SWING SUPPLIERS

IRAQ’S ROLE IN REPLACING SAUDI CRUDE
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In Brief...

Afghan Checkup

With popular attention largely focused on Iraq, we shouldn’t forget the ongoing nation-building campaign in Afghanistan, where the situation seems to be quietly but surely deteriorating. New American Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad faces numerous problems, foremost among them surging poppy cultivation, increased attacks on UN and NGO aid workers, and a renewed groundswell of support for the Taliban among Afghans disillusioned by slow progress on the reconstruction front. Until the Afghan people take the bull by the horns and move in earnest to curb warlords’ power by complying with Kabul’s policies, progress will be inadequate and the Taliban’s resurrection will continue to gain momentum.

India and Tajikistan

On November 14, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee paid a state visit to Tajikistan, where a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and a bilateral extradition treaty were both affirmed. India also plans to build a highway passing through Northern Afghanistan that will link it to Tajikistan, giving it a transport corridor to the otherwise inaccessible region. Most importantly, India’s first ever foreign military base has been established at Farkhor on southern Tajikistan near the Afghan border. Viewed through the prism of India’s growing political and economic relationships with Iran, the recent engagement of Tajikistan seems the latest phase of India’s “Southern Thrust” to counter Chinese influence in Central Asia. The New Great Game just added another player.

Self-Destruction

In the past few weeks, four suicide bombings have claimed 52 lives in Turkey, nearly all of them Muslim passersby. While the war on terror has functionally decapitated al-Qaeda, the beast lives on in a more amorphous and equally deadly form. Like the barbaric attacks in Morocco, Indonesia, Kenya, and Pakistan, the attacks in Turkey seem to number driving a wedge between the West and its Muslim allies a primary goal. However, as the Egyptian public’s reaction to a spate of terrorist actions in the mid 1990s showed, the odds are better than even that al-Qaeda’s bloody work will backfire by hardening the resolve of civilized persons across the Middle East against its evil deeds. By indiscriminately killing innocent Muslims, Al-Qaeda may well succeed where we have failed in building an action oriented global anti-terror coalition.

Villepin Strikes Out

In the best national spirit, the French Foreign Ministry has gone on strike. Ninety-four percent of French diplomats around the world coordinated a one-day work stoppage last week. The strike, which was the first of its kind, stretched from Algiers to Tehran to Washington, D.C. was intended to protest Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin’s penchant for lavish travel at a time when the Foreign Ministry is facing severe budget cuts. According to report, diplomats in some posts have been reduced to buying stationery and office supplies out of pocket, while the elevators in the Foreign Ministry have stopped functioning properly. The strike is a great blow for Villepin’s quest to enhance French prestige, but others may snicker.
Despite recent concerns about reservoir damage in the enormous Kirkuk and Rumaila fields, Iraq’s prospects as an oil exporter remain bright. Multinational companies strain at the bit in hopes of getting even a small piece of Iraq’s rich petroleum pie. Stabilizing the country will allow them to realize their hopes, and by extension, the Iraqi people’s hope for a prosperous post-Saddam life.

4. Iraq’s potential remains largely untapped, as only 17 of 80 discovered fields have been developed. Assuming that the internal situation stabilizes enough to entice foreign petroleum multinationals to invest a large part of the $30-40 billion needed to rebuild and improve Iraq’s admittedly dilapidated infrastructure, the country might eventually produce 12 million barrels of crude per day. Taken in conjunction with growing development of oil reserves in Central Asia, West Africa, Brazil, and Russia, the prospect of a revitalized Iraq brings many new dynamics to global oil markets. Russia already stands tall and continues to grow, with World Oil forecasting production of 8.17 million barrels per day by the end of 2003. Concurrent with its resurrection on the world oil export stage, Russia increasingly seems to be setting its sights on North American markets, which can be serviced by the soon-to-be-built pipeline running from the East Siberian fields near Angarsk to the Pacific port of Nakholkida, as well as from port facilities at the northern port of Murmansk. Nevertheless, even with Russian oil’s boost to energy security through diversification, the fact remains that a significant percentage of oil imports will still come from the Middle East, owing to that region’s huge untapped reserves.

Perhaps the most important dynamic will be America’s newfound leverage for promoting internal reform within a reformed Saudi Arabia. Since America’s World War II choice to become Saudi Arabia’s Godfather, oil dependence has inexorably drawn us into the seemingly hopeless Middle Eastern quagmire. Two escape routes exist: lifting the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act and re-establishing relations with Iran, or making Iraq the world’s new swing oil supplier. It seems the White House has chosen the latter. Until Iraq comes fully online, the US will remain beholden to the Kingdom and will be unable to push for true reform, as the risks to our economy are unacceptably high. Once our dependency on the House of Saud ceases however, either reform or revolution will be at hand.

