

NO CHINA DOLLS

I wonder how many readers had the same reaction as I did when I looked at the photo of those serious and disciplined Chinese army officers? Estée Lauder would be disappointed—not a lipstick in sight! If the feminists are wrong, and I suspect they are, that there is absolutely no difference between men and women, we had best steer clear of those hombres. When your army's poster girl is Lynndie England, it's wise to restrict your wars to opponents like Iraq.

WILLIAM ABBOTT
Oyster Bay, N.Y.

BLOCKED IN BEIJING

I was very impressed with James Pinkerton's "Superpower Showdown" (Nov. 7). Pinkerton has laid out a very nuanced argument, one that captures the complexities of Sino-U.S. relations between the "Panda-huggers" and "China threat" camps. As a grad student studying in Beijing, I'll be digesting this article for quite a while.

I did want to point out two concerns. One, we would not be alone in a conflict over Taiwan. The past year has seen a growing partnership on this issue with Japan, highlighted by their announcement of an overt policy of alliance in a war over Taiwan. Tokyo, seeking a greater regional security role and concerned over China's maritime posturing near undersea gas deposits, would almost certainly fight alongside the U.S.

Also, it's not true that China's citizens can go to PACOM's website. All DoD websites are blocked by the Great Firewall—including the controversial Pentagon report on China's defense in July.

I should add that I'm not sure the British balance-of-power analogy, while helpful, is completely applicable. The Pax Britannica was dependent upon maritime supremacy—after 1871, Bismarck's Germany was widely acknowledged as the dominant land power on the continent. Once Germany began to build a navy, Britain became genuinely

alarmed. The U.S., too, has no intention of challenging Beijing's land power on the Asian mainland. The problem with an attempt to balance is that China's military budget indicates a splurge on building a modern navy, a challenge to this century's "Ruler of the Waves".

These comments notwithstanding, I thoroughly enjoyed this article. Thank you.

JOSH KIRKMAN
via e-mail

VIVA FORMOSA!

James Pinkerton's article suffers from a major distortion that springs from either personal ignorance or a conscious disregard of facts and desire to distort history. The island of Formosa, now called Taiwan, was never a part of China. Your repetition of Chinese propaganda is sick. If you wish to tell your readers of your desire to sacrifice the Formosan people and force them to submit to Chinese autocracy as a means to avoid conflict, fine. But don't parade it as a noble gesture. The Chinese conquest of Formosa would no more be an act of re-unification than the Japanese conquest of Korea, the Philippines, and much of mainland China.

JOHN KLINGENBECK
via e-mail

LETTING CHINA LIVE

James Pinkerton writes, "Americans should understand that if we want a war with the People's Republic, Beijing will happily give us one." Really? Well, if the Chinese are half as smart as they think they are, they wouldn't welcome such a war. If the truth be told, America could turn China into a burning cinder tomorrow afternoon. There is absolutely nothing the Chinese could do to prevent this. What holds us back is nothing about China; it's our own sense of decency and self-restraint. The logical conclusion is that China exists by our grace.

PETER SKURKISS
Stow, Ohio

TAC IS FOR LIBERALS, TOO

I just want to say how much I respect your publication. As a recovering liberal, I am struck at your integrity. I constantly tell liberals to read *TAC*, and they are skeptical when I tell them you were one of the earliest publications to question the wisdom of the Iraq War.

Even when I am at odds with some of your ideas, I disagree with respect and an open mind to keep considering it because I know you have the best interests of our country in mind.

JIM WACHTEL
via e-mail

WHERE HAS ALL THE MONEY GONE?

With regard to "Money for Nothing," I used to think that only rock stars could burn through cash faster than your so-called bleeding-heart liberals, but I now see that I was wrong. Apparently, the most "conservative" administration since Reagan has become the hands-down leader in corruption and mismanagement. This war will be lost not for the lack of blood and guts, but from an oversupply of greed. While the right-wing blogs scream for the heads of those United Nations officers in charge of the oil-for-food program, they still sing the praises of a corrupt administration that has squandered billions in gold and wasted an even more precious commodity—the blood of our sons and daughters.

Although I hate to say it, I now agree with the Left: it's time for these Bush bozos to go!

KEVIN MALONE
via e-mail

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[POLITICS]

TWO FOR ONE

Those who thought Dick Cheney might be chastened by the indictment of Scooter Libby have never met David Addington or John Hannah. In best hydra style, two heads have grown to replace the severed one—at least as ideologically fierce and no less cultish.

Addington, Cheney's new chief of staff, is scarcely removed from the Plame affair: Libby sought him out immediately after promising to provide Judith Miller with more information about Joe Wilson. More important, he has become the administration's foremost advocate of executive power, not only blocking the GAO's attempt to discern what role lobbyists played in the Cheney energy plan and authoring the White House memo justifying torture. But also, as *National Journal* reports, "Addington played a leading role in 2004 on behalf of the Bush administration when it refused to give the Senate Intelligence Committee documents from Libby's office on the alleged misuse of intelligence information regarding Iraq."

Cheney's pick to be his national security adviser, a title Libby also held, shows a similar disinclination to clean house. John Hannah served as the White House contact for the Iraqi National Congress and conduit for their bogus "intelligence" and was Cheney's link to the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans. He earned his neocon stripes for his battles with the CIA and State Department as those reluctant agencies were pressured to support the war. And now, despite rumors that he might also be indicted, Hannah has been handed the vice president's full foreign-policy portfolio.

Perhaps there was no one else. Perhaps that's the point. This would be an ideal time for new perspective, but insularity—they call it loyalty—breeds mistrust. Thus the clique shuffles nameplates and nothing really changes.



[JUSTICE]

FIRST-RATE SECOND PICK

Judge Samuel Alito, President Bush's second choice for the Supreme Court, is a world apart from Harriet Miers—15 years' experience on the federal bench, impeccable legal credentials, an ample paper trail. Conservatives were as euphoric about "Scalito" as they were disappointed and bewildered about Miers. Perhaps the Right should stand up for its principles rather than be treated as the White House's doormat more often.

Yet the fact that Alito is no stealth nominee doesn't mean we know everything. While the ladies of NOW and NARAL make him sound like an opponent of women's suffrage, less partisan observers note that he voted with the pro-choice side in three out of four abortion cases. Pro-lifers shouldn't panic, however. His dissent in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the 1992 decision that reaffirmed *Roe v. Wade*, is probably a better indicator of his abortion jurisprudence than his pro-choice votes while bound by Supreme Court precedent. But neither side should count on Alito to legislate from the bench on their behalf.

Of course, *Roe* almost certainly wasn't the White House's main concern during the vetting process. Alito has tended to side with the government in *habeas corpus* and other civil-liberties cases, a plus for an administration seeking untrammelled power to treat Guantanamo inmates and other terrorism detainees as it sees fit—and probably the only thing this nominee has in common with Miers.

[MIDEAST]

THE IRAN WE MADE

The Iranian people got to elect their president in a free election! Regrettably, it turns out the man they elected is an aggressive and not terribly worldly Islamist, who has begun to make demagogic comments about wiping Israel off the map. It didn't take long for Iranian diplomats to begin saying that President Ahmadinejad really didn't mean what he plainly did say—or for subsequent reports that the president planned a shakeup of the entire diplomatic corps.

There has long been evidence that a viable, forward-looking bourgeois class exists in Iran, ready to impose a final Thermidor on the mullah's revolution.