

POLITICS

2. The Gospel According to Lowell; Weekly Standard, By Fred Lucas (4/3)
3. Those Democratic Veterans; U.S. News & World Report, By Dan Gilgoff (4/3)
5. Republicans On The Run; Time, By Karen Tumulty and Mike Allen (4/3)
8. Words Fail Him; Vanity Fair, By Michael Wolff (4/5)

ISRAEL

13. Borderline Support; National Review, By Meyrav Wurmser (4/3)

IRAN

15. The Iran Plans; New Yorker, By Seymour M. Hersh (4/10)
22. Iran & the Bomb; New York Review of Books, By Christopher de Bellaigue (4/7)
27. Will This Man Get The Bomb?; Time, By Johanna McGeary (4/3)
30. Today Tehran, Tomorrow the World; Time, By Charles Krauthammer (4/3)
31. How to Love a Hard-Liner; Time, By Azadeh Moaveni (4/3)
32. Remember This Name; National Review, By Kathryn Jean Lopez (4/6)
35. Fool Me Twice; Foreign Policy, By Joseph Cirincione (3/27)

IRAQ

36. Rumors of Civil War; Weekly Standard, By Frederick W. Kagan and William Kristol (4/3)
37. Camp Saddam; Weekly Standard, By Stephen F. Hayes (4/3)
40. Putting More Time on the Iraq Clock; U.S. News & World Report, By Julian E. Barnes (4/3)
41. Is This a Strategy For Success?; Newsweek, By Rod Nordland (4/3)
43. The Last Word Ashraf Qazi: 'Serious'--Or A Civil War?; Newsweek International, By Malcolm Beith (4/3)
44. Crossing Over; New Republic, By Lawrence F. Kaplan (4/3)
46. The Other Side of the Story; National Review, By Bill Crawford (4/3)
50. Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq; Foreign Affairs, By Paul R. Pillar (4/2006)
56. Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon; Foreign Affairs, By Stephen Biddle (4/2006)

HAMAS

61. Hamas: The Last Chance for Peace?; New York Review of Books, By Henry Siegman (4/7)
68. Hobbling Hamas; Weekly Standard, By Robert Satloff (4/3)
70. Hamas: Out of Money; Newsweek, By Kevin Peraino (4/3)

HEZBOLLAH

71. Terrorist TV; National Review, By Steven Stalinsky (4/4)

UNITED NATIONS

78. The U.N. Plays with Lego; Weekly Standard, By Henrik Bering (4/3)
80. How Corrupt is the United Nations?; Commentary, By Claudia Rosett (4/2006)

GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

87. Blair's Last Stand; Weekly Standard, By Gerard Baker (4/3)
89. The Rise and Fall of Berlusconi; Newsweek International, By Christopher Dickey (4/3)
91. Get Him to Gitmo; National Review, By Deroy Murdock (4/3)
92. On Second Thought; Commentary, By Aaron L. Friedberg (4/2006)

HARVARD PAPER

97. An Unfair Attack; U.S. News & World Report, By David Gergen (4/3)
98. Easy Prey; National Review, By Michael Ledeen (4/3)

ECONOMICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

99. The Right Touch; Newsweek International, By Stephen Glain (4/3)

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

100. Islam's Imperial Dreams; Commentary, By Efraim Karsh (4/5)

POLITICS

The Gospel According to Lowell

Weekly Standard

By Fred Lucas

4/3

LOWELL WEICKER PUT HIS CANE aside and thrust his heavy 6'6" frame up the stairs. Now 74, the former senator had a knee replacement last year, but as he stepped up to the pulpit at the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, Connecticut, one Sunday afternoon in late January, he seemed anything but feeble.

"We are all about to lose a country--ours, not Iraq," he bellowed, with the passion of a man half his age. "The greatest casualty of this war is the image we have of ourselves and the reality of what we have become. How did matters get to this point? How have we moved from Norman Rockwell's America to a United States where violence, torture, mendaciousness, spying, propaganda, and disregard for the law have become the new patriotism?"

In the last seven years, Weicker has been closer to pro wrestling than to politics, as a board member of the Stamford-based World Wrestling Entertainment. But it's looking more and more like he'll be taking on an old rival for a grudge match 18 years in the making: a third-party challenge to Senator Joe Lieberman, the Democrat who ended Weicker's third term in the Senate in 1988, defeating him by just 10,000 votes.

A lot has changed since 1988. Weicker served one term as Connecticut's governor, then seemed to retire from politics in 1994. Lieberman, meanwhile, went from being Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2000 to Democratic pariah, scorned by the left wing of the party for his dogged support of the Iraq war.

This year, many angry liberals want to rally behind an antiwar candidate who will criticize the president, not a Democrat who has been mentioned for cabinet positions in the Bush administration.

For now, though, Weicker is playing the reluctant warrior.

"I have no desire to get back in the political ring," he told the crowd of 150 people at the First Congregational Church's antiwar forum, where he was the keynote speaker. "But it's the only thing I know how to do in terms of confronting this issue. One thing I do know, I am not going to give anyone in Connecticut in public office a free pass on this issue."

In an interview for this article, Weicker threw down the gauntlet: He'll stay out of the race only if "we are out of Iraq, if Joe Lieberman no longer agrees with the president, if an antiwar Republican runs, or if a viable Democrat can challenge Lieberman in the Democratic primary."

Subsequently, Greenwich businessman Ned Lamont started a self-financed campaign against Lieberman for the Democratic nomination, using the war as a key issue. But Weicker said this won't get him "off the hook" unless the unknown Lamont appears likely to win the state's August 8 primary.

Weicker-Lieberman II would have enough political novelty to make it one of the most closely watched contests in the nation: a rematch between two giants in national politics, and a referendum on the Iraq war. Weicker said his decision will come in mid to late spring.

In Connecticut, 42 percent of voters are registered as unaffiliated, the largest bloc, which could help Weicker as a third-party candidate. Meanwhile, according to a Quinnipiac University poll, 51 percent of Connecticut voters overall and 74 percent of Democrats disagree with Lieberman on the Iraq war.

Weicker has a history of defying political odds. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1970 after just one term in the House. And after breaking with the Republican party, he won the governor's office as an independent in 1990.

But Weicker's foremost claim to fame is that, as a freshman Republican senator on the Watergate committee, he took a chance by hounding the Nixon administration well before other Republicans followed suit.

"Instead of his political doom, it made him," says Barry Sussman, a former editor at the Washington Post and the coauthor of Weicker's memoir, *Maverick: A Life in Politics*.

"I would never underestimate Lowell Weicker once he seizes on an issue he cares about," Sussman said. "The least that can be said is that he is putting a very important issue before the voters of Connecticut."

But Weicker must also deal with the legacy of the income tax he signed into law as governor, making Connecticut one of the most heavily taxed states in the nation--certainly a political liability.

POLITICOS STILL TALK ABOUT the highly effective "sleeping bear" campaign ad in 1988 that mocked Weicker's girth and listed the number of Senate votes he had missed. The underdog Lieberman painted Weicker as out of touch with the state and won a tight race with some support from Republicans tired of the liberal senator.

Today, Lieberman would win 65 percent of the vote against Weicker in a one-on-one race, according to the Quinnipiac poll. But a Rasmussen Reports poll late last year was less encouraging: Lieberman won just 54 percent to Weicker's 32 percent.

"If you look at Lieberman's totals, and take out Republican support, Lieberman has under 40 percent," said Scott Rasmussen, president of Rasmussen Reports. "A race between a Republican, Lieberman, and Weicker could have all three candidates in the 30s." So far, only one Republican has declared, Paul Streitz, an anti-immigration candidate who has never been elected to office.

Lieberman actually has a higher approval rating among the state's Republicans (68 percent) than Democrats (55 percent), according to the Quinnipiac poll. So a three-way race might be great for Weicker.

But Weicker detests polls. "I don't care if the polls are 90 percent to 10 percent against me," he says. "That wouldn't change anything."

As he preached the gospel according to Lowell from the pulpit that Sunday in Old Lyme, he certainly appeared to be in the game.

"The time has come to challenge incumbents," he told the gathering. "I first came into political prominence in 1968. I challenged a pro-war Johnson Democrat for the fourth congressional seat of Connecticut. He was for the war. I was against the war. Both of us knew we would rise or fall on that issue."

If liberals truly see everything through the prism of Vietnam, Weicker may be expecting to achieve his own resurgence in 2006 by challenging a pro-war Bush Democrat. If he succeeds, it will only render victory the sweeter that, along with recapturing his glory days, he'll have the last laugh against Joe Lieberman.

--Fred Lucas is the political reporter for the *News-Times* in Danbury, Connecticut.

Those Democratic Veterans

U.S. News & World Report
By Dan Gilgoff

There's no doubt why Tammy Duckworth is running for Congress: While serving as a National Guard reservist in Iraq, she decided that "our policymakers haven't lived up to the sacrifice of our troops." And Duckworth, who won the Democratic primary for Illinois's Sixth District last week, ought to know: She lost both legs when her helicopter was shot down. She believes the Iraq war was a mistake but opposes immediate U.S. withdrawal. Even so, she insists the primary victory had more to do with her healthcare plan than her status as a veteran critical of the war. "Being a vet gives you a platform, so that people will listen," she says. "And that's all it gives you."

For Duckworth and seven other veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan running as Democrats for the House of Representatives--along with nearly 50 other vets--the 2006 midterms will test how strong that platform is. Many Democrats hope the candidates will help neutralize the GOP's national security advantage and immunize the party against charges that its Iraq criticisms are unpatriotic. "They bring an unimpeachable view on issues of war and peace," says Sen. John Kerry, who has raised money for vet candidates. But the gambit faces serious challenges. The Iraq and Afghanistan vets are all political newcomers, most facing well-financed incumbents. And the Democratic Party may find it difficult to appear both tough on terrorism and more critical on Iraq.

Among the vets running, Duckworth is a standout. A natural campaigner, she was recruited by Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman Rahm Emanuel, who serves a neighboring district. She raised more than half a million dollars for her primary run. And the retirement of 16-term Republican Rep. Henry Hyde and changing district demographics make her race one of the most competitive in the nation this year.

Organic. But the DCCC asserts that the slate of veterans does not reflect a concerted attempt to run such candidates. "This was as organic a movement as there is in politics," says a top party source. In fact, some vets have been surprised by their lukewarm reception from the party. "The likelihood that the Democratic Party is going to put resources into these races is almost nil," says Mike Lyon, whose Band of Brothers PAC raises money for Democratic vets.

The Democratic Party may have reason to be skeptical. So far, most war vet candidates haven't shown much fundraising muscle of their own. In Kentucky, Iraq vet Andrew Horne, a lawyer, has raised less than \$150,000 and faces Republican incumbent Anne Northup, who boasts a \$1 million-plus war chest. In Pennsylvania, Patrick Murphy, an Iraq vet and former West Point professor, has raised more than \$250,000, but the Republican incumbent, Michael Fitzpatrick, has raised five times as much. And both veteran challengers must first survive primaries. "These candidates have caused a national media sensation," says Amy Walter, an analyst at the Cook Political Report. "But the reality on the ground is totally different."

In Ohio, the Democrats' campaign to press Iraq vet Paul Hackett to drop out of a Senate race last month in favor of a better-financed candidate showed how such candidacies could backfire. "The Democratic Party is still led by a post-Vietnam mentality," says Hackett. "There's still a certain amount of prejudice and resentment against the military there."

The biggest challenge for the Democratic war vets may be developing credibility beyond national security. The Iraq and Afghanistan vets were motivated to run by disillusionment over Iraq, but most are using military experience as a framework for branching out. "The front line in national security is not Iraq," says Joe Sestak, a former Navy vice admiral who is challenging Pennsylvania Rep. Curt Weldon. "It's about healthcare security, education security, and economic security."

Republicans are determined to paint Democratic vets as single-issue candidates who are clueless on pocketbook issues. National Republican Congressional Committee spokesman Ed Patru says 38 vets (including at least two who fought in Iraq) are mounting challenges as Republicans in 2006, "but we're not broadcasting that because we don't have a credibility gap on national security." The Democratic vets, says Patru, "are adopting the surrender message of the Democratic establishment."

That's certainly debatable. But the Democratic vets do risk further muddying the party's message. "Democrats are trying to have it both ways," says pollster John Zogby, "saying they're tough on national security and running veterans disgruntled about the war." Kerry tried to walk that line as a presidential candidate two years ago. It didn't work then. And it's no small challenge now.

Republicans On The Run

Time

By Karen Tumulty and Mike Allen

4/3

[This article consists of a complex diagram. Please see hardcopy of magazine or PDF.] Considering that Vice President Dick Cheney had come a long way to help Florida Congressman Ric Keller raise \$250,000 last week, the reception he got in the Sunshine State could have been a bit warmer. After extolling Cheney as "one of the most effective Vice Presidents in the history of the U.S.," Keller launched into all the times he had recently opposed the Bush Administration, including the deal to allow a Dubai company to manage operations at several U.S. ports. And then Keller went right for the punch line: "'Don't be too hasty,'" he claimed the Vice President had pleaded with him. "'Let's go hunting. We'll talk about it.'"

As the campaign season kicks into gear, Republican incumbents are having a hard time figuring out how close they want to be to the White House. Voters have plenty to take out on Republican candidates this year--ethics scandals, the G.O.P.'S failure to curb spending, the government's inept response to Hurricane Katrina, a confusing new prescription-drug program for seniors and, more than anything else, an unpopular President who is fighting an unpopular war. Iraq could make a vulnerability of the Republicans' greatest asset, the security issue.

The midterm contests in a President's second term are almost always treacherous, but this time around, Republicans thought it would be different. The 2006 elections, coming on top of their gains in 2002 and 2004, would make history and perhaps even cement a G.O.P. majority in Congress for a generation. George W. Bush's credibility on national security and the states' aggressive gerrymandering, they believed, had turned the vast majority of districts into fortresses for incumbents. But that's not turning out to be the case. In recent weeks, a startling realization has begun to take hold: if the elections were held today, top strategists of both parties say privately, the Republicans would probably lose the 15 seats they need to keep control of the House of Representatives and could come within a seat or two of losing the Senate as well. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, who masterminded the 1994 elections that brought Republicans to power on promises of revolutionizing the way Washington is run, told TIME that his party has so bungled the job of governing that the best campaign slogan for Democrats today could be boiled down to just two words: "Had enough?"

Iraq is driving nearly all the big indicators the wrong way for Republicans. In a TIME poll conducted last week, Bush's job approval rating was mired at 39%; 3 in 5 Americans said the country is headed in the wrong direction, and when those surveyed were given the choice between a generic Republican and a generic Democrat for Congress, the nameless Democrat won, 50% to 41%. The signs suggest an anti-Republican wave is building, says nonpartisan electoral handicapper Stuart Rothenberg, whose Rothenberg Political Report is closely followed in Washington. "The only question is how high, how big, how much force it will have. I think it will be considerable."

The danger signs for Republicans show up across the electoral map but nowhere more clearly than in the swing state of Pennsylvania, where the hottest Senate race in the country is being fought and where Republican strategists say as many as five G.O.P. congressional seats are in play, out of a total 19. The President is still beloved by the state's Republican faithful, as evidenced by the fact that 500 of them showed up to see him at a \$1,000-a-plate private fund raiser for Senator Rick Santorum last week in Sewickley Heights, a suburb of Pittsburgh. Santorum posed for photos with the President at the airport and leaned into a smiling handshake with political guru Karl Rove. But it was telling that Santorum, who is trailing state treasurer Bob Casey by 10 points in the latest polls, scheduled no public appearances with Bush. When Cheney flew to Newark, N.J., earlier in the week to raise nearly \$400,000 that state senator Tom Kean Jr. badly needs in his bid for the U.S. Senate, the candidate didn't show up until 15 minutes after the Vice President's motorcade had left. Kean blamed the state's notorious traffic for his tardiness. Local papers confirmed that there hadn't been much congestion at the time.

On the fund-raising front, Democrats have been surprisingly competitive with the Republicans. In a rare feat for the party, the Democratic senatorial campaign committee has outraised its Republican counterpart. Last year "our bottom-line goal was not to lose any seats," says Charles Schumer, the

New York Senator who heads the committee. "Now, if things fall in line, we might even pick up the Senate." Republicans could even lose the Tennessee seat of retiring majority leader Bill Frist to Representative Harold Ford, a Democrat.

Few strategists in either party think a Democratic takeover of the Senate is likely, but many agree that the party's playing offense rather than defense is a remarkable turnaround, given that Democrats have more incumbents (18) fighting to keep their seats than Republicans do (15). But the G.O.P. failed to recruit strong challengers for the North Dakota, Nebraska and Florida seats that had been considered their best opportunities. "There was a chance for us to get damn close to [a filibuster-proof] 60 votes," says G.O.P. activist Grover Norquist. "We gave away three sure things."

If there's any good news for Republicans, it's that the elections are still seven months off. There is time in which any number of possible events--the capture of Osama bin Laden, for instance, or positive developments out of Iraq--could sweeten the nation's mood. Gingrich says Republicans badly need accomplishments to tell voters about. "The country actually expects the majority to implement," he says. "They hire you to govern, not just to tell them why you are right."

Representative Tom Reynolds of New York, chairman of the G.O.P. House campaign committee, said the picture is more promising race by race than it is nationally. He told TIME only 36 to 40 races will be in play, meaning Democrats would have to keep all their competitive seats and knock off three-quarters of the Republicans. "We have more money, and their only message is slash and burn," Reynolds said.

Republicans can take some comfort in the fact that one general rule about politics remains true, even in this difficult year: as mad as voters are at Washington in general, they are still pretty happy with the individual people who represent them. In the TIME poll, 63% of respondents said they approved of the job their local lawmaker was doing. That's one reason Republican strategists say they plan to battle the national tide by localizing individual races. Localizing suggests drawing voters' attention to the issues that most affect them at home. But in practice, to political operatives it means putting an opponent through the shredder. Republicans plan to go after Democratic challengers with every bit of ammunition they can find, from old tax liens to long-ago votes to raise local taxes.

Democrats say, Bring it on. "If they want to have a negative campaign not about the issues, they will be met on the campaign field," says Illinois Representative Rahm Emanuel, the former Clinton White House aide who heads the Democrats' campaign committee for House races. There has been a shifting line of attack. January's mantra about the G.O.P.'s "culture of corruption" became February's lament about the "rubber-stamp Congress." The latest slogan they are hurling against the Republicans is "dangerously incompetent." (That, however, can be a tricky visual, as Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow discovered when she stood next to a placard with those two words and gave a speech two weeks ago on the Senate floor.)

The most appealing argument the Democrats are offering may be their candidates, who were recruited more for how they fit the districts in which they are running than for how they match the party's national ideology. In Pennsylvania, which has an active bloc of Catholic voters, Casey is an opponent of abortion rights. That same position cost his father, then the Governor, a speaking spot at the 1992 Democratic Convention. For what could be two close races against female Republican incumbents--Heather Wilson in New Mexico and Deborah Pryce in Ohio--Emanuel found women challengers. Former NFL quarterback Heath Schuler has added star power to the race in a North Carolina district. Incumbent Charles Taylor is on the defense there with claims that an electronic glitch prevented him from casting his vote against the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which Bush had sought but is unpopular among Taylor's constituents, who believe it will cost the state jobs.

The most obvious line of defense for Republican candidates is to point out their differences with the President, as the party-wide revolt over the ports deal amply demonstrated. In the face of the Democrats' "rubber stamp" charges, G.O.P. lawmakers are distancing themselves on other issues as well. In Kentucky, Representative Anne Northup, generally a staunch Bush backer, notes that she strongly supports reimporting cheaper drugs from Canada. In Missouri, Senator Jim Talent emphasizes his successful push for an amendment to last year's energy bill that requires 7.5 billion gallons of renewable energy to be in the nation's fuel pipeline by 2012. Boasts Talent adviser Lloyd Smith: "He took on the Bush Administration and the oil companies."

But party leaders are warning privately against taking that strategy too far. "If Diet Coke criticizes

Coke, people buy Pepsi, not Diet Coke," said Ken Mehlman, chairman of the Republican National Committee. In an internal Republican Party memo provided to TIME, Jan van Lohuizen, a longtime Bush pollster, warns candidates tempted to distance themselves that "President Bush drives our image and will do so until we have real national front-runners for the '08 nomination. If he drops, we all drop." Another Republican strategist describes the problem for G.O.P. candidates this way: "Adding weight to the anchor doesn't help them."

Meanwhile, although there is no doubt that Americans are unhappy with the Republicans who run the country, Democratic strategists acknowledge that they have yet to sell voters on their party. In the TIME poll, approval for congressional Democrats is no higher (39%) than for Republicans, and 56% of voters said they don't believe the Democrats offer a clear set of alternative policies. Democratic activists and fund raisers are putting pressure on their leaders to come up with a program to tout as an option different from the Republican agenda, the way Gingrich and G.O.P. candidates did in 1994 with their 10-point Contract with America. Few voters were aware of the particulars of the Contract, but it helped give coherence and a positive tilt to the party message. Emanuel points out that the Republicans did not unveil their 1994 Contract until September of that year and says the Democrats are leery of doing anything right now that may draw attention away from the Republicans' problems. Still, he promises, "we will have, and properly so, in late spring and early summer a rollout [that tells voters], You give us the car, and we'll drive it."

Indeed, the party's House leaders and committee chairs have begun making plans for their first moves if they take power, Democratic sources told TIME. Those sources said one of the first steps that a newly installed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi would take would be to introduce legislation making college tuition more affordable for middle-class families, perhaps through tax credits and lower interest rates on student loans. Democrats would move immediately to tighten port security, seeking to have 100% of incoming container cargo inspected. A Democratic official briefed on the plans said the party would quickly push a bill designed to inhibit future lobbying scandals. The sources said Democrats would push for changes to the troubled Medicare prescription-drug plan, giving more control to Medicare and less to private providers and striking the provision that prevents the government from negotiating prices with pharmaceutical companies.

Administration officials say they fear that losing even one house of Congress would mean subpoenas and investigations--a taste of the medicine House Republicans gave Bill Clinton. "Everything will grind to a halt," one said. That prediction could be a scare tactic designed to get out the G.O.P. vote. But Democrats say that if they are victorious in November, they plan to force Bush to be more accountable, and they intend to dig through records of contracts in Iraq, for homeland security and for the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Democratic Representative Henry Waxman of California, one of the most dogged critics of the Administration, would be in line to chair the House Government Reform Committee and could write witness lists instead of open letters to the West Wing. "Some of these ranking members have had 10 years to think about what they would do," a Democratic official said. If Republicans can't change the course of things soon, the Democrats may have their chance. [The Following Descriptive Text Appears Within A Diagram] TIME Poll WILL BUSH BRING DOWN THE HOUSE? THE PRESIDENT Bush's struggles continue. His approval rating is below 40% and nearly half the country questions his competence In general, do you approve of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President? Approve: 39% Disapprove: 56%

Would you describe President Bush as ... Competent? Total: 52% G.O.P.: 90% Dem.: 25% Ind.: 46% ... Incompetent? Total: 47% G.O.P.: 9% Dem.: 73% Ind.: 53% CONGRESS Voters lean toward putting the Democrats back in control even though the party is seen as lacking a clear agenda. Voters prefer the Democrats on many domestic matters, but Republicans hold a notable edge on handling terrorism If the congressional elections were being held today, would you be more likely to vote for the Republican or Democratic candidate?* Democratic 50% Republican 41% Regardless of which candidates you favor, would you rather see the Republicans or the Democrats control Congress? Democratic 49% Republican 38% Do you think the Democrats have a clear set of policies for the country? Yes 36% No 56% Do you think the Republicans have a clear set of policies for the country? Yes 43% No 50% *Asked of registered voters. Includes respondents who "lean" toward a particular party

Which party would do a better job of ... Democrats / Republicans ... rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast? Democrats ...48% Republicans ...21% ... standing up to special interests?

Democrats ...40% Republicans ...22%

... managing government spending?

Democrats ...46% Republicans ...31%

... dealing with corruption in government?

Democrats ...39% Republicans ...25%

... protecting the rights of Americans?

Democrats ...48% Republicans ...35%

... managing tax policies?

Democrats ...45% Republicans ...38%

... dealing with the war in Iraq?

Democrats ...40% Republicans ...41%

... dealing with terrorism?

Democrats ...33% Republicans ...44%

This TIME poll was conducted by telephone March 22-23 among 1,003 adult Americans by SRBI Public Affairs. The margin of error is +/-3 percentage points. "Don't know" responses omitted for some questions.

Words Fail Him

Vanity Fair

By Michael Wolff

4/5

Now that the daily White House briefings are instantly available online, Press Secretary Scott McClellan's mangled sentences, flat-footed evasions, and genial befuddlement have made him the butt of a thousand blogs, as well as of an increasingly savage press corps. Is he a victim, a pawn, or a P.R. disaster?

How come the White House pressroom doesn't have PowerPoint? Nearly every conference and meeting and middle-school assembly supplies this visual speaking aid and basic technology to lackluster and tongue-tied speakers.

But when I mentioned PowerPoint and other marvels of communication to Scott McClellan, the White House press secretary, in a recent interview, he got a cloudy look—as though I had been making an incongruous or impertinent suggestion. As though only a total outsider, or fool, or wise guy would apply such workaday logic to the briefing process.

The briefing room exists, frozen in amber, in another time. The moment is somewhere after Richard Nixon tried to accommodate—and control—the burgeoning press corps by converting F.D.R.'s pool house, sauna, rubdown rooms, and dog kennel into press offices and a small auditorium (it's still, basically, a pool house, with a door that flaps open directly onto the White House lawn, allowing in gusts of hot or cold air). And somewhere well before the advent of personal computers and the digital age (there is no Wi-Fi in the briefing room).

A kind of daily Socratic dialogue, or at least an attempt at one, continues to take place in the briefing room in a method of inquiry initiated by Joseph Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson's primary aide and, effectively, the nation's first press secretary: a ritual Q&A that leads to both what the White House wants you to know and away from what it doesn't want you to know. Only, now the dialogue is led by

something of a knuckleheaded Socrates, each day struggling and failing to talk his way out of a paper bag.

It's this verbal haplessness that has made Scott McClellan—a pleasant, low-wattage, old-before-his-time young fellow, with, at 38, a wife, no children, and "two dogs and four cats"—the living symbol of this White House's profound and, perhaps, mortal problem with language and meaning. McClellan himself, as though having some terrible social disability, has, standing miserably in the press briefing room every day, become a kick-me archetype. He's Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*: a living victim, whose reason for being is, apparently, to shoulder public ridicule and pain (or, come to think of it, he's Squealer from *Animal Farm*). He's the person nobody would ever choose to be.

His daily march into hostile territory, without any of the available diversions and protections that a basic presentation-software package might provide, is so fraught that it must be a cunning setup—diabolical Karl Rove at it again. If not, it's a remarkable, defining lack of self-awareness on the part of the heretofore all-controlling Bush administration.

McClellan himself hardly seems to be a control freak, nor does he seem all that interested in analyzing his place in a grand political design.

He's obviously comfortable as just a cog in the greater machine. After all, the briefing he presides over is, as much as anything, a ritual (you can more easily explain how it got to be here than why it continues to exist) and a sideshow. ("One thing that the live briefings did," McClellan says about the introduction of live broadcasts during the Clinton administration, "was attract a lot of colorful characters," by which he means, without particular rancor, flaky people and media hounds.) In this and in other recent administrations, the high-end White House media and communication functions have been moved out of the traditional press office into a larger political sphere (Karl Rove is the real press secretary—or media general). What's more, the Bush administration has taken a further step to downgrade the operation: it's practically Bush policy to see the press corps as irrelevant and out of step with the American people.

The diminished role and stature of the place can't be missed: the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room is gross—there's the smell of disinfectant or long-lingering chlorine, broken seats, grungy carpets, harsh lighting, buckled acoustic tiling, shabby draperies ("Somebody fix the curtain—stage right, a white spot," an exasperated cameraman kept yelling, at nobody in particular, on one of the recent days when I was in the room).

But here's the thing that seems to have caught many people in and out of the administration quite unawares: outside of any plan or design or strategy (countermanding the plan, really), the briefing has slipped its bonds, defied its relegation, and become the true public face of the White House.

This supposed side-show works now as something like the White House's daily discourse with the nation (if not for the nation as a whole, at least for the ideologically polarized Internet nation) and the world. It's the White House reality series. Or the briefing is our stumblebum version of challenging the P.M. on the House of Commons floor (we get the vitriol without the grandiloquence and good cheer).

Beginning with the advent of the live broadcasts, under Clinton's last press secretary, Mike McCurry, then as a staple of the cable news cycle, and now as endlessly repeated, ever available streaming video, the briefing has become the living, inarticulate, comically absurd voice of the White House. Under McClellan the briefing is not only the source of news but news itself: McClellan's performance, its degree of ham-handedness, echoed and refracted in a thousand blogs, is a central political event.

"You're talking on [the White House] Web site?" says McClellan, a little bewildered, when I ask him about the transmutation of the briefing process in the last few years, as well as the embarrassment of having his every grunt and pause and garbled sentence rendered in freely available, near-instantaneous transcriptions. "When did that start?" McClellan fuzzily asks Mike, the transcriber he insists upon having at our interview. "Do you have any idea?"

Anyway, Scott McClellan, ready for prime time or not, may be the first real-time political figure and, arguably, the most public, or most exposed, man in America, gamely, doggedly repeating his set phrases ("We're going to keep focusing on the pressing priorities of the American people"; "We're going to continue to focus on the priorities of the American people"; "We're moving on to the priorities of the American people") long after they've become punch lines.

Putting someone as strikingly out of his depth as McClellan into this job (and keeping him there) could well be part of this administration's contempt for the press. But while that contempt is surely real, installing McClellan here may actually, in another self-awareness gap, have been the administration's idea of a generous act.

In the modern history of presidential press secretaries—from, say, Ron Ziegler in the Watergate White House through to the present—the job has veered between greater and lesser levels of stonewalling and accommodation. McClellan's immediate predecessor, Ari Fleischer, by nature a cold fish—and a prickly one at that—was quite a gifted stonewaller (true stonewalling involves a certain amount of aggression—an implicit threat that you will really be messed with if you go for the follow-up question). Then, too, his general air of resistance and tight-lippedness may have reflected not just the Bush administration's media hostility but Fleischer's own distance from the inner circle (he was an outsider, an Elizabeth Dole–campaign man). He didn't try to explain, perhaps because he couldn't.

McClellan, on the other hand, sincere and earnest, might reasonably have been regarded as a kinder, gentler, and, as it happens, more informed representative. He's an insider—a guy in the Texas circle. To that degree, the inner circle might have thought of him as a certain sort of gift to the press—the real Bush thing.

Indeed, it's a Texas political-family thing. His mother, Carole Keeton Strayhorn, became the mayor of Austin when Scott was in the third grade. By high school he was fully involved with her campaigns; by college he was running them. His older brother Mark McClellan heads the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; before that, he was commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. Their parents are divorced: father Barr McClellan is the author of a book claiming that L.B.J. murdered President Kennedy; last year, Strayhorn announced that she was quitting the Texas G.O.P. to run against Rick Perry, the Republican governor (formerly Bush's lieutenant gov-ernor), as an independent. This hint of family eccentricity perhaps helped create McClellan's clear aversion to conflict and foster his air of let's-all-get-alongness (while that's his obvious inclination in the briefing room, he seems to have no real talent for getting people to get along with one another).

It was Karen Hughes, Bush's longtime aide and handler, who picked Mc-Clellan from the Texas Republican political crowd and brought him into then Governor Bush's political operation. McClellan is in the Hughes mold, haimish in a Texas sort of way, setting him innately apart from non-Texans. The Bush inner circle is also the us-versus-them circle.

He's what the Bush people like to call a straight shooter. Very much the kind of young person whom older people like (this is a certain sort of high status in politics in general and in southern politics in particular—dweeb as acolyte). The premium is on one-dimensionality. A singularity of purpose. No edge. No shading. No artifice—or the artifice is strictly Dale Car-ne-gie artifice. No slyness. No real sense of humor. No over-analyzing anything (one of McClellan's favorite criticisms of the press, and another of his often repeated phrases, is about the "tendency to over-interpret"). What you see is what you get.

In some perhaps crucial sense, he was, when he got the press-secretary job, in 2003, at the age of 35, not only the official representative of what the Bush people stood for but a proud example of it.

My guess is that nobody in the inner circle thought it very important that he couldn't talk, that he had to plod and often struggle through every sentence. Not being able to talk—not being quick enough and facile enough to shape language to your precise and urgent needs—might even have been a further sign of his straight-shooter qualities.

In that sense, McClellan may have been even an idealization. Just the facts, ma'am. That's all the press would get out of him—that's all anybody could get out of him. (He tends to relentlessly repeat anything that he thinks is a fact, for instance his initially quaint and then puzzling constant characterization of 50-year-old Supreme Court nominee John Roberts as "young," causing one reporter to press, "Are you aware of something that is getting ready to come out ... that will make this administration say, `Well, that was when he was young and he has now changed his mind?'") Maybe the media wouldn't be able to twist his words, because his words would be, knowing Scott, necessarily so limited and basic.

Also—and this must surely have been part of the thinking in such a top-down administration—because Scott couldn't talk, he wouldn't be able to say anything for himself. His lack of verbal acumen, his lack of dexterity with a subordinate clause, becomes another part of the way to control the White House message in a White House obsessed with such control. He wouldn't be able to cozy up to the press. That requires a serving-two-masters deftness. A special tonal range. A wink. A nod. An emphasis. A surgical use of modifiers, so that I say what I have to say in such a way that we all understand what I mean to say. A little Kabukiness.

This is not just sophistry, something else that straight shooters don't practice; it's verbal athleticism. Language is the game. You need to have a gift for it.

In McClellan's case, almost all of his sentences are dead on arrival. Even the pre-written sentences (most every briefing begins with a statement about the president's schedule or the plausibly positive developments at hand—we've turned the corner in Iraq, etc.) are so bald and flat-footed that they become a kind of insult—he doesn't disguise the bull.

Herewith another emotional complication: among the overrated jobs in American journalism is being a daily assignment reporter covering the White House. You are, in essence, a transcriber. The White House dishes out relative baloney and you serve it. So if you're the press secretary, your job is to make the baloney palatable. You have to help provide press people with the wherewithal to maintain the belief that they are doing something more than writing up your spin—you have to go the extra lingua-mile to make the spin seem plausible, clever, elegant, seductive, uplifting even. It is not just the stubbornness of McClellan's baloney but the inartfulness that makes everybody nuts. He offers nobody any cover.

The media, after all, is being blamed by many people (not to mention many of its own people) for pretty much uncritically accepting the Bush line about the war—about terrorism, W.M.D., and the prospects for a positive outcome in Iraq. The media's defense has been that it can function only within the prescribed information structure. How can we know when the White House is prevaricating, dissembling, not being straight with us, even outright lying to us?

McClellan destroys this line of defense. His inability to finesse the administration line, to tickle its logic, to prettify it, to seem smart about it in the least—and with virtually every one of his prevaricating and dissembling and truth-avoiding utterances becoming the morsels of the daily blog diet—means the media has to struggle even more to justify how it ever believed these num--skulls.

In fact, Iraq, relatively speaking, remains the elephant in the briefing room—nobody really talks about it. But as to everything else, McClellan has become a helpless and irresistible target.

On Rove-Plame-Libby he dumbly delivered a bald denial on Rove's behalf (whereas Rove's actual denial was a study in the nuance of deniability) and therefore became as guilty as Rove and more foolish.

Katrina became the objective correlative of McClellan's inability to connect language to reality ("Flood control has been a priority of this administration from Day One." And "As I have indicated, this is not a time for politics." And again: "This is not a time for finger-pointing or playing politics"), and, in turn, McClellan became the living example of the White House's own befuddlement.

When Dick Cheney shot Harry Whittington, McClellan, in some strange, reflexive slow motion, adopted the Katrina defense—whatever happened on the ground was so complicated and the scene so remote that the White House prudently waited to amass all reports and all data before responding to the event.

On Dubai Ports, an obvious shocked-shocked thing for the press and everybody not personally associated with the White House, McClellan was, once again, helpless to hit the ball back—to one reporter's asinine question about how many American companies run Arab ports, he just stood there blinking.

Every day, he's pulped, pummeled, spit upon for speaking White House untruths—or for not speaking them well enough.

It is so bad, and so constantly public—every misspoken word, every stutter, every repetition, repeated mercilessly across the information universe—that he can only hope that it's gotten bad enough for him to get a sympathy vote.

Which is why, after months of repeated requests, I all of a sudden got a call to come to the West Wing and have a chat with McClellan. This is a reach-out. He's a man on the ropes. He needs to explain himself. It's personal—it's got to be. Even McClellan, whose singular talent is to stand there and take it, has feelings.

But there remains the same intractable problem: he's as inexpressive one-on-one as he is in the briefing room.

He makes the problem worse: while I intentionally have not brought a tape recorder, hoping to hear McClellan talk without the self-consciousness of preserved words, he, ever defensive and bureaucratic, has his own recorder on the table, and, what's more, an official stenographer sitting in on our conversation (the "steno," as Mc---Clellan calls him, has a tape, too—and a big funnel microphone which he points at me and at McClellan—from which he makes the transcription).

Now, the subject is—my invitation here has everything to do with—the fact that McClellan has become the world's most pitiable (or martyred, depending on your ideological position) creature. And while it would probably not be a good idea for McClellan to break down in tears, you should, if you're in McClellan's position, want to somehow evoke rather than flatly deny your humanity—you want to slip it in, begin to suggest you bleed, too.

But he denies all personal feelings. Indeed, his approach here to dealing with his humiliation is to call me up to demonstrate that he can deny what's crystal clear:

McClellan: One thing that you can't let happen when you're in a position like this is—and you can't get caught up—well, let me back up. I think the best way to say it is that you can't take things personally.

I offer a wider opening:

Me: I don't know of another example where someone's words on a daily basis—someone's essentially extemporaneous words—are so dissected and repeated—

McClellan: Around the world.

Me:—and redistributed. It must make you crazy.

McClellan: No, it's part of the job. I mean, I'm actually glad that we have the whole transcript out there so everybody can see and have the full context of it.

It's one-note. He can't leave it. He's affectless. (His forehead is absolutely smooth—robotlike rather than Botox-like smooth.)

He professes: He's an office worker, nothing more, nothing less, doing his job. There's nothing more than that.

I can't even get him going very much on the history of his office (usually people in politics love the history digression), nor on his predecessors (he does offer that he sees himself most like George Christian, L.B.J.'s last press secretary, who was from Texas and who, if he is remembered for anything, is remembered for not being too memorable).

Indeed, the only real nod to the idea of how the job has changed—creating the predicament of rancor and high exposure that he finds himself in—is to evoke, in all but random fashion, 9/11. It's a reference made, it seems, for no other reason than that in the Bush White House everything must be related to 9/11.

Finally, though, I manage—this is just after the Cheney shooting mess—to get him to make a small admission of being just a little bothered by being so relentlessly bitten and kicked:

McClellan: Well, last week was a little bit of an example where I think most people feel like the White House press corps, in general, went a little over the top.... I tried to be as responsive and forthright as

I could be based on the facts that I knew. And obviously, there's a point where the vice president was going to have to come out and talk about it. He wanted to wait until Harry Whittington was doing better. But this town can—and I think I talked about it last week—can get into over-analyzing things at points. And I think there was a tendency to do that last week—or over-interpret things.

Which is how I got to thinking about PowerPoint, pressing the suggestion with McClellan, who says there is a plan to renovate the briefing room.

In a minimally well-equipped office, your junior-most assistant would have been able to put a time line up on slides, and let you flip to everybody's highlighted statements, and illustrate the issue with graphics and maybe even a little video (Harry Whittington from the hospital bed), and, in lieu of verbal repetition, provide some bullet points (no pun) which you could refer back to—"What I wouldn't have given to be able to talk about slides," said a former press secretary of my acquaintance who held the job before Power-Point was popular—sparing McClellan the verbal and intellectual burden of having to keep all these cockamamy moving pieces and wildly unlikely scenarios in credible and reasonable order in his head.

So is he purposely being sacrificed? McClellan looks and acts like a pawn, so perhaps he is. And why else wouldn't you fire someone who is so obviously not up to it? There must be method here. The Rovian rationale might go something like this: Scott talks fine enough for our people; the fact that he's not the brightest bulb makes him more sympathetic and recognizable; he's everybody's good-guy brother—or ev-erybody's good-guy brother in our good-guy base. If NBC's David Gregory calls Scott a "jerk" for a little prevaricating when it comes to the vice president's hunting accident (which itself, probably, isn't playing so badly with the base), well, them's fighting words coming from a media snot. When it comes to the press, just grin and bear it—or let Scott grin and bear it.

But, personally, I think the true answer is that the Bush people have no idea what they're doing here. Language exists for these guys only as a bullying tactic (if they say we're at war, then we're at war). They rule by repetition—that's their truncheon. Their whole theory, to the extent they theorize, is to keep it simple, stupid—in fact, to mock the people who make it complicated. The problem is that Scott McClellan isn't really a bully. He's rather a pantywaist. So something of a reversal has happened. The press is now the bully and Scott McClellan is recognizable to everyone as the kid who, unfairly and cruelly, to be sure, gets instant-ly set upon and pulled apart. Indeed, he reminds us all, disgustingly, of our own inarticulateness (which may not be the best way to get the sympathy vote).

Then, too, not unimportantly, these guys in the White House—and probably not just them, but everybody in pre-modern governmentland—still don't know jack about the Internet. They have no idea what's really being said about them, at what rate, and by whom, and how widespread and how damaging the joke has become.

This failure of language and nuance falls most squarely on Scott's head, but it is also, day by day, doing the rest of them in.

And while it's too late now, if they had just gotten a big plasma screen up there and let Scott point instead of talk, they might have spared themselves a bit.

--Michael Wolff, a Vanity Fair contributing editor, is the author of *Autumn of the Moguls* (HarperBusiness) and *Burn Rate: How I Survived the Gold Rush Years on the Internet* (Simon & Schuster).

ISRAEL

Borderline Support

National Review

By Meyrav Wurmser

4/3

Israel's recent elections occurred in the context of significant, even monumental, questions facing the Jewish nation. Israel faces grave threats from Hamas's ascent, al Qaeda's possible entry into the Palestinian territories, the large-scale buildup of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the rise of an imminently

nuclear, apocalyptic Iranian regime. In the face of all of that, the central item on Israel's national agenda is unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank in order to establish the country's final borders.

Coverage of the elections has almost universally suggested that Israelis overwhelmingly support further disengagements from the Palestinians. The Kadima victory has been touted as a vindication "convergence," Kadima's new title for unilateral Israeli withdrawal from large areas of the West Bank. But a closer look at the election results suggests a far more complex picture. Not all Israelis--not even a significant majority--support such a policy. And this could pose quite a challenge for Olmert's soon-to-be-formed government.

The new Kadima ("Forward") party, winner of the Israeli elections, was established a mere four months ago by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, shortly before his incapacitating stroke. Sharon left his own Likud party in order to temper internal opposition generated by his unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, a move that broke with Likud's traditional stance. When Sharon fell ill, Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was called upon to take charge of the fledgling party, and he rapidly became the country's frontrunner in the March elections that resulted.

Riding on Sharon's overwhelming popularity, Kadima was predicted by most polls to win an enormous victory--between 36 and 45 out of 120 Knesset seats--as recently as last week. Certain of his party's triumph, Olmert did something atypical of Israeli candidates: he spelled out his post-elections political plan. He told a variety of newspapers that he intends to withdraw unilaterally from large parts of the West Bank and to evacuate about 80,000 settlers from their homes. Even Prime Minister Sharon, who gained the Israeli people's unwavering trust, did not spell out his plan to disengage from Gaza prior to the last elections, fearing that such a move would cost him votes. Olmert, on the other hand, was so certain that the majority of Israelis had moved to the center-left, in support of unilateral disengagement, that he did not feel the need to keep his plans to himself until after the elections.

But Olmert's confidence was premature. Instead of gaining the hoped-for 36-45 seats, Kadima won the elections with only 29. This result was disappointing to many in Kadima if only because they hoped the party would have more positions to hand out. But the results are most disappointing to the advocates of unilateral withdrawal.

The challenge now facing Ehud Olmert is how to build a broad coalition that will support this withdrawal. His natural allies include the Labor party, with twenty mandates, the Pensioners, with seven mandates, and the secular ultra-left Meretz party, with five. Although this does amount to 61 seats, the thin majority would leave such a government tremendously vulnerable to instability. Should the coalition survive and vote in favor of unilateral withdrawal, critics would surely claim it illegitimate and non-representative of the views of a very large minority.

To secure a more stable coalition, Olmert will have to turn to the large religious Shas party, which gained 12 mandates, or to the Russian immigrant party Yisrael Beiteinu, which secured 11 mandates in the elections. If those two parties joined the coalition, Olmert could preside over a broad coalition of up to 84 mandates. Although it now seems likely that one or both will become members of the ruling coalition, this kind of a coalition would last only until Olmert launches his withdrawal plan. Shas's leaders, as well as the majority of its voters, strongly oppose unilateral withdrawals. In fact, in his victory speech following the elections, Shas's leader Eli Yishai emphasized, with tears in his eyes, his opposition to such border changes. Likewise, Avigdor Lieberman of Yisrael Beiteinu said as late as a week before the elections that his party, which advocates territorial exchanges with the Palestinians in order to maintain a clear Jewish majority in Israel, will oppose Olmert's unilateral withdrawals.

Although many Israel observers in Washington interpret Kadima's election as a mandate for unilateral withdrawals, the fact is that there is not a strong, reliable Zionist majority to support such a move. Olmert could rely on the support of one or more of the Communist or Arab parties (with a total of nine seats), which oppose Israel's existence as a Jewish nation, to carry out withdrawals. But opponents, including the settlers' Ichud Leumi (National Union) party, the secular right-wing parties, and the religious block (which together total 50 Knesset seats) would likely argue that this undermines the legitimacy of the withdrawal. No matter how wide a temporary coalition Olmert will be able to establish, his ability to maneuver and carry out his political plan will face strong opposition. The disengagement plan may just disengage the flimsy coalition.

--Meyrav Wurmser is the director of the Center for Middle East Policy at the Hudson Institute.

IRAN

The Iran Plans

New Yorker
By Seymour M. Hersh
4/10

The Bush Administration, while publicly advocating diplomacy in order to stop Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapon, has increased clandestine activities inside Iran and intensified planning for a possible major air attack. Current and former American military and intelligence officials said that Air Force planning groups are drawing up lists of targets, and teams of American combat troops have been ordered into Iran, under cover, to collect targeting data and to establish contact with anti-government ethnic-minority groups. The officials say that President Bush is determined to deny the Iranian regime

The opportunity to begin a pilot program, planned for this spring, to enrich uranium. American and European intelligence agencies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.), agree that Iran is intent on developing the capability to produce nuclear weapons. But there are widely differing estimates of how long that will take, and whether diplomacy, sanctions, or military action is the best way to prevent it. Iran insists that its research is for peaceful use only, in keeping with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and that it will not be delayed or deterred.

