

MAY 1 – MAY 8

IRAN

2. Iran – Unacceptable; National Review, Editorial (5/8)
2. Iran Is Not Iraq; Weekly Standard, By William Kristol (5/8)
3. The Oil Shield; Foreign Policy, By Christopher Dickey (May/June 2006)
5. A Particular Madness - Understanding Iran's Ahmadinejad; National Review, By David Pryce-Jones (5/8)
7. Deterrent Defect; New Republic, By Peter Beinart (5/8)
8. Iran: A Rummy Guide; Newsweek, By Christopher Dickey and John Barry (5/8)
10. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: Iran's High-Stakes Nuclear Gambler; Time, By Azadeh Moaveni (5/8)

IRAQ

11. Kurdistan: Dangerous Passage; Newsweek, By Owen Matthews (5/8)
12. No More Vietnams: This Time, Let's Finish the Job; Weekly Standard, By David Gelernter (5/8)
15. 'I Demand a Timetable'; Newsweek, By Scott Johnson (5/8)
16. Face to Face With Terror; Time, By Aparisim Ghosh (5/8)
19. Back to Falluja; Weekly Standard, By Michael Fumento (5/8)
23. Muqtada Al-Sadr: Iraq's Shadowy Power Broker; Time, By Kenneth M. Pollack (5/8)

ISRAEL

24. Ehud Olmert: Israel Turns to The Inside Man; Time, By Zev Chafets (5/8)

HAMAS

24. Mideast: No Money for Hamas; Newsweek, By Dan Ephron (5/8)
25. Ismail Haniya: Hamas' New Heavy; Time, By Dennis Ross (5/8)

EGYPT

25. Egypt: Taking On the Wrong Enemy; Newsweek, By Joshua Hammer (5/8)
26. Three Strikes in Egypt; Time, By Scott MacLeod (5/8)

GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

27. For Better or Worse?; National Review, By Victor Davis Hanson (5/5)
29. Osama Needs More Mud Huts; Newsweek, By Fareed Zakaria (5/8)
30. Ayman al-Zawahiri: How He Became Bin Laden's No. 1; Time, By Peter Bergen (5/8)

POLITICS & POLICY

31. A Gotcha! Gone Bad; National Review, By Andrew C. McCarthy (5/8)
33. Pork Busters, and Keepers; National Review, By Stephen Spruiell (5/8)
35. Saint Sam; National Review, By John J. Miller (5/8)
38. The New McCarthyism; Weekly Standard, By Stephen F. Hayes (5/8)
41. Bush's Bad Polls; Weekly Standard, By Jeffrey Bell and Frank Cannon (5/8)
43. Crispy Duck; New Republic, Editorial (5/8)
44. Many Strange 'Emergencies'; Newsweek, By George F. Will (5/8)
45. Why Spending Has Got to Give; Policy Review, By David R. Henderson (April/May 2006)
51. Whistling Dixie: Mark Warner test-drives a new strategy for the Dems in '06; Newsweek, By Jonathan Darman (5/8)
52. Back on the Stand; Newsweek, By Michael Isikoff and Evan Thomas (5/8)
54. John McCain: The Maverick Gunning for the Oval Office; Time, By Ralph Nader (5/8)
55. We're Here, We're Square, Get Used to It; Time, By Caitlin Flanagan (5/8)
56. George W. Bush: Trying to Salvage an Administration; Time, By James Carney (5/8)
56. Condoleezza Rice: Master of the Universe; Time, By Leslie Gelb (5/8)

SOCIAL ISSUES

57. Sheik Yo Booty; New Republic, By Eli Lake (5/8)
59. Wafa Sultan: A Daring Voice Calls For a New Islam; Time, By Asra Q. Nomani (5/8)

IRAN

Iran – Unacceptable

National Review
Editorial
5/8

Four years ago, President Bush said his administration would not "permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons." Yet precisely that is about to happen. With Iran's announcement that it has begun uranium enrichment, we know that the world's most dangerous regime is on a fast track to building an atomic bomb.

Atomic bombs are only as scary as the regimes that own them -- but this one is about as bad as they come. The mullahs would surely threaten us with their arsenal to extract concessions inimical to our interests, and might even be evil enough to launch their nukes. Consider Hashemi Rafsanjani, that celebrated "moderate," exulting that the Muslim world will "vomit [Israel] out from its midst," since "a single atomic bomb has the power to completely destroy [it]." Nuclear deterrence operates on the assumption that your foe is rational. Things break down when much of its ruling establishment fancies itself on a divine mission to evaporate the Zionist Entity, roll back the Great Satan, and usher in a paradisiacal rule by sharia. That's not a regime to bargain with. The goal must be to remove it from power.

This doesn't mean invasion and occupation. But it does mean getting serious about supporting the Iranian democracy movement. There are three things we should do now. First, give financial backing to Iranian labor unions so that workers -- many of whom are deeply discontent with their government -- can feed their families if they go on strike. Second, help Iranian student groups. Roughly 70 percent of Iran's population is under 30. These youths are the most pro-Western segment of Iranian society -- and they are mad as hell at Iran's rulers. We should open channels of communication with student leaders, and repeat their message at every turn. Accordingly, our third priority should be to massively increase our pro-democracy broadcasts into Iran.

None of this is guaranteed to spark a revolution, but it has better odds than doing nothing. The sad consequence of our delay -- and the world's indifference -- has been to make military action more likely. While a bombing campaign can't stop Iran from eventually building nukes, it can delay that outcome by several years. But then what? If the mullahs stay in power, all that will change is the intensity of their lust for a bomb. We shouldn't hesitate to use military force if that's what it takes to keep them from getting one, but no air strikes will be effective over the long term unless coupled with an aggressive strategy to topple the regime from within.

Make no mistake: Bombing Iran is not a good option. The mullahs would probably retaliate with terrorist attacks against U.S. interests worldwide, as well as efforts to destabilize Iraq. But the alternative -- letting them go nuclear -- is incalculably worse. For a quarter-century they have been fighting an undeclared war against the West with the only weapons they have had: terrorism and a poisonous ideology. For a quarter-century we have failed to respond. They now stand on the brink of getting a new weapon -- and this one will let them threaten the incineration of millions of infidels at the push of a button. Is this something that we -- that anyone -- should be willing to live with?

Iran Is Not Iraq

Weekly Standard
By William Kristol
5/8

"We are committed to a diplomatic course [to stop Iran's nuclear program] that should, with enough unity and with enough strength and with enough common purpose, make it possible to convince the Iranian government [to change its course]. . . .

"Let me go right to the crux of the question. The United States of America understands and believes that Iran is not Iraq. The Iraq circumstances had a special character going back for 12 years of suspended hostilities after a war of aggression which Saddam Hussein himself launched. . . .

"It goes without saying that the United States believes and others believe that, in order to be credible, the U.N. Security Council, of course, has to act. . . . The Security Council is the primary and most important institution for the maintenance of peace and stability and security, and it cannot have its word and its will simply ignored by a member state."
--Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Europe last week, from Glenn Kessler's April 28 account in the Washington Post, "U.S. Tries to Calm Fears in Europe on Using Bases"

SAY IT AIN'T SO, CONDI!

In fact, Condi and her colleagues will try to say--privately and off the record--that it ain't so. They'll explain to Bush supporters here in Washington that the administration hasn't really gone soft on Iran. The State Department is just doing its job, reassuring the Europeans so as to keep them on board. Sure, hawks will worry that proclaiming "Iran is not Iraq" signals that the Bush administration is now terrified even to threaten the use of force against terror-sponsoring dictatorships seeking weapons of mass destruction. But all options, at least theoretically, are still on the table. And Ahmadinejad is doing such a good job scaring the Europeans. This is no time for Washington to be scary!

No, it's time to be reassuring. That doesn't mean we don't do some finger-wagging when Ahmadinejad taunts and challenges us, saying one day he's going to destroy Israel, the next that he's going to transfer nuclear technology to Sudan, and meanwhile buying more long-range missiles from North Korea. But it would be simple-minded to rise to his bait, and to think that we really have to do something tough in response to him.

After all, he's just hurting himself! At some point the Iranian government will figure out that aggressiveness and bellicosity don't really produce victories. They'll come to understand that the momentum Tehran seems to have built up in the last several months is misleading. If it looks as though Iran is suddenly being treated with more fear and more respect throughout the Middle East, and beyond--that's just temporary. Deep down, the Iranians know, as the State Department knows, that what really matters is that they're running a risk of getting pretty darn isolated from the international community. And meanwhile, we're arm in arm with the Europeans again.

As for the statement, "The Security Council is the primary and most important institution for the maintenance of peace and stability and security"--of course that's not true. But what's the harm in saying it? It creates goodwill as the United States goes through the Security Council process. Sure, that process won't lead anywhere. But then the Europeans will finally see that they've got to join us in serious sanctions. They will be very targeted sanctions, which won't affect ordinary Iranians, because that would be counterproductive. But a signal of resolve will have been sent to Tehran, nonetheless. They will know that if they don't change, we and the Europeans will remain united behind these targeted sanctions. And you can't argue with this: Our relations with the Europeans are much better than they were during that nightmarish first term.

Yes, that's the view from Foggy Bottom. And it's true the Europeans don't fear the Bush administration any more. Nor, unfortunately, do others. One might also note that, despite all the goodwill built up by our outreach to the capitals of Europe, President Bush seems much weaker today than he was in the bad old days of unilateralism and bellicosity, and so does the United States. But the State Department is popular, and at least we don't look like Neanderthals in the drawing rooms of Europe and Georgetown.

Condi and her colleagues may come home and say, privately, it ain't so. But it is so. Much of the U.S. government no longer believes in, and is no longer acting to enforce, the Bush Doctrine. "The United States of America understands and believes that Iran is not Iraq." That's a diplomatic way of saying that the United States of America is in retreat.

The Oil Shield

Foreign Policy

By Christopher Dickey

May/June 2006

Iran is commanding the world's attention as the ayatollahs accelerate their race for the bomb. But the timetable for talks—or a nuclear crisis—is not being shaped by centrifuges, uranium, or reactors. It's about the security only a barrel of oil can provide.

The poster for the recent George Clooney film *Syriana*, a tale of complex intrigue surrounding a fictional oil emirate, shows a bound and blindfolded CIA agent with the words "Everything is connected" emblazoned on the duct tape that gags him. The movie is a confusing pastiche, but that adage is worth remembering, especially when considering the ongoing crisis over Iran's nuclear program.

For almost four years now, efforts by Europe and the United States to curb Tehran's nuclear designs have vacillated between threats and appeasement. In February, after much intense, highly publicized diplomacy by Britain, France, Germany, and the United States, the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—including Russia and China—was persuaded to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council. The move seemed to raise the threat of sanctions, yet all parties were quick to call such talk premature. As diplomacy continued, so did the pace of Iran's nuclear research, opening the prospects for chronic confrontation that could last years with no clear resolution.

Why the hesitation to take stronger action? One reason is certainly that China and Russia have been reluctant partners in the business of pressuring Tehran. China expects to sign long-term agreements for Iranian oil worth an estimated \$100 billion. Russia is building nuclear reactors in Iran for which it is receiving billions of dollars as well. But the West, including the United States, has an even stronger and more direct incentive to talk instead of act: Any misstep in the campaign to deter Iran from developing nuclear technology that might be used for an atomic bomb could lead to an explosion in the cost of oil.

The Iranians know that, of course, and as soon as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took office in August, the regime began performing as if a higher law—supply and demand—would protect it no matter how much it provoked the international community. As Iran's delegate to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, said bluntly in March, Tehran estimates that "the United States has the power to cause harm and pain, but the United States is also susceptible to harm and pain. So if that is the path that the U.S. wishes to choose, let the ball roll."

The basic arithmetic is simple. There is just barely enough oil in today's market to meet the global demand for about 85 million barrels a day. With almost all oil producers pumping every drop they can get out of the ground or from under the sea, a margin of roughly 1.5 million barrels a day is left over. Iran exports about 2.7 million barrels a day. If an international embargo, a military attack, or a political decision in Tehran took that Iranian oil off the market, prices could well soar from the current price of around \$60 a barrel to \$90 a barrel or higher. Adjusted for inflation, that would equal or surpass the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979. Painful indeed.

"There are no sanctions on the oil sector in Iran that will not hurt the whole world at the same time," says Pierre Terzian, founder of the Paris-based group *Petrostratégies*. One of the most influential oil industry analysts in the United States, who asked not to be quoted by name, agrees: "Right now, the Iranians are in a strong position and they know it. The tight market and high prices provide them not only with a shield but with the high cards. It gives them leverage they didn't have a couple of years ago." And while the threat of an oil shock deters strong action against Iran, the income generated by current prices gives the regime huge amounts of cash with which to woo foreign support. "The Europeans, especially, will not put up with \$100-a-barrel oil," says Abbas Milani, director of the Iran program at Stanford University. At the same time, he said, "the Chinese will not give up their \$100 billion deal. The Russians will not give up billions on nuclear reactors."

But Iran's leverage isn't likely to last. Supply and demand—and Saudi Arabia—will see to that. The current high prices encourage oil-producing countries to ramp up production wherever possible, while discouraging some of the growth in consumption. The Saudis, meanwhile, have begun a strategic program to boost not only their production but their control over that thin margin of spare capacity in the global market that gives them a huge influence on prices.

For many years, in times of crisis, the Saudis could literally turn on the taps to stabilize world prices. After the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, and during the buildup to the invasion of Iraq

in 2003, they did just that. Since then, however, the Saudis have fallen behind the curve. Consumption surged in China, India, and Southeast Asia. Production in Iraq, which was expected to increase after the invasion, actually declined dramatically in the midst of the unexpected insurgency. Unrest in Nigeria and labor strife in Venezuela occasionally disrupted supplies.

In 2005, the Saudis launched a \$50 billion program to reassert their power in the markets. By the summer of 2009, they expect to increase their overall production capacity from 11 million barrels a day to 12.5 million barrels, which should restore their ability to keep about 3 million barrels in reserve. When that happens, world oil markets will be much less vulnerable to a drop in Iranian oil exports; Iran will be much more vulnerable to international pressure. "There's a window of opportunity of two or three years, not more, for this 'oil protection,'" says Terzian.

So Iran is in a hurry to push ahead with its nuclear program before its oil shield is lost. The current crisis began last year, when it decided to end the voluntary freeze on its nuclear enrichment activities that had been negotiated with Britain, France, and Germany. "We were forced to fight the Europeans' policy of wasting time," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a news conference in March. (When that deal was first negotiated, the price of oil was \$30 a barrel; when it was rejected, the price was at \$50; when enrichment activities actually recommenced this year, the price stood at \$60.)

"Iran has made some sort of calculation, of which oil is a part, that they can win," says David Albright, a physicist and former weapons inspector who now runs the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, D.C. But what is winning? Is the goal to have a nuclear weapon for its own sake? Or to attack Israel, as Ahmadinejad's many intemperate statements suggest? Or, is the objective of the Iranian regime essentially to assure that the reign of the ayatollahs continues, using the nuclear threat, among others, as a means to that end?

Tehran's course is designed to cover the regime with a diplomatic shield, or a nuclear one, or both, before the oil shield is weakened. Iran's former nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rohani, recently cited India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan as countries that have nuclear weapons, or claim to, and are protected as a result. The clear implication was that Iran hopes to join those ranks, even if it says it has no intention of building a bomb. (Most likely it will become a "virtual" nuclear weapons state, known to have the ability to produce an arsenal even if it chooses not to, believed to have the bomb, even if it never tests it.) "The regime talks in terms of red lines, and I don't think giving up the nuclear program is a red line they would pass," says Milani. "They see it as the sine qua non of their survival."

The reign of the ayatollahs in Iran, the oil-production capacity of Saudi Arabia, the stabilization of Iraq, the proliferation of nuclear weapons around the world: Everything is, indeed, connected.

--Christopher Dickey is Newsweek's Paris bureau chief and Middle East editor.

A Particular Madness - Understanding Iran's Ahmadinejad

National Review

By David Pryce-Jones

5/8

Elected less than a year ago, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a president unlike any other. He is doing his utmost to alienate the entire West, mobilizing as much military technology as possible, and now enriching uranium in quantities apparently enough for hundreds of nuclear warheads. "This is the result of the Iranian nation's resistance," he boasts, and the work of "young scientists," adding that the nation does not get its strength from nuclear arsenals, but "relies on the sublime beliefs that lie within the Iranian and Islamic culture." Far from deterring him, the prospect of war, and perhaps Armageddon, is an encouragement. Those who live in democracies have become unwilling or unable to fathom anyone gambling with peace in this way -- it took years to realize that Hitler and Stalin meant what they said. A huge leap of the imagination is now required to take the measure of Ahmadinejad.

The son of a blacksmith, he grew up in the provinces, and owes his career exclusively to the Islamic revolution and membership in the Revolutionary Guards, the paramilitary body responsible for the regime's security, the equivalent of the KGB or the SS. Personally he seems honest, a rare quality in

Iran where corruption rules, among the clerics especially. At any rate, the ayatollahs parachuted him into the presidency to do their bidding, rather as Boris Yeltsin once promoted the then unknown Vladimir Putin. The analogy is not quite exact, since in Iran power is in the hands of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the president has the subsidiary role of ensuring the governing doctrine that "any action that weakens the sacred Islamic republic is not permissible."

To someone of such limited background and experience, the outside world is an unknown quantity. Ahmadinejad's religious beliefs are no doubt as sincere as they are narrow, and they prompt regular pronouncements in a messianic style: "The wave of the Islamist revolution will soon reach the entire world." Or again, "Our revolution's main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam, the Mahdi." In the middle of the 10th century, this imam went into hiding, supposedly in a well in Jamkaran, south of Tehran, but it is an article of Shiite faith that he will return and herald the End of Days. Ahmadinejad and his cabinet signed a petition to the hidden imam, proceeded to Jamkaran, and threw it down the well for his attention. Similarly unself-conscious, he claimed that while speaking at the United Nations "I became surrounded by a green light," so that for 27 to 28 minutes all the attentive listeners did not blink -- the chronological exactitude is a touch a thriller writer might envy. And he closed that speech by urging God to "hasten the emergence of Your last repository, the Promised One, that perfect and pure human being, the one who will fill the world with justice and peace."

History has produced in Iran a volatile compound of self-regarding nationalism and religiosity, a superiority complex that switches easily into its opposite of inferiority and martyrdom. In the national memory, Cyrus, king of kings, remains a symbol of ruined empire. The Arabs swept in to impose their culture and faith, but they were Sunni Muslims, and Persians maintained their ethnic and national particularity as Shiite Muslims. In the 19th century, Russia conquered and absorbed whole provinces of Persia, and occupied still more for a while under Stalin. British resistance to Russian penetration, and then American forces in the Cold War, alone preserved the country's continuing independence.

Nobody projected the accompanying sense of impotence and humiliation more eloquently than Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, writing in the 19th century when Europeans were at their imperialist zenith. In spite of his name, Afghani was a Shiite from Persia, but he shaped a mindset for all Muslims that is still influential today. Muslims in his view were backward, but the blame for this lay with other people, and not themselves. Europeans had stolen a march on Islam unfairly. He wrote, "It is science that everywhere manifests its greatness and power. Ignorance had no alternative to prostrating itself humbly before science." For him, science was not the expression of a civilization, but something Muslims had only to copy as a means to recovering the supremacy that is theirs by rights. The reigns of the two Pahlavi shahs of Iran in the 20th century duly paid attention to science, but not to Islam. The Islamic revolution now aims to reconcile the two elements. Ahmadinejad's boast about the "young scientists" doing nuclear enrichment corresponds to the spirit of Afghani.

In another echo of Afghani, Ahmadinejad likes to lament that, "unfortunately, over the past 300 years the world of Islam has been in retreat." But he goes on to emphasize that this is changing, and centuries of humiliation at the hands of Sunni Arabs and infidel Europeans are reversing into the proper honor and glory. The prospects are tantalizing. To the north, Russia is now so reduced that it is begging to sell nuclear plants and know-how, even though one day an Iranian atomic bomb might land on its own head. To the west, Saddam Hussein is no more, and Iraq is in no position to wage another war for many years to come. Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states have no genuine military capacity. The Shiites are certain in the end to dominate the government in Baghdad, and their power already reaches into Syria, and through Hezbollah into Lebanon.

The United States alone appears to cast a shadow over the Shiite future, and so in the rhetoric imposed by the need for honor and supremacy, it is depicted as "arrogant" and the "oppressor." In strict defiance of reality, Ahmadinejad asserts, "Our enemies should know that they are unable to even slightly hurt our nation and they cannot create the tiniest obstacle on its glorious and progressive way." A Revolutionary Guards commander spells it out: "America should accept Iran as a great regional power and they should know that sanctions and military threats are not going to benefit them."

In that same rhetoric of honor, Ahmadinejad calls Israel "a disgraceful stain on the Islamic world" and "a rotten, dried tree that will be eliminated by one storm." In any case, Israel is doomed to be "wiped from the map" in "a war of destiny." While promoting a holocaust of its own, Tehran is currently hosting a conference to deny that Hitler's holocaust ever took place. I cannot prove it, but I suspect

that the fury against Israel and Jews has no profound resonance with the population. Historically again, Persians and Jews were natural allies against Arabs. In the days of the shah, Iran and Israel had close commercial and military ties. Anti-Jewish stereotypes and images of "stain" and "rotten tree" are intended to induce the sense of shame needed to mobilize the faithful to redress it. An Iranian friend told me how on the day when Ahmadinejad promised to wipe Israel off the map, she was incessantly telephoned in Tehran by people saying that he had signed their death warrant, and some of them were in tears.

A nation whose way really is glorious and progressive has no need for a totalitarian security apparatus. The regime makes sure that nobody challenges it. The interior minister, Mustafa Pour-Mohammadi, is responsible for the summary execution of thousands of political prisoners. To give just two examples, Hojjat Zamani was executed on February 6 in Gohar Dasht Prison in the city of Karaj, near Tehran, and Valiollah Feyz Mahdavi is slated to be executed there in May. The charge against both of them was "enmity with God." I receive by e-mail regular lists of wretched men and women judicially murdered all over the country. Unforgettable among them is Ateqeh Rajabi, a 16-year-old orphan who went to work as a waitress to feed her siblings. Her efforts were called "acts incompatible with chastity." She was forbidden a lawyer, and her judge himself put the rope around her neck. A crackdown on universities is under way, involving purges of staff and students. In absolute control of the media, the regime uses sophisticated equipment to censor bloggers, arresting them by the score.

Western culture has no room in it for evidence of weakness disguised in this way by language as evidence of strength. In Western culture the literal meaning of words counts for more than the psychological vanities or evasions behind them. To us, lies may serve a purpose of glorification or mystification but they cannot be true. To us, expressions of hatred and the threat of extermination and war and the End of Days are indeed what they sound like, to be taken at face value and not as expediciencies designed to avert shame and reclaim honor. Again I cannot prove it, but I am confident that Ahmadinejad has no conception that what he believes to be making him a serious person in his culture makes him a dangerous nut in ours. And a danger is what he most certainly is, to us and to himself.

--Mr. Pryce-Jones is an NR senior editor. His new book, *Betrayal: France, the Arabs, and the Jews*, will be published by Encounter in the fall.

Deterrent Defect

New Republic

By Peter Beinart

5/8

Rhetorically, at least, the debate over military action against Iran is starting to look like a rout. In recent weeks, three opinion magazines--the centrist *Atlantic*, the liberal *American Prospect*, and the neoconservative *Weekly Standard*--have all published articles on the subject. The *Atlantic* article, by James Fallows, ends with this categorical statement: "Realism about Iran starts by throwing out any plans to bomb." The *Prospect* story, by Matthew Yglesias, begins like this: "Should we go to war with Iran? The short answer is `no.' The long answer is `hell no.'" Not exactly subtle.

Then there's the *Standard*. Its cover shows Uncle Sam peering at a globe that looks like a bomb. The text asks, to bomb, or not to bomb? A question mark! The *Standard* defines the hawkish pole in American foreign policy debates. It proposed militarily overthrowing Saddam Hussein three years before September 11. If it's not sure that military action against Iran is a good idea, who is?

The ambivalence would be easier to understand if the *Standard* believed there were nonmilitary ways to prevent Tehran from getting a nuke. But its lead essay disposes of that possibility in the fifth paragraph. "The diplomatic process," writes the American Enterprise Institute's Reuel Marc Gerecht, "no matter how hard the Europeans and the Americans may try, is coming to a close." America's choices are military action or an Iranian bomb.

And here's what Gerecht--a prominent hawk writing in America's most famously hawkish magazine--says about the military option: "The reasons not to bomb are many, and some are pretty compelling." Iranian-sponsored retaliation in Afghanistan and Iraq, he suggests, might cripple U.S. efforts in those countries (though it also might not). If the United States bombed Iran's facilities once, he adds, it

would have to do so again and again, and consider using, "at a minimum, special-operations forces," "until [Iran] stopped" trying to get a nuke. How long would such a war last? "[M]any years, perhaps a decade or more."

"All of this is frightening," Gerecht concedes. But then, having spent 90 percent of his essay describing an invasion's potential horrors, he pivots in the final paragraphs and says that, if Iran gave a dirty bomb to Al Qaeda or attacked a U.S. embassy, that would be worse. "It is best that such men not have nukes, and that we do everything in our power, including preventive military strikes, to stop this from happening," he writes. "Given the Islamic Republic's dark history, the burden of proof ought to be on those who favor accommodating a nuclear Iran."

Huh? Surely, as a general rule, the burden of proof should be on those wishing to launch a war--except, perhaps, in response to a direct attack. That burden can sometimes be met, but there's something a little sinister about suggesting that it should rest with those who don't want to go to war--especially since Gerecht himself has just catalogued the ramifications that a conflict with Iran could bring.

In this particular case, the burden of proof is this: Hawks must show that, if Iran gets a nuclear weapon, it cannot be deterred from using it or transferring it to terrorists. That standard shouldn't make doves rest too easy. It's too glibly simply to declare that deterrence "worked" during the cold war. As John Lewis Gaddis notes in *The Cold War: A New History*, deterrence came very close to failing--not merely in the Cuban missile crisis, but during the Korean war as well. In the cold war's terrifying first decade and a half, using nuclear weapons was far from unthinkable--not only in Moscow and Beijing, but also in Washington. Doves need a theory explaining why the circumstances that allowed deterrence to unexpectedly succeed between Washington and Moscow and Washington and Beijing (and, for that matter, Moscow and Beijing) would also hold between Tehran and Washington and Tehran and Jerusalem (and, for that matter, Tehran and Islamabad). And, if doves skip this deterrence debate--staking their case on America's ability to prevent Iran from getting a bomb in the first place--they will be making a big mistake. Diplomacy is worth trying, but we shouldn't kid ourselves: It will probably fail. Russia and China won't wield sticks. And the United States and Europe have no carrots that Iranians (including Iranian nationalists who loathe the regime) want as much as they want the bomb. If doves don't argue for deterrence now, they will find themselves in an intellectually precarious position down the road, when America's options come down to deterrence and war.

