

New Bush Defense Policy Paves The Way for Strategic Blunder

by William Jones

The Bush Administration's announcement of a new defense doctrine based on the right of the United States to conduct pre-emptive military strikes against states and terrorist groups intent on developing weapons of mass destruction, aims to provide the basis for an early pre-emptive strike against Iraq, as well as serving as a precedent for making U.S. military might the legions of a "new Roman Empire."

Some details of this new national security strategy were floated to the *New York Times*' David Sanger on June 17, after President Bush had intimated such a radical change in a graduation speech at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point on June 1. "We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best," Bush said. "We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systematically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long." Bush told these future officers of the United States Army. "Homeland defense and missile defense are part of stronger security, and they're essential priorities for America. Yet the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act."

This message was further underlined by Vice President Dick Cheney to a gathering of international leaders of conservative parties on June 10. "During the Cold War, we were able to manage the threat with summit meetings, arms control treaties, and by a policy of deterrence, through which an act of aggression would put the aggressor's own nation at risk," Cheney said. "In the terrorists, however, we have enemies with nothing to defend. A group like al-Qaeda cannot be deterred or placated or reasoned with at a conference table. For that reason, this struggle will not end in a treaty or in accommodation with terrorists; it can only end in their complete and

utter destruction."

"Nor can we always rely on the doctrine of containment," Cheney continued. "As the President said last week, 'Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to their terrorist allies. Grave threats are accumulating against us, and inaction will only bring them closer. We will not wait until it is too late.' For our part, the government of the United States understands what must be done. We have a responsibility to protect ourselves against future attack, to prepare our military for all future threats, to maintain the global coalition we have built to defeat global terror, and to take pre-emptive action, when necessary."

A Rejection of U.S. Military Traditions

Such a brazen move toward a policy of arbitrary unilateral military action has raised something of an outcry, both at home and abroad. Although wholly in line with the "New Imperialism" doctrine of right-wing ideologues like William Kristol and Robert Kagan, the new policy flies in the face of the entire edifice of international law which the United States has been so keen in erecting, as well as the traditional U.S. military policy from Washington to MacArthur.

The shift to such an openly aggressive unilateralist doctrine by Administration warhawks has been motivated in part by frustration in getting any other country on board any form of "multilateral" military operation against Iraq. The Administration has realized that the days of the "Gulf War coalition," are long gone. And the New Imperialist crowd have a "quick fix" to replace it.

Initially, it was thought that the "Get Saddam" operation might be brought in under the umbrella of a nation's "right to self-defense," used so deftly by the Israeli Defense Forces to reverse the Oslo peace process, and by the United States after Sept. 11, to launch operations against al-Qaeda in Afghani-



Not only Arab nations, but also Turkey, watch with dread the doctrinal and military buildup for a U.S. war against Iraq. As Lyndon LaRouche and his strategic alternative have appeared throughout Arab venues in June, so also Yarin, one of the newspapers most read in Turkish government circles, headlined LaRouche's analysis of the Sept. 11 and succeeding events.

stan. But try as they might, even with former CIA Director James Woolsey especially, doing his utmost to find some link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, the needed connection to give the pretext did not materialize. The new national security policy gives a carte blanche to the United States to conducting military operations against Saddam Hussein—or anybody else.

Providing a pretext for such operations does not, however, guarantee their success. The estimate of General Tommy Franks, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that 200-250,000 U.S. soldiers would be needed for an invasion of Iraq aimed at Saddam Hussein, has probably cooled the ardor among some Administration warhawks for such an option. It is now buttressed by a combination of covert and overt special operations, and use of that phantom of this tragi-comic opera, the “Iraqi opposition.”

A front-page *Washington Post* article on June 16 by Bob Woodward underlined the fact that this was a very “live option” for the Bush people. Woodward notes that earlier this year, President Bush signed an intelligence order directing the CIA to undertake a comprehensive, covert program to topple Saddam Hussein, including authority to use lethal force to capture the Iraqi President. This involved increased support to Iraqi opposition groups and forces inside and outside Iraq, including money, weapons, equipment, training, and intelligence information. This would also involve the deployment of CIA and U.S. Special Forces teams, which would be authorized to kill Saddam “if in self-defense.”

CIA Director George Tenet, according to Woodward, had informed President Bush that such a CIA operation alone would have only a 10-20% chance of succeeding without a concomitant military sweep on the part of the United States. But even this estimate seems high given the composition of the opposition to Saddam Hussein.

One of the prime proponents of this policy has been Wayne Downing, the Deputy National Security Adviser and former commander of U.S. Special Operations forces, who has been meeting with leaders of the Kurdish groups active in northern Iraq, where they are protected by U.S. and British

forces. Downing is also the key person in attempting to identify individuals and groups that might replace Saddam Hussein.

