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In My View

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IN MY VIEW

IRAQ: THE MONTHS AFTER

Madame:

Dr. Phebe Marr's "Iraq 'the Day After'" (Winter 2003, pp. 12–29) was presumably written before the Bush administration's much promoted, rationalized, and precipitously made-inevitable "preemptive" war of Iraqi freedom. Yet at this writing in late June 2003—some nine weeks into the actual "day after"—it is clear that the paper had correctly predicted: "Replacing Saddam's regime . . . may prove costly, and it may require a long-term American presence," and that there will be "the policy dilemma" of working with problematically complex dynamics among three main ethnic and sectarian "communities" and the associated "inside [and] outside options" for potential leadership replacement.

It is interesting to note that Marr's paper is premised on the precept of Saddam Husayn [*sic*] being "unseated" by whatever "means" it may take, and moreover on "regime replacement" to be undertaken by the "U.S. administration"—though "[it] will be one of the most difficult decisions facing the . . . administration." Ironically, this precept has turned out—and still *is* as the debate rages on "hyped" and/or "failed" intelligence—to be in fact the Bush administration's "most difficult decision."

One would expect studies by those with direct knowledge of Iraq, like Dr. Marr, to be beneficially exploited in preparing America's political infrastructure, armed services mission objectives, and societal psyche and support for going to war. It would be useful indeed to examine all possible means of effecting the regime change in Iraq. Such an academic—that is, unemotional and rigorous—exercise might help to understand better the precise natures of issues and difficulties that the United States and the world face in so determined a regime change; more importantly, it might help in shaping astute strategies and postures for dealing individually with all nations of the world—well beyond the Iraqi war, in confrontations with other emerging threats to the civilized world.

But it seems obvious that no such pragmatic, let alone in-depth, deliberation was made “before” or on the “day after” by the hard-core handful of war-policy makers of the administration, the president and Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Vice President Cheney—“the Bush people,” as they have been referred to by Sir Jeremy Richards, Britain’s ambassador to the UN (on PBS’s *Charlie Rose*, 18 June 2003). The Bush people chose a simpler approach of justifying the war on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as the “clear and present danger” to homeland America. More serious is their “conviction” that every “non-Saddam” Iraqi would welcome the American “liberators” with open arms. The current daily reports of serious attacks on U.S. and “coalition” troops by Iraqi militants shouting “Americans, go home,” in more than isolated sectors, prove that this conviction was uninformed and ill conceived. Is it really fear of the (June 2003) yet-to-be-taken-out Saddam that is driving this fierce opposition? Do the “Iraqis,” with their multi-ethnic, multireligious, and multipolitical background—Shi’ah and Sunnis, Kurds and Arabs—have a common base for classic nationalism against foreign occupying forces? The often referred to post-World War II unopposed occupation of Germany and Japan—each a unicultural society—may not be a viable model. Curiously, both theaters in that war had begun in historical-benchmark “preemptive” attacks that—proving the attacking nation’s miscalculation of the enemy’s will to resist—resulted in all-out wars and the defeat of the preemptors.

A unilateral, and sure to be judged imprudent, employment of the de facto superpower should have been weighed carefully against the potential loss—in a proverbial “quagmire”—of critical credibility and prestige. An extra-astute diplomacy is needed in a world that regards U.S. actions and postures from many varied perspectives, from nationalism-centric resentment to legitimate disagreement. The administration’s doctrine of “preemptive” defense against terrorism—some have called it the “militarization of foreign policy,” others even a “flawed” policy—has unnecessarily caused strained global and cross-cultural public sentiments, if not total divisiveness in international relationships.

The military and economic superpower status of the United States presents an unprecedented opportunity to lead the world toward universal democracy. But that task will take an ever more intellectually disciplined leadership in Washington.

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COMMONSENSE, ITERATIVE PROGRESS

Madame:

True to the Naval War College's "rational decision making" teachings, Professors Dombrowski and Ross ("Transforming the Navy: Punching a Feather Bed?" Summer 2003, pp. 107–31) assess fairly and candidly the Navy's progress with transformation. Their determination to call it as they see it is laudable and needed, as PowerPoint concepts and plans require as many checks and balances as the law. One hopes their audience is broad and attentive. Their observations, challenges, and conclusions, however, are useful to the Army and the Air Force as well as the Navy.