There is a growing conviction among members of the United States military, and in the international community, that President Bush's ultimate goal in the nuclear confrontation with Iran is regime change. Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has challenged the reality of the Holocaust and said that Israel must be "wiped off the map." Bush and others in the White House view him as a potential Adolf Hitler, a former senior intelligence official said. "That's the name they're using. They say, 'Will Iran get a strategic weapon and threaten another world war?' "

A government consultant with close ties to the civilian leadership in the Pentagon said that Bush was "absolutely convinced that Iran is going to get the bomb" if it is not stopped. He said that the President believes that he must do "what no Democrat or Republican, if elected in the future, would have the courage to do," and "that saving Iran is going to be his legacy."

One former defense official, who still deals with sensitive issues for the Bush Administration, told me that the military planning was premised on a belief that "a sustained bombing campaign in Iran will humiliate the religious leadership and lead the public to rise up and overthrow the government." He added, "I was shocked when I heard it, and asked myself, 'What are they smoking?' "

The rationale for regime change was articulated in early March by Patrick Clawson, an Iran expert who is the deputy director for research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and who has been a supporter of President Bush. "So long as Iran has an Islamic republic, it will have a nuclear-weapons program, at least clandestinely," Clawson told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 2nd. "The key issue, therefore, is: How long will the present Iranian regime last?"

When I spoke to Clawson, he emphasized that "this Administration is putting a lot of effort into diplomacy." However, he added, Iran had no choice other than to accede to America's demands or face a military attack. Clawson said that he fears that Ahmadinejad "sees the West as wimps and thinks we will eventually cave in. We have to be ready to deal with Iran if the crisis escalates." Clawson said that he would prefer to rely on sabotage and other clandestine activities, such as "industrial accidents." But, he said, it would be prudent to prepare for a wider war, "given the way the Iranians are acting. This is not like planning to invade Quebec."

One military planner told me that White House criticisms of Iran and the high tempo of planning and clandestine activities amount to a campaign of "coercion" aimed at Iran. "You have to be ready to go, and we'll see how they respond," the officer said. "You have to really show a threat in order to get Ahmadinejad to back down." He added, "People think Bush has been focussed on Saddam Hussein since 9/11," but, "in my view, if you had to name one nation that was his focus all the way along, it was Iran." (In response to detailed requests for comment, the White House said that it would not comment on military planning but added, "As the President has indicated, we are pursuing a diplomatic solution"; the Defense Department also said that Iran was being dealt with through "diplomatic

channels" but wouldn't elaborate on that; the C.I.A. said that there were "inaccuracies" in this account but would not specify them.)

"This is much more than a nuclear issue," one high-ranking diplomat told me in Vienna. "That's just a rallying point, and there is still time to fix it. But the Administration believes it cannot be fixed unless they control the hearts and minds of Iran. The real issue is who is going to control the Middle East and its oil in the next ten years."

A senior Pentagon adviser on the war on terror expressed a similar view. "This White House believes that the only way to solve the problem is to change the power structure in Iran, and that means war," he said. The danger, he said, was that "it also reinforces the belief inside Iran that the only way to defend the country is to have a nuclear capability." A military conflict that destabilized the region could also increase the risk of terror: "Hezbollah comes into play," the adviser said, referring to the terror group that is considered one of the world's most successful, and which is now a Lebanese political party with strong ties to Iran. "And here comes Al Qaeda."

In recent weeks, the President has quietly initiated a series of talks on plans for Iran with a few key senators and members of Congress, including at least one Democrat. A senior member of the House Appropriations Committee, who did not take part in the meetings but has discussed their content with his colleagues, told me that there had been "no formal briefings," because "they're reluctant to brief the minority. They're doing the Senate, somewhat selectively."

The House member said that no one in the meetings "is really objecting" to the talk of war. "The people they're briefing are the same ones who led the charge on Iraq. At most, questions are raised: How are you going to hit all the sites at once? How are you going to get deep enough?" (Iran is building facilities underground.) "There's no pressure from Congress" not to take military action, the House member added. "The only political pressure is from the guys who want to do it." Speaking of President Bush, the House member said, "The most worrisome thing is that this guy has a messianic vision."

Some operations, apparently aimed in part at intimidating Iran, are already under way. American Naval tactical aircraft, operating from carriers in the Arabian Sea, have been flying simulated nuclear-weapons delivery missions—rapid ascending maneuvers known as "over the shoulder" bombing—since last summer, the former official said, within range of Iranian coastal radars.

Last month, in a paper given at a conference on Middle East security in Berlin, Colonel Sam Gardiner, a military analyst who taught at the National War College before retiring from the Air Force, in 1987, provided an estimate of what would be needed to destroy Iran's nuclear program. Working from satellite photographs of the known facilities, Gardiner estimated that at least four hundred targets would have to be hit. He added:

I don't think a U.S. military planner would want to stop there. Iran probably has two chemical-production plants. We would hit those. We would want to hit the medium-range ballistic missiles that have just recently been moved closer to Iraq. There are fourteen airfields with sheltered aircraft. . . . We'd want to get rid of that threat. We would want to hit the assets that could be used to threaten Gulf shipping. That means targeting the cruise-missile sites and the Iranian diesel submarines. . . . Some of the facilities may be too difficult to target even with penetrating weapons. The U.S. will have to use Special Operations units.

One of the military's initial option plans, as presented to the White House by the Pentagon this winter, calls for the use of a bunker-buster tactical nuclear weapon, such as the B61-11, against underground nuclear sites. One target is Iran's main centrifuge plant, at Natanz, nearly two hundred miles south of Tehran. Natanz, which is no longer under I.A.E.A. safeguards, reportedly has underground floor space to hold fifty thousand centrifuges, and laboratories and workspaces buried approximately seventy-five feet beneath the surface. That number of centrifuges could provide enough enriched uranium for about twenty nuclear warheads a year. (Iran has acknowledged that it initially kept the existence of its enrichment program hidden from I.A.E.A. inspectors, but claims that none of its current activity is barred by the Non-Proliferation Treaty.) The elimination of Natanz would be a major setback for Iran's nuclear ambitions, but the conventional weapons in the American arsenal could not insure the destruction of facilities under seventy-five feet of earth and rock, especially if they are reinforced with concrete.

There is a Cold War precedent for targeting deep underground bunkers with nuclear weapons. In the early nineteen-eighties, the American intelligence community watched as the Soviet government began digging a huge underground complex outside Moscow. Analysts concluded that the underground facility was designed for "continuity of government"—for the political and military leadership to survive a nuclear war. (There are similar facilities, in Virginia and Pennsylvania, for the American leadership.) The Soviet facility still exists, and much of what the U.S. knows about it remains classified. "The 'tell'—the giveaway—"was the ventilator shafts, some of which were disguised," the former senior intelligence official told me. At the time, he said, it was determined that "only nukes" could destroy the bunker. He added that some American intelligence analysts believe that the Russians helped the Iranians design their underground facility. "We see a similarity of design," specifically in the ventilator shafts, he said.

A former high-level Defense Department official told me that, in his view, even limited bombing would allow the U.S. to "go in there and do enough damage to slow down the nuclear infrastructure—it's feasible." The former defense official said, "The Iranians don't have friends, and we can tell them that, if necessary, we'll keep knocking back their infrastructure. The United States should act like we're ready to go." He added, "We don't have to knock down all of their air defenses. Our stealth bombers and standoff missiles really work, and we can blow fixed things up. We can do things on the ground, too, but it's difficult and very dangerous—put bad stuff in ventilator shafts and put them to sleep." But those who are familiar with the Soviet bunker, according to the former senior intelligence official, "say 'No way.' You've got to know what's underneath—to know which ventilator feeds people, or diesel generators, or which are false. And there's a lot that we don't know." The lack of reliable intelligence leaves military planners, given the goal of totally destroying the sites, little choice but to consider the use of tactical nuclear weapons. "Every other option, in the view of the nuclear weaponeers, would leave a gap," the former senior intelligence official said. " 'Decisive' is the key word of the Air Force's planning. It's a tough decision. But we made it in Japan."

He went on, "Nuclear planners go through extensive training and learn the technical details of damage and fallout—we're talking about mushroom clouds, radiation, mass casualties, and contamination over years. This is not an underground nuclear test, where all you see is the earth raised a little bit. These politicians don't have a clue, and whenever anybody tries to get it out"—remove the nuclear option—"they're shouted down."

The attention given to the nuclear option has created serious misgivings inside the offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he added, and some officers have talked about resigning. Late this winter, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to remove the nuclear option from the evolving war plans for Iran—without success, the former intelligence official said. "The White House said, 'Why are you challenging this? The option came from you.' "

The Pentagon adviser on the war on terror confirmed that some in the Administration were looking seriously at this option, which he linked to a resurgence of interest in tactical nuclear weapons among Pentagon civilians and in policy circles. He called it "a juggernaut that has to be stopped." He also confirmed that some senior officers and officials were considering resigning over the issue. "There are very strong sentiments within the military against brandishing nuclear weapons against other countries," the adviser told me. "This goes to high levels." The matter may soon reach a decisive point, he said, because the Joint Chiefs had agreed to give President Bush a formal recommendation stating that they are strongly opposed to considering the nuclear option for Iran. "The internal debate on this has hardened in recent weeks," the adviser said. "And, if senior Pentagon officers express their opposition to the use of offensive nuclear weapons, then it will never happen."

The adviser added, however, that the idea of using tactical nuclear weapons in such situations has gained support from the Defense Science Board, an advisory panel whose members are selected by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. "They're telling the Pentagon that we can build the B61 with more blast and less radiation," he said.

The chairman of the Defense Science Board is William Schneider, Jr., an Under-Secretary of State in the Reagan Administration. In January, 2001, as President Bush prepared to take office, Schneider served on an ad-hoc panel on nuclear forces sponsored by the National Institute for Public Policy, a conservative think tank. The panel's report recommended treating tactical nuclear weapons as an essential part of the U.S. arsenal and noted their suitability "for those occasions when the certain and prompt destruction of high priority targets is essential and beyond the promise of conventional weapons." Several signers of the report are now prominent members of the Bush Administration,

including Stephen Hadley, the national-security adviser; Stephen Cambone, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; and Robert Joseph, the Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security.

The Pentagon adviser questioned the value of air strikes. "The Iranians have distributed their nuclear activity very well, and we have no clue where some of the key stuff is. It could even be out of the country," he said. He warned, as did many others, that bombing Iran could provoke "a chain reaction" of attacks on American facilities and citizens throughout the world: "What will 1.2 billion Muslims think the day we attack Iran?"

With or without the nuclear option, the list of targets may inevitably expand. One recently retired high-level Bush Administration official, who is also an expert on war planning, told me that he would have vigorously argued against an air attack on Iran, because "Iran is a much tougher target" than Iraq. But, he added, "If you're going to do any bombing to stop the nukes, you might as well improve your lie across the board. Maybe hit some training camps, and clear up a lot of other problems." The Pentagon adviser said that, in the event of an attack, the Air Force intended to strike many hundreds of targets in Iran but that "ninety-nine per cent of them have nothing to do with proliferation. There are people who believe it's the way to operate"—that the Administration can achieve its policy goals in Iran with a bombing campaign, an idea that has been supported by neoconservatives.

If the order were to be given for an attack, the American combat troops now operating in Iran would be in position to mark the critical targets with laser beams, to insure bombing accuracy and to minimize civilian casualties. As of early winter, I was told by the government consultant with close ties to civilians in the Pentagon, the units were also working with minority groups in Iran, including the Azeris, in the north, the Baluchis, in the southeast, and the Kurds, in the northeast. The troops "are studying the terrain, and giving away walking-around money to ethnic tribes, and recruiting scouts from local tribes and shepherds," the consultant said. One goal is to get "eyes on the ground"—quoting a line from "Othello," he said, "Give me the ocular proof." The broader aim, the consultant said, is to "encourage ethnic tensions" and undermine the regime.

The new mission for the combat troops is a product of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's long-standing interest in expanding the role of the military in covert operations, which was made official policy in the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review, published in February. Such activities, if conducted by C.I.A. operatives, would need a Presidential Finding and would have to be reported to key members of Congress.

" 'Force protection' is the new buzzword," the former senior intelligence official told me. He was referring to the Pentagon's position that clandestine activities that can be broadly classified as preparing the battlefield or protecting troops are military, not intelligence, operations, and are therefore not subject to congressional oversight. "The guys in the Joint Chiefs of Staff say there are a lot of uncertainties in Iran," he said. "We need to have more than what we had in Iraq. Now we have the green light to do everything we want."

The President's deep distrust of Ahmadinejad has strengthened his determination to confront Iran. This view has been reinforced by allegations that Ahmadinejad, who joined a special-forces brigade of the Revolutionary Guards in 1986, may have been involved in terrorist activities in the late eighties. (There are gaps in Ahmadinejad's official biography in this period.) Ahmadinejad has reportedly been connected to Imad Mughniyeh, a terrorist who has been implicated in the deadly bombings of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, in 1983. Mughniyeh was then the security chief of Hezbollah; he remains on the F.B.I.'s list of most-wanted terrorists.

Robert Baer, who was a C.I.A. officer in the Middle East and elsewhere for two decades, told me that Ahmadinejad and his Revolutionary Guard colleagues in the Iranian government "are capable of making a bomb, hiding it, and launching it at Israel. They're apocalyptic Shiites. If you're sitting in Tel Aviv and you believe they've got nukes and missiles—you've got to take them out. These guys are nuts, and there's no reason to back off."

Under Ahmadinejad, the Revolutionary Guards have expanded their power base throughout the Iranian bureaucracy; by the end of January, they had replaced thousands of civil servants with their own members. One former senior United Nations official, who has extensive experience with Iran, depicted the turnover as "a white coup," with ominous implications for the West. "Professionals in the Foreign

Ministry are out; others are waiting to be kicked out," he said. "We may be too late. These guys now believe that they are stronger than ever since the revolution." He said that, particularly in consideration of China's emergence as a superpower, Iran's attitude was "To hell with the West. You can do as much as you like."

Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, is considered by many experts to be in a stronger position than Ahmadinejad. "Ahmadinejad is not in control," one European diplomat told me. "Power is diffuse in Iran. The Revolutionary Guards are among the key backers of the nuclear program, but, ultimately, I don't think they are in charge of it. The Supreme Leader has the casting vote on the nuclear program, and the Guards will not take action without his approval."

The Pentagon adviser on the war on terror said that "allowing Iran to have the bomb is not on the table. We cannot have nukes being sent downstream to a terror network. It's just too dangerous." He added, "The whole internal debate is on which way to go"—in terms of stopping the Iranian program. It is possible, the adviser said, that Iran will unilaterally renounce its nuclear plans—and forestall the American action. "God may smile on us, but I don't think so. The bottom line is that Iran cannot become a nuclear-weapons state. The problem is that the Iranians realize that only by becoming a nuclear state can they defend themselves against the U.S. Something bad is going to happen."

While almost no one disputes Iran's nuclear ambitions, there is intense debate over how soon it could get the bomb, and what to do about that. Robert Gallucci, a former government expert on nonproliferation who is now the dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown, told me, "Based on what I know, Iran could be eight to ten years away" from developing a deliverable nuclear weapon. Gallucci added, "If they had a covert nuclear program and we could prove it, and we could not stop it by negotiation, diplomacy, or the threat of sanctions, I'd be in favor of taking it out. But if you do it"—bomb Iran—"without being able to show there's a secret program, you're in trouble."

Meir Dagan, the head of Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, told the Knesset last December that "Iran is one to two years away, at the latest, from having enriched uranium. From that point, the completion of their nuclear weapon is simply a technical matter." In a conversation with me, a senior Israeli intelligence official talked about what he said was Iran's duplicity: "There are two parallel nuclear programs" inside Iran—the program declared to the I.A.E.A. and a separate operation, run by the military and the Revolutionary Guards. Israeli officials have repeatedly made this argument, but Israel has not produced public evidence to support it. Richard Armitage, the Deputy Secretary of State in Bush's first term, told me, "I think Iran has a secret nuclear-weapons program—I believe it, but I don't know it."

In recent months, the Pakistani government has given the U.S. new access to A. Q. Khan, the so-called father of the Pakistani atomic bomb. Khan, who is now living under house arrest in Islamabad, is accused of setting up a black market in nuclear materials; he made at least one clandestine visit to Tehran in the late nineteen-eighties. In the most recent interrogations, Khan has provided information on Iran's weapons design and its time line for building a bomb. "The picture is of 'unquestionable danger,' " the former senior intelligence official said. (The Pentagon adviser also confirmed that Khan has been "singing like a canary.") The concern, the former senior official said, is that "Khan has credibility problems. He is suggestible, and he's telling the neoconservatives what they want to hear"—or what might be useful to Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, who is under pressure to assist Washington in the war on terror.

"I think Khan's leading us on," the former intelligence official said. "I don't know anybody who says, 'Here's the smoking gun.' But lights are beginning to blink. He's feeding us information on the time line, and targeting information is coming in from our own sources— sensors and the covert teams. The C.I.A., which was so burned by Iraqi W.M.D., is going to the Pentagon and the Vice-President's office saying, 'It's all new stuff.' People in the Administration are saying, 'We've got enough.' " The Administration's case against Iran is compromised by its history of promoting false intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. In a recent essay on the Foreign Policy Web site, entitled "Fool Me Twice," Joseph Cirincione, the director for nonproliferation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote, "The unfolding administration strategy appears to be an effort to repeat its successful campaign for the Iraq war." He noted several parallels:

The vice president of the United States gives a major speech focused on the threat from an oil-rich nation in the Middle East. The U.S. Secretary of State tells Congress that the same nation is our most

serious global challenge. The Secretary of Defense calls that nation the leading supporter of global terrorism.

Cirincione called some of the Administration's claims about Iran "questionable" or lacking in evidence. When I spoke to him, he asked, "What do we know? What is the threat? The question is: How urgent is all this?" The answer, he said, "is in the intelligence community and the I.A.E.A." (In August, the Washington Post reported that the most recent comprehensive National Intelligence Estimate predicted that Iran was a decade away from being a nuclear power.)

Last year, the Bush Administration briefed I.A.E.A. officials on what it said was new and alarming information about Iran's weapons program which had been retrieved from an Iranian's laptop. The new data included more than a thousand pages of technical drawings of weapons systems. The Washington Post reported that there were also designs for a small facility that could be used in the uranium-enrichment process. Leaks about the laptop became the focal point of stories in the Times and elsewhere. The stories were generally careful to note that the materials could have been fabricated, but also quoted senior American officials as saying that they appeared to be legitimate. The headline in the Times' account read, "RELYING ON COMPUTER, U.S. SEEKS TO PROVE IRAN'S NUCLEAR AIMS." I was told in interviews with American and European intelligence officials, however, that the laptop was more suspect and less revelatory than it had been depicted. The Iranian who owned the laptop had initially been recruited by German and American intelligence operatives, working together. The Americans eventually lost interest in him. The Germans kept on, but the Iranian was seized by the Iranian counter-intelligence force. It is not known where he is today. Some family members managed to leave Iran with his laptop and handed it over at a U.S. embassy, apparently in Europe. It was a classic "walk-in."

A European intelligence official said, "There was some hesitation on our side" about what the materials really proved, "and we are still not convinced." The drawings were not meticulous, as newspaper accounts suggested, "but had the character of sketches," the European official said. "It was not a slam-dunk smoking gun."

The threat of American military action has created dismay at the headquarters of the I.A.E.A., in Vienna. The agency's officials believe that Iran wants to be able to make a nuclear weapon, but "nobody has presented an inch of evidence of a parallel nuclear-weapons program in Iran," the high-ranking diplomat told me. The I.A.E.A.'s best estimate is that the Iranians are five years away from building a nuclear bomb. "But, if the United States does anything militarily, they will make the development of a bomb a matter of Iranian national pride," the diplomat said. "The whole issue is America's risk assessment of Iran's future intentions, and they don't trust the regime. Iran is a menace to American policy."

In Vienna, I was told of an exceedingly testy meeting earlier this year between Mohamed ElBaradei, the I.A.E.A.'s director-general, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year, and Robert Joseph, the Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control. Joseph's message was blunt, one diplomat recalled: "We cannot have a single centrifuge spinning in Iran. Iran is a direct threat to the national security of the United States and our allies, and we will not tolerate it. We want you to give us an understanding that you will not say anything publicly that will undermine us. "

Joseph's heavy-handedness was unnecessary, the diplomat said, since the I.A.E.A. already had been inclined to take a hard stand against Iran. "All of the inspectors are angry at being misled by the Iranians, and some think the Iranian leadership are nutcases—one hundred per cent totally certified nuts," the diplomat said. He added that ElBaradei's overriding concern is that the Iranian leaders "want confrontation, just like the neocons on the other side"—in Washington. "At the end of the day, it will work only if the United States agrees to talk to the Iranians."

The central question—whether Iran will be able to proceed with its plans to enrich uranium—is now before the United Nations, with the Russians and the Chinese reluctant to impose sanctions on Tehran. A discouraged former I.A.E.A. official told me in late March that, at this point, "there's nothing the Iranians could do that would result in a positive outcome. American diplomacy does not allow for it. Even if they announce a stoppage of enrichment, nobody will believe them. It's a dead end."

Another diplomat in Vienna asked me, "Why would the West take the risk of going to war against that kind of target without giving it to the I.A.E.A. to verify? We're low-cost, and we can create a program that will force Iran to put its cards on the table." A Western Ambassador in Vienna expressed similar

distress at the White House's dismissal of the I.A.E.A. He said, "If you don't believe that the I.A.E.A. can establish an inspection system—if you don't trust them—you can only bomb."

There is little sympathy for the I.A.E.A. in the Bush Administration or among its European allies. "We're quite frustrated with the director-general," the European diplomat told me. "His basic approach has been to describe this as a dispute between two sides with equal weight. It's not. We're the good guys! EIBaradei has been pushing the idea of letting Iran have a small nuclear-enrichment program, which is ludicrous. It's not his job to push ideas that pose a serious proliferation risk."

The Europeans are rattled, however, by their growing perception that President Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney believe a bombing campaign will be needed, and that their real goal is regime change. "Everyone is on the same page about the Iranian bomb, but the United States wants regime change," a European diplomatic adviser told me. He added, "The Europeans have a role to play as long as they don't have to choose between going along with the Russians and the Chinese or going along with Washington on something they don't want. Their policy is to keep the Americans engaged in something the Europeans can live with. It may be untenable."

"The Brits think this is a very bad idea," Flynt Leverett, a former National Security Council staff member who is now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center, told me, "but they're really worried we're going to do it." The European diplomatic adviser acknowledged that the British Foreign Office was aware of war planning in Washington but that, "short of a smoking gun, it's going to be very difficult to line up the Europeans on Iran." He said that the British "are jumpy about the Americans going full bore on the Iranians, with no compromise."

The European diplomat said that he was skeptical that Iran, given its record, had admitted to everything it was doing, but "to the best of our knowledge the Iranian capability is not at the point where they could successfully run centrifuges" to enrich uranium in quantity. One reason for pursuing diplomacy was, he said, Iran's essential pragmatism. "The regime acts in its best interests," he said. Iran's leaders "take a hard-line approach on the nuclear issue and they want to call the American bluff," believing that "the tougher they are the more likely the West will fold." But, he said, "From what we've seen with Iran, they will appear superconfident until the moment they back off."

The diplomat went on, "You never reward bad behavior, and this is not the time to offer concessions. We need to find ways to impose sufficient costs to bring the regime to its senses. It's going to be a close call, but I think if there is unity in opposition and the price imposed—in sanctions—is sufficient, they may back down. It's too early to give up on the U.N. route." He added, "If the diplomatic process doesn't work, there is no military 'solution.' There may be a military option, but the impact could be catastrophic."

Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, was George Bush's most dependable ally in the year leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. But he and his party have been racked by a series of financial scandals, and his popularity is at a low point. Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, said last year that military action against Iran was "inconceivable." Blair has been more circumspect, saying publicly that one should never take options off the table.

Other European officials expressed similar skepticism about the value of an American bombing campaign. "The Iranian economy is in bad shape, and Ahmadinejad is in bad shape politically," the European intelligence official told me. "He will benefit politically from American bombing. You can do it, but the results will be worse." An American attack, he said, would alienate ordinary Iranians, including those who might be sympathetic to the U.S. "Iran is no longer living in the Stone Age, and the young people there have access to U.S. movies and books, and they love it," he said. "If there was a charm offensive with Iran, the mullahs would be in trouble in the long run."

Another European official told me that he was aware that many in Washington wanted action. "It's always the same guys," he said, with a resigned shrug. "There is a belief that diplomacy is doomed to fail. The timetable is short."

A key ally with an important voice in the debate is Israel, whose leadership has warned for years that it viewed any attempt by Iran to begin enriching uranium as a point of no return. I was told by several officials that the White House's interest in preventing an Israeli attack on a Muslim country, which would provoke a backlash across the region, was a factor in its decision to begin the current operational planning. In a speech in Cleveland on March 20th, President Bush depicted Ahmadinejad's

hostility toward Israel as a “serious threat. It’s a threat to world peace.” He added, “I made it clear, I’ll make it clear again, that we will use military might to protect our ally Israel.”

Any American bombing attack, Richard Armitage told me, would have to consider the following questions: “What will happen in the other Islamic countries? What ability does Iran have to reach us and touch us globally—that is, terrorism? Will Syria and Lebanon up the pressure on Israel? What does the attack do to our already diminished international standing? And what does this mean for Russia, China, and the U.N. Security Council?”

Iran, which now produces nearly four million barrels of oil a day, would not have to cut off production to disrupt the world’s oil markets. It could blockade or mine the Strait of Hormuz, the thirty-four-mile-wide passage through which Middle Eastern oil reaches the Indian Ocean. Nonetheless, the recently retired defense official dismissed the strategic consequences of such actions. He told me that the U.S. Navy could keep shipping open by conducting salvage missions and putting mine-sweepers to work. “It’s impossible to block passage,” he said. The government consultant with ties to the Pentagon also said he believed that the oil problem could be managed, pointing out that the U.S. has enough in its strategic reserves to keep America running for sixty days. However, those in the oil business I spoke to were less optimistic; one industry expert estimated that the price per barrel would immediately spike, to anywhere from ninety to a hundred dollars per barrel, and could go higher, depending on the duration and scope of the conflict.

Michel Samaha, a veteran Lebanese Christian politician and former cabinet minister in Beirut, told me that the Iranian retaliation might be focussed on exposed oil and gas fields in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. “They would be at risk,” he said, “and this could begin the real jihad of Iran versus the West. You will have a messy world.”

Iran could also initiate a wave of terror attacks in Iraq and elsewhere, with the help of Hezbollah. On April 2nd, the Washington Post reported that the planning to counter such attacks “is consuming a lot of time” at U.S. intelligence agencies. “The best terror network in the world has remained neutral in the terror war for the past several years,” the Pentagon adviser on the war on terror said of Hezbollah. “This will mobilize them and put us up against the group that drove Israel out of southern Lebanon. If we move against Iran, Hezbollah will not sit on the sidelines. Unless the Israelis take them out, they will mobilize against us.” (When I asked the government consultant about that possibility, he said that, if Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel, “Israel and the new Lebanese government will finish them off.”) The adviser went on, “If we go, the southern half of Iraq will light up like a candle.” The American, British, and other coalition forces in Iraq would be at greater risk of attack from Iranian troops or from Shiite militias operating on instructions from Iran. (Iran, which is predominantly Shiite, has close ties to the leading Shiite parties in Iraq.) A retired four-star general told me that, despite the eight thousand British troops in the region, “the Iranians could take Basra with ten mullahs and one sound truck.”

“If you attack,” the high-ranking diplomat told me in Vienna, “Ahmadinejad will be the new Saddam Hussein of the Arab world, but with more credibility and more power. You must bite the bullet and sit down with the Iranians.”

The diplomat went on, “There are people in Washington who would be unhappy if we found a solution. They are still banking on isolation and regime change. This is wishful thinking.” He added, “The window of opportunity is now.”

Iran & the Bomb

New York Review of Books
By Christopher de Bellaigue
4/7

During the past few months, many nations have reached a consensus on the threat that Iran’s nuclear program poses to international security. A similar consensus eluded the same nations in the debate over invading Saddam Hussein’s Iraq three years ago. On March 8, the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna referred Iran’s case to the Security Council. In public or private, but increasingly in public, senior officials from a wide range of countries—including the US, the EU states that vociferously

opposed the invasion of Iraq, as well as India and Japan—speak of Iran's alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons with a conviction that suggests they regard it as an incontestable fact. Citing a series of deplorably anti-Israel statements by Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, officials from some of the same countries express the fear that once Iran has the bombs it is assumed to be seeking, it will threaten Israel with a new and reckless vigor.

There is less agreement on the US contention that citizens of the Islamic Republic are captives of the country's clerical elite, and that other countries should strengthen Iran's pro-democracy organizations so that Iranians can enjoy, in George Bush's words, the "right to choose [their] own future." But this view may be spreading. In a recent speech, Jack Straw, the British foreign secretary, declared his support for Iranians' "aspirations for a freer and more democratic...future."

As the Security Council debates what to do about Iran in closed sessions during the coming months, Iran's relations with many countries will continue to worsen unless its leaders give in to international pressure and abandon their plans to become producers of nuclear fuel by enriching uranium, which they could use to make bombs. Between October 23, 2004, and January of this year, Iran had suspended work aimed at achieving a nuclear fuel cycle using enriched uranium. Then it started work on enrichment once again, and reacted to the IAEA's strong condemnation of this move by telling the agency that it could no longer inspect sites other than those that Iran had declared to be nuclear sites. On March 29, the Security Council issued a statement repeating the recent demand of the IAEA that Iran again suspend its work on uranium enrichment and allow the IAEA to inspect installations where nuclear work is suspected of going on.

If Iran refuses to comply with such demands, as it has vowed to do, and continues the uranium enrichment program that it started in January, a senior British official expects it to have acquired "the technology to enable it to develop a nuclear weapon" by the end of this year. If the Iranians do not back down, the US, Britain, and France are expected to try to persuade the Russians and Chinese to support a subsequent resolution declaring Iran in violation of international law.

Having agreed that the Security Council discuss Iran's behavior, Russia and China, however, have indicated that they oppose putting heavy political pressure on the Iranians. In the Security Council they will most likely insist that the IAEA must have the main responsibility for dealing with Iran's program, and that other UN action be delayed, if it is taken at all. Russia and China have large interests in Iran. The Chinese recently agreed to purchase a large amount of Iranian oil and gas during the next three decades. Russia considers the Islamic Republic an ally in its efforts to counter America's influence in the Middle East. It has also sold Iran civilian nuclear technology, a new air defense system, and civilian aircraft.

It is true that Russian officials were irritated by Iran's policy of prevarication while responding to their proposal that it transfer uranium-enrichment activities to Russian soil. Nonetheless, they maintain that excessive pressure on Iran may impel it to opt out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) altogether, and end even the much-reduced access that inspectors now have to Iranian sites. The Iranians have not discouraged such speculation. Russia and China seem unlikely to join in the policy of sanctions against Iran that the US, Britain, and France hope that a coalition of countries will adopt should Iran refuse to comply with a putative resolution demanding that it stop its uranium enrichment program and accept more intrusive inspections.

To judge from his comments during a press conference on March 8, it seems that Mohamed ElBaradei, the IAEA's director general, has some sympathy for the Russian and Chinese positions. He called on the parties to avoid an "escalation" and engage in more talks. ElBaradei is said by diplomats to be deeply disappointed that after three years of intensive inspections and correspondence with the Iranian authorities, he can't say that the Iranian program is peaceful. In his most recent report, on February 27, he acknowledged that the IAEA has not seen in Iran "any diversion of nuclear material to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices." But he was troubled that Iran had provided inadequate information about its program to develop centrifuges to enrich uranium. He was, he said, concerned about the ambiguous "role of the military" in the program. He mentioned a document sent to the Iranians from a supplier of nuclear technology described as suitable for the "fabrication of nuclear weapons components." The Iranians said the document was unsolicited.

ElBaradei's agency has much to lose if Iran achieves a fuel cycle and the ability to build a bomb at short notice. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, signed by 188 nations, has been undermined by countries such as India, Pakistan, and Israel, which refused to sign it and have nuclear devices. North

Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003 and then claimed to have a nuclear device. The NPT would lose what little credibility it still has if Iran were to quit or were allowed to stay a member of the group of signers while remaining elusive about its nuclear program. If the NPT collapses, the result could well be a nuclear arms race involving Saudi Arabia and other nations in the Middle East. Eibaradei's extensive dealings with Iranian leaders, and particularly with its top nuclear officials, who answer to the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, seem to have convinced him that the only solution is to negotiate a deal with Iran that will involve the US. On March 8, he called on the US to negotiate with Iran and stressed the need for "a comprehensive political settlement that takes account of all underlying issues."

As the Bush administration sees it, the main "underlying issue" is that Iran's fanatical and unpopular regime is secretly trying to build a bomb with which to threaten Israel and other countries. Only by asserting the possibility of sanctions or preventive war—the "meaningful consequences" to which Dick Cheney has referred—can the US and other influential nations stop this from happening. This reading of the Islamic Republic's position is misleading, however. First, it ascribes to a fractured and secretive state a transparency of intent and an ideological rigidity that it does not have. Second, it absolves the US of any responsibility for Iran's refusal to abandon its ambitions to have a fuel cycle, and of any obligation to use diplomatic means to persuade its leaders to change their mind.

The Iranians' ability to behave with startling pragmatism was first displayed during the Iran-contra scandal of 1986, when they were found to be cooperating with their American enemies to buy arms from Israel, whose right to exist they contested. After the death three years later of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranians developed relations with Saudi Arabia, a kingdom that Khomeini himself had loathed. The Iranians also indicated that they would take no action to implement the death sentence that Khomeini had passed on Salman Rushdie. After the attacks on America of September 11, Iran provided valuable support for the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and for the new Afghan government.

Iran's enmity toward Israel is more nuanced than Ahmadinejad's statements suggest. The President's declarations that Israel should be "wiped off the map," and that the Holocaust is a "myth," understandably aroused fears that Iran might be considering an attack on Israel. But Iran's senior civilian and military officials have insisted that Iran will strike Israel only if Israel strikes first. More significantly, the President and supreme leader have both reiterated Iran's longstanding demand for a referendum on the status of Israel that would involve all Palestinian refugees. This official position would not seem to be consistent with an ambition to destroy Israel by force, least of all by using nuclear arms, which would endanger the very Palestinians whom the Iranians claim to be protecting. Several senior Iranian officials, including Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former president who heads a powerful arbitration council in Tehran, have not disguised their irritation with the President's comments. But Ahmadinejad has benefited from the furor. By raising his prestige among hard-line Islamists around the world, the President has made it harder for his domestic opponents, who include Rafsanjani, to undermine him.

Iran's nuclear crisis centers on the Islamic Republic's ambitions and fears, and these are hard to identify when we consider the largely hidden decision-making process in Iran, where an elected president and parliament are subservient to an unelected supreme leader and other appointed bodies. All are in competition with one another and it is hard to know exactly how decisions are made. Seeking clues, one could do worse than review the deterioration in relations between Iran and the US since early 2002, when Bush included the Islamic Republic in his "axis of evil." At the time, I was told by Iranians connected to the clerical elite that this speech had convinced Iran's leaders that Bush intended to bring down the Islamic Republic. Iranian insecurities were subsequently heightened by the American invasion of Iraq, even though it got rid of one of Iran's worst enemies—and by the US's stated ambition to democratize the Middle East.

Unsurprisingly, Iran has obstructed George Bush's mission of regional transformation. The Iranians have been asserting their influence over neighboring Iraq, while doing nothing to help the US out of its predicament there. Iran has been channeling cash and arms to Iraqi Shiite groups, and it encourages commercial and philanthropic work in Iraq by Iranian citizens. In spite of Western pressure, the Iranians have not changed their support for other regional adversaries of the US, including Syria and such groups as Hezbollah (which Iran co-founded with Syria) and Hamas. Some Iranian leaders went out of their way to whip up religious anger against the West during the recent controversy over caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that were published in a Danish newspaper. "Iran's aim,"

observes an experienced analyst in Tehran, "is to ensure that the Americans are too harassed to be able to threaten it."

Achieving a nuclear fuel cycle and the ability to build a bomb would give Iran's leaders a different degree of protection altogether. It would be in a position to deter attacks by any hostile power. Acquiring a fuel cycle, however, is a perilous undertaking. In a speech that he delivered to senior officials at the end of 2004, whose contents were recently made public, Hassan Rohani, then Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, spoke of the intense diplomatic pressure being felt by Iran. "If we can one day complete this [uranium enrichment] cycle and present the world with a *fait accompli*," he said, the situation will change. The world didn't want Pakistan to get an atom bomb or Brazil to get a fuel cycle, but Brazil achieved a fuel cycle and Pakistan a bomb, and the world came to an accommodation with them...but we haven't yet achieved a full fuel cycle, and that, as it happens, is our main problem.

Iran's leaders are unlikely to abandon their plans to achieve a fuel cycle unless they believe that they will be more secure as a result. On February 15, after Condoleezza Rice asked Congress to allocate \$75 million to promote democracy in Iran, a senior US official, briefing journalists anonymously, predicted that the money would help Iranians "who wish to see a different type of Iran." Another official referred to Iranians' desire to live in "a different system." For Iran's leaders, the two main "underlying issues" that EIBaradei says should be discussed are their own security and America's readiness to coexist with an Islamic theocracy that it finds repugnant. The Bush administration has apparently adopted a policy of regime change toward Iran, although there seems no way it could accomplish this by military force. At the same time, the administration has been talking about possible meetings with Iranians concerning cooperation on achieving stability in Iraq—meetings that have yet to take place. When it comes to Iran, the administration doesn't appear to have a coherent idea of what it is doing.

Congress allocated \$19 million less than Rice asked for to promote Iranian democracy. If we count the \$10 million that had already been budgeted for this fiscal year but not yet spent, the administration has \$36 million available for improving and increasing the propaganda it transmits to Iran, and \$20 million to give to human rights organizations, NGOs, and labor unions, and to help Iranians who want to study in the US. This is a big increase over the \$3.5 million that was allocated last year for similar purposes. The State Department is also greatly increasing the number of officers who work on Iran. For the first time during his administration, Bush is devoting much attention to Iran.

That is good news for exiled Iranian opposition groups, many of which are based in the US. According to Connie Bruck's comprehensive report on these groups, which was published in *The New Yorker* on March 2, a potential recipient of funds is Reza Pahlavi, the forty-five-year-old son of the former shah and the proponent of a referendum that would let Iranians set up a constitutional monarchy, with him as shah, or a secular republic. The twenty-five Persian-language TV and radio stations that broadcast to Iran from Los Angeles, home to 600,000 Iranian exiles, may also apply to the US government for funds. Supporters of another group, the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, are pressing the State Department to lift its designation of the Mujahedin as a foreign terrorist organization. If that happens, the Bush administration will be free to consider giving it money.

It is hard for American organizations, even private ones, to have direct relations with Iranians inside the country. That was shown by the trial in 2002 in Tehran of Abbas Abdi, a prominent reformist, on charges of espionage. Abdi's crime was to organize opinion polls on behalf of the Gallup organization, one of which indicated that 74 percent of people living in Tehran wanted Iran to start an official dialogue with the US. (Abdi recanted in court, in response, it is now known, to judicial threats against his wife. He was jailed.) According to one of the Iranian officials who spoke on March 12, the Bush administration intends to use international NGOs and other organizations as go-betweens. This frank admission is likely both to make life harder for non-Iranian NGOs that have links to Iran and to increase the dangers facing Iranians who are in contact with them.

Before the invasion of Iraq, US government officials were misled by some Iraqi opposition groups and their American supporters into thinking that these groups had popular support at home, and that they had good information about the country. Similar claims are now being made about the Iranian groups. For her *New Yorker* piece, Connie Bruck spoke to Raymond Tanter, a former member of the US National Security Council and a visiting professor at Georgetown University. Tanter is urging the administration to lift the Mujahedin's designation as a terrorist organization. He believes, in Bruck's paraphrase, that the Mujahedin is "the only opposition group capable of overthrowing the regime."

That would be news to the regime. The Mujahedin lost its credibility as a military force when its Iraq-based militants launched a suicidal attack on Iran at the end of the Iran–Iraq war in 1988; they expected to provoke popular rebellion but were crushed by Iran's forces. The organization's 3,500 remaining members have been disarmed by the US and live in a camp near the Iranian border. The Mujahedin's alliance with Saddam Hussein turned most Iranians against it. Indeed, in more than five years of living in Iran, I have yet to hear an Iranian praise it.

Reza Pahlavi is less easy to dismiss. Some Iranians feel nostalgia for the prosperity and carefree hedonism of the time of the Shah, and they have a reflexive allegiance to his son. However, these sentiments do not seem widespread among the young people who make up most of the population; I have met plenty of young Iranians who favor a secular republic, but few who want a restoration of the monarchy. Pahlavi's association with some of his father's most reviled former allies, and his reliance on American largesse, have not enhanced his reputation. His main handicap is that of the exiled opposition as a whole; he has not seen Iran in twenty-seven years, and Iran has changed enormously in that time.

The exiles' understanding of their own country is occasionally delusional. Take, for example, Pahlavi's chief adviser, an Iranian businessman called Shahriar Ahy. He expects Iranians to begin a campaign of civil disobedience after a "national congress" of opposition groups that is being planned this summer in the US. "All have to cooperate to bring the regime down," Ahy told Bruck. "We would have five, six, seven clusters inside, coordinated for unity of action. So, at the same time, the Kurds would be doing this! The oil workers striking over here! So the wolves are not running after different zebras."

Ahy's fantasy illustrates the gulf between perceptions of Iranians in the US, where many believe that conditions for regime change have never been more propitious, and the reality in Iran. In the words of a leading literary dissident in Tehran, "For the first time since the last shah's accession, in 1941, Iran is bereft of any effective opposition, legal or illegal."

Eight months after Khatami stepped down as president and his reform movement came to an end, there is no progressive political movement to take its place. This is not surprising, for the reform movement attracted a generation of brilliant public figures—officials who worked for Khatami, writers, editors, student leaders—who have since, for the most part, been silenced. They have been jailed, driven into exile, or intimidated into staying quiet. The once-active student movement is moribund.

Bush has contributed to the sense of torpor and pessimism that now afflicts many politically imaginative Iranians. By including Iran in his "axis of evil" and repeatedly praising pro-democracy activists during periods of unrest, Bush gave conservative judges and their hard-line supporters in the press and television a pretext to label all reformists as traitors and the lackeys of America. Abbas Abdi's trial is only one example among many. Khatami has made it clear that he regards George Bush as partly responsible for his failure to reform Iran. Since Ahmadinejad's election and the subsequent worsening of Iran's diplomatic relations with many countries, it has become even harder for Iranians to express views in favor of more freedom of expression.

US officials have portrayed the Islamic Republic and its citizens as being monolithically opposed to one another. Again, this view is inaccurate. Iran's conservative leaders have presented their refusal to give up a fuel cycle program as an act of resistance against foreigners' efforts to deprive Iran of its rights. The success of this approach was apparent on February 11, when President Ahmadinejad addressed a huge crowd, estimated by foreign news agencies to number several hundred thousand people, that had gathered to celebrate the anniversary of revolution. It was the biggest such crowd in years. Sentiments in favor of the regime and strongly opposed to the US are stronger now than at any time since I first visited Iran, in 1999.

If Iran's leaders do not change their nuclear plans, some countries, including EU member states, will probably impose sanctions on the Islamic Republic later this year. At first, these will try to block help to Iran's civilian nuclear program—partly with the aim of preventing Iran's single, Russian-built, nuclear reactor from becoming active—and to stop Iranian officials from traveling abroad. European restrictions on investment may follow.

The threat of sanctions is already deterring investors in Iran, especially in the oil and gas industries on which the country's economy depends. Some foreign energy companies have postponed plans to develop Iran's liquid natural gas. Oil ministry officials fear that a lack of foreign investment in the oil

industry may hinder Iran's chances of meeting its OPEC quota; they will soon launch a scheme to cut wasteful gasoline consumption.

The Iranian authorities reassure the public that sanctions will not threaten the high economic growth that the economy has enjoyed since the big oil price rise of 1999. Ahmadinejad's budget for the coming Iranian year, which parliament ratified on March 14, has been criticized as extravagant and inflationary in its handouts to the poor, especially in the provinces. Khamenei has reminded Iranians that the sanctions that were formerly imposed on Iran, which included an oil embargo, stimulated the country to achieve self-sufficiency in many fields.

If that embargo were repeated, the inevitable collapse in revenues would threaten the Islamic Republic's survival. World oil prices would also soar, with threatening consequences for many of the world's economies. Iran has hinted that in response to sanctions it might block tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, off its southern coast, further destabilizing the international economy.

The anticipated reluctance of many nations, including Russia and China, to impose such an embargo, and Iran's continuing progress toward a fuel cycle, increase the likelihood of attacks by the US or Israel on Iran's known and suspected nuclear sites. According to several recent analyses, including one by the International Crisis Group (ICG), only a major air campaign, entailing many civilian casualties, could do lasting damage to Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran might retaliate using its missiles, which can probably reach Israel, and it would certainly encourage its regional allies, including Shiite leaders in Iraq and its friends in Syria and Lebanon, to cause trouble in Iraq and Israel. (Hezbollah and Hamas have both pledged to retaliate on Iran's behalf in case it is attacked.) If Iran's leaders feel that the US is determined to destroy the Islamic Republic, they will not hesitate to cause chaos.

It is not unthinkable that an imaginative solution will be found to the immediate diplomatic impasse. (The ICG, for instance, proposes that the Iranians be permitted to have a small and heavily monitored enrichment facility, but to commission it only after several years of building confidence with the IAEA and the EU countries, among others.) That would be good news, but the underlying issue would still need to be addressed. That issue is what Iran's conservative leaders need to do to save themselves from being overwhelmed by George Bush's administration, whose plan to transform the Middle East has no room for undemocratic ayatollahs.

Will This Man Get The Bomb?

Time

By Johanna McGeary

4/3

Let's start with a simple proposition: no one wants Iran to have the Bomb. The country doesn't actually possess nukes yet, but much of the world suspects that it is hell-bent on building them under the cover of its nuclear-energy program--and the loose-cannon bluster of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad only reinforces that conviction. That's why diplomats and nuclear watchdogs in the U.S., Europe and other parts of the world have spent so much time trying to stop Iran's nuclear program in its tracks.

