ages of the early revolutionary period. The Islamic Republic is a government ruled by factions and competing power centers. The intriguing aspect of Iran that tends to persistently puzzle Western observers is that these political factions never completely lose their influence despite poor electoral performance. The fact remains that they all represent important constituencies and have a presence in the complicated web of informal and formal institutions that govern the Islamic Republic. The pragmatic elements of the state and the reformist politicians are engaged in a subtle attempt to restrain Iran's impetuous new president and are pressing Khamenei to curb Ahmadinejad's ideological edges. The power plays and rivalries have hardly disappeared, as the perennially divided state is once more battling itself.

However, it is undeniable that a new, harsh political tendency led by a severe war generation has infiltrated the corridors of power. Ahmadinejad and his allied faction (with their powerful appeals to Khomeini's legacy and open contempt for their elders' corruption) cannot be discounted or dismissed. Although it may be difficult for a Western audience to appreciate, Ahmadinejad's message of economic populism and nationalistic self-assertion does enjoy a level of public support, particularly among the lower classes struggling with Iran's inequalities. A strident new voice has now enshrined itself within the landscape of the Islamic Republic, pressing Iran toward confrontation abroad and reaction at home.

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IRAQ

Hard Pounding

National Review

By Victor Davis Hanson

3/24

If I could sum up the new orthodoxy about Iraq, it might run something like the following: "I supported the overthrow of the odious Saddam Hussein. But then the poor postwar planning, the unanticipated sectarian strife and insurrection, the mounting American losses, the failure to find weapons of mass destruction--all that and more lost my support. Iraq may or may not work out, but I can see now it clearly wasn't worth the American effort."

Aside from the old rehash over disbanding the Iraqi army or tardiness in forming a government, three observations can be made about this "readjustment" in belief. First, the nature of the lapses after March 2003 is still the subject of legitimate debate; second, our mistakes are no more severe than in most prior wars; and third, they are not fatal to our cause.

Consider the most frequently alleged errors: the need for more troops; the need to have restored immediate order; and the need to have had up-armored vehicles and some tactical counterplan to improvised explosive devices.

In none of these cases, was the manner of the solution all that clear-cut--especially since on the first day of the war the United States was trying to avoid targeting civilians, avoiding infrastructure as much as possible, and waging a supposed war of liberation rather than one of punitive annihilation.

Had we brought in another 200,000 troops to secure Iraq, the vast increases in the size and cost of American support might not have been commensurate within an increased ability to put down the insurrection, which from the beginning was decentralized and deliberately designed to play off larger concentrations of conventional patrolling Americans--the more targets the better.

The insurrection broke out not so much because we had 200,000 rather than 400,000 troops in country; but rather because a three-week strike that decapitated the Baathist elite, despite its showy "shock and awe" pyrotechnics, was never intended, World War II-like, to crush the enemy and force terms on a shell-shocked, defeated, and humiliated populace. Many of our challenges, then, are not the war in Iraq per se, but the entire paradox of postmodern war in general in a globally televised world.

And if the point of Iraq was to stress "Iraqification" and avoid too large an American footprint in the Middle East, then ubiquitous Americans may have posed as many problems as they solved--with two or three Green zones rather than one. Instead of drawing down to 100,000 we might now be talking of hoping to keep below 300,000 troops.

Past history suggests that military efficacy is not so much always a question of the number of troops--but rather of how they are used. Especially large American deployments can foster dependency rather than autonomy on the part of the Iraqi security forces. Each month, fewer Americans are dying in Iraq, while more Iraqis are fighting the terrorists--as it becomes clear to them that some enormous occupation force is not on its own going to save the Iraqis' democracy for them.

The looting should have been stopped. But by the same token, after the statue fell, had the U.S. military begun immediately to shoot looters on sight--and that was what restoring order would have required--or carpet bombed the Syrian and Iranian borders to stop infiltration, the outcry would have arisen that we were too punitive and gunning down poor and hungry people even in peace. I fear that 400,000 peacekeepers, given the rules of postbellum engagement, would have been no more likely to shoot thieves than would 200,000.

We forget that one of the reasons for the speed of the American advance and then the sudden rush to stop military operations--as was true in the first Gulf War--was the enormous criticism leveled at the Americans for going to war in the first place, and the constant litany cited almost immediately of American abuses involving excessive force. Shooting looters may have restored order, but it also would have now been enshrined as an Abu-Ghraib-like crime--a photo of a poor "hungry" thief broadcast globally as an unarmed victim of American barbarism. We can imagine more "Highway of Death" outrage had we bombed concentrations of Shiites pouring in from Iran or jihadists from Syria going to "weddings" and "festivals" in Iraq.

Throughout this postmodern war, the military has been on the horns of a dilemma: Don't shoot and you are indicted for being lax and allowing lawlessness to spread; shoot and you are gratuitously slandered as a sort of rogue LAPD in camouflage. We hear only of the deliberately inexact rubric "Iraqi civilian losses"--without any explanation that almost all the Iraqi dead are either (1) victims of the terrorists, (2) Iraqi security forces trying to defend the innocent against the terrorists, or (3) the terrorists themselves.

Legitimate questions arise as to whether America's army is too small, or whether requisite political support for military operations is too predicated on the 24-hour news cycle. But all those are issues transcending the war in Iraq. In retrospect, up-arming humvees would have been wise from the very outset--so would having something remotely comparable to a Panzerfaust in 1943, more live than dud torpedoes in 1942, or deploying a jet at the beginning of the Korean War that could compete with a Russian Mig 15.

So again, the proper question is not whether there were tragic errors of judgment in Iraq--but to what degree were they qualitatively different from past errors that are the stuff of war, to what degree were they addressed and corrected, and to what degree did their commission impair the final verdict of the mission?

Instead of this necessary ongoing discussion, we are left with former hawks that clamor ad nauseam for the secretary of Defense's resignation as a sort of symbolic atonement for their own apparently collective lament that the postwar did not turn out like the aftermaths of Panama, Kosovo, Afghanistan, or Gulf War I. All that angst is about as helpful as perpetually damning Turkey for not letting the 4th ID come down from the north into the Sunni Triangle at the beginning of the war.

It is often said we had no plan to deal with postwar Iraq. Perhaps. But the problem with such a simplistic exegesis is that books and articles now pour forth weekly from disgruntled former constitutional architects and frustrated legal experts who once rushed in to draft Iraqi laws, or angry educationists and bankers whose ideas about school charters or currency regulations were not fully implemented. Somebody apparently had some sort of plan--or the legions that went into the Green Zone in Spring 2003 wouldn't have been sent there immediately in the first place.

Yes, we had zillions of plans alright--but whether they were sufficient to survive the constant and radically changing cycles of war is another matter, especially in a long-failed state plagued with fundamentalism, tribalism, chaos, insurrection, and Sunni, Shiite, and Baathist militias whose leadership had been routed rather than its military crushed. The best postwar plans do not work as they should when losing enemies feel that they won't be flattened and a successful attacker feels it can't really flatten them.

In March 2004 perhaps our initial manner of enacting the "plan"--train the Iraqi security forces, craft a consensual government, and put down the terrorists--was thwarted by our inexperience and naiveté. But by March 2006, the identical plan seems to be working far better--precisely because, as in all wars, we have adapted, modified, and nuanced our way of fighting and nation-building, as American fatalities decrease and Iraqis step up to fight for their freedom.

Nothing in this war is much different from those of the past. We have fought suicide bombers in the Pacific. Intelligence failures doomed tens of thousands--not 2,300--at the Bulge and Okinawa. We pacified the Philippines through counterinsurgency fighting. Failure to calibrate the extent of Al Zarqawi's insurrection pales before the Chinese crossing of the Yalu.

Even our current clinical depression is typically American. In July 1864, Lincoln was hated and McClellan and the Copperheads who wished a cessation of war and bisection of country canonized. Truman left office with the nation's anger that he had failed in Korea. As George Bush Sr. departed,

the conventional wisdom was that the budding chaos and redrawing of the map of Eastern Europe would prompt decades of instability as former Communists could not simply be spoon fed democracy and capitalism. During Afghanistan by week five we were in a quagmire; the dust storm supposedly threatened our success in Iraq--in the manner that the explosion of the dome at Samarra marked the beginning of a hopeless civil war that "lost" Iraq.

The fact is that we are close to seeing a democratically elected government emerge, backed by an increasingly competent army, pitted against a minority of a minority in Zaraqawi's Wahhabi jihadists.

While we worry about our own losses, both human and financial, al Qaeda knows that thousands of its terrorists are dead, with its leadership dismantled or in hiding--and most of the globe turning against it. For all our depression at home, we can still win two wars--the removal of Saddam Hussein and the destruction of jihadists that followed him--and leave a legitimate government that is the antithesis of both autocracy and theocracy.

Syria is out of Lebanon--but only as long as democracy is in Iraq. Libya and Pakistan have come clean about nuclear trafficking--but only as long as the U.S. is serious about reform in the Middle East.

And the Palestinians are squabbling among themselves, as democracy is proving not so easy to distort after all--a sort of Western Trojan Horse that they are not so sure they should have brought inside their walls. When has Hamas ever acted as if it has a "sort of" charter to "sort of" destroy Israel? We worry that Iran is undermining Iraq. The mullahs are terrified that the democracy across the border may undermine them--as if voting and freedom could trump their beheadings and stonings.

Ever since 9/11 we have been in a long, multifaceted, and much-misunderstood war against jihadists and their autocratic enablers from Manhattan to Kabul, from Baghdad to the Hindu Kush, from London and Madrid to Bali and the Philippines. For now, Iraq has become the nexus of that struggle, in the heart of the ancient caliphate, rather than the front once again in Washington and New York. Whose vision of the future wins depends on who keeps his nerve--or to paraphrase the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, "Hard pounding, gentlemen; but we will see who can pound the longest."

--Victor Davis Hanson is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is the author, most recently, of *A War Like No Other. How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War.*

Murder is Certain

Economist

No author given

3/25

AN AMERICAN marine spotted the bomb, in the semi-dark, 30 yards away. A small grey lump in the roadside, half-covered with brown dirt, it looked no different from the moraines of trash and detritus littering Ramadi, the capital of western Iraq's Anbar province—except that it had not been there ten minutes before. The Humvee jeep jolted to a halt, three marines sprang out and grabbed three youths sauntering away.

They possessed nothing suspicious—no mobile phone or radio transmitter rigged to trigger a blast—and were released. But quite possibly they had been trying to kill the marines and your correspondent. Or, at least, if they had not planted the bomb, a 122mm-artillery shell, they must have seen who had. Debating this, the marines took possession of a nearby house—to the alarm of its sleep-befuddled owners—and awaited bomb disposers. The flash and crashing boom of the controlled detonation that followed was not the last, or the biggest, explosion in Ramadi that night.

Three years after America and its few allies invaded Iraq, the incident illustrates one or two features of the war that continues there. America's 138,000 troops in Iraq, already adept and courageous conventional fighters, are much improved at fighting irregularly. This is a benefit of experience: half the marines in Ramadi, aged about 21 on average, are on their second six-month tour of Iraq, and some are on their third. It is also the result of improved tactics and technology. American snipers, hidden on rooftops above main intersections and other likely spots for roadside bombs, known as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), have killed scores of bombers in recent months. New jammers, fitted on to American vehicles, can counteract some remote triggers for IEDs, forcing bombers to

revert to cruder and riskier devices, such as command-wires. The Americans now reckon that they foil about 40% of IEDs.

But that still leaves an awful lot of explosions. Indeed, despite the Americans' successes, the rate of IED attacks has remained fairly steady in recent months, at between 60 and 70 a month. And the insurgents have got better also, by using their own snipers, for example, and by planting bigger and deadlier bombs. Of 2,300 American troops killed in Iraq, roughly a third have been dispatched by IEDs. In the past year, over half were killed by IEDs, including 36 of the 55 American servicemen killed last month. Total insurgent attacks—on American and allied troops, Iraqi security forces (ISF) and civilians—have also stayed steady, at around 550 a week.

These figures conceal important variations. For most of the time in this conflict, the violence has been massively concentrated in four of Iraq's 18 provinces—Baghdad, Ninewa, Salaheddin and Anbar—where only 40% of Iraqis live. One reason is that these provinces are home to most of the country's Sunni Arab minority, many of whose tribes profited from Saddam Hussein's rule, and have resisted America's invasion and the Shia ascendancy it has instigated. Increased enthusiasm for Wahhabism, an extreme form of Sunni Islamism, in the latter years of Mr Hussein's rule, has given coherence and inspiration to this resistance. Even within these provinces, there are variations in the intensity and flavour of the conflict. But the bottom line is that, overall, Iraq is as violent now as at almost any time since the invasion.

This is despite the fact that over the past three years American and British troops have killed thousands of suspected insurgents. They have also detained more than 100,000 Iraqi men, most of them innocent, with only 15,000 still in custody. Such smash-and-grab tactics have clearly failed. "If you've applied the kinetics [Pentagon-speak for force] we've applied, and you still have a situation where attacks are up and there are so many bad guys, that's the best argument against applying kinetics," says Lieut-General Peter Chiarelli, the commander of coalition forces in Iraq. "For every one we pick off the streets, we're creating one to take his place."

That may be especially true when the people picked off are innocent. In each of the past three years, according to coalition sources, American troops have killed over 250 innocent people at vehicle checkpoints alone. Given that insurgents often use suicide car bombs, American troops are bound to be jumpy. Yet it is remarkable that coalition procedures for issuing warnings to oncoming vehicles, including flares and shots, were standardised only this month. Last month, for no easily comprehensible reason, American soldiers fired high-velocity shots into the windscreen and engine of a car carrying a Canadian diplomat—inside Baghdad's heavily fortified international zone. And this week American investigators arrived in Iraq to look into the allegedly deliberate killing last November of 15 Iraqi civilians in the western town of Haditha.

As the Americans tend not to report the civilians they kill, many are omitted from independent counts of Iraqi civilians killed in the conflict. Otherwise, by one estimate, the conflict has claimed between 34,000 and 38,000 people so far.

More happily, America is no longer trying to win in Iraq by military might alone. The strategy is now twofold: to train, by the end of 2007, Iraqi forces capable of waging the counter-insurgency campaign with little American support; and to create, by the end of 2009, effective civilian institutions under a democratic and representative government. On both fronts there has been progress, but it remains patchy.

The current batch of Iraqi soldiers and police began to be recruited only 18 months ago, after most of the previous lot ran away or joined the insurgency. In that short time, with inspired leadership and American logistics, an army of more than 100,000 soldiers has been trained and equipped. This is a great achievement. With varying degrees of success, the Iraqi Ministry of Defence is paying, feeding and supplying them; and by the end of this year, it is supposed to have full control of the army's promotions and recruitment. At its full complement, the army should have 130,000 men, arrayed in ten divisions, in control of most of Iraq.

When the numbers are set against the soldiers' actual performance, however, this plan looks either hugely ambitious or plainly fanciful. Iraqi troops are often ill-disciplined and accident-prone. The Americans seconded to them as mentors, ten at each battalion and brigade level, joke weakly that ISF stands for I Shot Foot—a painful eventuality witnessed in Ramadi by this correspondent. Asked to assess the first Iraqi tank battalion, one homebound American trainer blanched and muttered darkly.

Your correspondent later observed this trainer's former charges rumbling through Baghdad, with one gunner atop communicating with his driver by firing a Kalashnikov rifle over his head.

Still, rough as it seems, this army is perhaps as good as Iraq can expect. The police, under the Ministry of Interior, are in a much worse state—and it is they who are expected eventually to quell the insurgency. So far, 123,000 have been trained and equipped (a total of 194,000 has been authorised). But they are of wildly mixed quality, with some of them barely trained. Worse, the best units, including several paramilitary brigades, have been infiltrated by various brutish Shia militias, and have launched reprisal attacks against Sunni civilians.

In November, American troops freed 123 famished Sunnis, some of whom had been tortured, from an interior-ministry basement in Baghdad. Coalition troops have also been attacked by the boys in blue, with several especially lethal IED attacks against British troops in Basra believed to be the work of rogue policemen there. In western Baghdad last month, shortly after the bombing of a sacred Shia shrine in Samarra, two American soldiers were sliced into pieces by an IED laid, during a curfew, within 50 yards of a police checkpoint.

In nearby Abu Ghraib, amid shady date palms and well-watered fields, a group of Sunni farmers claims that many of their relatives had been killed by Shia assassins within the police. Such tales are no doubt exaggerated. Yet, at a time of appalling sectarian tension, many Sunnis seem to believe them. The farmers said they would prefer to have the Shia-dominated army, or even American forces, in their area than the police. This anything-but-the-police preference should not be confused with America winning Iraqi hearts and minds.

The army's most capable soldiers may be from the Kurdish north, drawing on seasoned peshmerga militiamen. These troops—and occasionally peshmerga who are not in the army—have helped bring semi-control to parts of Ninewa, including the ethnically mixed capital, Mosul, and the radicalised Turkomen town of Tal Afar. But the most sophisticated Iraqi units are in Baghdad, half of which is, a bit more than nominally, controlled by four independent Iraqi brigades.

In western Baghdad, two of these brigades, comprising five battalions, are praised by their American mentors. The commander of one, Brigadier Jaleel Khalaf, describes his impressive response to the Samarra shrine-blast: he put guards outside mosques, brokered talks between religious leaders, and so on. His troops have improved security; though IEDs still riddle their area, they tend to be laid hastily and badly—a process American troops dismiss as "drop-and-pop".

Since the Iraqis took charge, the American brigade has pushed westward into a neglected rural area, Agar Guf. Sunni farmers there complained that the Americans had come with no money to fix roads destroyed by IEDs, and were too few to provide security. Agreeing, a young American lieutenant told them to protect themselves by keeping rifles to hand. "I don't understand why I keep finding your weapons hidden under your beds," he added.

Yet the farmers may not be bothered for long. The American brigade, totalling 4,000 troops, will leave Iraq at the end of this year. In its place will remain a few hundred American troops—trainers seconded to the two Iraqi brigades, and troops to protect and support the trainers. This is the coalition's withdrawal strategy. According to current plans, which could be revised, no more than 100,000 American forces should be in Iraq by the end of the year. In the south, the current force of 7,800 British troops should have been halved by then, and two desert provinces, Muthanna and Maysan, should be substantially Iraqi-run. Against a shifting insurgency, it is a risky strategy. The Iraqi troops in western Baghdad would not patrol so freely in Baghdad's violent southern approaches, which American troops barely control now. But even that wild area is serene compared with Ramadi.

Returning to Anbar's capital, a city of 400,000, after a year's interval, The Economist saw a great deal of violence and little to celebrate. American armoured vehicles slalom at breakneck speeds between sinisterly pot-holed roads. To try to reduce IEDs, a section of the city's main thoroughfare is closed to civilians, shops are boarded-up along it and buildings are derelict. At least the provincial government exists, unlike a year ago, but it hardly functions. On one afternoon of your correspondent's visit, its headquarters was attacked by a dozen insurgents with rockets and machineguns. They were eventually silenced by an American airstrike. Anbar's governor, Mamoun Rasheed, was philosophical about the conflict. "What you are seeing is the struggle between good and evil," he said. "It has existed since the beginning of time and it will never end."

Depressing as Ramadi is, it does at least have four Iraqi army battalions, although still no regular police. But even a dozen army battalions could not hope to quash the insurgency—as a night-patrol with an Iraqi company, along the northern shore of the Euphrates river, suggested. After ten months of American training and mentoring, the men of the 3rd battalion of the 1st brigade of the Iraqi 7th division are among the best Iraqi troops in Anbar. Under the haggard eye of a few American troops, their ragtag patrols have improved security in Ramadi's northern outskirt of Jazeera, even if many of the local insurgents have perhaps shifted to other neighbourhoods. The Iraqi soldiers, with their knowledge of Arabic and local customs, do seem more at ease in Ramadi than Americans—but only just. They are all Shia, from Baghdad and Basra, a fact bitterly resented by the inhabitants of Ramadi. Out of earshot of their American mentors, several of the Iraqi soldiers expressed the opinion that the Americans should quit Iraq at once, but added that they would quit the army if they did. Some said they believed that the Mahdi, a mythical figure who, it is prophesied, will lead Muslims to conquer the world before the day of judgment, had recently appeared in Iraq. Several identified him as Muqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand Shia cleric whose black-robed militiamen have killed many American and British troops.

Why is it so difficult to raise disciplined and determined Iraqi troops? Talk of the Mahdi, implying a hankering for leadership, offers a clue. During the invasion, Iraq's state collapsed. Three years on, after a clueless American military occupation and two incompetent and divisive Iraqi governments, it has not yet been rebuilt. Iraqis are more insecure than before the invasion. They also, despite \$20 billion thrown at reconstruction projects, have fewer basic services, including power and clean water—Baghdad has 20% less power than a year ago. And where the insurgency rages, their streets are a nightmare of bomb-blasts and rubble. This has made them resentful and distrustful of America's schemes, including the creation of the ISF. Many Iraqis ask how it is that America, which could seize their country in two weeks, cannot turn their lights back on.