But, if doves have intellectual work to do, it is nothing compared with the burden on hawks. Gerecht dismisses deterrence against Iran in three breezy sentences--and on that basis proposes a war he admits could last a decade. That's pathetic. As shaky as deterrence was in the 1950s and early '60s, it grew stronger, and leaders of radically different ideological and cultural stripes increasingly avoided the nuclear brink. Whether President Bush wants to admit it or not, the United States is relying on deterrence even today against North Korea, as isolated and nutty a state as exists on the face of the earth. If hawks want to argue that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani, and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei are fundamentally more irrational than Nikita Khrushchev, Mao Zedong, and Kim Jong II, they will have to do better than vague allusions to "the Islamic Republic's dark history." (For all his obscene Holocaust references, Ahmadinejad has still not said anything as menacing as Khrushchev, who, in a 1958 meeting with Hubert Humphrey, circled Minneapolis on a map and told him that, as a favor, he'd spare Humphrey's hometown when Armageddon came.) Where is the evidence, in the 25 years since Iran's mullahs came to power, that threats of military retaliation don't affect their behavior? Where is the evidence that they seek martyrdom so fervently that they would risk the one thing that most regimes value above all else: survival? To be sure, Iran is a longtime sponsor of the murderous Hezbollah. But is there any reason to believe, from what we know of their relationship, that Iran's leaders would give it control of their most precious military possession? And, if the mullahs are so eager to launch nuclear weapons against Israel, why haven't they launched the chemical and biological weapons they already have?

There may be good answers to these questions. But, so far, the hawks aren't providing them. So far, in fact, they are barely even convincing themselves.

Iran: A Rummy Guide

Newsweek

By Christopher Dickey and John Barry

Back in June 2002, as the Bush administration started pushing hard for war with Iraq by focusing on fears of the unknown--terrorists and weapons of mass destruction--Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld explained that when it came to gathering intelligence on such threats, "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." Elaborating, Rumsfeld told a news conference: "There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns; that is to say there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we do not know we don't know."

Now there's a crisis brewing with Iran. And the same basic problem applies: what is known, what is suspected, what can be only guessed or imagined? Is danger clear and present or vague and distant? Washington is abuzz now, as it was four years ago, with "sources" talking of sanctions, war, regime change. In 2002, despite a paucity of hard evidence, Iraq was made to seem an urgent threat demanding immediate action. "We don't want 'the smoking gun' to be a mushroom cloud" is the memorable phrase used by the then national-security adviser Condoleezza Rice.

Given the results of Washington's rush into the Iraqi unknown, concern is growing about U.S. policy toward Iran. Yet the Iranian case is very different--and more dangerous. The latest report from the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, released last Friday by Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei, makes it clear that Tehran is defying U.N. demands that it freeze its nuclear activities. European and American diplomats are considering resolutions calling for unspecified consequences--and, according to European sources, they have contingency plans for sanctions outside the United Nations if they're blocked by Russian or Chinese vetoes. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, lest there be any doubt about his stand, said, "The Iranian nation won't give a damn about such useless resolutions."

With the confrontation raising questions about future oil supplies, and fears growing that a seemingly crazy regime may soon acquire atomic bombs, the IAEA and Western intelligence agencies are working overtime to separate fundamental facts from guesswork and propaganda.

The Known Knowns

Tehran has a full-fledged nuclear-energy program. That's a known known, and the rabble-rousing Ahmadinejad is proud of it. (Indeed, he's made it a nationalist rallying cry: "By the grace of God, today Iran is a nuclear country," he declared again last week.) The country has used high-speed centrifuges to produce low-enriched uranium suitable for power generation. That, too, is confirmed by the IAEA. But the same techniques that Iran is using, and the machinery it's assembling, can also make the highly enriched uranium at the core of atomic bombs. Once the process is mastered, the question is not whether Iran can make a weapon, but whether it wants to. And who's next? Ahmadinejad talked last week about sharing the technology with Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir.

Iran insists the whole project is benign, and that it's now observing the letter of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty--which enshrines its "right" to peaceful nuclear energy. But, another fact: Iran kept its enrichment activities secret from 1985 to 2003, in clear violation of the treaty's safeguard agreements. And instead of continuing a freeze on some of its activities begun in 2003, which was supposed to help restore international trust, Iran restarted nuclear-fuel enrichment earlier this year. Such facts led the IAEA board of governors, including a reluctant Russia and China, to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council for further discussion and possible action.

Yet it's also true that no solid evidence has ever been revealed linking Iran's known nuclear program to the actual development or production of nuclear weapons.

The Unknown Unknowns

At the other end of the information spectrum, on the invisible wavelength of unknown unknowns, is the hypothesis that the mullahs have an entirely secret, separate and thus far utterly undiscovered nuclear-weapons program. Israeli officials commonly espouse this view, as do some American analysts. Former Reagan administration terrorism adviser and neoconservative scholar Michael Ledeen says he believes the Iranians already have the bomb. "Of all the hypotheses, the hypothesis that they don't is the least likely," he claims. A senior intelligence source from a country with close ties to Washington, who is not allowed to discuss intelligence matters on the record, says there's no smoking gun that points to a clandestine program. But he insists none may be needed. "What we have are a lot of dots,"

he says. "If you trace them and they outline an elephant, it's probably an elephant."

Israel, in range of Iranian missiles and often the victim of Iranian-backed terrorists, has every reason to be alarmed. Ahmadinejad, after all, talks about wiping Israel off the map. Yet Israeli estimates of how long it might take Iran to acquire atomic weapons--two years or less, in some cases--are often much shorter than others. "It's not the facts, it's the interpretation," says Ephraim Sneh, chairman of the Knesset's Defense Planning and Policy Subcommittee. "Maybe we define differently the definition of the 'point of no return'." Last month in Washington, top aides to U.S. intelligence czar John Negroponte told reporters they believe Iran will not have a nuclear bomb until after 2010, at the earliest.

"Are there secret facilities? I don't think so," says Gary Samore, nonproliferation expert in the Clinton administration, who recently wrote a major study of Iran's WMD programs. "Look, if there were, Iran would be very foolish to provoke a crisis over its known facilities. Their best course would be to soothe everyone by allowing the IAEA to monitor those, while secretly working away in the clandestine plants." Joseph Cirincione at the Carnegie Endowment is equally skeptical. "There's not a scintilla of evidence," he says. "Is it possible? Yes. Is it possible Iran has a base on the moon? Yes."

The Known Unknowns

Between clear fact and pure speculation lies the realm of questions based on shreds of evidence that actually exist. That's where the IAEA's investigators spend most of their time, and that's where they've encountered some of their greatest frustrations. "After more than three years of Agency efforts to seek clarity about all aspects of Iran's nuclear program, the existing gaps in knowledge continue to be a matter of concern," EBaradei wrote with considerable understatement in last week's report.

There's still no paper trail showing the details of Iran's relationship with the clandestine nuclear network of Pakistani scientist AQ Khan. Some of the same middlemen who supplied Iran also supplied Libya, which turned over a trove of intelligence about the network to Western governments in 2003, and the Libyans got weapon designs. The Iranians said they did not, but some of the few papers they have shown the IAEA suggest weapon-related activity.

Libya also got designs and parts from AQ Khan's people for P-2 centrifuges, which are much more efficient than the P-1s Iran acknowledged first acquiring in 1987. Iran told the IAEA it got some P-2 technology in 1995, but did nothing with it until 2002. Then last month Ahmadinejad told students in the city of Khorasan that P-2s "are going through the research and testing phase." The IAEA is still waiting for Iran to explain.

As suspicious as all this sounds--and is--some evidence against Iran hasn't turned out to be as sinister as it seemed at first. The IAEA had discovered minute traces of highly enriched uranium on some Iranian equipment that seemed to indicate a clandestine program. The Iranians said they were "shocked" by the level of contamination, and that it must have been left there by someone--presumably the Pakistanis--using the centrifuges before Iran got them. Extensive tests "tend, on balance, to support Iran's statement," the IAEA concluded.

"The most important of the known unknowns is what this program is really about," says Matt Bunn, a nuclear expert at Harvard's Belfer Center. Is Iran determined to build a weapon, or does it merely want the option? Other analysts, including EBaradei, have suggested its aim is to launch wide-ranging negotiations about the future of the whole region. But in the official report, there's no speculation about that. "The Agency cannot make a judgment about, or reach a conclusion on, future compliance or intentions," he said. There are just too many unknowns.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: Iran's High-Stakes Nuclear Gambler

Time

By Azadeh Moaveni

5/8

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a President unlike any other Iran has known: belligerent, naive, at once a fundamentalist and nationalist, and a dark genius at mobilizing Iranian public opinion. In the first year of his presidency, he has risen out of obscurity to become one of the most troublesome and noteworthy leaders in the world.

His uncompromising stand on his country's right to enrich uranium has increased the threat of further turmoil in the Middle East and edged the U.S. and Iran closer to a military confrontation than ever before in recent times. Iranians elected Ahmadinejad, 49, with the clear mandate of improving their economic lives. His campaign slogan, "We can do it," implied fighting corruption, not building the Bomb. Often the President's rhetoric--like his suggestion that Israel be moved to Alaska or maybe Europe--seems outrageous to Iranians, who are more interested in engaging the world than in eliciting its condemnation. But the former mayor of Tehran and Revolutionary Guards commander has formulated a message that the majority of Iranians agree with: it's time for Iran to be strong again, and no time is better than now. He has made nuclear power an issue of national pride, and so far, his position that the U.S. "can't do a thing" is proving true. It's a dangerous gamble, though, because it may force America to flex its military muscle to prove him wrong.

IRAQ

Kurdistan: Dangerous Passage

Newsweek

By Owen Matthews

5/8

Could another front be opening in the Iraq war? Over recent weeks, some 200,000 Turkish troops, backed by tanks and helicopter gunships, have massed along the mountainous border with Iraq. Trucks passing from Turkey, ferrying the imported goods and foodstuffs that are the lifeblood of the Kurdish economy, have slowed from 1,000 a day to just a couple of hundred. The Turkish military says its troops are there only to prevent armed insurgents of the Kurdish PKK rebel group from crossing into Turkey from their bases on Iraq's Kandil Mountain. But last week, according to angry Foreign Ministry officials in Baghdad, Turkish commandos briefly crossed 15 kilometers into Iraqi territory in pursuit of PKK rebels--a move that could signal dangerous new frictions to come.

Compared with the rest of the country, Iraqi Kurdistan has been a haven of stability--still subject to insurgent bombings, but generally free of the kind of sectarian violence that has racked Baghdad and other major cities in recent weeks. But tensions are rising. Shia militiamen from Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army have begun moving into oil-rich Kirkuk, claimed as part of Kurdistan. In neighboring Iran last month some 10,000 troops attacked PKK-affiliated rebels who defy Tehran's rule in the region. And the Turks have grown increasingly frustrated with the 5,000 guerrillas holed up at Kandil. Over the last two months, the PKK and its political affiliates have stepped up violence inside Turkey to levels not seen in a decade. At least eight government troops were killed in a series of ambushes in Turkey's southeast; two bombs linked to the PKK were planted in Istanbul and, last month, 14 civilians were killed as Kurdish cities all over the southeast erupted in violence.

Ankara is losing patience with the United States, which has promised to deal with the PKK problem. Last week Gen. Hilmi Ozkok, chief of the politically powerful General Staff, claimed that Turkey had the right to defend itself under the United Nations Charter, hinting strongly that the military was seriously considering hot-pursuit cross-border raids. (Before Saddam was toppled in 2003, Turkish troops used to cross the border regularly chasing the PKK, often with the connivance of local Iraqi Kurdish groups which had their own differences with the PKK.) And Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in Ankara last week to try to defuse the crisis, that "we expect the U.S. to do more and to be more active." In reply, Rice warned that any cross-border operations would have "a destabilizing effect" on Iraq's fragile security.

Washington is caught between two allies--NATO member Turkey, its closest friend in the Muslim world, and the Iraqi Kurds, its closest ally within Iraq. By rights, of course, dealing with the PKK "should be the responsibility of the Iraqi government," as a senior Iraqi official puts it, not wishing to speak publicly on security matters. "We will not allow any PKK attacks on [Turkey] from our soil. But the limits on the central government are obvious. According to one U.S. official, also not wishing to be quoted on such a sensitive topic, Washington has been trying to pressure Iraq's Kurds to crack down on the PKK themselves, before Ankara steps up its campaign. U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has several points of leverage. One is that the Kurds are desperate to have a more or less permanent American military base on their territory as insurance against a future anti-Kurdish regime in Baghdad. Another is that the Kurds will need U.S. help to contain any Shia designs on oil-rich Kirkuk. Also, they

need Washington's support in any deal on the parceling out of the country's future oil revenues.

So, the big question is why the Iraqi Kurds aren't cracking down on the PKK insurgents, with whom, after all, they once used to clash. One reason is that, under Saddam, the precarious autonomy of Iraq's Kurds was largely dependent on the good will of Ankara. That was ample incentive to keep the PKK in check. But today, Iraqi Kurds are much more confident. For the first time, they have their own nation in all but name--and are thus more willing to support the nationalistic aspirations of their 14 million countrymen living in Turkey. In words widely interpreted in Ankara as a veiled threat to support a Kurdish insurgency inside Turkey if the cross-border raids continue, Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Regional Government, warned last week that if Turkey tries "to stop our people from profiting or progressing," then Turkey's own "stability and security" would suffer. That kind of talk is likely to reinforce Turkey's determination to stamp out the PKK once and for all--and take their war inside Iraq if necessary.

No More Vietnams: This Time, Let's Finish the Job

Weekly Standard

By David Gelernter

5/8

NOT LONG AGO RICHARD COHEN of the Washington Post wrote a column about Iraq headlined "As in Vietnam, dereliction of duty all over again." The Vietnam analogy has been part of the Iraq war story since the fighting started (in fact, since before it started). The Bush administration often deals with its critics by ignoring them. This time it can't. Too much rides on the president looking these critics in the eye and telling them: Damned right this is Vietnam all over again. Only this time we will not get scared and walk out in the middle. This time we will stand fast, and repair a piece of the American psyche that has been damaged and hurting ever since we ran from Vietnam in disgrace way back in April 1975.

Of course any citizen is welcome to criticize the conduct of any war--tactfully, without giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Maybe we are doing things all wrong in Iraq. But those who launch the Vietnam analogy at the administration are lobbing heavy artillery for a different reason. They are predicting (with obnoxious schadenfreude) that Iraq will turn out like Vietnam in the end: We will proclaim ourselves beaten, give up, and go home. The sooner we understand this, the sooner we will do the intelligent and humane thing and surrender.

These critics ought to be told firmly that Iraq is indeed another Vietnam. Once again we are in the middle of cleaning out one of the world's ugliest abscesses, which turns out (again) to be infected and putrefying.

In Iraq as in Vietnam, the government gave the American people an unrealistic estimate of how hard the war would be. Both times it was an honest but costly mistake, which could probably have been avoided.

In Iraq as in Vietnam, it's impossible to say whether our intervention was justified by self-interest. (Churchill: "It is not given to the cleverest and most calculating of mortals to know with certainty what is their interest. Yet it is given to quite a lot of simple folk to know every day what is their duty.") In Iraq as in Vietnam, we have promised to rescue a suffering people from its tormentors. (Our duty was not to plant democracy in Iraq; our duty was to put an end to unbearable suffering. But planting democracy seemed like the only way to accomplish this goal, unless we were bucking for a new colony.) In Iraq as in Vietnam, the fighting is ugly and bloody. But in Iraq, unlike Vietnam, we will stay until we are finished.

Not many nations get a second chance to show the world and themselves that they are serious after all, that their friends can trust them and their enemies ought to fear them. There is no way we can atone for the blood and death we inflicted (indirectly) on South Vietnam by abandoning it to Communist tyranny. That failure can never be put right. But we can make clear that "No More Vietnams" is a Republican slogan. It means that we will never again go back on our word and betray our friends, our soldiers, and ourselves.

Most wars bog down in hard fighting at some point or other. When that happens, America must be able to trust itself not to run away. George Washington and his men did not run away after General Howe

took Philadelphia for the British in September 1777, and Washington's counterattack on Germantown failed in October, and the brand new American army had to settle into miserable, freezing winter quarters at Valley Forge. Every American schoolchild used to know what Valley Forge meant: Stand firm and fight, no matter how terrible things are. The Union army did not run away in the fall of 1862, although Lee and Jackson had won a huge Confederate victory at Second Bull Run, and Lee had crossed the Potomac into Maryland and was threatening Washington, Baltimore, and (again) Philadelphia, and was expected to capture all of Maryland and a crucial railroad bridge in Pennsylvania--which would just about cut the Union in two. But Lincoln and the Union did not give up. The Confederates didn't run away either. Their cause was wrong, but they stood up heroically and fought till they were crushed to bits.

Nor did the American army run away 80 years later in the spring of 1942, although the Pacific fleet had been smashed at Pearl Harbor, Manila had been evacuated, Bataan had surrendered after a desperate, starving defense--and then Corregidor had surrendered too. But MacArthur promised that Americans would return to liberate the Philippines, and that's just what happened.

The United States has no tradition of running away. The left had better get this straight: Vietnam was an aberration. There will be no more Vietnams.

THOSE WHO THINK that "no more Vietnams" means that cowardice is the better part of wisdom don't know their Vietnam history either. There are many important lies in circulation about Vietnam, like counterfeit \$50 bills that keep resurfacing. Those who held these views during the war itself weren't liars; in most cases they were telling the truth as they understood it. But decades later, it requires an act of will to keep one's ignorance pristine.

Lie #1: We were wrong to fight the Vietnamese Communists in the first place; they only wanted what was best for their country. In *Why We Were in Vietnam*, Norman Podhoretz summarizes Vietnam after the Communist victory. He quotes the liberal New York Times columnist Tom Wicker, outspoken critic of the war, on its aftermath. "What Vietnam has given us instead of a bloodbath [is] a vast tide of human misery in southeast Asia." He quotes Truong Nhu Tang, minister of justice in the Provisional Revolutionary Government that ruled South Vietnam after the Americans were ordered by Congress to run away: "Never has any previous regime [previous to the Communists] brought such masses of people to such desperation. Not the military dictators, not the colonialists, not even the ancient Chinese overlords." Prominent South Vietnamese were thrown into prison and tortured with revoltingly inventive cruelty. Virtually the whole South Vietnamese army and government were herded into concentration camps. Tang fled Vietnam in 1979, one of untold thousands who put to sea in crowded, rickety boats. Anything to get free of Communist Vietnam, the workers' and peasants' paradise, Fonda-land by the Sea. In Vietnam, as everywhere else on earth, communism was another word for death.

Lie #2: The Vietnam war was unwinnable. We had no business sending our men to a war they were bound to lose. The Communist Vietcong launched their first major coordinated offensive in January 1968--the "Tet offensive." "Tet was a military disaster for Hanoi," writes the historian Derek Leebaert. "Intended to destroy South Vietnamese officialdom and spark a popular uprising, Tet ironically had more of an effect in turning South Vietnam's people against the North." But America had been fighting ineffectively. In May 1968, Creighton Abrams replaced William Westmoreland as supreme American commander in Vietnam and U.S. strategy snapped to, immediately. With Abrams in charge, the war "was being won on the ground," writes the historian Lewis Sorley, "even as it was being lost at the peace table and in the U.S. Congress." The British counterinsurgency expert Sir Robert Thompson commented on America's "Christmas bombing" campaign of 1972, which devastated the North: "You had won the war. It was over." American anti-warriors insisted on losing it anyway.

Lie #3: As the American people learned the facts, they turned against the war and forced America's withdrawal from Vietnam. Actually, Americans continued to support the war nearly until the end. The 1972 presidential election was a referendum on the war; "Come home, America!" said the antiwar Democrat George McGovern--and he lost to Richard Nixon in a landslide. Of all U.S. population segments, 18-to-24-year-old men--who were subject to the draft, who did the fighting--were consistently the war's strongest supporters. "It was not the American people which lost its stomach," writes historian Paul Johnson, "it was the American leadership."

Lie #4: The real heroes of Vietnam were the protesters and draft-resisters who forced America to give up a disastrously wrong policy. If this was heroism, it was dirt cheap heroism. While college students paraded and protested and whooped it up, America's working classes bore the brunt of the fighting,

bleeding, and dying. Around 80 percent of the 2.5 million enlisted men who fought in Vietnam came from poor or working class families. They lacked the law-breaking and draft-evading skills that their better-educated countrymen could draw on. And they lacked the heart to say no when their country called. Reread Norman Mailer's gorgeously written yet (like the smell of marijuana) faintly disgusting *Armies of the Night*, about a massive antiwar march on the Pentagon. You will learn or relearn all about the passionate ingenuity of left-wing lawyers fighting for clients they admired--who were innately superior to the law but scared of the consequences when they broke it.

All these lies are present symbolically in the Vietnam wall near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. Many other memorials, in Europe especially, have commemorated fallen soldiers by listing every name. The soaring (yet knotted-up, anguished) Thiepval Memorial Arch at the Somme, by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1924), is the most extraordinary and celebrated instance of the list-every-name school of memorial design. Our own wall is different, for one, insofar as it stands in a scraped-out hole in the ground; a symbolic open grave. Some day we will tear down that wall and fill up the open grave, and rebuild the wall above ground and re-engrave every name, and add two more words at the end. Two words the designer did not see fit to include. Thank you. On that day we will finally have gotten over Vietnam.

IN THE ARGUMENT OVER IRAQ we can see reflected (like ominous headlights in a rearview mirror) one of the central disputes of modern times--between a traditional "morality of duties" and a modern "morality of rights." Philosophers like to argue that these two worldviews are complementary. In fact they are contradictory. Each of these two worldviews yields an all-inclusive blueprint for society, with no room for further contributions.

Granted, it's convenient to speak of one's "duty" to help the poor and one's "right" of self-defense. No contradiction there. But think it over and you will see that, by laying out everyone's duties explicitly, you lay out everyone's rights implicitly; and vice versa. You have a right to self-defense--or, to put it differently, a duty to use no violence except (among other cases) in self-defense. Both formulas reach the same destination by different routes. By means of the "morality of duty," you shape society the way a sculptor carves stone; by the "morality of rights," you shape it the way a sculptor models clay. Two different, contradictory techniques.

The morality of duties originated in Judeo-Christianity, the morality of rights in Roman jurisprudence. The Hebrew tradition knows about rights--but only in the context of covenants, where two parties each acquire rights and responsibilities simultaneously. America's Founders and Framers spoke of rights, but might well have had this Judeo-Christian idea in mind.

But the modern preference for rights over duties has nothing to do with religion or covenants. And your choice between these two worldviews is important. Morality deals, after all, with how to conduct yourself--whereas a right ordinarily confers an advantageous position, to put it formally; having a right means that your will is favored over someone else's. It's therefore conceivable that the morality of duties is the one and only kind of morality; that a morality of rights is a contradiction in terms. It's conceivable that a "morality of rights" actually rejects morality in favor of some other way to organize society--I'll call it "rights-liberalism." Rights-liberalism might be better than traditional Judeo-Christian morality, or worse, or neither, but in any case I believe it is not morality. In fact, proponents of rights-liberalism seem to believe (though they rarely say so point blank) that it is the next step beyond morality.

Even if you don't care about religion, you might still choose the morality of duty, with its focus on an individual's obligations, over rights-liberalism--which focuses not on your duty but on what is coming to you. Many Republicans and conservatives do prefer to discuss duties; many Democrats and liberals would rather talk about rights.

Now when you assign someone a duty, he is responsible for carrying it out; when you assign him a right, someone else is responsible for guaranteeing it. Rights-liberalism is a worldview that centers on "make way for me"--and some find it unattractive for just this reason. "Ask not what your country can do for you," said JFK, "ask what you can do for your country." In other words: Don't ask for rights, dammit; ask for duties. Nowadays Kennedy's most famous line is dismissed as a routine call for good citizenship. But there is more to it than that. The statement was taken up with amazing enthusiasm. Every schoolchild knew it. The enthusiasm was partly because the line is catchy; it might also have reflected a deep-lying sympathy over the rising call for civil rights. But it's also true that America in 1961 was just on the point of seeing traditional morality swamped by rights-liberalism. People felt what was happening. No doubt some felt, too, that Kennedy was sticking up for an older, better

worldview that was on its way out.

We find this same deep disagreement over Iraq. Should we talk about America's duty to protect itself, and do its best to protect other, weaker peoples? Or should we talk about Saddam Hussein's right to develop weapons so long as they aren't "weapons of mass destruction," and the Iraqi people's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?

The problem with the second formulation is that it blacks out whenever we reach the hard questions. Who will police the rights of Iraq, and guarantee the rights of Iraqis? The usual answer is the U.N. or some other multinational concoction. In other words: nobody. Sometimes we do leave things largely to the U.N. The Security Council has just voted to freeze the assets of four prominent Sudanese: the first punitive measures ever against instigators of violence in the Darfur region--which so far has killed hundreds of thousands.

When conservatives repossess the motto "No more Vietnams," it will be a perfect occasion to address one of the most important questions of our time. Is American policy based on rights or on duties? Is America in Iraq because of our duties or their rights? If "their rights" is the answer, liberals are correct: We have stuck our necks out unnecessarily; we could just as easily have let someone else worry about it, the way France and Germany did. If the answer is "our duties," we had no choice. We had an obligation to take charge of our own safety in a world that is lousy with terrorists, and we had to face up to our obligations as the world's strongest nation. And obviously we have duties in nations besides Iraq also. America doesn't have the power to help everybody--which is no excuse for helping nobody.

American character is on the line. For the sake of this nation--of its good name, its big heart, the sacrifices of its many brave defenders, the genius of its creators--of its greatness, in short--conservatives had better not lose this fight.

The administration was wrong to let Americans get the idea that Iraq would be easy. But it was right to fight. And because Iraq is exactly Vietnam all over again, our eventual victory won't only be good for Iraq, the Middle East, and peace on earth. It will repair American self-respect. And it will turn the Friends of Cowardice, the U.S. Mothers for Despair, and all their allied groups back into the peripheral players they always used to be in this country--until Vietnam.