So far, however, the joint diplomatic offensive hasn't produced much in the way of results. The Bush Administration's National Security Strategy, issued this month, names Iran the most challenging "single country" to U.S. interests, leaving open the possibility of pre-emptive strikes against Iran's nuclear program. The U.S. and Europe have persuaded Russia and China to join them in reporting Iran's failure to cooperate with international demands to the U.N. Security Council, but both countries oppose punitive action such as economic sanctions. The U.S. spent last week pushing the five permanent members of the Security Council to sign on to a British-drafted statement urging Iran to open its books and lab doors to intrusive international inspections. But the plan met resistance from Russia, which wants to avoid Security Council involvement altogether. "It's a fundamental problem," says a senior U.S. official. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice telephoned Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov but made little headway. She plans to visit Berlin, Paris and Britain this week in an effort to hammer out a statement that can win unanimous backing in the Security Council. Meanwhile, Tehran has sped up research work on the uranium enrichment that lies at the heart of the dispute. Diplomats who have been briefed on Iran's program by international inspectors say the country has developed the ability to enrich uranium, the first step on the pathway to the Bomb.

"They're progressing much faster than we thought they would," says a knowledgeable U.S. official. "They seem to know what they're doing."

There lies the deadlock. The U.S. and Iran have shown a faint willingness to lower the temperature, by agreeing to hold talks over Iranian interference in Iraq. But it's unclear whether Tehran hopes to use the talks over Iraq as a way to open the subject of nukes--or to distract the West's attention from it. Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, told TIME that the regime may be open to compromise on the nuclear issue. "If there is a proposal that the rights of Iran can be secured to some extent for the present time and the other rights through negotiations, we are open to that." Yet the Bush Administration doesn't expect the Iraq discussions will lead to a breakthrough on the nuclear front. National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley dismisses Iran's overture as "simply a device by the Iranians to divert pressure that they are feeling in New York."

The willingness of the U.S. and Europe to make a deal has always been compromised by Iran's unpredictability. At this point, there are few outside Tehran who consider its behavior anything but destabilizing, if not sinister. The West is operating on the assumption that the Iranians are trying to develop the technology and expertise required for building a bomb as rapidly as possible--and that given the regime's support for terrorism, its stated desire to destroy Israel and the prospect of a new arms race in the Middle East, the world can't afford to let them succeed. Yet there is still nothing close to unanimity on what that means in practice. History has already shown how difficult it is to curb the nuclear ambitions of a state that is determined to get the Bomb. Witness the examples of India, Pakistan and North Korea, all of which have openly defied international strictures against acquiring nuclear weapons. With so much bluster on all sides, here is a breakdown of the issues at the heart of Iran's showdown with the West--and what is at stake for the world in the outcome.

What Does Iran Want?

THAT DEPENDS ON WHOM YOU ASK. WHAT IS clear is that Iran has pursued a nuclear program for decades, ever since the U.S. first fed the Shah's appetite for reactors. Experts generally believe that Tehran has coveted the Bomb as well. Under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, signed by Iran in 1968, the country is legally entitled to build reactors and make enriched uranium fuel as a source of energy, as long as it abides by treaty rules and allows the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor what it is doing. Iran has consistently denied that it intends to scale up fuel-grade enriched uranium into the purer weapons-grade component of a bomb. Iranians say they have the same rights as other countries to technology and are just looking out for their long-term energy future.

The trouble is, almost no one believes that's all Iran is after. Iran had concealed clandestine efforts to make enriched uranium from IAEA inspectors for two decades, until its secret lab at Natanz was exposed by an exile opposition group in 2002. Iran eventually owned up to the deception, telling the IAEA that since the West had denied Iran reactors for decades, it had to go underground to become self-sufficient in fuel. The revelations led the IAEA to put seals on Iran's test centrifuges while Britain, France and Germany tried to negotiate guarantees that Iran's nuclear program could never be shifted to weapons production--an effort that the U.S. backed after initial hesitation. But those talks collapsed in January when Iran refused to abandon its insistence that it retain the rights to proceed with enrichment. The Iranians broke the seals on their most sensitive equipment and vowed to press ahead. According to diplomats and U.S. officials, experts from the IAEA have reported that Iran is on the verge of assembling and operating a 164-centrifuge cascade, machinery that has peaceful applications but can also eventually be used to make fuel for a bomb.

To this day, Iranian officials assert that their uranium-enrichment activities are purely for energy or research purposes rather than military ones. "There's no place for nuclear weapons in our national security doctrine," Larijani told TIME. He points out that Supreme Leader Ayatullah Ali Khamenei has issued a fatwa forbidding the use of nuclear weapons. But such claims were undermined again in January when the IAEA reported an administrative link between a uranium-conversion program known as Green Salt and efforts to weaponize missiles that, for the first time, appeared to show an attempt to harness the nuclear program for military purposes.

Is Iran Close To Getting the Bomb?

NOT NECESSARILY. UNDERPINNING THE current air of crisis is uncertainty about how soon Iran could manage bomb production. Western intelligence on the intentions and capabilities of nuclear aspirants is notoriously unreliable. Thus far, the IAEA says, Iran has the knowledge but not the capacity to make

weapons. Some experts say that if Iran's enrichment facilities became fully operational, they could churn out enough material to construct two bombs a year. John Negroponte, Director of National Intelligence, said recently that "Iran, if it continues on its current path, will likely have the capability to produce a nuclear weapon within the next decade." What is already worrisome is that once Iran has the fissile material to make a bomb, it would have ready ways to threaten to use it. In 2004 Iran unveiled the Shahab-3 missile, with a range long enough to reach Israel and southern Europe. At the military parade in which it was first shown, one of the missiles carried the scrawl WIPE ISRAEL OFF THE MAP!

For years Iran alternately hid its activities and negotiated with the West over their scope. Over the past three years, both sides have focused on rebuilding confidence rather than provoking confrontation, but those overtures have lately all but vanished amid Iran's increasingly provocative behavior.

Why Is Iran Picking a Fight?

MANY IRANIANS POINT TO THE POLITICAL ambitions of Ahmadinejad. The hard-line President who just squeezed past more experienced candidates to take office has seized on the nuclear issue to cement his claim to power, according to some top government advisers. He can bypass the ruling clerics by appealing to the street, framing the right to nuclear energy as a populist cause and the centerpiece of his campaign to restore revolutionary ideals--and solidify his base in the military and revolutionary apparatus. That requires a return to the 1980s atmosphere of siege, rallying Iranians by whipping up animosity toward a common enemy, the West. To a generation forged in the heat of revolution and war, diplomacy is akin to slow surrender. "He's using the nuclear issue," says a Tehran political science professor, "to send a message to the Iranian people that he's tough, capable of standing up for Iran and fundamentally different from his soft predecessors."

Ahmadinejad's confrontational approach is reportedly causing consternation within Iran's clerical establishment, especially at the Supreme National Security Council, in which ultimately the decisions on the nuclear issue are made. In a recent TIME interview in Tehran, Larijani extended an olive branch of sorts to the Bush Administration, saying Iran could agree to direct talks with Washington on nuclear and other issues. "You have differences of views with us. Having differences of view does not mean animosity," he said. "We have no problems negotiating ... provided that Mr. Bush does not harangue us." The U.S. has ruled out direct nuclear talks.

Despite such conciliatory rhetoric from some Iranian officials, it is likely that many of the mullahs still dream of a robust nuclear program--if Iran had the capacity to make a bomb, it would get the respect it deserves. That conforms with Iran's self-image as a nation whose glorious past and potential greatness are undermined by implacable enemies such as the U.S. According to experts inside and outside the country, the regime sees bargaining over its nuclear rights as a way to recast the strategic balance in the region in Iran's favor, to gain stature and recognition of the Islamic Republic as a powerful geopolitical player. A history of invasions has left Iran wary of its neighbors, especially now that it is encircled by countries that possess atom bombs--Russia, Pakistan and India as well as Israel. Now that U.S. troops occupy two next-door states, Iran's leaders see the nuclear card as a way to buy security guarantees for the country and survival for the regime. It wants Washington to stop pushing "regime change" and accept the existence of an Iranian Islamic Republic. But even as Iranian officials deny that they plan to build a bomb, they point out that once North Korea tested a nuclear device, Western threats against Pyongyang ceased.

One reason Iran is acting up may be that its leaders see this as a moment when the game of brinkmanship is tilted in its favor. The country is in a nationalist mood; for the man in the street, more concerned with economic issues, the appeal is simple: If other countries can have nuclear power and atom bombs, why can't we? High oil prices and an overstretched U.S. military combine to lessen the West's capacity to react. So too, Iran's leaders think, does Iran's influence with the Shi'ite majority in Iraq and the newly elected Hamas leaders in the Palestinian territories. Getting loud and ugly about Israel earns Iran credibility and support in the Muslim world. And the regime may have decided that thumbing its nose at the nonproliferation treaty and at IAEA inspections is worth the international disapprobation, gambling that its extensive commercial ties with Russia and China will insulate it from punitive Security Council measures.

What Iran seems to be playing for, above all, is time. The longer it can string out the diplomatic process, the further it can proceed down the road toward completing the fuel cycle. It is possible that Iran may even agree to suspend uranium enrichment at some point in the near future, knowing that it

has already created new facts on the ground. If the regime were then to change its mind again, says Mark Fitzpatrick, a longtime veteran of the U.S. State Department who is now at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies, "it would resume from a new starting point, with uranium conversion up and running and the enrichment process under way."

What Are the U.S.'s Options?

MISTRUST OF IRAN'S INTENTIONS HAS soured the Bush Administration and the Europeans on any deal that would allow Tehran to retain enrichment capacities. U.S. attitudes have hardened in response to Ahmadinejad, and Washington seems to have little interest in any grand bargain that would offer the theocratic regime security guarantees. Thus diplomacy for the moment is centered on the U.N. But even if Iran fails to accept demands that it submit to involuntary inspections, the challenge of reaching consensus on sanctions with real teeth could take months, if it can be achieved at all. The search is already on for selective embargoes that might stand a chance of passage. "It's not going to be oil for food," says a Bush Administration official. "I don't have a clue as to what they are, but fine minds are working on trying to sort out what could get support." Still, Washington's allies know that it's tough to design economic restrictions that will hurt the regime without hurting the Iranian people and realize how effectively Iran's leaders could use blunderbuss penalties to unify the nation behind them.

The bleak outlook for diplomacy fuels speculation that the U.S. and Israel might use military force to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. While the military option is "never off the table," officials in both capitals say contingency plans for an air strike "are not under active consideration as an option now." Most experts say only that the U.S. has the air power and long-range fueling capability to carry out the multiple attacks that would be required to inflict serious damage on Iran's nuclear facilities--but they acknowledge that the U.S. military already has its hands full in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although some in the Middle East fear that Israel might attempt to repeat its 1981 solo raid on Iraq's incipient nuclear bomb, a senior Israeli intelligence officer says, "We won't act alone. Why should we? It's a global problem."

The costs of a military strike would well outweigh the benefits. That would be no simple raid but a major military operation taking several weeks, akin to the opening onslaught on Iraq in 2003. Not just the nuclear sites but Iran's air defenses and retaliatory machinery as well would have to be destroyed. The collateral damage in Iranian casualties from the attacks or radioactive fallout could be severe, as could the political backlash against moderates and opponents of the existing regime. And then, how much would Iran's nuclear ambitions be set back? "You can't bomb know-how," says IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei. A U.S. analyst guesses "at best, two to four years." And, he adds, "while we went to war, Iran would not sit idle. It would strike back at a time and place of its own choosing"--including sponsoring attacks on U.S. and British troops in Iraq and perhaps even terrorist strikes inside the U.S. and Europe.

Is there a way out? The most encouraging fact about the standoff is that neither side has much to gain from precipitating a military confrontation. At the same time, it is unlikely that the major differences over Iran's nuclear intentions can be resolved in a way that is wholly satisfying to both Iran and the West. The most realistic hope for Washington and its allies may lie in using diplomatic measures to delay Tehran's nuclear development long enough to allow for the emergence of a more moderate Iranian leadership that could be persuaded to abandon its nuclear dreams. But if those efforts fail, this U.S. President, or the next one, may confront a sobering choice: live with the reality of a nuclear Iran, or take the risk of attacking it. All of which leads to another, simple proposition: get ready for the world to become a more dangerous place.

Today Tehran, Tomorrow the World

Time

By Charles Krauthammer

4/3

Like many physicists who worked on the Manhattan Project, Richard Feynman could not get the Bomb out of his mind after the war. "I would see people building a bridge," he wrote. "And I thought, they're crazy, they just don't understand, they don't understand. Why are they making new things? It's so useless."

Feynman was convinced man had finally invented something that he could not control and that would ultimately destroy him. For six decades we have suppressed that thought and built enough history to believe Feynman's pessimism was unwarranted. After all, soon afterward, the most aggressive world power, Stalin's Soviet Union, acquired the Bomb, yet never used it. Seven more countries have acquired it since and never used it either. Even North Korea, which huffs and puffs and threatens every once in a while, dares not use it. Even Kim Jong II is not suicidal.

But that's the point. We're now at the dawn of an era in which an extreme and fanatical religious ideology, undeterred by the usual calculations of prudence and self-preservation, is wielding state power and will soon be wielding nuclear power.

We have difficulty understanding the mentality of Iran's newest rulers. Then again, we don't understand the mentality of the men who flew into the World Trade Center or the mobs in Damascus and Tehran who chant "Death to America"--and Denmark(!)--and embrace the glory and romance of martyrdom.

This atavistic love of blood and death and, indeed, self-immolation in the name of God may not be new--medieval Europe had an abundance of millennial Christian sects--but until now it has never had the means to carry out its apocalyptic ends.

That is why Iran's arriving at the threshold of nuclear weaponry is such a signal historical moment. It is not just that its President says crazy things about the Holocaust. It is that he is a fervent believer in the imminent reappearance of the 12th Imam, Shi'ism's version of the Messiah. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been reported as saying in official meetings that the end of history is only two or three years away. He reportedly told an associate that on the podium of the General Assembly last September, he felt a halo around him and for "those 27 or 28 minutes, the leaders of the world did not blink ... as if a hand was holding them there and it opened their eyes to receive" his message. He believes that the Islamic revolution's *raison d'être* is to prepare the way for the messianic redemption, which in his eschatology is preceded by worldwide upheaval and chaos. How better to light the fuse for eternal bliss than with a nuclear flame?

Depending on your own beliefs, Ahmadinejad is either mystical or deranged. In either case, he is exceedingly dangerous. And Iran is just the first. With infinitely accelerated exchanges of information helping develop whole new generations of scientists, extremist countries led by similarly extreme men will be in a position to acquire nuclear weaponry. If nothing is done, we face not proliferation but hyperproliferation. Not just one but many radical states will get weapons of mass extinction, and then so will the fanatical and suicidal terrorists who are their brothers and clients.

That will present the world with two futures. The first is Feynman's vision of human destruction on a scale never seen. The second, perhaps after one or two cities are lost with millions killed in a single day, is a radical abolition of liberal democracy as the species tries to maintain itself by reverting to strict authoritarianism--a self-imposed expulsion from the Eden of post-Enlightenment freedom.

Can there be a third future? That will depend on whether we succeed in holding proliferation at bay. Iran is the test case. It is the most dangerous political entity on the planet, and yet the world response has been catastrophically slow and reluctant. Years of knowingly useless negotiations, followed by hesitant international resolutions, have brought us to only the most tentative of steps--referral to a Security Council that lacks unity and resolve. Iran knows this and therefore defiantly and openly resumes its headlong march to nuclear status. If we fail to prevent an Iranian regime run by apocalyptic fanatics from going nuclear, we will have reached a point of no return. It is not just that Iran might be the source of a great conflagration but that we will have demonstrated to the world that for those similarly inclined there is no serious impediment.

Our planet is 4,500,000,000 years old, and we've had nukes for exactly 61. No one knows the precise prospects for human extinction, but Feynman was a mathematical genius who knew how to calculate odds. If he were to watch us today about to let loose the agents of extinction, he'd call a halt to all bridge building.

How to Love a Hard-Liner

Time

By Azadeh Moaveni

4/3

The ski resort of Shemshak, just outside Tehran, is the last place you would expect to hear expressions of nationalist ardor. The slopes are filled with wealthy Iranians who sip hot chocolate in the shadow of a dazzling sun and spend most of their time gabbing about designer skiwear and which party to attend that evening. But when the subject of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad comes up between runs, the skiers get excited. "I couldn't be happier with him," says Mehdi, 19, an architecture major. "We just want our rights, and he defends them." His sister Anahita, 24, says she changed her mind about the President when he refused to abandon the country's nuclear-energy program. "He stood behind his world like a man," she says.

That an Islamic hard-liner has inspired such pride among even secular, Westernized Iranians says everything about the political climate in Iran today and shows how Ahmadinejad has transformed himself from a lightly regarded ideologue to a national hero. In recent months the President has used the escalating standoff over Iran's nuclear program as a platform for broadening his appeal at home, framing the West as an enemy bent on weakening Iran by denying it legitimate access to technology. Indeed, many observers believe that Ahmadinejad is reacting to the masses' increasingly assertive mood as much as he is stoking it. "Before, you had people vs. the regime," says a Western diplomat in Tehran. "Now you have Iran vs. the West."

Many Iranians attribute their changed views to the realities of a changed Middle East. The late 1990s--when former President Mohammed Khatami led Iran with promises of tolerance and democracy--was a stable time when young Iranians clamored for more social and political freedom. But now with neighboring Iraq in turmoil, Iranians seem more concerned with bolstering their place in the region than with freedom of expression. A growing sense of vulnerability is why many find it easy to ignore Ahmadinejad's fundamentalist outlook and provocative remarks and concentrate on his nationalist defiance. "I don't like this regime, but I don't think Iran should be weak either, or else we'll end up like Iraq," says Nazanin Arafin, 33, a teacher. "In the end, I'd rather be oppressed by an Iranian than a foreign occupier."

While he rallies supporters to back a more confrontational stance with the West, Ahmadinejad has soothed the anxieties of young Iranians, who initially feared he would crush their personal freedoms. Instead government meddling has been limited to blocking thousands of news and cultural websites. Some believe the regime will impose harsher social restrictions with time, but others argue Ahmadinejad will refrain altogether, to avoid alienating the majority of young people, among whom he is now popular. Young Iranians are excited to find a leader who lets them wear baggy jeans and pink veils, and still stands up to what they consider a belligerent U.S. "Our civilization is far superior," says Vahid Mobaraki, 28, a gold merchant in the Tehran bazaar. "We don't need to be bossed around by a country with only 200 years of history."

By focusing public attention on the country's external adversaries, Ahmadinejad has sidestepped criticism for not addressing the country's internal social problems. Despite \$60-per-bbl. oil prices, 16% of Iranians remain unemployed. Zahra Rassai, 46, a mother of four teenage sons, voted for Ahmadinejad, hoping he would reduce college tuition. "Nothing has improved in my daily life, but that doesn't matter," she says. "If we Iranians rallied together and boycotted Western products, they wouldn't have the right to dictate to us." It's just as likely, though, that the nuclear dispute will produce pain for Iran, by discouraging foreign investment and pushing the country deeper into isolation. The few critics of Ahmadinejad's who are willing to speak openly say incendiary remarks have already slowed the Iranian economy, and fear that his hostile tactics will elicit economic sanctions and the world's condemnation rather than its respect. "In principle, what Ahmadinejad says is beautiful. It's too bad it's him saying it," says Kamyar Sharifi, 41, a radiator manufacturer. "And the disturbing thing is that it's all a show, because nothing here is improving." Unfortunately for regime opponents at home and abroad, few Iranians seem to have noticed.

Remember This Name

National Review

By Kathryn Jean Lopez

Nazanin Afshin-Jam is not just another pretty face. This former Miss World Canada--2003 runner-up to the Miss World pageant--who will have her first album out this summer, has much more on her mind than her music and her cosmetics bag. Nazanin is a native of Iran. She recently heard about a young woman--with whom she shares both a natiaveland and a name--who has been sentenced to death in Iran for killing a man in self-defense when she and her niece were being assaulted (the men were trying to rape them). Nazanin has since adopted the cause of her namesake.

Nazanin recently spoke to National Review Online editor Kathryn Lopez about young Nazanin--who Lopez wrote about here--and the plight of the Iranian people, as well as Ms. Afshin-Jam's career and Persian roots.

Kathryn Jean Lopez: Why are you worrying yourself with this Iranian girl, Nazanin's, fate?

Nazanin: When I first heard about Nazanin I was horrified. I instinctively thought, "It could have been me". If three men tried to rape my 16-year-old niece and me and I had possession of a knife I would have defended myself in the same way. The only difference is that I thankfully live in a country that understands JUSTICE. I feel terrible that a victim of attempted rape is being treated as a first rate criminal.

I do not only worry about the case of Nazanin, since she represents a larger problem. She is just one of many people being wrongfully tried in Iran, Pakistan, and around the world. Nazanin's case is particularly concerning because Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and is therefore under obligation NOT to impose the death penalty on those under the age of 18. Nevertheless, Amnesty International has recorded 18 executions of child offenders in Iran since 1990. In 2005 alone, at least eight executions of child offenders were recorded. Nazanin was 17 years old at the time of commission of the offense and therefore Iran is in breach. If Iran is in breach of this treaty could they do the same for other treaties particularly those in relation to nuclear energy?

Lopez: Why did your family leave Iran?

Nazanin: We left to escape political persecution due to the Revolution. We could not tolerate the brutality of the regime and political, social and economic instability, not to mention a judicial system based on sharia law that spells out that a woman's life is worth half that of a man's

Nazanin: Why was your father tortured?

Lopez: The Islamic Fundamentalists forbid music and mingling between men and women. My father was the General Manager of the Sheraton Hotel in Iran, so he allowed for these to take place. They shaved his head, brutally lashed and tortured him until he could no longer stand. He was to be put before a firing squad, but by miraculous intervention through a mutual acquaintance he was released. He almost died due to his injuries but thank God he is with us today. He was one among thousands and thousands to be subject to such torture.

Lopez: Do you remember anything about Iran?

Nazanin: I left when I was only one, so unfortunately, the only memories I have are from pictures in my photo album.

Lopez: Do you ever think about what your life would be like if your family stayed there?

Nazanin: All the time. This is why I am so dedicated to helping those stuck in such a repressive regime.

Lopez: Does your family keep in touch with people in Iran still? If so what do they say about the situation there--politically, culturally?

Nazanin: People in Iran are afraid that their newly elected President Ahmadinejad is jeopardizing the quality of life of the Iranian people through his abuse of power and derogatory remarks on the international stage. They fear economic sanctions and/or war by the West. In other words they fear a

repeat of Iraq on Iran.

Lopez: Have you ever been back? Do you hope to go back?

Nazanin: I have never been back; however my dream is to one day be able to visit my homeland. It would be such an honor to visit a country with such an ancient and rich culture. I think I will wait until things calm down in the region before packing any bags.

Lopez: You do some singing in Persian, don't you? Do Iranians ever get to hear your music?

Nazanin: Most of my music is in English; however I have one song in French, others with Spanish influence and one traditional Persian song. My song "Someday: the revolution song" is in English but speaks of Iran. I have samples of my music on my website, www.nazanin.ca and my album will be out for worldwide release in July.

Lopez: What's the message of "Someday"?

Nazanin: Generally, "Someday" is a song of hope. It speaks to those who have had to change their life due to political or social injustices. It speaks about staying strong, rising above and driving forward to free oneself from the shackles that bind.

Specifically, I sing to the oppressed youth of Iran--who have been witness to a "regressive revolution"--not to give up because "someday we will find a way." Full lyrics can be found next to where my music plays on my website.

Lopez: Where can people go to hear more of your music?

Nazanin: www.nazanin.ca or www.myspace.com/nazaninmusic.

Lopez: What kinds of doors are opened to a Miss World Canada--to pursue political issues, for instance?

Nazanin: Having won the Miss World Canada title and having come runner up at Miss World in a television broadcast of over 2.2 billion people has certainly helped in giving me a platform to speak on issues close to my heart. During my reign I had the opportunity to travel the world and be a spokesperson for various charities; naturally I gained a lot of contacts which is now helping me gain momentum in the efforts to help save young Nazanin and in pursuing other humanitarian issues.

Lopez: I'm guessing Iran doesn't participate in Miss World, right?

Nazanin: No, "the Islamic Republic of Iran" does not participate in Miss World. During my year I felt like I was a direct ambassador of Canada and an indirect ambassador of Iran.

Lopez: Have you been able to talk to anyone about Nazanin's case?

Nazanin: Yes, I am getting support from people in my local community including Negar Azmudeh--an immigration lawyer that focuses on human rights issues. We are in the process of trying to get a hold of young Nazanin's lawyer in Iran to get more details about the case and ask them what is needed to help save her life.

In the meantime we have started a petition.

Amnesty International will be getting back to me in a few days about the next steps of action.

Once we have all the necessary information we will be forming coalitions with various Women's Rights groups and Human Rights NGOs and compassionate Islamic groups to move forward. We will also be contacting the media.

Lopez: What is your hope for women like Nazanin and for the Iranian people in general?

Nazanin: I hope that women in the Middle East will be respected and recognized as equals. Iran is a strong country with a highly educated population; the only thing missing is opportunity. Iranians are

recognized at the top of their schools and fields worldwide. My hope is for Iranians (and all citizens of the world) to have access to capabilities to follow all their dreams without fear of persecution. I hope Iran realizes its full potential soon under a free and democratic system.

Fool Me Twice

Foreign Policy

By Joseph Cirincione

3/27

I used to think that the Bush administration wasn't seriously considering a military strike on Iran, because it would only accelerate Iran's nuclear program. But what we're seeing and hearing on Iran today seems awfully familiar. That may be because some U.S. officials have already decided they want to hit Iran hard.

Does this story line sound familiar? The vice president of the United States gives a major speech focused on the threat from an oil-rich nation in the Middle East. The U.S. secretary of state tells congress that the same nation is our most serious global challenge. The secretary of defense calls that nation the leading supporter of global terrorism. The president blames it for attacks on U.S. troops. The intelligence agencies say the nuclear threat from this nation is 10 years away, but the director of intelligence paints a more ominous picture. A new U.S. national security strategy trumpets preemptive attacks and highlights the country as a major threat. And neoconservatives beat the war drums, as the cable media banner their stories with words like "countdown" and "showdown."

The nation making headlines today, of course, is Iran, not Iraq. But the parallels are striking. Three years after senior administration officials systematically misled the nation into a disastrous war, they could well be trying to do it again.

Nothing is clear, yet. For months, I have told interviewers that no senior political or military official was seriously considering a military attack on Iran. In the last few weeks, I have changed my view. In part, this shift was triggered by colleagues with close ties to the Pentagon and the executive branch who have convinced me that some senior officials have already made up their minds: They want to hit Iran. I argued with my friends. I pointed out that a military strike would be disastrous for the United States. It would rally the Iranian public around an otherwise unpopular regime, inflame anti-American anger around the Muslim world, and jeopardize the already fragile U.S. position in Iraq. And it would accelerate, not delay, the Iranian nuclear program. Hard-liners in Tehran would be proven right in their claim that the only thing that can deter the United States is a nuclear bomb. Iranian leaders could respond with a crash nuclear program that could produce a bomb in a few years.

My friends reminded me that I had said the same about Iraq—that I was the last remaining person in Washington who believed President George W. Bush when he said that he was committed to a diplomatic solution. But this time, it is the administration's own statements that have convinced me. What I previously dismissed as posturing, I now believe may be a coordinated campaign to prepare for a military strike on Iran.

The unfolding administration strategy appears to be an effort to repeat its successful campaign for the Iraq war. It is now trying to link Iran to the 9/11 attacks by repeatedly claiming that Iran is the main state sponsor of terrorism in the world (though this suggestion is highly questionable). It is also attempting to make the threat urgent by arguing that Iran might soon pass a "point of no return" if it can perfect the technology of enriching uranium, even though many other nations have gone far beyond Iran's capabilities and stopped their programs short of weapons. And, of course, it is now publicly linking Iran to the Iraqi insurgency and the improvised explosive devices used to kill and maim U.S. troops in Iraq, though Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Peter Pace admitted there is no evidence to support this claim.

If diplomacy fails, the administration might be able to convince leading Democrats to back a resolution for the use of force against Iran. Many Democrats have been trying to burnish a hawkish image and place themselves to the right of the president on this issue. They may find themselves trapped by their own rhetoric, particularly those with presidential ambitions.

The factual debate during the next six months will revolve around the threat assessment. How close is Iran to developing the ability to enrich uranium for fuel or bombs? Is there a secret weapons program? Are there secret underground facilities? What would it mean if small-scale enrichment experiments succeed?

Fortunately, we know more about Iran's nuclear program now than we ever knew about Iraq's (or, for that matter, those of India, Israel, and Pakistan). International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors have been in Iran for more than 3 years investigating all claims of weapons-related work. The United States has satellite reconnaissance, covert programs, and Iranian dissidents providing further information. The key now is to get all this information on the table for an open debate. The administration should now declassify the information it used to estimate how long it will be until Iran has the capability to make a bomb. The Washington Post reported last August that this national intelligence estimate says Iran is a decade away. We need to see the basis for this judgment and all, if any, dissenting opinions. The congressional intelligence committees should be conducting their own reviews of the assessments, including open hearings with independent experts and IAEA officials. Influential groups, such as the Council on Foreign Relations, should conduct their own sessions and studies.

An accurate and fully understood assessment of the status and potential of Iran's nuclear program is the essential basis for any policy. We cannot let the political or ideological agenda of a small group determine a national security decision that could create havoc in a critical area of the globe. Not again.

--Joseph Cirincione is director for non-proliferation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

IRAQ

Rumors of Civil War

Weekly Standard

By Frederick W. Kagan and William Kristol

4/3

WITHIN HOURS OF THE BOMBING of the al-Askariya shrine in Samarra on February 22, the media were filled with warnings that Iraq is sinking into civil war. Of course, almost any insurgency is, in a sense, a civil war, and sectarian violence has marked this insurgency from the very beginning. But the fact is that we are not facing a civil war in Iraq, with large scale military formations fighting one another along ethnic and sectarian lines. Moreover, we can very likely prevent this outcome, and, even better, make real progress toward victory.

What was striking, following the mosque bombing, was the evidence of Iraq's underlying stability in the face of attempts to undermine it. The country's vital institutions seem to have grown strong enough to withstand even the provocation of the bombing of the golden mosque.

In the wake of the bombing, it is true, militias took to the streets, and widespread sectarian violence occurred, killing and wounding many Iraqis. But not a single Iraqi political leader, including the volatile Moktada al-Sadr, endorsed an expansion of the violence. On the contrary, all joined to condemn it, to support government efforts to curtail it, and called on their followers to stop it. The Iraqi army and police were sent out to enforce curfews and stop traffic in many areas. Even in this crisis, they executed their orders, and shut down the great bulk of the violence within several days. Within a fortnight, Sunni leaders who had boycotted discussions aimed at forming a government reentered negotiations, and Iraqi politics--turbulent and nerve-wracking as it is--began again. This is not the performance of a society on the brink of civil war.

The tenacity of the Iraqi army is particularly notable. Iraqi soldiers are granted leave every month to hand-carry their salaries back home, in the absence of a reliable banking system. Especially for Shiites deployed in the Sunni triangle, this is a dangerous undertaking. Yet every month almost every Iraqi soldier "re-ups" by returning to his unit. This fact speaks volumes about the commitment of those soldiers and their professionalism in the face of the current dangers. If the situation began to spiral into real civil war, these Shiite soldiers would simply start deserting in droves, some of them to join up with Shiite militias. They are not doing so.

The continuing sectarian violence is, nevertheless, worrisome, as are the continuing tensions about the future nature and course of the Iraqi government. Together, these may ultimately undermine the foundations of stability. If the violence spreads, or other horrific terrorist attacks occur, the army and police may lose their effectiveness. The power of militias may grow beyond the point where the government and the Iraqi Security Forces can control them. Certainly, there is no basis for complacency. Iraq can still fail, with all the consequences that would follow.

President Bush has declared once again that the United States remains committed to stabilizing a democratic Iraq, and that American forces will stay there as long as necessary. He is right to reassert these commitments. The basic reason the Iraqi Security Forces and police have performed as well as they have is the presence of American troops.

U.S. forces have trained the Iraqis in how to set up checkpoints and search houses. And they have spent many hours teaching them that their loyalty is to the government and not their sect; that they must treat prisoners with respect; that they must behave professionally at all times. The continuing presence of U.S. soldiers is critical to the Iraqis' performance. The Iraqi army is holding together as well as it is because it is backed up and supported, materially and psychologically, by the U.S. Army--and by a sense that the U.S. Army will be there for quite a while to come. It is this simple: No stable and energetic U.S. Army presence--no successful Iraqi army. And without an Iraqi army, expect civil war.

Iraq is at a critical turning point, and U.S. forces are essential to helping the Iraqis get past it. Reducing the U.S. presence in the near future makes no sense, and constantly talking about reducing our forces is counterproductive and enervating. If U.S. force levels are (at least) kept steady while reliable Iraqi forces continue to increase--and the U.S. Army and Marines continue to join with the Iraqis in aggressively fighting the insurgents--the overall level of force that can be brought to bear against the insurgency, and in support of a political process that can hold the country together, will increase. And victory will then be achievable.

We trust President Bush is not going to squander this opportunity just so some congressional Republicans can say in this fall's campaign that the American military role in Iraq is decreasing. We trust that he will not permit his defense secretary to draw down troops when a major rotation occurs next month. After toughing it out through his own reelection campaign in 2004, the president, we trust, will not now capitulate to pressure and throw away the chance to succeed in Iraq.

Camp Saddam

Weekly Standard
By Stephen F. Hayes
4/3

REPRESENTATIVE John Murtha, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, appeared on NBC's Meet the Press on Sunday, March 19, to evaluate the war in Iraq on its third anniversary. Murtha, a decorated veteran and longtime hawk, has become a leading spokesman for his party on the war. And on the show, he spoke of what "probably worries me the most" about the U.S. effort in Iraq. The war, said Murtha, is a diversion from the global war on terror.

"There was no terrorism in Iraq before we went there," said Murtha. "None. There was no connection with al Qaeda, there was no connection with, with terrorism in Iraq itself." This is now the conventional wisdom on Iraq and terrorism. It is wrong.

A new study from the Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia, paints quite a different picture. According to captured documents cited in the study and first reported in THE WEEKLY STANDARD in January, the former Iraqi regime was training non-Iraqi Arabs in terrorist techniques.

Beginning in 1994, the Fedayeen Saddam opened its own paramilitary training camps for volunteers, graduating more than 7,200 "good men racing full with courage and enthusiasm" in the first year. Beginning in 1998, these camps began hosting "Arab volunteers from Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, 'the Gulf,' and Syria." It is not clear from available evidence where all of these non-Iraqi volunteers who

were "sacrificing for the cause" went to ply their newfound skills. Before the summer of 2002, most volunteers went home upon the completion of training. But these camps were humming with frenzied activity in the months immediately prior to the war. As late as January 2003, the volunteers participated in a special training event called the "Heroes Attack." This training event was designed in part to prepare regional Fedayeen Saddam commands to "obstruct the enemy from achieving his goal and to support keeping peace and stability in the province."

Some of this training came under the auspices of the Iraqi Intelligence Service's "Division 27," which, according to the study, "supplied the Fedayeen Saddam with silencers, equipment for booby-trapping vehicles, [and] special training on the use of certain explosive timers. The only apparent use for all of this Division 27 equipment was to conduct commando or terrorist operations."

The publication of the Joint Forces Command study, called the "Iraqi Perspectives Project," coincides with the release by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence of several hundred documents captured in postwar Iraq. There are many more to come. Some of the documents used to complete the study have been made public as part of the ODNI effort; others have not.

It is early, but the emerging picture suggests that the U.S. intelligence community underestimated Saddam Hussein's interest in terrorism. One U.S. intelligence official, identified only as an "IC analyst" in the Senate Select Intelligence Committee report on Iraq, summarized the intelligence community's view on Iraq and terrorism with disarming candor: "I don't think we were really focused on the CT [counterterrorism] side, because we weren't concerned about the IIS [Iraqi Intelligence Service] going out and proactively conducting terrorist attacks. It wasn't until we realized that there was the possibility of going to war that we had to get a handle on that."

A report produced by the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, signed by all members of the Intelligence Committee, Democrats and Republicans, offered this withering assessment of the intelligence community's work on Iraq and terrorism:

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did not have a focused human intelligence (HUMINT) collection strategy targeting Iraq's links to terrorism until 2002. The CIA had no [redacted] sources on the ground in Iraq reporting specifically on terrorism.

It wasn't just Iraq. "The CIA had no [redacted] credible reporting on the leadership of either the Iraqi regime or al Qaeda, which would have enabled it to better define a cooperative relationship, if any did in fact exist."

One document posted on the Internet by the government last week, after it was excerpted in the most recent issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD, sheds additional light on the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda. The internal Iraqi Intelligence memo was written at some point after January 1997 and described the efforts by the IIS to strengthen its relationships with four Saudi opposition groups. One of those groups was the "Reform and Advice Committee," run by Osama bin Laden. The New York Times reported that a Pentagon task force that studied the document concluded that it "appeared authentic." Last week, the investigative unit of ABC News summarized the document in a report.

A newly released prewar Iraqi document indicates that an official representative of Saddam Hussein's government met with Osama bin Laden in Sudan on February 19, 1995, after receiving approval from Saddam Hussein. Bin Laden asked that Iraq broadcast the lectures of Suleiman al Ouda, a radical Saudi preacher, and suggested "carrying out joint operations against foreign forces" in Saudi Arabia. According to the document, Saddam's presidency was informed of the details of the meeting on March 4, 1995, and Saddam agreed to dedicate a program for them on the radio. The document states that further "development of the relationship and cooperation between the two parties to be left according to what's open [in the future] based on dialogue and agreement on other ways of cooperation." The Sudanese were informed about the agreement to dedicate the program on the radio.

The report then states that "Saudi opposition figure" bin Laden had to leave Sudan in July 1996 after it was accused of harboring terrorists. It says information indicated he was in Afghanistan. "The relationship with him is still through the Sudanese. We're currently working on activating this relationship through a new channel in light of his current location," it states.

The summary was followed by an "Editor's Note" assessing the contents and meaning of the document.

This document is handwritten and has no official seal. Although contacts between bin Laden and the Iraqis have been reported in the 9/11 Commission report and elsewhere (e.g., the 9/11 report states "Bin Laden himself met with a senior Iraqi intelligence officer in Khartoum in late 1994 or early 1995) this document indicates the contacts were approved personally by Saddam Hussein.

It also indicates the discussions were substantive, in particular that bin Laden was proposing an operational relationship, and that the Iraqis were, at a minimum, interested in exploring a potential relationship and prepared to show good faith by broadcasting the speeches of al Ouda, the radical cleric who was also a bin Laden mentor.

The document does not establish that the two parties did in fact enter into an operational relationship. Given that the document claims bin Laden was proposing to the Iraqis that they conduct "joint operations against foreign forces" in Saudi Arabia, it is worth noting that eight months after the meeting--on November 13, 1995--terrorists attacked Saudi National Guard Headquarters in Riyadh, killing 5 U.S. military advisers. The militants later confessed on Saudi TV to having been trained by Osama bin Laden.

John Murtha's claim--that there was no connection "with terrorism in Iraq itself"--might come as a surprise to the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines. In early April 2003, they found a ten-acre terrorist training camp ten miles outside of Baghdad. In an interview at the time with an embedded reporter from Stars & Stripes, Captain Aaron Robertson said: "We believe this is a training camp where Iraqis trained forces for the Palestine Liberation Front. This is what we would refer to as a sensitive site. This is clearly a terrorist training camp, the type Iraq claimed did not exist."

Reporter Mark Oliva described the camp in detail:

About a dozen reinforced concrete buildings line the front edge with a large parade field, concrete and steel obstacle course and even a shooting range within its confines. The camp has many modern amenities, including running and heated water, a large kitchen and electricity. Some buildings had ceiling fans and central air conditioning.

Said Captain Robertson: "It's much more sophisticated than those training camps we found in Afghanistan. It has a permanent obstacle course, which rivals anything our Marines have back at Camp Pendleton."

The Marines recovered training manuals in Arabic and English, along with rosters of Palestinians trained there. Last week, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released an Iraqi "intelligence-coded" memo that included lists of "Palestinians trained in Iraq." In fact, Saddam Hussein boasted of his support for Palestinian terrorists and provided the families of Palestinian "martyrs" rewards of \$25,000. Another captured document details those payments.

Among the documents released last week was a translation of a three-page Iraqi Intelligence memo regarding a wave of attacks to be conducted by the Saddam Fedayeen. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence website states that it cannot verify the authenticity of the posted documents, but the document appears to be similar to one described in the "Iraqi Perspectives Study." The undated document was apparently prepared in response to orders given on May 5, 1999.

According to those orders, the Fedayeen Saddam was "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) and for coordination with the Intelligence service to secure deliveries, accommodations, and target guidance." The execution of the plan would take place in several steps. After the IIS selected 50 "fedayeen martyrs," they were to receive training at an IIS school. Those who passed the tests would be assigned targets. "The first ten will work in the European field (London). The second ten will be working in the Iranian field. The third will be working in the self-ruled field."

How many of these attacks were executed, if any? And who, exactly, were the non-Iraqi Arabs trained in Iraq beginning in 1998? Did some of them return to Iraq before the war? Are we fighting them still?

That is a distinct possibility. In an interview last month, David Dunford, a career foreign service officer who served as the chief U.S. government liaison to the post-Saddam Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad, described a document his team found in the abandoned ministry building. It was "a list of jihadists, for want of a better word, coming into Iraq from Saudi Arabia before the war," he said,

unprompted. "That suggested to me that Saddam was planning the insurgency before the war."

One key element in shaping the conventional wisdom on Iraq and terrorism was the 9/11 Commission Report, which found that Iraq and al Qaeda had no "collaborative operational relationship." But the day that report was released, Commissioner John Lehman offered this prophetic warning in an interview with THE WEEKLY STANDARD: "There may well be--and probably will be--additional intelligence coming in from interrogations and from analysis of captured records and so forth which will fill out the intelligence picture. This is not phrased as, nor meant to be, the definitive word on Iraqi Intelligence activities."

The "Iraqi Perspectives Project" has provided a look at Iraqi support for terrorism through its analysis of captured documents. The interrogation of the military commander of Salman Pak, a terrorist training camp outside of Baghdad, is said to add to this picture. And then there is the provocative "Summary of Evidence" on an Iraqi detainee at Guantanamo. Based in part on an interrogation of the detainee, it was produced by the U.S. government and released last year.

1. From 1987 to 1989, the detainee served as an infantryman in the Iraqi Army and received training on the mortar and rocket propelled grenades.
2. A Taliban recruiter in Baghdad convinced the detainee to travel to Afghanistan to join the Taliban in 1994.
3. The detainee admitted he was a member of the Taliban.
4. The detainee pledged allegiance to the supreme leader of the Taliban to help them take over all of Afghanistan.
5. The Taliban issued the detainee a Kalashnikov rifle in November 2000.
6. The detainee worked in a Taliban ammo and arms storage arsenal in Mazar-E-Sharif organizing weapons and ammunition.
7. The detainee willingly associated with al Qaeda members.
8. The detainee was a member of al Qaeda.
9. An assistant to Usama Bin Ladin paid the detainee on three separate occasions between 1995 and 1997.
10. The detainee stayed at the al Farouq camp in Darwanta, Afghanistan, where he received 1,000 Rupees to continue his travels.
11. From 1997 to 1998, the detainee acted as a trusted agent for Usama Bin Ladin, executing three separate reconnaissance missions for the al Qaeda leader in Oman, Iraq, and Afghanistan.
12. In August 1998, the detainee traveled to Pakistan with a member of Iraqi Intelligence for the purpose of blowing up the Pakistan, United States and British embassies with chemical mortars.
13. Detainee was arrested by Pakistani authorities in Khudzar, Pakistan, in July 2002.

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

Putting More Time on the Iraq Clock

U.S. News & World Report

By Julian E. Barnes

4/3

George Bush has acknowledged the elephant in the Oval Office: Iraq will not be wrapped up on his watch. It will be up to "future presidents and future governments of Iraq," Bush said last week, to

determine when American troops will make their final exit. Until now, that is a reality Bush himself avoided voicing. But observers of the war have long realized that, barring an unlikely act by the next Congress demanding immediate withdrawal, the American mission in Iraq will continue after the current president has left the White House.

What is far from obvious, though, is the composition of that force. The American presence could look much as it does today, with the bulk of the forces being combat brigades. Or it could be that much of the infantry will be gone and that teams of advisers and trainers will make up the majority of a far smaller force.

Shrinkage. The drawdown of the American military has already begun. U.S. forces surged to a temporary high of 160,000 for last December's Iraqi elections, but commanders said they hoped to reduce the American footprint to about 130,000 by the end of March. Military leaders have drafted a plan--although officers insist it is a "goal," not a plan--to continue to shrink the force in Iraq during the course of this year to below 100,000.

The civil sectarian strife that has surged while Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish politicians have wrangled over the creation of a unity government has prompted speculation that the drawdown would be derailed. In recent weeks, Gen. George Casey, the top American commander in Iraq, brought some of the reserve "quick reaction force" stationed in Kuwait to Baghdad, where they will remain until a new government is seated. But military officials say such temporary reinforcements will not change the long-term outlook. "Reducing the force will continue," says an officer. "That has not been impacted by this hiccup of sectarian violence."

More than a year ago, the primary mission of the American forces in Iraq shifted from fighting the insurgency to training the Iraqis to fight. The strategy may be starting to pay off--117 Americans died in January and February, compared with 152 in November and December. The decrease could be a result of insurgents shifting to Iraqi targets, as well as improving American training and tactics. But, as one officer points out, it is also a sign that more Iraqi forces are handling the messy duty of patrols and raids.

At the urging of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, once a leading opponent of peacekeeping operations, the military is establishing a new institute, the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, to study how to best train foreign militaries. Figuring out when American units should ramp down their assistance and hand over responsibility to Iraqi units is one of the big questions for the center. "There have been a lot of peacekeeping operations that have gone on [indefinitely]," says Col. Steven Mains, the center's deputy director. "I don't want to paint a bleak picture that we will always be there [in Iraq], but how to do the disengagement is a difficult issue."

Leaving. Mains says the goal in Iraq may be to work toward a situation like that in South America, where the United States periodically sends small groups of advisers to help train military units. But troop-intensive peacekeeping obligations are notoriously difficult to shake. President Bush entered office opposed to open-ended peacekeeping missions and pledging to bring troops home from Bosnia and Kosovo. Six years later, a small American force remains in the Balkans.

The 2000 debate over the Balkans will very likely pale in comparison with the debate over Iraq in the 2008 presidential election. The shape of that discussion will, of course, depend on the ground situation. Still, there will be no getting around the reality that the U.S. presence in Iraq probably will be one of the most important questions facing Bush's successor.

Is This a Strategy For Success?