Dispassionate observers note that America never expected to have to do so. Its post-war plan, such as it was, was for Iraqis to sort such things out for themselves. Efforts to raise the ISF and do proper reconstruction are still mired in the mess created by the invaders' initial naivety. And still the occupation fails to match power with responsibility. In southern Iraq, for example, British troops are too few to impose control; but too many to convince Iraqis that they are not under foreign control. Each group expects leadership from the other, and meanwhile Basra's streets run with slurry.

America's preferred solution to this problem has been to hold elections to unite Iraqis behind a representative government of their own and against the insurgency. Yet, despite a high turnout across Iraq in December's elections, the violence is undiminished. One reason for this may be that Iraq is not in the throes of a single insurgency, but three distinct although often overlapping conflicts. One battle is for political power. This is drawn on sectarian and, at the local level, tribal lines, and has been stirred by the scramble for power and resources that the elections represent. As elsewhere in the Muslim world, when Iraq's state collapsed, religious and tribal entities filled the void. Among the well-organised Shia majority, Shia militias, including Mr Sadr's, have thrived. In two elections and a referendum last year, Iraqis voted along increasingly sectarian lines, in effect giving power to Shia militia leaders, and, to a much lesser degree, to Sunni politicians linked to the insurgency. Unsurprisingly, then, democracy in Iraq is not peaceful. Shia militias linked to senior ministers were involved in the surge of sectarian killing that followed the recent desecration in Samarra. This bloodshed will not stop till the militias are disarmed.

Iraq's two other conflicts are even more tightly interwoven. The first features disgruntled Sunnis, including many security officials of the old regime, who are fighting foreign occupation and a Shia government, in a vain bid to restore their minority to power. The second fight is that of jihadists aiming to create an Islamist state. Most are Iraqis, with a minority of foreigners among them, including the Jordanian terrorist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Both these conflicts have been slightly damped down by American military action in recent months. A series of aggressive American operations along the western Euphrates valley late last year, from Ramadi to Qaim, near the border with Syria, has imposed fragile control on several rebellious towns. In the process, Mr Zarqawi's and other extremist groups appear, however temporarily, to have been weakened; they seem less able, for example, to import wide-eyed foreign suicide bombers through Syria.

Cheered by this, American officials claim that many Sunnis have also quit the insurgency since the election, in which they turned out in numbers and won many seats. Americans note the unprecedented

recent recruitment of 1,000 Ramadians into the police. This may not indicate much change of heart. One teenage recruit, Leoay Ibrahim, says simply that he needs the police wage of \$250 a month. But he also says that most of his male relatives have been detained as insurgents by American troops. Election day in Ramadi saw not a single attack, yet the city has returned to violent resistance. Many voters are clearly keeping their options open.

In the meantime, the violence will continue. It would help if a broad-based government were formed. Hopes of this were raised this week, after Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme spiritual leader of Iran, which holds great sway with Shia parties in Iraq, agreed to discuss the situation there with America. But no Iraqi government could end the violence soon: the country contains too many unsettled scores and too many angry people.

Neither success nor failure is certain, but any improvement will be slow. On a toilet-wall in an American airbase in western Iraq, an American soldier has scrawled his own summary analysis: "We came, we saw, we wasted a year of our lives. At least we got the fuckers to vote."

Three Years On

U.S. News & World Report

By Kevin Whitelaw

3/27

For one very brief, made-for-TV moment, anything seemed possible. Iraqis (with a little help from U.S. soldiers) tore down one of the ubiquitous statues of Saddam Hussein and dragged his metal torso down the street. Conveniently, the scene all unfolded right outside a hotel housing an army of television cameras. It was a satisfying, even hopeful, end to a regime of thugs and crooks.

Yet few at the time really understood the powerful, destructive forces loosed in Saddam's wake. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld publicly shrugged off the start of a wave of looting during which U.S. soldiers stood aside as government buildings were stripped of even their internal wiring. Spreading lawlessness left the once proud nation even more crippled than Saddam had--and paved the way for today's numbing routine of bombings and anonymous killings.

The invasion itself was short and not nearly as costly for American forces as had been feared. Fewer than 140 U.S. soldiers were killed in the first two months. A brutal dictator was on the run and an oppressed people freed. At the same time, Iraqis greeted America less with gratitude than with suspicion (bred by more than a decade of suffocating sanctions) and anger (at the failure of U.S. forces to provide security).

The American death toll now stands above 2,300--with the Iraqi civilian toll estimated to be in the tens of thousands--in a conflict marked by contradictions. It began as a pre-emptive war to disarm a dictator of weapons, which, it turned out, he no longer possessed. On the eve of the invasion, President Bush called it a mission to "tear down the apparatus of terror," but it has spawned one of the most dangerous theaters--and training grounds--for terrorists in the world.

Caldron. The Bush administration did stage a series of elections, which provided remarkable demonstrations of Iraqis' courage and desire for a better future. But the result so far has left Iraq more divided, because religious and ethnic parties were the only organized forces that could fill the vacuum left in the wake of Saddam's repression.

For the small group of American civilians who took the reins in the early days of the U.S. occupation, the playing field was largely restricted to the Green Zone and its growing fortifications. Working in not-so-splendid isolation in the stifling confines of one of Saddam's old palaces, they sketched out a new nation and devised plans for everything from a flat tax to a new stock exchange. Paul Bremer, the U.S. viceroy, also inadvertently helped fuel a nascent insurgency by disbanding the old Iraqi Army and banning thousands of Baath Party officials from public life--disenfranchising a large swath of Sunnis overnight.

Iraq was never an easy place to rule. Just ask Saddam Hussein, who made a full-time job out of alternately manipulating and terrorizing the religious, ethnic, and tribal forces that make up the Iraqi

mosaic. His overthrow lifted the lid off Iraq's complex cauldron of ethnic and sectarian tensions. In recent weeks, a new round of violence broke out, aimed at provoking Iraqis into a full-scale civil war.

All along, one factor has given U.S. officials some measure of hope--the majority of Iraqis have not thrown their lot in with the insurgents. Most Iraqis still wish to reclaim the rich legacy of their nation, known to many as the birthplace of civilization. They know full well how much they have lost--as recently as the 1970s, Iraq was one of the richest and most educated countries in the region. "This is a country that should be able to employ its people and give them a life like we live in the West," Margaret Hassan, the country director for the aid group CARE, told U.S. News five months before the invasion. "They know they should be living a decent life." Tragically, Hassan herself was kidnapped in October 2004 and is believed to have been killed by her captors.

Our Eyes Are Open. Now What?

Time

By Joe Klein

3/27

A few weeks before the war in Iraq began three years ago, I checked in with an Israeli friend, an intelligence expert who in 1991 had uncannily laid out for me the course of the first Gulf War on the night before it happened. "It'll be easier than 1991 this time," he said. "A three- or four-week campaign. But I have a question: You're not actually thinking of occupying that country, are you?" I asked if he had an alternative. "You decapitate the government--Saddam, his family and friends, the Special Republican Guard--but leave the rest of the army intact, and then find yourself a nice Mubarak," he said, referring to Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak.

As I've traveled through the region since the war began, I have heard the same sentiments from high-ranking government officials in Jordan, Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia: only a strong Sunni general could tame Iraq. But what about the rightful claims of the Shi'ite majority? "Oh, the Shi'ites usually go along," I was told in Saudi Arabia. "They're simple country people."

There was a breathtaking cynicism to all this. There was also utter disbelief that President George W. Bush actually thought he could bring democracy to a medieval society in which the strongest social units were tribes. Saddam was dangerously excessive, the neighbors agreed, but so were the Iraqi people--"the most violent in the neighborhood," a Jordanian told me. It went without saying that the Shi'ites usually endured unspeakable brutalities before they agreed to "go along." But this was realism, Middle East style.

Three years into this awful adventure, the question is, What is realism, American style? The U.S. effort in Iraq has been a deadly combination of utopian fantasy and near criminal incompetence. The absence of thoughtful military preparation--the Bush Administration's unwillingness to acknowledge the threat of a guerrilla insurgency--is laid out in greater detail than ever before in a new book, *Cobra II*, by General Bernard Trainor and Michael Gordon. It remains a mystery why Donald Rumsfeld, the architect of this disaster, has been allowed to continue as Secretary of Defense. There is some good news in Iraq today, says Andrew Krepinevich, a leading counterinsurgency expert: "After the recent wave of sectarian violence, all parties--even many of the Sunnis--realize they need us to keep the peace. The bad news is we still don't have a real campaign plan for doing that."

What would a realistic American policy look like now? There are three possibilities, none of them attractive: a top-down political solution, a bottom-up security solution and a staged retreat. Krepinevich and Kenneth Pollack of the Brookings Institution support the bottom-up "oil stain" strategy. This is a classic counterinsurgency plan, in which U.S. forces would refrain from whack-a-mole search-and-destroy sweeps, like the overhyped helicopter assault north of Baghdad last week, and instead concentrate on providing a strong local police presence and economic development in the 14 out of 18 Iraqi provinces that are relatively stable. If progress can be achieved in those areas, the argument goes, the "oil stain" of stability might spread through the rest of the country. The problem is, this strategy will require far more troops and time--five years, at least--than most Americans seem prepared to support. "We may have passed the tipping point," Pollack admits. "We may no longer have the credibility with the Iraqis, or the American public, to make this succeed. But the only alternative is an ethnic bloodbath."

The top-down political solution is to impose with force a power-sharing deal, perhaps including a partition into Kurdish, Shi'ite and Sunni provinces. In the current issue of Foreign Affairs, military historian Stephen Biddle argues that Iraq's internal strife is not a "Maoist people's war" like Vietnam's was: it is a communal civil war, and the Bush policy of rapidly building an Iraqi army "throws gasoline on the fire ... Sunnis perceive the 'national' army as a Shi'ite-Kurdish militia on steroids." Pollack agrees: "We have about 50 Iraqi battalions capable of fighting now, but not one of them is blended ethnically." Biddle argues that U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad's efforts to broker a deal need to be strengthened by U.S. threats "to manipulate the military balance of power"--in other words, to support one of the ethnic factions, as the British colonial empire used to do. It is true that an Iraqi solution is impossible without a grand political bargain (including a formula for distributing oil revenues), but the idea that the U.S. can manipulate such an outcome--by force, no less--seems fanciful at best.

The third potential course is retreat, which Bush will never countenance--but which is no longer unthinkable, given the evaporation of public support for the war. Retreat would leave anarchy in Iraq and quite possibly lead to a regional war of Sunnis against Shi'ites. The President won't admit it, but on the third anniversary of his war, the only plausible reason for remaining in Iraq is to prevent an even greater catastrophe. That is realism, American style.

One Morning in Haditha

Time

By Tim McGirl and Aparisim Ghosh

3/27

The incident seemed like so many others from this war, the kind of tragedy that has become numbingly routine amid the daily reports of violence in Iraq. On the morning of Nov. 19, 2005, a roadside bomb struck a humvee carrying Marines from Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, on a road near Haditha, a restive town in western Iraq. The bomb killed Lance Corporal Miguel (T.J.) Terrazas, 20, from El Paso, Texas. The next day a Marine communique from Camp Blue Diamond in Ramadi reported that Terrazas and 15 Iraqi civilians were killed by the blast and that "gunmen attacked the convoy with small-arms fire," prompting the Marines to return fire, killing eight insurgents and wounding one other. The Marines from Kilo Company held a memorial service for Terrazas at their camp in Haditha. They wrote messages like "T.J., you were a great friend. I'm going to miss seeing you around" on smooth stones and piled them in a funeral mound. And the war moved on.

But the details of what happened that morning in Haditha are more disturbing, disputed and horrific than the military initially reported. According to eyewitnesses and local officials interviewed over the past 10 weeks, the civilians who died in Haditha on Nov. 19 were killed not by a roadside bomb but by the Marines themselves, who went on a rampage in the village after the attack, killing 15 unarmed Iraqis in their homes, including seven women and three children. Human-rights activists say that if the accusations are true, the incident ranks as the worst case of deliberate killing of Iraqi civilians by U.S. service members since the war began.

In January, after TIME presented military officials in Baghdad with the Iraqis' accounts of the Marines' actions, the U.S. opened its own investigation, interviewing 28 people, including the Marines, the families of the victims and local doctors. According to military officials, the inquiry acknowledged that, contrary to the military's initial report, the 15 civilians killed on Nov. 19 died at the hands of the Marines, not the insurgents. The military announced last week that the matter has been handed over to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), which will conduct a criminal investigation to determine whether the troops broke the laws of war by deliberately targeting civilians. Lieut. Colonel Michelle Martin-Hing, spokeswoman for the Multi-National Force--Iraq, told TIME the involvement of the NCIS does not mean that a crime occurred. And she says the fault for the civilian deaths lies squarely with the insurgents, who "placed noncombatants in the line of fire as the Marines responded to defend themselves."

Because the incident is officially under investigation, members of the Marine unit that was in Haditha on Nov. 19 are not allowed to speak with reporters. But the military's own reconstruction of events and the accounts of town residents interviewed by TIME--including six whose family members were killed that day--paint a picture of a devastatingly violent response by a group of U.S. troops who had lost one of their own to a deadly insurgent attack and believed they were under fire. TIME obtained a videotape that purports to show the aftermath of the Marines' assault and provides graphic

documentation of its human toll. What happened in Haditha is a reminder of the horrors faced by civilians caught in the middle of war--and what war can do to the people who fight it.

Here's what all participants agree on: At around 7:15 a.m. on Nov. 19, a U.S. humvee was struck by a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) attached to a large propane canister, triggered by remote control. The bomb killed Terrazas, who was driving, and injured two other Marines. For U.S. troops, Haditha, set among date-palm groves along the Euphrates River, was inhospitable territory; every day the Marines found scores of bombs buried in the dirt roads near their base. Eman Waleed, 9, lived in a house 150 yards from the site of the blast, which was strong enough to shatter all the windows in her home. "We heard a big noise that woke us all up," she recalls two months later. "Then we did what we always do when there's an explosion: my father goes into his room with the Koran and prays that the family will be spared any harm." Eman says the rest of the family--her mother, grandfather, grandmother, two brothers, two aunts and two uncles--gathered in the living room.

According to military officials familiar with the investigation, the Marines say they came under fire from the direction of the Waleed house immediately after being hit by the IED. A group of Marines headed toward the house. Eman says she "heard a lot of shooting, so none of us went outside. Besides, it was very early, and we were all wearing our nightclothes." When the Marines entered the house, they were shouting in English. "First, they went into my father's room, where he was reading the Koran," she claims, "and we heard shots." According to Eman, the Marines then entered the living room. "I couldn't see their faces very well--only their guns sticking into the doorway. I watched them shoot my grandfather, first in the chest and then in the head. Then they killed my granny." She claims the troops started firing toward the corner of the room where she and her younger brother Abdul Rahman, 8, were hiding; the other adults shielded the children from the bullets but died in the process. Eman says her leg was hit by a piece of metal and Abdul Rahman was shot near his shoulder. "We were lying there, bleeding, and it hurt so much. Afterward, some Iraqi soldiers came. They carried us in their arms. I was crying, shouting 'Why did you do this to our family?' And one Iraqi soldier tells me, 'We didn't do it. The Americans did.'"

TIME was unable to speak with the only other survivor of the raid, Eman's younger brother, who relatives say is traumatized by the experience. U.S. military officials familiar with the investigation say that after entering the house, the Marines walked into a corridor with closed doors on either side. They thought they heard the clack-clack sound of an AK-47 being racked and readied for fire. (Eman and relatives who were not in the house insist that no guns were there.) Believing they were about to be ambushed, the Marines broke down the two doors simultaneously and fired their weapons. The officials say the military has confirmed that seven people were killed inside the house--including two women and a child. The Marines also reported seeing a man and a woman run out of the house; they gave chase and shot and killed the man. Relatives say the woman, Hiba Abdullah, escaped with her baby.

According to military officials, the Marines say they then started taking fire from the direction of a second house, prompting them to break down the door of that house and throw in a grenade, blowing up a propane tank in the kitchen. The Marines then began firing, killing eight residents--including the owner, his wife, the owner's sister, a 2-year-old son and three young daughters.

The Marines raided a third house, which belongs to a man named Ahmed Ayed. One of Ahmed's five sons, Yousif, who lived in a house next door, told TIME that after hearing a prolonged burst of gunfire from his father's house, he rushed over. Iraqi soldiers keeping watch in the garden prevented him from going in. "They told me, 'There's nothing you can do. Don't come closer, or the Americans will kill you too.' The Americans didn't let anybody into the house until 6:30 the next morning." Ayed says that by then the bodies were gone; all the dead had been zipped into U.S. body bags and taken by Marines to a local hospital morgue. "But we could tell from the blood tracks across the floor what happened," Ayed claims. "The Americans gathered my four brothers and took them inside my father's bedroom, to a closet. They killed them inside the closet."

The military has a different account of what transpired. According to officials familiar with the investigation, the Marines broke into the third house and found a group of 10 to 15 women and children. The troops say they left one Marine to guard that house and pushed on to the house next door, where they found four men, one of whom was wielding an AK-47. A second seemed to be reaching into a wardrobe for another weapon, the officials say. The Marines shot both men dead; the military's initial report does not specify how the other two men died. The Marines deny that any of the men were killed in the closet, which they say is too small to fit one adult male, much less four.

According to the military officials, the series of raids took five hours and left at least 23 people dead. In all, two AK-47s were discovered. The military has classified the 15 victims in the first two houses as noncombatants. It considers the four men killed in the fourth house, as well as four youths killed by the Marines near the site of the roadside bombing, as enemy fighters. The question facing naval detectives is whether the Marines' killing of 15 noncombatants was an act of legitimate self-defense or negligent homicide. Military sources say that if the NCIS finds evidence of wrongdoing, U.S. commanders in Iraq will decide whether to pursue legal action against the Marines.

The available evidence does not provide conclusive proof that the Marines deliberately killed innocents in Haditha. But the accounts of human-rights groups that investigated the incident and survivors and local officials who spoke to TIME do raise questions about whether the extent of force used by the Marines was justified--and whether the Marines were initially candid about what took place. Dr. Wahid, director of the local hospital in Haditha, who asked that his family name be withheld because, he says, he fears reprisals by U.S. troops, says the Marines brought 24 bodies to his hospital around midnight on Nov. 19. Wahid says the Marines claimed the victims had been killed by shrapnel from the roadside bomb. "But it was obvious to us that there were no organs slashed by shrapnel," Wahid says. "The bullet wounds were very apparent. Most of the victims were shot in the chest and the head--from close range."

A day after the incident, a Haditha journalism student videotaped the scene at the local morgue and at the homes where the killings had occurred. The video was obtained by the Hammurabi Human Rights Group, which cooperates with the internationally respected Human Rights Watch, and has been shared with TIME. The tape makes for grisly viewing. It shows that many of the victims, especially the women and children, were still in their nightclothes when they died. The scenes from inside the houses show that the walls and ceilings are pockmarked with shrapnel and bullet holes as well as the telltale spray of blood. But the video does not reveal the presence of any bullet holes on the outside of the houses, which may cast doubt on the Marines' contention that after the IED exploded, the Marines and the insurgents engaged in a fierce gunfight.

There are also questions about why the military took so long to investigate the details of the Haditha incident. Soon after the killings, the mayor of Haditha, Emad Jawad Hamza, led an angry delegation of elders up to the Marine camp beside a dam on the Euphrates River. Hamza says, "The captain admitted that his men had made a mistake. He said that his men thought there were terrorists near the houses, and he didn't give any other reason."

But the military stood by its initial contention that the Iraqis had been killed by an insurgent bomb until January when TIME gave a copy of the video and witnesses' testimony to Colonel Barry Johnson, a U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad. After reviewing the evidence, Johnson passed it on to the military command, suggesting that the events of Haditha be given "a full and formal investigation." In February an infantry colonel went to Haditha for a weeklong probe in which he interviewed Marines, survivors and doctors at the morgue, according to military officials close to the investigation. The probe concluded that the civilians were in fact killed by Marines and not by an insurgent's bomb and that no insurgents appeared to be in the first two houses raided by the Marines. The probe found, however, that the deaths were the result of "collateral damage" rather than malicious intent by the Marines, investigators say.

The U.S. has paid relatives of the victims \$2,500 for each of the 15 dead civilians, plus smaller payments for the injured. But nothing can bring back all that was taken from 9-year-old Eman Waleed on that fateful day last November. She still does not comprehend how, when her father went in to pray with the Koran for the family's safety, his prayers were not answered, as they had been so many times in the past. "He always prayed before, and the Americans left us alone," she says. Leaving, she grabs a handful of candy. "It's for my little brother," she says.

"I couldn't see their faces well--only their guns. I watched them shoot my grandfather in the chest and in the head." --EMAN WALEED

Iraq's Real WMD

Newsweek

By John Barry, Michael Hastings and Evan Thomas

They call it "running the gauntlet." Army Capt. Gregory Hirschey and his bomb squad would go looking for improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the streets of Baghdad. They would find them in donkey carts, paint cans, trash bags, plastic bottles and in schoolyards--explosive charges ready to be detonated by insurgents lying in wait. Operating around the clock in teams of three, Hirschey's 21-man unit responded to 2,178 incidents in seven months, from the summer of 2005 to the winter of 2006. "There were IEDs on the way there, there were IEDs on the way back," says Hirschey. Not to mention small-arms fire, ambushes and rocket-propelled grenades.