--David Gelernter is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard and a national fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

'I Demand a Timetable'

Newsweek

By Scott Johnson

5/8

Variously described as a populist Shia cleric, a violent militia leader and a political kingmaker, Moqtada al-Sadr is all of the above. His growing power--and his stance against the American occupation--helped impede the formation of an Iraqi government for four and a half months. Now that a government is finally coming together, Sadr is still a wild card. Will he fuel further violence or help to mend sectarian wounds? NEWSWEEK requested an interview with Sadr several weeks ago and gave him a list of questions. Last week he provided an eight-page response, typed in Arabic. Excerpts:

NEWSWEEK: In 2003, the Americans and various Iraqi parties described you and your followers as a minor force. Clearly no one would say that now.

SADR: Time elapsed; things became clear and resulted in the Sadr trend--a powerful, loyal political and military force. At the same time, I reach out my hand to cooperate [and] to make peace in Iraq, to drive away the shadow of the armies of darkness. The occupation is the creator of all problems. I pray to Allah to take away the problems and their creator.

At one point the U.S. military and [American] political spokesmen said it was their aim to "kill or capture" you. Your reaction now?

Their threats are still on, and my life is cheap as a price for the service of Islam. America is baring its teeth against Shiite mosques and sanctuaries.

What happened to the murder warrant issued against you and some other people in the matter of Ayatollah [Abdel Majid] al-Khoei [Khoei was killed in April 2003]?

The arrest warrant was issued by the occupation, not by the Iraqi courts, and this is not legal. Many people were arrested over this matter, and they were released. This is true evidence that they are innocent.

It is said that you have made some contacts with Sunni resistance figures. Do you still have such relationships with them in the wake of the [attack on the Askariya shrine in Samarra]?

There is no Sunni or Shia resistance; there is an Iraqi Islamic resistance. But I address the Sunnis through NEWSWEEK: One, they should specify their stance toward attacks on civilians. After the attack in Samarra, the Sunnis didn't have a clear stance. Two, their stance toward Takfiris [adherents to the extremist ideology espoused by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi] is not clear. Three, they should specify their stance toward the Shia. Are we Muslims or not? Four, they should demand the execution of Saddam Hussein. And five, they should specify their stance toward families who have been displaced.

You blamed the Askariya shrine bombing on the Americans, in part. Can you explain your thinking?

There is only an incomplete sovereignty in Iraq, which means that the occupation is the decision maker. Any attack is their responsibility. The U.S. ambassador and Rumsfeld have ignited the sectarian crisis here.

The Mahdi Army is supposedly the only faction that hasn't signed on to an agreement to incorporate militias into governing bodies. Can you explain why? The Mahdi Army is not a militia. I issued a statement recently limiting the Mahdi Army personnel to cultural, social and religious acts.

Many people claim that Mahdi Army militiamen have been responsible for sectarian attacks in recent weeks. Others say they're simply defending their neighborhoods. What do you say?

Mahdi Army personnel are not sinless. But they are integrating themselves despite the harsh circumstances they live in.

You've become part of the political establishment now. Are you more moderate? Everyone builds Iraq the way he sees fit. The most important issue is the timetable for the U.S. withdrawal. We know there will be no justice under occupation, at any time and any place. In fact, there will be no stability for anyone, since Iraq defines the destiny of the world. You can see the families of U.S. soldiers waiting for their sons, brothers, men to return home peacefully. Where is the distribution of justice and peace there?

Your partners in the ruling coalition are very much against insisting that the Americans leave immediately from Iraq; [they think] it would be a disaster. We want to build our country by our own hands. I demand a timetable. Even if it is for a long time, it doesn't mean it isn't possible to have a timetable for it.

Isn't it true that American advisers are not allowed into the ministries you control?

Yes, it is forbidden, and it is prohibited for anyone to deal with them. Otherwise he will be disobedient to God and I will have no relation with him. Can you tell us something about yourself personally? Married? Children? I am married; I have no children. I was 25 when my father was assassinated. If he were alive, the U.S. would never have been able to come to Iraq.

Face to Face With Terror

Time

By Aparisim Ghosh

5/8

When he was picked for a secret mission one evening in early 2005, Ahmed Bakr felt no fear. He had been on many life-threatening assignments for al-Qaeda in Iraq. In comparison, taking a small package of high explosives to a village on the outskirts of Baghdad was almost an insult. "I thought, Why are they sending a fighter for such a simple job?" he says. But when he arrived at the given address, he began to sense that the mission might not be so petty after all. The modest house was guarded by fighters, one of whom recognized Bakr and waved him in. As he sat on a rug on the floor of the living room, he told himself this was clearly the hideout of an important figure. Then a man walked in from another room, greeting him in a quiet voice. It was Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda's leader in Iraq.

Bakr, a veteran of dozens of battles against U.S. troops, says he was instantly awestruck. "I could not feel my tongue, my hands, my legs ... I could not move," he says, his eyes widening at the very memory. "For a few moments I could not even think. My mind went completely blank." Bakr says al-Zarqawi led him into another room, with prayer mats and copies of the Koran. "Come, let us pray," al-Zarqawi said. Bakr says they prayed for about three hours, with al-Zarqawi reciting from memory several long surahs, or chapters from the Koran, in a whisper. From time to time, he broke into sobs and moans, babbling incoherently, as if in a trance. Afterward, Bakr was asked to join al-Zarqawi and some of his closest aides in a discussion on the life of the Prophet Muhammad that went on until dawn. It wasn't until morning that al-Zarqawi gave Bakr a message to take back to his field commander. It was an order to launch a suicide-bombing operation.

Bakr spoke about his first meeting--and many others over several months--with al-Zarqawi in a recent interview with TIME in Baghdad. He admitted he was using a pseudonym and asked that some details of his experiences be omitted in order to avoid al-Zarqawi's wrath. The anecdotes and other details in his account were verified by several sources, including a second al-Qaeda fighter who has spent some time close to al-Zarqawi, commanders of two Iraqi insurgent groups who have met the Jordanian-born terrorist, U.S. counterterrorism officials-- who confirmed some aspects and cast doubt on others--and others who have tracked his career closely. Their accounts provide a rare and intimate portrait of a fugitive who, despite being the most feared man in Iraq, has also remained the most obscure. After three years in which al-Zarqawi has helped turn Iraq into a terrorist breeding ground and claimed responsibility for the deaths of hundreds, new images of his visage emerged last week for the first time in years when he appeared in a video released on the Internet. The video's release coincided with the naming of Nouri al-Maliki as Iraq's new Prime Minister, who the U.S. hopes can finally form a unity government that will begin to erode the strength of the insurgency. In the video, a bearded and black-clad al-Zarqawi fires a machine gun to show off his prowess as a fighter, then aims some verbal broadsides at the enemy. He accuses the U.S. of waging a crusade against Islam, adding, "By God, your dreams will be defeated by our blood and by our bodies."

Such fiery rhetoric, though, masks a gradual but unmistakable effort by al-Zarqawi to recast his image. Based on interviews by TIME with Bakr and others who have associated with al-Zarqawi, a picture emerges of a cold-blooded killer trying to reinvent himself as a quasi-religious leader. He wants to be seen as a deeply spiritual Muslim whose actions are driven by a desire to save Islam from attacks from external and internal enemies, according to those sources. The most striking aspect of that transformation is al-Zarqawi's attempt to mimic the *sirah*, or lifestyle, of the Prophet. Those who have seen al-Zarqawi in the past year say he constantly uses the written histories of the Prophet's life, known collectively as the Hadith, to copy the way he spoke, sat, walked, ate and slept, even the way he brushed his teeth (the Prophet is recorded as having used the twigs of a particular bush). He has taken to using musk-scented oils and requiring his closest aides to be similarly anointed because Islamic history says the Prophet favored those traditional Arabic perfumes.

What explains such conspicuous expressions of piety? Some Western officials believe that al-Zarqawi may be trying to project a more moderate, appealing image to regain some of the prestige he has lost in recent months. Clashes between al-Qaeda, which mainly comprises foreign fighters, and homegrown Iraqi insurgent groups have been interpreted as an indication that al-Zarqawi is no longer the all-powerful figure leading the anti-U.S. forces in Iraq. He has also attracted criticism for his group's deadly attacks on Iraqi Shi'ites.

But al-Zarqawi hasn't lost his appetite for murder--or his determination to sow civil war in Iraq. Bakr says he recalls conversations in which al-Zarqawi raged at the Shi'ites. "Those were the only times I hear him shout," he says. "He really hates the Shi'ites, even more than the Americans." The terrorist leader may carry his Koran at all times, but his Kalashnikov is never far from his reach, as evidenced by last week's video, in which he is clearly seen wearing an ammunition belt. Bakr and other sources

say al-Zarqawi constantly wears a suicide-bomber's belt, taking it off only to bathe, although a U.S. official questioned this. When al-Zarqawi is on the road, his car is said to be rigged to blow up at the throw of a switch. "He will never be taken alive," says Loretta Napoleoni, author of *Insurgent Iraq: Al-Zarqawi and the New Generation*. "He may be getting more religious, but the mujahid in him wants to go down fighting."

AL-ZARQAWI IS NO RELIGIOUS SCHOLAR. A high school dropout, he memorized the Koran while in prison and acquired his religious ideas from extremist preachers and thinkers in Afghanistan and Jordan. To devout Muslims, emulation of the Prophet is considered desirable, and most believers concentrate on Muhammad's well-documented attributes, like frugality, modesty, charity and respect for elders. But al-Zarqawi, like others who subscribe to extremist schools of Islam, takes emulation literally. Among the examples Bakr cites is al-Zarqawi's tendency, modeled on the Prophet's, to "do everything from right to left: he puts on his right shoe first, washes his right hand first after a meal, talks to people sitting on his right." (Al-Zarqawi's status as a wanted man forces him to make some exceptions in his mimicking of Muhammad. While most of the literalist schools of Islam require that Muslims follow the Prophet's example and keep full beards, al-Zarqawi, who frequently alters his appearance to throw off his pursuers, sometimes shaves. For the same reason, he can't afford to dress as the Prophet did.)

Like many other literalists, al-Zarqawi favors one of the Koran's more complex chapters, known as "The Cave." It includes some metaphysical stories whose meaning has been debated by theologians for centuries. The Prophet is said to have advised his followers to read the "The Cave" before Friday prayers, and "some people mistakenly take this to mean that this surah was the Prophet's favorite," says Khaled Abou al-Fadl, an Islamic jurist at UCLA. Bakr says al-Zarqawi frequently quotes extensively from "The Cave" and encourages discussion about its stories.

For many Muslims, emulating Muhammad's *sirah* is a deeply spiritual exercise, designed to make believers feel closer to God. In al-Zarqawi's case, baser instincts may be at work. "People like al-Zarqawi try to portray themselves as very close to the Prophet in order to legitimize their other actions," says al-Fadl. Those who have observed al-Zarqawi at close quarters suggest that this is the logical next step in his evolution as a jihadi. Once a street thug in his hometown of Zarqa, he turned himself into a mujahid, or holy warrior, in Afghanistan, and then an emir, or military chieftain, in Iraq. "At some point, every emir wants to become a sheik," or religious leader, says the commander of an Iraqi insurgent group. "Since he was always quite religious, it is natural for him to grow in that direction." He cites Osama bin Laden as an example of another mujahid who rose gradually to the status of sheik.

A U.S. counterterrorism official says al-Zarqawi's attempts at reinvention may stem from tactical considerations that are due to the changing nature of his mission. Having fomented a sectarian conflict in Iraq--which he vowed to do as early as 2004--the Jordanian has been consciously adopting a lower profile. He went out of his way, for example, to set up a council of jihadist groups, under the leadership of Abu Abdallah Rashid al-Baghdadi, a previously unknown figure. The objective, says the official, is to put an Iraqi face on the jihad. "He's savvy enough to realize he's a foreigner in Iraq," he says. Last week's video bore the council's name, Shura al-Mujahedin, although the black flag of al-Zarqawi's group, al-Qaeda in Iraq, was occasionally visible.

In the meantime, al-Zarqawi has also been working to expand his influence beyond Iraq, and his new mantle of religiosity will be especially useful in parts of the Islamic world where military skills are less important than the ability to inspire devotion among hard-line Muslims, as bin Laden has. "For somebody who wants to position himself as a leader in the Muslim community, it can be a very effective tactic," says Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, a prominent U.S.-based Muslim preacher and scholar.

Will it work for al-Zarqawi? Imam Abdul Rauf believes that most Muslims will see through the pretense and "recognize the wolf in the sheep's clothing." Many, he says, will be outraged by al-Zarqawi's attempt to use the lifestyle of the Prophet in order to cover or justify his terrorist agenda. But, Imam Abdul Rauf says, "there will always be some people who will buy into it."

In Iraq there are signs that the spiritual turn is bolstering al-Zarqawi's stature. In separate interviews with two top military commanders of Iraq's largest nationalist insurgent groups, it was clear that al-Zarqawi's religiosity is making a deep impression. Both men have met the al-Qaeda leader; they say that he has always been very religious but that in recent months his faith has become more pronounced. Both commanders say their regard for al-Zarqawi has grown as a result of his

transformation. "In the beginning, we thought of him as a hard man, a great fighter," says one of the commanders. "But more recently, we're seeing a different side, a spiritual side." The other commander says meetings with al-Zarqawi, once brief encounters involving exchanges of intelligence and discussions about military tactics, are now dominated by spiritual matters. "He wants you to pray with him and to discuss religion," says the second commander.

But, the commanders say, al-Zarqawi's religiosity has not made him any less effective as a jihadi leader. If anything, it has made him more passionate about his cause and determined to kill for it. And he retains a full range of deadly skills. The commanders especially cite his expertise with explosives and an apparently photographic memory that enables him not only to recite the Koran but also to recall minutiae of military plans and remember obscure paths and hideouts in the giant Iraqi desert west of Baghdad. The U.S. counterterrorism official warns that al-Zarqawi's transformation may make him more dangerous than ever. "He has become more politically savvy, but he hasn't changed his stripes," says the official. "He still considers violence to be a religious duty." It is a duty he performs all too well.

Back to Falluja

Weekly Standard

By Michael Fumento

5/8

Al Anbar Province, Iraq

I ARRIVED AT CAMP FALLUJA in Iraq's Anbar Province by Blackhawk at 4 a.m. on the morning of April 13. No sooner had I lain down in my bunk than I heard the "thump, thump, thump" of outgoing artillery, five rounds in all. I later learned they were illumination rounds, probably called in to light up the area around the Iraqi Army's Observation Post 3 (OP3) in Karma, just northeast of Falluja. It was, I was told, the largest enemy action in the area in the last eight months.

This was my second visit to Al Anbar, a hotbed of enemy activity that stretches out west of Baghdad all the way to the Syrian and Jordanian borders. It's almost entirely Sunni and was heavily Baathist before Saddam's overthrow, and it's also the pipeline into Iraq for jihadists from the rest of the Islamic world. When I was in Camp Falluja a year ago for about a week, I heard no outgoing fire, and there was no incoming fire. Ramadi, the reputed headquarters of al Qaeda in Iraq, remained wracked with violence, but Falluja was a tame pussycat.

Now it has sprouted long nails and sharp teeth. Before I left the city and its environs, I would hear outgoing artillery on all three nights I spent time at Camp Falluja, withstand a mortar attack on one of the small outposts I stayed at, and hear more firefights in the distance, either from the outposts or out on patrol, than I could count.

Did we seize Falluja in November 2004 only to slowly cede it back to the enemy? And if so, what does it say about the "grab and hold" strategy underway to secure this huge Sunni province, without which the war cannot be won? Is the Iraqi Army (IA) that we are training up to the job? The answers are complex, and I often felt like each of the nine blind men grappling with the elephant--at one point feeling a trunk, at another the tail. But this is what I saw and heard.

MiTTs and the IA

I rotated among three different battalions of the Iraqi First Division based out of Camp India, just east of Falluja. One was in Falluja proper, one in Karma, and one at Camp India itself. All comprise both Iraqi Army soldiers and Americans. The IA recruits come here fresh from basic training (formerly a scant three weeks, but now eight) for further instruction in tracking down, detaining, and killing the enemy. The enemy is known by several nicknames including "Ali Baba," "Wahhabi" (the strict form of Islam to which many of the terrorists adhere), "the bad guys," and "Mooj," for mujahedeen.

The Americans attached to the Iraqi First Division are from the 80th Division, an Army Reserve unit based in Richmond, Virginia. They are not combat support--that comes from Marines at Camp Falluja and various forward operating bases (or FOBs, which rhymes with "Rob") throughout the area. Rather, these soldiers form "Military Transition Teams," or MiTTs. They always accompany the IA on patrols and raids "outside the wire," as leaving the camp is called; their job is to transition the IA into an

independent fighting force that eventually can operate with no American help. These MiTT units may have less than a dozen men in them, including a few Marines attached for extra firepower.

Normally, what the MiTTs are doing would be the job of the Army Special Forces, the vaunted Green Berets who performed so brilliantly in leading the Northern Alliance to victory in Afghanistan. But "we don't have enough SF to do what we're doing now, in the magnitude and at the pace we want to do this," explains Col. Thomas C. Greenwood. "We have over 50 adviser teams just in Al Anbar. You'd use up every Green Beret team in the world if you were to use just them." Greenwood, from the First Marine Expeditionary Force, is the assistant chief of staff for Marine advisers to all three branches of the Iraqi security forces: the army, the border forces, and the police.

Friendly Fire

How is the transition from U.S. forces to Iraqi Security Forces going in the Falluja area? Judging by the amount of hostile activity, it might seem not very well. It's unfair to say there's constant fighting in the area, but when you hear several firefights in a day, you know it's busy. On my second night in the area, at Second Battalion in Karma, I was enjoying a beautiful moonlit evening, watching the Iraqi soldiers excitedly prepare for the arrival of a captured suspect. Suddenly I heard the brat-brat-brat of machine gun fire perhaps two miles away. Then all hell broke loose out there. I listened for awhile, then went inside to find out what was happening. It wasn't good.

Seven insurgents had attacked a checkpoint at a vital bridge over the Euphrates that I would later visit. The IA were already jumpy from having three rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) fired at them earlier in the day, two of which hit the bridge. Now they were shooting back from both the bridge position and an upper floor of a building near the bridge where they had more soldiers stationed. At some point the insurgents slipped out, but in the meantime a Marine quick reaction force had arrived. The Marines, unfortunately, were unaware that there was an IA post on the bridge and took them under fire. The IA, paying no attention to the color of the Marine tracer rounds, assumed they were bad guys and fired back.

The commander of the unit I was embedded with, Maj. William Rummel, worked his walkie-talkie furiously to get both sides to cease fire. He succeeded just in time. The Marines, he later told the Iraqis, were about to call in a helicopter gunship to spray the bridge and probably rocket the building. Although about 2,000 rounds had been fired off (300 Marine, 1,700 Iraqi), nobody was hurt. That's not particularly surprising. It's not like in the movies where it usually only takes one or two rounds to bring down a soldier. Unless a good sniper is at work, it takes a lot of bullets to kill a man.

The next day, on a two-hour foot patrol, we heard another firefight and saw flares go up and smoke rising, though buildings blocked our view. Shortly after, I went back to Camp Falluja to be handed over to another unit when our Humvee broke down. While we were waiting for it to be fixed, there was, again, the thumping of outgoing artillery.

Finally we got to Third Battalion at Camp India at 2 a.m. Exhausted, I fell asleep in seconds, only to be awakened by four large explosions that sounded awfully close. They were. The bad guys had hit us with 122-millimeter mortars, the largest size they normally use, and large they are (about 5 inches in diameter and a couple feet long). The shells flew over the tiny camp and landed just outside. It's perhaps telling that I had heard enough gunfire in the past few days that I just rolled over and went back to sleep.

More encouraging was the response to an attack on Observation Post 3, which I visited two days after the attack. Manned by about 80 IA and three Marines, OP3 was stealthily enveloped on three sides by about 50 to 80 enemy firing from buildings that were anywhere from several hundred yards away to practically across the street. They attacked with RPGs and numerous light machine guns. The IA had nothing more than a few light machine guns and their AK-47 automatic rifles. (Their commanders are adamant that they need heavier weapons, especially large-caliber machine guns, but for various reasons the U.S. military isn't ready to supply them yet.)

Normally, both IA and American forces can get air support--helicopters or fighter-bombers--within 20 minutes, assuming there's enough space between good guys and bad guys to prevent fratricide. Often there isn't. Further, in what may have been a coordinated attack, fighting was raging in Ramadi at the same time and tying down air support. So the IA and the Marines had to hold on for 45 minutes for relief, in a war in which many firefights are over in just a few minutes. Finally, Marine quick reaction

units arrived from two different directions only to find themselves under fire. But now the Iraqis and Americans switched to the offensive and got helicopter support.

For 17 hours they pursued the enemy through the city, killing 18 and taking prisoners. One IA officer was killed, a lieutenant, along with five Iraqi soldiers. Interestingly, that death was a source of pride and encouragement to the IA, in that the lieutenant died a hero--barking out orders with his dying breath. What could have been an absolute disaster became, in this war of small actions and small arms, a stunning success.

Why the Increased Violence?

And yet it must be reiterated that a year ago this area was quiet. Is beating off enemy attacks somehow better than not having them at all? It wouldn't seem so unless you consider the major demographic changes during that time.

A year ago, residents had just started trickling back to their homes. Now the people have returned and, *à la* Mao Zedong's rules for guerrilla warfare, have become "the sea" in which the enemy can swim. Further, shortly after the Battle of Falluja in November 2004, U.S. troop strength in the area was somewhere north of 3,000 and was still high when I arrived in May 2005. Now it's down to about 300, with a few thousand IA and IP (Iraqi Police) filling the vacuum. (Exact numbers are confidential.)

The enemy will and do attack the Marines. At Second Battalion in Karma, the unit proudly displays a sign reading: "Go out of our country saveges [sic]. If you don't we shall kill you all because you are terrorists and killers." It's signed "Islamic Resistance." But clearly, around Falluja at least, they prefer Iraqi targets. Is that because the Iraqis are softer targets? Col. Greenwood says no. "I think the insurgents target the Iraqis not because they're lesser fighters; I think it's because they can have a huge psychological effect. Any small victory they score helps them. It puts a damper on recruiting and allows the local populace to see insurgents have strength." He also says the "increased spike in violence is an act of desperation," a last ditch effort to win before the coalition grows any stronger. But we've been hearing that "last ditch" stuff for the last couple of years, haven't we?

I don't doubt there's truth to what Greenwood says, but it remains the case that the enemy needs softer targets. I watched a video of an attack on a Falluja police station with a surrounding wall. The tape had fallen into coalition hands when the cameraman dropped his equipment and ran. The "actors" in the film were no more competent. One fired an RPG while running, making the odds of hitting the target slightly less than zero. Another was too scared to take the safety off his RPG and just stood there looking like an idiot. Another fired his light machine gun at a wall directly in front of him, while yet another kept tripping over the ammo belt that dangled from his machine gun and dragged on the ground. Others would simply hold their weapons above their head and fire over the wall. Yet they appeared to be taking almost no return fire from the police. They could have safely aimed their weapons, but made no effort to do so. All they got for their efforts was that most were captured after being identified from the film.

It also remains true that the IP and IA provide softer targets; they are not yet up to the job of defeating these Keystone Kop "warriors."

The police are still woefully undertrained and undermanned; they spend all too much time sitting in their reinforced stations and often require protection themselves. Infiltration also remains a problem, and there have been local reports of the police showing up at a firefight and for some reason the enemy won't shoot at them. In other words, apparently they've cut a deal: "You leave us alone; we'll leave you alone."

The IA are clearly superior to the IP in terms of ability and weapons, yet the "jundi" (pronounced "joon-dee"), as the IA like to be called (although strictly speaking it refers to the low rank of private), simply lack the aggressiveness of American troops. While reports of individuals taking to their heels during a firefight are rare, the IA often seem to think that merely breaking off an enemy attack is the equivalent of victory.

I sat in an office with several IA who were in Saddam's so-called "special forces" and with Maj. Rummel, as he displayed the patience of Job in repeatedly emphasizing the need to go after and kill the enemy. There was lots of nodding, but I saw no evidence he got his point across. I also questioned the IA commander at OP3 on this during an interview, asking more than once if he was ready to send

his men out to kill rather than merely defend. He simply evaded my questions, although he did say there was a value in grabbing prisoners.

In addition to lack of aggressiveness, the IA seem incapable of exercising fire control. Even without being able to distinguish the sound of an American weapon from an Iraqi one, you can often tell the difference in an instant. The well-drilled Americans fire off short bursts; Iraqis just pull that trigger and hold it. This makes it almost impossible to aim. Guns pull up as you fire them, and before you know it you're shooting at the clouds. It also wastes vast amounts of ammunition. (This is why, in the modern versions of the venerable M-16 rifle and its shorter M-4 counterpart, "full automatic" mode is mechanically limited to three-round bursts.)

On patrol with the IA in Falluja, they repeatedly needed to be urged to fully perform their jobs, such as stopping suspicious cars and interrogating the passengers. (In Ramadi, where every daytime patrol is a matter of life and death, the IA performed considerably better and more autonomously.)

Everyone understands that the IA will never be up to the level of American soldiers. On the other hand, judging by the even more woeful performance of the enemy, they'll hardly have to be. Further, there's absolutely no evidence the insurgency is growing, while the IP and IA in Falluja clearly are. In Al Anbar, as well as in Iraq as a whole, while it's common to hear that time is on the side of the enemy, it's really not.

"We only have about 3,000 IP now," says Greenwood, "but we expect to break the 10,000 point by next fall. They go to a police academy, we train them, give them gear, and give them leadership." Further, "we have about 18,000 Iraqi soldiers in Al Anbar and had only half of that last year." Nevertheless, Greenwood and others told me, it's the Iraqi Police that will really make the difference. Just as the Marines are turning larger and larger swaths of Falluja over to the Iraqi Army, the IA will one day have to start turning those areas over to the police. "A big challenge is building the Iraqi Army, but that's not a permanent solution," says Greenwood. "Once the police network is up and operating, it's the swan song for insurgents."

Hearts, Minds, and High-Fives

What about the "hearts and minds" aspect of the war? There was no place we patrolled where we didn't at least collect prodigious amounts of smiles and greetings from both children and adults. A recon patrol through a Falluja neighborhood known as Nasser Wa Salaam was instructive. Nasser Wa Salaam is like Sadr City in Baghdad--a ghetto into which Saddam herded the Shiites. But after decades of intermarriage, it's now about 60/40 Shiite/Sunni. It's basically an open-air toilet, with sewage collecting in large puddles. Fortunately for the residents, they don't seem to know how poor they are, and when we came through they were all smiles.