Newsweek

By Rod Nordland

4/3

At last, President Bush had news he could use from Iraq. He devoted an entire speech in Cleveland last week to the story of how the town of Tall Afar was wrested from Qaeda control and has become a model for defeating the enemy. Praise came not just from the administration; CBS's "60 Minutes" ran a glowing segment on what had been accomplished under Col. H. R. McMaster and his Third Armored

Cavalry. McMaster, author of a celebrated book, "Dereliction of Duty," a critical look at how the U.S. military and its leaders got it wrong in Vietnam, made the rounds of the airwaves about how they're now getting it right in Iraq. Tall Afar, said the president, "is today a free city that gives reason for hope for a free Iraq."

He showed off a letter to prove it. It was from the city's mayor to Gen. George Casey, the U.S. military commander in Iraq, calling American troops "our lion-hearted saviors." In Tall Afar last week, however, things weren't that clear-cut. U.S. troops were able to take a small group of American reporters on a foot patrol through several neighborhoods--rare these days in central and western Iraq, and unheard of in Baghdad. Iraqis along the way were full of praise for their liberators, many of whom they recognized by name. But just in case, two squads of heavily armed troops kept watch, front, rear and flanks, rifles at the ready, and wouldn't let the group linger more than a few minutes in any place; a helicopter gunship shadowed us overhead. In another part of town, police later reported that an insurgent mortar attack wounded six children. A second NEWSWEEK reporter, visiting Tall Afar independently, found other neighborhoods barricaded; Iraqi police warned that he might be killed by insurgents or their supporters if he went any farther.

President Bush extolled Tall Afar as proof of the success of America's new strategy, "Clear, Hold and Build." Tall Afar had been subdued before, in 2004. But after U.S. troops moved on, insurgents moved right back and made over the city in Al Qaeda's image, with Iraqi police barricaded in their station under constant attack. Even the mayor then was an insurgent sympathizer. McMaster brought in a large force, alongside a new Iraqi Army brigade, and after two weeks of fierce fighting in September 2005, retook the town. Al Qaeda even acknowledged the defeat, taking revenge by setting off six suicide car bombs in a day in Baghdad.

McMaster's Third Cav was replaced this year by a brigade of the First Armored Division. The new commander, Col. Sean MacFarland, is the first to admit Tall Afar is still a work in progress. "What's it look like to you--Stalingrad in 1944?" But he ticked off the reconstruction projects in the pipeline and the dramatic drop in insurgent activity--now only a couple of minor incidents every day or two, down from 10 a day only a month ago. "Clean it up, get the infrastructure back, and people will regain their confidence," he said. "It's not Camelot, but it's not Gotham either."

What it is, though, like so many places in Iraq now, is a city increasingly divided along sectarian lines. The neighborhoods we patrolled were largely Shia; those our reporter found barricaded and dangerous were mostly Sunni. "I'd say that zero percent of Bush's talk about Tall Afar is true," said Ahmed Sami, 45, a Sunni laborer. "They turned Shiite neighborhoods into havens, and Sunni neighborhoods into hells." Even in the Shia neighborhoods, people were far from satisfied. "This is all just an outdoor prison for us," said school teacher Abu Muhammed. "We can't even go as far as the market street up there." He gestured to the top of his road, where the Ottoman fortress that dominates the town is located (and which we couldn't visit due to a security scare, even though it holds the mayor's office). "We know the American Army and the Iraqi Army are working and doing their best," said Bakr Muhammed Bakr, a dressmaker whose shop, like most others on the streets, was open for business. "But what are they going to do, put a soldier in front of each Sunni house?"

To Sunnis, that's often what it seems like. "After the battle, resistance became very low, because the city was turned into a military camp," said a Sunni doctor at the Tall Afar General Hospital. In fact, at all times at least 3,000 Iraqi Army, police and U.S. soldiers are on duty inside the city, stationed at a welter of police stations and camps and on checkpoints. Most are Iraqis. They patrol by foot and vehicle constantly. Thousands more are at bases outside the city. Tall Afar's population is only 150,000. (As many as 100,000 people, mostly Sunni, fled during last year's fighting and most have not returned.) That's at least one armed man for every 50 residents, more if reinforcements are used. "That's a pretty high ratio," acknowledged MacFarland, "which is why the enemy is having a hard time. It would be pretty hard to replicate that in a city like Baghdad or Mosul."

The rise of sectarian feelings, after the terrorist bombing of the Shia shrine in Samarra, has complicated matters in Tall Afar as well--though protests there remained peaceful, and there were no reprisal attacks on Sunni mosques, as elsewhere in Iraq. The president's speech suggested Tall Afar was on the verge of being handed back to the Iraqis, but no one on the ground now expects that to happen soon. "There will be American troops in and around Tall Afar at least for the better part of the coming year," said Col. MacFarland. That's good news to Mayor Najim Abdullah al Jubori, who said he was so proud to hear President Bush mention him and his letter that "I could have flown without wings." But to be honest, he went on to explain, the point of his letter was actually a plea to Casey to

keep American troops here even longer--not proof of a strategy that will, sooner or later, allow Americans to pull out.

The Last Word Ashraf Qazi: 'Serious'--Or A Civil War?

Newsweek International

By Malcolm Beith

4/3

Since the February bombing of the sacred Askariya Mosque in Samarra, Iraq has been consumed by sectarian violence. Hundreds have died in reprisal killings carried out by Sunni and Shia militias, while the insurgency continues to hamper efforts to form a government. But despite the evident chaos, U.S. leaders continue to insist they're seeing progress. President

George W. Bush last week hailed the city of Tall Afar as a "concrete example of success in Iraq." Former Iraqi prime minister Ayad Allawi was less optimistic: "If this is not a civil war, then God knows what civil war is," he said. NEWSWEEK's Malcolm Beith asked former Pakistani diplomat Ashraf Qazi, currently the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, who just returned from the country, for his take. Excerpts:

BEITH: Allawi says that Iraq is in a state of "civil war." You've said that it is not.

OAZI: I don't want to [debate] the semantics. There is a serious sectarian situation, a serious security situation, which needs to be addressed by a broad-based government as soon as possible. As to whether you would apply a definition of civil war to the present situation is a matter that can be debated. What is important is that you have a very serious situation which has become more serious in the aftermath of the Samarra incident. That is more important than how you define it.

So what must Coalition forces and the Iraqi government do right now?

You need a broad-based approach, of which training and handing over greater responsibilities to the security forces--which includes the Army and the police--is one part. The other, of course, is dealing with the human-rights situation, and making the political process inclusive. Once you have a government and you have the Parliament--which includes more parties than it did in January--then you have a very good beginning.

With respect to building up capacity for delivery of services, which we've been doing and will continue to do, [we need to be] working with ministries, with U.N. agencies and Iraqi nongovernmental organizations to continue to try to deliver essential services to the people not only at the local level but at the national level.

There's not only an insurgency but also serious sectarian violence now. Can the Iraqi authorities translate what you call a good beginning into a good reality?

Yes. I think the leadership recognizes the absolute need to have a broad-based government in every sense of the word. Not just including numbers of parties, but agreeing on structures and procedures which would enable decision-making to be consensus-based.

So how can security be improved?

[The effort to improve] the security situation has various strategies. One is strengthening and enabling security forces to live up to the responsibilities that they will be taking over progressively. And also maybe reaching out to those who want to come into the political process and who are not guilty of crimes. Those elements that are beyond the pale need to be progressively isolated from those who might have political grievances and might be willing to come into the political process--provided, as I said, that they aren't guilty of atrocities, crimes or acts of terror. So it's a broad-based effort that's required, which includes training and bringing security services up to par.

But training has proved difficult and slow. Are efforts being made to speed it up?

This is not something with which United Nations is directly concerned, but we know this is happening. The Multi-National Force-Iraq is facilitating and helping the Iraqi government in this respect.

President Bush has hailed the Iraqi city of Tall Afar as a symbol of success. How so?

I know what the president has been saying. I haven't been to Tall Afar, so I couldn't really give you a personal point of view. I've been to Fallujah and Ar Ramadi and I've met with the governor of Anbar, and there's a problem there of restoring places that have seen military activity. Many displaced persons have returned, but businesses and homes need to be restored, compensation needs to be given, human rights need to be protected ... There's a long list of things that need to be done.

How do you foresee the United Nations' role in Iraq?

Essentially, our role is an advisory role. We don't have an executive role as such. People think that we formulate the constitution or that we run the elections. We don't. The political process has to be a sovereign independent Iraqi political process. But we are there to facilitate it and promote adult compromise.

There are claims from some aid groups in Iraq that the reconstruction efforts have stalled.

The reconstruction and development of course is related to the security situation, and the security situation has indeed been a constraint on reconstruction and development.

Crossing Over

New Republic

By Lawrence F. Kaplan

4/3

Fadi has had it with Iraq. At his family's home in Baghdad, the Christian university student (whose last name has been withheld to protect his family) elaborates in fluent English. "There is no future for Christians here," he says. He knows this firsthand. Last year, four men drove up to his family's house and snatched his twelve-year-old nephew off the street. Targeted for riches that few of them actually possess, Christians routinely disappear from the sidewalks of Baghdad. "We have no militia to defend us, and the government--they do nothing," Fadi says. A day after the abduction, the captors phoned Fadi's family, demanding \$30,000. If his family failed to cobble together the ransom, Fadi knew what would come next. His nephew would be shot or beheaded.

After Iraq's Baathists seized power in 1968, they celebrated by stringing Jews up in a Baghdad square. With the remnant of Iraq's Jewish population having long since fled the country, Christians have become today's victims of choice. Sunni, Shia, and Kurd may agree on little else, but all have made sport of brutalizing their Christian neighbors, hundreds of whom have been slaughtered since the U.S. invasion. As a result, Iraq's ancient Christian community, now numbering roughly 800,000 and consisting mostly of Eastern rite Chaldean Catholics and Assyrian Orthodox Christians, dwindles by the day. According to Iraqi estimates, between 40,000 and 100,000 have fled since 2004, many following their own road to Damascus across the Syrian border or to Jordan, while many more have been displaced within Iraq. As for the country that loosed the furies against them, the United States refuses to provide Iraqi Christians protection of any kind. From his synod in Baghdad, the most prominent Christian clergyman in Iraq, Chaldean Patriarch Emmanuel Delly, denies the obvious. "There is no persecution of Christians," the septuagenarian archbishop insists. "All Iraqis have problems." The fiction has become canonical among Iraqi Christian leaders, who maintain it to avoid inciting their tormentors. Many members of Iraq's clergy, for example, dismiss as gross exaggeration reports that tens of thousands of Christians have fled Iraq. But, however much the clergy may deny it, Iraqi Christians suffer for their faith. Along with kidnappings and assassinations, church bombings--beginning with the destruction of five churches in August 2004--have become a staple of Christian life in Iraq. To disguise their faith, Christian women, particularly in Iraq's south, tuck their hair under hijabs, while fewer and fewer attend church, performing Mass in homes and sometimes, like their ancient Christian ancestors, in crypts instead. Even the Kurds, so often depicted as saints in Iraq's morality tale, have taken to pummeling Christians; the Kurdish religious affairs minister said last year that "those who turn to Christianity pose a threat to society." Commenting on a recent pogrom against

Christian students in Mosul, Yonadam Kanna, the only Christian elected to Iraq's new parliament, says, "The fanatics blame us for doing nothing. They blame us for being Christian." The blame accrues, in part, because of real and imagined ties to the West and to the Western power occupying Iraq. There is, in truth, a cultural affinity between Iraqi Christians, many of whom speak English (and, as such, account for a large percentage of the U.S. military's interpreters), and the mostly Christian soldiers occupying their country. "[Local Christians] were very supportive of having us in Mosul," says Colonel Mike Meese, who served with the 101st Airborne Division in the heavily Christian city. "They'd have our soldiers go to Mass with them." But, as soon as their American protectors departed, the city's Christians became targets--their churches sacked and their archbishop kidnapped. In Baghdad, too, insurgents routinely execute Christians who work alongside the Americans. Threatened by her neighbors, a Christian friend of mine who worked in the Green Zone quit her job and today rarely leaves her house. To the lengthy indictment of Christians, their persecutors have also added the charge of proselytizing. Unlike American soldiers, who mean to save Iraqi lives, the American evangelicals who followed on their heels mean to save Iraqi souls. There is a difference. Evangelizing to Iraqis carries with it risks that evangelizing to, say, Latin Americans does not. The infusion of pamphlets and missionaries from organizations like the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention enrages Iraqi Muslims, who, Iraqi Christian leaders claim, increasingly conflate their congregants with "the crusaders"--and, too often, treat them as such. "The evangelicals have caused such problems for us," says Kanna. "They make the Sunni and Shia furious." Even though Iraq's Christians suffer in the name of their American co-religionists, their fate seems not to have made the slightest impression on much of the evangelical establishment. Their websites and promotional literature advertise the importance of creating new Christian communities in Iraq while mostly ignoring the obligation to save ancient ones. Nor, with a few exceptions, have mainstream church leaders in the United States broached the subject, either. Dr. Carl Moeller, the president of Open Doors USA, an organization that supports persecuted Christians abroad, pins the blame on Christianity's own sectarian rifts. "The denominations in Iraq aren't recognized by Americans," he explains. "The underlying attitude is, 'They're not us.'" The abysmal plight of Iraq's Christians, needless to say, long predates the arrival of the Americans. Since the first century, when Christianity first came to Nineveh province, Iraqi Christians have been cursed by geography. With its fields of mud burnt red by the sun, much of Nineveh--the ancestral home to a large number of Assyrian Christians that runs from Mosul to the Syrian border in Iraq's northwest corner--resembles a Martian landscape. Thousands of feet above the plains, a small U.S. outpost atop the Sinjar mountain range shines at night, a beacon to many of the Christians, Yazidis, and other persecuted minorities who populate the province below, a number of whom initially greeted the Americans as their saviors. But, having been massacred over the centuries by Ottomans, Kurds, and Arabs alike, most Christians know better than to rely on the goodwill of others. Nor is this knowledge merely the result of their experiences under foreign rule. Even though the Christian presence in Iraq predates the arrival of Islam, in the Iraqi Muslim imagination, Christians will always be emissaries of the West. Because they operate a disproportionate share of Iraq's liquor, music, and beauty shops--industries deemed sinful in various interpretations of Islam--insurgents accuse them of embodying the licentiousness of all things American and have burned hundreds of liquor stores to the ground. Where Iraq was once awash in pop music CDs sold by Christian vendors, a more recent CD circulating in Mosul features the beheading of Christians. It was against this backdrop that Fadi's family raced to save his kidnapped nephew from a similar fate. Luckily, Fadi's father, a doctor, was able to produce the \$30,000 ransom. Eight days after his abduction, the captors released Fadi's nephew. But the ordeal shook his family so badly that, a month later, they spirited the boy off to Jordan. "If, today, we all had a place to go, tomorrow there wouldn't be a Christian left in Iraq," Fadi says. As for Fadi himself, who first applied to leave Iraq in 1998 while Saddam Hussein was in power, last year's kidnapping made him even more anxious to flee. With the doors to the United States sealed shut, he placed his faith in other Western countries. While over 40,000 Iraqi Christians have fled their homeland since the invasion, last year the United States permitted fewer than 200 Iraqis to immigrate. As for the thousands of remaining Christian refugees, until recently, the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Refugees didn't even bother referring their cases to the United States, knowing we had no inclination to take them in. Their case files amount to proof of Washington's callousness. There is the Iraqi American whose Christian sister saw her husband gunned down in the street. Following the assassination of two more family members, the sister fell into a crippling depression, unable to care for her two-year-old child. Caught up in a bureaucratic tangle, her American relatives have gotten exactly nowhere. Another sister of an Iraqi American, a Christian woman with four children, lost her husband, killed while serving as a U.S. military interpreter. Her family, too, has been reduced to pleading her case before unconcerned State Department officials. A heartfelt advocate for Iraqi Christians, Representative Jan Schakowsky, a Democrat from Illinois, calls embassies, by her account, "at all hours of the night," but "the policy since the war began is, 'We're not granting asylum.' ... There is no processing of refugees from Iraq." The reasons derive from post-September 11 security restrictions

and, in the telling of a senior administration official, from the fiction that Iraqis, now liberated, no longer endure systematic persecution. Fortunately for Fadi, other Western governments have offered a more candid assessment, and, after seven years of waiting, one just informed him he will be granted his visa. He can barely contain his glee. "I feel happy because I go to a new place where I feel free," he says. But his case counts as a rare exception. Before leaving Baghdad last month, I got a taste of the desperation felt by Iraqi Christians left behind. Samira, a sad woman in her fifties who comes once a day to cook for an Iraqi friend, showed me a photograph of a woman in her thirties. She had a favor to ask: Would I marry her daughter? The proposition had nothing to do with me, per se. She simply wants to get her Christian daughter out of Iraq. Last year, insurgents murdered Samira's son. As a sign of respect, his Muslim friends transported the body to Najaf for burial in the Shia holy city. A kind gesture, to be sure, but Samira wants her son buried in a Christian cemetery. The son's Shia friends refuse to surrender his body, and, not being Muslim herself, there is no one to whom she can effectively--or safely--plead her case. Like most Iraqi Christians, she has nowhere to turn.

The Other Side of the Story

National Review

By Bill Crawford

4/3

Welcome to another round-up of good news in Iraq. Two positive trends have remained strong. First, Iraqi forces continue to takeover more battlespace from the U.S., and they continue to show that they are capable of securing their own country. Second, Iraqi citizens continue to provide tips against terrorists and insurgents. Also noteworthy is that the number of attacks is decreasing, and the number of casualties with it. Finally, this week's edition features several stories about heroes--soldiers who went above and beyond in their service to our country and were recognized for it.

Operation Scorpion kicked off this week, and several factors make it a unique security sweep. The target list for the operation contained 52 names, and was compiled through Iraqi intelligence gathering. Also, the operation was planned solely by Iraqis, in this case Major General Anwar, commander of the 2nd Iraqi Army Brigade, and his staff. Twenty-four of the terrorists on target list were captured. The Iraqi's American advisor spoke about the success of the operation and the continued progress of the Iraqi army: "This Iraqi Army Brigade has made tremendous progress in the five months we've been working with them," said Colonel David Gray, Commander, 1st BCT, 101st Airborne Division. "In October, they were loosely organized and not very well trained. The success of Operation Scorpion, and their ability to conduct a complex mission in the Hawijah area without suffering or inflicting casualties, demonstrates their professionalism and improved level of discipline." 100 soldiers of the 7th Iraqi Army Division conducted their first independent operation in Anbar Province. The mission showed that the abilities of Iraqis has improved immensely: "They planned and executed the operation by themselves instead of us guiding them," said Army Staff Sgt. Ken E. Miller, MiTT training officer. "They [Iraqi Army] are ready to show people that they can do this on their own." Iraqi special forces conducted an operation in Baghdad looking for terrorists involved in kidnappings and executions. During the operation, 16 terrorists were killed, 18 were detained, and one kidnapping victim was rescued.

Iraqi police thwarted an attempted suicide car-bombing on their headquarters south of Baghdad, killing two of the terrorists. Iraqi police came under fire from a passenger in a minibus that was headed towards their position. The explosives-laden minibus blew up when police returned fire. The driver of the minibus was not a willing martyr: Subsequent examination of the bus revealed that the driver's hands had been chained to the wheel. Iraqis are increasingly providing information against terrorists. In one instance, an Iraqi turned in a relative, who was eventually detained on charges of participating in drive-by attacks against coalition forces. Near the town of Al Imam, tips led to the discovery of two large weapons caches.

During January, 25 IEDs exploded along a road designated Route Redwing. The 4th ID was sent into the area, along with Iraqi troops, and arrested a terrorist connected to the bombings. The house he was in is now used as an observation post. The local population supports the combined efforts of Iraqi and U.S. forces: Marez feels many of the locals agree and approve of the U.S. presence in their area. If the 506th is securing the area and keeping bombs and explosives off the road, then the kids have nothing to fear when they're out playing or on their way to school. The city of Tall Afar, once a focal

point of terrorist activity, is now safe thanks to Iraqi forces. Six months after an operation to clear the city of terrorists, the streets are still safe, and schools and markets are open again. The Iraqi battalion in charge of security in the city operates independently and is one of the best in the country.

In Ramadi, Iraqi forces, operating independently, discovered the largest weapons cache yet to be found by Iraqi forces. The operation was based on tips by local Iraqis: The cache consisted of: sniper rifles, numerous rockets and rocket launchers, multiple hand grenades, RPGs, loaded weapons magazines, numerous artillery rounds, an assortment of propellants, and bomb and IED making materials. Additionally, the IA Soldiers removed a completed suicide vest that was fully armed with explosives and ready to be used in a terrorist attack. Members of the 5th Iraqi Army Division assumed sole responsibility of the battlespace around the southern half of Diyala Province. Their pride was evident: "With pride and loftiness, we are assuming battle space from our friends. It is a great day for our battalion," said Col. Hadi Jamal, commander, 3rd Bn., 2nd Brigade, 5th IAD. "It has been assigned to us, as a combat battalion, to conduct planning and coordinate assaults on terrorist nests, chase them and paralyze their movements at day and night." The Iraqi army took control of security in part of Mosul this week. It is the second handover of battlespace in Mosul to the Iraqis since December. The city is also undergoing major reconstruction: Since reconstruction began, more than 194 projects valued at \$182 million have begun, with 56 completed. The effort to rebuild Mosul's infrastructure has three major focal points.

There are 18 projects dedicated to water and sanitation, 83 projects involving education, and 45 projects designed to support law and governance that have been completed, said Col. Bruce Grant, deputy team leader for reconstruction. 600 Iraqis conducted an independent operation in Bayji. The operation led to the detention of 25 suspected terrorists.

The leader of a terrorist cell was captured in an Iraqi-led operation in the city of Haswa.

An operation northwest of Baghdad resulted in the discovery of several large weapons caches: The caches contained 20 rockets, 53 rocket-propelled grenades, three anti-aircraft missiles with two launchers, an anti-tank missile, 24 mortar rounds, a mortar tube, and a variety of small-caliber artillery rounds. In addition to the ordnance, soldiers found items commonly used in roadside bombs. Another tip led U.S. soldiers to a member of a terrorist cell, who in turn provided information on his accomplices. The cell is wanted for IED attacks and kidnapping.

A large cache used for making IEDs was discovered by soldiers from the 6th Iraqi Army Division: The cache consisted of 16 bags of high-munitions explosives (approximately 900 lbs), one roll of detonation cord, nine long-range communication antennas, two demolition sticks (approximately 300 lbs), two ZPU anti-artillery guns, eight 155 mm rounds, a 122 mm round prepared as a roadside-bomb, a fire extinguisher prepared as a roadside-bomb, 30 82 mm mortar rounds prepared as roadside bombs and a 300-pound acetylene tank prepared as a roadside bomb. In Abu Ghraib, U.S. soldiers uncovered more than 16 tons of weapons in a five-day period.

A Predator UAV killed three terrorists as they planted an IED near Balad Air Base. The terrorists were observed by the Predator digging a hole for an IED. Once it was clear they were planting an IED, the Predator launched a Hellfire missile, killing all three.

More than one million Shiite pilgrims went to the Iraqi cities of Karbala and Najaf in celebration of Arbaeen. Terrorists routinely target these sorts of events. However, they were unable to do much damage thanks to improved security: According to Rumsfeld, "this year's pilgrimage passed, for the most part, peacefully," after years of violence once marked the occasion.

Rumsfeld confirms that only "12 were killed and two wounded in connection with the pilgrimage," whereas in 2004 terrorists killed over 120 civilians, injuring over 300 more.

Rumsfeld says, "Iraq is benefiting from added training and increased military capabilities of the 241,000 Iraqi soldiers and police. Provincial governors, provincial police chiefs and Iraqi security personnel executed an extensive security plan." As usual, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated the obvious: "If the coalition does not have an adequate number of forces on the ground, as some argue, how did the Iraqi forces with coalition support manage to protect millions of Iraqis? And if terrorists tried and failed to pull off a massive attack, what does this say about their strength and their capabilities?" he asked. One of the biggest misconceptions about Iraq is that violence is endemic across the country, but nothing could be further from the truth, as General Casey points out: Fact:

violence is not widespread in Iraq. Three of Iraq's provinces, Baghdad, Al Anbar and Salah ad Din, account for nearly 75 percent of all the attacks. The other 15 provinces average less than six attacks daily and 12 average less than two attacks per day. That does not erase what is happening in Baghdad, but it does put it in perspective.

Fact: 70 percent of Iraq's population lives without incidents. And how about some perspective on the violence: The rate of violent deaths in war-ravaged northern Uganda is three times higher than in Iraq and the 20-year insurgency has cost \$1.7bn (£980m), according to a report by 50 international and local agencies released today.

The violent death rate for northern Uganda is 146 deaths a week or 0.17 violent deaths per 10,000 people per day. This is three times higher than in Iraq, where the incidence of violent death was 0.052 per 10,000 people per day, says the report. The news is also good for U.S. soldiers. In March, fatalities fell to a two year low. Moreover, the number of deaths from roadside bombs fell one year low of twelve. In Baghdad, the number of attacks on our troops dropped by 58 percent this week, but this decline isn't the only explanation for the decrease in deaths. The increased capability of Iraqi forces plays a big part.

Despite being targets for terrorist attacks, Iraqis continue to sign up to serve their country in the military. In Ramadi, recruits explained their reasons for making the two year commitment: "My family encouraged me to sign up for the Iraqi Army. Security is a problem in this area and it's up to the men of the city to take a stance against the violence and help build our new government," said a local Iraqi man, as he waited to be checked by an Iraqi medical doctor.

"With the new government in place, Iraq is heading in the right direction. I drove here from Jazeera to sign up for the Iraqi Army," said an Iraqi Army Candidate. In related news, efforts to recruit Sunnis into the military are starting to pay off: They came by the hundreds. Iraqi men, mostly young but a few graybeards, milling about the desert or squatting in the sand with their robes tucked between their legs and turbans fluttering in the breeze.

It's recruiting day. These men have come to join the Iraqi army.

They are Sunni Arabs from tribes that populate the vast desert region to the west along the Syrian border. On just one day in Qaim, 400 Sunnis showed up to join the Iraqi Army, many of them former insurgents. This Sunnis have no love of the terrorists in Iraq: One said he joined because his brother had been killed by an insurgent bomb.

"I want to shoot terrorists," he said, his face tightening into a hard scowl. Another 831 Iraqis signed up in Fallujah.

Japan is providing \$655 million in loans to Iraq in order to improve the country's irrigation systems, power plants, and port facilities. The loan is the first installment of the \$3.5 billion Japan pledged to Iraqi reconstruction in 2003.

Renovations are complete on the Karbala Government Building: The local administration building received a full interior make-over, including new heating and air conditioning systems, electrical wiring, wall finishes, stage area, seating, and furniture. The exterior of the building was also upgraded with a power transformer, courtyard area, restroom facilities, and a new coat of paint. Sadr Al Yousefiyah (reg. req.) use to be used by terrorists to stage attacks against targets in Baghdad. A joint U.S./Iraqi operation liberated the town, which is now the site of numerous projects aimed at rebuilding the town's infrastructure. A project restoring drinking water to the town has already been completed, and another six are underway: "Half a dozen projects are already underway in the wake of this operation," said McFadden, program manager, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. "These projects are a mix of short and long-term solutions to the problems facing these people. Some of these projects are simple road repairs to facilitate civilian transportation, while others are complicated and longer term projects developed to repair local electrical networks over the long haul," said McFadden. More than a dozen reconstruction projects are underway in Yousefiyah, including the rehabilitation of twelve schools. The city now has a "nearly continuous" power supply.

Iraq's first ATM is now available at the Baghdad branch of the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI), and plans are underway to put ATM's throughout the country. TBI issued a statement showing their expectation of opportunities for significant growth in the future: "We are very happy to be the first financial institution

to bring ATM service to the Iraqi people. This is another first for TBI. We continue to be the most modern and innovative bank in Iraq." This is just another sign that Iraq's economy is getting better. In a recent poll, 56 percent of Iraqis said that the economy was improving, and 65 percent said their economic conditions were improving. Despite the violence, Iraqis are struggling to build a modern, peaceful society.

Unemployment continues to be a problem in Iraq, but Dhi Qar University is working to remedy the situation. It will host a series of job training seminars: Those taking part in the training courses will learn a number of skills in the electrical, tailoring, carpentry trades, as well as nursing, al-Yasiri said. An outdoor market in Kirkuk was revitalized with the help of USAID. The work included paving the streets, installing sidewalks, and constructing a drainage canal. Locals provided \$10,000 for the project.

U.S. and Iraqi medics conducted a medical clinic for residents of the Jabouri peninsula. The clinic treated more than 250 people, many of them children.

Here's some more of what we have accomplished, via Centcom:

- * There were virtually no cell-phone subscribers during Saddam Hussein's reign. Today, there are more than 5 million.
- * Eighty percent of the Saddam Hussein-era debt has been forgiven by Iraq's debtors.
- * Women comprise 25 percent of the Iraqi parliament, which is the highest proportion in the Arab world and one of the largest percentages worldwide.
- * The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides training on industrial equipment enabling Iraqis to operate and maintain equipment and power systems throughout the country.
- * Nearly 100 percent of Iraqi children have been vaccinated.
- * In March of 2003, per capita income in Iraq was \$500. Today it has risen to \$1,200.
- * More than 30,000 new businesses have been registered in Iraq since the fall of Saddam.
- * In education, 3,000 schools have been rehabilitated, 9 million new textbooks distributed, and 36,000 teachers have been trained.
- * The country has more than 2,000 Internet cafes, and a free press.
- * The country's electrical output is near pre-war levels, and demand for electricity has doubled.

Alabama Governor Bob Riley returned from Iraq this week and noted that U.S. troops remain upbeat and committed to completing their mission: "If you had a poll that said, 'Would you like to go home?' I'm sure that 72 percent of the people would say 'I would like to go home, I would like to be with my family,'" he said. "But if you had asked the follow-up question, 'Do you want to leave before your mission is complete?' I believe 75, 80 or 100 percent of them would say no." Students at the university in Basra are working to alert their countrymen to the dangers of sectarian violence. The student movement, therefore, has devoted itself to raising awareness about the folly of sectarian violence by distributing leaflets and posters and through the internet. According to members, the group, which supports itself financially, is growing daily. The story of eleven-year-old Annie Hassee reveals just how important it is for those of us here at home to support our soldiers fighting overseas. Annie sent a letter addressed to "Any Soldier," and it was opened by Scott Montgomery of the South Carolina National Guard, who was at a hospital in Balad, recovering from a wound he received from an IED blast. This simple gift immediately lifted his spirits: "When I opened it (the envelope), I found a beautiful handmade card from you. It brought a big smile to my face to know that some young girl in Indiana took the time to send a 'good luck' card to someone she doesn't even know." The two became pen pals, and to show his appreciation Scott gave Annie the Purple Heart he was awarded.

Two Macedonian soldiers were awarded the U.S. Medal of Merit for their contribution in Iraq. The Medal of Merit was established to honor the service of U.S. and allied soldiers.

So many stories in the media are about the most irrelevant subjects. It's a shame that more attention isn't given to stories about real heroes, like Paul Smith. Smith is the only soldier to win the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq. Here is how he did it: Now all his training, all his experience, all the instincts that had made him a model soldier, were about to be put to the test. With 16 men from his First Platoon, B Company, 11th Engineer Battalion, Sgt. Smith was under attack by about 100 troops of the Iraqi Republican Guard.

...

The Iraqis were practically on top of him. Coolly grasping the situation, Sgt. Smith ordered Spc. Seaman to back the APC south into the compound to a position half way down the eastern wall. There he could arc the big machine gun back and forth, from the gate entrance to the north, all along the western wall of the triangle, to the Iraqi occupied tower in the southwest corner to his left.

To fire the machine gun, Sgt. Smith had to stand in the APC's main hatch, his body exposed from the waist up to a withering fire coming at him from three directions. On the ground through the blur of combat, Sgt. Matthew Keller saw Sgt. Smith grimly firing measured bursts from atop the APC even as a hail of bullets hit around him.

Sgt. Keller yelled at him to get out. Sgt. Smith looked back at him and with a slight shake of his head, made a cutting motion across his throat with his right hand. Sgt. Keller would always remember the look in his eyes. "There was no fear in him whatsoever."

As Spc. Seaman, crouching in the adjoining hatch, fed him ammunition belts, Sgt. Smith directed an expert and murderous fire with the long-barreled M2, hitting Iraqis who tried to enter the compound through the gate or over the wall. He tried also to suppress renewed fire coming from the Iraqis in the guard tower to his left.

Finally, one of his fellow sappers, First Sgt. Timothy Campbell, led a small fire team which stole up to the tower and killed all Iraqis inside. But by this time, Sgt. Smith's machine gun had fallen silent. The attack had been broken. Nearly 50 Iraqi dead lay all over the area. Others were in retreat. But Sgt. Smith was now slumped in the turret hatch, blood soaking the front of his uniform.

Spc. Seaman jumped out of the vehicle in tears. "I told him we should just leave," he said. Pvt. Gary Evans drove the APC out of the compound at high speed to the nearby aid station. Read it all.

Another name we should all know is Victor Lewis. He was awarded the Bronze Star for "dodging machine gun fire to rescue a pair of fellow Marines."

A Silver Star and Bronze Star were awarded to two Marines for actions in Fallujah when they risked their lives to save a wounded Iraqi soldier: The two led a counter-assault that killed 13 insurgents and captured eight. Russell was struck in the helmet, suffering a concussion and "bleeding profusely."

"When he discovered that a Marine isolated in a bunker needed ammunition, he raced to supply him by crossing 75 meters of open area while under fire from at least six insurgents," said Russell's citation.

The Iraqi soldier was wounded and pinned down away from the main part of the platoon. The two Marines dashed across an open area under fire to get him to safety so he could be rushed to a field hospital. Three Marines received the Bronze Star last week for service in Iraq.

Few things are so inspiring as the selfless actions of good soldiers fighting for a good cause. There are many more stories that could be told--and should. Perhaps it doesn't make for as sensational news as IEDs and suicide bombings, but it's real and it's encouraging--and it's important to know.

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

Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq

Foreign Affairs
By Paul R. Pillar

A DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP

The most serious problem with U.S. intelligence today is that its relationship with the policymaking process is broken and badly needs repair. In the wake of the Iraq war, it has become clear that official intelligence analysis was not relied on in making even the most significant national security decisions, that intelligence was misused publicly to justify decisions already made, that damaging ill will developed between policymakers and intelligence officers, and that the intelligence community's own work was politicized. As the national intelligence officer responsible for the Middle East from 2000 to 2005, I witnessed all of these disturbing developments.

Public discussion of prewar intelligence on Iraq has focused on the errors made in assessing Saddam Hussein's unconventional weapons programs. A commission chaired by Judge Laurence Silberman and former Senator Charles Robb usefully documented the intelligence community's mistakes in a solid and comprehensive report released in March 2005. Corrections were indeed in order, and the intelligence community has begun to make them.

At the same time, an acrimonious and highly partisan debate broke out over whether the Bush administration manipulated and misused intelligence in making its case for war. The administration defended itself by pointing out that it was not alone in its view that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and active weapons programs, however mistaken that view may have been. In this regard, the Bush administration was quite right: its perception of Saddam's weapons capacities was shared by the Clinton administration, congressional Democrats, and most other Western governments and intelligence services. But in making this defense, the White House also inadvertently pointed out the real problem: intelligence on Iraqi weapons programs did not drive its decision to go to war. A view broadly held in the United States and even more so overseas was that deterrence of Iraq was working, that Saddam was being kept "in his box," and that the best way to deal with the weapons problem was through an aggressive inspections program to supplement the sanctions already in place. That the administration arrived at so different a policy solution indicates that its decision to topple Saddam was driven by other factors -- namely, the desire to shake up the sclerotic power structures of the Middle East and hasten the spread of more liberal politics and economics in the region. If the entire body of official intelligence analysis on Iraq had a policy implication, it was to avoid war -- or, if war was going to be launched, to prepare for a messy aftermath. What is most remarkable about prewar U.S. intelligence on Iraq is not that it got things wrong and thereby misled policymakers; it is that it played so small a role in one of the most important U.S. policy decisions in recent decades.

A MODEL UPENDED

The proper relationship between intelligence gathering and policymaking sharply separates the two functions. The intelligence community collects information, evaluates its credibility, and combines it with other information to help make sense of situations abroad that could affect U.S. interests. Intelligence officers decide which topics should get their limited collection and analytic resources according to both their own judgments and the concerns of policymakers. Policymakers thus influence which topics intelligence agencies address but not the conclusions that they reach. The intelligence community, meanwhile, limits its judgments to what is happening or what might happen overseas, avoiding policy judgments about what the United States should do in response.

In practice, this distinction is often blurred, especially because analytic projections may have policy implications even if they are not explicitly stated. But the distinction is still important. National security abounds with problems that are clearer than the solutions to them; the case of Iraq is hardly a unique example of how similar perceptions of a threat can lead people to recommend very different policy responses. Accordingly, it is critical that the intelligence community not advocate policy, especially not openly. If it does, it loses the most important basis for its credibility and its claims to objectivity. When intelligence analysts critique one another's work, they use the phrase "policy prescriptive" as a pejorative, and rightly so.

The Bush administration's use of intelligence on Iraq did not just blur this distinction; it turned the entire model upside down. The administration used intelligence not to inform decision-making, but to justify a decision already made. It went to war without requesting -- and evidently without being influenced by -- any strategic-level intelligence assessments on any aspect of Iraq. (The military made extensive use of intelligence in its war planning, although much of it was of a more tactical nature.) Congress, not the administration, asked for the now-infamous October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq's unconventional weapons programs, although few members of Congress

actually read it. (According to several congressional aides responsible for safeguarding the classified material, no more than six senators and only a handful of House members got beyond the five-page executive summary.) As the national intelligence officer for the Middle East, I was in charge of coordinating all of the intelligence community's assessments regarding Iraq; the first request I received from any administration policymaker for any such assessment was not until a year into the war.

Official intelligence on Iraqi weapons programs was flawed, but even with its flaws, it was not what led to the war. On the issue that mattered most, the intelligence community judged that Iraq probably was several years away from developing a nuclear weapon. The October 2002 NIE also judged that Saddam was unlikely to use WMD against the United States unless his regime was placed in mortal danger. Before the war, on its own initiative, the intelligence community considered the principal challenges that any postinvasion authority in Iraq would be likely to face. It presented a picture of a political culture that would not provide fertile ground for democracy and foretold a long, difficult, and turbulent transition. It projected that a Marshall Plan-type effort would be required to restore the Iraqi economy, despite Iraq's abundant oil resources. It forecast that in a deeply divided Iraqi society, with Sunnis resentful over the loss of their dominant position and Shiites seeking power commensurate with their majority status, there was a significant chance that the groups would engage in violent conflict unless an occupying power prevented it. And it anticipated that a foreign occupying force would itself be the target of resentment and attacks -- including by guerrilla warfare -- unless it established security and put Iraq on the road to prosperity in the first few weeks or months after the fall of Saddam.

In addition, the intelligence community offered its assessment of the likely regional repercussions of ousting Saddam. It argued that any value Iraq might have as a democratic exemplar would be minimal and would depend on the stability of a new Iraqi government and the extent to which democracy in Iraq was seen as developing from within rather than being imposed by an outside power. More likely, war and occupation would boost political Islam and increase sympathy for terrorists' objectives -- and Iraq would become a magnet for extremists from elsewhere in the Middle East.

STANDARD DEVIATIONS

The Bush administration deviated from the professional standard not only in using policy to drive intelligence, but also in aggressively using intelligence to win public support for its decision to go to war. This meant selectively adducing data -- "cherry-picking" -- rather than using the intelligence community's own analytic judgments. In fact, key portions of the administration's case explicitly rejected those judgments. In an August 2002 speech, for example, Vice President Dick Cheney observed that "intelligence is an uncertain business" and noted how intelligence analysts had underestimated how close Iraq had been to developing a nuclear weapon before the 1991 Persian Gulf War. His conclusion -- at odds with that of the intelligence community -- was that "many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon."

In the upside-down relationship between intelligence and policy that prevailed in the case of Iraq, the administration selected pieces of raw intelligence to use in its public case for war, leaving the intelligence community to register varying degrees of private protest when such use started to go beyond what analysts deemed credible or reasonable. The best-known example was the assertion by President George W. Bush in his 2003 State of the Union address that Iraq was purchasing uranium ore in Africa. U.S. intelligence analysts had questioned the credibility of the report making this claim, had kept it out of their own unclassified products, and had advised the White House not to use it publicly. But the administration put the claim into the speech anyway, referring to it as information from British sources in order to make the point without explicitly vouching for the intelligence. The reexamination of prewar public statements is a necessary part of understanding the process that led to the Iraq war. But a narrow focus on rhetorical details tends to overlook more fundamental problems in the intelligence-policy relationship. Any time policymakers, rather than intelligence agencies, take the lead in selecting which bits of raw intelligence to present, there is -- regardless of the issue -- a bias. The resulting public statements ostensibly reflect intelligence, but they do not reflect intelligence analysis, which is an essential part of determining what the pieces of raw reporting mean. The policymaker acts with an eye not to what is indicative of a larger pattern or underlying truth, but to what supports his case.

Another problem is that on Iraq, the intelligence community was pulled over the line into policy advocacy -- not so much by what it said as by its conspicuous role in the administration's public case for war. This was especially true when the intelligence community was made highly visible (with the director of central intelligence literally in the camera frame) in an intelligence-laden presentation by

Secretary of State Colin Powell to the UN Security Council a month before the war began. It was also true in the fall of 2002, when, at the administration's behest, the intelligence community published a white paper on Iraq's WMD programs -- but without including any of the community's judgments about the likelihood of those weapons' being used.

But the greatest discrepancy between the administration's public statements and the intelligence community's judgments concerned not WMD (there was indeed a broad consensus that such programs existed), but the relationship between Saddam and al Qaeda. The enormous attention devoted to this subject did not reflect any judgment by intelligence officials that there was or was likely to be anything like the "alliance" the administration said existed. The reason the connection got so much attention was that the administration wanted to hitch the Iraq expedition to the "war on terror" and the threat the American public feared most, thereby capitalizing on the country's militant post-9/11 mood.

The issue of possible ties between Saddam and al Qaeda was especially prone to the selective use of raw intelligence to make a public case for war. In the shadowy world of international terrorism, almost anyone can be "linked" to almost anyone else if enough effort is made to find evidence of casual contacts, the mentioning of names in the same breath, or indications of common travels or experiences. Even the most minimal and circumstantial data can be adduced as evidence of a "relationship," ignoring the important question of whether a given regime actually supports a given terrorist group and the fact that relationships can be competitive or distrustful rather than cooperative. The intelligence community never offered any analysis that supported the notion of an alliance between Saddam and al Qaeda. Yet it was drawn into a public effort to support that notion. To be fair, Secretary Powell's presentation at the UN never explicitly asserted that there was a cooperative relationship between Saddam and al Qaeda. But the presentation was clearly meant to create the impression that one existed. To the extent that the intelligence community was a party to such efforts, it crossed the line into policy advocacy -- and did so in a way that fostered public misconceptions contrary to the intelligence community's own judgments.

VARIETIES OF POLITICIZATION

In its report on prewar intelligence concerning Iraqi WMD, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said it found no evidence that analysts had altered or shaped their judgments in response to political pressure. The Silberman-Robb commission reached the same conclusion, although it conceded that analysts worked in an "environment" affected by "intense" policymaker interest. But the method of investigation used by the panels -- essentially, asking analysts whether their arms had been twisted -- would have caught only the crudest attempts at politicization. Such attempts are rare and, when they do occur (as with former Undersecretary of State John Bolton's attempts to get the intelligence community to sign on to his judgments about Cuba and Syria), are almost always unsuccessful. Moreover, it is unlikely that analysts would ever acknowledge that their own judgments have been politicized, since that would be far more damning than admitting more mundane types of analytic error.

The actual politicization of intelligence occurs subtly and can take many forms. Context is all-important. Well before March 2003, intelligence analysts and their managers knew that the United States was heading for war with Iraq. It was clear that the Bush administration would frown on or ignore analysis that called into question a decision to go to war and welcome analysis that supported such a decision. Intelligence analysts -- for whom attention, especially favorable attention, from policymakers is a measure of success -- felt a strong wind consistently blowing in one direction. The desire to bend with such a wind is natural and strong, even if unconscious.

On the issue of Iraqi WMD, dozens of analysts throughout the intelligence community were making many judgments on many different issues based on fragmentary and ambiguous evidence. The differences between sound intelligence analysis (bearing in mind the gaps in information) and the flawed analysis that actually was produced had to do mainly with matters of caveat, nuance, and word choice. The opportunities for bias were numerous. It may not be possible to point to one key instance of such bending or to measure the cumulative effect of such pressure. But the effect was probably significant.

A clearer form of politicization is the inconsistent review of analysis: reports that conform to policy preferences have an easier time making it through the gauntlet of coordination and approval than ones that do not. (Every piece of intelligence analysis reflects not only the judgments of the analysts most directly involved in writing it, but also the concurrence of those who cover related topics and the review, editing, and remanding of it by several levels of supervisors, from branch chiefs to senior executives.) The Silberman-Robb commission noted such inconsistencies in the Iraq case but chalked it

up to bad management. The commission failed to address exactly why managers were inconsistent: they wanted to avoid the unpleasantness of laying unwelcome analysis on a policymaker's desk. Another form of politicization with a similar cause is the sugarcoating of what otherwise would be an unpalatable message. Even the mostly prescient analysis about the problems likely to be encountered in postwar Iraq included some observations that served as sugar, added in the hope that policymakers would not throw the report directly into the burn bag, but damaging the clarity of the analysis in the process.

But the principal way that the intelligence community's work on Iraq was politicized concerned the specific questions to which the community devoted its energies. As any competent pollster can attest, how a question is framed helps determine the answer. In the case of Iraq, there was also the matter of sheer quantity of output -- not just what the intelligence community said, but how many times it said it. On any given subject, the intelligence community faces what is in effect a field of rocks, and it lacks the resources to turn over every one to see what threats to national security may lurk underneath. In an unpoliticized environment, intelligence officers decide which rocks to turn over based on past patterns and their own judgments. But when policymakers repeatedly urge the intelligence community to turn over only certain rocks, the process becomes biased. The community responds by concentrating its resources on those rocks, eventually producing a body of reporting and analysis that, thanks to quantity and emphasis, leaves the impression that what lies under those same rocks is a bigger part of the problem than it really is.

That is what happened when the Bush administration repeatedly called on the intelligence community to uncover more material that would contribute to the case for war. The Bush team approached the community again and again and pushed it to look harder at the supposed Saddam-al Qaeda relationship -- calling on analysts not only to turn over additional Iraqi rocks, but also to turn over ones already examined and to scratch the dirt to see if there might be something there after all. The result was an intelligence output that -- because the question being investigated was never put in context -- obscured rather than enhanced understanding of al Qaeda's actual sources of strength and support. This process represented a radical departure from the textbook model of the relationship between intelligence and policy, in which an intelligence service responds to policymaker interest in certain subjects (such as "security threats from Iraq" or "al Qaeda's supporters") and explores them in whatever direction the evidence leads. The process did not involve intelligence work designed to find dangers not yet discovered or to inform decisions not yet made. Instead, it involved research to find evidence in support of a specific line of argument -- that Saddam was cooperating with al Qaeda -- which in turn was being used to justify a specific policy decision.