With a month left on his tour, Hirschey began to think his unit would miraculously emerge unscathed. Then an IED blew off a soldier's arm. Twelve days later, a team leader--Hirschey's close friend, Staff Sgt. Johnnie Mason--was dismantling an IED when a second one killed him instantly.

(Army bomb squads are often targeted by the insurgents for ambushes.) A strapping 12-year veteran with brush-cut blond hair, a wife and three kids, Hirschey, 38, found himself becoming numb to the IED threat. "You quit looking," he told NEWSWEEK. "I don't know what it is. You almost feel like you're part of the walking dead."

In every sense of the word, IEDs are crippling American soldiers in Iraq. The insurgents know that their best chance to win is to bleed America, and IEDs are the most effective way to cause the most harm at the least cost. Three years after the United States invaded Iraq, the military still has not figured out how to overcome the threat. Former administration officials blame the military bureaucracy; military officials blame a civilian leadership that did not grasp the operational challenges.

There is no doubt that the Bush administration is frustrated by the IED menace and is trying hard, if belatedly, to overcome it. President George W. Bush's tone was slightly defensive last week when he talked about "putting the best minds in America to work on this effort." In 2004, said Bush, the military spent \$150 million to defeat IEDs; this year the figure is \$3.3 billion--mostly for more armor and better technology. Bush himself has asked how the Pentagon could burn through so much money. Last week Gen. Montgomery Meigs, the four-star general appointed by Bush in December to lead the anti-IED effort, gave the president a little show and tell. On a long dark table in the Roosevelt Room were assembled a series of IEDs, ranging from the small, simple kind--an artillery shell detonated by a garage-door opener--to the bigger, more sophisticated shaped charges ignited by infrared beams (technology, it appears, courtesy of Iran). The former is good for tearing off limbs; the latter can take out a tank.

The Pentagon and Central Command do not like to get into specifics, for fear of tipping off the insurgents, but officials claim that the military is disarming an ever-greater number of IEDs before they can kill Americans. "We have reduced the casualty rate from IEDs by half of what it was 18 months ago," says Pentagon spokesman Brian Whitman. All this may be true, but the insurgents are planting IEDs at a faster rate than the Army can eliminate them. According to Central Command, in 2004 there were 5,607 IED attacks; in 2005, there were 10,953.

"As we've improved our armor, the enemy's improved his IEDs. They're bigger and with better detonating mechanisms," Maj. Randall Simmons, whose Georgia National Guard unit escorts convoys through western Iraq, told the Associated Press. "There's a road we called IED Alley that the ordnance-disposal guys would clear regularly," says Sgt. Robert Lewis of Carrollton, Ga. "But no sooner would they reach the end of that stretch"--eight miles--"than the insurgents would be planting IEDs again at the beginning."

The bomb planters have become more inventive in hiding the devices, using animal carcasses and disguising the bombs as rocks or coating them with plaster to look like chunks of concrete. Most of the IEDs have been made from artillery or mortar shells, mines or grenades. Munitions are not hard to come by: Saddam Hussein's Iraq was awash with weapons. Left unguarded, many arsenals were looted in the wake of the March 2003 American invasion.

For detonators, the insurgents have used cell phones and garage-door openers; when the Americans figured out how to jam those signals, they began using infrared beams. The explosives got bigger and more deadly. A shaped charge can fire a jet of white-hot gas right through the armor of a tank, causing "spalling," a swirling mist of metal shrapnel that can shred the soldiers within. The Americans suspect that the Iranians have been teaching the insurgents how to make these IEDs. The Iranian-

backed terrorist organization Hizbullah had years of practice building IEDs that bled--and eventually helped drive out--the Israeli Army occupying Lebanon in the 1980s and '90s.

The Pentagon was a little slow to recognize the IED threat, but a year after the invasion, CENTCOM commander Gen. John Abizaid wrote a classified letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard Myers, the then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pleading for help. According to a military official who declined to be identified discussing sensitive matters, Abizaid warned that IEDs were "the number one killer of American troops" and asked for a "Manhattan Project-like effort," on the scale of the building of the atom bomb during World War II.

The civilian leadership of DoD agreed and let it be known that money would be no obstacle. A new Joint IED Task Force was duly convened under Army leadership--and immediately bogged down in bureaucracy. The first meeting was chaired by an Army two-star general and attended by a Navy two-star admiral, many one-star Army and Air Force generals, and "more colonels than you could count," according to a participant who requested anonymity because he was discussing a secret meeting. About an hour and a half was spent discussing the transfer to the Army of four bomb-sniffing dogs belonging to the Air Force. The cost of flying the dogs to Iraq was \$35,000, but "at the end of that time, there was not a soul in the room who could say, 'I will give you the money'," a participant recalled. It was a harbinger. "We were hamstrung from the beginning by an inability to actually do anything," said another participant in the meeting. (Pentagon spokesman Whitman says that "our efforts against IEDs grew as the threat grew.")

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was frustrated by the slow progress, according to a knowledgeable official who requested anonymity because he was divulging sensitive matters. Wolfowitz hoped to use interservice rivalry to spur some competition. The Air Force had begun a "Project Eyes" to fly a plane, equipped with sensors, over Iraq looking for buried munitions. The equipment was sensitive--it kept overheating over the desert, forcing the plane to retreat to cooler altitudes--but it showed that hidden caches could be found. Wolfowitz was so fed up with what he saw as the Army's inertia that he asked Air Force Secretary James Roche to brief the rival branch. "Paul wanted to shame the Army into action," says an official involved in the operation who declined to be identified.

Pentagon officials involved in the weapons-procurement process say that Wolfowitz and his underlings were not taken seriously by the uniformed brass. The civilians were scorned for their lack of military experience, an age-old problem for civilian-controlled militaries. An iron rule of all military bureaucracies--that the best is the enemy of the good--also got in the way. Exhibit A is the story of "the Warlock."

The Warlock is a jamming device used to hunt up and down radio frequencies searching for signals that could detonate a bomb. The Army has worked heroically with the makers to upgrade the short range and limited capability of the Warlock. But in the field, competing technologies kept getting in the way. The Army uses a radio (called SINCGARS) that also hops around frequencies. The radio frequently interfered with the Warlock jammer. Unable to communicate, troops began turning off their jammers--thereby exposing themselves to IEDs.

In April 2005, a civilian team in the Pentagon suggested that the SINCGARS radios, designed during the cold war to evade interception by Soviet radio scanners, be set at a single frequency, on the ground that Iraqi insurgents do not have the same signal-gathering capabilities as Warsaw Pact armies. The answer came back from the top commanders in Iraq: not good enough. The Army wanted to keep trying for a jammer that would not interfere with radio signals--a worthy goal but one still years away.

The steep challenge of stopping IEDs with a technological fix can be illustrated by a public solicitation that appeared on a Web site run by DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Translated from techno-jargon, the want ad asked for innovative ideas on how to build a gizmo able to detect hidden roadside bombs 450 yards away in one second or less; able to scan a swath of territory 110 yards wide quickly enough to warn a vehicle moving at 60mph, and small enough to fit in a space three feet wide. The notice appeared on Jan. 24, 2006; proposals were due Feb. 17.

It's a tall order. "A lot of our early efforts tended to concentrate on technology solutions," says Whitman, the Pentagon spokesman. Now, he says, the military is looking at "a mix of training, technology and intelligence."

In December, Bush brought General Meigs out of retirement to run the program to defeat IEDs. Meigs is no yes man. As commander of U.S. forces in Europe in 2002, he dryly chided Rumsfeld for not tolerating dissent. "There's an RMA [revolution in military affairs] underway," Meigs observed to The Washington Post, commenting on Rumsfeld's favorite cause. "We're going to use it to transform the military, and anybody who disagrees with us is a Luddite."

There are signs of fresh thinking in the war on IEDs. The Army is talking about setting up dedicated transportation routes that skirt cities and towns, and already the military is using the Air Force to carry more soldiers from place to place in Iraq. During one day last month, the Air Force transported 4,880 people, the largest number of passengers moved on any day since the war began. The Army also has some useful tools, like the remote-control-operated Talon robot, which has an agile mechanical arm and is nimble enough to cut the wire linking a radio to a bomb.

Captain Hirschey of the 717th Explosives Ordnance Disposal Company is glad to have the Talon. "My kick-ass robot operators are my best videogame players," he says. Hirschey is home in Fort Campbell, Ky., now, preparing to train a new batch of soldiers. By the year-end, he's likely to join them in Iraq for his second tour of duty. Maybe some scientist will have found a magic bullet by then. Hirschey, who has told his wife that he has had a premonition of dying in combat, tries to be philosophical. "If you're going to die," he says, "why not die for your country?"

Appalling--But Not Hopeless

Newsweek

By Fareed Zakaria

3/27

Three years ago this week, I watched the invasion of Iraq apprehensively. I had supported military intervention to rid the country of Saddam's tyranny, but I had also been appalled by the crude and unilateral manner in which the Bush administration handled the issue. In the first weeks after the invasion, I was very critical of several of the administration's decisions--crucially, invading with a light force and dismantling the governing structures of Iraq (including the bureaucracy and Army). My criticisms grew over the first 18 months of the invasion, a period that offered a truly depressing display of American weakness and incompetence. And yet, for all my misgivings about the way the administration has handled this policy, I've never been able to join the antiwar crowd. Nor am I convinced that Iraq is a hopeless cause that should be abandoned.

Let's remember that in 2002 and early 2003, U.S. policy toward Iraq was collapsing. The sanctions regime was becoming completely ineffective against Saddam--he had gotten quite good at cheating and smuggling--and it was simultaneously impoverishing the Iraqi people. Regular reconnaissance and bombing missions over Iraq were done through no-flight zones, which required a large U.S. and British presence in Saudi Arabia and Turkey. These circumstances were fueling a poisonous anti-Americanism throughout the Muslim world.

In his fatwa of 1998, Osama bin Laden's first two charges against the United States were that it was "occupying" Saudi Arabia and starving Iraqi women and children. The Palestinian cause was a distant third. Meanwhile Saddam had a 30-year history of attempting to build nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

The other reality by 2003 was that the United States and the international community had developed a reasonably effective process for military interventions like Iraq. The RAND Corporation released a thorough study just before the invasion pointing out that the central lesson of the 1990s was that if you went in with few troops (Haiti, Somalia), chaos prevailed, but if you went in with robust forces (Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor), it was possible to succeed.

Consider what the administration itself did in Afghanistan. It allied with local forces on the ground so that order would be maintained. It upheld the traditional structure of power and governance in the country--that is, it accepted the reality of the warlords--while working very slowly and quietly to weaken them. To deflect anti-Americanism, the military turned over the political process to the United Nations right after Kabul fell. (Most people forget that it was the U.N. that created the assembly that picked Hamid Karzai as president.) The United States gave NATO and the European Union starring roles in the country--and real power--which led them to accept real burden-sharing. The European

Union actually spends more in Afghanistan than the United States does.

But Iraq turned out to be a playground for all kinds of ideological theories that the Bush administration had about the Middle East, democracy, the United Nations and the Clinton administration. It also became a playground for a series of all-consuming turf wars and policy battles between various departments and policymakers in the administration. A good part of the chaos and confusion in Washington has abated, but the chaos in Iraq has proved much harder to reverse. It is much easier to undo a longstanding social and political order than it is to put it back together again.

So why have I not given up hope? Partly it's because I have been to Iraq, met the people who are engaged in the struggle to build their country and cannot bring myself to abandon them. Iraq has no Nelson Mandelas, but many of its leaders have shown remarkable patience, courage and statesmanship. Consider the wisdom and authority of Ayatollah Sistani, or the fair-minded and effective role of the Kurds, or the persistent pleas for secularism and tolerance from men like Ayad Allawi. You see lots of rough politics and jockeying for power in Baghdad. But when the stakes get high, when the violence escalates, when facing the abyss, you also see glimpses of leadership.

There is no doubt today that the costs of the invasion have far outweighed the benefits. But in the long view of history, will that always be true? If, after all this chaos, a new and different kind of Iraqi politics emerges, it will make a difference in the region. Even now, amid the violence, one can see that. The old order in Iraq was built on fear and terror. One group dominated the land, oppressing the others. Now representatives of all three communities--Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds--are sitting down at the table, trying to construct a workable bargain they can all live with.

These sectarian power struggles can get extremely messy, and violent parties have taken advantage of every crack and cleavage. But this might be inevitable in a country coming to terms with very real divisions and disagreements. Iraq might be stumbling toward nation-building by consent, not brutality. And that is a model for the Middle East.

At War - Back from the Brink

National Review

Editorial

3/27

The much-anticipated full-blown Iraqi civil war is not upon us, at least not yet. In the wake of the savage Golden Mosque bombing, it seemed that the extraordinary forbearance of Iraq's Shiites in the face of three years (and more) of provocation might finally have reached its end. But all of Iraq's political leaders -- even the thuggish Moqtada al-Sadr -- called for calm and an end to the violence.

Civil war is in no one's interest except al-Qaeda's. It hopes to ruin the American project in Iraq, by destroying the country around us, and perhaps take power -- at least in some Iraqi rump state -- in the ensuing chaos. All the major players realize this, so they all worked to talk the country back from the brink, including Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who, as usual, played an admirably responsible role.

None of this is to suggest that the situation in Iraq is anything less than deadly serious. A strong government must have a monopoly on force, and as long as there are private militias the Iraqi government won't have one. The mosque attack may have increased the prestige of the militias as defenders of the Shiites. With every day that passes, the prospect of putting the militias out of business seems more remote.

As bad as the existence of the militias is, their infiltration into government security forces is worse. The interior ministry, which runs the police, has become a hiring program for the Badr Corps, the paramilitary wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) party. The ministry is a rat's nest of death squads and torture cells. U.S. ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has been pushing to clean it up.

His reward was a ridiculous attack by the head of SCIRI, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, who blamed him for the Golden Mosque assault. Khalilzad got it from the other side too. Sunnis blamed the U.S. for not doing more to protect them from reprisals. The U.S. is a convenient pincushion for blame, but the fate of Iraq ultimately rests on the shoulders of Iraqis, and depends on whether they make the compromises

necessary to seize the better future that is still open to them.

To that end, Khalilzad's goal of hammering out a unity government that includes Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds is still vital. Khalilzad is also pushing for technocrats to run the "power ministries" of interior, defense, and oil, a play to put them above the sectarianism and patronage concerns of the Shiite parties. Arriving at the precipice of civil war might just scare the Iraqi factions into a healthy flexibility. It will be a sign that this is happening if the Shiites agree to dump the ineffectual incumbent prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, in response to Kurdish and Sunni opposition to him.

If Iraq ever descends into a real civil war, we won't have to debate whether it has happened. It will be clear for all to see. The military will dissolve into ethnic factions, and the government will collapse. That hasn't happened, and so declarations of defeat in Iraq -- of the sort our founder and editor-at-large William F. Buckley Jr. has made in his column -- are premature. That view could ultimately be proven right, but there is no way to know with certainty at this point.

Throughout the Iraq War, NR has tried to temper the rival fatalisms of the Iraq optimists and pessimists. Victory in Iraq has never been inevitable or impossible. The outcome depends, as is usually the case, on the choices made by the players, including us. Even if our influence in Iraq is waning, our commitment -- and the specific forms it takes -- still matters very much. Defeatism will be self-fulfilling.

The Other Side of the Story

National Review
By Bill Crawford
3/27

Welcome to another dose of good news about Iraq. (See here and here for more.) After my last report, I received an avalanche of positive feedback about the story of the bullet-proof cross, requesting more stories like that. So I've done that, and at the end of this update there are several more stories about the wonderful men and women in our armed forces.

Colonel John Tully is the officer in charge of security for three Iraqi provinces south of Baghdad. He recently told Voice of America that Iraqi forces will soon be capable enough that the U.S. can begin to draw down the number of troops in the region: "I'd say by the time I'm ready to go back to Texas at the end of the year that the Iraqi Army is going to have the lead for any kind of counter-insurgency operations in the three provinces that I'm in, and I'll be in a support role for them. Clearly, as the Iraqi Army takes over the lead for any kind of counter-insurgency operations I won't need a complete battalion to work in an area. What I need is just a smaller team. So without a doubt it translates into less troops on the ground, less U.S. troops," he said. As proof of their capabilities, Colonel Tully cites the recent Islamic holiday of Arba'een, which takes place in the holy city of Karbala. Security for the holiday was a mostly Iraqi affair, with U.S. troops in support. There were no deaths during the holiday, and only a few minor injuries.

A major theme of my first two updates was that people who actually go to Iraq are far more optimistic about the situation than those who base their opinions only on the reporting of the mainstream media. Governor Kenny Guinn says his belief in what the U.S. is doing in Iraq has been strengthened after a trip there: Regarding the rampant sectarian violence in Iraq, Guinn said there were "enough out of millions of people that will join together and try to do things you don't want them to do."

"We have gangs in America, don't we?" Guinn said. "And they're pretty brutal in many of the areas."

Guinn said he saw major reconstruction and other signs of progress in Baghdad that he didn't think had been depicted in the news here, adding, "I went there and saw something different that what I had been exposed to." Governor James Douglas of Vermont traveled with Gov. Guinn and made an interesting observation: Iraqi insurgents, according to Douglas, are most active in four of the country's 18 provinces. Much of the violence is centered in and around Baghdad, he noted.

"The insurgents are pretty smart ... they know where the media are," Douglas said. Colorado Senator Ken Salazar is also in Iraq with a bipartisan delegation, and like so many others who have been there, he sees signs of progress: Salazar said he is hopeful "because I see signs of positive action on the

ground, in terms of training of the Iraqi army as well as training of the Iraqi police." Senator Jeff Sessions is traveling with Salazar, and expressed optimism about the situation as well.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said the situation in Iraq is getting better and that the country is not on the verge of civil war: "When you have a situation where a country was a dictatorship, and a very brutal one which didn't allow television reports when people were exterminated and liquidated by Saddam Hussein, when you go from that to being a democracy and you have in the space of 12 months, you have three democratic elections, I don't think things can be said to be getting worse. I think they can be said to be getting better," he said. The son of Iraq's president spoke in Florida about the situation in his country. He predicted disaster if U.S. troops leave too soon, and said the situation isn't as bad as media reports present it: But I'm here to tell you," he said, "that not everything happening in Iraq is bad." The country, he said, is largely stable, with fighting in a handful of areas while most of Iraq functions calmly. Schools and hospitals are opening, he said, and trained Iraqis are fighting terrorists. Plus, the country held three elections in a little more than a year. Many American media outlets (Yahoo, CBS News, CNN, Fox News) reported that a U.S. air raid killed eleven in the town of Ishaqi; however, the U.S. military is denying the reports: The U.S. military hit back on Wednesday at what it called a "pattern of misinformation" following Iraqi police accusations that its troops shot dead a family of 11 in their home last week. President Bush mentioned the Iraqi city of Tall'afar during a speech this week. The mayor of Tall'afar agrees. He recently sent a letter to General Casey thanking U.S. troops for routing the terrorists from his city. This exchange has not been covered by the media, so perhaps you aren't familiar with it. Here are some excerpts from the mayor's letter: Dear General Casey, I don't need to explain to you the condition of my city since you have full knowledge of our suffering better than any other dignitary in our dear Iraq. By this letter, I wish to bring to your attention the dear position you occupy in the hearts of the Tall'afar people, which all words fall short of explaining.

Dear General, our city was overrun by heartless terrorists, Abu Mus'ab Al Zarqawi and his followers who unloaded their blood thirsty and voracious action of evil on this city for several months by indiscriminately killing men, women and children. At that time, Tall'afar days were all dark. I have seen with my own eyes, fathers holding their sons bleeding to death from injuries inflicted while we could do nothing to help as there was not a drop of life saving blood to be found in the whole city. Tall'afar was a human slaughterhouse. Iraq has become a tough place to be a member of al Qaeda, and it has been reported that the number al Qaeda members in Iraq is dwindling: Officials said Iraqi intelligence has assessed that the number of Al Qaida operatives in the country decreased significantly over the last year. They said many of the operatives were killed, captured or returned to their native countries.

"We have information that many members of Al Qaida have returned to their countries," Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr said.

Officials said no more than several hundred Al Qaida operatives were believed to be in Iraq. A top aide to Zarqawi was captured in eastern Iraq on Thursday. Fares Kadhim Lafi, an Iraqi, was responsible for dozens of attacks, including an attack on a bus that killed nine civilians.

In Baghdad, soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division stopped a kidnapping after receiving a tip from an Iraqi. A suspicious vehicle was pulled over and a kidnapping victim rescued from the trunk of the car.

In Tikrit, a tip from a local led to the discovery of a weapons cache containing 500 rounds of anti-aircraft ammunition.