Due to Iraq’s unparalleled strategic weight, America should shrug off accusations of petro-imperialism and put her interests and those of the Coalition first in the development of Iraq’s energy sector. To be certain, France and Germany’s refusal to meaningfully adhere to OPEC policies will be better focused on OPEC headquarters in Vienna than on the ineffectual and obstructionist UN. OPEC policies will need much re-calibration to account for Iraq’s new role.

Waking this slumbering petroleum giant hinges upon our ability to defeat the insurgency and stabilize Iraq so that multinational corporations can invest and ensure that nation to realize its massive potential. Perhaps a Mesopotamian swing supplier will give the forces of civilization sufficient leverage to uproot the corrupt Saudi regime that brought us the terrible events of September 11.
Many believe that China will be the world's next great power. With its immense population, growing global economic influence, technological advances, and a government in transition, China has the potential to enter the pantheon of elite countries. Since the appointment of new communist party president Hu Jintao earlier this year, Beijing has shown signs of achieving this potential. China's success in overcoming the SARS epidemic, its role in mediating multilateral talks between North Korea and the rest of Asia, and its continuously growing economy are all signs of the great changes sweeping China. During the summer, Hu initiated a party-wide dialogue in an attempt to modernize and adapt the communist party to this new China. This new agenda promised to further democracy and transparency in China, and it is already being enacted through increased party democracy founded by the Kuomintang party, China's government prior to the communist revolution of 1949. Currently, Taiwan's 23 million people live as citizens of the Republic of China. Beijing has long considered Taiwan to be a renegade province of China, one that would eventually be reunited with the mainland. Beijing's “One China” policy towards Taiwan has proven to be a highly divisive issue in its engagement with the rest of the world. Today, less than 30 countries officially recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state. The rest of the world, including the United States, sales with China, unwilling to upset China on such a sensitive issue.

During the last several weeks, talk of Taiwanese independence has resurfaced as Taiwan's president, Chen Shui-Bian, suggested that Taiwan should hold referendums on several political issues including sovereignty, constitutional changes, and official name change. Fearing that legislative approval of these referendums would allow Chen an independence campaign platform for the national election to be held next March, Beijing reacted harshly to what they perceive to be a serious separatist threat. Through a state media outlet, the Vice Minister at Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office, Maj. Gen. Wang Zaixi, said: “The use of force may become unavoidable...Taiwanese independence means war." In a recent interview with the Washington Post, China's premier Wen Jiabao, when asked about the Taiwan issue, said “We will not sit by and do nothing when faced with provocative activities aimed at splitting the motherland”. This threat of open war clearly would allow for referendums to be held on constitutional changes. However, in a concession to the mainland, no referendums are to be held that would address the issues of sovereignty and changing the name of the state, unless China initiates an attack on Taiwan. Only under provocation by the mainland, it seems, will Taiwan now move towards full independence.

For now, this new legislation seems to have defused some of the tension across the Taiwan Strait. Given the circumstances, it seems a good temporary solution for all parties involved. Chen and his ruling Democratic Progressive Party now have a legal framework on which to base their independence platform. Those Taiwanese who prefer the status quo will not have to worry about defending against attacks from the mainland. Finally, Beijing does not have to follow up on its initial military threat. Shortly after the bill was passed, Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office issued a statement saying, “We are deeply concerned about relevant things concerning 'referendum legislation' in Taiwan and are paying close attention to the development of the issue.”

Notably, the statement did not reiterate earlier threats. Despite this seeming return to normalcy, one cannot help but wonder how long it will be until this issue resurfaces. Chen Shui-Bian has mentioned on several occasions that he would like to have a referendum on Taiwan independence by 2008, around the time of the Olympic Games in Beijing. The mainland, in response, continues to target an arsenal of missiles at Taipei, declaring that even the staging of the Olympic Games will not disrupt its plans for war should the island declare independence.
Dear Mr. Konieczkowski and readers of American Foreign Policy:

In a lecture on "The Economics of the All-Volunteer Army" in Economics 100, I had remarked on the tendency among some Americans, especially the talking heads on Fox Channel News, and including Princeton’s student-run American Foreign Policy, to question the fiber and the quality of the American enlisted man. I then challenged the editors of American Foreign Policy to write a column on the many hawkish, able-bodied men among our armed forces who refuse to join the fray in Iraq and even though many soldiers of these very countries do serve valiantly in Iraq, but are content to let Jessica Lynch and her social class do the actual fighting for them. My question was what we are to make of these self-professed American "patriots." In what way do they deserve the alleged Eurotwit?

To his credit, Mr. David Konieczkowski, an editor of this paper, and Chairman of the Princeton Committee Against Terrorism, rose to my challenge with his letter addressed to me in the November 6 issue of this paper. Before explaining why I am not persuaded by his argument, I would like to express my deep appreciation for his courtesy and his courage to take me on in this regard. Like the overwhelming majority of those who have ardently supported the war in Iraq, Mr. Konieczkowski prefers not to volunteer for military service. In defense of that posture, he writes: "I believe I will be of more use to my nation as a [biomedical] researcher than as a soldier [in the military]." This familiar rationale is based on the economist’s theory of human capital, according to which highly intelligent and educated persons are pieces of human capital generally too precious to be deployed on the battlefield, where human capital of lesser economic value (i.e., with relatively lower expected economic contributions to society) will do just fine. Abstracting from the handful of potentially "high-value" individuals who choose to serve their country in uniform for patriotic or other reasons — opportunity costs damned — the economist’s case for the all-volunteer army rests on this very theory, which leads economists to call that approach "inefficient" and, thus, good.