One possible consequence of such politicization is policymaker self-deception. A policymaker can easily forget that he is hearing so much about a particular angle in briefings because he and his fellow policymakers have urged the intelligence community to focus on it. A more certain consequence is the skewed application of the intelligence community's resources. Feeding the administration's voracious appetite for material on the Saddam-al Qaeda link consumed an enormous amount of time and attention at multiple levels, from rank-and-file counterterrorism analysts to the most senior intelligence officials. It is fair to ask how much other counterterrorism work was left undone as a result. The issue became even more time-consuming as the conflict between intelligence officials and policymakers escalated into a battle, with the intelligence community struggling to maintain its objectivity even as policymakers pressed the Saddam-al Qaeda connection. The administration's rejection of the intelligence community's judgments became especially clear with the formation of a special Pentagon unit, the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group. The unit, which reported to Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, was dedicated to finding every possible link between Saddam and al Qaeda, and its briefings accused the intelligence community of faulty analysis for failing to see the supposed alliance.

For the most part, the intelligence community's own substantive judgments do not appear to have been compromised. (A possible important exception was the construing of an ambiguous, and ultimately recanted, statement from a detainee as indicating that Saddam's Iraq provided jihadists with chemical or biological training.) But although the charge of faulty analysis was never directly conveyed to the intelligence community itself, enough of the charges leaked out to create a public perception of rancor between the administration and the intelligence community, which in turn encouraged some administration supporters to charge intelligence officers (including me) with trying to sabotage the president's policies. This poisonous atmosphere reinforced the disinclination within the intelligence community to challenge the consensus view about Iraqi WMD programs; any such challenge would have served merely to reaffirm the presumptions of the accusers.

PARTIAL REPAIRS

Although the Iraq war has provided a particularly stark illustration of the problems in the intelligence-policy relationship, such problems are not confined to this one issue or this specific administration. Four decades ago, the misuse of intelligence about an ambiguous encounter in the Gulf of Tonkin figured prominently in the Johnson administration's justification for escalating the military effort in Vietnam. Over a century ago, the possible misinterpretation of an explosion on a U.S. warship in Havana harbor helped set off the chain of events that led to a war of choice against Spain. The Iraq case needs further examination and reflection on its own. But public discussion of how to foster a better relationship between intelligence officials and policymakers and how to ensure better use of intelligence on future issues is also necessary.

Intelligence affects the nation's interests through its effect on policy. No matter how much the process of intelligence gathering itself is fixed, the changes will do no good if the role of intelligence in the policymaking process is not also addressed. Unfortunately, there is no single clear fix to the sort of problem that arose in the case of Iraq. The current ill will may not be reparable, and the perception of the intelligence community on the part of some policymakers -- that Langley is enemy territory -- is unlikely to change. But a few steps, based on the recognition that the intelligence-policy relationship is indeed broken, could reduce the likelihood that such a breakdown will recur.

On this point, the United States should emulate the United Kingdom, where discussion of this issue has been more forthright, by declaring once and for all that its intelligence services should not be part of public advocacy of policies still under debate. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Tony Blair accepted a commission of inquiry's conclusions that intelligence and policy had been improperly commingled in such exercises as the publication of the "dodgy dossier," the British counterpart to the United States' Iraqi WMD white paper, and that in the future there should be a clear delineation between intelligence and policy. An American declaration should take the form of a congressional resolution and be seconded by a statement from the White House. Although it would not have legal force, such a statement would discourage future administrations from attempting to pull the intelligence community into policy advocacy. It would also give some leverage to intelligence officers in resisting any such future attempts.

A more effective way of identifying and exposing improprieties in the relationship is also needed. The CIA has a "politicization ombudsman," but his informally defined functions mostly involve serving as a sympathetic ear for analysts disturbed by evidence of politicization and then summarizing what he hears for senior agency officials. The intelligence oversight committees in Congress have an important role, but the heightened partisanship that has bedeviled so much other work on Capitol Hill has had an especially inhibiting effect in this area. A promised effort by the Senate Intelligence Committee to examine the Bush administration's use of intelligence on Iraq got stuck in the partisan mud. The House committee has not even attempted to address the subject.

The legislative branch is the appropriate place for monitoring the intelligence-policy relationship. But the oversight should be conducted by a nonpartisan office modeled on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Such an office would have a staff, smaller than that of the GAO or the CBO, of officers experienced in intelligence and with the necessary clearances and access to examine questions about both the politicization of classified intelligence work and the public use of intelligence. As with the GAO, this office could conduct inquiries at the request of members of Congress. It would make its results public as much as possible, consistent with security requirements, and it would avoid duplicating the many other functions of intelligence oversight, which would remain the responsibility of the House and Senate intelligence committees.

Beyond these steps, there is the more difficult issue of what place the intelligence community should occupy within the executive branch. The reorganization that created the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) is barely a year old, and yet another reorganization at this time would compound the disruption. But the flaws in the narrowly conceived and hastily considered reorganization legislation of December 2004 -- such as ambiguities in the DNI's authority -- will make it necessary to reopen the issues it addressed. Any new legislation should also tackle something the 2004 legislation did not: the problem of having the leaders of the intelligence community, which is supposed to produce objective and unvarnished analysis, serve at the pleasure of the president. The organizational issue is also difficult because of a dilemma that intelligence officers have long discussed and debated among themselves: that although distance from policymakers may be needed for objectivity, closeness is needed for influence. For most of the past quarter century, intelligence

officials have striven for greater closeness, in a perpetual quest for policymakers' ears. The lesson of the Iraq episode, however, is that the supposed dilemma has been incorrectly conceived. Closeness in this case did not buy influence, even on momentous issues of war and peace; it bought only the disadvantages of politicization.

The intelligence community should be repositioned to reflect the fact that influence and relevance flow not just from face time in the Oval Office, but also from credibility with Congress and, most of all, with the American public. The community needs to remain in the executive branch but be given greater independence and a greater ability to communicate with those other constituencies (fettered only by security considerations, rather than by policy agendas). An appropriate model is the Federal Reserve, which is structured as a quasi-autonomous body overseen by a board of governors with long fixed terms.

These measures would reduce both the politicization of the intelligence community's own work and the public misuse of intelligence by policymakers. It would not directly affect how much attention policymakers give to intelligence, which they would continue to be entitled to ignore. But the greater likelihood of being called to public account for discrepancies between a case for a certain policy and an intelligence judgment would have the indirect effect of forcing policymakers to pay more attention to those judgments in the first place.

These changes alone will not fix the intelligence-policy relationship. But if Congress and the American people are serious about "fixing intelligence," they should not just do what is easy and politically convenient. At stake are the soundness of U.S. foreign-policy making and the right of Americans to know the basis for decisions taken in the name of their security.

--PAUL R. PILLAR is on the faculty of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. Concluding a long career in the Central Intelligence Agency, he served as National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia from 2000 to 2005.

Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon

Foreign Affairs
By Stephen Biddle
4/2006

THE GRAND DELUSION

Contentious as the current debate over Iraq is, all sides seem to make the crucial assumption that to succeed there the United States must fight the Vietnam War again -- but this time the right way. The Bush administration is relying on an updated playbook from the Nixon administration. Pro-war commentators argue that Washington should switch to a defensive approach to counterinsurgency, which they feel might have worked wonders a generation ago. According to the antiwar movement, the struggle is already over, because, as it did in Vietnam, Washington has lost hearts and minds in Iraq, and so the United States should withdraw.

But if the debate in Washington is Vietnam redux, the war in Iraq is not. The current struggle is not a Maoist "people's war" of national liberation; it is a communal civil war with very different dynamics. Although it is being fought at low intensity for now, it could easily escalate if Americans and Iraqis make the wrong choices.

Unfortunately, many of the policies dominating the debate are ill adapted to the war being fought. Turning over the responsibility for fighting the insurgents to local forces, in particular, is likely to make matters worse. Such a policy might have made sense in Vietnam, but in Iraq it threatens to exacerbate the communal tensions that underlie the conflict and undermine the power-sharing negotiations needed to end it. Washington must stop shifting the responsibility for the country's security to others and instead threaten to manipulate the military balance of power among Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds in order to force them to come to a durable compromise. Only once an agreement is reached should Washington consider devolving significant military power and authority to local forces.

NOT AGAIN

As it is in 2006, in 1969 Washington's strategy was built around winning hearts and minds while handing off more and more of the fighting to indigenous forces. From the outset of the Vietnam War, efforts to coax the Vietnamese people away from the communists and into supporting the Washington-backed government in Saigon were a crucial part of U.S. policy. "The task," President Lyndon Johnson said in 1965, "is nothing less than to enrich the hope and existence of more than a hundred million people." The United States transferred \$2.9 billion in economic aid to South Vietnam between 1961 and 1968 alone. In 1967, allied forces distributed more than half a million cakes of soap and instructed more than 200,000 people in personal hygiene. By then, thanks to U.S. pressure, elections at all levels of government had taken place throughout South Vietnam. The plan was to undermine the Vietcong by improving the lives of the South Vietnamese through economic development and political reform.

Of course, the counterinsurgency was about more than winning hearts and minds; it was also about fighting. At first, following Congress' decision in 1965 to commit large-scale U.S. ground forces, Americans did much of South Vietnam's defensive work. But in 1969, the Nixon administration changed course and decided to transfer responsibility for ground combat to the South Vietnamese. "We have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable," Richard Nixon declared. "This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater." The strategy, which became known as "Vietnamization," led to the complete withdrawal of U.S. ground forces from Vietnam by 1973. After that, South Vietnamese troops who had been trained and equipped by the Americans conducted all ground operations.

U.S. strategy in Iraq today is remarkably similar. To win the war, President George W. Bush has advocated following three parallel tracks -- one for politics, one for economics, and one for security. The first two involve using democratic reform and economic reconstruction to persuade Iraqis to side with the new government in Baghdad and oppose the insurgents. The goal of the Bush administration's third track is the creation of an Iraqi national military and an Iraqi police force that can shoulder the burden of counterinsurgency on their own -- a project many call "Iraqization," after its counterpart from Vietnam. The details of how to implement today's policy may differ from those for the policy in the 1960s, but the two plans' intents are effectively indistinguishable. Even the rhetoric surrounding the two plans is strikingly similar. Bush's claim that "as the Iraqi security forces stand up, coalition forces can stand down" parallels Nixon's hope that "as South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater."

Meanwhile, commentators such as Andrew Krepinevich argue essentially that Washington is not refighting Vietnam properly ("How to Win in Iraq," September/October 2005). Krepinevich sees the current U.S. strategy as a repeat of the failed search-and-destroy missions of early Vietnam and wants Washington to adopt instead the approach of territorial defense used in late Vietnam. Former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird argues that Vietnamization was working fine until Congress pulled the plug on support for South Vietnam in 1975, and so he advocates recycling the strategy and following through with it ("Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam," November/December 2005). Journalists scorn U.S. officers who insist on overusing firepower -- a mistake made in Vietnam -- and lionize those who try to bring good governance to Iraq by holding local council elections, fixing sewers, and getting the trash picked up -- the good lessons of Vietnam. Advocates of outright withdrawal think the United States has already lost the hearts and minds of Iraqis and should therefore cut its losses now, earlier than it did last time around.

A CATEGORY MISTAKE

Unfortunately, the parallel does not hold. A Maoist people's war is, at bottom, a struggle for good governance between a class-based insurgency claiming to represent the interests of the oppressed public and a ruling regime portrayed by the insurgents as defending entrenched privilege. Using a mix of coercion and inducements, the insurgents and the regime compete for the allegiance of a common pool of citizens, who could, in principle, take either side. A key requirement for the insurgents' success, arguably, is an ideological program -- people's wars are wars of ideas as much as they are killing competitions -- and nationalism is often at the heart of this program. Insurgents frame their resistance as an expression of the people's sovereign will to overthrow an illegitimate regime that represents only narrow class interests or is backed by a foreign government.

Communal civil wars, in contrast, feature opposing subnational groups divided along ethnic or sectarian lines; they are not about universal class interests or nationalist passions. In such situations, even the government is typically an instrument of one communal group, and its opponents champion the rights of their subgroup over those of others. These conflicts do not revolve around ideas, because no pool of

uncommitted citizens is waiting to be swayed by ideology. (Albanian Kosovars, Bosnian Muslims, and Rwandan Tutsis knew whose side they were on.) The fight is about group survival, not about the superiority of one party's ideology or one side's ability to deliver better governance.

The underlying dynamic of many communal wars is a security problem driven by mutual fear. Especially in states lacking strong central governments, communal groups worry that other groups with historical grievances will try to settle scores. The stakes can be existential, and genocide is a real possibility. Ideologues or nationalists can also be brutal toward their enemies -- Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge come to mind -- but in communal conflicts the risk of mass slaughter is especially high. Whereas the Vietnam War was a Maoist people's war, Iraq is a communal civil war. This can be seen in the pattern of violence in Iraq, which is strongly correlated with communal affiliation. The four provinces that make up the country's Sunni heartland account for fully 85 percent of all insurgent attacks; Iraq's other 14 provinces, where almost 60 percent of the Iraqi population lives, account for only 15 percent of the violence. The overwhelming majority of the insurgents in Iraq are indigenous Sunnis, and the small minority who are non-Iraqi members of al Qaeda or its affiliates are able to operate only because Iraqi Sunnis provide them with safe houses, intelligence, and supplies. Much of the violence is aimed at the Iraqi police and military, which recruit disproportionately from among Shiites and Kurds. And most suicide car bombings are directed at Shiite neighborhoods, especially in ethnically mixed areas such as Baghdad, Diyala, or northern Babil, where Sunni bombers have relatively easy access to non-Sunni targets.

If the war in Iraq were chiefly a class-based or nationalist war, the violence would run along national, class, or ideological lines. It does not. Many commentators consider the insurgents to be nationalists opposing the U.S. occupation. Yet there is almost no antioccupation violence in Shiite or Kurdish provinces; only in the Sunni Triangle are some Sunni "nationalists" raising arms against U.S. troops, whom they see as defenders of a Shiite- and Kurdish-dominated government. Defense of sect and ethnic group, not resistance to foreign occupation, accounts for most of the anti-American violence. Class and ideology do not matter much either: little of the violence pits poor Shiites or poor Sunnis against their richer brethren, and there is little evidence that theocrats are killing secularists of their own ethnic group. Nor has the type of ideological battle typical of a nationalist war emerged in Iraq. This should come as no surprise: the insurgents are not competing for Shiite hearts and minds; they are fighting for Sunni self-interest, and hardly need a manifesto to rally supporters.

The uprisings led by Muqtada al-Sadr's Shiite militia in Baghdad and Najaf have been an exception to this general pattern, but it is the exception that confirms the rule. Although Sadr may still have a political future, so far he has failed to spur a broad-based Shiite uprising against either the U.S. occupation or the Shiite-dominated government. Some Iraqi Shiites do resent the U.S. occupation, and nationalism does feed anti-American violence. But nationalism is only a secondary factor in the war, and its main effect is to magnify the virulence of the Sunnis' violence in what is fundamentally a communal civil war.

This is not to claim that there are no Iraqi patriots who place nation above sect, or that a unified state is beyond reach. And this is certainly not to denigrate the courageous efforts of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers who have sacrificed much for a new Iraq. But these efforts may be in vain if the communal civil war in Iraq continues to be misunderstood.

KEEP NIXON OUT OF BAGHDAD

The problem with recycling the Vietnam playbook in Iraq is that the strategies devised to win a people's war are either useless or counterproductive in a communal one. Winning hearts and minds, for example, is crucial to defeating a people's rebellion that promises good governance, but in a communal civil war such as that in Iraq, it is a lost cause. Communities in Iraq are increasingly polarized and fear mass violence at one another's hands. Some Sunnis hunger for a return to dominance; many others fear violent Shiite-Kurdish retribution for Saddam's Sunni-dominated tyranny. Some Shiites and Kurds want revenge; others fear they will face mass killings in the event of a Sunni restoration. Economic aid or reconstruction assistance cannot fix the problem: Would Sunnis really get over their fear of Shiite domination if only the sewers were fixed and the electricity kept working? This is not to say that Washington should not provide reconstruction assistance or economic aid; the United States owes Iraq the help on moral grounds, and economic growth could ease communal tensions at the margins and so promote peace in the long term. But in the near term, survival trumps prosperity, and most Iraqis depend on communal solidarity for their survival.

Rapid democratization, meanwhile, could be positively harmful in Iraq. In a Maoist people's war, empowering the population via the ballot box undermines the insurgents' case that the regime is

illegitimate and facilitates nonviolent resolution of the inequalities that fuel the conflict. In a communal civil war, however, rapid democratization can further polarize already antagonistic sectarian groups. In an immature polity with little history of compromise, demonizing traditional enemies is an easy -- and dangerous -- way to mobilize support from frightened voters. And as the political scientists Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder have shown, although mature democracies rarely go to war with other democracies, emerging democracies are unusually bellicose. Political reform is critical to resolving communal wars, but only if it comes at the right time, after some sort of stable communal compromise has begun to take root.

The biggest problem with treating Iraq like Vietnam is Iraqization -- the main component of the current U.S. military strategy. In a people's war, handing the fighting off to local forces makes sense because it undermines the nationalist component of insurgent resistance, improves the quality of local intelligence, and boosts troop strength. But in a communal civil war, it throws gasoline on the fire. Iraq's Sunnis perceive the "national" army and police force as a Shiite-Kurdish militia on steroids. And they have a point: in a communal conflict, the only effective units are the ones that do not intermingle communal enemies. (Because the U.S. military does not keep data on the ethnic makeup of the Iraqi forces, the number of Sunnis in these organizations is unknown and the effectiveness of mixed units cannot be established conclusively. Considerable anecdotal evidence suggests that the troops are dominated by Shiites and Kurds and that the Sunnis' very perception that this is so, accurate or not, helps fuel the conflict. Either way, Iraqization poses serious problems, and the analysis below considers both the possibility that integration might succeed and the possibility that it might fail.) Sunni populations are unlikely to welcome protection provided by their ethnic or sectarian rivals; to them, the defense forces look like agents of a hostile occupation. And the more threatened the Sunnis feel, the more likely they are to fight back even harder. The bigger, stronger, better trained, and better equipped the Iraqi forces become, the worse the communal tensions that underlie the whole conflict will get.

The creation of powerful Shiite-Kurdish security forces will also reduce the chances of reaching the only serious long-term solution to the country's communal conflict: a compromise based on a constitutional deal with ironclad power-sharing arrangements protecting all parties. A national army that effectively excluded Sunnis would make any such constitutional deal irrelevant, because the Shiite-Kurdish alliance would hold the real power regardless of what the constitution said. Increasing evidence that Iraq's military and police have already committed atrocities against Sunnis only confirms the dangers of transferring responsibility for fighting the insurgents to local forces before an acceptable ethnic compromise has been brokered.

On the other hand, the harder the United States works to integrate Sunnis into the security forces, the less effective those forces are likely to become. The inclusion of Sunnis will inevitably entail penetration by insurgents, and it will be difficult to establish trust between members of mixed units whose respective ethnic groups are at one another's throats. Segregating Sunnis in their own battalions is no solution either. Doing so would merely strengthen all sides simultaneously by providing each with direct U.S. assistance and could trigger an unstable, unofficial partition of the country into separate Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish enclaves, each defended by its own military force.

Unfortunately, the alternatives to the Bush administration's policies currently on the table are no more promising. Shifting from tactical offense to defense, for example, could make things worse. Krepinevich proposes an "oil-spot strategy" that focuses on providing security to civilians rather than on killing insurgents. In principle, such an approach could help by protecting Iraqis against violence perpetrated by ethnic rivals. But finding the appropriate troops to implement it would not be easy. There are too few Americans to protect more than a fraction of Iraq's population, and it is far from clear that Sunnis would accept their help anyway. So the plan would have to rely on Iraqi troops, which will inevitably end up being either integrated and ineffectual or segregated and divisive. Tactical defense by the wrong defenders can be fatal in a communal civil war, and in Iraq it will remain far from clear how to provide appropriate defenders until the communal strife itself has been resolved.

The case for withdrawing U.S. troops is no stronger, largely because the war does not hinge on the United States' winning -- or losing -- Iraqi hearts and minds. The war is about resolving the communal security problems that divide Iraqis, and it is too early to give up on achieving this goal via constitutional compromise. In fact, the very prospect that today's conflict could degenerate into attempted genocide if compromise fails should be a powerful lever for negotiating a deal. The presence of U.S. troops is essential to Washington's bargaining position in these negotiations. To withdraw them

now, or to start withdrawing them according to a rigid timetable, would undermine the prospect of forging a lasting peace.

THE BEST PLAN

What, then, is to be done? Some elements of the current U.S. strategy are worth keeping. The efforts of the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, to broker a constitutional deal between Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds, for example, are crucial for success; his interventionist approach is a major improvement over the strategy of quiet behind-the-scenes encouragement favored by L. Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority from May 2003 to June 2004. Economic assistance is a moral imperative; it should be continued and reinforced whatever its marginal strategic value. But critical departures from the current strategy are also necessary. First, Washington must slow down the expansion of the Iraqi national military and police. Iraq will eventually need capable indigenous security forces, but their buildup must follow a broad communal compromise, not the other way around. If the development of the army and the police gets ahead of the agreement, the forces will either exclude the Sunnis and be effective but divisive or include the Sunnis but be weak. The latter result would mean lost effort and perhaps lives, but the former would probably be worse, because it would jeopardize any constitutional power-sharing deal that may emerge from Khalilzad's efforts. This dilemma leaves Washington with no choice but to continue providing enough U.S. forces to cap the violence in Iraq.

Second, the United States must bring more pressure to bear on the parties in the constitutional negotiations. And the strongest pressure available is military: the United States must threaten to manipulate the military balance of power among Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds to coerce them to negotiate. Washington should use the prospect of a U.S.-trained and U.S.-supported Shiite-Kurdish force to compel the Sunnis to come to the negotiating table. At the same time, in order to get the Shiites and the Kurds to negotiate too, it should threaten either to withdraw prematurely, a move that would throw the country into disarray, or to back the Sunnis.

If Washington fails to implement this plan, it will continue to have only limited leverage over the parties, each of which sees compromise as risky. The groups fear that if their rivals gain control of the government, they will face oppression, impoverishment, or mass violence. Compromising means ceding some power to rivals, and a miscalculation that cedes too much power could result in the enemy's seizing the rest later, with catastrophic results. In contrast, an ongoing low-intensity war does not look so bad: as long as U.S. forces patrol Iraq, the country will not break up and the conflict will not descend into all-out chaos. The parties' refusal to compromise may be an obstacle to real peace, but it is also a way to avert mass violence.

The only way to break the logjam is to change the parties' relative comfort with the status quo by drastically raising the costs of their failure to negotiate. The U.S. presence now caps the war's intensity, and U.S. aid could give any side an enormous military advantage. Thus Washington should threaten to use its influence to alter the balance of power depending on the parties' behavior. By doing so, it could make stubbornness look worse than cooperation and compel all sides to compromise. Today, however, Washington is doing just the opposite. Washington's stated policy is to field an ethnically mixed Iraqi military as quickly as possible in order to replace U.S. troops, with or without a stable constitutional deal in place -- an approach that forfeits Washington's primary source of leverage with all three local factions. The Sunnis have little to fear from the plan, for if it succeeds, they will have been saved from a powerful U.S.-trained Shiite-Kurdish army without having had to make any concessions. The prospect that the United States' policy could fail, thus leaving the Sunnis on their own, may frighten them, but since the likelihood of that happening is unrelated to their willingness to make political compromises, they have little reason to negotiate. Iraqization gives Washington no more sway with the Shiites or the Kurds, because it involves keeping U.S. troops in Iraq until these groups can defend themselves, regardless of whether they negotiate seriously in the meantime. So the only way out of this problem is for Washington to postpone Iraqization and make it contingent on the parties' willingness to bargain.

This shift in strategy will require changes in other current policies, too. For example, Washington will have to suspend its campaign against the Sunni insurgent leadership, former senior Baathists, and Sunni tribal leaders. If the key to success is a negotiated communal compromise, Washington needs negotiating partners who can make a deal stick -- in other words, leaders with authority among their own people and combatants. But many of the Sunnis with such stature are now fighting in the insurgency, are in hiding, or are banned from politics because of their Baathist pasts; others are excluded by Washington's reluctance to reinforce a tribal loyalty system based on graft and patronage.

The result is a weak Sunni political leadership lacking both the legitimacy and the power to negotiate a settlement. Since such weakness could be fatal to the prospects for ethnic compromise, Washington should consider trying to accelerate the emergence of a credible Sunni leadership by endorsing a wider amnesty for former Baathists and insurgents and learning to tolerate nepotistic tribal leaders. Washington should also avoid setting any more arbitrary deadlines for democratization. Pressure to reach demanding political milestones can further polarize factional politics, and the parliamentary elections in December 2005 may already have hardened communal divides. In a people's war, early electoral deadlines can make sense; in a communal civil war, they are dangerous. Democracy is the long-term goal in Iraq, of course, but getting there will require a near-term constitutional compromise whose key provision must be an agreement to limit the freedom of Iraqi voters to elect governments that concentrate ethnic and sectarian power. Resolving the country's communal security problems must take priority over bringing self-determination to the Iraqi people -- or the democracy that many hope for will never emerge.

BACK ON TRACK

Putting such a program in place would not be easy. It would deny President Bush the chance to offer restless Americans an early troop withdrawal, replace a Manichaean narrative featuring evil insurgents and a noble government with a complicated story of multiparty interethnic intrigue, and require that Washington be willing to shift its loyalties in the conflict according to the parties' readiness to negotiate. Explaining these changes to U.S. voters would be a challenge. Washington would have to recalibrate its dealings with Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds with great precision, making sure to neither unduly frighten nor unduly reassure any of the groups. Even the most adroit diplomacy could fail if the Iraqis do not grasp the strategic logic of their situation or if a strong and sensible Sunni political leadership does not emerge. And the failure to reach a stable ethnic compromise soon could strain the U.S. military beyond its breaking point.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to think such a plan could work. Most important, the underlying interests of all local parties would be far better served by a constitutional compromise than by an all-out war. The losers would have to pay the butcher's bill of combat and bear the oppressor's yoke in the aftermath; even the winners would pay a terrible price. Since no side today can be confident that it would come out on top in a war, the prospect of losing should be a powerful motivation to compromise. The December 2005 round of negotiations in Baghdad suggested that the parties may have started to understand these stakes: the willingness of the Shiite negotiators to yield to the Sunnis' preferences on the procedures for amending the constitution indicates that compromise may be possible. The current U.S. strategy in Iraq makes this compromise less likely by shielding Iraqis from the full consequences of their stubbornness and thereby weakening Washington's potentially formidable leverage over the military balance of power. But if that changes -- and it can change -- the chances for success will be significantly increased.

At a minimum, Washington should stop making matters worse. Understanding the war in Iraq as a communal civil war cannot guarantee success, but without this understanding failure is far too likely. Whatever the prospects for peace, they would be considerably better if Washington stopped mistaking Iraq for Vietnam and started seeing it for what it really is.

--Stephen Biddle is a Senior Fellow in Defense Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of *Military Power*.

HAMAS

Hamas: The Last Chance for Peace?

New York Review of Books
By Henry Siegman
4/7

The rising tide of Muslim anger at the US and the West—as recorded by the Pew Poll and other opinion surveys— and the recent successes of political Islam have given many Israelis a newly urgent sense that they are under siege. Sever Plotzker, a well-known Israeli columnist, recently wrote in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Israel's most widely circulated newspaper, that “the Palestinian vote connects with the chilling phenomena taking place in the Arab world, whose resonant echoes penetrate every household

in Israel.... Israel finds itself an inch away from an erupting volcano, on the frontlines of the "clash of civilization."

In Iraq, the Shiite parties defeated not only the Sunnis but also secular political parties; in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's representation in the parliament increased fivefold; and in Palestine, legislative elections were swept by Hamas. The anti-Semitic rantings of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his government's determination to develop nuclear weapons have only further exacerbated Israeli fears.

Israel is facing not only the threats of Hamas, an organization that has affirmed the right to violently resist Israel's occupation and has denied Israel's right to exist, but also the more general anger from the larger Muslim world toward the West. The two are often conflated, but it is a dangerously misleading conflation, for it gives a confused view of both the dangers and the opportunities created by Hamas's election victory, however meager the latter may appear to be.

The anger of the Muslim world toward the West is fueled by the humiliations of their Palestinian fellow Muslims who live under Israeli occupation; by what Muslims consider the theft of Palestine, land that is part of Dar al-Islam, the eternal domain of Muslims, in which the West has been complicit; by the war in Iraq and its aftermath; by the horrors that have occurred, and continue to occur, in US military prisons; and by the hypocrisies of America's plans to install democracy in various parts of the world. This hostility is seen as evidence of the religious and cultural confrontation between Islam and the Christian West that Samuel Huntington has famously argued has become the new global fault line that has replaced the cold war. Paradoxically, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is the lesser of the two threats, because it is political rather than religious in character, and Palestinian society is among the most secular in the Arab world.

Even for Hamas, the national component of its struggle (ironically at odds with the "globalism" of traditional Islam that recognizes no national borders within the Domain of Islam) generally takes precedence over its religious imperatives when the two conflict. This is so not only because most Palestinians oppose Hamas's religious goals, particularly efforts to regulate their personal religious behavior, but more importantly because Hamas itself is as much a Palestinian national movement as it is a religious one.

In response to a call by Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second in command, to Hamas to continue a violent jihad to recover every last "grain of soil from Palestine which was a Muslim land that was occupied by infidels," a Hamas official pointedly stated that "Hamas believes that Islam is completely different [from] the ideology of Mr. al-Zawahiri." He added, "Our battle is against the Israeli occupation and our only concern is to restore our rights and serve our people." Now that Hamas has taken control of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the office of prime minister, the difference between Hamas and political Islam outside of Palestine defines what may be an opportunity that only a Hamas-led government may hold for Israel.

In the choice of candidates for the Palestinian Legislative Council, Hamas's "pragmatists," led by Ismail Haniyeh, the new prime minister, and Abed al-Aziz Duaik, the new speaker of the council, have visibly prevailed over those who are identified as Hamas's hard-liners. And many hardliners themselves have adopted an increasingly moderate tone. Even hard-liners know that Hamas won the elections not because of their uncompromising ideology but because they ran on a moderate platform of clean government and better services. In a post-election opinion poll, only one percent of the respondents said that Hamas's priority should be to implement Islamic law in Palestine, while 73 percent said they still supported a peace deal with Israel and a two-state solution.

If Hamas's advocates of moderation were to prevail and a long-term coexistence were achieved between a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority and Israel, the implications of such an accommodation could be far-reaching indeed—for Israel's relations not only with the Palestinians but with the larger Muslim world as well. For Hamas's imprimatur on such an arrangement would provide Israel with an "insurance policy" of the sort that Fatah is not able to provide.

In his recent book, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*, Shlomo Ben Ami, a former foreign minister of Israel, writes of Arafat's passing from the political scene as a "tragedy" because he was "the only man whose signature on an agreement of compromise and reconciliation, which would include giving up unattainable dreams, could have been legitimate in the eyes of his people," and he took this legitimacy with him to the grave. The possibility of an Israeli–Palestinian agreement that enjoys comparable—

indeed, perhaps even greater—legitimacy than Arafat could have conferred on it may have been revived by Hamas's entry into Palestinian political life.

Is such an optimistic outcome at all possible? At the least, it is too early to rule it out before the political and ideological trajectory of Hamas's new government can be discerned. The likely direction of that trajectory was recently described to me by a prominent senior member of Hamas's Political Committee in the following terms:

Members of Hamas's political directorate do not preclude significant changes over time in their policies toward Israel and in their founding charter, including recognition of Israel, and even mutual minor border adjustments. Such changes depend on Israel's recognition of Palestinian rights. Hamas will settle for nothing less than full reciprocity.

Hamas is not opposed to negotiations with Israel, provided negotiations are based on the provision that neither party may act unilaterally to change the situation that prevailed before the 1967 war, and that negotiations, when they are resumed, will take the pre-1967 border as their starting point. Hamas will not renounce its religious belief that Palestine is a waqf, or religious endowment, assigned by God to Muslims for all time. However, this theological belief does not preclude accommodation to temporal realities and international law, including Israel's statehood.

Hamas is prepared to abide by a long-term hudna, or cease-fire, which would end all violence. Here again, complete reciprocity must prevail, and Israel must end all attacks on Palestinians. If Israel agrees to the cease-fire, Hamas will take responsibility for preventing and punishing Palestinian violations, whether committed by Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Intifada, or its own people. Hamas understands that it cannot demand recognition as the legitimate government of Palestine if it is not prepared to enforce such a cease-fire, in the context of its responsibility for law and order.

Hamas's first priority will be to revitalize Palestinian society by strengthening the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers between various branches of government, and the professionalizing and accountability of the security services. It will aim to end corruption in government and implement new economic and social initiatives that are appropriate to the Palestinians' present circumstances. (My Hamas informant told me that well before the recent legislative elections, Hamas had commissioned teams of experts to prepare detailed plans for the economic and social recovery of Palestinian society; he said that the implementation of these plans would be Hamas's highest priority, but he did not discuss their content.)

Hamas will not seek to impose standards of religious behavior and piety on the Palestinian population, such as the wearing of the veil or the abaya, although Hamas believes that certain standards of public modesty— but not of religious observance— should be followed by everyone.

These views are exceptional only in their comprehensiveness. Similar views have been expressed for some time by other Hamas moderates as well. Ismail Abu Shanab (assassinated by Israel) said that Hamas would halt its armed struggle if "the Israelis are willing to fully withdraw from the 1967 occupied territories and present a timetable for doing so."

The Hamas leader Mohammed Ghazal said last year that Hamas's charter is not the Koran. "Historically," he said, "we believe all Palestine belongs to Palestinians, but we're talking now about reality, about political solutions.... I don't think there will be a problem of negotiating with the Israelis." It is a sentiment echoed by Hasan Yousif, the Hamas leader in the West Bank who is now in an Israeli jail: "We have accepted the principle of accepting a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders."

More recently, and by far more importantly, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that not only did he approve a meeting between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Ehud Olmert but added that if Abbas brings back something that the Palestinian people approved, Hamas would change its positions.

These sentiments are in striking contrast to the odiousness of Hamas's founding charter (of August 18, 1988), which relies on an extreme anti-Jewish reading of Islamic religious sources and on classical anti-Semitic defamations such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Such hateful language was not entirely absent from PLO documents and statements in its pre-Oslo days, and one can find comparable demonization of Palestinians by some Jewish groups, including official Israeli political parties that advocate ethnic cleansing of all Palestinian residents of the West Bank. As noted by Henry Kissinger in a recent Op-Ed article, rejection and demonization are all too common in ethnic and political conflict,

as is unexpected moderation by former extremists after they enter a political process and assume responsibility for the well-being of those who brought them to office.

The leaders of Israel's current government claim that no peace process is possible with a Hamas-led Palestinian government. But some of the best-informed observers of the Israeli– Palestinian conflict believe that no lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is possible without Hamas's participation. Nearly three years ago, well before anyone anticipated that Hamas might be running the Palestinian Authority, Efraim Halevy, former head of the Mossad, Israel's CIA, wrote the following:

Hamas constitutes about a fifth of Palestinian society. Because they are an active, engaged and aware group, they have more political weight. So anyone who thinks it's possible to ignore such a central element of Palestinian society is simply mistaken. Anyone who thinks that Hamas will one day evaporate is similarly mistaken. Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian prime minister] will not kill thousands of Palestinians in order to overcome the Islamic movements. In my view, then, the strategy vis-à-vis Hamas should be one of brutal force against its terrorist aspect, while at the same time signaling its political and religious leadership that if they take a moderate approach and enter the fabric of the Palestinian establishment, we will not view that as a negative development. I think that in the end there will be no way around Hamas being a partner in the Palestinian government. I believe that if that happens there is a chance that it will be domesticated. Its destructive force will be reduced.

Whatever one's reading of Hamas's intentions as it takes over the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, the notion that its sweeping electoral victory spells "the end of the peace process" is nonsense. The peace process died when Sharon was elected prime minister in 2000. More correctly, it was killed—with malice aforethought—by Sharon's "unilateralism" with which he implemented the disengagement from Gaza, which in turn provided cover for his continued unilateralism. That he was bringing off the disengagement against the wishes of the settlers helped to divert attention from his refusal to have any negotiations with the Palestinians.

Unilateralism continues to serve as the euphemism for Israeli policies that are expropriating half of what was to have been the state of Palestine, and are concentrating the Palestinian population, about to outnumber the Jewish population, in territorially disconnected Bantustans that make a mockery of the promise of an independent, sovereign, and viable Palestinian state made in the "road map" of 2003, which was put forward by the Quartet of the US, the EU, the UN, and Russia.

This unilateralism remains the policy of Kadima, the new party founded by Ariel Sharon, and headed by Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, which is now forming the next Israeli government. In fact, Kadima's goal has largely been achieved. According to Haaretz, the Israeli government has over the last few years, almost totally severed the West Bank from the Jordan Valley and transformed the Jordan Valley into a Jewish region.... Between the eastward expansion of [the large Israeli settlement] Ma'aleh Adumim, the westward expansion of the Jordan Valley communities and the expansion of the settlement blocs toward the Green Line, the Palestinians are left with no territory on which to establish a state.

Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni have led Israel's international campaign to isolate and bring down Hamas unless it clearly foreswears the right to violent "resistance" to Israel's occupation and recognizes Israel's right to exist. Ironically, the appropriateness of both demands is compromised when they are advanced by Olmert and Livni, for both are Likud "princes"—the term applied to politically active sons and daughters of the founders of the Irgun who owe their positions of leadership in large part to that fact. What distinguished the Irgun was its resort to terrorism in the cause of the Jewish struggle for statehood and its complete rejection of Palestinian claims to any part of Palestine. In these two respects, at least, the Irgun closely resembled Hamas.

Indeed, according to the historian Benny Morris, it is the Irgun that established the precedent of systematically targeting civilians. In his book *Righteous Victims*, Morris writes that "the upsurge of Arab terrorism in 1937 triggered a wave of Irgun bombings against Arab crowds and buses, introducing a new dimension to the conflict." While, in the past, Arabs had "sniped at cars and pedestrians and occasionally lobbed a grenade, often killing or injuring a few bystanders or passengers," now "for the first time, massive bombs were placed in crowded Arab centers, and dozens of people were indiscriminately murdered and maimed." Morris notes that "this 'innovation' soon found Arab imitators."

So far as I know, neither Olmert nor Livni have criticized or repudiated the Irgun's terror activity, which gives their condemnation of Hamas a certain whiff of hypocrisy. This is not to suggest that Hamas's suicide bombings have been anything less than barbaric (as was the Irgun's targeting of Arab civilians); and if such terrorist acts are not discontinued this would be a sufficient cause to quarantine the Hamas government and bring it down. It is to say that the Likud's own history argues that terrorists can transform themselves if they have reason to believe that legitimate national goals can be achieved by political means.

What skills Israeli governments lack in peacemaking have been more than compensated for by their skill in devising new euphemisms intended to deceive their own citizens and many others about what they are really up to. The latest such euphemism is the "conversion of large settlement blocs," a process of officially integrating large settlements into Israel while withdrawing from others. This will supposedly result in a permanent Israeli border and President Bush's two-state solution.

Acting Prime Minister Olmert and members of his cabinet now speak frequently about this "conversion." Israeli commentators are celebrating the defeat of the settlers and the end of their Greater Land of Israel dream. That all of this can be achieved unilaterally by Israel is attributed to Olmert's clever leadership and to Hamas's ascendancy, since surely no one could suggest they are likely partners for peace.

In fact, as pointed out by the Haaretz commentator Gideon Levy, "while pundits and opinion polls indicate a shift leftward, with a majority for the establishment of a Palestinian state and evacuation of the settlements, the real political map has taken a sharp turn to the right." The "new consensus" about keeping the large settlement blocs on Israel's side of the border comes on top of a previously alleged consensus not to allow Palestinians access to any part of East Jerusalem. The result is a claim that Israel must hold on to Palestinian territories amounting to half the West Bank. And this, Levy notes, is considered in Israel a defeat of the settlers and a move to the left:

Those who say the "Greater Israel vision" has given way to "dividing the land" are deceiving the country. So are those who airily assert that Israelis now recognize the need to end the occupation. The truth is much worse: The Israeli discourse continues to foster Israel's most deeply rooted national aspiration—to have the cake and eat it.

None of this is to say that even a genuinely peace-seeking Israeli government would not have reason to fear a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, in view of its formal opposition to the existence of the Jewish state and its resort, until recently, to barbaric suicide bombings. But an Israeli government that values peace above the acquisition of additional territory would not have prepared the ground for a Hamas victory, something that Sharon's government surely did with its unilateralism. More to the point, it would not have dealt with such fears by threatening to put Palestinians "on a diet." Dov Weissglas, Olmert's senior adviser (and previously senior adviser to Sharon), made that humiliating proposal, explaining to his colleagues—who reportedly were greatly amused by his cleverness—that he wanted to help Palestinians lose weight.

Haaretz contrasts this mocking and contemptuous behavior to Hamas's behavior, which it describes as "more responsible" than Israel's government, according to a Haaretz editorial. "[Hamas's] representatives speak of a new era, of a transition from terror to politics, of continued opposition to occupation via other means, and of aspirations to a long-term hudna."

As if determined to confirm Haaretz's indictment, the former head of the Shin Bet, Avi Dichter, now a star in the supposedly centrist Kadima party, announced that when the next terrorist act occurs, Ismail Haniyeh would be an appropriate target for assassination by the IDF. Not to be outdone, Israel's defense minister, Shaul Mofaz, declared afterward that every one of Hamas's seventy-four newly elected members of the PLC would be candidates for targeted assassination as well.

With rare exceptions, Israelis believe that if Hamas is to be accepted as a "partner for peace," Hamas must first recognize the State of Israel, since Israel long ago accepted the Palestinians' right to a state of their own in the West Bank and Gaza. But this is not true. That even so well-informed a journalist as Sever Plotzker believes this lie indicates how deeply it has taken hold of the Israeli imagination. In the article cited previously, Plotzker writes that the basic assumption that has guided Israelis since the Oslo accords is that while they may have a debate with the Palestinian people over borders and Jerusalem, they have no debate over Israel's very right to exist as a Jewish state and the Palestinians'

right to exist as a Palestinian state. According to Plotzker, this fundamental assumption has now been "completely shaken" by Hamas's victory.

Apparently it has not occurred to Plotzker that "the debate" over borders and Jerusalem is not a rhetorical exercise for Palestinians, who have seen the ground literally removed from under their feet as Sharon's unilateralism is annexing to Israel large parts of what was to have been the state of Palestine. Plotzker maintains that:

The Palestinian people have handed over, through democratic elections, the reins of power to a movement that advocates establishing an Islamic kingdom from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, where the Jews will be permitted to remain as a religious minority with limited rights. This takes us not fourteen years backwards, but one hundred forty years backwards.

In fact, Hamas does not advocate an Islamic kingdom, or caliphate—an al-Qaeda program from which Hamas has explicitly dissociated itself. More to the point, with only minor changes, Plotzker's statement is one that Palestinians—given their actual experiences since the 1967 war—might make, and with far greater justification than Plotzker:

The Jewish people have handed over, through democratic elections, the reins of power to a movement that is establishing a Jewish kingdom from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, where Palestinians would be permitted to remain a religious minority with limited rights. This takes us not fourteen years but a thousand years backward.

In fact, the State of Israel has enlarged its borders by over 50 percent beyond the areas assigned to the Jewish state by the UN in 1947, while the area assigned to Palestinians has already been diminished by nearly 60 percent—and all of this before any of the settlements and the other Israeli expropriations in the West Bank are taken into account.

If Hamas were to declare that it accepts the legitimacy of Israel, but on only half the territory that made up the Jewish state before the 1967 war, its statement would surely not be taken seriously by anyone in Israel as recognition of Israel's right to exist. Yet that is exactly what Israelis have found to be an acceptable declaration by their own government with respect to the legitimacy of a Palestinian state, one that obliges Palestinians to recognize not half but all of pre-1967 Israel, and considerably more. That is why Ismail Haniyeh has said that Palestinian recognition of Israel will depend on "what kind of Israel" is demanding that recognition. Is it an Israel within its pre-1967 borders, or is it an Israel that has taken over half of the Palestinians' remaining territories? If it is the latter, Hamas will not recognize Israel. He added that until Palestinians are told which of these two Israels demands Palestinian recognition, it is not a demand Palestinians need respond to.

What is unreasonable about such a Hamas position? What is the basis of Israeli and US criticism of a Hamas policy that is the precise mirror image of Israel's policy toward a Palestinian state? To pose these questions is to recognize what will be the central organizing principle of a Hamas-led government, which is not the removal of the Jewish state, something that various Hamas leaders have already said is not an abiding Hamas principle (and is in any event beyond Hamas's capacity to achieve—only self-destructive Israeli policies can bring that about), but rather its uncompromising demand for reciprocity.

The demand for reciprocity is also Hamas's answer to the two other conditions put forward by Israel for dealing with a Palestinian Authority led by Hamas—acceptance of all previous agreements and renunciation of violence. But surely Israelis cannot believe Hamas is unaware that Israel has not accepted its previous agreements with the Palestinians. Whenever speaking of Israel's alleged acceptance of the road map to President Bush and other international leaders, Sharon invariably added the qualifier "as accepted by Israel's government," which at the time of its "acceptance" of the road map added fourteen conditions that gutted its main provisions. For example, the road map explicitly demands that both sides proceed immediately with the implementation of their respective obligations—in the case of Israel, ending settlement construction and removing illegal outposts, in the case of the Palestinian Authority, ending terror—without regard to the state of the other side's implementation. Israel's government stipulated that it will not carry out any of its obligations until Palestinians have ended all violence and incitement against Israel and have "dismantled the terrorist infrastructure."

Not only the European Union but the US government is on record that Israel's expropriations of large parts of the West Bank violate international law, the road map, and UN resolutions. It was not a Hamas

spokesman but Condoleezza Rice who said, at a press conference following her recent meeting in Washington with Israel's Tzipi Livni, that "the United States position on [Israel's unilateralism] is very clear and remains the same. No one should try and unilaterally predetermine the outcome of a final status agreement. That's to be done at final status." Rice added that President Bush's letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon endorsing the need to take into consideration "new population centers" in the West Bank does not provide a license for anyone to "try and do that in a preemptive or predetermined way, because these are issues for negotiation at final status."

As to the issue of violence, Hamas declared a "calm" (tahdiyah) over a year ago, and largely observed it, despite Israel's resumption of targeted assassinations, which Israel had suspended in response to Hamas's initiative. Hamas has now offered to observe a long-term hudna, and is waiting for an Israeli reply.