Operation Northern Lights began on Thursday, in part from information received via tips from Iraqis. The operation has already resulted in the discovery of five weapons caches: ...containing a machinegun, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, three AK-47 assault rifles, 2,200 PKC machine gun rounds, two boxes of gunpowder, a RPG rocket, an Iraqi police jacket, 18 106 mm tank rounds, 400 blasting caps, 40 artillery rounds, 17 pressure plate initiators, 20 Motorola radio initiators, and thousands of .50 caliber machine gun rounds. Iraqi forces killed one terrorist during a firefight. Eighteen terrorists have been detained in the operation, including two "high-value" targets.

During Operation Swarmer a tip from an Iraqi led to the arrest of two and the discovery of a large weapons cache. The weapons cache consisted of "four 55-gallon drums filled with weapons."

Operation Swarmer ended on the March 22 "without any casualties and with all tactical objectives" having been met. During the operation, more than 100 insurgents were detained and 24 weapons

caches discovered. The caches included:

- * Six shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles
- * Over 350 mortar rounds and three mortar systems
- * 26 artillery rounds
- * A variety of IED-making materials and other military items
- * Over 120 rockets
- * Over 3200 rounds of small-arms ammunition
- * 86 rocket-propelled grenades and 28 launchers
- * Six landmines
- * 12 hand grenades and 40 rifle grenades
- * 34 rifles and machineguns of various types

North of Balad, a joint Iraqi and U.S. operation uncovered more weapons, including four shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles: Iraqi Army and coalition forces also confiscated nine 155 mm artillery rounds, four 122 mm mortar rounds, 27 rocket-propelled grenades, eight RPG launchers, 10 - 57 mm rockets, a .50 caliber machine gun, various types of hand grenades, 50 pounds of explosives and various improvised explosive device making material. In Anbar Province, Marines have uncovered 500 weapons caches in the last six months.

In the town of Madain, 15 miles south of Baghdad, Iraqi and U.S. troops stopped an assault on a police station. More than sixty insurgents were involved in the attack using mortars, RPG's, and automatic rifles. Iraqi forces stood their ground and when it was all over 50 of the attackers were in custody.

Iraqi forces in Fallujah were just provided with armored Humvees similar to those of their Marine counterparts: Iraqi soldiers said through an interpreter, they were pleased with the delivery. They praised the "high technology" and said that with the added protection, they could "destroy the terrorists."

"We're very excited," one Iraqi soldier said. "We can't wait to go into the city of Fallujah with these cars. The terrorists will be more scared and will take more consideration before attacking."

The new humvees are more than just better protection for the Iraqis. It's also a visual reminder of their growing capabilities in the eyes of their own citizens.

"They're a status symbol," explained Capt. Jon J. Bonar, a 31-year-old from Los Angeles who serves as the senior logistics advisor to the 1st Iraqi Army Division. "All the soldiers take their picture in from [sic] of the humvees." The 9th Iraqi Army Battalion took over responsibility for another nine square miles of battlespace in northern Baghdad: "The Iraqi Army is getting better every day," said Col. James Pasqualette, commander of 1st BCT. "They are a capable security force. They impress me because they can gather intelligence from the Iraqi citizen better than we can."

"They (the Iraqi Army) are motivated and trained to take over the mission. I was really impressed," said Capt. Lou Castillo, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, STB, 1st BCT. "They are a ready and trained force." In an area of Anbar Province called "The Triad," members of the Iraqi 7th Army operated independently for the first time: Iraqi soldiers planned, rehearsed, and executed the mission entirely on their own. A Military Transition Team (MTT)--a group of Coalition servicemembers assigned to logistically assist and guide each Iraqi military unit's transition to independent operations - accompanied the Iraqi soldiers to advise them during the operation.

This operation is another example of the continuing progress Iraqi Army units are making toward eventually assuming control of areas of Iraq, independent of Coalition forces. The operation was part of Raging Bull. The Iraqi soldiers were pleased with the results: Iraqi soldiers are pleased with the

success of the independent operation.

"All the soldiers are very happy to be able to do this operation because it is our one chance to prove we can do our duty alone," said Iraqi Army Sgt. Q'ter al-Raheed, a platoon noncommissioned officer with 2nd Bn., 2nd Brigade. Iraqis now control a considerable amount of battle space in Iraq: Two divisions, 13 brigades and 49 battalions of the Iraqi army and two brigades and six battalions of the national police are responsible for their own battlespace, Dempsey said. By July, Iraqi security forces will be responsible for security along all 3,631 kilometers of Iraq's borders, he added.

Much of the battlespace the Iraqis are responsible for is in secured areas or those with small populations. Dempsey pointed out that 50 percent of Baghdad is controlled by Iraqi forces and by the end of the year, when Iraqis control 75 percent of the country, much of that will include heavily populated and dangerous areas. This week, 196 Iraqis graduated from the Baghdad Police Academy. One graduate made his resolve clear: "There is no difference between Sunni and Shia, we are all Iraqis. One thing we learned at the police academy is that we must work as one family to win against the insurgency," said a police graduate. There are now more than 241,000 trained and equipped Iraqi security forces.

Construction will begin soon on an international port in Basra: Iraq is on the verge of starting work on the construction of the Basra Grand Port, an international maritime hub linking Asia and Europe, a senior official at the transport ministry has confirmed.

"The plan foresees the construction of 100 platforms with a capacity of 400-100 million tonnes per annum, and the works, which will begin by year's end, will take four years and cost 80 billion dollars." Construction is to begin on a \$3.4 billion project to build an underground metro system in Baghdad. The project will be completed in four years.

Iraqis in four towns south of Baghdad now have clean drinking water thanks to a water delivery system built with the assistance of U.S. forces.

Iraq's economy is improving: Iraq's economy is showing signs of recovery after 30 years of dictatorship. In 2005, the Iraqi economy grew an estimated 2.6 percent in real terms, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has estimated it will grow by more than 10 percent in 2006. Under Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqis' standard of living deteriorated rapidly. In nominal terms, Iraq's per capita income had dropped from \$3,800 in 1980 (higher than Spain at the time) to \$715 in 2002 (lower than Angola). In 2005, per-capita income is estimated to have increased to over \$1,000.

USAID has provided more than \$8 million to create a microfinance industry in Iraq. Loans will range from \$250 to \$1,000 and will be provided interest free.

Opponents of our efforts in Iraq often point to Iraq's electrical grid as a sign of our failure, but the reality is that remarkable progress has been made in this area as well. Prior to the invasion, Baghdad had access to 24 hours of electricity; however, it came at the expense of the rest of the country. Today, Iraqis all over the country have, on average, 13 hours of electricity a day, and 1,492 megawatts of capacity has been added to the country's electrical grid. Iraq's electrical generation is now higher than pre-war levels: By October 2003, U.S. government efforts rehabilitated electric power capacity to produce peak capacity of 4,518 MW, greater than the pre-war level of 4,400 MW. Peak production reached 5,365 MW in August 2004 and a peak of 5,389 MW in July 2005. For an overview of the electrical, water and oil sectors see this report.

In Al Hasa, a wheelchair-bound Iraqi girl received a new wheelchair from Marines of the 5th Marine Regiment. The girl lost the ability to walk after a car accident two years ago, and her wheelchair was old and rusty, and designed for an adult. The girl's father was tremendously happy, and he thanked the Marines again and again.

Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division are helping Iraqis clean a canal near Abu Ghraib in order to improve water flow for the irrigation of their crops: "This project was not simply about cleaning canals for the residents of this area," said Capt. Edward Keel, commander, Company A, 3-6 FA. "By working with the Nahia Council and hiring local workers, we have laid the corner stone for further projects that will be developed, financed and executed by the Iraqis." Once again I would like to end the update with a couple stories showing how incredible the men and women serving in our armed forces are.

First, the story of Spc. Brian Sheetz of Connellsville, PA, who saved the lives of his buddies when he took action after a grenade landed in the tank they were riding in: According to the Herald Standard Newspaper, a few grenades were tossed into the tank Sheetz and his unit were riding in during a patrol mission in Iraq.

Sheetz tossed the grenade out before it exploded.

He sustained injuries to his hands and face after one of three tossed grenades exploded.

He has returned to regular duty. Some soldiers have lost limbs in Iraq, only to return to active duty, some actually returning to their comrades in Iraq. Take Captain David Rozelle for instance. Rozelle lost his right foot after the Humvee he was riding in hit a mine. He is now back at his post in Iraq: Rozelle's right foot was amputated, which could have allowed him to retire. Instead, he battled drug and alcohol dependency and worked to get back in the fight against insurgents.

"They made a decision on that day that I was going to get injured," he said. "But I wanted to turn it around and say, 'I can beat this.'"

Eighteen months later, Rozelle became the first officer to lose a limb and return to command in Iraq.

"I went back and I faced the demon," he said. "I overcame my fears, and I went back to war." Marine Sergeant Sean Wright lost both hands in the battle of Fallujah, and is now a martial arts instructor. He has no reservation about returning to Iraq if he is needed.

In all, 26 U.S. soldiers have returned to active duty after suffering an amputation, and ten have returned to Iraq.

Sergeant Williams of the Arkansas National Guard has been back from Iraq for one year. She is so proud of what the military is accomplishing there that he has chosen to reenlist, knowing he will have to leave his wife and one year old son when he returns to Iraq.

Here are a few factoids via the Centcom website:

- * Ninety-eight percent of Iraqi children under five have been vaccinated for polio, and Malaria cases have dropped from 1,043 to 86.
- * Iraq has six police academies, with one in Jordan, that train 3,500 police every 10 weeks.
- * During Saddam's rule, Internet access was limited and censored. Today, Iraqis are flocking to an uncensored Internet in Iraq, with over 2,000 Internet cafes serving them.
- * About 90,000 residents in the city of Abu Ghraib will receive piped drinking water from a project funded by the Commander's Emergency Response Program.

Progress in the area of education:

- * In 2003, approximately 6.1 million children were enrolled in Iraq's lower education system. Of these only about 2.96 million were expected to graduate from secondary school. Now, in 2006 nearly 25 percent of the Iraqi population either attends a school of, or is directly employed by, the Ministry of Education. With a 2006 budget of \$1.9 million (up 66 percent from 2005), the ministry oversees more than 20,000 school sessions in over 14,731 school buildings, administrative offices, and educational facilities nationwide. The MoED provides the oversight and training needed to support 500,000 teachers in their work with 6.28-6.4 million K-12 students a 3-5 percent increase from 2003.
- * In 2003 there were 14,731 kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools, most of which suffered from years of neglect by the Saddam regime, an insurgency intent on intimidating teachers and students, and the damage caused by war. Over the last three years nearly 6,000 of those schools have been renovated or undergone some form of rehabilitation.
- * In 2003, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) consisted of 22 universities, 46 institutes or colleges within the Community College system, 2 commissions and 2 research centers. Since 2003, MHESR has, in addition to continuous work on its facilities and

infrastructure that had been largely destroyed by war and looting, has been able to install nearly a dozen new colleges within its university system.

In addition, more than 2,500 schools have been rehabilitated and 45 new schools built. Educational supplies have been provided to more than 3 million Iraqi school children.

Although mostly ignored by the media, there have been major accomplishments in the reconstruction of Iraq:

* The Iraq Relief & Reconstruction Fund (\$2.5 billion) and supplemental Appropriations (\$18.4 billion) have been committed to the re-building of Iraq. As of 7 March 2006, \$18.6 billion (of which \$11.4 billion is obligated for DoD projects) has been obligated on Iraqi reconstruction.

* Since March 2003, more than 11,600 construction projects have been started. More than 9,340 projects, valued at \$9.3 billion, have been completed.

* Since March 2003 \$9.6 billion (IRRF 1 - \$2.5 billion, IRRF 2 - \$7.1 billion) has been focused on providing reliable essential services (electricity, water, transportation, telecommunications, and oil). More than 2,412 essential service projects are either completed or underway.

* Before March 2003, Iraq averaged 4,300 MW of peak electricity generation, supplying Baghdad with 12-24 hours of power a day by diverting power from the rest of Iraq, left with 4-8 hours of power, however today the average Iraqi citizen has 7 hours of electrical service in Baghdad and 10-12 hours in the rest of the country. It is expected to be 12 to 14 hours over the next year.

* Before March 2003, only 5.5 million of Iraq's 25 million citizens had access to a safe and stable water supply. Iraq's cities suffered from inadequate sewage systems, today nineteen potable water treatment facilities have been built or rehabilitated, providing a standard level of service to about 2.7 million more Iraqis. In addition eight centralized sewage treatment facilities have been rehabilitated, adding capacity to benefit 4.9 million Iraqis.

* Health care for some ethnic groups was almost nonexistent under Saddam's regime, today there are over 300 new health care facility projects across Iraq and over 270 projects underway to be completed by mid-year 2007 allowing an additional 7 million Iraqi citizens, regardless of ethnicity, geographic origin, gender, or religious affiliation, access to health care that was unavailable under the old regime.

You can read more here.

The Iraqi government, the economy, the education system, the police force, the army, the infrastructure--all of these are being rebuilt, or just plain built. For all the bad news coming out of Iraq, there's plenty of good news too, and it's important that Americans be made aware of this.

--Bill Crawford lives in San Antonio, Texas. He blogs at All Things Conservative

SADDAM HUSSEIN

Blessed July

Daily Standard

By Thomas Joscelyn

3/24

Saddam's ultra-loyal Fedayeen martyrs were ordered to carry out bombings and assassinations in London, Iran, and "self ruled areas" of Iraq in May 1999, according to a newly released Iraqi intelligence document. One such operation, codenamed "Tamooz Mubarak" or "Blessed July," was apparently intended to hunt down Iraqi dissidents and bomb other unspecified locations.

Although a copy of the original document was not released, an English translation was published on the Foreign Military Studies Office's Joint Reserve Intelligence Center website yesterday. The site cautions, "the US Government has made no determination regarding the authenticity of the documents, validity or factual accuracy of the information contained therein, or the quality of any translations, when

available." But, the document appears to be the same as one discussed by a team of military and defense analysts in Foreign Affairs magazine earlier this month.

The Fedayeen Saddam was established in the mid-1990s and its ranks were filled with recruits fanatically loyal to Saddam and his sons. Uday, Saddam's eldest son, was the group's commander throughout much of its existence. And according to the Foreign Affairs piece, it was Uday who issued the order for the "Blessed July" operations.

The document divides the "Blessed July" operations into two "branches," bombings and assassinations, and lays out specific steps for selecting and training 50 Fedayeen martyrs for these duties. The martyrs were to be admitted to a "seminar at the Intelligence School to prepare them for the required duties." Then, "after passing the final test," the martyrs were to be divided into three teams of ten (it is not clear what happens to the other 20). The first ten recruits "will work in the European field (London)," while the "second ten will be working in the Iranian field" and "the third ten will be working in the Self ruled area." Martyrs are even reminded to use "death capsules" if "captured at the European fields"-- an apparent order to commit suicide if caught.

What targets did the martyrs plan on bombing? Did the Fedayeen Saddam carry out any of these operations? If so, when and where?

The document does not say. But, interestingly, the "Blessed July" operation appears to have been conceived within a broader mandate for future attacks. The translated document refers to "your Excellency's orders" (probably a reference to Uday) in May 1999 "to start planning from now on to perform special operations (assassinations/bombings) for the centers and the traitor symbols in the fields of (London/Iran/Self ruled areas)."

The Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) was ordered to provide logistical support for these missions, including selecting targets to attack. After completing the regime's training program, the document reads, "the fedayeens will be sent as undercover passengers, each one according to his work site, for the purpose of preparations and to acquire from and coordinate with the Intelligence Apparatus." Fedayeen Saddam was also ordered to coordinate "with the Intelligence service to secure deliveries, accommodations, and target guidance."

While the document does not say what came of Uday's order, it does raise a number of additional questions concerning the IIS's and Fedayeen Saddam's activities.

What were Saddam's henchmen doing prior to the war, exactly?

With each additional release of the Iraqi intelligence documents we learn more.

--Thomas Joscelyn is an economist and writer living in New York.

Saddam's Philippines Terror Connection

Weekly Standard
By Stephen F. Hayes
3/27

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S REGIME PROVIDED FINANCIAL support to Abu Sayyaf, the al Qaeda-linked jihadist group founded by Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law in the Philippines in the late 1990s, according to documents captured in postwar Iraq. An eight-page fax dated June 6, 2001, and sent from the Iraqi ambassador in Manila to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad, provides an update on Abu Sayyaf kidnappings and indicates that the Iraqi regime was providing the group with money to purchase weapons. The Iraqi regime suspended its support--temporarily, it seems--after high-profile kidnappings, including of Americans, focused international attention on the terrorist group.

The fax comes from the vast collection of documents recovered in postwar Afghanistan and Iraq. Up to this point, those materials have been kept from the American public. Now the proverbial dam has broken. On March 16, the U.S. government posted on the web 9 documents captured in Iraq, as well as 28 al Qaeda documents that had been released in February. Earlier last week, Foreign Affairs magazine published a lengthy article based on a review of 700 Iraqi documents by analysts with the

Institute for Defense Analysis and the Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia. Plans for the release of many more documents have been announced. And if the contents of the recently released materials and other documents obtained by The Weekly Standard are any indication, the discussion of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's Iraq is about to get more interesting.

Several months ago, The Weekly Standard received a set of English-language documents from a senior U.S. government official. The official represented this material as U.S. government translations of three captured Iraqi documents. According to this source, the documents had been examined by the U.S. intelligence community and judged "consistent with authentic documents"--the professionals' way of saying that these items cannot definitively be certified but seem to be the real thing.

The Weekly Standard checked its English-language documents with officials serving elsewhere in the federal government to make sure they were consistent with the versions these officials had seen. With what one person characterized as "minor discrepancies," they are. One of the three documents has been posted in the original Arabic on the website of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. A subsequent translation of that document is nearly identical to the English-language text that we were given.

These documents add to the growing body of evidence confirming the Iraqi regime's longtime support for terrorism abroad. The first of them, a series of memos from the spring of 2001, shows that the Iraqi Intelligence Service funded Abu Sayyaf, despite the reservations of some IIS officials. The second, an internal Iraqi Intelligence memo on the relationships between the IIS and Saudi opposition groups, records that Osama bin Laden requested Iraqi cooperation on terrorism and propaganda and that in January 1997 the Iraqi regime was eager to continue its relationship with bin Laden. The third, a September 15, 2001, report from an Iraqi Intelligence source in Afghanistan, contains speculation about the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda and the likely U.S. response to it.

ON JUNE 6, 2001, the Iraqi ambassador to the Philippines sent an eight-page fax to Baghdad. Ambassador Salah Samarmad's dispatch to the Secondary Policy Directorate of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry concerned an Abu Sayyaf kidnapping a week earlier that had garnered international attention. Twenty civilians--including three Americans--had been taken from Dos Palmas Resort on Palawan Island in the southern Philippines. There had been fighting between the kidnapers and the Filipino military, Samarmad reported. Several hostages had escaped, and others were released.

"After the release of nine of the hostages, an announcement from the FBI appeared in newspapers announcing their desire to interview the escaped Filipinos in order to make a decision on the status of the three American hostages," the Iraqi ambassador wrote to his superiors in Baghdad. "The embassy stated what was mentioned above. The three American hostages were a missionary husband and wife who had lived in the Philippines for a while, Martin and Gracia Burnham, from Kansas City, and Guillermo Sobrero, from California. They are still in the hands of the Abu Sayyaf kidnapers from a total of 20 people who were kidnapped from (Dos Palmas) resort on Palawan Island." (Except where noted, parentheses, brackets, and ellipses appear in the documents quoted.)

The report notes that the Iraqis were now trying to be seen as helpful and keep a safe distance from Abu Sayyaf. "We have all cooperated in the field of intelligence information with some of our friends to encourage the tourists and the investors in the Philippines." But Samarmad's report seems to confirm that this is a change. "The kidnapers were formerly (from the previous year) receiving money and purchasing combat weapons. From now on we (IIS) are not giving them this opportunity and are not on speaking terms with them."

Samarmad's dispatch appears to be the final installment in a series of internal Iraqi regime memos from March through June 2001. (The U.S. government translated some of these documents in full and summarized others.) The memos contain a lengthy discussion among Iraqi officials--from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Iraqi Intelligence Service--about the wisdom of using a Libyan intelligence front as a way to channel Iraqi support for Abu Sayyaf without the risks of dealing directly with the group. (The Libyan regime had intervened in an Abu Sayyaf kidnapping in 2000, securing the release of several hostages by paying several million dollars in ransom. Some observers saw this as an effort by Muammar Qaddafi to improve his image; others saw it as an effort to provide support to Abu Sayyaf by paying the ransom demanded by the group. Both were probably right.)

One Iraqi memo, from the "Republican Presidency, Intelligence Apparatus" to someone identified only as D4/4, makes the case for supporting the work of the Qaddafi Charity Establishment to help Abu

Sayyaf. The memo is dated March 18, 2001.

1. There are connections between the Qaddafi Charity Establishment and the Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines; meanwhile, this establishment is providing material support to them. 2. This establishment is one of the Libyan Intelligence fronts. 3. The Tripoli post has indicated that there is a possibility to form what connections are available with this establishment as it can offer the premise of providing food supplies to [Ed: word missing] in the scope of the agreement statement. Please review . . . it appears of intelligence value to proceed into connections with this establishment and its intelligence investments in the Abu Sayyaf group.