Street urchins followed us around in packs, initially begging for "Choccolata" and money. "U.S. number one! George Bush number one! Choccolata?" On safer patrols, we might carry and hand out candy, but not on this one. We couldn't afford distractions; an ace sniper was operating in the area. He'd already plugged several Marines, including one who was shot while lying prone, the best defensive position if you're caught in the open--an incredible shot. "The round went into his neck and tore a path right into his lungs," a Marine told me, perhaps providing more of a forensics report than I needed.

So this time we told the kids, "No choccolata!" but they didn't seem to care. They wanted high-fives, handshakes, head rubs, and conversation, notwithstanding that we barely knew anything they said. When I told them I was a reporter--"Izmi sahafi"--they kept demanding I take their photos. So I'd pretend, and they'd be delighted.

That was the happy side. On another patrol in an overwhelmingly Shiite section near Falluja's main market, I saw barriers placed across lesser streets. They might be rocks, large concrete pipes, or even just piles of trash. I asked about them. These people were exceptionally friendly to us, so clearly the barricades weren't intended for Americans or IA. "They're terrified of the insurgents," a soldier told me. The insurgents are lazy and don't like to walk, so usually stopping their cars stops them. In any case, it prevents drive-by shootings.

But civilians are fair game for shootings, bombings, and intimidation. New structures such as schools and hospitals are regularly targeted by mortar and rocket attacks. Cell phone towers are blasted so that civilians can't call in tips to American and Iraqi forces. In Ramadi, the bad guys waited until a

hospital was 95 percent completed and then blew it up. Nobody had the heart to start over. As Col. Greenwood explains it, there are four phases to defeating the enemy. "You need security, then stability, then reconstruction, and finally prosperity in that order," he says. "We're still somewhat between the first and second. The insurgent knows if he can keep us from devoting resources to the last two, ultimately you can't win over the people--you're just using their neighborhoods as a battleground."

Throughout much of the country, not just in Al Anbar, ambitious American programs of electrification and building are often crippled, in part by attacks, but mostly by fear of attacks, causing inordinate expenditures on security. A couple of insurgents with a couple of mortar rounds that widely miss their mark can nonetheless scare off construction crews. That was a tactic used to try to prevent the building of Camp India.

"Insurgents would fire mortars into the camp and invariably a sizable number [of workers] wouldn't return the next day," Third Battalion commander Lt. Col. Doug Anderson told me. "They'd filter back, but you had significant delays as a result. The Iraqis went after one mortar team [with a patrol] and got it. That slowed the attacks. But workers died, workers were wounded, Iraqi soldiers were wounded." Nevertheless, said Anderson, "this camp was going to be built no matter what the insurgency wanted."

Ultimately the war isn't going to be decided just by killing lots of bad guys, as important (and satisfying) as that can be. Guerrilla conflicts are political, and the best Iraqi commanders know that. One of them is the commander of First Division, who has so many names he simply goes by "General Abdullah." Iraqi commanders tend to talk in circles--one was a bigger gas bag than the Hindenburg--but Abdullah is relatively straightforward.

He complains that he's outgunned by the bad guys. "My soldiers only have AKs and PKCs [light machine guns, essentially an AK-47 with extra kick], and my soldiers ask me why the Army has no heavy machine guns." But he's delighted that his sector has recently been enlarged. "The men are proud that the Marines trust us to give us more space. We have informers, and because we have good relationships with people, we can do stuff the Marines can't. But we can share information with Marines as well."

And he acknowledges that his troops can't do it all. He believes the linchpin is a strong government. "The more the people trust the government, the easier my job becomes," he says. Or as Greenwood puts it, "I think we're making progress, but what the American people have to understand is that insurgency is essentially a political contest between both sides competing for the popular will."

From Falluja all the way west to the Syrian border, Abdullah acknowledges, there is much sympathy for the enemy and many hiding places, including farms and caves. "When there is a political solution with them," he says, "they will help stop the foreign guys."

It won't be easy, but if it can be accomplished in Al Anbar it can be done anywhere. Says Greenwood, "One high-ranking Iraqi officer told me 'Al Anbar is worse than the devil!'" But Greenwood disarmed him. "I said with your help, we're going to make it too nice for the devil to visit."

--Michael Fumento, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, last wrote for The Weekly Standard about the avian flu.

Muqtada Al-Sadr: Iraq's Shadowy Power Broker

Time

By Kenneth M. Pollack

5/8

In August 2004 Muqtada Al-Sadr looked finished. Four months earlier, his Mahdi Army had risen up against U.S. and Iraqi forces, but in the end his militia was smashed. Al-Sadr, who is thought to be in his mid-30s, was forced to call off the revolt and join the U.S.-driven political process that he had fiercely denounced.

Today he is back with a vengeance. Al-Sadr proved a quick study, devising a new approach to his goal

of becoming the leader of Iraq's Shi'ite community. His militiamen switched from confronting U.S. forces to filling the vacuum in the large swaths of southern Iraq where few (or no) U.S. troops were present. He developed a social-services network that could provide the average Iraqi with the protection, medicine, supplies, assistance and even money and jobs that they so desperately needed.

The result is that Iraqis are flocking to his banners. He has parlayed this popularity into real political power. His followers won 30 of 275 seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections. It has largely been al-Sadr's recalcitrance that has produced the months of stalemate in forming a government. He doesn't yet have the power to choose the country's leaders, but he does have the clout to block those he doesn't like, and if Iraq's low-level civil war continues to build, his power seems only likely to rise with it, riding the wave of Shi'ite frustration that he has nurtured from the very beginning.

--Pollack is a Middle East expert at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center.

ISRAEL

Ehud Olmert: Israel Turns to The Inside Man

Time

By Zev Chafets

5/8

Ehud Olmert is the 12th Israeli to serve as Prime Minister and probably the best politician of them all. Ariel Sharon, his immediate predecessor, was a professional hero. Olmert, 60, is a lawyer, a dealmaker, an inside man. His Israel is a modern, democratic society, not a biblical re-enactment. Olmert was Sharon's consigliere on the decision to leave Gaza. He calculated that Israel couldn't rule the Palestinians there and remain a democracy; he had no trouble deciding which was more important. Olmert helped Sharon see the arithmetic and the political equation. It was a gutsy thing for a lifelong Likudnik to do, and it won Olmert enough respect to get him nominated and elected.

Olmert plans to finish the security barrier, bring Israeli settlers into a few blocks and leave the rest of the West Bank to the Palestinians. It's a fraught policy. The settlers and the Arabs will come to it kicking and screaming, if at all. This departure from the status quo requires more power than an Israeli Prime Minister has. So Olmert needs U.S. support. He inherits a strong partnership with George W. Bush. The President saw Sharon as a Jewish Texan, and Sharon treated him as a fellow warrior. The Bush-Olmert relationship will be based on more prosaic commonalities--good marriages, a shared mania for sports and exercise. In the end, preserving Bush as an ally is a politician's job, and Olmert is well suited to it.

--Author and journalist Chafets is currently at work on a book about Jews and evangelical Christians.

HAMAS

Mideast: No Money for Hamas

Newsweek

By Dan Ephron

5/8

After the Islamic Hamas group swept to office in the West Bank and Gaza Strip earlier this year, one of Washington's first moves was to halt most aid to the Palestinian Authority. Now the United States is working to ensure no money from other countries flows to the government led by Hamas, which much of the world considers a terrorist organization. How? By pressing Arab banks in the region to turn away clients who wish to make money transfers to the Palestinian Authority. Worried about fines or other legal measures--the most painful would be a ban on operating in the U.S.--the banks are complying so far. A \$70 million donation by Qatar and Saudi Arabia has been languishing in Cairo, where at least four banks have refused to wire the funds to Ramallah, according to bankers in the region and officials in Washington who requested anonymity in discussing confidential matters. "We have stated that if an organization or individual is facilitating direct fund-raising for Hamas, they open themselves up to action by the United States," Treasury spokeswoman Molly Millerwise told NEWSWEEK.

Other officials familiar with U.S. policy on Hamas, who spoke without authorization and thus can't be named, say the financial cordon is aimed at making governance for the Islamic group almost impossible. Hamas won a democratically contested election in January but is notorious for its suicide attacks against Israel. Israel is already withholding the other major source of Palestinian revenue--tax and Customs earnings that the Jewish state collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, worth about \$50 million a month. "This is a sure way to drive Hamas back to militancy," said Afif Safieh, the top Palestinian diplomat to the U.S. With almost no outside funding, the Palestinian Authority has failed to pay salaries to its civil servants since February, he said. Nearly one third of Palestinians live off wages paid by the government.

Ismail Haniya: Hamas' New Heavy

Time

By Dennis Ross

5/8

Ismail Haniya, the Hamas leader who is now Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, has developed the reputation of being a moderate. The term needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

Haniya, 43, rose up the Hamas organizational ladder as a close aide to the late Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the group's founder and spiritual leader. But while Haniya has promised since his election in January to clean up corruption, establish law and order, and revive the Palestinian economy, nowhere in his statements is there a place for peace with Israel. Which means that even the illusion of peacemaking is over. You cannot make peace with a group that rejects it as a principle and legitimizes terrorism. And that is what Hamas demonstrated on April 17 when its officials called the fatal bombing of a falafel stand in Tel Aviv an "act of self-defense." If Haniya's Hamas wants to act like an opposition group even when it has responsibility for governing, it will merely isolate itself and damage the Palestinian cause.

--Ross is a former U.S. envoy to the Middle East

EGYPT

Egypt: Taking On the Wrong Enemy

Newsweek

By Joshua Hammer

5/8

They moved under cover of darkness. Batons in hand, visors over their faces, black-uniformed troops charged toward the Judges' Club, a social gathering spot for magistrates in downtown Cairo. For a week hundreds of protesters had gathered there in solidarity with two magistrates who have accused ruling party hacks of rigging last year's parliamentary elections. Now the judges were facing possible prosecution, and pro-democracy forces were outraged. As the protesters held hands and chanted antigovernment slogans, the club-wielding cops fell upon them, beating many and dragging 60 to jail. The following day, thousands of security forces sealed the High Court, arresting even more demonstrators as troop carriers rumbled through the city center. "This is Mubarak's democracy," said one young protester who witnessed the crackdown but did not want his name used for fear of retribution.

Egypt seemed on the threshold of a new era last September when President Hosni Mubarak, 77, broke with 24 years of dictatorial rule by holding the country's first multiparty presidential elections. The Egyptian strongman made the concession under pressure from the Bush administration, which maintains that transforming autocratic Middle Eastern regimes into secular democracies can help to tamp down Islamic radicalism. There was never any question who would win. Mubarak swept 84 percent of the vote and his ruling National Democratic Party captured 324 of 444 parliamentary seats. But the campaign, with strident anti-Mubarak protests in Cairo and other cities, raised new hopes for freedom of expression and an enduring political pluralism. Now Egypt is in the midst of a vicious crackdown--"a backlash," says one Western diplomat, against pro-democracy forces. Opposition leaders have been arrested, protests have been squashed and Mubarak has shown no indication that

he'll remove the country's draconian Emergency Laws, put into place after Anwar Sadat's 1981 assassination.

Criticism by the United States, which gives Egypt \$1.8 billion a year in military and other aid, has been muted. During a February visit to Cairo U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said only that transforming one-party states into democracies was a "process" that "takes time." After the victory of the radical Hamas movement in the Palestinian elections, and the strong showing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's parliamentary vote, many Egyptians share the perception that the Bush administration is rethinking its commitment to Middle Eastern reform. "The whole thing was a charade," says George Ishaq, coordinator of Kifaya (Enough), which has organized dozens of anti-Mubarak protests. "The U.S. prefers stability to democracy." Some Egyptians believe that Mubarak's repression may even have contributed to last week's bombings in the beach resort of Dahab, killing 24 people. The Interior Ministry, they charge, has channeled most of its resources into pursuing secular pro-democracy activists rather than fighting Islamic terrorists holed up in the Sinai Desert.

Mubarak's most spectacular attack on democracy has been the prosecution of Ayman Nour, the main opposition candidate for president last year. A former member of Parliament, Nour founded the al-Ghad (Tomorrow) Party in 2005 and built a large following among young Egyptians with his eloquent attacks on ruling party corruption. "He is young, he is charismatic, and he is a genius at campaigning," says Hisham Kassem, the editor of al-Masri al-Yom, a pro-opposition daily newspaper in Cairo. "Mubarak is frightened of him."

Nour came in a distant second in the presidential election with 7 percent of the vote. Three months later, he was put on trial for forging signatures on party registration documents. Though the case against him was hardly airtight--a key prosecution witness claimed he had been coerced into testifying--the judge sentenced Nour to five years in prison. A diabetic, Nour has languished in a prison hospital for four months; a decision on whether to allow an appeal will be made on May 18. The judge assigned to the case, Western diplomats say, is a Mubarak loyalist who is frequently called on to back the regime in politically sensitive trials. As for the party Nour founded, al-Ghad, it is in tatters. Nour's campaign manager was convicted on a separate forgery case and sentenced to one year in prison, and most other members have resigned in the face of police harassment and threats. "Mubarak has a military mentality," Kassem says. "His attitude is 'take out the last platoon, take no prisoners, wipe out the enemy'."

Mubarak has been only slightly more tolerant of his runners-up in Parliament. The Muslim Brotherhood captured 88 seats last fall; political analysts in Egypt say it could have won 120 if ruling party thugs and police hadn't shut down polling stations and beaten up would-be voters. Brotherhood representatives have needled the Mubarak regime in Parliament, charging that it mishandled a recent bird-flu outbreak and protected the owner of the ferryboat that sank in the Red Sea. In recent weeks the regime has struck back, arresting dozens of activists. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood has been savvily modifying its image for Western consumption: officials posted a notice on their Web site rejecting Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's denials of the Holocaust, and they have downplayed their Islamic agenda. "The essence of Sharia law is to fight against corruption and to establish social justice," says Dr. Abdel Monem Abul Fotouh, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood's High Board, "not to set boundaries for women's rights and such things."

This is probably Mubarak's last term as president; the next election isn't scheduled until 2010 or 2011. Analysts believe that the dictator wants to stifle political reforms so he can ease the way to power for a handpicked successor, possibly his son, Gamal, whose political profile has risen sharply in recent years. Gamal Mubarak is almost exactly the same age as Ayman Nour, and some Western diplomats and Egyptian analysts predict that Nour would defeat him in a free and fair election. The U.S. ambassador in Cairo has urged President Mubarak to free Nour, only to be told that it is a domestic matter. For the aging Egyptian dictator, pleasing democracy's champions in Washington no longer appears to be a priority.

Three Strikes in Egypt

Time

By Scott MacLeod

5/8

Springtime is a festive season in Egypt, especially in Dahab, a laid-back Red Sea resort famous for its scuba divers and hippies. But terrorists crashed the party last week, setting off three explosions along Dahab's beachside promenade, killing 18 people, including four foreigners. Two days later, two suicide bombers attacked an international peacekeeping base and an Egyptian police vehicle in the northern Sinai peninsula but killed only themselves.

The Dahab attacks--the third major strike on Red Sea resorts in the past 18 months--came as President Hosni Mubarak prepared to welcome political and business leaders to Egypt for a World Economic Forum gathering later this month. The bombings underscored Mubarak's inability to eliminate the terrorist threat, which has hurt the country's \$7 billion tourism industry. But that is only one of the regime's problems. Long-simmering sectarian tensions erupted into rioting and street fighting between Muslim fundamentalists and Coptic Christians in Alexandria in mid-April. And police clashed last week in Cairo with demonstrators protesting disciplinary action against two high-court judges who alleged widespread vote rigging in last November's parliamentary elections--an embarrassing episode for a government that has been urged by the Bush Administration to implement democratic reform.

Mubarak, 78, has been in power for 25 years, and his anemic response to these crises is a worrying sign. "The regime is tending toward immobility," says Hugh Roberts, a Cairo-based director of the International Crisis Group. "Old repressive reflexes are in full swing, which suggests that the regime is rather nervous and fresh out of ideas." An aide recently hinted Mubarak would consider stepping down if a suitable successor could be found. In the meantime, for Egyptians caught between terrorist violence and government repression, there's little cause for cheer.

GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

For Better or Worse?

National Review

By Victor Davis Hanson

5/5

After September 11, there were only seven sovereign countries in the Middle East that posed a real danger to the policies and, in some cases, the security of the United States--Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Ignoring the hysteria about the Sunni Triangle in Iraq, if we look at these states empirically, have they become more or less a threat in the last five years?

The Taliban in Afghanistan was actively harboring bin Laden and al Qaeda. Without their support, the mass murder on September 11 would have been difficult to pull off.

Iran was the chief sponsor of Hezbollah, which had killed more Americans than any other Islamist terror organization and was rumored to be at work on obtaining nuclear weapons.

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein's agents were involved in the first World Trade Center bombing. They were also meeting with al Qaeda operatives throughout the 1990s and offering sanctuary both to al Qaeda offshoots in Kurdistan and, later, to veterans from Afghanistan. As the U.S. Senate observed in 2002, this was in addition to the general problems of no-fly zones, oil-for-food, violations of U.N. and 1991-armistice accords, and periodic retaliatory American bombing.

Libya was a de facto belligerent of the United States, provoking past U.S. air strikes on Tripolis. Among other things, it was involved in the Pan Am Lockerbie bombing and had a clandestine WMD program.

Pakistan had violated both U.N. and U.S. non-proliferation protocols. Its intelligence services were infiltrated by radical Islamists who were responsible for killing American diplomatic personnel and supplying the Taliban with support, as well as directly aiding al Qaeda operatives along the border.

Saudi Arabia, whose 15 subjects comprised the majority of the killers on 9/11, was stealthily giving blackmail money to Islamic terrorists to deflect their anti-Royal Family anger toward the United States. The kingdom's vast financial clout subsidized radical "charities" and madrassas that offered at a global level the religious and ideological underpinnings for radical and violent Islamic extremism.

Syria had long swallowed most of Lebanon, and was a haven for anti-Western terrorists from Hamas to

Hezbollah.

Four-and-a-half years after September 11, how has the United States fared in neutralizing these seven threats?

The Taliban is gone. In its place is the unthinkable--a parliamentary democracy that welcomes an open economy and foreign investment. Afghanistan is plagued still by drug-lords and resurgent terrorists, but after a successful war that removed the Taliban, the country hardly resembles the nightmare that existed before September 11.

Iran is closer to the bomb than ever, but there is at least worldwide scrutiny of its machinations, in a manner lacking in the past. Tehran is in a death struggle with the new Iraqi government, trying to undermine the democracy by transplanting its radical Shiite ganglia before a constitutional, diverse Iraqi culture energizes its own restive population that supposedly tires of the theocracy.

The thousands who died yearly under Saddam's killing apparatus in Iraq have been followed by thousands killed in sectarian strife. Yet Saddam and his Baathist nightmare are gone from Iraq, offering hope where there was none. After three elections, a democratic government has emerged. Despite a terrible cost in American lives and wealth, so far elections have not been derailed, open civil war has not followed from the daily terror, and Americans are looking to reduce, not enlarge, their presence.

Libya is perhaps the strangest development of all. The United States is slowly exploring reestablishing diplomatic relations. Moammar Khadafy is giving up his WMD arsenal. And the country is suddenly open to cell phones, the Internet, satellite television, and is no longer a global financial conduit for international terrorism.

Pakistan is still run by a military dictator. But as a result of American bullying and financial enticement, it is slowly weeding out al Qaeda sympathizers from its government, which on rare occasions attacks terrorists residing in its borderlands. Indeed, al Qaeda seems to hate the present Pakistani government as much as it does the United States.

Saudi Arabia has gained enormous leverage as oil skyrocketed from \$30 to over \$70 a barrel. Yet under American pressure it has cracked down on al Qaeda terrorists and has cleaned up (somewhat) its overseas financial offices--perhaps evidenced by a wave of reactive terrorist attacks against the Riyadh government. American efforts to urge liberalization have met a tepid response--given Saudi reliance on the oil card, and its sophistic argument that for the present an autocratic monarchy is the only alternative to a terrorist-supporting theocracy.

Syria is out of Lebanon by popular pressure. It still supports terrorists against Israel--and now Iraq too--but judging from its rhetoric it must be feeling squeezed by a democratic Turkey, Iraq, and Israel on its borders, and a new tough stance from the United States.

So where does all this leave us? In every case, I think, far messier--but far better--than before September 11. Few argue that Afghanistan or Iraq is worse off than when under the Taliban or Saddam. Nor is Syria in a stronger position. Despite their respective nuclear and petroleum deterrence, both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are ever more sensitive to the dangers of Islamic radicalism. Libya no longer poses the threat of using WMD against its neighbors and is less likely to fund international terror. Iran is the wild card--closer to success in obtaining the bomb, but closer as well to becoming isolated by international pressure and the events that it cannot quite control across the border in Iraq.

Where do we go from here? The United States has its own paradoxes. These positive developments--themselves the result of a radical departure from the old appeasement that either used the cruise missile as an impotent gesture of retaliation or accepted realpolitik as a means of playing odious dictators against each other--have proved as controversial as they are costly.

A new strain of what we might call punitive isolationism is back ("more rubble, less trouble"), in which we should simply unleash bombers when evidence is produced of complicity in attacks against Americans, but under no circumstance put a single soldier on the ground to "help" such people who are "incapable" of liberal civilized society.

The hard Right is candid in its pessimistic dismissal of American idealism and worries that a new

muscular Wilsonianism will lose the ascendant Republican majority and betray conservative values.

The Left buys into the neo-isolationism since it means less of an "imperial" footprint abroad and more funds released for entitlements at home--as well as a way of tarring George Bush and regaining Congress.

What is lacking has been a consistently spirited defense, both unapologetic and humble at the same time, of our efforts since September 11.

First, the United States was not cynical in its efforts: no oil was stolen; no hegemony was established; and democrats, not dictators, were promoted. We were appealing directly to the people of the Middle East, not negotiating with Mullah Omar or Saddam Hussein about their futures. No other oil-importing country in the world would have tried to pressure the Saudis to reform at a time of global petroleum shortages--not France, not China, not India.

Second, there were never good choices after September 11. The old appeasement had only emboldened the terrorists, from 1993 in Manhattan to the bombing in Yemen of the U.S.S. Cole. Saddam's Iraq was unstable. It was only a matter of time before Saddam, energized with fresh petroleum profits, would renew his ambitions, once 12 years of no-fly-zones and controversial, but leaky, embargoes wore the West out. Given the premise that dictators promoted terrorists in an unholy alliance of convenience, and themselves often had oil and access to weapons, there were no good choices, whether we let them be or removed the worst.

Three, by the standard of Grenada, Panama, and the Balkans, our losses were costly. But the Middle East is a struggle of a different sort; it is an existential one in which defeat means more attacks on the United States homeland, while victory in changing the landscape of the region presages an end to the nexus of Islamic terror. In that regard, so far we have been fortunate, four-and-a-half years later, in avoiding the level of costs incurred on the first day of the war that took 3,000 American lives and resulted in a trillion dollars in economic damage.

Four, the strategy was not wholly military or political, much less characterized by preemption or unilateralism. Iraq was not the blueprint for endless military action to come, but the high-stakes gambit that offered real hope of bringing about associated change from Pakistan to Tripolis once Saddam was gone and a constitutional government established in its place.

Five, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. As we approach year five, there has been no subsequent attack on the United States. An entire intellectual industry has emerged to educate the West about radical Islamic fascism, something mostly lacking prior to September 11. Our enemies in al Qaeda are either dead, arrested, in hiding, or losing in Iraq, and the embrace of radical Islam through the Middle East at least now carries the consequence of fear of an unpredictable reaction on the part of the United States.

We are still in a race of sorts, hoping that Afghanistan and Iraq will enter a period of democratic stability and the violence halts before the American public tires of the daily visuals to the point of demanding a premature end to our efforts at birthing democracy. And while we do the unpopular work of trying to restore hope to the Middle East, the aloof Europeans pose as the moderate alternative, the Chinese make ever more trade, the Russians ever more trouble, and the Arab sheikdoms ever more money.

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

Osama Needs More Mud Huts

Newsweek

By Fareed Zakaria

5/8

Imagine if a few months after September 11 someone had said to you, "Five years from now, in the space of a single week, Osama bin Laden will issue a new call for worldwide jihad, the head of Al Qaeda in Iraq will threaten a brutal, endless war, and there will be two terror attacks in Egypt."

Chances are you would have been quite unnerved. Yet the most striking aspect of last week's news was the reaction to it--very little.

Radical Islamic terror made big, violent and scary moves and--whether you judge it by media coverage, stock-market movements or international responses--the world yawned.

Al Qaeda Central, by which I mean the dwindling band of brothers on the Afghan-Pakistani border, appears to have turned into a communications company. It's capable of producing the occasional jihadist cassette, but not actual jihad. I know it's risky to say this, as Qaeda leaders may be quietly planning some brilliant, large-scale attack. But the fact that they have not been able to do one of their trademark blasts for five years is significant in itself.

Moreover, bin Laden's latest appeals have a very changed character. His messages used to be lyrical, sharp and highly intelligent. They operated at a high plane, rarely revealing anything about Al Qaeda's operations. In fact, intelligence agencies looked for small signs--an offhand reference, an item of apparel--to reveal where Al Qaeda would strike next. Bin Laden's most recent appeal is a mishmash of argument and detail, and seems slightly crazed. He has broadened his verbal attacks against the "Zionist-Crusaders" to include the United Nations and China. The latter he condemns because it "represents the Buddhists and Pagans of the world."

Like Hitler crazily declaring war on the United States after Pearl Harbor, bin Laden is adding to his slew of formidable enemies: China was the only major world power that was unconcerned about him. (And his reference to the United Nations as a "Zionist-Crusader tool" would surely surprise most Israelis.) Bin Laden also makes some plaintive appeals to Muslims to rise up and attack the "crusaders" in the west of Sudan. This shows desperation because there are no "crusaders" in Sudan. The troops there are African Union peacekeepers. But more interestingly, the victims in Darfur are Muslim. Bin Laden's real objective appears to be to support the government in Sudan--which once housed him--as it brutally exterminates tribes that oppose it. What does this have to do with Islam? Most revealingly, bin Laden makes a parochial appeal for foreign aid, to help those Qaeda supporters in Waziristan who have been rendered homeless by Pakistani Army attacks. That suggests he and his friends are having a rough time. Strip away the usual hot air, and bin Laden's audiotape is the sign of a seriously weakened man.

It is now widely accepted that Al Qaeda Central no longer has much to do with the specific terrorist attacks--even the most bloody ones, in Madrid, Sinai and London--that have taken place in the past three years. These appear to be the work of smaller, local groups, often inspired by Al Qaeda but not directed by it. The result of this decentralization, however, is that the attacks lack coherence and strategic sense. Al Qaeda Central would attack large symbolic targets (the World Trade Center) or government facilities (embassies, ships), but smaller groups do what they can, going after cafés, hotels and train stations. The result--local civilians die, which enrages the public. After a while the attacks also begin to feel less cataclysmic. People realize that life goes on. In Egypt, the stock market shrugged off last week's terror attacks; hotels in Sinai (where the bombs exploded) reported a small number of cancellations, and the public seemed increasingly angry at the terror groups.