Whether or not Hamas disbands its terrorist wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, it is highly likely that a Hamas responsible for governance and the well-being of the Palestinian people will be a very different entity than a Hamas that acts in opposition to a Palestinian government. Hamas is now the government, and it is aware that it cannot govern and act as a terrorist force at the same time.

The truth is that if Hamas were to recognize the State of Israel tomorrow and dismantled its "terrorist infrastructure," there still would not be the slightest prospect for a resumption of a peace process without major US pressure on Israel and there is little prospect for such US pressure. Israel has gone too far in its unilateralist decisions to suddenly reengage in a peace process that would require Palestinian assent to any continuing Israeli presence in the West Bank. And Hamas would not agree to a peace process that abandons the principle of Palestinian assent established by previous agreements, and reconfirmed by President Bush and the European Council.

And yet, paradoxically, as a consequence of Hamas's electoral victory, the possibility of a modus vivendi, and ultimately an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, may have improved rather than receded. Both Hamas and Israel's government believe their respective interests are best served not by a quick return to a peace process, but by an extended period of unspoken and unacknowledged coexistence. Respite from pressures to resume a peace process would allow Israel to pursue its stated intention of carrying out additional unilateral disengagements from some of the West Bank areas under Israel's control, thus assuring a Jewish demographic majority on Israel's side of the border. For Hamas, further Israeli withdrawals would provide the space it requires to resume Palestinian institution building and a rehabilitation of the Palestinian social and economic life that has been destroyed by Israel's occupation.

For Israelis, a protracted cease-fire would be consistent with Sharon's insistence that a long-term interim arrangement must precede permanent status negotiations. For Hamas a cease-fire would be consistent with its position that it is not prepared at this time to offer Israel much more than a long-term truce. As Rami Khouri, a leading Lebanese journalist, recently noted, it seems possible that there will be an "accord [between Israel and Hamas] that dares not speak its name," the title of one of his recent columns.

If such an informal arrangement holds, it could lead in time to bilaterally negotiated and more openly acknowledged agreements, and perhaps even a peace treaty, but only if several conditions are observed on both sides. Hamas must enforce the truce it has offered, and prevent terrorism not only by its own militants, but by Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Brigades, and other terrorist groups as well. But for Hamas to be able to pull that off, Israel must stop its targeted assassinations and incursions into Palestinian areas. Even more important, Israel must publicly declare that the lines to which it is withdrawing as a consequence of its unilateral disengagements are not permanent borders, which will only be determined in negotiations with the Palestinians. And if such a declaration is to be at all credible, Israel must cease adding to its presence on the West Bank in order to assure the irreversibility of its "temporary" lines.

Ironically, such an arrangement, leaving the door open to a more formal resolution of the conflict some years from now, is probably possible only under a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. For Hamas can credibly explain its acceptance of a transition period as consistent with its ideological refusal to make formal concessions to Israel that are not based on Israel's recognition of Palestinian rights and on Israeli reciprocity. Meanwhile Hamas can concentrate during this transition period on cleaning the Palestinian stables that have been soiled by Fatah's corruption. In direct opposition to Fatah's insistence that the reform of the Palestinian Authority's institutions must await the creation of a

Palestinian state, Hamas, as well as non-Islamic Palestinian reformists, has always maintained that honest and effective Palestinian governance is a precondition for the achievement of Palestinian national goals.

Perhaps expectations of Hamas moderation will turn out to have been mistaken. If so, there will be time enough for Israel and other nations to impose sanctions that Hamas and the Palestinian Authority would then fully deserve. But recent statements by various Hamas leaders about their new priorities strongly indicate that changes in their thinking are already underway. For example, Dr. Nasser Eddin Sha'er, the deputy to Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, told Haaretz on March 27 that "the new government does not reject coordination and cooperation to resolve routine problems, with anyone, including Israel." The haste with which Israel's government is seeking to discredit and topple Hamas is undermining the possibility of finding out the truth. It also threatens to foreclose what prospects for Hamas moderation may in fact exist.

Israel's General Shlomo Brom, who until recently served as deputy national security adviser for strategic planning in the IDF, has warned that if the failure of Hamas's government is brought about by an Israeli policy to isolate Hamas and bring about its downfall, the failure and the hardships suffered by the Palestinian population will not be attributed to Hamas but to Israel and the West. This is likely to widen the rift between the US, the Palestinians, and the Islamic world. On the other hand, an Israeli and Western policy of engagement and negotiation with Hamas could encourage fundamental changes in Hamas's policies, and eventually in its ideology. One great advantage of a strategy of engagement with Hamas over a strategy of isolating and undermining it is that Israel would be able to move from a policy of engagement to one of confrontation if it becomes clear that engagement has failed. A movement in the opposite direction will not be possible. And the cost of failure is likely to be the end of a two-state solution to the conflict, with all that implies for the future of the Jewish state that is situated within a region whose "clash of civilizations" may just be getting underway.

Hobbling Hamas

Weekly Standard

By Robert Satloff

4/3

LAST WEEK, one of the world's deadliest terrorist organizations--the Islamic Resistance Movement, aka Hamas--announced that it has formed a cabinet and is now poised to take effective control of the Palestinian Authority, which governs Gaza and the Palestinian population of the West Bank. This comes two months after the group, responsible for killing hundreds of civilians, including 27 Americans, won a sizable plurality in Palestinian legislative elections and, with it, a crushing parliamentary majority.

Since the triumph of Hamas, the Bush administration has taken what appears to be a hard line. Washington's mantra is "no recognition, no dialogue, and no financial aid" to a Hamas-led PA until Hamas recognizes Israel, renounces violence and terror, and accepts all previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements.

But is this really such a hard-line position? The Palestinian Authority was established solely as a vehicle for the purpose of resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict diplomatically, and the only claim it has on the U.S. Treasury is its contribution to that goal. Since Hamas leaders, without exception, confirm their objective of destroying the Jewish state, the administration would be hard-pressed to find a rationale for any policy more indulgent than the one it has adopted.

Indeed, on close inspection, the Three No's of U.S. policy actually mask a passive, often confused approach. This was most evident in the odd juxtaposition of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice traveling around the Middle East urging Arab governments to deny all funding to a Hamas-led PA--and James Wolfensohn, envoy of the Quartet (created in 2002 by the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations to spur Middle East peace), visiting those very same Arab capitals urging leaders to donate as much as they could to the PA. Washington may have terminated its own direct financial support of the PA, but it did little to stop America's European allies as well as the World Bank, in whose decisions the United States has a major say, from sending tens of millions of dollars to the same address.

At the core, the problem is that the Bush administration has a policy on Hamas but no real strategy. This reflects a deep ambivalence over whether the success of Hamas at the polls in the Palestinian election of January 25 poses a threat or offers an opportunity.

On the one hand, there is widespread sympathy for the view that the empowerment of Hamas is a grave danger to U.S. interests. It is transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a difficult, bloody, but theoretically resolvable nationalist conflict into an intractable, zero-sum religious war. Before our eyes, an Islamic Republic of Palestine is taking shape next door to Israel and on the borders of Israel's two treaty partners, Jordan and Egypt. Islamist radicals of all stripes--from the mullahs in Tehran to the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia to the jihadists of al Qaeda--are cheering the triumph of Hamas as the greatest political achievement of the new century. Now that the radicals' caliphate has a foothold at the gates of Jerusalem, all these bad actors can be expected to invest in the success of the Hamas experiment, each in its own nefarious way.

On the other hand, others in the administration hold out elections as the way to coopt Islamist political parties via the democratic process. To win power, Hamas had to accentuate a civic agenda of good, clean, responsible government; to keep power, argue the advocates of this view, Hamas will have to deliver on those promises. Along the way, Hamas will learn the hard truths that all ideological parties eventually learn. In Hamas's case, that means the price of political power is to shelve the goal of destroying Israel. While it is true that Hamas--like the Lebanese terrorist group cum political party Hezbollah--was permitted to win electoral legitimacy without giving up its weaponry or renouncing terrorism, circumstances will eventually compel it to do so. Such moderation, say supporters of this approach, is inevitable--or at least likely.

For President Bush, this is no arcane policy dispute. Because Hamas's victory leaves the president vulnerable on two key foreign policy themes of his administration--the fight against terror and the promotion of freedom in the Middle East--the political risks are high. After all, the president delivered a landmark speech four years ago in which he committed the United States to building a Palestinian leadership "not compromised by terror." Today, it is an obvious embarrassment that the Palestinian leadership--indeed, the PA cabinet--is made up of terrorists.

At the same time, the White House has thrown the dice on promoting elections as the first step in advancing Middle East democracy. With Islamists reaping the gains in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories, the policy is looking like it might be a bad bet. Unless the "freedom agenda" produces a visible success soon--defined as an Islamist party that moderates in power--the president's legacy on his signature foreign policy theme will be in serious trouble.

So far, the administration has tried to reconcile these positions by condemning Hamas as a terrorist group but praising the democratic process by which Palestinian voters elevated it to power. It manages this balancing act by suggesting that Palestinian voters supported Hamas not because of its commitment to destroy Israel but only as a way to throw out the corrupt incumbents of Arafat's Fatah party and, as Bill Clinton recently said, to make the Palestinian buses run on time.

The problem with this view is that it has little basis in fact. Other parties on the ballot offered alternatives to Fatah, including the good-government Third Way, but Hamas won 74 seats and the squeaky-clean liberals just 2. Indeed, it is an uncomfortable truth that an absolute majority of Palestinians voted for parties publicly committed to the destruction of Israel--Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. To suggest that Palestinians were oblivious to the political meaning of their votes is, as President Bush has argued in a different context, the soft bigotry of low expectations.

In practical terms, Washington's current policy--deny Hamas diplomatic recognition and U.S. financial aid but otherwise do little to arrest its growing hold on power--is an effort to have it both ways. In the end, it will achieve nothing. The policy does not pack enough wallop to undercut Hamas. Since Arab, Muslim, and even Western states are likely to fill in for lost U.S. aid, there is little chance that the policy will entice Hamas to come to terms with the legitimacy of Israel.

Already, the international consensus in support of the administration's three conditions has cracked. Russia was the first to break ranks, hosting a Hamas delegation in Moscow. Since then, such strategic partners as Turkey, a member of NATO, and Qatar, home to the largest U.S. air base in the Persian Gulf, have put out the welcome mat for Hamas, too.

When European powers begin to deal with Hamas, as they almost certainly will after Israel's election scheduled for March 28, the likely result of U.S. policy will be America's isolation, not the isolation of Hamas.

So Washington should get off the fence and decide what its strategic objective toward Hamas really is.

My own view is that Hamas's success poses such a threat to vital U.S. interests that we should do everything possible to abort Hamas rule. We should do this as quickly and peacefully as circumstances allow. We should work both openly and clandestinely with allies and partners who share our concern. The U.S. interest is not that Hamas slowly wither on the vine. That would require many years of containment, during which Hamas could foil our efforts by tightening its grip on power as the ayatollahs have in Iran. To the contrary, the U.S. interest is that Hamas collapse speedily and spectacularly.

Israel's role is critical. Jerusalem controls virtually the entire Palestinian economy and provides access into the Palestinian territories for all goods. Israel has the right to sever all economic ties with Gaza so as not to be responsible for sustaining Hamas rule; a case can be made that Israel is even duty-bound to prevent the emergence of a terrorist regime on territory it controls. (Israel has no role inside Gaza; in the West Bank, its troops operate relatively unfettered.) If Israel chooses to choke off a Hamas government, Washington should stand with Jerusalem.

But, critics will say, targeting the Hamas-led PA with punitive measures would punish the Palestinian people. That's right. If Hamas had come to power via a military coup, then it would be wrong to impose sanctions on the Palestinian people. But Hamas has come to power precisely because Palestinian voters chose it. If this isn't a moment when the populace itself should bear the repercussions of its actions, then what is? And isn't it more humane to level a swift blow than to inflict a thousand slow and painful cuts?

And what about democracy, the critics will say? Doesn't the Palestinian democratic process deserve our respect? The messy answer is that Washington made a mistake by acceding to an election in which Hamas could participate without first renouncing violence and recognizing Israel. Every democracy requires its participants to play by the rules, but we ignored the most basic rule of all: the choice of ballots over bullets. The Oslo Accords themselves had well-defined candidacy requirements for would-be legislative aspirants. But we foolishly acceded to PA president Mahmoud Abbas's decision to waive those requirements for Hamas. Admitting our mistake now is a bitter pill to swallow, but, in the long run, it will strengthen our ability to advance democracy among Palestinians and elsewhere in the Middle East.

At the moment, Palestinians pay little price for choosing a terrorist leadership. A new strategy based on vigorous efforts to stop international financial transactions and block all but narrowly defined humanitarian assistance would tell them that their actions have consequences. In the near term, this might conceivably propel into the streets the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who did not vote for a radical Islamist government, perhaps even triggering the collapse of the Hamas regime.

Many of these voters, though, were themselves Yasser Arafat's fellow-travelers, companions in the two-faced game the chairman played as terrorist-peacemaker. In the longer run, therefore, the United States needs to revert to the principles enunciated in President Bush's farsighted but apparently forgotten June 2002 address: "A Palestinian state will never be created by terror--it will be built through reform." This will require a multiyear investment in building a truly liberal democracy in the West Bank and Gaza, one whose claim to sovereignty is worthy of our support.

Aborting Hamas rule will not be easy. With a war to fight in Iraq and no good answers on Iran, the administration may opt not to face up to its mistake and instead put the Palestinian issue in the "too hard to do" file. But whatever we decide, we should not delude ourselves that our current policy will solve the Hamas problem. On the contrary, it is likely to deepen our own.

--Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, is the editor of *Hamas Triumphant* (2006).

Hamas: Out of Money

Newsweek
By Kevin Peraino
4/3

If you think you have a lousy job, meet Omar Abdel-Razeq. Last week the soft-spoken economist was named as Hamas's choice to be the Palestinian Authority's next Finance minister. The 48-year-old professor happened to be in an Israeli jail when his Islamist colleagues won an absolute majority in the Palestinian Parliament two months ago. And as he sat in his cell, Abdel-Razeq recalls, he found himself hoping he might stay there until after Hamas had finished forming its cabinet.

No such luck. Released a week ago, Abdel-Razeq says he hasn't yet had time to sift through the World Bank's dire projections for 2006, warning of an economic downturn equivalent to the Great Depression. "I just got out of prison," he protests. Even before Hamas's election upset, the Palestinian Authority was hemorrhaging money; Israel has since announced it would withhold an additional \$55 million a month in Palestinian customs receipts. With Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's Kadima Party far ahead in the polls, this week's Israeli elections seem likely to buoy proponents of further disengagement. "We are all aware of the difficulties we are getting into," Abdel-Razeq says with a sigh.

Born in the northern West Bank village of Salfit, Abdel-Razeq spent his college years in the United States, where he studied math, economics and computer science at Iowa universities. In the 1980s he took a post at An-Najah University in Nablus, and was later introduced to Islamists from Hamas--as well as to respected liberal economic reformers such as Salam Fayyad, the former PA Finance minister who now helps lead the Third Way Party in the West Bank. Abdel-Razeq considers Fayyad a "good friend" and says they've spoken about ways to streamline the PA's finances. (Hamas cofounder Mahmoud Zahar told NEWS-WEEK that the Islamists approached Fayyad about the Finance Ministry post, which he declined.)

Abdel-Razeq could use the help of both Fayyad and Zahar, Hamas's nominee for foreign minister, if he's to have any hope of narrowing the PA's funding gaps. As foreign minister, "it's my job to collect the money," Zahar says. If President Mahmoud Abbas gives his blessing to Hamas's cabinet list, he plans to embark on a tour of Arab allies, from whom he hopes to secure pledges of some \$50 million a month. Yet even if he succeeds, the PA budget will likely remain in the red. One potential stopgap measure, according to Abdel-Razeq: tapping a special PA investment account worth \$1.2 billion.

At the rate the PA is losing money, however, such rainy-day accounts won't last very long. Abdel-Razeq insists he can save \$300 million annually by cracking down on misused funds. But he seems less willing to trim the PA's payrolls. "We're not going to start laying off people just to make cuts," he says. Even Fayyad agrees that could be dangerous. "This is a lot easier said than done," he said recently. "Which 30,000 are you going to ax in Gaza?" One more reason to be glad you're not Abdel-Razeq.

HEZBOLLAH

Terrorist TV

National Review
By Steven Stalinsky
4/4

On March 23, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced pursuant to Executive Order 13224, that Al-Manar, a satellite television channel operated, owned, and controlled by the Iranian-funded Hezbollah terrorist network was designated as a global terrorist entity. The announcement cited earlier U.S. laws against Al-Manar which it called "the media arm of Hezbollah."

Hezbollah's brazen response to the U.S. decision was not surprising. A spokesman for Al-Manar was quoted by the Lebanese Daily Star on March 25 vowing to continue broadcasting despite having its assets frozen by the U.S. government. He insisted it was "nothing new" and added, "It doesn't change anything, and we will continue our work and will remain broadcasting everywhere in the world, including the U.S."

Al-Manar's general manager, Abdullah Qassir, was also quoted by the Daily Star stating: "We consider

this an assault on an objective and professional media group. It is politically motivated and we have information that the Zionist lobby in the U.S. is behind it." Qassir went on to explain, "The channel is now watched in America and all over the world...Al-Manar is an honorable open station that abides by rules and regulations, and is far from encouraging terrorism or violence as it is constantly being accused of by the U.S."

The following highlights the story behind Al-Manar; its activity in the U.S.; its role propagating anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism in the Muslim world; and how it incites Muslims in the West to violence. Over a dozen links to translated segments from the channel are included.

Al-Manar is Hezbollah's Propaganda Wing According to its website, Al-Manar is a "Lebanese TV station," launched in 1991 that began broadcasting via satellite in 2000. The channel claims to focus on the tolerant values of Islam and "to promote the culture of dialogue and cooperation among the followers of the Heavenly religions and human civilizations." The website also states that "Al-Manar avoids cheap incitement" and presents a combination of religious programming, international and local news, sports, politics, culture, and children's shows.

The channel is officially associated with the Arab League and according to its website, "draws a large number of viewers inside the Arab world and in countries of immigration." The Daily Star has reported that Al-Manar claims to reach an estimated 200 million viewers around the world, but the newspaper said a more realistic approximation is 10 million regular viewers. According to the French paper Liberation, Al-Manar reaches about 100 million homes in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

The network first made headlines with the airing of the Syrian-produced Ramadan special "Al-Shatat" ("Diaspora") in 2003. (See here.) The series focused on the purported history of the Jews with classic anti-Semitic motifs including the blood libel. MEMRI was instrumental in bringing the issue of Al-Manar and Al-Shatat to the attention of world leaders, including high-ranking American government officials; Germany's chancellor and its foreign minister; the Swedish and Australian prime ministers; and France's prime minister and president. After the French prime minister viewed segments from the series, he called for banning the channel in France, according to the French daily Le Monde.

Following the French ban of Al-Manar, Hezbollah has tried to create an impression that it is not officially connected to the channel. Yet Al-Manar's news director, Hassan Fadhlallah, is a Lebanese member of parliament representing the Hezbollah party. In a 1995 interview with the Washington Post, an Al-Manar station manager said the station "belongs to Hezbollah culturally and politically."

Arab and Western press outlets also describe the channel as belonging to Hezbollah. Writing in the Lebanese Daily Star on December 24, 2005, Rami Khouri called the channel "Hezbollah-owned Al-Manar." On November 21, 2005, Al-Jazeera TV reported: "The Al-Manar TV station, speaking in the name of Hezbollah," and on May 14, 2005, the Saudi daily Al-Riyadh wrote: "Al-Manar TV, which belongs to Hezbollah."

Al-Manar's chairman, Nayyef Krayyem, who was also chief of Hezbollah's information department, told the Christian Science Monitor in 2001, "Al-Manar is an important weapon... It's a political weapon, social weapon, and cultural weapon." Hezbollah's deputy leader, Sheikh Naim Qassem, was quoted explaining that Al-Manar's message is simple: "Jihad is the only way to salvation, and the experience of the Islamic and the Lebanese resistance is the best proof."

The channel is used to spread Hezbollah's message in Lebanon as well as throughout the world. In an interview with Islam Online in January 2001, an Al-Manar TV broadcaster, Fatima Bari, said Hezbollah's activities have "enriched Al-Manar TV through its Jihad, the blood of its martyrs, and everything it sacrificed" and that "Al-Manar TV waged an extremely harsh media war against the Zionist[s]."

During last year's Lebanese elections, Al-Manar was responsible for getting Hezbollah's message out. No other groups or parties running for office had a TV station at their disposal. One Lebanese politician, Ali Trabulsi, appeared on the channel during the early round of voting on June 5 declaring, "I vote 'yes' for the resistance [i.e. Hezbollah]. I have written it with the blood of my 10 fingers." He then took his bloody finger and wrote on his election form: "Yes to the resistance." (See here.) The result: His group won 14 out of 128 seats and Hezbollah emerged as a power in the Lebanese Parliament.

Al-Manar's Activity in the U.S. One of the most authoritative books written on terrorist groups operating in the U.S., Steven Emerson's American Jihad, has asserted that Hezbollah is active in American cities,

including Detroit, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, D.C. Most notable was a Hezbollah cell operating in Charlotte, N.C. It was taken down following an FBI sting in July 2000, whereby 18 people were charged. According to the indictment, they were guilty of providing training, communication equipment, and explosives to Hezbollah "in order to facilitate its violent attacks."

Hezbollah does maintain an elaborate network in America. Staff from Al-Manar have lived and been educated here, including a translator, Mohammad Abdullah, who graduated from the University of Massachusetts. Al-Manar also has a Washington-based correspondent named Muhammad Dalbah.

A few months ago, Al-Manar's website was registered in Seattle, by a company called eNom, with Internap Network Operations. Previously, the website was hosted in New Jersey. According to a May 31, 2005, report in the St. Petersburg Times, it was taken down temporarily but was up again a week later with another provider. Al-Manar webmaster Mohammed Obeid explained: "Companies that do hosting for us are getting afraid of the consequences by the U.S."

On occasion, anti-American figures are interviewed on Al-Manar from Washington D.C. For example, the editor-in-chief of the Washington-based Middle East Magazine, Ahmad Yusuf, said in a December 30, 2004, interview that Muslims were not involved in the attacks of September 11, 2001. He called the attacks a grand scheme designed by Israelis and American right wing forces, including "evangelical Christians." He also said the American government itself attacked Pearl Harbor as an excuse to enter War World II (see here).

In its broader strategy to reach out to Americans, Al-Manar has been a useful tool for Hezbollah. During the last two years, delegations from families of victims of the September 11 attacks, along with members of the Presbyterian Church, have appeared on the channel in meetings with the terror organization. In one instance, the deputy leader of Hezbollah, Sheikh Nabil Qauq, said that President Bush's and America's "aggressive inclination [is] a real danger to all monotheistic religions." A Presbyterian elder, Ronald Stone, stood at Mr. Qauq's side and said, "We treasure the precious words of Hezbollah and your expression of goodwill toward the American people." (See here.)

In May 2004, Al-Manar invited foreign college students studying in Lebanon, from countries such as Australia, Russia, and America, to participate in a documentary in support of Hezbollah. Three American students took part, including an American University of Beirut graduate student, Stephanie Tournear. She was quoted in the Daily Star as saying, "It's a shame you can't state your opinion or observations regarding Hezbollah in the U.S." Another American student who would not be identified said, "I decided not to be involved in the documentary, as it could have security and employment implications for me upon return to the U.S."

In an important step in the war on terror, the State Department added Al-Manar to its "Terrorism Exclusion List" in December 2004 for incitement to terrorism. Among other things, the designation means that anyone working for or helping the network can be barred from America.

Yet Al-Manar maintains vocal Arab and Muslim-American supporters. Osama Siblani, publisher of Dearborn, Michigan's Arab American News, which, according to its website, "is the largest, oldest, and most respected Arab American newspaper in the United States" was quoted in the Washington Post as saying, "I disagree with the State Department that it [Al-Manar] incites violence. ... By that standard, they should shut Fox News for inciting against Muslims."

Texas Muslims for Islamic Change issued a statement that it was "dismayed at this development and considers it to be part of the American government's assault on constitutional rights," adding, "To date we have not seen properly documented evidence brought forward that would support the State Department's claim that Al-Manar 'preaches violence and hatred' or 'serves to incite ... terrorist violence.'"

Since it has been put on the State Department's terror list, the station has continued to attack America, describing it as a "plague" with commentators calling for jihad against the country. As Hezbollah's leader, Sheikh Nasrallah declared at a rally covered live on Al-Manar in February 2005, with thousands yelling "Death to America": "We consider the current administration an enemy of our [Islamic] nation. ... Our motto, which we are not afraid to repeat year after year is 'Death to America'" (See here.)

Similarly, during a speech televised on Al-Manar on February 23, Nasrallah said: "America you are the

great Satan... America, the enemy of Muslims... Those who have come at night, like bats, will hear Lebanon saying: Death to America..." (See here.)

Anti-American Incitement on Al-Manar The 1983 attack on American Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 was Hezbollah's coming-out party. To this day, the attack is lauded on Al-Manar. A Hezbollah "poet," Atef Moussa, appeared on May 22, 2005, and said, "Who says we are afraid of war? ... Who can compare to the men of Hezbollah? ... These enemies [the American military] turned out to be as light as cardboard. Bush knows it. Beirut remains dangerous for the Marines. Our proof is here, they left in shame. Our people sail the seas of martyrdom." (See here.)

In an anti-American speech mocking the American military on March 8, 2005, Hezbollah's leader, Sheik Nasrallah, also referred to the attack: "I address the following to America ... to President Bush ... to Condoleezza Rice ... and to American-Lebanese field commander Satterfield ... Lebanon will not ... throw its heart to your soldiers' dogs so they will eat it ... You can make yourself heard by the commander of the American forces in the region, who is of Lebanese origin, John Abizaid ... Are you Lebanese afraid of the American naval fleets? These naval fleets have come in the past, and were defeated, and if they come again, they will be defeated again." (See here.)

Since Hezbollah's founding, its leadership has threatened America openly. In a March 1985 Newsweek article about Hezbollah, an Islamic teacher at the Bir Al-Abed Mosque in Beirut, Alia Hamden, promised a future attack by the terror organization within America. Similarly, in a July 2003 interview with the Christian Science Monitor, Sheik Nasrallah said that if America tried to dismantle his organization, American interests throughout the world will be at risk, "through any means and at any time and any place."

Al-Manar is Hezbollah's main vehicle for spreading its anti-American ideology. Such messages surface in news programs, music videos, and even game shows. For example, the question "What structure built of gray sandstone in 1792 became the source of all oppressive decisions the world over?" was asked on Al-Manar's version of Jeopardy, The Mission. The answer: "the White House." The Mission quizzes contestants from throughout the Middle East about Islamic history, geography, and arts. A spokesman for the channel, Ibrahim Musawi, explained the show's appeal "is not in an ideological way, but in an entertaining way."

On February 12, 2005, Sheik Naim Qassem of Hezbollah appeared on Al-Manar to discuss his hatred of President Bush: "He considers himself the god of the world. This perversion is evident in his personality ... His is patronizing and everyone abhors him ... he is a liar who tried to impose heresy on Islam." (See here.)

Sheik Nasrallah urged a screaming crowd in May 2004 to send "a symbolic message that tells the Americans that we are a people that does not settle for words, but is prepared for martyrdom... [L]et Bush, Powell, Rumsfeld, and all those tyrants in Washington hear ... there will only be room for great sacrifice for the call to martyrdom." (See here.)

Influential Arab figures also regularly appear on Al-Manar to express anti-American sentiments. One among countless examples is the editor of the Egyptian weekly Al-Arabi, who said in an April appearance, "Anti-Americanism is like music" to his ears, calling America "the plague" and "an ongoing crime." The head of the Sunni religious courts in Lebanon, Sheik Muhammad Kanan, called America "the garbage of all nations" in a sermon broadcast live last year.

A professor of political science at Notre Dame University in Lebanon, Dr. George Hajjar, who identified himself as "coming from Columbia University," appeared on July 13, 2005, saying, "America is the New Nazism." Discussing terrorism in the West he said, "[The Americans] should be treated reciprocally. They reap what they sow." He added, "I hope that every patriotic and Islamic Arab will participate in this war, and will shift the war not only to America, but to all corners ... wherever America may be." (See here.)

Anis al-Naqqash, who was involved in major terrorist attacks in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s and was released early from a French prison, appeared on Al-Manar on August 3, 2005: "The U.S. is the enemy of Arabs and Muslims ... every person must resist it ... if he can resist with weapons, it is his duty, mandated by the Koran." He also said, "Any cleric with knowledge of Islam, must ... declare Jihad against the U.S., England, and their allies." (See here.)

Anti-Semitism on Al-Manar Al-Manar's jihad is not limited to Western countries. Much of the channel's programming is devoted to anti-Semitic themes against the Jews, who are described as "apes and pigs."

On November 29, Al-Manar TV hosted and covered a live symposium at Lebanon's largest and only government-run university, Université Libanaise. Hisham Shamas, a student of political science, said, "Just like Hitler fought the Jews, we are a great Islamic nation of jihad, and we too should fight the Jews and burn them." When another student, Mahmoud Fakhri, called for Israel "to be wiped off the map," he asked the Al-Manar moderator if his statement was "too inciting." "Go ahead and incite. This is what we're looking for." (See here.)

The French ban on Al-Manar for incitement against Jews in December 2004 enraged the Arab world. A spokesman for the Committee for Solidarity with Al-Manar, Ghaleb Qandil, said, "All the talk about anti-Semitism is meaningless nonsense ... we Arabs are Semites, the offspring of the 'Khazar' Jews will not be the ones to judge how Semitic we are." (See here.)

The Lebanese foreign ministry issued a statement explaining Al-Manar is "anti-Zionist, not anti-Semitic," while President Lahoud of Lebanon called the charges of "anti-Semitism" an attempt "to mislead international public opinion." As Lebanese government officials made such claims, Al-Manar aired a program about Jews spreading AIDS throughout the world.

Al-Manar's anti-Semitic outlook is derived from Hezbollah's interpretation of the Koran. The group's one-time spiritual leader, Sheikh Muhammad Hussain Fadlallah, said in 1994 that the literal text of the Koran detailing "the negative aspects of the Jews ... both in history and in the future" serves as a guide for Muslims.

A 1997 book on Hezbollah by a Reuters correspondent based in the Middle East, Hala Jaber, detailed how Al-Manar regularly broadcasted excerpts from the terrorist organization's original manifesto. Citing Surat al-Maidah, Verse 82 of the Koran, the manifesto said Hezbollah's "jihad" is a "religious obligation" and that "the animosity between Muslims and Jews goes back to the early days of Islam."

Al-Manar's children's programming also includes antisemitic themes taken from Islamic teachings. For example, a claymation special from December 7 was titled "Stories from the Koran." The program was based on a famous Hadith from Islamic history in which the Jews became apes and pigs. (See here.)

The head of Radio Islam in Sweden and one of Europe's most notorious antisemitic Muslims, Ahmad Rami, appeared on Al-Manar on September 30 to explain that his beliefs are based on what "the Koran says, that our battle is with the Jews" and that "Judaism is a criminal and dangerous mafia." (See here.)

Antisemitic incitement on Al-Manar is not drawn solely from interpretations of the Koran, but from classic antisemitic subject matter including the blood libel; Protocols of the Elders of Zion; Nazi forgeries; and attacks on Judaism.

Explaining how the Jews have "distorted the Torah," the Mufti of Tripoli, Sheikh Taha Al-Sabonji appeared on Al-Manar on April 22, 2004, saying: "Those responsible for all civil strife ... throughout history were the Jews. This is verified by anyone who has read Jewish literature and ... the Koran." On the same show, the secretary-general of the Islamic Universities Association, Dr. Jafar Abd Al-Salim, responded: "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion clearly refer to this." (See here.)

The president of the Middle East Center for Studies and Public Relations, Hisham Jaber, appeared on Al-Manar on July 11 to discuss the vileness of the Jews, claiming they were behind the attacks of September 11, 2001. He also said, "We know that since the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Zionism has forged the New Testament. ... 60 million in the U.S. alone have left Christianity to become believers in the Torah. Global Zionism has tried to forge the Holy Koran." (See here.)

A Lebanese journalist, Arafat Nizam Al-Din, quoted Nazi propaganda during a November 11, 2004, interview on Al-Manar. He added his own twist on American history and Jews with fictional antisemitic quotes from President Washington, President Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. Similarly, Al-Manar aired a discussion by Dr. Ghazi Rababa, Professor of Political Science at Jordan University, on May 27, 2004: "President Jefferson told the American people in an official speech, 'If you do not expel the Jews from your land, they will enslave you. ... If we open the Talmud, the Jews' false book, we see that."

(See here.)

Another one of the countless examples of such anti-Semitism on Al-Manar comes from the deputy head of the Palestinian Clerics Association, Sheik Muhammad Ali, who appeared on August 19 and spoke of wiping out the Jews and how the Zionists have forged the Torah and Talmud, and he quoted directly from the Koran to justify killing Jews. (See here.)

The Iranian Theocracy Launched Al-Manar & Continues to Support It Hezbollah's original secretary-general, Sheik Subhi Tufeili, once said, "To deny the Iranian aid issued to Hezbollah would be like denying that the sun provides light to the earth." On February 16, 1985, Hezbollah released its manifesto bearing a picture of "our leader," the Ayatollah Khomeini on the back cover. A Washington Post article from that year reported on "Iranian Revolutionary Guards carrying out their missionary work, indoctrinating the Lebanese Shiites in the spiritual and political teachings of Khomeini."

Iran's ideological and financial support of Hezbollah was detailed in Hala Jaber's 1997 book on the terror organization: "Hezbollah is coy about revealing the sums it has received from Iran." She added, "Reports have spoken on figures ranging from \$5-\$10 million per month."

Hezbollah's most important tool in spreading its ideology of death and celebration of martyrdom--heavily influenced by the Iranian theocracy--is the TV channel Al-Manar. With a multimillion-dollar headquarters in Beirut and as the Christian Science Monitor has reported, a budget that grew tenfold between 1991 and 2001 (some estimate its current annual budget to be between \$10-\$50 million), that the Iranian government is backing Al-Manar should come as no surprise. According to an article published by in the Transnational Broadcasting Studies' winter-fall 2002 issue, "Iranian ayatollahs backed and helped to launch Al-Manar" and the channel's first broadcast was of the 1989 funeral of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

In a June 2, 2002, interview on Al-Manar, the deputy secretary-general of Hezbollah, Sheik Naim Qasem, quoted the Iranian regime in explaining his organization's position on Israel and jihad: "Muslims should annihilate Israel... Imam Khomeini said, 'The goal of this virus [Israel] that was planted in the heart of the Islamic world. ... The danger is to the whole Middle East... and the solution is in annihilating the virus.'" Mr. Qasem also described how good it was to see "a mother saying goodbye to her son, awaiting his return as a shahid [suicide bomber]..."

Hezbollah's leader, Sheik Hassan Nassrallah, gave a speech on February 19, broadcast live on Al-Manar, containing both a threat to America and a salute to Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei: "If America ... stops its aggression ... we will have no problem with it. We don't want to go to Washington to fight America." He added, "How can death become joyous ... sweeter than honey? Only through conviction, ideology, and faith ... as the Leader Imam Khamenei said ... the most honorable killing and the most glorious martyrdom is when a man is killed for the sake of Allah, by the enemies of Allah, the murderers of the prophets [i.e. the Jews]." (See here.)

Ms. Jaber's book also detailed how Hezbollah TV incites Muslim youth to terrorism: "Al-Manar ... is dominated by religious programs. Pictures and names of martyrs are screened, supported by verses from the Koran which glorify such deaths. The aim is simple, to indoctrinate the minds of the young ... with the idea that those seek martyrdom will be rewarded with more pleasure than can ever be achieved during this earthly lifetime."

Al-Arabiya TV aired a program on the celebration of martyrdom by Hezbollah and Al-Manar on August 19. In one scene, a young boy is shown viewing footage of a suicide bomber in a car that exploded. The boy said: "I love to watch him," explaining it was his father. (See here.)

The mother of martyr Bassel Al-Din appeared on Al-Manar on May 22. She cried in happiness when telling the channel: "Bassel had a wish. ... Whenever I told him I wanted to marry him off, he would say, 'Yes, mother, you'll marry me off like this in paradise.' And indeed, the martyr Bassel got married in paradise. I congratulate the black-eyed virgins who took Bassel from me." (See here.)

A November 11, 2004, "Mother's Day Special" on Al-Manar featured comments from many mothers of martyrs. One stated, "All I want is martyrdom. I'm willing for all my children to become martyrs." Another said, "It's true I sacrificed a son, but others have sacrificed two or three. I hope more of my sons will become martyrs." The Al-Manar moderator praised them and explained, "The reward of ... all martyrs' mothers is not in vain. ... Not only locally, this is an experience that is now shared by all

societies." (See here.)

Al-Manar Incites Western Muslims During the last week of January, Dutch authorities blocked the transmission of Al-Manar for spreading hate and stated the channel encourages the radicalization of Muslims and glorifies terrorist attacks.

In fact, since Hezbollah's TV channel Al-Manar began broadcasting via satellite in 2000, it has been at the center of controversy throughout the West. In America, Canada, France, Australia, Spain, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, the channel has been banned in various capacities.

In 2003, Australia was first to censure Al-Manar. The Australian said by way of explanation, "The channel incites to terrorism." During a Swedish parliament session on March 18, 2004, Mikael Oscarsson of the Christian Democratic Party asked Prime Minister Goran Persson to put an end to Al-Manar broadcasts in his country, describing them as "appalling propaganda of incitement" that "can only be compared with that of the Nazis."

The French government banned Al-Manar in December 2004 for violating repeatedly the country's anti-hate laws. America and Canada followed just days afterward. A State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher, said, "We don't see why ... a terrorist organization should be allowed to spread its hatred and incitement through the television airwaves."

The Spanish government blocked transmission of Al-Manar on July 14, 2005. A conservative foreign affairs spokesman at the European Union, Charles Tannock, responded as follows: "Hezbollah uses Al-Manar to spread hatred and incite people to commit terrorist acts against innocent civilians ... every effort must be now made by the E.U. to prevent further brainwashing of vulnerable young people by fundamentalist religious extremists." He said Hezbollah ought "not be allowed to spread hate-filled propaganda on our continent."

More recently on January 26, 2006 Dutch authorities blocked the transmission of Al-Manar for spreading hate, saying the channel encourages the radicalization of Muslims and glorifies terrorist attacks. Justice Minister Piet Hein Donner was quoted by the AFP as calling "for a European Union-wide solution to the problem of such television channels."

It should be noted that some Arabs have also been critical of Al-Manar. In an interview with Al-Jazeera on July 26, 2004, a former Iraqi government minister, Hoshyan Zebari, accused Arab satellite channels of inciting violence--singling out Al-Manar. In November, the editor of the London Arabic daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, Tariq Al-Homayed, criticized "ideology-laden satellite channels" for causing damage to the Arab world, mentioning "Hezbollah's channel Al-Manar."

The channel does receive tremendous support from the Arab world and in particular from the Lebanese government. After the American ban, a former Lebanese premier, Salim Hoss, said, "The U.S. move was akin to granting Al-Manar a medal of honor. It is an official recognition of its genuine effectiveness."

Lebanese government officials have explicitly stated Al-Manar is formally under its control. President Lahoud said on July 1, "Al-Manar is a national Lebanese consensus issue, and it is protected by Lebanese laws." The director general of the Information Ministry, Hassan Falha, in August 2004 said, "Al-Manar is a Lebanese media institution working in abidance with the Lebanese laws and laws regulating media in Lebanon. The Lebanese government is concerned about the Al-Manar issues at all press, legal, diplomatic, and political levels."

Following Al-Manar's ban in the West, the editor-in-chief of the channel's news division, Abdullah Shamseddine, told the Daily Star on December 20, 2004, "The damage is merely political ... Viewers can still watch via NileSat and by adjusting their dishes to receive our signal. The same applies to South American countries."

This strategy has not gone unnoticed by Western governments. E.U. spokesman Charles Tannock said on July 14, 2005, "I have asked the British Presidency of the E.U. to raise the matter with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, both of whom continue to operate satellites which broadcast Al-Manar across Europe."

As the Muslim streets of Europe erupted earlier this winter over the publishing of cartoons of Islam's prophet Muhammad, Hezbollah leader Sheikh Nasrallah made a statement covered by Al-Manar which

could be interpreted as being directed toward Muslims in the West: "If there had been a Muslim to carry out Imam Khomeini's fatwa against the renegade Salman Rushdie, this rabble who insult our Prophet Muhammad in Denmark, Norway, and France would not have dared to do so ... I am sure there are millions of Muslims who are ready to give their lives to defend our prophet's honor and we have to be ready to do anything for that."

This quote represents the danger posed by Hezbollah and its TV channel. The blocking of Al-Manar's assets and placing the channel on terror lists are positive developments, yet the real solution is to pressure the Lebanese government to pull the plug on Al-Manar.

--Steven Stalinsky is the Executive Director of The Middle East Media Research Institute.

UNITED NATIONS

The U.N. Plays with Lego

Weekly Standard

By Henrik Bering

4/3

ARTISTS ARE OFTEN PRAISED for their ability to peer into the future. When the hysteria over the Danish Muhammad cartoons was at its height last month, another cartoon circulated on the Internet depicting a Lego "Danish embassy" playset--complete with embassy ablaze, Danish flags going up in smoke, and little Lego Islamists carrying placards that read "Europe the cancer, Islam the Answer." In linking Lego toys, a symbol of Denmark and of childhood innocence, with the campaign of hatred against Denmark sweeping through the Arab world, the cartoonist was more prescient than we knew.

Because who could have guessed that Lego would indeed find itself sucked into the controversy? In connection with its International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21, the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights issued an antiracism poster. Under the headline "Racism takes many shapes," it featured a very red and very recognizable Lego building block.

Lego and the Danish foreign ministry immediately protested, and the agency had to cancel the poster. Afterwards, a U.N. spokesman disingenuously claimed that the use of the building block had been entirely accidental, and with a smirk apologized if this had hurt Danish feelings. Unfortunately for Lego, you can't sue the United Nations.

The Lego poster incident is just one of the international humiliations heaped on Denmark, which finds itself in its greatest foreign policy crisis since World War II. The current Arab campaign against Denmark is seen as a warning to the bigger European nations. Autocratic regimes in the Middle East have a general interest in discouraging Western pressures for liberalization, while fundamentalists have a particular interest in presenting opposition to political Islam as an attack on the beliefs of ordinary Muslims.

In fact, Denmark has once before been the target of Arab wrath. In 1973, during the OPEC oil crisis, Prime Minister Anker Jørgensen cautiously suggested that Israel had a right to defend its borders. The Arab countries immediately upped their prices an extra notch especially for the Danes, who remember that as a rather cold winter. Not surprisingly, in the present crisis, the backing of Denmark's fellow E.U. members has been less than staunch.

The current anti-Danish campaign is well coordinated, and plays out on many fronts and forums. The special rapporteur for the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission, the Senegalese Doudou Diene, released his latest report on racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance in February. He devotes several pages to the Muhammad cartoons published by the Jyllands-Posten newspaper and portrays Denmark as a nation that is profoundly hostile toward foreigners. The fact that Diene has never set foot in Denmark and that his accusations are unsubstantiated does not strengthen the report's credibility.

The absurdity of being called out by the U.N.'s notoriously corrupt human rights establishment is

heightened by the fact that Denmark has been a model supporter of the U.N., always volunteering for U.N. projects, and urging respect for international norms. Some Danes hope that this naive belief in the United Nations may be giving way to a more realistic appraisal of the nature of the organization.

The past week, the focus shifted to Bahrain, site of a major conference of 300 leading Islamic lights. Not to miss out on the fun, some of the Danish imams who started the whole anti-Danish campaign went on a fresh mission to the Middle East. On their first trip back in December, you may remember, they slipped a few incendiary cartoons of their own into the briefing folder and spread the rumor that the Koran was being burned in the streets of Copenhagen.

This time around, they were in Bahrain at the International Conference for Supporting the Prophet, ostensibly on a mission to persuade their fellow imams to end the boycott of Denmark. But their image as conciliators was badly shaken when, at the same time they were in Bahrain, a French documentary aired showing a spokesman for the traveling imams, Ahmed Akkari, on camera suggesting that the leader of Denmark's Democratic Muslims organization, a moderate member of parliament named Naser Khader, should be blown up if he enters the government.

"If he becomes Foreign or Integration Minister, we should send a couple of guys to blow up both him and the ministry," Akkari said, not knowing he was on camera. Danish police are now trying to decide whether the threats were made "in jest," as Akkari subsequently claimed. A tiny man with a scraggly beard and a high-pitched voice, Akkari had not previously been known as a great comedian.

In the same footage, Akkari's fellow imams Sheikh Raed Hlayel and Abu Bilal state that the campaign of hatred should be kept up against the Jyllands-Posten, which they describe as "owned and run by Jews." Incidentally, that was also the position of the conference's main speaker and most prominent figure, the learned Yusuf al-Qaradawi, whose weekly Al Jazeera program reaches an audience of 50 million. "Of course the boycott must continue. It must continue until the Danish government apologizes."

The documentary clearly demonstrates that the Danish imams have engineered the crisis to increase their own following, as part of their grand scheme to eventually impose Islamic law on Europe. The revelations of their actual agenda have led to demands in Denmark for the revocation of their residence permits.

As for the country's alleged hostility to foreigners, Mohamed Sifaoui, the respected journalist who shot the documentary for France-2, said, "We came to Denmark without preconceived ideas and found that you cannot call a country racist when it gives its minorities all rights and chooses three Muslims to parliament."

All this should ease some of the internal pressures on the center-right government of Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. For months, the leftist opposition has been yammering about the harm done to Denmark's image abroad by the government's refusing to compromise on the issue of free speech, and it has been demanding a policy of never-ending self-abasement before the Middle Eastern despots.

The leftist demands have been supported by some members of the Danish business community. Arla, the Danish dairy giant that has lost its Middle Eastern export markets, took out full-page advertisements in leading Arab newspapers to issue an abject apology in connection with the Muhammad cartoons. "We understand and respect your reaction, which has led to a boycott of our products over this irresponsible and regrettable incident," the ads said. Apart from being craven and distasteful, such groveling, most analysts agree, will not work. These markets are lost for the foreseeable future.

Having himself recovered from a moment of going wobbly on the Arab television network Al Jazeera, Rasmussen, in a big interview in the daily Berlingske Tidende, went on the offensive, taking the media, timid Danish intellectuals, and parts of the business community to task for their fainthearted attitude towards free speech. He stated that it was time to separate the sheep from the goats, pointing out that Danish firms owe their existence and their success to the concept of free speech and that free speech is essential for democracy's survival. In the prime minister's view, no one should gratuitously insult another man's religion, but freedom of speech is a vital weapon in the fight against the Islamists.