The short response, two days later:

Mr. Dept. 3:

Study this idea, the pros and the cons, the relative reactions, and any other remarks regarding this.

That exchange above was fully translated by U.S. government translators. The two pages of correspondence that follow it in the Iraqi files were not, but a summary of those pages informs readers that the Iraqi response "discourages the supporting of connections with the Abu Sayyaf group, as the group works against the Philippine government and relies on several methods for material gain, such as kidnapping foreigners, demanding ransoms, as well as being accused by the Philippine government of terrorist acts and drug smuggling."

These accusations were, of course, well founded. On June 12, 2001, six days after Samarmad's dispatch, authorities found the beheaded body of Guillermo Sobrero near the Abu Sayyaf camp. Martin Burnham was killed a year later during the rescue attempt that freed his wife.

A thorough understanding of the relationship between Iraq and Abu Sayyaf (the name, honoring Afghan jihadi Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, means "Father of the Sword") will not come from an analysis of three months' correspondence between Manila and Baghdad in 2001. While it is certainly significant to read in internal Iraqi documents that the regime was at one time funding Abu Sayyaf, we do not now have a complete picture of that relationship. Why did the Iraqis begin funding Abu Sayyaf, which had long been considered a regional terrorist group concerned mainly with making money? Why did they suspend their support in 2001? And why did the Iraqis resume this relationship and, according to the congressional testimony of one State Department regional specialist, intensify it?

ON MARCH 26, 2003, as war raged in Iraq, the State Department's Matthew Daley testified before Congress. Daley, the deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, told a subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee that he was worried about Abu Sayyaf.

"We're concerned that they have what I would call operational links to Iraqi intelligence services. And they're a danger, they're an enemy of the Philippines, they're an enemy of the United States, and we want very much to help the government in Manila deal with this challenge," Daley told the panel. Responding to a question, Daley elaborated. "There is good reason to believe that a member of the Abu Sayyaf Group who has been involved in terrorist activities was in direct contact with an IIS officer in the Iraqi Embassy in Manila. This individual was subsequently expelled from the Philippines for engaging in activities that were incompatible with his diplomatic status."

This individual was Hisham Hussein, the second secretary of the Iraqi Embassy in Manila. And Daley was right to be concerned.

Eighteen months before his testimony, a young Filipino man rode his Honda motorcycle up a dusty road to a shanty strip mall just outside Camp Enrile Malagutay in Zamboanga City, Philippines. The camp was host to American troops stationed in the south of the country to train with Filipino soldiers fighting terrorists. The man parked his bike and began to examine its gas tank. Seconds later, the tank exploded, sending nails in all directions and killing the rider almost instantly.

The blast damaged six nearby stores and ripped the front off of a café that doubled as a karaoke bar. The café was popular with American soldiers. And on this day, October 2, 2002, SFC Mark Wayne Jackson was killed there and a fellow soldier was severely wounded. Eyewitnesses almost immediately identified the bomber as an Abu Sayyaf terrorist.

One week before the attack, Abu Sayyaf leaders had promised a campaign of terror directed at the

"enemies of Islam"--Westerners and the non-Muslim Filipino majority. And one week after the attack, Abu Sayyaf attempted to strike again, this time with a bomb placed on the playground of the San Roque Elementary School. It did not detonate. Authorities recovered the cell phone that was to have set it off and analyzed incoming and outgoing calls.

As they might have expected, they discovered several calls to and from Abu Sayyaf leaders. But another call got their attention. Seventeen hours after the attack that took the life of SFC Jackson, the cell phone was used to place a call to the second secretary of the Iraqi embassy in Manila, Hisham Hussein. It was not Hussein's only contact with Abu Sayyaf.

"He was surveilled, and we found out he was in contact with Abu Sayyaf and also pro-Iraqi demonstrators," says a Philippine government source, who continued, "[Philippine intelligence] was able to monitor their cell phone calls. [Abu Sayyaf leaders] called him right after the bombing. They were always talking."

An analysis of Iraqi embassy phone records by Philippine authorities showed that Hussein had been in regular contact with Abu Sayyaf leaders both before and after the attack that killed SFC Jackson. Andrea Domingo, immigration commissioner for the Philippines, said Hussein ran an "established network" of terrorists in the country. Hussein had also met with members of the New People's Army, a Communist opposition group on the State Department's list of foreign terrorist groups, in his office at the embassy. According to a Philippine government official, the Philippine National Police uncovered documents in a New People's Army compound that indicate the Iraqi embassy had provided funding for the group. Hisham Hussein and two other Iraqi embassy employees were ordered out of the Philippines on February 14, 2003.

Interestingly, an Abu Sayyaf leader named Hamsiraji Sali at least twice publicly boasted that his group received funding from Iraq. For instance, on March 2, 2003, he told the Philippine Daily Inquirer that the Iraqi regime had provided the terrorist group with 1million pesos--about \$20,000--each year since 2000.

ANOTHER ITEM from the Iraq-Philippines files is a "security report" prepared by the Iraqi embassy's third secretary, Ahmad Mahmud Ghalib, and sent to Baghdad by Ambassador Samarmad. The report provides a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the Iraqi Intelligence operation in the Philippines. A cover memo from the ambassador, dated April 12, 2001, gives an overview: "The report contain[s] a variety of issues including intelligence issues and how the Philippines, American and Zionist intelligence operate in the Philippines, especially the movements of the American intelligence in their efforts to fight terrorism and recruiting a variety of nationalities, particularly Arabs."

Ghalib's report is a rambling account of a phone conversation he had with an Iraqi intelligence informer named Muhammad al-Zanki, an Iraqi citizen living in the Philippines, who is referred to throughout the document as Abu Ahmad. The embassy official is looking for information on a third person, an informer named Omar Ghazal, and believes that Abu Ahmad might have some. (To review: Salah Samarmad is the Iraqi ambassador; Ahmad Mahmud Ghalib is the embassy's third secretary, most likely an Iraqi intelligence officer and author of the "security report"; Abu Ahmad is an Iraqi intelligence informer; and Omar Ghazal is another Iraqi intelligence informer.)

As the conversation begins, Abu Ahmad tells his embassy contact that he doesn't know where Omar Ghazal is and would have told the embassy if he did. He then tells the embassy contact that when he called Omar Ghazal's aunt to check on his whereabouts, she used a word in Tagalog--walana--which means "not here." But Abu Ahmad says its connotations are not good. "That word is used when you target one of the personnel who are assigned to complete everything (full mission). Then they announce that he is traveling and so on, and that's what I'm afraid of." The Iraqi embassy contact asks him to elaborate. "I have been exposed to that same phrase before, when I asked about an individual, and later on I found out that he was physically eliminated and no one knows anything about him."

The embassy official assures Abu Ahmad that Iraqi intelligence has also lost track of Ghazal, and became alarmed when he abruptly stopped attending soccer practice at a local college. Abu Ahmad fears the worst. "I'm afraid they might have killed him and I'm very worried about him," he says, according to the report. "The method that those people use is terrible and that's why I refuse to work with them."

The Iraqi embassy official interrupts Abu Ahmad. "Who are they? I would like to know who they are."

"Didn't I tell you before who they are?"

"No."

"The office group," says Abu Ahmad.

"Which office?" asks his Iraqi embassy handler.

"A long time ago the American FBI opened up an office in the Philippines, under American supervision and that there are Philippine Intelligence groups that work there. The goal of the office is to fight international terrorism (in the Philippines of course) and they have employees from various nationalities that speak of peace and international terrorism and how important it is to put an end to terrorism. The office also has other espionage affairs involving Arab citizens to work with them in order to provide them with information on the Arabs who are living in the Philippines and also for other spying purposes."

Abu Ahmad continues: "They also monitor diplomacy, and after I tried to lessen my amount of office work, I became aware that the office group was trying to get in contact with the person who is in charge of temporary work, Malik al-Athir, when he was alone."

Abu Ahmad tells his Iraqi embassy contact, Ghalib, that "the office" was trying to recruit an Arab to monitor Arab citizens in the Philippines. The Iraqi embassy contact suggests that Abu Ahmad volunteer for the job. Abu Ahmad says he had other plans. "I am leaving after I finish selling my house and properties and will move to Peshawar [Pakistan]. There I will be supplied with materials, weapons, explosives, and get married and then move to America. Do you know that there are more than one thousand Iraqi extremists who perform heroism jobs?" The speaker presumably means martyrdom operations.

The Iraqi embassy contact asks Abu Ahmad how he knows that those people are not "Saudis, Kuwaitis, Iranians."

Abu Ahmad replies: "They are bin Laden's people and all of them are extremists and they are heroes. Do you want me to give you their names?"

"Why not? Yes, I want them," says the Iraqi embassy contact.

"I will supply you with the names very soon. I will write some for you because I am in touch with them," says Abu Ahmad.

This report raises more questions than it answers. Who is Omar Ghazal and why did he disappear? What is the "office group" and how is it connected to Americans? What happened to Abu Ahmad? Were his stated plans--moving to Peshawar to obtain weapons and explosives and then moving to the United States--just bluster to impress his Iraqi embassy handler? A way to discontinue his work for the Iraqi regime? Or was he serious? Is he here now?

A SECOND internal Iraqi file obtained by The Weekly Standard concerns relations between Iraqi Intelligence and Saudi opposition groups. The document was apparently compiled at some point after January 1997, judging by the most recent date in the text, and discusses four Saudi opposition groups: the Committee for Defense of Legitimate Rights, the Reform and Advice Committee (Osama bin Laden), People of al Jazeera Union Organization, and the Saudi Hezbollah.

The New York Times first reported on the existence of this file on June 25, 2004. "American officials described the document as an internal report by the Iraqi intelligence service detailing efforts to seek cooperation with several Saudi opposition groups, including Mr. bin Laden's organization, before al Qaeda had become a full-fledged terrorist organization." According to the Times, a Pentagon task force "concluded that the document 'appeared authentic,' and that it 'corroborates and expands on previous reporting' about contacts between Iraqi intelligence and Mr. bin Laden in Sudan, according to the task force's analysis."

The most provocative aspect of the document is the discussion of efforts to seek cooperation between Iraqi Intelligence and the Saudi opposition group run by bin Laden, known to the Iraqis as the "Reform

and Advice Committee." The translation of that section appears below.

We moved towards the committee by doing the following:

A. During the visit of the Sudanese Dr. Ibrahim al-Sanusi to Iraq and his meeting with Mr. Uday Saddam Hussein, on December 13, 1994, in the presence of the respectable, Mr. Director of the Intelligence Service, he [Dr. al-Sanusi] pointed out that the opposing Osama bin Laden, residing in Sudan, is reserved and afraid to be depicted by his enemies as an agent of Iraq. We prepared to meet him in Sudan (The Honorable Presidency was informed of the results of the meeting in our letter 782 on December 17, 1994).

B. An approval to meet with opposer Osama bin Laden by the Intelligence Services was given by the Honorable Presidency in its letter 138, dated January 11, 1995 (attachment 6). He [bin Laden] was met by the previous general director of M4 in Sudan and in the presence of the Sudanese, Ibrahim al-Sanusi, on February 19, 1995. We discussed with him his organization. He requested the broadcast of the speeches of Sheikh Sulayman al-Uda (who has influence within Saudi Arabia and outside due to being a well known religious and influential personality) and to designate a program for them through the broadcast directed inside Iraq, and to perform joint operations against the foreign forces in the land of Hijaz. (The Honorable Presidency was informed of the details of the meeting in our letter 370 on March 4, 1995, attachment 7.)

C. The approval was received from the Leader, Mr. President, may God keep him, to designate a program for them through the directed broadcast. We were left to develop the relationship and the cooperation between the two sides to see what other doors of cooperation and agreement open up. The Sudanese side was informed of the Honorable Presidency's agreement above, through the representative of the Respectable Director of Intelligence Services, our Ambassador in Khartoum.

D. Due to the recent situation of Sudan and being accused of supporting and embracing of terrorism, an agreement with the opposing Saudi Osama bin Laden was reached. The agreement required him to leave Sudan to another area. He left Khartoum in July 1996. The information we have indicates that he is currently in Afghanistan. The relationship with him is ongoing through the Sudanese side. Currently we are working to invigorate this relationship through a new channel in light of his present location.

(It should be noted that the documents given to The Weekly Standard did not include the attachments, letters to and from Saddam Hussein about the status of the Iraq-al Qaeda relationship. And the last sentence differs slightly from the version provided to the New York Times. In the Weekly Standard document, Iraq is seeking to "invigorate" its relationship with al Qaeda; in the Times translation, Iraq is seeking to "continue" that relationship.)

Another passage of the Iraq-Saudi opposition memo details the relationship between the Iraqi regime and the Committee for Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), founded by Dr. Muhammad Abdallah al-Massari. Once again, Dr. Ibrahim al-Sanusi, the senior Sudanese government official, was a key liaison between the two sides. Al-Massari is widely regarded as an ideological mouthpiece for al Qaeda, a designation he does little to dispute. His radio station broadcasts al Qaeda propaganda, and his website features the rantings of prominent jihadists. He has lived in London for more than a decade. The Iraqi Intelligence memo recounts two meetings involving Dr. al-Sanusi and CDLR representatives in 1994 and reports that al-Massari requested assistance from the Iraqi regime for a trip to Iraq.

In 1995, the Iraqis turned to another Saudi to facilitate their relationship with al-Massari. According to the Iraqi memo, Ahmad Khudir al-Zahrani was a diplomat at the Saudi embassy in Washington who applied for political asylum in the United States. His application was denied, and al-Zahrani contacted the Iraqi embassy in London, seeking asylum in Iraq. His timing was good. Al-Zahrani's request came just as Iraqis were stepping up efforts to establish better relations with the Saudi opposition. According to the Iraqi Intelligence memo:

A complete plan was put in place to bring the aforementioned [al-Zahrani] to Iraq in coordination with the Foreign Ministry and our [intelligence] station in Khartoum [Sudan]. He and his family were issued Iraqi passports with pseudonyms by our embassy in Khartoum. He arrived to Iraq on April 21, 1995, and multiple meetings were held with him to obtain information about the Saudi opposition.

These contacts were not, contrary to the speculation of some Middle East experts, simply an effort to keep tabs on an enemy. The memo continues, summarizing Iraqi Intelligence activities:

We are in the process of following up on the subject, to try and establish a nucleus of Saudi opposition in Iraq, and use our relationship with [al-Massari] to serve our intelligence goals.

The final document provided to The Weekly Standard is a translation of a memo from the "Republican Command, Intelligence Division," dated September 15, 2001. It is addressed to "Mr. M.A.M.5."

Our Afghani source number 11002 (his biographic information in attachment #1) has provided us information that the Afghani consul Ahmed Dahestani (his biographic information attachment #2) has talked in front of him about the following:

1. That Osama bin Laden and the Taliban group in Afghanistan are in communication with Iraq and that previously a group of Taliban and Osama bin Laden have visited Iraq.
2. That America has evidence that the Iraqi government and the group of Osama bin Laden have cooperated to attack targets inside America.
3. In the event that it has been proven that the group of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban planning such operations, it is possible that America will attack Iraq and Afghanistan.
4. That the Afghani consul heard of the relation between Iraq and the group of Osama bin Laden while he was in Iran.
5. In the light of what has been presented, we suggest to write to the committee of information.

This document is speculative in parts, and the information it contains is third-hand at best. Its value depends on the credibility of "source number 11002" and of Ahmed Dahestani and of the sources Dahestani relied on, all of which are unknown.

We are left, then, with three small pieces to add to a large and elaborate puzzle. We will never have a complete picture of the Iraqi regime's support for global terrorism, but the coming release of a flood of captured documents should get us closer.

A new and highly illuminating article in Foreign Affairs draws on hundreds of Iraqi documents to provide a look at the Iraq war from the Iraqi perspective. The picture that emerges is that of an Iraqi regime built on a foundation of paranoia and lies and eager to attack its perceived enemies, internal and external. This paragraph is notable:

The Saddam Fedayeen also took part in the regime's domestic terrorism operations and planned for attacks throughout Europe and the Middle East. In a document dated May 1999, Saddam's older son, Uday, ordered preparations for "special operations, assassinations, and bombings, for the centers and traitor symbols in London, Iran and the self-ruled areas [Kurdistan]." Preparations for "Blessed July," a regime-directed wave of "martyrdom" operations against targets in the West, were well under way at the time of the coalition invasion.

Think about that last sentence.

--Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard

Something New . . .

Daily Standard
By Stephen F. Hayes
3/27

SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE on Sunday contradicted claims from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that documents captured in postwar Iraq and now being posted on the Internet will not contain anything new or significant.

"We're going to find some important and surprising things in these documents," Rice said in an appearance on NBC's Meet the Press.

Rice also addressed revelations, important but not surprising, that former Russian ambassador to Iraq, Vladimir Teterenko, passed the U.S. war plan to Iraq shortly before the war began. The charges, based largely on two Iraqi documents captured in postwar Iraq, came in a report issued by the Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia, and released by the Pentagon late last week. Rice said she is not in a position to confirm or deny the claims but vowed to take "a hard look at the reports" of Russian betrayal.

The revelations about the Russians will be the subject of discussions this week between Bush

administration officials and their Russian counterparts. "We will certainly raise it with the Russians," Rice said.

The Russian government has already denied the charges. "Similar, baseless accusations concerning Russia's intelligence have been made more than once," Russian Foreign Intelligence Service spokesman Boris Labusov said. "We don't consider it necessary to comment on such fabrications."

But Labusov has not always found such allegations baseless. In 2003 Labusov confirmed reports, based on captured Iraqi documents, that the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service was training Iraqi Intelligence operatives as late as September 2002. This is how the San Francisco Chronicle, which broke the story on April 13, 2003, reported the findings:

A Moscow-based organization was training Iraqi intelligence agents as recently as last September--at the same time Russia was resisting the Bush administration's push for a tough stand against Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqi documents discovered by The Chronicle show.

The documents found Thursday and Friday in a Baghdad office of the Mukhabarat, the Iraqi secret police, indicate that at least five agents graduated Sept. 15 from a two-week course in surveillance and eavesdropping techniques, according to certificates issued to the Iraqi agents by the "Special Training Center" in Moscow.

The "Moscow-based organization," it turns out, was the SVR, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service:

Russian intelligence officials have confirmed that Iraqi spies received training in specialized counterintelligence techniques in Moscow last fall--training that appears to violate the United Nations resolution barring military and security assistance to Iraq.

A spokesman for the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Boris Labusov, acknowledged that Iraqi secret police agents had been trained by his agency but said the training was for nonmilitary purposes, such as fighting crime and terrorism.

Said Labusov: "The SVR does not refuse cooperation with secret services of different countries in the areas of counter-terrorism and war, fighting drug traffic and investigating the illegal trade of weapons." The Chronicle article continues:

However, it seems likely that the Iraqi agents who were trained at the Moscow center were using their skills for other purposes. Found in the same Mukhabarat office with their personnel files and graduation certificates were a host of other documents, including orders for wiretaps and for break-ins at such sites as the Iranian Embassy, the five-star al-Mansour Hotel and private doctors' offices.

Rice on Sunday missed an opportunity to highlight two other significant revelations from captured Iraqi documents. The "Iraqi Perspectives Project" study, which ignited the public discussion of Russia and Iraq, also reveals that beginning in 1998 Saddam Hussein's intelligence services began training "non-Iraqi Arab volunteers" at camps in Iraq.

Another captured document details the plan of the Iraqi Intelligence Service to invigorate its relations with Saudi opposition groups, including one headed by Osama bin Laden. According to that document, which a Pentagon task force determined "appears authentic," bin Laden requested assistance from the Iraqi regime on its anti-Saudi propaganda efforts and with attacks on U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. The documents indicate that Iraq agreed to rebroadcast al Qaeda propaganda and left open the possibility of working with al Qaeda on attacks.

--Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard

AFGHANISTAN

Sharia Calling

National Review
By Nina Shea

Abdul Rahman, a 41-year-old Christian convert now on trial for apostasy in Afghanistan, may be beheaded for his faith, but President Karzai shouldn't order the sharpening of the executioner's sword just yet.

Over last weekend, word spread here about the case.

Apparently, in a dispute over the custody of his two daughters, Rahman was outed as a Christian convert and arrested. At his one-day trial last Thursday, the judge explained that under article 130 of Afghanistan's new constitution, medieval sharia laws against apostasy applied. The prosecutor told the press that he offered to drop charges if the defendant converted back to Islam, but Rahman refused, saying that he is a Christian and will always remain one. According to press accounts, the prosecutor called Rahman a "microbe" who "should be killed." The judge said he would consider the case for a few weeks but affirmed that if he rendered a determination of apostasy, the punishment would be death.

Evangelical networks began to mobilize and by Monday afternoon an American grassroots campaign to rescue Rahman was in full swing. Christian radio talk shows and websites excoriated the administration. Is this what we "liberated" Afghanistan for? the Family Research Council and others were demanding to know. The mainstream press reported news about the case as well.