In Mr. Konieczkowski’s defense, it must be noted that, in giving this rationale, he is in highly distinguished company. Along with natural fear, the same rationale undoubtedly led young Bill Bush, then a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, to avoid combat duty in Vietnam War. By way of background, you might want to consider the hue and cry engendered by this argument still held to be all of their own vits—rather than connections—to get around the military draft. Along with natural fear, this economic rationale is bound to have motivated current Vice President Dick Cheney and current Democratic presidential candidates Howard Dean and Joe Lieberman to avoid military service as well at that time, as did virtually the entire cadre of today’s hawkish neo-conservatives—Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Ken Adelman, Bill Kristol, Fred Barnes, Newt Gingrich, and many more architects and ardent supporters of the idea to “liberate” the entire Mideast through military conquest. Indeed, along with natural fear it must have been this rationale also that persuaded young George W. Bush, after graduating from Yale, to seek refuge in the National Guard, along with former Vice President Dan Quayle, then a Vietnam hawk on his campus, and current democratic presidential candidate Richard Gephardt. In those days, the National Guard effectively served as a shield against combat duty, which made entry into the Guard so coveted and difficult, and often required family connections.

As a human being born into war and, therefore, with a lasting, deep-seated fear of combat, I have some sympathy for this rationale. As a member of the economics profession whose vision of the good society can be summed up by the mantra "efficiency über alles!" I ought to find it intellectually appealing. Yet I find it flawed even on strictly economic grounds. Furthermore, I find it unseemly from a broader civic perspective. It strikes me as especially dubious when cited by self-styled "patriots" who egg the nation on to war, without expressing their self-professed patriotism in the front lines.

My objection on purely economic grounds rests on the concept of "moral hazard." The concept applies to contexts in which decision makers are unduly insulated from the costs of their own decisions. Patients with first-dollar health insurance coverage, for example, are thought to use health-care resources recklessly. Factories that can dump poisonous pollutants into rivers with impunity are thought to soil the environment recklessly, and so on. By extension, my argument is that, if members of an economic and political elite can advocate and declare war on other nations without having to share in the blood (and, in the present instance, fiscal) cost of such wars, they are likely to engage in such ventures more recklessly than they would if their own flesh and blood were put thereby in harm’s way.

Mr. Konieczkowski anticipates this objection and counters it preemptively with the argument that "it is the responsibility of everyone who supports a war—particularly our senators and representatives—to ask whether his reasons are just, whether this war would be worth sending his child. And if that congressman or citizen supports a war because it seems necessary for national security, and if it is with the highest respect for the troops who will be asked to fight that war, then I believe that the support is valid."

I have no problem with this statement as a normative proposition. I merely question whether people actually behave in this fashion—whether they can actually "feel the pain," to borrow a famous Clinton phrase, of other peoples’ travails. It is my sense, based on my life-long experience, that the capacity of individuals to feel someone else’s pain is much more limited than Mr. Konieczkowski supposes. The usually chirpy anchors of our television media demonstrate the validity of my assertion, not just now but since that time. We are no longer treated to heart-breaking news stories about casualties in Iraq with casual banter about this or that ceremony in American life. There is little decorum here, nor much evident sharing of personal pain. Yet the media represent our proclivities as a nation more faithfully than even our elected representatives. For most Americans, the distant war in Iraq remains more a television spectacle than a harrowing experience.

Let me illustrate this point with a personal vignette. During the first Gulf War, our children were safely insulated from the carnage there. Were my wife and I therefore completely indifferent to American casualties? Of course not. Indeed, as I have written in The New York Times, we were concerned even about the thousands upon thousands—perhaps one hundred thousand—young and basically innocent Iraqi draftees who were torn to shreds by the onslaught of our awesome arsenal. But our concern for American and other casualties in that war pales in comparison with our emotions in this year’s war in Iraq, in which our own son, a Princeton graduate, served as a forward observer with a Light Armored Reconnaissance battalion in the United States Marine Corps. I hope Mr. Konieczkowski and other readers if this paper will respectfully accept my country’s parent’s proposition that no member of Congress, nor any other citizen without flesh and blood at risk, could possibly imagine what life is like when one’s own child is constantly exposed to hostile bullets and rocket propelled grenades. "...no member of Congress, nor any other citizen without flesh and blood at risk, could possibly imagine what life is like when one’s own child is constantly exposed to hostile bullets and rocket propelled grenades."