In the late 1990s, the backbone of Army digitization was the "transformational" Army Battle Command System (ABCS). Field elements would communicate information of all kinds to a network of ABCS processors, each tailored to a specific functional area but sufficiently cross-linked via common message formats and protocols to work in digital and operational harmony with all the others. Each system had been developed separately within its own functional stovepipe. Bringing the systems together after the fact proved remarkably difficult, expensive, and frustrating. After five years of tweaks and major digital surgeries, further ABCS development has been effectively terminated. Bringing together sensors, processors, and users in a common digital environment, horizontally and vertically, remains no easier today. Our ability to describe what we want far exceeds our practical ability to implement what we envision. We set the bar too high, spend a small fortune struggling to reach it, and then spend another small fortune to accomplish individually achievable things that an iterative approach would have had us do anyway.

The list of accomplishments in the transformational arena is manifold, but it contains nothing revolutionary or remarkable outside the realm of the iterative, evolutionary application of technology to military problems and systems. We harness improving technologies and miniaturization as best we can to improve information transfer and knowledge. It is one thing to set the bar higher, but one must actually clear the bar as one goes. History says we do that iteratively, one design at a time, regardless of complexity. Engineers cannot remain permanently in the concept-development and preliminary-design modes if they are to deliver anything.

Technology applications that make a difference today, and will tomorrow, tend to be applied to specific problem sets having manageable numbers of variables. Only then are we able to decide, program, implement, and judge their usefulness effectively. In applying the Global Positioning System to "dumb" bombs,

for example, we make a clear and present difference. We do not do nearly so well with higher-order concepts, like network-centric operations and the Global Information Grid. We know what we want in general terms. We are inundated with visions and proclamations of knowledge-based this and that, horizontal information flow, and optimized sensor-shooter combinations in near real time. Where we consistently go astray is in believing we can have it all now, or within a few years, without taking the time to design and engineer practical, realizable solutions that must apply today's technologies with only a limited eye on tomorrow's. We aim instead at the elusive "revolution," rarely allowing time to deal with the devils in the details—the organization's ability to employ the proposed changes, and the tough technical issues of exponentially growing bandwidth, memory, processing speed. Schedules are too tight and wishful, assuming that some technological "big bang" will make the concepts real—but as Dombrowski and Ross remind us, the big bang never occurs.

Compounding the problem of transformation is the breadth and diversity of customers. Our typical "integrated process team" style forms committees on top of subcommittees on top of working groups on top of focus groups to ensure that everyone's requirements are identified and their interests covered. Transformation, then, is as much affected by turf as by technology. Perhaps the Navy of the 1950s had a better way; while many today would reject the autocratic methods of Admiral Hyman Rickover, one wonders how transformation is to be achieved without a czar who knows systems engineering.

I agree that though we are not achieving transformations of the magnitude advertised, we are doing great work, selectively applying modern technologies to improve what we have and what we are. Certainly our organizational responses lag, but they will catch up. There is a strong argument for better balance, for capabilities, organizations, and doctrines that are more complementary than they now are. There is no magic here; we will be best served if the resources spent on transformational glitz are applied to commonsense, iterative progress. At the end of the day, our process will turn out to have been iterative anyway, because engineering is simply that way. And we will all, somehow, still be relevant.