The State Department, however, didn't seem to notice the significance of the case--either with respect to what it said about the character of the Afghan government or its impact on domestic politics. At a press conference on Tuesday, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns was asked about the U.S. response to the case. He answered something garbled about process, about needing to "respect the sovereignty of Afghan authorities," hoping for a "transparent" trial, and, under follow-up questioning, seemed to be making a distinction between Afghan values and the "American point of view" in favor of religious freedom. His annoyance with the persistent line of questioning was his only betrayal of emotion in discussing the case. If Mr. Rahman met up with the sword of sharia, well, it was regrettable, but the democratization project was proceeding apace if the trial was transparent, and the rule of law followed. Whether "self-evident" freedoms were guaranteed or not was simply not a concern.

Burns's response was very familiar to those of us who had been pressing for an unambiguous assertion of individual freedoms and rights over the past three years during the drafting of Afghanistan's and Iraq's constitution. It was this same exclusive focus on process over values--the same impatient shrug of the shoulders--that was given by key officials in the administration whenever the drafts were criticized for containing provisions that ushered in sharia or otherwise negated or clouded individual rights. (For example, the so-called "repugnancy clause," found in both the Afghanistan and Iraq constitutions, which asserts that no law can contradict Islam.) At that time, our criticism found no echo. In fact, it was drowned out with near universal acclaim from law professors involved in the drafting and from the media. The New York Times editorial page on January 6, 2004, called the new Afghanistan constitution "one of the most enlightened constitutions in the Islamic world" and applauded it on the basis that it "balances the goal of an Islamic state with the promise to abide by the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

This time it's not just lawyers debating abstract constitutional provisions. The Burns press conference quickly circulated on the web. By late that afternoon, Chuck Colson had organized a call-in to jam the White House switchboards. Colson bluntly expressed what many of the president's religious base was thinking: I have supported the Bush administration's foreign policy because I came to believe that the best way to stop Islamo-fascism was by promoting democracy. But if we can't guarantee fundamental religious freedoms in the countries where we establish democratic reforms, then the whole credibility of our foreign policy is thrown into serious question. I hope the president and the administration can recognize what a devastating setback Rahman's execution would be to the cause of democracy and freedom.

By Wednesday, President Bush had received the message. In a public statement, he spoke to values and was unequivocal about where he stood: "It is deeply troubling that a country we helped liberate would hold a person to account because they chose a particular religion over another."

Rahman is not the only case where execution has been threatened over beliefs and ideas in the new Afghanistan. Last year, an Afghan journalist who argued against the heresy law was found guilty of it,

and escaped death after international pressure. Before then, a female cabinet member was charged with blasphemy for criticizing Islamic law, but was also spared after international protest erupted. Other journalists were imprisoned for blasphemy after debating the compatibility of sharia law with democracy, but then quietly allowed to leave the country. It is even reported that other Christian converts are in prison there but not much is known about them.

The administration needs to rescue Rahman as he is determined not to be found "innocent" as Undersecretary Burns had hoped.

But this is about more than Mr. Rahman. This will be a persistent, recurring problem under Afghanistan's sharia apostasy and blasphemy laws. The administration also needs to do more to ensure the reform Afghanistan's judiciary. President Karzai must be encouraged to wrest it from the control of Islamists like Supreme Court Chief Justice Fazl Hadi Shinwari, who once told our National Public Radio that it is his duty as a judge to "behead" those who do not conform to Islamic law. Americans continue to give billions of dollars, and sacrifice their lives to support the Afghan government. It not only serves compelling humanitarian interests to use this leverage now, but it would be a betrayal of America's deepest national values not to.

--Nina Shea is the director of Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom

WAR ON TERRORISM

Jihad TV

Daily Standard
By Dan Darling
3/24

ACCORDING TO A NEWLY-RELEASED DOCUMENT from the former Iraqi regime, during a February 1995 meeting with members of Iraqi intelligence in Sudan, one of bin Laden's first requests was for "the broadcasting of Sheikh Salman al-Ouda [who has influence both in Saudi Arabia and outside as a religious personality] and dedicate a program for them through the station directed inside the country." While bin Laden's desire to see a radical Saudi cleric broadcast on Iraqi TV has been known since the New York Times first reported on the existence of this document in the summer of 2004, the identity of that cleric has not been revealed until now.

Salman al-Ouda, like his better-known colleague Sheikh Safar al-Hawali, has long been known as a leading figure in the world of Islamic extremism. During the Gulf War, the two men were jailed in Saudi Arabia for criticizing the government and calling for an end to the U.S. military presence in the Kingdom. They were released after five years and today, their worldviews seem largely unchanged. In the case of al-Ouda, a growing pattern of evidence seems to indicate that he has continued to support violence against the United States and its allies since his release.

While al-Ouda has long been characterized as a "friend" of Osama bin Laden, federal investigators told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer in March 2003 that he and al-Hawali "have direct contact" with Osama bin Laden. In a number of al Qaeda propaganda videos, bin Laden has praised al-Ouda for "enlightening" the Muslim youth as well as for his support of jihadi causes.

In April 2003 following the invasion of Iraq, al-Ouda joined a group of 225 Islamist clerics, scholars, and businessmen--led by al-Hawali--in establishing a new organization that respected Israeli academic Dr. Reuven Paz described as nothing less than "the Supreme Council of Global Jihad."

(It is perhaps worth noting that one of the members of this Supreme Council was Ahmad Abu Laban, one of the chief architects in internationalizing the controversy over the Danish Mohammad cartoons. Other members of the Supreme Council included several Iraq Shiite clerics, defying the conventional wisdom about non-cooperation between Shiites and Sunnis. Paz also noted that two Arab Americans were members: "Dr. Ahmad Sharbinia lecturer in the American Open University in Colorado, of Egyptian origin, and Sheikh Walid Manisi, the Imam of the mosque in that university.")

There is evidence connecting al-Ouda to one of the suspected masterminds of the 2004 Madrid train bombings. In September 2004, El Mundo and Corriere della Sera reported that Rabei Osman Ahmed, a

former Egyptian army explosives expert and one of the purported masterminds of the bombings, was quoted in conversations wiretapped by Italian authorities as saying that al-Ouda was "Everything, everything" to him and that "I worked for him [al-Ouda] in Spain. I did really well in that period, in which I earned 2,000 euros (\$2,400) a month. There were days I earned 1,000 euros (\$1,200)." While whether or not any of the money that al-Ouda sent Ahmed was used to underwrite the Madrid bombings appears unclear at this point, it would seem worthy of further investigation given his other activities.

While al-Ouda joined other Saudi Islamist clerics in condemning attacks in Saudi Arabia in June 2004 (under pressure for the Saudi authorities), such condemnations did not extend to terrorist attacks in Iraq. In November 2004, al-Ouda and 25 other Saudi Islamist scholars called on Iraqis to support the insurgency, issuing a letter which stated "Fighting the occupiers is a duty for all those who are able. It is a jihad to push back the assailants . . . A Muslim must not inflict harm on any resistance man or inform about them. Instead, they should be supported and protected."

Interestingly, in March 2005 al-Ouda's lawyer filed a defamation suit against the Saudi newspaper al-Watan, which had reported that al-Ouda's son, Muaz, had planned to travel to Iraq to fight the United States, but that his father, fearing he would be killed, contacted Assistant Interior Minister for Security Affairs Muhammad ibn Naif and arranged for him to be captured on the Saudi-Iraqi border.

This thumbnail sketch makes it clear that Sheikh Salman al-Ouda is not simply a cleric, but a key part of the Islamist brain trust. Discussions of his sermons being broadcast on Iraqi state TV should be viewed within that context.

--Dan Darling is counterterrorism consultant for a Manhattan Institute Center for Policing Terrorism

Revising The Old Plan

U.S. News & World Report

By Linda Robinson and Kenneth T. Walsh

3/27

The Bush administration released a key document last week, following on the signing of a classified directive that gives new orders to government agencies about their roles in the war on terrorism. As a result, the National Counterterrorism Center must now produce a National Implementation Plan in the next 90 days. The NCTC, created by Congress after the 9/11 attacks, has already compiled a database of some 200,000 suspected terrorists or terrorist facilitators. Last week, the deputy director of the center, Kevin Brock, said that law enforcement in the United States is turning up about 60 "hits" a day from that list.

The new version of the administration's national security strategy was unveiled by senior White House adviser Stephen Hadley. In a change from the September 2002 version, which said that neither religion nor ideology was the enemy, the new document describes the terrorist threat as a "murderous ideology" that will require both military forces and a "battle of ideas" to defeat. New emphasis is also placed on relying on other countries to help fight the war on terrorism and spread democracy. Iran, believed to be developing a nuclear weapons capability, came in for a veiled warning. Diplomacy to dissuade the regime in Tehran "must succeed," the 49-page document states, "if confrontation is to be avoided." The White House wants to keep Tehran guessing about President Bush's intentions, but there was little confusion about his policy of pre-emption--striking at America's adversaries before they strike first. Bush is still all for it.

Interagency conflicts. The National Security Presidential Directive gives new marching orders to each agency for its role in the war on terrorism. That classified document is colabeled National Security Presidential Directive 46 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 15, since it also directs domestic agencies on their responsibilities. A major goal of the new NSPD is to resolve discrepancies among previous presidential directives and chronic conflicts among agencies with overlapping responsibilities: The State and Defense departments have wrangled over jurisdiction for the war on terrorism in countries where the United States is not at war, and the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security have had similar turf disputes at home. The Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon have both claimed roles in intelligence collection abroad.

Now it falls to the National Counterterrorism Center to make sure each entity does what it has been ordered to do. Congress created the NCTC and gave it two mandates: to fuse the intelligence from all the disparate U.S. intelligence and law enforcement entities and conduct "strategic operational planning" across all those agencies to ensure there is a common plan implemented at home and abroad.

Among other things, the NCTC maintains a database of "people we want to know about because we believe they are linked to terrorism," Brock, the NCTC's deputy director, explained. The database has 325,000 names on it, including aliases; Brock estimates the names represent as many as 200,000 individuals. The database is being provided to local police, and Brock says they are responding: "We are getting about 120 hits a day, and about half of them are real."

Curse of the Militias

National Review

By David Pryce-Jones

3/27

Iraq is teetering on the brink of civil war, or so the watching world believes and bemoans. Just one more major atrocity, and it'll be worse than Lebanon in the 1980s, the fragile regime will collapse and the country will break apart, the Turks and the Iranians will move in, and here comes another war in the Middle East.

It's instructive to compare and contrast Lebanon and Iraq. Civil war has always been latent in both countries, exploding regularly into bloodshed -- and for very clear reasons. Molded out of outlying provinces of the Ottoman Empire, neither Lebanon nor Iraq has ever had a national identity, or anything that might pass for it. Both were agglomerations of peoples with separate ethnic, communal, and religious identities, altogether a joy to students of ethnography and theology: Maronites and Druze and Arabs in Lebanon, Kurds and Chaldeans and Turkmen and Arabs in Iraq, to name but some. In these Middle East versions of the Balkans, territory and boundaries are flexible concepts, and citizenship nonexistent. The human and social cement for one and all lies in the family, the tribe, the sect, or religious confession, not in statehood or nationhood. Allegiance to those of one's own kind is what counts.

Competition between component groups for the best place in the sun promotes injustice and violence. Shiite Arabs have long stood out as conspicuous losers. A majority in Iraq and probably in Lebanon too, they have been denied the power due their numbers. In the eyes of Sunnis, moreover, Shiites are not true believers but heretics, who therefore deserve a destiny as second-class people. A popular saying expresses the Shiite sense of historic oppression: "Taxes and death are for the Shiites while official jobs are for the Sunnis."

An early sign of the upheavals ahead came in 1860, when the Ottoman Turks proved too weak to prevent communal massacres in their Lebanese provinces. Acting in the spirit of that age, the Western powers intervened to put a stop to this proto-genocide. To govern the country, they then promulgated an Organic Statute. This set up a restricted council of a dozen or so men with authority to speak on behalf of their own kind -- a sort of trial-and-error proportional representation. This skillful example of colonial fixing survived until Lebanon acquired its independence after the Second World War. Continuous attempts by every community and minority to manipulate the trial-and-error proportional representation in their favor have subsequently perpetuated Lebanon as an arena of imminent or actual civil war. Statehood and nationhood are still more notional than real.

Occupying Iraq in the First War, the British faced the same communal free-for-all. Still at the expense of the Shiites, they resorted to sleight of hand to put the Sunnis into power, and they then cut and run, just as some want the United States to do today. For decades, extreme violence on the part of the Sunnis kept the lid on civil war while guaranteeing that it would erupt whenever it could. So Iraq too has remained only an approximate nation and state.

Almost exactly a hundred years after the first Western intervention, the United States sent troops into Lebanon, once more to check civil war (with the added incentive to counter what looked at the time like the growing Soviet hold on the Middle East). However, the spirit of the modern age was very different. In the interim, people everywhere had acquired the sovereign right to do as much harm to

themselves as they pleased. This time there was nobody willing or able to devise and decree an up-to-date Organic Statute that would have laid the base for a successful state and nation.

Instead the leaders of the various communities and minorities armed militias in order to protect and advance their own kind. The Kataeb or Phalangists, Tigers, Murabitun, the Jumblatt Druze, Amal, the several Palestinian factions and eventually the Israeli army, were a joy to political scientists. For the best part of two decades, these multiple armed forces condemned the country to a hellish merry-go-round of improvised alliances and mutual betrayals that left the definition of the nation and state as fluid as ever. Invading and occupying the country, Syria did not end the inter-communal causes of the fighting but drove them underground to fester.

Among the militias, Amal fought for the Shiites, and it was something of a portent. Amal was the creation of the charismatic imam Musa al-Sadr, born in Iran into a famous family of clerics (and a relation by marriage to Ayatollah Khomeini), but settling in Lebanon. As sectarian fighting spread, he recruited and armed the Shiites to join in the alliances and betrayals all around them, so that the downtrodden became a force equivalent or superior to others. As in a lurid crime novel, one day the imam disappeared without trace in Libya, and his murder has never been solved.

Another Iranian, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, began as an Amal ideologue, but he moved on to become leader of Hezbollah, yet another Shiite militia in Lebanon, openly financed, armed, and controlled by the ayatollahs in Tehran. From the outset, Hezbollah has been a byword for terrorism, graduating from kidnapping and beheading of hostages to wiring cars with bombs to kill particular targets and any bystanders caught in the blast. Its innovative specialty has been suicide bombers, and it has popularized the now widespread notion that these bombers kill themselves because they prefer death to life. Hezbollah or its agents killed 243 American Marines in Beirut, and boasts that it has driven Israel back and knows how to drive it back still farther.

More than useful tools, these militias have been part and parcel of the handiwork of Ayatollah Khomeini. For him and his heirs, Islam, and Islam alone, is all that every Muslim needs by way of a state and a nation. Iranian in origin though it is, his brand of Shiite triumphalism affects Muslims everywhere, and the wider world too. Nothing like it has been seen in centuries.

What are Sunnis to do? Saddam Hussein went in for the traditional response, invading Iran, and depicting the subsequent campaigns and battles in terms borrowed from the 7th century when the divide between Sunnis and Shiites first became an issue of doctrine. His defeat and downfall devolves Sunni leadership to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis have no capacity for fighting and probably are unable to put effective military units into the field, and financing preachers and practitioners of their extremist form of Sunni Islam is no substitute.

The terrorist Abu Musab Zarqawi and Saddamite diehards believe themselves to be defending the identity of Sunnis, their community. Zarqawi openly despises Shiites as heretics, and boasts of how many he will kill. The Shiite Badr brigade, or the cleric Moqtada al-Sadr with his Mahdi militia, are indistinguishable in tactics and practice. The demolition of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, the wretched handcuffed and tortured corpses laid out on the mortuary curb, the random suicide bombs, are not so much signs of civil war as inter-communal tests of strength. The brutality, the cruelty, serves the exemplary purpose of showing that whoever stands in the way of the perpetrator and his community can expect no mercy. Atrocities such as the murder of Rafik Hariri and other prominent Lebanese, bombing of churches, attempted kidnappings, provide similar evidence that this violence is instrumental and endemic in the region, not simply the crisis of the hour.

Leaders from all communities in the Middle East have lived their whole lives with these realities; they know from hard experience how to negotiate, and they are able to turn violence on and off in exact degrees to suit their purposes. In the background, largely invisible and therefore unreported, roundtable processes are under way, calculated to fill the political void, and not so very different in character from the roundtables that ended Communism in the Soviet bloc. In Beirut, in the parliament building, leaders of the different communities, Christian, Druze, Shiite and Sunni, pro-Syrian and anti-Syrian, pro-Iran and anti-Iran, are having what former president Amin Gemayel calls a dialogue that "lays the foundation for a new period . . . one of independence." Photographs show them smiling and hugging, even though their militias have been conditioned to kill each other.

In Baghdad, the virtual disintegration of the Jaafari government creates a void, and violence fills it as leaders stake out their positions. But all from President Talabani and Ayatollah Sistani downwards are

publicly calling for unity. Compromise of communal and sectarian identities is the prerequisite of a nation and a state. Whatever the political, geostrategic, or other dictates and interests originally in play, the American presence in Iraq unexpectedly, and surely temporarily, holds the balance between Shiite triumphalism and Sunni refusal to accept change. Conditions are right for another Organic Statute and more trial-and-error proportional representation, and if those round the table do it for themselves, the spirit of the age will indeed have moved on.

--Mr. Pryce-Jones is an NR senior editor. Among his many books is *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs*.

Al-Qaeda's Media Strategies

The National Interest

By Marc Lynch

3/2006

We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. . . . [W]e are in a media battle for the hearts and minds of our umma.

--Ayman al-Zawahiri, July 2005

THE CENTRALITY of the Arab mass media to Al-Qaeda's political strategy has long been evident. From spectacular terror attacks designed for maximal media exposure, to carefully timed videos from Osama bin Laden and his lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahiri, to the burgeoning realm of jihadi Internet forums, Al-Qaeda the organization has increasingly become indistinguishable from Al-Qaeda the media phenomenon. But the nature of Al-Qaeda's relationship with the Arab media has been poorly understood, and the wrong policy conclusions too often drawn.

For the United States to have any hope of waging a serious "war of ideas" against jihadism, it must better understand a rapidly changing battlefield--which means grasping the realities of the Arab media environment and its complex relationship with the jihad. Bin Laden and Zawahiri's grand strategy of winning over the Arab "median voter" depends on the mass media, which creates both great power and unique vulnerabilities. Al-Jazeera and other satellite television stations have unleashed powerful counter-forces and political competitors into a once-vacant arena. Indeed, the migration of the jihad onto the Internet associated with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's rise to prominence directly responds to his dismay with Al-Jazeera's challenge to the jihad.

Al-Qaeda's Media Strategy

EVEN BEFORE 9/11, Al-Qaeda adapted with ruthless efficiency to the rise of satellite television and the Internet, grasping before virtually anyone else the political possibilities inherent in new media technologies. Zawahiri and Bin Laden both recognized the revolutionary significance of these developments, with Bin Laden understanding that "rhetoric and satellite propaganda can be on equal footing with unmanned bombers and cruise-missiles."¹

Al-Qaeda, therefore, invested heavily and creatively in propaganda and media from the start. Media became even more central to its strategy after the loss of its Afghan base, when Al-Qaeda metamorphosed into the more virtual, diffuse organization that Peter Bergen memorably labeled "Al-Qaeda 2.0." The global arena of contention, the absence of a physical territory, and an environment constricted by Western and Arab counter-terrorism operations made the media the premier site of its political action.

The media have also become a vital forum for internal arguments about the jihad's direction. Arguments over doctrine and strategy that might once have been private matters, carried out face to face in secretive hideouts, are now by necessity public. The decentralized, diffuse nature of Al-Qaeda, the growing difficulty of private communications, and the goal of persuading mainstream and jihadi publics alike all force these arguments into the public sphere. Some of these arguments are tactical, as in the disputes broadcast on Al-Jazeera between Zarqawi and his jihadi mentor, Abu Muhammad Maqdessi, about the taking of hostages. Still others debate doctrinal issues, such as the Quranic justification for terror or whether Muslim adversaries of the jihad can be declared non-Muslims.

Al-Qaeda's ultimate goal is to reinvigorate the Islamic umma in confrontation with the West and to direct this mobilized Muslim community in a revolutionary transformation of the international order. This means that it must target not simply the small minority of radicalized jihadists, but the "median voters" of the Arab Muslim public--not themselves necessarily Islamist, but deeply concerned about issues such as the Palestinians and Iraq, disenchanted with corrupt and authoritarian Arab regimes, and thus potentially receptive to anti-American politics. Al-Qaeda's media strategy is therefore inseparable from its political strategy, as its terrorism and rhetoric alike work toward the common goal of heightening Islamic identity and sharpening the confrontation of that identity with the West. The recent controversy over the Danish cartoons portraying the Prophet Muhammad, while not directed by Al-Qaeda, brilliantly served its purposes in driving both the Muslim world and the West into its desired "clash of civilizations."

The Arab Media: Double-Edged Sword

THE ARAB media's coverage of Bin Laden's videos and the Iraqi insurgency has led influential American officials to denounce it as an effective collaborator with the jihad. But the jihadists in fact find the Arab media an unreliable ally. Bin Laden himself, in a January 2004 statement, identified the Arab media as a primary source of deviation in the Muslim world: "The media people who belittle religious duties such as jihad and other rituals are atheists and renegades."