The deplorable management of our occupation of Iraq offers vivid empirical support for my hypothesis. In its issue of October 14, 2003, for example, The New York Times reported in two separate, front-page articles that terrorist attacks on American troops in Iraq have been carried out chiefly with...
Chickens Hawks or Patriots?

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Whether they have served in uniform or not, Americans from all walks of life deeply appreciate the sacrifices that our courageous soldiers make in the name of freedom. Here, troops in Kuwait partake of Thanksgiving Dinner.

Einstein was no soldier, yet his contribution to ending World War II saved hundreds of thousands of American lives.

material taken from Saddam Hussein’s former weapons depots, many of which have remained unguarded by American troops even after their location was known. American officials quoted in the story stated that “there are not enough American soldiers here to do the job of finding the weapons and securing them until they are destroyed.” In a similar report, The Financial Times (October 16) cites the head of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies worrying what ammunition and shoulder-launched missiles terrorists in Iraq might find in these “unguarded or poorly guarded depots.” In the meantime, the White House and the civilians who now run this nation’s Department of Defense—Mr. Wolfowitz prominently among them—have blithely insisted that more American troops are not needed in Iraq, after earlier ridiculing an estimate by former Army Chief of Staff General Erik K. Shinseki that it would take several hundred thousand troops to secure and rebuild Iraq (The New York Times, February 28, 2003).

Remarkably, but not surprisingly, these stories did not trigger a single letter in The New York Times or the Financial Times. Where is the outrage? Does the equanimity with which this alarming circumstance is accepted by the American public, and by the U.S. Congress, show the “respect for the troops” of which Mr. Konieczkowski wrote in his letter to me? I would argue that this equanimity has all the markings of the moral hazard whereof I write above. Very few current members of Congress or the Administration ever have worn this nation’s military uniform, let alone served in combat. It has been reported that, apparently, only two members of Congress have children in the military. If every second member of Congress did have a child patrolling the streets of Iraq, do we sincerely believe that Congress would countenance as passively as it has the Pentagon’s stubborn insistence that more U.S. troops are not needed in Iraq? Would there not be greater outrage all around among members of America’s elite if a heavy sprinkling of their offspring were at the front in Iraq?

Aside from the purely economic problem of a reckless use of resources induced by the moral hazard of war, the current allocation of the blood and financial costs of this war also strikes me as unseemly from the perspective of civics.

How can one respect the socio-economic and political elite of a nation that boldly speaks of the “sacrifices” Americans must make to “stand firm” in Iraq, when with very few exceptions that elite refuses to bear not only the blood cost of the war, but even its financial cost. So far the only personal sacrifice President Bush has asked the upper half of the nation’s income distribution to make for this war is to accept two massive tax cuts in a row? The financial burden of the war is simply put on the tab for future generations to pay, or borne by, say, the 43 million or so Americans without health insurance who, in the face of our massive current deficits, cannot hope for any assistance from their federal government to access needed health care. Is this, then, American civics 21st century style?

Next, why would one have respect for vociferous super-hawks such as Kenneth Adelman who simultaneously warned us of Saddam Hussein’s ready arsenal of biological and chemical weapons and yet sold the war on Iraq as a “cakewalk”—he who never served in the military, let alone in combat? What would he know about “cakewalks” on the front lines? How can one respect former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, who equally avoided military service during the Vietnam War, and yet brazenly chided in the pages of USA Today people who worried about casualties in Iraq as “Chicken Littles?” What do persons of that ilk do on the Pentagon’s Defense Advisory Board, there to counsel Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld on how to conduct the war and occupation in Iraq? Why should I respect Max Boot of the Council on Foreign Relations who, in an editorial in the Wall Street Journal, took Americans to task for their aversion to body bags, yet who would never dream of personally taking a stand for America in the front lines? If these people are too timid to join combat, or consider themselves too precious to serve their nation in that way, gun in hand, might they at least have the courage not to let their mouths run ahead of basic tact?

Finally, what am I to think of a President who deftly avoided combat duty in Vietnam, when it was his turn to serve the nation in that role and hundreds of his contemporaries were dying there every week, but who now stands tall in the Rose Garden of the White House, boldly taunting the Iraqi insurgents to “bring them on,” full well knowing that Jessica Lynch and her social class, rather than his own flesh and blood, will bear the lethal brunt of what is being “brought on.” Is this the “high respect” our troops and their families deserve? Why has this President never seen fit to greet to the coffins of fallen American soldiers when they arrive on American soil, or to attend at least one of their funerals, just to show his respect? To be sure, a day before Veteran’s Day this year the President did sign a bill, voted unanimously by Congress, which doubled death benefits paid the families of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan from $6,000 to $12,000 and to make that payment tax free, to boot. Maybe we should celebrate that gesture as a sign of the elite’s “high respect” for our troops and of its generosity; but perhaps not.