ALLEN BOYD

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NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Madame:

Dr. Jonathan D. Pollack's article "The United States, North Korea, and the End of the Agreed Framework" (Summer 2003) was well researched and well written. The author has obviously studied his material and understands his subject. Yet the entire article read as little more than a long apology for the actions of the North Korean government in seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, something that it had supposedly forsworn in 1985 through the signing of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and more specifically through the adoption of the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

I will leave it to persons more familiar with the problem than I am to defend the actions of the Bush administration in reacting to the revelations that North Korea had begun the enrichment of uranium in light of the 1994 Agreed Framework. My sole purpose is to use that uranium enrichment program as an example of the incomplete consideration of an issue leading to a questionable conclusion of benign intentions on the part of North Korea. Dr. Pollack seeks to explain away the uranium enrichment program as having "an entirely legitimate civilian purpose—[enrichment facilities] provide the means for fabricating the low-enriched uranium . . . to power light-water reactors." Dr. Pollack then goes on to analyze in considerable detail whether the uranium enrichment capability was sufficient to produce one or a number of uranium-fueled weapons and concludes that it was unlikely to do so. Dr. Pollack mentions, but seems to attach no importance to, the fact that the Pakistani nuclear weapons program tested a uranium-fueled weapon and that Pakistan may have provided assistance to the North Korean program.

Despite the considerable doubt cast by Dr. Pollack on the capability of North Korea's enrichment program to produce fuel for a weapon, there is no analysis whatsoever of whether the North Korean uranium enrichment program would ever produce light-water reactor fuel in meaningful quantities. A more complete consideration would have contained such an analysis, and I do not know what conclusions it would have reached. One thing is certain. In light of the incredibly low prices of enriched uranium on the world market, developing a capacity to enrich uranium for electricity production makes all the economic sense of a capacity to produce seawater. The U.S. Department of Energy would probably agree to give North Korea light water reactor fuel, since it is presently "blending down" highly enriched uranium from the Russian weapons stockpile to make such fuel.

The article's overall tone is one of moral equivalence between the United States and North Korea. For example, in what sense can North Korea be said to have "reacted" to U.S. intelligence findings about its program? As if the North Korean leadership didn't know what it was doing before U.S. officials told them? A more accurate approach might phrase it as a North Korean reaction to having been caught doing what it sought to keep secret.

The situation with North Korea reflects a serious dilemma for policy makers, but one that the article leaves unexplored, in light of its clear endorsement of the 1994 Agreed Framework. The United States seeks to prevent North Korea from developing or acquiring nuclear weapons. North Korea wants to acquire nuclear weapons, probably for purposes of blackmail, but possibly for sale to terrorist groups. Negotiations are undertaken and an agreement reached in which North Korea appears to have agreed not to develop or acquire nuclear weapons and is compensated for not doing so. North Korea then begins secret activities probably intended to develop nuclear weapons. What should the appropriate U.S. response be? Dr. Pollack's response, as best I can divine it, is to engage in further negotiations and (presumably) further compensate North Korea to forgo activities that the United States believed North Korea had already agreed not to undertake. Yet Dr. Pollack notes that one of North Korea's objectives is to be treated as an "equal" of the United States, something it certainly achieved in the context of his article. Since equality in negotiations is one of North Korea's objectives, it has every incentive to breach existing agreements so that it can provoke further negotiations demonstrating its equality with the United States. It is not terribly difficult to predict how this process will end. North Korea will have its "feeling" of equality with the United States, nuclear weapons, and compensation throughout the process. The only conceivable gain in such an arrangement is delay, and it is not clear whether delay favors the United States or North Korea.

Many commentators on the difference between Anglo-American and Asian business practices and legal systems remark that the different cultures view contracts in a different light. The Anglo-American view is that they are relatively final arrangements, meant to be respected and referred to in governing the subsequent conduct of the parties. The Asian view is that they are simply way stations in an ongoing relationship and subject to wide interpretation and renegotiation when the situation changes, even if the change is the desire of one party not to adhere to the agreement. If that is the case, the entire notion of the United States reaching agreements meant to be respected with North Korea is probably fundamentally flawed. Making North Korea a regional issue (which I believe to be the present policy of the Bush administration) is probably the better option. It denies the North Koreans their objective of equality with the United States in negotiations. It places the problem in the hands of regional

actors (South Korea, Japan, the People's Republic of China, and Russia), who will be threatened sooner by North Korean nuclear weapons than will the United States. It will involve negotiations and agreements between cultures that share a similar attitude toward their obligations. Finally, it will demonstrate to that portion of the world that cares that the United States does not seek to be the final arbiter of all international relations. It does raise the specter that North Korea will develop nuclear weapons and seek to sell them to terrorists, or otherwise threaten the United States directly. But U.S. intervention at that stage, to protect itself from terrorist attack or other nuclear threat, however bloody and destructive, will be as a result of the failure of those states with the most influence over North Korea and those states most directly impacted by war.