Those who make easy connections between the Arab media and Al-Qaeda often fail to recognize the incredibly rapid, even dizzying, changes in the media landscape. Prior to Al-Jazeera's launch in late 1996, the domestic Arab media was tightly controlled by states, with much of the transnational media owned by Saudis. For half a decade, Al-Jazeera dominated the media landscape. But by 2003 the Arab media had become intensely competitive. An increasingly fragmented Al-Qaeda now confronts a fragmented media environment, complicating the satellite television side of its media strategy.

Al-Jazeera revolutionized Arab politics with daring news coverage and wide-open, contentious talk shows. Its distinctive narrative voice focused intensively on the Palestinian struggle with Israel, the American "blockade" of Iraq and the myriad failures of the existing Arab regimes. Al-Jazeera highlighted the human suffering of Arabs and Muslims around the world, openly identifying with the Palestinians, Iraqis and Afghans whose conflicts it covered so graphically. Because of its region-wide focus, the United States inevitably featured prominently in this narrative, often in the villain's role.

Bin Laden's speeches carefully tapped into this "Al-Jazeera narrative", striking the themes of Palestine, Iraq and the corruption of existing regimes because, as Zawahiri frankly explained in his 2001 manifesto, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, "The one slogan that has been well understood by the [Muslim] nation and to which it has been responding for the past fifty years is the call for the jihad against Israel. In addition to this slogan, the nation in this decade is geared against the U.S. presence. It has responded favorably to the call for the jihad against the Americans." Working within the Al-Jazeera narrative empowered Al-Qaeda by giving it direct access to the median Arab voter in ways closed off to past Islamist extremists.

Al-Jazeera's mass Arab audience and critical worldview made it the best way for Bin Laden to reach the Arab world. But the antipathy to American foreign policy so prominent in Al-Jazeera's narrative should not be confused with support for Al-Qaeda's violent strategy or extreme Islamist goals.

Al-Jazeera is hardly a paragon of Islamist advocacy: Many of its leading news presenters and talk-show hosts are beautiful, unveiled women, and many of its popular figures are determinedly iconoclastic. Its leading Islamist figure, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, is a fierce critic of Bin Laden's form of Islamist extremism (and is regularly castigated in jihadi circles as a dangerous, misguided American dupe). Nor can Al-Jazeera's narrative be reduced to a simple anti-Americanism. It shows the carnage in Iraq, but it also shows democratic elections and gives ample voice to those who condemn Al-Qaeda's Mesopotamian strategy. In its fervent, sustained criticism of the Arab status quo and its advocacy of democratic reforms, Al-Jazeera can sometimes sound surprisingly like an American neoconservative organ.

Al-Jazeera's approach to these videos has hardly been one of willing propagandist, and it has changed over time. In June, when Zawahiri released a tape condemning Egypt's Kefaya ("Enough") movement--a coalition of liberal, Arab nationalist, and moderate Islamist protestors challenging Mubarak's regime--Al-Jazeera followed each excerpt with discussion by the Islamist lawyer (and Bin Laden critic) Montasser al-Zayat, Jordanian liberal Muhammad Abu Roman and Kefaya activist Ahmed Baha al-Din

Sha'aban. This transformed Zawahiri's lecture into a dialogue and denied him the monopoly on political discourse he so craved. In January, Bin Laden released his first message in over a year, and Al-Jazeera invited the able, Arabic-speaking American diplomat Alberto Fernandez to respond.

By early 2003, just as the Iraq War began, the Arab media environment had begun to fragment, becoming increasingly crowded and competitive. The Saudi-financed Al-Arabiya, launched in February 2003, soon ran a strong second in many Arab markets and even supplanted Al-Jazeera in some (such as Iraq). Al-Arabiya branded itself as the liberal alternative to Al-Jazeera, frequently hosting liberal and pro-American Muslim figures, as well as American officials including President Bush (while demonstrating rather greater sympathy to the Saudi royal family and to the ruling Arab regimes than does Al-Jazeera). An ever-growing panorama of satellite television stations now ensures that the norm is diversity and competition. The average Arab viewer routinely channel surfs among competing news stations like Abu Dhabi TV and Dubai TV, the extreme propaganda of Hizballah's Al-Manar, the mixed entertainment and news of Lebanon's LBC and Future TV, the rapidly expanding array of religious programming, and the writhing, barely-dressed music video vixens of Rotana TV. While Al-Jazeera remains the one station watched by virtually everyone, it faces powerful competitors in almost every market. Intense market competition means that even if Al-Jazeera chose to stop airing Al-Qaeda videos, some other station would most assuredly air them instead. It also guarantees a diversity of opinions on the air that implicitly and explicitly challenge Al-Qaeda's goal of imposing a single political vision on the Arab world.

Zarqawi and the Cyber-Jihad

ABU MUSAB al-Zarqawi's rise from the carnage in Iraq has been accompanied by a palpable shift in focus away from an increasingly hostile satellite television towards the Internet. Certainly, Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda has long used the Internet to disseminate its message, to recruit, to coordinate and to train potential jihadists. But Zarqawi's dismissal of satellite television and his preference for the Internet suggests a profoundly different political strategy. Where Zawahiri and Bin Laden aim to reach out to the vast, uncommitted middle ground of Arab Muslims through tailored rhetoric that is broadcast over the mass media, Zarqawi places far more emphasis on the mobilization of already-committed jihadists.

Zawahiri believes in the need to win mass support; hence, the deep concern expressed in a (presumably authentic) July letter that Zarqawi's gory beheadings and attacks on Iraqi Shi'a were alienating the mainstream Arabs so central to Al-Qaeda's strategy. Zawahiri's response to the democratic protests sweeping from Beirut to Cairo in early 2005 demonstrates his sensitivity to the trends in mainstream Arab public discourse. With political reform and elections and protest rallies dominating Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya alike, Zawahiri attempted to insert Al-Qaeda into those debates with extended discussions of "reform."²

Zarqawi has no interest in such debates and no interest in identifying his movement with "reform" or "democracy." Power, in his view, comes from the true mujaheddin, not from compromise or persuasion of the masses. Zarqawi would argue publicly with other jihadists, such as in his response to criticism by Maqdessi aired on Al-Jazeera or to those jihadists who expressed doubts about the November 9 hotel bombing in Amman, Jordan. But the rest of the political spectrum, from Americans to the Muslim Brotherhood, might as well not exist. Zarqawi persisted in murdering the representatives of Arab states in Iraq, regardless of the outcry in their home countries, because he placed a higher priority on isolating the new Iraqi government from its neighbors (and on killing representatives of what he considered to be apostate states) than on winning popularity among mass audiences.

Zarqawi's message in his continuing attacks on the Shi'a, on Iraqi civilians and on Arabs in Iraq could not be more clear: He simply does not care about Zawahiri's elusive median voter. Instead, he wants to motivate already-committed jihadists to translate their convictions into deadly action. And for that goal, the appropriate media is not satellite television but the Internet. Zarqawi has repeatedly lashed out at Al-Jazeera for its insufficiently supportive reporting, and jihadi Internet forums routinely blast Arab satellite television stations as "crusader media." In December 2004, Zarqawi attacked Al-Jazeera, Qaradawi and the "sultans of the airwaves" for "abandoning the mujaheddin."

Zarqawi's moving of the primary terrain from satellite television to the Internet reflects this disdain for non-jihadi audiences. His production of shocking beheading videos, use of Internet forums and production of Internet news broadcasts all create a virtual media landscape that is virtually impossible for states to control--but it is also restricted to those individuals prepared to seek them out. In the fall

of 2005, Zarqawi's organization began releasing regular Internet news broadcasts, which it described as "the sole outlet for mujaheddin media." Despite being ignored by the satellite television stations (none of which, to my knowledge, has ever broadcast a beheading), Zarqawi's videos have been, according to Al-Arabiya director Abd al-Rahman al-Rashed, "broadcast directly over the Internet to hundreds of thousands of youth who see and hear and read most of their information from it. . . . [M]ost of the terrorist crimes are tied to the Internet as the preferred theater."

Those who suggest that Al-Qaeda cannot win in Iraq miss the primacy of its media strategy: Every day that the occupation of Iraq generates graphic footage of American occupation and Islamist "resistance", Al-Qaeda wins. Seizing the Iraqi state is hardly necessary, or even desirable, for Al-Qaeda's media-centered strategy. But as the insurgency grinds on--and Arabs and Muslims everywhere question its random brutality, targeting of civilians, intense antipathy towards the Shi'a community and "blind violence"-- its political significance begins to diverge in ways aligned with these competing media strategies.

In speeches in 2004 and 2006, Bin Laden has presented himself as an elder statesman, addressing the American public directly with political demands, using the media as a direct avenue of (very public) diplomacy. But among Arab commentators, debates about Al-Qaeda's post-Bin Laden future are well underway. Zawahiri, for all his strategic insights, manifestly lacks Bin Laden's stature or charisma and is ill suited for the role of satellite-television persona. It has become commonplace among Arab observers to argue for Zarqawi's inevitable ascendance, due to the centrality of the active Iraqi theater. To the extent that Zarqawi hopes to wrest control of Al-Qaeda after Bin Laden, the fact that his brutal attacks cripple Zawahiri's strategy of cultivating the Arab mainstream can only be a plus. The Amman hotel bombings, which killed members of a wedding party and a leading Syrian film director but few Israelis or Westerners, were disastrous from Zawahiri's point of view but may have been a success from Zarqawi's perspective if they mobilized even a small number of recruits to join the jihad.

Changing Discourse and Attitudes

MANY OBSERVERS believe that Al-Qaeda's influence is in steep decline and its ideas are at bay. The quantity and volume of anti-jihadi voices in the Arab media have dramatically increased in recent years, with every Al-Qaeda-linked terror attack now met by a chorus of Arab criticism and condemnation. Public-opinion polls have shown steep declines in support for Al-Qaeda, particularly in countries directly affected by its terror attacks. Last fall's Amman Declaration brought together a wide range of Muslim figures (including Qaradawi) to condemn Islamist extremism. But while these are important developments, we must not fall victim to the perennial problem of blowback: believing our own propaganda.

There is no question that anti-jihadi voices are vastly more prevalent in the Arab media today than four years ago. The July 7 London bombings were routinely described in the Arab media as "a new massacre of innocents." They were roundly condemned by moderate Islamists, such as Qaradawi and the highly influential sheikh of Al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayed Tantawi. Similarly, the Amman hotel bombings provoked tremendous outrage in Jordan and beyond. Hamas and Jordan's Islamic Action Front condemned Zarqawi for the bombings, as did Egypt's Islamic Jihad and the Gamaa Islamiyya. Terrorist atrocities in Madrid, Sharm el Sheikh, London, Lebanon, Amman (but not, it should be said, Israel)--each has been described by Arab authors as a "turning point", each greeted by liberal columnists sarcastically expressing thanks to Bin Laden for finally exposing the moral and political failure of the Al-Qaeda project through the latest atrocity.

Without slighting the valor or integrity of any individual writer, it is clear that this upsurge in anti-jihadi discourse reflects official government policies more than changes in public opinion. The Saudi regime has deployed its vast media holdings in its own campaign against Al-Qaeda, initiated after several terror attacks struck the kingdom in 2003. Jordan's King Abdullah similarly declared a "total war" on takfiri thought--the denouncing of Muslims as insufficiently pious--after the November Amman bombings and publicly instructed the Jordanian media accordingly.

There is little evidence as yet that this state-directed propaganda will be more successful than the decades of state propaganda against which the new Arab media such as Al-Jazeera rose up. The anti-Islamist campaign may ultimately discredit those outlets more than it does the Islamists it targets. Arabs who have long lived under repressive, authoritarian regimes are well experienced in ignoring state propaganda. While there is little reliable information about the market share of Arab television

stations, a December survey found Al-Arabiya losing ground among Arab audiences, even as it adopts a more explicitly anti-jihadi and pro-American editorial line.

Similarly, many Americans have been encouraged by recent surveys, such as one in the Jordanian newspaper Al-Ghad after the Amman hotel bombings in which 64 percent of Jordanians said that their view of Al-Qaeda has changed for the worse. But it is not clear that this visceral, nationalistic revulsion at Zarqawi necessarily translates into a sustained and wider rejection of Al-Qaeda, to say nothing about support for the United States. As recently as summer 2005, a Pew survey had found support for Al-Qaeda in Jordan actually having increased from 2004, with 60 percent of Jordanians expressing admiration for Bin Laden. In a December survey by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies, three-quarters of Jordanians described Zarqawi's branch of Al-Qaeda as a terrorist group, but less than half considered Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda to be a terrorist organization. While 94 percent saw the Amman bombings as a "terrorist act", only 63 percent said the same of the July London bombings and less than 40 percent felt the attacks by the Iraqi insurgency on American troops in Iraq to be the work of terrorists. Similar results were seen in a December public opinion survey of Palestinians: Only 12 percent supported the Amman hotel bombings, but 65 percent still supported Al-Qaeda actions, such as bombings in the United States or Europe. Such findings suggest that America should not count on Zarqawi's brutality to alone win the day in the wider war against Al-Qaeda.

The Real War

THE COMMON American conception of the War on Terror generally sees the battle of ideas as a confrontation between the United States and Al-Qaeda. In fact, America is a relatively marginal and often self-defeating player in the real ideological struggle among Arabs and Muslims. American power and policies matter. But direct American interventions, however necessary, tend to reinforce Al-Qaeda's arguments about an Islam under siege. The real battle is elsewhere.

Zawahiri's and Bin Laden's media strategy aims ultimately at a fundamental restructuring of the political discourse and identity of the Islamic world. That battle, for the definition of Islamic identity, is the key one for the future of Al-Qaeda. Unfortunately, those arguing America's case in the region have serious weaknesses. Arab liberals are pushing for more open and pluralistic politics, but they remain an embattled minority and are divided over their attitudes towards the United States. Some Arab states have been using their media as part of a comprehensive struggle against jihadism in their own self-interest, but those dictatorships remain unpopular, and the effectiveness of their propaganda is uncertain.

Perhaps the most important combatants in today's Arab and Muslim war of ideas are popular Arab nationalists and moderate Islamists who generally oppose American policies but also detest Al-Qaeda's tactics and doctrines. Al-Qaeda's reliance on its ability to tap into the symbols, rhetoric and priorities of the Al-Jazeera narrative leaves it particularly vulnerable to the arguments of independent figures prominent within that milieu. Influential figures--such as the Egyptian columnist Fahmy Howeidy (who wrote scathingly about the need to "liberate the Iraqi resistance" from Zarqawi's sectarian brutality) and Qaradawi (who has denounced Zarqawi as a murderer and a criminal)--have done more damage to jihadism than all of America's efforts combined. "God's curse on Qaradawi, the American agent" is standard fare in jihadi Internet chat rooms.

Such figures criticize Al-Qaeda not out of love for America, but because they see the group as hijacking their own Islamist or reformist projects. Their trusted voices have a far greater chance of swaying the median voter away from jihadism than do the propagandists of Arab regimes or marginal pro-American liberals. They therefore pose the greatest threat to Zawahiri's political vision. And it is Al-Jazeera and other popular satellite television stations that bring their voices to a mass public. Arab satellite television remains the strongest force today pushing for change in the region and one of the biggest obstacles to Al-Qaeda's agenda of imposing a monolithic Islamic identity.

Al-Qaeda understands that its "public diplomacy" is at the heart of its political project; so should America. Unfortunately, American public diplomacy has often seemed designed to confirm Bin Laden's taunt, delivered just before the presidential election, that "it seems as if we and the White House are on the same team, shooting at the United States's own goal." The U.S. government-financed satellite television station Al-Hurra, which administration officials see as the linchpin of their public-diplomacy strategy, is largely irrelevant--a costly white elephant with few viewers, disappearing with hardly a trace in the turbulent Arab media environment. Its launch has fooled U.S. officials into complacency,

by creating a false impression they are countering the jihadi message. Other strategic-information schemes--ranging from propaganda, psychological warfare and the recently exposed payola effort to buy good press in Iraq--inevitably backfire once revealed, discrediting precisely the pro-American voices so desperately needed to argue their case to a skeptical Arab public. Angry denunciations of Al-Jazeera by administration officials make American advocacy of political freedoms seem hypocritical.

American public diplomacy has recently improved under Karen Hughes. The boycott of Al-Jazeera has finally ended, and there has been much greater effort to place senior officials and Arabic-speaking diplomats on the Arab media. The next step is to pay attention to the real arguments Arabs are having among themselves and allow Al-Qaeda's critics the space to win their own war.

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Geopolitical Jihad

The National Interest

By Ximena Ortiz

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A CARTOON of the Prophet Muhammad donning explosive headgear detonated in the Islamic world--a picture telling a thousand fighting words. At least that is how many Muslims saw it, particularly those who responded to the depiction of Islam as an inherently violent religion with their own acts of violence.

Some imams and other Islamic leaders expressed frustration with the cartoon riots. Egypt's grand mufti, Ali Gomaa, instructed Muslims to expect their religion to be attacked but to respond peacefully and with "wisdom and exhortation."

The response by Gomaa and others points to an emergent and overlooked global trend. Militants from the secular Fatah party, and not the Islamic-fundamentalist Hamas party, led the most vigorous protests. In addition, a spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt regretted, in a roundabout way, the violent response to the cartoons, accusing some politicians of striving "to distort the image of the Islamic movement--to get the people to say they are not peaceful, not democratic, against free speech."

Interestingly, you had Islamists (those that the West tends to see as the enemy) calling for calm and secularists (perceived as our natural allies) summoning religious rage in response to a perceived affront to Islam. That response highlights how difficult it is becoming to distinguish the religious from the political, and vice versa.

While many Middle East experts have pointed to the "medieval" religiosity of many Muslims, Islamists have been adept at folding modern political ideology--nationalism, self-determination, free markets--under the banner of Islam and winning at the polls as a result. The Islamist parties that have either triumphed or made electoral gains in the Middle East--Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Shi'a religious parties in Iraq--made openly political appeals for support, such as ending corruption, promoting national self-determination, improving social services. At the same time, political secularists are dredging up Islamic motifs to galvanize a sense of Islamic identity when it becomes expedient for them to do so. Those developments make it more difficult for Western policymakers and Middle East experts to keep track of and understand alliances, networks and ideologies and to define those forces in society likely to be pro-American.

The electoral ascendancy of Islamist parties highlights not only that democracy will bolster political Islam for the foreseeable future (with troubling implications for a U.S. policy that assumes the promotion of democracy will enhance U.S. interests). It also demonstrates how little support Islamic liberals have been able to gain. Reformers, as Faisal Devji from the New School has pointed out, have attempted systematically to enshrine more liberal interpretations of the Quran into law, breaking with a tendency to interpret the Quran fluidly in accordance with prevailing traditions. Many "Islamists" selectively choose which parts of the Quran they wish to emphasize, making them more Islamic radicals than Islamic fundamentalists. Reformers have been so unpopular that they have allied

themselves with authoritarian (some blood-soaked) regimes, like that of Atatürk Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Turkey, Reza Shah in Iran, Bashir al-Asad in Syria, Saddam Hussein in Iraq and both Pervez Musharraf and Ayub Khan in Pakistan.

The "Islamic radicals" have also been successful in rallying jihad on the tribal, but not inherently Islamic, tradition of restoring "honor." Muslims appear to have been mainly outraged by the Danish cartoons' attack on Islamic "honor" than by a perceived violation of Islamic tenets.

To many Muslims, Islam represents a sense of identity more than a religion to follow dogmatically. Last month, Iraq's Shi'a cleric (and militia leader) Moqtada Sadr dropped in on Syria's Bashir al-Asad, who is, of course, not only a staunch secularist but also the globe's last standing Ba'athist. "I will help Syria in every way. We are witnessing Islamic solidarity", Sadr told Asad.

Similarly, violent jihad directed at the West has had more geopolitical than Islamic inspiration. The rage that was born from the cartoons appears to be a strain of the same emotional tumult that gives rise to jihad. Osama bin Laden does not need the counsel of K Street PR firms to recognize the advantage of making a geopolitical, rather than religious, call to arms. As Bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri put it in 2001: "The fact must be acknowledged that the issue of Palestine is the cause that has been firing up the feelings of the Muslim nation from Morocco to Indonesia for the past fifty years."

Your run-of-the-mill jihadi footsoldier does not seem driven to violence by grand visions of regional or global Islamic caliphates, as a litany of terrorism experts have contended. Also, the idea that jihadists are agitated by a hatred of freedom would hardly dignify a debate, were it not routinely advanced by the president of the world's sole superpower. Further, while many jihadists probably take solace in visions of celestial rewards, including chaste (if spirited) maidens, they are probably not driven to violence by those illusions either. Jihadists are probably motivated more by a zeal to destroy or avenge than to create much of anything, caliphates or VIP spots in paradise included. The impulse appears to be more nihilistic and, arguably, hormonal.