In his Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville had this to say about American patriotism: “I have heard of patriotism in the United States, and have found true patriotism among the people, but never among the leaders of the people.” Were he to travel in our country today, he might have chosen the word “rarely” instead of “never,” because even today he would have come upon the occasional true patriot among America’s elite who did or does put their body in harm’s way on behalf of their nation. Senator John McCain and current presidential candidate Senator John Kerry, the President’s Vietnam-era contemporaries, are but two notable examples of this small cadre of Americans along, I dare say, with our own son and a small minority of other Princetonians of that time and later vintages. Furthermore, Tocqueville would have apologized for his remark, had he visited America during WWII, when an entire generation stood so tall, shoulder to shoulder, with awe inspiring valor.

But Tocqueville did have the elite of these valiant patriots’ children and grandchildren roughly right. That elite is smart, to be sure, and economically successful beyond anyone’s expectations. But its facile idea of costless patriotism would have deeply disturbed Tocqueville, as it disturbs me. One can easily acknowledge, as I do, any young man’s right in our democracy fervently to advocate a war without personally sacrificing for it. I find it more difficult, however, to defend and respect that posture, even though I understand it, as a card-carrying economist and as somewhat a wimpish fellow traveler myself. My saving grace as a wimp is that I would never talk as bravishly and tactlessly about war as do so many of America’s famous “chicken hawks,” do not consider myself a patriot worthy that hallowed label, and do not look down on Europeans who, for reasons of their own, refuse to join us in particular wars.

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Dear Professor Reinhardt,

Thank you, first of all, for your comprehensive reply. I agree, in fact, with many of the points you raise, but three thrusts of your argument strike me as troubling. First, your inclusion of me – and, by extension, all civilians who support war in the “distinguished company” of Vietnam-era draft-dodgers is unsupportable. There is a world of difference, both factual and moral, between someone who refuses to “bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law,” as citizenship demands, and someone who chooses, for whatever reason, not to enlist in the All-Volunteer Force. Every American has a profound obligation to serve if called, and as I have said before and will say again, if I am drafted, I will go. Unlike those who avoided mandatory service three decades ago, I and those like me have not violated the Oath of Citizenship.

Second, your questioning of efficiency as the sole discriminant of military service is well-considered, but to dismiss it altogether is, I think, in error. Since you were clearly unconvinced by the example of the researchers who developed the Ebola vaccine, allow me to offer instead the physicists of sixty years ago at work on the Manhattan Project. In both cases, it may well be that “greatest generation,” certainly they supported the war against Nazi Germany and Japan. Yet even in an America completely mobilized for war, the government kept these scientists from the front lines. Why? Had these scientists been sent to take Okinawa instead of developing the atomic bomb, the United States would have been forced to invade the Japanese home islands. It will suffice, I think, to say that the minimum number of American casualties in this operation was figured at one million. I, for one, will embrace efficiency if it keeps people like these scientists, who saved so many of lives on both sides of the war, out of harm’s way.

The problem you point out in this argument, however, is that any educated or prominent individual can use the efficiency criterion to escape danger. Fortunately, the solution is simple. Under a draft, it is one thing for the government to decide that an individual is too valuable to be put at risk. For the citizen to make that choice himself is quite another. It is this latter elitism, used by some of the men of your examples to avoid a legal order to serve, that is (and ought to be) viscerally disgusting. Yet, as I have discussed above, there is a profound difference between a citizen who chooses not to enlist and a draft-dodger. I do not, to use your terminology, consider myself “too precious” to be sent to the battlefield. That is precisely why I would fight if drafted, for I will go, following the men of America’s past wars, where my government orders me. Leaving the decision of efficiency to the government, I realize, may ruffle some economists’ feathers, but in this case it appears to be the only just path. Perhaps, then, a little historical context suggests that, though efficiency cannot be our sole criterion for service, it cannot always be ignored.

Third, as you say, “One can easily acknowledge, as I do, any young man’s right in our democracy fervently to advocate a war without personally sacrificing for it. I find it more difficult, however, to defend and respect that posture...” I may paraphrase, in your view it is unjust (though allowable) for those without a personal stake in war to support war. Such reasoning should apply all the more, then, to the highest of civilians – the President – who actually must commit troops to combat. Yet to say that a uniform is required for just judgment of war and peace is a terribly dangerous thing. From citizen to President, civilian control of the military is a fundamental tenet of democracy. Those civilians chosen to lead, then, have an obligation to the people and the state to exercise their power responsibly. For a leader to have a military background is honorable and praiseworthy, but to suggest that only soldiers are qualified and justified to choose war leads in one direction: military rule. This is precisely the reason the Uniform Code of Military Justice regulates soldiers’ public expression of political views. As I think Tocqueville would have agreed, in America, the military is to execute, not to make, foreign policy. To have as President a true war hero like Sen. McCain would be a noble thing indeed, but did Eisenhower’s manifest service or Kennedy’s time in a PT boat prevent the bloody stalemates of Korea and Vietnam? And so, with respect for your position as a military parent, I must disagree and, in conclusion to this debate, repeat what I wrote earlier. To support war for the right reason of national security, with men for those who serve, and with a willingness to fight if called seems to me a valid position, regardless of military rank or civilian station.