Iraqi Opposition Gathers—and Squabbles

The fragility of such a coalition became obvious, when the major groups were pulled together for a cameo appearance in Washington at a June 8 meeting organized by the American University’s Center for Global Peace, which is actually a center for some of the “ethnic conflict” scenarios being run in the Persian Gulf region. The ostensible subject of the day-long conference was “Iraqi Kurds: Key to Stability in Iraq.” Being one of the first public gatherings of all the possible players in a U.S. covert anti-Saddam operation, it was also a litmus test in how this gaggle of disparate, and fundamentally antagonistic groups would function. On the surface, all was peace and love, until sensitive issues were actually discussed—and then the fireworks started.

The gathering lacked that mogul of “Iraqi opposition,” the darling of the Washington beltway Iraq-bashers, Ahmad Chalabi, the London-based chieftain of the Iraqi National Congress (INC). While Chalabi has long been fêted—and financed—by the Washington crowd, he is generally considered by Arab sources to be a “hotel lobby opposition,” with little support in Iraq. Chalabi declined to attend the American University meeting, in spite of being invited, perhaps not choosing to share the podium with other groups, when he is accustomed to being the sole focus of adulation by anti-Saddam Congressmen and Senators. Two members of the INC were present, however, including the self-styled heir to the Iraqi throne, Sharif Ali bin al-Hussein, a cousin of the late King Faisal of Iraq. Neither spoke as representing the INC, but as representatives of other groups.

Even before the “oppositionists” took the floor, the fireworks began with the first forum of the day in which the international views of the “Kurdish problem” were discussed. The Turkish position was presented by Ozdem Sanberk, the director of the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation and a former adviser to the late Turkish President, Turgut

Özal. While not unsympathetic to the situation of the Iraqi Kurds, Sanberk was also not reticent in explaining that his government was *very* concerned about any military operations involving the Iraqi Kurds, for fear they will fuel the drive to establish a “Greater Kurdistan,” which would include the areas of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, with a majority Kurdish population.

That such fears were not unfounded was seen in the reaction of the large American-Kurdish contingent. Sanberk was bombarded with questions about alleged mistreatment of the Kurds in Turkey, in spite of Sanberk’s assertion that Turkey’s Kurds have full rights as citizens, and many serve in high government posts. The U.S. handlers at the conference had to expend a lot of energy to restore order and reorient the discussion back to Iraq.

Peter Galbraith, a Clinton-appointed ambassador to Croatia and long a meddler in ethnic conflict in various parts of the world, had been selected to explain the U.S. view. Now based at the National Defense University, Galbraith holds no government post, but his long association with the Kurdish cause merited his selection. He tried to admonish his Kurdish listeners to adapt a less emotional attitude to Turkey, explaining that without Turkish aid it would be very difficult to oust Saddam Hussein. Alan Makovsky, an aide on the House International Relations Committee, himself a supporter of Iraqi “regime change,” readily admitted that the biggest problem facing such an operation was “accommodating Turkey and the Kurds” in northern Iraq.

A New Ottoman Empire?

Sanberk was also adamant about maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq as a nation. He explained that Turkish-Iraqi relations went back all the way to the founding of the Turkish Republic, in spite of the political changes which followed in Iraq. Turkey has no interest in causing problems with its neighbor, he indicated, and the nature of the burgeoning opposition, with a U.S.-British-supported Kurdish entity established in the North, and a possible Shi’ite breakaway in the South, could lead to major problems for his country.

Given the partial balkanization already accomplished in the north of Iraq, with the Kurdish region operating under the protection of “Operation Provide Comfort,” the anti-Iraq warhawks are proposing a form of loose federal system for a post-Saddam Iraq, involving greater autonomy for the Kurdish and Shi’ite areas to get them to join this under a loose central government. The U.S. proponents of this option harken back to the Ottoman Empire, claiming that the “autonomous zones” would be equivalent to the Ottoman *wulia*, relatively autonomous provinces effectively controlled by the provincial bosses, but formally subordinate to the central government of the empire.

Not surprisingly, Galbraith gave credence to this insanity by comparing it to that misbegotten child of the Dayton, Ohio, negotiations, Bosnia-Hercegovina/Republika Srpska—

which he and fellow-meddler Richard Holbrooke were largely responsible for crafting in 1995. The leftist Galbraith was also fully supportive of what he called an “impending” U.S. attack against Baghdad. He ironically reflected the views of the neo-conservative wildman, Richard Perle, in claiming that such an operation would garner the support of “the masses” in Iraq, waiting eagerly to welcome their “liberators” as they enter Baghdad.

Draping such a model in Ottoman garb does not change the insane nature of the policy to break up the Iraqi nation. In the words of one Kuwaiti speaker at the American University meeting, it would create a “nightmarish scenario” in the region, not only probably resulting in an independent Kurdistan demanding parts of Turkey, but also creating a dangerous situation for Iran, which would not sit silently by without reacting to such a balkanization in its immediate neighborhood. Nasser Hadian-Jazy of Iran made clear that while Iran has little love for Saddam’s regime, it strongly supports maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq.

If the Bush Administration places operational trust in this crew of dissidents, it is in for a rude awakening. But if the President does decide for a unilateral military strike with 200-250,000 U.S. troops, we will head straight for a strategic quagmire. Over and above the cost in Iraqi and American lives, awful forces unleashed by the devastation and breakup of Iraq, will haunt its perpetrators.

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