Next in the communications department is Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi's appearance, and for the first time we got to see his face. Zarqawi's motive in doing this is debated, but almost certainly it was an effort to show that he is still relevant. Conditions in Iraq are bloody and dangerous, but they also might be moving out of his control. Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds are struggling, both on the ground and across the table, to see if they can live together. Whatever they decide about this power-sharing arrangement, Zarqawi's appeals for jihad seem beside the point and appeal to a dwindling number of Iraqis.

The danger from global Islamic terrorism is real. But it is the product of small and scattered groups, spewing hate. It has much less support in the Muslim world than people think. There is much to be distressed about in that world--oppressive regimes, reactionary social views, illiberal political parties, mindless and virulent anti-Americanism. But these trends are not the same as support for jihad or for a Taliban-like Islamic state. And it is the latter--terror and theocracy--that are Al Qaeda's basic goals. The evidence suggests that they are not gaining adherents.

The West, and the United States in particular, has a long history of seeing the enemy as 10 feet tall--think of Soviet Russia and Saddam Hussein. But as we paint Al Qaeda in those lofty terms, let's please remember last week, when Osama bin Laden appealed on a crackling audiotape for a little money to build a few huts in Waziristan.

Ayman al-Zawahiri: How He Became Bin Laden's No. 1

Time

By Peter Bergen

5/8

Ayman al-Zawahiri, a cerebral Egyptian surgeon who joined his first jihadist cell at age 15, is as much the force behind al-Qaeda as his more famous friend Osama bin Laden. When the two first met in Pakistan in 1986, al-Zawahiri made a powerful impression on the younger, inexperienced Saudi millionaire. Within a couple of years, bin Laden was funding al-Zawahiri's militant group Al Jihad, while Egyptian militants close to al-Zawahiri were helping bin Laden found al-Qaeda. That was the beginning of a powerful symbiotic relationship that continues to this day.

In the past year or so, al-Zawahiri, 54, has increasingly become the public face and voice of al-Qaeda while bin Laden has ceded the spotlight to his deputy. It was al-Zawahiri who wrote a letter to al-Qaeda's leader in Iraq, Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi, gently suggesting that he stop his habit of beheading hostages because it was turning off many Muslims. In recent months al-Zarqawi has stopped the beheadings. Following the 9/11 attacks, bin Laden released more than 15 audio- and videotapes. But recently he has sharply cut back, releasing only two tapes since December 2004, apparently fearing the U.S. could locate him by tracing back a tape's chain of custody. Meanwhile, al-Zawahiri has released seven tapes. His high profile may account for the Jan. 13 U.S. missile strike on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border aimed at killing him. The attack killed four al-Qaeda members but not al-Zawahiri, who appeared on videotape two weeks later, taunting President Bush and defiantly proclaiming himself alive.

--Bergen is the author of *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader*

POLITICS & POLICY

A Gotcha! Gone Bad

National Review

By Andrew C. McCarthy

5/8

'Cheney's Aide Says President Approved Leak.' So blared the Page One headline of the April 7 New York Times. It is a story as old as *The Flood* that the mainstream media are adamant in their bias against the Bush presidency in general and the Iraq War in particular. But every now and again, the press outdoes itself.

"Cheney's Aide," of course, is I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the vice president's former chief of staff. The leak with which he has heretofore been associated is the disclosure of the name of Valerie Plame Wilson as a CIA undercover officer, for which, after much cheerleading by the media, he has been indicted. Except that . . . a) Libby wasn't indicted for the leak, which does not appear to have been a crime, but for allegedly lying to government investigators about his conversations with three reporters; b) it does not appear that Libby actually disclosed anything about Plame that wasn't already known within media circles; and c) it's not at all clear that Plame was a CIA undercover officer, because the government refuses to reveal that information (claiming it is irrelevant to the charges, despite the prosecutor's explicit statement -- in a press conference announcing the indictment -- that "Valerie [Plame] was a CIA officer").

In other words, the currency of this leak, once hyped by the administration's antagonists as a major national-security scandal, has substantially deflated. No small thanks are owed in this regard to the media's deafening yawn in the face of other leaks -- e.g., those concerning the National Security Agency's terrorist-surveillance program and the CIA's arrangements for housing high-level al-Qaeda prisoners -- that actually did damage national security and against which the Plame imbroglio is aptly seen as a trifle.

Still, it would be big news if it turned out that President Bush had authorized the now-infamous Libby

leak. Naturally, such would be the assumption of anyone casually following the Libby/Plame narrative who happened to catch the Times's headline. On April 7, however, this leak was not the "Leak." The Times was not talking about Plame at all -- an inconvenience the paper of record finally got around to acknowledging several paragraphs into its story.

Instead, the media, arm-in-arm with the leading Democrats they champion, had gone to DEFCON 4 over a "leak" from the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), a composite crafted by the agencies of the U.S. intelligence community. Specifically, Libby is reported to have testified that, in July 2003, with the express approval of President Bush (communicated to Libby by his boss, Vice President Cheney), he shared with the Times's Judith Miller some of the NIE's contents regarding Saddam Hussein's efforts to build nuclear capability.

Miller was obviously so enthralled by the "news" that a dictator who had a long history of seeking (and using) weapons of mass destruction was, well, seeking weapons of mass destruction that she didn't even bother to write a story about Libby's tip. Still, top Democrats were atwitter at the revelation of the testimony (in a court filing by the independent counsel handling Libby's prosecution). "In light of today's shocking revelation," Senate minority leader Harry Reid insisted, "President Bush must fully disclose his participation in the selective leaking of classified information." Jane Harman, the ranking member on the House Intelligence Committee, chimed in: "If the disclosure is true, it's breathtaking. The president is revealed as the leaker in chief."

To say this latest choreographed "scandal" is nonsense is to give nonsense a bad name. Having rendered a high administration official (Libby) radioactive with an (apparently false) accusation of illegally leaking classified information (viz., the Plame disclosure), the media have now attached his name and that baggage to a routine communication of non-classified information to a reporter, made for the purpose of clarifying the administration's actions in a matter of public importance -- something done every day, and done by all administrations of both parties.

In July 2003, you may recall, the air was thick with controversy over whether the Bush administration had exaggerated intelligence in order to justify the invasion of Iraq. In the vanguard of such accusations was Joseph Wilson, a former ambassador. Wilson had penned a misleading op-ed in the Times (in addition to his sundry anonymous leaks) in which he claimed, falsely, both that he had been tasked by Vice President Cheney, via the CIA, to go to Niger to investigate whether Saddam Hussein had really sought uranium ore there, and that he had found no evidence to that effect. Wilson, in reality, had not been tasked by Cheney; had been selected by the CIA for the mission through the intercession of his wife, Valerie Plame (like her husband, a Kerry supporter and Iraq naysayer); and had, while in Niger, stumbled on indicators that actually tended to confirm Iraq's efforts to acquire uranium.

Consequently, when Libby met with Miller, he was authorized to reveal information that put the lie to Wilson's tale. This could be considered a "leak" only in the sense that the administration steered information to a particular reporter rather than broadcasting it at large in, say, a presidential speech. But it cannot conceivably have been -- as the media and Democrats repeatedly maintained -- a classified leak.

Preliminarily, it bears observing that resorting to the NIE as grist for a scandal was especially bogus. The NIE is assembled with the understanding that some of it will be made public. As already noted, that is exactly what was done here. Nonetheless, in their determination to portray the president as an untrustworthy schemer, the media upped the ante: Libby had not just leaked the NIE at Bush's direction; he had also misrepresented it.

According to reports, Libby had claimed to Miller that the conclusion that Iraq was "vigorously trying to procure" uranium had been among the NIE's "key judgments," meaning it was the subject of consensus among the intelligence community. No, the media squealed: This had been a mere suggestion of the NIE, not a weighty key judgment -- making for another gotcha! moment in the history of Bush's lies. Except that the whole thing turned out to be wrong. Even as the media went into overdrive, the independent counsel, Patrick Fitzgerald (a friend and former colleague of mine), submitted a letter to the judge in Libby's case, explaining that his submission -- the cause of all the fuss -- had been in error. It should have said that Libby was authorized to reveal some of the key judgments of the NIE and, separately, that Iraq had sought uranium; not that the latter was a key judgment. In effect, Libby had framed things accurately. It was the press that was guilty of exaggerating the intelligence.

Furthermore, classified information by nature cannot be leaked by the president. It belongs to the executive branch, of which the president is the unitary chief. Once he authorizes the disclosure of information, it is no longer classified. To be sure, such declassification decisions can be unwise; but they cannot be illegal, for this is a judgment call the president gets to make.

It is a decision that presidents typically make amid political strife. The executive branch has all manner of information that it would prefer, for a variety of sound strategic reasons, to keep confidential. Yet governance is freighted with politics: When public opinion is being led astray by one-sided political attacks, and when important policy is threatened by misinformation, all administrations must balance the benefits of secrecy against the need that the public learn the truth.

Examples are too numerous to catalogue. To counter the Soviet missile threat in 1962, for example, the Kennedy administration chose to reveal publicly its satellite-surveillance capacity. This proved that Cuba was being used as a platform, but gave the Soviets critical insight into U.S. capabilities. In 1998, to beat back detractors embarked on a withering attack against its air strike against a Sudanese pharmaceutical factory after the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Clinton administration selectively disclosed previously classified information that suggested that the factory was a joint Iraq/al-Qaeda chemical-weapons venture. Indeed, the Washington Post reported at the time that Richard Clarke, the administration's top counterterrorism official, had explained that, in light of the existing intelligence, Clinton "would have been derelict in his duties if he didn't blow up the facility."

The difference here, patently, is the loathing the media harbor for the Bush administration. They proclaim loudly that the public's right to know is sacrosanct -- except, of course, when it comes to the public's right to know that a media-made icon (even one of the 15-minute variety, like Joseph Wilson) is a hack; except when it comes to evidence underscoring that Saddam was a danger; except when it comes to facts that vindicate George W. Bush. Then, the story is never the story. The story is the leak. Any leak.

--Mr. McCarthy, a former federal prosecutor, is a senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

Pork Busters, and Keepers

National Review

By Stephen Spruiell

5/8

At the eleventh hour, House Republicans failed to pass a budget resolution before leaving for a two-week break. A tenuous deal between fiscal conservatives and the House leadership collapsed when big-spending Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee threatened to torpedo the bill on the floor. Most budget fights are over line items, but this one is over a bigger issue: Congress's power to spend money. When conservatives proposed some reforms to curtail that power, Republican appropriators shut down the negotiations.

Like a collapsing civilization, the GOP majority seems unable to uphold the values that lifted it to prominence. Republicans who seek to regain the trust of fiscal conservatives through spending cuts are losing ground to appropriators and moderates who want to spend their way out of their political problems. Unless the House leadership brings the big spenders under control, the Republican party that took over in 1994 will continue to disappear.

The road to the current impasse starts in New Orleans. Fiscal conservatives, led by Indiana congressman Mike Pence's Republican Study Committee (RSC), started campaigning relentlessly for spending cuts when Hurricane Katrina precipitated a spree of federal pork disguised as emergency relief. Shortly after Katrina struck, Congress hastily appropriated over \$10 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for disaster relief. A week later, President Bush asked for -- and Congress approved -- over \$50 billion more.

This extravagance alarmed the RSC, but few members would vote against such politically sensitive emergency bills, so Pence and his group came up with another plan. They drew up a list of

unnecessary, wasteful, or redundant government programs that could be cut in order to pay for Katrina relief, held a series of press events, and called their effort "Operation Offset." These conservatives were rebuffed, however, when they brought their ideas to the Republican leadership. Then-House majority leader Tom DeLay said there weren't any offsets in the budget because, as he infamously told the Washington Times, "after 11 years of Republican majority we've pared it down pretty good."

The RSC eventually convinced the leadership to support modest spending cuts in the budget-reconciliation bill last February, but the \$39 billion in savings fell far short of offsetting the Katrina spending. In addition, the RSC's fears that the billions appropriated for hurricane relief would be vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse proved well-founded. The Washington Post reported that FEMA had squandered 60 percent of the \$10 billion from the first emergency bill on a wasteful mobile-home program that benefited only 10 percent of the households affected by Katrina, while 80 percent of the households were helped through rental assistance at a third of the cost.

Which brings us to the current budget resolution. After the Katrina mess, fiscal conservatives pledged to fix the broken system that allows Congress to appropriate vast sums of emergency dollars with little or no oversight. First, conservatives want to define "emergency": Hurricane Katrina was a true emergency, but Congress often uses "emergency supplementals" as a way to circumvent the budget process. For instance, Congress has funded the war in Iraq as an emergency supplemental ever since it began. Because of the urgency of supplying our troops, these are must-pass bills -- and their status as such leads members to load them up with pork. In the Iraq supplemental currently before the Senate, the Heritage Foundation found \$4 billion in farm bailouts and \$700 million to re-route a rail line. To put an end to this, Rep. Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) has drafted legislation defining emergencies as "sudden, urgent, unforeseen, and temporary."

Hurricanes would meet all of these criteria, so conservatives have proposed another reform to govern such real emergencies, so that Congress won't exploit them to give away money with too little oversight. Ryan's legislation demands that each year Congress include a certain amount of emergency spending in the budget. Emergency spending in excess of that "rainy-day fund" would have to go to the House Budget Committee for a vote.

Reforms like these would not have been possible just a few years ago, but the runaway spending of the last five years has energized House conservatives. In the election to replace Tom DeLay as majority leader, these conservatives elevated Ohio's John Boehner; having voiced commitment to budget reforms during his campaign, Boehner seemed like a leader the RSC could work with after years of frustration.

As members began to negotiate the budget, modest reform looked possible. The leadership agreed to put a "rainy-day fund" into the budget and to require that spending over that limit get a separate vote. "We found ourselves in the unfamiliar position of being in agreement with the leadership," says a senior Hill staffer close to the RSC. Conservative Republicans agreed to smaller spending cuts than they would have preferred, but moderate Republicans also compromised -- dropping their demand for \$7 billion in additional health and education spending. Overall, the budget resolution held discretionary spending under the president's \$873 billion cap.

But then the Appropriations chairman, Jerry Lewis of California, blew the whole thing out of the water. Once he found out about the reforms -- especially the limits on emergency spending -- he had one of his staffers fire off an angry e-mail to the other members of the Appropriations Committee, urging them to oppose the bill. The e-mail, leaked to the National Taxpayers Union, said: "As you know, the Budget Resolution contains a so-called 'Rainy Day Fund' that would REQUIRE the Budget Committee to approve non-defense related emergency spending in excess of the amount stated within the Budget Resolution . . . Chairman Lewis has instructed us to inform you that, unless the Rainy Day Fund and this new Point of Order are dropped/not included through action of the Rules Committee tonight, he will NOT SUPPORT passage of the RULE and/or the BUDGET RESOLUTION tomorrow. He also requested that you inform your Subcommittee Chairman of his position in this regard and asks that they likewise support the Committee."

According to National Journal's CongressDaily, a sufficient number of Republicans on Lewis's committee took his advice and opposed the bill. This gave cover to some moderate Republicans who weren't comfortable with the budget's fiscal restraint, and the Democrats had already indicated that they would vote together to hand the Republicans a defeat. When House leaders counted votes and realized they

were short, they decided to postpone the vote until after the Easter recess.

Appearing on ABC's This Week, Boehner placed the blame squarely on Lewis and the appropriators. But instead of getting into the complicated subject of emergency spending -- the subject of Lewis's angry e-mail -- Boehner cleverly put the focus on another reason Lewis gave for opposing the deal: a rule change that would reform the practice of earmarking money for pork. The Appropriations Committee controls the earmarking process; it gets over 35,000 requests for earmarks a year. The new rules would make it easier for members to object to especially egregious earmarks.

Earmark reform is now a hot topic: The online Porkbusters movement has raised awareness of it; the Senate has passed a version of earmark reform; President Bush even addressed the issue in his State of the Union. Boehner is turning up the pressure at exactly the right time. But he and Speaker Dennis Hastert need to do more if they want to revive this budget. They need to use their power on the House GOP Steering Committee -- which hands out committee assignments -- as leverage against Lewis: He needs to know that his chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee is at stake.

For conservatives, this isn't about the RSC vs. the appropriators anymore. It's about the leaders vs. the appropriators, and whether the former have the political foresight to realize that their jobs depend on their ability to restore values and discipline to the Republican majority. They should begin by upholding some semblance of fiscal sanity -- passing some modest budget reforms and holding the line against those Republicans who think they can stay in the majority by outspending the Democrats.

--Mr. Spruiell writes the media blog for National Review Online.

Saint Sam

National Review

By John J. Miller

5/8

About five years ago, at a weekly prayer meeting of senators, Sam Brownback came as close as he ever had to confessing to a hate crime. "I was scheduled to be the speaker that morning," recalls Brownback, a Kansas Republican. "As I was preparing for it, I had seen hate in myself for the Clintons. I felt righteous. That's not a Christian virtue."

Brownback says his antipathy for the Clintons grew out of the government shutdowns of the mid-1990s, when he was a freshman member of the House. "We were trying to balance the budget, and President Clinton backed away from an agreement," he says. "I flew off the handle." More controversies followed, including impeachment. As a senator in 1999, Brownback voted to remove Clinton from office. He says he isn't sorry for that, but he does regret the way he felt about it at the time: "When somebody does something wrong, there is a penalty to pay, but there is not an entitlement to hate."

Within a couple of years, of course, one Clinton was out of office and another was in -- Hillary Rodham Clinton became one of Brownback's Senate colleagues in 2001. She also started to attend the Tuesday-morning prayer group. Brownback figured that she would be there on the day he was supposed to speak, and indeed she was. He used the occasion to clear his mind. "I confessed it to the group," says Brownback. "I apologized for my hate."

Today, Brownback is all about the love -- not just for the Clintons, but for everyone. As he mulls a long-shot bid for the White House in 2008, he is trying to reinvent the politics of compassionate conservatism for the post-Bush era. "The term 'compassionate conservatism' is great, but it's basically a marketing term," he says. "I think it's been overused in rhetoric and underutilized in public policy. I want to make it a reality." His idea is to place love and compassion for human life at the center of everything, from the traditional issues of abortion, cloning, and euthanasia to the less traditional ones of immigration, pharmaceutical patents, and North Korea. The senator's vision is certainly distinctive, and it has already demonstrated crossover appeal by resonating with some liberals. Will it appeal to conservatives in a primary campaign two years from now?

NICE GUYS FINISH . . . FIRST? The 49-year-old Brownback is the epitome of soft-spoken niceness. In speeches, he rarely raises his voice, even when he means to show passion. In Q&A sessions, he is

flawlessly polite, often thanking his questioners for their thoughtfulness (even when they aren't very thoughtful). He smiles easily, though smiling also has the effect of narrowing his dark eyes to slits -- it looks as if he's squinting, almost as if he is enduring some kind of pain. Brownback is no joker, but he does show flashes of humor. At one recent event, a man asked him a potentially confrontational question about gay marriage. Naturally, the senator thanked him -- "for not talking about 'Brownback's Mountain.'" Then he stated his opposition to gay marriage. "I don't say that with malice toward anybody," he concluded. It is difficult to imagine the guy hating anyone.

Even so, he is capable of playing hardball politics. Last October, Brownback helped derail the Supreme Court nomination of Harriet Miers, whose potential ascension was viewed by many conservatives as a disaster in the making. After meeting with Miers privately, the senator told the press that he would consider voting against her, even if President Bush personally urged him to do otherwise. He now says, "When I first heard her name, I wondered, 'Who is this person? Where did she come from?' I thought there were good nominees out there and she was not one of them." Brownback never denounced the nomination, but his vocal skepticism gave cover to those who did. Miers had the support of many Evangelicals who also look to Brownback for political leadership; it is possible to think that in the absence of the senator's public doubts, which hardly any other senators were willing to express, the resolution to the Miers controversy could have been less pleasing to conservatives.

Brownback came to Washington as part of the GOP class of 1994, joining calls to downsize the federal government. But he didn't stay in the House for long. In 1996, Bob Dole abruptly resigned his seat in the Senate so that he could concentrate on running for president. Lt. Gov. Sheila Frahm, a pro-choice Republican in the mold of Nancy Kassebaum, was appointed to replace him. Brownback decided to challenge Frahm, even though she was the de facto incumbent and a member of his own party. He made cutting government a theme of his campaign; Frahm assailed his "slash and burn" positions on the budget. Brownback prevailed in an August primary and in the general election. Since then, he has won reelection twice, most recently in 2004, by wide margins.

Moving from the House to the Senate was obviously a big step, but it wasn't the most important thing that happened to Brownback in the mid-1990s. A year into his congressional service, he had a cancer scare -- a doctor found melanoma on his side, and for a while the prognosis was uncertain. "It caused me to do a mental reevaluation," he says. He didn't change his policy views, but he did rethink his political purpose. One night when he couldn't sleep, he got up, found a copy of his résumé, and looked it over. "I had devoted my life to building that résumé," he says. "But what did it really matter? Life is not a résumé." He tossed it into the fireplace and watched it burn. "Doing that made me a lot less fearful of what others will think and [made it] easier to stand up for the right things, such as fighting for life or for malaria relief in Africa." He beat the cancer, but he says he emerged from the experience a changed man. Religious faith would come to play an ever greater role in his life.

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE In 2002, he converted to Catholicism. "I've not talked much about it publicly," he told me at our first interview, which happened to be on Ash Wednesday (there were ashes on his forehead). "It's just something I felt called to do. I love the liturgy and the writings of the saints. There's so much beauty there, and so much beauty of thought." Whatever the motivation, it was clearly an act of conscience, as Kansas is not a heavily Catholic state in which conversion might deliver a political benefit. Nor did Brownback's family convert with him; on most Sunday mornings, he attends an early Mass and then goes to a Protestant service with his wife and kids.

Another sign of his growing faith was his interest in William Wilberforce, a Tory politician who fought for the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. While many American conservatives identify Edmund Burke as their favorite parliamentarian of yore, Evangelicals are more likely to look to Wilberforce, who was about a generation younger than Burke. (Next year, Walden Media, the company behind the recent *Chronicles of Narnia* film, will release *Amazing Grace*, a movie about Wilberforce.) In the 1990s, Brownback began to read everything he could find on Wilberforce, who used his public office to promote Christian morals. For Brownback, the attraction to Wilberforce and abolitionism was only natural: The senator grew up near Osawatimie, Kan., the town from which John Brown launched murderous attacks on pro-slavery men a century and a half ago, earning the pre-Harper's Ferry nickname "Osawatimie Brown." When Brownback learned that forms of slavery were still being practiced in Sudan and elsewhere, it outraged him. "I couldn't believe this was going on," he says. "It was just wrong, and we needed to do something about it."

Osawatimie Brownback became increasingly interested in human rights, not just in Africa but also in Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Pakistan, and Turkey -- anywhere they were being violated. He also

investigated the international sex trade, in which organized-crime syndicates are forcing an estimated 1 million women and girls around the world into prostitution. For Brownback and many others, the sex trade is a slave trade. "This mass trafficking of women and children is the largest manifestation of modern-day slavery worldwide," he has said. One of the most important mechanisms for fighting it has been the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, authored by Brownback and Paul Wellstone, the late Democrat of Minnesota. It is one of several legislative successes Brownback has achieved in behalf of human rights. For these efforts, and especially for the way he talks about them, *The Economist* recently labeled Brownback "the Wilberforce Republican."

He is perhaps more accurately described as a bleeding-heart conservative. For one thing, he really is a conservative -- he supports a flat tax, criticizes divorce and illegitimacy, and backs an aggressive foreign policy in Iraq. What really animates him, however, is something deeper. In February, he delivered a major address at Kansas State University, as part of a lecture series named after Alf Landon, the Kansan who ran for president against FDR in 1936. "What are the battles today that we must wage?" he asked. "I believe that the core battle of our day is the battle to defend the inherent dignity of each and every person, the inherent beauty of each and every soul to be respected and treated as a beautiful, unique, and sacred child of a loving God."

It is not unusual for conservatives to speak this way as they go about promoting the culture of life, and Brownback is one of the Senate's pro-life leaders. He is the author of the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act, the Human Cloning Prohibition Act, and the Human Chimera Prohibition Act (which would make it a crime to create a being with both human and non-human tissues) -- none of which has become law. The only time Brownback failed to earn a 100 percent rating from the National Right to Life Committee was when he supported the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance bill (which the NRLC regarded as hostile not because it favored abortion but because it placed new restrictions on political-advocacy groups).

2008: BROWNBACK TO THE FUTURE? What distinguishes Brownback from other pro-lifers is his ambitiously expansive vision for the culture of life. "He's the one conservative who can bridge the gap between the blue states and the red states," says Michael Horowitz, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and a Brownback ally on human rights. "When liberals hear him talk, they understand that the spirit that moves him to be pro-life is also the spirit that moves him to have sympathy for North Korean refugees." The speech at Kansas State, for instance, linked familiar life issues with the less familiar ones of alleviating poverty and reforming criminals in the United States as well as preventing disease and fighting genocide in Africa. Liberals sometimes complain that pro-life conservatives stop caring about children once they've left the womb; such claims usually turn into pitches for enlarging the welfare state. Brownback responds to their accusations without surrendering to their demands, quoting both Ronald Reagan and Bono in the process. As a result, he has managed to impress at least a few people who normally hold a dim view of conservatives. New York Times columnist Nicholas D. Kristof has called Brownback "the most intriguing man in Washington -- so wrong on so much, and yet such a leader on humanitarian issues." At a time of partisan rancor, the senator has managed to stick to his principles and still find some love on the left.

Will his bleeding-heart conservatism find it on the right, especially as he heads toward 2008? On the whole, Republican primary voters will like what they see in Brownback, whose lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union is 95 percent. Evangelicals in particular will welcome his idealistic politics: Conservative Christian groups are a rising presence in foreign affairs, as they combat religious persecution, defend Israel, and engage in conventional relief efforts. Brownback has tried to find ways he can help from Washington, such as proposing that drug companies develop treatments for diseases that ravage poor countries in return for increasing their patent protection. Brownback speaks about certain international issues with as much authority as anybody in the Senate. Yet his specialization in the soft issues of human rights may also seem out of sync with the gritty requirements of the post-9/11 world. When Republicans nominate their next presidential candidate, they'll be less interested in a goodwill ambassador than in a national-security hawk.