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Some of America’s greatest political leaders never donned a uniform. If it becomes standard doctrine that only soldiers can justly lead, America’s democratic tradition will be in serious danger of a shift towards military rule.

Dire Straits

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Much of how this conflict resolves will depend on the position that the West, particularly United States, decides to take. Currently, the United States sides diplomatically with mainland China. As China is the United States’ second largest trading partner and has the second fastest growing economy in the world, it is within our national interest to maintain good Sino-American relations. Furthermore, China has been a useful ally both in our ongoing dialogue with North Korea on nuclear non-proliferation and in supporting our activities in the Middle East. However, ideological ties have long sustained a bond between the United States and Taiwan. As the self-appointed defender and promoter of democracy and self-determination, the United States has a moral imperative to support Taiwan. Where China often claims that nationalism supercedes all other governing principles, the United States has long been a strong proponent of democracy and humanitariantism. It is due to this ideological obligation that America continues to equip and train the Taiwanese military.

Though the ambiguity of America’s position on the issue has been mostly successful so far in preventing any direct confrontation, one cannot help but wonder how long this battle of words can be kept from becoming a full scale war. Time is certainly on China’s side. Though the belligerent rhetoric coming out of Beijing might seem empty now, it won’t be long before it must be taken seriously. China’s influence in Asia and in global politics is increasing. Whether it is in local Asian politics or on the UN security council, we are already beginning to see the world’s most populous country flexing its newfound muscle on various international stages. There might come a day when president Hu Jintao might be bold enough to reject United States intervention on this issue just as his predecessor Deng Xiaoping had rejected British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s suggestion for extending England’s lease on Hong Kong in 1982. One may hope that this recent series of events has awakened the United States to this potential crisis in Asia. If China is to be the next great power of the world, then the nature of America’s relationship with this power will hinge upon how this conflict resolves. What makes the Taiwan independence issue so volatile is that it places ideology directly against diplomacy. Will the US pursue economic interests and stability by siding with Beijing or will we yield to our ideological imperative and side with the independence movement in Taipei? This could be one of the most important foreign policy dilemmas facing our country in the coming decade.

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O
n November 22, protesters opposed to Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze stormed the Georgian Parliament and declared former Parliament speaker and opposition leader Zurab Zhvania the new head of cabinet. As Zhvania said, “We’re making a revolution.” In the words of the opposition, this was a “velvet revolution” for its comparative peacefulness. “We don’t need any bloody revolution in the country,” said Nino Burdzhanadze, the outgoing Parliament speaker and new head of state. As per Georgia’s constitution, she declared herself the country’s acting president until interim elections. In a promising step towards stability, Shevardnadze heeded her call to step aside peacefully, thanks in part to her guarantee of safety for him and his family. This “velvet revolution” was the result of three weeks of street protests against fraudulent parliamentary elections. American and European observers denounced the vote as rigged, and the vote sent demonstrators into the streets. Remarkably, there were no reports of serious violence and no evidence that the opposition was armed. Indeed, opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili and his colleagues drove Shevardnadze from the parliament chamber armed only with flowers, according to witnesses. Given the country’s Soviet heritage and recent turmoil, the ease of this transition has been truly remarkable.

President Shevardnadze is best known historically for his role in ending the Cold War as Mikhail Gorbachev’s foreign minister. However, he has become hated in Georgia, after a ten-year term filled with civil war, poverty, and corruption. After years of supplying him with generous financial aid, the United States lately soured on him for failing to tackle Georgia’s systemic problems. Indeed, Shevardnadze’s reaction to the protestors seemed to hark back to his days as a Soviet official. He took a tough line after being evacuated from Parliament, promising that “we will restore order and punish the criminals. They will be arrested.” In another Soviet reflex, he concluded that his trouble stemmed from being too lenient with his opponents, rather than from corruption, fraud, and “elections” in which the people are given no voice. Guards took Shevardnadze away from the Parliament building when the protestors broke in. Armored vehicles surrounded the ministry buildings in the evening, but the riot police surprisingly refused to intervene, allowing protestors to go about freely in the capital Tbilisi. This passivity was a clear indication that Shevardnadze no longer retained full control of his own security forces, much less the entire country. Guards even permitted the protestors to enter the State Chancellery, take the president’s chair from his office, take it outside and burn it, a symbolic gesture of majority opinion in this country of five million.

During the protests, the United States asked the Georgian government to refrain from violence against the protestors, who succeeded in staging a fairly peaceful protest. In general, however, the United States kept involvement in Georgia’s recent problems at an arm’s length, urging Shevardnadze to work peacefully with the opposition. Russian President Vladimir Putin took a slightly more active role in helping Shevardnadze. He dispatched Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov to Georgia to help consult with government officials, as well as meet with the opposition leaders and their supporters.