For the jihadist, the creation of a caliphate is more the terminology or pretext for jihad than the animating motivation. While many jihadists generally support the construction of an Islamic state, that desire is probably not the catalysts for strapping on an explosive belt or piloting an explosive-laden car. That distinction is not so dissimilar from nations' justifications for wars. While the administration surely favors the spread of democracy, it was probably more focused on reminding the world of America's awesome military might in the Iraq theater. Other priorities, including non-proliferation goals, may have been important but were probably not the driving impetus either.

The target of the jihadists, meanwhile, has been not so much the infidel but the outsider. Saddam Hussein, a Ba'athi apostate, was largely spared jihadi wrath in Iraq, while coalition troops have not been. Similarly, anger at America's tendency to support dictators in the Middle East is not born so much out of detestation of the Arab dictators themselves, but rather of America's perceived infringement on the Arab heartland. Those factors illustrate the sense of "honor" and fellowship that can ignite jihad.

A number of Middle East experts insist that Arabs and other Muslims understand only the language of force and that the West must become fluent in brute coercion if it wants to bring insurgents to heel. What those experts seem to be overlooking is that coercion has mostly been effective in the longer term when exacted by fellow Arabs or Muslims. Outsiders have had much more difficulty, as the French learned in Algeria, the Soviets learned in Afghanistan and the Israelis continue to experience in Palestine. Sometimes we will have no choice but to engage in counter-insurgency operations--and even to employ brutally effective force to achieve results--but our use of such methods should be done judiciously.

Some U.S. military commanders have been mindful that, as outsiders, using force incorrectly can further mobilize the insurgency. Col. J. C. Coleman, chief of staff for the First Marine Expeditionary Force, noted that before independent contractors were killed and their charred bodies so ghoulishly paraded in Fallujah in March 2004, the Marines had planned to move away from the Army's aggressive tactics. "We were going to roll in there all quiet like the fog", said Coleman. "Now these people are invigorated. They're all stirred up."

Despite the attack on the contractors, the Marines favored a restrained response, but were ordered otherwise by Washington. A former commander of U.S. Marines in western Iraq, Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, said September 2004, "We felt like we had a method that we wanted to apply to Fallujah, that we ought to probably let the situation settle before we appeared to be attacking out of revenge." Conway also disagreed with Washington's subsequent order to have the Marines withdraw from their siege of Fallujah, claiming his forces were on the eve of victory. "I would simply say that when you order elements of a Marine division to attack a city, you really need to understand the consequences of that, and not, perhaps, vacillate in the middle of that." The orders Washington gave the Marines represent precisely how counter-jihad strategy should not be formulated: ill-conceived aggression, followed by a weak will.

The question remains, what should be done about the jihadists who are out to kill us?

To the jihadi problem, there is no ultimate solution in the short term. While U.S. officials should make every reasonable effort to maximize the security of the homeland, they cannot create an impregnable fortress America, any more than the state is capable of eliminating murders in the country. The notion that military forces can be successful in killing so many jihadists abroad that terrorists will not try to kill Americans at home is also foolhardy.

What's more, once an individual goes over to the side of jihad, it seems unlikely that the individual will drop that pursuit in the short term, even if the initial source of rage ceases to exist. The Islamic fighter is often too committed to a jihadi frame of mind and ensnared in the network and friendship bonds to walk away from one day to another--not unlike the difficulties individuals encounter in exiting criminal gangs that operate in the United States.

Some calibration of foreign policy is pressingly important, though. That calibration should not entail discontinuing America's support and special relationship with Israel, abandoning other Middle East allies or haphazardly withdrawing from Iraq. But U.S. officials do have room and the imperative to take more consistent stands that would also better serve the interests of the United States.

While there is, for example, a broad consensus on the need for more honest U.S. brokering of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and a better articulation of why settlement expansions undermine both U.S. and longer-term Israeli interests, there has been little progress in these areas. In addition, the administration must be more forthright in recognizing that the U.S. campaign in Iraq creates a paradox: While U.S. troops adeptly employ impressive firepower, their presence also fuels the insurgency in Iraq and sows suspicions of hegemonic ambitions. Perhaps the administration should adopt one of the meticulously formulated exit strategies offered free of charge by the constellation of Washington think-tanks.

In dealing with jihad and other global problems, the United States must balance its national interests and its democratic and other principles. A policy that pursues soaring principle while ignoring the potential impact of that pursuit on the citizenry becomes implicitly unprincipled. A pursuit of policies that considers only interests and ignores ethics can provoke a backlash, thereby undermining national interests.

The administration's efforts to give its foreign policy a Karen Hughes makeover will not be successful. The administration must re-engineer policy, not make new pitches. Washington needs a means of fighting jihadists that does not create additional jihadists. While jihadists are dreaming of and plotting revenge, Washington officials should be kept awake designing strategies that go well beyond just "smoking 'em out." America needs a foreign policy that is more strategic than nihilist; a measured, muscular approach that can apply carrots and sticks effectively rather than a "bring-it-on" hormonal response that is impulsive and uncoordinated.

Finally, we need to be more realistic about how people in the region regard U.S. actions. The concept of "benign crusader" does not exist in the Middle East. While many Americans have been moved by Bush's recurrent promotion (and virtual appropriation) of freedom, Middle East Muslims have not been similarly stirred, given that they are in greater proximity to the carnage of war--the military extension of that professed pursuit of freedom. They also have a distinct vision of freedom: defined largely as the ability to reject the guidance of the world's superpower. Our desire to build liberal nation-states conflicts with a Middle Eastern desire to exercise sovereignty and self-determination independent of infidel outsiders.

With the death toll rising in Iraq and America's ability to promote its agenda in the region increasingly called into question, now is not the time for impulsive or emotional responses. More than ever, we will need to think and act strategically--and that sometimes means having to choose between unpleasant options. But we do not have unlimited amounts of time, as recent events in Iraq have all too tragically demonstrated. This is why it is important to avoid a defeat--or an appearance of one--in Iraq that could accelerate the process of turning that country into a terrorist base, further destabilize the region and give jihad a new momentum. Now is the time to take the opportunity to recalibrate U.S. policy to secure our interests--before the next crisis rears its head and our freedom of action is even more compromised.

-- Ximena Ortiz is executive editor of The National Interest

UAE/DUBAI PORTS WORLD

The Demagogues Win

National Review
Editorial
3/27

Who says that Democrats and Republicans can't work together? When there is an opportunity for cheap and advantageous demagoguery, ignorance, and bad faith, they will eagerly join hands. This is exactly what they have done -- with a few honorable exceptions, including Sen. John McCain -- on the Dubai ports-deal controversy.

We have yet to hear a convincing explanation of why having the United Arab Emirates-owned firm Dubai Ports World -- after its purchase of a British-owned firm -- manage some terminals at six U.S. ports would threaten our national security. A firm like DP World basically operates the cranes. It is a small part of a big operation, with various U.S. government agencies providing the security. But the White House got behind in the p.r. game and was late explaining this, allowing opponents to label the deal as "giving Arabs control of our ports."

Now, incredibly, the White House is on the wrong side of a 70-20 national-security issue that has more resonance than the Patriot Act and the National Security Agency wiretapping program. This is simply a debacle, shaping up as lose-lose for Bush. If he loses on Capitol Hill, where congressmen of both parties threaten to block DP World, he will be humiliated and identified with the unpopular deal. If he somehow wins, he will have done so against the grain of public opinion, harming himself on national security in a cause -- having DP World manage the terminals -- that is not of fundamental importance.

The deal is unpopular among Republicans, almost 60 percent of whom oppose it. The ports controversy is actually wreaking the damage on Bush's political base that the Harriet Miers nomination only threatened to inflict. Congressional Republicans aren't going to let Sen. Chuck Schumer, who will surely find a reason to oppose the deal no matter what, get to their right on port security, and many of them actively want to split with the president on a high-profile issue. Trying to see this one through isn't worth it. Bush should pull the plug, and remember the caliber of politicians he's dealing with in Congress, for next time.

ECONOMICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Al Waleed bin Talal--Saving the Saudi Market

Newsweek
By Stephen Glain
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Saudi Arabian prince Al Waleed bin Talal, one of the world's richest men, is now also one of the kingdom's most popular citizens. Last Wednesday, the 49-year-old investor said he would plow some \$2.7 billion into the Saudi share market, which has tumbled dramatically since late last month after posting gains of more than 200 percent over the past two years. The market's key index rebounded 4 percent on his announcement, which comes as many Middle Eastern markets are suffering major

corrections. Bin Talal, whose \$20 billion portfolio includes a \$10 billion share of Citigroup and major stakes in a network of luxury hotels, remains bullish and still plans to list 30 percent of his main investment arm, Kingdom Holdings, on the Saudi exchange later this year. He spoke with NEWSWEEK's Stephen Glain last week. Excerpts:

GLAIN: Why buy now? Why not wait for prices to get cheaper?

BIN TALAL : Let me explain. The stock market in Saudi Arabia went up substantially in 2005, and it reached a point where there was no distinction between those companies that deserved a high price/earnings ratio and those that didn't. What I perceived last Wednesday was an opportunity to calm down fears in the market. Otherwise, panic--a huge panic--would have taken place. The problem is there is a lot of excess cash in Saudi Arabia with few investment opportunities. People here can only invest in stock and property, and it's important to know that 70 percent of the shares in listed companies are controlled by the government or state-controlled agencies. Another 20 percent is held by big investors like me who never sell. There is too much cash chasing too little tradable equity.

How do you plan to educate investors?

The best education comes in the market, where investors get punished for believing that whatever goes up can go on forever. We also need two parallel markets, one with the big-capitalized companies, call them the big caps, and another with the small- to midsized caps. Like America has with the Dow Jones and the Russell 2000 indices.

So which sectors look good to you?

When I went public on Wednesday, I said the good sectors were banking, industrial petrochemical projects, cement and telecommunications. These areas were hit hard and now offer value. I also warned investors never to touch the [heavily subsidized] agriculture sector.

Is it time to let in foreigners?

Absolutely. My recommendation is, one, allow local expatriates to buy shares directly. Second, allow foreign funds to invest and if the government is worried [about the risk of capital flight], they can impose limits on how much foreigners can invest in certain companies.

Switching to macroeconomics, what is driving growth in the Arab world?

First, Arab countries have witnessed some major economic liberalization because Arab governments know that is the only direction they have to go. Second, a lot of Arab investment outside the region was remitted back [after 9/11] and has been reinvested here. Clearly the high price of oil has also flushed a lot of cash through the system, but even in parts of the region with no oil there has been a major boom. Countries are diversifying, and Egypt is the perfect example. Oil is not a big percentage of its economy, though it has many sources of income and it is developing them. Here in Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah and his ministers are doing their best to diversify the economy and reduce our dependence on oil. The non-oil private sector is doing pretty well. We have a long way to go, but I'm optimistic.

We see evidence of debt markets emerging in the Middle East, which previously has been a largely cash economy. How significant is it, for example, that the Arab world's young population may soon be purchasing homes with bank loans instead of bundles of cash?

It would mark the beginning of a new era. A mortgage law would be vital to Saudi Arabia. We need mortgage lending here and it needs to be institutionalized.

Some might think it ironic that Washington's rejection of Dubai's bid to control some American seaports comes just as the Arab economy appears to be taking off. Does this bother you?

For sure, this was a big-time blunder. It makes it a liability for someone like me, who is very pro-U.S., to speak in a pro-U.S. manner. Of course it was wrong, but I don't want to take the Dubai Ports World case and blow it out of proportion. President Bush himself was for the deal, which gives us some comfort. After all, the U.S. will have to rely on foreign investment to finance its deficits. If the trend

continues, then obviously we should be worried. But with all my investments in the U.S., I've never witnessed any resistance. For now, this is only an isolated case.

UNITED NATIONS

Bolton at Bat

National Review

By Jay Nordlinger

3/27

John Bolton brought the gavel down at 10 a.m., right on time -- but he was the only one in the room. That's how the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations started his month as president of the Security Council. The presidency of the Council rotates monthly, going through all 15 members, in alphabetical order (according to English). February was the turn of the United States, and thus of Ambassador Bolton.

He maintained to one and all that starting on time was "a form of discipline," and also "a matter of courtesy." The United Nations is famously sluggish and unwieldy, and Bolton wanted to shape it up a little. On that first day, the Council got going about 10:15. But the members were more punctual thereafter, as Bolton says, in a post-presidency interview: "We were hitting somewhere between 10 and 10:05 every day." And "people appreciated it," this change in the U.N. style.

John R. Bolton is one of the most amazing weapons in President Bush's foreign-policy arsenal. Senate Democrats blocked his confirmation, so Bush gave him a recess appointment, last August. That term will expire when the current Congress expires (probably at the end of this year). Whether Bolton stays on or not, he is certainly making the most of his time at Turtle Bay.

He had a good month, as president, but "not as good as it could have been," he says. The presidency of the Security Council is not the most spectacular position on earth, but it has its uses, "particularly on the procedural side of things," as Bolton notes.

So the ambassador -- in an indication that a new sheriff was in town -- started on time. He also arranged for daily briefings from the U.N. Secretariat. If the Security Council was to make decisions, it needed to be up to date on U.N. happenings, around the globe. And Bolton encouraged members to dispense with prepared statements, and simply talk: diplomat to diplomat, nation to nation. Some people grumbled about this, and others smiled on it. Denmark's ambassador -- a woman named Ellen Margrethe Loj -- told reporters that the U.N. should not continue as it has for 60 years, with no change whatsoever. "Sometimes we have to be a bit more modern."

Will Bolton's reforms stick, or at least have some lingering effect? During February, the Chinese ambassador was heard to remark that they would simply "fade away." But Bolton expects the Secretariat briefings to continue, even if in "scaled back" form -- "something like twice a week." People found the daily briefings "too much work, heaven forbid." And Council members may actually have gotten used to starting on time, or at least less tardily.

WONDROUS SIGHTS When Bolton was at bat, you saw any number of things you don't see every day at the U.N. He held a meeting on sexual exploitation by U.N. peacekeepers around the world. And he held a meeting on waste, fraud, and abuse in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Auditors had examined \$1 billion in contracts, finding that \$300 million of that sum was lost. Bolton noted that the U.S. contributes 27 percent of peacekeeping funds -- meaning that all of those monies go to waste. Of this remarkable fact, Bolton said, "The U.S. taxpayer considers it important."

Other, perhaps smaller, matters arose in February. For instance, the Security Council put out a very strong statement on Iraq, praising and encouraging democracy there and condemning those who would kill it off. Would that have happened absent the Bolton presidency? Bolton observes that "something would have happened," but "we put a strong emphasis" on the matter.

And would Sudan -- the genocide in Darfur -- have been spotlighted and debated? "It would have come up, but with less saliency, is the best way to put it." And, Bolton continues, "this is a good example of what the presidency can do": allow a nation to "push," although a successful outcome is far from

guaranteed.

For a year and a half, Darfur has been policed -- more like watched -- by a pathetic, paltry force from the African Union. The United States is a leader in wanting to replace that band with a U.N. force, larger and more capable. In the end -- by the end of February -- Bolton could not get the Security Council to move on Sudan: either on sanctions against individuals committing atrocities or on a statement supporting a U.N. force. But he tried.

In a press conference, Bolton said the Council had raised alarms over Darfur, but "if the Council doesn't mean what it says and isn't willing to take steps to persuade people to follow what it says, its credibility will decline." At another press conference, a reporter mentioned the opposition of Sudan's president to U.N. troops. In his response, Bolton said that the U.S. was looking for a way "to stop the genocide. That's our objective. And one can only hope that the government of Sudan shares the objective that its own citizens should live."

A Bolton press conference is typically a very entertaining -- in addition to a very informative -- event, by the way. Bolton is as blunt as the president he works for. He is happy to remind people that Iran is a champion sponsor of terrorism. He is now and then a touch sarcastic: Reporter: "Are you still for [a particular proposal]? There had been some talk that you'd pulled back from that." Bolton: "Well, I don't know who's doing the talking." And did I mention blunt? A reporter asked whether the U.N. Human Rights Commission should meet before talks on reforming it had been concluded. "Well," said Bolton, "I've said in private consultations that it might be worthwhile having the commission meet again to remind everybody how bad it is so that we can get on the track of real reform."

BUTTERFLIES AND CATERPILLARS Ah, yes, the Human Rights Commission. As you may know, this august body includes some of the most brutal, oppressive, and murderous regimes on the planet: Sudan, Cuba, China, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia. Kofi Annan was putting it mildly when he said in January that the Human Rights Commission "casts a shadow over the entire U.N." Almost everybody describes the commission as "discredited" -- even the New York Times, which has used the word without quotation marks in at least one news story.

So Secretary General Annan wanted reform -- a new type of commission -- and so did the United States. In a speech at the beginning of the year, Bolton said, "If member countries want the United Nations to be respected, they should begin by making sure it is worthy of respect." The Americans put forward a proposal, and it is multifaceted. The main elements, however, are these: Instead of the current 53 members, make it 30; and have countries be elected by two-thirds of the General Assembly. Both of these changes would make it harder for the worst regimes to land on the rights panel. And, at the least, bar those governments under Security Council sanctions for violating human rights from serving on the Human Rights Commission.

On February 23, the U.N. brass, in the person of Jan Eliasson, president of the General Assembly, responded with a proposal that said: 47 members, rather than 53; voted in by an absolute majority; and even those under sanctions are eligible. Bolton said no way -- the United States would not accept that proposal, in fact would vote against it, if it came to that. He told the press that it wasn't enough that the Eliasson proposal, on the whole, wasn't as bad as it could have been. He also said, "We want a butterfly. We're not going to put lipstick on a caterpillar and declare it a success."

(I later ask whether that is an expression from his growing up, or from somewhere else in American culture. Bolton says no, he made it up, and will have to accept paternity, for better or worse.)

Bolton made clear that he -- i.e., the United States -- was willing to negotiate with other member states, but not with Mr. Eliasson, acting as a "facilitator." International agreements ought to be between nations, he argued. You sit down across a table, with red pencils, and jaw it out. Annan supports the Eliasson proposal, and so do many nations -- most nations. The United States, incidentally, has no veto in the matter: It would be one of the 191 members of the General Assembly, voting on the proposal. Many conservatives believe that, if the proposal goes through, the United States should refuse to participate -- should leave the human-rights panel as it did UNESCO, under Reagan, back in '84.

For their stance, Bolton and the administration received support from an unexpected quarter: the New York Times. That Bush-despising, Bolton-despising newspaper editorialized, "When it comes to reforming the disgraceful United Nations Human Rights Commission, America's ambassador, John

Bolton, is right; Secretary General Kofi Annan is wrong; and leading international human rights groups have unwisely put their preference for multilateral consensus ahead of their duty to fight for the strongest possible human rights protection. A once-promising reform proposal has been so watered down that it has become an ugly sham, offering cover to an unacceptable status quo. It should be renegotiated or rejected."

Bolton later sought to reassure National Review that, despite the Times's approval, he and his people had not "gone soft in the head."

But the Times, as it concluded the editorial, took care to offend: "Mr. Bolton, representing an administration whose record is stained by Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, is awkwardly placed to defend basic human rights principles."

Stubbornly soft in the head were usual suspects such as Archbishop Tutu, Jimmy Carter, and the leaders of the EU, all of whom urged acceptance of the Eliasson proposal. Carter practically pleaded with U.N. members to defy the United States. This recalled his actions in 1990, when the first President Bush was trying to rally the Security Council for what would be the Gulf War, Desert Storm. Carter wrote members of the Council, urging them to thwart the United States. The government in Washington found out about it when the Canadian prime minister, Brian Mulroney, called the secretary of defense, Dick Cheney, and said (essentially), "What gives?"

As of this writing, it is unclear what will become of the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

NO TEARS During his month as president, Bolton let his hair down a little, with his fellow Council members: He took them to a professional basketball game, at Madison Square Garden, where the Miami Heat beat the New York Knicks, badly. Bolton pointed out that basketball, while an American game, has become very much an international game. And did you hear about Miss Universe? This young lady -- Natalie Glebova, a Russian-born Canadian -- happened to be touring the U.N., and Bolton showed her around the Security Council chamber. "That could have been the highlight of the month," he says.

By the accounts of even some critics, Bolton has had a very strong tenure as ambassador. He has been firm, and yet not outlandish, refuting the worst fears of the critics (to the extent those critics were honest). Sen. George Voinovich of Ohio was a rare Republican critic. You may recall that he nearly cried, when speaking against Bolton on the floor. But on a visit to Turtle Bay last month, he sounded different. He said, "I think [Bolton] is really working very constructively to move forward. . . . At this stage of the game I'm pleased with the progress that is being made here and the team that he has gathered together."

Bolton appeared to relish his time as Security Council president, and his admirers relished it even more. Bolton seemed to feel a sense of urgency about his month, hearing the clock tick. On February 27, talking to the press about Sudan, he said, "With 36 hours left in the presidency, we're still prepared to move ahead." On February 28, he said, "We've pushed hard, and we're going to continue to push hard, even though tomorrow is March 1." Given his status as a short-timer -- a recess appointee -- Bolton may never get another crack at the Security Council presidency, as the 15 nations take their turns. Whatever the case, he made the most out of February 2006.