Moreover, some of Brownback's pet projects will strike conservatives as bizarre, such as his determination to pass a resolution that apologizes to Indian tribes "for the poor and painful choices our government sometimes made to disregard its solemn word," as he put it in testimony to the Senate's Indian Affairs Committee last year. One of Brownback's main assets is that he lacks the jagged edges of some right-wing pols -- but he may have smoothed away the sharpness so successfully that conservatives will harbor doubts about him.

Immigration may pose an especially thorny problem. In March, Brownback broke with most of his

fellow Republicans on the Judiciary Committee to vote for the McCain-Kennedy immigration bill, which would put today's illegal aliens on a path to citizenship. The senator has likened his own position to Reagan's, though it is hard to believe that many conservatives view the 1986 immigration law (which granted amnesty to nearly 3 million illegal aliens) as a high point of Reagan's presidency. "I see tension in our party between showing compassion and enforcing our laws," says Brownback. "We also have to recognize that there is a lot of work where it's hard to find Americans who will do it, such as meatpacking, which is a physically demanding and dangerous job." He therefore believes a guest-worker program is necessary. His approval of the McCain-Kennedy bill in committee unleashed a torrent of conservative criticism: Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies, a restrictionist group, dubbed him "Amnesty Sam," and Human Events Online, the website of the weekly newspaper, declared in a headline, "Brownback Can Kiss '08 Run Goodbye."

Brownback hasn't even kicked off a 2008 run, so it's a little premature to kiss off anything. He does admit that he's thinking about a race. "I've done a lot of early traveling, trying to assess the atmosphere," he says. If he eventually throws his hat in the ring, his campaign may come to resemble the efforts of John Ashcroft and Steve Forbes in previous cycles -- not an especially attractive comparison, given their lack of success, but also a potentially powerful blend of faith and free markets. It is possibly more conceivable to think of Brownback as a running mate.

An important lesson for Brownback may be found in the life of Wilberforce, who never was able to put the post of prime minister on his rsum. Today, however, Wilberforce is perhaps better remembered and more loved than any of the prime ministers of his time -- nobody, after all, is making a movie about Spencer Perceval. It is possible, in other words, to be the inspirational leader of a moral movement without ever becoming the political leader of a country.

The New McCarthyism

Weekly Standard

By Stephen F. Hayes

5/8

ON APRIL 19, 2006, security personnel from the Central Intelligence Agency escorted a senior CIA official from her office, withdrew her Top Secret clearance, and terminated her employment. The CIA did not name the officer. She was fired after she "acknowledged having unauthorized discussions with reporters in which the officer knowingly and willfully shared classified intelligence, including operational information."

The CIA did not name her, but several news organizations reported that the official was Mary McCarthy, whose most recent position at the Agency was in the office of the inspector general. Two days later, when McCarthy denied disclosing classified information to reporters, she asked a former colleague, Rand Beers, to make the statement on her behalf.

It was an interesting choice. McCarthy had worked for Beers on the National Security Council under President Bill Clinton. They had apparently remained close, even after Beers quit his position in the new administration and became a leading critic of the counterterrorism policies of George W. Bush. Or perhaps the two had remained close because Beers quit his position to criticize the Bush administration.

Beers was the senior foreign policy adviser to John Kerry's presidential campaign in 2004. In March 2004, Mary McCarthy contributed the maximum amount allowed under campaign finance laws-- \$2,000--to the Kerry campaign. She increased her giving as the competitive campaign drew to a close. On October 5, 2004, she gave another \$5,000 to the Democratic party in Ohio, a state that many observers believed (correctly, it turned out) would decide the election. And on October 29, 2004, McCarthy gave an additional \$500 to the Democratic National Committee Service Corps. Federal records show that Michael McCarthy, of the same home address, gave an additional \$2,000 to the Kerry campaign and \$500 to Barbara Mikulski, a Democratic senator from Maryland. In all, the McCarthy household contributed some \$10,000 to Democrats during the last election cycle.

The New York Times reported McCarthy's \$2,000 contribution to the Kerry campaign (but not the others), and articles sympathetic to McCarthy by the Associated Press and Newsweek at least made mention of Beers's association with the Kerry campaign. But virtually none of the other press found the

facts in the preceding paragraph worth reporting.

In the current political environment, that's an odd oversight. Hardly a day goes by that we don't hear about the war between the White House and the CIA over politicized intelligence. Administration critics claim the White House selectively uses intelligence to support its policies, and administration supporters complain about a rash of leaks from unelected bureaucrats at the CIA determined to undermine those policies.

Observe these battles through the prism of the mainstream press, however, and you get the distinct impression that only one side is fighting: the White House. Something closer to the opposite is true and has been since the summer of 2003.

Consider. On May 6, 2003, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote a column on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, focused on President Bush's allegation that Iraq had sought uranium in Africa:

I'm told by a person involved in the Niger caper that more than a year ago the vice president's office asked for an investigation of the uranium deal, so a former U.S. ambassador to Africa was dispatched to Niger. In February 2002, according to someone present at the meetings, that envoy reported to the C.I.A. and State Department that the information was unequivocally wrong and that the documents had been forged.

The envoy reported, for example, that a Niger minister whose signature was on one of the documents had in fact been out of office for more than a decade. In addition, the Niger mining program was structured so that the uranium diversion had been impossible. The envoy's debunking of the forgery was passed around the administration and seemed to be accepted--except that President Bush and the State Department kept citing it anyway.

We now know that Kristof's "person" was Joseph Wilson. And we know that it was not possible for Wilson to have concluded that the documents were forged in February 2002 because, according to the Senate Intelligence Committee, the U.S. government did not receive the forgeries in question until October 2002. It was the first--and most reckless--of many lies Wilson would tell. The column ran under the headline "Missing In Action: Truth." No kidding. The column would set in motion a chain of events that would lead to the indictment of Scooter Libby, then Vice President Cheney's chief of staff.

On May 30, 2003, Kristof wrote a follow-up called "Save Our Spooks":

A column earlier this month on this issue drew a torrent of covert communications from indignant spooks who say that administration officials leaned on them to exaggerate the Iraqi threat and deceive the public. . . . These people are coming forward because they are fiercely proud of the deepest ethic in the intelligence world--that such work should be nonpolitical--and are disgusted at efforts to turn them into propagandists.

Some of these "nonpolitical" intelligence professionals were so outraged, Kristof reported, that they had formed a group called Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity. The VIPS bought Wilson's claim that he had "determined that the Iraq-Niger report was a con-job" and his assertion that his "findings were duly reported to all concerned in early March 2002." False and false. At one point, the VIPS called for active intelligence officials to leak documents that would undercut the Bush administration and its claims on Iraq.

Not that some of these officials needed any encouragement. On June 9, 2003, New York Times reporter James Risen wrote under the headline: "Captives Deny Qaeda Worked with Baghdad." His article focused on two al Qaeda leaders, Khalid Sheikh Muhammed and Abu Zubaydah:

Abu Zubaydah, a Qaeda planner and recruiter until his capture in March 2002, told his questioners last year that the idea of working with Mr. Hussein's government had been discussed among Qaeda leaders, but that Osama bin Laden had rejected such proposals, according to an official who has read the Central Intelligence Agency's classified report on the interrogation. . . . The Bush administration has not made these statements public, though it frequently highlighted intelligence reports that supported its assertions of links between Iraq and Al Qaeda as it made its case for war against Iraq.

A source described as "one official" made the accusation directly: "I remember reading the Abu

Zubaydah debriefing last year, while the administration was talking about all of these other reports, and thinking that they were only putting out what they wanted."

You get the picture. The Bush administration selectively used intelligence to make its case, and nonpolitical intelligence professionals were simply setting the record straight. Only that's not what happened.

Whoever leaked the debriefing to Risen apparently gave him only part of it. Zubaydah did tell interrogators of bin Laden's reservations about being beholden to Saddam. (Newly released Iraqi documents demonstrate that despite these reservations, which date to at least 1992, bin Laden requested operational support from Saddam.) But the report also included this line, which contradicted the whole thrust of Risen's article: "Abu Zubaydah explained that [bin Laden's] personal goal of destroying the U.S. is so strong that to achieve this end he would work with whomever could help him, so long as al Qaeda's independence was not threatened." One other nugget from Zubaydah's March 2002 debriefing was omitted. He named a senior al Qaeda associate who did have good relations with the Iraqi regime: Abu Musab al Zarqawi, with whom Zubaydah had plotted attacks in Jordan.

WHEN GEORGE W. BUSH chose Rep. Porter Goss, a former CIA officer, to succeed George Tenet as director of central intelligence, Goss was widely portrayed as a partisan intruder on an apolitical agency. Some Democrats said Goss "seems too partisan" for the job, the New York Times guilelessly reported. An editorial in the paper labeled Goss a "partisan Republican" and urged Bush to withdraw the nomination and let the CIA's acting director serve through the 2004 election.

On October 1, 2004, with Goss less than a week into the job, the Washington Post ran an article noting the concerns of intelligence professionals that Goss was bringing with him to the Agency four of his top staffers from the House Intelligence Committee. "Some also expressed concern that newcomers from the Republican-run House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence would bring partisan sensibilities to their new roles. Concerns about partisanship and the CIA have been at the forefront of public debate over the agency's future in the past weeks."

Two days later, one of those staffers, Michael Kostiw, was the target of a nasty leak about a shoplifting incident from the early 1980s. The story appeared in the Washington Post and cited "four sources who were familiar with the past events but who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the information." Kostiw was to have been executive director of the CIA. Two days after the story ran, he withdrew from consideration.

Those leaks came shortly after another damaging leak, this one of a National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq that challenged Bush's optimism and warned of possible civil war. The same day, John Kerry's presidential campaign incorporated the substance of this leak into its campaign message and charged that Bush was living in a "fantasy world of spin."

The leaks didn't stop after the election. The Washington Post ran its now-famous "secret prison" story on the CIA's handling of al Qaeda detainees in November 2005; the New York Times published its accusations of domestic wiretapping by the National Security Agency the following month.

Was Mary McCarthy a source for any of these stories? We don't know. Her lawyer, Ty Cobb, has said that she denies discussing any classified information with reporters. CIA spokeswoman Jennifer Millerwise Dyck, without naming McCarthy, says the official terminated last week acknowledged discussing classified information with reporters. A source that agreed only to be described as an "intelligence official," goes further. "There was a clear pattern of talking to the media."

We may never know why and what precisely McCarthy leaked. The fact that she contributed significant sums of money to John Kerry and Democrats may mean little more than that she wanted a better job in a new Kerry administration than she had been able to get under Bush.

In the midst of a three-year CIA-Bush administration battle over politicized intelligence, how can it be that journalists find these contributions irrelevant?

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

Bush's Bad Polls

Weekly Standard

By Jeffrey Bell and Frank Cannon

5/8

THE USUAL WAY OF ANALYZING the collapse in polls of public approval of the Bush administration is to make a list of all the things the analyst believes are going wrong and attribute the decline to those things. The polls provide plausibility for this method, because the president's performance rating has declined greatly on each of the individual issues that voters are asked about.

But the very universality of these declines should make us wary. In 2002, the U.S. economy was recovering sluggishly from the 2001 recession, yet Bush enjoyed solid public approval of his handling of the economy. Today, the economy has enjoyed three years of much faster growth without inflation--yet Bush's performance rating on handling the economy has collapsed just as precipitously as it has on other issues.

The truth is that in wartime, public perception of a president's handling of the war is more important politically than everything else combined. This was the case in 2002 as it is in 2006. The big difference between these two years, politically speaking, has nothing to do with today's much stronger economy. In 2002 the public rated Bush very favorably on the war on terrorism; today its verdict on him as a war leader is far lower and continuing to decline. And to voters in wartime, a president's handling of the war is not simply the most important of several issues. Fairly or unfairly, it shapes their opinion of him on every other issue as well.

The debate on the war has often taken the form of a debate on whether our decision to seek regime change in Iraq is a necessary, integral part of the larger war on terrorism, or a diversion from it, as many Democrats have argued. It seems likely that Bush has won this debate, but winning or losing this debate has lost its political salience.

That is because the central fact of today's political landscape is that Iraq is seen by voters as going badly--so badly that it is affecting the rest of the war on terrorism. Iran has become more and more aggressive in its nuclear ambitions; there is an upsurge of Taliban activity in Afghanistan; Syria has reverted to terrorism and assassinations in Lebanon; democracy in the Arab world is meeting new resistance in Egypt and elsewhere--pick your own bad-news list. To voters who still believe Iraq is a diversion from the larger war, these non-Iraq developments represent vindication. If Bush hadn't invaded Iraq, they argue, we would have more resources to fight all the other battles.

Far more important is the reaction of voters who always agreed with Bush about the strategic centrality of Iraq, or have come to believe in its centrality in the years since the invasion. The key premise Bush and all these voters share is that success or failure in Iraq will affect success or failure in a war of global reach. To increasing numbers of these voters, such disturbing events as the escalating challenge from Tehran are a sign that U.S. frustration in Iraq is beginning to mean what Bush always said it would mean: marked progress, perhaps even victory, for Islamist radicals in the war as a whole.

Is Iraq going as badly as voters believe it is? There is much evidence that it is not. But this is another argument of declining political relevance. The reason lies in the nature of asymmetric warfare. By definition, the weaker side in an asymmetric war cannot prevail militarily. Its central objective is to convince the political decision-makers of the superior side that continuing the war is an exercise in futility. That is why the Communists' Tet offensive of early 1968 could be, at one and the same time, militarily disastrous and politically decisive in inducing the United States to terminate its involvement in the Vietnam war.

Our enemies in Iraq, particularly Abu Musab al Zarqawi, clearly have studied Tet and learned well. At each stage of the three-year conflict in Iraq, Zarqawi has chosen tactics of high psychological impact on America's home front over conventional military success in Iraq. Each of a series of tactics--the beheading of western hostages, suicide bombings in civilian areas, roadside bombs aimed at American soldiers, and (most recently) terror attacks on Shiite mosques designed to provoke a wave of ethnic cleansing--have been well designed to make American voters and political elites feel an overwhelming sense of futility.

The explicit connection to Tet in the thinking of the enemy was recently underlined by the discovery by

allied forces of a plan to attack and occupy the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. In 1968, one of the most potent blows of the war was struck by the Vietcong when it invaded and briefly occupied part of our embassy grounds in Saigon--a move that had absolutely no military significance yet was reported around the world as a devastating symbol of American failure.

If our view is right, nothing the administration does on the economy, health care, immigration, or any other non-war issue will affect the president's overall performance rating very much. Only a change in public perception of the administration's handling of the war on terrorism is capable of doing that.

Does that imply that only a sharp reduction of enemy activity in Iraq could improve the public's rating of Bush's handling of the war? If so, it is very bad news. Given the track record of Zarqawi's success in Tet-style asymmetric warfare, there's a very good chance he and his friends could come up with new psy-war tactics to demoralize American voters and political elites. If the past is prologue, such tactics could easily be executed even at times when American and Iraqi government forces were achieving great progress in pure military terms, or even in the midst of an American-Iraqi push to successfully counter the earlier Tet-style tactics. Asymmetric warfare, after all, does not require armed strength or military success on the part of the weaker power, but only an ability to keep undermining the political will of the stronger power.

An American military withdrawal from Iraq, whether swift or gradual, announced or tacit, would be even less likely to improve the public's rating of Bush as a war president.

If a withdrawal came in the wake of a visible movement toward victory in Iraq, it would of course be welcomed. But that scenario implies fulfillment of the goal of swift, near-term movement toward victory in Iraq, which by the nature of asymmetric warfare, and the enemy's mastery of it, is highly unlikely.

A U.S. withdrawal in the absence of visible progress, on the other hand, would be devastating to Bush. For voters who bought Bush's argument on the centrality of Iraq in the larger context of the world war on terrorism, it would be something very close to an admission of global failure. And for voters who always thought Iraq was a diversion or sideshow, it would be taken as ratification of their long-held view that Bush spilled our blood and treasure in Iraq for nothing.

Looking only at Iraq, and its intimate relationship to the decline of voter confidence in Bush's handling of the presidency as a whole, the picture is bleak and unlikely to change very much in the foreseeable future.

But this view is claustrophobic, because it leaves out Bush's handling of the rest of the war on terrorism. This is the one issue where Bush's ratings have remained respectable. And it is the one area with considerable upside potential for a change in voters' overall view of Bush.

Why? Because most voters now believe this is a world war. This includes many if not most voters who disagreed with the president's decision to invade Iraq.

Yes, visible progress toward achieving democracy in Iraq would be a positive force all over the Arab and Islamic world. Bush is right about that, and that is why success in Iraq is still worth sacrificing for. But the nature of a world war, which this is, implies that the relationship goes both ways--indeed, in all directions. That is, positive developments in any one sector of the battlefield are capable of reverberating back through all the others.

THE TRUTH IS, even as the struggle in Iraq has intensified over the past three years, other fronts in the world war have become far more active than they were earlier. Think of the suicide bombings in Madrid and London. Think of the expulsion of the Syrian Army from Lebanon. Think of the cartoon crisis, which originated in Denmark and caused riots and mass killings far and wide--some of the worst of which came in Nigeria.

Think, above all, of the Islamist regime in Iran. A regime that threatens repeatedly to annihilate Israel, that threatens to make its nuclear program completely secret, that threatens to share nuclear technology with the genocidal regime in Sudan and (at least by implication) with nongovernmental terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. This, don't forget, is the same regime whose willingness to stonewall in negotiations coincided with the political demise of one American president (Jimmy Carter) and came quite close to bringing down another (Ronald Reagan).

President Bush has never ruled out the use of military force against this toxic regime. But all high officials on his second-term foreign-policy team--including his secretary of state, secretary of defense, national security adviser, and director of intelligence--act not just as if this is not under active consideration, but as if the very idea were absurd. They shrug off the simple reality, abundantly plain to the most casual American voter, that Iran is moving ahead with obtaining and (in the regime's own stated scenarios) disseminating nuclear weapons. They act as if our utter failure to deter Iran is less important than the fact that we are not being attacked as warmongers by France and Germany.

Their body language says that Iraq has tied our hands everywhere else. If that is true, then engaging in Iraq has in fact handcuffed the United States in a world war, and the Bush administration will not make a comeback in public opinion.

But if, as we believe, Bush and the majority of American voters are right--in their belief that Iraq is one front, important but not all-encompassing, of a much wider war--then a failure to act elsewhere will also deny the administration a comeback, because most Americans believe that acting elsewhere is possible, and may in certain grave circumstances be required.

The president's decision on who is right--those who would handcuff him because of Iraq, or those who believe a world war sometimes requires grave, unpleasant decisions on more than one front--will almost certainly determine the future of his presidency in the eyes of the American electorate as a whole.

--Jeffrey Bell and Frank Cannon are principals of Capital City Partners, a Washington consulting firm.

Crispy Duck

New Republic

Editorial

5/8

As Social Security privatization stalled and Iraq slid further off the rails last summer, the White House became a grim place to work. To buck up morale, top officials circulated a Washington Post story from 1985, according to a squib from U.S. News & World Report. The story had pronounced Ronald Reagan's administration all but dead at a similar point in its tenure. Of course, as every West Wing denizen surely knows, the Gipper recovered by passing the most sweeping tax reform bill in history. Unfortunately, the last six months have not gone quite as well for President Bush. Since circulating the Post story, the Bushies went on to fumble the response to a natural disaster, withdraw a Supreme Court nominee, watch a top aide get indicted, and witlessly hand a Middle Eastern government control of our vulnerable ports. Their popularity is gone, their self-proclaimed "mandate" vanished into the ether.

Often, it is difficult to know when a president has entered the state of political purgatory known as "lame duck" status. For this president, the question is no longer whether, but how lame. Political science has given us regrettably few tools for answering this question with precision. But our own qualitative analysis suggests that not since James Buchanan has a president been lamer. Second-term presidents often see their agenda stalled by gridlock. But haggling over substance at least has the excitement value of conflict and opposition. Bush, on the other hand, has seen his agenda die from within, of its own accord. The last years of Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, and Reagan were like watching an angry traffic snarl. The last years of George W. Bush's presidency are like watching a car resting on cement blocks in the front yard.

What distinguishes Bush's predicament from that of his predecessors is a unique combination of structural and cyclical lameness. Cyclical lameness is the lameness all presidents must endure late in their second terms (or late in their first terms, if they lose reelection). It's the Bush administration's structural lameness that has made this president's lame years so stultifyingly lame. This was, after all, an administration plagued by flashes of lameness from the get-go. Back in August 2001, the Bushies had cut taxes and were on the verge of passing an education bill, at which point it was clear to anyone paying attention that the president was fresh out of ideas. Not long after, Bush's poll numbers plummeted to historic lows. True, September 11 saved ambitious White House aides from enduring years of monotony at the Crawford ranch with only the odd pickup game of Old Maid to pass the time.

But it couldn't wash away the fact that our big-ideas president had remarkably few of them--and that they were all pretty lousy to boot. (Whatever happened to that mission to Mars?)

The biggest reason to be pessimistic about Bush's lame duck years is his administration's preoccupation with politics. The few former Bush administration officials who have dared violate Bush clan omerta have marveled at the White House's near-total lack of interest in domestic policy. Shortly after leaving the administration in 2001, for example, former faith-based initiative czar John DiIulio complained that pretty much every policy decision had to be filtered through Karl Rove-- an arrangement that was formalized when Rove became deputy chief of staff following Bush's reelection. But, with Rove now abandoning that post to concentrate on politics full time, we may soon look back fondly on the halcyon days of politically motivated policy decisions, when at least there were such things as "policy decisions" being made.

And that's just the next six months. After this November's midterm elections, the Bushies will be one of the most pathetic species in the popular imagination: a collection of political sharpies with no more campaigns to scheme over. It's the political equivalent of an aging Hollywood starlet ... with bad skin ... and a weakness for Ho Hos. Maybe they'll still trot out some of their favorite tricks for old time's sake--say, a constitutional amendment counting a gay voter as three-fifths of a straight voter, or a campaign accusing Democrats of operating a secret terrorist cell from the House cafeteria. But their hearts won't be in it. It's all the more depressing when you realize this is the best-case scenario. Should the Democrats retake Congress, the end of the Bush era will consist of little more than fending off subpoenas and inventing new ways to say, "I don't recall."

"We have a thousand days to get the job done," incoming White House honcho Josh Bolten recently told his staff, apparently hoping to instill a sense of urgency. To which we can only respond: Have a thousand days ever looked longer?

Many Strange 'Emergencies'

Newsweek

By George F. Will

5/8

Before 1977, no snowstorm had ever been declared a federal disaster by a U.S. president. Twelve inches of powder overnight in Syracuse? We've handled that sort of thing for generations without hand-wringing on CNN. Then, in the first four years of the Clinton White House, more than 40 winter storms were designated as official traumas--opening the spigots for FEMA payments from D.C. In 1996 alone, President Clinton declared a record 82 federal disasters and emergencies of all sorts.

--Karl Zinsmeister, The American Enterprise Institute

So the decadence of the Republican Congress, displayed in the bloated "emergency" supplemental-spending bill, lacks even the dignity of originality. The noun "emergency" once had meaning: a severe, sudden, unexpected and temporary crisis. The original point of the president's request for a \$92.2 billion "emergency" supplemental was to provide money for the war on terror--principally Iraq--and Katrina recovery. Well.

Why are we funding Iraq, one of the longest wars in American history--by Nov. 25, 2006, it will be 1,347 days old, the number of days between Pearl Harbor and VJ Day--with "emergency" bills? To hide, or at least obscure, the costs. Funding the war in dribs and drabs--as if the fact that the war costs money is a recurring surprise--spares Congress from confronting the huge cost and having to make room for it in the budget by shedding lower-priority spending. When the Korean War erupted, Congress immediately slashed discretionary nonwar spending 25 percent.

Today's supplemental contains \$782 million for military research and development--important, perhaps, but hardly an emergency. That is a minor peccadillo compared with the Senate's cynical packaging of pork as essential to Katrina recovery--e.g., the \$700 million to move railroad operations (even though repairs after Katrina cost the railroad and its insurers almost \$300 million) slightly north from the Gulf Coast to serve developers' longstanding goal of clearing the space for casinos and tourism.

Worse still, the "emergency" bill includes \$594 million for highway projects, even in Hawaii, 4,000 miles from where Katrina hit. And \$4 billion for supposed farm "disasters" unrelated to Katrina. And \$150,000 for the Bronx Council of the Arts, \$1.8 million to promote art in West Virginia, \$500,000 for the Montana World Trade Center, and on and on. A poll shows approval of Congress down to 22 percent. Who are those 22 percent?

Regarding the almost erotic pleasure of spending other people's money, many Senate Republicans adhere to Oscar Wilde's advice on how to deal with temptation: Succumb to it. That is how many conservative voters will respond to the growing temptation to boycott this November's elections.

Even without the debacle of the Senate's "emergency" legislation, April was the cruelest month for conservatives, disgusted as they were by Republicans' floundering, pandering responses to the public's infantile tantrums about gasoline prices. Republican responses included threats of windfall-profits taxes and other measures to punish "price gouging." Conservatives, who are supposed to understand the power of markets and the limited power of government, should be saying:

About those polls critical of the president's "handling" of gas prices, who over the age of 7 really thinks presidents can "handle" world petroleum prices? And: A major reason for high oil prices is the rapid modernization of India and China--which is desirable and promoted by U.S. policy. And: For some reason, it pleased the Intelligent Designer of the universe to put much of the Earth's oil in turbulent places--the Middle East, Venezuela, Nigeria, Russia. And: The Congress that is in histrionic anguish over high gas prices has mandated adding ethanol to gasoline--ethanol which is in short supply, partly because Congress has legislated a tariff of 54 cents per gallon on imported ethanol.

A modest proposal: Among the federal entitlement programs is the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which gives states block grants to help pay energy bills, and for weatherization and other energy-related home repairs. Congress should amend that law to say: No such funds shall be spent in any congressional district or state that elects a representative or senator who votes against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or in currently closed portions of the Outer Continental Shelf.

Americans, endowed by their solicitous government with an ever-expanding array of entitlements, now have the whiny mentality that an entitlement culture breeds. They feel entitled to purchase gasoline at the price they paid for it 25 years ago. Guess what? Last week they could do even better than that. The average price of a gallon of regular was \$2.91. In April 1981, the real, inflation-adjusted price was \$3.10.