The problems in Georgia are mirrored in many of the former Soviet republics. They are still struggling to shed their Soviet past and the civil strife, fraudulent elections, and corrupt government that accompanied it. As in Georgia, prominent Soviet officials are still in power, there are rampant domestic problems, and the goal of creating truly democratic regimes has not been reached. Everything that has occurred recently in Georgia seems to be a result of the fact that Georgia’s government has not been able to relinquish its Soviet way of dealing with things—undemocratic elections, harsh punishment for all opposition, even peaceful ones—and the reason for that is because Georgia’s current government still is the Soviet government, just under a different name. Although there is no doubt that advances have been made towards a new democracy, as there is a parliament and there was a multi-party election, there is still much work to be done and this “velvet revolution” may bring much progress. The opposition leaders have broken away from the violence associated with Communist past, and their methods thus far seem to have been in accordance with the majority’s wishes. Whether or not they will be able to do what Shevardnadze and his administration could not and fix Georgia’s problem is something only time can tell. But the fact that they seem to truly have the support of the Georgian public is a step in the right direction.

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Public Relations Pitfalls in Iraq

The military should refrain from adopting a body count policy.

By Matt MacDonald ’07

While November was the deadliest month of the US occupation of Iraq, December began with a dramatic US success.

On December 1st, US forces engaged Iraqi insurgents in a massive firefight in the city of Samarra. The Iraqis organized a coordinated ambush on a coalition logistical convoy—and the attack was a complete failure. At the cost of no American lives, over 50 enemy fighters were killed and 8 were captured in the abortive assault.

At least those were the early reports. Later, more realistic information filtered out. Iraqi civilians who observed the fight disputed the US tally, and independent journalists investigated. Eventually, military authorities admitted that the initial reports were too high—for example, there was only one Iraqi in custody instead of the 8 claimed at first.

At first, this seems like just another inaccurate first report—similar to the mistaken WMD “finds” that were prevalent in the early months of the occupation. But this is more than a simple numerical mistake—it represents a major shift in public relations policy. The coalition is now reporting body counts. For the past few weeks, during their regular news briefings on the Iraq situation, military spokesmen have been reporting on the number of enemies killed in action. The change was made quietly, with no official justification given for the shift. Nevertheless, this is a change from earlier coalition practices.

In the first phases of the war with Iraq, Gen. Tommy Franks stated: “we don’t do body counts.” Franks’ reasons for this, while never publicly stated, may have stemmed from his experience as an officer in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, calculating enemy deaths was not only highly imprecise, it was often dishonest. Since the Vietnam War was not a traditional conflict, progress could not be measured in terms of territory gained or cities captured. Therefore, the body count was the primary metric of success. There was tremendous political pressure for it to be high. The consequences are not surprising: counts were inflated.

Even in the absence of deliberate dishonesty, calculating enemy deaths is difficult. In the case of the Samarra attack, the convoy vacated the area after beating back the ambush. Consequently, the number of enemies killed was determined through questioning individual soldiers. In the heat of battle, it’s perfectly understandable that recollections may not be accurate. But Vietnam demonstrates another problem with calculating enemy deaths—there’s no clear way of determining whether a corpse was actually associated with the insurgency. In Vietnam, for example, it was not unknown for inadvertently killed civilians to become “enemies” in the after-action report. So, even when our soldiers do have access to the field of battle after the fighting, determining enemy casualties is not an exact science.

In the face of all the negative historical associations of body counts, why is the coalition now reporting enemy KIAs? While military planners are certainly aware of the inevitable Vietnam comparisons that will result, the decision was a political one. Faced with the perception that numerous Americans were dying in Iraq, the coalition is trying to place the numbers of American casualties in context. While the goal is understandable, history teaches us that this is not the best way to measure progress.

Some commentators have suggested that weapons captured, not bodies, be the true measure of success. It’s clear that confiscated weapons are associated with the insurgency. Furthermore, a count of captured RPGs, for example, can be independently verified. Padding the numbers would be nearly impossible. Of course, the decision to report body counts is a political one, and this method would not have the same political benefits.

It’s tempting to put the constant tally of US dead and wounded in perspective by considering the number of enemy killed. Nevertheless, the practice is both inaccurate and counterproductive. Reporting body counts is a practice that the US military needs to reconsider.

A pile of confiscated and destroyed Iraqi chemical bombs near a weapons depot.

Quote of the Week:

“in hadith there are many references to how many times Allah has multiplied the reward of jihad. If I knew how to multiply, I would be able to calculate the reward I will earn in the hereafter.”

Tahir, a Pakistani Madrassah student, whose entire education consists of rote memorization of the Qur’an.