In tone, his remarks resembled those of George W. Bush after September 11, that in the fight against terrorism, you were either with us or against us. In Denmark, as in other European nations, the Bush

position was originally criticized as simplistic, but increasing numbers of Danes are beginning to realize that in the fight against Islamofascism, fence-sitting is not an option.

The nation is now steeling itself for the upcoming trial of Fadi Abdullatif, the spokesman of the extremist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, against whom the Danish public prosecutor has finally decided to press charges for making death threats and for incitement. In November 2004, after Friday prayers at a mosque in Valby, Copenhagen, the organization distributed a flyer that said, "So go and help your brothers in Falluja, and kill your rulers if they stand in your way." And on its homepage was found the exhortation to "kill Jews, wherever you find them." Abdullatif has previously received a 60-day suspended sentence for threats against Jews.

Many Danes are now asking what took the public prosecutor so long to put Abdullatif on trial, and why he didn't move long ago to seek a ban of the organization, which in other countries is regarded as a terrorist hate group. To most ears, "Kill your rulers" and "Kill Jews" sounds pretty unambiguous.

--Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

How Corrupt is the United Nations?

Commentary

By Claudia Rosett

4/2006

Recent years have brought a cascade of scandals at the United Nations, of which the wholesale corruption of the Oil-for-Food relief program in Iraq has been only the most visible. We still do not know the full extent of these debacles—the more sensational ones include the disappearance of UN funds earmarked for tsunami relief in Indonesia and the exposure of a transnational network of pedophile rape by UN peacekeepers in Africa—and we may never know. What we do know is that an assortment of noble-sounding efforts has devolved into enterprises marked chiefly by abuse, self-dealing, and worse.

Seen by many, including many Americans, as the chief arbiter of legitimacy in global politics, the UN is understood by others to be the only institution standing between us and global anarchy. If that is so, the portents are not promising. The free world is grappling with threats from the spread of radical Islam to North Korea's nuclear blackmail and Iran's pursuit of nuclear bombs. The UN, despite its trophy case of Nobel prizes, has failed so far to curb any of these, just as it failed abysmally to run an honest or effective sanctions program in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Currently it is gridlocked over matters as seemingly straightforward as cleaning up its own management department.

In the effort to address the UN's manifold problems, there have been audits, investigations, committees, reports, congressional hearings, action plans, and even a handful of arrests by U.S. federal prosecutors. There have been calls for Secretary-General Kofi Annan to step down before his second term expires at the end of this year. Solutions have been sought by way of better monitoring, whistleblower protection, the accretion of new oversight bodies, and another round of conditions attached to the payment of U.S. dues. On top of the broad reforms of the early 1990's, the sweeping reforms of 1997, the further reforms of 2002, and the world summit for reform in 2005, still more plans for reform are in the works.¹ To its external auditors, internal auditors, joint inspections unit, eminent-persons panels, executive boards, and many special consultants, the UN has recently added an Office of Ethics—now expected to introduce in May what will presumably become an annual event: "UN Ethics Day."

Is any of this likely to help? Behind the specific scandals lies what one of the UN's own internal auditors has termed a "culture of impunity." A grand committee that reports to itself alone, the UN operates with great secrecy and is shielded by diplomatic immunity. One of its prime defenses, indeed, is the sheer impenetrability of its operations: after more than 60 years as a global collective, it has become a welter of so many overlapping programs, far-flung projects, quietly vested interests, nepotistic shenanigans, and interlocking directorates as to defy accurate or easy comprehension, let alone responsible supervision.

But let us try.

One clear sign of how badly things have gone with the UN is the difficulty of tallying even so basic a sum as the system's real budget. Nowhere does the UN present a full and clear set of accounts, and statistics vary even within individual agencies and programs.

The UN's current "core" annual budget is \$1.9 billion—but the "core" is itself but a fraction of the actual budget. Around it are wrapped billions more in funding provided by "voluntary contributions" from private and corporate donors, foundations, and member states, including, to a large extent, the United States. These sums are shuffled around in various ways, with UN agencies in some instances paying or donating to each other. For instance, the UN Development Program (UNDP) operates with its own "core" budget of about \$900 million a year but handles about \$3 billion per year—or, depending on whom you ask and what you count, \$4.5 billion per year.

According to Mark Malloch Brown, the UN chief of staff who has just been promoted to the post of Deputy Secretary-General, the total budget for all operations under direct control of the Secretariat comes to roughly \$8-9 billion per year. Adding in just a few of the larger agencies like UNDP (at, let us say, \$4 billion), UNICEF (\$2 billion or so), and the World Food Program (\$2-3 billion) already brings the grand total to somewhere between \$16 and \$18 billion, again depending on whom you listen to and what you count. On UN websites devoted to procurement, where the idea is not to minimize the official amount of UN spending but on the contrary to attract suppliers to a large and thriving operation, the estimate of money spent yearly on goods and services by the entire UN system comes to \$30 billion, or more than 15 times the core budget of \$1.9 billion on which reformers have focused.

Staff numbers are likewise a matter of mystery. The new ethics office proposes to offer its services to 29,000 UN employees worldwide. That number is well short of the total staff of the Secretariat plus the specialized agencies alone, which, according to Malloch Brown, consists of some 40,000 people. And that figure itself does not include local staffs—such as the 20,000 Palestinians who work for the UN Works and Relief Agency (UNWRA) or the many employees, some long-term, others transient, at hundreds of assorted UN offices, projects, and operations worldwide, or the more than 85,000 peacekeepers sent by member states but carrying out UN orders and eating UN-supplied rations bought via UN purchasing departments. Whereas the number of UN member states has almost quadrupled since 1945 (from 51 to 191), the number of personnel has swollen many times over, from a few thousand into somewhere in the six figures.

Little of this system is open to any real scrutiny even within the UN, and no single authority outside the UN has proved able to compel any genuine accounting. Moreover, even though there can no longer be any doubt that the scale of the rot is large, the UN's top management continues to insist to the contrary. Take the central scandal of recent UN history—namely, Oil-for-Food. Last October, Paul Volcker's UN-authorized probe into Oil-for-Food submitted its fifth and final report on that relief program, which in its seven years of operation had become a vehicle for billions in kickbacks, payoffs, and sanctions-busting arms traffic. By January of this year, after first having declared that he was taking responsibility for the debacle, Kofi Annan was spinning a different story, telling a London audience that "only one staff member was found to maybe have taken some \$150,000 out of a \$64-billion program."

This was an artful lie. The staff member in question was Benon Sevan, whom Annan had appointed to run Oil-for-Food for six of its seven years. If indeed Sevan took no more than this relative pittance, then Saddam Hussein scored the biggest bargain in the history of kickbacks. According to Senator Norm Coleman's independent investigation into Oil-for-Food, the real figure for Sevan's take was \$1.2 million. Clearing up this discrepancy is difficult, however, because Sevan, who was allowed by Annan to retire to his native Cyprus on full UN pension, is outside the reach of U.S. law and has denied taking anything.

In any case, the corruption hardly ended with Sevan. Instances that appear to have slipped the Secretary-General's mind include another member of his inner circle, the French diplomat Jean-Bernard Merimée, who by his own admission took a payoff from Saddam while serving as Annan's handpicked envoy to the European Union. Within the UN agencies working with Annan's Secretariat on Oil-for-Food, Volcker confirmed "numerous [further] allegations of corrupt behavior and practices," embracing "bid-rigging, conflicts of interest, bribery, theft, nepotism, and sexual harassment." He also noted that the UN lacked controls on graft, failed to investigate many cases, and failed to act upon some of those it did explore. Finally, Volcker calculated that UN agencies had kept for themselves at least \$50 million earmarked to buy relief for the people of Iraq.²

Nor do the sheer monetary amounts even begin to convey the extent of the damage done by UN labors in Iraq. Annan's office had the mandate of the Security Council, plus a \$1.4-billion budget, to check oil and relief contracts for price fiddles, to monitor oil exports in order to prevent smuggling, and to audit UN operations. In the event, Oil-for-Food spent far more money renovating its offices in New York than checking the terms of Saddam's contracts, and ignored the smuggling even when Saddam in 2000 opened a pipeline to Syria. The result of what Annan now placidly describes as "instances of mismanagement"—as if someone forgot to reload the office printer—was that Saddam skimmed and smuggled anywhere from \$12 billion (according to the incomplete numbers supplied by Volcker) to \$17 billion or more (according to the more comprehensive totals provided by Senator Coleman's staff). And what did Saddam do with those profits? What Annan describes as "instances of mismanagement" did not simply entail theft, corruption, and waste. They enriched and supported a tyrant and a mass murderer. Saddam used his UN-blessed loot not only to build palaces and buy luxury cars but also to provide patronage to loyal Baathists, reward Palestinian suicide bombers, and restock his arsenal, conventional or otherwise. When CIA chief weapons inspector Charles Duelfer went to Iraq in 2004 looking for weapons, the money trail took him straight to the UN relief operation, which, as he would report, had become a shill for an arms and illicit-money network that reached through Syria to Belarus and Russia. The network was buying "milk" from a Chinese weapons manufacturer, contracting for "vehicles" and "detergent" with Sudan, and negotiating for missiles with North Korea.

And that is only Oil-for-Food. Since last summer, the UN has been bedeviled by a bribery scandal centered in its procurement department, which handles the Secretariat's buying of everything from paperclips to peacekeeper rations. In August, a UN staffer named Alexander Yakovlev pleaded guilty in federal court to taking hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of bribes, involving possibly hundreds of millions' worth of tainted contracts—many of them in force to this day. In September, Vladimir Kuznetsov, the head of the UN budget oversight committee, had to step aside under federal indictment as Yakovlev's co-conspirator in wire fraud and money laundering. With the scandal still spreading, a number of other UN employees are now under investigation in cases involving something on the order of \$1 billion in UN contracts.

There have also been cases in which, although no corruption has been alleged, clear conflicts of interest have been disclosed. Thus, Volcker found that in 1997, Maurice Strong, a longtime UN Under-Secretary General, accepted a check bankrolled by Saddam in the amount of \$988,885. Strong (who has denied knowing where the money came from) was then serving as chief coordinator of UN reform, no less. Another top adviser to Annan, Giandomenico Picco, was discovered to have served in late 1999 and early 2000 as both a UN Under-Secretary General and chairman of the board of a company called IHC Services.³ The company had close ties to the bribe-taking Yakovlev and signed millions of dollars in contracts with the UN while Picco was running one of Annan's pet projects, the Dialogue of Civilizations.

Then there is the saga of Annan's son, Kojo, who turned out to have received more than \$195,000 from a major UN Oil-for-Food contractor, Cotecna Inspection, after he had formally stopped working for it. In investigating Kojo's UN-related ventures, Volcker came across the paper trail of a by-now famous green Mercedes: in 1998, Kojo had saved some \$20,000 by buying this car at a diplomatic discount in Germany and shipping it duty-free into Ghana, all under the false use of his father's name and diplomatic privileges and of the UN seal.

Oil-for-Food has been described by Annan and his aides as a mistake in a good cause; such, they suggest, is the occasional if regrettable cost of doing the world's humanitarian business. Structurally, however, Oil-for-Food was not an exception. It was a template of what the UN has become. A hallmark of Oil-for-Food was that it was funded not by an assembly of UN member states but directly by Saddam as a function of his oil sales. This effectively bypassed the UN's version of the appropriations process, and was hardly the kind of setup envisioned when the organization was founded. As U.S. Ambassador John Bolton has noted, "It is the member states who are supposed to control the money."

Nevertheless, the UN negotiated terms with Saddam under which the Secretariat would collect 2.2 percent of his oil revenues to cover its costs in running and monitoring the relief program. With oil sales topping \$64 billion, that meant \$1.4 billion for the Secretary-General's administrative spending over the seven-year life of the program. In other words, the UN Secretariat was being paid big money by Saddam to supervise Saddam—an intrinsic conflict of interest that surely played a part in the expansion and easy corruption of the program. On top of whatever bribery he managed to deploy,

Saddam became for a time one of the largest direct contributors to the Secretariat's budget. Publicizing itself as Saddam's probation officer, the UN in effect became his business partner.

But Saddam was only one, if the most virulent, of the many questionable business partners the UN has acquired over the past decade or so. These days, "partnering" at the UN goes far beyond enlisting the help of Angelina Jolie to visit refugees or of Bono to lecture Americans on development policy. Under Annan's management, the UN has been avidly seeking liaisons with foundations, non-governmental organizations, and private business—especially big corporate donors endowed with ready cash. This has been hailed in many quarters, including in Washington, as an innovative way of funding good works. It is rather more alarming than that.

The star example of today's UN partnerships is the Secretariat's cozy arrangement with the media magnate Ted Turner, who in 1997 made a landmark offer to donate \$1 billion to the world organization. The pledge reportedly caused Jane Fonda, Turner's wife at the time, to weep with joy; as for Annan, he welcomed the deal as "a model to demonstrate my commitment to engage the private sector in a concrete manner." Turner said he hoped his example would inspire others—and it has. Whatever Turner's ultimate aims may have been in undertaking this deed of seemingly astounding generosity, one of its chief beneficiaries has arguably been Ted Turner himself. For the past eight years, in exchange for the rather less than \$1 billion disbursed so far, he has enjoyed a seat at the head table of what is supposed to be an impartial public institution, wielding access and influence beyond that of many actual UN member states. Like the UN's 2.2-percent commission under Oil-for-Food, moreover, Turner's funds flow through the administrative channels of the Secretariat without even the minimal checks that might be provided by the budgeting process of the General Assembly. To dispense his largesse in tax-deductible form, Turner set up a Washington-based non-profit organization, the UN Foundation, stipulating that he would turn over his gift through this foundation at the rate of \$100 million per year. (Since then he has halved his annual disbursements, thus stretching out the arrangement even longer than the projected decade or more.) At the same time, and as part of the same gift, he set up a sister organization, the Better World Fund, which describes itself as "a key advocate for the UN on Capitol Hill." A portion of Turner's gift to the UN thus goes not to the world's poor but to lobbying efforts in Washington to extract more dollars for the UN from U.S. taxpayers. Over the past eight years, according to the UN Foundation, the Better World Fund has devoted more than \$110 million to this effort.

Of course, Washington is home to many lobbying groups. But Turner's setup is so intimately linked with the UN Secretariat as to make it hard to distinguish where the one ends and the other begins. Thus, to handle Turner's gift, the UN created a special in-house division dedicated exclusively to interacting with Turner's foundation and reporting directly to the Secretary-General. This division is called the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, or UNFIP. According to the head of UNFIP, Amir Dossal, the relationship between UN and UN Foundation officials is "pretty much a seamless exercise," with Turner's Foundation often involved from the inception in shaping UN projects that it then pays for. UNFIP staff, who evaluate these projects as UN insiders for the approval of the Secretary-General, have their salaries and expenses paid not by the UN but by Turner's foundation. Since the arrangement began, some \$600 million of Turner's own money has flowed into UN causes in this way, plus another \$350 million from other donors contributing via his UN Foundation. (The total of \$950 million includes the \$110 million spent by the Better World Fund in lobbying Congress.)* This has allowed the Secretary-General to control, through UNFIP alone—and in concert with the wishes of Turner's foundation—what in many ways qualifies as an annual slush fund of more than \$100 million. Many of the projects involve worthy causes like sending malaria medicine and measles vaccines to children in poor countries. But others approved by the Secretary-General have directed millions in Turner money to departments within his own Secretariat, including in some cases his own executive office. Featuring as opaque one-line items in UNFIP's sometimes tardy public reports, these endeavors have included \$1 million for "Strengthening the UN Secretariat"; \$1.9 million for "UN Dialogue with the Global South"; \$994,875 for "Supporting UN Management Reform"; \$1.9 million for the Secretariat's department of public information (on which more below); \$117,600 for a "Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on Best Practices in Partnerships"; and \$319,988 for "Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships"—a somewhat reflexive exercise, one might think, for what is already a highly muscular public-private liaison.

In general, oversight at the UN is conducted by the organization's internal audit department, whose director is named by the Secretary-General and whose reports until this year have not been disclosed even to member states. According to a secret internal audit submitted in 2003, UNFIP appeared to be operating "without legally established functions and organizational structures." Specific irregularities in

the program's conduct included the release of \$1.2 million in Turner-foundation money to Annan's executive office in a manner "constitut[ing] a breach of internal controls." Small stuff, perhaps, when measured against the overall size of Turner's gift, but a significant sum to be sloshing around within the single most influential office at the UN.

In September 2001, Turner intervened even more deeply in UN matters, giving \$31 million from his separate, family-run Turner Foundation (devoted to the environmental "totality of the planet") to the U.S. State Department to cover a portion of U.S. arrears on UN dues. This was greeted by many, including then-U.S. Ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, as a selfless act of philanthropy. But the reason we had fallen behind in our dues was not any lack of resources but the fact that Congress—which is supposed to control U.S. funding for the UN—had been trying to lever better behavior out of it.

Why the State Department accepted the money is a question unto itself. But from the UN's point of view, splicing Turner's millions into the process meant that, as long as the organization could find wealthy private patrons in tune with its policy preferences, it could afford to be that much less answerable to a powerful member state and its democratically elected representatives.

Increasingly, since the Turner pledge of 1997, the UN has been inviting wealthy patrons around the globe to collaborate with it as "partners." Some of those answering the call have signed on through Turner's foundation. Of these, a number are governmental institutions. They include the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the U.S. (no doubt an instance of Taiwan trying to get a foot in the door at the UN in any way it can), the World Bank (an instance of the UN system paying itself), the U.S. Agency for International Development (an instance of the U.S. government funding the UN via Turner's foundation), the government of Akwa Ibom state in Nigeria (itself a recipient of World Bank aid), and the American Red Cross. Others are private foundations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which since 1995 has given more than \$380 million to the UN, more than \$50 million of that through Turner's foundation. And Turner's foundation has also collaborated on some projects with the Open Society Institute of the financier George Soros, whose global network of foundations and institutes has its own roster of projects jointly funded with the UN.⁴

In 1999, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Annan proposed a "Global Compact" between the UN and business leaders. To join, a company is required to write a letter, addressed to the Secretary-General, "expressing support for the Global Compact and its principles." Thereafter, it is required to publish in its annual report "a description of the ways in which it is supporting the Global Compact."⁵ According to the UN, the Global Compact has by now amassed more than 2,400 participants in 50 countries. They are invited to host outreach programs involving UN agencies, to promote UN causes, and to contribute in cash or in kind to UN endeavors. No doubt many do so for entirely worthy reasons; but the utter balkanization of UN agencies, offices, operations, budgets, and organizational charts makes it virtually impossible to know for sure. In a 352-page book published in 2002 on "Building Partnerships," the UN itself acknowledged that there is "inconsistency, both within the United Nations system and more widely, on what constitutes the private sector." It might be more accurate to say that under the stewardship of Annan, there has been a considerable blurring of the lines.

Characteristic of this is the UN's increasing willingness to franchise out both its name and its official emblem. Back in 1946, as that emblem was about to be approved, the first UN Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, stressed the importance of protecting it from abuse for "commercial purposes." In 2000, as part of the UN's grand plans for "public-private partnerships" in the new millennium, Annan issued lengthy guidelines in which he stipulated that the UN could in fact authorize use of its emblem by a business engaged in promotion or fund-raising for the UN itself—as long as "generation of profit by the business entity is only incidental." This raises intriguing questions about who in Annan's graft-ridden UN might be qualified to judge whether commercial profits are "incidental" to humanitarian work—and who could possibly keep track.

And that brings us to a feature of the UN system, mentioned early on, that has helped to shield it from thoroughgoing investigation. Since its founding, the institution has added untold numbers of agencies, funds, commissions, programs, "ad-hoc bodies," and "other entities," to the point where most of the UN's own personnel do not know who reports to whom, or how. The Secretary-General himself, when questioned last year by the Volcker commission, professed not to understand his own chain of command.

To anyone seeking to capture fresh turf at the UN, creating one of these new bodies has long been a favored path. The Secretary-General appoints or at least nominates the heads of most of them, but each has its own board, its own agenda, and in many cases its own program for soliciting funds. To name just a few of the better-known ones: UNICEF (founded in 1946); the World Food Program (or WFP, 1961); the UN Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 1964); the UN Development Program (UNDP, 1966); the UN Environment Program (UNEP, 1972); the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS, 1994), UN-Habitat (1997); the World Tourism Agency (UNWTO, 2003); and so forth. Many of these overlap. Most, when probed, open onto ever-receding vistas of regional offices, working groups, and the like. The offices are scattered around the globe, from New York to Rome to Nairobi to Tunis to Madrid to Bangkok and beyond. Periodic efforts to streamline and harmonize the system tend mainly to paint yet another layer on top. Typical of this is one of the Secretary-General's latest initiatives, launched just this past February: the "High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence in Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, Environment." Among its fifteen "high-level" panelists is a senior fellow from Turner's UN Foundation.

Another example, launched last fall, is Annan's so-called Alliance of Civilizations. This grand-sounding initiative is in fact a rather restricted project of Spain, Turkey, and 20 unelected "eminent persons" picked by the Secretary-General, most of whom (like Nafis Sadik, a special adviser to Annan and a director of Turner's UN Foundation) have already spent years on the same UN conference circuits. Instructed to come up with an "action plan" to "bridge divides," the Alliance has so far served mainly as a vehicle for Annan to resurrect as a "special adviser" his former chief of staff, Iqbal Riza, who "retired" in early 2005 after Volcker's discovery that he had shredded three years' worth of UN executive-suite documents potentially germane to the Oil-for-Food investigation.

There is almost no way to hold the UN accountable for most of what goes on in this growing empire. No national legal jurisdiction applies to the UN network and no media corps has the resources, or for that matter the interest, to deal with the entire network. Despite a Secretary-General who wields more control than anyone else in the system, accountability ultimately does not reside with him, either. In fact, there is no procedure at the UN for impeaching or firing the Secretary-General.

There is, however, a tremendous machine for glossing over anything that goes wrong. The Secretariat fields a department of public information with an \$85-million annual budget and more than 700 employees, about half of whom staff UN public-relations offices in more than 100 countries worldwide. On top of that, a public-relations staff is employed by each of the many agencies, commissions, and so forth. All of this promotional activity is further supplemented by the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), founded in Luxembourg in 1946 and now boasting more than 100 national chapters. The American chapter, UNA-USA, fields more than 175 community-based chapters and organizations, with nearly 20,000 members.

Bringing these various strands together is a dizzying array of interwoven boards, working groups, and staff positions both within and around the UN. To give a few quick examples: Ted Turner, of the UN Foundation, sits on the board of the UNA-USA. Maurice Strong—chief coordinator of the 1997 UN "reforms," which among other things created the framework for the Turner-dedicated UNFIP—then became a charter member of the board of Turner's UN Foundation while serving as a special adviser to UN Secretary-General Annan, and is also a past president and current honorary president of the WFUNA. Paul Volcker, when tapped by Annan himself to head the Oil-for-Food investigation, was serving not only on the board of directors of UNA-USA but also as a director of its business council—which advertises itself as a networking resource for businesses interested in getting a piece of the billions in UN contracts handed out every year. Only when the media finally discovered and questioned this potential conflict of interest did Volcker resign.

Asked in a recent interview about the dangers of collusion between big business and a public institution like the UN, Mark Malloch Brown declared indignantly that the UN was doing "God's work," and walked out.

Is it? The question is important because, in the end, the amount of money lost to waste by the UN, or skimmed through graft, or dumped wholesale into agencies, commissions, and alliances that serve mainly themselves, or devoted in the UN's name to select private crusades, arguably counts less than the kind of agenda all this money supports.

The founding purpose of the UN was to bring peace and prosperity to the globe. As to the former, the UN in the age of terror has been in most ways useless and in some ways positively dangerous. The lesson that Saddam Hussein quickly grasped was that the UN lends itself to money-laundering. With its big flows of funds across borders, its many contractors and public-private partnerships, its gigantic bureaucracy and lax controls, its diplomatic immunity, and its culture of impunity, the UN operation is a prime candidate not only for graft but, as Charles Duelfer discovered, for arms deals masked as medicine and soap. Further protecting those arms deals, and the rogues and tyrants making them, is the fact that in its capacity as a deliberative body, the UN has repeatedly urged appeasement in the face of real threats to world peace and just as repeatedly tried to constrain those (like the U.S. and its allies) willing to act to remove them.

If there is any priority that the UN, with its mandate for peace, might be expected to stress, it is preventing rogue regimes from getting nuclear bombs. But as a practical matter, the organization has behaved for the most part as a spectator. Its record with Saddam Hussein is too well known to bear repeating. In the case of North Korea, admitted as a member state in 1991, the UN has responded to Kim Jong II's nuclear-weapons program mainly by kicking the problem over to the U.S. and making itself irrelevant. On Iran, the UN "debate" has served mainly to buy time for the mullahs while the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Mohamed El Baradei, the head of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency, ponders the "uncertainties" of Iran's nuclear program.

On matters involving Israel and the Palestinians—unlike nuclear proliferation, this may be the UN's one genuine obsession—hypocrisy has been outdone only by mischief-making and blatant anti-Semitism. UN programs set up to help the Palestinians over the past half-century have not only failed to produce decent lives but have helped create a culture of entitlement and violence—fueled in large part by the UN's own anti-Israel agenda. The UN condemnation of Zionism as racism in 1975, finally repealed in 1991, was followed by the grotesque transformation of the UN's 2001 Durban conference on racism into an anti-Semitic festival. The UN Security Council invites totalitarian Syria to take the chair, but democratic Israel has never been so much as allowed to hold a seat.

Then there is peacekeeping, which since the end of the cold war has been a boom area for the UN. Here again the expansion of UN missions has brought everything from widespread allegations of corruption to drug-dealing to rape and the sexual exploitation of hungry children—"Sex-for-Food," as the columnist Mark Steyn has aptly put it. In large parts of the undeveloped world, the appearance of blue-helmeted forces has come to signal a warning: stay away, and keep your children away. But neither have those blue-helmeted forces been visible when and where they might actually be needed. Provided with manpower plus a budget that ought to qualify the UN itself as a formidable military power, the organization stood passively aside during the massacres in Rwanda and Srebrenica and has yet to act in the case of Sudan. Indeed, it has yet to muster even the integrity to kick Sudan off its Geneva-based human-rights commission, which has doubled as a clubhouse for the world's worst regimes. (Current members include China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, and Zimbabwe.)⁶

As for disaster relief, the record is similarly deplorable. When the tsunami hit Asia in December 2004, the U.S. and countries like Australia rushed to help the victims. The UN rushed to help itself. Demanding exclusive rights to direct the aid effort (and the money), UN officials warned loudly of a health crisis that never materialized, denounced the U.S. as "stingy," and promised transparent use of funds. A year later, the Financial Times reported that, from what little could be gleaned of the UN's largely incomplete or secret accounts, the organization's expenditures on overhead (i.e., travel, hotel rooms, lavishly funded international talk-fests, and the like) were triple those of private charities.

If such is the general nature of the UN's contribution to peace and humanitarian assistance, its contribution to global prosperity is a similar story. The simple and true recipe for wealth is liberty framed by the decent rule of law; the great lesson of the last century, learned at horrific cost, is that central planners and state development schemes are a brew that tends not toward prosperity but toward dictatorship and economic immiseration. In 1990, that lesson seemed briefly to have been learned: as the Soviet Union headed for collapse, the global aid profession was atwitter over the newfound virtues of privatization. But in the sixteen years since then, the UN, in the name of "sustainable development," has fostered a comeback of command-and-control planning, courtesy of the same bureaucracy that cannot even account for its own expenditures.

An enormous amount of UN activity now revolves around the so-called Millennium Goals, which aim to cut world poverty in half by the year 2015. This noble-sounding goal serves as a framework for calculating to the last decimal point a set of targets for which the UN system then decides how

resources should be apportioned. UN agencies, agendas, working groups, and a never-ending succession of conferences, declarations, and plans testify to a determination to control the global climate, horn in on the Internet, and—à la Oil-for-Food—impose a UN-supervised income tax on the entire developed world. Where once the Soviet agency Gosplan issued five-year plans for an imprisoned people, the UN now aims to administer and profit from fifteen-year plans for the entire human community. Think of it as planetary socialism, supported and financed in “partnership” with private capital.

The United Nations was founded as a forum of governments. As we had ample occasion to learn over the decades, this arrangement presented quite enough problems of its own. Now the UN, in contravention of its own charter, is rapidly evolving into something larger, more corporate, and more menacing: a predatory, undemocratic, unaccountable, and self-serving vehicle for global government. Like the Soviet Union of old, the UN is unwieldy, gross, inefficient, and incompetent; it is also so configured as to reach deep into the national politics of its member states and, by sheer weight and persistence, to force at least some of the worst of its agenda upon all of us.

There will never be enough John Boltons to counter all of this—not that it was easy to come up with even one. Indeed, with notable exceptions, generations of American officials and policy-makers have been content, sometimes for reasons of state, sometimes for reasons of convenience, to look away from the UN's multiform deficiencies and derelictions while occasionally indulging in minor punitive measures like withholding a proportion of our annual dues—akin to docking a delinquent's bus money while continuing to pay for his liquor and his car. For many others in public life, and for many ordinary citizens as well, the institution itself, as the very embodiment of the multilateralist ideal, is still held in nearly sacred regard.

All the more reason, then, to force ourselves at long last to take a hard, undeceived look at what the institution has in fact become, put aside the lengthy and futile quest for its reform, and begin to think more concretely about how, with or without it, we can best work to advance the interests and values of ourselves and other members of the civilized world.

--CLAUDIA ROSETT, a journalist in residence with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, is at work on a book about the United Nations in the age of terror. Her article, “The Oil-for-Food Scam: What Did Kofi Annan Know, and When Did He Know It?,” appeared in the May 2004 COMMENTARY. In 2005 she won both the Mightier Pen award and the Eric Breindel award for excellence in opinion journalism.

GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Blair's Last Stand

Weekly Standard

By Gerard Baker

4/3

TWILIGHT IS HASTENING FOR TONY Blair. Though British prime ministers face no term limits, few can withstand the swelling tide of public boredom and familiarity's contempt. Margaret Thatcher set a peacetime record of 11 years in office before she succumbed; Blair, elected in 1997, will have clocked up nine in May. The gathering consensus now asserts that he will not, in spite of his own ambition and energy, reach the full decade in office he had hoped for.

Last week the constitutional choreography in London seemed to hint strongly at an imminent succession. Blair's designated successor, Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the Exchequer, delivered his tenth budget speech to the House of Commons. The budget is usually a boastful recitation of economic statistics and tweaks to the tax code; the chancellor generally seizes the opportunity to tout the success of the U.K. economy and add a penny or two to the cost of a bottle of whisky.

But this time Brown presented a manifesto for the impending change in leadership. The financial details clearly bore him: Instead he waxed enthusiastic about Britain's global role and the kind of changes in the domestic political framework that are inevitable. And in the pure political theater that only the House of Commons can stage, Brown engaged in an intriguing preview of the struggle

between him and David Cameron, the new Conservative party leader, that will define British politics in the run-up to the next election in 2009. Blair was reduced to the status of an amused and slightly detached onlooker.

The prime minister (for he is still that, for now) was hurt by his own campaign promise to stand down before the next election. Though he figured at the time that such a declaration might give him a full U.S.-style final term in office, he did not account for the swift and brutal motion of British politics. Blair was already weakened by the continuing and deepening unpopularity of the Iraq war. A series of domestic legislative fights in the last few months over the introduction of identity cards, toughened antiterrorist laws, and education reforms further undermined him, at least in the unforgiving eyes of his own Labour party.

But earlier this month he seemed to add the insult of venality to the injury of socialist apostasy. The prime minister, the public learned, was recommending several wealthy business leaders who had given generously to the Labour party for elevation to the House of Lords. This news underlined the popular view that this is a government grown remote and contemptuous of the rules of decent governance.

Republicans may fret about an approval rating for President Bush of 36 percent. But that looks positively Reaganesque compared with Blair's plight: He is now despised by two-thirds of Labour voters, three quarters of Conservatives, and a clear majority of independents.

In fact the Bush administration will have played a substantial part in Blair's demise. The Iraq war, of course, has undermined the prime minister; but the Bush administration seems oddly committed to making life even more difficult for him. Britain is in a state of angry ferment about the way its defense contracts have been handled by the Americans. A decision by the Pentagon to cut a British company out of the procurement contracts for the new Joint Strike Fighter has outraged public opinion and led even this most Atlanticist of governments to think seriously about striking out in a new direction with European partners, rather than be more closely integrated with U.S. defense systems. Quite how a beleaguered administration can still find room to alienate one of its few allies in the world is perhaps only for Donald Rumsfeld to explain. But the damage done to Blair's claim that his support for the United States has produced tangible benefits for the United Kingdom is incalculable.

Many American conservatives are tempted to regard the imminent end of Blair as a blessing. They note his statist tendencies when it comes to domestic policies--increased taxes and government spending, bans on fox hunting and other infringements of civil liberties--and wonder what side in the war of ideas he is on. And yet, just when you prepare yourself to welcome the departure of this oddly cynical and infuriatingly political man, he reminds us of just how much he will be missed when he is gone.

Last week, he gave the first of a series of three detailed speeches in defense of the Iraq war and the broader struggle against Islamist extremism. Even a British media that barely stops now to consider the case for the Iraq invasion could not ignore the power of its message. Blair spelled out, without apology, what is truly at stake in Iraq:

People look back on the three years since the Iraq conflict; they point to the precarious nature of Iraq today and to those who have died--mainly in terrorist acts--and they say: How can it have been worth it? But there is a different question to ask: Why is it so important to the forces of reaction and violence to halt Iraq in its democratic tracks and tip it into sectarian war? Why do foreign terrorists from al Qaeda and its associates go across the border to kill and maim? Why does Syria not take stronger action to prevent them? Why does Iran meddle so furiously in the stability of Iraq?

And in explaining the bigger threat from Islamism, he demonstrated how his departure will leave a large gap where the war's most effective advocate has been for the last few years:

Fundamentally, for this ideology, we are the enemy. . . . "We" is not the West. "We" are as much Muslim as Christian or Jew or Hindu. "We" are those who believe in religious tolerance, openness to others, to democracy, liberty, and human rights administered by secular courts. This is not a clash between civilizations. It is a clash about civilization.

In a tumultuous nine years, Blair may have gotten many small things wrong. But, as he demonstrates in these apparently valedictory remarks, when it mattered, he, perhaps better than anyone in the entire world, got the one big thing right.

--Gerard Baker is U.S. editor of the London Times and a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

The Rise and Fall of Berlusconi

Newsweek International

By Christopher Dickey

4/3

The lights were set up, the camera was ready. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi stood in front of the Italian and European Union flags, ready for a portrait, but he stopped for a second to chat with an American reporter. "You know," he said, practicing a line he would use before a joint session of the U.S. Congress a few days later. "When I see the American flag, I don't see just a symbol of a country, I see a symbol of freedom and democracy." He smiled, satisfied. "And that European flag?" the reporter asked. Berlusconi seemed a little taken aback. He paused and thought. "Under construction," he said.

Listening to the 69-year-old billionaire turned politician's increasingly frenzied politicking against the euro and Brussels, one might think "under destruction" would be more accurate--especially if Berlusconi manages to win his uphill bid for re-election on April 9 against former European Commission president Romano Prodi. Right now, however, that seems unlikely. Berlusconi's political machine is in meltdown. The candidate's first televised debate was a disaster. His coalition and his cabinet are out of control. Instead of tending to allies, he's battling the big business interests that ought to be his core support--all of them alarmed by Italy's seemingly unstoppable economic slide. Along with much of the rest of Europe, they hope more and more for a Prodi victory. But while many of Italy's ills can justly be laid at the door of its flamboyant prime minister, those that matter most--and most threaten the rest of Europe--will persist no matter who wins this year's closest and most important election.

It wasn't supposed to be this way, at least in Berlusconi's eye. He imagined winning a second term by sheer force of personality, thrusting himself onto the public stage to showcase his natural advantages: ebullience, charm and take-charge personal confidence. But that strategy seems to have backfired. Tense and defensive, he looks these days like he probably feels--a man whose hopes for staying a step ahead of Italy's vindictive prosecutors (by running the country) are coming to a potentially ugly end. The latest polls show him behind by 3.5 to 5 points, a gap that has lately widened rather than narrowed. The winning smile that has long been his emblem looks increasingly like a rictus. Berlusconi's last best hope is that the Socialists' famously soporific Prodi will so thoroughly bore the electorate--or the extremist fringes of Prodi's cobbled-together leftist coalition so appall it--that at the last moment Italians will throw up their hands and return to the long-running political carnival that has been Silvio's Circus.

It would be premature to count him out, of course. As the longest-serving Italian prime minister since World War II, he has brought admirable political stability to a country notorious for its lack thereof. Yet Europe wants him gone, for good reason. Partly it's his government's uncanny knack for infuriating European leaders, which at times seems almost pathological. At the height of the controversy over Muhammad cartoons earlier this year, one Berlusconi minister donned a T shirt emblazoned with a particularly insulting caricature of the prophet. (The minister resigned, but not before 14 people were killed in anti-Italian riots in Libya.) Harking back to 2003, when Berlusconi likened a German member of the European Parliament to a "kapo" in a concentration camp, a member of his cabinet just last week compared the Netherlands' legalization of euthanasia to Nazi eugenics. Even the government of Berlusconi's ally Tony Blair has been rattled by accusations that the Italian magnate involved the husband of a British cabinet member in money laundering and tax evasion, a charge both men deny.

The real danger that Berlusconi's Italy poses for Europe, however, is economic. Over his tenure, Europe's fourth largest economy has become its weakest link. From an already anemic growth rate of 1.8 percent in 2001, Italy slowed to 0.0 last year. Niente! The country faces such "profound, serious problems," new Central Bank Gov. Mario Draghi said this month, that it has "run aground." And worries are growing that the country will be an increasing drag on the rest of the European Union. "There's no doubt that Italy is the sick man of Europe," says economist Tito Boeri of the prestigious Bocconi University business school in Milan.

Is Berlusconi to blame? Of course not, he trumpets, pointing an accusatory finger at the economic crunch following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, a few months after he took office. "Europe probably suffered most, after what occurred, because of its inability to adjust," Berlusconi told NEWSWEEK last month. In his version of history, restrictions on debt and the rising strength of the euro are at the heart of the problem. "Four years ago," said Berlusconi, "to buy a euro, 82 cents of a U.S. dollar were enough. Today you need \$1.20. What does this mean? That any European product is more expensive by 50 percent!" Thanks to Brussels, "our companies have their hands tied, are crushed, are squeezed between the hypervaluation of the euro, the many regulations they have to comply with, and competitions from new economic systems led by China and India which, among other things, resort to unfair competition."

Berlusconi doesn't go so far as to say he'd pull out of the euro zone, if re-elected. In his interview, he put it more obliquely: "I'll try to convince my colleagues to open their eyes and change, which is not very easy." Despite Berlusconi's hot rhetoric about the euro, he knows the cold realities. When Italy had the lira, sure, Rome could devalue whenever necessary to jump-start exports. But those tactics brought on double-digit inflation, forcing families and small businesses to become currency speculators if they wanted to survive. The sense of insecurity that created is one reason earlier governments were so shaky and short-lived. The EU stability pact that underwrites the euro has been in place the whole time Berlusconi has held office--and probably helped to keep him there, if only by forcing his government to keep its spending under some semblance of control. Berlusconi recognizes as well as anyone that Italy's economic decline would probably accelerate under more-populist policies. "Deficits would go sky-high," says Antonio Missiroli, chief policy analyst at the European Policy Center in Brussels. "You could end up with a sort of Argentina-like crisis."

In fact, Italy could end up there anyway, with or without Berlusconi. The man who made billions by building a private media empire likes to present himself as the paradigm of entrepreneurship and a great friend of business. And to be fair, he has introduced new flexibility into the labor market and managed to reform the pension system further. But while he talks about the bottom line, he's really about razzle-dazzle. What sounded like bold concepts for cutting taxes and government bureaucracy when he took office in 2001 now smacks of what some call "spaghetti economics." As Italy's economy has declined, Il Cavaliere has made almost no effort to introduce the sort of serious reforms that could reverse the slide. "In his five years there were neither big privatizations nor structural reforms," says Boeri. "His idea was just to raise public expenditure and cut taxes to revitalize demand." It didn't work. Many European businessmen now worry that, eventually, Italy's economy will deteriorate to such an extent that the country could be forced out of the euro zone even if Berlusconi doesn't really want to go that route--and even if Prodi, Mr. Europe, is elected.

In a sense, Italy is the proverbial apple that poisons the barrel. Consider the situation Prodi finds himself in. Even if he wins by a substantial margin, he will have a hard time taking the economic steps he considers necessary. Reason: thanks to changes in the electoral law pushed through by Berlusconi, Italy has returned to the old system of proportional representation that created such unstable coalitions in the past. "The country will be much less governable," says John Harper at the Bologna Center of Johns Hopkins University. Yet obviously, painful decisions must be made. Italy's trade deficit for 2005 surpassed 10 billion, a result of both skyrocketing energy costs and rising labor expenses. European budget deficits are supposed to be held to 3 percent of GDP annually. Several countries have exceeded that, but Italy, at about 4 percent, is among the worst. And its example makes it easier for other countries to justify slipping beyond the bounds.

Compare Italy's zero growth with other nations of Europe: Spain at 3.4 percent, the U.K. at 1.8 percent, France at 1.4 percent. Only by Italy's standards could such performance be considered anything but anemic. Yet at a time when Europeans need to believe in change, Berlusconi has actually helped discredit the kind of free-market reforms needed to make Italy's economy, and Europe's, more dynamic. He likes to cite the successes of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain, but he has been utterly unwilling to walk their walk. Italian economic and industrial policies are so hapless, in fact, that the country's business class is in open revolt. One of Berlusconi's most aggressive critics is Diego Della Valle, chief executive of the global clothing and shoe behemoth most famous for the Tod's brand. After Della Valle took Berlusconi to task for his failures, Berlusconi denounced him as a businessman who'd "gone out of his mind and supports the left." Nor did he stop there. Della Valle "must have many skeletons in his closet, and many things that must be pardoned," Berlusconi went on to say, seemingly oblivious to accusations that he himself has misused his office and his power in the legislature to block or defeat criminal prosecution for his own business dealings. As for Della Valle, he dismissed the prime minister as "a man on the edge of a nervous breakdown."

Italy's prime minister thus looks increasingly isolated. "Berlusconi is running alone this time," says Gianfranco Pas-quino, author of a dozen books on Italian politics. His coalition partners have not only distanced themselves, they've taken to sniping at him. Fellow conservatives in other European countries are clearly uncomfortable. Germany's former chancellor Helmut Kohl, a key architect of European construction and the mentor of current Chancellor Angela Merkel, recently endorsed Berlusconi's opponent as "my friend" and said that only Prodi is "capable of restoring Italy to its place in Europe." In case anyone missed the point, Kohl underlined it: "Let me be clear: I am here to support a great European. [Prodi] is an excellent example of cosmopolitan Italy, linked to his roots but capable of looking beyond borders."

Under the circumstances, it is perhaps natural that Berlusconi would seek solace elsewhere. President George W. Bush, for one, still calls him "my friend." For Berlusconi's vocal support of democracy, his talk of free enterprise and for committing thousands of Italian troops to support the 2003 American-led occupation of Iraq, he won a standing ovation from the Republican-dominated Congress in Washington last month. The moment probably marked the high point of his election campaign back home, if only because it's rare that Italians have seen that kind of homage paid to one of their leaders. For a day or so, he was called l'Americano in the press with some grudging admiration. Meanwhile, the mercurial prime minister began a pullout last year of all the Italian forces in Iraq, amid concerns that Italy will be targeted by terrorists just as Spain was in 2004 and Britain last year.

After Berlusconi came back to Italy, both friends and enemies expected him to come on strong in the first televised debate with Prodi. But his performance went flat. Since then he's complained of back pain, and even taken enforced time off. Can Berlusconi recover his, ©lan as well as his health? Only a few days are left in the campaign. April 3 brings another TV debate, in which the prime minister will be fighting for his political survival. The battle will be watched intently, at home and abroad. Detractors rooting for his fall cannot help but be mindful, however, that Berlusconi's passing would in many ways be only a prelude to further trouble. His escapades and pratfalls have been a diversion from Italy's grave, and growing, problems for far too long. Indeed, the country's difficulties are so formidable that any successor would have to be almost superhuman to overcome them. Is Prodi that man? Or will he find that, in his struggle to do the job that Berlusconi ducked, Italians do not want to follow? The stability that Berlusconi brought to the landscape might very well give way to the fractured, internecine politics of yore, with little agreement on where the country should go or how it should get there. This, ultimately, might be Berlusconi's legacy. Win or lose, Europe will be dealing with him and his works for many years to come.

Get Him to Gitmo

National Review
By Deroy Murdock
4/3

What must Sayed Ramatullah Hashemi think of his new school's insignia? Yale University's crest features the words "Light and Truth" emblazoned on an open book--in Hebrew. This must irk Hashemi, former deputy foreign secretary of the Taliban, the anti-Semitic, Islamofascist theocracy that misruled Afghanistan and hosted Osama bin Laden before 9/11.

Hashemi has generated headlines since it emerged that Yale admitted this former adviser to the notorious one-eyed Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar. As Yale officials stated, Hashemi got in--despite his fourth-grade education and high-school equivalency certificate--because "Universities are places that must strive to increase understanding." The Wall Street Journal's John Fund reports that Yale, which bars military recruiters and the ROTC, discounted Hashemi's tuition 35 to 40 percent.

Imagine if Yale had accepted German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop's top aide in 1942 to "increase understanding" of Nazism. Maybe Yale should add David Duke to the faculty to help students "increase understanding" of neo-Nazism.

This affair may show that "my enemy's enemy is my friend." Yale's politically correct administrators hate that reckless Texas cowboy George W. Bush (Yale, class of 1968). How better to smack him, while preening their liberal feathers like peacocks, than to welcome one of W's enemies?

Of course, Hashemi is not Bush's enemy, but America's. He is no Taliban defector, but someone largely unrepentant about fronting an autocracy whose diehards have killed 139 GIs while at war with this country, including one Wednesday in Helmand province.

Hashemi last year called Israel "an American al-Qaeda." He trivialized stonings of adulteresses in Kabul's soccer stadium by saying, "There were also executions in Texas."

Reviewing Taliban public policy might "increase understanding" of Hashemi and the dictatorship he perpetuated.

As Yale alumnus Clinton Taylor wrote March 8 in TownHall.com, the Taliban was "a brutal regime of retrograde, misogynist, terrorist-abetting, drug-running, Buddha-blasting, gay-murdering, freedom-hating tyrants." They expressed their feminism by banning the education of girls over age 8, closing Afghanistan's women's university, banishing females from their jobs, and forcing them into burqas. They also celebrated diversity by fatally collapsing brick walls onto the heads of gay men.

Consider these other Taliban evils:

- * The Department to Propagate Virtue and Eliminate Vice abolished white paper bags, since they could have been made from recycled Korans.