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PITY THE POOR PLA NAVY

Madame:

Justin Bernier and Stuart Gold's article "China's Closing Window" (Summer 2003) has it precisely right. China has been busy trying to develop a military that can isolate Taiwan and, if necessary, hold the United States at bay. The problem for the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is that as fast as it is able to move in modernizing its interdiction forces, U.S. military advancements, particularly by the U.S. Navy, will negate any gains it may hope to achieve.

The PLAN's one hope for success in a campaign against Taiwan is that it can successfully blockade the island and limit or even negate a U.S. response by challenging the American naval presence in the waters to the east of Taiwan. The target of choice, naturally, is a U.S. aircraft carrier.

Attacking a U.S. aircraft carrier, particularly one steaming in harm's way, is one of the most difficult tasks that can confront any hostile power. The Lexington Institute recently published a study on this subject. In *Aircraft Carrier (In)vulnerability*, Dr. Loren Thompson concludes that U.S. aircraft carriers are

extremely difficult to find and target, but that even were it possible for an adversary to do so, the defensive firepower available in the carrier battle group and the inherent resilience of the platform itself would make it highly unlikely that the aircraft carrier could be attacked successfully.

The substantial defensive capability that the Navy enjoys with its current assets will be further augmented by a number of programs currently under way. The nearest-term advance in defensive capabilities will come with the deployment of the advanced E-2C Hawkeye based on the Radar Modernization Program (RMP). Providing enhanced airborne command and control as well as an expanded surveillance umbrella, the Hawkeye will act as an airborne node for the Cooperative Engagement Capability, supporting complex air defense missions and leveraging the RMP's electronically steered, ultra-high-frequency radar system. The Aegis weapon system currently aboard both *Arleigh Burke* (DDG 51) destroyers and *Ticonderoga*-class (CG 47) cruisers can deal with most air-breathing threats. In addition, the U.S. Navy and the Missile Defense Agency are working hard to develop the Area Missile Defense System and the Theaterwide Missile Defense System to counter ballistic missile threats at various ranges. Finally, the extended-range active missile will be deployed on Aegis-capable ships to address advanced cruise missile and aircraft threats.

On the offensive side, extended air defense will be enabled by the deployment of the F/A-18 E/F and F-35 JSF. With its enhanced radar, large payload, increased range, and networked data sharing, the F/A-18 E/F will allow the carrier battle group to operate at a greater distance from the enemy while delivering a more powerful punch. The addition of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter at the end of the decade will further enhance the ability of carrier-based aviation to conduct both offensive and defensive missions.

An observer might pity the poor PLA Navy planners. They have focused their attention almost solely on the aircraft carrier threat when an equally great danger to their plans will be lurking below the surface. The United States is converting four Trident ballistic missile submarines to carry up to 154 cruise missiles each. These boats will be able to operate independently in otherwise denied waters and to strike suddenly and with devastating effect. The first SSGN is scheduled to enter the fleet in 2007.

Perhaps most significantly, the U.S. Navy is developing FORCENet, an information architecture that networks sensors, weapons, command and control, databases, and platforms. Integrating ground, air, space, and sea-based capabilities, FORCENet will serve as the structure for acquiring, processing, and distributing a vast amount of information that will improve battle space awareness for both offensive and defensive operations.

The Chinese can buy ships and missiles, but no one is selling network-centric capabilities. This alone is likely to tip the scales in favor of the U.S. Navy in terms of overall combat capability in the region. As Bernier and Gold note, China's current intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities do not, as yet, allow the PLAN even to see over the horizon. In the race to dominate the seas, don't bet on China. As fast as the PLAN tries to go, as much as it drives itself, the U.S. Navy's transformation plan will only widen the gap.

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