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With the increase of violence in Iraq in recent weeks, it has become increasingly popular among doomsayers to compare American involvement there with the quagmire of Vietnam. This comparison, while politically explosive, is superficial and inapt. A guerilla conflict looks much the same whether it takes place in Baghdad, Saigon, or Belfast; the steady, if low, flow of casualties makes any military counter-insurgency campaign look like a bloody stalemate when viewed in isolation. But the key truth of these campaigns is that they are not won or lost on the battlefield. Military counter-insurgency operations, especially those taken by outside forces such as the United States in Iraq or Vietnam, are at best holding actions. The real battle is political and must be waged for the hearts and minds of the populace. And it is here, at the heart of the issue, that the current situation in Iraq bears little resemblance to Vietnam.

In Vietnam, the South Vietnamese government was seen by much of the populace as brutal and corrupt, a mere cipher for “imperialist” interests. In contrast, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong successfully sold themselves as a force for national liberation. Due to this political environment, South Vietnam could not effectively fight for its own survival, and American forces spent a fruitless and bloody decade delaying the inevitable. America lost the battle for hearts and minds in Vietnam; in Iraq, Saddam Hussein has already decided the battle in America’s favor.

This victory does not mean that most Iraqis see Americans as liberators or even like them. It means that the Iraqi insurgents cannot pretend to be fighting to overturn brutality, corruption, and authoritarianism - they are fighting to restore them, and every Iraqi knows it. Given the chance, Iraqis will not surrender their newly found freedoms in the face of a terrorist insurgency. Therefore, America need not defeat the insurgents on its own to be victorious in Iraq; it need only hold them at bay long enough for a new Iraq to produce indigenous forces for the job. By providing interim security, training new Iraqi security forces, and judiciously transferring power to Iraqi governing bodies, the United States is doing exactly that.

There is every reason to believe that over the next two to three years not only will the bulk of American forces be able to return home, but a self-governing Iraq that protects the rights of its citizens will emerge. Iraq may have become a counter-insurgency campaign, but it is no Vietnam.
If the war in Chechnya were not horrific enough, that conflict now seems to have infected Russian society as a whole. The threat of insecurity looks poised to halt Russia’s reopening, bringing back in its place qualities of a police state last seen under the Soviet Union. The major threat in this regard are the Russian police forces, which have themselves been fighting for years in Chechnya. These police are forced to fight in military operations but lack military equipment or supplies. Increasing casualties and growing bitterness among these officers constitute a problem that may become one of the lasting legacies of the Chechen War in Russia.

Russian police units from all over Russia have been dragged, lured, and often coerced into what were called “business trips” to Chechnya. Most officers went, often believing that they would lose their jobs if they did not. In Russia’s current state, money is short for most people, and any job is a good job. But when these officers return from their police actions in Chechnya, they bring home more than their scant wages. They also bring toxic rage and casual violence bred of warfare. Their combat-zone experiences mean nothing but trouble for police as well as army troops is part of the Russian government’s strategy to depict the Chechen war, to its people and to the world, as a limited, anti-terror operation. At what cost, though, does this appearance come? It remains a grave struggle to keep Russian society together, and it would be a disaster for Eurasian politics if, to justify this Chechen war, Russia literally tore itself apart. The Chechen people really want their independence, and, in their growing desperation, they are willing to turn to any means to do it, which has lead to the rise in terror attacks against Russian civilians. Russia’s response to Chechnya’s independence movement, though, has been far from ideal. Reluctant to lose Chechnya’s vast oil pipeline networks, Russia has not recognized a single Chechen diplomat or foreign minister. There is thus little communication between the two sides, rendering diplomacy nearly impossible. The military and police forces are now engaged in full-scale war in Chechnya, and this situation produces constant reports of human rights violations.

Russia’s attempt to portray the war as a limited anti-terror operation – even at the cost of ruining its domestic law enforcement – is not fooling anyone, and in fact only hurting its own future. There is no easy solution to the current Chechen situation. As in many such conflicts, emotions have taken over and real compromise seems a flight of fancy. Yet small things can be done that can slowly close the wounds of war. Abandoning the “limited action” charade and withdrawing the Russian police from Chechnya would be a good place to start. Such a move would ease tensions with the Chechen population and give Russia’s domestic law and order a fighting chance. Without this type of real internal security and some measure of compromise on Chechnya, Russia’s prospects for true democracy look bleak indeed.

Russian police develop unsavory habits in Chechnya

By JESSICA CASE ’06

Russian forces on patrol outside Grozny

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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

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November 14, 2003

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To the Editor:

Thank you for including me on the circulation list of American Foreign Policy. As a Senator consumed with the national security interests of the United States of America, I find your paper to be informative, balanced, and very well written.

I especially enjoyed the piece "The Missing WMDs: War was Still Just" by David Konieczkowski. I have met personally with survivors of Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons attack against the Kurds. They provided harrowing accounts of Saddam's inhuman brutality and their suffering provides unimpeachable proof of Saddam's lifelong commitment to the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction. While I am confident in time we will expose Saddam Hussein's WMD programs, I am certain that the war was just and that the world will be better off for our actions in Iraq.

As an alumnus of Princeton University, I am proud to see such fine work being produced by Princeton students. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely yours,

William H. Frist '74
Majority Leader
United States Senate

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