Why Spending Has Got to Give

Policy Review

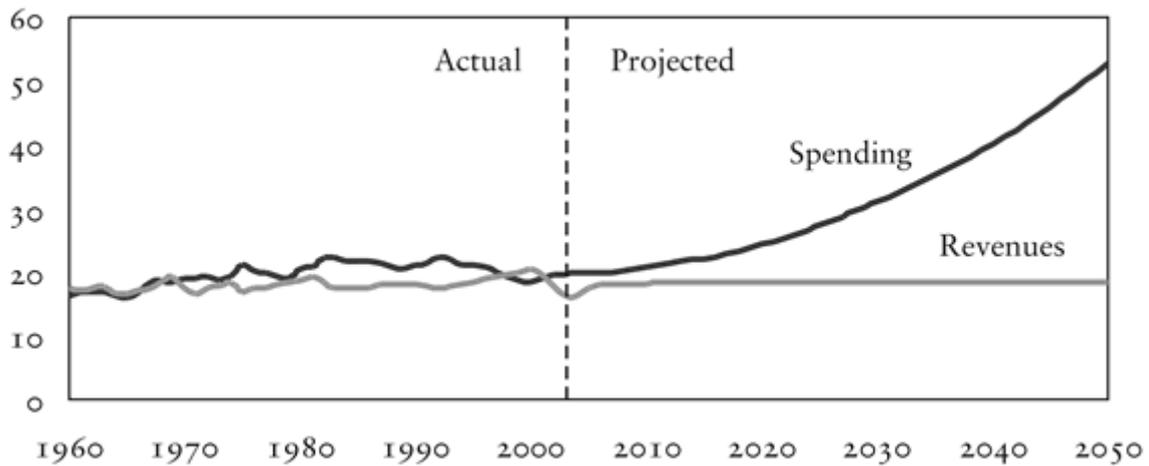
By David R. Henderson

April/May 2006

FEDERAL SPENDING ROSE from about 18.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) at the end of the Clinton administration to 20.3 percent by the end of George W. Bush's first term — during the watch, that is, of a Republican president and a Republican Congress. Of course, much of this increase is in defense spending and homeland security. But President Bush has not chosen guns at the expense of butter: He has opted for both. He did not veto even a single spending bill. And real (that is, inflation-adjusted) domestic discretionary spending, not counting homeland security, rose by an annual average of 4.8 percent over his first four years in office. Someone who favors relatively small government could get awfully depressed looking at these numbers.

One does not get less depressed contemplating the spending increases that are projected over the next 45 years. Credible estimates from the Congressional Budget Office and from independent budget analysts show federal spending doubling as a percent of GDP by the middle of the twenty-first century, reaching about 40 percent of GDP (see Figure 1). Yet some historical constants and some facts about Americans' views on taxes incline this observer to believe that federal spending will come nowhere close to 40 percent of GDP by mid-century.

FIGURE 1
A Scenario for Total Federal Spending and Revenues, Percentage of GDP



Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Note: CBO categorized this scenario as one of high spending and lower revenues. The scenario is explained in detail in CBO, the Long-Term Budget Outlook (December 2003), 6–12.

Before we turn to the good news, let us consider the bad news: the news on spending. Defense spending rose by \$161 billion between fiscal years 2001 and 2005, an increase of \$117 billion in 2001 dollars. This was large, and yet it took defense spending from a postwar low of 3.0 percent of GDP in 2001 (tied with 1999 and 2000) to 3.8 percent of GDP. Even if the U.S. government maintains a strong military presence in the world, which seems likely, it can do so with less than 4 percent of GDP. To see where spending is projected to grow substantially as a percentage of GDP, therefore, we must look elsewhere. The three programs accounting for most of this increase are projected to be Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Medicare and Medicaid spending together are credibly predicted to be about 21 percent of GDP by 2050, and Social Security spending is expected to equal about 6 percent of GDP by 2050. All three are driven by demographics — the aging of the U.S. population — and the first two are also driven, ironically, by improvements in health care.

Consider Social Security first. Social Security spending, which is now about 4.2 percent of GDP, is likely to be 6.2 percent of GDP by the middle of the twenty-first century unless changes are made in the program. This is due to two main factors: 1) the retirement of the baby-boom generation and 2) the increasing life expectancy of the elderly. The two factors together mean that the fraction of people aged 65 or older will rise from 12 percent of the population in 2000 to 19 percent in 2030. The working-age population, by contrast, is projected to fall from 59 percent to 56 percent. Based on this, the Social Security trustees project that the number of workers per Social Security recipient will decline from about 3.3 in the early 2000s to 2.2 in 2030. Of course, substantially increased immigration of younger people or a significant decline in life expectancy of the elderly could slow this trend but absent that, these population numbers are fairly firm. And absent a change in that ratio, absent policy changes in Social Security (more on that later), and absent a substantial increase in the growth of productivity, the increase in Social Security to about 6 percent of GDP is also fairly firm.

The scarier numbers are in Medicare, the federal government's socialized medicine program for the elderly, and Medicaid, the program for the poor and near-poor: Not only is the number of people enrolled in these programs increasing, but spending per person has also increased and will likely continue to do so.

Since 1967, the first full year of Medicare spending, spending has risen from 0.2 percent of GDP to about 2.3 percent in fiscal year 2004. Medicaid spending rose from 0.3 percent of GDP in 1970 to 1.5 percent in 2003, a quintupling of its share of output. Between 1970 and 2003, Medicare spending per person rose annually by 3 percentage points more than the growth of per capita GDP. Over approximately the same period, Medicaid spending per person rose annually by 2.7 percentage points more than the growth of per capita GDP. The spending growth comes from the combination of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries spending other people's money plus the incentive thereby created

to develop technological improvements allowing doctors and hospitals to do more. The spending is valuable. That's not the problem. The problem is that Medicare and Medicaid recipients are spending other people's money and therefore do not restrain their spending as much as they would if they were spending their own. What would otherwise have been an individual decision by someone trading off between health care and other goods becomes, instead, society's problem because the government has made it into society's problem. And because incremental dollars spent are partly paid for by taxpayers, people trade off at a different point than they would if they were spending their own money. Specifically, they buy medical care that they would not be willing to purchase on their own.

This is not to say that medical spending would not be rising as a percentage of GDP if there were no Medicare or Medicaid. Economists Robert E. Hall and Charles I. Jones argue that because health care adds years to our lives, people will voluntarily spend a higher fraction of their income on health care as their real incomes grow. Hall and Jones project, in fact, that overall health care spending could be as much as 33 percent of GDP by mid-century (up from about 15 percent today) and argue that there is nothing wrong with that. They are right. The problem, as noted above, comes when people spend other people's money.

Based on past growth in spending per person and assuming no changes in policy, the Congressional Budget Office projects that by 2050, Medicare and Medicaid spending could be as much as 21 percent of GDP (see Figure 2). Together with the growth in Social Security spending, and assuming that other spending doesn't fall as a percentage of GDP, this would put federal government spending in 2050 at about 40 percent of GDP, or twice its share of GDP today.

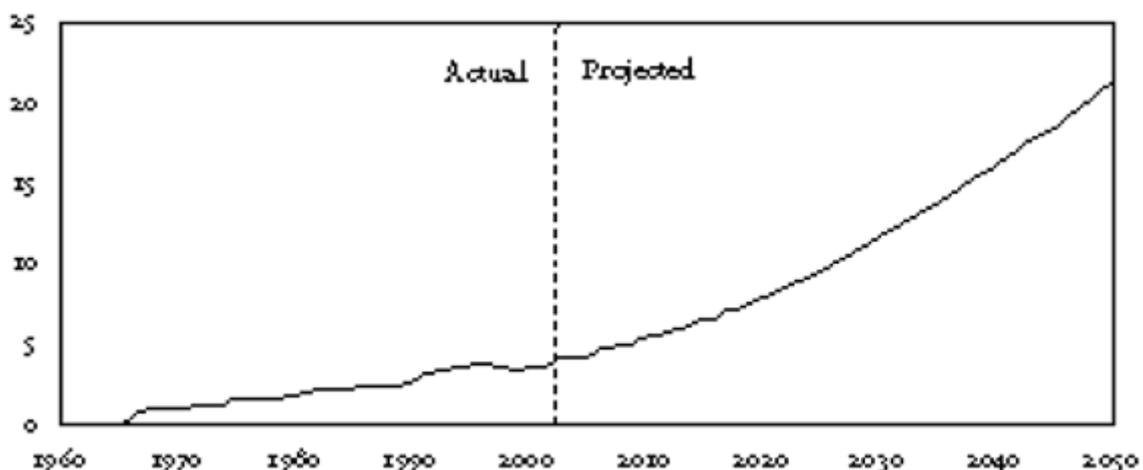
Tax increases aren't enough

THAT'S THE BAD news. Now the good news. The Congressional Budget Office said it best:

In the past half-century, total revenues have ranged from 16.1 percent to 20.8 percent of GDP, with no obvious trend over time. On average their share of GDP has hovered around 18.5 percent.

This is about as close to a historical constant as one finds in public-sector economics. U.S. experience differs dramatically from that of other countries. This is probably because of the political equilibrium we have reached in the United States due not only to our particular demographics but also, and more important, to division of powers and a republican rather than a parliamentary political system. Clearly, unless the deficit takes up a lot of the slack (which is highly unlikely for reasons that are argued below), something's gotta give. Which will it be: taxes or government spending? The odds-on favorite is government spending.

FIGURE 2
Total Federal Spending for Medicare and Medicaid, Percentage of GDP



Source: Congressional Budget Office. See The Long-Term Budget Outlook (December 2003).

It's true that taxes as a share of GDP did rise in the late 1970s from 18 percent in fiscal year 1977 to 19.6 percent in fiscal 1981. But there are three things to note about this. First, the high inflation of the 1970s drove people into higher tax brackets, and the indexing of tax brackets that Ronald Reagan and Congress put into the 1981 tax law, effective in 1985, means that inflation alone can no longer put people into higher tax brackets. Inflation, therefore, cannot be the income-tax-revenue generator for government that it was in the late 1970s. Second, the increase in tax revenue generated by inflation was one of the main factors that led to popular support for Reagan's 1981 cut in income tax rates at all income levels. Third, this increase in tax revenue as a percent of GDP still kept the number within the 20-percent upper limit.

Ample polling data also support the view that Americans, whatever their other positions, are against higher taxes on themselves. Various polling organizations asked Americans their views on taxes in 1938 and in most years since 1947. The percentage who thought their taxes were too low was always between 0 and 2, except for 2003, 2004, and 2005, when the number hit 3 percent. And in every year but 1949 and 2003, the percentage who thought their taxes were too high exceeded the percentage who thought their taxes were about right, usually by a wide margin.

It's not surprising, of course, that people would think their own taxes are too high. But as the following evidence shows, most Americans are even against taxing the highest-income people more and, indeed, favor taxing them less. A Roper Center/Reader's Digest poll in October 1995 asked people what they thought was the highest percentage of income governments at all levels should take in taxes of all forms. The higher the hypothetical income, of course, the higher was the percentage people found to be fair. What was striking, though, was how low this percentage was. Even for the highest-income family asked about, one making \$200,000 a year, the mean percentage that people found to be fair was 27 and the median percentage found to be fair was 25. To put this in perspective, a real family making \$200,000 a year or more at about that time paid about 28.7 percent of its income in federal taxes of all forms. Adding in their state and local taxes would take this number well above 30 percent and close to 35 percent. In other words, high-income people were already paying well above the median level that the Americans surveyed thought fair.

Nor did the Bush tax cuts change this much. A 2002 study by economists William G. Gale and Samara R. Potter found that, taking account of the 2001 Bush tax cut, people in the top 1 percent of the income distribution paid 31.3 percent of their income in taxes of all forms. To add more perspective, consider the fact that left-wing politician Al Sharpton, who advocates higher taxes on "the rich," when asked by ABC News reporter John Stossel what percentage of their income "the rich" should pay in federal income taxes, answered "around fifteen percent." This is well below the approximately 20 percent, in income taxes alone, that they now pay. It's true that Sharpton can get away with advocating tax increases on high-income people because few people know just how much high-income people pay in taxes, but various economists and reporters will certainly get these facts out to the public whenever a tax increase becomes a serious threat.

The bottom line is that it would be extremely difficult for the federal government to raise taxes by more than a few percentage points of GDP. Even if federal taxes were to rise, say, to 25 percent of GDP, this would imply a 35-percent increase in the federal tax share of GDP over its historical average share of 18.5 percent and would still require government spending to "give" much more than taxes.

The implications of these facts about government spending and taxation are huge. First, the dominant problem of domestic economic policy for the next 40 years will be how to rein in the growth of government spending. The president and Congress may have the luxury of escaping it for the next few years, but by sometime in the next decade (and possibly even during this one), reining in spending will be paramount. Second, many of the proposals now being pushed by pro-free-market economists that are not treated seriously by politicians in Washington will be taken very seriously very soon. These include cashing out Medicare by giving every recipient straight cash or a health care voucher, raising the age to receive full Social Security benefits to 70 and then indexing it to life expectancy, raising the age to qualify for Medicare to accord with the age to qualify for Social Security, capping Social Security benefits in real terms so that they no longer grow, requiring Medicare and Medicaid recipients to pay substantial co-payments for medical care, and privatizing the disability insurance component of the

Social Security program. All of these, I predict, will be on the bargaining table. They may not yet be politically feasible but will quickly become so once they become politically necessary.

Why worse will be better

CONSIDER, FOR EXAMPLE, one way the political dynamics of Social Security might change as more and more baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) start collecting benefits. One of the most important insights from “public choice” economics is what I like to call “the importance of being unimportant.” Translation: If an interest group is suitably small, its members can be relatively cohesive. They can get together to obtain a special subsidy, regulation, or import barrier that costs members of a much larger group a little each in order to give members of the small group a lot each. One reason the farm lobby has been so successful at getting subsidies for its members is that there are so few farmers. This means that each farmer can get a substantial gain at the expense of consumers and taxpayers (in the form of higher prices and higher taxes, respectively) and that the consumers and taxpayers don’t bother organizing to fight the wasteful farm policies because each pays a much smaller amount than the gain per farmer. This “importance of being unimportant” explains a phenomenon that has surprised many observers: Even as the farm population has shrunk, the lobbying success of the farm lobby has grown.

But the reverse also holds. All other things being equal, the larger the interest group becomes relative to the size of those paying for its special privileges, the bigger becomes the loss to the payers. The case of Social Security and Medicare now becomes relevant. One reason there has been relatively little resistance by the working population to increased subsidies to the elderly is that for a few decades there have been about three to four workers for every elderly beneficiary. But as the number of workers per beneficiary falls to 2.2 by 2030, as noted above, the resistance among workers will grow because the cost per worker will grow. This could imply a new political equilibrium in which the amount of benefit per elderly person would not grow as quickly as planned and might even fall somewhat. Readers of Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point* might think that that is what I’m describing here. But it’s not necessarily a tipping point. Rather, increased political pressure by the relatively young will lead, along a continuum, to a different outcome.

Now, the above does not mean that there would be an across-the-board reduction in benefits or in the growth of benefits for all the elderly. Instead, a new political coalition might form between the working-age population and, say, the oldest Social Security beneficiaries to rein in benefits for the relatively young seniors who can most afford to give some up. Or it may be a coalition between the working-age population and the younger elderly. Which coalition comes about is difficult to predict — that there will be a coalition seems likely.

This might sound heartless, but note two things: First, it’s not heartless to recognize that the cupboard is bare and to prepare for it. Second, it’s important to remember why we will be in this fix — it’s because Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as president, purposely structured Social Security to put us there. In a famous statement about the Social Security payroll taxes, FDR said:

[T]hose taxes were never a problem of economics. They are politics all the way through. We put those payroll contributions there so as to give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their pensions. . . . With those taxes in there, no damn politician can ever scrap my Social Security program.

If heartlessness is to be ascribed to anyone, therefore, it is to that Machiavellian man who set things up.

Of course, not all ways of cutting the growth of benefits are created equal. Some are fairer than others, and some are more efficient than others. Here’s where the insights of economists who recognize the incentive effects of policies will be important. One problematic way to cut Social Security and Medicare benefits, or the growth of benefits, is means testing; that is, cutting benefits more for the higher-income elderly than for the lower-income elderly, which is what President Bush and many other politicians have proposed. There is one and only one merit to this: Those with more will be better able to take the hit. But the proposal runs up against a tough philosophical problem and a tough practical/economic problem.

The philosophical problem is this: Consider two people, Smith and Jones, who are the same age and have the same time profile of earned income. Smith saves a high percent of his income and invests it in stocks, bonds, and other investments. Jones goes to Europe every few years and saves little. When they retire, Smith gets substantial income from his investments while Jones gets little. So, under some proposals, Smith would get less than Jones. This is unfair. Smith is being penalized for saving. Many of us have read to our children the story of the ant and the grasshopper — the ant who stores up food for the winter and the grasshopper who doesn't. We tell our children that it's unjust for the grasshopper to have a free ride. Unless we think we are teaching our children an unjust ethic, therefore, the injustice of this way of cutting benefits should be apparent.

This gets us to the practical economic problem. When governments penalize saving and high incomes, they can expect there to be less saving and lower incomes. Cutting benefits more for higher-income people discourages people from saving as much as they might otherwise, so the income from their investments is not as large as it might otherwise be. That's one part of the problem. The other is what means testing would do to people — especially the elderly — who have saved and put themselves in a higher-income category who, therefore, have a great deal of discretion over how much income to earn in their old age. With means testing, the implicit marginal tax rates they will face when they earn more than a relatively modest income can easily be over 70 percent.

The reason marginal tax rates would be so high is that they are already substantial. Means testing would drive them higher. Consider, for example, a single 66-year-old man whose earnings from taxable bonds are \$22,000 per year. (This could be based on a 4-percent interest rate on bonds worth \$550,000.) Assume the man's annual Social Security benefits are \$10,000 a year and that he is working part-time for \$12,000 a year. Thus, his total income is \$44,000 a year. Assume for simplicity that he has no tax-exempt interest income. If he takes the standard deduction and has no dependents, this man will be in the 25-percent federal tax bracket. But for every dollar he earns, an additional 85 cents of his Social Security benefit will be taxed at his federal income tax rate. Thus, every dollar he earns will bring not one dollar, but \$1.85 under taxation at his marginal rate of 25 percent. Imagine he is trying to decide whether to work a little harder, producing goods and services that others value, for an extra \$1,000 annually. By making that extra \$1,000, he would incur a tax liability of \$250 plus 25 percent of \$850 of his Social Security income, for an additional federal tax liability of \$462.50. And that's just his federal income tax. To that we must add Social Security and Medicare taxes equal to 7.65 percent of the additional \$1,000 in earnings, or \$76.50. Then, if he lives in a state with an income tax, he could well pay 4 or 5 percent of this \$1,000 in state income taxes. Even if it's just 4 percent, this is an additional \$40. So, on that extra \$1,000 in earnings he's considering, he would pay an additional \$579 in taxes. His marginal tax rate, therefore, is 57.9 percent.

Now introduce even a modest means-tested Social Security where, for example, he gives up \$150 in Social Security benefits for every additional \$1,000 in earned income. The implicit extra marginal tax rate on this \$1,000, then, is 15 percent. Add this to the 57.9 percent earlier computed and our relatively modest-income "upper-income" elderly person now faces a whopping marginal tax rate of 72.9 percent. He may well decide, along with millions of other elderly people, not to earn that extra \$1,000 producing goods and services that others value. That is the practical problem.

There's a related practical problem. Because many people in this man's situation may decide not to work as much as they would have, the government gives up the income and payroll tax revenue that it would have collected on that extra income. This means that the static estimate of the Social Security spending that the government estimates it would save thanks to means testing will overstate the net positive impact on the government's finances. Offsetting this saving from means testing will be a reduction in revenues that would otherwise have been collected, and this reduction might well be large.

One might argue that the reduction in work that I predict above will be modest because few people will be aware of these high implicit marginal tax rates. It is true that they will be implicit rather than explicit and that, therefore, many elderly people will be unaware of them. At first. But is it really a good idea to implement a policy based on the notion that people won't find out, especially when there will be countless books, magazine articles, and websites telling people how to map out their income-earning, spending, and sheltering strategies?

A way to cut benefits or the growth of benefits that avoids these incentive problems and that, in ant/grasshopper terms, is more fair is to raise the age for Medicare in line with Social Security (phased in to give people time to plan), raise both ages to 70 (again phased in to give people time to plan), and

cut the real growth of benefits. Interestingly, this was done in 1983, when the age for receipt of full Social Security benefits was raised in stages to 67, effective in 2027. So we have a precedent for it. Nor was it done at the behest of either the 1983 Greenspan commission on Social Security or the Reagan administration. The real heroes in this were a Democratic congressman from Texas named Jake Pickle, who attached it to the House bill implementing the Greenspan commission's recommendations, and the House of Representatives generally, then under Democratic control. The fact that it was done then with so little fanfare suggests that it could be done again.

Reforms

I said earlier that the deficit is unlikely to take up a lot of the slack. Why do I believe that? The reason is that other than during World War II, when federal spending on the war alone was well over 40 percent of GDP, there has been no period in our history when the deficit was over 5 percent of GDP in a nonrecession year. Even a few years of deficits at 5 percent or more of GDP — to put this in perspective, that would be a budget deficit of over \$600 billion — would raise the debt-to-GDP ratio dramatically. This seems unlikely, if only because such a debt level would be increasingly difficult to finance.

The budget numbers are such that various market-based reforms will be looked at seriously — soon and for a long time. We must not give up on these reforms because they are not politically popular today. What reformers should do, instead, is keep honing their proposals for reining in government spending and keep their powder dry.

--David R. Henderson is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and an associate professor of economics at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. His latest book, co-authored with Charles L. Hooper, is *Making Great Decisions in Business and Life* (Chicago Park Press, 2006).

Whistling Dixie; Mark Warner test-drives a new strategy for the Dems in '06

Newsweek

By Jonathan Darman

5/8

When you're an out-of-work Southern governor with time on your hands and your eye on the presidency, driving a NASCAR pace car around a deserted speedway should probably come naturally. Or at least it did for former Virginia governor Mark Warner when he stumped for Harold Ford Jr. in April at the Bristol Motor Speedway in northeast Tennessee. Ford, like Warner a Democrat, is running for the state's open Senate seat; the trip to the track was his photo op, and he got to drive first. Ford looked nervous behind the wheel, though; passing a flock of flashbulbs, he was all clenched fists and tight shoulders, keeping his speed under 70. "I'm from the western part of the state," he said, a little defensively, after slipping from behind the driver's seat. "We race trucks."

But politics in Virginia, just a few miles to the north, had sent Warner to speedways often, and he knew the drill for navigating the track. Taking the pace-car wheel, he grinned coolly as he zoomed fast once, twice, three times around the track. "Man, governor, you have got a lead foot," a Ford aide called from the infield. Ford, too, sounded impressed: "I could take lessons from this guy."

Ford and a handful of other Democrats running statewide in the South this year are trying to do just that. With President George W. Bush's poll numbers at a record low and congressional Republicans struggling to distance themselves from White House missteps on Katrina and Iraq, Democrats are dreaming of taking back the Senate and House. To pull it off, however, they'll have to solve a vexing problem: how to get Red State voters to give them a chance. They're looking to Warner, and the Different-Kind-of-Democrat formula he used successfully in Virginia, to help them gain back the foothold in the South they've missed since the Clinton era. Warner, an unannounced but unrelenting candidate for the presidency, is happy to help, urging Dixie's Democrats to break with the national party's Bush-bashing strategy and instead emphasizing bipartisanship and values. Warner is hoping big Southern victories in 2006 will prove that his Virginia success was a preview of things to come, not just a random stroke of luck in a region grown hostile to Democrats.

Republicans currently hold a substantial 55-to-45 advantage in the Senate. In Tennessee, Ford staffers see themselves in a race for the "51st seat" essential for tipping control. Other must-win races include

Missouri, where State Auditor Claire McCaskill hopes to knock off incumbent Republican Jim Talent by dramatically increasing Democratic percentages in the southern half of the state. Also on the wish list: the Virginia Senate seat held by Republican George Allen. Democrats admit this will be a tough one, but say they at least hope to slow Allen's 2008 presidential momentum with a close and costly race. Meanwhile, the small number of competitive House races has Democrats settling for targets in the heart of Bush country, like Republican Anne Northup's conservative Kentucky district. To win big in 2006, in other words, Democrats need to reach out to voters who don't like the Democratic Party very much.

That is Warner's specialty. He won the Virginia governorship in November 2001, a high point for post-9/11 Republican power. While in office, he won rural support by channeling economic development toward the state's depressed Southside. He even managed to raise taxes and see his poll numbers go up.

Now term-limited and out of office, he's exporting his strategy (and his staffers) to other Southern Dems. He's spent the past four months on airplanes, making a name for himself in rural Missouri and Tennessee, and his political action committee has peppered '06 Democrats with money. In speeches in the South, he preaches the blessings of bipartisanship. He rarely mentions the words "Bush" or "Republican" and only invokes his own party to say, "I'm proud to be a Democrat, but I'm prouder to be an American." There is "a wide swath of Reagan Democrats or independents who are up for grabs," Warner tells NEWSWEEK, "but it can't be for a Democrat who's going to preach the kind of 'us against them' '70s populism."

Warner is also telling Southern Democrats to go on the offensive on values issues and run against "cultural elitism." One unusual new target, plucked from the Republican playbook: the press. This month, "Dateline NBC" sent a camera crew to film fans at a Virginia NASCAR track reacting to a group of Muslim men. Jim Webb, a candidate for Allen's Senate seat who is being advised by Warner's top political strategists, fired off an angry letter to NBC. The network, he charged, had cavalierly assumed NASCAR fans would be intolerant. Ford, who uses Warner's media adviser, grew irritated when asked if Tennesseans would give a Democrat a chance: "People in the media don't realize these people are Americans; they don't think in terms of Democrat or Republican."

Some Democrats who've heard prophecies of a Southern renaissance before are skeptical. They think the party would be better off cutting its losses in Dixie and focusing on the Southwest and Rocky Mountain states. "The South that once was is not going to rise again for us," said one Democratic strategist who asked not to be named because he did not want to disparage his party's chances this year. "We have to find votes somewhere else."

Warner says Democrats can't survive without the South. He has a vested interest in the argument. His presidential prospects, after all, depend on beating out other would-be Southern spokesmen, like John Edwards, and running as the anti-Hillary, as a Democrat who can win in Dixie. If the message falls flat in the midterms, party leaders may look elsewhere--to other regions and other candidates.

But Southern victories in 2006 could boost Warner's profile, and provide a roadmap for his presidential run. At the Tennessee speedway event, Ford introduced a conservative Democratic state legislator to Warner, asking the legislator if he'd met "the next president of the United States." Warner could chat for only a minute but said he wanted to stay in touch. "I'll be back," he said, "and I may need to ask for your help."

