

Was Poppy Right After All?

After five weeks of air strikes and 100 hours of ground war, President Bush ordered General Schwarzkopf to end his attacks and halt his advance. Receiving reports

of air massacres of retreating Iraqis on the Highway of Death out of Kuwait City, unwilling to risk a defection of his Arab allies, Bush I ordered an end to the war.

America agreed. Our goal had been to liberate Kuwait. It had been achieved, brilliantly. Saddam's army had been evicted. The 500,000-man army of Desert Storm was ordered home. And the neoconservatives never forgave Bush I for not going to Baghdad.

A dozen years later, the son, at their fanatical urging, invaded Iraq, seized Baghdad, and committed America to building a democracy that would serve as a model for the Arab and Islamic world.

Three months have now elapsed since Baghdad fell. In those 100 days, the wisdom of the father in disregarding the neocons, and the folly of the son in heeding them, have become apparent.

America has 150,000 troops bogged down in Iraq as proconsul Paul Bremer is demanding thousands more to put down a guerrilla revolt that has broken out against our occupation.

Each day brings reports of new American dead and wounded. Our enemies are said to be terrorists, Saddam's *Fedayeen*, the remnants of the Ba'ath Party. But Saddam had hundreds of thousands of men in his army, Republican Guard, and Special Republican Guard. We did not kill a tenth of these soldiers. Where are they now?

George W. Bush is in more trouble than he realizes. Indeed, his place in history may yet hinge on how he deals with

what Americans are coming to see as an intolerable cost in lives to maintain a presence in Iraq when they are not yet convinced it is vital to our security.

The president spent a year convincing us of the ominous threat of Saddam—his weapons and ties to terrorists—a threat that could be eliminated only by an invasion and the death of his regime. But he has not even begun to make the case for why we must stay on in Iraq.

Why are we still there? If our goal is a democracy in Iraq, that is surely noble, but is it doable? What is the price in blood of achieving it? What is the cost in tens of billions? What are the prospects for success? What would constitute indices of failure, at which point we would write off the investment? What is our exit strategy?

None of these questions has been answered. What we hear from the president is "Bring 'em on," and from senators who visit Baghdad, "We must be prepared to stay five or ten years." But why must we be prepared to stay five or ten years? Now that Saddam is gone and his weapons of mass destruction no longer threaten us, if ever they did, why must we stay?

Iraq is not Vietnam where we lost 150 soldiers each week for seven years. But it has taken on the aspect of the colonial wars of the European empires, all of which were lost because the natives were more willing to pay in blood to drive the imperialists out than the imperialists were willing to pay in blood to stay around.

The truism stands: the guerrillas win if they do not lose. And they do not lose as long as they keep fighting, dying, killing, and raising the cost of the occupation. British, French, Israelis, and Russians can testify to that.

Americans sense, rightly, that we do not need to occupy Iraq to be secure here at home.

Bush's father understood this. Is the son wiser? Why did Bush I stop at Basra and not go on to Baghdad? He had no desire to occupy and rule Iraq. He saw no need to. He feared that a U.S. occupation would alienate Arab allies, inflame the Arab street, and invite an Iraqi *intifada*. He placed a high value on the coalition he had stitched together to fight, and to pay for, the war. He was warned Iraq could split apart and a Shi'ite south sympathetic to Iran could break loose. He did not see a routed Saddam as a mortal threat. He believed Iraq could be deterred, contained.

On this, he was a conservative. Has not history proven him right?

His son, however—to invade and occupy Iraq and oust Saddam—was willing to shatter alliances, alienate Arabs, Turks, French, Germans, and Russians, have his country pay the full cost of the war, and run the entire occupation ourselves. Now, U.S. casualties, after the fall of Baghdad, are approaching the number of lives lost in the war.

Looking back, were Saddam's weapons so imminent a menace they required an invasion? Or did the neocons get revenge on the father by leading his son down the garden path—to the empire of their dreams, now creaking at the joints?

What does the son do now, with the election 15 months away? ■

[in the bedroom]

Sex & Consequences

An anthropologist vindicates the traditional family.

By Peter Wood

ANTHROPOLOGY—hometown to cultural relativists and all-night diner for disaffected intellectuals—may not be where you would most expect to find good reasons to defend traditional American family values. But anthropology, in fact, guards a treasure house of examples of what happens when a society institutionalizes *other* arrangements.

Want to know what it really means for a society to recognize “gay marriage”? Or for a society to permit polygamy? Or when the stigma on out-of-wedlock birth disappears? Care to know what happens to a human community that tolerates sexual experimentation among pre-adolescents and teenagers? Are fathers and mothers really interchangeable? Anthropology actually has a large amount of empirical evidence on all these matters—and many others that are now on the table in the United States thanks to various advocacy movements.

The Leftist political convictions of many of my fellow anthropologists tend to keep them silent about some of the scientific findings that have accumulated over 150 years or so of systematic

ethnographic study. But these findings strongly suggest that the family is a bedrock institution and that the kinds of modifications to the family advocated by gays, feminists, and others who speak in favor of relaxing traditional restrictions on sexual self-expression will have huge consequences.

Let's take an anthropologically informed look at two of these proposed changes to the family: gay marriage and polygamy.

Institutionalizing Male Homosexuality

It is not especially difficult to find examples of societies that are considerably more relaxed about male homosexual behavior than American society has been, at least until recently. Some societies such as pre-communist China and Vietnam officially disapproved of homosexuality while tolerating large numbers of male homosexual prostitutes. Today's boy prostitutes in Thailand carry on a trade that was remarked on by Western travelers of centuries past. A fair number of North American Indian societies made room for a homosexual “man-

woman” (a *berdache*, as the French fur traders called him) who dressed and acted the part of a woman. But the *berdache* was an exceptional creature and did not represent anything like normalized homosexuality.

For that, we have to look to Melanesia, where there are perhaps dozens of very small-scale societies in which male homosexuality is given ritual significance and fully incorporated into the life of the community. This happened for example in the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, and in many parts of New Guinea. Here is one example:

Among the Etoro, a tribe of about 400 living by hunting and small-scale gardening in the Stickland-Bosavi district of Papua New Guinea, from around age 12, every boy is “inseminated” orally more or less daily by a young man who is assigned to him as a partner. Late in his teenage years, an Etoro boy is formally initiated in an event involving many male sex partners, after which he becomes an “inseminator” rather than an “inseminee.” In due course, the former older male partner often marries the younger man's sister.