- * It banned kites under the theory that time spent flying them should be devoted to reading the Koran.

- * Not unlike the Nazis' yellow stars for Jews, the Taliban ordered all non-Muslims to wear yellow badges in public.

- * In January 2001, Amnesty International reports, Taliban soldiers in Yakaolang fired rockets into a mosque as 73 women, children, and old men took sanctuary there.

- * According to the 2004 PBS documentary Afghanistan Unveiled, after blowing up a pair of huge, 1,500-year-old statues of Buddha in March 2001, the Taliban targeted the Hazara tribe in Bamiyan.

"From hundreds of women here, not one has a husband," said a local woman named Zainyab. "From 100 children, maybe just one still has two parents. They bulldozed houses with women and children inside. They cut off women's breasts."

Rather than support this outrage by donating to Yale, alumni Clinton Taylor and Debbie Bookstaber organized a protest called "Give Yale the Finger." They ask Yalies and concerned Americans to mail red, press-on fingernails (available at drugstores) to "President Richard Levin, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520." This should remind him that the Taliban extracted the fingernails of women who wore nail polish.

The State Department must explain how it gave a student visa to a top official of a government whose agents still blast away at U.S. personnel.

Yale owes America an apology for giving aid and comfort to a former member of the government that gave aid and comfort to al-Qaeda as it plotted the September 11 massacre.

Meanwhile, Hashemi cannot believe his luck. "I could have ended up in Guantanamo Bay," he told the New York Times. Good point! Who knows how much valuable intelligence remains in this former Taliban's skull?

Let's find out. The FBI should arrest this young Yalie and fly him south for spring break at Guantanamo. Then, Sayed Ramatullah Hashemi can help U.S. interrogators "increase understanding" of America's battlefield enemy.

-- Deroy Murdock is a New York-based columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service and a senior fellow with the Atlas Economic Research Foundation in Arlington, Va.

On Second Thought

Commentary

By Aaron L. Friedberg

4/2006

Book Review: "America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy" by Francis Fukuyama

In 1989 Francis Fukuyama wrote an article, "The End of History?," that made him famous. Like George Kennan four decades earlier in "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," another famous article, Fukuyama managed to grasp the essential features of a newly opened chapter in human history before most observers had recognized its existence. His thesis—that liberal democratic capitalism represented the highest form of social development and was destined to spread throughout the world—was embraced by some, attacked (and often misinterpreted) by others, but became overnight an indispensable part of the intellectual toolkit of anyone trying to make sense of the post-cold-war world.

Not content to rest on his laurels, Fukuyama has used the past fifteen years to produce a body of work remarkable for its scope and seriousness. After expanding his article into a book, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), he turned to such topics as the role of culture in economic growth (*Trust*, 1996), the impact on advanced societies of the movement from industrial to information-based economies (*The Great Disruption*, 2000), and the implications of the biotech revolution (*Our Post-Human Future*, 2003).

Since 9/11 Fukuyama has also returned to foreign affairs, writing on the challenge of fixing failed states (*State Building*, 2004) and launching a new journal, *The American Interest*. In addition, he has emerged as a prominent critic of administration policy in Iraq—as well as of the neoconservative movement of which he has long been considered a part. In this new volume, based on a series of lectures at Yale, he concludes that since "the entire neoconservative agenda" is likely to be discredited by our "perceived failure in Iraq," he himself is ready to "abandon the label and articulate an altogether distinct foreign-policy position." In *America at the Crossroads*, Fukuyama is thus at a juncture of his own.

Before turning to Fukuyama's new doctrine, I should say a word about the controversy his arguments have already aroused. Although he now asserts that he had deep misgivings about the Iraq war before it started, he did not offer any public criticism of it until the spring of 2004, at which point the insurgency was raging and hopes of a quick end to the American occupation had evaporated. Then, instead of seeing U.S. difficulties in Iraq as the result of inadequate planning, bureaucratic bungling, poor early decisions, and/or a measure of bad luck, he contended that the entire enterprise had been misconceived from the beginning. Moreover, while rejecting crude accusations that American policy had been hijacked by a shadowy, pro-Israel, neoconservative (i.e., Jewish) "cabal," Fukuyama drew a crucial connection between the pre-war writings of at least some neoconservatives and the Bush administration's ultimate and, in his view, disastrous decision to invade Iraq.

Some of Fukuyama's critics, most notably Charles Krauthammer, have responded by accusing him, in effect, of cowardice, opportunism, and treachery. When the going got tough, they say, he jumped on the antiwar bandwagon, joining the chorus of blame being directed at his longtime intellectual allies and claiming to have known all along that they were wrong. To this Fukuyama has replied in turn that Krauthammer has become an uncritical cheerleader for the Bush administration.

This dispute is unfortunate in purely human terms, and it is also a distraction. Whatever one's views about Iraq then or now, the pressing question before us concerns the principles and goals that should guide American strategy going forward. What is the character of the threats and opportunities we face, and how should we respond to them? While I disagree with him in many respects, Fukuyama has important things to say on these questions, and his views deserve to be taken seriously.

The structure of Fukuyama's book is straightforward. After a largely familiar portrait of the founding fathers of neoconservatism, he seeks to distill "the basic themes or principles of neoconservative thought" on matters of foreign policy. By the end of the cold war, he writes, these constituted a distinct school, differing in important respects from the three leading alternative approaches: liberal

internationalism, realism, and what Fukuyama, following Walter Russell Mead, labels “Jacksonian” American nationalism.

Unlike most realists, Fukuyama points out, neoconservatives take the view that “the internal character of regimes matters and that foreign policy must reflect the deepest values of liberal democratic societies.” Unlike most liberals, who place their faith in international law and institutions, neoconservatives believe that certain problems can be solved “only through the prudent exercise of [American] power.” Finally, neoconservatives harbor a well-founded mistrust of “ambitious social-engineering projects.”

In Fukuyama’s view, the sudden and largely peaceful collapse of the Soviet empire was an “extraordinary vindication” for the neoconservatives, who in the 1970’s and 80’s had urged confrontation rather than accommodation and who asserted, correctly as it turned out, that the cold war would end only with the overthrow of Communist regimes across central and eastern Europe. But these events also “laid the groundwork for [a] wrong turn” in the next decade, encouraging many neoconservatives to believe that further dramatic breakthroughs to democracy were imminent in other parts of the world.

Fukuyama is himself, of course, the best-known advocate of the view that the end of the cold war would be followed by the global spread of markets and democratic institutions. Here, however, he describes his position as essentially predictive rather than prescriptive; for him, economic development would lead to the spread of democracy on its own steam and at its own pace. In contrast to this essentially “Marxist” conception, other neoconservatives unfortunately adopted the more “Leninist” stance that “history could be accelerated through American agency” and, in particular, through the application of American military power.

Although he does not directly tag them as such, Fukuyama clearly regards William Kristol and Robert Kagan as the leading “Leninists” of the 1990’s. In their hands, the complex, multistranded legacy of neoconservative thought was rendered into something cruder but politically more effective: “the expansive, interventionist, democracy-promoting position that has come to be seen today as the essence of neoconservatism.” During the 1990’s, these ideas were used to “justify a highly militarized American foreign policy that led logically to the Iraq war.”

The four central chapters of Fukuyama’s book are devoted to an examination of the links between the writings of some neoconservative theorists and the misjudgments and errors of the Bush administration. First, just as the neoconservatives “tended to overestimate the level of threat facing the United States” after the end of the cold war—wrongly seeing China, for example, as a looming great-power rival—so they and the Bush administration exaggerated the danger posed by Islamist terrorism, misdiagnosed its root causes and potential cures, and “conflated the threat of nuclear terrorism with the rogue state/proliferation problem.” This overestimation caused Bush to make preventive war against a prospective enemy (as opposed to preemptive attack on an enemy getting ready to strike) into a “central feature” of American grand strategy.

But those “mobilized to commit suicide terrorism against the United States” constitute, in Fukuyama’s view, “a relatively small number of people,” with limited appeal and little chance of seizing political power; the danger they pose should therefore be “manageable.” Moreover, while the threat of a mass-casualty terror attack cannot be altogether written off, “there is reason . . . to think that the probability of such an attack has gone down since September 11.” Finally, since the most likely candidates for recruitment are not “pious Muslims in the Middle East but alienated and uprooted young people in Hamburg, London, or Amsterdam,” spreading democracy in the Middle East “will not be a short-term solution to the problem of terrorism.”

Next, neoconservative arguments in favor of “benevolent American hegemony” combined with the Bush administration’s tendency to believe in “its own good motives” to lead it into a second error: the failure to anticipate the “global reaction to the war before undertaking it, particularly in Europe.” The United States may, in fact, be different in its goals and behavior from other great powers or empires; but, Fukuyama reminds us, the appeal of “benevolent hegemony rests on a belief in American exceptionalism that most non-Americans simply find not credible.”

A third set of problems arises out of what Fukuyama describes as a collision between the neoconservatives’ belief in the desirability (in some cases) of regime change and their longstanding suspicion of large-scale social engineering. Instead of seeking to resolve this contradiction, the administration and its supporters allowed themselves to be guided by one principle while simply

ignoring the other. As a result, they “vastly underestimated the cost and difficulty of reconstructing Iraq and guiding it toward a democratic transition.”

A fourth and final set of errors had to do with the alleged failure of both the neoconservatives and the Bush administration to take international institutions seriously. While Fukuyama shares their generally bleak view of the United Nations, he asserts that they have allowed their fear of multilateral constraints, their confidence in their own judgment and rectitude, and their lack of concern for international legitimacy to get the better of them. Despite the neoconservatives’ claim to be willing to work with organizations made up of other democracies, they even “rejected” NATO when it failed to fall into line over Iraq. As for the administration, thanks to its aversion to multilateralism it will leave behind “no lasting architecture for addressing problems of world order.”

What then of Fukuyama’s “altogether distinct” doctrine, which he labels “realistic Wilsonianism”? To this he devotes comparatively little space, but certain general features are plain. First, preventive war and forcible regime change must be understood to be “very extreme measures”; thus, Fukuyama advocates a “dramatic demilitarization of American foreign policy and reemphasis on other types of policy instruments.” Analogously, although the United States should continue to “care about what happens inside states around the world,” its efforts to promote democracy should rely primarily on the use of “soft power.” Finally, the democratization of the Middle East would be a good thing for its own sake (even if it will not solve our terrorism problem); but, having lost our moral authority and credibility over Iraq, we will have to cede the task largely to others, especially “alternative international institutions.”

In line with this last point, Fukuyama urges the U.S. to encourage the ongoing proliferation of regional and global multilateral mechanisms, including a revitalized NATO, a worldwide community of democracies, and various new security organizations in East Asia. Above all, Washington should seek ways to “downplay its dominance,” and be more cautious, “subtle,” and “indirect” in its efforts to shape the world.

Whether Fukuyama has succeeded in devising a distinctive new doctrine is open to question. With perhaps the partial exception of his desire to sideline the UN, the “realistic Wilsonianism” he espouses seems virtually indistinguishable from the mainstream liberal internationalism common in academic circles and among the foreign-policy gurus of the Democratic party.

But novelty is not the main issue here. Whatever its label, a successful post-cold-war, post-9/11, post-Iraq American grand strategy will have to provide clear and persuasive answers to the questions suggested earlier. What are our goals? What are the threats and opportunities we face? Through what mix of means, and what sequence of measures, can we best meet these challenges and achieve our objectives?

Both neoconservatives and liberal internationalists agree that a primary goal of American foreign policy should be to promote the global spread of democracy. Where they differ is on the prominence and priority to be accorded this objective. Since the end of the cold war, most liberals have tended to believe that the impersonal forces unleashed by economic globalization would eventually draw even the toughest and most distasteful holdouts toward political liberalization. In the meantime, they caution that making too much of regime differences risks challenging the legitimacy and sovereign equality of non-democratic members of the “international community,” thereby undermining prospects for cooperation and the all-important work of institution-building.

Neoconservatives, generally more impatient, have been inclined instead to draw sharp distinctions between democratic and non-democratic states. For them, authoritarian regimes are not merely distasteful but demonstrably unreliable and untrustworthy. This, rather than simple animus, is why most neoconservatives are deeply skeptical of the notion that a China ruled by the Communist party can ever become a true “strategic partner,” or that the present leaders of North Korea and Iran can be relied on to live up to paper commitments to abandon nuclear weapons. Regime change may not be around the corner in any of these places, but until it comes, the prospects for genuine cooperation will be severely limited.

The lesson the neoconservatives drew from the collapse of the Soviet Union was not that change would necessarily be easy but that it was possible, even in places where most experts did not believe it to be and where many warned that change would be more dangerous than a continuation of the status quo. To the neoconservatives, finding ways actively to encourage the further spread of democracy has thus

been a matter both of urgency and of strategic (as well as moral) importance. The United States has an essential role to play in this process; no other nation or international grouping can be expected to take the lead.

Time is of the essence. Especially if America is at or near the peak of its ability to influence events, it must use its advantages wisely while it has them. If liberalization does not take hold in the Middle East, the threat of militant Islam will only grow. And elsewhere, too, reversals are all too imaginable. A continued constriction of freedom in Russia will transform that country finally into a corrupt, unstable, and hyper-nationalist dictatorship equipped with vast energy reserves and a large stockpile of nuclear weapons and driven by revanchist dreams. If reform remains blocked in China, the United States will find itself facing an authoritarian competitor of unprecedented wealth, military power, and technological dynamism. The further spread of democracy is therefore not just an outcome devoutly to be wished, it must be a central goal of American strategy.

In his assessment of the "post-9/11 threat environment," Fukuyama has little to say about such potential great-power challenges. Nor does he have much advice on how to prevent rogue states from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Duly noting that the nuclearization of the Middle East would add "a huge new element of danger to one of the world's most unstable regions," he contents himself with warning against the dangers of preemption. He offers no suggestions as to how the United States can persuade or frighten others into joining it in applying the sort of intense, omnidirectional pressure that might stand some chance of compelling Iran (or North Korea) to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Has the Bush administration overestimated the threat of jihadists armed with weapons of mass destruction? Even as he concedes that "there is no methodology that allows us to come to agreement on the scope of this threat," Fukuyama believes the answer is yes. Unfortunately, however, the extent of the threat is not a function of the size of the jihadist movement. That, as he suggests, there may only be thousands rather than millions of people willing to commit acts of unprecedented barbarism against the United States and its allies provides scant comfort. Nor does the fact that active jihadists represent a tiny fraction of the Islamic world mean that they are incapable of seizing power in countries that have nuclear weapons (Pakistan) or the resources to buy them (Saudi Arabia).

Fukuyama is confident that the increased resources we have devoted since 9/11 to the threat of nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists must surely have reduced the level of danger. This optimism is probably misplaced. True, we are not yet at the point where rogue states supply nuclear weapons to terrorists. But if Iran and North Korea are permitted to pass safely across the nuclear finish line, we will likely be a great deal closer. It would be ironic if the events of the last several years were to cause us to lower our guard at precisely the moment when the threat might actually be growing—ironic, and potentially catastrophic. And this is to say nothing of the danger of biological weapons or the potentially enormous disruptive effects of repeated "conventional" attacks on the scale of 9/11 or the Madrid and London bombings.

The bulk of Fukuyama's criticism of neoconservative thinking and administration policy is focused less on ends or threats than on the issue of means. Although, in its details, Fukuyama's analysis can be nuanced, he seems in general to endorse the crude caricature of an administration and its "Leninist" backers obsessed with the use of military power and committed to "an open-ended doctrine of regime change and preventive war." One is left with the impression that, had it not run into difficulties in Iraq, the Bush administration would now be using force to topple one dictatorship after another, spreading democracy throughout the Middle East at the point of a sword.

If there are individuals who have held such views, I have never met them, either in or out of government. Nor is it the case that either the administration or its supporters were ever as reflexively unilateralist, or as dismissive of "soft power," diplomacy, or international institutions as they are routinely made out to be. Fukuyama is no doubt correct that the last several years have underscored the importance of consulting closely with allies, cultivating the perception that one's actions are legitimate, revitalizing the conduct of public diplomacy, and rethinking the structure of international institutions. But these, again, are means, not ends in themselves, and they are far less likely to be effective if they are not backed by American military power and the demonstrated willingness, where necessary, to use it. Without hard power behind it, soft power turns quickly to mush.

Following the appearance of "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" in 1947, George Kennan spent much of the rest of his career arguing that he had been misunderstood, and that others had wrongheadedly militarized the doctrine of containment he sketched there. Whether he was misread or not is a matter of debate. What is undeniable is that Kennan himself, having with great prescience identified the goal

and the broad outlines of American cold-war grand strategy, recoiled from the means necessary to attain it. It would be a pity if Francis Fukuyama came to resemble him in this respect as well.

--AARON L. FRIEDBERG teaches politics and international affairs at Princeton. From 2003 to 2005 he served in the office of the Vice President as deputy assistant for national-security affairs and director of policy planning.

HARVARD PAPER

An Unfair Attack

U.S. News & World Report

By David Gergen

4/3

It brings no joy to issue a public rebuttal against a valued colleague, but there are moments that demand no less. The occasion is the publication of a nerve-jangling essay entitled "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," written by two professors, John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago and Stephen Walt, the academic dean and my colleague at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

In essence, their 82-page piece argues that U.S. policy in the Middle East has been hijacked by a pro-Israel "Lobby." "The core of the Lobby," they say, "is comprised of American Jews who make a significant effort in their daily lives to bend U.S. foreign policy so that it advances Israel's interests." As a result, "the United States has a terrorism problem in good part because it is so closely allied with Israel." Mearsheimer and Walt assert that for decades, and especially since the Six-Day War in 1967, the lobby has manipulated our political system to give short shrift to Palestinians, was a "critical element" in the decision to invade Iraq, and is now skewing our policy on Iran (the United States, they say, "can live with a nuclear Iran").

Not only are these charges wildly at variance with what I have personally witnessed in the Oval Office over the years, but they also impugn the loyalty and the unstinting service to America's national security by public figures like Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk, and many others. As a Christian, let me add that it is also wrong and unfair to call into question the loyalty of millions of American Jews who have faithfully supported Israel while also working tirelessly and generously to advance America's cause, both at home and abroad. They are among our finest citizens and should be praised, not pilloried.

Commitment. To be sure, pro-Israeli groups in this country, led by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, push hard to gain the support of U.S. political leaders and public opinion in favor of positions that keep Israel strong and secure. AIPAC is officially registered as a lobbying group, and it is very effective. But that does not mean that its members are somehow disserving America or engaging in something sinister. The Founding Fathers believed interest groups were intrinsic to democracy (see Madison, Federalist 10), and anyone who thinks Jews are unusual hasn't met the Irish, Italians, Greeks, and Armenians who lobby just as hard for their brethren.

Moreover, it is just not true that the Israel "Lobby" has captured U.S. policy toward the Middle East. As David McCullough writes, Harry Truman recognized Israel in 1948 out of humanitarian concerns and in spite of pressure from Jewish groups, not because of it. Since then, 10 straight American presidents have befriended Israel--not because they were under pressure but because they believed America had made a commitment to Israel's survival, just as we have to other threatened outposts of freedom like Berlin, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Over the course of four tours in the White House, I never once saw a decision in the Oval Office to tilt U.S. foreign policy in favor of Israel at the expense of America's interest. Other than Richard Nixon--who occasionally said terrible things about Jews, despite the number on his team--I can't remember any president even talking about an Israeli lobby. Perhaps I have forgotten, but I can remember plenty of conversations about the power of the American gun lobby, environmentalists, evangelicals, small-business owners, and teachers unions.

Moreover, history shows many instances when our presidents have sharply opposed the Israeli government in order to protect American interests. I was there when Ronald Reagan, a great friend of

Israel, was so repelled by pictures of victims in Lebanon that he insisted the Israelis call off their assault on Beirut (they did). He acted in the same spirit as Dwight Eisenhower, who insisted that the Israelis, British, and French pull back from the Suez in 1956 (they did).

History is also replete with examples of American governments working tirelessly to mediate or negotiate peace between Israel and its neighbors. Who can forget the shuttles of Henry Kissinger, the heroic efforts of Jimmy Carter, the last-minute push for peace by Bill Clinton? These men and their colleagues weren't hostages of some sinister Israeli "Lobby." They were acting in what they correctly perceived to be America's own security interest--and they weren't afraid to put pressure on Arabs or Israelis if that's what it took.

Has Washington sometimes tilted too much toward Israel? Of course, just as we have toward other friends overseas. Is our policy in the Middle East worthy of serious debate? Absolutely, and we should defend the right of academics like Mearsheimer and Walt to question it. But let that debate go forward with a clear mind and an understanding heart. And let us remember that our friendship with Israel has always been rooted in noble values--just as our friendships have been with other outposts of freedom.

Easy Prey

National Review
By Michael Ledeen
4/3

The "Protocols of the Elders of Harvard," as Roger Simon elegantly calls the now-infamous (at least in blogosphere parts) "Israel lobby" screed written by a professor/administrator from Harvard's Kennedy School, and another academic who holds an endowed chair in the political-science department at the University of Chicago, might finally disabuse people of the conventional nonsense that professors at our "elite" schools are really smart. "The Israel Lobby" is really dumb, both intellectually and politically. It should dissuade rational Harvard and Chicago donors from giving any further money to the Kennedy School (where one author, Steven Walt, was, incredibly, the academic dean until his abrupt resignation following the publication of the unfortunate screed) or to the Chicago political-science department (where John Mearsheimer holds an endowed chair). It should also help bright high-school students and their parents realize that a lot of "top" universities are living on largely undeserved reputations.

If these are the stars of that galaxy, it's best to send our children to a different solar system. And it is long past time to take a hard look at how such schools, and such fools, got "rated" at the very top of the educational system of this country. I wonder if the folks at U.S. News & World Report are scrambling to revise their evaluation standards. They should.

Most commentary on the screed has generally focused on the details--ranging from factual mistakes to lopsided "interpretations"--which is all to the good. But the most important thing about screed is not the errors of fact; it's The Big Lie at its core. The same Big Lie we've heard for centuries: The Jews run the world, and they do it by manipulating others to carry out the Jews' designs. The premise on which "The Israel Lobby" rests is that American foreign policy, for more than half a century, is the product of a small band of willful and clever people who have tricked the American people and every president into acting in Israel's interests, not our own. This is anti-Semitism in the grand tradition.

But the most amazing sentence in the screed is this one: "Israel was explicitly founded as a Jewish state and citizenship is based on the principle of blood kinship." Which is to say, "Jewish" is a racial matter, not a religious one.

That is why, when Walt and Mearsheimer claim they have nothing against the Jews, it reminds me of Richard Nixon protesting "I am not a crook." He was, and they do. The ritual denial, now as then, is an expression of contempt for the listener, not an act of candor.

We're living at a moment when hatred of religion and of religious groups is gathering momentum. Perhaps this is a reaction to the global religious revival that has been underway for two generations, but whatever its roots, it is now so common that hardly anyone notices (except, paradoxically, when it's directed against Muslims). Some attention was given to the singularly intolerant action taken by the local regime in St. Paul, Minnesota, barring public displays of bunnies during the Eastern season. And

then, to the near-total indifference of the journalistic hunting pack, in late March the San Francisco City Council, angered by Catholic opposition to gay adoption, unanimously approved a resolution that read: It is an insult to all San Franciscans when a foreign country, like the Vatican, meddles with and attempts to negatively influence this great city's existing and established customs and traditions, such as the right of same-sex couples to adopt and care for children in need.

One could almost see the torch flicker at John F. Kennedy's gravesite across the Potomac, and one had a great impulse to yell very loudly in the fine words of Oriana Fallaci, who lies in pain in Manhattan, snarling back at the cancer that has taken over her body: How come that, in a country where 85 percent of the citizens say to be Christian, so few rebel to the ludicrous offensive which is going on against Christmas?!? How come that so few protest when your Caviar Left speaks about abolishing Christmas holiday, Christmas-trees, Christmas-songs, the same expressions Merry Christmas and Happy Christmas?!?

That's the sort of anger that comes from a self-described "religious atheist" like Oriana, who knows that if anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism spread again, it is only a matter of time before they will come for people like her.

As indeed they have already, with their legal briefs and their anti-hate-speech codes, dragging her off to the latest version of the Inquisition for the sin of apostasy against the Church of Political Correctness. San Francisco, under cover of "existing and established customs and traditions," bans free speech. The little reichs of San Francisco, St. Paul, and Paris ban free religion. And "top professors" at Harvard and Chicago take off after the Jews.

No wonder Ayman al Zawahiri and his buddy, the Ayatollah Khamenei, think we're going to be an easy prey.

--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

ECONOMICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

The Right Touch

Newsweek International

By Stephen Glain

4/3

Quick, name a leader whose every word can roil or calm the markets from Tokyo to Wall Street. Now that U.S. central bank boss Alan Greenspan is retired, and his successor is still settling in, that description may best apply to Saudi Oil Minister Ali Naimi, who has in fact been described as the Greenspan of oil. "Naimi chooses his words carefully because he realizes the impact they have," says Frank Verrastro, an energy expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "He knows the industry intimately. He knows whom to talk with to get things done."

Naimi is, in effect, the world's central banker of oil, chief lord of its oil cartel and guardian of its largest oil reserves. Though deliberately low profile, Naimi is widely regarded as the most influential Saudi oil minister, ever. Where the Fed uses the U.S. money supply to stabilize world markets, the Saudis use vast oil reserves. When Hurricane Katrina cut U.S. refining capacity, Naimi soothed markets by quickly declaring that Saudi Arabia would make up the shortfall. In March 2003, with war raging in Iraq, Riyadh announced it was ready to tap its excess capacity of 2 million barrels per day to ensure a steady supply.

A Stanford grad in geology who jogs every morning, Naimi works easily with Westerners, but is as fiercely independent as any central banker. He has built up Saudi oil exploration skills in a country once dependent on American or European expertise. "Those oil wells are his babies, and he treats them that way," says Verrastro. Under King Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz, he has become the monarch's top economic adviser. Where Greenspan taught even soft-money Democrats to embrace stable prices, Naimi is the first leader of OPEC to persuade its members that stable oil prices benefit them, too.

Born to a poor family, he was raised among Aramco tanker trucks and drilling rigs. As a 15-year old clerk, according to Aramco lore, he vowed he would one day take the helm, which he did in 1984. When he became Oil minister in 1995, OPEC was in trouble. Members were defying production caps as oil prices sagged. "Naimi's performance has been fantastic," says Leonardo Maugeri, a senior vice president of Italian energy giant ENI. "Few people know how difficult it is to impose discipline over OPEC, and he did it."

Of course oil prices have since risen sharply--but in contrast to previous oil shocks, few blame a greedy OPEC. Naimi is seen as a trustworthy and authoritative voice on the real state of the oil supply. In April 2004, with oil prices nearing \$40 a barrel, Naimi began voicing concerns about supply bottlenecks at the "downstream," or refining end of oil production. So did Greenspan. Their remarks intensified a buying spree of shares in oil refiners.

Naimi knows volatile prices could inspire a new conservation movement in the West, with dire consequences for his country. Falling oil prices deflated Saudi per capita incomes in the '70s and '80s, and rising prices are a big reason that Saudi incomes are rising again today. Seeking to calm Western fears about the reliability of Middle Eastern oil supplies, Naimi last May made the most candid remarks ever heard from a Saudi oil minister about the kingdom's plans, vowing to both build up spare capacity and boost production. In an interview, Naimi shows clear irritation with the subsequent speech by President George W. Bush, calling on America to beat its "addiction" to Middle Eastern oil. "We have always maintained spare capacity," he says. "Whenever there is instability that threatens oil supplies, there is always a bailout from the so-called 'unstable' Middle East, where people are doing their best to meet the world's needs."

The higher the price--oil closed last week at \$64 a barrel--the greater Saudi Arabia's clout becomes. Saudi oil revenues could hit \$305 billion this year, up from \$63 billion in 2001. Yet this windfall would be far larger if Riyadh did not keep huge reserves to steady the market. Some analysts now wonder: at what point do the cost of reserves outweigh the political gain of being the world's central bank for oil? Naimi insists that Saudi plans to spend \$50 billion by 2010 on new production capacity will maintain its role as the global source of last resort.

Naimi, 71, is also the last of a cosmopolitan generation that rose on merit, rather than filial ties to the monarchy. He came of age at Aramco when it was still an American finishing school for oil technocrats and engineers. That period ended with the nationalization of Aramco in the early 1970s. "Naimi is from the last generation that was exposed to different ways of doing things, both in Saudi Arabia and the U.S.," says Edward Chow, an oil consultant and former Chevron executive who has worked closely with Aramco. "What happens after him? There are probably a lot of princes who would like his job."

But there are few who can match his savvy in protecting Saudi oil interests. Maugeri, for one, believes Naimi vowed to reopen Saudi fields to American exploration in 1999 as a way to pressure OPEC members to obey quotas. Once oil prices were rising again, says Chow, Aramco began to reassert its grip on exploring Saudi fields. A spokesman for Naimi denies the oil ministry has tried to block foreign exploration. Yet foreign companies have downsized ambitions, and are now pursuing modest bids to process natural gas. That leaves Naimi with a firm hold on even future reserves in his oil bank.

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

Islam's Imperial Dreams

Commentary
By Efraim Karsh
4/5

When satirical depictions of the prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper sparked a worldwide wave of Muslim violence early this year, observers naturally focused on the wanton destruction of Western embassies, businesses, and other institutions. Less attention was paid to the words that often accompanied the riots—words with ominous historical echoes. "Hurry up and apologize to our nation, because if you do not, you will regret it," declared Khaled Mash'al, the leader of Hamas, fresh from the Islamist group's sweeping victory in the Palestinian elections:

This is because our nation is progressing and is victorious. . . . By Allah, you will be defeated. . . . Tomorrow, our nation will sit on the throne of the world. This is not a figment of the imagination but a fact. Tomorrow we will lead the world, Allah willing. Apologize today, before remorse will do you no good.

Among Islamic radicals, such gloating about the prowess and imminent triumph of their "nation" is as commonplace as recitals of the long and bitter catalog of grievances related to the loss of historical Muslim dominion. Osama bin Laden has repeatedly alluded to the collapse of Ottoman power at the end of World War I and, with it, the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate. "What America is tasting now," he declared in the immediate wake of 9/11, "is only a copy of what we have tasted. Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more than 80 years, of humiliation and disgrace, its sons killed and their blood spilled, its sanctities desecrated." Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's top deputy, has pointed still farther into the past, lamenting "the tragedy of al-Andalus"—that is, the end of Islamic rule in Spain in 1492.

These historical claims are in turn frequently dismissed by Westerners as delusional, a species of mere self-aggrandizement or propaganda. But the Islamists are perfectly serious, and know what they are doing. Their rhetoric has a millennial warrant, both in doctrine and in fact, and taps into a deep undercurrent that has characterized the political culture of Islam from the beginning. Though tempered and qualified in different places and at different times, the Islamic longing for unfettered suzerainty has never disappeared, and has resurfaced in our own day with a vengeance. It goes by the name of empire.

"I was ordered to fight all men until they say, 'There is no god but Allah.'" With these farewell words, the prophet Muhammad summed up the international vision of the faith he brought to the world. As a universal religion, Islam envisages a global political order in which all humankind will live under Muslim rule as either believers or subject communities. In order to achieve this goal, it is incumbent on all free, male, adult Muslims to carry out an uncompromising "struggle in the path of Allah," or jihad. As the 14th-century historian and philosopher Abdel Rahman ibn Khaldun wrote, "In the Muslim community, the jihad is a religious duty because of the universalism of the Islamic mission and the obligation [to convert] everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force."

As a historical matter, the birth of Islam was inextricably linked with empire. Unlike Christianity and the Christian kingdoms that once existed under or alongside it, Islam has never distinguished between temporal and religious powers, which were combined in the person of Muhammad. Having fled from his hometown of Mecca to Medina in 622 c.e. to become a political and military leader rather than a private preacher, Muhammad spent the last ten years of his life fighting to unify Arabia under his rule. Indeed, he devised the concept of jihad shortly after his migration to Medina as a means of enticing his local followers to raid Meccan caravans. Had it not been for his sudden death, he probably would have expanded his reign well beyond the peninsula.

The Qur'anic revelations during Muhammad's Medina years abound with verses extolling the virtues of jihad, as do the countless sayings and traditions (hadith) attributed to the prophet. Those who participate in this holy pursuit are to be generously rewarded, both in this life and in the afterworld, where they will reside in shaded and ever-green gardens, indulged by pure women. Accordingly, those killed while waging jihad should not be mourned: "Allah has bought from the believers their soul and their possessions against the gift of Paradise; they fight in the path of Allah; they kill and are killed. . . . So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him; that is the mighty triumph."

But the doctrine's appeal was not just otherworldly. By forbidding fighting and raiding within the community of believers (the umma), Muhammad had deprived the Arabian tribes of a traditional source of livelihood. For a time, the prophet could rely on booty from non-Muslims as a substitute for the lost war spoils, which is why he never went out of his way to convert all of the tribes seeking a place in his Pax Islamica. Yet given his belief in the supremacy of Islam and his relentless commitment to its widest possible dissemination, he could hardly deny conversion to those wishing to undertake it. Once the whole of Arabia had become Muslim, a new source of wealth and an alternative outlet would have to be found for the aggressive energies of the Arabian tribes, and it was, in the Fertile Crescent and the Levant.

Within twelve years of Muhammad's death, a Middle Eastern empire, stretching from Iran to Egypt and from Yemen to northern Syria, had come into being under the banner of Islam. By the early 8th century, the Muslims had hugely extended their grip to Central Asia and much of the Indian

subcontinent, had laid siege to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, and had overrun North Africa and Spain. Had they not been contained in 732 at the famous battle of Poitiers in west central France, they might well have swept deep into northern Europe.

Though sectarianism and civil war divided the Muslim world in the generations after Muhammad, the basic dynamic of Islam remained expansionist. The short-lived Umayyad dynasty (661-750) gave way to the ostensibly more pious Abbasid caliphs, whose readiness to accept non-Arabs solidified Islam's hold on its far-flung possessions. From their imperial capital of Baghdad, the Abbasids ruled, with waning authority, until the Mongol invasion of 1258. The most powerful of their successors would emerge in Anatolia, among the Ottoman Turks who invaded Europe in the mid-14th century and would conquer Constantinople in 1453, destroying the Byzantine empire and laying claim to virtually all of the Balkan peninsula and the eastern Mediterranean.

Like their Arab predecessors, the Ottomans were energetic empire-builders in the name of jihad. By the early 16th century, they had conquered Syria and Egypt from the Mamluks, the formidable slave soldiers who had contained the Mongols and destroyed the Crusader kingdoms. Under Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, they soon turned northward. By the middle of the 17th century they seemed poised to overrun Christian Europe, only to be turned back in fierce fighting at the gates of Vienna in 1683—on September 11, of all dates. Though already on the defensive by the early 18th century, the Ottoman empire—the proverbial “sick man of Europe”—would endure another 200 years. Its demise at the hands of the victorious European powers of World War I, to say nothing of the work of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the father of modern Turkish nationalism, finally brought an end both to the Ottoman caliphate itself and to Islam's centuries-long imperial reach.

To Islamic historians, the chronicles of Muslim empire represent a model of shining religious zeal and selfless exertion in the cause of Allah. Many Western historians, for their part, have been inclined to marvel at the perceived sophistication and tolerance of Islamic rule, praising the caliphs' cultivation of the arts and sciences and their apparent willingness to accommodate ethnic and religious minorities. There is some truth in both views, but neither captures the deeper and often more callous impulses at work in the expanding umma set in motion by Muhammad. For successive generations of Islamic rulers, imperial dominion was dictated not by universalistic religious principles but by their prophet's vision of conquest and his summons to fight and subjugate unbelievers.

That the worldly aims of Islam might conflict with its moral and spiritual demands was evident from the start of the caliphate. Though the Umayyad monarchs portrayed their constant wars of expansion as “jihad in the path of Allah,” this was largely a façade, concealing an increasingly secular and absolutist rule. Lax in their attitude toward Islamic practices and mores, they were said to have set aside special days for drinking alcohol—specifically forbidden by the prophet—and showed little inhibition about appearing nude before their boon companions and female singers.

The coup staged by the Abbasids in 747-49 was intended to restore Islam's true ways and undo the godless practices of their predecessors; but they too, like the Umayyads, were first and foremost imperial monarchs. For the Abbasids, Islam was a means to consolidating their jurisdiction and enjoying the fruits of conquest. They complied with the stipulations of the nascent religious law (shari'a) only to the extent that it served their needs, and indulged in the same vices—wine, singing girls, and sexual license—that had ruined the reputation of the Umayyads.

Of particular importance to the Abbasids was material splendor. On the occasion of his nephew's coronation as the first Abbasid caliph, Dawud ibn Ali had proclaimed, “We did not rebel in order to grow rich in silver and in gold.” Yet it was precisely the ever-increasing pomp of the royal court that would underpin Abbasid prestige. The gem-studded dishes of the caliph's table, the gilded curtains of the palace, the golden tree and ruby-eyed golden elephant that adorned the royal courtyard were a few of the opulent possessions that bore witness to this extravagance.

The riches of the empire, moreover, were concentrated in the hands of the few at the expense of the many. While the caliph might bestow thousands of dirhams on a favorite poet for reciting a few lines, ordinary laborers in Baghdad carried home a dirham or two a month. As for the empire's more distant subjects, the caliphs showed little interest in their conversion to the faith, preferring instead to colonize their lands and expropriate their wealth and labor. Not until the third Islamic century did the bulk of these populations embrace the religion of their imperial masters, and this was a process emanating from below—an effort by non-Arabs to escape paying tribute and to remove social barriers to their

advancement. To make matters worse, the metropolis plundered the resources of the provinces, a practice inaugurated at the time of Muhammad and reaching its apogee under the Abbasids. Combined with the government's weakening control of the periphery, this shameless exploitation triggered numerous rebellions throughout the empire.

Tension between the center and the periphery was, indeed, to become the hallmark of Islam's imperial experience. Even in its early days, under the Umayyads, the empire was hopelessly overextended, largely because of inadequate means of communication and control. Under the Abbasids, a growing number of provinces fell under the sway of local dynasties. With no effective metropolis, the empire was reduced to an agglomeration of entities united only by the overarching factors of language and religion. Though the Ottomans temporarily reversed the trend, their own imperial ambitions were likewise eventually thwarted by internal fragmentation.

In the long history of Islamic empire, the wide gap between delusions of grandeur and the centrifugal forces of localism would be bridged time and again by force of arms, making violence a key element of Islamic political culture. No sooner had Muhammad died than his successor, Abu Bakr, had to suppress a widespread revolt among the Arabian tribes. Twenty-three years later, the head of the umma, the caliph Uthman ibn Affan, was murdered by disgruntled rebels; his successor, Ali ibn Abi Talib, was confronted for most of his reign with armed insurrections, most notably by the governor of Syria, Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufian, who went on to establish the Umayyad dynasty after Ali's assassination. Mu'awiya's successors managed to hang on to power mainly by relying on physical force, and were consumed for most of their reign with preventing or quelling revolts in the diverse corners of their empire. The same was true for the Abbasids during the long centuries of their sovereignty.

Western academics often hold up the Ottoman empire as an exception to this earlier pattern. In fact the caliphate did deal relatively gently with its vast non-Muslim subject populations—provided that they acquiesced in their legal and institutional inferiority in the Islamic order of things. When these groups dared to question their subordinate status, however, let alone attempt to break free from the Ottoman yoke, they were viciously put down. In the century or so between Napoleon's conquests in the Middle East and World War I, the Ottomans embarked on an orgy of bloodletting in response to the nationalist aspirations of their European subjects. The Greek war of independence of the 1820's, the Danubian uprisings of 1848 and the attendant Crimean war, the Balkan explosion of the 1870's, the Greco-Ottoman war of 1897—all were painful reminders of the costs of resisting Islamic imperial rule. Nor was such violence confined to Ottoman Europe. Turkey's Afro-Asiatic provinces, though far less infected with the nationalist virus, were also scenes of mayhem and destruction. The Ottoman army or its surrogates brought force to bear against Wahhabi uprisings in Mesopotamia and the Levant in the early 19th century, against civil strife in Lebanon in the 1840's (culminating in the 1860 massacres in Mount Lebanon and Damascus), and against a string of Kurdish rebellions. In response to the national awakening of the Armenians in the 1890's, Constantinople killed tens of thousands—a taste of the horrors that lay ahead for the Armenians during World War I.

The legacy of this imperial experience is not difficult to discern in today's Islamic world. Physical force has remained the main if not the sole instrument of political discourse in the Middle East. Throughout the region, absolute leaders still supersede political institutions, and citizenship is largely synonymous with submission; power is often concentrated in the hands of small, oppressive minorities; religious, ethnic, and tribal conflicts abound; and the overriding preoccupation of sovereigns is with their own survival.

At the domestic level, these circumstances have resulted in the world's most illiberal polities. Political dissent is dealt with by repression, and ethnic and religious differences are settled by internecine strife and murder. One need only mention, among many instances, Syria's massacre of 20,000 of its Muslim activists in the early 1980's, or the brutal treatment of Iraq's Shiite and Kurdish communities until the 2003 war, or the genocidal campaign now being conducted in Darfur by the government of Sudan and its allied militias. As for foreign policy in the Middle East, it too has been pursued by means of crude force, ranging from terrorism and subversion to outright aggression, with examples too numerous and familiar to cite.

Reinforcing these habits is the fact that, to this day, Islam has retained its imperial ambitions. The last great Muslim empire may have been destroyed and the caliphate left vacant, but the dream of regional and world domination has remained very much alive. Even the ostensibly secular doctrine of pan-Arabism has been effectively Islamic in its ethos, worldview, and imperialist vision. In the words of Nuri Said, longtime prime minister of Iraq and a prominent early champion of this doctrine: "Although Arabs

are naturally attached to their native land, their nationalism is not confined by boundaries. It is an aspiration to restore the great tolerant civilization of the early caliphate."

That this "great tolerant civilization" reached well beyond today's Middle East is not lost on those who hope for its restoration. Like the leaders of al Qaeda, many Muslims and Arabs unabashedly pine for the reconquest of Spain and consider their 1492 expulsion from the country a grave historical injustice waiting to be undone. Indeed, as immigration and higher rates of childbirth have greatly increased the number of Muslims within Europe itself over the past several decades, countries that were never ruled by the caliphate have become targets of Muslim imperial ambition. Since the late 1980's, Islamists have looked upon the growing population of French Muslims as proof that France, too, has become a part of the House of Islam. In Britain, even the more moderate elements of the Muslim community are candid in setting out their aims. As the late Zaki Badawi, a doyen of interfaith dialogue in the UK, put it, "Islam is a universal religion. It aims to bring its message to all corners of the earth. It hopes that one day the whole of humanity will be one Muslim community."

Whether in its militant or its more benign version, this world-conquering agenda continues to meet with condescension and denial on the part of many educated Westerners. To intellectuals, foreign-policy experts, and politicians alike, "empire" and "imperialism" are categories that apply exclusively to the European powers and, more recently, to the United States. In this view of things, Muslims, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, are merely objects—the long-suffering victims of the aggressive encroachments of others. Lacking an internal, autonomous dynamic of its own, their history is rather a function of their unhappy interaction with the West, whose obligation it is to make amends. This perspective dominated the widespread explanation of the 9/11 attacks as only a response to America's (allegedly) arrogant and self-serving foreign policy, particularly with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict. As we have seen, however, Islamic history has been anything but reactive. From Muhammad to the Ottomans, the story of Islam has been the story of the rise and fall of an often astonishing imperial aggressiveness and, no less important, of never quiescent imperial dreams. Even as these dreams have repeatedly frustrated any possibility for the peaceful social and political development of the Arab-Muslim world, they have given rise to no less repeated fantasies of revenge and restoration and to murderous efforts to transform fantasy into fact. If, today, America is reviled in the Muslim world, it is not because of its specific policies but because, as the preeminent world power, it blocks the final realization of this same age-old dream of regaining, in Zawahiri's words, the "lost glory" of the caliphate.

Nor is the vision confined to a tiny extremist fringe. This we saw in the overwhelming support for the 9/11 attacks throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds, in the admiring evocations of bin Laden's murderous acts during the crisis over the Danish cartoons, and in such recent findings as the poll indicating significant reservoirs of sympathy among Muslims in Britain for the "feelings and motives" of the suicide bombers who attacked London last July. In the historical imagination of many Muslims and Arabs, bin Laden represents nothing short of the new incarnation of Saladin, defeater of the Crusaders and conqueror of Jerusalem. In this sense, the House of Islam's war for world mastery is a traditional, indeed venerable, quest that is far from over.

To the contrary, now that this war has itself met with a so far determined counterattack by the United States and others, and with a Western intervention in the heart of the House of Islam, it has escalated to a new stage of virulence. In many Middle Eastern countries, Islamist movements, and movements appealing to traditionalist Muslims, are now jockeying fiercely for positions of power, both against the Americans and against secular parties. For the Islamists, the stakes are very high indeed, for if the political elites of the Middle East and elsewhere were ever to reconcile themselves to the reality that there is no Arab or Islamic "nation," but only modern Muslim states with destinies and domestic responsibilities of their own, the imperialist dream would die.

It is in recognition of this state of affairs that Zawahiri wrote his now famous letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the head of al Qaeda in Iraq, in July 2005. If, Zawahiri instructed his lieutenant, al Qaeda's strategy for Iraq and elsewhere were to succeed, it would have to take into account the growing thirst among many Arabs for democracy and a normal life, and strive not to alienate popular opinion through such polarizing deeds as suicide attacks on fellow Muslims. Only by harnessing popular support, Zawahiri concluded, would it be possible to come to power by means of democracy itself, thereby to establish jihadist rule in Iraq, and then to move onward to conquer still larger and more distant realms and impose the writ of Islam far and wide.

Something of the same logic clearly underlies the carefully plotted rise of Hamas in the Palestinian Authority, the (temporarily thwarted) attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to exploit the demand for free elections there, and the accession of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran. Indeed, as reported by Mark MacKinnon in the Toronto Globe & Mail, some analysts now see a new "axis of Islam" arising in the Middle East, uniting Hizballah, Hamas, Iran, Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood, elements of Iraq's Shiites, and others in an anti-American, anti-Israel alliance backed by Russia.

Whether or not any such structure exists or can be forged, the fact is that the fuel of Islamic imperialism remains as volatile as ever, and is very far from having burned itself out. To deny its force is the height of folly, and to imagine that it can be appeased or deflected is to play into its hands. Only when it is defeated, and when the faith of Islam is no longer a tool of Islamic political ambition, will the inhabitants of Muslim lands, and the rest of the world, be able to look forward to a future less burdened by Saladins and their gory dreams.

--Efraim Karsh is head of Mediterranean Studies at King's College, University of London, and the author of, among other works, Arafat's War, Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography, and Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East. His new book, Islamic Imperialism: A History, on which this article is based, is about to be published by Yale.