Back on the Stand

Newsweek

By Michael Isikoff and Evan Thomas

5/8

It was August 2004, and special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald was zeroing in on I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby as the leaker in the Valerie Plame case. Fitzgerald had been quizzing reporters, searching for evidence that the vice president's chief of staff had leaked the identity of the CIA covert operative to a news organization in an attempt to undermine her husband, former ambassador Joseph Wilson, who had been an irritant to the Bush administration. Wary of identifying their confidential sources, reporters from big news organizations like The Washington Post and NBC were talking to Fitzgerald under strict

ground rules aimed at narrowing the scope of his questions.

Matt Cooper, Time magazine's deputy Washington bureau chief at the time, agreed to tell Fitzgerald about his contacts with Libby--but not about his conversations with anyone else. Given permission to testify by Libby, who waived the usual reporter-source confidentiality agreement, Cooper met with Fitzgerald at the Washington office of Cooper's lawyer, First Amendment expert Floyd Abrams. Yes, Cooper acknowledged to the prosecutor, he had spoken to Libby. And, yes, Libby had confirmed that Wilson's wife had worked at the CIA and had played a role in sending Wilson to Africa on a fact-finding trip aimed at discovering whether Saddam Hussein's Iraq was trying to buy uranium from the country of Niger. But according to Cooper, Libby had been offhand, passive--"Yeah, I've heard that, too," Libby allegedly replied when Cooper asked him about the role played by Wilson's wife. In other words, Libby was not Cooper's original source. Well, then, who was?

Fitzgerald seemed to be "surprised," according to a knowledgeable source who declined to be identified discussing a criminal investigation. He broke off the questioning to consult with a colleague, and then began to question Cooper over and over, methodically trying to make sure he wasn't missing something. The prosecutor had to wonder: was someone else in the administration besides Libby a player in this drama? Fitzgerald is the sort of prosecutor whose very being is offended by deception and who will go to great lengths to pursue the truth. Ultimately, Fitzgerald discovered that Cooper's original source was Karl Rove, the president's political adviser who last month stepped down from his job as White House deputy chief of staff to focus on the November elections. Last October, Fitzgerald indicted Libby for lying to a grand jury. (Libby has mounted an all-out defense against the charges). But the dogged prosecutor is still pursuing Rove. Last week Rove testified before a grand jury for the fifth time in a little more than two years. Rove's lawyer, Bob Luskin, says that Rove is not a "target" of the grand jury--meaning that the prosecutor has not warned him that an indictment is imminent.

It is impossible to know if Fitzgerald will make a case against Rove. But it is possible now to trace how Fitzgerald came to suspect Rove of not telling the whole truth. The Bush administration has been particularly quick to trigger leak investigations. Often, these probes in high-profile cases are intended to punish political enemies. But this is one that has boomeranged.

In February 2004, Rove testified before Fitzgerald's grand jury--twice. He told of speaking briefly to columnist Bob Novak about the Wilson trip. But Rove never mentioned any conversation with Time's Cooper. Then, in October 2004, Rove, through his lawyer Luskin, suddenly turned over to the special prosecutor an e-mail, sent to Stephen Hadley, then deputy national-security adviser, that clearly showed that Rove had spoken to Cooper. Reappearing before the grand jury that month, Rove acknowledged that he must have spoken to Cooper, but he still didn't remember doing so. Rove's e-mail to Hadley suggested that Cooper had telephoned him in July 2003 about something else--welfare reform--and then switched the conversation to Wilson. Rove, according to the e-mail, didn't say much more to Cooper other than to warn him that Time shouldn't get "far out front" on the story. Ambassador Wilson was telling--that the Bush administration was lying about WMD in Iraq and that, specifically, Wilson, on his trip to Niger, had found no evidence that Saddam was trying to buy uranium for atom-bomb making.

There the investigation stood until last summer--when Fitzgerald seemed to make a breakthrough. Threatened with jail, Cooper through his lawyer got a green light from Luskin to testify about his original source. Cooper told a different story of his conversation with Rove than the version Rove had given the grand jury. According to Cooper's own e-mail to his editors (first reported by NEWSWEEK last summer), Rove identified Wilson's wife as a CIA official who sent Wilson to Africa.

Now Rove was on the hot seat. Summoned back to the grand jury last October for a fourth time, Rove said it was "possible" that he had told Cooper about Wilson's wife, but he had simply forgotten it. It appears that Rove's lawyer saved his client from an indictment. Just before Fitzgerald indicted Libby last fall, he met with Luskin and told him that he was considering indicting Rove, according to a source close to Rove who declined to be identified discussing sensitive matters. Luskin, says this source, made a final plea. Among other things, Luskin told the prosecutor that sometime between October 2003 and January 2004 he'd had a drink with Time reporter Viveca Novak. An old friend of Luskin's, Novak (who is no relation to the columnist of the same last name) surprised Luskin by telling him that Rove might have been Cooper's source. Last week, in an interview with NEWSWEEK, Novak described the conversation. Luskin, Novak recalls, said that Rove "didn't have a Cooper problem," meaning that Rove had not been Cooper's source. "That's not what I hear," Novak recalls responding. At that point, Luskin's demeanor changed, says Novak. "He got very serious from what I told him. He reacted as

though he were learning it for the first time." (Novak had heard about Cooper's source from chatter inside the Washington bureau of Time; she recently took a buyout from the magazine.)

Luskin alerted Rove to the conversation, but his client still didn't remember it, according to a source close to Rove who declined to be named discussing sensitive legal matters. Luskin seemed to be signaling to Fitzgerald that Rove was truthful when he said he didn't remember the Cooper phone call; otherwise, why would he testify as such when he knew that others, including Cooper, could contradict him? (One possible explanation: Rove may have assumed Cooper would protect him as a confidential source.) Luskin did make a renewed search of Rove's files, the source says. That's what turned up the e-mail to Hadley. Fitzgerald was sufficiently slowed up by Luskin's story to hold off on indicting Rove, according to the source.

But Fitzgerald is nothing if not relentless, and he has kept after Rove. He has continued to take testimony in the case. Last week, according to a source close to Rove who refused to be identified discussing secret grand-jury proceedings, Rove testified that he would have had no motive to deliberately conceal his conversation with Cooper. "It would have been crazy" of Rove "to testify about [his conversations with Bob Novak] but not testify about the Cooper conversation," says this source, who adds that Rove would have known he would be "stepping into a perjury trap."

Rove and his legal team hope they will be cleared soon. It is not clear whether Fitzgerald is just tying up loose ends or building a case. Some lawyers suspect that he may be playing a tactical game with Libby's defense team. By keeping a file open on Rove, he can resist requests from Libby's lawyers to "discover" documents relating to the ongoing investigation. Such gamesmanship, however, may be too clever by half for Fitzgerald, who is regarded as anything but sly or devious.

The White House says that Rove's decision to step down as deputy chief of staff was not in any way caused by Fitzgerald's persistent investigation. Rove is at once expressive and not the sort to give away much. On the day of his grand-jury testimony, the man the president once called "the Architect" seemed jolly at a party at a fancy Georgetown restaurant to celebrate the 10th anniversary of "Fox News Sunday." Chatting about his testimony with a fellow partygoer, he cheerfully asked, "How's it playing out there?"

John McCain: The Maverick Gunning for the Oval Office

Time

By Ralph Nader

5/8

"I think a lot of people don't exactly get where I'm at," said Senator John McCain last month. So the G.O.P. candidate for President is going around the U.S. to loyal Republican gatherings to set them straight. "I've always been a conservative," he told the New York Times.

As the clear and active Republican front runner for 2008, McCain is not just a conservative. Otherwise why would he be so controversial among the party's base? He favors stronger auto-industry regulation and campaign-finance reform with anti-special-interest sound bites. He passed through Congress an anti-torture bill widely seen as a rebuke to George W. Bush. McCain opposed the Bush tax cuts in 2001 and '02 as unfairly tilted to the wealthy and reckless at a time of large deficits. But just as the hard right readies to reject his bid, the other McCain reappears. He is a foreign policy hawk; he supports Bush in staying the course in Iraq and even sending more troops. He backs many Bush priorities, including private Social Security accounts, school vouchers and deep cuts in nondefense spending. He now supports keeping the tax cuts.

Can McCain, 69, juggle what he sees as a problem-solving, independent pragmatism rooted in conservative philosophy with what others see as expediency and pandering? My guess is he can. The G.O.P. power brokers and right-wing conservatives in the precincts will need him as much as--if not more than--he needs them. In a field of uninspiring alternatives, they will prefer electable McCain to the looming Hillary Clinton.

--Longtime consumer advocate Nader ran twice for the U.S. presidency

We're Here, We're Square, Get Used to It

Time

By Caitlin Flanagan

5/8

I am a 44-year-old woman who grew up in Berkeley who has never once voted for a Republican, or crossed a picket line, or failed to send in a small check when the Doctors Without Borders envelope showed up. I believe that we should not have invaded Iraq, that we should have signed the Kyoto treaty, that the Starr Report was, in part, the result of a vast right-wing conspiracy. I believe that poverty is our most pressing issue and that we should be pouring money and energy into its eradication. I believe that allowing migrant women and children to die of thirst in American deserts is a moral transgression that will stain us forever.

But despite all that, there is apparently no room for me in the Democratic Party. In fact, I have spent much of the past week on a forced march to the G.O.P. And the bayonet at my back isn't in the hands of the Republicans; the Democrats are the bullyboys. Such lions of the left as Barbara Ehrenreich, the writers at Salon and much of the Upper West Side of Manhattan have made it abundantly clear to me that I ought to start packing my bags. I'm not leaving, but sometimes I wonder: When did I sign up to be the beaten wife of the Democratic Party?

Here's why they're after me: I have made a lifestyle choice that they can't stand, and I'm not cowering in the closet because of it. I'm out, and I'm proud. I am a happy member of an exceedingly "traditional" family. I'm in charge of the house and the kids, my husband is in charge of the finances and the car maintenance, and we all go to church every Sunday. This month Little, Brown published a collection of my essays about family life called *To Hell with All That: Loving and Loathing Our Inner Housewife*. It's written in the spirit of one of my great heroes, the late housewife writer and feminist Erma Bombeck. It's not a book about social policy or alternative lifestyles or anything even vaguely political. It's a book about how much I miss my mother, who died recently, and about the struggles I have had fighting breast cancer without my mom around to help me. It's a book that pays tribute to the '50s housewife instead of ridiculing her.

As far as I can tell, every reviewer and reporter who has encountered my book has assumed that I'm a conservative Republican. At the end of an interview on a national TV network, a reporter said, "Caitlin, I can't let you go without asking you one question." Here was her question: Was it really true that I'm a Democrat? Those reporters' assumptions don't tell you anything about me, nor do they tell you much about the reporters themselves: they made an honest mistake. What it tells you a whole lot about is the Democratic Party and the face it projects to the world. It's a party that supports gay families, as I do, and has vast sympathy for many other kinds of alternative lifestyles. But we let the Republicans have complete ownership of the image of the traditional family. And that's one reason we keep losing elections.

Most of the 60 million people who voted against George W. Bush have lifestyles more like mine than the Democratic Party would like to admit. Most of us aren't the Hollywood elite or the nontraditional family. Many of us do what I do, which is go to church on Sunday, work hard and value my marriage. Again, it's not so much my party's platform that rejects the family; God help us all if Bush's brutality to the poor continues much longer. It's a small but very vocal minority, the Democratic pundits, who abhor what I represent because it doesn't fit the stereotypical image of the modern woman who has escaped from domestic prison. Fifty years ago, a stay-at-home mom who loved her husband would not automatically be assumed to be a Republican. The image of the Democratic Party that used to come to mind was of a workingman and his wife sitting at the kitchen table worrying about how they were going to pay the bills and voting for Adlai Stevenson because he was going to help them squeak by every month and maybe even afford to send their kids to college.

The Democrats made a huge tactical error a few decades ago. In the middle of doing the great work of the '60s--civil rights, women's liberation, gay inclusion--we decided to stigmatize the white male. The union dues--paying, churchgoing, beer-drinking family man got nothing but ridicule and venom from us. So he dumped us. And he took the wife and kids with him.

And now here we are, living in a country with a political and economic agenda we deplore, losing election after election and wondering why.

It's the contempt, stupid.

George W. Bush: Trying to Salvage an Administration

Time

By James Carney

5/8

George W. Bush subscribes to the Great Man theory, the notion that bold leaders rather than impersonal economic and social forces shape the course of history. "It is human choices that move events," he triumphantly declared at his second Inaugural, just 16 months--and a political eternity--ago.

But events have a way of slipping the reins of human control, even of someone as powerful as the U.S. President. So Bush, 59, who launched his second term with the outsize goals of ending tyranny in the world and establishing a permanent Republican majority in America, finds himself with public-disapproval ratings higher than any other President's since Richard Nixon chose resignation over impeachment. The causes of Bush's fall from favor are multiple and compounding: Hurricane Katrina, high gas prices, the Jack Abramoff scandal, the CIA-leak investigation, the Dubai Ports deal, a bulging deficit and, above all, Iraq. An invasion the President sold as vital to national security is now seen by most Americans as a war of choice--and a bad choice.

Political recovery won't be easy. Other recent Presidents--Reagan, Clinton--weathered second-term scandals and left office with restored popularity. But Bush's fate hinges on an unpopular war, already going into its fourth year, that he probably can't--or won't--quit without a victory that may be unobtainable. Later than most Presidents, he has shaken up his staff, but he has refused to fire his Defense Secretary, whose head is most in demand. And he faces the prospect of losing one or both houses of Congress to the Democrats in November.

Yet Bush's time is far from over. Two issues--immigration at home, Iran abroad--pose challenges but also opportunities for successful leadership. And democracy may yet find a home in the Arab world. Bush is already assured a large place in history. What he does next will decide how he is judged by it.

Condoleezza Rice: Master of the Universe

Time

By Leslie Gelb

5/8

You could see something very special in the young lady in 1986 when she interned for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. What was there went beyond ambition and her already formidable presence and steely persistence; it was an absolute will to master whatever she encountered. Condoleezza Rice conquered the piano as a young girl and the complicated, controversial field of Soviet military affairs after receiving her Ph.D.

As happens with those marked with ability and presence, the lords of the mountain reached down to anoint her as National Security Adviser to President Bush and now as his Secretary of State. After she became Secretary, even former critics lauded her for reinvigorating U.S. diplomacy, though they questioned whether she could sculpt a much needed grand strategy. She responded with one built around promoting democracy worldwide, without compromise, as a cure for everything from terrorism to economic downturns. But this strategy already hangs by hairs in Iraq and a tumultuous Middle East.

Her reputation will turn on how she handles problems from hell like Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and North Korea. Could even Bismarck or Kissinger call down lightning from the mountaintop to tame those vipers? To her great credit, she has assembled a first-rate staff and keeps traveling and talking. And how well she talks, eyes sometimes blazing fiercely when she is attacked. Rice, 51, has less than three years to reverse the many mistakes of a shaky Administration and master the job designed by the lords of the mountain for the history books.

--Gelb is president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Sheik Yo Booty

New Republic

By Eli Lake

5/8

In early February, as Egyptian markets were emptying shelves of Danish butter cookies and Lebanese and Syrian crowds were burning embassies, Arab satellite TV stations began playing a song called "We're Out of Patience." In Cairo, the song blasted out of stores, taxis, and gas stations, ordering the Danish illustrators and publishers of the Mohammed cartoons to go to hell, where "fire will be everywhere, burning your faces." Preceding the eternal damnation line was a friendly reminder in the form of a lyric: "Islam is a religion of love, not injustice and terrorism."

The singer of "We're Out of Patience" is a 51-year-old Egyptian named Shaaban Abdel Rahim. Shaaban's other hits--including "I Hate Israel," "Bin Laden," and "Hitting Iraq"--have catapulted him to stardom. As the Arab world's best-known "political singer," he appears regularly on chat shows and variety hours and has hosted TV specials. In 2001, McDonald's tried to capitalize on Shaaban's popularity, hiring him to sing a jingle promoting its new McFalafel. ("If you eat a bite,/you can't stop/before finishing the whole roll.") Although Egyptian radio, which adheres to a long-standing rule not to air political music, won't play "We're Out of Patience," wealthy fans can hear Shaaban sing live six nights a week at the Casino Laile, the closest Cairo gets to Vegas.

On an April morning at four o'clock, Shaaban walks onto the stage in a three-quarter-length red coat with gold buttons that barely conceals his round torso. His hair is in Jheri curls, and he wears two large gold medallions around his neck. Although he looks like he is one giant Swatch watch away from a Flavor Flav imitator, in the Arab world Shaaban is unique. Most of the tunes offered by satellite stations and websites are saccharine love songs. Popular Islam-influenced pop--such as that of Sami Yusuf, whose songs praise Mohammed and the ummah, or Islamic nation--does not venture into geopolitics. Shaaban's lyrics, however, are the musical form of "Law & Order" episodes--political controversies ripped from the headlines.

But Shaaban does not express views out of the mainstream--in fact, his songs are accurate indicators of Arab public opinion. For example, right after September 11, when there was sympathy for the United States in the Arab world, Shaaban sang in "Bin Laden":

I hate terrorism of all kinds.

I hate to see victims and blood.

No matter Sharon or Barak.

People want to live without destroying.

But, by early 2003, when opinion was turning against the United States on the eve of the Iraq war, Shaaban sang in another song called "Hey, Arab Leaders":

Two faces of the same coin, America and Israel.
They made the world a jungle and ignited the fuse.
America spread its wings, doesn't care at all.
No one can stop her, no one can catch her.
Soon he will say Iran, then he will say Syria,
but he is silent about Korea.
About the Towers, Oh, people, definitely:
His friends were the ones who brought it down.
What terrorism!
How many years are left for America and Israel
to act as bullies?

Despite being a political singer, Shaaban is no dreary bard. As dance music, his songs are irresistible. Twenty seconds into "Bin Laden," Shaaban starts chanting, low and throaty, "binbinbinbinbin," to establish the song's tempo. After every fifth "bin," a chorus of children sings, "bin Laden." Underneath the call and response, the rhythm is established by a line of doff drums, handheld snares equipped with small cymbals that give each beat a shimmer. And then, after the first chorus, a whirlwind of string lines and trumpets establish the counterpoint. It starts and stops, but it doesn't matter, because the listener is already bobbing his head to the "bin Ladens."

For a man who has seduced much of the Arab world with his politically resonant dance tracks, Shaaban is a surprisingly uncouth figure. Born into a working-class family, he is fond of telling interviewers that he used to iron shirts for a living in a laundry. (Shaaban's agent turned down my interview request unless I paid him more than \$500. He hinted that the interview could also be obtained if I procured the services of one of Casino Laile's prostitutes.) And, although his songs reflect the opinions of a typical Arab newspaper reader, Shaaban boasts about his illiteracy. The reason for this discrepancy between the man and his music is that Shaaban is actually just a mouthpiece. Shaaban's lyrics are the genius of someone entirely different.

Prior to Shaaban, there were two kinds of political songs in Egypt, according to Kamal Mougheeth, a historian who has written extensively on Egyptian popular music. The first were sincere patriotic songs praising the leader, such as those by Abdel Halim Hafez, who, in the 1950s, wrote songs with choruses like: "Hugs to my beloved country"; "Oh, Gamal [Abdel Nasser], you are loved by millions"; and "Let's take a photo for this victorious nation." The second type, which appeared after the country's defeat in the 1967 war, was often sarcastic, underground music that was critical of the regime. Sheik Imam Eissa, a blind singer and composer who sang patriotic and popular songs before the Six Day War, recorded a blistering satire following the 1967 defeat called "Thank God," in which he sarcastically chided:

Welcome the defeated soldiers after war.
It's no matter we have been defeated in the Sinai,
this defeat will not deprive us of feeling free.

Emam's music was banned in Egypt, and he had to earn his living touring other Arab countries, but he became a cult figure among college students. He was arrested in 1969 and served a brief jail sentence until Nasser died and his successor, Anwar Sadat, released him.

Shaaban's music bridges the gap between these two traditions. On the one hand, he presents himself as a truth-teller for the common man in the Emam tradition. And, yet, the message of his songs is no different than what one would find in the columns of the state-funded newspapers. Darkly alleging that Israel was responsible for September 11 in Egypt is the equivalent of railing against the evils of smoking in the United States--it's not dangerous, it's banal. Shaaban almost never attacks Arab political leaders. In fact, last year, during the presidential elections, the opposition group, Kefiya, issued a press statement blasting Shaaban for a song called "What We Know Is Better Than What We Don't," which encouraged Egyptians to vote for President Mubarak. In short, Shaaban is the Egyptian Bob Roberts.

The man who figured out how to make Shaaban's songs both popular and politically acceptable is a 39-year-old songwriter named Islam Khalil. Khalil is the opposite of the flamboyant Shaaban, the Bernie Taupin to his Elton John. When I meet him at a local theater in Cairo, where he works on musical theater side projects, his hair is uncombed and he wears a knockoff American-style sweatshirt jacket. Where Shaaban is big and jiggly, Khalil is lean and fit. During the interview, we are interrupted eight times by well-wishing actors, who hug him and kiss him on both cheeks.

Khalil met Shaaban in 1992--shortly after the first Gulf war--at a wedding. Shaaban was singing Shabi, a rhythmic and repetitive folk music, and he'd had a modest hit with "Kheisha, You're a Liar," a song about a dishonest woman whose name is the same as the burlap sacks for carrying grain. Khalil was working for the state-funded regional theater. He had written most of the songs for the original 1992 production of "Bye, Bye Arabs," which he says was a criticism of Arab disunity in the wake of the first Gulf war. Shaaban approached Khalil with an idea for a project that wasn't exactly political. "He wanted me to write a song called, 'Kheisha, You Are Truthful,'" Khalil says with a laugh.

Khalil says he originally wanted to write songs for Amr Diab, one of the biggest stars in Arabic pop music, rather than Shaaban. "He was not very famous, but he was the first famous singer who asked

me to write for him, so I did," Khalil says. It took eight years for him to persuade Shaaban to go political. The catalyst was the shooting of Mohammed Al Dura, a twelve-year-old Palestinian boy who died in his father's arms during a shootout between the Israel Defense Forces and Palestinian gunmen at the beginning of the second intifada in 2000. Khalil says the images of Dura's death inspired him to do something he says he almost never does: He wrote an entire song straight through. In the late evening, he called Shaaban and sang the song's first lines, "I hate Israel, and I will say so if asked. Even if I'll be killed or imprisoned." Shaaban, according to Khalil, liked it immediately and memorized it for weddings. "People were moved by it," Khalil said of the initial response. "It was Ramadan, and everyone knew about Mohammed Al Dura." By the end of the Muslim holy month, Khalil and Shaaban went to the studio and recorded the song, "I Hate Israel," with phony crowd noises.

"I Hate Israel" became an underground sensation and is reported to have sold more than one million copies on cassette. It created a new archetype for Egyptian political music. It was far blunter than any of the pro-Palestinian music that was coming out at the time. The successful 2000 song "Jerusalem Will Be Ours Again," by a Live Aid-style benefit of Egyptian actors and pop stars, treats Dura as follows: "This was a little Palestine child in his house. Is it his sin? This is his history and his ancestors and his land and sky." Compare that with Shaaban, who gets right to the point:

I hate Israel, and I hate Ehud Barak,
since he is repugnant,
and all of the people hate you.
All of the time, Egypt forgets,
and has a lot of patience.

"'I Hate Israel' is my favorite," Khalil says. "It is the reason for my success."

Since "I Hate Israel," Khalil has written more than 100 songs for Shaaban, most of them inspired by current events. When an assassin killed Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, Khalil wrote a song grieving his death. When the United States and Great Britain were on the eve of war with Iraq, Khalil wrote "Hitting Iraq." Sometimes, his songs feel more like public service announcements than political statements. As Egyptian restaurants removed chicken from their menus in response to fears of bird flu, Khalil wrote a song about the bird flu pandemic in which he urges farmers to "keep your sickly hens at home."

Khalil says he writes his political songs because Arabs "should wake up and open their eyes for the dangers coming to them." But, most fundamentally, Khalil's lyrics are animated by a sense that the Arab nation is under constant threat and is being humiliated. This pan-Arabism, once articulated by Nasser, may seem at odds with the rise of Islamism in the region today. But the view that Danish illustrators and American imperialists have humiliated the Islamic nation plays on these same fears. And, just as the supporters of Nasser felt he was speaking both to them and for them, so do the fans of Shaaban. Hany Hassan, a 27-year-old office assistant, says, "I like Shaaban, because he is honest, courageous, and spontaneous. In every single situation, I feel as if he is speaking on my behalf." A 43-year-old taxi driver says, "We are standing behind you, Shaaban, against all who insult our Prophet Mohammed."

Khalil bristles at the suggestion that lyrics like "I hate Israel" or "fire will be everywhere, burning your faces" are incitements to violence. And, while he concedes that "We're Out of Patience" contributed to the Arab world's boycott of Danish products, he refuses to believe that the sentiments of his music could have had anything to do with, say, torching a few embassies. "These songs calm people," he says. "They help people get their anger out instead of burning things." Khalil is focused on the future, anyway. His next project is a musical that will sum up his political philosophy. Its working title? "Life Is A Farce."

--Eli Lake is a Cairo-based writer for The New York Sun.

Wafa Sultan: A Daring Voice Calls For a New Islam

Time

By Asra Q. Nomani

5/8

As a writer-activist who has fought for the rights of Muslim women, I thought I knew my fellow bad girls of Islam. But Wafa Sultan, 47, has given new meaning to the word bad. A psychiatrist in Syria before transplanting to Southern California in 1989 with her family, she gave an interview with al-Jazeera a couple of months ago that made her a household name in the Islamic world. "The clash we are witnessing around the world is ... a clash between a mentality that belongs to the Middle Ages and another that belongs to the 21st century," she said. "It is a clash between freedom and oppression."

The interview raced across the Internet and landed Sultan in the New York Times and Los Angeles Times and on CNN. I connected with her anger and pain. She questioned Islam in 1979, when, she says, she witnessed the murder of a professor by men with alleged ties to the ultraconservative Muslim Brotherhood political group. I challenged Islamic traditions after my friend and former colleague Daniel Pearl was murdered in 2002. Both killings were punctuated with "Allah is great." We have differences: Sultan blames Islam; I blame Muslims. But we both believe the Muslim world is in the Dark Ages.

Sultan's influence flows from her willingness to express openly critical views on Islamic extremism that are widely shared but rarely aired by other Muslims. She hopes to publish a book and start a foundation to take the politics out of Islam and "change the mentality of Muslim people." She plans to continue speaking out in Arabic to try to free Muslims from "brainwashing." "I even don't believe in Islam," she says, "but I am a Muslim." By so sharply voicing her beliefs, Sultan crystallizes the mission for the rest of us who want to take the slam out of Islam.

--Nomani is the author of *Standing Alone: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam*.
